

**JOURNAL
#05**

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Special Issue
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A Research Beacon
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This fifth issue of the TRACES Journal is a milestone, marking the midterm of our collaborative research project. It has been conceived as a 'beacon'. Rather than a dictionary, a glossary, or a thesaurus (which are meant to provide 'definitions'), this fanzine has been understood as a tool that brings together selected key concepts emerging from and/or grounding the TRACES project.

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From the 1990s onward, a growing corpus of studies has been delving into heritage and heritage practices from manifold and widening perspectives. Going beyond an idea of heritage as a *patrimoine* (i.e. related to the Latin idea of *patres*, a legacy holding an inner value and inherited from previous generations with a duty to preserve it), these practices investigate heritage as multifarious and multilayered, mostly contingent, imbricated in society, open to several critical readings and quite often holding a somehow contentious dimension. Neither static nor an already existing fixed entity, heritage has thus been investigated and theorised as a constitutive cultural process, shaped by contemporary social, cultural and political instances and inherently intertwined with memory, identity, owning and disowning, remembering and forgetting practices. In the wake of these studies, new promising lines of inquiry are emerging and taking root, expanding the field of heritage study to include contributions from different disciplines and opening up to important theoretical and methodological opportunities to investigate different 'types' of heritage for the potentially diverse meanings that may gather around them.

Nowadays, heritage studies are expanding so fast that one might not be even be able to keep up with the flow of literature generated as well the fast-flowing river of terms that can create confusion. Term-coining is flourishing, with an increasing penchant for 'name dropping'. These symptoms can be read in the context of the struggles to define critical analytical categories for the study

{ foreword }

of a shifting field such as heritage. Terms define positions, but they can also become empty labels and even reinforce disciplinary boundaries rather than building bridges to enable dialogue, nurturing truly interdisciplinary and productive approaches to the complex issues when working between heritage and society. Indeed, the risk of getting trapped in terminology is real and becomes even more urgent in research projects which start as multidisciplinary investigations but strive for truly interdisciplinary and dialogical dimensions. Many recent large-scale EU Research and Innovation collaborative projects working on cultural heritage and museum studies have identified the urgent need—yet the impossibility—to set out a shared language and thus resorted to multiplying outcomes (such as the MeLa Critical Archive, the REACHES taxonomy, the COHERE critical archive, to name a few).

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This issue of the TRACES Journal is our answer to this challenge.

From more than a year and half of collaborative research carried out in the context of TRACES—including workshops, meetings and several conversations undergone between the different researchers involved in the project—an open list of recurring terms has emerged, highlighting hot spots for research. Within this constellation a few key concepts have been identified as the core of our investigations and research activities. Presented in this issue, these concepts and terms are attributed a tentative and provisional statement of meaning, and thereby set out the theoretical framework for our research activities and the purposes of the project.

— Francesca Lanz



Find out more keywords and full texts at
www.traces.polimi.it/journal

Reflexive Europeanization, or: Makings of Europe

by Regina Römhild

Current trends to counter the EU-European project—either by fundamental rejections such as Brexit, or ‘alternative’ visions of a (re)turn to an exclusionist White, Christian, secular Europe (*Abendland*) promoted by the European New Right—remind us of the political and cultural fragility of a **Europe** which is still in the making.

What we tend to forget is that this fragility and contestedness has always been the case. There never was a clear-cut, consensual entity called ‘Europe’, nor a geographically defined continent or a cultural formation. Both of these notions have been and are today challenged by competing constructions such as, for example, ‘Eurasia’ in which the cultural boundary between Europe and Asia is dissolved in favour of an entangled space with similar cultural traits and with its centres weighted towards the East (Hann 2016). In fact, as Ulrich Beck has put it, there is no Europe as such but, depending on from where one looks at it, only diverse projects of **Europeanization**.

Many of these projects are not represented on any official map, they have been made invisible and actively forgotten or, in other ways, have not succeeded in becoming hegemonic. Such ‘Other Europes’ can be sought and found in the transnational, postcolonial imaginations and practices of migrant networks spanning the trans-European Mediterranean (Römhild 2007); or in alternative (post)socialist globalizations like the Non-Alignment-Movement, which was meant to connect anti-colonial socialist projects across and beyond the Cold War division of East, West and South. Still other, formerly hegemonic Europes are comprised in imperial projects of Western colonisation and National Socialist projects of conquering and ethnically cleansing, for example

‘Arianising’ the East. The more than national, indeed European, dimensions of these violent expansions are still not adequately considered and remembered in debates in and about Europe today.

Furthermore, all these more or less invisible, dismembered ‘Other Europes’ have resulted in specific reactions and dynamics, as seen in the long-term migration and refugee movements from post-imperial areas, which in turn effect the Europe that has become dominant today. In the political and cultural publics as well as in the **memoriscapes** of the European Union, however, these **contentious heritages** and their critical effects do not figure prominently, if at all.

In our project, TRACES, we employ the concept of **Reflexive Europeanization** as a key term to denote these diverse makings of Europe and their reflexive effects on the current European project. In this sense, Reflexive Europeanization is used as an analytical tool to investigate the global entanglements in which Europe figures as both a co-producer as well as a by-product (Adam et al. forthcoming). Furthermore, we employ Reflexive Europeanization as a methodological tool to bring to light the forgotten blind spots of European contentious heritages. These sites—with their persistent exclusions, disrecognitions of ‘Other Europes’ and their effects on the present—confront hitherto unconcerned debates on histories and memory politics. In this context we can pursue a pedagogical aim: if Europe can still be seen as under construction and in the making, then there is also the possibility for change and improvement. Can we, as Dipesh Chakrabarty suggests, contribute to the process of rethinking the European project from the margins?



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Contentious Heritage

by Sharon Macdonald

In choosing to focus on contentious heritage, TRACES explored the fact that Europe is home not only to pasts that bring different groups and nations together but also to ones that threaten to tear us apart or generate negative emotions. If heritage is what we inherit from the past and informs our sense of who we are today, then contentious heritage is that which is capable of throwing this sense into doubt and disrupting potential commonalities. Contentious heritage may spark memories of traumatic acts and oppression, problematic subject positions and roles, deep social divisions or conflicts.

Contentious heritage is not necessarily already in contention. Many of the cases that we are exploring in TRACES regard relatively **neglected or forgotten heritages**: heritage that we are only made aware of by following faint or partly hidden traces in the present. In some of these cases the forgetting has been a side-effect of other events, while in others the heritage would become contentious if it were brought to light or made known and is therefore avoided with willful amnesia. The latter is often heritage that would forge deep differences in positions about how to treat it—differences which often issue from and aggravate existing social divisions, such as those of race or class. In the context of TRACES our main concern is heritage that is contentious due to its capacity to disrupt more unifying memories of **Europe** itself. This heritage is contentious in its capacity to evoke the deep divisions within and between countries, as well as their relationships to the rest of the world, especially the colonized, within and beyond.



Francesca Lanz
online

Heritage that is contentious due to its capacity to disrupt more unifying memories of Europe itself.

Some of the heritage that we examine is contentious in other senses. For example, whether to exhibit a dead body or part of it might be considered contentious in itself due to the emotional demand that this might place on a viewer. In all cases concerning TRACES, however, this dimension of

contentiousness is tightly tied together with our main sense of the term: the disruptions caused by this kind of heritage to more cohesive memories. It would make sense, therefore, to retain the term ‘contentious’ for use in this primary sense, while recognizing that it may also be over-determined by other differences of view and conflicts.



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Communities of Implication

by Erica Lehrer

Given the intensifying global migrations of people and things during the twentieth and

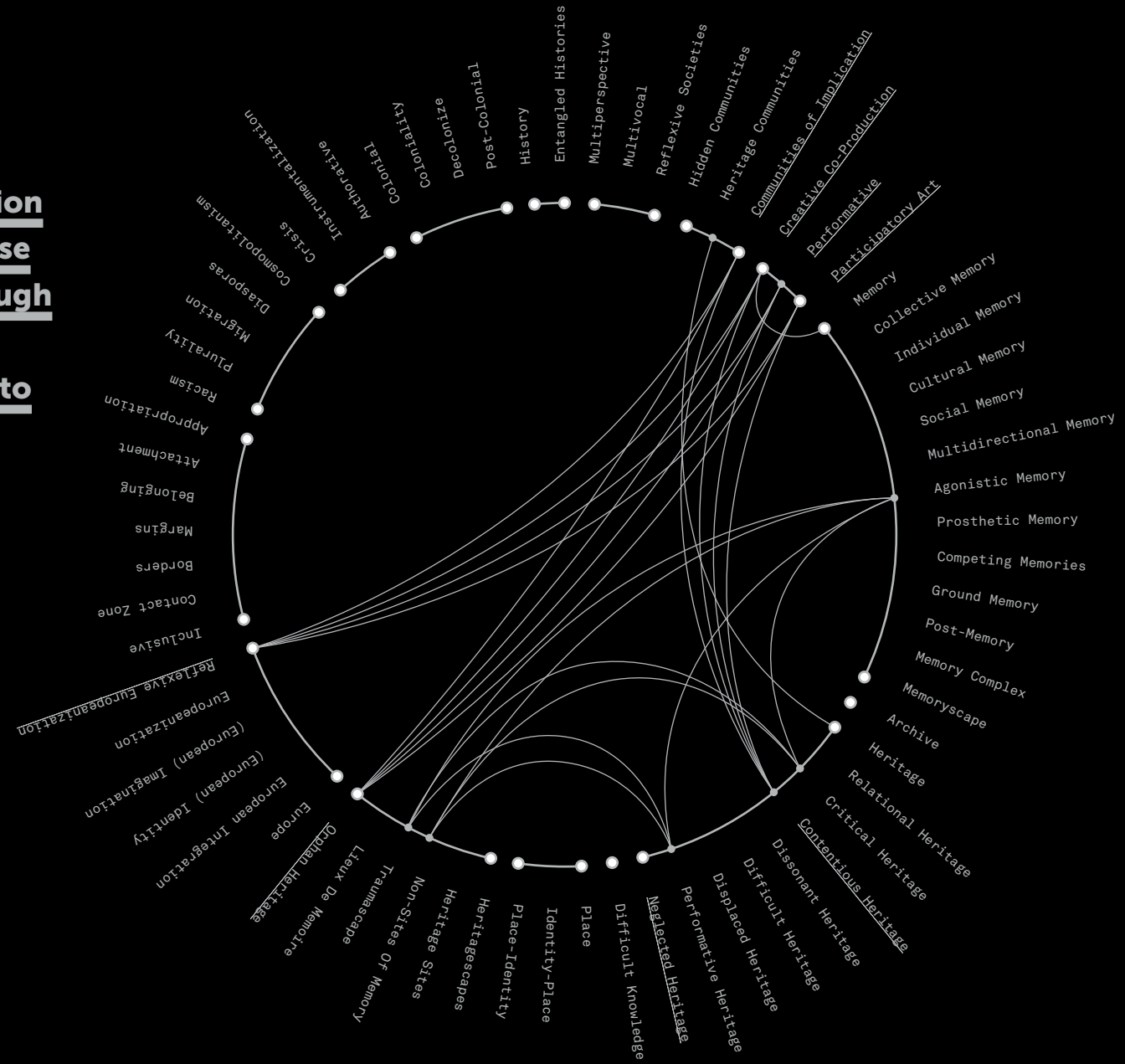
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twenty-first centuries, the grounds for ‘cultural authenticity’—together with the authority and analytical tools to determine it in relation to material culture—increasingly overflows the contours of any single national or cultural community. Quite simply, the language of ownership and property is insufficient to both theorize and productively activate certain kinds of material culture present in museums today. Without eroding the fundamental ethical (and legal) achievement of recognizing **source communities** and championing the restitution of ‘cultural property’ to those groups from whom it was unjustly acquired, we must explore how museums can supplement and expand on ideas of relatedness. Museums are in a powerful position to help broker new modes and terms of engagement with collections that enhance our understandings of meaningful objects as well as supporting our ability to envision and call into being new communities. Theorists need to develop



As a cultural imaginary, European identity is a process of self-recognition and exists as a constellation of diverse elements which are articulated through emerging repertoires of evaluation. This European Identity corresponds to a dialogic view of culture.

Delanty Gerard and Chris Rumford. 2005. *Rethinking Europe: Social Theory and the Implications of Europeanization*. London: Routledge.



additional concepts to support innovative museum work in a range of social, cultural, and political settings, a vocabulary suited to complex past and present relationships not only of museology, but of object-making. This language must also support new visions of identity politics and cross-group solidarity to counteract a dangerously polarized world.

There are simply too many tangible and intangible traces of the past that intrude on our social lives or consciousness unbeckoned in ways that may strongly contribute to our senses of self and others ideas about us, to allow us to think of heritage as always fully chosen and embraced.

A starting point in this process is the concept of a **heritage community**. The Council of Europe (CoE 2005) defines a heritage community 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’ [my emphasis]. This conception brings a usefully flexible sense of agency, process, and change to people-object relations but is limiting in its focus on *desire* and *choice* in relation to heritage. For this reason, I instead propose the term **community of implication**, adapting the CoE’s definition to include people who are *affected* by or can be said to be *implicated* in certain tangible or intangible cultural products (Rothberg 2014). Such a move decenters Europe as the space of definition, and yet keeps in full view the European connections to the objects that have sojourned in colonial museums without imputing any necessary or noble character to such custodianship.

Thinking about implication involves shifting the focus away from the agency of the subjects—the idea that we always choose what aspects of heritage relate to us—and transposes it instead to the agency of the objects, recognizing the material world’s ability to depict, to move, to connect, to remind and even to accuse (Navaro-Yashin 2009). Such a shift is particularly salient when considering complex recent histories involving mass violence, forced migration, and subsequent mnemonic formations—so-called **difficult heritage**

(Macdonald 2009). Heritage discourses are often deployed by regressive or even dangerous forces in highly exclusive, essentialist forms, which do not acknowledge ‘undesirable’ heritage that could complicate celebratory nationalist (or other exclusivist) projects (De Cesari 2017). It is therefore necessary to go beyond the notion of *positive valuation* and a *desire to protect and bequeath* ‘heritage’ as a gift of identity that one hopes to see continued by our descendants. There are simply too many tangible and intangible traces of the past that intrude on our social lives and consciousness unbeckoned (and often undesired), in ways that may strongly contribute to our senses of self and others ideas about us, to allow us to think of heritage as always fully chosen and embraced.

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Participatory Art

by Suzana Milevska

The turn towards a participatory paradigm in arts is based on the main assumption that while

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audiences do not take an active part in the creative process of production and presentation of art, they want and need to. Participatory art therefore offers an approach to artistic processes in which it is considered incomplete without the viewers’ involvement—making audience members into co-authors, editors, or active performers who complement and resolve the artist’s concept.

The main intent behind the emergence of participatory art is not to simply add a new genre to existing art genres and media. This conception is instrumental for challenging the dominant forms and relationships in the art world: a small protected class of professionals that have the monopoly over making



and defining art who conceive of the audience as the ‘other’, passive and marginal observers celebrating the results of the creation. In this respect, participatory art is closely related to the practice of institutional critique through which different generations of artists have called for revealing, critiquing, and dismantling elitist and exclusive art structures.

Today participatory art is linked with contemporary post-conceptual, conversational and relational practices, as well as with socially and politically engaged art (dubbed ‘artivism’), however it is often forgotten that similar art discourses and practices have existed since the early 1960s. Within the theoretical background of participatory art practices, there have been some other overlooked but related art phenomena such as the development of new media and discourses, as well as many individual artists who contributed to the application of an artistic participatory paradigm in parallel with democratic shifts towards participation in research and education.

Participatory art continues to promote the understanding that an artwork is not just an object that you passively enjoy while quietly looking at—it is a creation in which even non-specialised viewers actively participate, a dynamic collaboration between the artist, the audience and their environment. Moreover, participatory projects often aim to initiate the emergence of new communities.

Often there are also objects produced in such participatory processes, however these material outcomes are not the main priority because the establishing of the relational, interactive, and collaborative structures are also considered art. Therefore, although the results of participatory art may be documented with photography, audio, video, broadcasted, or otherwise, the artwork is really to be found within the interactions and relations that emerge from

Participatory art promotes the understanding that an artwork is not just an object that you passively enjoy while quietly looking at.

the audience’s engagement with the artist and the situation created. Even so, participatory art cannot always overcome societal strictures, and despite the attempt to erase divisions between the artist as a producer and the audience as participant, very often new hierarchies are created depending on class, ethnicity, access, etc.



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Creative Co-Production

by Tal Adler

Creative Co-Production (CCP) is a model for collaborative work. While it is probably applicable in many fields and useful for various purposes, the concept was developed specifically for the research project TRACES to be implemented and investigated through artistic and ethnographic research on **contentious heritage**.

The CCP provides institutions of cultural heritage, practitioners of artistic research, ethnographers and other researchers with a format for collaborative work aimed at generating significant and sustainable changes to the way contentious cultural heritages are understood, dealt with, and mediated to the public.

The CCP model was developed as an experimental solution for challenges and shortcomings in artistic work that engages with institutions or cases involving contentious cultural heritage. Nowadays, such engagements are often referred to as ‘artistic interventions’ that come into being through artistic residencies hosted by institutions of cultural heritage (see **participatory art**).

Very roughly, some of the main shortcomings of such ‘interventions’ are: the relatively short timeframe offered to artists to research a topic and develop a



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meaningful artistic process; fixed, unequal and inflexible relations between the artists and the heritage institution define the nature of the artistic processes through models of commissioning, contracting and service provision; the artistic results of these engagements have a relatively short duration of exposure to the public and therefore cannot generate a meaningful and sustainable change in regards to the difficult heritage in question.

To meet the challenges outlined above and provide an opportunity for collaborative artistic work to have significant and sustainable effects, the CCP brings together a multidisciplinary team of artists, ethnographers and other researchers, heritage providers—including museums, memorials, festivals, clubs, etc.—and **communities of implication**—such as individuals, organisations, policy makers, etc.—who are affected by the heritage at question. The CCP team works together over an extended period of time (at least three years) through mutual, equal and non-hierarchical relations: avoiding guest and host, commissioner and contractor, applicant and patron dynamics, but equal team members who share the responsibility not only for the artistic and scientific processes at play, but also for the financial, curatorial, educational dissemination concepts and tasks that should be seen as inseparable and equally important parts of the artistic work.



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Orphan heritage: Caducus

by Roma Sendyka



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Post-violence countries often face the problem of how to deal with the abandoned heritage of those who fell victim to past events. Especially difficult is the question of how to account for the processes unfolding in regions that suffered extreme population loss and are left to reckon with the heritage of the dead. The definition of orphan heritage proposed by Jon Price (2005) clearly refers to an estranged or abandoned possession of a still existing population, not an ownership of an erased one. According to Jon Price, orphan heritage is ‘owned by people distant from the territories that contain the material’ (2005, 182). Communities

linked to those who were murdered, expelled, or emigrated maintain symbolic, emotional, or discursive relationships to tangible objects or properties that remain in the country from which they or their kin fled but there is ‘a separation between those who would normally wish to enact codes of behavior, policy structures and legislation by reason of ownership of heritage, and those who are legitimately able to by reason of ownership of location’ (*ibidem*). The current ‘owning country’ can have ‘a variety of responses ranging from being co-operative to being completely disinterested, destructive, or not enacting any form of protective legislation’ (Miles 2016, 73). The orphan heritage might be thus destroyed, appropriated, misappropriated, commodified, or may become a magnet for newly formed **heritage communities** or **communities of implication**. The ancient legal term *caducus* might help in grasping the complexity of the phenomenon of post-genocidal ownership relations. *Caducus* would generally denote the ‘ownership’ status of an obliterated population, who left no descendants, to the material heritage they left behind. In the feudal past, such heritage fell to an individual, politically-stronger subject.



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The orphan heritage might be thus destroyed, appropriated, misappropriated, commodified, or may become a magnet for newly formed heritage.

The old legal term can still be found in the saying ‘to do something by the law of *caducus*’ (Polish: *prawem kaduka*), meaning done unfairly, without rights. Thus, **caducary heritage** may today describe morally despicable appropriation or looting by a particular person. Another form of *caducus*, **escheated heritage**—based on an old legal term for nationalization or transfer of property to the state—may today refer to actions undertaken by the state in the name of the people.



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Selected research papers published in a sixteen-page, custom-designed, off-set print, limited edition. Each issue investigates a specific topic from different perspectives focusing on practices, innovative approaches and experimental research actions.

Three issues per year: 'Snapshots', with graphic-based contributions raising questions and investigating practices; 'Dialogues', in which the topic unfolds through a semi-structured interview; and 'Insights', that expands the field of inquiry by means of theoretical and empirical critical thoughts.

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