

FROM DISAPPEARING TRANSPORT TO REVIVED MOVEMENT: MOBILITIES AS CULTURAL HERITAGE

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ABSTRACT

This article challenges the conventional notion of mobility and transport as merely the act of relocation, extending its implications to the realm of cultural heritage. In global professional discourses, heritage tourism and the transportation of monuments are frequently discussed under the themes of ‘mobility of heritage’ or ‘heritage on the move’. However, we contend that transport itself can be conceptualized as heritage within the framework of ‘mobilities as cultural heritage’. To substantiate this claim, we trace the heritization process at the semantic and practical levels. The importance of perceiving transport and mobilities as cultural heritage lies in its reinterpretation within different cultural contexts, transforming it from simple transportation into a symbol of rescue, nostalgia, entertainment, and a business concept. We illustrate it using examples of traditional transport forms from the field of vernacular culture that have been preserved in Central Europe, specifically in the territory of the Czechia and Slovakia. At the same time, we will ask whether in the process of heritization of transport we can observe a certain similarity between traditional forms of vernacular culture and contemporary public transport. Unlike other predominantly static heritage phenomena, the concept of cultural heritage in the context of transport and mobilities encompasses unique specifics and diverse social dimensions and impacts.

Keywords: transport; mobilities; cultural heritage; heritization; revitalisation; Central Europe.

I. INTRODUCTION

Mobility and transport are an inherent part of many discourses in the field of humanities and social sciences. It can be attributed to a large extent to the need to view the researched things as a non-static and changing entity (Sheller and Urry 2006: 208) and this is also applied in the field of ethnology, museology and cultural heritage studies. At the global level, within the framework of cultural heritage, the issue of heritage tourism is primarily addressed - e.g. tourist mobility and its economic, social, ecological or cultural impacts (e.g., Dávid 2011; Richards 2018; Telfer and Hashimoto 2024; Wang and Wong 2020) or mobility in the sense of visiting monuments and creating heritage (e.g., Jelincic and Senkić 2017; Smith 2022). Alternatively, the authors focus on transporting and making museum

exhibits and monuments more accessible (e.g., Gwozdziwicz-Matan and Jakubowski 2019; Tutková 2021). Not only from these examples, it is obvious that transport and mobility represent an integral and inseparable part of cultural heritage.

However, we do not have to deal with transport only at the level of ‘mobility of heritage’ or ‘heritage on the move’ (see Colomer 2017). Mobility can also be viewed as an independent valuable research subject (Toivanen 2020: 1). This is approached in the scientific community when the artifacts from the field of transport and mobility in the form of heritage are examined (e.g., Perez-Alvaro 2022). It shows that mobility and transport itself can represent heritage.

In this article, we challenge the conventional notion of mobility as mere displacement and consider mobility and transport in the form of cultural heritage. Specifically, the aim of this study is to show the process, when transport and mobilities become heritage. This will be done on two levels – semantic and practical.

In the semantic part, we want to trace the heritization process through the terms ‘folklore and tradition’, ‘heritage’, and ‘mobilities’ and point out a different semantic understanding of transport in individual terminological levels. In doing so, we are based on European and global discourses and examples.

On the contrary, in the practical part we want to point out the reasons that lead in practice to the heritization of transport and mobilities by the actors themselves. We will demonstrate heritization on a practical level using examples of traditional transport from the field of vernacular culture that has been preserved in Central Europe, specifically in the territory of the Czechia and Slovakia. At the same time, we will ask whether in the process of heritization of transport we can observe a certain similarity between traditional forms of vernacular culture and contemporary public transport.

Our findings and results will be based on already resolved professional discourses and examples at the global level as well as on our long-term ethnographic research of traditional forms of transport from the field of vernacular culture conducted in selected regions of Central Europe.

II. TRANSPORT AND MOBILITIES HERITIZATION AT THE SEMANTIC LEVEL

2.1 Transport as an archaic entity

About more intense professional interest in transport in the cultural field, e.g. from the point of view of anthropology, we can speak already in the 19th century. As a representative example, the world-famous publication of Otis Tufton Mason - ‘Primitive Travel and Transportation’ (Mason 1896) can be cited, but it does not explicitly consider transport as heritage. However, this is the first major undertaking on a global level to document forms of transport that are classified as archaic or, according to O. T. Mason, primitive. This effort could partly be based on the fear of the extinction of the phenomenon, which also touches on the beginning of the heritization process (see DeSilvey and Harrison 2020).

In the second half of the 20th century, the extinction of many archaic forms of transport that had been used until now began to occur worldwide. Interest

in the study of transport in connection with it thus gained considerable intensity. Specifically in Europe, numerous questionnaires and field researches were carried out for the needs of ethnographic atlases (see Gajek 1960; Kłodnicki 2021; Paládi-Kovács 1987; Woitsch 2012), which primarily had a rescue and documentation function. From the 60s of the 20th century, intensive international scientific cooperation developed within the study of transport, which manifested itself, for example, in the establishment of the Ethnological Commission for the History and Development of European Agriculture at the Société Internationale d’Ethnologie et de Folklore (SIEF). A comprehensive collective synthesis of Land Transport in Europe dedicated to the disappearing transport on the European and Asian continents was also published (Fenton, Podolák and Rasmussen 1973).

2.2 Folk and traditional transport

There was a semantic shift in the view of the transport problematics. The adjective ‘folk’ began to be used for disappearing forms of transport (see Bednárik 1950; Gunda 1955), which were becoming an independent and valuable subject of research, and in our opinion were already viewed as something that is now called heritage. However, the problem arose in the semantic ambiguity at the global level. While especially in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the term ‘folklore’ was and still is associated with verbal expressions, on the American continent and in Western European countries, this term is also commonly used in connection with material culture (Wilson 2006: 85). In some countries, for example in France, this term also has a pejorative connotation (Bronner 2007: 171). Nevertheless, the concept of ‘folk’ in transport is still used globally – see Ulster Folk and Transport Museum etc.

In connection with transport, parallel work began with the adjective ‘traditional’. The concept of tradition in connection with transport has been preserved at the global level to the present day. Specifically, on the UNESCO Lists of Intangible Cultural Heritage and the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices, there are phenomena from transport that have a tradition in the name itself, even though the list is based primarily on the concept of ‘cultural heritage’. Specifically, these are ‘Nordic clinker boat traditions’ (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden), ‘Oselvar boat – reframing a traditional learning process of building and use to a modern context’ (Norway) and ‘Oxherding and oxcart traditions’ (Costa Rica). Other phenomena, e.g. ‘Timber Rafting’ (Austria, Czechia, Germany, Latvia, Poland, Spain), avoid the term. They continue to work on local protection lists with the epithet ‘tradition’.¹

However, in many discourses of the humanities and social sciences, attention is drawn to the vagueness of this term without a clear definition. It also bothers the inappropriate implicit use by many researchers with the assumption of its general intelligibility (e.g., Boyer 1990; Oring 2021: 1; Uhrin 2019: 96-97). We do not consider it wrong to work with the term of ‘traditional transport’. Although

¹ UNESCO Lists of Intangible Cultural Heritage and the Register of good Safeguarding practices – Transport, accessed 02.07.2024, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/lists?text=transport&multinational=3#tabs>

tradition can be the subject of political abuse (Kuligowski 2014), in transport, this terminological concept is important not only in the professional environment. A decisive feature, valid in general even for ‘tradition’ connected with phenomena other than transport, is generational transmission and preservation of continuity (e.g., Oring 2021: 2-3). The different treatment of tradition in transport and its understanding in the way of passing on knowledge may appear more problematic. Some authorities refer to transport as ‘traditional’ if its knowledge is passed down only orally, in an informal way. These are mostly archaic forms, such as animal-drawn transport, rafting, carrying loads, etc. (e.g., Bockhorn 1988; Fenton, Podolák and Rasmussen 1973; Novakova 2020; Smrčka 2021; Bužrul 2022). On the contrary, other researchers include railways (e.g., Erdosi 2009) or biking (e.g., Ceccato and Diana 2021) under ‘traditional transport’.

2.3 Transport heritage

The semantic inconsistency in the understanding of ‘traditional transport’ gradually opened the way to using the term ‘heritage’.² Its official use by international organisations began at the end of the 1950s (Vecco 2010: 321-322). For a long time, the term was mainly associated with protecting material cultural and natural monuments.³ On the definition of intangible cultural heritage, more intensive discussions began in the 1980s and 1990s and resulted in the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2003 (see Harvey 2007: 25; Vecco 2010: 323-324).

The concept has introduced a novel perspective on transport. Notably, it alleviates the necessity of determining whether the knowledge of traffic conservation is transmitted informally, such as through oral traditions. Instead, the focus is placed on the actors’ self-identification with heritage (see Donders 2008). The protection and interest in transport had the potential to expand globally, applying the concept of ‘heritage’ or ‘cultural heritage’ alongside traditional forms of transportation from the realm of vernacular culture to public transport. This application is evident through initiatives by state and non-profit private organizations dedicated to the restoration and preservation of decommissioned railway and bus vehicles. Prominent examples include Transport Heritage NSW in Australia, which hosts the international exhibition event Transport Heritage Expo, and Nottingham Transport Heritage Centre in the United Kingdom.⁴

However, this loosening and emphasis on the identification of actors with transport as heritage does not represent terminological salvation. The view of

² In addition to this term, there is a close term ‘cultural property’. Its importance is discussed, for example, by Lixinski, Lucas. 2019. “Definitions: From Cultural Property to Cultural Heritage (and Back?).” In *International Heritage Law for Communities: Exclusion and Reimagination*, edited by Lucas Lixinski, 27-65, Oxford: Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198843306.003.0002>; in transport, we will encounter it more in technical disciplines: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/earth-and-planetary-sciences/transport-property>, accessed 10. 07.2024

³ See UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972).

⁴ Transport Heritage Expo, accessed 03.09.2024, <https://www.transportheritageexpo.com>.

heritage has always been largely influenced by the foul in the form of an subjective authoritarian, official or political approach (Harrison 2013: 14; Lowenthal 1985; Smith 2006: 300; Smith and Waterton 2012).

On the other hand, it can be seen that ‘heritage’ in connection with transport is used completely without connection to the protection or history of vehicles and transport companies. Examples include companies operating regular truck transport whose name include ‘heritage’; we can cite examples from the United States of America and Canada – e.g. Heritage Transportation (California), Heritage Logistics (Alabama) or Heritage Truck Lines Inc. (Ontario).⁵

2.4 Mobilities heritage

When examining transport as heritage, it is essential to consider its comprehensive components. Traditionally, the focus has been predominantly on means of transport, as these receive the most protection and social attention. However, this approach reveals limitations in the scope of research. Transport heritage encompasses more than just means of transport. For instance, the Transport Heritage Expo in Sydney, Australia, exemplifies a broader understanding of transport heritage. As evident from the promotional video, transport heritage includes not only vehicles but also clothing, period music, entertainment, and general nostalgia.⁵ Using the example of traditional timber rafting in Europe, we may note various expressions of verbal folklore related to transport.

Personal observations further substantiate this broader perspective; many individuals engaged in the preservation of historic and scrapped forms of transport also exhibit an interest in other period artefacts and their interconnectedness. This includes dynamic objects, non-static phenomena, ideas, and the interactions, atmosphere, and relationships among passengers, which are worthy of investigation (Bissell 2010). Thus, there is a shift from the concept of ‘transport heritage’ to ‘mobilities heritage’.

Some researchers place the beginnings of mobility research at the very beginning of the 20th century, and one of the first pioneers is the German sociologist and philosopher Georg Simmel and his essay *Bridge and Door* (Simmel 1994). The mobility turn and increased interest in researching subjects on a non-static level can be noticed in the nineties of the 20th century (Cresswell 2011: 550-551). The French anthropologist Marc Augé already outlined the need to deal with an exploration of the concept of ‘non-places’ – airports, shopping centres, motorways, college campuses etc. (Augé 1995; see Namhata and Prayer Elmo Raj 2024). This turn deepened in full at the beginning of the millennium, especially under the influence of British researchers devoted to the topic until the present day (e.g., Adey 2023; Bissell 2010; Büscher, Sheller and Tyfield 2016; Salazar 2023; Urry 2007; etc.).

The ‘heritage of mobilities’ concept has not been much discussed yet, on the contrary, ‘mobilities of heritage’ has been. For example, John Urry (Urry 2007)

⁵ Heritage Transportation (California), Heritage Logistics (Alabama) or Heritage Truck Lines Inc. (Ontario), accessed 29.07.2024, <https://www.heritage-transportation.com>; <https://www.myheritage-logistics.com>; <https://www.jbtgroup.com/>.

mentions tourist travelling (p. 11), and materials on the move (p. 34). The concept of ‘heritage of mobilities’ is partly touched by, for example, Rodney Harrison, when he writes about ‘movable cultural heritage’, under which he includes paintings, stone tools, but also means of transport – specifically tractors (Harrison 2013: 5). In the last two decades, we tend to talk about ‘transport heritage’, but the concept of ‘mobilities heritage’ is increasingly being used, for example, in connection with migration (e.g., Blanchard and Lamarche 2023), travel mobility in the form of historical routes (see Sigley 2020) or historical air mobility – e.g. Air Mobility Command Museum.⁶

III. TRANSPORT AND MOBILITIES HERITIZATION AT A PRACTICAL SENSE (VERNACULAR TRANSPORT IN CENTRAL EUROPE)

So far, we have shown the paths to the concept of ‘mobilities as heritage’ on a semantic level. However, it is one thing to name phenomena and work with the concept on a theoretical level, the second essential part is the process of transforming transport, mobility or means of transport into heritage in practice by the actors themselves.

We will demonstrate the reasons for the actors to heritize transport and mobility using forms of traditional transport from the area of agrarian vernacular culture, which have been preserved in various forms in Central Europe, specifically in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, to the present day. These include wood floating, mountain portering, hauling wood by horse and competitive sled races.

3.1 Preservation

One of the reasons that lead to heritization is often the expectation of loss and disappearance of the phenomenon (DeSilvey and Harrison 2020). This concern about the disappearance of the phenomenon may appear to be completely unnecessary because if something loses its function, it will logically disappear through selection. However, we should not neglect two levels.

First, there is an interest of the affected actors and the external environment to save the means of transport themselves – old road and rail vehicles, transport equipment, etc. despite the loss of their original function. Alternatively, the preservation of knowledge related to transport and the production of means of transport to preserve reminiscences, and memory for the next generation, but also from the point of view of the subjective or collective perception of the beauty of the given form of transport. This preservation can thus serve museum and educational purposes (Burman and Stratton 2014).

The next reason for the perception of transport or mobility as cultural heritage is that the given form of relocation still has its original function and is difficult to replace, but due to environmental influences, it is in danger of disappearing. An example can be the use of a horse draft when hauling wood in a mountain environment (Figure 1). Based on our ethnographic research in the

⁶ Air Mobility Command Museum, accessed 13.03.2024, <https://amcmuseum.org>.

mountains of Central Europe, where the hauling of wood by horse is still used, we have come to the knowledge that this mode of transport has retained its unchanged function. As some authors also note, its importance in terms of nature protection and the effectiveness of work in poorly accessible terrain is irreplaceable (Kadlec and Matysová 2015: 87-89, see Malatinszky, Ficsor and Erdélyi 2024). Nevertheless, due to the demanding nature of the profession, the necessary knowledge of working with horses and, above all, the fundamental influence on personal and family life, only a few young people are willing to do this work (Ficsor and Malatinszky 2014: 135). The coachmen also confirmed the same information to us.⁷

Many coachmen thus pursue their profession not because of finances, but above all because of their relationship with horses and nature. What is important, we noted in many respondents the awareness that they are continuing the work of their fathers and grandfathers who made a living from this profession. At the same time, they pass on the knowledge and heritage of their ancestors to the younger generation, and they look at their work as a cultural heritage that needs to be passed on.⁸

A similar example within Europe is represented by the profession of mountain porters (Tatra Sherpas) in Slovakia (Figure 2). The continuity of this profession has been preserved to the present day thanks to the year-round need to supply high-mountain huts with goods (Novakova and Turinicova 2014: 193). The profession of porter represents a unique cultural phenomenon existing in its unchanged form within Central Europe only in Slovakia, specifically in the mountainous areas of the High and Low Tatras and the Velká Fatra Mountains. The carrying of goods by human power on the backs in the wooden carrying frames has been preserved here thanks to the efforts of the sherpas themselves, for some of whom this profession is the main way of their livelihood. The maintenance of this phenomenon at the present time, despite the possibility of transporting goods using helicopters, is thus caused, in addition to the difficult-to-access mountainous terrain, by a strong identification with the heritage by the porters themselves. This is partly helped by the annual Sherpa Rallye sports events, which gives us nostalgia and fun (Nováková 2008: 90–95). The popularisation of this profession was also helped by the fact that in 2018 the mountain porters (Tatra Sherpas) profession was included in the list of intangible cultural heritage of Slovakia.⁹

3.2 Fun and nostalgia

The fun and nostalgia, which we have already partially outlined in the profession of professional mountain porters in Slovakia, can be considered another important aspect that represents a reason for heritization. It is used in many social sectors. For example, a thought-provoking article by Thomas David DuBois on using the heritage approach of revitalizing old brands and creative retro nostalgia

⁷ Interview with J. G. (b. 1957), coachman, November 5, 2019.

⁸ Interview with J. G. (b. 1957), coachman, November 5, 2019.

⁹ List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Slovakia, accessed 07.09.2024, <https://www.ludovakultura.sk/zoznam-nkd/vysokohorske-nosicstvo/>.

shows their significant role in the food industry (DuBois 2021). Both approaches are also encountered in the case of preserved traditional forms of transport in the area of Central Europe that we are monitoring.

In the case of the heritage revitalization approach, we can mention a phenomenon that is also on the UNESCO Lists of Intangible Cultural Heritage and the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices, namely rafting on wooden rafts (timber rafting) taking place annually with the direct participation of tourists in selected European countries (Figure 3).¹⁰ In 1991, The International Timber Raftsmen Association was officially founded in Austria, and with some promotion and interest from the wider public, this phenomenon began to show a desire and longing for the past – nostalgia. At the same time, after the collapse of the communist regime in post-Soviet countries and greater freedom in publishing by amateur historians and ethnographers, popular books began to be published. The topic was widely noticed by the media, museum exhibitions were created, association activities related to timber rafting developed to a large extent, and replicas of wooden rafts were built. The situation was vividly described by the then-last surviving respondent, who made a living by floating wooden rafts on the Vltava River in Czechoslovakia at the time. He said that for thirty, forty years, no one was interested in it. He literally said that not even the dog barked after that. In the 1990s and especially after 2000, lots of people from TV and radio often visited him and asked him about timber rafting.¹¹

The phenomenon of traditional rafting has been inscribed on the UNESCO Lists of Intangible Cultural Heritage and the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices since 2022, thanks to, among other things, international cooperation between European countries within the International Rafting Association and local associations. To a large extent, in the effort to preserve its originality, we encounter this phenomenon as a revitalization of nostalgia rather than retro creative nostalgia.

On the contrary, retro creative nostalgia, not only monument revitalization, can be observed in very archaic forms of transport in the form of sleigh races – e.g., dog sledding (see Vitale, Rasmussen et al. 2023). We noticed this in the Krkonoše Mountains on the Czech-Polish border, where international sledge races are held every year. The then-living respondent and founder of the races recalled that he wanted to take his grandfather's old sledge just for fun and invite friends. They liked it and it has become international sledge races (Figure 4).¹²

Similarly in Slovakia, races on traditional wooden sledges, originally used for weighing wood, called “krňačky”, are organized every year in several villages. These races have outgrown the local dimension and today they are known as an important and popular regional, even county-wide event. This race is known for its danger due to the steep mountain terrain, difficult winter conditions and the difficulty of controlling this simple means of transport.

¹⁰ UNESCO Lists of Intangible Cultural Heritage and the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices – Timber Rafting (Austria, Czechia, Germany, Latvia, Poland, Spain).

¹¹ Interview with V. H. (b. 1930), a rafter on wooden rafts, October 2012.

¹² J. T. (b. 1936), forester, January 2011.

Retro creative nostalgia can also be observed in mountain porters in the highest mountain range of the Czech Republic – the Krkonoše. However, unlike in Slovakia, this profession has not been preserved here in its commonly used and unchanged form. The end of this profession occurred in 1961, and since then goods have been transported on backpacks to the highest mountain Sněžka, only occasionally. However, the craft is commemorated in the form of sports competitions known as the Sněžka Sherpa Cup.¹³

3.3 Business

Another reason why transport and mobility become heritage is the effort of actors to use the concept of ‘transport and mobilities heritage’ in business. There are different ways to do this. It can be seen that ‘heritage’ in connection with transport is used completely without connection to the protection or history of vehicles and transport companies. We have already demonstrated this as part of the heritization of transport and mobilities on a semantic level, when we drew attention to companies operating regular truck transport whose name includes ‘heritage’.

The second way of using the concept of ‘transport and mobilities heritage’ in business is directly related to disappearing, but recently still commonly used transport (e.g. nostalgic rides on decommissioned public road and rail vehicles), or newly restored and revitalized forms (e.g. sleigh races, floating tourists on wooden rafts).

In the case of traditional transport in the Central Europe, these are revitalized forms. However, we do not mean directly those that have preserved their function and still represent an unchanged tool used for the original livelihood in the form of ordinary transport of material and people – e.g. hauling wood by horse or mountain portering in Slovakia (except sport races).¹⁴ We are talking about transport and mobility, where the actors base their business directly on the concept of ‘cultural heritage’.

Tourism connected with transport forms a complex made up of different mobilities and is currently an inseparable common part of transport and mobility (Sheller 2021). We identify with authors, according to whom this connection is largely overlooked and narrowed down to tourism in the destination to which the passenger is transported or to the technical and economic aspects of transport (Hopkins 2020; Mertena and Kaaristo 2024). At the same time, we point out that we still move in the field of tourism ‘using transport’ - the passenger is transported to the place where the heritage is located and the business is run. However, we cannot ignore the fact that the goal for tourists can be transport itself – ‘tourism for transport’. These are all sorts of fans and enthusiasts who seek to travel by nostalgic means of transport. For example, in the railway environment, the term

¹³ Cesta horských nosičů, accessed 07.10.2024, <https://www.cestahorskychnosicu.cz/index.html>.

¹⁴ Even in the world, we can mention traditional forms that are continuously used for their original purpose – e. g., hauling wood by horse-drawn carriage, sherpa profession in the Himalayas (see Sherpa 2022) or timber rafting in Siberia (see Hellmann, Kirilyanov and Büntgen 2016).

‘railfans’ is used for them (Peira, Lo Giudice and Miraglia 2022; Stefanovic and Koster 2014). We also find similar fans and tourists in the traditional transport environment in the Central Europe, where tourists participate in wood floating, carrying goods on backpacks, or sled races.

However, it is difficult to determine the exact boundary of when specific transport and mobility becomes a heritage for reasons of preservation, the desire for entertainment and nostalgia, or simply striving for financial gain. Often the reasons for heritization complement each other. At the same time, the process of using ‘cultural heritage’ in business cannot be viewed only in a negative way. Ethnotourism is an integral and important part of the viability of cultural heritage fulfilling its economic function (e.g., Ghosh, Kisku and Chakrabarty 2024; Lenovský and Kurajda 2022; Lenovský and Slobodová Nováková 2021). We see this also in the case of transport in the form of heritization. Thanks to the acquisition of a new function of business based on the concept of heritage, the given form of transport and mobility is kept alive and at the same time the given region is promoted. From the transport research carried out by us in Central Europe, we can cite examples of tourists floating on wooden rafts in Austria, Czechia, Germany, Poland and Slovakia, tourism promotion using TV spots and museum exhibitions focused on the sherpa profession in Slovakia (Křišková 2021: 67) or nostalgic retro-rides on sledges.

At the same time, it is possible to notice the abuse of business based on ‘transport and mobilities heritage’. In the case of timber rafting, some entrepreneurs on their websites refer to the registration of European rafting on the UNESCO World Heritage List and offer tourists romantic rafting cruises with refreshments. However, these vessels visually have nothing in common with the original wooden rafts (e.g. Český Krumlov, Czech Republic).¹⁵ Another global example, also common in the studied region, is the questionable carriage of tourists in horse-drawn carriages in the historical centres of metropolises, which is considered by some to be heritage, and by others to be an inappropriate business with the oppression of animals (Gursoy 2020).

3.4 Similarity of heritization between the transport of vernacular culture and public transportation

We have shown the process of heritization of transport by the actors themselves, using the example of traditional forms of transport in Central Europe, mainly focusing on the Czech Republic and Slovakia. We can therefore ask whether the process of transport becoming heritage also occurs even in public transport and not only in the area of vernacular culture. Global examples show that this is the case. We can cite, for example, the restoration of the Riotinto Mining Railway in Spain for a tourist attraction (Boente, Romero-Macías, Delgado-Domínguez and Sierra 2024) or the state and non-profit private organizations dedicated to the restoration and preservation of decommissioned railway and bus vehicles already mentioned in the

¹⁵ Timber rafting – Sightseeing cruises on timber rafts (Rafting on the Vltava River through the center of Český Krumlov), accessed 5.10.2024, <https://www.voroplavba.cz/en/about-us>.

article – Transport Heritage NSW in Australia or Nottingham Transport Heritage Centre in the United Kingdom etc.

Even in Central Europe heritization in practice also affects public transport. Based on the personal experience of one of the authors of this study, who has experience as a bus driver in Prague (see Smrčka 2022), we have noted in the public transport that organizations often make decisions instead of actors who maintain or bring new life and function to disappearing transport. What a few years ago was considered ‘a scrap’ by institutions and saved by individual fans, became a ‘desired heritage’ a few years later. We can see that the perception of heritage in transport is highly individual and influenced by local institutions.¹⁶

In addition to rescue, in public transport we will also encounter nostalgia and business tied to the concept of heritage. For example, in post-Soviet European countries, it is possible to notice an interesting phenomenon, when people nostalgically recall the way of travelling under socialism. Specifically, in the Czech Republic during the tourist season, express trains made up of locomotives retired from regular passenger traffic and wagons manufactured in the then-German Democratic Republic are dispatched (Figure 5). The rides also include period-dressed staff. At the same time, this is not a politically oriented adoration of the political establishment of that time. As stated by one of the respondents, who is interested in transportation during the times of socialism and is himself the owner of buses from that period told us, that he does not care politics and he just likes to remember the past way of life.¹⁷ In addition, the main impetus for restoring lost travel mobility may not be pure nostalgia, but also a simple reason to meet friends. Indeed, the respondent regularly organises non-commercial trips on New Year’s Eve and summer vacations on a decommissioned city bus, to which he invites his colleagues, friends and acquaintances.

However, even in these forms of public transport used for nostalgia, the efforts of some actors to make an interesting profit while abusing historicity and the concept of heritage can be evident. For example, some media points out that some carriers operating nostalgic journeys with decommissioned retro trains demand significantly higher fees from the transport organiser and the municipality than carriers providing connections with modern train sets with a high purchase price.

IV. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The aim of this study was to show the process of transport and mobilities heritization at the semantic and practical level, and thus to show that even transport and mobility itself can represent cultural heritage.

In the semantic part, we have pointed out a different semantic understanding of transport in individual terminological levels based on European and global

¹⁶ Discarded Karosa 700 series buses intended for scrapping at the time were bought and saved by enthusiasts who use the vehicles for entertainment events. The transport company providing most of the traffic in Prague on the operated retro line later lacked these vehicles.

¹⁷ Interview with L.Š. (b. 1984), bus operator and collector of historic buses, August 2023.

discourses. The beginning of an insight into transport and mobility as cultural heritage on a schematic level can already be seen in the interest in disappearing forms of transport. The dark side is the semantic ambiguity of ‘tradition’ in connection with transport. The looser concept of ‘heritage’ or ‘cultural heritage’, which at the official level is primarily based on the identification of actors with the given phenomenon as heritage (see Donders 2008), thus found application next to vernacular forms in public transport as well. However, this concept is to a large extent negatively influenced by an authoritarian approach (Smith and Waterton 2012), but also by its completely free use without any deeper meaning, as was pointed out in the article on global examples of selected transport companies.

We have also demonstrated that transport heritage is not only about means of transport but also about other objects and ideas in movement, clothing, period music, eating on the road and generally about entertainment and nostalgia. Therefore, it is possible to talk about ‘mobilities’ in many respects (e.g., Adey 2023; Bissell 2010; Büscher, Sheller and Tyfield 2016; Salazar 2023; Urry 2007; etc.).

On a practical level of heritization we have used examples of traditional transport forms from the field of vernacular culture that have been preserved in Central Europe, specifically in the territory of the Czechia and Slovakia. This has partly shown us the significance of the view of transport and mobilities as cultural heritage. It is mainly an awareness of the possibility of the existence of transport and entities related to mobility in a revived form and in a different cultural context, where it is no longer primarily about the simple transportation of people and material, but about ‘preservation and restoration’, new use of transport and phenomena associated with mobility for ‘nostalgia and entertainment’ or ‘business’. However, it is difficult to determine the exact boundary for what reason specific transport become cultural heritage. Often the reasons for heritization complement each other. Initially, it may be about saving, then fans’ interest in nostalgia, which will be transformed into an interesting business opportunity in the tourist season, e.g. in the case of the already mentioned European timber rafting, it gradually turned into a business, where tourists who yearn to experience the past sail on wooden rafts for a fee every year.

Heritization does not only concern traditional transport from the field of intangible cultural heritage, but also recently decommissioned public transport vehicles for the purpose of their preservation, as well as the desire for nostalgia and efforts to recall the recent history of travel, for example from the era of socialism. We can thus see the similarity of the second life of public transport vehicles with transport from the field of vernacular culture.

We can undoubtedly encounter the concept of heritage and cultural heritage in other phenomena as well. However, we believe that transport and mobilities have their own specifics and, in many respects, different social and cultural dimensions. The difference from other phenomena connected with the concept of heritage is related to the issue of protection of specific mobilities and abuse of the concept itself. Unlike static monuments, where their social function may be

redefined during their existence, it is much more complicated for mobilities linked to a large extent with means of transport. Most of the archaic forms of transport have perished. Intangible knowledge of their exact production and use, mainly due to oral tradition, has largely disappeared with the death of witnesses. We can remember the words of the witness – the rower on wooden rafts on the Vltava River in the Czech Republic paraphrased in this article above. The absence of witnesses and the means of transport has a direct impact on the fact that many entrepreneurs rely on the ignorance of tourists. They pass specific forms of transport as contemporary. They even do not notice it, because for them it can only be a normal means of transport in the historical centre of a heritage zone or in a place of beautiful nature.

Another problem is that until recently commonly used, but currently discarded means of transport are often considered as unnecessary ‘mobile scrap’ and in the search for interest, protection and their new use, mainly thanks to many enthusiastic individuals and voluntary groups. In this way, we follow the idea pointing out the impossibility of equating the past and heritage (see Lowenthal 1985).¹⁸

FIGURES



Figure 1. Arrival in the forest and preparation for hauling wood by horse, Czech Republic (Valachia), 2022. Photo by the first author of the article

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Figure 2a. Viktor Beranek, porter and chatter, is resting during the load up to Chata pod Rysmi. Photo by P. Barabáš, (with the permission); Figure 2b. Porter Ondrej Hudáček with his wife, also a porter, during the removal of loads (50's of the 20th century). Photo: archive of the second author



Figure 3. Timber Rafting on the Vltava River. 2020. Photo by the first author of the article



Figure 4. Sleigh races, Czechia (Krkonoše Mountains), 2017. Photo by the first author of the article



Figure 5. Departure of the retro train from Prague. 2024. Photo by the first author of the article

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