

# **Cultural Heritage Practices and Life-Long Learning Activities for Fostering Sustainable Development in Local Communities**

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**Abstract** The paper highlights the contemporary roles, meanings and appearances of heritage practices, which are no longer conducted only by experts, but also by local residents, who construct, mediate and understand their collective identity by reviving the past. New concepts intend for heritage put into perspective development potentials of cultural resources as well, especially in the framework of introducing and fostering sustainable growth in the local communities. However, the development of the new roles of heritage practices inevitably demand that the local residents are aware of the potentials that culture heritage (i.e. old skills, experiences, achievements etc.) can provide and, on the other hand, a mutual relationships among the other actors, who are involved in the negotiation processes of what to revive and use from the past. The paper first discusses theoretical concepts of CH as a key element in establishing sustainable development in local communities, and then outlines problems, good practices and concrete ideas to achieve coherent, mutual and reflective relations among residents and experts.

**Summary** 1 Introduction. – 2 Methodological Background. – 3 Culture and Its Heritage as the Main Pillar of Sustainable Development. – 4 The Development Potentials of Heritage Activities to Foster Sustainable Local Communities. – 5 Conclusions .

**Keywords** Heritage practices. NGOs. Life-long learning methods.

## **1 Introduction**

Nowadays, CH practices take on different roles, meanings and appearances, due to the latest postmodern research paradigms, contemporary socioeconomic and political circumstances around the world, adaptation of new transnational UNESCO's and CoE's declarations and development of participatory democracy, which in the field of heritage practices enable active participation of different actors. Although the concept of CH has attracted many scientists and experts from different disciplines over decades and variety of heritage's definitions, meanings and practices were highlighted and discussed, there are still ongoing negotiations, what heritage actually encompasses and how heritage products should be interpreted and used. Due to the neo-liberalisation of society, where market have grad-

ually impacted all spheres of life, the special focus in the heritage studies is put also on abuse and neglect of cultural rights, values, experiences, knowledge, skills of local people, who are the main bearer and practitioners of tangible and intangible heritage elements (Borelli, Lenzerini 2012; Silverman, Fairchild Ruggles 2007). Different interpretations, definitions and critics of heritage processes caused that the contemporary definitions are spin around understanding that a heritage covers just about everything that a human has made or changed. It refers not only to material remnants but also to intangible elements including:

the character or feel of a place, its aura as well as customs, traditions, language, dialects, musical styles and religious or secular rituals. There is no need that the tangible or intangible things are architectural or aesthetic features, but it can be painful, ugly, unsafe and unprepossessing; old or new; something that can be valued by society, by a specific group within society and by individuals. (Schofield 2008, 19)

Furthermore, heritage is not restricted only to actions from state officials or bodies, but can include the most basic and ordinary ways of life of people. As a result, in the context of the newest postmodern paradigms and theory of practice (Bourdieu 2002), the main point of doing research on heritage lies less in investigating the materiality or immateriality of heritage elements, but more in understanding social practices and the constructions of meanings and values which particular tangible and intangible cultural elements embody (Byrne 2008; Smith 2006; Fakin Bajec 2011). The new heritage paradigms emphasize that heritage must be understood as a present social action or process, where the focus is on context and not so much on the object itself. Fairclough emphasizes that

heritage is object and actions, product and process. It means not only the things ('goods', properties, immobilier - 'stuff' (and the perceptions or ideas) that we inherit, irrespective of whether we want to keep them, but it can also be taken to mean the processes by which we understand, contextualize (physically and intellectually), perceive, manage, modify, destroy, and transform the inherited world. (2009, 29)

Its theoretical concept is also understood as dynamic and contested; as a construct of contemporary needs, concern, experiences, values and desires of ordinary people, who should have an important role in its management. Special attention is given to recognition of the validity and usefulness of multiplicity of values and ways of valuing. Heritage at its base is still linked with the work, thinking, actions, and experiences of our predecessors; however, it is not only about the past but 'draws on the power of the past to procedure the present and shape the futurequotatio' (Harrison et

al. 2008, 1).

Up until now, the criteria of what constitutes heritage and how its elements should be protected have not always been in harmony with the views and needs of local residents. Traditional heritage methods poorly reflected local or personal concerns such as context or sense of place. But today the question ‘why should we enhance its value and for whom’ (Fairclough 2008, 299) is important. Researchers have begun to stress that “what ‘ordinary’ people value might be different from what expert’s value, or they might value the same things but for quite different reasons, such as for reasons of association, memory, or locality” (Fairclough 2008, 299). Innovative approaches to the investigation of heritage focus on the perception of cultural landscape and sense of place constructed by material and immaterial things, which we identify as CH. As people’s lifestyles change together with world situations, so do perceptions of landscapes and heritage. In the core of this points of view, the processes of formation heritage should not be in hand only of experts, scientist, politicians, national and international heritage organisations (e.g. UNESCO, ICOMOS) that according to the authorised discourse of heritage (Smith 2006) decides what can get the label of national or international monument and what not, but also of civil society or local populations.<sup>1</sup>

Besides, the contemporary concepts of heritage also develop in a way that heritage practices should be incorporated into processes aimed at advancing development of national, regional and local communities as well. New roles of heritage connected with sustainable development and green growth can be seen in various fields, most frequently in achieving better interpersonal relations, intergenerational connections, enrichment of content for informal forms of learning, improvement of ideas for new commercial products (for example in cuisine), preservation and sustainable use of natural materials, and so on.

With the awareness that the concepts of heritage continue to evolve in the light of ongoing social, cultural and economic practices and the role of culture heritage in the framework of sustainable green growth is still developing, the main purpose of this paper is to outline possible ways, conditions, and tools for using culture and its heritage for sustainable development of local communities. The crucial question that paper will try to answer is, how can the activities, such as researching a local history, restoring old material objects, reviving old customs, preparing historical exhibitions, using old skills and knowledge for creating new products, etc., which are conducted by local people or associations, encourage people to be more open for new development concepts like sustainable develop-

<sup>1</sup> The values and meaning that local people connect with the heritage objects and actions is highlighted in contemporary heritage documents as well, like in the 2003 UNESCO Convention or the Faro Convention, adopted in 2005.

ment, gender equality, inclusive society, life-long learning activities and participatory democracy which are recommended by EU strategies. The answer will be given by the presentation and analyses of heritage activities conducted by the Housewives association from the village of Planina pri Ajdovščini in the Upper Vipava Valley of western Slovenia, which has managed through its work to empower and activate local resident from rural areas (especially women) to take more active role in the community, to achieve social innovations and produce interesting products for the further development of a competitive local economy. The paper first reflects on methodological issues of uses heritage practices for development potential and briefly presents the history of association and its work with the expert. It then presents some insights gained from a case study, and concludes with some suggestions of how to sustainable manage, utilize and maintain heritage practices from local communities that they will become a powerful medium for achieving coherent societies, inter-sectoral dialogues, and other kinds of networking among practitioners, who have different knowledges, skills, experiences, ideas and needs for better future.

## 2 Methodological Background

The findings presented in this paper are drawn from the postdoctoral project *CH - A Medium for the Introduction of Sustainable Development in a Local Place*, financed by the Slovenian Research Agency in the period from 2012 to 2015. The project focused on the development of innovative approaches and methods to make people aware that heritage practices, which among other things represent a bridge between nature and the actions of people, can make an essential contribution towards facilitating sustainable development and making it more effective. Another aim of the project was to define the role of the humanities and social sciences in developing approaches to implement sustainable policy, since in contrast to natural, mathematical and technical sciences, which develop sustainable economies, information, communication and other innovative technologies, humanists and other social scientists assist in the application and implementation of these sustainable products and solutions in the real world. They deliver them to the people who are the main agents of change in a natural landscape.

The main hypothesis of the research was that ways of informing and educating the population in the valuation and use of CH practices are more effective if there is active cooperation between experts and local residents through using different participatory methods (Price 2013; Fikfak 2014). Among many of them, the active participation of the expert with local associations or communities can be highlighted, where members enthusiastically research the past and directly construct local heritage. Since active

members of associations have already established a positive attitude towards local history and consequently also towards their environment, they have become more receptive to obtain additional knowledge about ways of using heritage for sustainable development. The presentation of their activities and products to a wider public can also be a reminder for people who for variety of reasons are not interested in this topic. As an informal way of educating the local population we can also use the ethnographic research method, in which the interviewer through semi-structured interviews not only obtains research material but also makes the interviewees aware of the applications of their knowledge, memories, and experiences for further development.

In the project, particular attention was given to an analysis of activities conducted by the Housewives association and drama group of Planina pri Ajdovščini, which is regarded as one of the most active heritage associations in the Upper Vipava Valley in the western part of Slovenia. The main purpose of the association, which brings together women and girls from the village and actors from the drama group (the total number of members is forty-four), is to enliven village social life and present traditions of their ancestors to younger generations. The earliest members of the society began to formally associate in 2004, when they collected and recorded old culinary recipes. After one year, they presented the collected recipes in a publication, entitled *Lest We Forget. Planina pri Ajdovščini: Customs and Recipes of our Ancestors* (Aktiv Kmečkih Žena 2005). The book provided the association with momentum for new activities. Each year the members of the association research a particular theme from a local history and at the end of the calendar year present to wider public, and the drama group prepares a humorous play in the local dialect based on the selected content. Particular attention is given to culinary traditions, and visitors of its events are served traditional dishes that in recent years are somewhat modified and improved with modern ingredients or preparation methods. All the members of the association participate in researching and presenting annual achievements, coordinated by the president of the association, who has a remarkable feeling for the preservation of local history. Over the years of the association has presented many interesting themes from their local history.

With the exception of the first year, up until 2012 the association carried out its activities without expert assistance. While the president of the association was aware that expert assistance would enrich their operation, she did not want to oppose the other members, who up until recently had reservations about cooperating with experts. Since they regarded their activities as amateur, voluntary work and among other things gave a lot of attention to socializing, relaxed interactions among people, informal conversation and having fun, they were afraid that the presence of an expert would spoil that atmosphere. Expert assistance was also offered in

the drama group, which from the very beginning has always been directed by a volunteer director without any formal training in the field, who writes as well as directs the plays. But here, too, help from a professional director was rejected.

In 2012 the president, despite opposition of association members, accepted my expert's help that I offered in the framework of the research project *CH - A Medium for the Establishment of Sustainable Development*. My personal interests were to research the local history of Upper Vipava valley, to help association members in their activities and encourage them to use local past not only for interpretation of the ways of life of their predecessors, but also for rural development and creation of new products, which can be based on tradition, but modified according to new technologies, skills and needs. Furthermore, by giving them expert support I also try to develop methods of how to raise the awareness among the wider population about the contemporary meaning and role of CH and how the experts should work with the local people.

Collaboration with association members represented a significant challenge for me since I was conducting the research in a space I had not previously been familiar with, and I was a complete outsider for Planina residents. At the beginning, it was difficult to get trust and confidence with members. I somehow managed to establish a certain rapport as a speaker of the same Primorska dialect and since I am closely familiar with work on the farm. In conversations with residents about their lives I often added personal memories, which proved to be a successful way of creating a mutual relationship with older interviewees. As a researcher, I never experienced any problems in interviewing people, but I could sense a certain respect in the relationship. It was only after three years that they began to trust me and invite me to their meetings and training courses. During the research, I used an ethnographic research method as well, especially a number of semi-structured interviews, in which interviewees in addition to sharing their memories of past events also spoke about the meaning of the association for their personal development and life in the local community. Some thoughts are presented below as well, where special attention is focus on different occasions where heritage activities can be used for introduction of sustainable development policy and concrete actions for better quality of life of the residents. Due to the sensitivity of the information the names of interviewees are not given.

### 3 Culture and Its Heritage as the Main Pillar of Sustainable Development

Many discussions on the development and the conservation of the cultural landscape take place in the context of observing the principles of sustainable development, which ought to be a key regulator of economic progress and society. Although the concept of sustainable development has become a politically abused word, its definition, with the main emphasis placed on a careful balance between environmental, social and economic development in order to meet the needs of current and future generations (the WCED 1987), assures welfare development policy. New development strategies also promise that the economic, cultural and social progress of local communities will be adapted to the constraints imposed by environmental capacities and the potential of the cultural wealth. The policy of sustainable development has gradually forced the spread of other social and environmental concept, like green economy, participatory approach, capacity building, community learning, which encompass the notion that the development has to recognise and duly support the identity, culture and interests of local communities and indigenous people and enable their effective participation in the achievement of sustainable development (Blake 2009, 45).

Initially the policy of sustainable development included only three main pillars: environmental, economic and social development. Alongside conservation of nature, sustainable use of natural materials and the development of a so-called green economy, sustainable development should also include preservation or maintenance of social values such as cultural/social identity, mutual trust and cooperation, social justice and well-being (Nurse 2006, 38). Today it also increasingly includes sustainable cultural development, which assumes the continuity of cultural values and identities and builds on the knowledge of the population in a particular cultural environment. Although in every society, new high technology processes, services, and products that enable progress and technological development are critically needed, these should be created taking into consideration the experiences, practices, knowledge, values, and way of life of the local people. Since humans are social beings that develop and improve themselves in communities, an understanding of past and current cultural and social processes is of vital importance in planning development; these processes can serve as a sound and effective development guideline for a sustainable future. *Agenda 21 for Culture* stresses the importance of culture for regional development, grounded in particular in respect for local cultural differences, human rights, intercultural dialogue, participatory democracy, sustainability and peace. With this document, which was adopted in 2002, culture was designated as the fourth pillar of sustainable development.

Culture here is understood in a broader context; as a whole way of life of people or more specifically as 'shared meanings', where through a representational system (such as language) different thoughts, ideas, feelings, memories, experiences etc. are shared among participants, who are the main builders, bearers, and mediators of meanings that cultural elements embody. According to Hall culture "is not so much a set of things [...] as processes, a set of practices" (2003, 2), in which, through production and exchange of meanings of things, people and events, the world is interpreted by citizens in roughly the same ways. In part, we give things meaning by how we use them, or integrate them into our everyday practices. In part, we give things meaning by how we represent them - the words we use about them, the stories we tell about them, the images of them we produce, the emotions we associate with them, the ways we classify and conceptualize them, the values we place on them (cf. Herzfeld 2001). Culture is thus involved in all those practices and carries meaning and value for us. In this sense, culture permeates all of society and its study and understanding underline different dimensions of development, where the processes, how the meaning of things was constructed during different periods, the conditions of its changing, and wider consequences of its alteration are of crucial importance. If the known, already experienced and positively valued practices and meanings of heritage (for example, building with stone), which reflect sustainable management also today, are preserved, protected, restored, upgraded and represented among the local population in a particular local place, the local population will more easily recognize, try, and begin to consider contemporary sustainable guidelines for development of the environment and for building sustainable communities. Thus, culture has an unavoidable role in reflecting past and present experiences, needs, desires and expectations of the local population on the one hand and broader socio-political and economic flows on the other. If the political authorities, experts or economists impose development practices which are valued negatively by local residents or have no tradition in a given environment, the local population will have more difficulty in adapting them and may even resist in some cases. Furthermore, Nurse highlights the importance of how development is understood in a specific society or local community, because "when it comes to sustainable development not all cultures are equal, some cultures are more equal than others, depending on the political and historical context" (2006, 36). As culture represents the meanings and practice of development at its epistemic core, it should be viewed not just as an additional pillar of sustainable development along with environmental, economic and social objectives, but as the central pillar 'because peoples' identities, signifying systems, cosmologies and epistemic frameworks shape how the environment is viewed and lived in' (Nurse 2006, 36). A culture shape what is meant by development in a specific society and it determines how people act, think, and feel in the world (37).



The development potential of heritage practices can be seen in three aspects. Firstly, since our ancestors lived in coexistence with nature and without the use of today's technologies, their knowledge can be important for the development of eco-friendly products and other forms of a healthy lifestyle. Special attention should be given to the role of intangible CH, which consists of not only immaterial things, but especially knowledge, skills, ideas, experiences and understanding of our ancestors. The preservation, restoration, renovation of cultural tangible monuments, like cathedrals, churches, castles and vernacular architecture will not have an impact if we do not consider the new, contemporary content of these monuments. The tourist stories, interactive exhibitions, musical festivals, culinary competitions, etc., which are based on utilization of the intangible CH can provide an interesting ideas and opportunities for qualitative contemporary content according to new needs and desires. Secondly, heritage activities as social activities can help in establishing social cohesiveness, intergenerational connection, forms of lifelong learning, conditions for a creative environment, etc. And thirdly, CH activities can provide some useful methods for establishing cooperation and networking among local politicians, experts, the local population, and businesses (Fakin Bajec 2014). Here should be highlighted the new roles of the experts, who have to work for the benefit of the local community and become mediators or 'translators' between local authorities and residents. It should be outlined that the role of an expert/researcher from cultural or research institutions is not just research, observation and sometimes criticism of different practices, but also to encourage local residents to achieve better living conditions. Moreover, by using an interdisciplinary approach researchers should focus on different generations (children, youth, the employed, the elderly, the ill, etc.) to empower their activities and consequently to satisfy their needs for achieving a knowledge-based society. Nonetheless, the problem is that different experts are not able to work together, or to make compromises between different approaches, as everybody defends his/her discipline as most important. In order to achieve sustainable development, the interdisciplinary approach must become an essential methodology for tackling all environmental problems. Besides, another challenge which has appeared is how the experts should work and collaborate with the local residents, who until recently have not be actively involved in the decision-making processes. Although the experts at the theoretical level are aware of the importance of an interdisciplinary relationship between different expert points of views and criteria as well as the importance of including the local population, in reality such approaches are very difficult to achieve. Experts in different projects are not prepared to compromise, and the will, energy, and in particular money to include the local population in a wide range of processes are often lacking. The inclusion of the local population in development projects for the preservation and marketing

of heritage is most often reflected in the inclusion of experts drawn from the local environment who are familiar with local problems and also draw attention to them, but if they do not inform and educate the entire local population – including those with a lower level of education and those who may be passive or uninterested, who usually comprise the majority – then no development strategy will take root and will exist only on paper. Therefore, of crucial importance in the contemporary society is of how the experts should work with local residents.

According to my experiences from the different applicative projects (such as INTERREG) the experts must first become familiar with the meanings and values that are embodied in the community by the cultural elements that we wish to include in its development (for example architectural buildings, cuisine, crafts). This requires that experts who are collaborating in the revitalization of, for example, settlements of historical significance, in economic development (in the form of tourism development) or other forms of creating heritage come into contact with people and learn more about their past and also the environment in which they live, in order to become acquainted with their (human) experience, understanding and feeling for the cultural landscape. Only in this way can the logic of the community be constructed from their history, experience, and current practices, and guidelines provided for the future based on valuing important elements of their life. It often happens that experts work in their cabinets, following European and national strategies, conventions and agendas on formulating development guidelines for a particular environment, yet never even talk to anyone who actually lives there. On the other hand, it is also true that local residents hardly find free time, will, or interest to begin thinking about what kind of environment they would like to live in. For this reason, the local population must be sufficiently informed and educated to recognize the values of CH as development components from which the economic, cultural and social advancement of their place of residence is realized. As part of this, methods of raising awareness must be perfected not only through organizing expert workshops and consultations, but also through the active participation of the expert public with local associations and active local communities, where members enthusiastically research the past and directly construct local heritage.

Here is where ethnographic research can come in useful: the techniques of interviews, participant observation, and analysis of historical sources (cf. Low 2008; Palmer 2009) enable experts to better recognize the history and contemporary way of life of local residents. The role of the expert, in addition to offering expert assistance in the research, preservation and presentation of heritage, is also to encourage the local population to value past practices for contemporary development needs. In so doing the expert on the one hand becomes familiar with the logic of the community, experiences and the desires of the population, while on the other

the local population can become an active participant in shaping further development guidelines. Active participation and therefore education is reflected in part in individual interviews, which allow experts to inform and educate people/questioners about the problem which is being researched while also themselves learning about the specific features of their way of life and the main values for a given environment. As Stig Sørensen notes, interviewing is one of the most commonly used methods in social studies. But it is also “important to recognize that interviews can have different purposes: they can and should aim at different kinds of insights and discoveries, and in turn their form, how they are conducted and, even more significantly, how they are evaluated must respond to such differences” (Stig Sørensen 2009, 168). Last but not least, experts must cooperate with municipal and national authorities so that the meanings and needs of the local population and the proposals put forth by experts will be taken into account in identifying spatial guidelines. Achieving these goals requires continuing education and training of municipal councillors through expert articles in local municipal newspapers and expert lectures in the framework of municipal meetings.

#### **4 The Development Potentials of Heritage Activities to Foster Sustainable Local Communities**

In line with the presented challenges, which have to be resolved by experts, the main purpose of my active collaboration with the local association was to examine the ethnographic methods (interviews, participatory observation) for encouraging sustainable development in a local community. According to my perspective, ethnographic methods not just enable researchers to better understand the ways in which individuals make sense of their everyday life (Geertz 1973), but it could be used as methods for community building or life-long learning (Ličen et al. 2015). As it was already mentioned, the common activities between the local association and me started in 2012, when we together decided to work on the importance of corn in the local history of Planina. Based on ethnographic methodology, I proposed that we first conduct interviews with older local residents in order to learn the role that corn played in the history of the way of life in Planina, then based on this research collect the main valued products towards which the locals have a positive attitude and which can be built on in contemporary times using new knowledge, techniques and needs. After conducting field research and a survey of the ethnological and agricultural literature, I performed an analysis and synthesis of the data gathered, which I presented textually in a brochure titled “We ate polenta every day, sometimes even for breakfast: on the cultivation of corn,

husking, and cooking of polenta in Planina in the past and challenges in the future” (2012). The text was written in the spirit of a search for possibilities for using knowledge, experience, and old customs of ancestors for a better and higher quality life in the future, in which local tradition and heritage will represent elements for new innovations and a more competitive residential environment.

The research showed that a corn variety called *guštānca*, which was adapted to Vipava weather and geological conditions, was indispensable in Planina. Since the cultivation of older local varieties is once again on the rise, since these are better adapted to the natural conditions of the environment, the brochure concluded with the idea that in the Vipava Valley, which has always been known as a good region for growing grains, we start discussing the renewed cultivation of different varieties from which products typical of the Vipava Valley would be produced (corn flour for making corn bread and meal for a better tasting yellow polenta). In the future, we could also think about reconstructing the formerly widespread water mills, in which the old, domestic seeds of grain could be ground using old processes and ways. Since tradition is a process which changes with the times and is improved by modern trends and knowledge, the polenta and bread made from *guštānca* could be enriched with newer foods and dishes. It was known that polenta used to be eaten only with sour milk, fat from lard and cracklings, more rarely also with prosciutto and sausage, but today excellent Vipava chefs also serve it with new local delicacies. Local tradition could be cultivated and built on also in the area of other corn products and goods; using the leaves removed from the cobs, making brooms from cornstalks, and making stoppers for bottles from the corncob.

In the course of several conversations with some members of the society on the importance of heritage for sustainable development, members themselves came up with the idea of a new competitive product: pasta made from corn flour, which can also be suitable for people with celiac disease. Since there are many young people included in the society, the president and I tried to involve their creativity. We proposed that the young people take part in workshops building on the earlier tradition of making things from husks. In the past only doormats were made from husks, but at the workshops the young people displayed their creativity in making advent wreaths, wedding bouquets, dolls, and brooches in the shape of butterflies. The drama group staged a play on the theme of learning about the features of sustainable development in which they emphasized that the entire policy is based on the idea that the knowledge of our ancestors, who in some way already followed the guidelines of today’s organic agriculture, should be made use of and enhanced. The play titled “Here are Some Domestic Seeds” depicted in a very humorous way the importance of cultivating old domestic varieties and intergenerational connections, in which older people teach young people about work on the farm in the

past, and young people teach the elderly about the importance of using visual media, especially the internet, where one can likewise acquire new knowledge. Since the spaces in which association members present their play and culinary specialties are packed with people of all generations, similar nonprofessional activities can be an extremely good example of the development of informal methods of learning and teaching to acquaint a wider public with global concepts such as sustainable development, gender equality, alleviation of poverty and unemployment, and so on. The play used a very simple approach and the local dialect, and people learned about the importance of reviving traditional varieties of field crops and familiarity with the traditional skills of our ancestors in order to develop for example organic farming. At the same time, older actors and spectators were learned about the potential of new visual media (e.g. the internet) as a source of new knowledge from people from other parts of the world.

In the next years, more small projects were developed in collaboration with the members of the associations and me, as during the ethnographic and historical research a good relationship were established. Special benefits of heritage practices in the framework of introducing sustainable communities was achieved in the project in 2014, where the association published the second book, titled *Lest We Forget II.: Customs, habits, and recipes from Planina pri Ajdovščini* (Rosa, Fakin Bajec 2014), where they collected traditional dishes and new recipes, which reflects the skills, experience, courage and boldness of modern-day housewives. The authors of the book were among experts (among me, where I presented the customs and habits associated with a variety of holidays habits of calendar's festivals, also designer and journalist) also the association members who collected old recipes and further by using their knowledge adapted them to modern times and ingredients that previously were not accessible or known. At the same time, the recipes still retained their local character. The book is further enhanced by subchapters titled "Lest We Forget", which present old skills for making use of the natural resources of a particular area. In this way, the reader learns how to obtain seeds from traditional crop varieties, how to make fermented sour turnips, how to prepare wine vinegar, how to make a medicinal syrup from grape, etc. All this knowledge has exceptional importance today for achieving sustainable development policy, as shown by the book in overcoming significant development challenges. At the same time, the book shows the key role of women in achieving results of sustainable policies. Since women in rural areas were not just mothers, housewives, and good cooks but also had to be responsible for the development of the farm, in the book special attention was put on the importance of women in the collecting, preserving and production of seeds for indigenous field crops, which today, given the importance of organic farming and the development of healthy cuisine, people want to preserve and cultivate again. Seeds are also a symbol of new wealth, hope, and a better life.

The book is further enriched by the thoughts of association members on the mission of home cooking and the importance of socializing in the association. Especially meaningful are the words of members whose participation in the association enriches their personal lives, filling them with new strength and courage. Among others we can read:

We share happy as well as less happy life events with other members; they encouraged me to continue my studies and boosted my confidence. I can therefore say that they are not just my fellow members but even more, they are my friends. (Rosa; Fakin Bajec 2014, 64)

The association...learning, life, singing, laughter, socializing and friendship. I am proud to have been a part of this since the beginning. (76)

In reflecting on the last ten years of the association's activity, I was struck by the realization that I came to know my neighbors and fellow villagers only through my membership in it. (98)

Close by thoughts the photographs of the members are displayed, what proved as a successful way of how to empower the female authors of the recipes and using their knowledge for innovative product, which is result of heritage activities. Because of that, the book is a tribute to their activities. As a member enthusiastically explained:

The book is a product that will remain for posterity. This is our heritage. What has been recorded will remain. The purpose of the association is not just to go there and chat for a bit and gossip, as we women are often accused of doing. We don't just gossip, we also get things done and we have something to show for our efforts. I give the book as a gift since it is a part of me and I'm very proud of it. It's not just a book, it's something more. (interview, Planina pri Ajdovščini, 11 May 2015)

At the same time, the book also shows how a variety of forms of cooperation can be achieved through intergenerational connections (members come from both older and younger generations), mutual encouragement, and exchange of experience: between younger and older, between experts and laypeople, between men and women. Young people in particular contribute greatly to the association since they are somewhat bolder in the presentation of products and uninhibited in the presentation of village farming culture whereas the older ones are still ashamed of it.

Members of the younger generation said this about their participation in the association:

The association teaches me a lot, through it I experience new knowl-

edge and have fun with it. As a member of the association I feel useful and capable. I enjoy discovering history, past customs and habits of our ancestors and transmitting them to others. (Rosa; Fakin Bajec 2014, 46)

The association is like one big family. We are connected by our joy in our work, creativity and revival of old traditions. (140)

The preservation of tradition, socializing, relaxation, mutual teaching/learning ... I soak up the knowledge of other housewives like a sponge and I am proud to say that I am a member of the Housewives Association from Planina. (166)

These thoughts and presented approaches lead to another added value of heritage in the social dimension. Both, the president of the association, and director of drama group pointed out that the members over the years undergo tremendous personal growth and become more self-confident, daring, more persuasive, and happy. One of the member stressed that in the association:

We encourage one another. We have a good president, very knowledgeable, and her husband encourages her. This means a lot to us and we can be take pride in the association and our many achievements. This gives us determination and the awareness that we have done something good. What a good feeling it is when people come tell us they like what we do. Money isn't important to me, but a simple thank means a lot. (interview, Planina pri Ajdovščini, 11 May 2015)

## 5 Conclusions

CH in the modern, global world, which is facing drastic environmental, economic and cultural changes, should be understood in the context of new development components and content. Although the social, economic and development roles of heritage practices are intertwined and operate in the direction of ensuring a better future, its development role for establishing sustainable communities and fostering local economy based on tradition and innovation is still neglected. The key to solving the problem presented can be seen in better cooperation among the main stakeholders involved in heritage practices, especially between experts and residents from particular local areas. The latter most feel the difficulties and burdens of the modern world such as social inequality, poverty, climate change and political pressures, but they are frequently without a clear idea of how to deal with the resulting crises. Although the local population are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of the knowledge of their

ancestors and realize that the past is not a symbol of poverty, technological backwardness and a hard life but rather something of value which can in conjunction with modern innovative approaches be enriched for a better tomorrow, often they have no clear vision of the means of implementing past practices. Experts can contribute greatly to this effort, but they must take on the role of consultant, facilitator, and proposer of different ideas and thoughts which the local population are willing to accept and supplement and enhance with respect to their own expectations and needs.

Despite the uncontrolled commercialization of culture and its heritage in the tourist industry and the devaluation of the cultural legacy of our ancestors, which this article has not directly addressed, the development role of culture heritage is inevitably important in numerous processes of alleviating contemporary social problems, especially in overcoming the passiveness of local residents, reducing social poverty, assuring gender and social equality, generating ideas for innovative economic products, constructing creative living areas, healthier societies and the well-being of local residents. Of course, many wider conditions should be resolved to obtain successful results, but the most important thing is that the local residents take an active part in construction heritage and understand it as an important media for better relationship among different kind of partners among residents and other sectors.

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