

“Sites of Memories: Learning spaces for democracy”

GENERAL REPORT OF THE First annual Forum for History Education



Belgrade, 3-4 November 2022



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“Sites of Memories: Learning spaces for democracy”

GENERAL REPORT OF THE
First annual Forum
for History Education

November 3-4th, Faculty of Philosophy,
University of Belgrade

**General Rapporteur
Dr Rodoljub Jovanović**

French edition:

*“Sites de mémoire : Des espaces
d'apprentissage pour la démocratie”*

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Executive Summary

The first annual forum for history education “Sites of Memories: Learning spaces for democracy” was held at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade on the 3rd and 4th of November 2022. Around 70 participants – history educators, history education experts, Council of Europe representatives and others from around 26 countries gathered to discuss the potential of memory sites for education that would lead to the development of democratic principles. The forum combined three crucial aspects of looking at the sites of memories: experiences from successful memorials/museums, visits to memory sites in Belgrade, and a theoretical perspective on sites of memories. Presentations of the sites of memories that became memorials and museums ([Nantes Memorial to the Abolition of Slavery](#), [The Memorial to the Victims of Communism and to the Anti-Communist Resistance](#), and [Guernica Peace Museum](#)) introduced the struggles and real-life experiences of transforming a site of memory into an institution and opened important discussions on the **relationship between the memorials and the local community, decision making processes involved, financial aspect** and the **challenges when it comes to cooperation with the formal education**. Participants had a chance to choose one of the four tours: **the Old Fairground** ([Terraforming](#)), **Contested history and monuments** (professor Marko Šuica, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade), **the Belgrade Fortress**, and the **Ottoman and Jewish heritage** (these two by [Education for 21st century](#)). These provided participants with the hands-on experience and a possibility to gain deeper understanding of the potential challenges arising from using the sites of memories in education. The visits opened many interesting discussions including the **existence of many different layers of memory, possibility of repurposing the sites of memories, the mandate**

to remember/forget, and controversial memories. Finally, the theoretical perspective was provided by the lecture **“Are sites of memories in Serbia learning spaces for democracy?”** given by **Dr Dubravka Stojanovic**, Head of the History Department, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade. Dr Stojanovic discussed several key issues employing the examples from Belgrade: **neglecting Holocaust memory and employing it for political purposes, celebrating Middle Ages in Serbia, and street name changes**. All these examples, although in their own way, speak to the memorialization processes in a society and how **what is commemorated is a political decision that speaks less about what is commemorated and more about the present**. Based on their experience and knowledge as well as the intensive first part of the forum, participants had a chance to discuss and propose their recommendations within the working groups. During this session, participants agreed that developing critical thinking through multiperspective approach is the key however they outlined several groups of open questions – challenges different actors in this process need to have in mind and respond to. The conditions under which the sites of memories can be used as a tool for developing democratic thinking. The second group of challenges is focusing on the possibility of using the sites of memories within formal education setting. The final, third group, deals with the types of questions educators need to emphasize if they are to promote democratic decision making among their students while they use the sites of memories. The final session included the closing discussion and the address by **Barbara Toce**, Representative of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities who restated the great importance of heritage and the sites of memory for democracy and the potential of local and regional authorities to support these processes even more.

Introduction

The first annual forum for history education “Sites of Memories: Learning spaces for democracy” was held at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade on the 3rd and 4th of November 2022. Around 70 participants – history educators, history education experts, Council of Europe representatives and others from around 26 countries gathered to discuss the potential of memory sites for education that would lead to the development of democratic principles. Over the two days, forum participants had a chance to learn about and experience sites of memories in Belgrade and across Europe. The first day was opened by the introductory remarks given by the representatives of the Council of Europe, Ministry of Education the Republic of Serbia, Faculty of Philosophy, Observatory on History Teaching in Europe, Delegation of the European Union to Serbia, and the Ambassador of Ireland to Serbia. After the opening remarks, three memory sites across Europe ([Nantes Memorial to the Abolition of Slavery](#), [The Memorial to the Victims of Communism and to the Anti-Communist Resistance - Sighet](#), [Guernica Peace Museum](#)) and firsthand experiences from educators were presented. In the afternoon, participants had a chance to participate in four tours presenting numerous sites of memories around Belgrade related to the period ranging from the Middle Ages to the last few decades, including a site of a World War Two concentration camp, the Old Fairground (Staro Sajmište). Four parallel tours, organized by several local experts and NGOs, took participants on the historical exploration of Belgrade through marked and unmarked sites of memories. On the second day, participants attended a lecture “Are sites of memories in Serbia learning spaces for democracy?” given by **Dr Dubravka Stojanovic**, Head of the History Department, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade. The lecture provided indispensable theoretical contextualization of the visited memory sites and the memorialization practices in Serbia. After that, participants, divided in five working groups, provided their insights, thoughts, and recommendations in relation to the potential of the sites of memories as learning spaces for democracy. Participant reflections were later presented in the plenary. Finally, before the remarks by **Barbara Toci**, Representative of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities and closing of the forum, participants had a chance to present their own projects related to using sites of memories for learning in a form of pop-up gallery. The Forum was closed by the presentation of the preliminary insights from the General Rapporteur.

Opening Remarks

The introductory panel was chaired by **Tobias Flessenkemper**, the Head of the Council of Europe Office in Belgrade and the remarks were given by **Matjaž Gruden**, Director of Democratic participation, Council of Europe, prof. PhD **Bojan Tubić**, Assistant Minister, Sector for higher education at the Ministry of Education the Republic of Serbia, **Aurora Ailincai**, Executive Director, Observatory on History Teaching in Europe, **Milan Stančić**, Vice-dean for International Co-operation, Faculty of Philosophy, **Plamena Halacheva**, Deputy Head of the Delegation of the European Union to Serbia, and **H.E. Iseult Fitzgerald**, Ambassador of Ireland to Serbia. **Milan Stančić** welcomed all the participants and panel participants emphasized several crucial intersections between history teaching, sites of memory and the current events in Europe. **H.E. Iseult Fitzgerald** reflected on the 100th anniversary of the independence of Ireland and concluded that these kinds of commemorations are an important learning opportunity, and very much worthwhile doing. **Plamena Halacheva** emphasized that confronting history and the conflicting past is one of the most demanding tasks our society must undergo and history education can be harnessed to build diverse, inclusive, and democratic societies that can deal with sensitive and controversial issues, develop critical historical thinking in the digital age and most importantly, offer a multifaceted template for our identity. This is especially true now when we are witnessing war on our continent, and continuous attacks on democracy that require us more than ever to invest in history and education. **Aurora Ailincai** presented the work of the [The Observatory on History Teaching in Europe](#) (OHTe) and put forward the main question from their perspective which is how, with everything we have, can we make the life of students and teachers easier in the classroom. Developments in the Serbian educational system and especially the project focusing on the promotion of competencies for democratic culture by promoting democratic culture in the formal education system and applying an anti-discrimination approach were presented by **Bojan Tubić**. Finally, **Matjaž Gruden** focused on the need for remembrance, memory, and critical understanding of history, to understand the importance of democracy and human rights. This, according to him, is crucial for understanding the challenges we face today. He concluded dealing with history does not mean living in the past, but about knowing what happened and where we come from. It is about understanding today and who we are. But above all, it is about learning how to build a better future.

Memory Site Presentations

After the official opening of the forum, the work continued with the presentations of the first-hand experiences of the representative of the three sites that became memorials (in the case of [Nantes Memorial to the Abolition of Slavery](#) and [The Memorial to the Victims of Communism and to the Anti-Communist Resistance](#)) or a museum (in the case of [Guernica Peace Museum](#)). The panel was chaired by **Marie-Louise Jansen**, Program Director, [Institute for Historical Justice and Reconciliation \(EUROCLIO\)](#), and **Andreas Holberget**, Project Manager, [European Association of History Educators \(EUROCLIO\)](#). The chairs opened the session by emphasizing the importance of the sites of memories for educators, as places that offer a lot of possibilities to instill students with curiosity, skills, and knowledge, that can help them to gain a better understanding of both the past and the present. In addition they connected the theme of the forum with the ongoing EuroClio project [Contested Histories](#) that examines not only the history of the site (why it was built, by whom, etc.), but also how the historical narratives are interpreted by different groups and what impact interpretations have on society today.

Nantes Memorial to the Abolition of Slavery

Dr Cottias presented the story of the [Nantes Memorial to the Abolition of Slavery through several important dates](#). The first [Anneaux de la Mémoire](#) association conference in 1985 which brought together the best international specialists on the topic and opened up a new path for political discussions between the town council of Nantes, and the Association of Nantes. The 1994 launching of the UNESCO program “[Routes of Enslaved Peoples: Resistance, Liberty and Heritage](#)” in Riga and the 1998 commemoration on the 150th anniversary of the abolition of slavery. Finally, in 2001 France ratified a law declaring the slave trade and slavery in the Atlantic and Indian Ocean as crimes against humanity. This law had institutional implications: the creation of a committee for the memory and history of slavery, and the establishment of the two national commemoration dates for the memory of slavery: May 10th and May 23rd. Furthermore, in the field of education, the history of slave trade and slavery was integrated into school curricula. However, the decision to build the [Nantes Memorial to the Abolition of Slavery](#) in June 1998 did not come easy and was subject to political uncertainties and a great deal of opposition, despite the involvement of historians and the associations. It was only in 2021 that the memorial to the abolition of slavery was open to the public.

The Memorial to the Victims of Communism and to the Anti-Communist Resistance

The following speakers, **Virginia Ion** and **Andrea Dobes** from The Memorial to the Victims of Communism and to the Anti-Communist Resistance in Sighet, Romania started by introducing the history of creating the memorial. It was established in 1993 by a non-governmental organisation, the **Civic Academy Foundation**, which today organizes and administers the memorial. The memorial was inaugurated in 1997 and consists of 60 museum rooms and the Paupers' Cemetery, situated 2.5 kilometers away from the former prison. The same year, Romanian State declared the Sighet Memorial a *site of national interest*. Since 2013, there is the *Memory as a Form of Justice* exhibition space in Bucharest which also serves as a cultural center where we organize conferences, workshops, debates. In 2018, the memorial was included on the list of European Heritage Label sites. From 1998 to 2014 the memorial organized the *Sighet Summer School* for youth and since 2008 the young people have been joined by high school teachers. The summer school, which restarted in 2020 as part of the project *Festival of unSettled Ideas*, is aimed at university students and includes exploration of memory through artistic performances. In addition, in 2015 the memorial started the autumn school for young historians at the Museum of the Memorial in collaboration with the History Faculty, Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj. They also reflected on the relationship between the museum and the local community given that the memorial became an important cultural space for the city, and a tourist attraction important for the economic development of the local community. However, the most important collaboration is one with the schools from this town. Interestingly, the pandemic opened new ways so the Memorial and its activity could be presented to the students who didn't have the possibility to visit the museum physically.

Guernica Peace Museum

Gernika Peace Museum established in 1998 was presented by **Idoia Orbe Narbaiza**, Head of the Educational Department. Besides the permanent exhibition, the museum organizes temporary exhibitions and the current one is dedicated to the Spanish Civil War and the dictatorship in Spain. One of the many activities organized by the educational department are the walking tours exploring the city and connecting the story of bombing with the current

day locations. These tours came in handy when the pandemic started and now, there are four walking tours: air-raid shelters, the reconstruction, monuments and memory, and Picasso and “Guernica”. Each covers a different topic and includes different aspects of the events and memory related to the Guernica bombing. Furthermore, the museum provides two sets of materials for online activities which were started with school children during the pandemic: the bombing of Guernika and the Spanish Civil War through cartoons. The education department also created and conducts several 1-1.5 hour workshops that are provided to school groups to enrich their visit. These have various topics: the bombing of Gernika, Gernika and fake news, Picasso and “Guernica”, What is peace?, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, cooperative games, art for peace, etc. These workshops are available in four languages (Spanish, Basque, French, and English) since our official languages are Spanish and Basque and more than 50% of our visitors are foreigners, mostly French. Finally, one part of the museum work is dedicated to the memory of the Basque conflict. The project, which is a cooperation with other organisations in Gernika and from the Basque Country, is trying to involve civilians and allow them to talk about the Basque conflict.

Discussion

The key challenges in using the sites presented as learning spaces and particularly as learning spaces for democracy, according to panel participants, are the interest of young people in history, finding ways to engage them and the relationships with the local communities. Participants reflected on the formal organisation of the educational system (such as the number of field trips in a year) that limit the possibility of the cooperation with schools but pointed out several online programs developed during the pandemic that can solve this problem. The cooperation with local community is a very important aspect of the work of all the memorials, and participants discussed the financial gains as well as the potentially contentious issues for the local community. Depending on the story of the memorial, local community sometimes resists being depicted in a negative light or being a captive of the difficult past. All of these need to be considered when we think of the new and existing memorials and the sites of memories being used in education.

Sites of memories in Belgrade

The afternoon session was devoted to experiential learning through exploring the sites of memories in Belgrade. Participants, who previously applied for one of the four walking tours/site visits, had several tasks. First, the participants learned about the sites and history – they were the learners. The second role they had was to reflect on the potential of these sites of memories as learning spaces for Serbian democracy, but also as sites for international students and the public. Finally, and maybe most importantly, the participants were asked to use these examples and their own experiences of visiting them to reflect on the potential of sites of memories as learning spaces for democracy in general. The four tours were: the Old Fairground ([Terraforming](#)), Contested history and monuments (professor MArko Šuica, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade), the Belgrade Fortress, and the Ottoman and Jewish heritage (these two by [Education for 21st century](#)).

The Old Fairground

The first tour was the visit to the **Old Fairground**, a former concentration camp site which, aside from a plaque and the monument, is still unmarked to a large extent. There is currently an initiative to create a memorial in one part of the complex. The visit was guided by Miško Stanišić, Director of [NGO Terraforming](#) and it is, in his own words, focused on experiencing the space and only then moving to seeing the monument and the plaques that are nearby. The focus on feeling the site is exactly what separates this kind of learning from the classroom learning since this is what students can't experience by sitting in the classroom. The tour is concerned with how the place transforms throughout time and what goes into commemorating a site of memories.

The Belgrade Fortress

The second tour, guided by Ana Radaković and Igor Mijović from [NGO Education for 21st century](#), was the tour of the **Belgrade fortress** that reflects several different layers of history through one site. This is the tour of the most popular and visited historical site in Belgrade. The focus is on going deeper and trying to open questions about history teaching outside the classroom. The tour aims to raise awareness of the potential that local history possesses and show how sites of memory can truly help learning democratic values. In addition, this tour is supposed to make dealing with sensitive and controversial issues easier and to develop critical historical thinking through face-to-face encounters with historical objects and

real spaces. It takes participants from the Middle Ages all the way to the present time and emphasizes the differences in commemoration depending on the period commemorated and when the commemorative action was taken. The tour shows how the most popular tourist site in Belgrade has more to offer than meets the eye. Finally, it is providing the stories of hidden and silent histories of the fortress.

The Ottoman and Jewish heritage

Similarly, the tour **Ottoman and Jewish heritage**, guided by Lidija Županić Šuica ([Education for 21st century](#)) depicts hidden history of the old Belgrade city center – Dorćol. This district contains an incredible number of important sites intertwining the Ottoman and Jewish heritage that citizens of Belgrade pass by every day. The tour includes the 19th century residential place of the Serbian government, Ottoman Sejh Mustafa's tomb mausoleum from the late 18th century, the Museum of Vuk and Dositej – a typical Balkan, Ottoman style building from the first half of the 18th century that later served as the headquarters of the Great School - the seed of the future Belgrade University, and the final stop at the Ottoman part of the tour - the late 16th century [Bajrakli mosque](#). The Jewish heritage tour of Dorćol begins around the corner from the Bajrakli mosque, a place where a Moorish style synagogue used to stand. The tour continues through Jevrejska street where it visits the remnants and archeological site of the old devastated synagogue, a Jewish hospital with its horrifying past during the Holocaust, and a stop at the Jewish cultural center. On the way back, participants walked through Rige od Fere street and learned about this historical person. Furthermore, they were prompted to think about creating the culture of remembrance through pinpointing and forgetting or erasing certain historical layers and heritage (like Ottoman) through street names.

Contested history and monuments

Finally, the sites visited as part of the tour **Contested history and monuments** are hiding the history of struggle for democracy, human rights, and different appearances of freedom. The tour takes participants through the Belgrade city center and reveals different layers of history often neglected by most tourists and citizens. The tour covers several important topics regarding memorialization in public space. The Republic square (Trg Republike) and the monument to Prince Mihailo (Knez Mihailo) tell the story of the visible and invisible history of Belgrade. The Youth

Cultural Center (Dom Omladine) is an important place publicly voicing disagreement with the government and the street name changes in the current Svetogorska street reveal the continuity and change in memorialization. Furthermore, the names are a witness to the changing politics of memory in Serbia. Telling the story of freedom of speech, expression, and voices of democracy, the following part of the tour consists of the building of the oldest daily newspaper

Politika, Ateje 212 – the theater that produced Hair in 1969 and Jesus Christ Superstar in 1972, and the place where a prominent journalist, Slavko Ćuruvija, was murdered in 1999. Finally, in Tašmajdan park the participants can explore the multi-layered history of Belgrade as well as the invented history by visiting the monuments to Heydar Aliyev and Milorad Pavić erected in 2011.

Lecture “Are sites of memories in Serbia learning spaces for democracy?”

On the second day of the First annual Forum for History Education “Sites of Memories: Learning spaces for democracy” in Belgrade, participants had a chance to attend the keynote lecture by **Dr Dubravka Stojanović**, Head of the History Department, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade. The session was opened by **Dr Marko Šuica**, Full Professor, History Department, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade. **Dr Dubravka Stojanović** discussed several negative practices in Belgrade, some of which participants saw the day before during the walking tours. These three negative strategies are: Holocaust remembrance, street naming practices, and the new monuments dealing with Middle Ages in Belgrade.

Talking about the Holocaust in Serbia, the most important camp was the Old Fairground in Belgrade, built in the late 1930s, transformed into a concentration camp as soon as the occupation started. It is also important to understand that the site of Sava River, where the camp is placed, belonged to the Independent State of Croatia. Today, this site is not only neglected but destroyed and there are restaurants, tennis courtyards, and even a disco club was there at one point. It was only in 1987 that one modest memorial was erected because from 1944-45 until 1987, it wasn't possible to talk about the Holocaust; the partisan victims of the Second World War took priority. However, this monument doesn't mention the Jews and is erected for the 40000 people murdered all around Yugoslavia. In 1990, a new monument was erected called 'Menorah in flames'. While this monument is visually great, it was erected on the shore of the Danube River, far away from the concentration camp. The third monument was erected in 1995 when there was still war going on between ethnic Serbs and Croats in Croatia and it is dedicated to all the victims and especially the Serbian victims of the Independent State of Croatia. This monument, clearly, says more about the year it was erected than the events it is commemorating. We can see here how learning about the Holocaust was neglected for many years, and neglecting the memory of the Holocaust is missing the opportunity to learn about empathy and solidarity – two of the basic values of human rights and democracy. Learning about the Holocaust is the first step towards facing one's own controversial national past, and this is the first step towards constructing the rational basis of a democratic society.

The second topic **Dr Stojanović** presented was the street names in Belgrade. The street names, she said,

were 'de-Yugoslavized' in the early 1990s, however, not all names of partisan and antifascist heroes were changed because of the eclectic ideology of Milošević. The second phase in the politics of memory in the changes of street names came in 2000 when power was taken by parties that were anti-communist and strongly nationalist. The new government of Serbia and the new government of Belgrade changed. Among other things, 900 street names overnight. This, according to **Dr Stojanović**, teaches us two things. One, it shows us the importance of memory and two, the political power to control memory. Going back to democracy, the capacity of political control over the past shows also how this politics of history is arbitrarily authoritarian and sends the message of the absolute power of the political elite that controls not only the present, but the past as well.

The third topic refers to the trend notable in the latest monuments in Belgrade. These monuments have all been erected during the regime of Aleksandar Vučić. During this regime the new leader of Serbia is trying very much to connect himself to glorious times of mediaeval Serbian history. The most prominent being the monument to Stefan Nemanja, a gigantic 23-meter-high monument that is built near the old railway station which represents the symbol of modernism. So, the symbol of 19th century modernism is replaced by this monument, which is a symbol of re-traditionalization of Serbia. Additionally, celebrating the Middle Ages today means promoting the concept of a so-called Golden Age in history, which is crucially and deeply anti-democratic, because it fixes the past as the ideal that is supposed to be achieved in the future.

The debate was opened by looking into the obstacles teachers face when they want to present history and the sites of memories in this way. It was asserted that we need to think about how we can put this freedom in front of teachers, give them autonomy, and help them not to be scared to teach in a way which develops these competences for democratic culture and develop a capacity for democracy among our students. The following point focused on the potential of the democratic assets such as civil society organisations, educators, historians, etc. to shift the dynamics and influence society in Serbia. **Dr Stojanović** said that there was action, specifically for the Stefan Nemanja monument, by the public, professors and students from the Faculty of Philosophy, but it was with little result.

Working Groups

The afternoon session of the second day required participants to take everything they learned and experienced during the first part of the forum and, split into five working groups, and provide their reflections on the potential and the difficulties of using sites of memories as learning spaces for democracy. Each working group consisted of a diverse group of forum participants – history educators, history education experts, museum experts, etc. and each group included participants who were a part of different tours of Belgrade on day one of the forum, so they were able to reflect on different experiences and provide diverse reflections.

Working Group 1

Reflecting on the potential of the sites of memory as learning spaces for democracy, this working group started from the perspective of teachers and local authorities and agreed that, in the contexts with a lot of contested historical topics, the **safety of teachers needs to be ensured** so they can be free to tackle these topics. In addition to this, participants concluded that decision makers on local, regional, and national levels need to make sure of the availability of sufficient **material resources needed to conserve the sites of memories** and create memorials/museums. Furthermore, they pointed out that, to use them adequately, **sites of memories need to be contextualized** within a larger historical narrative. During this whole process, it is crucial for all memorialization and education actors to maintain respect **for the local community**. To use these sites as learning spaces for democracy, educators **need to provide content and emotional support to students** while **involving them in project work and inspiring active citizenship**. In addition, teachers need to **activate students**, help them **connect past and present, prepare students** by **allowing democratic participation, allowing for fun and games** that help students learn, **support students' agency**, help them **feel as history activists**, equip them for a **multifaceted approach** – so they can see the positive but also the negative aspects of historical episodes, and finally help them see **democracy as everyday practice**. Looking at the educational

systems, there is a need to **bridge the methodologies of formal and informal education** to achieve best results. Educational authorities are called upon to **empower teachers to take students to the sites of memories** and **create space in the curriculum for site visits**. Finally, memorials, museums, and various NGOs should reach out to the educational system and **provide teachers with simple “plug and play” solutions** for using sites of memories in the educational process.

Working Group 2

This group took their impressions of the three presentations of memorials, guided tours through Belgrade and the keynote lecture as a starting point in the analysis of the potential of the sites of memories to be learning spaces for democracy. They first reflected on the undemocratic practices that produce **manipulated, false, or displaced history** that, for them, amounts to ‘killing’ the history. Furthermore, they concluded that there are many **difficulties in teaching and learning about invisible, silent, or absent heritage** and wondered **whether the verbal tour was enough** to ‘tell the truth’ in these situations.

Participants in this group provided some open questions they felt needed to be addressed. **Is it the job of memorials/museums to do the work of remembering** events or should the whole of society take that role? Are there some **dangers in memorials telling us what to think? Who is responsible for the sites of memories** in a democracy? **Who should use the sites of memories** to build democracy? **Who should have the power to decide** on the creation of memorials in a democratic society? **How should we make people care? How can we engage local community** in a democracy? **Is there enough time given to teachers** in the classroom to teach the context needed to understand sites of memories? **Are teachers trained/competent** to teach/read the memorials? **What is the role of authentic sites** in teaching and learning?

They agreed that **authentic sites provide experiences, emotions, evocative visualization and understanding** that can't be achieved in the

classroom. Furthermore, they observed a difference between the **monuments that often provide one view of the events**, and the sites themselves that can show **layers and meanings changing over time**.

They agreed that the **sites of memories can be used in the digital sphere** to present alternative, contested, and multilayered histories, however they always need to be relevant for the present and the future. Finally, participants provided some recommendations for using sites of memories as learning spaces for democracy:

- ▶ Sites of contested/multiperspective histories should be sought out for teaching.
- ▶ Don't be afraid to visit "difficult" sites.
- ▶ Blending the physical and digital by using technology such as QR codes on sites.
- ▶ Teach methods and skills of independent critical thinking based on sites of memories and sources.

Working Group 3

This group shared their impressions of everything they learned and experienced in the first part of the forum and emphasized some important aspects of contested histories in sites of memories. These are **personal reflections** and the **power of personal testimony, power of silences, layers of history, conflicting interpretations, and importance of destruction of buildings/memories**. All these feed into their analysis of the potential of sites of memories to be used as learning spaces for democracy. The guided tours opened some interesting questions for the members of this group. One important element was understanding **different layers of memory in a single site** of memories as well as **different ways to commemorate events depending on the time of the commemoration**. They also emphasized the **importance that sites of memories can have for national identity** and the **significance of invented histories** for some sites. Other questions referred to the possibility and moral aspects of repurposing the sites of memory, as in the case of Old Fairground, for everyday uses. Finally, instead of recommendations, this group posed open questions that should be addressed if we want to facilitate the usage of sites of memories as learning spaces for democracy:

- ▶ How much can we expect students/teachers to "take" from sites of memories?
- ▶ How much contextual knowledge is needed for students to understand sites of memories?
- ▶ What is the role of other sources of knowledge that exist outside the classroom?

Working Group 4

This group took the concept of the meaningful absences/silences as the starting point of their work and built up from there. One of the ideas connected to the main concept that emerged was the question of the **right to remember and/or forget, as** understood in several ways: the danger of imposing certain stories, the need to accept the right to forget of people who suffered, and the need of society to remember so as to be able to teach future generations. Related to this is the question of **whether teaching history is about the past or the future**. Another important aspect of the main idea is the **misuse of history** which is often seen as **manipulation for political purposes**. Uncovering the hidden, absent, and silenced memories, according to this group, requires a **democratic dialogue and safety** to raise some issues even if they are controversial. Talking about contested histories, it is important to understand that every **site consists of many layers of history, memory, and meaning**. imultaneously, sites have **different meanings for different groups in society**. The **importance of context** is further raised as an issue that we need to be aware of, especially to help students read and learn about hidden histories. They also emphasized the role of governments, local authorities, and educational authorities on one hand, and civil society organisations and social media on the other, for different educational processes. There is a need to teach history in a multiperspective way to better navigate differences in perspectives between groups in a society, but also a need to engage students in active citizenship through educational processes. Finally, this group highlighted certain important concepts to keep in mind **going forward** with using the sites of memories as learning spaces for democracy and these are: definitions, historical methods, multiperspectivity, and international dialogue and exchange.

Closing Session

The closing session was chaired by Marie-Ann Persoons, Vice Chair of the Council of Europe Steering Committee for Education and included the address of **Barbara Toce**, Representative of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities and the preliminary summary of the forum by **Rodoljub Jovanović**, General rapporteur for the First annual Forum for History Education.

Barbara Toce, Representative of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, expressed her agreement with the words of the High Level Reflection Group of the Council of Europe who concluded that *our democracies are not established once and for all, but that we need to strive to uphold them each and every*

day, continuously, in all parts of Europe and at all levels of government. She shared the belief of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, that cultural heritage management at a local and regional level has a role to play, and that cultural heritage can contribute to building a culture of democracy. She added that, if managed correctly, cultural heritage can be a tool in upholding our democratic values, and without protecting these values at local level, peace, stability and “never again” are impossible. She emphasized that to do this, we need a sensitive approach to history, we need to recognize cultural heritage as a living, breathing thing and local and regional authorities have a key role in contributing

to the dynamic potential of history. This specific role allows the local and regional authorities to collect and understand the different perspectives which we need for constructive discussions about how to best manage our cultural heritage. Cooperation with universities and other organisations is necessary, and cross-border cooperation is needed. Cultural heritage needs to be inclusive of all groups but maybe most importantly it needs to include working with young people, using cultural heritage as a tool to strengthen democratic values amongst the younger generations. In the end, she expressed the hope that governments and other institutions will make full use of cities and regions’ potential as partners.

Lessons learned

The First annual Forum for History Education “Sites of Memories: Learning spaces for democracy” was opened by speakers who all agreed that today, maybe more than ever before, democracy and democratic values in Europe need to be nurtured and supported. History education and especially sites of memories have a great potential to communicate these values to young generations and we need to invest in ways to do it properly. Sites of memories are all around us and if we are not using them as a learning opportunity, we will miss out on an amazing opportunity to learn about history.

The presentations of the three memorials ([Nantes Memorial to the Abolition of Slavery](#), [The Memorial to the Victims of Communism and to the Anti-Communist Resistance](#), and [Guernica Peace Museum](#)) were extremely useful in understanding the variety of examples of the sites of memories across Europe. The events remembered, local contexts, national contexts, grassroots activism, economic dimensions, and socio-political contexts are all different in these three examples; however, there are certain lessons we can learn from the struggles and practices that stand behind these institutions. One important aspect is the cooperation with local community. All three examples show how good cooperation with the local community is crucial for this kind of memory work – whether it refers to creating a memorial or just putting up a plaque. Local community associations can often represent the driving force behind the initiatives to create museums or memorials, but local community members are also the people who live with the memorial once it is built – they work in the memorial, they host the tourists visiting the city, etc. Moreover, the support of local decision makers is crucial for the success of such initiatives. Finally, the question was raised about *branding* the city as a place where a certain historical event happened and the possible resistance to this. Another aspect of the work of these memorials is the cooperation with the formal educational system. During the presentations and the discussion, the participants opened the question of whether curricula allow sufficient time for teachers to organize trips to the memorials and what the possibilities are for educational staff from the memorials to visit schools. It was concluded that schools often don't have enough time and memorials

often don't have the resources to reach out to schools. While this is currently the case, there is a need for greater cooperation in the future. It was also clear that the Covid-19 pandemic created, aside from all the negative consequences, some positive change in the work of memorials. Many created online courses and managed to encourage many participants to attend. Some created walking tours as a substitute for staying inside the museums and some invested in virtual tours that can be used by anyone, anytime at a lower cost.

After this, participants had a chance to learn about sites of memories in Belgrade in two ways. First, they had a chance to experience one of four different guided tours of sites of memories in Belgrade. Second, they attended a keynote lecture that provided some theoretical considerations regarding the memorialization in Serbia and especially Belgrade. These activities proved to be an excellent introduction for forum participants to reflect on the potential of sites of memories as learning spaces for democracy and recommendations on how to achieve this in the best possible way. Participants had a chance to provide their reflections through working groups and their discussions will be summarized here. Most participants noted that sites of memories always include silent/hidden histories that provide great potential for the discussions on who makes decisions on who is commemorated, in which way are they commemorated, which stories are put in the foreground and which ones are hidden, etc. The quality of these decision-making processes speaks exactly about the democratic procedures in a society and can help us help our students become active citizens who voice their opinions and join public debates on these issues. Sites of memories are often sites of horrible crimes. This opens a moral question on what the most respectful way is to commemorate these sites. Following from this is the question of the possibility of repurposing these kinds of sites and the right to remember and forget painful historical episodes. Contested histories are usually connected to the sites of memories. Each historical event and episode can be viewed from at least two different perspectives and visits to the sites of memories are making this completely obvious. Therefore, participants agreed that we need to follow multiperspective approaches to teaching

history when using sites of memories. Maybe the most frequent concept mentioned by the participants of the forum as the key for successfully using sites of memories as learning spaces for democracy is the development of **critical reading of sites** and consequently the development of **critical thinking**. While agreeing that content and contextualization are very important, most participants agreed that we need to teach students how to think critically and understand various layers of sites of memories. This, in turn, they believe, will lead to the development of the kind of democratic capacity and active citizenship we want to see in young generations. Finally, participants agreed that in order for all of this to be productive, there is a need for greater **cooperation** between memorials, museums, schools, CSOs, communities **within countries and on the international level**.

In addition to these points, all working groups created certain recommendations for using the sites of memories in education. The first group of conditions refers to the sites of memories in general. **All participants agreed sites of memories are a great tool, but to be used efficiently they need to be:**

- ▶ Contextualized within history education
- ▶ Well prepared for visits
- ▶ Respectful towards the victims and local community
- ▶ Accessible for students and general public
- ▶ Places open to critical thinking that do not present single perspective narratives.

- ▶ Created and used in collaboration with the local community

The second group of conditions refers to formal education. **From the perspective of formal education, using sites of memories requires:**

- ▶ Resources (time, money)
- ▶ Training for using sites of memories
- ▶ Curricular support
- ▶ NGO Support
- ▶ International cooperation with other teachers and memorials

Finally, when it comes to the **analysis of the sites of memories, educators need to emphasize several questions for their students if they are to promote democratic decision making:**

- ▶ Who decides on the memorials?
- ▶ Who is sending a message that is a part of a memorial?
- ▶ Why are they sending the message they are sending?
- ▶ Why was the memorial built at that specific time?
- ▶ Who are the messages aimed at?
- ▶ Was the process of creating a memorial transparent?

APPENDIX

Agenda

DGII/EDU/HIST (2022) 1

Original: English

Strasbourg, 27 October 2022

First annual Forum for History Education

“Sites of Memories: Learning spaces for democracy”

Belgrade

3 November 2022, 09.30 – 18.30 (CET)

4 November 2022, 09.30 – 18.30 (CET)

Faculty of Philosophy

18 – 20 Čika Ljubina Street

Concept note and draft programme

Organised in co-operation with the joint European Union and the Council of Europe action “Quality Education for All - Quality Education ED Serbia”

CONCEPT NOTE

History and history teaching have been a focus for the Council of Europe’s work on education since its inception.

In times when History faces distortion, denial of some historical facts, political misuse of the past; it is crucial to offer spaces for open discussion on the role of History in the XXI century and to develop guidelines to support the peaceful development of memories based on multi-perspectivity in history.

The annual Forum for History Education offers one such space in which public authorities (from different ministries: Education, Higher Education, Culture), teachers, curriculum developers, academics, etc... can share their views and their practices in terms of history education with the aim of developing recommendations for improvement of History Education.

Seventy participants from all over Europe will take part in the 2022 Forum which will focus on “sites of memories: learning spaces for Democracy”, exploring the role of historical sites (assuming that they are respected, protected, memorialised) as education tools that foster the development of competences for democratic culture. The organisation of the Forum is supported by the joint European Union and the Council of Europe action “Quality education for all”.

Purpose:

- ▶ The aims of the conference are to:
- ▶ Contribute to the relaunch of the historical intergovernmental programme, based on the incredibly “rich acquis”.
- ▶ Reflect on the role of sites of memories, not only in terms of history education but also of citizenship and human rights.
- ▶ Share good practices from examples of different aspects of European history, including on the conditions necessary for optimal educational use of the sites.
- ▶ Promote dialogue and cooperation between different stakeholders — public authorities, academics, teachers, curriculum developers — on sites of memories for optimal education use of the sites.

Expected outcomes:

Based on the different Working Groups' reports, learning visits and plenary sessions, as well as the general rapporteur's contribution and the evaluation by both the participants and the team, the expected outcomes are:

Commitment of the different stakeholders to advancing good practices, based on a set of quality examples serving as a road map for developing optimal education use of the sites in their city, region and country.

- ▶ Promoting active dialogue between sites of memories and public authorities on the promotion and protection of such sites and on their use as a learning space for the development of a culture of democracy.
- ▶ Contributing to the overall intergovernmental programme on "History for democracy: the role of public authorities in history education".
- ▶ A report of the Forum will be published in 2023.

Programme

2 November:

Arrival of the participants

- 19.30: Welcome dinner in the framework of the Irish Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe hosted by H.E. Ms Iseult Fitzgerald, Ambassador of Ireland to Serbia and Mr Tobias Flessenkemper, Head of the Council of Europe Office in Belgrade
Venue: Aeroklub, Uzun Mirkova 4, 2nd floor

3 November

- 9.15-10.00 Official opening.
Session chaired by Tobias Flessenkemper, Head of the Council of Europe Office in Belgrade
Matjaž Gruden, Director of Democratic participation
Branko Ruzic, Minister of the Ministry of Education, Science and technology (TBC)
Aurora Ailincai, Executive Director, Observatory on History Teaching in Europe
Milan Stancic, Vice-dean for International Cooperation
Emanuele Giaufret, Ambassador/Head of the Delegation of the European Union to Serbia (TBC)
H.E. Iseult Fitzgerald, Ambassador of Ireland to Serbia
- 10-10.15 Presentation of the Programme by Jean Philippe RESTOUEIX, Administrator, History for education program
- 10.15-10.45 Coffee break
- 10.45-12.45 Sites of memories: learning spaces for democracy:
Session chaired by Marie-Louise Jansen and Andreas Holberget, Euroclio
3 memories/3 examples:
Myriam Cottias, Nantes Memorial to the Abolition of Slavery, Directrice au Centre international de recherche sur les esclavages et post-esclavages, CNRS
Virginia Ion and Andrea Dobes, The Memorial to the Victims of Communism and to the Anticomunist Resistance
Idoia Orbe Nabaiza, Head of the Educational Department, Gernika Peace Museum
- 12.45-14.15 Lunch break
- 14.15-14.30 Presentation of the afternoon:
Sites of memories in Belgrade: 4 routes organised by local NGO
The Old fair Ground, Terraforming
The Belgrade Fortress, Education for 21st century
The Ottoman and Jews in heritages, Education for 21st century
Controversial history and monuments, Education for 21st century

- 14.30-17.30 Parallel visits
- 19.30 inner hosted by H.E. Mr Tomáš Kuchta, Ambassador of the Czech Republic and Mr Matjaž Gruden, Director of Democratic Participation, Council of Europe
Venue: Embassy of the Czech Republic, Bulevar kralja Aleksandra 22

4 November

- 9.30-10.45 "Are sites of memories in Serbia learning spaces for democracy?"
Dr Dubravka Stojanovic, Head of the History Department, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade
Session chaired by Dr Marko Suica, History Department, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade
- 10.45-11.15 Coffee break
- 11.15-12.30 5 Parallel mixed working groups to
Exchange thoughts, impressions, and reactions towards the visits.
Brainstorm on ideas, proposals, and recommendations for optimal education use of the sites of memories as learning spaces of democracy.
- 12.30- 14.15 Lunch break
- 14.15- 15.30 Forum on projects:
If you are involved in projects regarding "sites of memories: learning spaces for democracy", if you want to share this experience with all the participants, under a Forum exhibition format, this time is for you:
– To share the projects in which participants are involved
– Informal exchange and discussions, networking time
- PLEASE TAKE NOTE:** Only printed material or posters. **NO ELECTRONIC SUPPORT**
Including a Coffee break
- 15.30- 16.00 Feed Back from the 5 Working groups
Session chaired by Roman Fröhlich, Wannsee Forum
- 16.00-17.15 Final Session chaired by Marie-Ann Persoons, Vice Chair of the Council of Europe Steering Committee for Education
- 16.00-16.15 View of a Local Authority
Barbara Toce, Representative of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities
- 16.15 – 17.00 Lessons learnt from the First Forum on History education on "Sites of memories: learning spaces for democracy"
Report of the General Rapporteur:
Questions and answers session
- 17.00 – 17.15 Closing of the Forum
- 18.30 Reception hosted by H.E. Pierre Cochard, Ambassador of France
Venue: Residence of the French Ambassador, Gracanicka 2

List of Participants

Preparatory Group

CARR	Gillian Clare	University of Cambridge Institute of Continuing Education
HOLTBERGET	Andreas	Euroclio
JANSEN	Marie-Louise	Euroclio
LEECH	Patrick	ATRIUM Cultural Route
FROEHLICH	Roman	Stiftung wannsseeFORUM
PERSOONS	Marie-Anne	CDEDU Vice-Chair, Flemish Department of Education and Training (Belgium)
SUICA	Marko	University of Belgrade
ZUPANIC SUICA	Lidija	Education for the 21st Century
STANICIC	Misko	Terraforma

General Rapporteur

JOVANOVIC	Rodoljub	Researcher
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Experts

Romania	ION	Virginia	Civic Academy Foundation - Memorial to the Victims of Communism and to the Anticommunist Resistance
Spain	ORBE NARBAIZA	Idoia	Museo de la Paz de Gernika (Gernika Peace Museum)
France	COTTIAS	Myriam	Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, CIRESC (Centre International de Recherche sur les Esclavages et les Post-esclavages)
Serbia	STO-JANOVIC	Dubravka	Faculty of Philosophy, Belgrade

Participants

Austria	RABL	Christian	Melk Memorial
Austria	STEININGER	Sigrid	Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research
Belgium Fédération de Wallonie	D'ALOISIO	Irena	Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles Cellule Démocratie ou barbarie / Conseil de la transmission de la mémoire
Bosnia	DUJKOVIC BLAGOJEVIC	Bojana	The European Wergeland Centre (EWC)
Bosnia	JURIC MILINOVIC	Tatjana	Euroclio
Bulgaria	GEORGIEVA	Mariela	Emilian Stanev Secondary School
Cyprus	DEMETRIOU	Chloe	Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth-Department of Secondary General Education

Cyprus	ASIK	Kemal	Association for Historical Dialogue and Research (AHDR)
Denmark	REDZIC	Mirela	Vejen Gymnasium and HF
Denmark	KRAGH	Peder	Greve Gymnasium in Physics and History
Finland	KAIHARI	Kristina	Finnish National Agency for Education/MoE
France	CHASTAN	Jérôme	Ministère de l'éducation nationale - Direction générale de l'enseignement scolaire
France	LIEVAL	Ann-Laure	Euroclio
France	RYBACK	Timothy	IHJR - Institute for Historical Justice and Reconciliation
Germany	ALLEN	Tom	It's "St George's International School, Munich and the Bristol History Teaching Forum"
Germany	LIEPACH	Martin	Fritz Bauer Institut, Frankfurt
Germany	DURAND	Olivia	Friedrich Meinecke Institute of History Freie Universität Berlin
Holly See	PATRIARCA	Giovanni	Dicastery for Culture and Education - Department for Schools
Iceland	NIELSSON	Oskar Haukur	Ministry of Education and Children
Italy	LENTINI	Cristina	ATRIUM Route
Italy	ARRIGHI	Carlo	ATRIUM
Italy	FLAMIGNI	Tania	ATRIUM ROUTE (Architectures of Totalitarian Regimes and Memory in the 20th Century. Forlì.
Italy	ISAACS	Ann Katherine	University of Pisa
Latvia	NUDIENS	Ansis	National Centre for Education (NCE)
Luxembourg	VÖLZ	Dajana	Service national de la jeunesse (SNJ)
Malta	SPITERI	Raymond	Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation (MEYR)
Poland	SKIENDZIEL	Anna	Secondary school in Katowice (Poland) Zespół Szkół Technicznych i Ogólnokształcących Nr 2
Portugal	ELEUTERIO	Sonia	Lisbon Youth Center
Portugal	PEREIRA HENRIQUES	Raquel	Ministry for Education / Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas, Universidade Nova de Lisboa (Department of History)
Romania	FURTOS DOBES	Andrea Beatrice	Civic Academy Foundation - Memorial to the Victims of Communism and to the Anticommunist Resistance
Romania	CAPITA	Laura-Elena	Unit of Research in Education, National Centre for Policies and Evaluation in Education
Serbia	KESKINOV	Maja	
Serbia	RADAKOVIC	Ana	

Serbia	TODOSIJE-VIC	Aleksandar	
Serbia	MIJOVIC	Igor	
Serbia	LYKIC	Filip	
Serbia	NEVENA	Bajalica	
Slovak Republic	VARGA	Juraj	Centre for Education and Innovations
Slovenia	SNOJ	Damjan	CENTROPA
Spain	MARTYKANOVA	Darina	Universidad Autónoma de Madrid
Spain	MARC	Francesch Camps	Association Européenne pour la Préservation et valorisation de la culture et du patrimoine Juifs (AEPJ) - European Routes of Jewish Heritage
Spain	LAMIKIZ	Amaia	University of the Basque Country (UPV-EHU)
The Netherlands	VAN DER DRIFT	Britt-Marie	Musea Bekennen Kleur
The Netherlands	STEGERS	Steven	Euroclio
Turkey	BOZKURT	Abdurrahman	Istanbul University
Turkey	YILDIZ	Abdullah	Ministry of National Education Provincial Directorate of National Education İzmir
Ukraine	VERBYTSKA	Polina	All Ukrainian Association of Teachers of History and Civic Education "Nova Doba", Lviv Polytechnic University, Department of History, Museology and Cultural Heritage, Lviv
Obessu	FRANC	Petr	Obessu

Congress

HANNON	Inge	Council of Europe
TOCE	Barbara	Council of Europe

Council of Europe

GRUDEN	Matjaz	Council of Europe
AILINCAI	Aurora	Council of Europe
RESTOUEIX	Jean-Philippe	Council of Europe
GUERRERO	Catherine	Council of Europe

Bureau Belgrade

CUK	Nadia	Council of Europe
FLESSENKEMPER	Tobias	Council of Europe
ALGHAITH	Mona	Council of Europe

Since 1954, following the adoption of the Cultural Convention, the Council of Europe has been working on history in response to Article 2, which stipulates:

“Each Contracting Party shall, insofar as may be possible:

- a. encourage the study by its own nationals of the languages, history and civilisation of the other Contracting Parties and grant facilities to those Parties to promote such studies in its territory; and
- b. to promote the study of its language or languages, history and civilisation in the territory of the other Contracting Parties and grant facilities to the nationals of those Parties to pursue such studies in its territory.”

As part of the intergovernmental programme on history education, the Education Department has launched a series of Forums on key topics concerning history in the first quarter of the 21st century. In November 2022, the first Forum of which this publication is the report, focused on “Sites of Memories: Learning spaces for democracy” was held in Belgrade. The second Forum, looked at “History Education in the digital age” and took place in Brussels in March 2023. The third Forum in Bologna in May 2024 will focus on the challenges of history in higher education, before a final Forum in 2025 will take up the conclusions of the three previous.

Thinking about the role of places of remembrance at a time when, in the case of the Shoah, the witnesses are disappearing, means questioning their place in our societies in the 21st century. Through museums, commemorations and historical research, how can these places, from Nantes to Sighet, via Guernica and Belgrade, become places where our citizenship is inscribed, and under what conditions and with what pedagogies can these places best speak of their history and thus enlighten our present? These are just some of the questions addressed in this book. The idea is not to find the answers, but to explore avenues and share practices, so that places of remembrance can be fully effective places for learning about democracy.

www.coe.int

The Council of Europe is the continent’s leading human rights organisation. It comprises 46 member states, including all members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.