

MuseumEdu 6

Museums, education and 'difficult' heritage
Μουσεία, εκπαίδευση και «δύσκολη» κληρονομιά

INTRODUCTION

MuseumEdu 6 on *Museums, education and 'difficult' heritage* is the sixth issue of the on-line, open access, peer-reviewed international journal *MuseumEdu*, published by the University of Thessaly Museum Education and Research Laboratory in October 2018. Guest editors of this special issue are Esther Solomon and Eleni Apostolidou, both Assistant Professors at the University of Ioannina, Greece.

The issue includes papers exclusively in English, accompanied by abstracts in Greek and English and an extensive introduction regarding the basic aspects of the relationship between museums, education and difficult heritage, as these are reflected in Greek and international literature.

The rationale

In 2007, Sharon Macdonald introduced the term “difficult heritage” as “concerned with histories and pasts that do not easily fit with self-identities of the groups of whose pasts or histories they are part”.¹ Such histories and pasts, Macdonald asserted, “instead of affirming positive self-images, potentially disrupt them or may threaten to open up social differences and conflicts. Difficult heritage deals in unsettling histories rather than the kinds of heroic or progressive histories with which museums and heritage sites have more traditionally been associated”.²

Although Macdonald dealt with the material remains of one of the most traumatic period of the 20th century, that is, the German Third Reich regime and nightmarish Second World War (2009), the term has been used in the field of museum and heritage studies, especially that of *Critical Heritage Studies*, in order to describe a series of related controversial, contested, conflicting and/or traumatic themes (Harrison 2008; Logan & Reeves 2009; Silverman 2011a, 2011b; Convery, Corsane & Davis 2014). Such studies also examine the perceptions of difficult pasts through a variety of social groups, both museum visitors and non-visitors, bringing thus the multifaceted and inextricable link between cultural heritage, memory and social identity into the heart of the academic debate.

This issue of *MuseumEdu* explores such themes from the perspective of museums and museum and history education. It puts particular emphasis on issues of identity politics and cultural memory, while it presents a series of interesting case studies of academics, heritage professionals and history teachers who have variably tried to discuss and

challenge ‘musealized’ difficult heritage in interesting and innovative ways, often using its educational potential.

Among the issues discussed in the volume, historical education emerges as the most critical. The contributors’ interest in public history and archaeology brings together the editors’ academic interests, that is, critical museology and history didactics, and render museums one of the most fruitful and promising fields for the development of historical thinking, empathy, and the endorsement of a more sensitive attitude towards social ‘otherness’ (both in time and space) in a fragmented, unequal and, at the end of the day, ‘difficult’ society.

Basic aspects of the debate on museums and difficult heritage

Historical museums, as well as art museums, have long been occupied with rare and prestigious objects. Since the 1970s, the growing interest in social history and the history of everyday life has reshaped the collections and exhibitions of many museums, pushing them towards more thematic activities. These include new categories of collected and exhibited objects— not necessarily beautiful, heroic, rare, or unique— a part of which touch on the ‘difficult’ issues of social reality and raise concerns, objections, controversies, or even conflicts.

Such a shift in museological interests towards social history and related practices has led to the search for a new public profile for many history, ethnography and archaeology museums, and not least, for city and migration museums, most of which wish to play an active role within the societies by which they are supported and funded.

Could we have imagined prior to a few years ago, for example, the work of a ‘city curator’ who records and presents aspects of contemporary urban culture (Van De Laar 2013; Rhys & Baveystock 2014) or a practitioner, for instance, who contacts low-income mothers in poor neighbourhoods in order to present their social action and associated material heritage in a local museum? Could we have conceived of exhibitions and related collections of objects about a LGBT community or a community of drug addicts, cases usually characterized by limited material evidence, silence and secrecy?³

Most of these issues are deeply charged, politically and ideologically. They are opposed to the patriotic stories recounted in several historical museums, the nostalgic representations of the past proposed by ethnographic and/or folklore museums, or the concepts of national and ethnic progress and evolution that seem to undermine many archaeological exhibitions. In addition, dealing with controversial issues may break with the positive image of a nation or a place with which many museums have been connected so closely.

This is the case of an increasing number of museums founded worldwide in order to not only represent but also commemorate and educate people about traumatic events of the past, human tragedies and losses: genocides, displacements, forced labour, refugeeism and migrations, tortures and atrocities. In these museums (including musealized historical landscapes, battlefields, prisons, concentration camps etc.),

many of which are dedicated to the Holocaust and other genocides of the 20th century, the tangible, material heritage of violence often acts as a metonymy for human pain and group identity. Museum objects symbolically counteract the elimination of human lives or even of fundamental concepts such as human dignity and social rights.

It is, therefore, not surprising that a new discourse on “conflict archaeology” has emerged within the museum community (and beyond it), which refers to the study of the polysemous heritage derived from various social, political or even war conflicts (Saunders 2012). Moreover, in many cases of difficult heritage, ethnographic work makes itself indispensable as it helps interpret the role played by museums and heritage sites in memory wars, in the relation between past, place and people (Hecht 2004), between local, national and global identities (Yalouri 2001) and, not least, in the tricky games played by social memory when people use cultural heritage in order to face the constantly changing needs of the present (Solomon 2007).

The difficult heritage debate has also highlighted the constraints imposed on the representation of controversial events and periods of history, as well as the challenges faced by museum professionals when they provide traditionally silent social groups with the opportunity to express themselves in exhibitions, to make their voices heard through oral history and/or portray their identity in public (Perks 2013; Solomon 2013; Gazi 2015). Yet, in spite of several existing constraints, this new museum reality of exhibitions on difficult pasts allows us to criticize public discourses and practices of institutions and specialists, to seek social reconciliation when necessary and, finally, to deal with opposing perspectives and versions of the narrated past.

Museum objects and material culture: A valuable educational source

The selection, preservation and display of remains of the past in the present constitute a constant process of meaning assignment. A variety of interested parties (curators, heritage managers, educators, politicians, communities and multiple audiences) are engaged in the various interpretations of exhibited material culture, in a social game that always aims to pursue a better future, as each involved party perceives it (Smith 2006).

Material culture studies have convincingly that objects function as performative entities that objectify social relations, human experiences, social values and agency (Tilley, Keane, Küchler, Rowlands & Spyer 2006). Since our very early childhood, we make sense of the world through piecing together and engaging with a variety of material forms which surround us, and which we live with or through. Physical encounter with objects, therefore, underlies personal and collective attempts for social change, or, as Christopher Tilley has put it (2004: 217), “people make things and things make people”.

The use of objects in learning processes has been extensively examined in the relevant literature (Chatterjee & Hannan 2015). Their experiential capacity, entrenchment with bodily perception, affective imprint, role in stimulating curiosity and more are employed in a variety of educational contexts including, even to a limited extent, that

of formal education. Yet, a long time passed until museums managed to benefit from this powerful relation between people and things. Despite their object-oriented nature, the display and museological treatment of their collections –often put in isolated treasure-cases with obstructed physical and intellectual access– had imposed a distant and hegemonic museum narrative, within which the visual held an undisputed primacy. The objects’ protected and sanctified authenticity often cancelled or minimized interaction between people and the preserved material culture, and impeded an experiential approach to the past and its material remains.

Nowadays, museums are actively exploring the possibilities of educating their audiences, especially young visitors, by using and taking advantage of their collections’ materiality and specific education techniques (Dudley 2012). Touching, experiencing, feeling, researching, re-enacting and contesting the objects’ given significance and meaning are some of the ways material cultural heritage is included and used in museum programmes, some of which are presented in this volume.

History education and controversial issues: Difficult heritage or difficult pedagogies?

Objects have always played a primary role in history education: in the context of a “disciplinary” approach to school history, students are expected to become familiar with locating, assessing and interpreting historical evidence. For teachers focusing on material culture’s educational capacities, difficult heritage can be approached as a tool for enhancing historical thinking and critical history education; but what would a critical history education involve?

In the 1960s and 1970s, a transition, similar to the above-mentioned shift of museums towards social history, was noted in school history in the western world, with traditional, exclusively knowledge-based curricula being changed to competency-based, “New History” ones (Wilschut 2010: 693). Today, in many countries, school history aims to help students to build both substantive knowledge and conceptual understanding in ways that they construct patterns related to the past (Husbands, Kitson, & Steward 2011: 142). Students need to realize the interpretative nature of the discipline of history, thus the provisionality of the narratives they construct. Interpretations in history are contained “not only by the evidence available but also by the assumptions and biases brought to this” (Husbands, Kitson, & Steward 2011: 142). Thus, historically literate students should be able to see multiple perspectives in past realities and discuss their own communities’ identities in critical ways. As Slater pointed out: “historical thinking is primarily mind-opening” (Husbands, Kitson, & Steward 2011: 145).

If students at school are expected to become familiar with the interpretative nature of history, and do so also by using material culture, then they ought to accept controversies as well. Besides, as Stradling has put it, “in a sense, much of what is taught in history is controversial; there are disagreements about what happened and over its significance ... sometimes purely academic controversies” (2001: 99).

History educators maintain that school history lessons ought to refer to issues of the difficult past and difficult heritage, as embedded not only into historiographic controversies but also into people's identities, "loyalties" and "prejudices" (Stradling 2001: 100), at least for three reasons. First, because of the turn of historiography and history didactics to historical consciousness. The latter combines aspects of the present, the past and the future and includes practical aspects of "history in private and public life" (Rüsen 1987: 215). Second, because, as Husbands, Kitson and Steward (2011: 148) have argued, "it is a professional obligation of history teachers to make history matter" – a process related to the selection of both the content and the adopted teaching methods. In other words, everyday life controversies stemming from the past ought to be included in school history in order to make it 'relevant' to the students' everyday lives. These controversies also include commemoration processes, material culture, public monuments, memorials, school history textbooks, museums, commemorative holidays and more (Seixas & Clark 2004: 146). The third reason why history education has set the familiarization of students with the difficult and non-flattering pasts as a basic aim is that learning about the past takes place within all formal and informal education environments. History teaching aims to impart "historical knowledge and reasoning in daily, practical life" (Rüsen 1987: 213) or, as Liakos and Bilalis state: "our attention [today] is directed [more] to the public dimensions of historical practice" (2017: 210), a fact that inevitably brings the discussion back to the field of difficult heritage.

If historians today historicize the past, including in this process past approaches to it (Liakos & Bilalis 2017: 213), then the same is to be applied to history teaching at school. According to Lee,

[T]his is not a matter of having an emotional bond. In history we must empathize with ideas we might oppose in the unlikely event we came across exactly the same ideas in the present [...] Understanding [people in the past] means understanding their beliefs and values (Lee 2005: 47).

Thus, contextualizing diverse interpretations of the past and dealing with difficult non-popular and controversial heritage in the present constitute pedagogical teaching aims of school history. According to Wooley,

there are facts [of life] or [historical] facts which are not controversial [or difficult] in themselves [...] but when included in primary schools' curricula [...] questions must be raised about the appropriateness and effectiveness of this (Wooley 2010: 2).

Wooley provides bereavement as an example of a "fact of life" and the Holocaust as one of historical events. The latter epitomizes the two most typical problems regarding the role of difficult heritage at school: the first one concerns the significance of the students' age and the other one the teaching aims and the pedagogical focus of history lessons about unwanted pasts. Both issues, that is, the different ages of the involved students and the teaching aims, produce different teaching strategies and one may expect that their impact on students will also vary.

At what age would teaching difficult heritage be most effective? Educators conclude that younger students, who are less influenced by social media and whose main focus is not yet on school exams, could be more malleable (The Historical Association 2007). Such conclusion is also verified in the case of students in Northern Ireland who proved to be more committed to their conflicting communities (Protestants and Catholics) as they grew up than they were in the earlier years of their schooling (Barton & McCully 2005).

Regarding young students' intellectual 'readiness' to tackle emotive and controversial issues, Gillespie (2007) refers to the research that makes students' readiness appear dependent on ways of teaching. Special strategies such as storytelling and role-play allow younger students, even of pre-school age, to approach distant experiences of past people and also to see alternatives in historical development (Harnett 2007). The more we ask children open questions and provide them with the essential vocabulary, the more they can simulate historical reasoning and, in the end, contextualize issues of difficult heritage.

In relation to the sensitivity of such heritage issues and the possibility of having unwanted effects as a result of the teaching of unwanted pasts, such as the production of shock horror stories (Russell 2006), there are specific teaching strategies suggested by history and human rights educators (Agency for Fundamental Rights 2010: 32-49). Moreover, there is an ongoing discussion about the aims of such history teaching being "intrinsic" or "extrinsic" to the discipline of history (Husbands, Kitson & Pendry 2003: 29). The antagonism between the disciplinary and moral functions of history calls into question whether teaching should place emphasis on history or on citizenship. "Extrinsic" are those aims concerned with attempts to change a society, such as the development of tolerance in students, while the "intrinsic" aims "chiefly emerge from concepts and assumptions within the discipline itself" (Husbands, Kitson & Pendry 2003: 29).

Within the above framework, what are the opinions of practitioners and teachers? In her study about the ways history teachers of the Holocaust defined the aims of their teaching, Russell specified three attitudes in relation to the suggested pedagogies: the interviewed teachers ranged from those adopting "historical aims" for the lesson to those adopting "emotional" ones, while most of them converged in adopting "social and moral aims" (Russell 2006: 17). In contrast, Kitson and McCully initially posed a different question, that is, whether history teachers would opt for controversial and emotive history in the classroom. The researchers ended up with another continuum that ranged between "avoiders" and "risk takers" (2005: 35). The "avoiders" range from those teachers who do not teach controversial issues because they do not "see" the social function of history, to the "containers," that is, those who contain such issues in the teaching process but in a way that pupils are not encouraged to engage with the root of the controversy. On the other hand, "risk takers" "fully embrace the social utility of history teaching" (Kitson & McCully 2005: 35). The Kitson and McCully typology reminds us of Seixas' one about "traditional," "modern" and "postmodern" history

teaching: “traditional” history teaching aims at “shaping collective identity,” “modern/constructivist” history teaching at serving the discipline and only “postmodern” history teaching aims to focus at the “relationship between historical knowledge and power” (Seixas 2000: 21, 24, 26). Finally, from the Greek perspective of history teaching, the 192 students who participated in a survey about the teaching of controversial issues at school were found to be inconsistent in their answers: while initially they were positive as regards the inclusion of controversial/difficult history in the curriculum, when presented with seventy events of Greek, European and World History, the same majority answered that specific events could not be taught or were too difficult to be taught at school (Mavroskoufis, Kokkinos & Kyritsis 2015: 286-287).

On the whole, teachers seem to be reluctant to include controversial/difficult issues in their history teaching for many reasons, one of them being the lack of resources. This is the reason many educators in universities and relevant organizations advocate the provision of the appropriate resources, noting at the same time that

teachers also need to be encouraged and not penalised for encouraging debate and risk-taking in the classroom and schools’ given support when facing challenges from parents and communities (The Historical Association 2007: 41).

To summarize history teaching in relation to controversial, emotive and difficult heritage issues, the consensus is that educators seem to converge by including these issues in school curricula, while school teachers appear reluctant to address these with their students. Moreover, there seems to be a wide discussion regarding the most appropriate teaching approach: there is harsh criticism of the ways students are exposed to the issues of controversial history and difficult heritage either in school or outside school, since in many cases stereotypes and misunderstandings are reproduced. Often, problematic and inaccurate material, like the film “The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas” regarding the Holocaust, is used, even in schools (Foster 2014: 204; Gray 2014). As Foster et al. put it, “At the level of policy making what would and should be understood as the distinctive functions of ‘education’ and ‘commemoration’ are presented as though one and the same” (2014: 204); and, in the same vein, Van Nieuwenhuysse and Wils add that “remembrance education becomes a general umbrella for education about ‘dark’ chapters from the past” within contemporary democratic citizenship (Van Nieuwenhuysse & Wils 2012: 1).

Critical historical thinking, difficult heritage and the world of museum education

In this volume, it is argued that museum education can also be a tool for the development of historical thinking, especially in the case of controversial issues. Museums act ‘pedagogically’ as loci of meaning construction, within which students and adults realize the interpretative, provisional and often biased nature of historical discourses. History teaching in museum exhibitions on difficult pasts can also contribute to critical approaches to the visitors’ own identities and civic responsibilities as well as

to searches for alternative narratives of the past, all of which can draw on and benefit from the material capacities of the historical evidence on display.⁴

One wonders, must museums reflect sensitive social issues or should they stay as neutral as possible in order to ensure fundamental ‘objectivity’? Many museum professionals see this dilemma as schematic and oversimplistic. Scientific accuracy does not necessarily contradict an activist stance and the pursuit of social justice (Message 2014; Solomon forthcoming). Museums may play a crucial role in the shaping of both historical memory and institutional memory politics, hence disseminate an educational discourse that recognizes different identities (gendered, ethnic, religious and otherwise) and cultural particularities in modern antagonistic multi-cultural societies. In this context, curatorial practices “interwoven with social battlefields and agency” can contribute to antiracist attitudes (Bayer, Kazeem-Kamiński & Sternfeld 2018) and foster a different model of citizenship.

Moreover, exhibitions on neglected and unprivileged social groups, for example, those with disabilities or suffering social discrimination (Sandell 2002a, 2002b; Sandell, Dodd & Garland-Thomson 2010) often encourage visitors to confront and subvert their preconceptions, stereotypes, prejudices as well as established behaviours. As has been shown (Brstilo & Jelavić 2010), such goals are largely achieved by museums for, as many people admit, they have revised their views and negative commonplaces on marginalised cultures after visiting relevant exhibitions and participating in associated activities.

Finally, the museum world –in particular “dissonant” (Tunbridge & Ashworth 1996) heritage sites and exhibitions– provides us with the opportunity to build on public education in connection to cultural trauma. By dealing with the traumatic effects of armed conflict and atrocities, an ever increasing number of institutions, long committed to the healing of traumatic memories of the involved collectivities (Arnold-de Simine 2013), go beyond narratives that perpetuate hatred and mutual distrust between conflicting sides, or even between victims and perpetrators. As Walters, Laven and Davis (2017) have recently shown, museums and heritage can be significant agents in peacebuilding. Trying to balance their activity between historical representation, commemoration and civic education, they are able to draw on the healing properties of heritage (Rowlands 2002; Butler 2006: 473; Meskell & Scheermeyer 2008). This fundamental conceptual shift in the understanding of the agency of the past may have positive identity effects and make difficult heritage appear *less* difficult than before (Macdonald 2016).

This volume

This volume reflects our concerns with museums, cultural heritage and difficult pasts in Greece and beyond. The papers presented explore theoretical and practical aspects of the work of museologists, museum professionals and history educators and put special emphasis on the museological and/or educational treatment of difficult heritage. Such heritage is examined in different contexts and approached as a tool for

both enhancing critical historical thinking and encouraging all social parties involved to take a stance on challenging social matters.

What is conceived here as *a museum* may take on a variety of forms. New exhibitions in old institutions, such as the one at the Archaeological Museum of Ioannina in Greece, public sculpture and neglected monuments associated with traumatic memories in the provincial Greek city of Florina, the Auschwitz/Birkenau Memorial and Museum in Poland, the innovative exhibitions on the Holocaust at Yad Vashem and the Van Leer Institute in Jerusalem, a former prison – associated with troubled political history– above a Turkish bath in the Greek city of Trikala, the community museum (MUPE) at the city of Curitiba, Brazil, a humble group of objects and the exhibition *Bunce Island* supporting history teaching about African slavery in the United States, the museum “Filio Chaidemenou” on Greek Asia Minor refugeeism in Athens and the work (publications etc.) of cultural associations in Greece and Turkey regarding the memory of the massive refugee communities created after the Lausanne Convention in 1923, are all used as examples of heritage experiences of difficult pasts, represented, studied and negotiated in an ever-changing present.

More precisely, *Museumedu 6* consists of three parts.

The first part of the issue focuses on difficult pasts in museum exhibitions.

Thus, **Eleni Kotjabopoulou**, in her article CHALLENGING MYTHS IN THE MUSEUM: THE ACHERON ORACLE OF THE DEAD IN THE IOANNINA ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM, deals with the controversial history of display of the so-called archaeological site of the Acheron “Oracle of the Dead” in Epirus, Greece, and its museological treatment. Within the broad ideological context of the history and representation of archaeological research in Greece, the author presents the efforts made by professionals of the Archaeological Museum of Ioannina to challenge established myths concerning antiquity. In her meticulously documented account, she provides the reader with a persuasive narrative regarding not only the production and consumption of related archaeological knowledge but also the role museums can play in promoting a more self-reflexive representation of and education about the ancient past.

Yehudit Kol-Inbar, in her own piece of work “And who will remember? And how shall we preserve a memory?” NEW APPROACHES TO EXHIBITS ON THE HOLOCAUST, debates practical, theoretical and broadly philosophical issues regarding the designing of exhibitions on the Holocaust, in general and the children’s experience of it, in particular. Focusing on recent exhibitions at Yad Vashem (which has served as a model for similar displays worldwide) and the pioneer *Transmitted Memory and Fiction* project of the eponymous Study Group at the Van Leer Institute, Kol-Inbar tackles issues of museum representation, commemoration and Holocaust education in a world without survivors and sheds light on the role of curators in dealing with the subject. The paper stands at a critical transition in museum studies whereby the very focus on children’s trauma and suffering raises important ethical and didactic issues, especially when it is meant for an audience increasingly used to visual horror and emotional involvement.

Papers in **the second part** take us outside the museum walls and explore issues of difficult social memory management.

For more than a century, the prison of Trikala, Greece, ‘hosted’ criminal and political prisoners, the latter acting during the most ‘difficult’ periods of the country’s political history, that is, the Civil War (1945-1949) and the military Junta (1967-1974). It has also been associated with Vassilis Tsitsanis, an important Greek composer of rebetiko music, itself a difficult intangible heritage category until the 1970s. **Ioannis Poullos**, in his article **MANAGING ‘DIFFICULT’ INTANGIBLE HERITAGE THROUGH THE APPLICATION OF THE LIVING HERITAGE APPROACH**, discusses this topic through an overview of different approaches: that of the local authorities, the state archaeological authorities who decided on the demolition of the prison in favour of the remains of a listed Ottoman bath, and that of the community of former prisoners and other people associated with the prison who shared their memories in the relevant documentary film “Silent Witness” by Dimitris Koutsibasakos (2014). Poullos investigates how the application of what he calls “living heritage approach”, a community-led heritage management model, seen as employed by the filmmaker in his documentary, can lead to a better and more holistic way of managing both tangible and intangible difficult cultural heritage.

Angelos Palikidis, in his article **TRACING ROADS OF NOSTALGIA. CAN THERE BE A SHARED LIEU DE MÉMOIRE FOR THE GREEK AND TURKISH REFUGEES OF THE POPULATION EXCHANGE OF THE LAUSANNE CONVENTION (1923)?**, deals with the Greek and Turkish refugee memory communities, that is, descendants of the populations exchanged after the end of the Greek Turkish War and the Lausanne Convention (1923). Considering the heavily political framework of the national historiographies in Greece and Turkey, the refugee trauma and its intergenerational evolution, the author reviews the history of refugee associations and related foundations in both countries and provides us with an analysis of the narratives of Greek and Turkish refugees, as these appear in the bilingual publication of the NGO “Lozan Mübadilleri Vakfi”, a cultural foundation holding cultural events, exhibitions and trips in Turkey and Greece. The contribution concludes with some thoughts on whether it is possible to create a common *lieu de mémoire* for the refugees on both sides, and its appropriate characteristics.

In their paper, **THE ‘DIFFICULT’ PAST OF A TOWN. THE RESONANT SILENCES AND SUPPRESSED MEMORIES OF FLORINA’S CULTURAL HERITAGE**, **Andreas Andreou** and **Kostas Kasvikis** examine attitudes and practices towards difficult cultural heritage in the city of Florina, north-western Greece. They discuss established (by the local authorities, the Church, etc.) as well as emerging approaches to the formation of collective memory and its identification with the city’s hellenized past, the latter having powerfully included and excluded cultural elements of the area’s history and material culture. The authors approach Florina’s townscape as a potential open-air museum representing local history, a representation that embraces the Slavophonic past of the area and the traumatic Greek Civil War. Such a distinctive ‘museum’ raises conflicting memories and commemoration practices diversely approached by all involved social groups in their milieus.

As regards the **third part of *MuseumEdu 6***, most of the papers address the debate on difficult pasts, education and museums in relation to the broader aims of history education.

Thus, **Georgia Kouseri**, in her article **THE AUSCHWITZ-BIRKENAU MEMORIAL AND MUSEUM AS A SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE AND A TRIGGER FOR EMPATHY ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST**, presents the visits made with her Greek secondary school students to Auschwitz/Birkenau Memorial and Museum in Poland, and considers problems of students' readiness to contextualize and "transfer" on a social level their experience of painful historical events, strengthen their knowledge and, in some cases, change their pre-existing ideas about the Holocaust. The paper demonstrates the validity of an "empathy of care" (Barton & Levstik 2004) in historical education as well as of the importance of heritage visits to sites of trauma in order to interpret difficult pasts and their legacies.

Evangelia Sarigianni, in her article **APPROACHING CULTURAL TRAUMA THROUGH MUSEUM EDUCATION A PROJECT FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN ON THE ASIA MINOR CATASTROPHE**, brings us (as well as her primary school students) to the Museum of the Asia Minor Hellenism "Filio Chaidemenou" in Athens, and considers problems of students' age and teaching approaches to history and citizenship education. Her programme dealt with one of the most important Greek cultural traumas – the Asia Minor Catastrophe in 1922 and the subsequent refugee crisis – and was based on guidelines provided by various institutions for teaching the Jewish Genocide and other cultural traumas in schools and museums. Sarigianni convincingly demonstrates how museum drama can be employed in order to facilitate historical understanding of the historical 'Other' and enhance the empathy for the contemporary 'Stranger', that is, the migrants and refugees of our own times.

Kay Traille, in her article **RICE AND RACE. CULTIVATING CURIOSITY ABOUT CONTROVERSIAL HISTORIES**, speaks about slavery and the difficulty of attributing agency to stereotypically victimized groups, also bringing to the fore unknown sides of their lives and roles in history. In order to explore controversies and racial issues related to the teaching of the history of African American slavery, she uses material culture as an educational tool. A specific exhibition is used for this purpose; through it, the role of African Americans in cultivating rice and contributing to local economy is highlighted. The paper provides us with an applied teaching strategy coupled with empirical data regarding students' ideas about their own collective past, thus constituting a significant contribution at the core of museum and history education.

Finally, **Maria Auxiliadora Schmidt** and **Ana Claudia Urban**, in their article **COMMUNITY MUSEUMS. A PROPOSITION FOR HISTORY EDUCATION**, offer an exemplary case of a community museum, the MUPE, at the city of Curitiba, capital of the State of Paraná in Brazil, whose purpose is to carry out cultural activities and offer human rights education to the low-income population of the region. Based on the importance of investigating the present ideas and the historical awareness of the subjects, the museum has been not only the outcome of the relationship that the residents have established with the history of their place but also an important agent in the formation

of local historical consciousness. The authors present mnemonic processes such as the “rodas da memória” (memory circles) and “cafés de memória” that thematically schematized the memory of the locals or served to sensitize others about local struggles regarding housing.

Perhaps this part of *Museumedu 6* concludes our editorial attempt most appropriately. We envisage museums that aim to transform a passive visitor into an active, participatory and insightful social subject and also a citizen able to critically assess different perspectives, meanings and readings of heritage and history. These are museums where audiences do not constitute abstracted conceptual categories but significant actors in the re-construction of the past.

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The *Museumedu 6* Guest Editors

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Notes

¹ http://www.icmah2011.net/difficult_heritage.html Retrieved May 16, 2018.

² http://www.icmah2011.net/difficult_heritage.html Retrieved May 16, 2018.

³ All three cases were presented at the ICMAH International Conference of Museums and Collections of Archeology and History (in collaboration with the International Association of Museums of History IAMH) on “Museums and Difficult Heritage” (July 2011) by Irene van Renselaar (Museum of Rotterdam), Marjo Poutanen (Vantaa Museum, Finland) and Marie- Paule Jungblut (Museum of Luxembourg), respectively. See also Mazarakis-Ainian 2012; Solomon 2013: 63.

⁴ Ashby (2011) and Nakou (2006) have convincingly stressed the advantages of the material culture as opposed to written documents: material remains seem to encourage students to think critically about human agency, while written documents are usually taken at face value; see also Nakou 2009; Nikonanou & Kasvikis 2008; Galanidou & Dommasnes 2012.