

Cultural heritage and post conflict situations

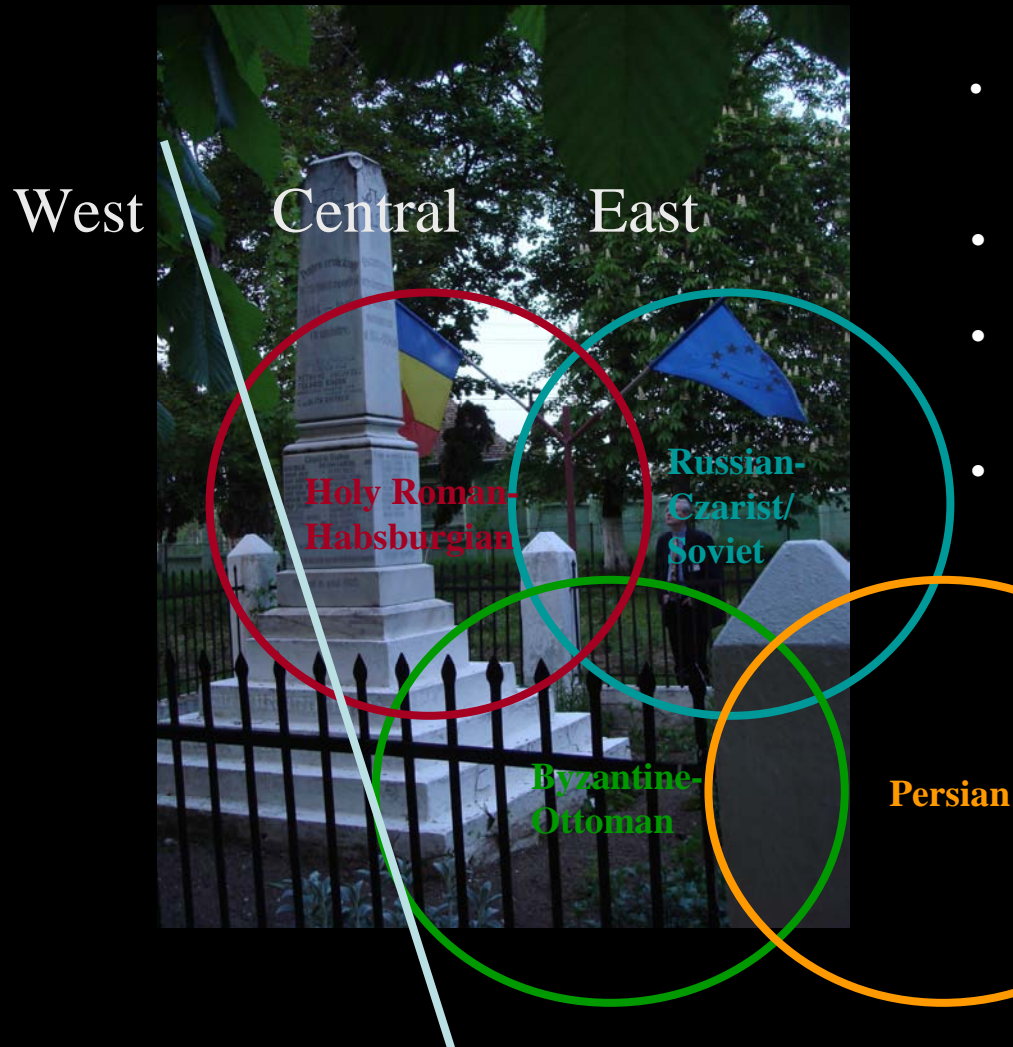
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The European idea of cultural heritage and monuments was developed as an instrument in the context of Western nation building ...



... it does not necessarily work in the same way outside of the context in which it was developed



- The rich and complex cultural heritage of the Balkan and the Caucasus regions is conditioned by their geopolitical situation through time.
- They are situated on the intersecting edges of succeeding imperial systems, and on important crossroads between East and West, North and South.
- This is also the background for understanding their current lack of stability.
- Stability is an important goal in both regions. It is a prerequisite for regional economic development.
- Stability in the Balkans and the Caucasus is also an issue of major geopolitical importance.



Cultural heritage in areas of conflict – is part of the conflict theme

- ▶ Targeted destruction of cultural heritage – or cultural cleansing is an important feature of warfare.
- ▶ It is a means to rewrite history by editing the historic script in the landscape, and write some people in and others out of disputed lands.
- ▶ Prior to their targeted destruction goes the inclusion or exclusion of the particular heritage objects into the narratives of particular ethnies or groups.
- ▶ The eventual reconstruction of cultural heritage, destroyed in conflict, therefore must be handled with awareness of what different set of meanings the object may carry to the different parts in the conflict.
- ▶ It becomes necessary to work with both the tangible and the intangible aspect of each object.



The CRIC project funded by the EU FP7 SSH and coordinated by the University of Cambridge has since 2008 analysed heritage in conflict and post-conflict situations



Water bears no ethnic signature, and food is for sharing

- ▶ The Hrant Dink foundation in Turkey is preparing a project for the reopening of the 17th Century fountains and water canals of Habab in the Diyarbakir region – a village with Armenian population prior to 1915.
- ▶ Reciprocity: NIKU is seeking with Armenian and Norwegian authorities to develop a project in Armenia that could mirror the Habab-project by exposing Turkish-Ottoman heritage in Armenia.
- ▶ In both projects mutual Turkish-Armenian recognition of a shared heritage (beyond 1915) and mutual involvement will be important.



Cultural heritage may or may not help healing wounds after conflict

- Cultural heritage can then be part of the problem or part of the solution
- We need to address the conflict related aspects of cultural heritage, before we can restore and use it as a basis for economic development.
- Rebuilding bridges, mosques or churches will not heal all wounds if the objects are still by some perceived as the rallying points of their enemy.
- Reconstruction projects must find and unite stakeholders on both sides of the conflict. Then reconstruction may help building the trust and stability which is necessary for economic development.



Thank you for your attention

