

# The Dissonant Heritage of the Blessed Alojzije Stepinac: The Case of the Silencing of a Religious Tourist Route

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## Abstract

*A religious tourist route, the Stepinac Path (Croatia), is a project designed to connect four mnemonic sites related to selected parts of the Blessed Alojzije Stepinac's biography. The project follows the European model of the Camino de Santiago. The Stepinac Path includes the reconstruction of several old pilgrimage paths leading to the national pilgrimage shrine of Our Lady in Marija Bistrica. It was also conceived to be incorporated into a wider network of Croatian and international Marian pilgrimage paths. The project was created and is managed by various tourism institutions, with the aim of heritagizing the figure of Alojzije Stepinac by highlighting several aspects of his life. However, the phrase "the heritage of the Blessed Alojzije Stepinac" is mostly promoted by the Catholic Church in Croatia, emphasizing the religious aspect of his legacy. The complex power relations between religious and heritage politics have pushed the Stepinac Path project's implementation into a silent phase. Without the proper support of the Catholic Church in Croatia, the project has little public recognition and momentum has slowed. This paper examines the Stepinac Path's silencing in terms of dissonant heritage policies and heritagization processes in political, religious, and economic discourses and power relations.*

**Keywords:** dissonant heritage; heritagization; the Blessed Alojzije Stepinac; the Stepinac Path

## Introduction

A religious tourist route, *the Stepinac Path*, is a project in northwest Croatia designed to revive old pilgrimage routes and to connect places that preserve the Blessed Alojzije Stepinac's memory. The project was created and is managed by tourism institutions, seeking to heritagize the life and work of the Blessed Alojzije Stepinac by highlighting several different aspects of his life. However, as the project concerns a beatified member of the Catholic Church in Croatia, it is burdened with complex power relations interweaving between religious and tourism heritagization politics. This has pushed it into a silent phase—the project is hardly recognized by the public and progress has slowed.

The framework for my observations is a notion of heritage as a "social construction [and] the manner in which contemporary interests shape and mobilize views of the past" (Madrell et al. 2015, 12). The production of heritage (heritagization) includes and excludes; it is selection, interpretation, and representation of content from the past following the needs and demands of the present, and with the intention of consigning

such things to the future; it “is as much about forgetting as remembering the past” and more about meanings than material forms; it is contested political, socio-cultural and economic process (Ashworth and Graham 2015, 4–7). Heritagization, as the management of the past, reflects the demonstration of the power of one group and, simultaneously, the silencing and exclusion of others. In connection with this, Tunbridge and Ashworth use the term “dissonant heritage” (1996, 21). As a consequence of these guidelines and bearing in mind the silencing of the Stepinac Path, it is my intention to analyze why the religious tourist route has been silenced and what this silencing tells us about wider processes and power relations in heritage production and society.

The Stepinac Path project follows in the footsteps of the European model of the Camino de Santiago, a route that has been promoted in Europe since 1987 as a Cultural Route of the Council of Europe, and subsequently designated a UNESCO Cultural Itinerary in 1998. With this, as with many other projects in Europe that tend to varying degrees to replicate the Camino de Santiago in their home countries, the Stepinac Path reflects the contemporary phenomenon of “Caminoization”—the transplantation and translation of various aspects and assumptions of the contemporary Camino to other pilgrimage sites, routes and contexts (Bowman and Sepp 2019, 75). However, apart from being a model, the Camino de Santiago conceals problems connected with the creation and production of heritage, i.e., with heritage politics. Cristina Sánchez-Carretero (2005) drew attention to this in her writing on the Camino de Finisterre. This route connects Santiago de Compostela with Finisterre and Muxia on the Galician North-West Atlantic coast. She wrote that, in 1993, when the Camino de Santiago was included in the UNESCO World Heritage List, the Government of Galicia initiated the Camino de Finisterre’s inclusion in the list as one of the Caminos de Santiago. Despite being placed on that list, that part of the Camino was not officially recognized by the Catholic Church and the pilgrims on that route do not receive the Compostela—the recognition granted by the Church to the pilgrims who have walked at least 100 km. In fact, the route is shorter than 100 km and does not end in Santiago de Compostela. Consequently, writes Sánchez-Carretero, and also because Finisterre is associated with the cult of the sun, this route is often named “the Camino of the Atheists.” The Catholic Church does not obstruct the Camino officially but rather ignores it (Sánchez-Carretero 2005, 5).

In the context of heritagization, the Camino de Finisterre, as an example of heritage production issues, finds an analogy in the silenced Stepinac Path. To understand the essence of this analogy, it is first necessary to briefly present critical segments of the Blessed Alojzije Stepinac’s complex biography, according to which the project and route received its name.

### **The Blessed Alojzije Stepinac**

Alojzije Stepinac was born in 1898 in Brezarić, a village in the parish of Krašić, about 50 km southwest of Zagreb, the capital of Croatia. He was baptized in the Church of the Holy Trinity in Krašić. In 1906, his family moved to Krašić. At that time, Croatia was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. After completing his end-of-school exams

in 1916, Stepinac was drafted into the Austro-Hungarian Army and in 1919, he participated in combat on the Italian battlefield, where he was injured and captured. After the Austro-Hungarian capitulation, as a volunteer in the Yugoslav legion, he was sent to the Solun battlefield, at a time when combat on that battlefield had already ceased. He was demobilized in 1919 through an act by his lieutenant-colonel, and in 1920 he was promoted to the rank of reserve lieutenant. From 1924 to 1931, he studied at the Pontifical Gregoriana University in Rome, in 1930, he was ordained as a priest, and in 1931 he received a PhD in theology and philosophy. Three years later, in May 1934, Pope Pius XI appointed him as the Archbishop Coadjutor with the right to succeed the Archbishop of Zagreb, Antun Bauer. In June 1934, Stepinac was appointed bishop in Zagreb, with only three years experience as a priest and the youngest bishop in the Catholic Church (Butler and Burns 2000, 263). He was almost entirely unknown among the wider Croatian public, but two weeks after his consecration, he led a 15,000-strong pilgrimage to the old Marian shrine in Marija Bistrica near Zagreb (ibid.; Ćorić 1998), followed by annual pilgrimages to this site. After the death of Archbishop Bauer, in 1937 he became the Archbishop of Zagreb and remained in this position until his death. This period included fascist Ustasha rule (a Croatian fascist, nationalist and terrorist organization) over the puppet state named the Independent State of Croatia under Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy's auspices during World War II. After the war, in 1946, the Yugoslav communist government convicted Stepinac of treason and of collaboration with the Ustasha regime in a show trial. He was sentenced to sixteen years in the Lepoglava prison with forced labor and a five-year deprivation of political and civic rights (Stanić 1946, 453). A few years later, Milovan Đilas, one of the leading Yugoslav communist politicians and dissidents, clearly emphasized in an interview with the sculptor Ivan Meštrović how Stepinac, in the name of the political goals of that time, was innocent yet had been convicted because of his powerful attachment to the Holy See (Benigar 1974, 638–39). In fact, Stepinac had steadfastly opposed Josip Broz Tito's<sup>1</sup> idea of the separation of the Catholic Church in Croatia from the Vatican (ibid., 639). After five years spent in Lepoglava prison in 1951, Stepinac was placed under house arrest with his movements confined to his home parish of Krašić. In 1952 he was appointed cardinal by Pope Pius XII. On February 10, 1960, still under confinement in Krašić, Stepinac died. Three days later, he was ceremonially buried in a completely crowded Zagreb Cathedral. Many years later, in 1985, the Chief Trial Prosecutor, Jakov Blažević, admitted that Stepinac's sentencing had been framed (op. cit. Stanojević 1985, 66–67). In 1992, the Croatian Parliament passed a declaration denouncing the political process and judgment passed on Cardinal Stepinac. In 1998, Pope John Paul II declared Stepinac a martyr and beatified him before 500,000 Croatians in the Croatian National Shrine of Our Lady in Marija Bistrica near Zagreb. He was declared a martyr based on the torment he had suffered in prison. Stepinac became a crucial figure in Croatian national mythology, and as Pope John Paul II declared, "a sort of compass" with "its cardinal points: faith in God, respect for man, love toward all even to the offer of forgiveness, and unity with the Church guided by the Successor of Peter" (John Paul II 1998). The process of his canonization is ongoing.

The Blessed Stepinac's feast day in the Catholic Church in Croatia is celebrated on February 10. Each year, a grand celebration is held in the Zagreb Cathedral, with more than 5,000 people and representatives of the Church, state, and city authorities, attending Mass. On the same day, a grand celebration in Krašić is held, visited by more than 3,000 believers from all over Croatia.

In the process of preserving memories of the Blessed Alojzije Stepinac, around twenty monuments and busts have been erected in Croatia and one in Melbourne, Australia; in Croatia, eight parishes bear his name, as well as streets in thirty-two cities, four squares, one promenade, one coastal promenade, and two primary schools; outside Croatia, one street and one school in Chicago bear Stepinac's name, one school in New York and Toronto, one nursing home and one home for the elderly in Australia, and a children's center in Haiti. Two films have been made about Alojzije Stepinac. The high representatives of the Catholic Church in Croatia call the Cathedral in Zagreb the Stepinac Cathedral. However, it is dedicated to the Assumption of Mary and the Kings Saint Stephen and Saint Ladislaus. The Museum of the Blessed Alojzije Stepinac is located next to the Zagreb Cathedral, and his memorial house is in Krašić. There is also a religious tourist route project in his honor, the Stepinac Path.

### **The Stepinac Path Project**

The Stepinac Path project began with the document *Idejni program "Stepinčev put"* [The Conceptual Program "The Stepinac Path"] in 2006, as suggested by the Tourist Board of Marija Bistrica, which is also the project bearer. Two years later, the conceptual proposal for the Tourist Board of Marija Bistrica was further detailed by Eduard Kušen, an architect and urban planner at the Institute of Tourism at that time, and the project creator, in the *Osnove programa Stepinčev put [Foundations of the Program The Stepinac Path]* (2008; 2013, 168–70). In 2010, the Tourist Board Marija Bistrica put together the official document *Stepinčev put [The Stepinac Path]* (2010), which contained a short description, the primary goals and justification for the project, a report on completed and planned activities as part of the project and a financial plan.

The Stepinac Path project consists of two components: "Stepinac's Pilgrimage Path" and "Stepinac's Croatian Foursquare."<sup>2</sup> Both components link up to four "religious-tourist destinations," but the first is mostly made up of old and a smaller number of newly formed pedestrian pilgrimage routes, while the second is made up of existing roads intended for vehicles (Kušen 2008, 6; 2013, 168). The project goals are: (1) renewing the old pilgrimage routes toward the shrine in Marija Bistrica and to a lesser extent forming new ones in the area around Krašić, (2) "devoting Cardinal Stepinac the special recognition of the Bistrica pilgrims" and (3) "linking up with other shrines in and outside of Croatia"; conceptually, these goals "mostly tend toward worshipping the Mother of God of Bistrica and her traditional pilgrimage routes and the life and works of the Blessed Alojzije Stepinac" (2008, 6; 2013, 168, 170). According to the words of the project's author, the path "connects the places and towns related to the life and work of the Blessed Alojzije Stepinac." The project is managed by local tourism institutions and supported by the Ministry of Tourism, the Croatian Tourism Authority, and three county-level tourist boards.

The Stepinac Path incorporates the following four mnemonic sites related to “the work and life” of Stepinac “which were of special importance for the Blessed Cardinal” (Kušen 2008, 11):

1. Krašić, where the Blessed Alojzije Stepinac spent his childhood and the last nine years of his life under house arrest (after he had left Lepoglava prison and up until his death). In the former parish court in which he spent the final years of his life, a memorial house has been set up on the first floor, which is always open for visitors. The memorial house presents Stepinac’s living space: his study and bedroom with an inventory, books, writings and objects that he used, holy pictures, photos from his life, and the death mask that Mila Wod (Ludmila Wodsedalek) made on February 12, 1960 just before the transportation of Stepinac’s dead body to the Zagreb Cathedral (Benigar 1974, 851–853). The space underscores Stepinac’s deep devotion to his faith and his martyrdom.

Apart from the memorial house, there is the Holy Trinity Parish church where Alojzije Stepinac was baptized. In 2004, a new altar was blessed and installed in his honor. In the church, and especially around his altar, numerous objects and votive tablets with messages of gratitude can be found, addressed to the Blessed Alojzije Stepinac. Today, the church is a pilgrimage site, especially around Stepinac’s Feast Day.

Besides the church and the memorial house, the location is marked where Stepinac’s blood was spilled during attempts to heal him through bloodletting. A low fence marks out the location, flowers have been planted, and it has been marked with a tile with the inscription: “This place retains the memory of more than 36 liters of the spilled blood of the martyr, the Blessed Alojzije Stepinac.” In front of the Holy Trinity church, there is a 2.65-meter-high statue of Stepinac, by the academic sculptor Josip Poljan, raised in 1998 on the occasion of the one-hundred-year anniversary of Stepinac’s birth. Behind the church and the memorial home, a park sticks out with the Way of the Cross, named “The Space of the Way of the Cross of the Martyr Alojzije Stepinac.” According to the words of the local priest, this was set up in memory of Stepinac’s walks.

2. Zagreb Cathedral was where the Blessed Alojzije Stepinac worked as a priest, was ordained as a bishop, served as archbishop, and is buried. His tomb is behind the main altar of the cathedral. His tomb is lined with silver panels on which events from Stepinac’s life and the Marian dimension to his spirituality are portrayed, alongside a golden death mask of Alojzije Stepinac. On the tomb’s pedestal there is a headstone with the most important dates and events from the life of the Blessed Alojzije Stepinac. His body has been on display for public worship since 1998 and became the pilgrimage site and a destination for worshippers.

On the archbishop’s court’s ground floor, behind the cathedral, the Museum of the Blessed Alojzije Stepinac can be found. The museum was opened in 1995. It contains documents and records from the Cardinal’s life, from his baptism to his will, clothes and other objects connected with his life and works, and his documentary photographs.

3. Marija Bistrica is the Croatian national shrine of Our Lady, noted as a favorite

pilgrimage site of the Blessed Alojzije Stepinac. Stepinac went there as a pilgrim or as the leader of the famous Zagreb vow pilgrimage, greatly aiding the worship of the Blessed Virgin Mary among Croatian believers (Benigar 1974, 150, 303). Alojzije Stepinac was a passionate promoter of the devotion to Our Lady of Marija Bistrica and encouraged the restoration of the shrine: "I wish that it [Marija Bistrica] will become our Croatian Lourdes, Loretto, etc." (op. cit. *ibid*, 304–305). Finally, Marija Bistrica is the place where Alojzije Stepinac was beatified by Pope John Paul II in 1998. The shrine representatives refer to Stepinac as one of the shrine's dearest pilgrims, alongside Pope John Paul II (Susović 2007).

4. Lepoglava is the place where Stepinac was imprisoned from 1946 to 1951. Today, his prison cell is a memorial room with a bed, chair, wardrobe, washbasin, alongside the additional small space with the kneeling bench on which Stepinac prayed. As part of the prison, above the cell, there is a refurbished chapel dedicated to the Blessed Cardinal Stepinac, where these days prisoners gather for prayers, Mass, and other sacraments. The chapel has been equipped with Stepinac's bust, which Pope John Paul II consecrated in 1998 in Marija Bistrica. Above the chapel altar is a painting of Stepinac, and three plaques with the date of his death, the number of days he spent in prison and his detention number. Apart from the cell and chapel, memories of Alojzije Stepinac are kept alive by the Lepoglava Parish Church of the Immaculate Conception, in which the altar on which Stepinac served Holy Mass inside his cell is located. Besides the church, in the wake of the 50th anniversary of Stepinac's death, in 2010, Alojzije Stepinac's statue was erected, a work by the sculptor Anđelko Odak. Finally, in Lepoglava, in honor of Stepinac, "The Way of the Cross with the Blessed Cardinal" has been set up, from the Parish Church, along the walls of the Lepoglava prison, up to the Chapel of St. John the Baptist on the Gorica hill above Lepoglava. The Way of the Cross is inspired by Stepinac's martyrdom, with fourteen stations set along a 1600-meter Way of the Cross. Alongside descriptions of Jesus' suffering, stations also include descriptions of the suffering of the Blessed Alojzije Stepinac, therein linking Stepinac's suffering with Jesus' way of the cross:

1. Jesus is condemned to death: "The People's Court" sentenced the Archbishop Alojzije Stepinac in a show trial on October 11, 1946 to 16 years' imprisonment.
2. Jesus takes up his cross: On October 19, 1946, Alojzije Stepinac was brought to the Lepoglava prison.
3. Jesus falls for the first time: For the first month of imprisonment, Stepinac was in total isolation from the outside world and other prisoners.
4. Jesus meets his Mother: Mother Barbara visited her son Alojzije twice in the Lepoglava prison.
5. The Cyrenian helps Jesus carry the cross: The priests Stjepan Pavunić and Nikola Borić, as prisoners, occasionally dared to spend time in the company of Alojzije.
6. Veronica wipes the face of Jesus: Mrs. Julijana Fidler saluted the imprisoned Stepinac before one of the guards. As a result of this, her assets were seized, and she ended up in prison.

7. Jesus falls for the second time: The discourteous guards often humiliated the Archbishop by mocking and insulting him, withholding visits, and by other means.
8. Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem who weep for him: The Lepoglava women would sing songs of reverence beside the prison so that the archbishop could hear them in his cell.
9. Jesus falls for the third time: On December 5, 1951, the extremely ill Archbishop was transferred to Krašić to serve his sentence.
10. Jesus is stripped of his garments: The authorities attempted to take away the people's trust in Archbishop Stepinac, through various defamatory false accusations.
11. Jesus is nailed to the cross: Illness riveted Alojzije to his bed, and he himself felt that his final hours were nearing, and he asked for his last rites.
12. Jesus dies on the cross: With a lit candle in his hand, Alojzije died on February 10 1960 in Krašić.
13. Jesus is taken down from the cross and given to his Mother: The Croatian Parliament issued a declaration in 1992 condemning the political process and unfair verdict passed against Cardinal Alojzije Stepinac, and the Zagreb County Court revoked the verdict in 2016.
14. Jesus is laid in the tomb: The Cardinal Alojzije Stepinac was buried on February 13, 1960 behind the main altar in the Zagreb Cathedral.

The Way of the Cross was conceived of and initiated by the parish priest Andrija Kišiček on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of Stepinac's arrival in Lepoglava prison and is held from Palm Sunday to Good Friday.

The designer of the Stepinac Path project, Eduard Kušen, pointed out that "the underlying idea [of the project] is to commemorate Stepinac's life and work in their entirety," to heritagize the figure of Stepinac by highlighting not only the religious aspect of his life but his life as a whole: as a Catholic believer, a martyr, a key figure of the Catholic Church in Croatia, as well as a person with a political, charitable, cultural and prison life. By contextualizing these religious and secular aspects, the project includes rural and urban landscapes and their natural and cultural resources and heritage.

As earlier stated, an essential component of the project is the reconstruction of old pilgrimage routes to the National Shrine of Our Lady of Marija Bistrica. The network of pilgrimage routes toward Marija Bistrica has developed over the past 300 years, reaching the peak of its development between the two world wars. The use of the footpaths practically dying out after World War II, partly due to the political circumstances, and partly due to a pilgrimage changes, i.e., the frequent use of vehicles instead of walking (Kušen 2008, 8; 2013, 170). With the restoration of pilgrimage routes toward Marija Bistrica, as the project outlines, Stepinac's Path would, via the Marija Bistrica shrine, on the one hand, connect up with the Croatian Marian holy sites in Trsat and Sinj (Kušen 2013, 230), and on the other hand, be incorporated into the existing network of the International Cultural Pilgrimage Trail—Mary's Pilgrimage Route: Marija Bistrica (Croatia)—Ptujška Gora and Svete Gore (Slovenia)—Mariazell (Austria)—Levoča (Slovakia)—Częstochowa (Poland) (Kušen 2008, 26). Thus, along with the heritagization of the religious and secular life of the Blessed Alojzije Stepinac,

on the symbolic level of Marian piety, the project aims to link Croatia with the shared European cultural (religious) heritage and to emphasize a Croatian affiliation with the European cultural area and values.

In one interview in 2009, Eduard Kušen announced that this project, like many other projects that include pilgrimage routes, not only garners attention in the areas of culture and tourism but also in the sphere of the regional development of rural spaces (as cited in Genc 2009). According to project documentation, the Stepinac Path is designed as a cultural and tourist product with a clearly expressed economic component. It would thus contribute to the regional development of the areas included in the project. Thus, in the aforementioned official document *Stepinčev put* (2010), the project holder, the Tourist Board Marija Bistrica, in the project justification study, gives two exclusively economic components—the economic development of the region and the economic development of the municipalities, based on the development of entrepreneurship, production, and services, in fields such as rural economic activities, accommodation, and catering facilities, etc.

The sections of the Stepinac Path have been traced and marked with tourist signs and signposts. Certain locations (churches) have been marked with interpretative panels that include a description and a map of the route, with the current location marked out. All panels and signposts, alongside the route's name, have its symbol, a white cross in a yellow square.

In a period of the blossoming development of routes based on the European model of the Camino de Santiago, and in a period of the process of seeking to declare this beatified person a saint (the act of canonization ensuring reverence beyond the local level), it is to be expected that the Stepinac Path has experienced a growth in popularity and number of visits. To paraphrase Christopher McKeivitt (1991, 79) and Laurajane Smith (2006, 46), just the conscious effort and engagement of those who visit and use religious, cultural, and tourism routes and who inscribe their experiences into them make those routes “alive” and ensure the continuity of the routes' lives. However, several years previously, apart from Krašić, the Blessed Alojzije Stepinac's birthplace, the Stepinac Path is poorly recognized in the wider public domain. Apart from walks occasionally run by certain hiking groups, cultural-tourist walks are not organized along the Stepinac Path. Promotional materials, tourist maps, brochures, or guides cannot be found, and the Tourist Board of the City of Zagreb, on whose territory a large portion of the Stepinac Path's routes lie, has not included this route in its pool of local tourist attractions. When asked, numerous passers-by in the wider Zagreb area do not recognize or even recognize the path's symbol and signs. It appears that the project's development has slowed down and is now in a silent phase. And Eduard Kušen himself, who designed the Stepinac Path project, emphasizes the fact that the project is dormant, and in this context, directs attention to Church institutions:

It is a ready-made product. It is another matter that you don't have any accompanying information about it. Not even from the Church. As far as I know, in *Glas Koncila* [Voice of the Council]<sup>3</sup> the Path has never been mentioned. This means that the Church is absolutely not interested in it, in such possibilities. (Interview from December 17, 2017)



### **The Catholic Church's Perspective on the Heritage of Alojzije Stepinac**

While tourism institutions strive to heritagize the life and work of Alojzije Stepinac through the Stepinac Path project, the term “the heritage of Alojzije Stepinac” had already been invented by the Catholic Church in Croatia, striving for public recognition of Stepinac as a martyr. In 2008, Josip Bozanić, the Cardinal and current Archbishop of Zagreb, published a book entitled *The Blessed Alojzije Stepinac—a Binding Heritage* [*Blaženi Alojzije Stepinac – baština koja obvezuje*] (2010), a collection of homilies that Cardinal Bozanić held on Stepinac's Feast Day in the Zagreb Cathedral between 1998 to 2008. In the book, he presents Alojzije Stepinac as a martyr and a role model of the faith and hopes found in God. Mons. Juraj Batelja, the Postulator for the Cause of the Canonization of Stepinac, uses the term “the spiritual heritage of Stepinac” in the sense of human dignity and freedom of thought, speech, faith, and human rights; the freedom of the Church and the fidelity to the Church, which is not a human institution but a divine one; persistent faith and the devotion to the Mother of God; forgiveness. He denoted him a patriot, an advocate for the right of Croats to their free state and the free Catholic religion, a promoter of the idea of the unity of the Catholic Church and the Croatian people. Batelja also includes in Alojzije Stepinac's heritage numerous built or renovated buildings, and institutions that are Stepinac's legacy to the Croatian people. Finally, Batelja concludes that it is a “legacy that goes beyond any one era, particularly with the power of Christian love” (as cited in Cvjetičanin 2013). Pope John Paul II, in his 1994 visit to Zagreb, described Alojzije Stepinac as “the brightest figure” of the Catholic Church in Croatia (John Paul II 1994a), who after the Second World War “paid in sufferings and trials of every kind for his courageous devotion to the Gospel” (John Paul II 1994b). The Archbishop of Zagreb at that time, the Cardinal Franjo Kuharić, in his opening speech to Pope John Paul II, emphasized how Alojzije Stepinac was a “sign and symbol” of the temptations and tribulations, and persistent devotion to God and the Church “at the price of various forms of renunciation and humiliation, even to the level of martyrdom” (Kuharić 1994).

The Church emphasizes the martyrdom of Stepinac as a counter-memory to the communist regime and its anticlericalism and atheism. For the Church, Stepinac is a symbol of the struggle against the seizure of the Croatian people's right to self-determination and their homeland, and also a symbol of the devotion of the Catholic Church in Croatia to St. Peter's successor—devotion paid with the price of martyrdom. As a victim and martyr of the communist regime, whose martyred death was caused by the suffering of prison (*ex aerumnis carceris*; “Dekret o mučeništvu” 1998, 82), Stepinac was beatified and declared a martyr of the Catholic Church. The ceremony for the declaration was held in the Croatian National Shrine of Marija Bistrica, as requested by Croatian bishops (John Paul II 1998). National-oriented Croatian politicians welcomed the concept of Alojzije Stepinac's heritage as the brightest figure of the Catholic Church in Croatia into their political agenda to articulate and promote the honor and exclusivity of Croatian people. The (recent) president of Croatia also referred to this in her writing in a book of remembrance in the Stepinac memorial house in Krašić, in January 2019: “His love of man and the testimony of truth will always remain a living part of our spiritual heritage and a guiding light of our deeds for the good of the Croatian people and their homeland.”

## Dissonant Heritage

The material presented in the previous sections suggests a dissonance in the conceptualizations of Alojzije Stepinac's heritage. This question is addressed by the term "dissonant heritage," which as Tunbridge and Ashworth state, is not some unforeseen result "of the heritage assembly process," but is rather "intrinsic to the nature of heritage" and inevitable "in a system where selection is unavoidable" (Tunbridge & Ashworth 1996, 20–21). The phenomenon of dissonant heritage points to the coexistence of various inconsistent and discordant concepts and narratives in the construction of heritage.

The present-day silencing of the Stepinac Path, as the data demonstrates, points to fractures in the process of creating and producing the heritage of Alojzije Stepinac, i.e., to the evident gap between the perspectives of the two main actors of the process, tourism institutions and the Catholic Church in Croatia. The forms in which Alojzije Stepinac's past is manifest, and the emphases in his biography are different in these perspectives. This diversity is based on dissonant ideas and viewpoints on current economic, social, and political needs and goals (also including the creation of a pledge for the future) that are set out in the framework of two discordant heritagization policies. "Different intellectual backgrounds, working methods, goals, and ethos" (Ashworth 2011, 3) fill the concept of the heritage of Alojzije Stepinac with inconsistent, dissonant, and contested meanings (Tunbridge & Ashworth 1996).

When considering relics of the past, as Ashworth (2011, 4) states, over time, various paradigms have just been added to, so that they coexist today. When speaking of Alojzije Stepinac's heritage, tourism institutions see heritage in the "heritage paradigm," which is based on the idea of "us[ing] the past in the present." At the same time, the Catholic Church understands heritage in the "preservation paradigm" directed at: "preserv[ing] from the past" (ibid. 10). In this vein, the heritage of Alojzije Stepinac for the former is a "contemporary product shaped from history" (Tunbridge & Ashworth 1996, 20) with economic and social goals that intentionally encourage specific desired changes (Ashworth 2011, 3, 5); for the latter, it is "the contemporary use of the past" for conservation purposes, i.e., "the prevention of change" by which to avoid potential harm (ibid. 5, 7). From the Church's point of view, the potential harm would be the transformation of Alojzije Stepinac's heritage (as the Church conceives it) into goods on the market of ideas and interpretations. The heritage of Alojzije Stepinac, as with everything it considers exclusive religious (i.e., its own) heritage, the Church strives to represent, above all, in the realm of spiritual enrichment and wellbeing.

In speaking of the different meanings of heritage, Nick Merriman focuses on two aspects:

On the positive side, the word is used to describe culture and landscape that are cared for by the community and passed on to the future to serve people's need for a sense of identity and belonging. (...) These positive values of care and identity are in sharp contrast to the more negative and pejorative views on the term heritage. In this sense, as used in the 'heritage industry', the word has become synonymous with the manipulation (or even invention) and exploitation of the past for commercial ends. (Merriman 1991, 8)

Although Merriman's value judgments of different understandings of the term heritage are problematic, in the context of the heritagization of Alojzije Stepinac, tourism institutions would represent the negative side. Nevertheless, the fact is that the process of Stepinac's heritagization, irrespective of whether the perspective of tourism institutions or the Church is concerned, includes "positive values of care and identity," using (rather than exploiting) the past, and managing (rather than manipulating) it, to achieve benefits that include those of a commercial nature. However, while keeping to Merriman's aspects, the question is who and which community and level of identity are contemplated, how the past is used and managed, and for whom benefits are generated. Furthermore, heritagization can be a "top-down" process or "bottom-up" decision-making; it can be based on separate projects using separate legislation or joint projects; it can be directed at encouraging national, or local and regional values and distinctiveness; it can be a source of national unity or cultural diversity; it can be based on formal and authoritative interpretations or interpretations open to different values; it can rest on an idea directed at a specific designated site, or on an idea of significance to the landscape as a whole (Clark 2000, 104–105).

The Stepinac Path project focuses on various aspects of Stepinac's biography written into the landscape of a whole region and is conceived as a link to the European cultural trail the Mary's Pilgrimage Route. According to the ideas of tourism institutions, as a regional religious tourist trail, it connects and gathers together the religious, cultural, and natural heritage of many local communities. It thus depends on the collaboration and decision-making of local and regional institutions in the area it passes through. One of the project goals is the economic development of the communities it connects, so the project's benefits are directed toward the communities themselves. On the one hand, in connecting the community's cultural and natural heritage in one space marked by various aspects of Stepinac's life, the Path separates and highlights local and regional values and distinctiveness. On the other hand, as a link to the European Marian Trail, the Stepinac Path is written into the idea of shared European identity based on the motto "unity in diversity."

Other than that, insisting on the martyrdom of Alojzije Stepinac, based on which he is beatified, and representing the heritage of Stepinac's entire biography exclusively in a religious and spiritual register, is an instrument for securing the political power of the Catholic Church in Croatia in decision-making in the heritagization process. In the Church paradigm of creating heritage, Stepinac is transposed in a historic site, the exclusive locus of which is centered in the Zagreb Cathedral. A thus-conceived concept of heritage directs the benefits of heritagization toward the Church. As "the brightest figure" of the Catholic Church in Croatia, a Croatian patriot and an advocate for Croatian religious and national rights and freedom, the Church concept promotes Stepinac as a symbol of national values and a generator of religious and national unity.

A consequence of the dissonance "of the heritage assembly process" is a profit for one and a loss for others, because the created heritage is someone's and therefore not someone else's:

[A]ny creation of heritage from the past disinherits someone completely or partially, actively or potentially. This disinheritance may be unintentional, temporary, of trivial importance, limited in its effects and concealed; or it may be long-term, widespread, intentional, important and obvious. (Tunbridge and Ashworth 1996, 21)

The discrepancy in the various approaches to creating Alojzije Stepinac's heritage is reflected in the current silencing of the Stepinac Path. Such an outcome points to the heritagizing power relations and wider social and political processes in Croatia, which heritagization mirrors.

### **Of What Does the Silenced Stepinac Path Speak?**

Reviewing the use of heritage, Smith writes of how heritage can support and legitimize national narratives and identities, or even "the diversity of community experience and identity claims" (Smith 2006, 5). In Croatia, but also in other countries, as stated by Astor et al. (2017), where national and religious identity are powerfully interwoven, the discourse of heritage with religious symbolism supports national myths and symbols of the "iconic representation of the nation"; at the same time, more recently, such processes have intensified due to, among others, "questions regarding the cultural foundations of European identity stemming from deepening processes of European integration" (Astor et al. 2017, 128, 129).

In the previous section, it has been shown how the Catholic Church in Croatia has shaped Stepinac's legacy into the concept of the "spiritual heritage of Alojzije Stepinac," referring to the religious and spiritual aspects of his life. Addressing such a legacy of Stepinac in the form of "the brightest figure" of the Catholic Church in Croatia seeks to strengthen the Church's unity as an institution and, as a community of Croatian believers gathered in solid faith, loyalty to the Church, its credibility. In addition, the heritage of Alojzije Stepinac in creating the Church is related to the idea of nation-building; it strives to instill a sense of belonging to the nation and national unity. As imagined by the Church, Stepinac's heritage reflects opposition to the suppression of national identities in the concept of European unity and blurred European identity. From that way, it seems, the Church opposes a pluralist and democratically oriented policy that breaks strong ties with religious beliefs and restricts the role of the Church in public life. For the Church, Stepinac symbolizes a strong ecclesiastical institution and of resistance to anticlericalism and secularization.

Tourism institutions identify heritage as a part of economic development strategies, moreover, as "an economic sector in itself, using resources, producing products and generating returns in profits and jobs" (Graham et al. 2000, 155). From the perspective of tourism institutions, Stepinac's heritage strives to incorporate a version of Stepinac's figure, made up of different aspects of his life, into European processes of economic integration and identity formation. This implies the weakening of national borders and the strengthening of local and regional communities and development. Consequently, the layers of Stepinac's martyrdom and his role as a leading figure in the national mythology and Croatian Catholicism become diluted.

The Stepinac Path project designer said: “The question of Stepinac is a question of fracturing worldviews.” According to the tourism sector, which relies on the Council of Europe and the UNESCO’s concept of cultural heritage, heritage with an included religious component is “fashioned [...] for the benefit of all, regardless of their religious or non-religious affiliation” (Astor et al. 2017, 139). Thus, religion in such a discourse no longer mirrors an inherited tradition of the nation and can hardly be embedded in the process of national identification.

The silencing of the Stepinac Path reflects the advantage of a discourse on the monolithic legacy of Alojzije Stepinac, which addresses his martyrdom and patriotism, and which ensures the power of the Catholic Church in Croatia and the unity of the Catholic Church and the Croatian people. As the Stepinac Path project subsumes the original martyrdom and sacred quality of Stepinac in other aspects of his life and other cultural and economic contents, the Church does not support such a polyvalent approach to his legacy. The Church contravenes the idea that Stepinac becomes part of an industry, the object of “the manipulation (or even invention) and exploitation for commercial ends” (Merriman 1991, 8). Additionally, it resists the dispersal of veneration from its power center, the Zagreb Cathedral, to Krašić and other places that feature in Stepinac’s biography. The center of veneration is also a resource of various benefits.

The silencing of the Stepinac Path points to the power of the Church, even to its self-naturalizing role in orchestrating the creation of Alojzije Stepinac’s heritage. Moreover, the Stepinac Path generally casts light on the authority and primacy of the Catholic Church in Croatia in the heritagization of a legacy with religious attributes.

## Conclusion

The silenced Stepinac Path, like every silenced space, reflects and points to the multiple and often dissonant meanings framed in the dimensions of power, as well as pointing to current social processes. The coexistence of divergent and contested perspectives in creating and understanding heritage was given the term dissonant heritage by Tunbridge and Ashworth (1996). In this article, the term serves as an analytical category deployed to discuss what the silenced Path communicates about the controversy over discordant conceptions of Alojzije Stepinac’s heritage, a martyr and beatified person of the Catholic Church.

The meaning of Stepinac’s heritage produced by the tourism institutions, which have created the project of the religious tourist route, differs from that created by the Catholic Church in Croatia, which first inaugurated the idea of “spiritual heritage” connected with him. The disparity of concepts surrounding the Stepinac heritage reflects different views of current social, economic, and political needs and goals, different roles that the heritage can and should have in contemporary socio-economic processes, different approaches to Stepinac’s past and different paradigms in the creation of heritage. The preservation paradigm of the Church in its approach to the heritage of the Blessed Alojzije Stepinac presents him as a figure who confirms and preserves the program and unity of the Catholic Church in Croatia. The Church, as an institution

and community of believers, also consider Stepinac as a symbol of national values and a generator of religious and national unity. Such a paradigm mirrors a reckoning with the atheist political past in this region and the opposition of the Church to contemporary democratic and pluralist politics marked by secularism. Tourism institutions base their concern for Stepinac's legacy on a heritage paradigm, promoting his figure by inscribing different aspects of his life in the regional landscape and incorporating them in European processes of economic integration and the idea of "unity in diversity." In such a paradigm, the martyrdom and holiness of Stepinac melt into a cultural polyphony, while the man and martyr, from the position of the Church, transforms into an object for commercial benefit. The result of the power relations between these two perspectives in shaping Alojzije Stepinac's heritage is the silencing of the Stepinac Path.

The notion of the Blessed Stepinac's heritage necessarily falls into a religious register. In so doing, the Church's insistence on "their" heritage of Alojzije Stepinac excludes the plurality of the political space around his figure. The silenced Stepinac Path reflects the power and leading role of the Church in the heritagization of a religious legacy, which furthermore opens questions concerning the attitude of the Church to its natural primacy in managing such processes.

#### Notes

- 1 The leader of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia and the President of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia from 1945 to 1980.
- 2 A part of the project linking four mnemonic sites of Alojzije Stepinac.
- 3 A renowned Roman Catholic weekly in Croatia, published by the Archdiocesan Cathedral in Zagreb since 1962.

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