# Heritage and Environment

# Heritage and Political Environment

# Protection of Culture in Conflict: Heritage in a Militarised Environment

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> Es gibt heute Blumen, Bäume, Wälder, Moore, Häuser, Dörfer, Städte und Menschen, auf denen ein museales Tabu ruht, und auch die kühnste Phantasie wird nicht das Ziel ermessen, das diesem Drange, solche Massen von lebenden und toten Dingen ins Unantastbare zu ziehen, doch vorschweben muss. Merkwürdig ist auch das unmittelbare Nebeneinander dieser unter Glasglocken gezogenen Welt mit einer anderen, in der die wilde Grausamkeit und der Umfang der Zerstörung kaum Grenzen mehr kennt.
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> (Ernst Jünger, *Das abenteuerliche Herz*, Zweite Fassung)

## On the current situation

If we take a closer look, we have to realise with great dismay that the first quarter of the 21st century marks a period of unprecedented destruction of cultural heritage. Roughly 30 years of armed conflicts have inflicted an immeasurable damage on the cultural memory of the world. Afghanistan,[1] Iraq,[2]

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1 Juliette Van Krieken-Pieters (ed.), *Art and Archeology of Afghanistan: Its Fall and Survival. A Multi-disciplinary Approach*, Leiden 2006; Michael Falser, "Die Buddhas von Bamiyan, performativer Ikonoklasmus und das 'Image' von Kulturerbe," [in:] *Kultur und Terror: Zeitschrift für Kulturwissenschaft*, vol. 1 (2010), pp. 82–93; Jamal J. Elias, "Götzendämmerung: Moderner Ikonoklasmus in der muslimischen Welt," [in:] *Zeitschrift für Ideengeschichte*, vol. 9 (2015), pp. 33–48.

2 Peter G. Stone and Joanne Farchakh Bajjaly (eds.), *The Destruction of Cultural Heritage in Iraq*, Woodbridge 2008; Lawrence Rothfield (ed.), *Cultural Heritage Protection after the Iraq War*, Lanham 2008; Lawrence Rothfield, *The Rape of Mesopotamia / Behind the Looting of the Iraq Museum,* Chicago 2009.

Syria,[3] Mali[4] – in retrospective, the destruction wreaked by the Yugoslav Wars[5] at the closing of the 20th century appears to have set the paradigm.

Meanwhile, most comprehensive scientific analyses of the destruction consensually state a profound failure of the internationally agreed legislation and mechanisms for the protection of culture in conflict.

However, these analyses only involve the scenarios conforming to the common notion of war and conflict. The continuing attacks on culture in Western Africa, for instance, especially in Nigeria,[6] the most populous state on the African continent, over the course of latent conflicts, uncontrolled urbanisation, and merciless exploitation of resources barely attract attention at the global level. One of the most urging problems here reveals itself already at the first sight of potential sources: there is a marked shortage of necessary texts, both in Western Africa, whose archives and libraries are, if existing at all, in a deplorable state, and in the well-endowed institutions of the so-called "West."

Yet another development seems to have escaped the recognition of national and international institutions for the protection of culture and preservation of monuments. As the British urban researcher and geographer Stephan Graham points out, it is becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish between militarised and civil environments at all. The common notions of war and peace in spatial and temporal separation become blurred in an omnipresent global scenario of conflict with a multitude of showplaces where various factions permanently besiege one another. Public security, economy, daily life, and indeed even popular culture become increasingly militarised.[7] Suddenly, the cultural her-

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3   Michael Greenhalgh, *Syria's Monuments: Their Survival and Destruction*, Leiden – Boston 2017; Thorsten Holzer, "Der internationale Kulturgüterschutz in Kriegszeiten am Beispiel Syriens," [in:] *Journal für Rechtspolitik*, vol. 25 no. 2 (2017), pp. 102–107.

4   International Criminal Court (ICC), The Office of the Prosecutor (ed.), *Situation in Mali: Article 53(1) Report* (2013), https://www.icc-cpi.int/itemsDocuments/SASMaliArticle 53_1PublicReportENG16Jan2013.pdf. (access: 23 April 2020).

5   Andrew Herscher, *Violence Taking Place: The Architecture of the Kosovo Conflict*, Stanford 2010; Helen Walasek et al., *Bosnia and the Destruction of Cultural Heritage*, Farnham 2015; Sabri Bajgora et al., *Destruction of Islamic Heritage in the Kosovo War 1998–1999*, Prishtina 2012; Tobias Strahl, *Kultur, Erbe, Konflikt: Kulturgutzerstörung in Kroatien, Bosnien-Herzegovina und Kosovo*, Wien – Köln – Weimar 2018.

6   Blessing Nonye Onyima, "Nigerian Cultural Heritage: Preservation, Challenges and Prospects," [in:] *Ogirisi: A New Journal of African Studies*, vol. 12 (2016), pp. 273–292.

7   Stephen Graham, *Cities under Siege: The New Military Urbanism*, London – New York 2011.

itage situated far from the so-called "war zones" finds itself located in a militarised environment and in the centre of ever more intense, frequently violent conflicts. Suffice it to mention, among others, Ayodhya in India,[8] Skopje in North Macedonia,[9] and even the city of Dresden in the East of Germany.[10]

Not to mention the events in which monuments in European urban centres served as the stage or backdrop for acts of violence which could be located within the framework of global conflicts or were at least linked to it. The forty-year-old Algerian Farid Ikke, who on 6 June 2017 attacked policemen in front of the Notre-Dame cathedral in Paris with a hammer, declared himself a supporter of the terrorist network Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (isis). Before he was gunned down by the police, he reportedly exclaimed, "This is for Syria!"[11] Similarly, the twenty-nine-year-old Egyptian Abdullah Reda al-Hamahmy who attacked soldiers with a machete in front of the Louvre museum in Paris on 3 February 2017 is said to have shouted "Allahu Akbar!" [God is the greatest]. During his interrogation by the police in the aftermath of the attack he went on record as saying to have wanted to damage paintings in the Louvre with colour spray to "take revenge for the people of Syria."[12] Another example, the French Karim Cheurfi, reportedly a member of isis, chose the Champs-Élysées

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8   Ram Sharan Sharma, "The Ayodhya Issue," [in:] *Destruction and Conservation of Cultural Property*, Robert Layton, Peter G. Stone and Julian Thomas (eds.), New York 2011, pp. 127–138.

9   Goran Janev, "Skopje 2014: Erasing Memories, Building History," [in:] *Balkan Heritages: Negotiating History and Culture*, Maria Couroucli and Tchavdar Marinov (eds.), London – New York 2016, pp. 111–130.

10  Autor_innenkollektiv "Dissonanz" (eds.), *Gedenken abschaffen / Kritik am Diskurs zur Bombardierung Dresdens 1945*, Berlin 2013; Karl-Siegbert Rehberg and Matthias Neutzner, "The Dresden Frauenkirche as a Contested Symbol: The Architecture of Remembrance After War," [in:] *War and Cultural Heritage / Biographies of Place*, Marie Louise Stig Sørensen and Dacia Viejo-Rose (eds.), Cambridge 2015, pp. 98–127; Tobias Strahl, "The Longing for History and Patterns of Exclusion," [in:] *Heritage and Society*, Robert Kusek and Jacek Purchla (eds.), Krakow 2019, pp. 115–139.

11  Henry Samuel, "Notre Dame: Attacker Shouted That He Was a Soldier of Isis as He Attempted to Strike Police Officer with Hammer," [in:] *The Telegraph*, 6 June 2017, https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/06/06/parisians-told-avoid-notre-dame-amid-reports-explosion/ (access: 23 April 2020).

12  Reuters, "Louvre Attack Suspect Says Islamic State Had Not Given Him Orders," [in:] *The Irish Times*, 8 February 2017, https://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/europe/louvre-attack-suspect-says-islamic-state-had-not-given-him-orders-1.2968549 (access: 23 April 2020).

in Paris for the site of his terrorist attack on the grounds of its status as a cultural heritage icon of the so called "Western World." On 20 April 2017 he opened fire with an assault rifle on a police patrol, killing one officer and leaving others heavily wounded.[13]

The military perspective is without doubt of crucial importance regarding armed conflict since in most cases military personnel is amongst the first representatives of third parties in war zones. No other institution active in these regions can draw back – at least potentially – on comparable resources as well as means of violence to protect cultural assets and monuments effectively. Nevertheless, the military point of view represents only one way of looking at a highly complex problem.

The experience deriving from the operations on the Balkans, in the Middle East, and in South-East Asia has sensitised the military of NATO countries towards cultural issues. By the end of the first decade of the 21st century cultural assets and monuments became part of the operational planning in multinational headquarters. This shift was marked by the highly ambitious *Counterinsurgency Field Manual* of the United States Army, drafted and realised under the aegis of the United States Four Star General David Petraeus. The concept of culture unfolded in the famous *Field Manual 3–24* is less developed with regard to the targeted audience; instead, it is directed towards infantrymen and members of the United States Marine Corps: "Social structure can be thought of as a skeleton, with culture being the muscle on the bones."[14] Nevertheless, the manual contains 16 paragraphs which decidedly ask for cultural structures to be taken into account while planning military operations.

And here as well the line between military and civil structures becomes increasingly blurred. Laurie Rush, American anthropologist and archaeologist, according to her own information, for eleven years was a civilian employee of the US armed forces at Fort Drum, New York, where she was responsible for cultural education. In 2010 Rush edited a volume of articles on the protection of cultural assets in armed conflict. Nine of the 20 authors were or are representatives of high rank military

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13  Der Spiegel, "Attentäter nach Todesschüssen auf Champs-Élysées identifiziert," [in:] *Der Spiegel*, 21 April 2017, https://www.spiegel.de/panorama/justiz/par-is-schiesserei-auf-champs-elysees-mindestens-ein-polizist-getoetet-a-1144151.html (access: 23 April 2020).

14  United States Dept. of the Army, *The U.S. Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual: U.S. Army Field Manual no. 3–24*, Chicago 2007, p. 89.

personnel.[15] Another volume in the same series was edited a year later by the British prehistorian Peter Stone. Here again three of the authors (Laurie Rush, Derek Suchard, and Lieutenant General Barney White-Spunner) are members of the military or have worked for the military.[16]

One must not ignore these endeavours but neither should we expect them to be particularly effective when it comes to the protection of cultural heritage in conflict. A similar endeavour had already been undertaken by the German art historian Paul Clemen in 1919, immediately after World War I. The two volumes of Clemen's *Kunstschutz im Krieg*[17] [Protection of art in war] comprise 25 papers by different authors drawing on similar subjects, and yet a hundred years later we find ourselves once more confronted by a similar problem.

While the Österreichisches Bundesheer [Austrian Armed Forces] were engaged in developing a systematic approach towards the protection of cultural assets in conflict[18] as early as in the 1980s, during the operations on the Balkan Peninsula in Croatia, Bosnia and Hercegovina, and Kosovo heritage protection values were crucial for the Bundeswehr [German Federal Forces]. As part of the multinational Kosovo-Force (KFOR), the Landeskundliche Beratergruppe [Advisory group regarding history, culture, geography of the host region] became active for the first time in advising the commander of the German detachment of the KFOR. With a series of instructions issued by the Bundesministeriums der Verteidigung [Federal Ministry of Defence], from the middle of the first decade of the 21st century onwards several institutions were established within the German Federal Forces which aimed at the improvement of the intercultural competencies of the forces. In future cultural assets are intended to form a separate area of analysis in the two centres of Interkultureller Einsatzberatung [Intercultural advisory in deployment] in the garrisons of Mayen and Potsdam.[19]

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15    Laurie Rush (ed.), *Archeology, Cultural Property, and the Military*, Woodbrigde 2010.

16    Peter G. Stone (ed.), *Cultural Heritage, Ethics and the Military*, Woodbridge 2011.

17    Paul Clemen, *Kunstschutz im Kriege*, Leipzig 1919.

18    Franz Schuller, "Der Kulturgüterschutz im Österreichischen Bundesheer," [in:] *Kulturgüterschutz: Ein Aufruf zu Transnationaler Aktion*, Österreichische Gesellschaft für Kulturgüterschutz (ed.), Wien 1995, pp. 51–63.

19    Arno Tappe, "Aspekte zur Geschichte und zum Aufbau der Interkulturellen Einsatzberatung und Ausbildung für die Auslandseinsätze der Bundeswehr," [in:] *Am Hindukusch – und weiter? Die Bundeswehr im Auslandseinsatz: Erfahrungen, Bilanzen, Ausblicke*, Rainer L. Glatz and Rolf Tophoven (eds.), Wien 1995, pp. 156–172.

## Anachronisms in the concepts of culture and heritage

The initiatives of the military for the protection of cultural assets in conflict or post-conflict areas barely surpass mere drafts and thus are far from providing a functional framework of action in actual scenarios. However, we have to ask ourselves how we want to deal with the increasing merging of the civil and military environment as described by Stephen Graham. How do we want to protect monuments and other cultural heritage assets against their political, indeed extremist staging and instrumentalisation, even up to their damage or destruction? And what about ourselves? What about the social groups for which these objects are meaningful? Can we afford to hire security personnel to guard every relevant object around the clock? And even if we possessed the necessary resources – would we really want to live in such an increasingly militarised environment? Wouldn't that imply an affirmation of the logics of militarisation of the civil environment?

It seems we cannot gain any ground here by conventional means. Instead, we have to ask ourselves how over a century of international legislation for the protection of cultural assets and monuments in armed conflicts – from the first Hague Laws and Customs of War on Land in 1899 until present – the destruction of culture could continue to grow in intensity and extent, to now reach the point of transcending to the civil environment.

The first and quite obvious reason is the discrepancy between the supranational legislation, claiming universal validity, and exclusive national interests. In such cases as this, history teaches us, exclusive interests usually prevail. A law, however, is effective only when it can be enforced, which means that violations must be effectively sanctioned. If the 20th century, following the experience of two devastating wars, can be regarded as the century of universal projects – starting with the establishment of the United Nations (1945), the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the attempt, henceforth, to establish an ethical, just global economy, the passage, furthermore, of the World Heritage Convention of the UNESCO (1972) and, if you will, the political superstructure of the European Union (1951) – the 21st century can be regarded as the period of failure of these projects, or at least their latent imperilment.

Another reason is the asymmetric structure of conflict in the 21st century. Beside or in place of regular forces, bound at least *de jure* by the international laws of war, conflicts involve a multitude of different groups

of non-state actors, not committed to any binding set of rules.[20] Here again the Yugoslav Wars with their enormous number of paramilitary gangs[21] created a precedent.[22] From that point, marking the dispersion of the monopoly on violence, results the biggest danger in the merging of the civil and militarised environment, including even – or especially – areas situated far from the "war zones" in the strict sense.

The third and by far more complex reason is the combination of the terms "culture" and "heritage" in the determinative compound "cultural heritage," as Western societies understand this concept. The problem can be illustrated by reference to the assessment of cultural assets in a militarised environment.

In the years between 1991 and 1997 the Canadian cultural heritage specialist Colin Kaiser evaluated cultural assets affected by the wars in Croatia and Bosnia on behalf of both the Council of Europe and UNESCO. Already in the first of his ten reports Kaiser pointed out the dilemma which would permanently accompany his further work: the definition of cultural heritage. The extent of the destruction was enormous. But the vast majority of the affected objects did not meet with the exclusive criteria of Kaiser's employers – UNESCO and the Council of Europe – for an inclusion in the list of damaged or destroyed cultural heritage. For their registration, not to speak about safeguarding, there were no resources available – neither in terms of time and personnel, nor in terms of funds. However, these objects were of crucial existential importance for the local population:

> An Orthodox church built in the 1870s or a mosque built in the 1890s may be judged mediocre in terms of aesthetics or originality, but they are focal points of cultural identity. [...] Widespread destruction has the painful virtue of enlarging notions of the heritage to all objects

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20  For asymmetric warfare see: William Banks, *Counterinsurgency Law: New Directions in Asymmetric Warfare*, Oxford 2013.

21  The United Nations Security Council reported 83 different identified paramilitary groups operating in former Yugoslavia throughout the wars in Croatia and Bosnia: United Nations Security Council (ed.), *Final Report of the United Nations Commission of Experts Established Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 780 (1992)*, New York 1995, vol. 1, Annex III.A, p. 11.

22  Tobias Strahl, *Kultur...*, op. cit., pp. 219ff.

in which people see carried the values of their culture, however new or old, however outstanding or run-of-the-mill these objects are.[23]

We are encountering a basic and unaltered volatile problem concerning the protection of cultural assets in conflict, if not monument protection in general. Colin Kaiser addresses it with the juxtaposition of built structures which he describes as "outstanding" on the one hand and ordinary ("run of the mill") on the other. With our orientation towards the concept of the universal World Heritage as represented by UNESCO, the vast majority of destruction of cultural assets in conflict escapes our attention. Likewise, we regularly underestimate the extraordinary social relevance of the objects which do not meet the criterion of the "outstanding universal value." Yet objects which comply with the outstanding value standard for an abstract international society can be utterly meaningless for a specific local community, while other objects with no perspective of ever belonging to the exclusive canon of the World Heritage, or indeed cannot even be considered monuments after professional criteria, can be of vital importance for the stability of these communities. To disregard this correlation in the times of global migration flows and the merging of the civil and militarised environment can be of severe consequences.

The British archaeologist Henry Cleere addressed the dissent in the World Heritage Convention in an elaborated paper already in 2001. Disregarding the difficulty to unequivocally define the criterion of the "outstanding universal value," UNESCO's World Heritage List displayed a significant imbalance in the representation of the cultural heritage of different parts of the world. In 2001 60% of the world heritage sites were situated in Europe, North America, and Canada. The unjust focus on the Western culture "deriving from largely European aesthetic notions relating to monumental cultures" misses the vast majority of cultural achievements worldwide. Admittedly, Cleere noted already back then a trend "to interpret the criterion of 'outstanding universal value'

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23 Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (ed.), *Information Report on the Destruction by War of the Cultural Heritage in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina Presented by the Committee on Culture and Education. Doc. 6756. Appendix B. War Damage to the Cultural Heritage in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina: Report by Mr Colin Kaiser, Consultant Expert*, Strasbourg 1993, p. 13.

in a more holistic manner;"[24] nevertheless, still today 47% of world heritage sites are located in Europe and North America, while merely 8.5% are to be found in Africa.[25] A similarly critical attitude to that of Henry Cleere was expressed by others, for instance in the papers delivered by the Austrian art historian and conservationist Wilfrid Lipp[26] and his compatriot, the architect Friedrich Achleitner.[27]

The claim of the so called "West" for the universal validity of its perspective on culture, non-reflexive and verging on congealing in the illusion of its own totality, was recently addressed by the French philosopher and sinologist François Jullien in his Essay *Il n'y a pas d'identité culturelle* [There is not such a thing as cultural identity]:

> One thing by all means is certain: with a particular form of the universal one cannot reach any further, namely that of totalisation and completeness. If one believes to have reached the universal, one does not know anymore what this universal lacks. [...] It rests itself in its positivity and sees no cause anymore to advance any further. It does not set anything in motion anymore but is rather satisfied with itself. In this sense one had spoken for over a century of a universal suffrage without realizing that women were excluded from it. In other words: it is necessary to set the universal against the universalism which forces its hegemony upon others and believes it can claim universality for itself.[28]

The claim for universality, caught in the false imagination of its own totality, would have been the fate of Goethe's Faust in his contract with Mephisto, if the former had not been aware of the danger – and, therefore, added the most crucial clause:

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24  Henry Cleere, "The Uneasy Bedfellows: Universality and Cultural Heritage," [in:] *Destruction...*, Robert Layton et al., op. cit., pp. 22–29.

25  UNESCO (ed.), *World Heritage List Statistics*, https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/stat (access: 28 April 2020).

26  Wilfried Lipp, "Welt-Kultur-Erbe: Im Konflikt der Interessen," [in:] *Kulturerbe als soziokulturelle Praxis*, Moritz Csáky and Monika Sommer (eds.), Innsbruck – Wien – Bozen 2005, pp. 19–30.

27  Friedrich Achleitner, "Das Erbe und die Erben: Weltkulturerbe – Unbehagen an einem Begriff oder: einige Fragen," [in:] *Kulturerbe...*, Moritz Csáky et al., op. cit., pp. 13–17.

28  François Jullien, *Es gibt keine kulturelle Identität*, Berlin 2017, pp. 29ff (own translation).

When on an idler's bed I stretch myself in quiet. / There let, at once, my record end! / Canst thou with lying flattery rule me, / Until, self-pleased, myself I see,— / Canst thou with rich enjoyment fool me, / Let that day be the last for me! / The bet I offer. / [...] And heartily! / When thus I hail the Moment flying: / "Ah, still delay – thou art so fair!" / Then bind me in thy bonds undying, / My final ruin then declare! / Then let the death-bell chime the token. / Then art thou from thy service free! / The clock may stop, the hand be broken, / Then Time be finished unto me![29]

To fully understand the predicament in which we find ourselves here we have to visualise the history of the concept of culture and recognise that presently its different historical meanings coexist in a seeming asynchronicity and are equally valid for different social groups. It seems impossible to oblige all the social groups worldwide proposing the same concept of culture – not to mention that the concept of culture itself is an occidental invention. If the institutions of monument conservation as well as other entities for the protection of cultural assets on the national and international level fail to take into account the transformation of the concept of culture and its ambivalent utilisations, they won't be capable of taking action when confronted with cultural heritage in a militarised environment. Their discourse in itself will then miss its subject matter.

Let us for once leave aside the origins of the term "culture" from the Latin verb *colere* and its application, for example, in Cicero's *Tusculanae disputationes*,[30] focusing instead on its meaning in the so-called "modern era." The probably most influential connotation of the concept of culture has its roots, like monument protection,[31] in historicism and enlightenment. It was the proponents of the enlightenment, such as Samuel von Pufendorf and Immanuel Kant, who coined the normative concept of culture, in which culture becomes the guiding value and the highest

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29  Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust: A Tragedy. Translated, in the original metres, with copious notes, by Bayard Taylor,* London – New York – Melbourne 1890, p. 48.

30  Andreas Reckwitz, *Die Transformation der Kulturtheorien*, Weilerswist 2000, p. 66; Stephan Moebius, *Kultur*, Bielefeld 2009, p. 15.

31  Norbert Huse, *Denkmalpflege: Deutsche Texte aus drei Jahrhunderten*, München 2006, p. 11.

expression of morality and ethics. Art, and especially the *aisthesis* (aesthetic intuition) was the chief subject of this paradigm. However, in his *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* [Ideas on a philosophy of the history of mankind, 1784–1791] Johann Gottfried Herder developed a totality-oriented concept of culture, in which culture describes the specific *Lebensform* of a social entity, a nation, ethnicity, or community. Based on this thought, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel developed the idea of *Volksgeist* (national character) in his *Die Vernunft in der Geschichte* [Reason in history, 1837].[32]

Contemporary cultural theory has started to move away from the normative and the totality-oriented concepts of culture already in the 1960s. Nevertheless, in national and international institutions of monument protection and the protection of cultural assets, as well as among the public at large, a combination of both these viewpoints is still very influential, if not prevailing. It is addressed when prominent writers and conservationists argue for the "extension of the notion of monuments," speaking of "high culture" and the difficulty to move beyond this perception.[33] The notion of high culture as a combination of a normative and a totality-oriented concept of culture has congealed in the first and most important article of the UNESCO World Heritage Convention (which claims universal validity):

> For the purpose of this Convention, the following shall be considered as "cultural heritage:" monuments [...] groups of buildings [...] sites [...] which are of outstanding universal value from the historical, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological point of view.[34]

Similar approach is reflected in the last *Operational Guidelines* to the Convention:

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32  On the history of the concept of culture and its transformation: Tschunkel Lee, *Kultur als Widerstand und Befreiung,* Frankfurt am Main 1993; Andreas Reckwitz, *Die Transformation...*, op. cit.; Peter M. Heil, "Kultur," [in:] *Metzler Lexikon Literatur- und Kulturtheorie*, Ansgar Nünning (ed.), Stuttgart – Weimar 2004, pp. 357–358; Stephan Moebius, *Kultur...*, op. cit.

33  Thomas Will, *Kunst des Bewahrens: Denkmalpflege, Architektur und Stadt*, Berlin 2020, p. 246.

34  UNESCO (ed.), *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural Heritage and Natural Heritage*, Paris 1972, Art. 1.

Outstanding universal value means cultural and/or natural significance which is so exceptional as to transcend national boundaries and to be of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity.[35]

Based on this notion of culture and cultural heritage,[36] the vast majority of the socially important cultural assets in conflict and militarised environments cannot be protected, let alone captured, since these objects are, as Colin Kaiser has noted, "run-of-the-mill." In the 21st century, however, both these scenarios (conflict and militarised environment) are increasingly often perceived as ordinary, for both heritage and heirs.

In this regard, it appears more appropriate to apply a "meaning- and knowledge-oriented concept of culture," as the structural and interpretative cultural theories have developed with the so called "cultural turn" from the 1960s onwards.[37] Culture here is the symbolic order, the system of meaning and knowledge of a social entity. Every perceived object is, therewith, an object of culture – its form and utilisation are determined by cultural means. Both form and utilisation are, moreover, passed on and transformed from generation to generation; they are, therewith, a cultural heritage. Recent attempts to approach the concept of cultural heritage and its content take this development within cultural theory into account.[38]

### Cultural net, cultural fingerprint

If we want to protect cultural heritage on a global level in an increasingly militarised environment, we must depend on the meaning- and knowledge-oriented concept of culture in contemporary cultural theory and move away from the normative and totality-oriented concepts. We

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35  UNESCO (ed.), *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention (WHC.19/01)*, Paris 2019, Art. 49.

36  A profound critique of the amalgamation of a normative and totality-oriented concept of culture claiming universal validity was drafted by the Austrian historian Heidemarie Uhl in 2005: Heidemarie Uhl, "Zwischen Pathosformel und Baustelle: Kultur und europäische Identität," [in:] Moritz Csáky et al., *Kulturerbe…*, op. cit., pp. 129–146.

37  Andreas Reckwitz, *Die Transformation…*, op. cit., pp. 84ff.

38  Stefan Willer, Sigrid Weidel, and Bernhard Jussen, *Erbe: Übertragungskonzepte zwischen Natur und Kultur,* Berlin 2013; Markus Tauschek, *Kulturerbe,* Berlin 2013.

also have to give up the biggest part of our universal claims – whether we like it or not. Let me illustrate this with an example.

Let us imagine a fictional character in Sarajevo, in the Yugoslavia of the late 1980s. In this character we find an intersection of individual and collective cultural values and meanings, which constitute, signify, determine, and stabilise one another. Our character is 30 years old, has parents and grandparents, and is a Muslim married to a woman from a Christian-orthodox family, with whom he has two children. In Bosnia in the 1980s marriages between Muslims and Christians were not uncommon anymore. Since the 1960s the number of interethnic and inter-confessional marriages was – with the exceptions of Kosovo and Macedonia – steadily increasing. Regarding inter-confessional marriages, Bosnia was actually leading the statistics.[39]

The different members of the family of our fictional character have social functions, whose precise conditions and configurations are culturally mediated and partly determined by old traditions. Our character is in possession of a small collection of books and vinyl records – both of great significance in the Yugoslav society, since the combination of certain books and records would not only be seen as a status symbol but also as a political statement. Moreover, our character studied classical languages and has just taken up a position at the renowned Oriental Institute in the city – a position he most likely got also because his mother is distantly related to the director of the Institute.

He buys his groceries and daily goods at the city's old oriental bazar, the Baščaršija. As a Muslim he attends the Friday prayer at the Ferhadija Mosque, erected in the 16th century; on Christmas Eve, however, like many other *Sarajlija* [citizens of Sarajevo], he participates in the Catholic service in the Cathedral of the Heart of Jesus, built in the late 19th century. After his religious duties he meets up with friends in one of the *kafanas*, small coffee houses of the city, where he drinks a typical Bosnian coffee or even *rakija* [traditional fruit brandy – again, nothing uncommon for a Yugoslav Muslim], or plays a game of chess in the square with the stelae of the famous Yugoslav writers in front of the Orthodox cathedral. With his wife's Christian-Orthodox family he celebrates the patron saints of

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39 Dorothea Kiefer, "Eine Übersicht in Zahlen: Nationale Mischehen in Jugoslawien," [in:] *Wissenschaftlicher Dienst Südosteuropa: Quellen und Berichte über Staat, Verwaltung, Recht, Bevölkerung, Wirtschaft, Wissenschaft und Veröffentlichungen in Südosteuropa*, vol. 6/7 (1980), pp. 162–164.

his family, the Slava, as well as Easter and Christmas. With the Muslim family of his parents and siblings, in turn, he observes the Ramadan and celebrates Eid al-Adha.

The above example – from love to liquor – outlines a tiny extract from a highly complex constellation of objects whose wholeness we want to designate as the cultural net of the Bosnian society.

In this context, the Egyptologist, religious- and cultural scientist Jan Assmann speaks of the "cultural formation" of a society.[40] In a certain sense it is similar to what Michel Foucault has discussed in his theory of the *dispositif* [dispositive].[41] The social frames of memory (*Les Cadres sociaux de la mémoire*), as the French sociologist and philosopher Maurice Halbwachs has delineated them for the first time in 1925, are also made of similar cultural items.[42] According to François Jullien, in turn, cultural objects related to each other in this way form the "cultural resources" of a society.[43]

I have chosen the term "cultural net," because it appropriately illustrates the complex interdependencies of a variety of objects and serves better our purpose to depict the consequences of ripping this net. The specific constellation of cultural objects and their particular significance for our character shall be designated as his "cultural fingerprint." Admittedly, none of the abovementioned objects is exclusively significant for our character; instead, their specific constellation is as unique and specific as his fingerprint – there is no other like it. Needless to mention, all arts and humanities, poetic intensification, and philosophical reflection likewise, originate at the intersection of cultural nets and cultural fingerprints.

From 1992 until 1996 a gory war sweeps over Bosnia and Hercegovina. Our character loses his parents in a massacre. One of his two children is killed by one of the 329 grenades hitting the city of Sarajevo on a daily

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40  Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, München 2013, pp. 139ff.

41  Daniel Defert and François Ewald (eds.), *Michel Foucalt: Schriften in vier Bänden. Dicts et Ecrits*, vol. 3, Frankfurt am Main 2003, p. 392; Achim Landwehr, *Historische Diskursanalyse*, Frankfurt am Main 2008, p. 77; Siegfried Jäger, *Kritische Diskursanalyse*, Münster 2009, p. 22; Tanja Gnosa, *Im Dispositiv: Zur reziproken Genese von Wissen, Macht und Medien*, Bielefeld 2018.

42  Maurice Halbwachs, *Das Gedächtnis und seine sozialen Bedingungen*, Frankfurt am Main 2016.

43  François Jullien, *Es gibt keine…*, op. cit., pp. 53ff.

basis. 1,500 children altogether face violent death during the four years' siege of the city, while 10–15,000 suffer injuries; 39% of all children have to witness a family member getting killed, 19% bear witness of a massacre; every new day brings eight new casualties on average.[44] The Ferhadija Mosque and the Cathedral of the Heart of Jesus are badly damaged; the Oriental Institute with all its collections is entirely destroyed. The oriental market is burned down completely.[45] Two of our character's three best friends die in the war. The books and the vinyl records have to be exchanged for firewood during the harsh winter of 1992/1993.

Within four years' time, the cultural net of our character's society as well as the vast part of his cultural fingerprint are torn; the largest part of the social frame of his memories (Halbwachs) is destroyed, the cultural formation (Assmann) of his community annihilated, the cultural resources (Jullien) of his society obliterated; the dispositive of the discourses he was involved in (Foucault) is wrecked. There were thousands such stories caused by the Yugoslav Wars. In the conflicts of the 21st century there are millions.

One of the most severe consequences of the traumatic destruction of cultural nets and fingerprints is migration. The Yugoslav Wars triggered an enormous flow of migration from Croatia, Bosnia and Hercegovina, and Kosovo to other parts of Europe and the US, which continues until today, respectively, two and three decades after the wars. In Bosnia alone approximately two million people were displaced.[46] In 2013 still 170,000 Bosnian Muslims – 5% of the total population of the country – were regarded as refugees.[47] The horrors of war, as we can see, are apparently not the only reason why people would leave their homes and familiar environment, often never to return – 30 years after the war there is still not enough cultural net for many people to identify with, no structure to which they could connect, no fabric which could replace the one that was torn apart.

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44   United Nations Security Council, *Final Report…*, op. cit., vol. 2, Annex VI, p. 8.

45   Helen Walasek, *Bosnia and the Destruction…*, op. cit.; Tobias Strahl, *Kultur…*, op. cit.

46   Noel Malcolm, *Bosnia: A Short History*, London 2002, p. 252; Zoran Terzić, *Kunst des Nationalismus: Kultur, Konflikt, (jugoslawischer) Zerfall*, Berlin 2007, p. 126; Valery Perry, "Cultural Heritage Protection in Post-conflict Bosnia-Herzegovina: Annex 8 of the Dayton Agreement," [in:] *Bosnia and the Destruction…*, Helen Walasek et al., op. cit., p. 186.

47   Aid Smajić, "Bosnia and Herzegovina," [in:] *Yearbook of Muslims in Europe*, vol. 5, Jørgen S. Nielsen et al. (eds.), Leiden – Boston 2013, p. 124, (123–141).

Every cultural net and every cultural fingerprint are subject to continuous transformation. The books we read change, our beliefs alter within a lifespan; the music we listen to, the museums and temples we visit, the games we play all replace one another. The social frames of memory, to quote Maurice Halbwachs once more, grow in extent and number – new ones emerge, others vanish, sometimes they break apart. This is an ordinary cultural process of the transformation of meaning and as such is rarely traumatic.

The violent destruction of a cultural net and of cultural fingerprints, however, is indeed a traumatic event which unfolds the devastating power of a social hydrogen bomb. If culture is destroyed in the sense of contemporary cultural theory, if the cultural system of meaning, order, and knowledge of a social entity is destroyed – the entity itself is destroyed, even if most of its individuals survive. Without hold and orientation, without structure and bonds, people become "free radicals" in the global society.

The priority of the international community placed on the reconstruction of infrastructure in (post)conflict areas and to treat cultural assets as secondary[48] in this regard represents a grave misjudgement of the significance of cultural nets.

Nevertheless, war and conflict make only one scenario in which cultural nets and fingerprints are destroyed. Making the reconstruction of infrastructure the sole priority is only one of many reactions meriting criticism. However, the horrors of the Yugoslav Wars usually overshadow the fact that the society of Yugoslavia, as most societies in (post)socialist countries, had to cope with a profound cultural and political change from the 1990s onwards. This change of cultural and political paradigms caused a severe damage to, if not destruction of, the cultural nets in

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48  Helen Walasek, *Bosnia and the Destruction…*, op. cit.; Emily Gunzburger-Makaš, *Representing Competing Identities: Building and Rebuilding in Postwar Mostar, Bosnia-Herce-govina*, New York 2007; Paul Harris, "Urbicide Sarajevo," [in:] *The Architectural Review*, vol. 4 (1994), pp. 11–13. After the war in Kosovo the European Commission installed the International Management Group (IMG), which was supposed to evaluate the damages of the infrastructure of the former Yugoslav province. The IMG had planned to publish six reports of which, however, only five were actually issued between 1999 and 2000. The subjects of these studies were: "Housing and Local/Village Infrastructure," "Railways Assessment," "Roads," "Transport Assessment," and "Kosovo Telecommunication Assessment." The sixth study ("Cultural Heritage") was in fact planned as well but never released. See: European Commission/International Management Group (eds.), *Kosovo / Emergency assessment*, Strasbourg 1999, p. 4.

Poland and the Eastern part of Germany, to name but two examples – with consequences palpable until the present.

To close these thoughts with an example from outside of Europe, it is worth mentioning the destruction of the traditional structures and hierarchies within the autochthone groups of the African continent – representing centuries-old cultural heritage – as a result of globalisation, exploitation, and impoverishment of the indigenous population. The repercussions of this process are devastating and, indeed, already palpable, the evergrowing migration being only one of the consequences.

## Topologic discourse analysis and cultural assets in a militarised environment

The differentiation between the *Denkmalbegriff* [monument concept] and cultural heritage was paramount for the German art historian and conservationist Tilmann Breuer. Already in 1981 he warned against the drift to simplification resulting from the ever-increasing amalgamation of the two concepts. The distinction seemed crucial: "Monuments exist only within a profile of values."[49]

With a strong sense of the social relevance of monuments and manifold interrelations between different objects, Breuer, referring to the writings of Max Dvořák, developed the concept of the *Denkmallandschaft* [landscape of monuments] as early as in 1983. In Breuer's concept, the *Denkmallandschaft* forms a part of the *Kulturlandschaftsgefüge* [structure of the cultural landscape]:

> If, in addition, it should be possible to recognise certain patterns within the structure of the cultural landscape described as "the earth's surface" which could be depicted and valued as landscapes of monumental character, then one should speak of landscapes of monuments.[50]

In that sense, the monument and the landscape of monuments are characterised by a particular profile of values and, therefore, constitute

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49  Tilmann Breuer, "Baudenkmalkunde: Versuch einer Systematik," [in:] *Arbeitshefte des Bayerischen Landesamtes für Denkmalpflege*, vol. 9 (1981), p. 6 (6–11).

50  Tilmann Breuer, "Denkmallandschaft: Ein Grenzbegriff und seine Grenze," [in:] *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Denkmalpflege*, vol. 27 (1983), p. 76 (75–82).

a special part of the cultural heritage – which brings us back to the normative concept of culture of the European enlightenment. Every example of cultural heritage, admittedly, refers to certain values, but conversely to the monuments, these values do not have to be imperative nor normative. However, Breuer's concept of monuments is not exhausted with this observation. He makes an almost visionary comment, stressing the importance of the connections within the landscape of monuments, which are forming a net-like structure:

> The most subtle weave of connections it constitutes is extremely vulnerable, most often already disturbed [...]. To conserve landscapes of monuments, therefore, would mean to strengthen these connections.[51]

No less important for our concern to protect culture in militarised environments is Breuer's draft for description and analysis of the landscape of monuments. Thereto, Breuer differentiated between the topography of monuments (the place where they are located), the typology of monuments (their type), and the topology of monuments (their meaning). A register after this model, led over years and decades, Breuer argued, would provide us with information about what object under which circumstances and of which meaning could be a monument. What Breuer suggested in the early 1980s was a complex order of monuments, including not only the diachronic and synchronic level, but also the semantic one.[52]

From this foundation, supplemented with two further additions, we can develop the basic framework of what we call a "topologic discourse analysis in conflict," in which cultural heritage and monuments respectively become analytical tools which allow us to protect culture in conflict and in a militarised environment.

In his approach to registering monuments Breuer still focused on the "monographic display,"[53] i.e. the discourse of experts. Admittedly, he addressed the social perspective briefly but did not elaborate. Conversely, we want to strengthen the social perspective and at least equate it with the experts' discourse.

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51   Ibidem, p. 81.

52   Tilmann Breuer, "Baudenkmalkunde...," op. cit.

53   Ibidem, p. 10.

For the second addition to Breuer's model let us use the example of the fictional character Libripeta from Leon Battista Alberti's *Dinner Pieces* (*Intercenales*, 1440) as an example. In the dialogue *Somnium* [A dream] Libripeta returns from a sewer which, as he informs his conversational partner, the cynic Lepidus, forms the entrance to a hidden realm of dreams. In this realm of dreams Libripeta rediscovered all the things the world had lost from its consciousness and memory.

> On the other side, there are mountain valleys where lost things are preserved [...] you'll find there everything that has been lost. In the middle of those fields, there are the ancient empires of nations we read about, as well as reputations, favors, loves, riches, and all such things that never return, once they are lost.[54]

The sewer in Alberti's satirical dialog *Somnium*, virtually, forms a diametrical reflection, provides the negativity to the positivity of the city on the surface. In the sewer land we find all the things which are of no use anymore, or are not wanted any longer – but remain an inextricable part of the city.[55] The (mostly invisible) negativity of the city defines the city – its essence – to the same extent as its visible positivity. What is left out is just as decisive as what is taken in.

The situation is not any different in the case of cultural heritage, in which the landscape of monuments plays a particular role. Cultural heritage also has a diametrical reflection, a sewer, amassing all the forgotten or unwanted objects, writings, and meanings, thus forming the negativity of the cultural heritage.[56] We want to use it to protect culture in conflict and militarised environment.

As the scientific analysis of the Yugoslav Wars has shown, the social meaning of various cultural heritage objects and monuments was preserved in text which would never find its way into the lavishly styled monographies on art and culture. The reason is quite simple: this text

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54  Leon Battista Alberti, *Dinner Pieces: A Translation of the* Intercenales, David Marsh (trans.), Binghampton – New York 1987, p. 67.

55  Mark Jarzombek, "Das Enigma von Leon Battista Albertis 'dissimulation'," [in:] *Theorie der Praxis: Leon Battista Alberti als Humanist und Theoretiker der bildenden Künste*, Kurt W. Forster and Hubert Locher (eds.), Berlin 1999, p. 210 (203–216).

56  David Lowenthal, *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History*, Cambridge 1998.

was mostly colportage, rumours, and hearsay. However, these "unofficial" meanings, albeit not approved and rubber-stamped by the community of scholars, circulated within the different social groups of the region already at the end of the 19th century, only to become the factor behind the damage and destruction of cultural assets at the end of the 20th century. If in the 1980s we had analysed this particular text, which was mainly embedded in the nationalist discourse and passed on orally, not only would we have been able to predict accurately which objects, monuments, archives, and other cultural assets would be especially endangered in the case of conflict, but also we could have come up with a plausible explanation why the objects which were thought to be especially endangered were not touched at all throughout the war, while other objects, not known to the experts but of extreme importance for the local communities, were entirely destroyed or heavily damaged.[57] Moreover, we would have been able to avoid the heavy mistakes which were made in the reconstruction in the aftermath of the wars.[58] We would have realised that the dense accumulation of sites and objects of the Orthodox, Catholic, and Islamic faiths in places such as Sarajevo is not quite the expression of peaceful coexistence, as it is claimed frequently in romantic projections.[59] Instead, we would recognise the negativity of culture like Alberti's Libripeta, appreciating its virtue and capability of serving as a reservoir of sublimated conflict. We would perceive the outlines of a society like the contour lines on a topographical map – with monuments as their manifest expression.

By this means we could save heritage. To refer to another example – had we been aware in 1999 of the particular endangerment of the Buddhist statues in Afghanistan,[60] we could have, with some political will, saved them, thus making a major contribution to the stabilisation of the local communities.

Knowing this, we could cultivate awareness that every project of assistance to the developing countries, with main focus on the African

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57  Tobias Strahl, *Kultur...*, op. cit., pp. 192ff.

58  Helen Walasek, *Bosnia and the Destruction...*, op. cit.; Emily Gunzburger-Makaš, *Representing...*, op. cit.

59  Nijazija Koštović, *Sarajevo: European Jerusalem*, Sarajevo 2001; András Riedlmayer, "From the Ashes: The Past and Future of Bosnia's Cultural Heritage," [in:] *Islam and Bosnia: Conflict Resolution and Foreign Policy in Multi-ethnic States,* Maya Schatzmiller (ed.), Montreal 2002, p. 103 (98–135).

60  Jamal J. Elias, "Götzendämmerung...," op. cit.

continent and aiming to curb the migration flow to Europe and North America, is doomed to failure if it does not include extensive programmes for the protection and preservation of cultural assets.

**Conclusion**

Topologic discourse analysis in conflict on the basis of cultural heritage and monuments is conductible in every society, or community. It promises a gain of knowledge in the conflict zones in South-East Asia, the Middle East, and Africa, as well as in Western cities.

Instead of an abstract world society with a paradigm of memory designed after Western criteria and the World Heritage List at its centre, topologic discourse analysis serves specific social communities *in situ*, making their stabilisation its chief concern. It is important to realise that such approach is of global interest in the increasingly militarised environment of the 21st century, in the face of conflicts and evergrowing migrations flows.

Topologic discourse analysis in conflict asks perhaps not for the abandoning, but for the relativisation of normative and totality-oriented demands on culture. It does so by shifting the focus towards the social function of cultural assets. It explicitly does not ask for the levelling of profiles of values. It asks merely for the abandoning of the claim for universality regarding an exclusive profile of values. To understand culture as an ordered symbolic system, as a system of meaning and knowledge, with the cultural net as a stabilising coefficient for social entities is the necessary precondition for the topologic discourse analysis on the basis of cultural heritage and monuments.

The preservation of monuments could thus be given a new task – provided that the parties involved are ready to join the effort. They would then have to take into account the entirety of the discourses on the objects which they have previously viewed almost exclusively from the perspective of history and aesthetics, of architecture and innovation value. To achieve this, the preservation of monuments would have to open up – not least with regard to its staff. The protection and preservation of monuments as the classic domain of art historians and architects would in future also have to provide a home for sociologists, psychologists, anthropologists, political scientists, and, likewise, military personnel. The preservation of monuments has to become a task for society as a whole.