

SLOW MEMORY AND BEYOND

Conference abstracts

SLOW MEMORY AND BEYOND

Conference abstracts



02.

JULY

SESSION 01.

TRADE UNIONISTS AND THE LEGACIES OF DEINDUSTRIALIZATION IN EUROPE

CHAIR: Joanna Wawrzyniak (Faculty of Sociology, University of Warsaw, Poland)

Work has always been a constitutive aspect of human life, shaping the most significant social transformations. Across disciplines, scholars have examined how work is influenced by fundamental historical changes and how it structures societies and their cultures. Yet, within memory studies, the memory of work remains an underexamined topic, precisely because it is not a sudden impact memory but one that unfolds gradually, often over decades.

This roundtable brings together memory studies and research on labour transformations, with a particular focus on the memory of deindustrialization in Europe. It discusses the autobiographical memories of a generation of trade unionists born between the 1940s and 1960s, whose professional trajectories intersected with profound economic, social, and cultural transformations driven by deindustrialization. These shifts occurred at different speeds across countries with distinct political-economic systems, yet they played a decisive role in reshaping labour structures and, consequently, European societies at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries. By analysing recollections of high ranked trade unionists from several countries, we highlight how these memories encapsulate the hopes and disappointments associated with these transformations, revealing the tensions of late modernity and the conflicts between divergent social interests.

The roundtable provides a comparative framework, methodological insights, and case studies drawn from the research project conducted by WG1. Our discussion engages with the following key questions: How do trade unionists from different European countries remember deindustrialization? In what social, political-institutional, and cultural contexts do they situate their biographies? What changes do they view as most significant? Which labour traditions are lost and which remain relevant today? Overall, by bridging labour history and memory studies, this roundtable aims to advance our understanding of how social actors construct slow narratives of work in times of deep structural transformation.

Other participants:

Stefan Berger (Institute for Social Movements, Ruhr University Bochum, Germany)

Natalie Braber (Nottingham Trent University, UK)

Davide Carnevale (University of Ferrara, Italy)

Irene Diaz (Universidad de Oviedo, Spain)

Tibor Valuch (Academy of Sciences Centre for Social Sciences, Hungary)

SESSION 02.

SLOW MEMORY NARRATIVES

CHAIR: Elsa Skenderi (University of Tirana, Albania)

SENECA

Brett Ashley Kaplan (University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, USA)

The New York Times produced a full-page exposé of a startling discovery: in Central Park, right near 82nd Street, remains had been found of an African American village. Seneca Village had been rediscovered by archaeologists. A child's shoe emerged through the nut-brown earth, bringing with it a largely forgotten story: from 1825 (the year slavery was abolished in New York) until 1857, when the residents of Seneca Village were chucked out to build Central Park, a thriving, multiracial, multicultural village had lived vibrantly in what is now the park. There was a church, a cemetery, a blacksmith; the people were Black, Irish, German. Perhaps it wasn't utopia, but it was a far cry from the fetid water and filthy sardine conditions of life for most working people in the burgeoning city.

The exposé hit me like a gut punch. How could it be that I spent so much of my youth in the park, innocently having no idea this village had been there?

Seneca Village was a place with a story to tell – and it wouldn't let me go. Seneca (a novel) addresses the aftereffects of the destruction of Seneca Village through the story of a museum studies professor who slowly reconstructs some of its buried past.

SLOW MEMORY AS NARRATIVE TEMPLATES IN HISTORY TEXTBOOKS IN BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA AND SERBIA

Ismar Dedović and Tea Sindbaek Andersen (University of Copenhagen, Department of Cross-Cultural and Regional Studies, Denmark)

This presentation explores history textbooks in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia as examples of slow moving, institutional memory. Examining what Wertsch calls “schematic narrative templates” we show that certain narrative logics appear across historical periods almost as *longue durée* patterns, and that excluding a few highly charged and controversial historical topics, there has been little change in most of the textbook content since the collapse of Yugoslavia. Nor has the overall approach to history as a subject changed much in this period, despite the violent and substantial changes which have occurred in the post-Yugoslav region since the 1990s. History – at least that which is taught at schools and universities – is still seen and taught through an empiricist and positivist lens that shies away from addressing controversial and politically sensitive topics. We propose that this kind of “slow memory” makes open investigations and discussions of the difficult recent history very hard to achieve.

THE SLOW MEMORY OF DECOLONIZATION – GERMAN LITERATURE AND THE UNEVENTFUL GENOCIDE

Jessica Ortner (Department of Culture and Language at the University of Southern Denmark, Denmark)

This paper suggests that decolonialization is a slow memory process, making it comparable to “event-less developments”, such as climate change (Wüstenberg 2023). Rather than defining decolonization as the “eradication of colonialism” (Táíwò 2022), decolonization is an “open-ended, multi-layered” process, persisting well beyond “formal transfers of power” (Thomas & Thompson 2018; Stoler 2016). Decolonization does not only take place by tearing down monuments but also by means of literature, which, according to Rigney (2021), has the agency of making marginalized memories “memorable.” Literature is a slow and unspectacular memory medium that both takes time to write and to read. Moreover, there is no guarantee that literature’s “mnemonic potential” (Erl 2009) is actualized and unfolds an impact on collective memory. This paper investigates how contemporary postcolonial novels contribute to Germany’s delayed process of decolonization by inventing a vocabulary for representing the strangely “uneventful” genocide of the Herero and Nama people (1904-1907), which was mostly committed by letting people die of thirst in the desert. Whereas there is still no term that, like the Holocaust, covers this event short and precisely, I will show that German authors are concerned with inventing literary strategies for making Germany’s first genocide—committed in present-day Namibia—sayable (Rigney 2016), and therefore grievable (Butler 2009) in the public realm.

SESSION 03.

UNLOCKING RESEARCH METHODOLOGY THROUGH SLOW MEMORY LENS

CHAIRS: Vjollca Krasniqi (University of Prishtina, Kosovo), Isabel Alexandre Machado (University Institute of Lisbon - ISCTE & Institute of Telecommunications -IUL, Lisbon, Portugal)

IMAGINED CONVERSATIONS: A SLOW MEMORY METHOD

Libora Oates-Indruchova (University of Graz, Austria):

The presentation will introduce a writing strategy of “imagined conversations” as a method of slow remembering, corresponding to the slow change of the institutional context that was the subject of the research, for which I developed the method. The research concerned academic censorship and publishing in the state-socialist Czech Republic and Hungary. The aim was, first, to capture the gradual transformation of institutions, the people in them and the textual work they produced under politically restrictive conditions. Second, it was to allow the interviewees, researchers active in state academic institutions between 1969 and 1989, maximum space to represent themselves, while at the same time preserve the polyphony and contradictions present in the interviews due to the politically, emotionally and ethically sensitive nature of the topic. The dramatised dialogues, created with the application of constructivist grounded theory and narratology, are “imagined” in the sense of being constructed from one-to-one interviews and that the resulting collective biography foregrounded the sense of a shared community (cf. Benedict Anderson ‘s “imagined communities”).

POETICS OF WALKABILITY: INTEGRATING EMBODIED EXPLORATIONS AND SLOW MEMORY IN EDUCATIONAL & RESEARCH PRACTICE

Diana Salahieh (Czech Technical University, Prague) and Layla Zibar (Independent Professional, Belgium)

This paper explores walkability as an interdisciplinary method, a dynamic research and educational tool for engaging with slow memory –a temporally layered and often unacknowledged remembrance forms (Wüstenberg, 2023; Jones & Van de Putte, 2024). This method allows one to perceive how slow memory seeps through the cracks of materialities when bodies and spaces come in contact, revealing what resists erasure within everyday geographies. This methodology unfolds in three layers: Embodiment involves exploratory walks (guided, slow drifting, and dance-based) that awaken bodily knowledge, revealing how memory is embedded in place. Narrative surfaces through engaging with local literature, oral histories, and writing, allowing personal and collective memories to (e)merge. Representation materialises through mapping, which enables critical (re)imagination of spatial memory. Embracing slowness as both method and ethos, these layers expose the palimpsestic nature of everyday footpaths, where traces of the past intersect with present experiences. By foregrounding slowness, poetics of walkability resists accelerationist knowledge systems and challenges processes of invisibilisation. It becomes a critical lens to unconventionally examine and cultivate relational ways of knowing. Ultimately, this poetics of walkability offers a counterpoint to dominant memory politics, and repositions movement, perception, and place as vital components in urban design, architecture and memory research and education.

VISUAL LITERACY AS A TOOL FOR PERSONAL AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

Vicky Karaiskou (Open University, Cyprus)

Memories are imprints on our bodies, minds and societies. It would be accurate enough to parallel them to fossils or scars: life continues evolving around them, but always carries their shape and intervention. This presentation will focus on Visual Literacy as a visuality process, a methodology that evolves within the framework of the UNESCO Chair "Visual Anticipation and Futures Literacy towards Visual Literacy". The methodology investigates the origins of our assumptions and their impact upon our perceptive and prospective mechanisms, and sheds light on how visuals determine our relations with the past, the ways we experience it in the present and carry it in the future. Einstein famously sustained that in order to solve a problem we need to alter the level of consciousness that created it. In the same vein, Bayo Akomolafe reminds us of an African saying: "When the times are urgent; let us slowdown".

The chapter will describe how, indeed, Visual Literacy as an exploration of our visuality, slows us down by supporting the examination of our memory stores with an aim to comprehend how we ended up to think and act the way we do. The fundamental rationale of the process is that, when we explore our own stories and critically comprehend collective narratives we permit hidden memory patterns to emerge. Thus, we enrich hegemonic narratives and notions; we gain agency and the choice to curve our own path in the present and in the future; we enrich collective awareness; and we create alternative paths to build resilience and achieve transformation.

PHOTOGRAPHY PRACTICES IN SUPPORT OF SLOW MEMORY APPROACHES TO PRESERVING INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE MEMORY

Andreea Elle Vas (The University of The Arts, London, UK):

With the increase of tourism, urban regeneration and capital-raising programmes such as the Portugal golden visa, urban environments such as Porto have seen significant changes over the past few decades. These changes come with inevitable and sometimes irrevocable transformations of the natural and built landscape, place in general. Place is intrinsically connected with individual, familial and collective memories. Fundamental changes like these, often against accelerated timelines, challenge the local sense of belonging and the ability to preserve such memories for local communities and future generations rooted there. My paper discusses how photographic practices such as archival photography curation and rephotography can be instrumental in support of a slow-memory approach to preserving the past, its individual and collective memory, maintaining inter-generational connections and restoring a sense of belonging to counter dis-placement. Presenting examples from several practitioners and locations, I will argue that using archival images and the practice of rephotography are inherently slow and long-term processes consistent with and supporting slow memory practices. In addition to my paper, I will invite participants to consider archival images from the locations we will visit during the conference and create re-photographs at one or several of these locations, which can be used to encourage further rephotography practices.

SESSION 04.

SLOW MEMORY WITH CARE

CHAIR: Kim Groop

THE SLOW MEMORY OF AUTOIMMUNITY: REFLECTIONS ACROSS GENRES

Micha Jauch (Nijhawan), (York University Toronto, Canada)

In this paper, I draw on sociological data (interpretive interviews), autoethnographic writing, and visual media (photography & artwork) to explore autoimmunity as a form of slow memory. I ask what precisely is captured by the notion of embodied memory in this context when thinking about the eventful and the transitory in chronic autoimmune conditions.

To tackle the embodied dimensions of autoimmunity as a social dimension (e.g., how somatic materiality is signified, how temporal structures of acuteness and chronicity are expressed, how manifestations of embodied pain are verbalised) requires attentiveness to subtle expressions of self and subjectivity at various thresholds of our precarious social and political times.

If there is something distinctive about living with autoimmune conditions, it is the profound destabilization of the boundaries between self and not-self—boundaries that I consider beyond old metaphors of immunology (e.g., autophagy). A range of scholars in the humanities and social sciences have explored the unseated sense of self and personhood in autoimmunity, while political philosophers have famously cited autoimmunity when evoking the ambiguities of late modern subjects and politics.

It stands out to be observed that many of these approaches have favoured broad and abstract conceptualisations of autoimmunity rather than explore the temporal, material, relational, and socio-spiritual dimensions of those living with chronic autoimmune conditions, as I endeavour in my project.

REMEMBERING SEGREGATED LIVES: USING THE VOICE CENTRED RELATIONAL METHOD TO ACCESS SILENCED MEMORIES OF HOSPITALIZATION FOR MENTAL ILLNESS TREATMENT

Gloria Kirwan (Royal College of Surgeons, Ireland)

WOMEN'S HEALTH VULNERABILITY – (IN)VISIBILITIES

Inês Amorim (CITCEM-Faculty of Arts and Humanities, University of Porto, Portugal)

Given current social challenges, especially those related to welfare and vulnerability, the present analysis focuses on the transformation of social welfare and the concept of vulnerability, as marked by several dimensions: the difficult access to health services, the disparity in health policies within societies, and gender inequalities concerning the notion of who should have access to health care.

This framework becomes even more complex when viewed through a historical lens, considering reasons and hypothetical impacts such as:

- the evolution of the concept of health care in the 19th century, which presupposes an understanding of the relationship between epidemiological patterns, processes of modernisation, and changes in the concept of health—particularly regarding the “health transition” and the “epidemiological transition”—as growing health awareness transformed social medicine into preventive medicine;
- the sexual phenomenon as a procreative and legitimate factor, with particular focus on the role of women, but also linked to individual and social disturbances, such as female prostitution;
- the increasing number of institutional services that sought to maintain public hygiene by controlling or incarcerating women deemed to be causing health problems, and thus aimed to preserve public hygiene.
- Methodologically, the analysis will focus on the regulatory norms shaping women's behaviour and the institutional responsibilities—hospitals, shelters, and houses for tolerated women (an expression that seeks to prevent women from circulating freely but authorises the practice of prostitution)—designed to remove them from public spaces.

All the data concerning these women, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, point to their social stigmatisation. If they benefited from medical care, it was primarily to safeguard society at large and to uphold public morality, as will be confirmed.

SLOW MEMORY WORK IN MENTAL HEALTHCARE THROUGH ARTS-BASED PRACTICES

Marileen La Haije (Radboud University, Netherlands)

“I can tell you my war / born from impotence / when the door closes.” In the opening scene of *Los fuegos internos* (“Inner Fires”, 2019) Daniel, Argentinian poet diagnosed with schizophrenia at the age of fourteen, recounts his experiences of mental suffering during hospitalisation, which he interprets and frames in terms of war. In this way, he highlights the violent dimensions of psychiatric hospitalisation, making visible memories of violence that otherwise would not be recognised as such. The collaborative film project *Los fuegos internos* is the result of a nine-year process of co-creation by the Argentinian artistic collective *El Cisne del Arte*, integrating people who have been hospitalized in the psychiatric institution Dr. Alejandro Korn, Melchor Romero. In this presentation, I study *Los fuegos internos* through the lens of slow memory. The film project is illustrative for the memory work that is presently being carried out in Argentinian mental health care facilities through arts-based practices. These arts-based practices, I argue, contribute to a collective memory-making process in which the stories of people experiencing mental suffering are being listened to, remembered, shared and valued.

SESSION 05.

SLOW VIOLENCE, EXTRACTION AND COMMUNITIES

CHAIR: Natalie Braber (Nottingham Trent University, UK)

SLOW VIOLENCE, MINING, AND MEMORY: RETHINKING THE ROLE OF IDENTITY IN FORMER YUGOSLAV MINING COMMUNITIES

Tanja Petrovic (ZRC SAZU Institute of Culture and Memory Studies, Ljubljana, Slovenia)

It is often assumed that violence is an intrinsic aspect of mining culture and is closely linked to miners' identity traits (gender, race) and interpersonal relations (Abrahamsson and Johansson 2020; Breckenridge 1998; Charman 2018; Cuvelier 2014; Miller Klubock 1996). Based on preliminary ethnographic and archival research in several locations in former Yugoslavia, this paper challenges the idea of the centrality of relational aspects of violence in the context of mining and instead emphasizes its structural and long-durée nature.

I argue that violence is historically constitutive of mining as a profession and relevant to miners' personal and social lives beyond the realms of occupational health risks and illnesses. Focusing on the *longue durée* practices of collective memory-making in mining communities across former Yugoslavia, the paper elucidates the ways in which violence inherent to mining – manifest in a history of accidents and disasters, environmental degradation, and long-term health damage – is not only inscribed in the social contract but is also generative of social life. It is constitutive of labour, family, and community relations.

The objective of this paper is to demonstrate that masculinity, ethnicity, and other identity traits are not merely performed or negotiated through mining labour and “mining culture”, but rather mobilised to maintain labour patterns inherently characterised by structural and slow violence (Nixon 2011).

By discussing several historical instances where this slow violence intersects with other forms of violence (state violence, political repression, war violence), I aim to grasp the logic of their entwinement and their faculty in shaping mining localities and the mnemonic communities inhabiting them.

RECONTEXTUALISING MINERALS: EXTRACTIVISM, MEMORY, AND THE POLITICS OF DISPLAY IN NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUMS

Mounir Sabeh Affaki (CRIA – University Institute of Lisbon, Portugal)

As part of the Horizon Europe project PITCH (Petroculture's Intersections with the Cultural Heritage Sector in the Context of Green Transitions), we examined mineral collection displays at the National Museum of Natural History and Science (MUHNAC) in Lisbon. Depicted mostly as scientific objects, the historical narratives surrounding mineral extraction – along with its socio-political, economic, and environmental dimensions – are largely absent.

This omission reflects a broader trend in science museums, where the vibrant aesthetics of minerals are foregrounded, sanitising their colonial, capitalist, and extractivist legacies and framing them as politically neutral objects.

By combining archival research with in-situ observations of the collections and interviews with curators and staff, this paper highlights significant gaps in the museum's exhibitions, particularly in relation to the origins of the specimens, labour conditions, and environmental impacts. While these omissions are not always intentional, they still stem from traditional institutional practices that have long disregarded the social and ecological contexts of specimens.

We argue for the recontextualisation of the mineral collection, advocating for a more inclusive and historically aware approach to curating natural history museums – leading to a broader, more ethical, and socially responsible understanding of cultural heritage.

WHEN THE GOVERNMENT CLOSED THE GLASSWORKS: SOCIAL CHANGE AND THE VALUE OF MEMORY IN A PORTUGUESE INDUSTRIAL SETTING

Emília Margarida Marques (Centre for Research in Anthropology – (ISCTE-IUL) / IN2PAST & Institute of Contemporary History – NOVA FCSH, Lisbon, Portugal)

The proposed presentation articulates and discusses (i) the content of 17 recent interviews with 19 former workers of an iconic, bicentenary, public sector Portuguese glassworks about the government-ordered closure of their factory in 1992, and (ii) the circumstances of these interviews, namely their location (in the old factory premises, now a glass museum) and purpose (the creation of a video piece for a museum exhibition).

A slow memory lens can be aptly applied to these two aspects and to the articulations between them. My interviewees' memories of the factory's closure were clearly shaped by relevant economic-political changes that had taken place since then, such as deindustrialisation, precarious employment, or the degradation of some local urban sites. All of this contributed to the way in which the closure of the factory affected their everyday lives and experiences—lastingly.

The interactions around the interviews further highlighted the crucial embedding of structural relations and processes of loss, devaluation, and hardship in these ways of remembering. In fact, some initial reluctance to enact and confront them, especially in somewhat formal circumstances, gave way to a verbalised post-interview satisfaction at having articulated—and finally felt recognised and valued—such slowly crafted memories and thoughts.

THE LIMITS OF EMANCIPATORY MEMORY: SLOW MEMORY AND THE RISE OF COUNTER-LIBERAL MEMORY REGIMES

Astrea Nikolovska (Central European University, Skopje, North Macedonia)

Memory is often framed as an emancipatory force. Rooted in the *lest we forget* ethos that developed following the world wars, this paradigm became dominant in Western memory culture. With the rise of transitional justice after the Cold War, global commemorative practices started to be shaped by the coming to terms with the past imperatives, reinforcing the idea that remembrance serves reconciliation and democratic progress.

This paper critically examines this liberal teleological assumption. It draws on the ethnographic research of the counter-liberal memory regime in Serbia, showing fragmentation, rather than healing, as the main outcome of memory politics. The paper explores how a counter-liberal regime contests the transitional justice never again discourse through a process of normalisation of alternative historical narratives.

Leaning on the concept of slow memory, this paper shows that the shift to a counter-liberal memory regime in Serbia is not merely the result of the abrupt nationalist politics of the political party that took power in 2014, as many scholars argue. Rather, it is a process that has been unfolding for over three decades—shaped by deeper social, cultural, and historical dynamics, and driven by long-term discursive, institutional, and grassroots processes that have gradually reconfigured collective memory.

SESSION 06.

SLOW MEMORY AFTER CONFLICT: FRAGMENTS FROM THE POST- YUGOSLAV SPACE

CHAIR: Vjeran Pavlaković (University of Rijeka, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Croatia)

FORGET ABOUT IT: SLOW PEACE IN COLLECTIVE MEMORY OF THE 1990S WAR IN CROATIA

Tamara Banjeglav (ZRC SAZU Institute of Culture and Memory Studies, Ljubljana, Slovenia)

This article examines how peaceful reintegration of Croatia's Danube region is today publicly remembered and what role it plays in collective memory of the 1991–1995 war in Croatia. The article attempts to move the attention from the usual research on the memory of violent events during conflict and to focus on the slow memory of a peaceful process in the aftermath of violence. It is argued that, in post-war Croatia, public remembrance of the war includes only violent episodes from the war and marginalises public memory of peace. This has created an impression that alternatives to violence were and are not possible, although a non-violent, peaceful solution proved exactly the opposite by playing a crucial role in ending the conflict. We argue that memory studies scholars should expose this cultural continuity of seeing conflicts as necessarily and inevitably violent and should pay more attention to peace processes that are harder to recognise because they are not one-off events and because of their slowness.

FROM LATE SOCIALIST TO POST-CONFLICT MACEDONIA: THE PERSEVERANCE OF ANTAGONISTIC MEMORY NARRATIVES REGARDING INTERETHNIC RELATIONS

Naum Trajanovski (University of Warsaw, Poland) and Elena B. Stavrevska (University of Bristol, UK)

The presentation traces the discursive framings as means of portrayal of the so-called ‘ethnic question’ and Macedonian Albanians in late socialist Macedonia and subsequently considers how much those framings are reflected in the post-2001 armed conflict memory narratives in Macedonia. The late socialist Yugoslav period is generally perceived as a period of intensified political struggles and weaponization of the inter-ethnic relations in the Federation—a process which had its reflection in Macedonian society too. However, much of those ramifications, albeit formative, as we argue, remain largely unnoticed. In our analysis, we examine media articles in Macedonian and Serbo-Croatian, from Skopje- and Belgrade-based media respectively, from the late 1960s up to the fall of socialist Yugoslavia in the early 1990s. In doing so, we compare and contrast the narratives around Macedonian Albanians, how these narratives develop over time and whether they diverge depending on the centre that produces them, mapping out existing media tropes. We further take a closer look at the memory narratives related to the 2001 armed conflict in Macedonia and how much of them relate to those identified pre-armed conflict narratives. In this direction, we argue that many of them survived well into the post-Yugoslav Macedonian society, thus structuring much of the memory narratives pertaining to the inter-ethnic relations and their history in today’s North Macedonia.

SLOW PEACE, SLOW MEMORY: LEARNINGS FROM A MULTIETHNIC COMMUNITY IN CROATIA

Valentina Otmačić (Center for Peace and Conflict Studies,
University of Rijeka, Croatia):

This work contributes to peace and conflict studies and memory studies by assessing bottom-up peace and its mnemonic formations in the community of Gorski kotar, one of the rare multiethnic communities in Croatia where ethnic Croats and ethnic Serbs did not resort to inter-ethnic violence during the 1991–1995 war of dissolution of Yugoslavia. Engaging with the concepts of slow peace and slow memory, the paper brings to the fore key characteristics of everyday positive peace in Gorski kotar and endeavours to identify links between positive peace practices and memories of peace in this community. The examination of sites, agents, narratives and events dedicated to the memory of constructive conflict transformation and multiethnic living together in this region unveils the scope and dynamics of remembering of local peace beyond major events, as well as the related memory politics within and beyond the region. While it sheds light on multiple tensions between local memories of peace preservation and dominant nation-building narratives of war, the analysis also uncovers a significant potential for memory activism focused on positive, slow and non-violent past.

MEMORYSCAPES, TOURISM, AND THE ENVIRONMENT IN CROATIA: SLOW MEMORY AND SITES OF CONFLICT AND SLOW VIOLENCE

Taylor McConnell (Johannes Gutenberg-University Mainz, Germany)

What is the relationship between memory, tourism development, and environmental transformation in areas impacted by armed conflict? This paper examines the 1991–1995 Croatian War of Independence through the lens of slow memory in three Croatian regions, highlighting varied impacts on the country's memoryscapes, tourism landscapes, and landscapes. By studying the physical and social legacy of the violence of the Homeland War thirty years after its conclusion, we trace the slow transformation of violence—from active to subtle—in spaces marked in great contrast by rapid change and development. The short distance from the Adriatic coast, relatively unscathed by war, to the hinterlands of Kordun, Lika and Dalmatia is counterbalanced by economic growth and a deflection away from the 1990s in the former and lingering, if not intentional, evidence of conflict, marked ubiquitously by museums and monuments in the latter. Croatia's tourism campaigns largely omit references to Croatian national identity (Fernández 2017), yet the transformation of its memory- and tourism landscapes from 1995 onward reveals underlying power struggles over memory and identity. The "slow memory" paradigm (Wüstenberg 2023) thus enables a deeper analysis of how time and environment mediate Croatia's contested national narrative.

03.

JULY

SESSION 07.

CONCEPTS IN SLOW MEMORY AND POLITICAL TRANSFORMATION

CHAIR: Sara Jones (The University of Birmingham, UK) and Maija Spurina (The Latvian Academy of Culture, Latvia)

The panel presents a selection of the key concepts that have been developed within the Slow Memory Working Group on the Transformation of Politics. The aim is to showcase how these concepts can be used in particular empirical contexts, but also how they can be made useful to understand slow transformations elsewhere. Work will be presented on: "mnemonic exclusion", "slow feminism", "emotional communities and mnemonic temporalities", "slow memory and urban evolution" and "slow palimpsests".

MNEMONIC INCLUSION AND POPULIST MEMORY: BELONGING AND THE CRISIS OF LIBERAL COMMEMORATION

Johana Wyss (Institute of Ethnology, Czech Academy of Sciences, Prague, Czech)

This presentation introduces the concept of mnemonic inclusion to explore how populist actors across Europe reconfigure collective memory in response to the legacies of 1989 and the neoliberal turn that followed. While much existing scholarship focuses on populist memory as a site of exclusion and antagonism, this paper shifts attention to how previously marginalised majority experiences—particularly those of workers, women, and peripheral communities—are selectively reintegrated into national narratives by populist movements seeking to challenge liberal-cosmopolitan authority. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork in the Czech peripheral town of Opava, the paper examines how commemorative practices surrounding the fall of communism foreground elite dissidents and urban intellectuals, while sidelining the broader public who took part in the transition. In contrast, populist actors engage in mnemonic inclusion: they recover and repurpose these excluded memories of a "people's revolution" to generate affective resonance and political legitimacy. By reframing commemoration as a contested political act, the paper offers a new perspective on how memory, belonging, and populist discourse intersect in post-1989 Europe—and problematizes the prevailing assumptions about the memory-populism nexus.

FEMINISM AND MEMORIES IN ALBANIA

Gilda Hoxha (University of Tirana, Albania)

Democratic consolidation often brings significant challenges, one of which is the advancement of women's rights. In Albania, a society with deep-rooted patriarchal traditions, women's rights have undergone various processes to achieve recognition and consolidation. This proposal tries to examine the role of feminist movements in shaping Albania's socio-political culture, focusing on their mobilisation, development, and societal impact.

The proposal explores the slow yet steady growth of feminist activism in Albania, highlighting the symbolic importance of the 8th of March as a focal point for advocacy and awareness. By analysing the cultural and political significance of this day, the study aims to uncover how feminist movements navigate and address systemic barriers to gender equality. Furthermore, the research delves into the role of historical memory in shaping Albanian society's perceptions of feminism and women's rights. It investigates how collective memories influence the understanding, acceptance, or rejection of feminist ideals within a society undergoing democratic transitions.

By addressing these themes, based on a comprehensive analysis of how feminist movements contribute to transforming socio-political culture in Albania. It seeks to shed light on the interplay between tradition, activism, and the evolving discourse on gender equality in a post-transition context.

RUINS OF MODERNITY: EMOTIONAL AND MNEMONIC COMMUNITIES THROUGH WAR

Sílvia Correia (IS- Faculty of Arts and Humanities University of Porto, Portugal)

The First World War remains a subject of contention between those interpretations that argue that it marked a rupture of modernity and those that defend the persistence of traditional models, particularly about the ways in which the experience was remembered. Walter Benjamin posits that the experience of war fundamentally undermined the promises of modernity. He asserts that, in the wake of war, nothing would remain as it was before. In the line of Benjamin, I understand war less as a crisis of modernity than as part of the constitutive catastrophe of progress. Indeed, war can be regarded as a vital strategy for the recovery and regeneration of the capitalist system, as evidenced by the beginning of the 20th century and the present day, regarding the path of production towards an arms industry investment. The present study looks to unveil emotional and mnemonic responses of communities in the context of modern catastrophes, delving into the intricate temporal dynamics that shape these reactions, between the destructive rapidity of the catastrophe and the slow emotional and mnemonic encounter of the communities. The proposal calls for the introduction of alternative temporalities that frame memory, such as those found in rural emotional communities, whose lives are more defined by the cycles of nature. These alternative temporalities have the potential to disrupt the conventional notions of time that are characterised by the modern capitalist system. Excavating the ruins left by progress, as Benjamin suggested, the present proposal looks to examine, through the remnants of the experience of war, forms of resistance to the catastrophic logic of modernity.

TEMPORAL REFLECTIONS: TRACING MOST'S DUAL IMAGES THROUGH SLOW MEMORY

Akshatha Ravi Kumar (Czech Technical University, Prague, Czech)

Cities remember - but they also forget. Urban memory is often framed as a battleground between preservation and erasure, where history is either safeguarded or deliberately erased. Yet beyond these dramatic interventions, a quieter, more profound process unfolds: slow urban memory, the gradual sedimentation, adaptation, and erosion of meaning over time. The paper explores how cities do not just inscribe history but metabolise it, allowing layers of memory to persist, fade, or resurface in unexpected ways. Ludwig Mies van der Rohe famously stated that "Architecture depends on its time. It is the crystallization of its inner structure, the slow unfolding of its form." Similarly, slow urban memory operates over decades or centuries, embedding historical narratives within the built environment in ways that defy immediate recognition. The paper will highlight the ways in which slow memory manifests, through the endurance of symbolic urban forms, the adaptive reuse of structures, and the faint echoes of erased histories that remain embedded in the city's fabric. In a world obsessed with rapid urban change, this study argues for the importance of understanding cities as palimpsests, where history is not only actively curated but also passively endured.

SLOW URBAN MEMORY: THE CITY AS AN UNFOLDING PALIMPSEST

Marsela Plyku Demaj (Polis University Tirana, Albania)

This study revisits the City of Most, Czech Republic, 50 years after mining-induced displacement and resettlement which had resulted in the obliteration of the original city and creation of a new built environment. Although, the old and new cities never coexisted, yet the dual "images" of Most persist in the memories of its residents, reflecting a unique contrast between past and present urban identities. This research explores the city's evolution and how memories shape residents' identities through an interdisciplinary approach that combines Urban Design and Anthropology. Despite physical transformations, there has been a lack of follow-up studies on Most's evolving narrative, offering a distinctive case of urban memory and adaptation.

Employing these themes, the study examines the interplay between the intended "designed city" and the experiential "lived-in city" across two generations. This approach uncovers the intricate relationship between Most's physical layout and its social dynamics, illustrating how resident memories and daily interactions influence urban life. Viewed through the 'Slow Memory' perspective, this research emphasises the importance of slow, reflective processes in understanding urban evolution, aiming to improve strategies for displaced communities. By capturing how residents perceive changes in Most, this study contributes to the broader discourse on using residents' narratives for more inclusive urban development.

SESSION 08.

SLOW TESTIMONIES OF TRANSFORMATION AND TRAUMA

CHAIR: Hanna Teichler (Goethe University, Germany)

SLOW MEMORY: THE VOX MACHINE INSTALLATION —‘CONCEPTUAL TIME MACHINE’ WITH THE VOICE OF HUMAN VALUES

Fjoralba Satka (Aleksander Moisiu University, Albania)

This article explores the issue of how Sadik Spahija's Vox Machine sound expo-installation with a ballet troupe performance focuses on the ruins and discarded materials from factories that ceased operations after 1990. Applying the Slow Memory concept, the research findings show: a) the shortcomings of Albania's accelerated mass transformation of industrial sites into cultural objects, b) how the Vox Machine exhibition becomes a 'conceptual time machine' with artistic interpretation of the value of human industrial products in the socialist past, c) how today, in the time of rapid de-industrialisation, people relate to their heritage, created with labour, sweat, joys, sufferings and privations, and clothed in public values, and d) today's accelerated destruction of the intellectual public heritage. Sadik Spahija's exhibition is a social-political and cultural visual expression of slow memory, appealing to critical reflection on the relationship between human labour, its products and our attitude towards them, and human well-being today and in the future.

THE UNDERGROUND POETRY AND SLOW MEMORY

Marisa Kerbizi (Aleksander Moisiu University, Albania)

Underground poetry, (coined by Visar Zhiti, a prominent imprisoned poet) is strongly related with individual memory. It was written during communist times (in the prison or internment) and published after the fall of the totalitarian system in 1991. Underground poetry best represents the non-official literature written in Albania from 1944 to 1990 – the literary corpus of the imprisoned writers, and also an act of resistance against communist ideological system and the method of socialist realism. The underground poetry became the voice of the national trauma echoing from each individual pain. It destroyed the fake narrative of happiness (there is no rain in the communist heaven), transforming the readers perspective for the past. Underground poetry changed the fallacy of peace, prosperity, social justice and human brotherhood, introducing their reality, their memory, their pain, their truth. Their poetical corpus became the medium through which the readers knew the totalitarian system in which intellectuals were arrested, incarcerated, or even executed. Poets like Arshi Pipa, Visar Zhiti, Havzi Nela, Trifon Xhagjika, Genc Leka, Vilson Blloshmi, Frederik Rreshpja, Zef Zorba, Gjergj Komnino became prominent voices of underground poetry; each one telling his story of resistance (political / aesthetical or both), his pain, his identity, his values.

SLOW MEMORY IN TIMES OF WAR: WRITING DIARIES DURING THE SIEGE OF SARAJEVO, 1992 – 1995

Nicolas Moll (Memory Lab - Trans-European Exchange Platform on History and Remembrance, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina)

What motivated inhabitants of Sarajevo to hold a diary during the siege of their city which lasted from April 1992 until the end of 1995? Which aspects of their life did they write about? Diaries can be seen as “material memory holders, memory boxes of their time” (Anna-Leena Perämäki), for other persons who might later read them, and for those who are writing them. Analysing the relation between diaries and slow memory can be a stimulating way to explore the slow memory-concept and also to better understand the role of diaries in times of war. Writing a diary can be seen as slow process, even more if it takes place during a long-lasting siege which might be experienced as slow life. Diaries can be seen as a tool to create immediate memories, and they can become mediated memory when they are getting published, a process which can also take a long time. Based on an analysis of diaries written during the Sarajevo-siege and on interviews with diary-writers, the presentation will also tackle the question how the role of diaries has recently changed through social media, when looking at video-diaries which have appeared in war zones as Gaza, Syria and Ukraine.

SLOW MEMORY. PERSPECTIVES FROM CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

Violeta Davoliūtė (Vilnius University, Lithuania) and Barbara Törnquist-Plewa (Lund University Center for European Studies, Sweden)

SESSION 09.

CURATING SLOW MEMORY: MUSEUMS, DICTATORSHIP, AND THE UNFINISHED PAST

CHAIRS: Alice Semedo (CITCEM-Faculty of Arts and Humanities University of Porto, Portugal) and Luís Trindade (IHC, FCSH NOVA Lisboa / IN2PAST, Portugal)

This roundtable explores the role of museums in addressing authoritarian pasts and their repercussions in the present. It opens a space for reflecting on curatorial practices that resist forgetting and simplification, fostering critical, plural, and relational readings of history. The discussion focuses on the challenges of representing legacies of dictatorship and repression, and on the possibilities of building narratives that remain open, unfinished, and transformative.

THE MUSEALISATION OF RESISTANCE TO FASCISM

Aida Recheda (National Museum of Resistance and Freedom, Fortaleza de Peniche, Portugal)

The National Museum of Resistance and Freedom is a museum of the memory of resistance to fascism, which develops its activity by collecting testimonies and life experiences of the men and women who fought for freedom and democracy in Portugal during the dictatorship that prevailed between 1926 and 1974. I will present a reflection on the memory disputes identified along the processes of establishing the museum and the museological and exhibition programmes, and the persistent popular demand for the creation of the museum.

CAN MUSEUMS BE SPACES FOR HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION?

Rita Rato (Aljube Museum – Resistance and Freedom, Portugal)

Drawing on the experience of organisation, curatorship, and development of temporary exhibition programming at the Aljube Museum – Resistance and Freedom – “Women and Resistance – “New Portuguese Letters” and other struggles”; “FAREWELL HOMELAND AND FAMILY”; “25th of April ALWAYS!”, I reflect on the preservation and sharing of democratic memory, work with different target audiences, education for human rights, and practices of “democratic literacy” and other experiences.

HERITAGISING THE DIFFICULT LEGACIES OF THE ANTI-FASCIST RESISTANCE IN PORTO: AN ACTIVIST MUSEUM IN DEFENCE OF DEMOCRACY, EQUALITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Luís Valentim Pereira Monteiro (CITCEM-Faculty of Arts and Humanities
University of Porto, Portugal)

In Porto, the lack of any kind of museum dedicated to the theme of anti-fascist resistance has sparked several citizen mobilisations in the city and the surrounding region since the end of the dictatorship. Of particular note in this regard is the demand for the use of the old building that once housed the PIDE/DGS headquarters in Rua do Heroísmo - which today houses the Porto Military Museum - as an ideal location for a Museum of Resistance and Freedom. The aim of this paper is to explore the difficulties inherent in the patrimonialisation of the social memory of anti-fascism in Porto. Firstly, the concept of “difficult inheritances” (Macdonald, 2009) is used as a tool to better understand the existing friction generated by the production of official memories about resistance and state violence during the fascist dictatorship and, consequently, the disavowing and invisibility of the social and subalternised memories of social subgroups such as former political prisoners and other anti-fascist resisters. Secondly, we present a historical overview of this social and political demand in the city and the tensions that have existed between the defenders of this new museum project and the institutional political powers. Thirdly, the idea of the “activist museum” (Sandell, 2018) is used as a theoretical and practical tool applied to the constitution of a collection and consequent exhibition built collectively with anti-fascist resisters and dedicated to the treatment of these memories.

POLITICS OF MEMORY AND DIFFICULT PASTS AT THE TARRAFAL CONCENTRATION CAMP MUSEUM

Victor Barros (Institute of Contemporary History (IHC), FCSH-UNL,
Lisboa, Portugal)

The purpose of this presentation is to place the analysis of the Tarrafal Concentration Camp (Cabo Verde) within the scope of historiographical enquiries into difficult pasts and slow memory and, at the same time, to show how the politics of memory officially implemented constructed the political, cultural, and symbolic status of the site. It is also important to emphasise how the museum of the Tarrafal Concentration Camp combines both memories of the difficult pasts of the Portuguese dictatorship and colonialism.

POLITICS OF MEMORY AND FORGETTING: WHEN RESISTANCE BECOMES HERITAGE

Sofia Lisboa (Institute of Contemporary History (IHC), FCSH-UNL/ IN2PAST, Lisboa, Portugal)

The musealisation of authoritarian pasts and of the resistances that opposed them is a process marked by tensions and disputes, reflecting how heritage is not a fixed entity but a social and political construct. Heritage value is attributed, emerging from the political and cultural appropriations of certain objects, places, and practices. Thus, the selection of what is preserved, displayed, and interpreted in memory museums is an active process subject to divergence.

Based on an analysis of the National Museum Resistance and Freedom – Peniche Fortress, we seek to examine three key dimensions: (1) the relationship between museums and communities in defining a shared heritage; (2) the processes of re-signifying spaces and objects linked to authoritarian pasts; and (3) strategies for preserving memory in contexts of political dispute.

This proposal aims to understand how the heritage of resistance is constructed and legitimised, as well as the implications of this construction for contemporary societies. At a time when ways of remembering the past are constantly being reshaped, reflecting on the processes of attributing value to the heritage of political resistance becomes crucial for understanding the dynamics of memory and forgetting.

SESSION 10.

SLOW MEMORY AND SLOW PEACE: OUTPUT AND REFLECTIONS

CHAIRS: Chris Reynolds (Nottingham Trent University, UK) and Orli Fridman (Faculty of Media and Communications, Singidunum University, Belgrade, Serbia)

In this panel we will feature the works, discussions and outputs of working group 4 on transformation of conflict. The panel will feature brief introductions of our main outputs (two special issues, education resources, podcast episode, exhibition contribution, and working) that will then provide the basis for an open discussion on some of the key analytical themes that have emerged on slow memory and the transformation of conflicts and fed into and out of the production of our materials.

Other participants:

Claudia Garradas (CITCEM-Faculty of Arts and Humanities University of Porto, Portugal)

Sara Dybris McQuaid (Aarhus University, Denmark)

SESSION 11.

SLOW SITES OF MEMORY

CHAIR: Gruia Badescu (University of Konstanz, Germany)

EMBRACING SLOW LIVING: REDISCOVERING TIME AND CULTURE IN SERRA DA ESTRELA

Ana Cruz da Silva (Center for Intercultural Studies for the Porto Accounting and Business School, Polytechnic of Porto - CEI, ISCAP-P.PORTO, Portugal)

The Portuguese mountainous territory of Serra da Estrela turns out to be a typical “*lieu de mémoire*,” or a site of memory (Nora, 1992). This mountain range has been the site of many activities and events that have fostered and developed the collective memory and identity of a huge number of individuals for a long period of time. Nevertheless, this region, as well as many others across the world, is having difficulties coming up with a strategy to deal with the process of globalization that is changing the world at an accelerated rate. Understanding how people and communities react to more “slow-moving” and distributed change is crucial. The ability of societies to create resilient responses to significant changes is largely dependent on their remembrance practices. Therefore, it is important to cultivate a culture of slowing down our thinking in response to the “Great Acceleration”, while taking time to remember the past (Ghosh, 2020; McNeill & Engelke, 2014). This communication will focus on the local and cultural territory of Serra da Estrela as a place where the “slow movement” rejects the common “fast living” of our daily lives, so typical of our globalized world.

MONUMENTS AS EVOLVING NARRATIVES: GENERATIONAL SHIFTS IN HISTORICAL MEMORY

Nena Mocnik (Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona, Spain)

Monuments, often built to preserve collective memory, are not immutable symbols—their meanings evolve as societies change, but this transformation is typically slow, unfolding over generations as shifting political landscapes and social values turn once-revered monuments into sites of controversy, and eventually, erasure. What, then, is the 'ideal pace for commemoration'? How long after atrocities should we erect a monument to be fair and just to anyone involved and to teach us 'historical lessons'? How can we ensure that remembering the past is both inclusive and historically conscious? This paper draws on case studies from EuroClio's Monument(al) Challenges project to reflect how monuments transition from celebration to contestation, and how, over time, collective memory is renegotiated. Some of the studied monuments have gradually lost their status, with their narratives reworked in a slow, evolutionary process. By exploring delayed memorialization, this paper investigates whether postponing the erection of monuments allows for a more nuanced historical understanding or, conversely, whether it prolongs the marginalisation of certain groups. Through these reflections, this paper aims to illuminate the intricate relationship between monuments and slow memory, offering insights into how societies can navigate commemoration in an ever-changing historical landscape.

HERITAGE IN CONFLICT: DECAY, INHERITANCE, AND MEMORY IN THE MEDINA OF TUNIS

Majdi Faleh (Nottingham Trent University, UK) and Leila Ben-Gacem
(FounderBlue Fish – Tunisia)

The Medina of Tunis, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, faces ongoing challenges of neglect, abandonment, and decay. Since the mid-20th century, socio-political shifts have led to the fragmentation of ownership, the decline of traditional economic structures, and the deterioration of historic buildings. Cases such as 36 Andalous Street and Fondouk el Henna highlight the complexities of inheritance disputes, weak urban policies, and bureaucratic hurdles that hinder conservation efforts. A 2020 survey identified 125 abandoned buildings, many municipally owned, representing both a challenge and an opportunity for revitalisation. Unlike other North African medinas shaped by mass tourism, Tunis's Medina remains primarily for local communities. This paper explores how slow memory—a reflective, community-driven approach—can guide heritage-led regeneration. Drawing on the 2019 Bartlett Innovation Fund project, it examines how municipal ownership can enable equitable restoration strategies that prioritise sustainability and social engagement. By focusing on two case studies, this research argues for a multi-stakeholder approach to transform decayed spaces into living heritage assets. Addressing both physical deterioration and social fragmentation, this approach seeks to reimagine the Medina as a dynamic space that preserves its past while ensuring a sustainable and inclusive future.

SLOW MEMORY, FAST BORDERS

Borut Klabjan (Science and Research Centre in Koper, Slovenia)

Collective remembering (and forgetting) are, in many cases, dominated by State-driven politics and State institutions frequently make use of mythologized understandings of the past to mobilize memory as an instrument of politics, both at the individual and collective levels. However, producing, cultivating, educating, and shaping memories are slow processes. They need time to sediment: years, decades. How societies remember in a context of moving political borders and geopolitical orders? How do they react to a constant flux of States and their narratives?

The northern Adriatic experienced constant redrawing of borders throughout the twentieth century: the Great War initiated a long-term process of border changes that characterised the lives of people in Central, Eastern, and South-Eastern Europe. By looking at the *longue durée*, this paper addresses certain features of engagement with the past that most scholarship passes over by concentrating on the memory of specific moments in history to the exclusion of other periods and events. The question of how different societies managed to interact despite hostile political conditions is of enormous importance and it poses challenges to neatly designated visions of state, sovereignty, space, and memory.

04.

JULY

SESSION 12.

SLOW MEMORY AND ENVIRONMENTAL TRANSFORMATION: SITES, SOUNDS AND STORIES

CHAIRS: Lucy Bond (University of Westminster, UK) and Jessica Rapson (King's College London, UK)

TRACKING SONGLINES: WALKING AS A SLOW ECO-MEMORY METHODOLOGY

Rosanne Kennedy (Australian National University - College of Arts and Social, Australia)

In this presentation, I analyse the travels of memory across time and space as conveyed in a major First Nations exhibition, Songlines: Tracking the Seven Sisters. Songlines – an introduced term adopted by Indigenous peoples in Australia – describes the creation of Law and Country. Through large collaborative paintings, holograms, videos, digital works, woven figures and pottery, the Songlines exhibition tells the story of the Seven Sisters as they travel across three lands in Central Australia to evade a lustful male pursuer. The exhibition introduces viewers to geological features of the land, and to Country, Law and the Dreaming, as they engage imaginatively with the deep present. I will consider ways in which this exhibition provides a new lens through which to consider the ecological and temporal dimensions of slow memory, with a focus on walking as a method especially suited to what I call slow eco-memory.

MUSEUMS AND THE IMPLICIT ANTHROPOCENE

Rick Crownshaw (Goldsmiths, University of London, UK)

Over the last five to ten years, British museums have pivoted towards representing climate change and, more generally, the Anthropocene, our new but still debated geological epoch defined by the human species' collective impact in changing the planet's chemistry. This environmental turn has often been through the exhibition of visualised climate data and the explanation of climate science in relation to natural history and the earth sciences, as well as the installation of the visual and plastic arts, and major Anthropocene exhibitions are in the planning stages. However, this paper focuses instead on the implicit rather than curated presence of our new geological epoch. Using a selection of exhibits at London's Science Museum, this paper reframes, reaccentuates and re-narrates a number of artefacts and objects to elicit their implication in the Anthropocene, along with the legacies of empire, race, and nation-building that such museums house. Unmoored from seemingly innocuous histories of the natural world and the technological and industrial progress of which the museum visitor is often positioned as the beneficiary, these objects and artefacts are positioned as witnesses to an unfolding catastrophe, a catastrophe to which British museums have only belatedly begun to testify. Moreover, this paper's methodology disrupts the logic of museum planning in which the explicit turn to the Anthropocene can be exculpatory – in that representation of the environmental present and future supplants institutional implication in the origins of catastrophe.

However, the conceptualisation and staging of counter-memorative work in such spaces would be dehistoricising if it did not recognise the multiple and multiscale temporalities by which the museum and its contents materialise. For example, museum time might describe the institutional time of curatorial labour, exhibition design and policy-making; the social history and itinerary of collected, curated and exhibited objects before and during their travels in museum and heritage ecosystems; the ways these objects have intra-acted with their environments over time and bear the chemical traces of changing human and nonhuman historical contexts; the history of cultural memory work itself (its various actors and institutions, from the original national and imperial missions of museums to institutional revisionism belied by the persistent legacies of past nationalisms, and the generational and cultural shifts in the responses of museum visitors); and, of course, the Anthropocene itself, the context of this counter-memory work, unfolding over inhuman and human time scales. The apprehension of the museum as a constellation of temporalities therefore incorporates the concept of "slow memory" (Wüstenberg). In short, despite the urgency and expediency of making the implicit explicit in museums of the present, such counter-remembrance takes time – into account.

THE SMALL THINGS OF CLIMATE CHANGE: CITIZEN HUMANITIES AS AN APPROACH TO SLOW REMEMBRANCE

Simon Probst (University of Vechta, Germany)

Climate change, even though a planetary phenomenon, affects places and landscapes in different ways. As the question whether climate change is anthropogenic has been settled, its local effects, consequences, and experiences become a more important focus of research. In this talk, I want to present results and thoughts from a project investigating local and regional perceptions and memories of natural-cultural transformation in Lower Saxony, Germany. Lower Saxony is characterised by a diversity of landscapes – the Harz forests, huge agricultural areas, marshlands and swamps, the shore of the North Sea and the Wadden Sea. All of them are affected by climate change. In our research, we analysed local and regional media and how they storied the natural-cultural changes in these places. Next to this discourse analysis, we invited citizens from diverse regional, professional and social backgrounds for two workshops and encouraged them to tell their personal climate stories. The purpose of these gatherings was not to conduct qualitative research. Instead, we followed a citizen humanities approach and aimed to open a space of co-creative remembrance. The stories that emerged displayed a great variety of experiences and forms: narratives from the more-than-human perspectives of spruce trees, a tree slice or a dyke meet lyrical, oral and diary-like autobiographies. None of these accounts offered new insights into the great chain of climate events. But even if they were only loosely and occasionally connected to planetary narratives, these stories created threads between personal experience and critical environmental change, between human and more-than-human memories. Far from the sublimity of extinction ceremonies or glacier funerals, the meetings offered an occasion for slow memory, contemplating small events and observations, where climate change began to matter in a personal way.

ECHOES OF SLOW MEMORY: SOUND-WALKING THROUGH VAROSHA'S HISTORY

Deniz Gundogan Ibrisim (Kadir Has University, Turkey)

“Sound-Walking: We Are Not Ghosts – Varosha Narratives” is a compelling project led by contemporary ethnographer and poet Nafia Akdeniz, blending poetry and ethnographic research to explore the contested spaces of Varosha, a once-glamorous resort town in Cyprus. Following the Turkish invasion of the island’s northern part in 1974, Varosha was abandoned by its 35,000 predominantly Greek Cypriot residents. Fenced off and left desolate, the town has remained frozen in time for nearly four decades, its future hanging in the balance between the north and south of Cyprus. Today, Varosha stands as one of the largest modern ruins in the world, drawing comparisons to the abandoned Pripyat near Chernobyl in Ukraine. Through an immersive, interactive audio walk, Akdeniz brings these histories and memories to life, using poetry and soundscapes to reflect on the displacement and enduring longing of the town’s former residents. Offered in Greek, Turkish, and English, the walk takes participants through the physical spaces of Varosha, providing an embodied experience of the city’s complex and painful history.

This paper examines the project as a mode of “slow memory,” engaging with histories of conflict and loss that resist the rapid commodification of memory in contemporary society. As this paper argues, the project fosters environmental memory—shaped by the sounds, sights, and histories embedded in the landscape—creating a deeper understanding of collective histories, particularly in conflict zones. Varosha’s status as an uninhabited, decaying ruin enhances the project’s power, transforming the site into a space of relational reflection on the lasting impacts of forced displacement and the politics of memory. By situating sound-walking within the broader discourse of environmental memory studies, this paper underscores the potential of physical spaces to provoke transformative reflections on both the past and the future, fostering a relational and response-able engagement with shared histories and the geographies of memory.

SLOW VIOLENCE/SLOW MEMORY AND TOXIC GEOGRAPHIES: COMMEMORATION, HAUNTINGS AND GRIEF IN GRENFELL BY STEVE MCQUEEN (2023)

Clara de Massol (King’s College London)

SESSION 13.

A LONG TRIP DOWN MEMORY LANE: TRANSFORMATION OF IDENTITIES IN UKRAINIAN LITERATURE

CHAIRS: Yuliya Yurchuk (Umeå University, Sweden) and Tetiana Grebeniuk (The Imre Kertész Kolleg Jena, Warsaw University, Poland; Zaporizhzhia State Medical and Pharmaceutical University, Ukraine)

SLOW RECOLLECTION OF ONESELF: THE DIARY OF YUR MEZHENKO AS A SEARCH FOR CULTURAL BELONGING

Olena Haleta (Ivan Franko National University of Lviv, Ukraine)

This paper is devoted to the analysis of the work of memory in the cultural heritage of Yur Mezhenko, who was one of the leading Ukrainian literary critics and theorists of the 1920s, and the founder and head of the National Library of Ukraine. Because of the Soviet repressions, he was forced to leave Kyiv and continue his work in Leningrad. In his diary entries for 1919-1926, then for the 1940s and 1950s, one of the central issues remains the question of cultural belonging, with reviewing one's own past and self-articulation through memories. Mezhenko's diary is analysed in terms of how specific textual strategies of constructing and overcoming the self/other opposition are developed, as well as strategies of recalling the past and imagining the future, which root identity in time, and strategies of choosing "one's own place" in a geographical and symbolic sense. Yur Mezhenko's "Shevchenkiana" collection is also considered as a performative space and a kind of metonymy of culture, which refers both to the community and to the figure of the collector himself, tells a story about them, and maintains cultural identity in often contradictory or adverse conditions of the Soviet era.

SLOW TRANSLATION AND RECONCEPTUALIZATION: UKRAINIAN NOVELS IN SWEDEN

Olena Jansson (Stockholm University, Sweden)

Every act of translation not only conveys national memory and identity from a source culture to a transnational memory sphere but also shapes post-remembrance in the target culture, referred to as postmemory. This connection relies on imaginative projection, creation, and alignment with national and transnational narratives about the source culture, incorporating 'frictions' between different cultural traditions of remembering. When translation is slow, occurring decades later, it widens the temporal and cultural gap for the target audience. This presentation delves into the changes that translated memory undergoes and explores how slow translating influences the reassessment of memory functions. Focusing on the slow translation of Ukrainian novels in Sweden, the study draws on reviews of two translated Ukrainian novels: by O. Zabuzhko and Y. Andruchovych. Review analysis is employed as a relevant method within the translation sociology approach, considering reviews as peritexts representing the target culture's reactions to the author and text.

INVISIBLE MOURNING: ASPECTS OF INTERGENERATIONAL TRAUMA IN UKRAINIAN WAR PROSE

Iryna Tarku (Justus Liebig University Giessen, Graduate Center: Giessen, Hesse, Germany)

The paper investigates mediation of mourning in the novels about the war in Donbas, *The Orphanage* (2017) by Serhii Zhadan and *Mondegreen: Songs about Death and Love* (2019) by Volodymyr Rafieienko. The continuity of political violence in Ukraine and Eastern Europe is perceived in terms of “multidirectionality of memory” (Rothberg 2009). Following the concept of “postmemory” (Hirsch 2012), it is important to emphasize that people who are fighting the war today are the descendants of the people who survived Soviet repressions and the Holocaust, and that the Russian-Ukrainian war will have a longstanding impact on the postgenerations of soldiers, local civilians, and refugees. Therefore, it is necessary to create safe “mourning sites” (LaCapra 2018) and to foster awareness about trauma and healing. The analysis of the novels *The Orphanage* and *Mondegreen* is focused on mourning as part of working through trauma (LaCapra 2018). Serhii Zhadan and Volodymyr Rafieienko are representatives from Donbas who witnessed the transformation of their homeland caused by the Russian aggression. In the novels, the characters live through difficult-to-narrate experiences, such as observing the ruination of houses or leaving home and loved ones behind. Pasha and Haba reconsider their values and discover agency. *The Orphanage* reveals vulnerable masculinity which goes beyond the social norms. *Mondegreen* introduces “carnivalization” of mourning which helps to cope with trauma. In both novels, dysfunctional relationships contribute to distancing between family members. The war becomes a challenge and a chance to overcome alienation by learning to communicate. At last, there is hope to break through the cycle of intergenerational trauma.

LONGING FOR THE “LOST” GALICIAN CULTURAL HERITAGE AS AN ACT OF DECOLONIZING UKRAINIAN IDENTITY (IN THE NOVELS OF NATALKA SNIADANKO AND SOFIA ANDRUKHOVYCH)

Olha Voznyuk (The Institute of Slavonic Studies of the Czech Academy of Sciences, Czech Republic)

Ukrainian intellectual elite actively started to investigate the unspoken and forbidden during the Soviet time cultural heritage of Ukraine after the independence of Ukraine in 1991. The process of re-thinking and re-discovering the historical and cultural heritage of Galicia, a region that was a part of the Habsburgs and later Austria-Hungarian monarchy and therefore belonged to the European cultural space till the first part of the 20th century, revealed an unexpected cultural landscape in the Ukrainian memory narrative. Multinational traditions of the region and its intercultural approaches, as well as Ukrainian unique Galician history and traditions, were oppressed and cancelled in Soviet Ukraine. As such, the Galician influence on Ukrainian culture is still understudied and would allow for a better understanding of the transition witnessed in Ukrainian society in the recent years. In particular, since the independence of Ukraine and especially after the Revolution of Dignity in 2014, the transformation processes in Ukrainian literature revealed a profound nostalgia for the European heritage in Ukrainian culture, through the prism of common history and values rooted in Galicia. The oeuvre of Ukrainian contemporary writers such as Sofia Andrukhovych and Natalka Sniadanko present the re-discovering process of a part of Ukrainian “forgotten” culture that influences the contemporary memory building and identity construction.

INVISIBLE MOURNING: ASPECTS OF INTERGENERATIONAL TRAUMA IN UKRAINIAN WAR PROSE

Yuliya Yurchuk (Umeå University, Sweden)

“BEING UKRAINIAN” FOR TWO GENERATIONS OF UKRAINIAN WRITERS: LONG ECHO OF NATIONAL TRAUMAS

Tetiana Grebeniuk (The Imre Kertész Kolleg Jena, Warsaw University, Poland; Zaporizhzhia State Medical and Pharmaceutical University, Ukraine)

The dissolution of the USSR and the declaration of independence of Ukraine triggered in Ukrainians gradual identity transformations related, among other things, to the revision of the notion of “Soviet identity” artificially constructed in the past. This kind of identity had been purposefully imposed on Ukrainians by Soviet regime, often through violence which, while strengthening the statehood, caused collective intergenerational traumas: the Holodomor, political repressions, forced deportations, etc.

Contemporary Ukrainian writers’ artistic visions of identity transformations, underlying the constant tension between Ukrainian national and “Soviet” identities, are rooted in personal author’s memories about their past. Based on belonging to different generations, two patterns of representation of identity changes can be distinguished. The older generation of contemporary writers – those who had been living a part of their adult life in the Soviet Union – mostly show in their works the direct conflict between national and “Soviet” (implicitly associated with Russian) identities, fierce Ukrainians’ resistance to threatening nature of the latter, considering this confrontation as the basis for forming the identity of contemporary Ukrainians. So, for instance, in fiction by Yurii Andrukhovych, Oksana Zabuzhko, and Oleksandr Irvanets, the constant attempts of post-soviet (Russian or pro-Russian) intelligence agencies to erase the Ukrainian identity of protagonists and – wider – contemporary Ukrainians are represented.

In the works of the younger generation of Ukrainian writers, who only entered adulthood in the 2000s, more complex, indirect identity construction mechanisms, based on the work of memory, are shown. These writers (namely, Sophia Andrukhovych, Artem Chekh, Tania Maliarchuk) refer to the past traumas stored in family memories as an important factor in the formation of contemporary Ukrainians’ national identity. Ukrainianness of the protagonists is shown in their works mostly as taken for granted, and the focus of these works is placed on representation of different experiences of trauma and working through (in Dominik LaCapra’s meaning) the past traumas of the nation in order to avoid further threats to national self-determination. Given the chronological continuity and multi-stage nature of the identity construction under consideration, a generational approach to this process seems relevant, as well as a view of change from the perspective of the idea of “slow memory.” The application of this idea allows us to “rethink the temporal premises of memory studies, by shifting attention from “eventful” and “sited” pasts to those that are slow-moving” (Jenny Wüstenberg 2023, 60). The purpose of the study is to examine the transformation of identity in the independent Ukraine, reflected in the fiction of older and younger generations of contemporary Ukrainian writers, in the context of idea of slow memory. The key concepts in this research will be the notions of “cultural trauma” (as interpreted by Piotr Sztompka and Jeffrey C. Alexander) and Astrid Erll’s explorations on significance of generations in the literary process.

SESSION 14.

METHODOLOGIES OF SLOW MEMORY RESEARCH

CHAIR: Aline Sierp (Maastricht University, Netherlands)

LONG MEMORY, SLOW MEMORY: THE ENDURING DISCOURSE OF TERRORISM IN POST-WAR PERU

Goya Wilson Vasquez (University of Bristol, UK)

This paper contrasts Slow Memory – the working concept of the conference – and Memoria Larga (Long Memory) – a concept from Latin American memory studies – through my research with the children of the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA), published as *Learning from Collective Memory Work: Troubling Testimonio in Post-War Peru* (2025). Both frameworks challenge event-centered approaches to memory, which I will use to understand the enduring discourse of terrorism in Peru.

The slow temporality of my research – spanning testimonial encounters over ten years – reveals how the stigma of being labeled “children of terrorists” persists long after the internal war (1980–2000). This discourse extends beyond the armed groups, as seen in the 2024 protests, where state violence and impunity were justified by branding protesters as terrorists, rendering them disposable. Memoria Larga situates this discourse within deeper histories of colonialism, racial hierarchies, and state violence. My research shows how the stigma inherited by the children of the MRTA is part of a broader web of interconnected violences that stretch back to colonial times and persist in the present. This challenges the notion that the end of armed conflict signifies the end of violence.

The relational nature of memory in both slow and long memory approaches further underscores how testimonies evolve in dialogue with others. Placing the MRTA children’s experiences in conversation with those of Indigenous communities and protesters against large extractivist projects in Peru reveals the interconnectedness of violences across time and space.

By contrasting these frameworks, the paper argues for a nuanced understanding of memory work that embraces both the slow, reflective process of engaging with the past and the long, interconnected histories of violence and resistance.

THICK MAPPING AND THE LOCAL HISTORY OF URBAN REGENERATION IN NORTH BELFAST.

Sara Dybris McQuaid (Aarhus University, Denmark)

This paper explores "thick mapping" as a methodology to slowly layer up the contested local history and memory of urban regeneration in North Belfast after the 1994 ceasefires. The mapping starts from the Oldpark Carnegie Library, which has been closed since 2010, but is currently being brought "back to life", as part of a community-led regeneration initiative. The library stands in a part of Belfast with a history of intense violence during the conflict, and the local area remains a particularly fractious area of the city, where segregated communities fear losing ground in the peace process. Ongoing divisions have made it difficult to rebuild this part of the city (both in relational and material terms) and previous attempts at urban regeneration have left long-term memories of spectacular failures and partial successes, which now fuel both hopes for the future and fear of disappointment. Any project of regeneration therefore has to stay alive to the many contested meanings and needs projected onto them as well as into the peace process in general. The strength of thick mapping methodology, in this context, is that it can accommodate different layers of meaning, time, data, history, voice and experiences (ref), rather than attempt to get closer and closer to the essence of a place. The strength of starting from a particular type of building (in this case a library) and a particular type of process (community-, rather than government-led regeneration) is that it can elicit different types of sources; more complex chronologies of conflict; and local experiences of peacebuilding. The mapping I have slowly been assembling makes use of the library's own records; local North Belfast newspapers; successive regeneration policies for North Belfast; interviews with former librarians and library users as well as current developers and community workers. Together the sources demonstrate the different ways in which North Belfast is drawn together in separate and overlapping geographies and communities of memory, which allows us to tell a more integrated but no less contested local history of regeneration.

SLOW MEMORY – ENGAGING CHILDREN IN ORAL HISTORY AND ‘OBJECTS THAT SPEAK’ METHOD. SHARING GOOD PRACTICES

Aleksandra Kurowska-Susdorf (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the Naval Academy in Gdynia, Poland)

The purpose of the presentation is to show how memory can be slowly shaped by stories and places we live in. According to the pedagogy of memory (Demetrio 1993) and pedagogy of place (Mendel 2010), teaching should be place-based, respecting the identity of the place and the memory of locals, including their traumas and challenges. Place plays the role of a “third pedagogue” and is seen as a pedagogical category. The places we live in influence our identity; the monuments we pass every day, the names of the streets—these slowly shape our vision of the world from a young age. Similarly, the stories of our grandparents, their memories, impact who we are.

The paper presents how problem-based learning, embedded in local context, increases the involvement of students. The paper is based on original research work and presents the educational project “From the past generation let our voice go to all generation”, linking generations in collective remembering, denying, and glorifying various memories revolving around the evacuation of the Stutthof Concentration Camp in 1945. The study shows, step by step, how a historical project—contacts with witnesses to history, oral methods, artifacts, and walks—help students build and then share slow memory.

“WE EXPERIENCED EMOTIONS, WE HAD FUN” - REFLECTIONS ON BODY MAPPING “SLOW MEMORY” AS A TOOL FOR EDUCATION AT SPAÇ PRISON, ALBANIA

Hannah Wilson (University of Manchester, UK)

This paper will reflect on the production of educational materials for the ‘Transformation of Conflict’ working group, in the form of body mapping workshops, as established with my co-author Marisa Kerbizi (Alexander Moisiu). In particular, I will reflect on the inaugural workshop that we held with around twenty higher education students from Alexander Moisiu University at the site of Spaç Prison in Albania, in March 2025. Spaç prison (sometimes referred to as the ‘Auschwitz of Albania’), was selected due to the fact that it is one of the most important sites of consciousness regarding Albanian totalitarian time. Spaç was a political prison built in a village (in the northern part of Albania) surrounded by steep mountains with no possible ways to escape, and was the first one during the totalitarian Albania in which a number of prisoners staged a rebellion during which a non-communist national flag was raised (in 1973). After the rebellion many prisoners were executed. As such, Spaç prison is an important conscious site of political punishments of the intellectual elite, suffering but also resistance. It reflects the violence of the state towards the intellectuals in the past, but not only. After the fall of communism, Spaç was planned to become a museum, but this failed to happen. As our first case study, then, this specific workshop explored the transformative concept of ‘slow memory’ and place, with a focus on the context of feelings, surroundings, and legacies of conflict. Through our methodology, we also aimed to help participants explore personal and collective histories through embodied storytelling. This structured event balanced reflection, creativity, and group dialogue, and can be adapted for various locations and age groups (and has since, including in Porto, Portugal). Ultimately, our body mapping workshop, when applied as an educational tool, can foster deep self-awareness, creative expression, and transformative insight concerning sites of conflict and ‘difficult’ heritage. In my presentation, then, I will refer to several examples of the body maps produced from our visit to Spaç, and outline future recommendations and suggested improvements based on this initial event.

PLENARY SESSION

TEXTILE LANGUAGE

Roberta Bacic (Conflict Textiles, <https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/conflicttextiles/>)

Roberta Bacic, curator and collector of Conflict Textiles will introduce the collection's mission and core focuses. We aim to navigate the Conflict Textiles web archive which documents over 400 textiles, primarily arpilleras. They have been produced across the globe in response to conflict and human rights violations. The site also records related events such as symposiums, exhibitions, and community-based workshops. Five of our textiles will be presented in the flesh for attendees to experience the impact of stitched testimonies.

PORTO

02-04 JULY 2025

CAPSTONE CONFERENCE

SLOW MEMORY

ORGANISATION

Action Chair:

Jenny Wüstenberg

(Nottingham Trent University)

Action Vice Chair:

Joanna Wawrzyniak

(University of Warsaw)

LOCAL ORGANISATION

General Coordination

Alice Semedo

(CITCEM - Transdisciplinary Research Centre Culture, Space and Memory, FLUP-Faculty of Arts and Humanities, University of Porto)

Isabel Machado Alexandre

(Instituto Universitário de Lisboa - Iscte & Instituto de Telecomunicações)

Executive Coordination

Ana Moreno

(ID+ Research Institute in Design, Media and Culture, Faculty of Fine Arts of the University of Porto)

Cláudia Garradas

(CITCEM - Transdisciplinary Research Centre Culture, Space and Memory, FLUP-Faculty of Arts and Humanities, University of Porto)

Fabiana Dicuonzo

(CITCEM - Transdisciplinary Research Centre Culture, Space and Memory, FLUP-Faculty of Arts and Humanities, University of Porto)

Mariana Cerveira Lima

Teresa Córtes

PORTO

02-04 JULY 2025

CAPSTONE CONFERENCE

SLOW MEMORY

COST Action CA20105

The SlowMemory COST Action addresses the need for increased interdisciplinarity in our understanding of how societies confront their past to contend with environmental, economic and social changes brought on by sudden events and by slow and creeping transformations.

www.slowmemory.eu

Organisation



This publication is based upon work from Slow Memory COST Action (CA20105), supported by COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology).

COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology) is a funding agency for research and innovation networks. Our Actions help connect research initiatives across Europe and enable scientists to grow their ideas by sharing them with their peers. This boosts their research, career and innovation.

Local Organisation



Main Partner



Partner



With the support of

