

Why Is Your Chosen Heritage Object Worth Protecting?

Based on Throsby, "Heritage Economics: A Conceptual Framework"

Duration: ca. 30' minutes

Materials: Please bring one PPT slide with a cultural heritage object you value (tangible or intangible): It can be a photo of a site you treasure, a link to a piece of music, an art object, a document, a personal or family item, etc.



Fair is fair... Here is one of my absolute favorite culture objects:



"Voi che sapete" ("You who know") is a famous aria from Mozart's opera *Le nozze di Figaro* (The Marriage of Figaro), sung by the adolescent page Cherubino to the Countess and Susanna in Act II, where he, a girl-crazy teenager, seeks their advice on the confusing feelings of first love, describing his sudden pangs of desire and emotional turmoil as a mix of delight and torment. Its tenderness makes me cry from delight.

Step 1 — Individual Preparation (2-3 minutes)

Please open your slide and jot down brief notes responding to two questions grounded in Throsby's framework:

1. **Heritage as an asset:**

Throsby describes heritage as a cultural asset that yields “a flow of services” over time if properly maintained (pp. 3–4).

How does your chosen heritage object function as an asset? What does it provide—culturally, socially, symbolically?

2. **Cultural value:**

Using Throsby's cultural value dimensions—such as aesthetic, spiritual, social, historical, symbolic, authenticity (pp. 9–11)

Which of these forms of value are present in your object?

3. **Monetization:**

Consider economic value pathways that Throsby outlines (tourism, willingness-to-pay, contributions, commercial uses, etc., pp. 7–9).

Could your object be monetized? If so, how—and to what end?

Step 2 — Heritage Objects Walkthrough (10–12 minutes)

One at a time, please briefly present your heritage object (1-2' each).

Layers:

A. Cultural Value (Throsby's Framework)

- *Which cultural value dimensions seem most relevant here?*
- *How do these values help explain why this object should be protected?*

B. Heritage as Capital

- *What ongoing “services” (social, identity-forming, symbolic, educational) does this object provide?*
- *What maintenance, care, or transmission does it require?*

Drawing on Throsby's framing of heritage as a stock of capital whose benefits depend on sustained stewardship.

C. Monetization (Beyond Throsby, but compatible with his economic value reasoning)

- *Could this object be monetized in some way—directly or indirectly?*

(Examples: ticketing, tourism, performances, craft sales, licensing, workshops, educational programming, heritage branding.)

- *If monetization is possible, does it enhance or threaten the object's cultural value?*
- *To what end should monetization be pursued (for maintenance expenses, community benefit, awareness, economic development?)*
- *If monetization is not appropriate, why not? What risks would it introduce?*

While Throsby does not prescribe monetization, he explains that some heritage assets lend themselves to economic valuation while others do not, and that cultural value often exceeds or resists monetary framing.

Step 3 — Synthesis (5 minutes)

Our findings and conclusions:

1. **Heritage value is multidimensional**
The diverse objects students selected will demonstrate that cultural significance cannot be reduced to monetary terms alone.
2. **Heritage requires investment because it is capital**
Each object—whether a recipe, a song, a family photograph, or a building—requires care, maintenance, or transmission to preserve its value.
3. **Sustainability is a responsibility**
Evaluating which objects matter reveals why heritage financing is essential: without resources, the “flow of services” they provide to society diminishes or disappears.