

***“Empowerment:***

***Or how people gain greater control over their individual and collective lives  
and contribute actively to the advancement of society”***

**Keynote**

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## 1. Introduction: The context

Empowerment is a key term of the overall theme of this International Summer Academy “**The Role of Participation, Empowerment and Sustainable Development in Heritage Studies and its Corresponding Disciplines**”.

As experience indicates and as we all know, without active engagement and participation of responsible citizens and communities – without an active civil society as driver of change - democracy cannot flourish and sustainable development cannot be advanced.

As it is outlined in the programme of this summer academy, the **involvement of local communities in the field of world heritage** has become a key requirement and a necessary measure to achieve sustainable development. On the one hand, community participation is one of the strategic objectives of the UNESCO Global Strategy. On the other hand, observations have shown that the protection of heritage can best be ensured by involving local communities and placing protection in their own hands.

To address the **role of empowerment** in Heritage Studies is about reflecting on the people, the citizens, in particular the young people, living in World Heritage Sites – which means it is about the local owners of the material and immaterial heritage – of their heritage – and about their power to take the responsibility and ownership and to participate actively in the promotion, protection, maintenance and further development of their world’s natural and cultural heritage including the intangible heritage and in sustainable development.

In order to enable students and future leaders to support the local communities in this process, to support the development of an inclusive and active civil society through and for World Heritage and the Intangible Heritage and to facilitate empowerment processes at local, national and transnational level, the questions for Heritage Studies are:

- Which themes and competences need to be included in the curriculum of Heritage Studies?
- Which are the key issues that need to be addressed in research of the International Graduate School Heritage Studies?

The programme of this International Summer Academy Cottbus: “Understanding Heritage” provides a wide range of opportunities for learning and reflections and for developing further perspectives for the curriculum and in particular for research.

**Empowerment** is a widely discussed concept in social sciences and an implemented approach in a growing number of local, national and international social practices and policies including the international cooperation and development work.

What are the different understandings of and approaches to empowerment? What are the definitions, key dimensions and levels of empowerment?

Let me go into details and start with the origins of the term “empowerment”.

## 2. Origins of the term “empowerment”

The term “empowerment” was born in the 1970s in the United States and used in two very different ways:

- It was first introduced by the civil rights movement, the black power feminist movement in particular, and by the community-based social work aiming at bottom-up social change combatting inequality, discrimination, poverty and social exclusion initiated and fought for by the people and activist groups themselves.

The strategy for generating power for women was inspired by the US American black power movement of the 1960s and by Paulo FREIRE’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970/1996). The central premise was that of understanding social relations as power relations. These approaches shared the view of advocacy from below, from the South, from marginalized groups, from minorities, from the oppressed.

With the introduction of the idea of empowerment into international cooperation and development policy programmes at the *3<sup>rd</sup> International Women’s conference in Nairobi in 1985*, the idea took a steep trajectory.

At that time, empowerment was introduced as a women’s political strategy from below in order to break exploitative and oppressive structures and pursue the dual aim of eliminating poverty and the gender hierarchy.

This strategy distanced itself from and criticised those women’s development approaches aimed at ‘integration in development’ as equality-oriented feminism.

- Opposite of this more radical origin of empowerment, at almost the same time in the 1970s, conservative thinkers in the United States began to use the term “empowerment” as well. But for them it was about doing away with the welfare state and giving responsible and power to intermediary institutions such as family and church and others – institutions that have certain values and teach people what they are supposed to do. I will not go into further details about this position but focus on the development of the first position I outlined.

Since its origins, the concept of empowerment was further influenced by the women’s empowerment movement, but it was also further advanced and refined by the various disciplines of social sciences and interdisciplinary approaches in particular, and by different concepts of change, developed by a number of public, independent and private national and international key players.

Furthermore, it was advanced by the practical experiences and expertise of self-help initiatives and protest actions of socially disadvantaged, marginalised people aiming at eliminating discriminatory and unjust structures, as well as changing the power relations. It

has become a key concept of youth policy of some local, regional, national governments and of the European Union. In some cases it has become a guiding concept for the work of international cooperation and development organisations and key players.

### 3. Empowerment: Definitions, key dimensions and different levels

Against this background, empowerment is a widely discussed concept in social sciences and related practices and accordingly in an extensive international literature. As a result it has a wide range of meanings with individual and social connotations, with different dimensions and levels, with different perspectives of change and social-political implications.

I would like to begin with two different perspectives which are suggested to look at empowerment:

- **Self-Empowerment of people affected by power- and helplessness and exclusion**

This perspective emphasises the active acquisition of power, energy, agency and creative power by the people themselves as individuals and as groups.

In this perspective, empowerment is seen as a process of re-construction of self-determination, autonomy and control. Examples are: Self-help groups, citizens' movements etc.

- The second perspective looks at

  - Empowerment as professional support for gaining autonomy, self-determination and capacity to act**

At the core of this perspective is the aspect of support and promotion of autonomy, self-determination and capacity to act **through professional helpers**. Examples are: social-psychological, psychotherapeutic interventions, social work, interventions in the international cooperation and development work etc.

Whatever perspective is taken, it can be observed that the term "empowerment" is used to indicate **a process** of empowering groups or individuals as well as to indicate **an outcome** – a person or group is empowered. Empowerment stands for a dynamic process which results in the outcome of an expansion both of individuals' and collective capacities and spheres of action.

I would like to share with you how some national and international organisations that are key players in the international cooperation and development work define empowerment.

My first example is **The World Bank**, as one of the largest international organisations that tries to overcome the inequality between the North and the South through numerous projects and substantial funding.

The World Bank stresses in its definition that:

*“Empowerment is the process of increasing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes. Central to this process are actions which both build individual and collective assets, and improve the efficiency and fairness of the organizational and institutional context which govern the use of these assets.” (WORLD BANK WEBSITE 2005; ALSOP/HEINSOHN 2005)*

My second example is the UN, the **United Nations**, which stresses in *The Human Development Report 1995* that empowerment is about participation:

*“Empowerment. Development must be by people, not only for them. People must participate fully in the decisions and processes that shape their lives.” (UN, 1995)*

With regard to women’s empowerment the UN emphasises that:

*“Investing in women’s capabilities and empowering them to exercise their choices is not only valuable in itself but is also the surest way to contribute to economic growth and overall development.” (UN, 1995)*

Finally examples from the independent sector:

- **Oxfam International**, a non-for-profit non-governmental federation with 17 member organisations aiming at working together for greater impact on the international stage to reduce poverty and injustice. As well as becoming a world leader in the delivery of emergency relief, Oxfam International implements long-term development programs in vulnerable communities.

For Oxfam *“Empowerment involves challenging the forms of oppression which compel millions of people to play a part in their society on terms which are inequitable, or in ways which deny their human rights (Oxfam, 1995)”*

- **Heinrich Böll Stiftung**, the Green Political Foundation of Germany with an international scope, understands empowerment as

*“... Enhancement of the political, social, economic and spiritual strength of a community or a person who are structurally disadvantaged through social constructs such as “race”, religion, gender, sexuality, class, disability and age. To support individuals and communities whom equal opportunities are denied because of structural barriers to realise their rights and to participate in society at all levels.”*

- **The Barrow Cadbury Trust**, a UK-based independent, charitable foundation, committed to bringing about socially just change. Empowerment is part of their published values:

*“The Trust seeks to uphold and extend the rights of marginalised groups, to reflect the grassroots experience of local communities and to support them in making their voices heard.”* (Website Barrow Cadbury Trust)

Some of the key aspects mentioned in these definitions are shared among many authors and show that the understanding of empowerment is based on a multi-disciplinary approach. It is interpreted and substantiated in the social sciences, in particular in psychology, social-psychology, in medicine, in educational science, in social pedagogy as well as in political sciences and in related fields of practice such as social work, crisis intervention work, trauma work etc.

In John FRIEDMAN’s (1992) understanding, empowerment refers to all those processes that lead people to take control and ownership of their lives that requires according to Nina STRANDBERG (2001), an array of opportunities to choose among. This understanding of empowerment overlaps with the *concept of human development* when defined as a process of enlarging people's choices. STRANDBERG (2001, p.3) further conceptualises empowerment as a *‘transformative process’* that is experienced both on the personal and the collective level.

Empowerment goes beyond ‘participation in development’. It addresses the need to transform development.

In their reflection on “power” - the key part in the term empowerment – RODENBERG and WICHTERICH (1999) argue that

*“...power is understood in a positive sense as the rights of access to and control over resources as well as decisional and structural capacities in the household as well as in politics, economics, and culture. Power so defined does not result in domination over others but rather the ability, energy, and structural capacity to act and negotiate, to resist dominance, to define and decide, to shape and compensate. Power is the power to change...the potential to transform.”*

Despite the use of various terminologies, there are commonalities between different views.

FRIEDMAN (1992) suggests differentiating psychological empowerment, social empowerment and political empowerment. In a comparable way, BECKER AND WEYERMANN (2006) identify the individual level (‘power within’), the level of the close social context (‘power with’) and the broader context of changing social power relations (‘power over’).

Developments on all three levels are, according to these definitions, interlinked and cannot be separated. On an individual level, empowerment includes the personal development associated with an increasing self-confidence and a deepening of the understanding of one’s own situation. To achieve empowerment, the nature and extent of disempowerment has to

be closely analyzed in order to develop and to be able to use one's own resources in a better way.

This process of increasing personal awareness is often perceived as a crucial precondition for change, yet empowerment cannot be reduced to the individual level alone. The social and political levels are critical to exert power and to make real choices. The second level (social empowerment / power with) acknowledges the fact that *'change can take place when people work together. This involves thinking, acting and networking with others'* (in both conventional and new ways through Social Media).

Empowerment also means doing something about it. It means actual participation in the social process with a realistic prospect of changing existing power structures. Ultimately, empowerment includes the macro-level, as well, and must be concerned with changing realities and power relationships.

In their analysis of women's projects in developing countries, RODENBERG and WICHTERICH (1999) identify further dimensions and levels of empowerment. Similar to the three levels mentioned above, they speak about **'personal empowerment'**, **'social empowerment'**, and **'political empowerment'**. Additionally, they coined the terms **'cultural empowerment'**, **'legal empowerment'** and **'economic empowerment'**. By economic empowerment they are referring to economic literacy, property, social security, decision-making power regarding money. Legal empowerment includes legal security, knowledge of the existing laws, and the ability to influence legislation. Cultural empowerment, finally, includes the power to shape cultural definitions and influence the symbolic order. In their view, empowerment processes can lead to changing social relationships and those socio-cultural norms which entail discrimination.

The identified dimensions have not only been used to define empowerment on the descriptive level but also to develop a referential framework for a comprehensive view of empowerment aims and processes – to create an analytic instrument for measuring empowerment-related processes and outcomes.

Due to the growing interest and increased investments in empowerment by the public, independent and private sector, the analytic work including the development of instruments and indicators with which to monitor and evaluate empowerment processes and outcomes developed fast over the last decades with significant contributions from social sciences and supported by various key players in the international cooperation and development work, such as The World Bank, GIZ Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit, national Ministries as well as a number of large independent foundations.

I would like to conclude this part of my presentation with the remark that in each case, the empowerment concept and approach needs to be reflected in the light of its normative-ethical frame of reference and its specific conceptual understanding of human being – the **"Menschenbild"**.

The concept of empowerment as such, is also a critique of how the clients of social welfare programmes have been traditionally understood. These individuals and groups have typically been defined by deficiencies rather than by their capacities, experiences and aspirations. As a consequence, willingly or unwillingly, there is an inherent power relationship between providers of assistance and their needy clients who are dependent on assistance. The empowerment approach was developed to break up this power relationship by viewing disadvantaged groups as potential actors for change. It is driven by an inherent trust in people's strengths and on a normative orientation toward principles of autonomy, social justice and democratic participation (BLECKMANN and KRÜGER, 2007, p. 12).

This means that the empowerment concept initiated a shift of paradigm with regard to the conceptual understanding of human being and the power relations – from the deficit-orientation to the resource-orientation, from paternalisms to respectful and equal relationships. For example, professionals who are involved in empowerment processes are supposed to act as facilitators not as teachers.

#### **4. Empowerment: The multi-dimensional and multi-level concept and approach in practice - The “YEPP” approach and methodology**

Empowerment requires an interdisciplinary, multi-sectoral and cross-border approach that is consonant with its complexity.

I would like to present to you an example of an empowerment approach which is committed to the following definition of empowerment:

“Empowerment refers to all those processes that lead citizens – including young people to:

*“... taking responsibility for, control and ownership of their individual and collective lives and destinies; having the ability and the power to contribute effectively to the advancement of their communities and society at large thus building active and sustainable communities based on social justice and mutual respect, solidarity and cooperation.” (EVANS and KRÜGER, 2012) It is about having access to an array of opportunities to choose among.*

The approach, I am going to present, is committed to empowerment by citizens and young people themselves and to the provision of support to the most vulnerable and disadvantaged people to become empowered.

#### **Context: What is “YEPP”?**

“YEPP” is a well-tested and widely recognised **concept of change** that grew out of the Youth Empowerment Partnership Programme (YEPP). The Youth Empowerment Partnership Programme was implemented over a period of 10 years (2001 – 2011). It was active in 18 disadvantaged communities in 8 European countries including Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Poland and Slovakia.



The Programme was a joint initiative of a group of independent European and US foundations, the OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) and the Institute for Community Education, International Academy for Innovative Pedagogy, Psychology and Economics (INAgGmbH) at the Free University of Berlin (Germany) (now: International Academy Berlin for Innovative Pedagogy, Psychology and Economics (INAgGmbH) working under the auspices of the Network of European Foundations for Innovative Cooperation (NEF). I was one of the initiators of the Programme and the Programme Director for the whole programme period.

The partner organisations didn't want to invent the wheel again but brought together their collective resources - their expertise, experiences and funds – thus creating synergies and working in partnership to combat social exclusion in marginalised communities across Europe – communities which offered little or no opportunities for young people - and to bring about lasting changes.

Its Mission was to develop sustainable, participatory and empowering processes to build an active civil society with disadvantaged youth and the communities they live in. (10 Years of YEPP Policy Folder, 2011)

Together with young people, local and European practitioners, researchers, decision-makers and politicians we engaged in youth and community empowerment work at local, regional, national and European level.

In 2011, the foundation-led Programme came to an end but the “YEPP” approach and methodology did not – it is further practised in a growing number of communities and municipalities, in particular in Italy.

Based on the results of the internal and external evaluation of the Programme where significant achievements were described, the majority of representatives of all stakeholder groups decided in a broad and participatory consultation process within the YEPP Community to establish at the beginning of 2012 the YEPP International Resource Centre (YEPP IRC) (now: YEPP EUROPE) at the Institute for Community Education of the International Academy in Berlin in order to build on the results and assets of the Youth Empowerment Partnership Programme and to further support local communities in Europe and beyond who implement or wish to implement the “YEPP” approach and methodology.

What is the YEPP Concept of Change all about?

### **The YEPP Concept of change: Key elements and essence of the YEPP approach and methodology**

Following a rights-based approach in accordance with the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child, YEPP's concept of change was inspired by community development, community organising and community education approaches, the “Contextual Approach”, the “Can-Do” Approach and action research as well as best practices of public-private partnerships. Also,

empowerment approaches and practices in the international cooperation and development work influenced the YEPP concept. It was also inspired by lessons learnt from urban regeneration programmes of the 1980s and 1990s that included residents' participation.

The YEPP Concept of Change is based on a set of common goals, principles and working methods. They form the **conceptual common ground** to which the members of the YEPP Community – the local stakeholders, the professionals and the partners - commit to.

## Goals

It pursues **five goals**:

- **youth empowerment** - to enable young people to participate in local decision-making processes, to create change within their communities and become active citizens in the wider society;
- ➔ **youth empowerment is embedded in community empowerment**
- **community empowerment** - to create self-confident and competent communities so that residents and local stakeholders become active citizens and advocate changes to the environment in which children and youth develop;
- **partnership** – to establish strong and sustainable partnerships and strategic alliances involving actors from different sectors as well as different levels, in order to foster youth and community empowerment;
- **advocacy** - to influence public and independent policies to ensure that the principles of youth and community empowerment and partnership become mainstream and are transformed into action at all levels;
- **learning** - to provide opportunities for learning and self-development through exchange and transfer of knowledge and expertise at local, regional, national and international level.

Following the identification of dimensions and levels of empowerment of RODENBERG/WICHTERICH, we developed the **YEPP Empowerment Matrix** to define empowerment and to develop a framework and indicators for monitoring and evaluating the achievements of the Programme in terms of empowerment – at individual and at community levels.

## YEPP Empowerment Matrix

<b>Areas</b>	<b>Individual</b>	<b>Community</b>
<b>Personal-Social</b>	Identity Confidence and values Social skills Personal relationships	Community image and identity Social capital
<b>Political</b>	Active youth participation Skills and knowledge about participation	Self-organising ability of the population Participation opportunities Transparency of the public sector
<b>Economic</b>	Employability, entrepreneurship Skills and knowledge about the economy and working life	Working and training opportunities Economic development
<b>Cultural</b>	Cultural identity Values and attitudes Respect Inter-cultural knowledge and skills	Integration of various cultural groups Rich artistic/cultural life
<b>Education and training</b>	Motivation, capabilities Formal educational and training successes	Educational opportunities Quality of schools (general and vocational education)
<b>Legal</b>	Legal knowledge	Civil rights
<b>Health and environment</b>	Mental and physical health Knowledge about health Respect towards nature	Health services Unpolluted environment Public awareness of the environment

## Non-negotiable key features of YEPP as guiding principles

Derived from discussions of youth and community empowerment, YEPP developed a set of 10 non-negotiable key features that have become part of the common ground of all YEPP stakeholder groups as guiding principles underpinning the work at all levels and includes for example:

- Identify the needs of the local community and mobilise local resources
- Engage local stakeholders as motor of change
- Recognise young people as competent individuals and experts of their situation, not merely as recipients of assistance and aid;  
engage young people as drivers of change having decision-making power;
- Engage local stakeholders, including young people, in joint strategic planning based on the YEPP Concept of Change and Participatory YEPP Monitoring and Evaluation design (PYME) leading to recurrent systematic processes of analysis, planning, implementation and evaluation.
- Establish cross-sectoral partnerships
- Invest in capacity-building
- Integrate systematically the work at local, regional, national and transnational level
- Advocate for policy change

## Common working methods

The YEPP Concept of Change includes a set of common working methods, in particular the YEPP infrastructure which needs to be set up and the YEPP Cycle of Change.

YEPP uses mainly non-formal learning methods and provides and facilitates a number of learning and capacity-building opportunities.

## YEPP's multi-level approach

Within the YEPP Concept of Change, the multi-level approach is one of the key conceptual elements. It integrates systematically the work at local, regional, national and international level.

### ➔ At the local level

In the YEPP Local Sites, stakeholders from the public, private and independent sectors including young people get organised in informal action groups or formal non-for-profit organisations such as NGOs and community foundations. They are called **Local Support Groups**, and work together to bring about the change they want to achieve within the framework of the agreed common overall goals and principles, as I just outlined.

Supported by a **professional team** - a Local Coordinator and an Evaluation Facilitator – Local Support Groups engage in a continuous participatory strategic planning and community

development model of working which is driven by an on-going process of analysis, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation – the so called **YEPP Cycle of Change**.

The Cycle of Change starts with establishing the Local Support Group. With the support of the Professional Team, this Group engages in an in-depth **analysis of the situation** and agrees on the **Operational Plan** including the key issues it would like to address, the objectives it would like to achieve and the activities and project it plans to implement.

At the same time, the Local Support Group agrees on the **Monitoring and Evaluation Plan** including indicators, outputs and outcomes. Local Monitoring Teams accompany the process of the implementation of the Operational Plan.

Based on the results of the reflection and evaluation, the next phase of the cycle starts with an update of the situation analysis and leads into a refined planning and implementation, monitoring and evaluation process.

#### ➔ **At the regional and national level**

Local Sites that are situated in the same region and/or country establish **informal or formal Clusters** as a platform for trans local professional exchange, collaboration and strategic alliance with a stronger voice to be heard at the political level, e.g. YEPP Italia.

#### ➔ **At the international level**

The local development processes are supported systematically by a transnational working and learning network – the **YEPP Community Network**. It includes all YEPP Local Sites, the YEPP International Resource Centre and all the partners. In response to the needs of its members, the YEPP Community Network functions as a platform for regular cross-border peer learning and exchanges, for transnational collaboration and strategic alliances, joint trans local and transnational initiatives and projects for all YEPP stakeholder groups.

Transnational activities include: YEPP Community Conferences and Youth Meetings, bi-lateral study visits and exchanges, twinning arrangements; capacity-building workshops and trainings on the YEPP Concept of Change, on themes such as Entrepreneurship, Advocacy, Digital Media for Active Citizenship and Social Inclusion,

### **YEPP's achievements**

I would like to share with you some of the achievements of YEPP.

The **internal and external as well as participatory evaluation** of the Programme **provided enough evidence** to show that YEPP works and brings about the targeted changes in disadvantaged local areas and regions across Europe when well implemented and supported and does so in a wide variety of different situations and cultures – from the rural area of the West Coast of Finland with Swedish speaking Finns, to the North Inner City of Dublin, the

capital of Ireland, to villages in the Eastern part of Slovakia with a large Roma population faced with the problem of severe exclusion, to the post-war situation of Bosnia & Herzegovina – still obvious when we started to work there in 2000 - and the growing community development and community organising activities and structures in Tuzla. (EVANS and KRÜGER, 2012)

Significant and sustainable changes in youth and community empowerment, civic engagement and active citizenship, cross-sectoral partnership and youth policies have been achieved in the participating Local Sites. Within the conceptual framework of YEPP, each programme site developed its own locally relevant activities and a great variety and diversity of best practices emerged that led to local changes which we can cautiously identify as being caused by YEPP.

It can be said that YEPP contributed in the Local Sites significantly to youth participation in decision-making processes, to bridging the gap between citizens and politics, to overcoming fragmentation of services, providing access to education and preparing for access to employment, to develop social cohesion – and to emotional recognition of young people and the communities they live in.

The YEPP Community Network has become an inspirational network interlinking the transnational with the local work in a systematic way, reflecting the needs and resources, showcasing and recognising examples of best practice of the young people and other local stakeholder groups.

The Network has become beneficial to the personal growth and the development of the local communities. It has enhanced and strengthened in particular the motivation of young people for local change processes as well as established collaboration, has built new partnerships and, finally, strengthened our joint advocacy work.

Finally, establishing the YEPP International Resource Centre as a mission-oriented service provider and support agency building on the results and assets of the Youth Empowerment Partnership Programme and further promoting the “YEPP” approach and methodology was a significant achievement in itself. It demonstrates to a certain degree that sustainability has been achieved.

## **5. Conclusions**

To conclude my presentation, I would like to summarise that - based on the understanding of heritage that stands for sustainable human development - empowerment becomes a key issue and key strategy for interpreting the cultural, natural and intangible heritage and for developing future-oriented strategies of sustainable human memory policy!

It is about facilitating capacities and opportunities, opening up choices and increasing the spiritual, political, social, educational, gender, or economic strength of individuals and communities

- to build an active civil society to take ownership and become the motor and agent of the promotion, protection, maintenance and future-oriented development of their natural and cultural heritage including the intangible heritage
- to safeguard, live and enhance cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue and sustainable development
- to develop strategic alliances to influence policies
- to produce an effect in the local community, the Heritage Site, and at national and international level
- to take part in World Heritage as transnationally shared experience and commitment of civil society.

### **Challenges for Heritage Studies**

- To further contribute to theory-based understanding and further development of the protection and the sustainability of World Heritage and of Intangible Heritage;
- To include community development and empowerment approaches in the programme of Heritage Studies;
- To enable future professionals to support the development of an inclusive and active civil society through and for World Heritage and Intangible Heritage and to facilitate empowerment processes at a local level, national and transnational level;
- To prepare future professionals for enabling young people and other citizens to resource the sustainability of World Heritage and Intangible Heritage;
- To integrate the work at local level with international exchanges across the World;
- To commit to research about open questions and key issues pertaining to participation, empowerment and sustainable development;

For example:

How to motivate citizens and in particular young people who are passive and have turned their back to democracy to become an active, contributing citizen and engage in democratic processes?

How to reach the most marginalised citizens and in particular the most vulnerable young people?

There is a lot of experience and expertise gained in many initiatives, projects, and measures worldwide but there is a need to substantiate them with research at global scale and to make the results accessible for the professional, practitioners, experts and organisations at the local, regional, national and international levels.

It needs to be recognised that monitoring and evaluation in this particular field has been further developed by social sciences and has become more and more an integral part of most of the initiatives, projects, measures and policies which is crucial for measuring outcome and impact and for improving and further advancing participation, empowerment and sustainable development.

Nevertheless, there is still a need for a refined research concept and approach to interpret and substantiate the many singular results through research and analytic work as well as international debate in order to support and advance the practices and policies at local, national and international level. These are areas of research responsibility and I think that Heritage Studies have to play an important role in this research and in publishing the advanced knowledge.

At this International Summer Academy Cottbus: Understanding Heritage you address and work on a number of key issues and some of the key questions pertaining to participation, empowerment and sustainable development. I know that you will make the results of your work available in a series of publications. This will contribute significantly to clarifying, substantiating and further advancing the role of participation, empowerment and sustainable development in Heritage Studies and its corresponding disciplines and this will enrich and support the work of many committed citizens, young people, professional practitioners, researchers, politicians and will contribute significantly to bringing about social change for advancing sustainable development!

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