

THE BALKAN PENINSULA OF JOVAN CVIJIĆ:

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND CONTEMPORARY
TRENDS IN HUMAN GEOGRAPHY



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GEOGRAPHICAL INSTITUTE "JOVAN CVIJIĆ" SASA, BELGRADE
CULTURAL CENTRE "VUK KARADŽIĆ", LOZNICA

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CVJIĆ'S CIVILISATION ZONES, LONGITUDINAL AND TRANSVERSAL ROADS AS A BASE OF CONTEMPORARY CULTURAL ROUTES

Aleksandra Terzić¹, Tanja Angelkova², Marko D. Petrović¹

Abstract: Cvijić's observations concerning the problems of the geopolitical and socio-economic position of the Balkans, with particular emphasis on regional ties with the West and East, transversal and longitudinal roads, civilization zones, ethnological and psychological characteristics of the people, migration movements, etc. are even now of exceptional value and can be used for the explanation of contemporary issues in society. Herewith, we will try to indicate that the considerations on the importance of the cultural exchange, civilizational impacts and cultural transmission roads are present and discussed in the book *La péninsule balkanique — géographie humaine (Balkan Peninsula: human geography)* of Jovan Cvijić. We also indicate that in a certain way, he gave the basis for defining contemporary cultural routes of South East Europe (the Balkans). In particular, comparative analysis of the distribution of Cvijić's civilization zones and transversal and longitudinal roads through which different civilizations made their impact with recently created Cultural corridors of South East Europe, some direct parallels can be extracted and commented. Furthermore, some issues related to the process of thematically defining and the inclusion of countries and certain historic sites to the cultural routes are also discussed.

Keywords: tourism geography; civilization zones; cultural routes; Balkans.

Introduction

Anthropogeographical study of the Balkan peninsula, published by Jovan Cvijić in 1918 in France (*La péninsule balkanique — géographie humaine*) was at the time, and still is, the most comprehensive and detailed description of the Balkan region. Cvijić's Balcanology and human geography provided a basis and a different model of the archaeological, ethnological and cultural studies, facing the "history of long duration". There exists a theoretical connection with Cvijić's anthropogeographical school and his cultural models (ethnographical and historiographical) (Palavestra, 2005), while geography as a science successfully addresses issues of spatial distribution of phenomena, as well as its presence in certain nations. Unlike his contemporaries, anthropologists who have directed their attention to the forms of material culture (economy, settlements, houses,

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roads and the like), in Cvijić's works for the first time we can find topics such as "metastasis currents", "civilization zones", psychological types, etc. (Grčić, 2003).

Civilization zones of the Balkan Peninsula represent Cvijić's interpretation of the effects that certain foreign civilizational factors had on the formation of social relations of the nations of the Balkan Peninsula at the time. In his study he analyses the characteristics of cultural impacts of different civilizations on the architecture, art, literature, religious and administration organization, social relations, taste and luxury of the higher social classes, etc. The distribution of various civilizations within the Balkans according to Cvijić, become a very important factor, in terms of the lifestyle of the population and it had a great influence on all the ethnographical and anthropogeographical phenomena of the peninsula. By pointing out to the specific directions to which historically determined cultural influences have been transmitted, outlining the relative value of the longitudinal and diagonal (transferral) roads, Cvijić underlines this important phenomenon and its social significance. However, he does not define the concept of civilization zones and influences, but describing it gives an outstanding contribution to the cultural studies that will emerge much later.

The emphasis of 'civilization' is often on a historic-cultural entity or congeries of peoples sharing a common geographic locus, common values and social institutions, outlining that the distinction between 'civilization' as the largest and highest socio-historical unit and 'culture' as something smaller, lower and subsumed under 'civilization' is productive for a meaningful explanation of the ubiquitous phenomenon of cultural appropriation and civilizational hybridization. Therefore, it can be said that a civilization is composed of constituent elements or 'cultures' which are interwoven with one another and are in constant interaction with those of the external world. These elements not only make up a civilization itself but are exactly what distinguishes one civilization from another (Wei, 2011). Some authors refer to civilizations as zones of prestige, directing attention to social activity and cultural variety, outlining that civilizations flourish or fade, each civilization zone having its centre, generating symbolic objects, tangible and intangible, embodied in physical artefacts that people travel to see (Collins, 2001).

The general concept of "civilization zones" and "cultural routes", "heritage routes" and "cultural itineraries" will be developed much later, and its universal values formally acknowledged through the Cultural Routes programme of the Council of Europe in 1987. Mentioned terms are considered as synonyms, used to define a unique complex of thematically linked heritage sites on the certain

geographical territory (Council of Europe, 2007). It is evident that the cultural heritage of Europe (especially Western Europe) is one of the oldest and most important tourism generators and has retained a central role in the European tourism industry to this day (Richards, 1996, 2007; Richards, Russo, & Grossman, 2008). On the other hand, the establishment of cultural routes as specific tourist product that relies on the thematically assembled heritage attractions, that are linked and networked in geographical terms and promoted as specific mean of proclaiming European unity and cultural diversity, preserving heritage by attracting thousands of tourists and providing economic gain to local communities is contemporary phenomena. Thematically oriented cultural routes are based on specific heritage sites and attractions, which by networking and interpretation achieve the high quality of tourist offer, marketing and preservation of cultural heritage and guaranty tourist experiences (Terzić, 2014). It was institutionalized by the establishment of the European institute for cultural routes in 1998. This initiative was welcomed on the international level at the World Heritage Conference “Routes as cultural heritage” (Madrid, 1994), which outlined the importance of the cultural route concept as an important step in the recognition of the diversity of human heritage (Terzić, 2014).

Since its creation in 1994, the International Committee on Cultural Routes of ICOMOS (CIIC-ICOMOS) proposed the following definition: “A heritage route is composed of tangible elements whose cultural significance comes from exchanges and a multi-dimensional dialogue across countries or regions, and that illustrates the interaction of movement, along the route, in space and time” (<http://whc.unesco.org/archive/routes94.htm>). Its objective is to demonstrate in a visible way, by means of a journey through space and time, how the heritage of different countries and cultures of Europe represented a shared cultural heritage. Cultural routes, as a type of cultural tourism product, encourage widespread community participation in cultural activities, whereby raising awareness of a common cultural heritage (UNWTO, 2015). European cultural route is „A cultural, educational heritage and tourism co-operation project aiming at the development and promotion of an itinerary or a series of itineraries based on a historic route, a cultural concept, figure or phenomenon with a transnational importance and significance for the understanding and respect of common European values” (Council of Europe, 2013, p. 3).

In his book Cvijić defines the geographical position of the Balkans between two centres of power — the Middle East and Europe. Settled in between, the Balkans had the role of the very important peripheral area, which in certain periods took the role of the diffusion centre that diffused the cultural, political and economic influences to the other peripheral areas. Based on its openness to the surrounding

territories, Balkan Peninsula had the role of transmission of the material and cultural products, using the existing communication routes through longitudinal and transferal roads (Cvijić, 1918a). Cvijić's longitudinal and diagonal (transversal) roads and communications are the base on which cultural influences of different civilizations were passed on. Jovan Cvijić was the first scientist that indicated to the importance of the mentioned communication lines between Central and Western Europe with the Balkans and Middle East (Grčić, 2008). Longitudinal roads are set in the north-south/southeast direction, lying in the large valleys where most attraction places are set. Such valleys enable the transport between Danube and Dinaric areas on one side and Aegean areas on the other. On those routes the "main historical Balkan events took place" and they are the places where the Roman and Byzantium civilization impact was rooted (Cvijić, 1918a). Diagonal or transferal roads lead from the Adriatic sea to the inner areas of the Balkans. One of the oldest and most significant ones was Via Egnatia, which functions as a connection of the Adriatic to the Morava-Vardar valley, and was increasingly important after the fall of Constantinople. During the empowerment of the Venetian and Dubrovnik republics, these communication roads became a commercial intermediary between Italy and the Balkans. Other West European connections date back to the era of the Crusades. The connection was maintained along coastal roads, by Moravian-Vardar communication and Via Egnatia.

Cvijić's civilization zones and contemporary cultural routes

Cvijić noted the existence of several main cultural circles of the:

1. *Zone of the Old Balkan (Modified Byzantine) Civilization*. Thus modified, Byzantine civilization spread over the larger part of the peninsula, and became "Balkan civilization par excellence". "Byzantine civilization was pre-eminently the civilization of the cities and of the main longitudinal routes Constantinople–Belgrade and Saloniki–Belgrade" (Cvijić, 1918b, pp. 472–473). He adheres that under the Byzantine impulses within Serbia developed original cultural means, manifested in literature and legislation (Dušan's Code³ from XIV century) but also in architecture as from XX till the middle of XIV century Serbian kings built magnificent endowments, monasteries Studenica, Gračanica, Dečane, Banjska, Sopoćane, Gradac, and in Macedonia Psača, Nagoričane, Metejič, and many others. Some of them can be compared to the most beautiful buildings of that time (Cvijić, 1922).

³ Document officially known as Law of the pious Emperor Stefan is a compilation of several legal systems that was enacted by Serbian emperor Stefan Uroš IV Dušan of Serbia in 1349.

2. *Turco-Oriental influences* “are numerous and widespread, penetrating the peninsula even before the Turkish invasion. Oriental influences are quite evident in the Serbian, Bulgarian and Greek literature of the Middle Ages and in Serbian art of the same period. Very old Oriental motifs are to be met within the folklore and especially the folk songs and ornaments of the Balkan peoples. It can be traced in the style of harness and weapons, as well as in the type of cities and houses” (Cvijić, 1918b, p. 475). However, the Turco-oriental influences spread over the whole peninsula mainly during the Turkish rule, and became strongest among the Turkish population and Moslemized inhabitants.

3. *Zone of Western Civilization*. “Continuing to the influences of the former Roman civilization, the Balkan world was in the close contact to the West at the time of the Crusades, and the rule of the House of Anjou in Albania and of the Franks and the Latins on the Aegean Coast and Constantinople. Even more important was the influence of the city republics of Italy, particularly Venice and Genoa, which made itself felt along the whole Balkan littoral from the Adriatic to the Black Sea” (Cvijić, 1918b, p. 477). The Western civilization penetrated to the interior by the transversal routes from the Adriatic coast, but its impacts were limited to the narrow coastal strip of the Adriatic Sea, holding to the same Mediterranean house types, the manner of living and culinary practices. “The relationship of the Republic of Venice with the Serbian kingdom of Rashka in the middle ages have also left traces in the interior of the peninsula. The Western influences in the architecture of Serbian churches of the twelfth to fifteenth centuries are well known” (Cvijić, 1918b, p. 477), especially the impacts of the Italian renaissance on Raška artistic school. Recently established cultural route “Transromanica” links the European heritage of romanic epoch, connecting medieval romanic sites in Europe, including since 2007 several heritage sites in Serbia. Serbian artists used and assimilated romanic elements which can be seen in the most representative monumental architecture of “Raška school” — monasteries Žiča, Studenica, Gradac, Đurđevi Stupovi and Sopoćani, that became the part of this tourist cultural route (ICOMOS, 2018). “The new Central European civilization started to penetrate the peninsula, especially after the liberation of the Balkan countries, but while Western influences only reached the vast majority on the Balkan coasts, the effects of Central Europe (Austro-Hungarian Empire) felt deeper inland through longitudinal roads, going from North to South, using the opposite direction of penetration compared to earlier civilizations” (Cvijić, 1922, p. 105). Under this statement, Cvijić predominantly indicates the moving of the centre of power from Byzantium (Istanbul) to the newly established Austro-Hungarian Empire and Vienna (XIX century).

4. *The Patriarchal Regime*. It represents a sort of oasis where the old cultures rooted deeply in the way of life, basically because of its isolation of foreign influences. “It is particularly strong in the areas north of the Shar Mountain and the Balkan Range, except for the narrow Adriatic coast and northern plains of Serbia. Large patriarchal enclaves exist in the mountainous ramparts of the Sryedna Gora, Rhodopi Mountains and the Pindus as well as in the large part of Albania” (Cvijić, 1918b, p. 480). Its particular philosophy of life, its social and economic organization, and its well-developed institutions, its artistic expressions found in poetry and ornaments, as well as in gastronomy, are all of indisputable merit.

Strong cultural influences of various nations and cultures in the Balkans have caused not only mixing and adoption of certain cultural elements, but also contributed to the creation of entirely new cultural expressions resulting from the combination of folk practices in cultural creativity, material and immaterial. As certain intangible cultural heritage can be recognized as common for several nations, from the ethnographic elements adopted from other nations completely new cultural expressions may develop (Terzić, Petrović, & Jovičić Vuković, 2016).

Contemporary Cultural Tourist Routes within South East Europe

Given today's geo-political considerations, the area of the Balkan Peninsula is treated primarily as a distinct geographic region of Europe, defined in regional aspect, the so-called South East Europe. However, it retained to the territory of the Balkan Peninsula (Okey, 2007; Terzić, Bjeljac, & Krivošejev, 2015), situated at the crossroad of civilizations and religions, being a mediator between the East and the West, the North and the South, bringing internal connections and influences, accompanied by common historical events (Terzić et al., 2015). In accordance with the contemporary trends, cultural corridors in above mentioned region have already been recognized, and certain branches of certified European cultural corridors of the Council of Europe pass through the Balkans, such as: *European route of Jewish heritage*, *Transromanika*, *European cemetery route*, *Iter Vitis route*, *The route of historic thermal places*, *The routes of the Olive Tree*, *The Art Nouveau Roads*, *The Way of the Roman Emperors and the Danube Wine Road*, *Atrium - the Architecture of Totalitarian Regimes of the 20th Century*, etc. (Terzić & Bjeljac, 2016). With the goal of promotion of cultural heritage of South East Europe, the initiative for the creation of SEE cultural corridors was created under the pilot project realized under the support of ICOMOS, Council of Europe, European Commission, UNESCO, etc. (2003–2008). The project for the development of the *Cultural Corridors of South East*

Europe is a practical implementation of the Varna Declaration, adopted at the Regional Forum “*Cultural Corridors of South East Europe*” (Varna, May 2005). Within the project several potential cultural routes within SEE were defined (Council of Europe, 2015; <http://seecorridors.eu/>; Terzić & Bjeljic, 2016):

1. The *Danube Road* is a waterway cultural corridor along the Danube River. The Danube Road, along with its riverside roads has been for hundreds of years conductors of cultural exchange (from Roman Limes, to Middle Ages, Crusades, Viking, Celtic and Slav settlement, trade communication between East and West). The Roman Emperors and Danube Wine Route is tourist route established in 2015 by the initiative of the Danube competence centre that extends through four countries in the Middle and Lower Danube Region — Croatia, Serbia, Bulgaria and Romania, encompassing 20 archaeological sites and 12 wine regions (UNWTO, 2015, p. 120). Cvijić also recognizes the significance of this river corridor with a single but strong statement: “Romans used all valleys and the main passages; they built the first longitudinal and diagonal roads. In this way, the Roman civilization infiltrated almost all over the peninsula, mostly in its north-western parts: it moved along the Sava and the Danube River... As an evidence of the Roman rule, numerous remains exist in the inner parts of the Peninsula: roads, forts, town walls, colonies... It is thought that Romans brought the culture of wine growing to the Fruška Gora and Smederevo surroundings” (Cvijić, 1918a, p. 87).

2. The *Diagonal Road* (Via Diagonalis, Via Militaris, Carigradski drum, Via de Ragusi) passes through South East Europe, connecting Europe to Asia. This cultural corridor is one of the most ancient arteries created in Roman times, of trans-continental, even world trade importance. Entering from Central Europe into Slovenia, it passes successively through Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro, Bulgaria and Turkey, to continue to the Far East. It is related to the pilgrim roads in Europe, as it represented in the Middle Ages the way through which Catholicism entered to the Peninsula, and connects to the branches of pilgrim roads directed to Jerusalem, as well as the Crusades. “Old Constantinople Road” known as well as “Royal road” and “Moravian road” was the most important communication lines in the Middle Ages within the Balkans, and its predecessor was Roman military road — Via Militaris (Cvijić, 1918a, p. 21).

3. The *Eastern Trans-Balkan Road* crosses South East Europe in North-South direction. The corridor passes through Romania, Bulgaria and Greece and connects the Baltic Sea with the Aegean and the Mediterranean Sea. The Eastern Trans-Balkan road is the spine of the monastery centres in South East Europe and exhibits the most distinctive achievements of the builders, woodcarvers,

painters in the unique churches of Moldavia, Maramureş, Bulgaria, Macedonia and the Rhodopi Mountains.

4. The cultural corridor *Sofia–Ohrid* passes through Bulgaria and FYR of Macedonia, connecting the monastery agglomerations around these two historic towns and the religious cultural area of Metohia in Serbia and Montenegro. The Sofia-Ohrid Road is a specific religious axis, conducting religious influences to the great pilgrim road Via Egnatia.

5. *Via Adriatica* spreads over the western coasts of Ionian and the Adriatic Sea, passing through Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Albania and Greece. It symbolizes the cultural exchange between Aegean, Roman, Byzantium, Dalmatian, Venetian and West-European Civilizations (Romanesque, Gothic, Renaissance and Baroque).

6. *Via Anatolia* is another cultural corridor, spreading along the three seas – the Sea of Marmara, the Aegean and the Mediterranean Sea. Starting from the historical town Istanbul (Turkey), the direction follows the coasts of Asia Minor peninsula (Anadol, Anatolia) in Western Asia. Via Anatolia represents the evidence of the touch of the local population with the sea cultures of the ancient towns Troy, Ephesus, Aphrodisias, Hierapolis and Xanthos-Letoon. It is also the part of the Anatolian Silk Road.

7. *Via Egnatia* is an ancient road, built during the Roman Empire, to facilitate the communication between Rome and Constantinople (present Istanbul), passing through Albania, FYR of Macedonia, Greece and Turkey. Cvijić (1918a, p. 78, 123) describes this road as: “First transversal road that was built by Romans was Via Egnatia, that went from Drač and surrounding areas along the valley of Skumbia and over Ohrid (Lichnidis) and Voden (Edessa) to Thessaloniki; from that point it went along the Aegean coast to Constantinople. In Byzantine and Ottoman rules this was the shortest way connecting Constantinople to its western balkan provinces and further to South Italy”. It is also an important path of penetration of Orthodox Christianity to the Balkans, and later of the Islamic domination.

8. *Via Pontica* is the cultural road, spreading over the west and south coasts of the Black Sea, passing from the Danube delta, reaching the foothills of the Caucasus, crossing Romania, Bulgaria and Turkey. It represents mutual influences between sea cultures of Greeks, Romans, Venetians, Genoese, with continental cultures of Skits, Thracians, Daces, Goths, Bulgarians and Slavs.

9. The *Western Trans-Balkan Road* crosses SEE in the North-South direction. The corridor has been uniting the territories from both sides of the Balkan range, passing through Romania, Bulgaria and Greece. Trans-Balkan Road connects Western and Central Europe with the Aegean and the Mediterranean Sea, crossing consecutively the Danube Road, the Diagonal road, the Sofia–Ohrid Road and Via Egnatia. It is the actual axis of spreading of ancient Greek culture to the North, as a basis of modern European civilization.

Comparative Analysis

It is evident that many of the above mentioned cultural routes and their geographical distributions can find the basic connections to the delimitations of the civilization zones and transmission (diagonal and longitudinal) roads defined by Cvijić (Figure 1). However, Cvijić does not indicate the exact linear routes of civilizational penetration, but indicated that it followed historical trade routes and roads (based on geographical limitations). Furthermore, he defines the zonal distribution (areal) of certain dominant cultural patterns seen in architectural styles, ways of life, ethnographical and other heritage assets present in the Balkan states of that time. The fact is that there is cultural overlapping of certain cultural patterns which resulted in the development of new national interpretation and adaptation to certain cultural impacts, and we must outline that such issues are highly dependent on historical, political and demographical changes in time. By direct comparison of the represented cultural zones which Cvijić defined, we can confirm the exact overlapping of the distribution of Mediterranean culture of Italian influences with the contemporary Cultural route “Via Adriatica”. It is characterized in urban settings and villages, Italian Mediterranean style of architecture and art. Cvijić refers to this road with words “from Dalmatian sides, roads of Dubrovnik, Kotor, Split and from the Neretva confluence, had great commercial and cultural importance, from Roman, over Middle Ages, until the end of XVIII century” (Cvijić, 1918a, p. 85). The other maritime culture route is “Via Anatolia” representing the mutual cultural exchange between Aegean (Greek), Mediterranean (Latin) and Asian (Persian) maritime cultures.



Figure 1. Zones of Civilization of the Balkan Peninsula and Cultural routes of the SEE (Source: Cvijić, 1918c, adaptation by authors).

The other exact overlapping is present in the spatial distribution of “Via Egnatia”, which is defined as passing through the direct areas of obvious old Balkan “modified Byzantine” cultural influences, which is also characteristic of the Sofia–Ohrid cultural corridor and Eastern Trans-Balkan Road. The contemporary cultural routes are consisted of the most representative heritage sites, mostly of the religious type. These routes are highly thematic as they are based on the existence of the unique Byzantine architectural and artistic styles present in all churches and monasteries that are included on these routes, but also evident in several archaeological sites and historic town centres. However, they are also transpassing the large areas of strong Turco–oriental influences. Such sites are also included to the contemporary route, for example town of Bitola as a representative or Islamic cultural style, but to a minor extent.

Central European influences are defined in Cvijić distribution of so-called Diagonal road (with numerous branches) which historically interconnected Vienna with Belgrade, Sofia and Constantinople. However, according to the long historical importance of this route in Roman, Byzantine, Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian and modern times, it also contains the representative heritage sites of all historical periods. Cvijić indicates that as it connects towns and main trade centres, which tend to develop following European patterns in towns positioned directly on this route. The cultural influences that came along can be foreseen in new architectural European styles applied in the urban areas — neoclassicism, academism, art nouveau, modernism, secession, etc. This came with the trend of sending youth to be educated in European university centres in Vienna, Zurich, Munich, Paris, etc. Currently there are several international projects that consider creating the cultural route of art nouveau/secession. Council of Europe's Cultural route certificate was in 2014 awarded to Réseau Art Nouveau Network. The contemporary Diagonal route includes the sites that are representatives of various cultures and periods, which differ significantly from state to state, indicating that it is not a thematically oriented route. This is also the case considering the Western Trans-Balkan Route, which is representing a vast variety of cultural and historical assets from different periods from Ancient Greece, through Roman and Byzantine influences to the medieval forts and traditional architectural styles.

Similar to previous ones is the Danube Route, also defined by Cvijić as “one of the mastering corridors of Europe” (Cvijić, 1922, p. 11). It has always represented the main artery of civilizational and national passing, a waterway, trade route, strategic border, point of limitation and connection. The contemporary Danube cultural route is based mostly on impressive archaeological sites from Roman and Medieval periods (Roman Emperors and Danube Wine Route; Fortresses along the Danube). However, it is also a place where the European prehistorical civilizations developed (a great number of prehistorical sites — Iron Age Danube Route). “Along the main maritime, then the river and continental roads of the Balkan Peninsula prehistoric civilizations moved, they went along the Danube, from its mouth to Central Europe” (Cvijić, 1918a, p. 87). Furthermore, it connects most European metropolis (capitals and ports), so it is also considered as actual conductor of the West European cultural, scientific and technological achievements to South East Europe in XIX century, etc.

Among contemporary cultural routes we cannot find any route with a strictly oriented Turkish-oriental theme, even though within the Balkans such influences are highly present — in architectural styles, gastronomy, crafts and customary

practices (intangible heritage). The same is evident for the Cvijić's so-called "Patriarchal zones" which give an outstanding potential in representing strong regional cultural differences between nations, based on strong ethnic-based cultural achievements (ethnographic evidence, reflected in tangible and intangible heritage) and as such transferred through migration flows, and created "ethnic enclaves" and "cultural oasis" in different European and non-European countries.

Conclusions

Civilization zones of the Balkan Peninsula and their geographical distribution strictly defined and explained by Jovan Cvijić, represent the pioneering work in the recognition of the importance of the cultural aspects of socio-economic relations, ethnology and anthropology of the Balkan peoples. Moreover, his longitudinal and transversal roads, geographical delimitations of foreign cultural impacts and their role in shaping the social, artistic, ethnographical aspects of Balkan nations can be used as a base for defining contemporary cultural routes in this area. Cvijić also points out to the main aspects of the cultural routes: joint European identity, shared history, cultural diversity influenced by main civilizations impact, transnational importance, historical events, heritage recognition, local/regional traditions and expressions, etc. The creation of contemporary cultural routes is usually strictly defined and follows some defined principles and administrative procedures.

As there are no defined quantitative limits or qualitative measures, the routes can contain a diffusion of sites of various type, different spatial distribution and concentration within some countries, which should be avoided. There are also problems in the process of categorization and valorisation of heritage sites that should be included to the route as representatives of outstanding value. There are also some political issues that may delimitate participation of certain countries and sites to the cultural routes, or restrict some proposed themes. However, the growth and inclusion of sites are generally not limited, except in the cases when the creation of cultural routes is defined as "time-limited" and "partner defined" project. In such cases it can happen that some of the most representative heritage sites, or even whole countries, stay excluded from the cultural corridors, due to the lack of knowledge and research. In order to minimize possible mistakes, such initiatives should strive to multinational, interdisciplinary and multi-institutional approach, including public transparency, enabling open debate and participative approach, while avoiding becoming politically coloured acts. Therefore, in order to promote and recognize the outstanding value of the common heritage we share, using the evidence and traces that Cvijić gave us a

century ago, we should strive to research and indicate to our joint and shared cultural values that unfortunately have been underappreciated and deteriorated for a long time.

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