CRITICAL HERITAGE STUDIES:

CENTRAL EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVES

Institute of Ethnology
Czech Academy of Sciences

6-7 OCTOBER

**PRAGUE
VILA LANNA**

CRITICAL HERITAGE STUDIES: CENTRAL EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVES

Since the inception of the Association for Critical Heritage Studies (ACHS) in the early 2010s, various local or thematic networks have emerged across the globe to promote new ways to tackle what is understood as heritage. Central Europe has been somewhat neglected so far in these discussions. The conference thus aims to achieve two interconnected goals: first, it will introduce critical heritage studies approaches to the local audience and open new research avenues in the region; and second, it should stimulate debate about how Central European perspectives may enrich international heritage studies scholarship.

Central Europe's peculiar past echoes to the present. The region's history has been marked by violent ruptures and continuities that shaped local state formations, communities, and, consequently, local notions and practices of heritage. Modern nationalism played a decisive role as a force behind both imperial and nation-state discourses and practices of heritage; the violent and destructive forces unleashed by the two World Wars played a role as well. With state borders being redrawn and whole communities disappearing or being displaced, societies had to find new ways of dealing with the relics of the past. The advent of socialism and the new global order after WWII further reshaped the way people related to and imagined what is and is not "their" heritage. State socialism brought its modernist vision of protecting and presenting heritage. Finally, global and local changes after the fall of the Soviet bloc in the early 1990s brought new challenges and new ways of dealing with heritage amidst the reality marked by the legacies of socialism and the emerging market economy.

Regional approaches to heritage have often stressed a traditional and unified notion concerning national monuments and their preservation. We argue that the conceptual toolkit of critical heritage studies provides a new and promising approach for understanding heritage that goes beyond the traditional conceptions. For instance, analysing the discursive dimension of heritage politics allows for considering the power relations and potential conflicts between the state, institutions, heritage managers, and the public. Thus, it sheds light on the contested nature of heritage. Power relations are evident also in the politics of heritage representation and management, which addresses new museology. Unlike traditional views of the museum, this approach also calls for a different attitude to museum visitors and a greater involvement of the public in curatorial practices. Another new approach to heritage comes from social anthropology, which turns attention to relations between human and more-than-human actors and thus challenges the older notion of viewing cultural heritage and natural heritage as two separate entities. All these critical provocations have the potential to stimulate local intellectual discussion and practical aspects of heritage management. On the other hand, we would also like to discuss the limits and pitfalls of adopting international critical heritage studies in the region. Central Europe had a different history from the countries where critical heritage studies were initially conceived. It is thus not possible to simply copy-and-paste these approaches without adjusting them to local conditions.

6 OCTOBER

9:30–10:00 Registration

➡ 10:00 Welcome (**Jiří Woitsch**)

➡ 10:10 **David C. Harvey: Keynote** "Heritage-Landscapes and the Nation: Hidden Stories and Alternative Narratives"

11:45–13:00 Lunch

➡ 13:00–14:00 Papers session 1 (Chair Filip Herza)

Uwe Baumann, Curating Destination "Ex-Utopia" - Negotiating Dissonant Heritage in the Digital Age

Vít Jesenský, Critical heritage studies through the lens of heritage conservation

14:00–14:30 Coffee break

➡ 14:30–16:00 Paper session 2 (Chair Olga Nešporová)

Špela Ledinek Lozej and **Nataša Rogelja Caf**, Heritage on the margins

Sandra Uskokovic, Hegemony of the Antiquity' Heritage: Sharing a Common Past?

Jiří Woitsch, Pavel Horák and Filip Herza, Critical Heritage Studies and Researching the Czech Borderlands

16:00–16:30 Coffee break

➡ 16:30–18:00 Roundtable 1 (**David Harvey**): Heritagization of the Landscape, (Inner) Borderlands & Forced Migration; Authoritative Heritage Discourse and the CEE Region

18:00 Conference Dinner

7 OCTOBER

➡ 10:00–11:30 Papers session 3 (Chair Jaroslav Otčenášek)

Ivo Strahilov Uncertain Europeanness: Dealing with the Ottoman Heritage in EU Bulgaria

Ondřej Kolář, Commemorating War in Public Space: Case of Ostrava Battlefield

Kristen Barrett-Casey, The Humboldt Forum and the politics of heritage: creating a new German political identity in the 21st Century

11:45–13:00 Lunch

➡ 13:00–14:30 Papers session 4 (Chair Nikola Balaš)

Karina Račaitytė, Constructing identities while living surrounded by a heritage from soviet era: a case study of Kaunas

Diána Vonnák, Expertise and rupture: heritage careers in post-1991 Lviv

Petra Švardová, Reluctant heritage: Communist era monuments in the contemporary world.

14:30–15:00 Coffee break

➡ 15:00–16:30 Roundtable 2 (**Gruia Badescu**): Socialist Period and its Heritage in CEE

16:30–16:45 Closing session

ABSTRACTS (in aplhabetical order)

Bădescu, Gruia (University of Konstanz, Zukunftskolleg)

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Roundtable: Socialist Period and Its Heritage (DAY 2)

The roundtable will address several threads of critical heritage studies: from the heritage in the former Yugoslavia, the project on "difficult heritage" of political violence, the project on critical cosmopolitan heritage in CEE to "dissonant network" action group for the EU.

Barrett-Casey, Kristen (University of the West of England)

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The Humboldt Forum and the politics of heritage: creating a new German political identity in the 21st Century

The aim of this paper is to stimulate debate about the extent to which urban architectural heritage is shaped by, and more interestingly shapes, contemporary political dynamics, ideologies and social relations, and the consequences of this for "dealing with the past". The Humboldt Forum and its home in the recent reconstruction of the 19th century Stadtschloss in Berlin have been selected as the case study for three reasons.

Firstly, the decision to demolish the former seat of government of the DDR, the Palast der Republik, and to replace it with a reconstruction of the 19th century palace of the Kaisers was met with both celebration and hostility across German society. It represented the defeat of one ideology, the victory of another, and was also a symbol of the friction of reintegrating the former East into the new Germany.

Secondly, the Humboldt Forum itself, home to several museums holding non-western collections, holds a duality of purpose and reception. Whilst placing these collections on Museum Island was intended as a political statement to globalise Berlin and put these collections literally at the heart of the city, their housing in a symbol of imperialism, repleat with a cross and inscription from King Friedrich Wilhelm IV calling on all peoples to submit to Christianity, has been criticised by many.

Lastly, the reconstruction and new museological approach has been incredibly recent and is still an ongoing issue. It is so contemporary it is not yet clear what impact this architectural/museological assemblage will have on societal relations, on how Germany deals with and views its own difficult past, and its role in Germany's political identity domestically and internationally.

As such, whilst this paper will start with how this heritage management is being shaped very clearly by political issues, the contemporaneous nature of the case study offers the chance to explore more theoretically how heritage (both in the form of reconstructions and the intangible practices of museology) also shapes political issues, dynamics, and societal relations.

Baumann, **Uwe** (Institute of Cultural Anthropology and European Ethnology, University of Freiburg)

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Curating Destination "Ex-Utopia" - Negotiating Dissonant Heritage in the Digital Age

Many individual and commercial curations currently draw from the spectrum of dark tourism (e.g. Stone 2005) to urban exploration (e.g. Bingham 2021) to make difficult cultural heritage a destination experience. These differ decisively from traditional approaches to cultural heritage and notions of its preservation: predominantly aesthetics of decay and atmospheres are elevated and curated in form of pictures, blog posts or framed in guided tours. In this process, subversive approaches are offered and represented that at first glance might seem a-historicizing and completely 'de-politicised'. In my case-study, some heritage „experts" condemn the approaches of such self-proclaimed heritage actors: moralizing attitudes are repeated, and the Authorized Heritage Discourse (Smith 2006) takes hold as a demarcation mechanism and to underline claims of interpretation and ownership. For example, art historian Vladimir Kulić writes about representations of tourists at Yugoslav monuments, which gained international popularity on the Internet under the hashtag "Spomenik" since about 2010, that it is primarily Western tourists who would visit these monuments only for their affective potential for successful internet posts. Through their representations, these tourists would degrade the monuments to commodities, and in their stagings of decay he recognizes exoticizing mechanisms of Balkanism (cf. Kulić 2018). In my presentation, I will focus on a small scale on representations of visitors, both international and local, that have condensed around the "spomeniks" in the online circulation of contents. I relate these to curation strategies of providers that rely on this online popularity and on subversive practices of spatial construction in the mediation of this difficult heritage of the former Yugoslavia. Based on participant observation during one of these tours, individual visits, field research and digital ethnography, I will explain how relationships between visitors and places are formed here – and how these interactions are close to the architecture's affordances and the ideas of their architects. It becomes apparent in this consideration that it is precisely in these contemporary forms of curation that individual emotional engagements with difficult cultural heritage sites take place and their polyvalences are revealed. These curations are less an expression of exoticism but rather closely interwoven with contemporary media actions, reflecting an Aesthetic Cosmopolitanism (Regev 2007) and a dynamic culture of remembrance (Thiemeyer 2018) in which meanings and valences of cultural heritage are renegotiated.

Harvey, David C. (Aarhus University, Denmark)

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KEYNOTE Heritage-Landscapes and the Nation: Hidden Stories and Alternative Narratives

Concepts of heritage and landscape usually go together in a mutually supporting manner. Particularly when associated with narratives of the nation, therefore, heritage-landscapes seem to answer questions. Moving beyond perceiving them as mere products or physical artefacts to be 'preserved', this paper considers the consequences of thinking processually about both landscapes and heritage. Focussing on the 'national landscape' of Exmoor National Park, in the SW on Britain, this paper examines how alternative and hidden narratives can disrupt taken-for-granted ideas of nationhood. Through reflecting in particular on the experience of walking across a small stone bridge within the National Park, which keeps being washed away, the paper opens up a creative space of heritage landscaping, in which haptic experience, ephemerality and movement provide a productive possibility of a more radical heritage tradition. The paper, therefore, raises questions about

the work that heritage and landscape does – and can do – specifically in terms of the conceptualisation of temporality, issues of authenticity and activist politics.

Biography: David C Harvey is an associate professor in critical heritage studies at Aarhus University, Denmark, and an honorary professor of historical and cultural geography at the University of Exeter (United Kingdom). His work has focussed on the geographies of heritage, and he has contributed to some key heritage debates, including processual understandings of heritage, extending the temporal depth of heritage, the outlining of heritage-landscape and heritage-climate change relations and the opening up of hidden memories through oral history. His recent works include The Real Agricultural Revolution: The Transformation of English Farming 1939-1985 (with Paul Brassley et al., 2021), which won the Joan Thirsk Prize (2022), Creating Heritage: Unrecognised Pasts and Rejected Futures (edited with Tom Carter et al., 2020), Commemorative Spaces of the First World War: Historical Geography at the Centenary (edited with James Wallis, 2018), and The Future of Heritage as Climates Change: Loss, Adaptation and Creativity (edited with Jim Perry, 2015). He is on the Editorial Board of The International Journal of Heritage Studies, and co-edits a Berghahn Book Series Exploration in Heritage Studies. In his spare time, David cycles a lot, plays a bit of football and struggles to learn Danish.

Jesenský, Vít (conservationist, National Heritage Institute, Regional Office of Central Bohemia in Prague)

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Critical Heritage Studies through the Lens of Heritage Conservation

Among the disciplines and institutions providing direct practical care for individual types of cultural heritage, heritage conservation plays the most important role. The paper offers its perspective on the activities and results of CHS in the scope of the Czech Republic. It can therefore serve as feedback for the application of CHS. CHS are not in opposition to heritage conservation, but neither are they an alternative, they are complementary to it in principle. CHS are concerned with what cultural heritage is, how to research it and possibly what objectives should result from it, but not with how to achieve the objectives or how to treat this heritage in the current situation. In a brief summary, it will be presented where the disciplines differ (object of interest – cultural heritage and heritage object (památka, das Denkmal), subject matter, relationship to practice, institutional status, etc.), and where they might seek mutual cooperation. At the same time, the obstacles to such cooperation will be commented on. From this perspective, the usability of their results appears to be a key problem and challenge for CHS. The characteristics of the above-mentioned disciplinary factors are finally applied to the issue of cooperation within the disciplines in Central Europe. While CHS can probably legitimately pursue Central European concepts or themes, when moving towards a practical solutions for cultural heritage, the usefulness of such integration of care proves questionable. The author will document arguments from practice for this state of affairs and process.

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Commemorating War in Public Space: Case of Ostrava Battlefield

The paper focuses on remembrance of a significant battle, fought between Red Army and Axis forces in the last weeks of World War II in Europe in a region of nowadays Czech-Polish borderland. The aim is to describe and analyse the forms of remembrance in public spaces and the role of the war events in collective memory of the Czech population of the region. The attention is paid especially on role of war memmorials, museums and toponymycs. The research attempts to highlight significant differences between the narratives of World War II in Czech nationwide context and in the examined specific border territory.

Lozej, **Špela Ledinek** and **Nataša Rogelja Caf** (Research Centre of The Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts)

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Heritage on the Margins

is the name and thematic focus of a multidisciplinary research group at the Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts (ZRC SAZU, Slovenia) that studies heritage formation and the performative influence of heritage on the margins - in minority, remote, linguistic, migrant, occupational, or otherwise marginalised settings. We are particularly interested in the circumstances and conditions that lead to something being recognised as heritage. In addition to observing such heritage as it is recognised by authorised heritage institutions, we also aim to enquire into heritage diglossia and the possibilities of undisciplined heritage. In doing so, the view is not directed at the question of what heritage is, but rather, at what heritage does. This kind of dissemination of heritage processes has no destination, only a direction - drawing maps and revealing the extent of labyrinthine heritage.

In the paper, we will introduce in more detail five thematic clusters around which our work is organised. Each cluster explores a specific aspect of heritage-making from the margins, providing a thematic focus: 1. Heritage-making in dynamic border regions, 2. Heritage in a mobile world, 3. Language in use - use of language, 4. Living with heritage, and 5. Heritagization of space. Furthermore, we will talk about our recent research efforts and results, with special emphasis on walking seminars organised in border regions and the programme's online journal Heriscope.

Račaitytė, Karina (Vytautas Magnus University, Kaunas University of Applied Sciences)

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Constructing identities while living surrounded by a heritage from soviet era: a case study of Kaunas

The paper aims to analyze how the inhabitants from four post- soviet districts (Dainava, Kalniečiai, Eiguliai, Šilainiai) of Kaunas city - second biggest city of Lithuania identifies themselves with these places. After the Second World War in the course of industrialisation, there was a need to provide housing for new workers of the industry, most of whom came to Kaunas from all around Lithuania, mainly from rural regions. As a result

new districts were built: Dainava, Kalniečiai, Eiguliai, Šilainiai. These districts differed from the historical parts of Kaunas city in that they were built in almost empty places - in the fields or in the territories of former villages and suburban settlements. Comparing these four districts of Kaunas with the historical parts of the city it is noticeable that there are not many symbols expressing cultural memory.

After examining the physical environment in these districts using participant observation method and analysis of everyday practices the question arises: are there any neighbourhoods built in the soviet era that could be called heritage? Do the inhabitants themselves perceive the neighborhood environment as a heritage?

According to researchers, „The legacy of the soviet era is special in that it dissonates with the present and reminds and forces to re-experience historical traumas" (Mickūnaitė 2015: 5). A large part of the soviet heritage is perceived as almost contemporary works. Due to the political circumstances of their creation these works are considered not only witnesses to the occupation regime but also accomplices.

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Uncertain Europeanness: Dealing with the Ottoman Heritage in EU Bulgaria

In Bulgaria, similar to other predominantly Christian countries in the Southeastern Europe, the Ottoman heritage is highly contested. Although the legacy of the Ottoman Empire, both tangible and intangible, is significant in the region, it is often neglected, physically erased, or left to natural decay. The Bulgarian national narrative mentions this historical period only to underline how it had alienated the nation from the European civilization. Archaeologists excavate Ottoman sites extremely rarely, while material objects dating from the period are omitted from museum displays. These premises are informed by the internalization of orientalist and balkanist discourses which contests the position of Islam and the Balkans in Europe. Due to this constitutive and traumatizing lack of Europeanness, the Bulgarian state has mobilized 'appropriate' heritage from less problematic periods to promote itself internationally as enough European.

To explore the contemporary dimensions of these tensions and the uncertainties they reveal, this paper follows the scandal of a cancelled Franco-Bulgarian exhibition from 2020. The exhibition was planned in the Louvre in Paris and would have been the third Bulgarian cooperation project with the prestigious museum. After showing objects from Ancient Thrace glorified as national Antiquity, and from the medieval Bulgarian Empire celebrated as the national Golden Age, the third exhibition was supposed to illustrate the contacts between Islam and Orthodox Christianity from the Ottoman period. The preparations were, however, blocked by the opposition of some scholars supported by radical-right organizations and the media. Their main argument was that this exhibition intended to portray Bulgaria as 'European Turkey' and that was unacceptable. Thus, its cancellation recycled long-lasting anti-Ottoman sentiments, but fused them with the current political instability of the country and its shaking reputation within the EU, growing illiberal ethnonationalism targeting indigenous Muslim and Turkish minorities, and competition with the heritage politics of neighbouring Turkey that re-valorises the Ottoman past.

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Reluctant heritage: Communist era monuments in the contemporary world

The subject that I propose to analyse focuses on statues and memorials constructed during the communist period and their transformation after 1989, in the contemporary context. The fall of communism was reflected very significantly in the public space. Most of Lenin's statues and other symbols of communism were removed, replaced, or destroyed. However, some objects, especially the tangible memories of the Second World War such as Soviet war memorials, remain in their original sites until today. The cultural and historical heritage of the communist era raises many questions in the public space. My paper will try to provide some answers to questions about contested heritage from the communist past, which create today many debates, tensions, and conflicts in collective memory.

Uskokovic, Sandra (University of Dubrovnik, Croatia)

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Hegemony of the Antiquity' Heritage: Sharing a Common Past?

While focusing on Greece and Balkans (Macedonia), I will argue that hegemony of authorized heritage discourse promotes/insists on dominance of the antiquity (Hellenophilia) while excluding other historical periods and cultural /ethnic influences, what nurtures pregnant imaginary for nationalism, where hegemony of heritage sites is being harnessed by a variety of agents for their own political agendas.

On the other hand, a celebration of shared civilizational heritage is being forged around imaginings of a glorious antiquity of East and West conjoined by the new Silk Road. Along this new road, civilizational imaginaries have been used to forge connections between East and West, and specifically between China and the Mediterranean, emphasizing antiquity via archeology, new heritage sites and museums related to Silk Road.

The new Silk Road has created new imaginaries of past and future, of east and west, of civilisations in dialogue. But this dialogue is also producing knowledge of "shared multicultural history" for the purpose of the international trade using Maritime Silk Route ports in the Mediterranean (Turkey, Greece, Italy, etc) to exchange commodities, capital, technology, but also for their exploitation in heritage tourism.

I will question whether this coming together of ancient and progressive (technological) is taking a form of hegemony that Gramsci links to a conflict between nationalism at home and foreign domination.

Vonnák, **Dianna** (St Andrews University)

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Expertise and rupture: heritage careers in post-1991 Lviv

Lviv had been a regional hub of heritage expertise already within the Habsburg Monarchy and in the interwar period. When the city became part of the Ukrainian SSR, it quickly became one of the flagship operations of Soviet Ukrainian heritage preservation. Restoration workshops, museums, preservation bureaus all required the accumulation of experts, and Lviv had a significant community of predominantly Ukrainian heritage professionals in the late-Soviet decades. After 1991, it was among the first Ukrainian cities

that supported a successful application for a UNESCO World Heritage Site nomination, and in the past decade it has participated in numerous transnational heritage projects that involve EU funds, or cooperation with Polish, German and other European organisations and expert networks.

The collapse of the USSR did not involve a war, and contrary to Austrian or Polish professional communities, Soviet-era Ukrainian heritage professionals did not leave with the end of the empire. Many Soviet-era heritage institutions and museums continue to exist, with relatively little change in staff or institutional management. Yet, the heritage scene is dominated by new actors, many of whom have been trained abroad, and/or come from career outside of the state sector. Besides traditional venues like academia, ministries, municipal offices or state museums, heritage careers increasingly start in NGOs and international organisations.

This paper looks at the transmission of heritage expertise, norms, professional networks in the aftermath of the collapse of the USSR, assessing how political and socio-economic rupture, and Ukraine's new geopolitical orientation translated into ruptures in professional careers. The rhetoric of the re-integration of Lviv into Europe translates into pragmatic work building transnational partnerships, requiring professionals fluent in new languages and preservation paradigms. Understanding the costs and ruptures inherent in these processes helps us reconsider changing authorised heritage discourses in the region, contributing to a better understanding of the interrelations of heritage and the state.

Woitsch, Jiří, Pavel Horák and Filip Herza (Department of Critical Heritage Studies, Institute of Ethnology of the Czech Academy of Sciences)

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Critical Heritage Studies and Researching the Czech Borderlands

The border areas of nowadays Czech Republic witnessed turbulent changes over the last hundred years. Czech, Moravian and Silesian borderlands were inhabited by mostly German-speaking peoples who settled in the area since the Middle Ages. During the 19th Century, these areas became hotspots of industrialization in the Austro-Hungarian Empire and later interwar Czechoslovakia. In the aftermath of WW2, the vast majority of the German-speaking peoples had been forcibly displaced and had to leave the country. The newly formed socialist regime sealed the borderlands, especially those that found themselves in the West, on what was later called the Iron Curtain. The 1990s witnessed the economic transformation, but also the first engagements with the entangled pasts of the Czech and Germans who came to seek their former homes. Nowadays, the borderlands represent the periphery of the Czech Republic and at the same time a dissonant heritage that bores the complicated past of the country. It is thus also a fortunate place for critical heritage research. Our paper introduces a collaborative project of the Department of Critical Heritage Studies, Institute of Ethnology, CAS that looks at different heritage-making activities from-bellow – e.g. grassroots movements that attempt at reconstructing former German sites, institutions and customs in the area – and reads them against the current socio-political realities in the region. Apart from the wider historical and theoretical background, we will present a case study of Jeseníky area (Northern Moravia).

VENUE & ACCOMODATION

The conference takes place in **Vila Lanna, V Sadech 1, 160 00 Praha 6 - Bubeneč**.

https://mapy.cz/s/cukezafoku The closest tram and metro station is "Hradčanská" (A Line).

Vila Lanna also offers accomodation. Please check capacity at recepce@vila-lanna.cz or call +420 224 321 278.

Conference participants arrange accomodation at own expenses. Apart from Vila Lanna, there is a number of various accomodation options in the nearby area.

ORGANISING TEAM

Dr Pavel Horák, Institute of Ethnology, Czech Academy of Sciences
Dr Jaroslav Otčenášek, Institute of Ethnology, Czech Academy of Sciences

and the rest of the team of **the Department of Critical Heritage Studies**, Institute of Ethnology, CAS.

CONTACT

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FUNDING

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