

Abstract

This thesis is concerned with a theme central to critical heritage studies, that is, the meaning of heritage for a people in a given context. The research for this thesis is focused on heritage sites and their articulation of both memory and history in post-communist Poland. Through the lens of the heritage sites, and most particularly museums in the Krakow region, the research addresses how past and history are being both negotiated and interwoven as part of an ongoing process.

The thesis offers four in-depth cultural analyses of presentist historical narratives pertaining to heritage sites, and thematically articulates the following narratives, mainly: the founding narrative of the National Museum in Krakow as the first national museum in Poland; the narrative of the Judaica gallery (1998) in the main building of the National Museum in Krakow; the narrative of the permanent exhibition of the Schindler Factory museum (2010) (a branch of the Historical Museum of Krakow); and the presentist reference of the narrative of the exhibition Poles' self-portrait (1979-80) at the National Museum in Krakow.

The purpose of such analyses is twofold: they provide an understanding of societal visions or present understandings of the past while at the same time they offer an understanding of how heritage time and space may function in the memory landscape. These analyses reveal how the national, the trauma of World War Two, Polish-Jewish relations and the communist past are being addressed and worked in in the heritage landscape and, meanwhile, how existing heritage sites may impact on these very narratives.