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HERITOLOGY

Scientific Contributions on the
International Summer School ‘on the Road’

Edited by Anja Hellmuth Kramberger, Jelka Pirkovič, and Verena Perko

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Foreword to the Proceedings of the International Summer School on the Road

The initiative for the Heritology Summer School is a reflection of fruitful collaboration among experts from the Faculty of Arts of the University of Ljubljana, Alma Mater Europaea University, and other European universities. The collaboration and integration of today's hardly manageable, all-encompassing bodies of knowledge are of crucial importance – especially for the interdisciplinary heritage sciences, united under the field of *heritology*.

At the Faculty of Arts in Ljubljana has been running an individual doctoral program in Heritology for more than a decade. During this time, we have invited both domestic and international experts in the field of heritage and museums, addressed urgent and complex topics, and visited museums, archaeological sites, private collections, and heritage routes. We hosted Professors Dragan Bulatović, Nikola Krstović, and Milan Popadić from the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade, as well as Goran Zlodi from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb – several of whom have become mentors to our doctoral students. The program has produced a number of original doctoral theses that have brought new insights and holistic approaches to understanding heritage as a comprehensive social phenomenon in Slovenia.

Heritology emerged as a response to the needs of contemporary society – a society that lives with heritage, draws inspiration from it for new creations, and protects and preserves it, but only to the extent that the community perceives it as a value pertinent to the living environment. The fundamental principle of heritology is that *heritage has a shared value*. Heritage values connect traditional knowledge and collective memory,

and these three concepts – values, knowledge, and memory – constitute the subject of heritological research. Heritage gives meaning to our lives, as it forms one of the foundations of our identities. It bridges the past and the present, thereby showing us the path to the future. It can only be understood as a unity of natural and cultural environments, inextricably linked to people.

In Western Europe and the United States, *heritage studies* began to develop in the 1970s, while in Eastern Europe, *museology* emerged as a theoretical foundation for museum practice. With Zbyněk Z. Stránský's concept of *museality*, who understood the museum object through its social meanings, the role of museum work began to merge with that of protecting tangible and intangible cultural and natural heritage. The new paradigm of the museum object as a reflection and expression of social values created the need for broader and more integrative knowledge. The museological thought of Ivo Maroević provided theoretical and methodological frameworks for museology, also in relation to heritage in its original contexts, while Tomislav Šola expanded these ideas with his visionary concept of a new, holistic heritage science. He named it *heritology* and defined it as a complex, transdisciplinary science oriented toward humanism. In this spirit, we have also conceived the individual doctoral program of heritology at the University of Ljubljana, integrating museology, conservation, and legal foundations of heritage protection with the principles of ethics, hermeneutics, and phenomenology.

Over time, it became evident that a broader understanding of the historical and social contexts of heritage phenomena in our region was needed. We identified as decisive the recent historical modes of using and interpreting heritage – especially those reflecting the dominant socio-political frameworks of the Habsburg and Yugoslav periods – which still shape the attitude of contemporary society towards heritage.

With the Heritology Summer School, we sought to connect knowledge and experiences from the broader European space. At the same time, we aimed to inspire young people to explore heritage as a foundation of a shared yet diverse European identity and culture. We wanted to emphasize the importance of heritological studies and to connect people, knowledge, and practice. The response exceeded all expectations: we were joined by

numerous renowned domestic and international experts, as well as students from many European countries. The presentations were accompanied by lively discussions that revealed diverse perspectives on pressing issues of heritage-making. We are convinced that open dialogue already contributes – and will continue to contribute even more in the future – to our shared goal: a better and fairer society.

The first Erasmus Summer School on Heritology, held from 8 to 12 July 2024 at Alma Mater Europaea University under the patronage of the former President of Slovenia, Mr Borut Pahor, brought together more than forty students and over thirty lecturers and speakers from across Europe. The event, realized through the joint efforts of Alma Mater Europaea University, the Department of Archaeology of the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana, the National Museum of Slovenia, the Park of Military History Pivka, and the company Krasen Kras, provided a unique platform for dialogue on the importance of cultural heritage in Europe.

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to Prof Ludvik Toplak, Rector of Alma Mater Europaea University, for his continuous encouragement and support. Our special thanks go to Nuša Veber Krstić from the International Office, whose dedicated organizational work made the Summer School possible. We are likewise indebted to Asst Prof Dr Katharina Zanier, Head of the Department of Archaeology, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana; Prof Dr Mateja Kos from the National Museum of Slovenia; Dr Elena Leghissa from the Institute of Archaeology, ZRC SAZU, for guiding us through the Ig pile-dwelling site Morostig – the House of Nature and Piles; Polona Janežič for her engaging presentation on experimental archaeology in Ig; Janko Boštjančič MA for leading us through the Park of Military History Pivka; Goran Živec from the Institute Beautiful Kras for introducing the site of Debela Griža; Lucija Perko, University of Ljubljana, for presenting Jože Plečnik's Ljubljana; Director Darko Komšo from the Archaeological Museum of Istria in Pula; and our colleagues from the Museo Nazionale di Aquileia.

We are also grateful to Prof Dr Lenart Škof and Asst Prof Dr Luka Trebežnik for including the contributions in Monitor ISH, and to all who assisted in the implementation and editorial process, especially Asst Prof Dr Gašper Pirc, Ignac Navernik, and Tjaša Pogorevc. Their commitment and

professionalism greatly contributed to the success of this publication and the Summer School as a whole.

Anja Hellmuth Kramberger, Jelka Pirkovič, Verena Perko
Initiators, organizers of the Summer School, and editors of the volume
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Photo 1: Before the opening ceremony of the international Erasmus Summer School on Heritology. Photo credit: Marko Pigac, 2024.



Verena Perko[1]

Modern Society and the Role of Heritage

ABSTRACT: The purpose of the paper is to highlight the characteristics of postmodern society and its needs in order to better understand the role of heritage in the lives of individuals and communities. The article discusses the causes and consequences of the radical changes that took place in the 1960s. It describes the effects of rapid economic and environmental changes, which greatly threaten heritage in its original environment and lead to the loss of traditional knowledge, the erasure of identity, and the emergence of alienation. The characteristics of modernism and postmodernism are briefly presented; we also show the changes in public attitudes brought about by the use of modern communication technology. The phenomenon of individualisation and the influence of consumerism on the instrumentalisation of modern man are highlighted.

From the perspective of philosophical anthropology, the influence of the social crisis on interpersonal relationships and the role of the individual, as well as the loss of meaning, are discussed. The importance of the active role of the public in the protection and preservation of heritage, which has become a value of society in the 21st century, is explained. Changes in heritage approaches and concepts of heritage preservation are presented through a review of international charts and documents. The concept of the ecomuseum is presented and the key role of the heritage community is outlined. The importance of societal and personal values is highlighted from a psychological perspective, and taking this into account, opportunities and responses to societal needs that heritage can offer are identified. The importance of active public involvement in heritage preservation as a value of the living environment is explained. The role of ethics and the humanistic nature of heritage processes is briefly outlined.

Keywords: Heritage; Museums; Values, Public; Inclusion; Ethics

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1 Introduction

During the international heritology summer school at Alma Mater Europaea University, held in Ljubljana in July 2024, the author gave two separate lectures on the role of heritage in contemporary society and the importance of heritage interpretation. In recent years, several articles on interpretation have been published in Slovenian, but there are few publications on contemporary society and its needs from the perspective of heritage. This prompted the decision to write a paper on the characteristics of contemporary society and their impact on heritage.

The turning points of the 1960s brought rapid economic, environmental, and social changes, which on the one hand endangered heritage like never before, but on the other hand, brought new challenges and opportunities. The causes of the destruction and loss of heritage in its original environment are manifold, with industrialisation, urbanisation and globalisation being among the most recognisable. Strong migration flows and radical changes in the way of life have led to the loss of traditional knowledge, the erasure of identities and rootlessness. However, the increase in general interest in heritage can also be recognized as a reflection of the specific needs of the modern environment. Consumerist thinking has permeated the way of thinking, and the instrumentalization of reason has also affected interpersonal relationships. Specific needs often stem from the personal distress of people who feel alienated in an atomized society. Modern man is marked by a tragic loss of meaning in life (Frankl 1989).

In order to understand the changes in the social role of heritage and the transformation of concepts, it is necessary to understand the specific characteristics of the modernity and postmodernity. These eras are marked by numerous antagonisms that at the same time also connect them deeply. The use of communication technology has brought about major changes in the habits and needs of the public and has offered unimaginable possibilities for the interpretation and communication of heritage. However, this same society, the society of the spectacle, poses major challenges for heritage institutions and points the way to a new humanism (Debord 1983).

The key developments of the 21st century in the heritage field are the result of decades of conceptual changes, which are well reflected in interna-

tional documents and charters. Changes in concepts and new approaches to heritage protection and public involvement can be observed throughout international heritage documents. In the 21st century, a holistic concept prevails, with heritage recognized as a social value that we protect and preserve for future generations. The heritage community becomes a key factor in contemporary heritage discourse (Council of Europe 2005). An involved and active community is capable of protecting and preserving heritage, which, despite its legal protection, often cannot be saved from destruction. An aware and empowered community is instrumental in making heritage a cornerstone of identity, education, cultural policy, religion, and economic development. Interpretation, which focuses on heritage as a holistic phenomenon, is of key importance in the social processes of heritage preservation. Inclusive interpretation is a bridge to understanding communicated cultural messages and accepting heritage as part of our personal values. In the confusing society of postmodern contradictions, ethics has also taken centre stage in the heritage field.

The paper is based on the premise that heritage is crucial for the preservation of humanity in society. The second premise is that inclusive interpretation is key to engaging the public, which is a prerequisite for preserving heritage as a unique and irreplaceable quality of life (International Council on Monuments and Sites 2014). The methods used are analysis, literature review, comparison, and synthesis. The research follows an interdisciplinary approach, based on heritology, and includes hermeneutics, philosophical anthropology, psychology, and cultural history.

The purpose of the paper is to offer a framework for consideration of the social role of heritage in the modern and postmodern era. Another purpose is to explain the nature of heritage processes from the perspective of philosophical anthropology and hermeneutics, which place heritage within the context of humanism. The goal of this paper was to offer broader humanistic perspectives on heritage preservation, based on the insights from philosophical anthropology, ethics, and psychology. The review of selected sources and literature is designed to assist in the study and protection of heritage.

2 Heritage and Modern Society[2]

Every day, three to five books on heritage and museums are published worldwide. This can be understood as a reflection of the needs of modern society and a kind of response to the rapid disappearance of the remnants of the past. Heritage has never been as endangered as it is in the age of consumerism.

There are various reasons for this. Rapid urbanization and industrialization with the construction of extensive infrastructure are just some of them. Global interventions in the environment are changing the cultural landscape and the world. Traditional social ties have been loosened or broken. Globalization has largely erased regional and local characteristics. There is no need to mention the terrible destruction caused by wars. It is enough to remember the destruction of landscapes by chemical weapons during the First World War (Košir, Črešnar and Mlekuž 2019), the systematic bombing of cities during the Second World War (Love 2012), and the destruction of Sarajevo in the Serbian-Bosnian conflicts. Those who have not experienced pre-war Syria, Ukraine as depicted by Svetlana Alexievich, and Odessa as portrayed by Isaac Babel, are forever deprived of the images and values of yesterday's world (Applebaum 1995; Alexievich 2016; Babel 2019). However, it is neglect and oblivion that threaten heritage most of all, not war, as one might infer from daily media reports. When memories fade, things fall out of use, and monuments or buildings lose their significance for the surrounding area, it is, despite legal protection, very difficult to preserve them. Some items find their way into museums; others end up in attics. Most of them disappear into landfills, waiting to be discovered in fragments and badly damaged, through expensive and time-consuming archaeological methods.

With this, we have already touched upon the characteristics of modern society, albeit only superficially. Modern society is recognized by its highly diverse, even contradictory and conflicting views on almost all

2 I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Dr Jelka Pirkovič, Dr Janez Weiss, Barbara Kalan, Anja Poštrak, Aleksandra Nestorović, Lucija Perko and Jana Puhar for their comprehensive advice and assistance in creating this paper. Without their help, the text would have been much more clappy. A big thank to my former student Timotej Pavlin for the improvements in the translation! *Amicus verus avis rara*!

fundamental issues of life. As a social value, heritage is inherently polysemous and inevitably conflicting. This dichotomy is reflected in the relationship between society and individuals. On the one hand, there is enthusiasm for the establishment of new museums, growing interest in cultural tourism, and mass visits to UNESCO monuments and famous museums. On the other hand, there is indifference and destruction. It probably goes without saying how much of a threat mass tourism poses to heritage (Perko 2016). Enthusiasm for heritage is often a reflection of fashionable nostalgia for the past, which is not entirely harmless and, unfortunately, all too often leads to new forms of intolerance and conflict (Bauman 2018, 49). Perhaps the most damaging thing for heritage is indifference. It often happens unnoticed and only comes to light when the damage has already been done, when it is usually too late to take action (Perko 2018). Neglect and oblivion have multiple causes, just as the concept of heritage is multifaceted and diverse, as the concept of the public is also polysemous. Let's try to shed some light on this through the characteristics of modern society!

3 Postmodernity, Post-postmodernity, or Simply Fluid Modernity?

The contemporary era is described in various ways: some call it postmodernity, others post-structuralism, others fluid modernity, etc. All these terms are quite elusive, as they are understood differently in different contexts (Lyotard 2002; Bauman 2018; Latour 2021). In recent decades, some new terms have also come into use, such as post-postmodernity and trans-modernity, etc. Postmodernity dates to the 1960s, a time of rapid post-war reconstruction of heavily devastated Europe and rapid industrialization and urbanization. This was followed by the quick disappearance of old city centres and the transformation of traditional rural landscapes. Large-scale agricultural interventions, the construction of transport links, and dams changed entire landscapes. Strong immigration flows led to the emergence of satellite settlements. These 'Towers of Babel' were largely populated by lonely, rootless, and identityless people. Western society was marked by consumerism, which brought about individualism and antisocial self-sufficiency (Bauman 2018, 90). 'The dark

side of individualism is self-centeredness, which flattens and narrows our lives, impoverishes them in meaning, and makes us less concerned about others or society,' wrote Ch. Taylor a quarter of a century ago (Taylor 2000, 10)[3]. The same author also recognized another fundamental characteristic of contemporary consumer society. He called it the 'primacy of the instrumental mind'. With this term, he referred to 'the kind of rationality we use when calculating the most economical use of resources for a given goal' (ibid.).

The criterion of instrumental reason has become a general social guideline that determines fundamental values and consequently transforms them into measurable and tangible assets[4]. Consequently, considering measurability and tangibility, people's attitudes toward the environment and their fellow human beings are also changing, which leads to alienation and isolation (Buber 1999, 118)[5]. Communication technology has further accelerated the atomization of a fragmented society. Identity crises and the disappearance of traditional values have been accompanied by an epidemic of loss of meaning in life. The COVID-19 pandemic has spread a general anxiety among people, which, with the loss of meaning, has become a fundamental characteristic of the so-called post-postmodern era (Frankl 1981; Desmet 2022, 125)[6].

The predominance of instrumental reason did not only lead to the ruthless exploitation of labour and natural resources. It has also led to the belief in the sole redeeming significance of technological development and the superiority of empirical, technological knowledge (Patočka 2021, 135–164). However, as early as the 1960s, major environmental disasters

3 Originally published as *The Malaise of Modernity* (House of Anansi Press, 1991); republished as *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Harvard University Press, 1991).

4 The ambiguity of the English term value (in Slovenian *vrednost* and *vrednota*), is often used in Slovenian to economize heritage and reduce the meaning of the word to a purely material level. The authors of the proposal for the new Act on the Protection of Cultural Heritage-2 of the Republic of Slovenia consistently omit the term 'vrednota' and, in the spirit of neoliberalism, use the term 'vrednost' (in English both value) exclusively. Time will tell what benefits the law will bring to Slovenian society (Pirkovič et al. 2025).

5 First published as *Das Problem des Menschen* (Heidelberg: Lambert Schneider, 1948).

6 The title of Viktor Frankl's anonymous publication in 1946 *Ein Psycholog erlebt das KZ*, later translated to English reads *A Psychologist Experiences the Concentration Camp*. This was the original title of *Man's Search for Meaning*.

revealed the catastrophic nature of technically overestimated and irresponsible interventions in nature. Doubts were sown about the supremacy of the technological mind, and boundless trust in science and development was undermined (Schiele 2020, 47)[7]. Environmental disasters, the arms race, and uncertain political conditions led to student, worker, and environmental protests. The first civil society movements emerged. Over time, civil societies gained significant influence in various advocacy, education, monitoring, and service provision processes at the national and local levels. The growing political power of civil societies, which represent the interests of citizens and challenge political and business interests, has brought about the change in many areas of official and legal affairs. The public, demanding the right to democratic decision-making and active participation in social processes, finally gained a voice. We can say that the active role of the public marked the end of modernity and accelerated the transition to postmodernity.

The use of the terms modernity, modernism, postmodernity and postmodernism requires some clarification. In a historical sense, modernity refers to the modern era and is a relatively long period of world history. It began with the end of the Middle Ages and lasted for about half a millennium, from the Renaissance to the mid-20th century. On the other hand, the term modernism refers only to a short cultural period, which is most evident in the arts. Russian-American philologist and philosopher Mikhail Epstein explains that modernism emerged at the end of the 19th century, and in some places only after the First World War. It lasted until the 1950s and 1960s, depending on the version we follow (Epstein, Genis and Vladiv-Glover 1998; Èpštejn 2012, 89)[8]. The term modernism thus refers to the final phase of the modern era, which is most evident in the arts. This is also where all the contradictions of the era come to the fore. Mihail Epstein observes that 'the

7 The accident in Vajont, known as *Il disastro del Vajont*, occurred on 9 October 1963 as a result of a newly built hydroelectric power plant on the Alpine River Vajont, near Pordenone. An avalanche from Monte Toc slipped into an artificial lake, a wave of several meters washed away villages at the bottom of the valley, including Longarone. 1917 people died, including 487 children. (Disastro del Vajont 2025)

8 Summarized from the author's short essay available online http://www.focusing.org/apm_papers/epstein.html (17 July 2025).

gap between European individualism at its extreme limit of self-reflection and particularisation and the alienating, impersonal tendencies in culture and society is widening'. He adds: The modernist era is characterised by the development of mass culture, the rise of totalitarian governments, the development of atomic and electronic technology, the theoretical discovery of the unconscious, etc. The explosion of contradictions, which modernism further emphasised, led humanity from the modern era into the postmodern era in the second half of the 1960s and early 1970s (Epstein, Genis and Vladiv-Glover 1998). We might also add that the 20th century has earned itself the infamous nickname of the century of wars, and that there is no sign that armed conflicts are a characteristic feature of the modern era alone.

The term postmodernity was first used in 1979 by French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard in a polemic with the German philosopher, political scientist and sociologist Jürgen Habermas. Their dispute focused on the ideological, sociological and cultural consequences of a (new) concept that heralds the end of the modern era and marks the beginning of a new period (Lyotard 2002).

Postmodernity has established itself as a central concept in philosophical, sociological and cultural-historical debates on the developmental trends characteristic of Europe and North America in the 20th century. Slovenian literary historian Janko Kos describes postmodernity as a broader concept that is 'more comprehensive and superior, encompassing the social, cultural and spiritual existence of the world'[9]. He uses the term postmodernism to refer to the artistic trends of the late 20th century in literary history, theory, interpretation and criticism. Therefore, we can conclude that the terms modernity and postmodernity are more appropriate for the purposes of heritology. However, due to the interdisciplinary nature of heritology, which also extends to the fields of philosophical phenomenology and hermeneutics, the use of both terms, modernism and postmodernism, is acceptable.

9 Kos, Janko. Postmodernizem. Access: https://studentski.net/gradivo/ulj_fif_sl1_svk_sno_postmodernizem_01 (11. July 2025).

Postmodernity as a term for the period from the 1970s onwards does not have a completely uniform meaning. In French circles, the term poststructuralism is also used interchangeably for the same period. Zygmunt Bauman, who first used the term postmodernity, later proposed the term 'liquid modernity' on the grounds that it is still a modern era that is constantly and 'liquidly' changing (Bauman 2002, 38)[10]. Postmodernity can therefore be described as a series of critical, strategic, educational-rhetorical and propaganda practices that oppose modernist concepts of identity, historical progress, trust in science and the unambiguousness of meanings and values (Aylesworth 2015). Their effect on the existing, traditional structures of Western society is devastating, and in return they offer nothing but empty ideologies (Delsol 2019, 115)[11].

In agreement with Z. Bauman, we can easily conclude that essentially the same ideas and concepts are still present, albeit in a modified and greatly accelerated form. Jean-François Lyotard (2002) used the term postmodernity to highlight the differences compared to the modern era, which arose from Enlightenment thought at the end of the 17th and 18th centuries. The Enlightenment emphasised the power of reason and faith in progress, which stimulated awareness of the importance of education and the struggle for social equality. The Enlightenment reached its political peak with the French Revolution, and its social peak with the development of empirical science and philosophical rationalism. It paved the way for industrialisation and technological progress in all areas of human activity. The modern era also represents a radical shift in attitudes towards faith and God, who has been 'expelled' from the concept of man, the world and life by the dominance

10 In his 1993 book *Postmodern Ethics*, the author still uses the term postmodernity. (I would like to thank Jelka Pirkovič for the comment.)

11 The French philosopher Ch. Delsol reveals an obvious confrontation with authority, which is one of the pillars and fundamental concepts of Western society, linked to a series of imaginary (God), formal (judge, policeman, teacher) and informal (father) structures. The family is no longer the basic building block of society, but an obstacle to the euphoria spread by new gender theories. The second disturbing concept is responsibility; there are only rights. Basically, it is the demolition of the building blocks of Western civilization, which has catastrophic consequences on a social and personal level (Delsol 2019).

of empirical science (Delsol 2019, 141)[12]. A process of secularisation began in the Church, culminating in the Second Vatican Council between 1962 and 1965[13]. This brought a new era and changed the values in the daily life of Western societies, which until then had been strongly committed to Christianity (Delsol 2019, 155)[14].

We also associate modernity to the concept of liberalism at all levels, which brought stability and continuity to Western society through rapid economic development. It strengthens faith in science and technology and has a strong impact on the way of life. Until the 1960s, traditional social structures prevailed in the West. The family provided the framework for the classic social roles of men and women and the associated personal and social values (Delsol 2019, 115). From a philosophical point of view, this was also a time when the ultimate Truth prevailed. Mikhail Epstein says that the concepts of the modern era are 'truth', 'objectivity', 'soul', 'subjectivity', 'utopia', 'ideality', 'primary source' and 'originality' as well as "sincerity" and 'sentimentality' (Epstein 2016, 547).

Postmodernity refers to a specific economic or cultural state of Western society in the 1980s and 1990s. Z. Bauman identifies this era as a period of pronounced liberalism, which allowed a handful to accumulate wealth, and a disproportionate increase in poverty for the masses, especially in the Global South, which can be characterized by the words 'back to in-

12 J. J. Rousseau, who regarded the atheist philosopher of his time as a modernist, seems to have been the first to use the word to that effect ('Correspondance à MD', 15 January 1769). Littré (Dictionnaire), quoting a passage, explains: 'A modernist, someone who values modern times over antiquity'. (Vermeersch 2025)

13 The initiator of the Council and the changes was Pope John XXIII, who wanted to encourage the spiritual renewal of the Church and achieve Christian unity. A radical renewal of religious life followed, Latin ceased to be the liturgical language, theology changed, and the role of the Church in the world and the relationship with other religions was reconceptualized. (Britannica Editors 2025).

14 Emmanuel Todd, in the book *La défaite de l'Occident*, 2024, argues that there was a considerable boom in active religion in the 19th century, which lasted well into the first decades of the 20th century. The time of the substantive emptying of faith occurs after World War II, from the 60s onwards, when the ritual turns into a hollow formal custom with no deeper meaning. God is finally exiled in the postmodern age of radical nihilism and the devaluation of values. The state of mind is best reflected through the mass culture of violence (film, video, but no less the shallow, only negative reporting media of public information). (I would like to express my sincere thanks to Dr Janez Weiss for the information.)

equality' (Bauman 2018, 79)[15]. Postmodernity can therefore be described as an initially silent, but later very vocal, resistance to progressivism, as an opposition to the supremacy of reason, science and technology, followed by the destruction of values and resistance to established, authoritarian social structures (Èpštejn 2012, 28).

The first phase of postmodernity is characterised by broad cultural activity, which is also strongly reflected in the fields of philosophy and sociology. The second phase is marked by digitalisation and the development of communication and information systems. The digital hyperproduction of information leads to the manipulation of almost all aspects of the media environment, which on a personal level has led to a state of constant identity crisis. According to Z. Bauman, constant change is the only constant of the modern age: 'Modernisation is omnipresent and ineradicable, an unfulfilled desire for destruction' (Bauman 2002, 38). This is the reason for his opposition to the assessment that the modern era is over, as he notes that many fundamental characteristics of modernity continue, even if they often lose their original content and structure. 'The society entering the 21st century is no less "modern" than the society that entered the 20th century; we can only say that modernity is modern on a different way'[16].

In the mid-1990s, the French Marxist theorist, philosopher and film-maker Guy Debord (1983) diagnosed contemporary society as a society of spectacle, characterised by a permanent state of delirium. He described his contemporaries as people who were numb to the perception of reality and are confused in terms of time, space, culture and identity. People are trapped in a false image of an endless present, desperately lonely, alienated from other people and nature. They are emotionally unresponsive and at the same time overwhelmed with information. Debord uses the term 'spectacle' to describe a general social phenomenon in which direct experience is replaced by representative; false images created for the public.

15 Among the main proponents of these ideas in the 80s was Margaret Thatcher, one need only remember her words '*there is no such thing as society*'. (I would like to express my sincere thanks to Dr Janez Weiss for the comment.)

16 An obvious example of the dichotomy of modern society's attitude towards the empirical and technological sciences is the use of modern technology, without any concern or doubt being observed. (Thanks to Dr Janez Weiss for the comment).

He says that with the help of modern technology, life has become a separate, artificially created spectacular world that serves artificially created needs of ostentation, solely for viewing. The world of the contemporary is created by the constant rearrangement of fragmentary images taken from all aspects of life and glued together into a never-connected whole of absurdity. It is comparable to a glued-together mirror broken into tiny pieces, reflecting thousands of separate images and never again able to reflect the whole.

The 21st century is characterised by the penetration of communication technology and artificial intelligence into every facet of social and private life. The consequence of a generally accepted way of life that transforms every aspect of privacy into something public and publicly observed is the 'struggle to have' and the resulting universalism. According to Z. Bauman (2018, 89), living conditions 'do not create solidarity, but rather, with the help of a new managerial philosophy and a new strategy of domination, produce mutual suspicion, conflicts of interest, rivalry and disputes'.

The emergence of relativism is particularly evident in the area of traditional personal and social values, which is growing into new forms of social movements with the character of hidden, manipulative ideological struggles. American cultural critic Thomas Chatterton Williams[17] warns of the pitfalls of the information age, which prioritises speed over expertise and contributes primarily to a culture of superficiality in which 'even the elite will openly disparage the best that has been invented and declare it meaningless[18].' Simply speaking, the information environment, which creates and offers extraordinary amounts of information, also creates a dangerous, hermetically sealed environment due to its fragmentation. The German physicist and philosopher Harry Lehman recognised the processes of ideologization in the systems of education, science and art. They take the form of an ideological struggle to enforce a particular language policy through specific means of power. Lehman concludes that 'power is used to

17 Thomas Chatterton Williams is an American cultural critic and writer, professor of humanities and senior fellow at the Hannah Arendt Center at Bard College, and a Guggenheim Fellow. (Bard 2025)

18 Chatterton Williams, Thomas. 2023. The People Who Don't Read Books. Access: https://www.aei.org/op-eds/the-people-who-dont-read-books/ (11. July 2025).

achieve the desired behaviour on the part of people, including the use of the desired mode of linguistic expression' (Lehman 2024, 20). Institutions in modern democratic countries are losing their ability to recognise political communication; instead of research, knowledge and art, they produce ideology. They are turning into ideological machines (ibid., 41).

Mathias Desmet, referring to Hannah Arendt, states: 'The main characteristic of the crowd is not brutality and backwardness, but isolation and a lack of normal social relations' (Desmet 2022, 102). Without an understanding of the Whole and contact with themselves, modern humans are not only unhappy, but also dangerous, as they fail to grasp the explosiveness of depersonalised and uprooted masses that easily identify with totalitarian systems.

The growing, unrecognisable anxiety, resulting from alienation from one's own essence, leads to individualism and ultimately to collectivism (Desmet 2022, 101)[19]. This phenomenon seems new to us, but in reality, it is not. As early as the 1940s, the German Jewish philosopher Martin Buber discussed the general social phenomenon of individualism and collectivism in his work *Das Problem des Menschen*[20]. Based on various philosophical views of man, he developed philosophical anthropology. He explained man as an entity that can only build its identity in contact with another person, who cannot be replaced by a thing or an object. Man in his deepest being is defined by genuine relationships (Buber 1999, 119)[21]. Martin Buber explains that the 'great', i.e. essential relationship exists only between real persons […] and builds a bridge across the abyss of worldly anxiety from self-existence to self-existence (ibid., 86). He goes on to say that man is defined by a triad of relationships: his relationship to the world and things, his relationship to people, both individuals and crowds, and his relationship to the transcendent mystery of being, to the Absolute (ibid., 90).

19 The French historian, anthropologist, and sociologist Emmanuel Todd explains that the (sickly) individualism of Western society is the result of its technological development and mental decay. In it, he recognizes the dominant, economically and politically supported phenomenon of Western society. (Thanks to Dr Janez Weiss for the comment).

20 The book was published in Tel Aviv in Hebrew in 1943 and was published in 1982, after the author's death, in an updated edition in Heidelberg.

21 See also Buber (1958).

Due to the retreat into the 'castle of the mind', as M. Buber wittily calls modern man's refuge in rationality and exclusion of the metaphysical, especially Christianity, the alienation from nature and one's own essence is intensifying (ibid., 90). This reaches its peak with new communication technology and the Covid epidemic, which offers a range of virtual contacts but in reality, destroys genuine, personal relationships.

Western society responds with numerous care programmes ranging from anthropological and social to health and psychological services and programmes. However, as Martin Buber's anthropological philosophy has shown, care, however well-intentioned and modern, cannot replace genuine human relationships. Only the I–Thou relationship, which breaks through the barriers of the self, gives meaning to life and opens it up to the transcendent, can truly fulfil the individual and society (Buber 1999, 81; Frankl 1981).

Due to its detachment from humanity, postmodernity has earned itself another attribute: the era of posthumanism. This is the era of morally indifferent individuals, and a society driven by desires. Posthumanist society expresses the rejection of ethics in general, especially Western ethics, which is based on the uniqueness of the individual. The French philosopher Chantal Delsol (2019, 157) brilliantly explains the importance of ethics for the existence of humanity: 'My future is not my immortality, it is my neighbour'.

A brief overview of the characteristics of contemporary society, regardless of whether we call it postmodernity or fluid modernity, reveals signs of a profound crisis[22]. Despite broader aspects, we recognise as primary the crisis of a human being who has lost touch with his own existence, with his own being (Buber 1999, 85). We can conclude that, despite some key social changes, modern and postmodern humans face similar existential problems. On a personal level, we are talking about confusion about identity, loss of genuine contact with nature and with oneself, anxiety and loss of meaning (Desmet 2022, 102). On a social level, perhaps the most

22 Emmanuel Todd gave the crisis a meaningful name with the title of his work *La Défaite de l'Occident*, in English *The Decline of the West* (Todd 2024).

noticeable issues are atomisation and a lack of sense of belonging to a community, disorientation in terms of values, and rootlessness. From this perspective, we will be interested in what heritage and its preservation can offer in the most challenging areas of contemporary society.

4 Heritage, Value and Quality of Living Space

As we have already pointed out, the postmodern era often contradicts views of modernity, promoting scepticism, subjectivism, and relativism. It undermines confidence in the role of reason and opposes the validity of a single truth, which undermines the authority of tradition and fundamental values. These views are also strongly reflected in the field of heritage, which has led to new concepts of heritage and the emergence of new approaches to heritage preservation (Howard, 2003; Waterton, Watson 2015 and cited sources). The active involvement of the public dilutes the authoritative role of experts and institutions, giving rise to the concept of the heritage community.

The era of modernity has been characterised by a view of the past from the perspective of a single, generalising 'grand narrative' sometimes also referred to as a meta-narrative[23]. Postmodernism criticises it for its 'totalising nature' and the form of 'universal truth', which is why it is being replaced by personal stories and testimonies. The grand, scientifically (and thus also politically) supported historical 'truth' is replaced by the 'small', 'relative' truths of personal narratives. Active public participation and a constructivist approach to presenting the past are directed towards an empathetic and critical experience of heritage, which opens up reflection on oneself. Heritage is becoming a community matter, uniting it in its diversity and empowering it to protect heritage as a value of the living environment (Šola 2003, 125; Van Mensch 2015; Pirkovič 2015; Pirkovič et al. 2025).

Heritage in the 21st century can best be defined as what we have inherited from the past in order to value and enjoy it in the present, and to preserve and pass on to future generations (Waterton and Watson 2015[24];

23 Jean-François Lyotard used the term to refer to the totalizing narratives or metadiscourses of modernity that provided ideologies with a legitimate philosophy of history (Chandler and Munday 2011, 178).
24 And cited sources.

Pirkovič 2022)[25]. However, the recognition of heritage as a social value and the acknowledgement of the primacy of its intangible aspect are relatively new. These conceptual changes reflect the socio-economic and political shifts of the postmodern era that have transformed the way we live. More free time, higher incomes and more accessible education have encouraged the public to demand a more active role in public life. However, the identity crisis, loss of meaning and fragmentation of contemporary communities have also stimulated, among other things, a nostalgic interest in the past and a search for a 'golden age' that never was (Bauman 2018; Lowental 1998, 179).

Civil society movements and protests by indigenous peoples in North America and elsewhere, demanding the right to decide on their own heritage, have contributed significantly to changes in heritage theory and practice. The 1972 UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage and the European Year of Architectural Heritage[26], proclaimed by the Council of Europe in 1975, were particularly important for bringing about these changes. The concept of heritage has expanded to include the intangible, content-related aspects of material remains, and a holistic concept of heritage has emerged, which presupposes the entirety of the social and natural environment (Watson and Waterton 2016; Harrison 2020).

4.1 Heritage in Museums

Since ancient times, efforts to preserve traces of the past have focused on materiality and form (Hudson 1988, 18–38). The heritage of the modern era was primarily represented by purposefully built monuments, memorials to events or famous people, and collections and objects of historical and artis-

25 The Heritage Council (2025), County Kilkenny, Ireland, has a brief definition on its website: 'Our heritage is what we have inherited from the past, to value and enjoy in the present, and to preserve and pass on to future generations.'

26 Convention for the Safeguarding of the World's Cultural and Natural Heritage – 1972 Each Party recognizing this Convention shall ensure the identification, protection and protection, presentation and transmission to future generations of the cultural and natural heritage referred to in Articles 1 and 2 throughout the territory within which it belongs. All this must be done as comprehensively as possible, as far as possible and, where necessary, with international assistance and cooperation in individual cases, as well as in financial, artistic, scientific and technical interventions. (I thank Dr Jelka Pirkovič for her comments.)

tic value. Themes related to European civilisation with Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian roots were given priority. In the 19th century, during the emergence of nation states, material culture served as a basis for recognising and proving ethnic affiliation and national identity (Arnold 2002; Perko 2014, 61–62). Objects of archaeological, historical and/or artistic value often served the purpose of educating people about their nation's past, which was later often exploited for political propaganda (Schama 1995, 75–134). And even though ancient *mouseions* were designed as temples of inspiration for the muses (Perko 2014, 28-33), spaces of memory and contemplation, museums of the new age, from the era of cabinets of curiosities onwards, have focused primarily on the material aspect of heritage and the care of collections (Hudson 1988, 18–38; MacGregor and Impey 1985; Díaz-Andreu 2007). In the 19th century, many museums also took on the character of scientific institutions, which gave them special social prestige and an 'aura of academicism' (Perko 2022). However, an excessive focus on the scientific aspect also became an obstacle when, from the 1960s onwards, the perception of heritage shifted towards its intangible nature, social significance and values (Pearce 1992). The relative unresponsiveness of traditional museums prompted the emergence of socially engaged museums, with changes based on the theoretical insights of the new museology (Vergo 1989; Maroević 1998, 162; Šola 2003; Brulon Soares 2019, 77; Popadić 2017, 2020).

4.2 Heritage in Its Space of Origin

At the beginning of the 20th century, Austrian theorist Alois Riegel recognised the importance of heritage values and based his typology of monuments on them (Riegel 1903; Perko and Pirkovič 2025). The principles of value were also taken into account in the drafting of the famous Athens Charter on the Preservation and Restoration of Historic Monuments in 1931 (The Athens Charter for the Restoration of Historic Monuments 1931). The devastating consequences of the Second World War revealed the vulnerability and transience of the material aspect of heritage. The need to rebuild what had been destroyed at least partly accelerated the changes. In the 1970s, ecomuseums emerged, which opened up heritage spaces to the public, who now had a voice in decision-making. The concept of ecomuseum accelerated conceptual changes in museology, conservation and

the doctrine of monument protection (Davis 1999, 2008). The term 'cultural heritage' was also used for the first time, replacing the outdated term 'historical monument'. This term paved the way for the understanding of heritage as a holistic social phenomenon. This happened thanks to the aforementioned 1972 UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage. The changes were also strongly influenced by the fact that non-European countries began to appear on UNESCO's World Heritage Lists, where the intangible aspect often prevails in the perception of heritage. A new perspective on the perception of the intangible values of tangible heritage emerged, perhaps most significantly contributed to by the efforts of Asian countries, especially Japan as the host of an important international conference in Nara in 1994. (The Nara Document on Authenticity (1994) 2019).

4.3 Heritage in International Charters[27]

International charters that set standards for the preservation, renovation or management of heritage offer a unique insight into conceptual changes. The Venice Charter of 1964 emphasises the importance of spiritual values, authenticity and symbolism of heritage (International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites 1964). Another important innovation, the active role of the public, appears in international charters of the late 20th and early 21st centuries. The Burra Charter of 1979, revised in 1999, first mentions the community, its needs and expectations (Australia ICOMOS 2013). In 2005, the Council of Europe defined the heritage community as 'a group of people who value specific aspects of cultural heritage and wish to pass them on to future generations' (ibid.).

The Nara Document on Authenticity, published in 1994, attempts to bridge the Western and Eastern understanding of the meaning of heritage and its values. The document is a response to the expansion of the World Heritage List to include only entries from the Western cultural environment and to the growing complexity of the meaning of heritage in the global contemporary world. Gradually, a new concept of heritage has

27 The comments and advices of Dr Jelka Pirkovič have significantly contributed to the improvement and clarity of the text of Chapter, for which I sincerely thank her.

emerged, moving away from the outdated, modernist, Eurocentric perspective. The document established a new way of perceiving the cultural diversity of heritage as a key feature of cultural diversity.

A decisive turning point came with the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, which established a holistic approach to heritage as a whole, both tangible and intangible. The community was recognised as a central and driving force behind heritage, tradition and creativity (UNESCO 2024; Council of Europe 2005)[28].

The Council of Europe framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society, also known as the Faro Convention after the Portuguese city where the document was drafted in 2005, is of groundbreaking importance for heritage rights and public participation. The treaty commits signatory states to protect cultural heritage and the rights of citizens to access this heritage and participate in heritage rights. In the spirit of Article 27 of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights to 'freely participate in the cultural life of the community,' it defines rights and responsibilities towards cultural heritage. These rights are inextricably linked to the right to participate in cultural life.

4.4 Heritage from the Top Down and from the Bottom Up

With the public taking a more prominent role in museums and in the heritage protection processes, particularly through the fostering of heritage communities, the democratic principle of 'bottom-up' has become established, enabling a more equitable approach to heritage.

This is reflected in the principles of protecting cultural diversity, social values and collective and cultural memory as relevant indicators of the democratisation of contemporary society (Assmann 2011). The principal places professional institutions in a new position, with the previous authoritarian decision-making of experts being replaced by dialogue with the community and inclusive engagement.

The social needs and demands of the postmodern era have also led to radical conceptual changes. This has opened the door to a range of new herit-

28 For the Slovenian translation of the Faro Convention, see Zakon o ratifikaciji okvirne konvencije Sveta Evrope o vrednosti kulturne dediščine za družbo (MOKVKDD).

age studies. Public archaeology has emerged and the new museology movement, put into practice by the ecomuseum, has been born (Vergo 1989; Šola 2003, 101–120; Davies 2008; Babić 2018). In the West, this was the time of the emergence of critical heritage studies, and in the East, of the Brno and Zagreb schools of museology (Brulon Soares 2019). Under the umbrella of information science, which underpins the communicative nature of the contemporary museum, the museum joins the media (Maroević 1998). Following the penetrating, futuristic, holistically conceived heritage philosophy of Tomislav Šola, a new heritage science, heritology, was born (Šola 2003).

The implementation of the new museological theory, which emphasises the museality of objects or the social significance of museum objects, can best be observed in the practices of the ecomuseum[29]. The ecomuseum is designed to be holistic, dynamic and practical; it brings together the population, cultural and natural heritage, and takes into account the socio-economic and political needs of the environment. Experts act in an advisory role, and representatives of authorities, associations and religious communities are also involved. The ecomuseum can best be defined as the interpretation of space as a form of heritage philosophy and a process that is initiated by the community (Šola 2003; Babić 2018). The aim is to connect cultural, educational and research institutions with the goal of preserving the environmental heritage, which is implemented by the community through its way of life (Šola 2003; Davies 2008). The ecomuseum is based on the concept of heritage as the values of the living environment (Šola 2003, 101–120).

The new paradigm has also shed light on the temporal aspect of heritage. While fundamental sciences such as archaeology and history deal with the past, heritage is rooted in the past, present and future.

Reforms have brought about a new, active role for the public. The emergence of the ecomuseum is perhaps most important because of its social impact and the indirect pressure it exerts on traditional museums, which are not sufficiently socially engaged, and on overly authoritative monument services. Visitors, who play a passive role in traditional museums, become active collaborators, co-interpreters, and ultimately co-deci-

29 Due to a misunderstanding, an ecomuseum is also called a cybermuseum (Šola 2003, 101–120).

sion-makers and co-creators of collective memory in reformed museums (Simon 2011; Van Mensch 2015, 49).

4.5 Heritage, the Value of the Living Environment

Heritage can best be defined as a continuous process of identifying tangible and intangible remains and phenomena, evaluating them, enjoying them and simultaneously negotiating what society will recognise and accept as its values and preserve for future generations (Waterton and Watson 2016, 33)[30]. With the new concept of heritage as a social value, an epistemological shift has also taken place[31]. From the field of natural sciences and social sciences, which until recently dominated heritage research, research has expanded to include philosophical hermeneutics and phenomenology. With interdisciplinarity, their focus has shifted to the field of humanities. Ethics plays a central role. The global ethos is based on four values: the sanctity of life, the consecration of the dead, human dignity and the golden rule of ethics. The golden rule, 'do not do to others what you would not want them to do to you', is the guiding principle of contemporary Emmanuel Levinas ethics. It enables us to understand the depths of human dignity as a fundamental requirement of museum and broader heritage professional ethics (Klun 2002; Perko 2023).

4.6 Heritage as a Value

When the concept of heritage began to focus on values, a wide range of highly subjective personal values and values of individual groups emerged. In a postmodernist manner, a hidden danger emerged that these values, often even in the name of democracy, would override the

30 And sources cited therein.

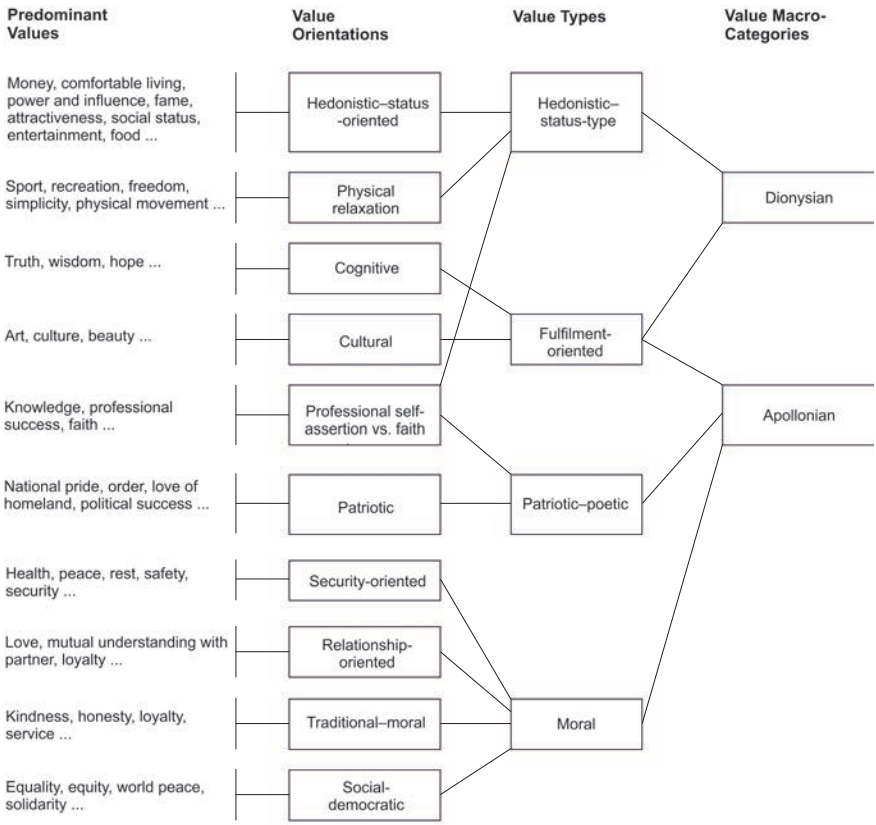
31 In the Textbook for the Management of Archaeological Heritage, Jelka Pirkovič refers to the ZVKD-1 (Act on the Protection of Cultural Heritage-1 of the Republic of Slovenia), which also includes among the definitions the social significance of heritage as 'the value that heritage has for the community and individuals due to its cultural, educational, developmental, religious, symbolic and identification potential, or for the study of disciplines such as anthropology, archaeology, architecture, ethnology, art history and history' (Pirkovič 2022, 51). ZVKD-1 (Act on the Protection of Cultural Heritage) uses the term 'vrednost' rather than 'vrednota' (in English both value) because it is a (mathematical) sum of individual values. The more of these individual values, the greater their social significance, which should also be an incentive for heritage professions to be interdisciplinary. (I would like to thank Dr Jelka Pirkovič for the explanation.)

values of the community or even harm the welfare of those who were (deliberately) politically overlooked. Jelka Pirkovič points out that humanity has long been aware of the importance of shared values, which form the basis for the formation and existence of communities and provide a safe environment for individuals. Only shared values enable creative cooperation, communication and joint planning for the future. Personal values are also formed in the family, school and wider social environment and most often coincide with the values of the social context, where they are historically and ideologically conditioned and inevitably politically coloured (Pirkovič 2023, 62, 72; 2024; Pirkovič and Perko forthcoming). Let us take a closer look at personal values, focusing on their connection with heritage.

Slovenian psychologist Janek Musek (2000) developed four levels of personal values. He equates the first level, which comprises self-improvement values, with spiritual growth and calls it the self-actualisation level. The first level is based on identity and education, and its key foundation is the heritage of a particular environment. Values that are closely linked to tradition and heritage are also the moral values of the second level. The third level includes potential values, which include successes and achievements, as well as patriotism and national pride, which are first recognised as values in the broader historical and cultural environment. The fourth level refers to hedonistic or sensual values. These are strongly linked to the enjoyment of cultural and natural resources, and therefore also to heritage.

J. Musek divides all values into Dionysian and Apollonian (Figure 1). The former represents emotional surrender, while the latter define the field of morality and fulfilment. Both types of values are rooted in tradition and education and are closely linked to the experience and enjoyment of the cultural environment. This applies primarily to works of art, which fill humanity with beauty and lead to the recognition of a broader truth. Similarly, heritage values also have a direct effect on individuals on a sensory and emotional level and can thus be described, at least in part, as Dionysian. However, their deeper meaning certainly affects the Apollonian level, because they enable individuals to perfect their moral sense. At the same time, we can conclude that culture and heritage are the fundamental basis of Apollonian values in particular.

Figure 1: Implicit value space according to J. Musek. Source: Lešnik 1996, 150.



On the other hand, research shows that traditional family and partner values are still at the top of the value hierarchy, while some potential values are the least valued (Lešnik 1996). It is easy to see that postmodernist tendencies in the field of heritage also give priority to personal and experiential values, which often imperceptibly pursue capitalistic goals. The postmodern era poses a difficult task for heritage institutions in deciding which values to choose and which to prioritize.

4.7 Heritage and (Professional) Ethics

Ethics enable us to recognise the balance and moderation between the personal and the communal, or the Dionysian and the Apollonian, in the preservation and interpretation of heritage and the provision of social wel-

fare. And, last but not least, the balance between politically correct democracy and justice. By taking into account the principle of achieving morality, which must be based at least on the golden rule, it becomes clear how an individual should act in specific circumstances in order to realize their human ethical dimension. It is crucial to realize that the needs of the postmodern era of chaos are pushing heritage institutions toward humanistic goals. Priorities become learning, socializing, connecting, critical reflection and, above all, insight into one's own human inner self (Marstine 2011, 3–25).

When we define heritage as a social and personal value, we are confronted with the full extent of postmodern society's dichotomy towards values. As already mentioned, on the one hand there is the destructive power of opposition to all traditional values, while on the other hand there is a great need for fundamental values that enable people to find meaning and restore their dignity (Buber 1999; Frankl 1981; Petkovšek 2021). From this perspective, it is easier to understand that the concept of heritage, defined as a social value, is historically and spatially conditioned and strongly dependent on the subjective experience of the individual and a particular community. It is therefore not surprising that David Lowental wrote as early as the 1990s that heritage is inevitably conflictual. Just over a decade later, L. Smith (2006, 296) added: 'The heritage process is inherently dissonant … it becomes important within certain struggles. These struggles may occur at family, local, community, national and international levels, but central to them will be conflict over whose experiences and perspectives are valid and whose are not'.

Due to the governmental processes of modern society, heritage is also highly political (ibid.). Two very good examples of conflictual and politically charged heritage are the Slovenian city of Nova Gorica, built after the Second World War, and Italian city of Gorizia. With the strongly politically supported European Capital of Culture project, it was suddenly pointed out that the fascist leader Benito Mussolini was still an honorary citizen of Gorizia. On the slopes of Sabotin, a hill above Nova Gorica, a large honorary inscription with Tito's name shines. Both, one on the side of the defeated, the other on the side of the victors, left behind a tragic legacy of totalitarianism. Despite the European Parliament's resolution on European consciousness and totalitarianism, neither of the parties in-

volved is willing to renounce it. Both sides insist on their own values and political traditions, neglecting collective memory and, above all, justice. Adherence to the ethical golden rule would certainly greatly facilitate the path to a solution that is acceptable to both sides involved and, above all, respectful of the victims of both regimes.

Once again, we can agree with David Lowenthal, who argues that 'heritage' is susceptible to market demands and is also profitable. This is also the case with both cities, Slovenian Nova Gorica and Italian Gorizia. At the same time, he also notes that the heritage industry jeopardizes historicity and can casually profit from tragic events while neglecting the suffering of those involved. The same author warns that 'heritage', tailored to market demand can turn locals into fools and boors. Traditions torn from their cultural context can easily turn the local community into circus bears, entertaining tourists for a handful of change. In this case, too, ethics points to the rule of balance and moderation between the personal and the communal. In other words, between the Dionysian, which serves pleasure, and the Apollonian, which demands moral reflection and responsibility for one's actions.

4.8 Heritage, an Opportunity for a Better Future

The remains inherited from our ancestors are not valuable in themselves, even though they may be of great importance to science. What is crucial is interpretation, which uses scientific and other data to shape cultural messages and convey them to the general public (Maroević 1998, 167, 215). Interpretation belongs to philosophical hermeneutics, which is the art of understanding and explaining. Leading American expert Sam Ham says that interpretation is explanation with meaning (Ham 2013, 69). It is essential for content that is distant in time and culture, where understanding enables broader insight and knowledge (Buber 1999, 79).

Interpretation appeals on a personal level, because a person's historical reflection can only develop from their own life. It arises 'on the basis of life experience and as its own execution in context: in the internal relationship between perceptions, remembered representations, judgments, and knowledge,' says Slovenian philosopher Dean Komel (2002, 427; Dilthey 2002, 41). Sensory and emotional experience is central to heritage interpretation, which also facilitates learning processes and deepens memo-

ry. The inclusion of the public, which chooses interpretive themes and co-creates the interpretive narrative, is crucial. Small, personal stories encourage critical thinking and personal reflection (Perko 2021a, 2021b, 2022). However, the relativism brought about by the power of personal stories has its negative sides.

Inclusive interpretation promotes experiential, object-based learning that takes place within the community (Pearce 2003). The knowledge of the community enriches the repositories of knowledge of heritage institutions. Collective memory is increasing, which is crucial for the preservation of the community and the foundation of a more just society. Reciprocal learning paths reduce the authoritative heritage discourse that gives institutions and experts a privileged role in heritage decisions (Smith 2006; Waterton and Watson 2015, 29).

5 Conclusion

Heritage has become one of the major themes of the postmodern era. On the one hand, this is due to threats and destruction, and on the other hand, to the growing interest in museums, cultural and natural landmarks as a reflection of the needs and habits of postmodern society. The beginnings of postmodern society date back to the 1960s and 1970s, marked by protests, environmental movements, demonstrations, etc. Postmodernity is an era of civil society and a time of rebellion against authority, questioning of science and the validity of a single truth, and opposition to the values of the modern era. Despite radical changes, the characteristics of modernity continue, such as liberalism, the arms race, and wars. Imperialism and neocolonialism also continue, spreading through culture and education to every corner of the world with the help of modern communication technologies. To quote the Trieste writer Claudio Magris, the postmodern man is lonely, alienated, and disappointed because of the chaotic world, and his life is worse. He suffers from a loss of meaning and simply no longer understands the world.

So, what can heritage offer postmodern human? How can it respond to the needs of contemporary society, which manifest themselves in the search for personal and community identity, the need for sustainable learning, socializing, and connecting, and the search for meaning in life?

Heritage is not a panacea, but it is nevertheless of inestimable importance to humanity. Amidst the many radical changes of postmodernity, including the destruction of values and resistance to established, authoritarian social structures, it has become a social value. The phrase 'heritage is people' highlights the essence: heritage is a key document and source of humanity. Participatory and inclusive heritage management brings numerous benefits to communities. It connects them and accelerates processes of social inclusion. New knowledge about one's own past increases pride and feelings of belonging (Batič et al. 2005).

Heritage responds to the social and individual needs of modern man mainly indirectly, through interpretation, which allows for new insights and stimulates creative processes. It opens the way to lifelong learning. It cultivates an instrumental understanding of consumer society with the dimensions of convivial and hermeneutic knowledge. Through collective memory, it increases the level of democracy in society. Through experiential learning about nature and getting to know fellow humans, it heals the wounds of impersonal relativism. Through connection and active socializing, it overcomes individualism. On a personal level, it connects modern, alienated people with the essence of life and restores their dignity. Heritage opens people up to transcendence and pushes them into the primary field of ethics, which 'answers the questions of how people should realize their humanity' (Petkovšek 2021, 991).

Let us conclude with the words of Martin Buber: 'The essence of man cannot be found in isolated individuals, for the connection of the human person with his generation and with his society is essential; we must therefore recognize the essence of this connection if we want to recognize the essence of man' (Buber 1999, 66). Heritage testifies to and proves the connection between the individual and society throughout the entire history of humanity (Perko 2023). Therefore, we can say that it embodies human existence and the essence of humanization. It is a unique source of humanity, realized through the personal adoption of historical experiences from the cultural treasure of humanity. At this point, we can argue that heritage transgresses the postmodern era of posthumanism and opens it up to a new humanism.

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Jelka Pirkovič[1]

Heritage as the Source of Identity: Interdependence of Key Heritage Concepts

ABSTRACT: Heritage discourses often emphasise heritage as an essential component of our present identities. Some heritage authorities even assert that identity is a quality attributed to heritage. However, the arguments supporting these claims are only partially convincing. Philosophical perspectives on the issue of identity emphasise its relativity. This relativity is contingent upon temporal fluctuations and, primarily, on the inherent ambiguity of phenomena such as heritage. We understand that no phenomena possess a substantial and permanent identity because they depend on factors and conditions that are constantly changing. This applies to individuals, communities, nations, and the heritage with which they identify. Nevertheless, at a practical level, identity provides relative benefits to individuals and communities.

Conventionally, a shared identity involves individuals feeling a connection to their community based on shared values and memories. From a sociological perspective, Maurice Halbwachs introduced the concept of collective memory, which is shaped by the social interactions and traditions of a specific community. Later, proponents of cultural sociology have demonstrated how social groups affirmed and validated their identities through their historical backgrounds.

The paper discusses the key concepts of heritage: memory, knowledge, and values. These concepts create a network where the heritage identity dimension can be mapped, correlating to the role heritage plays (or can play) for individuals and contemporary society. In conclusion, my paper illustrates that identity clarifies the interdependence between values, knowledge, and memories as conceptual building blocks of heritage. It also discusses the importance of interdisciplinary heritology (heritage studies) in exploring personal and collective identities that manifest in heritage.

The paradoxical nature of personal and group identities lies in their dependence on how we define ourselves in relation to the 'other'. As a result, heritage cannot possess a self-sufficient and distinct identity; instead, its identity can only be fully realised through embracing inclusivity and acknowledging the heritage of others.

A society becomes visible to itself and others through its cultural heritage. The past, as reflected in that heritage, along with the values emerging from its identification, reveals much about the viability and prospects of a society.

Keywords: Heritage; Shared Values; Cultural Memory; Traditional Knowledge; Collective Identity

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1 Introduction

Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, larger nations often disregarded or downplayed regional and local identities within their borders. During this time, groups without independent nations, such as the Catalans, Finns, Scots, Ukrainians, and Slovenes, nurtured their national identity through cultural expressions such as folklore, national landmarks, and language. Presently, globalist identities have gained prominence in Western social subsets, particularly in education, the media, and popular culture. In multicultural societies, especially those characterised by assimilation and integration, 'identities are becoming "disembedded" from bounded localities and the traditional frameworks of nation, ethnicity, class and kinship' (Ashworth et al. 2007, 55). Those who advocate for the preservation of local, regional, or even national identities run the risk of being labelled as reactionary, revanchist, or chauvinist.

Heritage discourses often emphasise heritage as a fundamental component of our present identities. Some heritage authorities even assert that identity is an attribute of heritage (Van der Mensch in Maroević 1998, 157–158). However, the arguments supporting such claims are only partially persuasive. Philosophical perspectives on identity (Noonan 2022) accentuate its relativity. This relativity is subject to temporal fluctuations and primarily to the ambiguity inherent in every changing phenomenon. This is also true of heritage, which is identical to itself only within a specific time frame; in another time frame, its attributes change and are simultaneously perceived differently.

Our goal is to analyse the nature of 'heritage identity', a coined term that abbreviates the idea that heritage and identity are interconnected. We understand the term as a unique set of characteristics and values that are appreciated in heritage and that give individuals and groups a sense of belonging. We will analyse how heritage influences identity and explore its relationship to values and other key heritage concepts in defining identity.

2 Critical Review of the Definition of Identity

2.1 Views Influencing Heritage Discourse

Before delving into heritage discourse, let us briefly mention other fields of thought. Mathematics offers a unique perspective on identity. It views

it as an equation that states that two mathematical expressions are equal for all values of any variables that occur (Concise Oxford Dictionary of Mathematics 2013). A similar definition applies to physics: it is a statement of equality that holds for all values of an unknown quantity. In both cases, equality at a higher level (not at the level of variables and their corresponding values) is the essential property that characterises identity.

A general dictionary definition of identity includes persons and things: a fact or a characteristic that determines who or what a person or a thing is; it can also mean a close similarity or affinity. According to psychiatry, an identity crisis refers to a phase of doubt and disorientation during which an individual's sense of self becomes confused (Oxford Dictionary of English 2009).

Viktor Frankl articulates the misfortune of modern Western society as having means but lacking meaning. He acknowledges that at the heart of human nature lies a search for meaning, which helps us endure suffering and grow into better persons. In contrast, today's individual seeks happiness through material wealth offered by the modern world (Frankl 1959, 140).

The Slovenian word 'samobitnost', which can be roughly translated as 'self-being' (without reference to others, such as relatives, neighbours, or strangers), has been instrumental during the periods of German, Italian, and Hungarian dominance in individual Slovenian regions. However, this concept must be reconsidered now that our place in the European and global power play has become our reality, as it raises questions about the interplay between personal and collective identity.

Buddhism, one of the oldest philosophical and psychological schools of thought, defines identity as follows: The inner experience of self, identity and values are at the core of conscious life. According to Buddhist doctrine, no phenomena, including individuals, possess an intrinsic, self-sufficient, substantial, and permanent identity. This is because the self, like all other phenomena, depends on factors and conditions that are constantly changing from moment to moment. From a Buddhist perspective, this represents the ultimate truth applicable to individuals and, one may add, to groups, such as communities, nations, the human race, and all sentient beings (Facco et al. 2019, 171–172).

However, the relative truth that is important at a practical level is that identity serves the purpose of survival. Without an internal sense of identity that remains stable over time, a person can become disoriented and, ultimately, paranoid. It brings relative benefits to individuals and groups as long as they recognise the same rights toward other individuals and groups or, at the very least, refrain from harming them. From a systemic standpoint, it is crucial that the concept of identity is well-defined and that individual cases are named and defined in order to understand their parameters and counterparts.

Buddhism should be considered a profound and well-founded philosophy and psychology that explores the relationship between the mind, body, and world (Facco et al. 2019, 117). A contemporary Buddhist scholar suggests that to attain inner stability, we must carefully consider the identity with which we align ourselves. Our identity shapes our being. We can identify solely with our biological makeup and societal limitations, or with the person we aspire to become. When confronted with upheaval and uncertainty about how to react to challenges, reflecting on our identity provides a solid foundation to steer our choices. However, knowing ourselves is only feasible by knowing others (Pryor 2016, location 1603–1604).

Personal identity has been prominent in the Western philosophical tradition since the ancient Aristotelian times. However, Western philosophy, contrary to Eastern tradition, has developed a dichotomy between inner contemplation and rational, logical reasoning by splitting the concept of knowing oneself from explaining it logically and rationally (Facco et al. 2019, 168). The 'res cogitans' is integral to holding ourselves accountable for our deeds, promises and interpersonal relations. We assume that we can affirm our personal identity with a past version of ourselves and project it into the future. The continuity of identity over time is central to our understanding of personhood. However, logical knowledge tells us that every person's identity changes constantly. The term 'persona' (with the modern meaning of 'person') originated in Roman and Etruscan theatre, and refers to the masks worn by actors and the characters they portrayed. Roman law later adopted the term to encompass any legal entity with rights and duties (Scruton 2017, 75, 77).

Modern existential phenomenology tries to overcome the dichotomy between the inner experience of 'self' and its rational explanation. For example, Jan Patočka, a Czech dissident philosopher and a follower of Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger, tried to bridge the contradictory understanding of personal identity by exploring the fundamental existential question of the identity of persons and things. He argued that we cannot fully explain something or understand its causes by simply reducing them to their composition according to rational logic. According to Patočka, a proper explanation involves understanding why something is what it is and why it has the particular characteristics it does. This requires questioning the unity of diverse elements rather than explaining their identity. Their cause determines the unity of diverse elements, whether it is the efficient or driving cause or the final cause. These causes explain why something comes into being and also why it possesses its specific attributes (Patočka 2011, 311). We acquire identity only in comparison, in differentiation from the other, with the plurality of what we are and how we see ourselves in the eyes of others. The way to the self also leads to the world and others (Patočka 1998, 59).

In Western psychology, the pursuit of self-forgetfulness (or, better to say, egolessness) has been developed as one of the pathways to discovering one's true identity and profound human nature. Thanks to Abraham Maslow, whose works were inspired by existentialists and theologians, this search for identity, known as self-actualisation, has become a familiar concept. The discovery of identity entails understanding and living in a way that aligns with one's potential. His fundamental position is that a comprehensive definition of human nature should encompass intrinsic values as an integral part of human existence (Maslow 1971, 63, 176, 304). His concept of self-actualisation differs from the Western way of thinking, which tends to polarise contradictions. On the contrary, it is more aligned with Eastern cultural traditions that value self-experience, which constantly refer to the thoughts and feelings of others (Suh 2002, 1379).

Western psychology and philosophy elaborate on the concept of collective or group identities. At the same time, social sciences deal mainly with ethnic, indigenous, and minority identities and the tensions associated with them.

One may wonder why we emphasise psychological processes and philosophical aspects of identity. This emphasis is driven by the complex overlap of personal and collective identities, which profoundly influences the feeling of connection to one's heritage. To grasp this interaction, it is crucial to contemplate ontological and epistemological factors, delving into the essence of existence and knowledge concerning heritage as a source of identity.

2.2 Identity and Heritage in the Development of Heritage Studies

Conservation primarily focuses on preserving physical artefacts and historical sites for future generations, while museology tends to consider physical preservation and the needs of visitors. In contrast, heritage studies and heritology[2] offer a broader perspective and provide a theoretical framework to understand the complexity of the heritage phenomenon. It explores how heritage manifests in space and time, encompassing tangible and intangible aspects. It tries to explain how it reflects human values and elucidates heritage-related activities.

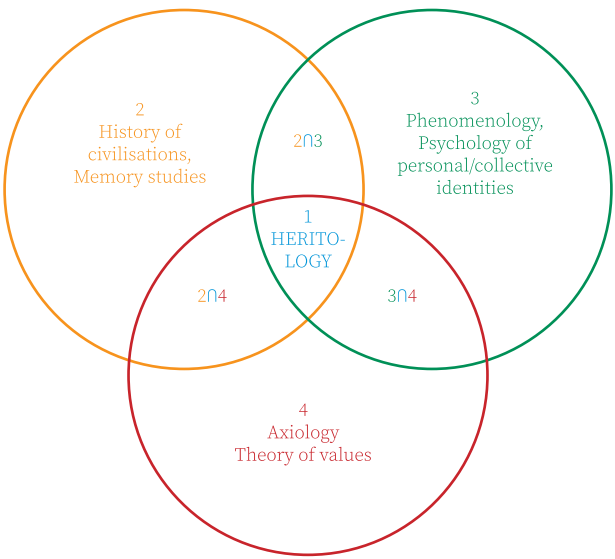
As Scruton (2013, 38) points out, the humanities play a pivotal role in distinguishing between the individual 'I' and the collective 'we', as well as in exploring various subjective realities. In contrast, science is confined to describing reality as objective entities. Given that heritage is intricately tied to human experiences and is contingent upon human actions specific to time and place, it can be inferred that the knowledge necessary to conceptualise, understand, evaluate, and holistically manage heritage largely falls within the realm of the humanities and only partially within other disciplines. Moreover, the nature of heritage studies spans interdisciplinary domains (Smith 2006, 2–3; Winter 2013, 541; Lorusso 2018, 178–179).

To research and explain heritage identity, heritology draws on insights from other studies, such as the history of civilisations and memory studies, phenomenology and psychology, and the theory of values.

2 The term 'heritage studies' was first introduced in Anglo-American universities in the late 1980s and has since dominated Western discourse on heritage. Tomislav Šola was the first to use the term 'heritology', which was adopted in Central and Eastern European academic circles. See Šola (2003, 19–21). Without going into the nuances of meaning, we use both terms here as synonyms.

The figure below illustrates three main disciplines that contribute to heritological theory.

Figure 1: Interdisciplinary nature of heritology in studying heritage identity



Heritological understanding of heritage and identity begins with heritage communities as defined by the Faro Convention (Council of Europe 2005, Article 2b). It emphasises the long-term role of heritage in addressing the societal need for identity and sees it as a way to foster collective and individual well-being and prosperity.

Identity and heritage are among the most elaborated topics in postmodern heritage studies[3]. In the introduction, we mentioned the work of Ivo Maroevič, which could be classified in the modern scientific tradition of heritage, and in Maroević's case, related to information science. On the other hand, the authors cited below are proponents of postmodern heritage discourse.

Ivo Maroević, a prominent Croatian scholar specialising in museums and heritage, views identity as an inherent aspect of heritage. In his essay *Introduction to Museology*, he delves into the concept of 'museality' of mu-

3 Google Scholar registers more than 69.000 entries on heritage identity that appeared after 2020.

seum objects and heritage, and explores the gradual revelation and communication of meaning by experts within museum environments and 'in situ'. Throughout his book, he elaborates on how the interpretation and communication of heritage significantly contribute to shaping our understanding of history and identity (Maroević 1998, 162, 180–184, 204, 208). It is evident that possessing 'museality' signifies that museum objects and heritage are imbued with values.

In her influential work *Uses of Heritage*, Laurajane Smith examines discourses on heritage from the Enlightenment to the present and contends that heritage is a process of negotiation. It involves drawing from the past and collective or individual memories to negotiate new forms of self-expression and identity. Therefore, heritage can be viewed as a discourse focused on negotiating and regulating social meanings and practices related to establishing and re-establishing 'identity' (Smith 2006, 2–18). To complement her position, we will differentiate between the development of personal and collective identities, as defined in psychology, through heritage-associated processes.

Smith's contribution to the book *The Ashgate Research Companion to Heritage and Identity* emphasises her general idea that the postmodern paradigm of heritage is concerned with the process rather than physical phenomena. Here, the notion of heritage has become more complex and allows the possibility of active public or visitor engagement (Smith 2008, 167). The book, edited by Brian Graham and Peter Howard, has had a significant impact. In the introduction, the editors emphasised the close connection between identity, knowledge, and the sense of time. The introduction discussed how identity involves sameness, group membership, and the perception of others with often conflicting beliefs, values, and aspirations. These attributes of otherness are fundamental to how identity is represented within heritage places, which serve as sites for memorialisation and commemoration (Graham and Howard 2008, 5–7).

This perspective reveals the paradoxical nature of personal and collective identity, which concerns relationships with others. This paradox raises the question of how heritage can represent an autonomous and independent identity of individuals or groups if their identities are interdependent with those of 'the other'.

In the concluding chapter of *Identity and Heritage*, Peter Biehl and his co-editors reiterate the postmodern stanza of power play permeating all social systems, including heritage. They argue that power politics is crucial in shaping collective identities, with individuals having multiple identities based on mutual benefit. Local identity can be denigrated as genetic, ideological or geographically conditioned. Community identities are constantly renegotiated as political and economic structures change (Biehl et al. 2015, 16).

The book *Critical Perspectives on Cultural Memory and Heritage: Construction, Transformation, and Destruction* focuses on the use and abuse of cultural heritage, identity, and memory. It includes case studies such as Veysel Apadyn's illustration of strong links between places and threatened identities, as seen in the public protests to preserve Gezi Park in Istanbul (Apaydin 2020). Helen Walasek's contribution highlights the tragic events in Bosnia and Herzegovina, focusing on the intentional destruction of both emblematic and less prominent monuments as a kind of ethnic cleansing, together with the ineffectiveness of international legal instruments to prevent the destruction and subsequently prosecute those responsible for such crimes (Walasek 2020). It seems in vain to wish that the tragic history of the 1990s would never be repeated.

3 Conceptualisation of the Relationship Between Heritage and Identity

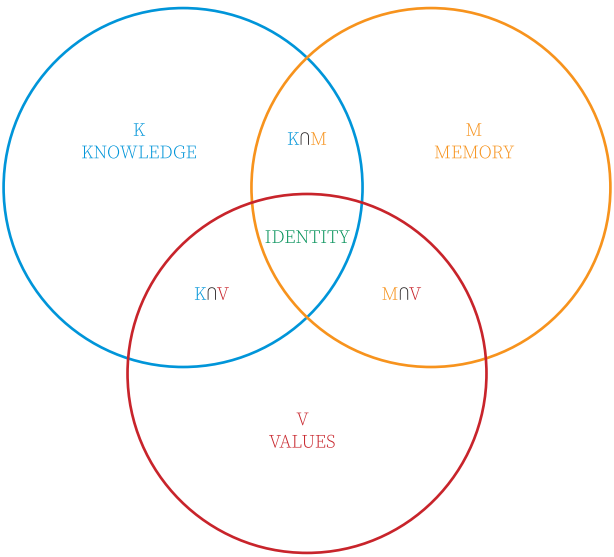
3.1 Relation to Key Heritage Concepts

My previous research elaborated on key concepts of heritage: memory, knowledge and values (Pirkovič 2023a). These concepts form a network where the meaning of heritage can be mapped, as it correlates to the role heritage plays (or can play) for individuals and contemporary society. When conducting the analysis, it was decisive to note that each core concept of heritage should be explored through at least two perspectives: knowledge from academic versus traditional standpoints, memory as historical versus collective memory, and values from their extrinsic versus intrinsic dimensions (Pirkovič 2023b).

When considering the integration of the idea of identity into this heritage network, we can observe how the original interconnected triad takes

on a more coherent structure. When we elaborate these ideas from the standpoint of heritage identity, new opportunities arise, shedding light on the additional interconnections between heritage and its key concepts. Now, it becomes evident that we are dealing with heritage identity that intersects all three key concepts of heritage. The following explanation will provide detailed arguments for my assertion. Let us proceed incrementally in this process of clarification.

Figure 2: The cross-section of values, memory and knowledge that contribute to heritage identity



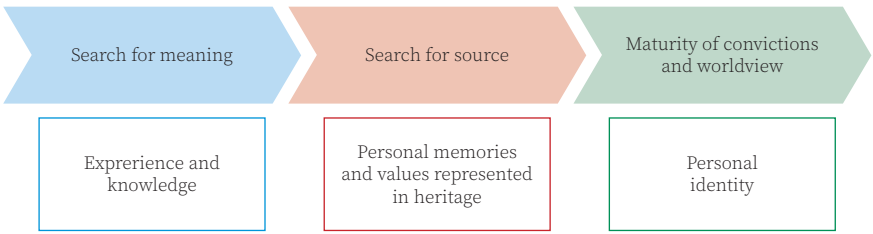
3.2 Existential Role of Heritage for Personal Identity Formation

First, we should elaborate on the links between personal and collective heritage identity and then analyse in more detail the role of collective heritage identity.

Personal identity is the 'I' as experienced by an individual. According to Eastern cultural traditions, this experience is common to all sentient beings and is not limited to humans. Individual human quests revolve around 'Who am I? Where do I come from? Where is my place in the world?' Psychology and cultural sociology examine the process of personal

identity formation, which is determined by changing social circumstances and cultural stimuli. We claim that understanding one's own memories and heritage is crucial for personal maturation, as it shapes individual and family memories and later influences collective memories and the cultural environment in which an individual lives or is inclined to. The study of heritology can ascertain whether this process contributes to a solid personal identity, and empowers individuals to navigate life more effectively.

Figure 3: The process of personal identity formation based on heritage knowledge, memories and values



Personality development starts with experiences and gaining knowledge. Later, understanding memories and heritage is crucial for the personal maturation of individuals. We shape individual and family memories and significantly influence collective memories and the cultural environment. Here, I refer to memories as intangible heritage and heritage as mostly tangible manifestations with layers of intangible memories.

3.3 The Role of Heritage in Collective Identity Formation

The chapter delves into the collective identities of communities and larger social groups, including nations, ethnicities, classes, and kinships, in connection with other crucial heritage concepts: shared values, memories, and knowledge. I will explore how heritage influences collective identity and how collective identity contributes to the heritage process.

3.3.1 Shared Values Manifested in Heritage

Shared values, celebrated in cultural expressions, summarise the values embraced by individual group members. Simply put, these are values shared by groups or communities. According to Hartman's value theory, individual values (referred to as 'intrinsic') hold the most significant posi-

tion compared to extrinsic values (related to a particular class of things, as defined by experts) and systemic (related to specific theories) (Hartman 1967, 136–139, 217, 219)[4]. When it comes to shared values, the connection that binds individuals to shared values is the appeal of identity projected by the group.

Heritage experts classify heritage and, as a result, speak about the values of heritage class. Heritage classification has proven to be an inadequate foundation for the formation of personal and collective identity. In this context, the responsibility of defining identity anchors should be shifted to individuals and heritage communities. Therefore, heritage experts should, in collaboration with the individuals and communities involved, identify those values and identity traits in heritage that differentiate our identity from that of others, and work to reinforce the intrinsic values that connect 'our identity' to that of others.

3.3.2 Cultural Memory[5] Transmitted by Heritage

We should consider the two opposing forces of memory, remembrance and forgetting (Whitling 2010, 88–90). The role of heritage lies in identity quests, where collective memories expressed in heritage become a crucial claim (Pakier and Starth 2010, 4). At the same time, such claims risk becoming politicised and, consequently, turn to be a part of historical memory where each nation uses political mechanisms. Similarly, official policies of the European Union have aimed to build on a European identity as early as the 1970s (Karlsson 2010, 39). The danger of present European policy supporting the identity claims of the 'oppressed' minorities based on sexuality, psychic status, or political-ideological conviction risks oppressing the ethnic identities that constitute nation-states.

To upgrade the loose description of collective memory as proposed by Maurice Halbwachs (1950), Jan Assmann introduced the concept of 'cultural memory' that covers all expressions of memory (Assmann 1995, 128–133), including personal memories that are passed from one generation to

4 For a short explanation of Hartman's axiology as it relates to archaeological values, see Pirkovič (2023, 68–71).
5 In line with Assmann, who proposed to enlarge Halwachs's collective concept of memory, we use the term 'cultural memory' in this broader sense (Assmann 1998).

the next and have the potential to develop into linguistic, pictural (spatial) and ritual expressions forming a collective identity of the society in question. In his words, the danger of discriminating the memory of others lies in the positive aspect of each and every cultural memory: 'The objective manifestations of cultural memory are defined through a kind of identificatory determination in a positive ("We are this") or in a negative ("That is our opposite") sense' (ibid., 130).

3.3.3 Heritage Community Sustaining and Transmitting Common Heritage

The Faro Convention references the concepts of 'heritage community' and 'common heritage' (Council of Europe 2005, Articles 2b and 3a). A heritage community is defined as people 'who value specific aspects of cultural heritage which they wish, within the framework of public action, to sustain and transmit to future generations.' The concept of 'common heritage' pertains to the heritage of Europe. Put differently, 'common heritage'[6] can be defined as heritage that encompasses all manifestations of cultural heritage that are valued by a heritage community, serving as their shared source of memory and identity.

The 1972 UNESCO World Heritage Convention focuses on world heritage. It involves an assessment undertaken by the ICOMOS expert panel and a rigorous procedure by the World Heritage Committee and the Member States. In contrast, the Council of Europe Convention presents an inclusive heritage definition that prioritises the perspectives of heritage communities. It is important to distinguish between a group of individuals who value specific aspects of heritage within the framework of their private action and a group that values heritage within the framework of public action. Only the latter could be considered a heritage community.

Again, heritage defined by experts and heritage authorities has less chance of being recognised by communities because it often lacks the potential to embody their collective identity. If we consider it deeply,

6 In this context, 'common heritage' does not refer to the international legal concept of the common heritage of mankind (as used in the World Heritage Convention) or the Common Heritage of the Council of Europe, which pertains to European countries that are members of this intergovernmental organization. Instead, 'common heritage' refers to heritage valued by the heritage community as opposed to heritage defined by authorised heritage discourse.

communities do not recognise their shared values and memories in the authorised heritage and have no opportunity to enrich it with their traditional knowledge.

3.3.4 Knowledge and Skills Cultivating 'Our' Heritage and Respecting the Heritage of Others

Jan Assmann suggests in his work that knowledge plays a significant role in shaping collective identity. He refers to the structure of cultural knowledge as the 'concretion of identity', indicating that a group's sense of unity and distinctiveness is rooted in this knowledge. According to him, cultural knowledge provides the group with formative and normative influences, enabling them to uphold and perpetuate their identity (Assmann 1995, 128). In short, cultural heritage is a vital component of collective identity because it enables members of specific groups to live together and with the 'others'. As previously mentioned, it is important to differentiate the academic knowledge discussed in Chapter 2.2 from the traditional knowledge and skills practiced by heritage communities. In addition, communities should demonstrate and utilise practical communicative skills to convey the meaning of their heritage to a wider audiences.

Figure 4: The role of heritage in collective identity formation



The metaphor of the target from Figure 4, consisting of concentric circles, vividly illustrates the interconnectedness of 'outer' concepts with 'inner' ones, with shared values occupying the central position. The scheme

also emphasises two dynamic aspects of the main components of heritage. The arrow on the left-hand side indicates the degree of centrality or influence of one key concept over the next. On the right-hand side, the arrow depicts the captivating process of concretising collective identity, starting from shared values, which are the most abstract, and extending to traditional knowledge and skills as the most concrete and everyday representations of collective identity.

4 Discussion

From the perspective of phenomenology, heritage is a thing or a phenomenon. In my article on heritage authenticity (Pirkovič 2024), I applied Heidegger's concept of Dwelling, Building, and Thinking to heritage authenticity. Of course, heritage authenticity should be understood only as a meaning given to heritage and not a part of phenomenal reality. Nevertheless, it points to the essential link humans place on our 'outer' reality.

Similarly, when we analyse the identity of heritage, it is clear that it is not per se one of the characteristics of individual heritage phenomena. Here, heritage plays a symbolic role as an 'anchor', 'signal', or 'identity card' for our personal and collective identities.

The general rule in addressing identity issues should apply: the higher the political authority is positioned, the more attention should be paid to preventing the oppression of lower-level identities and their respective cultural memories expressed through heritage. At the European level, memories and heritage should redeem the status of European collective memories (Council of Europe 1992, Article 1.1) or the common heritage of Europe (Council of Europe 2005, Article 3a)[7]. In reverse, the same rule should apply to national monuments and expressions of cultural memories at the sub-national levels. A more inclusive approach to common heritage should prevail, giving heritage communities a decisive role in identifying, managing and interpreting their heritage.

7 La Valetta Convention: 'The aim of this (revised) Convention is to protect the archaeological heritage as a source of the European collective memory and as an instrument for historical and scientific study.' Faro Convention: see footnote 6.

Further investigation could explore the intersection of heritage preservation efforts with identity politics, examining how heritage discourse mirrors broader cultural identity issues, power dynamics, and social representation. Not only does heritage mirror identity issues, but it also reflects broader societal concerns. It can help navigate through challenging social situations with ancestral wisdom. This research could also examine how various stakeholders, including communities, institutions, and governments, navigate heritage management and interpretation concerning diverse perspectives of identities.

5 Conclusion

Upon examining the interconnectedness of heritage and identity, it is apparent that heritage is closely intertwined with a sense of belonging and plays a crucial role in shaping one's identity. Essentially, heritage can serve as a genuine reflection of a community's culture. The identity associated with heritage is intricately connected to the fundamental human rights of individuals and communities that deeply respect their heritage. Acknowledging the shared values, individual and collective memories, and traditional knowledge of heritage communities is a tribute to their human dignity (Alatalu 2021, 150).

As discussed in Chapter 2.2, the paradoxical nature of identity stemming from heritage can be resolved by fostering a more inclusive approach to personal and collective identity that embraces and integrates the heritage of others. This approach challenges the conventional understanding of the relationship between heritage and identity. Heritage should empower individuals and communities to gain a deep understanding of who they are, what they stand for, where they come from, and what their purpose is.

A society becomes visible to itself and others through its cultural heritage. The past, as reflected in that heritage, along with the values emerging from its identification, reveals much about the viability and prospects of a society.

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Andrej Magdič[1]

The Public, Community and Identity in the Legal Protection of Archaeological Heritage in Slovenia

ABSTRACT: This article provides a brief overview of the social phenomenon of the 'public', its role in the protection of cultural heritage, and a commented review of the heritage protection legislation in the territory of present-day Slovenia, with an emphasis on public involvement.

Forms of archaeological discourse and the intensity of public involvement largely depend on heritage legislation. A review of legal acts in the field of cultural heritage protection from the late 18th century to the present reveals a growing role of the public in the discourse on archaeological heritage. Imperial decrees from the late 18th century, during the era of the absolutist monarchy, established the state's right of ownership over archaeological finds that were preserved in court collections. In the second half of the 19th century, as the bourgeois public gained social influence, archaeological remains became an integral part of public museums, and the right to protect them was assigned to the experts educated in the humanities employed in public institutions. This system of archaeological heritage protection on the territory of Slovenia remained in place even during the socialist period following World War II. However, during socialism, the subject of heritage protection began to shift, from elite social classes, largely originating from the bourgeois public, toward broader segments of society. Legal provisions dealing with archaeological and broader cultural heritage began addressing the general public as the bearer of heritage, although its role remained limited to that of a user, without the right or opportunity to participate actively in heritage protection processes. The shaping of heritage narratives remained the domain of experts employed by public institutions that operated under relatively strict political oversight. With the democratization of society in the final decade of the 20th century, the public began to take an active role in heritage protection processes. Legislation followed this shift, and by 2008 it enabled public involvement in specialist activities, such as the search for archaeological remains, which were previously the exclusive domain of professionals employed by public heritage institutions. Heritage communities that demonstrate an ethical relationship towards their heritage have begun to participate as active subjects in the processes of heritage protection, with their narratives now recognized as legal, legitimate and necessary components of the heritage discourse.

Keywords: Public Archaeology; Heritage Communities; Cultural Heritage Legislation in Slovenia; Participatory Heritage Discourse; Collective Memory and Identity Formation

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1 Introduction

In his foundational study of the social phenomenon of 'the public', Jürgen Habermas argued that the public, as a heterogeneous bearer of diverse public opinions, must always be understood within its historical context. Habermas assigned the public the role of a generator of public opinion, which is shaped through public discourse with the help of the media independently of the authorities. In Europe, this form of the public emerged during the rise of mercantilist capitalism in the 18th century and the associated social processes (Habermas 1989, 36–37).

Martin Heidegger in his work *Being and Time*, published in 1927 (Heidegger 1997), argued that a human being does not exist as an autonomous and self-sufficient entity outside of a social context. Human existence becomes fully self-defined only as 'Being-here' (*Dasein*), which means being in the world. 'The world' determines the being and is the indispensable context of the Being in itself (Heidegger 1997, 99). A human is defined as a being only within the environment in which they live. In addition to the physical and geographical characteristics of the environment, a crucial role is played by the primary social environment, the community.

The environment into which a person is situated, and which influences their perception, conditions their actions, and serves as the self-defining context of their being, was termed *habitus* by Pierre Bourdieu. This concept refers to the way individuals, through their activity within a community, develop habits, patterns, thoughts and behaviours in accordance with social rules and expectations (Bourdieu 2013, 18). A particular habitus develops exclusively within a specific environment, among a particular group of people: in a community (ibid., 31). A person who becomes uprooted from their community loses part of themselves, their Being-here can not fully develop.

The sense of belonging to a community is one of the fundamental human needs. Community affiliation develops as a process in which individuals, through collective memory and public discourse, shape their cultural heritage (Weil 2023, 33). Laurajane Smith, in her book *Uses of Heritage*, argues that the establishment of 'tradition' is a fundamental tool for communicating the heritage narrative, which is intended to inspire in members of the local community a desire to protect archaeological heritage as a shared value.

However, tradition should not be understood as a rigid, unchanging entity created in the past. Heritage value can be found only in connection with authentic interpretation of traditions and material culture (Smith 2006, 295). Heritage communities must be recognized as essential stakeholders in the consideration and evaluation of interventions in heritage places. Through such processes, a community generates its own collective identity (ibid., 176). The material remains and traces of human life in the past represent the historical roots of today's communities, without which an individual is incapable of true self-awareness and identity in the world (Curk 2022, 284). In order to build a collective identity based on the value of mutual respect, it is essential to develop discursive practices that enable community members to renew their heritage narrative (Pirkovič 2023, 70).

Active involvement of the public in cultural heritage protection processes can have highly beneficial social effects. Among other things, it strengthens social cohesion and fosters a sense of belonging to the local community and place of origin (Rosenberg 2011).

Community members' participation in cultural heritage preservation projects encourages the development of communal awareness, which directly and positively influences the quality of life (Fakin Bajec 2016).

It is clear from the above that an engaged public that values its cultural heritage represents a key subject of the heritage discourse. Therefore, it is essential that legal frameworks provide opportunities for the active participation of heritage communities in cultural heritage protection processes.

2 Legal frameworks for public involvement in the heritage discourse

The origins of archaeological heritage protection legislation on Slovenian territory can be traced to imperial decrees, with which the court of the absolutist Habsburg monarchy asserted its right to ownership of archaeological finds from within the empire from the late 18th century onward (Kirsch 1937, p. 1 and fn. 1). However, the beginnings of collecting material remains of the past among the Habsburg elites go even further back, to the Renaissance period, when the heritage community of European absolutist rulers started to define their identity through the humanist tradition of classical antiquity (Sandbichler 2015, 184).

In the early decades of the 19th century, the heritage discourse, which until then was led primarily by the high nobility, began to be taken over by the 'bourgeois public' (as defined by Habermas). A significant component of this process in Slovenian lands was the establishment of provincial museums in Graz in 1811 (Becker 2016, 75) and Ljubljana in 1821 (Baš 1955, 15), which, as part of the state structure for archaeological heritage protection, were responsible for safekeeping of archaeological heritage and its communicating to the public. The increase in their collections was supported by a state decree from 1846, which required state authorities to report archaeological finds of potential scientific or artistic value to the provincial office, which would then forward the finds to appropriate public institutions or societies (Kirsch 1937, 3). The majority of museum visitors belonged to the bourgeois public, which at that time began to assume an important societal role. This group reinforced its social identity through a classical education, which included knowledge of cultural heritage (Perko 2014, 45).

With the establishment of the so-called Central Commission for the Research and Preservation of Architectural Monuments (*Zentralkommission zur Erforschung und Erhaltung der Baudenkmale*) in 1850, composed of members from various ministries and research institutions, the state formally created a government service with public authority that actively took responsibility for the protection of immovable and movable cultural heritage (Pirkovič 2017, 71). By defining its areas of activity, including 'the investigation and protection of ruined and earth-covered building remains, graves, ancient roads, etc.', the Commission also assumed responsibility for archaeological sites. Its fieldwork was carried out by voluntary collaborators (conservators), whose primary tasks were to document monuments and provide assistance when needed (Jogan 2008, 27). These conservators were supported by civil servants from state construction offices, who were required to report any discoveries of archaeological remains made during construction works (Kirsch 1937, 3–5). In 1911, a new statute was adopted, according to which the Commission was renamed the Central Commission for Monument Protection (*Zentralkommission für Denkmalpflege*). The Commission's administrative body became known as the 'State Monument Office' (*Staatsdenkmalamt*), and the new position of 'provincial conserva-

tor' (*Landeskonservator*) was introduced (ibid., 11). This was a consequence of the increasing demands of individual regions in the empire for local autonomy (Jogan 2008, 41).

The organization of archaeological heritage protection did not change significantly after the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. After the end of World War I, the heritage protection system in Slovenia was established based on the role of the former Provincial Conservator for Carniola, a position held by France Stele since 1913, and was implemented in a manner consistent with the practices established during the Austro-Hungarian period. The Kingdom of Yugoslavia, during the interwar period, failed to establish its own legislation in the field of cultural heritage protection (Zupan 2014, 36–39). Immovable cultural heritage was protected only by the Forest Act of 1931 (Jogan 2008, 41–42) and the Building Act (Ivanc 2012, 21).

Heritage protection was not restructured until after World War II. The systemic solutions at that time, with the state as the central subject in heritage protection matters, were still heavily inspired by the Austro-Hungarian model (Pirkovič 2017, 72). The first law that regulated the protection of cultural heritage in Slovenia after the war was the federal Yugoslav Law on the Protection of Cultural Monuments and Natural Landmarks, adopted in 1945 (Jogan 2008, 56). On this basis, the Act on the Protection of Cultural Monuments and Natural Sites in the People's Republic of Slovenia[2] in 1948 (hereinafter: 1948 Act) was adopted (Ivanc 2012, 21). The Act designated the Institute for the Protection and Scientific Study of Cultural Monuments and Natural Sites of Slovenia as the public service body responsible for implementing the protection of cultural heritage. The Institute operated under the direction of the Minister of Education of the People's Republic of Slovenia. Other public institutions in the field of protection were also permitted to participate in heritage conservation (1948 Act, Article 2). Archaeological research could only be conducted with permission from the Institute, and any excavated archaeological finds became state property (1948 Act, Articles 8 and 9). According to the 1948 Act, the roles of

2 Zakon o varstvu kulturnih spomenikov in prirodnih znamenitosti. Uradni list LRS, No. 23/1948, and 22/1958.

safeguarding and researching cultural heritage were assigned exclusively to public institutions established directly by the ministry responsible for education. The public was not represented as a stakeholder in the protection of heritage. The Act on the Protection of Cultural Monuments and Natural Landmarks[3] from 1958 defined this topic in a similar way

A different, more active role for the public in cultural heritage protection was envisioned by the Cultural Monuments Protection Act[4] of 1961 (hereinafter: 1961 Act), whose purpose was 'to protect the material heritage of Slovenian culture and other cultures within the territory of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia and to foster in citizens a sense of responsibility and care for it'. The law was intended to ensure the necessary conditions 'so that cultural monuments, in accordance with their purpose and significance, would serve the cultural needs of the community' (1961 Act, Article 3). This Act introduced the decentralization of the public heritage protection service. The responsibility for heritage protection was assigned to public institutes for monument protection, established by municipal assemblies (1961 Act, Articles 6 and 42). Among their tasks, the institutes were required to encourage citizen interest in the protection and maintenance of cultural monuments and promote their participation in the identification of objects deemed to be cultural monuments (1961 Act, Articles 13 and 43). This clearly marks the early beginnings of active public involvement in cultural heritage protection (Jogan 2008, 85).

Despite this encouragement of public involvement in preservation and maintenance, the monopoly over archaeological research remained with public heritage institutions and the university possessing the necessary material resources and expert personnel. And only if they had obtained prior approval from the Institute for Monument Protection. An important provision introduced by this act, in terms of public participation in archaeological heritage protection, was the requirement that archaeological finds should, as a rule, remain in the area where they were discovered (1961 Act, Article 32), which was a prerequisite for fostering a sense of

3 Zakon o varstvu kulturnih spomenikov in naravnih znamenitosti. Uradni list LRS, No. 22/1958.

4 Zakon o varstvu kulturnih spomenikov (ZNKD). Uradni list LRS, No. 26/1961; Uradni list SRS, No. 11/1965, and 1/1981.

connection between local communities and their archaeological heritage.

In a similar spirit, the role of the public was also defined in the Natural and Cultural Heritage Act,[5] adopted in 1981, which again reunited the protection of natural in cultural heritage (hereinafter: 1981 Act): 'Through its cultural, scientific, historical or aesthetic value, natural and cultural heritage is intended for all working people and citizens. The protection of natural and cultural heritage is the responsibility of every citizen and of society as a whole. Everyone has the right, under equal conditions, to become acquainted with and enjoy the values of natural and cultural heritage' (1981 Act, Article 4).

The Act specified that socio-political communities (slov. *družbenopolitične skupnosti*) were the ones responsible for defining and implementing heritage protection policies within the system of social planning, as well as for promoting self-management agreements and participating in societal dialogue on issues of natural and cultural heritage protection (1981 Act, Article 8). However, in practice, the competencies concerning heritage protection remained limited to the heritage protection institute, museums, and archives, all of which were established by the state political authorities (1981 Act, Article 13). The only exception, where one might see a degree of decision-making power delegated to the local political communities, and thus indirectly to the local public, was the Act, by which a cultural monument gained legal protection. Such an Act was adopted by municipal assemblies, but only after receiving the opinion or proposal of the state heritage protection organization (1981 Act, Article 18).

During the period of socialist rule in Slovenia, the public was by definition included in the formation of public social discourse. However, it is important to emphasize that public discourse in the field of culture, at least in the first decades after World War II, was strictly monitored and directed in accordance with the ideology of the ruling Communist Party (Dedić 1979). Alternative narratives during this time had no opportunity to influence the broader community.

5 Zakon o naravni in kulturni dediščini (ZNKD). Uradni list SRS, No. 1/1981, and 42/1986; Uradni list RS, No. 26/1992, 75/1994 – ZUJIPK, 7/1999 – ZVKD, and 56/1999 – ZON.

On an international scale, the idea of involving the public in heritage protection emerged in the mid-1970s, when the philosophy of integrated conservation or the concept of holistic conservation spread (Ivanc 2012, 48). The public, understood as an active and independent generator of public opinion, shaped through public discourse and free from ruling power structures, began to emerge in Slovenia only in the final years of the socialist regime, in the mid-1980s. At that time, a Habermasian literary public sphere, independent of state politics, began to take shape, offering new perspectives on social reality (Mastnak 2023). The democratic ideals advocated by civil society during this period eventually led to the independence of the Republic of Slovenia and the establishment of a democratic state, which in turn influenced the structure of cultural heritage protection. After Slovenia gained political independence, all legislation in the field of heritage protection was based on the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia[6], adopted in 1991 (hereinafter: Constitution). It clearly stipulates that the state takes care of its cultural heritage on its territory (Constitution, Article 5). And further, that everyone is obliged to take care of the cultural heritage in accordance with the law (Constitution, Article 73). Whereby, based on the grammatical provision, the obligation of the state and local communities is broader, since the constitution prescribes the duty of preservation, which is a broader concept than the duty of protection, which is assumed to be the obligation of everyone (Ivanc 2012, 29).

The first Cultural Heritage Protection Act following the independence of the Republic of Slovenia[7], adopted in 1999 (hereinafter: 1999 Act), still largely continued the principles of cultural heritage protection from the period of socialist governance. Responsibilities in the field of heritage protection were assigned to the state, local communities, and the public heritage protection service (1999 Act, Article 1). The Act defined heritage

6 Ustava Republike Slovenije. Uradni list RS, No. 33/1991-I, 42/1997 – UZS68, 66/2000 – UZ80, 24/2003 – UZ3a, 47, 68, 69/2004 – UZ14, 69/2004 – UZ43, 69/2004 – UZ50, 68/2006 – UZ121,140,143, 47/2013 – UZ148, 47/2013 – UZ90,97,99, 75/2016 – UZ70a, and 92/2021 – UZ62a).

7 Zakon o varstvu kulturne dediščine (ZVKD). Uradni list RS, No. 7/1999, 110/2002 – ZGO-1, and 126/2003 – ZVPOPKD.

protection as being in the public interest due to its historical, cultural, and civilizational significance (1999 Act, Article 2). It took a major step towards gaining public involvement in heritage protection, by highlighting the integration of heritage into spatial planning and everyday life as a central function, particularly in the areas of education, transmission of knowledge and experiences from the past, the strengthening of national identity, and cultural self-awareness (1999 Act, Article 3). It also emphasized that the preservation and protection of heritage is a responsibility shared by all (1999 Act, Article 4). The Act also took a certain step towards inclusion, since private individuals and legal entities could carry out certain heritage protection tasks, such as data collection, storage and safeguarding of movable heritage, interventions, exhibitions and public presentations, but of course only with the permission from the minister (1999 Act, Article 27).

Since the turn of the century, research and studies on participatory governance in cultural heritage have become increasingly extensive (Pirkovič 2020, 831). In the Slovenian heritage protection discourse, the public has been regarded as an important actor in the heritage discourse at least since 2008, when the Council of Europe's Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (adopted in 2005; hereinafter: the Faro Convention) was ratified. The Faro Convention devotes special attention to the 'heritage community' for the first time (Ivanc 2012, 49), which it defines as a group of people who value specific aspects of cultural heritage and seek to sustain and transmit them to future generations through public action (Faro Convention, Article 2). This refers to a segment of the public that defines itself as a community through discursive practices based on collective memory. It has to be stated, that in accordance with the Slovenian Constitution, international treaties like the Faro Convention are directly applicable and, in terms of the legal order, stand above the sectoral law (Jogan 2008, 13).

Since 2017, ICOMOS doctrinal documents have also adopted the term heritage community to define groups of people who maintain a particular relationship with heritage (Pirkovič 2020, 831).

The current Cultural Heritage Protection Act[8] adopted in 2008 (hereinafter: 2008 Act), introduced several significant innovations regarding public participation in heritage protection. This Act defines heritage as including a value-based and ethical relationship that the public holds toward the remnants of the past:

> Heritage comprises assets inherited from the past that Slovenian citizens, Slovenes, members of the Italian and Hungarian national communities, members of the Roma community, and other citizens of the Republic of Slovenia, recognize as reflections and expressions of their values, identities, ethnic belonging, religious and other beliefs, knowledge, and traditions. Heritage also includes environmental aspects arising from the interaction between people and their surroundings over time. (2008 Act, Article 1)

A key novelty introduced by this Act is the recognition of public participation in heritage protection as a public benefit. The Act further stipulates that in fulfilling the public benefit of heritage protection, the state, regions, and municipalities must cooperate with heritage owners, businesses, non-governmental organisations and civil society (2008 Act, Article 2). Public engagement is also highlighted in the definition of 'social significance,' which refers to the value that heritage holds for communities and individuals due to its cultural, educational, developmental, religious, symbolic, or identity-related potential, or for disciplines such as anthropology, archaeology, architecture, ethnology, art history, and history (2008 Act, Article 3). Thus, the essential quality of heritage lies in the value it holds for both the community and individuals, as well as researchers in this field. The right to heritage may only be restricted in the public interest and with respect for the rights of others (2008 Act, Article 4).

The act also explicitly defines the role of non-governmental organisations (hereinafter: NGO) as part of the public (Jogan 2008, 159). An NGO that significantly contributes to heritage protection, the promotion of heritage awareness, dissemination of knowledge and skills, and educa-

8 Zakon o varstvu kulturne dediščine (ZVKD-1). Uradni list RS, No. 16/2008, 123/2008, 8/2011 – ORZVKD39, 90/2012, 111/2013, 32/2016, 21/2018 – ZNOrg, and 78/2023 – ZUNPEOVE.

tion and lifelong learning, may obtain the status of an 'NGO acting in the public interest in the field of cultural heritage protection. This status is granted under the laws governing public interest in culture and the status of NGOs' (2008 Act, Article 107). Such an organization is entitled to submit opinions and proposals on heritage protection matters, participate in advisory bodies of the ministry, regions, and municipalities, and contribute to the preparation of strategies (2008 Act, Article 108).

A notable innovation introduced by the 2008 Cultural Heritage Protection Act concerns the public involvement in the right to amateur search for archaeological remains. Unlike previous legal frameworks that defined the search for archaeological remains as an exclusive right of the state heritage protection service, the 2008 Act allows members of the public to actively participate in this process. However, the search is permitted only under certain conditions, and the key provision in this regard is that all discovered archaeological finds remain the property of the state (2008 Act, Article 6). Moreover: 'The search for archaeological remains and the use of metal detectors and other technical devices for this purpose are permitted only with prior authorization from the heritage protection institute, provided that the search is conducted by an amateur qualified for searching archaeological remains' (2008 Act, Article 32). To regulate such activities, the Regulation on the Search for Archaeological Remains and the Use of Technical Devices for this Purpose (in herein: 2014 Regulation) was adopted[9]. A person acquires the right based on a permit issued by the Institute after completing a training course (2014 Regulation, Article 4). Understanding public motivation is crucial for developing effective public engagement strategies in this area. The most common motivation among searchers is the desire for a direct connection to the past, a feeling that is uniquely experienced through the discovery of archaeological objects, something that museum displays cannot replicate (Gaspari 2025, 35). An important dimension of public activity in archaeological searches is in the integration of the public in 'citizen science' processes. Through proper

9 Pravilnik o iskanju arheoloških ostalin in uporabi tehničnih sredstev za te namene. Uradni list RS, No. 49/2014.

documentation procedures, participants can contribute to the shared archaeological data repository, which in turn fosters a sense of inclusion and belonging to the research and heritage community (Rutar 2025a, 2025b). The right to search is closely linked to the understanding that a prerequisite for full public participation in heritage protection is the broadening of understanding regarding the values associated with heritage, and the encouragement of the public to adopt these values as their own (Pirkovič and Šantej 2012, 13–14).

Conclusion

Human beings have an existential need to belong to a community, as it is only within and through the community that they can define themselves. A community is by definition rooted in the past; however, tradition alone does not guarantee its existence in the present. This is only made possible through the performance of heritage-related discursive practices through which members of the community articulate their heritage narrative and define and renew their sense of communal belonging, thereby ensuring the continued existence of the community.

Archaeological remains represent an important element of a community's historical connection to its physical environment. The heritage discourse, which includes narratives related to archaeological heritage, contributes to the structural stability and symbolic rootedness of the community in the material world. For the discursive renewal of the community to be effective, its members must actively participate in the shaping of the heritage narrative. Experts from core heritage disciplines can offer support and guidance in this process, but it is up to the community members themselves to internalize these narratives and integrate them into their own communal heritage story.

Over the past two centuries, since the time when archaeological remains in the Slovenian territory became part of the broader heritage discourse, archaeological heritage legislation has been continuously evolving, from absolutist to socialist to democratic approaches. Today, heritage communities formally have the right to actively participate in the archaeological heritage discourse. However, a legally guaranteed right to participate does not necessarily equate to actual active involvement. To achieve this, the

promotion of an attitude of active citizenship is required, one that exercises its constitutional right to co-create and protect cultural heritage in accordance with its own desires, needs, and beliefs.

Active participation of the local heritage community in co-creating a collective memory has a strong community-building potential that the activities of outside experts can never achieve. Therefore, public participation should more often reach beyond amateur archaeological search and data collection, for example through in-site management that engages heritage communities, informal inspections by locals and interpretation projects carried out by amateurs. Given the current social situation, in which identity communities are systematically being dismantled through the monetization of social systems, it would be essential for heritage experts to encourage the empowerment of heritage communities to take the initiative in managing their archaeological heritage by themselves. We can only hope that the new Slovenian legislation in the field of cultural heritage protection, which is currently being prepared, will enable and actively encourage such activities.

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Public Archaeology and Local Public Involvement in Slovenian Museums

ABSTRACT: This paper examines the current state and key characteristics of public archaeology in Slovenia, with a particular emphasis on evaluating the degree of involvement of the local public as both partners and interlocutors in heritage processes. Drawing on theoretical frameworks from museology and heritology, the study highlights the importance of participatory and multiple-perspective models in democratizing heritage interpretation and management. The research is based on qualitative methodology, including semi-structured interviews with archaeologists working in regional and municipal museums. Preliminary findings indicate that public archaeology projects in Slovenia are predominantly shaped by the deficit model, in which knowledge flows mostly in one direction and is led by professionals. Although some elements of participatory practice and democratic intent are present – particularly through voluntary engagement – the design and conceptualisation of projects remain firmly within expert domains. The study identifies a lack of systemic support for the implementation of inclusive approaches, despite a strong awareness among professionals of the value of public collaboration. Recent attempts to weaken heritage protection legislation further underscore the need to cultivate stronger public alliances. The findings suggest that while individual efforts towards participatory practice exist, a shift towards institutional and policy-level support is necessary to realise the full potential of public archaeology as a socially responsive and democratically grounded field.

Keywords: Public Archaeology; Heritology; Participation; Museology; Slovenia; Museums

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1 Introduction

This paper focuses on the analysis of public archaeology and the involvement of the local public as a partner and interlocutor in the research and interpretation process in Slovenian museums[2]. Different models of public involvement, as described in the paper, have proven successful in protecting heritage and restoring the social credibility of archaeology (Merriman 2004, 3–13; Okamura and Matsuda 2011, 4). In the museum field, they also serve to connect communities, which is one of the key tasks of a contemporary museum. The process begins with ensuring accessibility and enables individuals and communities to experience and understand heritage according to their specific cultural contexts, personal and social needs, and existing knowledge (Merriman 2004, 4; Perko 2014, 187). Access to information about archaeological materials, sites, research results, and heritage meanings constitutes a right of the contemporary public (McGimsey 1972, 5) and one of the important collective rights (Sandell 2011, 129–145). Moreover, there is a legitimate expectation that this information will be presented in an attractive and intellectually accessible manner (Carrada 2024, 22, 179–182). Scientific interpretation alone is insufficient to fully meet public needs (Gadamer 2009, 196). Heritage interpretation extends beyond science, involves social objectives, is interdisciplinary, and falls within the field of hermeneutics (Perko 2021a, 129; 2022, 139). As will be demonstrated, heritage interpretation is rooted in museological theory and requires a clear understanding of contemporary societal needs, public involvement, and interdisciplinary integration (Maroević 1993, 77; Hooper–Greenhill 1996, 35–53; Šola 2003, 28; Van Mensch 2015, 76).

In Chapters 2–3, we will review the definitions, origins, and objectives of public archaeology, while also considering them from the museological perspective of the public and its expectations. In Chapter 4, we will examine the approaches that so far have been used and recognized for making archaeology more accessible to the public, as well as for involving local

2 I would like to express my sincere gratitude to professors Asst Prof Dr Jelka Pirkovič and Asst Prof Ddr Verena Perko for their critical reading of the paper and their constructive feedback. Their exceptional expertise and insightful advice have significantly contributed to the research. Any remaining errors are, of course, my sole responsibility.

communities in activities related to archaeology, which are the fundamental tasks of contemporary museums.

In Chapter 5, we will present the results of preliminary research conducted in 2024 and 2025, which includes the identification and characterization of the predominant models of public archaeology currently used in Slovenia.

2 Public Archaeology, New Museology, and Participation

Archaeology has become increasingly concerned with its position in public discourse and its relationship to various segments of the public (Nicholaou et al. 2023, 1–5). Public archaeology has grown steadily since its inception in the 1970s (Matsuda 2004, 66). Today, it is a recognized field or at least a subject of study at many universities, with extensive literature and a dedicated periodical, Public Archaeology (ibid.).

Public archaeology overlaps significantly with museum activities (Merriman 2004, 85; Perko 2014, 250; Curk 2022, 319). Museums, as media and institutions that engage with the public to preserve collective memory, possess the knowledge and resources to connect archaeology and the public (Šola 2003, 174–179). Traditional museums operated as closed institutions serving academic interests more than those of the wider public (Maroević 1993, 76–80; Perko 2014, 47–53). The emergence of the ecomuseum (Varine 1996, 21–26) and the new museology (Krstović 2020, 128) coincided with the development of public archaeology (Perko 2014, 67–68) and should be understood in the context of democratization and the postmodern shift in society, which fostered a greater degree of participatory engagement with heritage.

The concept of participation originally emerged in other societal spheres – particularly in the fields of social inclusion, environmental protection, and the monitoring of scientific development (Schiele 2020, 47–48). During the 1970s, and even more so in the 1980s, it gradually entered the field of heritage as well (Pierroux et al. 2020, 27). Participation refers to the decision-making process on issues that concern the community, wherein greater influence is granted to those social groups most directly affected by the issue at hand. It can be observed in various societal processes wherever there is a need to bypass classical structures of authority, and is not limited to the field of heritage alone.

To this day, Arnstein's scale of participation (Arnstein 1969, 217) remains a widely referenced framework for understanding the levels and dynamics of participatory processes. Originally developed in the context of social policy, her typology was later adopted in science communication and, by the 1980s, also gained relevance in heritage studies (Simon 2011, 91). In Western societies, particularly after 1980, a noticeable increase in public demands for participation emerged (Pierroux et al. 2020, 34–35). These demands are closely linked to democratic movements and new currents of empowerment, rooted in the profound societal transformations that marked the second half of the 20th century.

It is important to recognize that the 19th and the first half of the 20th century were periods during which science enjoyed uncontested authority (Schiele 2020, 47). At the time, its influence on people's everyday lives was not yet as pronounced. However, the 1960s – and even more the 1970s – witnessed a conceptual shift: this was the moment when the transformative and destructive power of science and new technologies (from nuclear energy onwards) began to surface. The societal reckoning with the consequences of both World Wars undoubtedly played a role in this shift. These transformations coincided with the transition from modernity to postmodernity, as defined by the philosopher and sociologist Zygmunt Bauman (2016, 33–38, 135–138), and affected all aspects of human activity, archaeology, and heritage.

Schiele (2020, 49–51) emphasizes the paradigmatic difference between the so-called deficit model, which assumes one-way communication (i.e., simply informing the public), and models in which communication becomes two-way, meaning that authorities listen to and integrate public feedback.

A key work that addresses participation in museums is *The Participatory Museum* by Nina Simon (2011), who defines participation as a mutual exchange of knowledge and experience. The museum invites the audience and places trust in their contribution. This implies a relinquishing of control and the democratization of the interpretation of shared heritage. A participatory museum is an audience-centered institution, equally important, beneficial, and accessible as any other public service. It is a place where visitors can shape their meanings; where the voices of users inform and inspire the development of projects intended for the public.

This stands in contrast with more traditional, educational approaches, in which the museum defines the knowledge it wishes to communicate and transmits it to the visitor, who receives it passively, without questions or commentary.

Contemporary museological paradigms emphasize user-centered approaches (Miklošević 2015, 58–59). Museums are increasingly embracing accessibility, active participation, and the inclusion of socially marginalized groups (Hooper–Greenhill 1996, 54–68, 33–107; Van Mensch 2015, 90–95). This shift is partly due to the influence of community museums and ecomuseums, as well as the growing expectation that public institutions serve all citizens and remain accountable to taxpayers (Perko 2014, 67–81). Museums now play a more explicit social role (Sandell 2002, 18–21). They are expected to develop projects that involve local audiences, and to remain relevant and accessible not only to regular visitors, but also to those who typically do not engage with museums (Šola 2003, 52–55).

As we will discuss below, public archaeology has evolved alongside new museological approaches and the rise of participatory practices, gaining increasing relevance and recognition within contemporary society (Curk 2022, 223). Henson (2017, 45) defines four core tasks of archaeology: learning about the past, learning from the past, managing the heritage of the past, and enabling public engagement with the past. Archaeological education goes beyond dates and events. It offers knowledge and skills from the past, insights into the connection between the past and the present, and an appreciation of the complexity and societal value of heritage. This process entails both intellectual and emotional engagement, which makes archaeology appealing to diverse audiences or public. The public is demonstrating growing awareness of the value of archaeology and is willing to engage actively in safeguarding these benefits (Little 2002, 7).

Our relationship to the past depends on how we perceive the links between the past and the present (Gadamer 2009, 183–211). Henson (2005, 44) argues that studying human behavior fosters empathy and a sense of shared humanity. Archaeological knowledge can help us understand the diversity of cultural expressions and practices throughout history. The hermeneutic circle helps us understand contemporary society and our place within it (Gadamer 2009, 183–211). These insights are highly relevant

to contemporary issues such as identity, environment, conflict, economy, and politics, as noted by Henson (2017, 45–46).

To summarize the potential of archaeology for public engagement, it is important to recognize that the definition of public archaeology is still a matter of debate (Moshenska 2017, 5–11). When McGimsey coined the term in the early 1970s, it primarily referred to the recording and preservation of archaeological remains threatened by development, supported by and serving the public. This definition is still dominant in the United States, where public archaeology is closely tied to cultural resource management (CRM) (Smith 2004, 1–15; Curk 2022, 119). Elsewhere, however, the term has taken on a broader meaning (Okamura and Matsuda 2011, 3–4).

As summarized by Moshenska (2017, 4–6), public archaeology encompasses a variety of aims. None of its definitions is entirely precise, as the concept of heritage is socially and historically conditioned, and changes over time and across space. Around the world, multiple, overlapping, and at times divergent interpretations have emerged. The most significant differences are observed on both sides of the Atlantic (Curk 2022, 122–124). As Matsuda (2004, 68) observes, public archaeology is best understood as a broader socio-cultural study of the relationship between archaeology and the public.

3 Conceptualizing the Public in Public Archaeology

Carman (2002, 96–114) emphasized the need to consider who constitutes the public[3] in public archaeology. This provoked further studies by Merriman (2004), Matsuda (2004), and Nikolau et al. (2023).

Any attempt to define 'the public' must begin with Habermas, who introduced the concept of the public sphere in his 1962 work *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. The public sphere emerged in the 17th and 18th centuries in countries with developed bourgeois classes, notably Britain, France, and Germany (Habermas 1989, 26–39). Habermas defined

3 As Carman (2002, 96), Merriman (2004, 1–2) and Matsuda (2004, 68) have noted, the meaning of 'public' varies across cultures. In English, the word carries dual connotations: 'officialdom' and 'the people'. This ambiguity has complicated translations of the term in non-Anglophone contexts, influencing how public archaeology is conceptualized.

it as a space in which private individuals engaged in rational-critical debate about public affairs and held authorities to account.

These societies gradually developed modern state institutions, granting them abstract and impersonal authority. The bourgeois expanded its influence into finance and commerce, and the educated elite began to articulate their views publicly. In doing so, they redefined the concept of 'the public' as distinct from authority. The public sphere thus emerged as a conceptual space between the private and the public (Habermas 1989, 32).

Habermas saw the public sphere as ideally open and inclusive. While historically limited to privileged men (Calhoun 1992, 3), he noted that its permeability prevented it from becoming a closed clique (Habermas 1989, 51). Thus, openness and inclusivity are fundamental to the public sphere.

From this perspective, public archaeology should aim to create a democratic public sphere within archaeology and to encourage critical reflection. It should function as an open forum (Harrison 2013, 230–231), allowing for participation and rational-critical debate with clearly defined goals for community integration. The task, which is much more clearly defined in contemporary museums, demonstrates the need to integrate public archaeology with museology.

The information age has significantly changed the habits and needs of the public, further complicating the definition of the public spheres and the recognition of authority within it (Yuan 2020, 1–2). Contemporary public spheres are composed of multiple publics in dynamic relationships, rather than a singular unified entity. This notion of multiple publics, rooted in the Chicago School of Sociology (ibid.), contrasts with concepts such as the crowd or the mass. Scholars such as McManamon (1991, 123), Yuan (2020, 5), and Nikolaou et al. (2023, 1–5) highlight the diversity and multivocality of publics. The same view was also recognized by the University of Ljubljana's Department of Archaeology (Perko and Pirkovič 2025, 30).

4 Models of Public Engagement in Public Archaeology

In this section, we will explore possible models for addressing contemporary public(s) and examine those that are already in use locally. A broad and inclusive definition of public archaeology allows for multiple approaches. Merriman (2004, 5–8) and Holtorf (2007, 105–129) identify distinct models

of engagement. Merriman proposes the '*deficit model*', where archaeologists seek public support for their work, and the '*multiple-perspective model*', which fosters self-fulfillment, reflection, and creativity among the public.

Holtorf describes three models: the '*educational model*', which informs the public; the '*public relations model*', aimed at gaining support and improving archaeology's public image; and the '*democratic model*', which encourages active public interest and participation (Holtorf 2007, 105–129). Merriman's multiple-perspective model aligns with Holtorf's democratic model, while the deficit model in Holtorf's framework is divided into an educational and a public relations model (ibid.).

Okamura and Matsuda (2011, 5–7) further distinguish the progressive (multiple-perspective or democratic) approach into two types based on theoretical foundations. The '*critical approach*' employs critical epistemology to question whose interests are served by specific interpretations of the past. This approach, seen in critical and postcolonial archaeology, exposes power structures underpinning dominant narratives.

The '*multivocal approach*' adopts hermeneutic epistemology to explore how diverse groups interpret material culture. It seeks to understand the multiple meanings the past holds for different communities. While the critical approach emphasizes specific reinterpretations to challenge dominant groups, the multivocal approach prioritizes inclusive understanding. However, in practice, they are most often used together. All four models aim to bring archaeology closer to the public, albeit through different methods and with varying outcomes. Together, they reflect the broader societal role of archaeology.

Preliminary observations suggest that public archaeology initiatives in Slovenian museums predominantly follow the educational and promotional models, with the advancement of archaeological science and its social reputation as the main objectives. These models are closely tied to practice rather than theory, and may be linked to the limited presence of post-processual archaeology in Slovenia (cf. Smith 2004, 41–57; Perko and Pirkovič 2025).

Follow-up research will examine a broader sample of public archaeology projects in Slovenia to determine which models are most prevalent, why this is the case, and what implications could arise. The second part of the research will include observations on the implementation of a project based on the multivocal model and an analysis of the changes it initiates within the community.

5 Public Archaeology in Slovenia

5.1 Research Background

The aim of the research was to determine the extent to which public archaeology is present and established in Slovenia, and to identify its specificities. The implementation of a specific practice in the field of public archaeology in Slovenia has not been the subject of detailed or systematic research in recent times. However, several overview contributions on the topic do exist (Perko 2008; Pirkovič 2012, 2016, 2022; Plestenjak 2013; Pita da Costa 2021; Curk 2022; Perko and Pirkovič 2025). Since 2011, Public Archaeology has been offered as a course at the Department of Archaeology of the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana, where students are introduced to theoretical concepts and examples of good practice in public archaeology. Notably, the programme is designed at the intersection of museology and conservation practices related to the preservation of heritage in its original environment, with the aim of directing archaeology – through collaboration with museums – towards humanistic goals (Perko and Pirkovič 2025, 22–23). Since no existing dataset was available, we began collecting new data on public archaeology projects in Slovenia. The research, which started in 2024, is still ongoing. This paper presents preliminary findings based on the interviews conducted to date.

5.2 Hypothesis

If we were to define public archaeology in Slovenia through the prism of the four models discussed in the previous chapter, it appears that the so-called *deficit model*, as defined by Merriman, would be the most prevalent. The initial hypothesis is that public archaeology in Slovenia primarily serves the purpose of informing and educating the public from the perspective of archaeological science and practice, and that significant efforts have been directed toward gaining public support for archaeological research. The second hypothesis assumes that practices aligned with the *multiple-perspective* or *multivocal model* are largely absent from Slovenian public archaeology. This assumption is based on the persistence of the Authorised Heritage Discourse (AHD) (cf. Smith 2006, 29) within Slovenian heritage institutions on the one hand, and on the absence of a holistic understanding of heritage studies, on the other (Perko and Pirkovič 2025, 31). Another key factor is the

predominance of the processual paradigm in Slovenian archaeology, which is influenced by natural science research and positivist methodology, often at the expense of humanistic aspects of archaeology.

5.3 Methodology

Since no prior study of this kind had been conducted in Slovenia, data had to be collected anew and in accordance with the research objectives. A qualitative method was used, specifically a semi-structured interview. The interview included seven questions, with the last two being more complex in structure. The questions were designed to encourage discussion and extensive responses, while also ensuring that all key topics would be addressed and that the answers could be compared to some extent. The interviews lasted from 40 to 90 minutes, depending on the experience and engagement of the interviewees. The sample included curators -archaeologists whose professional duties were assumed to involve aspects of public archaeology.

It is important to note that this paper presents preliminary results, and that the interviews have not yet been conducted to the planned extent. As of 7 July 2025, six interviews had been conducted with museum-based archaeologists working in regional and municipal museums[4]. In the future, the research will be expanded to include public archaeology initiatives within national museums, the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage of Slovenia, and private institutions active in archaeological research.

The interviews were conducted in person, via the Zoom platform, or by telephone, depending on the preferences and availability of the interviewees. All participants were informed verbally and in writing about the aims and implementation of the study, and they provided written informed consent. The interview questions were shared in advance to allow time for reflection. Interviews were recorded when permission was granted; otherwise, answers were recorded manually. The recorded interviews were transcribed. The transcripts were processed qualitatively using conceptual coding: abstract features were extracted from specific statements and grouped into thematic categories through a coding system (Mesec 2023, 114–140).

4 These are museus that the state has authorized to perform national public museum service.

The coding process resulted in several recurring conceptual categories, including education and knowledge transfer, public image and legitimacy, community involvement, collaboration with schools, heritage as a common good, and digital engagement. The most frequently appearing themes were related to educational outreach (present in all interviews) and institutional communication (e.g. exhibitions, lectures, publications). Categories linked to reciprocal engagement or public co-creation were less prominent and mostly limited to two responses (R5 and R6). These categories were interpreted in relation to the theoretical models of public archaeology presented earlier, primarily the deficit and multivocal models.

5.4 Questionnaire and Results

The first set of interview questions (*What does the term public archaeology mean to you? Does your institution implement projects that could be considered public archaeology? Can you list some examples? Which of your public archaeology projects do you consider the most successful? Please describe the project.*) aimed to define what, according to Slovenian experts, constitutes the field of public archaeology. Respondents were explicitly asked to explain what public archaeology means to them. As discussed in previous chapters, the understanding of this branch of archaeology varies significantly from country to country. We also assume that the work of professionals in public archaeology is shaped by their own understanding of what public archaeology is and what it entails – an understanding that is closely tied to their knowledge of heritage theory.

The following question (*Does your institution implement projects that could be considered public archaeology? Can you list some examples?*) addressed whether they implement such projects and invited them to provide specific descriptions. Based on the subsequent set of questions (*Which of your public archaeology projects do you consider the most successful? Please describe the project. How would you define the main objective (goal) of the project described in Question 3? What is the main message of the project for participants/users/visitors?*), which focused on the aims and content of public archaeology projects, we anticipated that we would be able to identify the main models in use.

In the case of the deficit model, we expected to detect concepts such as *inform, present, explain, educate,* or *instruct,* which indicate a one-way flow

of knowledge from the expert to the public. The core premise of the deficit model is that heritage knowledge is transferred one-way – from experts to the public – without reciprocal or two-way exchange. (Curk 2022, 160–162) In contrast, for the multivocal approach, we expected concepts such as *with the public*, *discover*, *discuss*, *reflect*, and *exchange*.

The last two questions (*On a scale from 1 to 5, please evaluate the extent to which your project is oriented toward the following specific objectives, Who carried out the following phases of the project implementation?*) consisted of several sub-questions and directly invited the interviewees to self-assess the content they develop within public archaeology projects. These sub-questions listed specific objectives, some of which correspond to the deficit model (e.g. informing the public, gaining public support) and others to the multivocal model (e.g. raising awareness of multiple interpretations, understanding the roles and meanings attributed to heritage). Respondents were also asked to evaluate the extent to which the public was included in the various phases of content development.

These final questions were adapted to match the content of the project we sought to evaluate. The following sections present the interview questions, the responses received, and a preliminary analysis of the answers. The responses have been anonymized, processed, and coded, with conceptual categories assigned to them.

5.4.1 Coding Categories and Frequency

The qualitative coding process was based on a conceptual approach, where recurring abstract ideas were identified across interviews and grouped into broader thematic categories (Mesec 2023, 114–140). The process was guided by theoretical models in public archaeology (Merriman 2004; Holtorf 2007; Okamura and Matsuda 2011), and focused on identifying dominant narratives, objectives, and perceptions reflected in the interviewees' responses.

Several key categories emerged during the coding process. The most frequently coded themes included education and knowledge transfer, institutional communication, and improvement of public image, all of which correspond to the deficit model of public archaeology. Less frequently, interviewees referred to concepts aligned with multivocality, such as pub-

lic co-creation, community involvement, and reflection on social issues. Table below presents an overview of the main coding categories and the number of interviews in which they appeared.

Table 1: Coding categories and frequency

Code/Theme	Description	Present in Responses	Model
Education and knowledge transfer	Public lectures, workshops, school collaboration, content adaptation	R1–R6	Deficit
Institutional communication	Exhibitions, workshops, publications, guided tours	R1–R6	Deficit / Mixed
Public image and legitimacy	Gaining public support, justifying archaeological work	R2–R6	Deficit
Community involvement	Collaboration with artisans, volunteers, vulnerable groups	R5–R6	Multiple-perspective
Public co-creation	Joint development of materials, content input from non-professionals	R5	Multiple-perspective
Reflection on social issues	Heritage and consumerism, environmental awareness	R5	Multiple-perspective
Digital engagement	Use of ICT, creation of interpretive products	R2	Mixed

While all respondents referenced the educational and communicative functions of public archaeology, only two (R5 and R6) explicitly described activities that suggest participatory practices or multivocal engagement. This indicates that while the discourse of participation is present, its practical implementation remains limited.

Question 1: What does the term public archaeology mean to you?

R1	Accompanying activities and events; children and adult education programmes.
R2	Exhibitions, media publications, lectures, guided tours.
R3	Presenting archaeology to non-archaeologists; simplifying and transforming information to make it more appealing to the public.
R4	All activities carried out by museum professionals; everything broadly related to archaeology; museum users who come to access information.
R5	Bringing archaeology closer to the public in a way that changes perceptions; archaeology as a common good; everything we should be doing in museums.
R6	Transferring knowledge about the archaeological profession; making content understandable; community involvement; knowledge sharing; and heritage protection.

Result: Respondents without exception identify the work of museum professionals (specifically curator-archaeologists) as largely overlapping with the field of public archaeology. A strong emphasis is placed on the educational role (lectures, presentations, knowledge transfer, provision of information). Slightly less, but still significantly present, is the goal of gaining public support (changing perceptions, stimulating interest). In R5 and R6, archaeological heritage is expressed as a common good, a shared resource, and a collective right. R6 even lists concepts (community involvment, knowledge sharing) that may belong to the *multiple-perspective model*.

Question 2: Does your institution implement projects that could be considered public archaeology? Can you list some examples?

R1	Yes. Lectures, workshops, reconstructions, demonstrations; emphasis on adult education programmes.
R2	Yes. Exhibitions, publications, events, European Archaeology Days, workshops, lectures, and development of a video game
R3	Yes. Public tours, educational workshops, European Archaeology Days, classroom lessons, and exhibitions.
R4	Yes. Exhibitions, guided tours, public tours, lectures, workshops.
R5	Yes. Exhibitions, volunteer involvement in museum work, participation in exhibition content and materials, festivals, and events.
R6	Yes. Workshops, lectures, events, living history days, presentations, publications, and collaboration with vulnerable groups.

Result: All respondents associate public archaeology with already well-established (conventional) forms of museum communication with the public: exhibitions, publications, workshops, and lectures. These are typically carried out on a regular basis and are cited in institutional planning and reporting. In R5, public archaeology also includes volunteer engagement and their contribution to project content through collaboration on materials.

Question 3: Which of your public archaeology projects do you consider the most successful? Please describe the project.

R1	Adult education programme; workshop including a hands-on component; active role of participants; creative participation; a well-known (public) figure among invited facilitators.
R2	Educational; creation of an interpretive product; integration of digital technology; secondary school students; co-participation; collaboration with the school.
R3	Educational; classroom lesson; tactile objects; adaptation for different age groups; collaboration with the school.

R4	Exhibition; interdisciplinary; accompanying activities and events; workshops; educational; collaboration with the school.
R5	Festival; dramatic interpretation; culinary elements; workshops; collaboration with artisans and heritage interpreters; a wide range of activities; large attendance; diverse audiences, including families
R6	Educational; workshops; lectures; practical component; active participation; interaction with materials and tools.

Result: R2, R3, R4, and R6 identify educational workshops as their most successful projects. These were conducted in collaboration with schools and included practical elements (tactile components, interaction with materials and tools). R2 differs slightly due to its focus on secondary school students and the use of information and communication technology in the creation of an interpretive product. The project described in R5 is the only one aimed at the general public and reports a wide reach among participants. It includes collaboration with artisans and heritage interpreters, as well as engagement with diverse audiences. R1 is the only project primarily oriented toward adult education, with an emphasis on creative participation.

Question 4: How would you define the main objective (goal) of the project described in Question 3?

R1	Encouraging creativity, participation, learning something new, preserving, and reviving traditional knowledge.
R2	Discovering archaeological periods, using heritage in contemporary society, and everyday life.
R3	Popularizing archaeology, learning about heritage as a value, appropriate handling of archaeological finds.
R4	Presenting archaeology and different time periods; introducing the concept of time orientation and the passage of time.
R5	Fostering identification with heritage; promoting respect for heritage; raising awareness that heritage belongs to everyone.
R6	Bringing archaeology closer to young people; deepening knowledge; gaining hands-on experience.

Result: R2, R3, R4, and R6 define their objectives as raising awareness, popularization, accessibility, and presentation of archaeology or heritage to the public. These goals align with the *deficit model* as outlined by Merriman, focusing on public education. R1 emphasizes creative engagement, and R5 suggests greater public inclusion in heritage-related topics. Both of these may indicate a step toward multivocal or multiple-perspective models of public engagement.

Question 5: What is the main message of the project for participants/users/visitors?

R1	It is possible to enjoy a distant culture and learn something new in the process.
R2	Archaeology is a broad field. Much remains unexplored.
R3	Archaeology is not irrelevant. We did not appear here overnight. The past helps shape who we are.
R4	People once lived here before us. To inform visitors about how they lived.
R5	We should reflect on consumerism in today's society. Discarded material goods burden the environment. What kind of material legacy will we leave to future generations?
R6	Archaeology is important because it helps us understand our society and ourselves. Why do we need knowledge of the past, and what happens if that knowledge is lost?

Result: The initial observation is that most of the proposed messages are not structured by interpretive theory, which states that messages or themes are formulated as complete sentences containing a verb (Ham 2013, 121–138). Nevertheless, the core intent of each message can be reasonably inferred. R2, R3, R4, and R6 share a similar emphasis on the importance of archaeological knowledge for understanding contemporary society. These messages are relatively general. R1 also fits this category to some extent, highlighting the potential for learning from heritage while also expressing enjoyment of it. R5 stands out by addressing the concrete issue of modern consumerism and seeks to reflect on it through the lens of heritage.

Question 6: On a scale from 1 to 5, please evaluate the extent to which your project is oriented toward the following specific objectives (a to h):

a) Gaining public support for conducting archaeological research

b) Informing the public about the results of archaeological research

c) Informing the public about the work of archaeologists

d) Improving the public image of archaeology / increasing public support

e) Encouraging individuals/ the public to acquire knowledge and develop an interest in archaeology

f) Promoting and exploring diversity in the understanding of the past, its meanings, and its relevance for the present

g) Identifying and raising awareness of different interpretations of archaeological material sources

h) Documenting and understanding the roles and meanings that the public attributes to material culture and archaeological heritage

	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h
R1	1	1	3	5	3	3	3	2
R2	4	4	3	5	5	2	4	2
R3	1	3	4	5	5	1	1	1
R4	4	5	5	5	4	5	5	3
R5	5	5	4	5	3	5	3	3
R6	3	5	5	4	4	5	4	3
total	18	23	24	29	24	21	20	14

Results: Based on respondents' assessments of the extent to which the projects are oriented towards specific stated objectives, we attempted to link the projects to concrete approaches in public archaeology. Objectives a) – c) are associated with educational activities, while objective d) relates to public relations. According to Merriman (2004, 5), all objectives from a) to d) fall under the deficit model. Objectives e) to h) are classified by Merriman as goals of the multiple-perspective model (ibid.). Among all the objectives, the highest scored was improving the public image of archaeology or gaining public goodwill, which Merriman categorizes within the deficit model; Holtorf (2007, 107, 114–119) even defines this as a distinct public relations model. From this, it can be understood that archaeology in Slovenia is largely concerned with its public image and the justification of its activities. The objective that received the lowest score was the one that involved documenting and understanding the roles and meanings that the public itself assigns to heritage.

Question 7: Who carried out the following phases of the project implementation?

a) Selection of the topic
b) Concept design
c) Information gathering/research
d) Implementation
e) Interpretation
f) Evaluation

	a	b	c	d	e	f
R1	curator	curator, invited facilitators	curator, public	curator, public, invited facilitators	curator, public, invited facilitators	/
R2	curator	curator, invited facilitators	curator	curator, public, invited facilitators	curator, public, invited facilitators	the project is still in the preparation phase
R3	curator	curator	curator	curator	curator	/
R4	curator school teachers	curator	curator	curator, school teachers	public	/
R5	curator/ the museum's expert team	curator/ the museum's expert team	curator	curator, public, invited facilitators	curator, public, invited facilitators	school teachers, public
R6	curator	curator, school teachers	curator	curator, public	curator	school teachers

Results: For the seventh question, we deconstructed the implementation of the project into individual phases in order to more precisely define the actual role and scope of public engagement in the project's implementation. The responses indicate that public archaeology projects are theoretically and conceptually shaped predominantly within professional circles; the same applies to the collecting of heritage information and the study of content. Greater involvement of the public is observed during the implementation phases of the projects. A noticeable weakness is the limited practice of project evaluations, which also indirectly suggests a deficit model. Evaluations were reported in only two cases, specifically within projects conducted in collaboration with schools, where the evaluation questionnaires were completed by teachers rather than the target users of the project (in this case, students).

6 Discussion

The aim of the ongoing research, whose preliminary findings are presented here, is to offer a critically informed account of public archaeology in Slovenian museums and to assess the degree and scope of public involvment through the lens of heritage and museological theory.

Preliminary results are limited to regional and municipal museums that hold archaeological collections and employ curators specialised in archaeology. Interviews were conducted with six archaeologist-curators from six

different museums. Of the currently 66 museums listed in the register[5], the six museums represented in the interviews account for a small, 9 % share. It may be more accurate to consider the percentage based on all museums that house archaeological collections, have archaeology curators, and consequently also carry out public archaeology programs. There are only 18 such museums in Slovenia, which means that the representation of institutions through the interviews is 33 %. The representation in terms of the total number of curators-archaeologists is around 15 %, considering the fact that there are approximately 40 archaeology curators in Slovenia in total. The exact number depends on the method of counting, as some of them also perform other tasks such as documentation or educational work, according to their official job classifications.

The results indicate that archaeologist-curators are highly aware of the value of public archaeology as a potential intermediary between experts and the public (Q1 / R3–R6). Some recognise heritage as a right belonging to all (Q4 / R5) and acknowledge the need for its democratization (Q1 / R6). Some respondents already report using participatory approaches (Q4 / R1).

However, the planning and theoretical development of public archaeology projects remain largely confined to professional domains, revealing the persistent influence of the Authorised Heritage Discourse (Smith 2006, 29–34). This is evident in responses to Q7, where the public is generally excluded from conceptualisation and research. Collaboration with schoolteachers – who themselves represent institutional authority – was often noted, but this does not replace the involvement of the wider public.

Based on respondents' descriptions of goals (Q4) and project messages (Q5), most projects fall within the deficit model. However, when participatory objectives were explicitly offered among the answer choices (Q6), respondents demonstrated more openness to multivocal approaches. This contrast suggests that experts are sympathetic to participatory approaches but lack the institutional frameworks to fully implement them.

5 Razvid muzejev: https://remk.ekultura.gov.si/razvid/muzeji.

The most democratised forms of engagement – those involving reciprocal knowledge exchange –remain rare. Despite this, the professionalism and dedication of museum experts are evident. It is likely that efforts towards democratization are unfolding on an individual, perhaps even intuitive, level. Still, systemic support is lacking.

As demonstrated in Chapter 2, an appropriate theoretical framework for establishing collaboration with the public can be meaningfully sought within museological theory and heritology, both of which inherently involve the study of the relationship between the public and heritage, as well as close cooperation with the public and the implementation of participatory practices (Sandell 2002; Simon 2011; Van Mensch 2015; Perko 2008). However, comprehensive and socially recognised approaches to achieving these goals undoubtedly go beyond individual commitment. The implementation of participatory and more democratic approaches within the profession requires systemic support. This support should be ensured at the national level, both in terms of strategic policy directions and through theoretical and professional backing for heritage institutions, so that they are empowered to implement participatory approaches.

The community of Slovenian heritage and archaeology experts should have learned – especially in light of the unresolved attempts to erode cultural heritage legislation in 2024 and 2025 – how vital public support truly is. This period was marked by attempts to undermine institutional frameworks for heritage protection, particularly in the field of archaeology. Since 2008, the Republic of Slovenia has had excellent systemic solutions for the protection of archaeological heritage as a spatial potential, ensured by the Cultural Heritage Protection Act (ZVKD-1). Archaeology is protected and taken into account in spatial planning acts, while archaeological sites are safeguarded as monuments. This protection regime has been consistently challenged by interest groups advocating for more cost-effective and expedited procedures during spatial interventions. In 2024, however, for the first time, the Ministry of Culture – tasked with establishing systemic frameworks for heritage protection – proposed amendments that would have significantly reduced archaeological safeguards in spatial planning, effectively prioritising economic interests over heritage preservation.

The professional community responded strongly and may have temporarily prevented the changes. Most professional responses, legislative comments, and open letters to the Ministry of Culture are collected on the website of the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana (Filozofska fakulteta Univerze v Ljubljani 2025) and some were also published elsewhere (Pirkovič et al. 2025). The episode also prompted some self-reflection within the field, highlighting the need to improve communication with the public and to better articulate the value of archaeological work. Despite the importance of public support at such times, the resistance to the proposed changes was driven primarily by experts, while wider public engagement remained limited. The response from the museum professional community remained equally limited, despite the fact that the proposed legislative changes also inadequately address the issue of museum organization, stripping them of autonomy and museum functions. The reasons for this acquiescence – and even apparent subservience (Černelič Krošelj and Babšek, 2025) to the authorities – may stem from the structural dependence on political decision-making and funding mechanisms.

Regardless of any possible outcome of the negotiations concerning legislative changes, we must recognise that attempts to weaken heritage protection – to simplify and accelerate procedures for the removal of heritage under the pressure of capital – are not yet over. In the future, the professional community may find itself less unified – and heritage might ultimately depend on public outcry for its defence.

This raises the necessary question: who constitutes the public, what kind of relationship do we maintain with it, and what have we actually done to engage and support it? Slovenian archaeologists have relied heavily on the aforementioned law (ZVKD-1), which ensures proper management of archaeological sites and safeguards archaeology as a heritage asset in the spatial domain. Recent experiences should serve as a reminder of how rapidly circumstances can change and reflect on who truly protects heritage: the law or the people – a question that should remain central to any reflection on the social mandate of archaeology. The events of 2024–2025 have demonstrated that professional silence is rarely neutral – it too shapes the conditions under which heritage is protected or neglected.

In order to preserve archaeology and our heritage as a humanistic value, the public can and must be an ally. However, it is up to archaeologists to answer a fundamental question: What do we contribute to society – and do we truly share the values, visions, and responsibilities with the public?

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Matjaž Koman[1]

Management of the House Museums in Slovenia: A Study

ABSTRACT: House museums represent a distinct type of cultural heritage monument, distinguished by their authenticity as memorial sites associated with notable individuals or co-creators. The fundamental design of such memorial sites originates from spaces defined by natural and humanistic characteristics. These spaces, globally stable yet constantly changing in details, hold significant potential for preserving the link between the past and the present. Experiencing the space where historical events occurred enhances the understanding of their true value and thus objectifying potential memory. This underscores the important social and political role of house museums, which indirectly influence the relationship with the local community, the preservation of collective memory and heritage in its original environment.

In Slovenia, the most common type of house museums are those associated with notable personalities and are categorised as representative historical houses. The first publicly accessible house museum in Slovenia, converted in 1939 in Vrba, was the birthplace of Slovenia's greatest poet – France Prešeren. Subsequent house museums followed the musealisation concept implemented in Prešeren's birthplace by Fran Saleški Finžgar. However, there is a lack of museological research and studies related to house museums in Slovenia, which affects their naming and evaluation, as the distinction between individual houses remains unclear. Various terms such as 'house museum', 'memorial house', 'birth house', 'literary museum', 'historical house', 'biographical museum', 'ethnographic house', 'homestead', and 'memorial room' are used interchangeably, and these museums are often labelled as museums, open-air museums or monuments.

This research focuses on the management of house museums in Slovenia. A questionnaire was devised to be completed by the managers of thirty house museums, the aim of which was to: compile a list of all publicly accessible house museums in Slovenia, collect basic management information and, most importantly, examine cooperation between managers, museums, house owners, the Ministry of Culture, municipalities, Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage, and the interested public.

Keywords: Historic House Museums; Cultural Heritage Management; Slovenian House Museums; Museum Interpretation; Cultural Identity Heritage Preservation

Izvirni znanstveni članek / *Original scientific article*

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1 Introduction

1.1 Overview of the Topic

House museums represent a unique category of cultural heritage monuments that encompass far more than merely architecturally significant buildings. Their primary characteristic is the profound connection to both tangible and intangible heritage (Risnicoff de Gorgas 2001). This means that not only is the focus on preserving the structure, but also on caring for objects, collections, authentic furniture, and the stories and memories associated with former residents or events that took place within the house (Maroević 2020, 238). The fundamental difference between a historic house and a house museum is that the latter is open to the public and goes beyond mere preservation, as it incorporates the interpretation of historical events, personalities, and the cultural environment in which the house is situated.

House museums are recognised as an important tool for interpreting the history of a specific place, as they shed light on the societal events and personal lives that unfolded within their walls. Their evocative power allows the past to come alive, offering visitors an insight into the social, cultural and political context of a particular period (Pinna 2001, 7). By preserving collective memory and heritage in its original setting, house museums acquire significant social and political value.

Figure 1: A black smoke kitchen in Prešeren's birth house in Vrba. Photo credit: Aleš Košir, 2024.



Effective management of house museums plays a key role in maintaining their authenticity and ensuring public accessibility to cultural heritage. The management process involves planning, restoration, exhibition setup, visitor guidance and selection of interpretative approaches. Contemporary models, as advocated by organisations such as UNESCO, emphasise a holistic approach that interweaves systematic management with bottom-up governance (UNESCO 2013).

This approach is based on a cyclical model, wherein the outcomes of one management cycle are measured and used to improve subsequent cycles (Pirkovič 2022, 44). Each house museum is unique – both in terms of its historical value and its surrounding environment – and thus requires a tailored museological concept that considers the type of connection with historical events, social groups or personalities, recognised significance, local values, educational goals and communication strategies.

Figure 2: Finžgar's birth house in Doslovče. Photo credit: Aleš Košir, 2024.



Given their complexity and deep connection with the local community, house museums are crucial for the preservation of collective cultural identity (Šola 2015). They serve as spaces where community members recognise their own history and identity, a function that is especially significant in the

era of globalisation, when local distinctiveness faces the challenge of homogenisation (Pinna 2001, 5). Consequently, the management of house museums is not merely a technical task; it demands a profound understanding of the history, culture and the needs of contemporary society.

1.2 Research Objectives

The decision to conduct a survey on the management of house museums in Slovenia was based on the recognition of the key role that effective management plays in preserving, presenting and ensuring access to cultural heritage. The first house museum in Slovenia, converted in 1939, is Prešeren's birthplace in Vrba, and subsequent institutions have largely followed this model, predominantly encompassing the birthplaces of literary figures, which are classified as representative historical houses (Koman 2024).

However, there is a noticeable lack of comprehensive museological research in Slovenia, which is reflected in the ambiguous nomenclature and evaluation of house museums. Terms such as 'memorial house', 'birth house', 'literary museum', 'house museum', 'historical house', 'biographical museum', 'ethnographic house', 'homestead' and 'memorial room' are frequently used interchangeably, leading to confusion and an unclear definition of these institutions.

The challenges in managing house museums in Slovenia are not limited to terminology; they also manifest in the areas of interpretation, presentation and conservation regimes. Often, the strict conservation measures imposed on these houses are not suitable for their specific characteristics, which adversely affects both the interpretation and the visitor experience. Furthermore, despite their significance to Slovenia's cultural heritage, these institutions are not sufficiently integrated into community life nor do they fully serve scientific, educational and tourism purposes. This is primarily due to financial and technical constraints and a lack of professional staff, as well as insufficient knowledge, understanding, passion and practical implementation (Domšić 2014, 211). Additionally, there is a notable absence of cooperation among related institutions and a lack of comprehensive museological approaches in the development of holistic interpretations.

1.3 Purpose of the Research

The research on house museums in Slovenia is based on the identification of specific challenges encountered by their managers, particularly due to the lack of a systematic approach to the research, management and interpretation of house museums. As a special type of heritage, these houses carry significant cultural and social importance, which is currently insufficiently explored in the present context. The social and cultural-political role of house museums has a significant impact on the local community and shapes the public's attitude toward preserving collective memory and heritage (Perko 2022, 138). The role of museums should be to serve local communities and remind them of who they are, what they are, and how they change (M. H. 2014).

Given that house museums in Slovenia have not been sufficiently researched or addressed, a new paradigm is needed that recognises and addresses their unique requirements. This research is based on a survey conducted among managers and curators of house museums across Slovenia, with the aim of identifying the key challenges and proposing possible improvements. A comprehensive approach to the study is expected to contribute to raising management standards, enhancing the understanding of the needs of cultural heritage, and strengthening its role within the Slovenian context.

1.4 Research Questions

This research focuses on several key areas that are essential to understanding and improving the management of house museums in Slovenia. The main research questions include:

Existing Management Practices: What are the most prevalent management practices among house museums in Slovenia?

Primary Challenges: What are the main challenges faced by the managers of house museums? Are these challenges related to legislation, lack of funding, inadequate professional staff, or difficulties in involving local communities and visitors?

Overarching Acts and Regulations: Is there an overarching legislative act governing the management of house museums in Slovenia, or is this area left to the individual creativity of each manager?

Role of Conservators: Do conservators include house museum managers in the development of the cultural heritage conservation regime for house museums?

Public Involvement: How is the public, including local communities and interested individuals, involved in the management of house museums?

Collaboration Between Decision-Makers and Managers: How does collaboration between decision-makers (e.g. local authorities and other responsible institutions) and the managers of house museums take place? Are there established channels of communication, and what are the main obstacles to this cooperation?

2 Methodology

2.1 Research Method and Instrumentation

In this study, I have employed a survey method to collect data on the management of house museums in Slovenia. The survey was designed to cover the key aspects of house museum management and consisted primarily of closed-ended questions, with some open-ended ones included for additional insights – a total of 31 questions. This structured approach allowed predominantly quantitative data to be gathered, while also capturing qualitative perspectives, providing a well-rounded understanding of management practices, challenges, public involvement, and collaboration with conservators and decision-makers. The length of the survey was optimised to ensure detailed insights while minimising the burden on respondents.

2.2 Research Hypotheses

In line with the aims of this study – to identify challenges and opportunities in managing house museums in Slovenia – several hypotheses were formulated to guide the research and interpretation of the findings. The research was guided by the hypothesis that house museums require distinct management models compared to traditional museums due to their spatial, interpretative, and institutional specificities.

H1. The management of house museums in Slovenia is significantly influenced by conservation restrictions, which limit the ability of managers to develop interpretative and educational activities.

H2. Heritage professionals and decision-makers in Slovenia do not fully understand the specificities of managing house museums, resulting in inadequate institutional support and insufficiently adapted conservation policies.

H3. The absence of systematic research and a formal policy framework negatively affects the development of effective management models for house museums.

H4. Continuous education and specialized training for professionals can significantly improve the quality and sustainability of house museum management.

2.3 Data Collection Method

The survey was administered via the online platform SurveyPlanet, which facilitated straightforward data collection and processing. SurveyPlanet supports a variety of question types and enables efficient response analysis; however, one limitation is that respondents cannot modify their answers after submission. To complement the survey data, additional information on house museums was gathered from museum websites (where available), direct conversations with managers conducted in person or by phone, and from the Register of Immovable Cultural Heritage of the Republic of Slovenia (*Register nepremične kulturne dediščine*)[2].

Moreover, this article draws upon insights and practical experiences gained during a 10-year tenure as the director of the Žirovnica Institute for Tourism and Culture, an institution that manages several house museums, including the birthplaces of France Prešeren, Matija Čop, and Fran Saleški Finžgar, as well as Anton Janša's Apiary. These experiences, coupled with the author's doctoral research on the management of house museums in Slovenia and abroad, provided valuable context and enriched the interpretation of the collected data.

Data collection was conducted over a defined period, from the beginning of June to the end of August 2024.

2 Https://eid.gov.si.

2.4 Sample and Data Collection

The study identified and contacted more than fifty house museums in Slovenia. However, at the time of writing, completed surveys had been received from thirty-eight house museums. These institutions were selected based on the following criteria:

- Houses that have been converted into museums (house museums) and are open to the public.
- House museums whose interpretation includes content related to living cultures or important individuals who were born in or lived in the house.
- House museums where museum items related to the house are exhibited and are intended solely for exhibition purposes.
- Gallery houses – galleries were excluded as they do not meet the criteria for this study[3].

Respondents were drawn from the pool of managers and curators in these house museums. Contact information was obtained directly or via details available on museum websites. The survey was distributed electronically, ensuring wide reach and efficient data collection.

2.5 Ethical Considerations

To protect all participants, this research adhered to strict ethical guidelines. Prior to participation, informed consent was obtained from each respondent, who was assured of the anonymity and confidentiality of their responses. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences.

2.6 Data Processing and Analysis

After collecting the survey responses, the data were compiled, verified, and prepared for analysis. Simple descriptive statistics were used to summarise key trends in the data – including frequencies and averages – and to explore relationships between different variables. Open-ended questions were thematically analysed by reading through the responses, group-

3 Gallery houses, which do not display residential culture or former inhabitants of the house, but instead use the space for gallery activities.

ing similar ideas, and identifying recurring themes. This straightforward analytical approach enabled a clear interpretation of the findings and supported the formulation of meaningful conclusions about the management of house museums in Slovenia.

3 Results

The results are presented both verbally and with illustrative tables and figures. Each display is used uniquely to avoid duplication of content. The main findings relating to statistical data, management practices, financial resources, programme types and stakeholder collaboration are summarised below.

3.1 Statistical Data

The survey covered thirty-eight house museums. Table 1 summarises key statistical characteristics such as staffing, annual attendance, ownership and conservation status. For example, ten museums employ two to three staff members, eight employ one person, eight have no employees, seven report mixed staffing arrangements, and five employ more than three staff members. Annual visitor numbers vary significantly: 19 museums report 500–2,000 visitors, while three museums report over 14,000 visitors. The majority (30) are owned by municipalities, with a smaller number held by private (4) or state (3) entities. In terms of conservation status, 27 are declared as monuments of local heritage, five as monuments of national heritage, four as registered heritage, and two have not been formally declared.

Table 1: Statistic Characteristics of House Museums (N=38). (This table includes columns for Ownership of House Museums.)

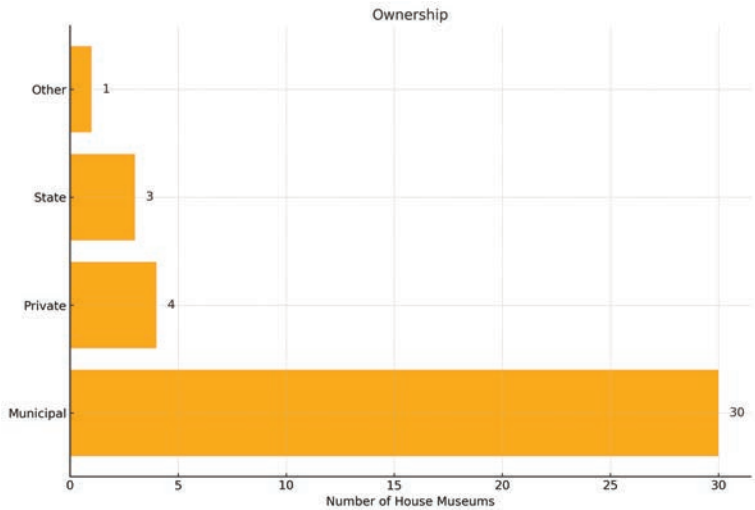
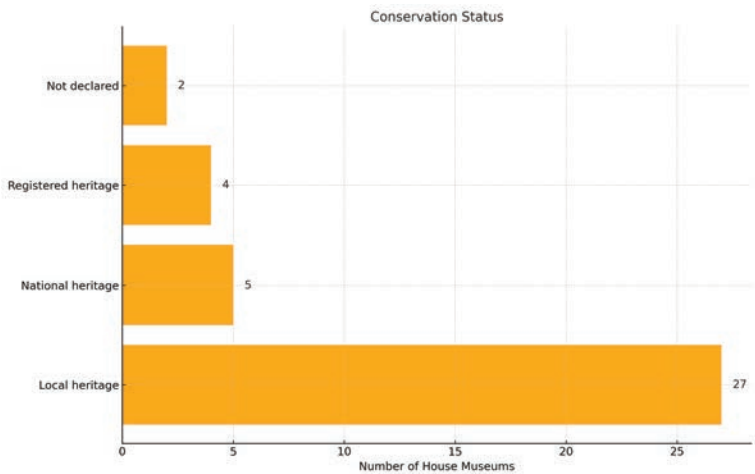


Table 2: Statistic Characteristics of House Museums (N=38). (This table includes columns for Conservation Status of House Museum.)



3.2 Management Practices

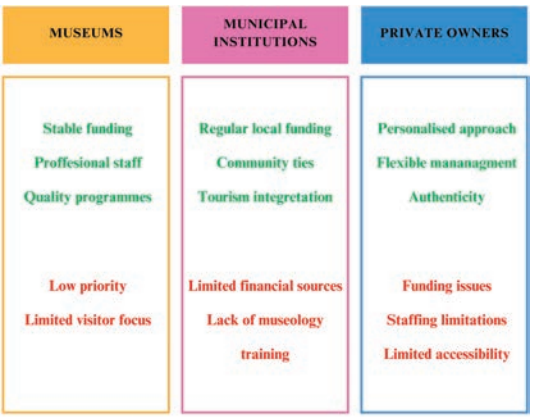
Management practices are quite diverse and can be grouped into three types based on the manager: museums, municipal institutes, and privately owned facilities. Figure 1 schematically represents these models along with their main advantages and challenges.

Museums: These house museums, managed under centralised systems with stable public funding and professional staff, benefit from quality programming and preservation efforts. However, they can be deprioritised compared to wider museum collections, which affects maintenance and visitor experience.

Municipal Institutes: These institutions integrate house museums into local cultural and tourism programmes using regular local funding and strong community ties. These are typically local public institutions established by municipalities, which manage cultural and heritage activities, but in most cases do not hold formal museum status under national legislation. This distinction often influences their operational frameworks, access to professional resources, and eligibility for specific funding schemes.

Privately Owned Facilities: Private management allows for a personalised and flexible approach that can provide highly authentic visitor experiences. However, financial sustainability and staffing limitations often require reliance on alternative sources of revenue, which may affect accessibility and professional collaboration. These facilities generally do not hold formal museum status.

Table 3: Schematic Representation of Management Models and Their Key Challenges. (This figure depicts a diagram outlining the three management models, highlighting the advantages and challenges of each one.)

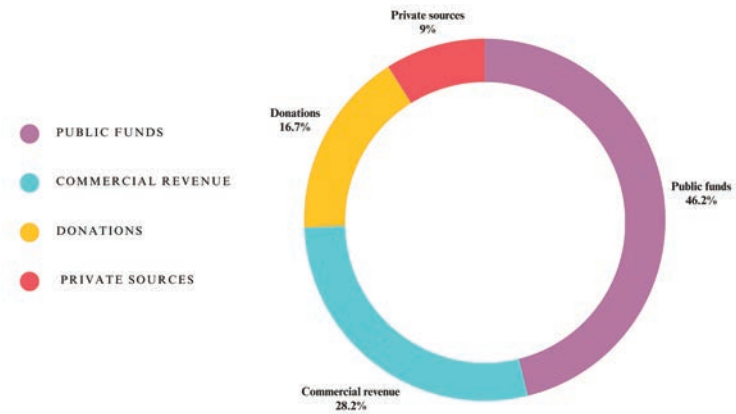


3.3 Financial Resources and Programme Types

Financial support for house museums is diverse. As shown in Table 2, respondents reported multiple sources of funding:

- public funds: 36 house museums
- commercial revenue: 22 house museums
- donations: 13 house museums
- private sources: 7 house museums

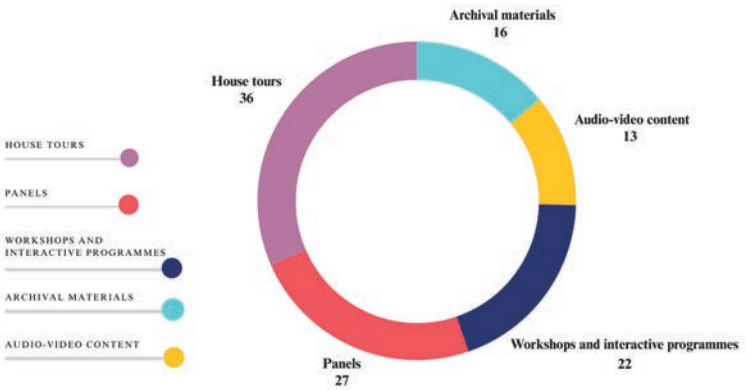
Table 4: Financial Sources Utilised by House Museums. (This table details the number of museums using each type of financial source.)



3.4 Programme Type and Interpretation

In terms of programme content, house tours (36 museums) and panels (27 museums) are the most common, followed by workshops and interactive programmess (22 museums), archival material (16 museums), and audio-video content (13 museums). These findings indicate a reliance on traditional methods while, also revealing a gradual adoption of digital and interactive approaches.

Table 5: Programme Types Utilised by House Museums. (This table details the number of museums using each type of programme. Multuple responses were allowed.)



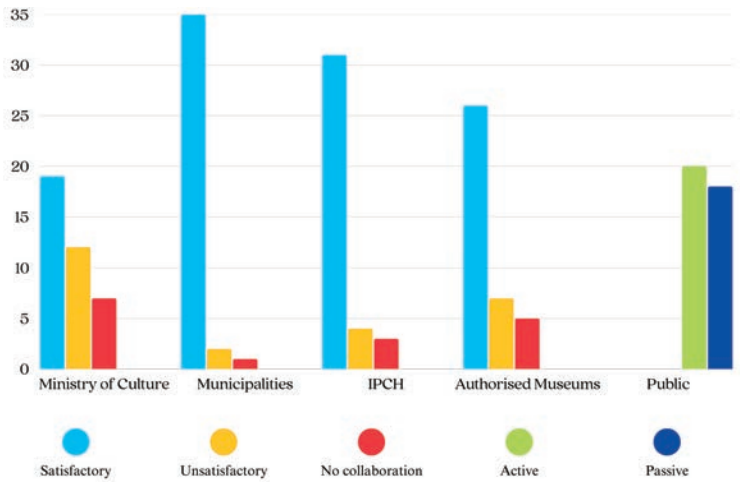
3.5 Stakeholder Collaboration

Collaboration with stakeholders is critical for effective management. Table 3 summarises the levels of satisfaction reported by respondents:

- Ministry of Culture: 19 respondents rated collaboration as satisfactory, 12 as unsatisfactory, and seven reported no collaboration.
- Municipalities: 35 respondents found collaboration satisfactory, two reported it as unsatisfactory, and one reported no collaboration.
- Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage: 31 respondents rated collaboration as satisfactory, four rated it as unsatisfactory, and three had no collaboration.
- Authorised Museums[4]: 26 respondents found collaboration satisfactory, seven had no collaboration, and five were dissatisfied.
- Public Involvement: 20 respondents actively involved the public in programme development, while 18 reported only passive engagement.

4 The term 'authorized museum' refers to regional or national museums officially recognized by the Ministry of Culture.

Table 6: Stakeholder Collaboration Ratings. (This table lists the satisfaction ratings for collaboration with various stakeholders, including the Ministry of Culture, Municipalities, the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage, Authorised Museums and the Public.)



3.6 Spatial Distribution of House Museums in Slovenia

An interactive map (Figure 3) was created to illustrate the geographic distribution of house museums across Slovenia[5]. On this map, house museums whose managers completed the survey are marked in blue, while those that have not yet completed or received the survey are marked in pink. By clicking on any museum icon, users can view detailed information about the institution, including:

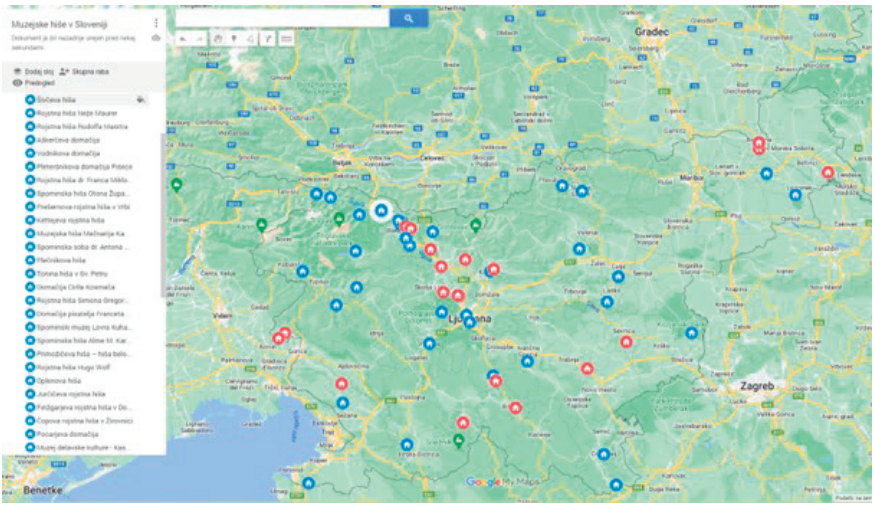
- Protection Status: (e.g., monument of national importance, local importance or registered heritage)
- Type: (e.g. home of a significant figure, rural house, bourgeois house, etc.)
- Heritage Registry Number
- Name of the Managing Institution

This spatial representation provides insight into regional patterns in museum management and cultural heritage distribution, complementing the

5 The map is available at the following link: https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/edit?mid=1Zlfs78Q29yJ8InoXBMK7ZImW9Z7My0s&usp=sharing.

previously presented statistical data. The map is continuously being updated with newly verified information. Its long-term purpose is to establish a comprehensive overview of the current state of house museums in Slovenia, which will serve as a foundation for the future categorisation and typology of these heritage sites – and, ultimately, for formulating a clearer definition of what constitutes a house museum within the Slovenian context.

Figure 3: Interactive Map of House Museums in Slovenia. (This figure shows the spatial distribution of house museums identified during the research.)



3.7 Evaluation

The integration of quantitative and qualitative data reveals that while house museums in Slovenia benefit from diverse funding sources and tailored management models, significant challenges persist. These include financial constraints, staffing issues, variable public engagement, and inconsistent stakeholder collaboration. The results highlight the need for tailored strategies to enhance management practices, secure sustainable funding, and foster stronger networks among cultural institutions.

4 Discussion

The results of this study reveal several critical issues in the management of house museums in Slovenia and provide valuable insights into the chal-

lenges and opportunities encountered by these institutions. This discussion interprets and compares key findings with existing research, analyses hypotheses, and describes limitations and recommendations emerging from the study.

4.1 Lack of Formalised Guidelines

A striking 79 % of respondents expressed a desire for a formal framework or recommendations for managing house museums. This overwhelming majority indicates that current practices are fragmented and vary considerably between institutions. The absence of standardised guidelines results in inconsistent management, making it difficult to coordinate conservation, interpretation, and programming across the sector. This finding supports the hypothesis that a formal framework would contribute to improved and harmonised management practices.

4.2 Need for Specialised Educational Programmes

An even higher proportion (94 %) of respondents indicated that additional educational programmes or seminars tailored to the management of house museums would be beneficial. This result reflects a strong perceived need for capacity building among heritage professionals. Many managers appear to feel ill-equipped to handle the complex challenges inherent in managing these unique cultural institutions. The demand for specialised training underscores the gap between current practices and international best practices in heritage management.

4.3 Developing Models for Managing House Museums in Slovenia

This research highlights the need to develop effective management models tailored to the unique characteristics of house museums in Slovenia. Unlike traditional museums, these institutions are deeply intertwined with personal histories and local cultural narratives, which necessitates models that address both conservation and interpretative challenges. The findings of this research revealed significant variations in management practices between institutions run by established museum organisations, municipal institutes and private owners. This divergence underscores the urgency for unified guidelines and tailored management models that incorporate:

- Integration of Best Practices: adapting international standards to the specific requirements of house museums to balance rigorous conservation with dynamic, visitor-focused interpretation.
- Standardisation and Legal Frameworks: establishing an overarching act or detailed recommendations to standardise procedures and ensure consistent protection of cultural heritage.
- Stakeholder Collaboration: promoting cooperation among museum managers, conservators, policy-makers and local communities to build inclusive management strategies.
- Capacity Building and Research: investing in specialised training and continuous research to refine management practices and develop innovative solutions for sustainable operations.

4.4 Identification of House Museums

A key insight from this study is the varied perception among managers in relation to their institutions. The majority (58 %) identify their properties as 'house museums' – a designation that signifies a departure from the traditional museum model. This label is not merely semantic; it reflects a nuanced understanding of the dual role these institutions have in preserving tangible heritage and narrating personal and localised histories. In Slovenia, the multiplicity of terms – ranging from memorial house and birthplace to literary museum – further complicates management practices. Recognising house museums as distinct entities is essential, as it directly informs the management, interpretation and preservation strategies tailored to their unique operational and cultural contexts.

4.5 The Importance of Categorisation, Typology and Terminology

Effective management of house museums depends on a systematic understanding of their inherent diversity. Establishing clear categorisation, typology and terminology is crucial for several reasons:

Categorisation helps to classify house museums based on their functions and historical contexts (e.g. memorial houses, birthplaces, literary museums), enabling managers to tailor conservation strategies and operational practices accordingly.

Figure 4: Permanent exhibition in Čop's Birth House in Žirovnica. Photo credit: Aleš Košir, 2024.



Typology allows for a deeper analysis of the different types of house museums, leading to best practices that address the unique needs of each type – whether they are primarily educational, focused on preservation, or designed for community engagement.

Terminology is fundamental for clear communication among stakeholders. A standardised lexicon ensures that all parties – from museum professionals to policy-makers – share a common understanding of what constitutes a house museum. This consistency is vital for internal management, policy formulation and academic research.

4.6 Stakeholder Collaboration and Public Engagement

Collaboration with key stakeholders – including the Ministry of Culture, municipalities and the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage – varies significantly. While a majority report satisfactory cooperation with municipalities (35 house museums) and the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage (31 house museums), only 19 house museums find their relationship with the Ministry of Culture satisfac-

tory, whereas 12 express dissatisfaction and seven report no collaboration at all. In terms of collaboration with authorised museums, 26 respondents rated it as satisfactory, while seven reported no collaboration and five were dissatisfied with the level of cooperation. Public engagement also remains limited: 20 house museums report active public involvement in shaping and implementation of programmes, whereas 18 describe public participation as passive, meaning that the public primarily observes rather than actively contributes.

This pattern suggests that, according to Arnstein's Ladder of Participation, most house museums in Slovenia operate primarily at the consultation level, rather than engaging in true partnerships with the community (Arnstein 1969). Strengthening collaboration mechanisms and fostering greater public involvement could enhance the sustainability and impact of house museums.

In addition to institutional challenges, the findings point to the importance of heritage communities – individuals and groups who identify with, use, and help maintain house museums. Their participation remains only partially developed, often limited to attending events or volunteering on an ad hoc basis. However, according to the Faro Convention (Council of Europe 2005), heritage communities are essential partners in the co-management of cultural heritage. Actively involving them in decision-making, programming, and day-to-day operations could alleviate staff shortages, strengthen social ownership, and enhance the relevance of house museums for local life. The development of participatory management models that integrate community knowledge and enthusiasm thus represents one of the most promising directions for future practice.

4.7 Conservation and Collaboration with Authorised Museums

The findings indicate that nearly half of the respondents (44.7 %) experience challenges due to rigid conservation restrictions, despite 71 % acknowledging the necessity of such measures. The limited involvement of house museum managers in developing these conservation policies is a significant concern, with 53 % reporting no participatory role. Additionally, while collaboration with authorised museums is generally

satisfactory, nearly 30 % of institutions either do not engage in such collaboration or express dissatisfaction with these partnerships, which may hinder access to professional expertise and resource sharing.

4.8 Comparison with Existing Research

The results of this research align with previous studies that have highlighted the challenges of managing culturally significant but resource-constrained institutions (e.g. Bryant and Behrens 2007; Butcher-Younghans 1996; Vagnone and Ryan 2016; Pinna 2001; Domšić 2014). However, this study extends these findings by quantifying the need for formal guidelines and specialised training specifically in the Slovenian context. Notably, to date, no studies have been done in Slovenia that focus on the management of house museums, thus making this research a unique contribution to this field. The high demand for standardised frameworks and education mirrors international trends that emphasise the professionalisation of heritage management. Additionally, the varied experiences with stakeholder collaboration in this study reflect the broader issues noted in cultural policy research, where strong local support often contrasts with the bureaucratic challenges imposed by national institutions.

4.9 Limitations

This study has several limitations:

- *Sample Size and Scope:* the survey was completed by managers of 38 house museums. Although this number is substantial, it may not fully capture the diversity of institutions across Slovenia. The limitation in diversity stems from the fact that management practices in Slovenia are highly specific, with very few distinct management models in use; the private sector is particularly minimally represented.
- *Data Collection Method:* the reliance on self-reported data via an online survey may introduce bias. Additionally, many house museums lack a dedicated manager, accessible phone numbers, working email addresses or updated websites, making it difficult to contact them.
- *Survey Platform Constraints:* using SurveyPlanet for data collection also introduced limitations. The platform limited the way questions and responses could be formulated, which required the author of this re-

search to adjust or exclude certain questions that were initially intended for inclusion.
- *Cross-Sectional Design:* the findings represent a snapshot in time, limiting the ability to assess trends and changes over longer periods.
- *Preliminary Nature of the Study:* as the first study focused on the management of house museums in Slovenia, this research may be considered basic and general, underscoring the need for more in-depth and nuanced future investigations.

4.10 Suggestions for Improvement

Based on the survey results and the challenges identified in the management of house museums in Slovenia, several measures can be proposed to enhance management practices. These recommendations address the unique needs of these institutions and aim to establish a robust framework for their long-term sustainability and effectiveness.

4.11 Develop Categorisation and Typology

A clear classification system is needed to differentiate between types of house museums (e.g., memorial houses, birthplaces, literary museums, and hybrid cultural spaces). This would enable tailored management practices and facilitate benchmarking and comparative analysis. In the future, this process could also lead to the formulation of a definition of the house museum that would reflect the specific cultural, historical, and institutional context of Slovenia.

4.12 Enhance Understanding of Specificities

It is crucial that decision-makers, cultural heritage experts and museum managers gain a deeper understanding of the unique challenges of managing house museums. Targeted educational initiatives, such as seminars and workshops, can bridge the gap between current practices and international best practices.

4.13 Encourage Collaboration

Strengthening collaboration among museum managers, conservators, local authorities and cultural institutions is essential. Joint initiatives and participatory processes would help to integrate diverse per-

spectives, improve resource sharing and enhance overall management effectiveness.

4.14 Strengthen Research

Expanding research into the management of house museums is necessary. Future studies should include in-depth analyses of management practices, financial models, visitor engagement and conservation challenges. Comparative international studies could also offer valuable insights and innovative approaches applicable in the Slovenian context.

In summary, by developing a robust framework for categorisation, deepening the understanding of the specific challenges, fostering broader stakeholder collaboration and reinforcing research efforts, the management of house museums in Slovenia can be significantly improved. These measures will not only enhance the quality of heritage preservation and interpretation, but also ensure that these culturally significant institutions remain dynamic, sustainable and relevant for future generations.

5 Conclusion

The study demonstrates that house museums in Slovenia operate within a complex and often fragmented management environment, where practices are largely shaped by individual initiative, professional experience, and the constant negotiation between conservation and accessibility. Despite differences in ownership and scale, these institutions share several common challenges, including limited financial and human resources, restrictive conservation frameworks, and insufficient institutional recognition of their distinct character. As Maroević (2020) emphasizes, the heritage field is not merely a matter of preservation, but of interpretation and communication – and this tension is at the heart of managing house museums.

The findings confirm that house museum management requires a more nuanced and adaptive approach than the one typically applied to traditional museums (Macleod, Hanks and Hale 2012). While 71 % of respondents consider conservation restrictions justified, nearly half report that these measures limit their interpretative and educational activities. This underlines the need for policies that enable greater flexibility while safe-

guarding authenticity – a balance long emphasized in Slovenian heritage discourse by Perko (2023), who advocates for a holistic and context-sensitive approach to heritage protection and management, grounded in collaboration with heritage communities and acknowledging the living and experiential nature of heritage spaces.

A striking 95 % of respondents believe that there is insufficient research on house museum management in Slovenia, and 79 % express the need for a formal framework or guidelines. This lack of systemic support and academic inquiry aligns with Pirkovič's (2023) observation that heritage management in Slovenia often suffers from institutional fragmentation and insufficient integration between theory and practice. Addressing this gap through targeted research and policy development would not only strengthen professional standards, but would also contribute to the long-term sustainability and visibility of house museums as vital cultural institutions.

Equally important is the need for education and dialogue. The overwhelming majority of managers (94 %) call for specialized training programs focused on the specificities of house museum management. Such initiatives, as Finlay (2008) and Hems and Blockley (2006) argue, are essential to strengthen professional competence, advance interpretative knowledge, and ensure the long-term sustainability of house museums. At the same time, improved cooperation between managers, heritage authorities, and local communities can foster a more participatory and collaborative approach to heritage care – one that reflects the principles of shared stewardship and collective responsibility (Vagnone and Ryan 2016), and ultimately redefines the role of house museums as living spaces of cultural dialogue.

Finally, the research highlights the under-explored role of heritage communities in the management of house museums. Encouraging their structured participation – beyond occasional volunteering – could transform house museums into genuinely shared cultural spaces. Such participatory governance would not only respond to limited staffing and funding, but would also align with the broader European principles of community-based heritage management, as promoted by the Faro Convention (Council of Europe 2005).

This research contributes to strengthening the theoretical and practical

understanding of house museum management within the Slovenian museological context. It is my hope that this will encourage further research and dialogue, inspiring a deeper, museological and heritological exploration of house museums in Slovenia – spaces where heritage, memory and identity continue to evolve.

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Lejla Džumhur[1]

Traumatic Heritage Places in Urban Context – Assessment and Interpretation of Values

ABSTRACT: Heritage studies have, up to this point, paid little attention to urban landscapes and entire cities that have been considered as Traumatic Heritage Places (THP). As a contribution to the issue of management of non-values in such areas, this paper examines commemorative practice in the aftermath of the 1992–1995 siege of Sarajevo.

Following three commemorative episodes, the analysis centers on the contribution of the urban sites' initial qualities to the construction of commemorative values. The key question is the mutual compatibility of the site's initial values and the added commemorative non-value: do they negate one another, or do they effectively coexist and build on each other?

The analysis illustrates how disregarding the initial qualities of a site leads to competing claims about its significance and diminishes its pragmatic use. Furthermore, the conclusions of the article point out the vital importance of dialogue among the stakeholders involved, particularly the participation of the concerned users – the citizens, throughout the decision-making process, from the comprehensive and inclusive assessment of non-values assigned to the city, to their accommodation and conveying n a manner sensitive to the city's vital and dynamic urban context.

Finally, the illustrated practice indicates a disregard for the prospects and potential brought about by a proper understanding and interpretation of the traumatic context – one that archives and commemorates, but also produces broader social changes critical for the process of reconciliation.

Keywords: Sarajevo; Commemoration; Traumatic Heritage Places; Values; Urban Environment

1 Introduction

Heritage sites do not necessarily have to convey only 'good' qualities; 'they can also represent undesirable views or actors' (Avrami and Mason 2019, 11). Termed as non-values, such qualities have emerged as a result of traumatic events, including modern wars. In the changing discourse of warfare

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in the 20th century, urban environments have increasingly been situated as a context for military operations, and the logic of total war finally made 'the home front a battlefront, where there are no innocent bystanders and where civilians are de facto implicated [...]' (Mendieta 2007, 29).

During the siege from 1992 to 1995, Sarajevo acted as an unconventional battlefield, subjected to military operations that led to enormous civilian casualties and urbicide.

Notwithstanding the disparity in power dynamics between the perpetrator and the victim, the resistance of civilians and the rising Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina emerged coherently from the very beginning of the siege. Each group of besieged population was able to make its own distinctive contribution to the resistance, which was unavoidably tied to the city, its survival and defense.

In the specified context, the entire besieged city eventually acquired the qualities of a Traumatic Heritage Place (THP). As 'places that are related to violence, war conflicts, genocide, and various forms of discrimination forming collective negative experiences, they are participants in the contemporary social process of constructing cultural trauma' (Mason 2019, 162). Consequently, starting with the cessation of hostilities, Sarajevo continued to gain new commemorative sites of diverse manifestations of suffering and resistance, which intertwined into the urban network, transforming its character and redefining the site's significance.

To date, heritage studies have paid little attention to large urban areas and entire cities that have been considered as THP. There are rare occurrences and assessments and management of related non-value touches on sensitive and contentious political and social issues. As a contribution to the issue of commemoration in such urban landscapes, this paper examines the role of the sites' initial qualities in the construction of commemorative values and symbols of mourning and healing. The key question is the mutual compatibility of the site's initial values and the added commemorative non-value: do they negate one another, or do they effectively coexist and build upon each other?

Without seeking to draw comprehensive conclusions or viewpoints, the paper follows three commemorative episodes in Sarajevo, focusing on utilitarian and symbolic values and perceptions of the site before and after

the monument was erected. The main issue these episodes seek to address is to what extent the new monument altered the initial understanding of the urban place among local communities.

The examples employed in the analysis were chosen to demonstrate three levels of monument visibility in urban space: localized, linked to a confined urban area and its users; those that engage with the broader population of users and exhibits a greater degree of public visibility; and the broadest level, which encompasses the entire city.

Although it was not a decisive factor in the selection of illustrative cases, the diversity of their formal expression was intentional. In the cited examples, commemoration is represented through an abstract three-dimensional architectural expression, a realistic symbolic form, and a two-dimensional abstract monument.

The paper's conclusions demonstrate the vital importance of dialogue among involved stakeholders, particularly the participation of concerned users – the citizens – throughout the entire decision-making process, starting from the value assessment of potential memorial sites and the outlining of their future aesthetic attributes to the management of the sites after the erection of monuments. Furthermore, as the analysis illustrates, disregarding the site's initial qualities leads to competing claims about its significance and diminishes its pragmatic use.

The paper also points to the striking absence of awareness of the capability of Traumatic Heritage Sites to embody a distinct, contemporary, and less acknowledged perspective on social values and yield benefits that extend beyond the direct connection between heritage and the heritage community. Among many others, these heritage places can address broader issues of political conflict and reconciliation, social justice, and civil rights issues (Avrami and Mason 2019, 11).

2 First Commemorative Episode

The first episode represents the memorial created by closely mediating the initial utilitarian, social, and architectural-environmental values of the site in the memorial program.

After a lengthy search for an acceptable location for a memorial honoring the fallen members of the Special Police Unit 'Lasta', the Municipality of

Centar Sarajevo had designated a small area within the park adjacent to the Sarajevo Faculty of Civil Engineering, which served as the Unit's headquarters during the aggression. The choice was also influenced by the qualities of the site, which were integrated into the design conception.

The open area chosen for the commemoration sits below the iconic AG student club and, for many years, represented its expansion into nature, being a much-loved place for gathering and socializing of students – the site's primary category of users. Such potential was recognized and employed into the new conception: 'The monument should represent a symbol of peace, freedom, and multi-ethnicity, as well as a functional space for citizens where children, the elderly, and other citizens for whom they sacrificed themselves will spend their free time' (Odred policije 'Lasta' dobija spomenik u Sarajevu 2018).

The design of the memorial reflects the formal aspects of the initial site: its modest, circular space, facing the slope and surrounded by greenery, flanked by a stone elevation intended for seating (Figure 1).

Figure 1: A memorial honoring the fallen members of the Special Police Unit 'Lasta' during the deconstruction works of the initial structure. A circular stone sitting area is apparent in the background. Source: Official web site of Municipality of Center Sarajevo, https://centar.ba/vijesti/16821/danas-zapoceli-pripremni-radovi-na-izgradnji-spomen-obiljezja-lasta.



This old structure was replaced by an identical form of the monument's pedestal in stone paving and similarly surrounded by a continuous stone elevation for seating. However, although the monument is formally identical to the previous structure, it differs in a number of important features. The new smooth, polished stone surfaces without obvious joints are difficult to identify with the original roughly hewn, irregular stone seats and green patchwork paving. Furthermore, two vertical slabs have been placed, facing the faculty building and the student club, with their middle points perforated in the shape of a swallow, the Unit's symbol. Significant in size, they nearly completely obscure the otherwise open view on the green slope, highlighting the names of the fallen members written on the inner panel surfaces (Figure 2).

Figure 2: A memorial honouring the fallen members of the Special Police Unit 'Lasta': top: memorial panel; bottom: sitting area. Source: Author, 2025.



The final performance contradicts the intention of social interaction; it does not encourage larger gatherings, sitting or playing, but rather presents the monolithic stone circle as a closed, self-sufficient whole. The 'cold' monumental appearance is inhospitable, and the use for its initial purposes is thwarted by the possibility of desecration, which is hinted at

by the most dominant architectural element – the slabs with the names of the fallen. Today, the space is an empty backdrop, devoid not only of students, but also of other users envisaged by the new concept. The social value of commemoration, which employs the well-established associative architectural tools to evoke suffering and trauma, has forced itself as the primary quality of the site.

3 Second Commemorative Episode

The second episode concerns the erection of a memorial in the park adjacent to the Second gymnasium, a location where many segments of public life converge. The park serves predominantly as the gymnasium's schoolyard, while also being used by residents of the neighboring large socialist settlement Ciglane, which has almost no green areas. Moreover, the park is intersected with pathways used daily by pedestrians along the Koševo residential area-city center route.

The initiative to erect a memorial to the Special Police Unit 'Bosna' is several years old. The winning entry in the 2016 competition is a realistic sculptural composition authored by a Sarajevo artist with a New York address – Nebojša Šarić Šoba, himself a former member of the BiH Army. His concept promotes a 'David and Goliath conflict', highlighting the disproportionate dynamics between a Unit's forces and a superior enemy. The monument depicts a historical event – the capture of an enemy tank belonging to the then Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) during the onset of the conflict in May 1992 in the Stup neighborhood of Sarajevo. The actual tank artifact is accompanied by five life-sized bronze figures of special forces in combat attire, who are rejoicing at the enemy's loss. The backdrop of the composition is a tall wall inscribed with the names of the eight fallen fighters (Stigao tenk kod Druge gimnazije u Sarajevu, predstavljat će spomenik specijalcima 2024) (Figure 3).

The decision to build the monument in this part of the city sparked a heated public debate, which ultimately led to the postponement of construction until 2024. The debate focused on the militarization of the culture of remembrance (Spomen-tenk usred Sarajeva: Militarizacija kulture sjećanja 2018) within the delicate context of public urban spaces, children's parks, and schoolyards. Maida Zagorac, coordinator of the non-gov-

ernmental organization Peace Building Network, asserts that the aesthetic representation of the monument results in the 'retraumatization of the survivors' (Zvijerac and Halimović 2023). The question 'Whom does the tank target?' arose after the real artifact was displayed.

Figure 3: A memorial to the Special Police Unit 'Bosna'. Source: Author, 2024.



Key stakeholders, including the Second gymnasium administration, the council of parents, and the public, were excluded from the discussion on the site selection. The political structures altered during the eight-year negotiating period showed a polarized perspective regarding the suitability of the location. The commemorative aesthetic, which relies on the subjective imagination of the artist and the constrained reach of public competition, undermines the essentiality of public participation. Owing to his international recognition and his role as a member of the BiH Army, the artist acquired a sort of informal authority over interpretation of the traumatic past.

By drawing on his personal favorable recollections of the former Yugoslavia's commemoration practices and the then present overarching militarization of history, Šerić explains the site's 'unproblematic' nature and his aesthetic exploration of memory. Growing up in a close post-war (Second World War) reality in an intimate familial environment, 'patriotic and ideologically orientated', was colored at all levels by the approval of militant discourse, as well as by the artist's own fascination with it. 'I first got a plastic gun as a toy, and only then Micky. Cartoons were favored, yet priority was still given to "Sutjeska", "Neretva", "Otpisani", "Valter brani Sa-

rajevo", and shows like "Dozvolite da se obratimo" (the morning program of the Yugoslav People's Army) […] My mother was active in SUBNOR, so they often invited her to "Maršalka", and she would take me there to look at cannons, rifles, tanks […] I climbed all over it – as much as they allowed me – fascinated by the firepower of our glorious army, built on the blood of our fighters. When we returned home, I made, with my dad's help, tanks out of plasticine. Every detail was important' (Šerić 2024). As a supporting argument for his design, according to the portal 'slobodnaevropa.org", Šeric highlighted the fact of memorial tanks being 'placed all over America and Europe, and that children also play on tanks and cannons from the Second World War placed near the National Museum in Sarajevo in front of the café "Tito"' (Zvijerac and Halimović 2023).

However, in the aforementioned societies, conflict was not aimed at the internal stratification of the community. In the aftermath of the war, members of those communities were able to 'define their solidarity relationships in ways that, in principle, allow them to share the suffering' (Jeffrey 2012, 6). Conversely, the ultimate goal of conflict in cities such as Mostar and Sarajevo during the 1992–95 aggression, Beirut during the Lebanese Civil War, and East Jerusalem after the Israeli military occupation in 1967 was to replace heterogeneity with homogeneity (Coward 2009 in Chiodelli 2021). Communities in such post-conflict societies acquire internalized competing claims about the cultural trauma itself (Jeffrey 2012). Thus, the sharing of suffering is considerably more challenging, and militarisation occurs within a fragmented social context.

4 Third Commemorative Episode

The last chapter discusses the unconventional memorials known as 'Sarajevo Roses'. Their creation is not a consequence of the official politics of memory in the post-war period, but a commemorative initiative started by the civilians themselves during the aggression, which was then reflected in the post-war artistic vision of the architect Nedžad Kurto.

The Sarajevo Roses emerged as a unique reminder of the locations where shells fired at the city and civilians from enemy positions during Sarajevo's siege left their mark on the street pavements, which also resulted in the deaths of many citizens.

Local wartime journalists described the traces of exploded shells on the city's streets, filled with the dead's blood, as 'Bloody roses'. During the conflict, citizens started to mark these traces, leading Sarajevo architect and artist Nedžad Kurto to design 'non-monumental' and 'silent' memorials (Junuzović 2006). Consequently, after the cessation of hostilities, over 100 remains from the city's bloodiest shelling were permanently sealed in red resin.

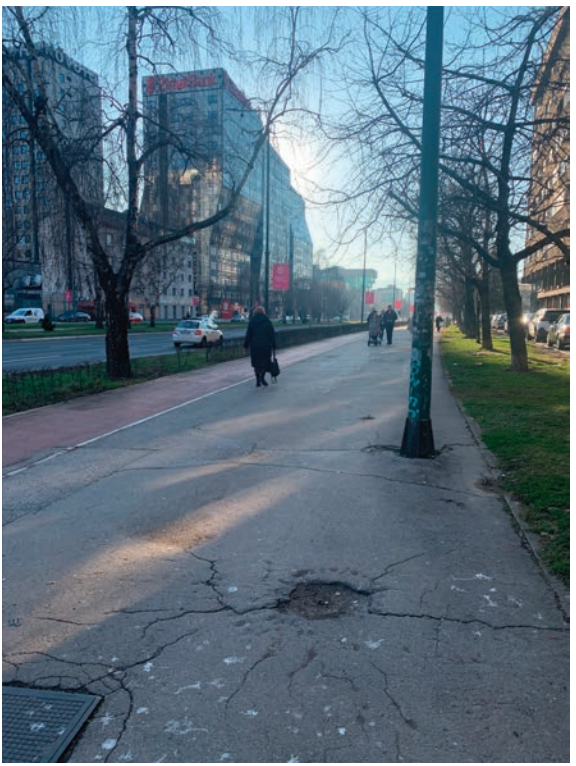
The Sarajevo Roses have become a fundamental aspect of urban identity. Embedded into the pathways that Sarajevans navigate through the streets today, they are a silent reminder of the terror of daily life in the besieged city. The non-monumentality, two-dimensional appearance, and abstract aesthetics of the Roses, as well as their material authenticity, provided tremendous commemorative power (Ristić 2013) (Figure 4).

Figure 4: One of the 32 officially protected and restored Roses, located in the front of the Sarajevo Cathedral. Source: Author, 2023.



In this case, the memorial does not violate the initial values of urbanity, but rather builds on them and bears witness to the authentic experience of suffering and its anonymity and comprehensiveness, but also the extraordinary event of urbicide – the death of the city. However, the failure of governmental institutions to recognize the importance of this landmark has resulted in their neglect, physical degradation, and loss of the monument's integrity. Following the commemoration, no institution, agency, or organization had a legal obligation to protect the Sarajevo Roses, and they began to disappear, forgotten and decaying, as well as being destroyed due to intensive urban renewal after the war (Figure 5)[2].

Figure 5: One of the many neglected Sarajevo Roses. Source: Author, 2023.



2 The Sarajevo Roses were designated as a monument in 2022 by the procedure of previous protection at the level of Canton Sarajevo (Cantonal Institute for the Protection of Cultural-Historical and Natural Heritage). Still, no institution is accountable for their maintenance and restoration.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Veteran Affairs of Sarajevo Canton implemented a marking criterion that allows only traces of shells that killed three or more people to be preserved[3], undermining the monument's integrity and authenticity. This reduction in the number of Roses from over 100 to around 30 protected remains overlooks their importance as a testimony to urbicide and as symbols of cultural and moral resistance to destruction, which led to a new form of urbanity – the 'landscape of survival'.

Figure 6: Sarajevo Rose, marking the trace of the shell that caused the first Markale massacre, alongside the memorial plaque commemorating the same event. Source: Author, 2024.



3 This criterion was established within the sub-project 1.7 'Marking of places of major suffering in besieged Sarajevo'. In 2007, the Government of the Canton of Sarajevo charged the Ministry of Veterans' Affairs of the Canton of Sarajevo to implement through the Memorial Fund (Fund of the Canton of Sarajevo for the Protection and Maintenance of Cemeteries of Martyrs and Fallen Soldiers, Memorial Centers, and Memorials for the Victims of Genocide) the sub-project 'Marking of places of major suffering in besieged Sarajevo – places of shell explosions (Sarajevo Roses)' as part of the project 'Siege and Defense of Sarajevo 92–95' (Bosna and Herzegovina, Federation Bosna and Herzegovina, Sarajevo Canton, Canton Sarajevo Memorial Fund 2022). At the moment, only 32 Roses are protected by the designation of Cantonal Institute for the Protection of Cultural-Historical and Natural Heritage.

Ultimately, their non-monumental form contradicts the prevailing perception of an 'appropriate' monument, as exemplified by the competition between the traditional memorial plaque and the Sarajevo Rose, both of which commemorate the same event – the first massacre at the Markale open market (Ćusto 2013) (Figure 6). The aforementioned governmental activities have overlooked the fact that the value of the Sarajevo Roses lies not in their visual reference, but in their spatial arrangement and number, ubiquity and ability to unfold slowly and be noticed in the rhythm of urban life.

These actions once again left out public participation as the most important tool in the now reversed decision-making process related to restoration and conservation of the memorial, which in the first place, was brought alive by citizen participation.

5 Conclusion

Acting as a spatial backdrop for its citizens' traumatic experience during the 1992–1995 siege, Sarajevo acquired qualities of a vast traumatic heritage place (Avrami and Mason 2019; Mason 2019). Until now, post-war commemoration has been an unsystematic, opaque, and protracted process spanning over thirty years, striving to accommodate the disvalues assigned by diverse categories impacted by the trauma. The bond between urbanity, its initial qualities, and the disvalues gained during the Siege has been continuously tested in an intricate process of turning the page, forgetting, and commemorating. Moreover, the curation of these qualities has mostly relied on traditional commemorative practices and the formal aesthetics and functions of 'monuments'.

This study explored three episodes of commemoration within the urban context of Sarajevo, highlighting the connection between initial values and commemorative symbolic values.

The findings of the analysis primarily testify to the concerning lack of awareness about the need for commemorative practices to appear as an upgrade to the existing values of urbanity and, by so doing, enable the uninterrupted life of the city.

The first two cases illustrate the conventional practice of commemoration as an initiative executed through internalized site- and design-se-

lection procedures that bypass public participation. The construction of the memorial dedicated to the Special Police Unit Lasta' reveals how the utilization of formal principles of monumentality and conventional commemorative symbolism has overshadowed and degraded the initial spatial and social values assigned to the site by a smaller localized group of users.

The second case, concerning the monument to the Special Police Unit 'Bosnia', situated next to the Second Gymnasium, exhibits a wider and more comprehensive public visibility. The pronounced military aesthetic of the winning design has provoked negative reactions and public debates regarding the suitability of this urban location. In this case, through the constrained process of public competition, the artist puts forward his own vision and moral judgments about the appropriate commemorative aesthetic and its spatial and social environment. This artistically focused approach likewise fails the test of public opinion.

The change in experience and previous use of the urban places in question reflects the emerging tension between initial and commemorative values. These monuments dominate the urban landscape instead of coexisting with it; they do not add a new symbolic layer but rather negate everyday urban life, which seeks to nurture memory as part of the healing process rather than militarizing it within an already complex post-war social reality. Traumatic values are part of the history of Sarajevo's urban life, which needs to be spatially and utilitarianly integrated within its boundaries, rather than becoming its overall narrative.

The final example of the Sarajevo Roses demonstrates how the participation of citizens in shaping the memorial aesthetics and symbolism has led to an exceptional connection between the urban space and the monument, which, however, suffers from other types of sanctions. Misguided comprehension of the non-monumental anonymous aesthetics as 'less valuable' led to their disappearance and degradation. Such perceptions also promoted an improper approach to their official protection, which has resulted in a reduced number of protected Roses.

Sarajevo Roses, as a non-order monument, while omnipresent in urban space, do not construct but subtly urge remembrance. Integrated into the urban environment, they manage to intertwine the lives and

deaths of fellow citizens, both in war and in the current peace, consistently yet unobtrusively permitting individuals to decide when and how they will remember.

The analysed commemorative practice highlights the need to develop a community engagement program that tackles the decision-making process at all levels, from assessment of values that communities assign to a certain event or site, to the sustainable management of the traumatic site. The traditional perspective on monuments as mere representations of remembrance and mourning fails to hold in a context that testifies to the continuity of life.

Finally, the illustrated practice indicates a disregard for the prospects and potential that come with a correct understanding and interpretation of the traumatic context – one that archives and commemorates, but also produces broader social changes that are critical for the process of reconciliation.

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Lucija Perko[1]

Identitary Role of Design in the Context of Heritage Interpretation

ABSTRACT: The contribution discusses the importance of design as a key factor in the presentation and communication of identity in the field of cultural heritage reuse. It exposes the role of design as an inseparable part of the interpretive process, which can make a key contribution to the inclusivity, experience and acceptance of a heritage object in its original social environment. The author argues that with the help of design it is possible to achieve unique products or create experiences with a strong identity message, which serve as a link between the past and the present and guide the preservation of heritage for the future. The concepts of heritage environment, context and heritage values are defined. Furthermore, the article discusses the possibility of values being exposed, re-evaluated or neglected through design approaches.

In order to better understand the role and effectiveness of numerous aspects of design in the practice of interpretation, the methodological approach is multidisciplinary and is based on heritology and hermeneutics. It comprises the deductive method, which consists of the study and analysis of fundamental literature from fields that range from heritology, museology, sociology, architecture and design. Additionally, a qualitative research method is based on the analysis of case-studies.

The paper addresses the ethical issue of the neglect of design practice in the area in question. It also highlights the criticism of the heritage industry and the associated issue of commercialization, and concludes with a thought about the meaning of material design in the context of the non-material conception of heritage phenomena.

Keywords: Heritage; Heritage Design; Identity Design; Heritage Interpretation; Inclusion

Izvirni znanstveni članek / *Original scientific article*

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1 Introduction – Designing in Heritage Contexts

Design interventions in the heritage environment can be key to raising awareness about the importance of preserving and protecting heritage as a quality of life in the area of origin. When designing for heritage or within heritage frameworks, it is therefore crucial to understand the contextual importance of heritage as a value for the communities to which a certain intervention relates and affects them in one way or another. The possibilities and challenges brought by various design interventions in the heritage context are also in the foreground.

Experts – especially architects and designers working in the field of heritage – should approach what are often very challenging situations by considering how a certain intervention can contribute to the meaning of (cultural) heritage. In recent decades, design interventions in the heritage environment have gained great importance and recognition among the public, which also applies to the field of contemporary architecture and design (Meurs 2016, 11).

The article aims to explore and emphasize the critical role of design in the reuse of cultural heritage, particularly how design contributes to the presentation, interpretation, and communication of identity within heritage contexts (Kuipers 2017, 65–69). It investigates how design can enhance the inclusion, experience, and acceptance of heritage objects, enabling them to serve as meaningful bridges between the past and the present. Furthermore, the article discusses how design can influence the exposure, re-evaluation or neglect of heritage values, thereby shaping the way heritage is perceived and preserved for the future.

1.1 Heritage Environment, Heritage Place, Heritage Site

Heritage includes aspects of the environment that arise from the mutual influence between people and space over time, where it is a matter of a broader understanding of spatial entities and the values of the cultural environment. When we talk about design in the context of heritage, we usually mean built or urban heritage that has a special cultural value for a nation that is preserved, maintained and restored under special conditions, as defined by the Cultural Heritage Protection Act (Cultural Heritage Protection Regulations – ZVKDS 2024). As for international policy, sever-

al legally binding international conventions have been adopted under the auspices of UNESCO and other organizations to ensure the safeguarding of both tangible and intangible heritage (starting from the 1954 Hague Convention, to 1970 UNESCO Convention, as well as The 1972 World Heritage Convention, the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, among others). These international conventions collectively form the foundation of a legal and ethical framework for the protection of cultural heritage, as they reflect the growing recognition of heritage as a public good that contributes to identity, social cohesion, and sustainable development. All of this creates a heritage environment (heritage place / heritage site) that gives a certain character to cities, places, areas, individual buildings or parts thereof and landscapes. Heritage environments or individual elements are designated for their social, cultural, historical, aesthetic, indigenous or scientific significance, as well as for their representative value or rarity (Government Architect New South Wales, Heritage Council of NSW 2018, 14) – or as a combination of the above.

1.2 Values in Heritage

The values that individuals or groups attribute to the heritage environment or its individual elements are the reason why a certain cultural landscape can be defined as heritage (Smith 2006, 13). Heritage values are the qualities that we attribute to heritage and that give meaning to heritage phenomena. The significance of heritage is the sum of all the values attributed to an individual place or area of heritage (Pirkovič 2022, 51). The meaning of heritage values, which each culture can understand in its own way, can change, especially in the context of time (Smith 2006; Harrison 2012; Waterton and Watson 2015).

The values of a particular heritage environment (towns, buildings or objects) are linked to its cultural significance, which is a combination of historical, symbolic, spiritual, aesthetic and social values, as perceived by past, present and future generations. This definition is best known because of the influential Burra Charter, first adopted in 1979 by ICOMOS Australia (Australia ICOMOS 2013). The term ‘values’ is used in the sense of positive qualities or qualities attributed to stakeholders, rather than in the sense of ethics or beliefs.

Historical value lies in the historical character and cultural content that provide a connection to the past and a sense of continuity. The symbolic meaning and power of certain places and objects contribute to people's cultural identity. The spiritual value of a place or object can encourage insight into the meaning of religious, sacred and spiritual practices and experiences. The aesthetic quality of a cultural object is also an important element that can inspire new artistic creativity. The social value of place enables connection with others, and a shared social experience (e.g. 'pride of place') can help promote local values (Pirkovič 2023, 66) and social cohesion (Sable and Kling 2001; Throsby 2001, 84–85).

2 Identity through Cultural Expression

As mentioned above, the formation of identities takes place through the active definition of values. The concept of identity, is at its most basic, defined as something that makes a certain entity recognizable due to qualities and characteristics that bring it together or diversify it from other entities. It could be defined as the encounter of an individuum, a single person, a group, and a culture. Cultural identity therefore extends the concept of identity from individual to the community and represents a place for creating bonds that are defined in common recognition in local references. According to the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity identity is the foundation of cultural diversity (diversity means to compare two different identities), which is a source of exchange, innovation and creativity for humankind (UNESCO 2005).

Heritage shapes identities by means of transferring meanings that cultures have given to their material and immaterial products from the past to the present and to future generations. Every item of heritage has the quality to form and uphold identities. Identity is the basis of cultural diversity (Follesa 2021, 21; Albert 2013, 6; Barthes, 1993): the sense of identity is formed through the shared values of a certain community, practices, traditions and its points of reference, material and intangible contents. Identity, like heritage itself, shapes the life expressions and needs of people, which represent the diversity of cultures and the wealth of heritage. This helps to shape the attitude of the communities of people to form connections in the context of understanding culture, memories and knowledge (Anico and Peralta 2009).

Local knowledge assumes a particular importance in triggering territorial development processes and, by means of appropriate strategies, can become new instruments for the circular economy (Ashworth and Graham 2016). Design can, in this sense, move from serving as a tool to industry to instead become a service to society (Interpret Europe 2024). It can even assume a more political role in defining social processes by contributing to development of product systems that can amplify the values of a certain territory and empower its identity and visibility (Follesa 2014, 79). Moreover, local identity is a living entity that is in constant transformation and feeds on new cultural practices, social relations and acts of transmission. It is vital for active processes to take place where new identity-related constructs can be formed in order to contribute to the protection and safeguarding of identity. Creating new connections through processes of contextualization is how local values of territoriality and other specific traditions can be continuously renewed, reconfirmed and thereby preserved.

2.1 Designing for Identity

Can cultural – even national – identity also be represented through a material manifestation – an object? If an emblematic object is taken into consideration, the answer is certainly affirmative. This also means that it can be created, or designed, for the very same purpose. One of the most representative (as well as most used)[2] Italian items – at a national but also international level – is without a doubt the famous Bialetti moka pot: an object with the ability to express a complex mediation between nationalism, contemporaneity of the period in which it was created, but is at the same time also a surprising remnant of the country's infamous Fascist legacy (Garvin 2021). When Alfonso Bialetti set out to develop his first coffee-machine in the 1930s that would be simple to use and affordable (unlike all the other large-scale appliances that existed at that time), this was also due to his choice of the material: aluminium. During Mussolini's economic self-sufficiency policy, when domestic consumption was lagging behind, he successfully imposed an embargo on foreign stainless

2 According to some estimates, an astonishing 90 % of of Italian households own one (Schnapp 2001).

steel and implemented a monopoly over the development of aluminium in Italy. Thus, aluminium emerged as the propagandistic metal of his Fascist revolution, perpetuating cultural narratives of Italian craftsmanship that echoed back to Ancient Rome, while its technological sophistication appealed to the modernist imaginations and symbolized a glorious future in the utopian fascist aspirations (Romagnoli 2016).

Figure 1: Bialetti moka pot as it first appeared according to Alfonso Bialetti's design in 1933. The name is a tribute to the city Mokha in Yemen, one of the leading and most famous production areas of coffee in the world. Source: https://www.bialetti.com/ee_en/our-history.



The aluminium moka pot emerged just in time to combine the political, economic and cultural ambitions – just like coffee itself, which played a prominent role in the mythology of the empire, considering Mussolini's invasion of Abyssinia, the homeland of coffee plant. In fact, colonial imagery of coffee advertising, as well as *caffès* that emerged in that period, acted as key sites for promoting the fascist imperial projects in East Africa, standing as an architectural and artistic legacy that remains in place to this today. In bars, as well as wholesale shops, advertising and interior design reminded Italian consumers that coffee was a colonial prod-

uct (Garvin 2021). In particular, advertising imagery that developed in the 1920s and 1930s reinforced the idea of colonialist products and imperialist supremacy as the basis of brand identity (as shown on Figure 2).

Figure 2: 'Qui Commando io!' ['Here I command!'] Coffee advertisement by Studio Tytan, Trieste, Italy, 1925–30. Source: The Wolfsonian–FIU, Miami, USA (XX1990.3681).



Fascist modernity was thus underlined by a truly colonial vision, which contributed to the emblematic moka pot becoming a symbol of the period. This demonstrates how dictatorial politics shaped everyday spaces and objects (Garvin 2021), as well as the coffee-drinking habit itself (with which the country is still associated today) – reminders of the inescapable presence of history and the inescapable power of ideology in our daily lives.

3 Design between Traditions and Contemporaneity

Identity can be considered as a dialogue between elements of continuity (history, traditions) and changes brought about by innovation. Adapting historical contents in the so-called operation of adaptive reuse can result in a successful dialogue with the creative industries (and thus design), where traces of the past can be used as a source of memory and at the same time of the future. From a design point of view, the readaptation of the new identity design is a mature work of adaptation that knows how to eliminate the folkloristic and superfluous and bring the project back to the essence of the contemporary language. The design challenge is to establish a dialogue between historical and identity-related aspects and translate them into a new stylistic language. In-depth knowledge is essential to be able to comprehend which elements of local specificity cannot be substituted or neglected. It is about adapting to contemporaneity without exaggerating the expressive and symbolic canons of the 'original'.

Design can thus assume an active role in virtuous processes of identity awareness within communities. The role of design in highlighting the importance of heritage lies in the use of strategic practices of cultural heritage reuse to achieve unique cultural products with strong identity message that serve as a link between the past and the present and a guideline for society to preserve heritage for the future (Waterton and Watson 2015; Thompson 1990, 85).

Several case studies strongly support the thesis that design is in fact a key factor in presenting and communicating identity in the reuse of cultural heritage, acting as a link between the past and the present and helping guide its preservation for the future. They illustrate how design, tradition, politics, economics, and heritage interact in concrete ways (Macleod 2005, Di Giovine 2008), and indicate how design functions as communication of identity, linking the past and the present or serving as a guidance tool for preservation.

Illustrious successful projects can serve as exemplary case studies that can be highlighted for this purpose, starting with the acclaimed example of Frank Gehry's Guggenheim Museum, which transformed the city of Bilbao and became an effective symbol of the city's identity.

Another case in point of 'constructed' identity can be observed in *Gardens by the Bay* in Singapore: an outstanding project that exemplifies iconic architecture, innovative use of sustainable technologies, environmental

sustainability and horticultural displays. This award-winning project has helped establish Singapore as one of notable cities where national and international sustainability practices have been exemplified. The area was conceptualized as a national effort to create a public garden for all Singaporeans to enjoy, as it raises the quality of the living environment and contributes to the social cohesion of the nation. It exemplifies a design intervention that positively influences and transforms an entire cityscape into an area that adds more value to people and the planet, while at the same time also fully capturing the essence and vision of the city behind Singapore's identity as the world's premier Garden city.

Figure 3: Supertrees Grove, one of the attractions in Singapore's Gardens by the Bay – the city-state icon as well as a 'people's garden', bringing together communities from across Singapore and people from around the world. Source: https://www.bbc.com/storyworks/travel/garden-of-wonders/gardens-by-the-bay.



Another case-study example of a city where the importance of design for its development has been clearly emphasized, is the nearby Austrian city of Graz, which was declared an international creative city (CIS) by UNESCO in March 2011, a title that gives the city additional prestige in terms of economic development.

Experimental laboratories are another example where approaches such as design thinking have been applied in real contexts in cooperation with

governments and public administrations. The main role in the implementation of such strategic services is played by the so-called *PSI labs* (Public Sector Innovation Labs, i.e. laboratories for creative innovations). Over the last decade, depending on the categories and mapping, they have been defined in different ways: public policy lab, government innovation lab, design lab, social innovation lab. In recent years, the European and global network of these laboratories has grown stronger, including entities with different interests and different methodologies, but with the common goal of public sector innovation (Zampella 2018). Labs strengthen government capacity by creating a narrative of change and enabling collaborative processes that demonstrate through examples and models how the inclusion and implementation of design and other innovative approaches in government management could be better and differently achieved (Mortati, Christiansen and Maffei 2018).

Strategies are also important in addition to labs. Governments around the world are introducing strategic innovation directions with a wide range of activities – a well-known example is the South Korean government initiatives 'Sharing City', 'Listening' and 'Citizen engagement', where the focus is more on citizen-driven and collaborative design of services and systems (Joo 2019).

The creation of spaces, communities (collectives that would support and encourage innovation in crafts, such as the Nesta States of Change project (States of Change 2016), an independent not-for-profit organization that helps governments become better problem solvers), networks, professional roles and functions are also essential in promoting a creative culture.

Continuous improvement of international and regional cooperation is an extremely important aspect in the field of cultural heritage – the promotion of culture is otherwise one of the essential elements in the EU's international relations, and the strengthening of cooperation in the field of cultural heritage is one of the three main goals of the European Agenda for Culture. The European Union's Global Strategy for Foreign and Security Policy identified cultural diplomacy as a new area for joint external action, and the new European Consensus on Development has recognized the role of culture as an important element and an active encouragement factor (European Commission 2017).

All examples of the approaches listed contribute to the promotion and development of the potential in the field of creative industries, especial-

ly in the field of design. The mutual exchange of ideas, the exploitation and application of new technologies and learning from mistakes play a fundamental role in the creative sectors. Governments and higher education institutions have a relevant role to play in attracting, developing and retaining talent, where a good understanding of the challenges and opportunities is essential for any planning and policy making.

It is important to highlight the role that design undoubtedly plays within the context of connecting with the heritage environment, products and the people. Design as a tool for the protection of heritage has since its origins aimed to address the relationships between the past, the present, and, consequently, also the future, and thus represents one of the opportunities in the field of protection and preservation of heritage.

4 Conclusion

Design interventions in heritage environments and contexts can be crucial for raising awareness about the importance of preserving and protecting cultural heritage as a quality of life in the area of origin, as they tend to preserve and spread knowledge about heritage through their involvement in creative processes. They are an inseparable part of the interpretative process, which can significantly contribute to inclusion, experientiality, and acceptance of heritage. Design approaches within the heritage environment can act as incentives for activating practices of community participation, inclusion, creation of social bonds, and community engagement towards rehabilitation and better awareness of its own traditions.

By drawing on the past and creating new meanings, people can transform the ways of social action, where heritage takes on an important social and cultural role. With the help of strategic practices of reusing cultural heritage, it is possible to achieve unique cultural products, whose strong identity message can serve as a link between the past and the present and guide society to preserve heritage for the future by upgrading and by implementing it in everyday life. These practices not only support the sustainability of heritage, but also contribute to broader goals such as social cohesion, cultural resilience, and the diversification of local economies through heritage-based innovation.

Moreover, when design strategies are informed by local cultural narratives and sensibilities, they not only help to articulate a sense of place, but

also reframe heritage as a living and evolving component of social identity. In this way, design becomes a mediating agent between the tangible and intangible dimensions of heritage, fostering a dialogue between historical layers and contemporary values.

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Digital Assets for the Study of Jordanian Heritage in the Nabataean and Roman Periods: The Data from the Madih (حيدم) Project

ABSTRACT: This study explores digital assets related to Jordan's Nabataean and Roman heritage, focusing on datasets from the MaDiH (Mapping Digital Cultural Heritage in Jordan) project. The MaDiH initiative aimed to assess Jordan's digital cultural heritage (DCH) landscape in order to inform research infrastructure policies and improve access to archaeological and historical data. Jordan has emerged as a regional leader in DCH development, with collaborations between the Department of Antiquities and international institutions yielding significant databases such as MEGA-Jordan and JADIS.

The research evaluates 133 datasets specific to the Nabataean and Roman periods, assessing their accessibility, ownership, and usability. These datasets primarily cover tangible heritage, including archaeological sites and objects, with limited representation of intangible cultural aspects. The majority exist in digital formats, yet accessibility challenges persist due to restrictive licenses, offline storage, and limited public availability. Ownership is primarily concentrated in universities, museums, and heritage institutions, but a significant portion remains in private hands.

The study identifies disparities in dataset accessibility, whether online or offline, depending on location, and highlights concerns regarding local access to national heritage. Additionally, language barriers exist, with most datasets in English rather than Arabic.

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Findings emphasize the need for improved data standardisation, interoperability, and expanded public access to digital heritage. The MaDiH catalogue serves as a foundational tool for researchers and is a good starting point for a Jordanian heritage catalogue, while providing an example for similar efforts in other regions, however it requires further development to enhance engagement and integration with World Heritage platforms. Future efforts should focus on federating existing datasets, fostering multilingual accessibility, and strengthening Jordan's digital infrastructure to maximize the academic and economic benefits of its rich cultural heritage.

Keywords: Jordan; Digital Cultural Heritage; Digital Archaeology; Roman Archaeology; Nabataean Archaeology

1 Introduction

This paper[8] discusses trends that emerged from the analysis of datasets related to Nabataean and Roman heritage from Jordan, the result of a wider data collection carried out by the MaDiH (حيدم): Mapping Digital Cultural Heritage in Jordan project[9]. The project aimed to scope the cultural heritage dataset landscape of Jordan across all periods to inform research infrastructure policy (Smithies et al. 2021a) and to suggest ways research software engineering (RSE) and technical applications could be deployed to maximise the academic and economic usage of that infrastructure (Smithies et al. 2021b)[10].

Jordan is at the forefront of the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region in terms of digital cultural heritage (DCH) (Smithies 2021a, 9–14). Both institutional and societal interest in the development of DCH assets (such as digital repositories and archives, websites, and associated infrastructure) are high, which has resulted in high-profile collaborations between the Department of Antiquity of Jordan (DoA) and international heritage organisations, leading to a regionally significant DCH infrastructural footprint.

8 I would like to thank Anja Hellmuth Kramberger and Kaja Stemberger Flegar for their invitation to present at the Erasmus Summer school 2024 – Heritage and Beyond and consequently to contribute to this volume. I extend my thanks to the anonymous reviewers and their valuable suggestions. Any mistakes remain my own.
9 MaDiH (حيدم) was a joint project funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council and the Newton Khalidi fund. It involved the King's Digital Lab (KDL), the Hashemite University, the Council for British Research in the Levant (CBRL), the Department of Antiquities of Jordan, the Jordanian Open Source Association (JOSA), and the Endangered Archaeology in the Middle East and North Africa (EAMENA) project (ref. AH/S011722/1). It ran from January 2019 to April 2021 and is dedicated to the memory of Dr Andrea De Silva Zerbini (1984–2019), one of its driving forces.
10 Other topical research papers and reports focused on international project management (Bala'awi et al. 2021; Smithies et al. 2023) and on the reception and usability of the project catalogue (Mubaideen et al. 2022).

Most notably, these collaborations resulted in the creation of the Jordanian Archaeological Database and Information System (JADIS) in 1991, in partnership with the American Centre for Oriental Research (Palumbo 1994). It was later replaced by MEGA-Jordan (The Getty Conservation Institute and World Monuments Fund 2010), the current system of indexing Jordanian archaeological sites (Myers and Dalgity 2012; The Getty Conservation Institute and World Monuments Fund 2014). More recently, the 'Documentation of the Objects in Jordanian Archaeological Museums (DOJAM)' project, promoted by the German Protestant Institute of Archaeology (GPIA), has led to the creation of a prototype national database of archaeological holdings to improve museum-management and enable scientific research (GPIA 2025).

In addition, other datasets that do not focus exclusively on Jordan are widely used, like the Aerial Photographic Archive for Archaeology in the Middle East (APAAME 2009), or the EAMENA project database (EAMENA 2023). The importance of these digital resources for conducting archaeological research in Jordan is confirmed by national and international researchers, however the number of these resources actually used was observed to be limited (Drzewiecki and Arinat 2017). They are often used in the initial phase of archaeological assessment for the preliminary surveying of the areas to be excavated (Zerbini and Banks 2015; Drzewiecki and Arinat 2017). In particular, MEGA-Jordan often informs heritage management in urban and extra-urban environments (Haroun 2016; Drzewiecki and Arinat 2017).

Set in this landscape, the MaDiH (حيدم) project intended to build a proof-of-concept digital catalogue to index all the above and other existing digital assets. The goal was to increase their use thus facilitating national and international engagement with Jordan's cultural heritage, either from an academic research perspective or to inform the development of tools enhancing public and touristic involvement with that heritage. Crucial to the spirit of the project was to help connect existing digital resources by standardizing the dataset metadata, while potential uses of the catalogue include the development of a shared space for the virtual federation of Jordanian heritage assets held around the world.

This paper illustrates the results of a test of the MaDiH (حيدم) catalogue by assessing whether it provides a useful go-to resource for researchers approaching specific aspects of Jordanian cultural heritage. The case study

for this test is a subset of Nabatean and Roman period related datasets[11]. To do so, it will consider aspects of data ownership and their accessibility, to evaluate how findable and accessible datasets related to these periods are, reflecting in particular on three aspects as a means of exploring how these datasets benefit the heritage community at large: who creates these digital assets, how they are shared with the heritage community, and how easy it is to access the information they hold.

The catalogue contains 326 datasets related to all periods of Jordanian history, from the Palaeolithic to the Hashemite period (Flohr forthcoming), while datasets related to the Nabataean period, the Roman period, or both, correspond to a total of 133 datasets. After briefly presenting the general project methodology used for the data collection (2), the paper will offer a summary of the Nabataean and Roman periods datasets sample in relation to the geographical areas of Jordan they cover and the types of evidence they are concerned with (3). It will then focus on specific aspects associated with datasets ownerships and their degrees of accessibility (4). Discussion of the findings (5) will be followed by concluding remarks (6).

2 Notes on the methodology of dataset collection in the MaDiH (مديح) project

The MaDiH (مديح) catalogue[12] was developed using CKAN, an open-source data management system based on Python, which facilitates publication and sharing of metadata and data (CKAN 2025). No raw data was collected in the catalogue, but only information *about* the datasets. In its conception, it was meant to function as both catalogue and *prototype* repository, but it is not an actual repository. Its goal is to provide a high-level 'landscape mapping' of Jordan's DCH infrastructure as an aid to analysis, research, and policy development, rather than, at this stage, a fully federated portal to the datasets or the digital objects they contain.

11 Two reasons have informed this decision: one has to do with the personal research interest of the first author, and the second with the good number of datasets making up this sample.

12 From now on referred to only as 'the catalogue'. After the completion of the dataset collection phase, the catalogue, originally hosted at the King's Digital Lab (KDL) in the United Kingdom, has since been transferred to the Hashemite University in Jordan, where it is maintained.

The data collection template used for the catalogue was based on a previous template developed by KDL to document their legacy projects (Ciula 2020) and customised by the MaDiH (مديح) research team following the Metadata Schema for the Description of Research Data Repositories (Rücknagel et al. 2015) and the DataCite Metadata Schema Documentation for the Publication and Citation of Research Data (DataCite Metadata Working Group 2016; Esposito et al. 2020).

The general datasets collection benefitted from the following sources:

- Online repositories
- Online library catalogues
- Online museum catalogues
- On-site visits to museums/institutions in Jordan
- Wide-spectrum internet search
- Word of mouth, based on the team's network
- Publications, e.g. journal papers
- Contacts established during MaDiH (مديح) outreach events

Highest priority was given to the collection of digital online datasets, followed by digital datasets stored offline, while the analogue datasets initially had a low priority (Esposito et al. 2020). In order to create a representative dataset, that also includes less visible (i.e. online) and accessible (i.e. online, digital) datasets, a deliberate effort was made to seek out more analogue-only datasets, but a (conscious) bias likely still exists in favour of the more accessible datasets. Moreover, fewer on-site visits than anticipated could be made due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which also likely reduced the number of offline and analogue datasets in the catalogue.

To analyse aspects related to the themes of dataset ownership and accessibility, we relied on the following tags:

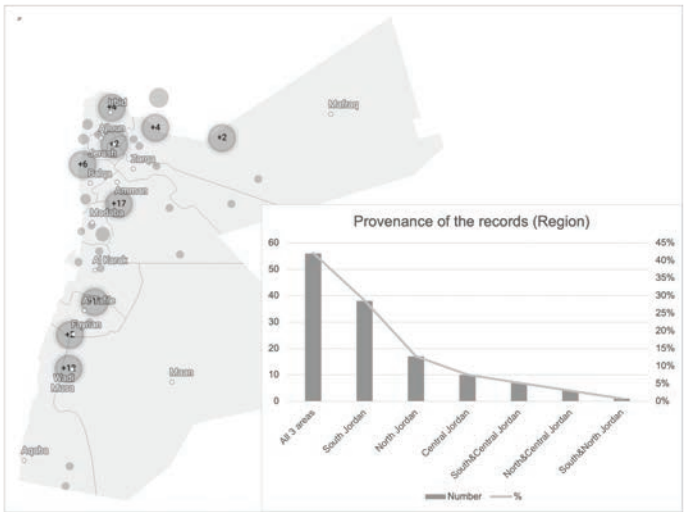
- Whether the dataset is available in digital, analogue form, or both.
- Whether the dataset is available online, offline, or both.
- Whether the dataset is publicly accessible, private, or partially accessible (tagged as 'partially public').
- Whether the dataset is held inside or outside Jordan and in which country.
- The dataset language(s).

3 The Nabataean and Roman periods datasets: An introduction

The Roman and Nabataean periods overlap chronologically, with 'Nabataean' covering the period from 100 BCE to CE 400 and 'Roman' referring to 50 BCE to CE 400 (MaDiH Team 2020a, 2020b). However, it is worth noting that Roman evidence is present in Jordan at least since the landing of Pompey in 63 BCE and that, although Jordan became part of the Roman province of Arabia Petrea in CE 106, this did not signal the end of Nabataean culture (Al-Otaibi 2011; Cimadomo 2018), as relevant material evidence continued well after this date (Amr 2004). The issue of periodisation in digital archaeology is a rich one, with many intellectual and technical issues, but is outside the scope of this paper (see for example Rabinowitz et al. 2016, 2025). The approach chosen by MaDiH (حيدم) is aligned to accepted scholarly practice employed in MEGA-Jo. What does this mean for our datasets collection? Depending on where an archaeological site is located, or the characteristics of a group of materials included in a certain dataset, that dataset might have been considered as pertaining to the Nabataean or Roman period, or both.

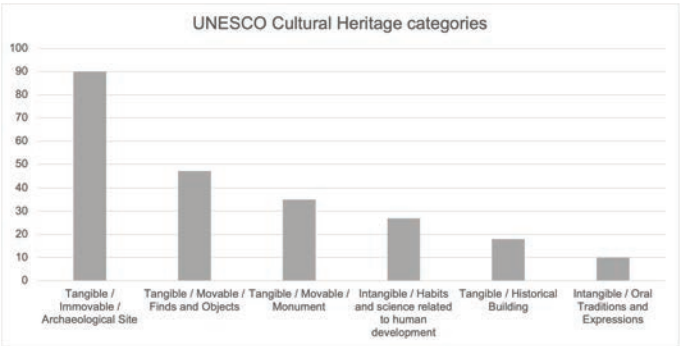
The Nabataean and Roman periods datasets mostly cover all regions of Jordan in the catalogue (42 %) (Figure 1). This group includes large national datasets, such as the Department of Antiquities Online Publications Archive (DOA 2025), or international ones (ICOMOS 2025; Ifpo 2025). In terms of individual regions, perhaps unsurprisingly, the most represented region is the South of Jordan, where Petra is located, (29 %), followed by the North (13 %) and Central (8 %) regions (Figure 1, inset).

Figure 1: Distribution of the records provenance by site (main) and percentage of the provenance of the records by region (inset).



The majority of the sites belong, again unsurprisingly given the periods, to the UNESCO Heritage categories[13] of Tangible Heritage, and more than a third (47) to the Movable Heritage category of 'Finds and Objects', showing a preponderance of datasets related to sites and monuments over finds, studies and catalogues (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Number of the Nabataean and Roman datasets by UNESCO Heritage category.



13 UNESCO 1992–2005, 2003.

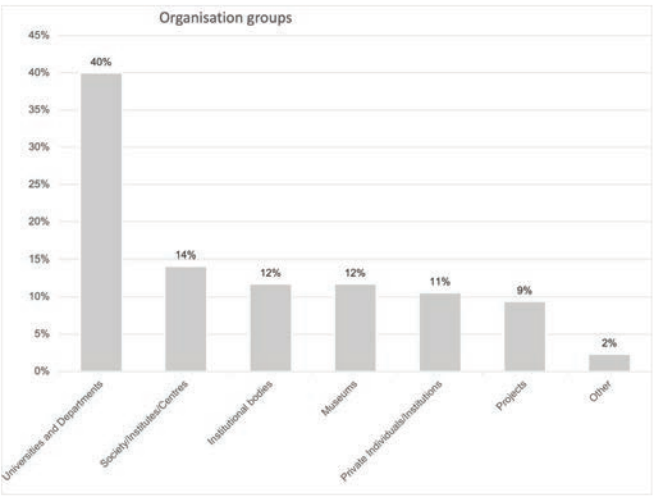
4 Finds from the Catalogue: Datasets ownership and accessibility

To analyse how the Nabataean and Roman periods datasets are created and shared with the heritage community, and how easy it is to access the information they hold, we will focus on two sets of characteristics recorded in the catalogue: one related to ownership, and one to accessibility. The first covers questions on who creates and owns the datasets and the formats in which they are available, while the second considers whether these datasets are publicly accessible or are kept private and to what extent.

4.1 Dataset ownership

Data ownership was tracked by analysing the types of organisations that produce datasets and the formats in which they are kept, reflecting their commitment to sharing their findings and/or collections and broader levels of accessibility. The majority of datasets are held by universities (40 %), while societies/institutions/centres host 14 % of them (Figure 3). Institutional bodies are responsible for 12 % of them, however more than half of the datasets in this category of organisations (15, corresponding to the 56 % of the datasets in this category) are 'owned' by the DOA, while 'Museums' hold *only* 12 % of the datasets related to the periods considered here. These numbers depend on the fact that many Jordanian museums are 'owned' by the DOA 'organisation', and thus do not appear in the catalogue as individual museums.

Figure 3: Types of organisations holding Nabataean/Roman periods datasets.



Private institutions or individuals own 11 % of the datasets, which heavily influences the modalities of their accessibility, a point that will be addressed in section 4.2. Furthermore, 9 % of the datasets are held by 'project' organisations, which refers to collaborative arrangements across different universities or institutions (e.g., the EAMENA project).

81 % of the datasets from the Nabataean-Roman period are tagged as 'digital', 14 % are double tagged as 'digital' and 'analogue', and 5 %, corresponding to 6 datasets, are tagged exclusively as 'analogue'. Before focussing on the digital datasets, it is worth describing the datasets that are tagged as 'analogue'. Five out of the six analogue datasets are research projects. It is likely that these datasets are available in some digital form, completely or at least in part, however this information was not available from the public sources consulted to record these databases. Only one dataset can be considered 'purely' analogue, i.e. the paper catalogue of the Karak Archaeological Museum (Jarajreh pers. comm.).

The datasets from the Nabataean-Roman period double tagged as digital and analogue (14 %) are primarily held in Jordanian museums. These collections are often recorded both in analogue (e.g. paper records) and digital files. Some archaeological projects, such as the iterations of the Madaba Plains Project (2025) or the Building Archaeology in Jordan Project (Parenti 2012), also fall into this hybrid category, as they compile and analyse both analogue and digital data from old and current archaeological excavation seasons. This 'digital/analogue' double tagging is useful for finding current digitisation projects, where only parts of the records have currently been digitised, (e.g. The French Institute of the Near East Library Catalog (Ifpo 2025)).

There are 108 exclusively 'digital' datasets, covering the Nabataean and Roman periods in part or exclusively. We have already addressed how this value is likely the result of the dataset collection methodology employed by the MaDiH (مديح) research team, which prioritised datasets available online over digital-offline or purely analogue ones, as these were both more accessible to the team and increased the speed of collection, thus supporting the project's scoping aim[14].

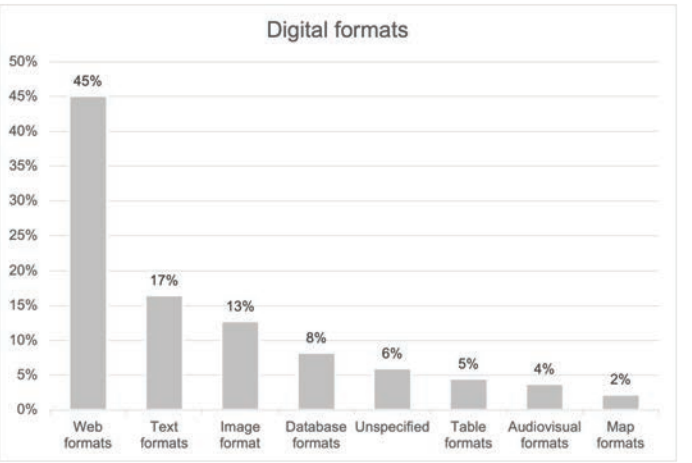
14 See section 2.

The 'digital' tag umbrella covers a variety of digital formats:

- Audiovisual (MP4, WMA)
- Database (ACCDB, ADLIB, ARCHES, ARK, FMP, JSON, SQL)
- Image (JPEG, TIFF, U3D)
- Map (QGIS, FMI, KML)
- Tabular (CSV, XLS)
- Text (DOC, PDF, TXT)
- Web (HTML, PHP, XML)

Web-based formats (45 %) are the most common, as they are often used to present archaeological projects, but this category also includes online catalogues and collections produced by museums and libraries (Figure 4). 17 % of datasets are in text formats (typically PDF files) and correspond to datasets published as journal articles, books, and reports. These text files often contain data in embedded tables or map images used to summarise the findings. Database (8 %) and tabular (5 %) formats are much less represented than expected, considering that many research projects, especially archaeological ones, almost always produce lists and/or tables of raw data.

Figure 4: Percentage of Nabataean and Roman periods datasets digital formats.



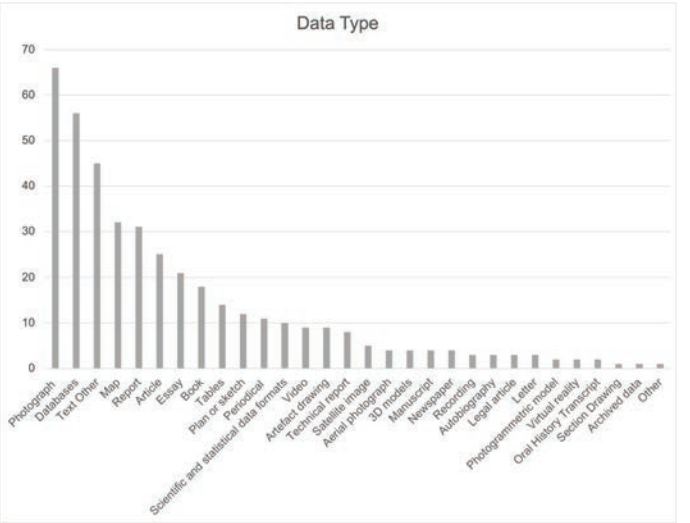
Audio-visual formats, although relatively uncommon (4 %), highlight the existence of datasets of video or audio recordings related in part to the preservation of intangible cultural heritage and in part to documenting the process of archaeological research of tangible heritage. Notable in this

category were videos of excavations at archaeological sites, often made via drones. Examples of audio-visual datasets include audio recordings of interviews from the Udhruh Oral History Project (Hageraats 2013), or videos and recordings of the excavations at the Petra area by the Association for the Understanding of Ancient Cultures (The Association for the Understanding of Ancient Cultures 2025).

Most datasets are image-related (specifically photographs), which are used widely both for datasets recording sites and/or monuments and finds catalogues. There is also a strong presence of archaeology-focused datasets, i.e. reports (31 datasets), plans or sketches (12), artefact drawings (9), technical reports (8), and section drawings (1). Interpretative visual formats, such as 3D models, photogrammetric models, and virtual reality formats only account for a small number of the datasets recorded (respectively 4, 2, and 2).

Purely map-based resources were the least common format (2 %), corresponding to just three datasets. The limited number of map formats might seem unexpected given the time periods considered here, as maps are crucial for visualizing the locations of archaeological sites and finding spots for objects. However, the low number only shows the limited availability of datasets published using sophisticated GIS-based technology. As mentioned earlier, maps are often included as text or image formats (if, for example, a map collection has been digitised as JPEG files). Looking at findings in the 'Data Type' field, we see that the Map category counts for 32 datasets (Figure 5). Similarly, another 'Data Type' field allows us to appreciate the number of 'Scientific and statistical data formats' (56 datasets), compared to the 'Database formats', which accounted for only 11 datasets. This is because many databases, such as museum collection catalogues, have been recorded as web formats rather than database formats (i.e. they are published in a web format, but there is an underlying database (Smithies et al. 2021b)). This 'hidden' information is an important aspect of the catalogue; essential information was gained but the project could only provide a tantalising snapshot of the extensive data relating to Jordanian archaeological heritage.

Figure 5: Numbers of the Nabataean and Roman periods datasets by 'Data Type'.



4.2 Dataset accessibility

Assessing how accessible these datasets are to different audiences was one of the main goals of the data analysis. 'Accessibility' is one of the four principles of FAIR[15] data (Wilkinson et al. 2016), but this does not necessary imply that the data collected is to be available in open access, only that the modalities of its accessibility are clearly stated. We considered physical accessibility for both Jordanian and international audiences in the catalogue, indicating whether a dataset is available online or offline, and whether it is hosted outside or inside Jordan. The language in which the dataset was produced was also recorded to highlight the presence of potential language barriers.

74 % of the datasets are accessible online. This percentage includes databases and institutional collections that allow access to their actual data, often through an online search tool, as well as archaeological and heritage projects, which usually have a website to showcase their activities, share bibliographic lists, and include contact details of researchers involved in the projects. The latter, however, do not provide access to their data. These websites have been included in the catalogue to ensure that the us-

15 Findability, accessibility, interoperability, and reusability.

ers would have information on how to access those datasets by contacting their owners, thus promoting research networking and boosting data accessibility. In this sense, the findings for the Nabataean and Roman subset show that although most datasets recorded are available online, the actual amount of data (i.e. the information contained in the datasets) that is actually accessible online is limited.

The smaller yet significant percentage of offline datasets (26 %, equalling 34 datasets) further confirms the challenges related to data accessibility. The reasons for this vary from restrictive licenses to concerns regarding data disclosure, lack of funding, and/or ability to provide online access to sometimes large datasets.

Knowing the 'privacy' status of a dataset is important for planning any engagement activity. Just over half of the datasets recorded in our subset were tagged as 'public' (53 %, 71 datasets). A 'public' dataset is one whose data is readily available to be consulted, either online or by visiting its holding institution. Surprisingly, given the importance of publicly funded research, 'private' datasets account for 27 % of the total of our subset, while 20 % are 'partially public', highlighting the hybrid accessibility of those datasets that can be consulted and used upon receiving authorisation from the owners (for example, the EAMENA database, which requires user registration).

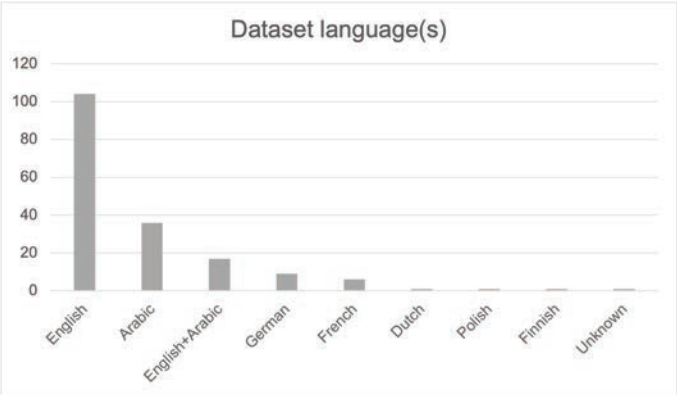
The geographical location of a dataset also influences its accessibility, especially if it happens not to be digital and publicly available. Most of datasets are located outside of Jordan (98 datasets, 74 % of the total). Of these, the most represented country is by far the USA, followed at a distance by the United Kingdom (Table 1). Other European countries are represented with much smaller numbers, although Canada and South Africa also appear. The only country from the MENA region is Lebanon. Of these datasets, the majority are digital. This highlights the efforts, interests and capacities of these countries to digitize. In fact, these might be the criteria by which we can best judge these datasets, rather than which countries actually hold more Jordanian heritage datasets. A second aspect worth considering is what level of public access is possible for these datasets. While Jordan itself has a low number of public datasets compared to the total, all the other countries have at least half their datasets publicly available.

Table 1: Roman and Nabataean datasets numbers by location and according to the 'digital', 'online', and 'public' tags.

	Dataset locations			
	Total	**Digital**	**Online**	**Public**
United States of America	42	39	32	23
Jordan	35	33	15	9
United Kingdom	19	19	18	13
Germany	10	8	8	6
France	8	8	8	7
Netherlands	6	6	6	3
Canada	2	2	2	2
Denmark	2	2	2	2
Italy	2	2	2	1
Poland	2	2	2	2
South Africa	2	2	1	2
Finland	1	1	1	1
Lebanon	1	1	1	1
Switzerland	1	1	1	1
Unknown	2	2	2	1

Even if a dataset is publicly accessible and online, a further barrier to its usability may be the language used to record the data (Figure 6). English is the most commonly used language, while Arabic is a distant second. Only a small number of datasets (17) are available both in English and Arabic, mostly Jordanian institutional datasets (7). Concerns over the accessibility of English-produced content for Arabic speakers are demonstrated by multilingual databases such as the EAMENA project database, which has an Arabic version. However, the number of datasets in other languages poses a further obstacle to the accessibility of Jordanian data.

Figure 6: Numbers of Nabataean and Roman datasets by language.



5 The relevance of the MaDiH (مَديح) catalogue for the study of the Nabataean and Roman periods in Jordan

The MaDiH (مَديح) catalogue was intended from its conception the intention of being a scoping exercise in understanding the landscape of digital datasets related to the Jordanian cultural heritage of any period. By looking at a subset period, the goal was mainly to test whether such catalogue could also be considered a useful resource for researchers interested in a specific period of Jordanian heritage, for example the Nabataean and Roman periods.

The total number of datasets in our subset is 133, which certainly does not represent all relevant datasets. It is also biased towards those datasets that were digital and available online at the time of data collection. Nevertheless, in its current form and for the periods concerned, the catalogue *is* a useful resource. For students and researchers approaching the study of Jordanian heritage, it showcases the necessary datasets to start off research on several aspects of Nabataean and/or Roman period heritage, covering archaeological sites and finds. Crucially, the data collection process involved meetings and encounters with professionals from Jordanian institutional and museum organisations, who provided precious insights about their institutions' holdings that are not available online or might be exclusively in Arabic.

The datasets currently in the catalogue might be already familiar to more expert researchers working on the Nabataean and Roman periods.

However, the value of this catalogue in this instance might not be in knowing that a dataset exists, but whether that dataset is accessible physically (where the dataset is stored), legally (who owns the dataset), in which format its content was recorded, and whether/to what degreecan be reused

For future dataset creators, the catalogue offers an overview of the work that has already been done. This limits the perils of creating digital 'islands', i.e. research efforts that are isolated from each other, which can lead to duplication of digital projects and consequent waste of funding. It is, in fact, becoming challenging for researchers to keep track of an increasingly complex landscape of digital outputs produced internationally and in different languages (Bala'awi et al. 2021). Growing concerns on this topic have funded interest in providing infrastructure to digital archaeology, as shown by the creation of large repositories of archaeological data like The Digital Archaeological Record (tDAR 2025) or the Archaeological Data Service (ADS 2025). The multiplication of digital repositories created by museums and institutions to digitise and share their collections has created a variety of outcomes both in terms of quality and sustainability. For this reason, initiatives such as the Archaeological Archives Forum (AAF 2017) and the Digital Archives in Archaeology project (DigVentures 2025) are aiming to provide guidance on how to create and manage digital cultural heritage data. Certainly, the creation of collections of such repositories in containers like re3data (2025) or Europeana (2025), which aim to connect repositories of archaeological and heritage data, provides important short-term resources that have not escaped the interest of tech giants such as Google (2025). But ideally, long-term solution would create a federated network of archaeological repositories underpinned by long-term funding and automatically aggregated by national heritage portals. On a more focused subset than the one considered here, the creation of similar repositories for other provinces of the Roman Empire could be facilitated by the adoption of similar ontologies that would enable the employment of linked data. In this respect, the Ariadne Plus Portal (ARIADNE Plus 2025), which aims to implement interoperability, linking resources, and enabling data mining (Geser 2016; Wright 2016) provide a successful example in this direction.

6 Conclusions

The data in the MaDiH (حيدم) catalogue highlight how rich the landscape of digital resources is for the study of Jordanian heritage related to the Nabataean and Roman periods, while at the same time also emphasising how these assets are currently underused. Rather than envisioning a vast new archive for these resources, the analyses conducted during the project and in this paper suggest how it would be possible to strengthen the already existing digital resources to build an integrated system of data preservation and research. This approach can similarly inform research on other periods of Jordanian history, as well as other areas of the Roman world: in many ways, it provides methodological and conceptual direction for the aggregation and analysis of archaeological data, as much as rigorous empirical evidence.

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Katharina Zanier[1]

The Past Made Present: Issues of Management, Presentation and Interpretation on the Example of the Late Roman Defence System Claustra Alpium Iuliarum

ABSTRACT: The paper presents issues concerning the management, presentation and interpretation of a complex cross-border monument, such as the Late Roman defence system the Claustra Alpium Iuliarum, which can be understood as a serial archaeological site.

The defence system protected the passages to the heart of the Roman Empire. The archaeological remains of the system span in segments from Rijeka in Croatia to the Posočje region in Slovenia. The Claustra Alpium Iuliarum represents an outstanding example of integration of architecture into the natural environment: the archaeological remains are located mainly in wooded areas, which often overlap with protected natural areas, therefore their experience is closely linked to the enjoyment of nature.

The remains of the system are spread over at least 19 small municipalities. In Croatia, they all pertain to the Primorje-Gorski Kotar county. In Slovenia, there are no regional entities which could coordinate and channel finances and activities for the valorisation of mentioned sites. In the absence of major and financially powerful entities, research, presentation and interpretation activities have mainly been implemented within the framework of several European projects, such as the PArSJAd, Claustra and Claustra+ project.

The aim of these projects was to improve the attractiveness and highlight development opportunities of the defence system, also by connecting its stakeholders. Several research activities were implemented in order to improve the information basis for all dissemination activities. Parts of the archaeological remains were exhibited to the public. The projects were also intended to enhance the physical and informational accessibility of the remains. The sets of activities were focused on the development of a joint tourism product, and a participatory form of management was initiated through the establishment of a consortium of 42 stakeholders. The paper aims to provide a critical overview of

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Izvirni znanstveni članek / *Original scientific article*

the key archaeological, conservation, and management activities that have been undertaken over the past two decades on the *Claustra Alpium Iuliarum* system. It seeks to highlight the main accomplishments of European cross-border projects, assess their contributions to research, heritage preservation, and sustainable tourism, and reflect on the challenges of coordinating and managing a transnational, serial cultural heritage site.

Keywords: Claustra Alpium Iuliarum; Roman Defence System; Archaeological Heritage; Cultural Heritage Management; European Projects

1 Introduction

This paper takes its cue from a number of European projects that have taken place in recent years on the subject, and the sites of the *Claustra Alpium Iuliarum,* which is an internal Late Roman defence system and can be understood as a serial archaeological site. It consists of barriers (i.e. *claustra*) that controlled the passages to ancient Italy. The barriers are located in discontinuous, and sometimes multiple, stretches between Rijeka in Croatia and the upper Soča Valley in Slovenia[2]. The *Claustra Alpium Iuliarum* represents an outstanding example of the integration of architecture within the natural environment: the archaeological remains are mainly located in wooded areas that often overlap with protected natural areas, and their experience is therefore closely linked to the enjoyment of nature.

Among other Roman defence systems, the *Claustra Alpium Iuliarum* can best be compared to early Byzantine Eastern-Balkan internal linear barriers (Dintchev 2012). Only few other internal barriers have reached the extent and importance that the *Claustra Alpium Iuliarum* system had. Due to its importance, the *Claustra Alpium Iuliarum* system was proposed for inclusion on the national UNESCO tentative list in a 2007 Slovenian government document, viz. in the 'Strategy for the Protection of Cultural Heritage and Natural Values in the Republic of Slovenia in accordance with International Legal Instruments and Activities' (Vlada Republike Slovenije

2 For a basic contextualization of the defence system, I mention only a few titles from the rich and valuable bibliography on the subject. Despite its remarkable age, the beautiful monograph by Jaroslav Šašel and Peter Petru (1971) still remains essential. After several interesting articles about individual sites belonging to the defence system, two comprehensive monographs were published: one by Jure Kusetič (2014) and the other by Peter Kos, with a greater focus on the Hrušica site (Kos 2014a). The results of the investigations carried out over the past few years were then collected in the monograph published at the end of the Claustra+ project (Višnjić and Zanier 2019), where further details and literature on the places mentioned in the text can be found.

2007). This proposal was never implemented, probably mainly due to an evident lack of solutions for a sustainable management of all the sites pertaining to the system.

The remains of the system are spread over at least 19 mostly small municipalities. In Croatia they all belong to the Primorje-Gorski Kotar county. In Slovenia, there are no regional entities that could coordinate and channel finances and activities for the valorisation of the aforementioned sites. In the absence of major and financially powerful entities, research, presentation and interpretation activities have therefore mainly been implemented in the frame of several European projects. In the last fifteen years, we can highlight three major projects. The PArSJAd project ('Archaeological Park of the Upper Adriatic') was a strategic Interreg Italy-Slovenia cross-border project implemented from 2010 to 2014, in which the Hrušica site, i.e. *Ad Pirum*, was included as the central pivot of the *Claustra Alpium Iuliarum* system among many other archaeological sites. This was followed by two projects, Claustra and then Claustra+, which specifically focused on the defence system; both took place within the framework of the Interreg Slovenia-Croatia programme[3]. Two key documents were prepared in the Claustra project: a conservation and a management plan for the remains of the defence system (Oven et al. 2015; Zanier et al. 2015). These documents enabled stakeholders to independently implement activities, including within the framework of different projects, but in accordance with a coherent intervention logic. The project Claustra+ ended in January 2020 and was coordinated by myself as the project manager at the Institute of the Protection of Cultural Heritage of Slovenia, which was the lead partner of the project. Some important documents were also prepared in this project, intended to guide future activities at the sites of the defence system: the development guidelines for the destination *Claustra Alpium Iuliarum*, an interpretation plan for the cultural touristic route, and a pro-

3 I refer to the project website *Claustra* (2019) for main project information. Two prizes, awarded by the Association of Conservators of Cultural Heritage of Slovenia (*Slovensko konservatorsko društvo*) and by the Slovenian Archaeological Society (*Slovensko arheološko društvo*), to whom I take the opportunity to express my gratitude, acknowledged my efforts directed to the coordination of the project. In the context of more recent research activities on this topic, I also acknowledge the valuable financial support of the Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency (research programme Archaeology – P6-0247).

motion plan for the cultural touristic product (Nikolić Đerić 2018a, 2018b; Kulturbüro 2019).

Although the aforementioned projects were primarily aimed at the tourist enhancement of the sites involved, there were also plenty of opportunities to include research activities, which clearly constitute the basis for dissemination. In recent years, archaeological research on the defence system has evolved in three main directions: the identification of new barriers, further topographic recognition of those already known, and preventive archaeological excavation connected to the presentation of the remains. Targeted excavations were implemented both in urbanised areas, subject to building interventions, as well as in rural areas, destined to be developed touristically through the establishment of archaeological trails and the presentation of archaeological remains. these sets of activities also focused on the development of a joint tourism product and a participatory form of management was initiated with the establishment of a consortium of 42 stakeholders, despite diverse ownership situations and various responsibility prerogatives.

The aim of this paper is to provide a reasoned overview of the key archaeological, conservation and management activities undertaken in the past two decades on the *Claustra Alpium Iuliarum* system. I will mention the activities implemented in aforementioned projects, as well as some important interventions that were implemented during the same years, but within the framework of other initiatives. For the sake of space, I will not be able to offer an exhaustive and comprehensive overview of all undertakings, but will focus only on the main ones. My accounts will be based on published data, project and expert reports, as well as on direct witnessing of implemented activities[4].

More broadly, the paper aims to assess how different European projects contributed to research, heritage preservation and sustainable tourism, and how the workflow has been organized in order to reach sound results, although the activities have been implemented within several projects and at different time periods.

4 For several of mentioned interventions, responsible partners and institutions keep expert reports.

The paper also offers a reflection on the challenges of coordinating and managing a transnational, serial cultural heritage site. Serial sites share common meanings and values. They were first mentioned in the 1980' version of the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of World Heritage Convention* (UNESCO 1980). Since then, several serial sites have been included on the World Heritage List. Nevertheless, few specific studies have focused on this heritage category and its specific challenges of valorisation and management (e.g. Poshyanandana 2019). The *Claustra Alpium Iuliarum* case study is therefore relevant for offering new insights and experiences related to this specific category of heritage.

2 Results and Discussion

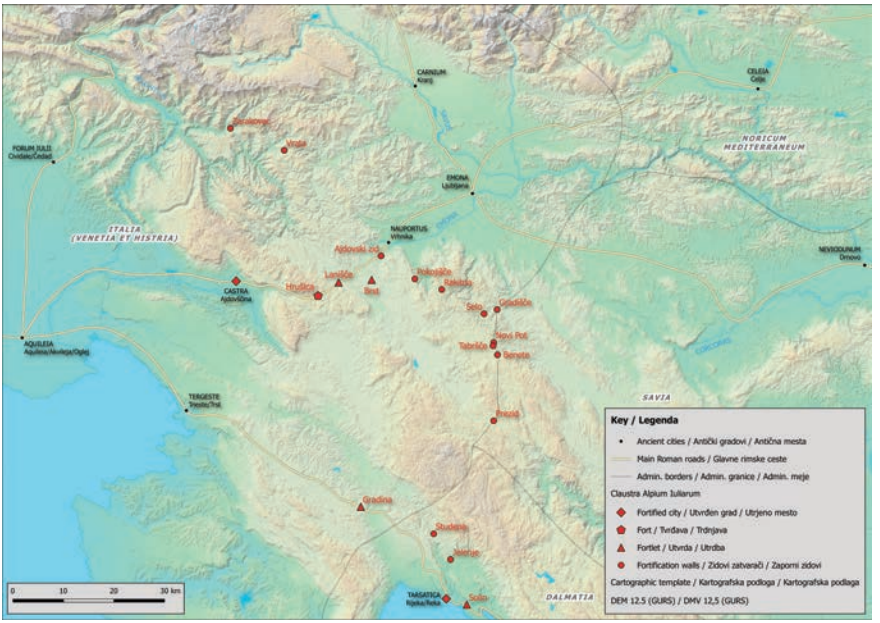
2.1. Archaeological and Historical Context

It was precisely in the context of the aforementioned projects that we came across the fundamental problem of clearly identifying individual structures and sites relevant to the defence system. While in ancient literary sources the main function of the *Claustra Alpium Iuliarum* as land barriers is distinctly emphasized (Šašel 1971; Kos 2014a, 114–122), it is also evident that it is possible to bar the land in different manners and as part of a more or less organically organized and unitary system. Thus, two main schools of thought have developed. One is more restrictive and considers as parts of the system only those Late Roman sites of a purely military character distinguished by linear barriers (large walls, ranging from a few tens of meters long to more than seven kilometres, mostly equipped with towers or even fortlets and forts), located in the area of the south-eastern Alps, i.e. in the ancient *Alpes Iuliae*, mainly near official road routes to channel the traffic over them (Kos 2013, 2014a, 2014b; Kusetič 2014). The other school of thought is more inclusive, comprising a broader zone and in addition to the usual Late Roman barrier walls, also includes Late Antique fortified hilltop settlements located in the wider area between north-eastern Italy and the south-eastern Alps, with a more or less pronounced military presence, but not characterised by linear barriers (Ciglenečki and Milavec 2009; Ciglenečki 2011, 2015, 2016; see also Milavec 2017, 157–158).

Dissemination is known to require simplification of the various possible hypotheses and clear identification, which is a sore issue in the archaeo-

logical field. For the purposes of the aforementioned projects, twenty sites were thus selected, located in present-day Slovenia and Croatia (Figure 1). They correspond to ascertained linear barriers, also including a number of forts in the same areas, which are partly structurally connected to the same linear barriers, with unitary constructive and chronological characteristics. The aforeentioned sites are located in conjunction with identified or hypothetical road connections belonging to the main *viae publicae* and numerous minor roads in the area. This way, these sites were undoubtedly identified as part of the defence system, not excluding, however, that it relied for its operation also on a broader context and on additional sites of a more heterogeneous and complex character.

Figure 1: Map of the Claustra Alpium Iuliarum defence system (linear barriers, forts and fortlets), with indication of main ancient settlements and roads, as well as provincial boundaries. Map: Jure Kusetič, National Museum of Slovenia.



However, the operation, i.e. the function of the *Claustra Alpium Iuliarum* has also given rise to considerable debate, partly related to their chronology, an issue that is also important to the aforementioned topic of site identification. The presence of the *Claustra Alpium Iuliarum* seems to be

documented as early as the year 269/270 AD in the *Vita Aureliani* (Historia Augusta 1998, 268–269[5]; cf. Kos 2014c, 118). Various literary sources, however, focus mainly on their importance during the civil wars between 350 and 352 (when, however, Hrušica is already referred to as an old fortress: Iul. 3.17), as well as in 388 and 394, while they are no longer mentiones during the crucial invasions in 408 and 452 (Kos 2014c, 121). As observed by Aldo Marcone, the *Claustra Alpium Iuliarum* 'serve more as a battleground between emperors among themselves and between emperors and usurpers than as a barrier against the barbarian hordes' (Marcone 2004, 354). Nevertheless, it is hard to imagine that such an extensive system was conceived as a whole and, above all, maintained over time for this purpose alone. Marcone himself also pointed out that the connections between the *Illyricum* and the Po Valley are right in this area facilitated by a series of passes that are at an easy altitude when compared to other areas of the Alpine arc (ibid., 344). By comparison, even today these are extremely heavily travelled areas within recent migration waves. The potential threat of invasions through this corridor, also mentioned in some sources[6], should have at least constituted an incentive for the construction of the system. However, it may also have had other purposes, such as traffic control, including trade (Kos 2014a, 36), with a particular emphasis on protecting people and goods along the route, which were often in danger due to the intense brigand activity, as attested by numerous sources (Bigliardi 2004, 326)[7]. The control of internal migration flows[8], including those of refugees and of a basically peaceful nature, may also be another possible purpose of the system, as well as protecting agricultural production in the high plains and suppressing raids by gangs of various provenance (Poulter 2013, 22, 24, 27). A combination of several of the aforementioned reasons is also probable. However, it should be noted that the general scarcity of artefacts found in the area of the actual linear barriers, i.e. the walls, would more

5 SHA, *Vita Aureliani* 37.5–6.

6 Cf. especially St. Ambrose for the years 374 (*De excessu fratris Satyri* 1.31) and 392 (*De obitu Valent.* 4).

7 See also the funerary monument from Ajdovščina (*Castra*) dedicated to *Antonius Valentinus*, who was killed by robbers at *Scelerata* while crossing the *Alpes Iuliae* (Pais 1922, 401–404; Buonopane 2016, 45; with many other examples). On the problem of Roman brigandage in the *regio X* cf. especially Cerva (1998).

8 On internal migration, nomenclature and categories in Roman law see Moatti (2016).

likely correspond to a temporary and short-term function and occupation in the event of sudden attacks (either internal or external invaders), rather than a permanent and prolonged control of the territory and traffic, which would have required continuous deployment of garrisons on site.

2.2 Non-invasive Research Approaches

As is well known, LiDAR imaging is available *online* for the entire Slovenian national territory (Triglav Čekada and Bric 2015). Thus, there are several reports of newly spotted walls and barriers, even made by non-professionals who have become interested in examining LiDAR images. When verifying LiDAR data in the field, it proved crucial to consider distinctive characteristics, such as the thickness of the walls (which in the case of the known remains of the *Claustra Alpium Iuliarum* is never less than 90 cm, i.e. three Roman feet), the construction technique (consisting of medium-large roughly hewn elements, generally, but not always, bound by mortar[9]), the presence of towers (mostly measuring between 4 x 4 m and 6 x 6 m) or small wall protrusions, which were probably intended to support wooden walkways along the walls (see below, Figure 4) (Kos 2014a, 22–23, 32–33; Kusetič 2014, 104–106). The analysis of the LiDAR data made it possible to recognise additional sections for some already known walls, both in Slovenia (Kusetič 2019, 6–7) and in Croatia, where the area was surveyed with LiDAR technology within the framework of the aforementioned Claustra project (Višnjić 2016). It also enabled researchers of the National Museum of Slovenia to re-identify the course of the barrier at Vrata, not far from Cerkno in Slovenia, previously partially known through notes of Pavle Blaznik and Nada Osmuk (Kusetič 2019, 11–12).

A recent master's thesis (Biščak 2022)[10] also analysed the visibility of one of the barriers of the defence system, namely the Ajdovski zid near Vrhni-

9 Some of the barriers in Croatia show dry construction sections: a short adjunct wall at Kičej in the Studena barrier sector (Višnjić et al. 2019a, 159, figs. 1 and 4), some sections of the Jelenje barrier at Borovica and Tomažina (Višnjić et al. 2019c, 119), both side walls of the U-shaped barrier in the area of Prezid, i.e. Babno polje, right on the Slovenian-Croatian national border (Lipovac Vrkljan and Šiljeg 2006, 81; Višnjić et al. 2019b, 191).

10 The master's thesis was prepared at the Department of Archaeology at the University of Ljubljana, under the mentorship of myself and Dimitrij Mlekuž Vrhovnik.

ka. The thesis used the QGIS program to investigate the visibility from the Ajdovski zid to the surrounding area and the visibility of the barrier from selected points in the area, as well as the mutual visibility of individual sections of the barrier itself. The analysis showed that the Ajdovski zid barrier enabled the monitoring of nearby roads and that the Ajdovski zid and Lanišče barriers could communicate with each other, as the visibility between them is excellent. The integration of the barrier into the terrain itself shows to be optimal based on the visibility analysis. Any other integration into the terrain would disturb the main fields of view that the actual layout offers.

2.3. Recent on-site Interventions

Archaeological research and interventions aimed at the presentation and interpretation of the *Claustra Alpium Iuliarum* sites have been carried out in the last twenty years in Rijeka, Solin near Kostrena, Jelenje, Studena, Pasjak and Prezid / Babno polje on the Croatian side. In Slovenia, similar activities have been carried out at the barriers of Benete, Novi pot, Gradišče pri Robu and Ajdovski zid, as well as in Vrhnika, Hrušica and Ajdovščina. In the following, I will focus on these locations, but small on-site interventions were over time implemented at almost all locations of the defence system, as they have been equipped with information boards and signposts. The interventions were implemented in accordance with common conservation guidelines and with the authorisation of all responsible institutions and owners.

Rijeka

Since 2007, large sections of *opus mixtum* structures pertaining to the south-western part of the *principia*, i.e. the military headquarters, of *Tarsatica*[11] have been brought to light and displayed *in situ* as an initiative of the municipality of Rijeka, but with the collaboration of the Croatian Conservation Institute (*Hrvatski restauratorski zavod*). Parts of the building are

11 The first to mention *Tarsatica* is Pliny (Plin., *HN* 3.140), precisely as *oppidum*; it became *municipium* probably in Flavian times, see Šašel and Petru (1971, 53) – especially in relation to literary sources – and Višnjić (2019, 71).

still incorporated into the surrounding architecture of the historic centre of Rijeka, but the layout of the complex, which has a large porticoed courtyard as its central space, is clearly recognisable. On the western side, which has been fully excavated, lies a row of rooms, while on the northern side, the remains of the main wing with the *aedes principiorum*, i.e. the shrine of the standards, and adjoining rooms have been discovered. On the southern side of the building was a monumental entrance, to which belongs the famous Roman arch. The latter is built with large limestone blocks and presents simple mouldings (Radić Štivić and Bekić 2009; Kusetič 2013, 35–37; Višnjić 2019). Luka Bekić dated the construction of the *principia* between 260 and 270 AD (Bekić 2009, 220), Peter Kos slightly later, towards the end of the 270s or in the early 280s, and its abandonment at the beginning of the 5th century (Kos 2012, 299; 2014a, 32–35; 2014c, 127). The coastal town of *Tarsatica* was surrounded by walls at this time. Some linear barriers also fortified the town's hinterland: five sections of barriers extend to the north, in the upper parts of the modern city, between the Calvary Hill (Kalvarija) and the Saint Catherine's Hill (Sveta Katarina) (Kusetič 2013, 34–38; Višnjić 2019).

The display of Roman remains has a long tradition in Rijeka. Several sections of linear barriers have long been displayed, but conservation and valorisation efforts have concentrated in recent years on the area of the *principia*, the remains of which have been consolidated and displayed to the public. A 3D reconstruction has been designed for the whole complex. An on-site an archaeo-stereoscope enables the visitors to see the reconstruction in real proportions. Since the site is located in the very centre of the city, regular maintenance of the remains is implemented by the municipality of Rijeka and the Croatian Conservation Institute.

Solin

The fortlet of Solin (Figure 2), located in the municipality of Kostrena, southeast of Rijeka, has been undergoing excavations for the Maritime and Historical Museum of the Croatian Littoral in Rijeka since 2007 (*Pomorski i povijesni muzej Hrvatskog primorja Rijeka*): only the southern side (the only accessible one) of the fortlet was protected by 2 m wide walls. Archaeological research shows that a hill-fort was previously located on the same location (Starac 2019b).

All discovered walls of the fortlet were eventually consolidated and displayed to the public and are subject to regular maintenance, as the site is jointly managed by the municipality of Kostrena and the Maritime and History Museum of the Croatian Littoral in Rijeka.

Figure 2: Solin near Kostrena (Croatia), archaeological remains of the late Roman fort facing west, with Rijeka in the background. Photo credit: Petar Fabijan.



Pasjak

A similar situation exists at the Pasjak fortlet, situated in the municipality of Matulji, on the route of the *Tarsatica–Tergeste* road. The fortlet re-examined by the Maritime and History Museum of the Croatian Littoral in Rijeka between 1987 and 2006. Ranko Starac dates the construction of the fortlet with 3 m thick walls, also located above an earlier prehistoric hillfort, between 250 and 270 AD, and assumes its early abandonment shortly afterwards (Starac 2019a).

Here too, remains have been discovered, consolidated and displayed to the public. Maintenance activities are performed only occasionally.

Jelenje

Recent archaeological research performed at the barrier, located in the municipalities of Jelenje and Čavle, was coordinated by Josip Višnjić from

the Croatian Conservation Institute. In 2015 and 2017, two towers of the Jelenje barrier were excavated in Obrovac. From the first a charcoal sample, relevant to the phase of use of the site, was dated by the C14 method to 340-425 (95 % probability) or 385–420 AD (68 % probability). During the excavation, fragments of smooth plaster were collected, which, as also observed in some other barriers, must have covered the walls of the tower. As with the other *claustra* towers, no tiles were found, suggesting the presence of a wooden roof. Remains of ceramic and glass artefacts collected during the excavation indicate that the tower, like some others, was at least partly used as temporary accommodation for soldiers (Višnjić et al. 2019c, 128–130).

Parts of the Jelenje barrier have been consolidated and displayed to the public. The 3D reconstruction of the barrier is also visible through an archaeo-stereoscope, placed at the Frankopan Castle of Grobnik situated in front of the barrier. Also in this case, maintenance activities are performed only occasionally.

Studena

Excavations were carried out at the Studena barrier (in the area of the municipalities of Klana and Jelenje), in 2005–2006 (Starac 2009, 279–285) and in 2015, specifically in the locality of Mlake, where a tower was discovered. The tower was crossed by a footpath, and a road probably ran alongside the tower, lined on the other side by another tower. A charcoal sample was analysed using the C14 method and provided a date of the tower's phase of use between 250–400 (95 % probability) or 260–280 or 325–385 AD (68 % probability) (Višnjić et al. 2019a, 154–165).

These remains were also over time consolidated and presented to the public. Maintenance activities are performed occasionally.

Prezid / Babno polje

The Prezid / Babno polje barrier lies on the national border between Croatia and Slovenia (respectively on the territory of the municipalities of Prezid and Loška dolina). The barrier was excavated in 2018 in Deuce. In addition to the characteristics also found at other *Claustra Alpium Iuliarum* sites (1.2 m thick wall with wall protrusions intended to support a wooden walkway), the coexistence of one part of the wall built with mortar and the other with dry construction has been documented here (Višnjić et al. 2019b, 198).

The discovered section was consolidated, but as a border area controlled by border policy, several parts of the barrier are *de facto* not accessible to the public.

Benete

Archaeological research was recently carried out at the Benete barrier, in the area of the municipalities of Bloke and Sodražica, on Slovenian territory. Archaeologists from the National Museum of Slovenia (*Narodni muzej Slovenije*), guided by Jure Kusetič and supported by other collaborators, conducted geophysical research and LiDAR analysis (Kusetič and Mušič 2019; Kusetič 2019, 5). The Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage of Slovenia (*Zavod za varstvo kulturne dediščine Slovenije*) conducted archaeological excavations at the site of a tower, which had previously already been partially excavated, coordinated by Maja Lavrič. Fragments of rough plaster were present on the inner and outer sides of the tower walls, and plaster fragments with special marks were also found: two had imprints of a circular object, one had engravings possibly referable to an extemporary rosette engraved in the fresh plaster, and one fragment was decorated with a red fillet on a white background. Inside the tower was a cocciopesto floor, and pavement remains were also found outside the tower. The tower was damaged on the outer side and later repaired. Charcoal samples analysed using the C14 method date the construction of the tower to a period slightly later than 300 AD, and its renovation to 350/360 AD. Again, only a few fragments of kitchen ceramics and glass, a nail and a fragment of bronze sheet metal were found (Lavrič, Mori and Vršnik 2019).

The tower was then consolidated and presented to the public. Maintenance activities are performed only occasionally.

Novi pot

Not far away lies the Novi pot barrier (municipality of Sodražica), which itself is a recent accidental discovery, made during road works in 2011. It is a 300 m long and 2 m thick wall with two towers. Geophysical investigations have shown that one of them was crossed by a road, the route of which has yet to be reconstructed (Kusetič 2019, 5–6).

Gradišče pri Robu

At the Gradišče pri Robu barrier (municipality of Velike Lašče), a small section of the wall was also cleaned (Lavrić and Mori 2019), consolidated and displayed by the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage of Slovenia. The site was also equipped with an archaeo-stereoscope showing the 3D reconstruction of the barrier (Figure 3). Archaeo-stereoscopes are a convenient solution that offers visitors a vivid picture of attempted reconstructions of archaeological remains, especially in areas without electricity, as it is the case at most locations of the *Claustra Alpium Iuliarum* system. However, we have to point out that our archaeo-stereoscopes demonstrated to be sensitive to humidity and changing temperatures, which is truly demanding for regular maintenance.

Figure 3: Gradišče pri Robu: 1. the barrier wall before excavation (photo credit: Andrej Blatnik); 2. the wall after excavation (photo credit: Tajda Senica); 3. information board and archaeo-stereoscope in front of the excavated remains (photo credit: Tajda Senica); 4. reconstruction of the original appearance of the barrier with a masonry walkway and wooden-roofed towers, visible through the archaeo-stereoscope (image: Link 3D).



Maintenance activities at this site are performed occasionally. The barrier is located on a geological-archaeological trail managed by the local Zavod Parnas team, which cares for it and organizes activities on a regular basis (see here below chapter 2.4).

Ajdovski zid

The Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage of Slovenia excavated two towers at two different locations of the Ajdovski zid (i.e. the Pagans' Wall), namely at Cesarski vrh and Zaplana, which had been partially explored before. This is the longest barrier of the defence system. It is located in the area of the municipalities of Vrhnika and a smaller part of Logatec. At the tower excavated at Zaplana, a charcoal sample pertinent to its phase of use, was dated using the C14 method between 174 and 341 AD (Lavrič 2019, 325).

Figure 4: 3D reconstruction of the barrier of Ajdovski zid near Vrhnika, with a wooden walkway and wooden-roofed towers, as it can be seen through the archaeo-stereoscope placed in front of the wall at Zaplana. Image: Link3D.



Both towers were consolidated and presented to the public. At the location of Zaplana, an archaeo-stereoscope showing the 3D reconstruction was placed in front of the remains (Figure 4).

At the same time, a new trail was created that allows visitors to learn about the remains and their special natural ambient in a playful way. The trail was designed by the Zavod Škrateljc on the initiative of the Ivan Cankar Institute of Culture, Sports and Tourism Vrhnika (*Zavod Ivana Cankarja za kulturo,* šport *in turizem Vrhnika*) with the help of the Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Nature Conservation (*Zavod Republike Slovenije za varstvo narave*).

Vrhnika (Hrib)

In 2018, construction works and consequent archaeological research, not related to any of the aforementioned projects, were carried out in the southern part of Vrhnika, considerably further south than the older Roman settlement core of *Nauportus,* which appears to be multinucleated and fluctuant during its chronological evolution (Horvat 2020). The work involved the locality of Hrib (or Gradišče), where buildings from the 1st and 2nd centuries AD, pertinent to a separate settlement core[12], were also found, as well as the remains of a pentagonal fortress of later date, which was already excavated by Samuel Jenny in 1900. The archaeological research was coordinated by Tina Žerjal from the company Arhej d.o.o.. Part of the 2.03 m thick northern wall of the fortress was investigated. The area was considerably disrupted and no conclusive results could be obtained for dating of construction of the fortress wall, but the discovery of a coin of Constantius II, dated to 351–355 AD, would seem to indicate that the fortress was still in use during this period (Žerjal 2019, 352). The dating and context of this fortress have long been debated. The fortress is crossed by the *Emona–Aquileia* road, but the position of the fortress in front, i.e. to the east of the Ajdovski zid barrier, makes a direct connection with the linear barrier system of the *Claustra Alpium Iuliarum* difficult, for obvious strategic reasons (Saria 1939, 145; Kos 2014a, 36). However, it should be noted that the functioning of an internal defence system, i.e. a system for controlling the territory as a whole, could differ from the functioning log-

12 Cf. Horvat 2020, 104. It should be noted that this settlement is detached from those located further north at Breg, Dolge Njive and Stara Pošta, as it is separated from them by a large cemetery in the Stara Cesta area, see Horvat (2020, 96, fig. 1).

ic of similar structures on the borders of the Roman Empire, since the dichotomy between internal and enemy territory is absent in this case. Therefore, a connection of this fortress with the *Claustra Alpium Iuliarum* cannot be dismissed out of hand.

This research was not conducted as part of the aforementioned European projects. However, in the frame of the Claustra+ project, one of the already displayed circular towers of the fortress (located in the entrance area of the cemetery of Vrhnika) was equipped with an information board, and maintenance activities were also performed several times in order to clean the tower of vegetation.

Hrušica

The fortress and the barrier walls of Hrušica, i.e. *Ad Pirum*, in the area of the municipalities of Ajdovščina and Postojna, have been the subjectt of several excavations in the past. Archaeological research in recent years has focused on the improvement of the topographic documentation and on the evaluation of the results and finds of older excavations (Kusetič 2019, 11).

The visitor infrastructure of the site has been enriched by several interactive tools and by a small exposition and info point, managed on-site by the National Museum of Slovenia.

Ajdovščina

Recently and again without any connection to aforementioned European projects, extensive excavations (2017–2019) and presentation activities (2020) have also been carried out in the fortress of *Castra* in Ajdovščina. The fortress is similar in size to the aforementioned fortress of Vrhnika (Hrib), i.e. 2.6 ha. It is located west of various barriers that controlled the *Emona*–Aquileia road. It should be noted that the site includes the *mansio Fluvio Frigido*, dating back to the late 1st century BC. This road station is mentioned in the *Itinerarium Antonini* and the *Tabula Peutingeriana* and may have developed as a *vicus* or, in any case, a larger settlement, which was later fortified and designated as *mutatio Castra* in the *Itinerarium Burdigalense*. Therefore, the area contains archaeological remains pertaining to both of these two main development periods (Žerjal and Tratnik 2020).

The fortress is sub-oval in shape and has 14 circular towers, which were built in the 70s or 80s of the 3rd century AD (Kos 2012, 285; 2014a, 35). The most recent archaeological work was coordinated by Luka Rozman for the companies Magelan d.o.o. and Avgusta d.o.o. Numerous rooms of building II were identified. This building, containing baths, is located on the southern edge of the fortress, close to the walls and was already excavated in the 1980s (Osmuk 1986, 258–260). The recently investigated rooms of the complex include a large room with a row of columns in the northern part of the building and an apsidal room in its eastern part. Adjoining building IV consists of at least five rooms with hearths. In the central part of the fortress, a continuation of the so-called atrium house, previously excavated by Drago Svoljšak (Svoljšak 1970, 155–157; Svoljšak et al. 2013, 47–49, 68), was found. The building had a portico on the south side, along the street, as well as an inner porticoed courtyard, and used to reach as far as the eastern wall, which constituted one of the main complexes of the fortress. All buildings were develop during several construction phases. Archaeological finds can be dated between the mid-1st to the 5th century AD, but noticeable concentration dates from the last third of the 3rd to the end of the 4th century (Urek et al. 2019; Urek and Kovačič 2020).

New data are also available for the settlement situation *extra muros*, especially for the area located south-west of the walls, where archaeological remains again belong to the 1st and first half of the 2nd century AD, the second half of the 2nd and 3rd centuries, and especially to the 4th and first half of the 5th centuries (Žerjal and Tratnik 2017).

Much has been written about the functionof the *Castra*, with its direct connection to the *Claustra Alpium Iuliarum* system sometimes being questioned, as well as its military purpose (Kos 2014b, 419; 2017, 301), and it has been compared to numerous urban centres in northern Italy that were equipped with walls during the same period. However, it should be noted that its very name, *Castra*, leaves little doubt as to its military significance. Moreover, the urban centres named as comparison for civil settlements encircled by walls in the Late Roman times (Rimini, Piacenza, Parma, Bologna, Verona; Pavia, Oderzo, Como, Aquileia, Milan, Cividale; Rijeka, Trento, Mantua, Vicenza, Trieste – cf. Žerjal and Tratnik 2017, 258) appear hardly equivalent to the site in question, for which not even the function

as *vicus* is ascertained. The position of the site, at the rear of several barriers, seems at least very suitable for an efficient supply of a defence system. A thorough evaluation of the material discovered during the recent extensive excavations will hopefully shed some light and clarify the question of the function and character of the site.

Ajdovščina has an established tradition of displaying remains of the fortress, and these recent works were also connected to the display of some of the discovered remains[13].

2.4 Establishment of Participative Management Procedures

As shown in the previous chapter, several parts of the defence system were displayed to the public. Physical and information accessibility of the remains was enhanced. As already mentioned, almost all locations of the defence system were equipped with information boards and signposts. Various forms of informative material were printed, and info points about the system are available in Rijeka, Vrhnika and Hrušica. 3D reconstructions were designed for several sites and a mobile app about the system was created.

The Claustra and Claustra+ projects also tackled the crucial challenge of creating the basis for joint management, improving the attractiveness and highlighting development opportunities of the defence system, also by connecting its stakeholders. With the establishment of a consortium of 42 stakeholders called the 'Partnership for the conservation and revitalisation of the heritage of the Claustra defence system', several activities were launched, focused on the development of a joint tourism product and participatory forms of management. The consortium was established in 2019 after several preparatory workshops and was led by myself until 2023, when the presidency was taken over by the mayor of the municipality of Čabar, Antonio Dražović.

Despite diverse ownership situations and responsibilities, the consortium enables a soft form of joint management of the remains of the system, the exchange of best practices and common tools, in accordance with

13 For this presentation the responsible conservator Patricija Bratina from the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage of Slovenia was awarded by the Slovenian Archaeological Society.

the competences and possibilities of the members. Several activities for visitors were tested during the Claustra+ project, including, for example, accommodation facilities in a temporary Roman camp, horseback riding visits and guided tours escorted by Roman soldiers (Figure 5). These pilot actions now serve as inspiration for new activities that the consortium members offer to visitors. As an example, we can mention the programme 'Meeting with a Roman horseman', offered by the local institute Zavod Parnas and the Mouse Valley Ranch, where visitors can meet a Roman horseman in full 4th-century gear while walking along the geological-archaeological trail at Gradišče pri Robu (Zavod Parnas 2025).

Figure 5: Guided tour from the Hrušica fortress to the Lanišče fortlet, escorted by Roman soldiers. Photo credit: Fulvio Grisoni.



3 Conclusion

In various segments, either management, presentation, interpretation or research, this overview shows that 'the road to success is always under construction', quoting the wise words of Lily Tomlin.

Research activities still need to be performed and widened in order to improve the interpretation of the defence system. The connection with the

Claustra Alpium Iuliarum system of several archaeological sites from the old and recent periods remains to be verified and despite the considerable progress made on several fronts, many questions remain and probably will always remain open in the interpretation of this very complex and intriguing defence system.

The presentation of archaeological remains, information boards and other eventual visitor infrastructure is unfortunately always associated with laborious maintenance work and this is where we are limping. Automation of monitoring and maintenance protocols still needs to be established. This deficiency is undoubtedly more evident in the case of archaeological remains compared to architectural monuments, which are subject to regular maintenance work, at least during use. Since the lack of regular maintenance is evident in almost every archaeological presentation (and there is little hope of a changing attitudes), it is important to always consider the principle of minimal intervention: the smaller the intervention, the smaller the maintenance effort.

The various activities that have made a significant contribution to research, heritage preservation, and sustainable tourism have been performed in different time frames and in different areas within different projects. Nevertheless, sound results were achieved. This was mainly made possible based on the subsequent preparation of solid planning documents, which were conceived as unitary, cross-border plans of intervention, represented first by the conservation plan, followed by the management plan and later on by the development guidelines for the destination *Claustra Alpium Iuliarum*, the interpretation plan of the cultural touristic route, as well as the promotion plan of the cultural touristic product.

These documents also helped to overcome challenges related to the coordination and management of a transnational, serial cultural heritage site with shared features, which have to be presented to the public in a uniform way, regardless of the uniqueness of every singular site. Within heritage studies, the category of serial sites is still underrepresented and our case study offers valuable insights and experiences that contribute to the assessment of this heritage category.

The last major project, Claustra+, was concluded in 2020. Some years later, we can still acknowledge it as a successful initiative, like all the pre-

vious projects. Of course, the activities are not so intense now as they were during the time of the realization of the projects. However, the consortium 'Partnership for the conservation and revitalisation of the heritage of the Claustra defence system' still exists and some activities are still being carried out. Overall, we can highlight the importance of minimal intervention, the need for sustainable maintenance protocols, and the value of the participatory consortium. At the same time, we must conclude that these extensive defence systems were difficult to maintain for the Romans, just as they are difficult to maintain for us.

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18 Also available in Croatian.

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When Archaeology Comes to Life in 3D: From Virtual Reality to Archaeogaming

ABSTRACT: This article offers an overview of how digital technologies are increasingly applied in archaeology and heritage communication. Selected examples are highlighted that illustrate how these methods support documentation, reconstruction, and public presentation of archaeological heritage. In addition, the emerging field of archaeogaming is discussed as a way in which archaeological content finds new entry points into popular culture and education. Rather than providing a comprehensive study, the article aims to demonstrate how digital approaches can enrich both archaeological practice and heritage communication, while also raising questions about authenticity, sustainability, and social responsibility.

Keywords: Digital Archaeology; Cultural Heritage; Heritage Communication; Public Archaeology; Archaeogaming

1 Introduction

Archaeology has undergone a profound methodological transformation in recent decades. While 3D scanning and 3D modelling have become standard tools of archaeological documentation, digital visualisations, augmented reality (AR), and virtual reality (VR) are opening new pathways for communicating archaeological research (e.g. Bekele 2017; Ellenberger 2017; Vincent et al. 2017; Evans and Daly 2006; Barceló, Forte and Sanders 2000). These technologies are increasingly applied not only in scientific projects and museums, but also in cultural tourism, public education, and the broader field of public archaeology (Merriman 2004; Curk 2022), which is also gaining importance in Slovenia (see also Jana Puhar in this volume).

Archaeology has always been an interdisciplinary discipline, combining methods from the humanities and natural sciences to trace the cultural development of humanity from its beginnings to historical times. It

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seeks to reconstruct social and economic forms of organization, as well as symbolic and spiritual expressions, through artefacts and immovable remains. In this sense, archaeology makes a fundamental contribution to understanding the foundations of modern civilizations.

Cultural heritage, at the centre of this discipline, is a sensitive and non-renewable component of collective memory. Its preservation and communication require not only traditional archaeological methods, but increasingly also innovative digital approaches. The aim of this article is to demonstrate, through selected examples, how new technologies can help to 'bring archaeology to life' and make cultural heritage accessible to a wider audience, while also supporting new interpretative approaches that seek to understand the people behind the material remains – both in the past and in the present.

2 Archaeological Heritage as a Societal Resource

Archaeological heritage constitutes a fundamental foundation for understanding the cultural development of past and present civilizations. UNESCO has emphasized culture as a global public good, underscoring that cultural heritage is a sensitive and irreplaceable resource worthy of protection[2]. Yet, this heritage is increasingly endangered by a variety of natural and anthropogenic factors, including geological processes, climate change, urban expansion, industrial development, and agriculture[3]. Examples such as large-scale mining of lignite in Germany (Stäuble 2010) or the creation of artificial reservoirs demonstrate the irreversible destruction of archaeological sites. Even where heritage authorities attempt to document, comprehensive recording often proves impossible, as for example in the Upper Euphrates region of southeastern Turkey, where sites such as Nevalı Çori sank beneath the waters of the Atatürk Dam reservoir (Schmidt 2016, 68).

Armed conflicts add a further dimension to the threat. Targeted destruction of sites, looting of museums, illegal excavations and trafficking

2 UNESCO 20241212_Policy Brief Culture as a Global Public Good: https://www.unesco.org/sites/default/files/medias/fichiers/2024/12/20241212_Policy%20Brief%20Culture%20as%20a%20Global%20Public%20Good.pdf.
3 UNESCO World Heritage in Danger: https://whc.unesco.org/en/danger/.

of artefacts have become widespread phenomena, as illustrated by the devastation of Nimrud in Iraq and Palmyra in Syria (e.g. Perko 2018; Turku 2018; Khunti 2018, 1) or the destruction of the Buddha statues in the Bamyan Valley in Afghanistan (Petzet 2009). More recent cases, such as damage to heritage sites and museums in Gaza and Ukraine, show that cultural heritage remains acutely vulnerable in contemporary conflicts. Illegal excavations also continue to devastate archaeological landscapes; for instance, at the site of Isin in Iraq, uncontrolled digging has left the terrain riddled with craters, permanently erasing contextual information essential for archaeological interpretation (e.g. van Ess, Hilgert and Salje 2014, 375, fig. 65.4).

Against this background, the role of archaeology extends well beyond the reconstruction of ancient cultures. International frameworks, such as the Council of Europe's *Strategy 21,* highlight heritage as a bridge for intercultural understanding and societal connection (Pirkovič 2019)[4]. Adopted in 2017, the strategy outlines three key dimensions: the social component (heritage as a factor of well-being), the economic and territorial component (heritage as a driver of development and cultural tourism), and the knowledge component (heritage as a field of education and research). Archaeological and cultural heritage is thus framed not only as a scientific concern, but also as a resource with broad social and economic significance.

This perspective resonates with the concept of collective memory, first introduced by Maurice Halbwachs in *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire* (1925) (Halbwachs 1980) and later further elaborated by Aleida and Jan Assmann, who emphasized its role in shaping cultural identity. Archaeological heritage forms part of a shared memory, shaped by space, time, rituals and objects, thereby connecting communities across generations. It can foster intercultural dialogue, promote inclusion, create employment opportunities, and enhance quality of life. In this sense, heritage emerges as both a research subject and a societal responsibility – reflecting the explicit goals of *public archaeology* and the central mission of contemporary museums (Merriman 2004).

4 Https://www.coe.int/en/web/culture-and-heritage/strategy-21.

Building on these insights, the challenge lies in how to communicate and render heritage accessible in the 21st century, in line with the principles of the Council of Europe's *Faro Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society* (2005)[5]. Traditional approaches – reconstruction drawings, scale models, reconstructions (Figure 1) and information panels at sites – are now increasingly complemented by advanced digital methods, including 3D visualization, augmented reality (AR), and virtual reality (VR). These techniques not only enrich museum displays and archaeological parks, but also expand access beyond academic contexts. In alignment with *Strategy 21*, innovative technologies are explicitly recommended as a means of making cultural heritage more widely available and strengthening its role as a global common good (compare Pirkovič 2019, 19–21).

Figure 1: Reconstruction of chalcolithic buildings at the Lemba archaeological site on Cyprus. Photo credit: Bine Kramberger.



5 Https://www.coe.int/en/web/culture-and-heritage/faro-convention.

3 Digital Methods in Archaeology

Archaeological knowledge has traditionally been derived from excavation, which is an inherently invasive process in which stratigraphic layers are uncovered, documented, and ultimately destroyed (e.g. Fera 2019; Pedeli and Pulga 2013; Barker 1993)[6]. Accurate recording through drawings, photographs, and measurements has therefore always been essential to preserve contextual information. While excavations remain indispensable, especially in the context of rescue archaeology, the last two decades have witnessed an increasing reliance on non-invasive techniques that safeguard the archaeological record while still generating rich data (e.g. Mušič et al. 2019; Bertók and Gáti 2014; Czajlik and Bödőcs 2013; Neubauer et al. 2013)[7].

Airborne laser scanning, or LiDAR, has become a particularly transformative method (e.g. Doneus and Fera 2019; Opitz and Cowley 2013). Laser scanners mounted on aircraft or drones capture millions of elevation points to create detailed digital models of the surface. These models allow archaeologists to detect features hidden beneath forest canopies or otherwise invisible from the ground. In many regions – from the South American rainforest (e.g. Prümers 2023, 31–37) to European cultural landscapes (e.g. Czajlik et al. 2019; Czajlik and Bödőcs 2013) – LiDAR has enabled the identification of entire archaeological landscapes without disturbing a single layer of soil, thereby reducing both costs and destruction.

Terrestrial laser scanning represents a complementary technique (e.g. Fehér 2013). By generating dense point clouds, it enables the creation of highly accurate three-dimensional models of sites, structures, and monuments. The method enables the recording of archaeological features with remarkable precision, allowing the reconstruction of spatial units that would otherwise be lost after excavation (e.g. Ludwig 2023; Zimmermann

6 The literature on the various analog and digital methods used in archaeological research in the past, and which are now standard practice in archaeological fieldwork, is extensive. The publications cited here can therefore only serve as examples.

7 See also Urankar's documentation system Zoot, developed for cultural heritage recording and museum integration (Urankar, Krajšek and Lipovec 2024).

and Capriuoli 2023). Similarly, Structure-from-Motion photogrammetry, which is based on the stitching of overlapping photographs, has emerged as a cost-effective tool for producing 3D models (e.g. Ludwig 2023, 53). Together, these techniques provide unprecedented accuracy compared to earlier analogue reconstructions.

Such technologies also enable sophisticated reconstructions of cultural heritage. A striking case is the Roman temple quarter in Baalbek, Lebanon, where 3D laser scanning has facilitated both meticulous documentation and a virtual reconstruction of the monumental complex (Burwitz 2023)[8]. The resulting application, Baalbek Reborn: Temples, integrates archaeological research with tourism, education, and cultural exchange. Baalbek, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and a long-standing venue for cultural festivals, illustrates the meaningful interweaving of science, heritage protection, and public engagement.

Beyond architecture, 3D scanning has revolutionized the documentation of artefacts (e.g. Schepers 2023; Ritter et al. 2023). Whereas objects were once recorded through technical drawings and photography, digital models now allow for detailed analysis and versatile modes of presentation. In some museum contexts, visitors can engage with interactive 3D displays or holograms[9], offering immersive encounters with archaeological objects and enhancing accessibility.

The integration of three-dimensional data further supports augmented reality (AR) applications that overlay reconstructions onto real-world environments via smartphones or tablets (e.g. Rivero et al. 2024; Ellenberger 2017; Vlahakis et al. 2002). Such applications enable visitors at archaeological sites to visualize monuments in their original form using smartphones, thereby deepening their experience. Virtual reality (VR) extends these possibilities by immersing users directly in reconstructed environ-

8 Researches in Baalbek, Lebanon, by the German Archaeological Institute (DAI): https://www.dainst.org/forschung/projekte/noslug/4484?tx_wfdaiprojects_projects%5Bnav%5D=open&cHash=3b7aa586f8a97e09771f4a166e878247.

9 For example in the LWL-Museum for Archaeology and Culture in Herne, Germany: https://www.lwl-landesmuseum-herne.de/de/unsere-digitalen-angebote/ .

ments (Barceló, Forte and Sanders 2000)[10]. Unlike AR, VR requires specialised equipment, yet it allows for highly interactive exploration, whether at archaeological sites, in museums, or in educational settings.

Finally, digital methods also extend beyond reconstructions of the past and include the creation of virtual museums (e.g. Carvajal, Morita and Bilmes 2020; Perko and Nestorović 2017; Styliani et al. 2009; Moscati 2007), where immersive and interactive online exhibitions are developed that simulate the museum experience in a digital space. Accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, these platforms offer a level of accessibility previously impossible: exhibitions can be viewed from anywhere and at any time, bypassing geographical, temporal or mobility-related constraints. They may include features such as 3D walkthroughs of galleries, high-resolution object models, annotated context information, multimedia content, and user interaction to deepen understanding. Such initiatives strongly resonate with the Council of Europe's *Strategy 21*, which places accessibility as a core principle in heritage management, advocating that cultural heritage must be comprehensible, participatory, and accessible to all. Beyond offering access to exhibitions, such platforms also open up new possibilities for interactive learning and participation, paving the way for innovative applications that combine education and digital engagement.

Together, these digital techniques transform the practice of archaeology by enhancing documentation, enabling reconstruction, and expanding public access. They are also of key importance for precise museum documentation, musealisation processes, and virtual reconstructions (Rodriguez-Garcia et al. 2024). They lay the groundwork for novel forms of engagement, including archaeogaming, which integrates archaeological content into digital entertainment and will be examined in the following section.

10 One example is the VR-Station of the Archaeological Museum Münster, Germany, which allows visitors since 2024 to experience early Christian heritage in today's Turkey (Asia Minor): https://www.uni-muenster.de/ArchaeologischesMuseum/aktuelles/doliche_vr.html. Another example is the 'virtual tour' into the Hallstatt salt mine in the Natural History Museum Vienna, Austria: https://www.nhm.at/en/research/prehistory/virtual_reality.

4 Archaeogaming: Science and Popular Culture

The emergence of 'archaeogaming' illustrates how archaeological knowledge and digital media intersect in novel ways (Mol et al. 2017; Reinhard 2018). The term itself has several meanings. As Andrew Reinhard has argued in his *Archaeogaming: An Introduction to Archaeology in and of Video Games* (2018), the term can refer to both the representation of archaeology in video games and to the archaeological study of games themselves as cultural artefacts. A striking example of the latter is the so-called 'Atari video game burial' in New Mexico, where unsold consoles and cartridges have become objects of contemporary archaeology (Reinhard 2018, 23–29). For the purposes of this article, however, the emphasis lies on the former: the integration of archaeological content into digital environments.

The aforementioned technologies, such as 3D scanning and visualization, provide the basis for the creation of historically grounded virtual worlds (Rodriguez-Garcia et al. 2024)[11]. These can serve as settings for games inspired by ancient civilizations such as Ancient Rome, for digital reconstructions used in narrative sequences, or even for interactive simulations of excavation techniques. Such applications allow players not only to explore the reconstructed past, but in some cases also to assume the role of archaeologists themselves – reminiscent of popular figures such as Indiana Jones[12] or Lara Croft (Deuber-Mankowsky 2005).

The spectrum of archaeogaming ranges from entertainment to education. One pioneering experiment was the digital reconstruction of the Neolithic site of Çatalhöyük in Turkey within the platform *Second Life* between 2007 and 2012 (Morgan 2009; 2019, 327–329). Based on excavation data, this virtual environment enabled students and their instructors to explore the prehistoric settlement with their avatars. This can be understood as a form of experimental archaeology in digital space, blending scholarly research with experiential learning.

11 See also: https://www.wessexarch.co.uk/archaeological-services/virtual-reality-vr-augmented-reality-ar-and-gaming.

12 The title character Dr. Henry Walton 'Indiana' Jones of the 'Indiana Jones' franchise was created by American filmmaker George Lucas: https://www.lucasfilm.com/productions/raiders-of-the-lost-ark/.

Commercial games also contribute to archaeogaming in diverse ways. Classic strategy titles such as *Caesar III*[13] (Figure 2) or *Age of Empires*[14] embed archaeological and historical knowledge into their mechanics, guiding players through the expansion of empires and the construction of ancient cities. At the same time, such examples also highlight the need for critical evaluation: to what extent do these games convey historically grounded knowledge, and where do they risk simplifying or distorting the past (compare Reinhard 2018, 192)? A systematic assessment of their impact remains essential, not only to identify their potential for public education, but also to address the ethical implications of how archaeology and history are represented in popular media.

Figure 2: Construction of an 'ancient Roman city' in the Video Game Caesar III (by Impressions Games). Screen capture by author.



13 Developed by Impressions Games and released in 1998: https://archive.org/details/Caesar_III_Sierra_Studios_Impressions_1998.

14 The first part of the franchise was developed by Ensemble Studios and released in 1997.

Other games depict archaeological practice, albeit with varying degrees of accuracy. An interesting example is *The Elder Scrolls Online* (ESO) (compare Reinhard 2018, 82–86), where excavation is presented as a specialized activity. Players must complete training at the 'Antiquarian Circle' before they are allowed to excavate; they then use a range of tools to uncover artefacts layer by layer (Figure 3). Errors in using the tools risk damaging the finds, which are subsequently assessed by experts and can even be displayed in museums. Although archaeology is not the central theme of the game, but rather a side activity, its mechanics echo real-life archaeological procedures and highlight, to a certain degree, the need for professional training.

Figure 3: 'Archaeological excavation' in the Video Game Elder Scrolls Online (by Zenimax Online Studios). Screen capture by author.



However, the popular image of archaeology is often shaped more by stereotypes than by reality. The enduring influence of Indiana Jones[15] has fostered an adventurous, treasure-hunting cliché that diverges sharply from the scientific practice of archaeology. This is reinforced by media portrayals that conflate archaeology with the aforementioned clichés, or by television programs that glamorize the use of metal detectors to search for

15 See footnote 10.

'treasures' by hobby 'archaeologists'[16]. In Europe, such activities are heavily regulated, and unsupervised searching represents a serious challenge for heritage protection (e.g. Jurišić et al. 2019, 59, 61, 67, 75). The marketing of real and toy metal detectors[17], which fail to clearly communicate legal restrictions, illustrates the persistent gap between popular perception and archaeological practice (Gaspari 2018, 2022).

These examples underline the dual potential of archaeogaming and the (popular) communication of archaeological science: it can both reinforce misconceptions and provide opportunities for more accurate and engaging representations of archaeology. The challenge lies in harnessing digital platforms not merely for entertainment, but also to raise awareness of archaeology as a scientific discipline and to communicate its methods and responsibilities to a wider public. These reflections also resonate with broader initiatives in digital heritage, such as virtual museums and online exhibitions, where the boundaries between entertainment, education, and public communication are increasingly fluid. In this context, 'serious games' are particularly promising, as they are explicitly designed to combine entertainment with educational objectives, and have been shown to foster learning and engagement in cultural heritage contexts (Mortara et al. 2014).

4.1 Case Study: Iron-Age-Danube and Digital Tools

An illustrative example of how archaeology can integrate digital media into both research and public communication is the Interreg *Iron-Age-Danube project*. The project 'Monumentalized Early Iron Age Landscapes in the Danube river basin' (Iron-Age-Danube), led by Marko Mele and the Universalmuseum Joanneum (Graz), ran from 2017–2019 and was part of the Interreg Danube Transnational Programme of the

16 For example in the American reality television series 'Diggers' (2013–2015) on National Geographic. The show has been discontinued, but it is still being re-broadcast on television. The Society for American Archaeology took action against the show since it was encouraging the looting of archaeological sites: https://www.huffpost.com/entry/archaeologist_n_1315867.

17 For example the model CANGSTARTDET6L by Bluemarble, sold under the product description National Geographic Metal Detector Starter Kit for Kids.

European Union[18]. Within this framework, the consortium developed the e-learning application 'Archaeology: History Uncovered', which combined serious content with game elements and was available in five languages (Mele 2021, 70; Hellmuth Kramberger 2021, 71) (Figure 4). The app guided users through the entire archaeological workflow – from preliminary research and project approval to excavation, documentation, and post-excavation analysis – thereby countering common stereotypes and misconceptions about archaeology.

Figure 4: Start screen of the app 'Archaeology: History Uncovered', developed by the Iron-Age-Danube (2017–2019) project. Photo credit: author.



The application offered two modes: a 'Learn' mode with interactive explanatory elements and a 'Play' mode in which users advanced through levels by correctly solving tasks. The integration of 3D visualizations as 'rewards' provided an additional immersive dimension and demonstrated the potential of digital technologies for science communication.

18 Https://dtp.interreg-danube.eu/approved-projects/iron-age-danube.

The app exemplifies how digital tools can translate archaeological practice into accessible formatsand bridge the gap between professional research and a wider audience. It also shows how heritage communication can benefit from interactive and playful approaches that not only increase outreach but also foster a deeper understanding of archaeology as a scientific discipline.

6 Conclusion and Outlook

The examples discussed in this article demonstrate how digital technologies are reshaping both the practice and communication of archaeology. Techniques such as 3D scanning, photogrammetry, and laser scanning have moved beyond purely technical applications to become essential tools for reconstructing past environments, safeguarding endangered sites, and enabling innovative forms of public engagement (Little 2002). Augmented and virtual reality further expand these possibilities by offering immersive experiences that connect heritage with contemporary audiences in ways that traditional media have not been able to achieve.

Archaeogaming and educational applications demonstrate that archaeology can find new entry points into popular culture and public discourse. When designed responsibly, such approaches do not trivialize the discipline but instead open creative avenues for explaining its methods, correcting misconceptions, and fostering interest across generations. The *Iron-Age-Danube* project, with its integration of digital learning tools and interactive elements, illustrated how playful approaches can still convey serious content and stimulate deeper awareness of archaeology as a scientific practice. Linking these approaches with the developments in virtual museums and online platforms suggests that archaeogaming is not an isolated phenomenon, but part of a wider trend in which digital technologies foster novel forms of participation and learning across different audiences.

At the same time, the growing reliance on digital mediation raises important challenges. Questions of authenticity, accuracy, and ethical responsibility must remain at the centre of archaeological research and heritage communication. Virtual reconstructions and game environments, while powerful, risk simplifying or distorting complex realities if not critically designed and contextualized. Moreover, long-term sustainability – both

technical and financial – must be addressed to ensure that digital outputs remain accessible beyond the short lifespan of individual projects.

Beyond these general challenges, several ethical questions deserve particular attention (compare e.g. Boruvková 2025; Khunti 2018; Richardson 2018). How much interpretation is acceptable in digital reconstructions, and where is the line between plausibility and speculation? Transparency is equally critical: audiences must be able to distinguish between what is securely documented, what is reconstructed, and what is hypothetically added. Cultural sensitivity is also essential, as reconstructions may unintentionally reproduce narratives that fail to do justice to certain communities or perspectives. Finally, the issue of long-term digital authenticity arises, since models often circulate in public perception as 'real', even though rapid technological change can quickly render them outdated. Addressing these concerns requires not only technical expertise, but also critical reflection, ethical guidelines, and clear communication with diverse audiences.

Looking forward, the field of digital heritage research will increasingly depend on interdisciplinary collaboration, involving not only archaeologists but also computer scientists, designers, educators, and policymakers. If pursued with care, digital archaeology can strengthen the role of cultural heritage as a bridge across societies, as envisaged by international frameworks such as *Strategy 21*. It has the potential to contribute to social well-being, intercultural dialogue, and lifelong learning, while simultaneously enriching archaeological scholarship itself (Moscati 2007; Merrimen 2004; Little 2002).

In this sense, bringing archaeology 'to life' in the 21st century is not only a matter of technological innovation, but also of social responsibility (Dallas 2007). Digital tools must be understood as a means of engaging the wider public, protecting endangered resources, and reaffirming the relevance of archaeology in contemporary society[19].

19 This article was supported by the Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency (ARIS) within the research group 'Raziskave kulturnih formacij / Research of Cultural Formations (P6-0278 (A), 2019–2027)' at Alma Mater Europaea University.

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Prevodi povzetkov / Abstract translations

Verena Perko

Sodobna družba in vloga dediščine

POVZETEK: Namen prispevka je osvetliti značilnosti postmoderne družbe in njenih potreb, da bi bolje razumeli vlogo dediščine v življenju posameznikov in skupnosti. Članek obravnava vzroke in posledice radikalnih sprememb, ki so se zgodile v šestdesetih letih 20. stoletja. Opisani so učinki hitrih gospodarskih in okoljskih sprememb, ki močno ogrožajo dediščino v njenem izvirnem okolju ter vodijo v izgubo tradicionalnega znanja, brisanje identitete in pojav odtujenosti. Na kratko so predstavljene značilnosti modernizma in postmodernizma, hkrati pa so prikazane spremembe v odnosu javnosti, ki jih je prinesla uporaba sodobnih komunikacijskih tehnologij. Izpostavljena sta pojava individualizacije ter vpliv potrošništva na instrumentalizacijo sodobnega človeka.

V članku obravnavam vpliv družbene krize na medosebne odnose in vlogo posameznika ter izguba smisla z vidika filozofske antropologije. Pojasnjen je pomen aktivne vloge javnosti pri varovanju in ohranjanju dediščine, ki je v 21. stoletju postala pomembna družbena vrednota. Spremembe v pristopih k dediščini in konceptih njenega ohranjanja so predstavljene skozi pregled mednarodnih listin in dokumentov. Predstavljen je koncept ekomuzeja ter poudarjena ključna vloga dediščinske skupnosti. Z vidika psihologije je izpostavljen pomen družbenih in osebnih vrednot, na tej podlagi pa so prepoznane možnosti in odzivi na družbene potrebe, ki jih lahko ponuja dediščina. Pojasnjen je pomen aktivnega vključevanja javnosti v varovanje dediščine kot vrednote bivalnega okolja. Na kratko sta orisani tudi vloga etike in humanistična narava dediščinskih procesov.

Ključne besede: dediščina, muzeji, vrednote, javnost, vključevanje, etika

Jelka Pirkovič

Dediščina kot vir identitete: medsebojna odvisnost ključnih dediščinskih konceptov

POVZETEK: Razprave o dediščini pogosto poudarjajo dediščino kot bistveno sestavino naših sodobnih identitet. Nekateri dediščinski avtoriteti celo trdijo, da je identiteta lastnost, pripisana dediščini. Vendar so argumenti, ki podpirajo takšne trditve, le delno prepričljivi. Filozofski pogledi na vprašanje identitete poudarjajo njeno relativnost, ki je odvisna od časovnih nihanj in predvsem od inherentne dvoumnosti pojavov, kakršen je dediščina. Razumemo, da noben pojav nima bistvene in trajne identitete, saj je odvisen od dejavnikov in okoliščin, ki se nenehno spreminjajo. To velja za posameznike, skupnosti, narode in tudi za dediščino, s katero se identificirajo. Kljub temu ima identiteta na praktični ravni relativne koristi za posameznike in skupnosti.

V običajnem smislu skupna identiteta pomeni, da posamezniki čutijo pripadnost skupnosti na podlagi skupnih vrednot in spominov. S sociološkega vidika je Maurice Halbwachs uvedel pojem kolektivnega spomina, ki ga oblikujejo družbene interakcije in tradicije določene skupnosti. Kasneje so predstavniki kulturne sociologije pokazali, kako družbene skupine potrjujejo in legitimirajo svoje identitete skozi svojo zgodovinsko izkušnjo.

Prispevek obravnava ključne koncepte dediščine: spomin, znanje in vrednote. Ti koncepti tvorijo mrežo, znotraj katere je mogoče umestiti identitetno razsežnost dediščine, skladno z vlogo, ki jo ima (ali bi jo lahko imela) dediščina za posameznike in sodobno družbo. V sklepnem delu prispevek pokaže, da identiteta pojasnjuje medsebojno odvisnost vrednot, znanja in spominov kot temeljnih konceptualnih gradnikov dediščine. Obravnavan je tudi pomen interdisciplinarne heritologije (študij dediščine) pri raziskovanju osebnih in kolektivnih identitet, ki se izražajo skozi dediščino.

Paradoksna narava osebnih in skupinskih identitet izhaja iz njihove odvisnosti od tega, kako se opredeljujemo v odnosu do »drugega«. Posledično dediščina ne more imeti samozadostne in jasno določene identitete; njena identiteta se lahko v celoti uresniči le skozi sprejemanje vključevanja in priznavanje dediščine drugih.

Družba postane vidna sebi in drugim skozi svojo kulturno dediščino. Preteklost, kot se odraža v tej dediščini, skupaj z vrednotami, ki izhajajo iz njene identifikacije, razkriva veliko o življenjski sposobnosti in prihodnjih perspektivah družbe.

Ključne besede: dediščina, skupne vrednote, kulturni spomin, tradicionalno znanje, kolektivna identiteta

Andrej Magdič

Javnost, skupnost in identiteta pri pravnem varstvu arheološke dediščine v Sloveniji

POVZETEK: Prispevek podaja kratek pregled družbenega pojava »javnosti«, njene vloge pri varstvu kulturne dediščine ter komentiran pregled zakonodaje s področja varstva dediščine na ozemlju današnje Slovenije, s posebnim poudarkom na vključevanju javnosti.

Oblike arheološkega diskurza in intenzivnost vključevanja javnosti so v veliki meri odvisne od dediščinske zakonodaje. Pregled pravnih aktov na področju varstva kulturne dediščine od poznega 18. stoletja do danes razkriva naraščajočo vlogo javnosti v diskurzu o arheološki dediščini. Cesarski odloki s konca 18. stoletja, iz časa absolutistične monarhije, so vzpostavili državno lastninsko pravico nad arheološkimi najdbami, ki so se hranile v dvornih zbirkah. V drugi polovici 19. stoletja, ko je meščanska javnost pridobila večji družbeni vpliv, so arheološke ostaline postale sestavni del javnih muzejev, pravica do njihovega varstva pa je bila dodeljena strokovnjakom s humanistično izobrazbo, zaposlenim v javnih ustanovah. Tak sistem varstva arheološke dediščine na ozemlju Slovenije je ostal v veljavi tudi v socialističnem obdobju po drugi svetovni vojni.

V času socializma pa se je nosilec varstva dediščine začel postopoma premikati z elitnih družbenih slojev, ki so večinoma izhajali iz meščanske javnosti, k širšim segmentom družbe. Pravne določbe, ki so urejale arheološko in širšo kulturno dediščino, so začele nagovarjati splošno javnost kot nosilko dediščine, vendar je njena vloga ostajala omejena na vlogo uporabnika, brez pravice ali možnosti aktivnega sodelovanja v procesih varstva dediščine. Oblikovanje dediščinskih narativov je ostalo v domeni strokovnjakov, zaposlenih v javnih ustanovah, ki so delovale pod razmeroma strogim političnim nadzorom.

Z demokratizacijo družbe v zadnjem desetletju 20. stoletja je javnost začela prevzemati aktivno vlogo v procesih varstva dediščine. Zakonodaja je temu premiku sledila in do leta 2008 omogočila vključevanje javnosti tudi v strokovne dejavnosti, kot je iskanje arheoloških ostalin, ki so bile prej izključno v domeni strokovnjakov, zaposlenih v javnih dediščinskih ustanovah. Dediščinske skupnosti, ki izkazujejo etičen odnos do svoje dediščine, so začele sodelovati kot aktivni subjekti v procesih varstva dediščine, njihove naracije pa so danes prepoznane kot pravno veljavne, legitimne in nujne sestavine dediščinskega diskurza.

Ključne besede: javna arheologija, dediščinske skupnosti, zakonodaja o kulturni dediščini v Sloveniji, participativni dediščinski diskurz, kolektivni spomin in oblikovanje identitete

Jana Puhar

Javna arheologija in vključevanje lokalne javnosti v slovenskih muzejih

POVZETEK: Članek obravnava trenutno stanje in ključne značilnosti javne arheologije v Sloveniji, s posebnim poudarkom na ocenjevanju stopnje vključenosti lokalne javnosti kot partnerjev in sogovornikov v dediščinskih procesih. Na podlagi teoretskih izhodišč muzeologije in heritologije raziskava izpostavlja pomen participativnih in večperspektivnih modelov pri demokratizaciji interpretacije in upravljanja dediščine. Raziskava temelji na kvalitativni metodologiji, ki vključuje polstrukturirane intervjuje z arheologi, zaposlenimi v regionalnih in občinskih muzejih.

Predhodni izsledki kažejo, da so projekti javne arheologije v Sloveniji večinoma oblikovani po t. i. deficitarnem modelu, v katerem pretok znanja poteka pretežno enosmerno in ga vodijo strokovnjaki. Čeprav so prisotni posamezni elementi participativne prakse in demokratične usmeritve – zlasti v obliki prostovoljskega sodelovanja – pa zasnova in konceptualizacija projektov ostajata trdno v domeni strokovnjakov. Raziskava ugotavlja pomanjkanje sistemske podpore za uveljavljanje vključujočih pristopov, kljub visoki ravni zavedanja strokovne javnosti o vrednosti sodelovanja z javnostjo. Nedavni poskusi slabljenja zakonodaje na področju varstva dediščine dodatno poudarjajo potrebo po vzpostavljanju močnejših zavezništev z javnostjo.

Rezultati kažejo, da sicer obstajajo posamezna prizadevanja za participativne prakse, vendar je za uresničitev celotnega potenciala javne arheologije kot družbeno odzivnega in demokratično utemeljenega področja nujen premik k institucionalni in politični podpori.

Ključne besede: javna arheologija, heritologija, participacija, muzeologija, Slovenija, muzeji

Matjaž Koman

Upravljanje hišnih muzejev v Sloveniji: študija

POVZETEK: Hišni muzeji predstavljajo poseben tip kulturnega spomenika, ki ga zaznamuje avtentičnost kot spominskih prostorov, povezanih z vidnimi osebnostmi ali njihovimi soustvarjalci. Temeljna zasnova takšnih spominskih prostorov izhaja iz ambientov, ki jih opredeljujejo naravne in humanistične značilnosti. Ti prostori, globalno gledano stabilni, a v podrobnostih nenehno spreminjajoči se, imajo velik potencial za ohranjanje povezave med preteklostjo in sedanjostjo. Doživljanje prostora, v katerem so se odvijali zgodovinski dogodki, poglablja razumevanje njihove resnične vrednosti in s tem objektivizira potencial spomina. To poudarja pomembno družbeno in politično vlogo hišnih muzejev, ki posredno vplivajo na odnos z lokalno skupnostjo ter na ohranjanje kolektivnega spomina in dediščine v njenem izvirnem okolju.

V Sloveniji so najpogostejši hišni muzeji, povezani z vidnimi osebnostmi, in so razvrščeni kot reprezentativne zgodovinske hiše. Prvi javnosti dostopen hišni muzej v Sloveniji, preurejen leta 1939 v Vrbi, je bil rojstni dom največjega slovenskega pesnika Franceta Prešerna. Poznejši hišni muzeji so sledili muzealizacijskemu konceptu, uveljavljenemu v Prešernovi rojstni hiši, ki ga je zasnoval Fran Saleški Finžgar. Kljub temu v Sloveniji primanjkuje muzeoloških raziskav in študij, ki bi se sistematično ukvarjale s hišnimi muzeji, kar vpliva na njihovo poimenovanje in vrednotenje, saj razlike med posameznimi hišami ostajajo nejasne. V rabi so različni izrazi, kot so »hišni muzej«, »spominska hiša«, »rojstna hiša«, »literarni muzej«, »zgodovinska hiša«, »biografski muzej«, »etnografska hiša«, »domačija« in »spominska soba«, ki se uporabljajo izmenično, ti muzeji pa so pogosto označeni kot muzeji, muzeji na prostem ali spomeniki.

Raziskava se osredotoča na upravljanje hišnih muzejev v Sloveniji. V ta namen je bil pripravljen vprašalnik, namenjen upravljavcem tridesetih hišnih muzejev, katerega cilji so bili: pripraviti seznam vseh javnosti dostopnih hišnih muzejev v Sloveniji, zbrati osnovne podatke o njihovem upravljanju ter predvsem preučiti sodelovanje med upravljavci, muzeji, lastniki hiš, Ministrstvom za kulturo, občinami, Zavodom za varstvo kulturne dediščine Slovenije in zainteresirano javnostjo.

Ključne besede: hišni muzeji, upravljanje kulturne dediščine, hišni muzeji v Sloveniji, muzejska interpretacija, kulturna identiteta, varovanje dediščine

Lejla Džumhur

Travmatični kraji dediščine v urbanem kontekstu – vrednotenje in interpretacija vrednot

POVZETEK: Raziskave dediščine so doslej posvečale razmeroma malo pozornosti urbanim krajinam in celotnim mestom, ki jih lahko razumemo kot travmatične kraje dediščine (TKD). Kot prispevek k razpravi o upravljanju t. i. nevrednot na takšnih območjih prispevek preučuje spominske prakse po obleganju Sarajeva v letih 1992–1995.

Na podlagi treh spominskih epizod se analiza osredotoča na prispevek izvornih značilnosti urbanih lokacij k oblikovanju spominskih vrednot. Ključno raziskovalno vprašanje je vzajemna združljivost izvornih vrednot kraja in dodane spominske nevrednote: ali se med seboj izključujejo ali pa lahko učinkovito sobivajo in se medsebojno nadgrajujejo.

Analiza pokaže, da zanemarjanje izvornih značilnosti kraja vodi v konkurenčne interpretacije njegovega pomena ter zmanjšuje njegovo pragmatično rabo. Sklepne ugotovitve poudarjajo ključen pomen dialoga med vključenimi deležniki, zlasti pa sodelovanja prizadetih uporabnikov – prebivalcev – skozi celoten proces odločanja, od celovitega in vključujočega vrednotenja nevrednot, pripisanih mestu, do njihove umestitve in posredovanja na način, ki je občutljiv za živ in dinamičen urbani kontekst mesta.

Predstavljena praksa nazadnje kaže tudi na zanemarjanje priložnosti in potencialov, ki jih prinaša ustrezno razumevanje in interpretacija travmatičnega konteksta – takšnega, ki ne le arhivira in komemorira, temveč tudi spodbuja širše družbene spremembe, ključne za proces sprave.

Ključne besede: Sarajevo, komemoracija, travmatični kraji dediščine, vrednote, urbano okolje

Lucija Perko

Identitetna vloga oblikovanja v kontekstu interpretacije dediščine

POVZETEK: Prispevek obravnava pomen oblikovanja kot ključnega dejavnika pri predstavitvi in komuniciranju identitete na področju ponovne rabe kulturne dediščine. Izpostavlja vlogo oblikovanja kot neločljivega dela interpretativnega procesa, ki lahko bistveno prispeva k vključujočnosti, doživljajski razsežnosti in sprejemanju dediščinskega objekta v njegovem izvirnem družbenem okolju. Avtorica zagovarja stališče, da je s pomočjo oblikovanja mogoče doseči edinstvene produkte ali ustvariti izkušnje z izrazitim identitetnim sporočilom, ki delujejo kot vez med preteklostjo in sedanjostjo ter usmerjajo ohranjanje dediščine v prihodnost. Opredeljeni so pojmi dediščinskega okolja, konteksta in dediščinskih vrednot. Prispevek nadalje obravnava možnost, da se vrednote skozi oblikovalske pristope razkrivajo, na novo vrednotijo ali pa zanemarjajo.

Za boljše razumevanje vloge in učinkovitosti številnih vidikov oblikovanja v interpretativni praksi je uporabljen interdisciplinaren metodološki pristop, ki temelji na heritologiji in hermenevtiki. Vključuje deduktivno metodo, ki obsega preučevanje in analizo temeljne literature s področij heritologije, muzeologije, sociologije, arhitekture in oblikovanja. Poleg tega je uporabljena kvalitativna raziskovalna metoda, ki temelji na analizi študij primerov.

Prispevek se dotika tudi etičnega vprašanja zanemarjanja oblikovalske prakse na obravnavanem področju. Pri tem se opozarja na kritiko dediščinske industrije in z njo povezano problematiko komercializacije ter se sklene z razmislekom o pomenu materialnega oblikovanja v kontekstu nematerialnega pojmovanja dediščinskih pojavov.

Ključne besede: dediščina, oblikovanje dediščine, identitetno oblikovanje, interpretacija dediščine, vključevanje

Alessandra Esposito, Pascal Flohr, Shatha Mubaideen, James Smithies, Fadi Bala'awi, Carol Palmer, Sahar Idwan

Digitalni viri za preučevanje jordanske dediščine v nabatejskem in rimskem obdobju: podatki projekta MaDiH (مديح)

POVZETEK: Prispevek obravnava digitalne vire, povezane z nabatejsko in rimsko dediščino v Jordaniji, s poudarkom na podatkovnih zbirkah projekta MaDiH (Mapping Digital Cultural Heritage in Jordan). Pobuda MaDiH je bila namenjena vrednotenju stanja digitalne kulturne dediščine (DKD) v Jordaniji z namenom usmerjanja politik raziskovalne infrastrukture ter izboljšanja dostopa do arheoloških in zgodovinskih podatkov. Jordanija se je v zadnjih letih uveljavila kot regionalna vodilna država na področju razvoja digitalne kulturne dediščine, pri čemer so sodelovanja med Oddelkom za starine in mednarodnimi institucijami privedla do nastanka pomembnih podatkovnih zbirk, kot sta MEGA-Jordan in JADIS.

Pri raziskavi vrednotimo 133 podatkovnih zbirk, specifičnih za nabatejsko in rimsko obdobje, pri čemer ocenjuje njihovo dostopnost, lastništvo in uporabnost. Te zbirke večinoma zajemajo snovno dediščino, vključno z arheološkimi najdišči in predmeti, medtem ko so nesnovni vidiki kulture zastopani v omejenem obsegu. Večina podatkovnih zbirk obstaja v digitalnih formatih, vendar dostopnost pogosto omejujejo restriktivne licence, shranjevanje brez spletnega dostopa in omejena javna razpoložljivost. Lastništvo podatkov je večinoma skoncentrirano v univerzah, muzejih in dediščinskih ustanovah, pomemben delež pa ostaja tudi v zasebni lasti.

Raziskava razkriva razlike v dostopnosti podatkovnih zbirk, bodisi spletno bodisi nespletno, glede na lokacijo, ter opozarja na problem lokalnega dostopa do nacionalne dediščine. Prisotne so tudi jezikovne ovire, saj je večina podatkovnih zbirk v angleškem jeziku in ne v arabščini. Ugotovitve poudarjajo potrebo po izboljšani standardizaciji podatkov, interoperabilnosti ter razširjenem javnem dostopu do digitalne dediščine. Katalog MaDiH predstavlja temeljno orodje za raziskovalce in dobro izhodišče za oblikovanje nacionalnega kataloga dediščine v Jordaniji, hkrati pa ponuja primer dobre prakse za podobne pobude v drugih regijah; vendar zahteva nadaljnji razvoj za okrepitev vključevanja uporabnikov in povezovanja s platformami svetovne dediščine. Prihodnja prizadevanja bi se morala osredotočiti na povezovanje obstoječih podatkovnih zbirk, spodbujanje večjezične dostopnosti ter krepitev digitalne infrastrukture v Jordaniji, da bi se v celoti izkoristile znanstvene in gospodarske koristi bogate kulturne dediščine.

Ključne besede: Jordanija, digitalna kulturna dediščina, digitalna arheologija, rimska arheologija, nabatejska arheologija

Katharina Zanier

Preteklost, udejanjena v sedanjosti: vprašanja upravljanja, predstavitve in interpretacije na primeru poznorimskega obrambnega sistema Claustra Alpium Iuliarum

POVZETEK: V prispevku so obravnavana vprašanja upravljanja, predstavitve in interpretacije kompleksnega čezmejnega spomenika, kakršen je poznorimski obrambni sistem Claustra Alpium Iuliarum, ki ga lahko razumemo kot serijsko arheološko najdišče.

Obrambni sistem je varoval prehode v osrčje Rimskega imperija. Arheološki ostanki sistema se v posameznih odsekih raztezajo od Reke na Hrvaškem do Posočja v Sloveniji. Claustra Alpium Iuliarum predstavlja izjemen primer vključevanja arhitekture v naravno okolje: arheološki ostanki se večinoma nahajajo v gozdnatih območjih, ki se pogosto prekrivajo z zavarovanimi naravnimi območji, zato je njihovo doživljanje tesno povezano z doživljanjem narave.

Ostanki sistema so razpršeni na območju vsaj 19 manjših občin. Na Hrvaškem vsi sodijo v Primorsko-goransko županijo. V Sloveniji pa ni regionalnih upravnih enot, ki bi lahko usklajevale in usmerjale financiranje ter dejavnosti za valorizacijo omenjenih najdišč. Ob odsotnosti večjih in finančno močnih institucij so bile raziskovalne, predstavitvene in interpretativne dejavnosti večinoma izvedene v okviru več evropskih projektov, kot so PArSJAd, Claustra in Claustra+.

Cilj teh projektov je bil povečati privlačnost obrambnega sistema ter izpostaviti njegove razvojne priložnosti, tudi z medsebojnim povezovanjem deležnikov. Izvedene so bile številne raziskovalne dejavnosti za izboljšanje informacijskih izhodišč za vse oblike diseminacije. Deli arheoloških ostankov so bili predstavljeni javnosti. Projekti so bili usmerjeni tudi v izboljšanje fizične in informacijske dostopnosti ostankov. Sklopi dejavnosti so bili osredotočeni na razvoj skupnega turističnega produkta, participativna oblika upravljanja pa je bila vzpostavljena z ustanovitvijo konzorcija 42 deležnikov.

Prispevek si prizadeva podati kritičen pregled ključnih arheoloških, konservatorskih in upravljavskih dejavnosti, ki so bile v zadnjih dveh desetletjih izvedene na sistemu Claustra Alpium Iuliarum. Obenem želi izpostaviti glavne dosežke evropskih čezmejnih projektov, ovrednotiti njihov prispevek k raziskavam, varovanju dediščine in trajnostnemu turizmu ter razmisliti o izzivih usklajevanja in upravljanja transnacionalnega, serijskega kulturnodediščinskega spomenika.

Ključne besede: Claustra Alpium Iuliarum, rimski obrambni sistem, arheološka dediščina, upravljanje kulturne dediščine, evropski projekti

Anja Hellmuth Kramberger

Ko arheologija oživi v 3D: od virtualne resničnosti do arheogaminga

POVZETEK: Prispevek ponuja pregled vse pogostejše uporabe digitalnih tehnologij v arheologiji in komuniciranju dediščine. Izbrani primeri ponazarjajo, kako tovrstne metode podpirajo dokumentiranje, rekonstrukcijo in javno predstavitev arheološke dediščine. Poleg tega je obravnavano nastajajoče področje arheogaminga kot način, preko katerega arheološke vsebine vstopajo v popularno kulturo in izobraževanje. Prispevek ne stremi k celoviti obravnavi teme, temveč želi pokazati, kako lahko digitalni pristopi obogatijo arheološko prakso in dediščinsko komunikacijo, hkrati pa odpirajo vprašanja avtentičnosti, trajnosti in družbene odgovornosti.

Ključne besede: digitalna arheologija, kulturna dediščina, komuniciranje dediščine, javna arheologija, arheogaming