From Conflicted Heritage Narratives toward Sustainable Communities of the Western Balkans

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The multicultural mosaic of the Balkans has been developed by the construction of parallel ethnic identities in close acculturation processes. Today, cultural heritage is often seen as an important factor in explaining the post-socialist landscape of the Balkans. The Balkans have been and still remain inserted in long standing perceived oppositions of East/West, Europe/Asia, Christianity/Islam, Centre/Periphery, etc. The main question put in this research is: How can "dissonant heritage" in the Balkans, together with its stigmatized image and identity, be reinterpreted to ensure the sustainability of communities sharing this heritage? Several case studies of divided cities will be discussed (Mostar, Vukovar, Srebrenica, etc.), as well as their symbol bearers and conflicted heritage, appropriated by different ethnic communities. Also, research will try to give insight about efforts of cultural organizations caring about socialist and antifascist heritage of Yugoslavia (bridges, monuments, etc.) which is unwanted heritage, sent to oblivion by different policies of forgetting. How those efforts, through what kind of actions and narratives, can re-activate communities to re-evaluate and re-appropriate those heritage thus contributing to sustainable local development?

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