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Title of development paper:

Collective Memory and Museum Practice

Summery:

With the phenomenon of socio-political instability and the rise of extreme national pride becoming normalized in the context of the West, I propose to explore collective memory as an integral component for social cohesion of communities. The term 'collective memory' was coined by the sociologist Maurice Halbwachs. Today, used by scholars in the field as an umbrella, it groups together different forms of memory, such as individual, cultural, communicative and social (etc.). Although a contested term (Sontag, 2004), it exposes the collective structures engaged in constructing and re-constructing all forms of memory belonging to individuals and thus, communities. I aim to analyze the term by uncovering the causal structures and powers that are in action in determining collective memory in the public field and museums as an instrument with unifying and, or divisive impact. This breakdown will be deeply rooted in a trans-disciplinary scholarly and empirical research.

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Introduction:

With the phenomenon of socio-political instability and the rise of extreme national pride being normalized in the West, this research will explore collective memory as an integral component of social cohesion in communities. The term 'collective memory' was coined by the sociologist Maurice Halbwachs. Today, it is used by scholars in the field as an umbrella, as it groups together different forms of memory, such as individual, cultural, communicative, and social (etc.). Although a contested term (Sontag, 2004), it exposes the collective structures engaged in constructing and re-constructing all forms of memory belonging to individuals and thus, communities. The aim of this investigation is to analyze the term by uncovering the causal structures and powers that are in action in determining collective memory in the public field and museums as an instrument with unifying and, or divisive impact.

3 Objectives:

Collective remembering, is exemplified by sociologists as 'a shared version of the past'(Erll, 2011, 15) which is negotiated by present generations; part of this process involves active or passive forgetting and, or remembering (Assman and Erll). Therefore, memories are collective products of the present rather than of the past. Smith also argues for the present mythicization of memories based on historical facts (Smith, 1991: 22-3). Group members choose the historical narratives they are to be defined by, even if that differs from the identity of preceding generational units. Due to these temporal qualities, collective memory theorists tend to highlight memories' unifying powers at a group level (Winter, 2010: 61). However, little is understood about the processes through which these memories can be unifying or divisive. The first objective of this investigation is to uncover the processes or causal powers involved, in the context of a community, that result in either a unifying or a divisive collective memory.

Originally, museums flourished on the presumption that they guide thought and behavior. Therefore, museums played an instrumental role in stabilizing the histories, identities and nationess of modern states. Among their core functions were to instill a strong sense of knowledge and pride for 'who we are' as a nation through their exhibits, while educating the public with 'a civilizing effect' (Bennet, 1995: 98). Museums have also adopted the contemporary role of social responsibility and action. Viewed as democratic and inclusive spaces, museum professionals are accountable for creating equal opportunities for their visitors, specifically targeting their local communities.

There is an overwhelming policy investment in understanding social inclusion (*Mapping of Cultural Heritage actions in European Union policies, programs and activities*: 2017). In the 2014-2020 period the overall budget for cohesion policy was €325 billion, with cultural heritage being classified as part of its specific targets (European Union, 2017: 13). Museum practice is a part of this movement by adopting policies of social impact. This policy shift is fueled by the understanding that museums are sites where communities are presented through rituals of remembrance and commemoration (Arnold-de Simine, 2013; Newman and McLean, 2006). This investigation is concerned with concepts of community identity and social cohesion, thus, its second objective is to explore museum functions, with a specific focus on their practices related to community engagement and how they influence collective identities.

The collective remembering of a community is a major variable in the grounding of a communal past and therefore, in its achievement of social cohesion in the present. However, collective memory can act as either an enabler or constrainer of social inclusion. Therefore, as one of the key functions of museums today, is social cohesion, it is crucial to study the processes of collective memory and the causal powers with an inclusive or divisive impact. Thereby, the third and most critical objective of this investigation is the exploration of the role museums can play in the formation and maintenance of collective memory and the underlying processes involved, in comparison to those at a community level.

The three objectives aim to collectively inform and better museum strategies and management. This is regards to both their bottom-up, day to day operation and top-down management processes that are acted out. The intrinsic aim of this research is to identify causal mechanisms and powers that are active at the level of communities that shape and manage the collective memory. By doing so, this research is broadening the field of study of collective memory at the level of the community in order to better understand the macrocosm. This will then allow for a more effective study of museums, as the microcosm. Although not a conventional approach within the field of management, the aim is to consolidate the findings of the research into a more honest and therefore, efficient management strategy and/ or approach for museums. The role of managing of collective memory becomes particularly important in the context of museums dealing with complex historical narratives.

Context :

Cyprus provides a perfect context for the exploration of all three objectives. The troubled past of Cyprus, still overshadows the collective memory of its people and is therefore ideal for understanding the processes of unity and division acted out to encourage or prohibit social cohesion. The ongoing inter-communal conflict among Turkish and Greek Cypriots escalated in 1974 with the occupation of Northern Cyprus by Turkish forces and the subsequent division of two communities; as an aftermath of the communal trauma, the collective memory in both communities is more visible. Cyprus is a small state, which allows for the exploration of collective memory from multiple community perspectives and museum uses. Over the past half-century various mechanisms and process have come into action that function as both enablers and constraints to social cohesion. Uncovering these will be the core focus of this exploration, particularly as the Cypriot citizens are entering a third generation since the occurrence of the war.

Methods and Methodology:

Ontological Approach:

Understanding and explanations of collective memory are contested. Despite a broad trans-disciplinary consensus on the nature and importance of collective memory as key component in consolidating shared histories and communal identities (Assmann and Clift, 2016; Assmann and Shortt, 2012; Erll, 2011); critics challenge the existence of the field (Sontag and Koselleck). To enable exploration of the contested contracts dispositional realism will be used to guide this investigation. As a philosophy of science, critical realism does not limit investigations to empirical phenomena. Bhaskar argues that the natural and social world is shaped by causal powers in action. Going beyond the Humean tradition of perceiving the world only as it known to us; Bhaskar reasons for the stratification of the world (Bhaskar, 2018). The mechanisms and causal powers that are acted out govern empirical phenomena. This investigation requires an ontology that allows the emergence of collective memory at the individual and structural level. The application of critical realism will aid in uncovering the causal powers and mechanisms associated with collective memory and help reveal the processes in which it can be inclusive or divisive. Furthermore, the non-deterministic 'agency-structure' approach embraced by critical realists is compatible with this investigation as its two focal points are the study of individuals within communities and institutional structures.

The core objectives of this investigation confine the data collection in two theoretical and actual domains; the first being the study of community identity and collective memory of the Greek and Turkish Cypriot public. The second level will focus on museum practice on either sides of the buffer zone. *Figure 1* demonstrates that the third objective will be addressed through the combinations of the two areas of study. Due to this distinction in the areas of study, a variety of methodological techniques will be implemented including sampling and comparative case studies.
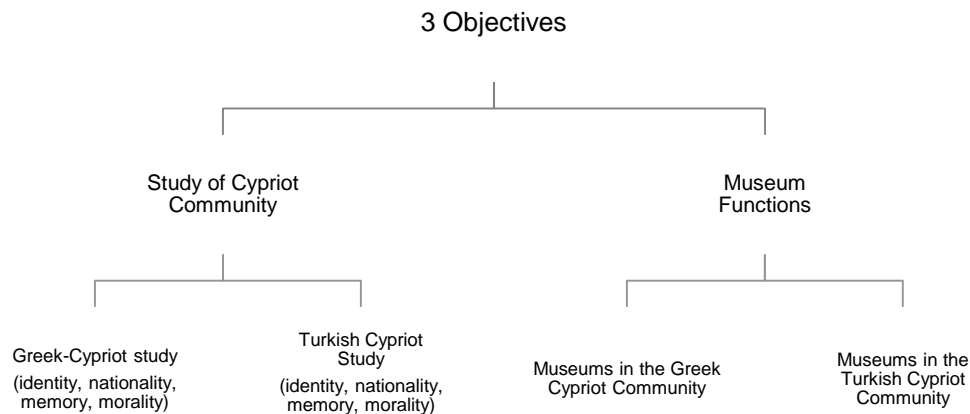
3 Objectives

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                              3 Objectives
                                  |
              _____
             |                                        |
      Study of Cypriot                            Museum
        Community                                Functions
             |                                        |
      _____                    _____
     |                   |                  |                   |
Greek-Cypriot study  Turkish Cypriot   Museums in the      Museums in the
(identity, nationality,  Study         Greek Cypriot       Turkish Cypriot
memory, morality)    (identity, nationality,  Community     Community
                     memory, morality)
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Figure 1: Fields of Research

Sampling:

Semi-structured interviews will be used to expose core concepts of identity, nationality, morality and therefore, memory at a community level. The data collection will be from a broad generational sample; as demonstrated in *Figure 2*. The sample will be divided into three distinct generations; the first group will be of people with personal experiences of the war as adult and the second group of individuals who experience it as children. It is key to consider that both generations experienced a united Cyprus, as well as a traumatic structural shift at a national level. Lastly, the third sample group will be citizens that have experienced the war only through the re-enactment of memories of their family unit and the impact of their social context. This generational distinction strategically aims to uncover the shifts in the causal mechanisms in relation to collective memory and identity. The interviewing process will continue in both communities, until the benefits from the interviews will be less than the investment made, also referred to as diminishing returns.

Subject of Study:	Generational Groups of Interviewees:		
Greek Cypriot Community	Experienced the war as adults. (aged 65-)	Experiences the war as children. (aged 55-65)	Experienced the war through 2nd and 3rd –hand. (18-55)
Turkish Cypriot Community	Experienced the war as adults. (aged 65-)	Experiences the war as children. (aged 55-65)	Experienced the war through 2nd and 3rd –hand. (18-55)

Figure 2: Sampling of Community Research

Comparative Case Study:

A comparative case study will be used for the study of museum functions. This is between more traditional museums, set up in the 1990s in Cyprus, that are explicitly concerned with the traditional functions of museums (e.g. the construction of state identity and nationality), and more contemporary museums, that have only been set up within the last decades and engage in promoting more secular

narratives. Semi-structured interviews of museum personnel, at various positions, and museums visitors, will aim to uncover the extent to which museum practice is guided by social cohesion and the means to which it is achieved through explicit or implicit processes. *Figure 3*, emphasises the distinction between traditional and contemporary functions of museums and how they differ in fostering or preventing social cohesion.

Traditional Museum
- Inclusive CM practices?
- Divisive CM practices?

Social Inclusion

Contedmporary Museum
- Inclusive CM practices?
- Divisive CM practices?

Figure 3: Exploration of Museum Practices

Ethics and Risks:

As this is an exploration of largely a symbolic yet active conflict between the two Cypriot communities it is imperative that ethical issues and risks are avoided. I will adopt the Research Code of Practice of the University of Warwick. The thorough consideration and consent of the interviewees will be required, with emphasis placed on their anonymity and ability to withdraw up to six months prior to the completion of the project. Furthermore, secure data storage will be ensured, particularly due to the political implications of this research. Despite being a study of presently a symbolic conflict there is still the potential of risks during data collection. Therefore, as a Greek Cypriot, all research will be carried out on the south-western part of the island that is under the control of the Republic of Cyprus.

Why does it matter?

This investigation is necessary on two grounds. Firstly, it will make a meaningful contribution in the academic fields of memory and museum studies; both considered interdisciplinary, which amplifies the relevance of the research. Studying collective memory on both sides of the coin, as a unifying and divisive force will provide an understanding of the processes involved in its construction and management. This is fundamental for contemporary functions of museums and the survival of present communities.

Secondly, this investigation is imperative as western communities are experiencing intense destabilizing political shifts with the key driving force being division. The move of extremist views into the center of political activity poses a threat to the survival and thrive of democratic states. The weakening of national borders, amplifies the power and responsibility of museums over their communities. Therefore, it is important that narratives promoted by museums, whether at a local or national level, are not thriving on dichotomy. Rather, the emphasis is rightly placed by policy makers on museums offering inclusive social and political narratives for its visitors and therefore, its citizens.

Collective Memory and Museum Practice

Social cohesion is a vital pillar for communities by ensuring their political stability and confidence to its citizens to flourish and collective memory is a crucial material in its foundation.

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