

ON THE PATRIMONIALISATION OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND OF ITS VALUES: TWO SHARED PERSPECTIVES

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Identified and circumscribed since the 19th century to historic buildings and collections of exceptional and irreplaceable artefacts, the heritage is constantly expanding, from the sacred to the secular, from material assets to vernacular knowledge and from culture to the environment (Di Méo, 2007). Far from canons of beauty and remarkable natural curiosities, everything is now likely to become patrimonial, from the humblest traces of the traditional daily life to singular ecosystems. The widening of heritage categories is accompanied by a chronological (from the past to the present), topographic (from the occasional to the vast) and even conceptual extension (Heinich, 2009). In particular, the intensification of the environmental patrimonialisation process seems to induce a radical transformation of the concept of heritage since the latter can no longer be confined to “the objects which have lost their use value” (Leniaud, 2007). Furthermore, it is no longer relevant to assume that patrimonial conservation always comes at the price of some form of sacrifice by the community (Babelon and Chastel, 1981), and to believe that it is necessarily in conflict with the productive valorisation of the concerned areas. Many authors thus stress that patrimonial assets can constitute specific development resources and even a kind of territorial revenue as they are capable to index the territories in a framework of unity and distinction and thus of attractiveness and competitiveness, (Pecqueur, 2000; Peyrache-Gadeau, 2004).

On the other hand, to the best of our knowledge, little work has been done on the social and political implications of these new justifications, and in particular on the economic valuation as a justification. Does assigning a monetary value to ecosystem services and internalizing externalities modify the order of implied pluralities (actors, scales...) as well as the mobilized justifications and thus the nature and challenges of the patrimonialisation process? Aren't the interrogations around the efficiency of these values often eluded on the ground of the moral and ethical principles of a consensual environmental heritage? We assume that in France the economic value of the environmental heritage is rarely a discussed justification, while at the same time it can be an argument of authority in public decision making processes and in patrimonial expansion.

After presenting briefly the principles of economic valuation, we will discuss two situations. First, we will present contexts in which economic values are used as a resource of authority, i.e. (1) when they are used as a sovereign argument in decision making processes, (2) when they are used in order to legitimate already made decisions and already applied policies and (3) why it is at the end little used. Second, we will analyse situations in which the economic values are part of a co-constructive decision making process, i.e. (1) when they are strategically used, in order to sensitize the general public for instance, (2) when they are used by non-dominant actors who want to be recognised or when they help recognize the existence of ecological damage and finally (3) when they help people to coordinate.

Resulting from the confrontation of the analyses of a geographer and an economist, this article proposes to discuss the transformation of the patrimonial values and of their uses. By crossing research tools and taking empirical studies as a starting point, the objective

is to develop a reflexive approach and change the way we look at patrimonial expansion.