

# PANEL 21

## *International Public History and memory\**

PANEL COORDINATO DA **SERGE NOIRET** (PRESIDENTE AIPH)

\* PANEL COSTITUITO DA PROPOSTE INDIVIDUALI SELEZIONATE PER AIPH 2022

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### ABSTRACT

### *The Concept(s) of Cultural Heritage in Russia: the cases of Likhachev Institute and “Arkhnadzor”*

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In our paper, we analyse how the concepts of cultural heritage are interpreted and used by official state institutions and public memorial and conservation projects in contemporary Russia. Though both of them appeal to the international definitions of cultural heritage adopted by UNESCO, their interpretations and uses vary. Involving the methods of critical heritage studies (esp. L. Smith’s concept of “authorized heritage discourse”, AHD) we analyse a defining role that the concept of cultural heritage has in their discourses and practices. At the same time, we are working in frames of the public history research program explicating the problem of “shared authority” in our cases.

In our paper we will compare uses of heritage concepts by two important actors of the Russian heritagization processes: Likhachev Research Institute for Cultural and Natural Heritage and the “Arkhnadzor”. Our research is based on the analysis of their publications (books, web-sites etc.) and our field observations made in 2021-2022. Likhachev Institute (est. 1992) is the only one institution implementing the state policy regarding cultural heritage and the AHD in Russia – including cooperating with UNESCO. Since 2014, with the changes in the state cultural policy, the AHD provided by Likhachev Institute has also changed (it became especially evident in the case of the inclusion of the Crimean heritage to the Russian register). The “Arkhnadzor” (Architectural supervision) project arose in 2009. It is interested in the protection and conservation of historical buildings in Moscow, bringing together researchers, local historians and active citizens.

It tries to involve different audiences in discussions about heritage and organizes protests against the demolition and incorrect restoration of buildings and monuments. At the same time using and challenging the AHD, the project adapts the practices of public history, expanding agency into the debate about heritage.

## *Going to the People: Visitors Study, History Museums, and the (im)possibility for the Emergence of new Historical Narratives in Shanghai*

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Museums around the world tend to frame heritage to promote national history, often bypassing complex narratives that might put into question the alleged naturalness of the nation state. But while in democratic countries different agencies can influence the making of historical exhibitions offering opportunities to decolonize their content and narratives, in the case of the People's Republic of China (PRC), the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) dictates the authorized interpretation of the past, influencing the management of heritage and the narratives that are articulated in museums. This means that Chinese museums are designed to be “bases for patriotic education” (aiguozhuyi jiaoyu jidi) that reflect the authorities' most correct interpretation of history.

Since in China the public can hardly influence the content of exhibitions, scholarship on Chinese museums privileges the analysis of exhibitions over the study of visitors' reactions to the exhibitions and their thoughts about the content of museums. But what do visitors of Chinese museums think? Do they passively accept the message of the exhibitions they visit, or do they actively decode the narrative presented? How do they perceive the nationalist content of museums? Would they like to change the way in which Chinese history is presented by curators?

Based on the author's research on the reception the permanent exhibition of the Shanghai History Museum/Shanghai Revolution Museum, one of the newest historical exhibitions in the PRC, this paper presents a qualitative analysis of visitor's responses to the exhibition, showing how they personalize and criticize the state-sanctioned anticolonial and nationalist version of Shanghai's history. It argues that visitor studies are a useful method for examining

how museum audiences re-negotiate the meaning of exhibitions under an authoritarian regime. An article based on this research is forthcoming in 2022 in the journal “The Public Historian”, University of California Press.

## *History Production in the City: Negotiating the Ottoman History of Graz in Museums and in Tourism*

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The Age of the Ottoman Wars, a decisive historical era for core European regions, was responsible for shaping the inner workings of the Habsburg empire from the mid-14th century onwards. Particularly affected were the “inner” hereditary lands of Styria, Carinthia, and Carniola in the Southeast. The threat the Ottoman advance posed was hardly anywhere felt as acutely as here owing to their closeness to the Ottoman empire and a particular topography with few natural borders.

Both tangible and intangible cultural heritage can be traced back to this historical period, marking land- and city-scapes in the region. Graz, the capital city of the Austrian federal state of Styria, is no exception here: remnants of Renaissance fortifications, a contemporaneous Armoury, murals, and monuments are all evidence to it. Given the existence of Ottoman-era heritage across the Old Town, this paper explores how the city’s early modern past has informed history production and its popularization. Considerations are concerned with the negotiation of this dimension of city history in the contexts of local museums and the city’s tourism industry.

The musealisation process takes place at three different premises, which are partially part of tangible heritage such as the Styrian Estates’ Armoury, a weapon storage facility, and the Museum on Castle Hill located in a bastion and making use of a casemate of the Renaissance fortress. The City Museum supplements them with a contextualization on a longer historical timeline, mediated both through a permanent exhibition in situ as well as a virtual one on its website. On the level of musealisation, history production is a balancing act. On the one hand, the city’s history as an actual and symbolic bulwark is to be highlighted; on the other hand, though, representations must not uncritically mediate orientalisating discourses and stereotypes about the Ottomans which informed early modern narratives and visualisations and which have been taken up time and again to promote political ideologies.

In tourism, Ottoman-era heritage serves commodification processes but it is only marginally negotiated in tourist representations. Related sites are part of the tourist city-scape, either individually or as components of themed walks or suggested walking tours, but their framing through textual and visual narratives lacks contextualization and serves illustration and entertainment rather than information. Ottoman-era history can therefore be seen as not contributing to tourist place-making in a destination development context in Graz.

Overall, history production related to the Ottoman period in museums and in tourism lacks historical contextualization and focuses on peripheral aspects, reflecting a difficult approach to the past rather than efforts to promote history consumption among tourists characterised by understanding, both cognitively and affectively. Moreover, additional commercial opportunities such as re-enactments or Living History schemes are not made use of, leaving the tangible heritage and its framing oddly in the air. Reasons for the status quo can be seen in the city's demographics as well as in the implementation of identity politics by political stakeholders and shall be further explored.

## *Rijeka Fiume in Flux: a mobile phone app for exploring the past of a contested city*

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The paper presents “Rijeka in flux”, a Digital Public History project created on the occasion of the European Capital of Culture 2020. The project is based at the University of British Columbia - Okanagan, in collaboration with scholars and institutions (such as Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso Transeuropa in Italy) from different countries. The goal of this project was threefold: to develop an innovative way to share expert knowledge with broad audiences; to explore the potential of located knowledge; and to disrupt entrenched narratives about the past by empowering users to discover and explore alternative narratives.

The mobile phone app “Rijeka Fiume in Flux” aims to find new ways of sharing knowledge about the history of a contested city. The city in question, Rijeka (in Croatian) or Fiume (in Italian) has a turbulent past. In the course of the 20th century alone, it belonged to six different states (although one of them was never formally internationally recognized). Changes of sovereignty were accompanied by contestation over the true identity of the

city, which in turn was reflected in competing narratives – about a multi-cultural city, an Italian city, a Yugoslav city, or a Croatian city.

How do we share knowledge about Rijeka's history in a way that does justice to its complexity? How can we engage groups that are not normally interested in reading academic history? The "Rijeka in Flux" project aims to share the research of numerous scholars with a broad audience in a way that empowers each user to explore multiple possible narratives about Rijeka's past. It uses mobile phone technology to engage groups that are not traditional consumers of academic knowledge. It enables users to engage with the history of the city through a selection of markers that mark places of significance in the city, which users can explore in a variety of ways.

This presentation will discuss the process of creating the app, with a focus on challenges, as well as the results of focus groups and interviews with users regarding their experiences.

## *For whom the bell tolls: commemorations of contemporary history in democratic Spain (1976-2021)*

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Just like space, public time is object of policies of history. Cyclical commemorations introduce a symbolic rhythm to citizens' life, and shape and root their imagery of the past. In addition, they constitute a great opportunity for diplomatic contacts, from official wishes to state visits. Changes to the festive calendar, be they caused by a modification of what is celebrated or by removing an existing bank holiday or by inserting a new one, often trigger vivid public discussions.

The paper will deal with the commemorations of contemporary history in democratic Spain. During the Franco's regime, the festivities with some Republican connotation were eliminated from the festive calendar and replaced by others that were Francoist. Thus, to mention the most solemn celebrations, on July 18, the beginning of the Civil War was commemorated; on April 1, the victory of the Movement, on October 1, the proclamation of Franco as Head of the Government of the Spanish State, the celebration of the 12th day of the same month, called the [Hispanic] Day of the Race, while November 20, the day of the death of José Antonio Primo de Rivera, was converted into National Mourning Day.

After the dictator's death on November 20th, 1975, this festive calendar underwent a meaningful transformation. The paper will analyse this process within the context of political changes, look into how different governments commemorated certain events and explore what was the reception and perception of these celebrations domestically and internationally. A special attention will be paid to the case of the remembrance of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) which to date has not been included in the Spanish festive calendar.

The paper is part of the research project "The present of the past, the public uses of history in today's Spain" carried out at the University of Navarra (Pamplona, Spain).