

NETWORKING EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

NECE Workshop: The Impacts of National Identities for European Integration as a Focus of Citizenship Education

Project Example

Socialist Heritage and Identity-Formation in Post-1989 Europe - Museums and Exhibitions

Luisa Ziaja, art historian, freelance curator and author

Tallinn, Estonia 8 - 11 September, 2007

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The dispute over a recent history, over a supposedly "true" collective memory has been one of the central and at the same time most intensely contested discourses in Central Eastern European countries in transition during the last years. Even more, debates on the "historical truth" and its public representations often triggered the transformation processes since the end of the 1980s. Simultaneously, social and cultural sciences have established a strong focus on hegemonic narratives in conjunction with social memory, which can also be noticed in recent museum studies. Such an emphasis is important, given that museums figure among the most important media for the dissemination of particular historical narratives and thus for the construction of collective identities. Museum and exhibition contexts as well as public space are increasingly used as grounds for visual manifestations of (new) hegemonic history writing.

In the framework of an interdisciplinary and transnational project – "Socialist Heritage and Identity-Formation in Post-1989 Europe" – the Austrian organization *schnittpunkt. exhibition theory & practice* will undertake exhibition analyses focusing on the "exhibitionary complex" (Tony Bennett) as "identity machinery" (Gottfried Korff) in the context of post-communist societies in Central and Eastern Europe. The research aim is a comparative study on the representation of the communist past in museums and exhibitions. Emanating from recent contributions to a transnational perspective on politics of history in cultural fields *schnittpunkt* will subject a number of eminent examples to a semiotic analysis, e.g. the Museum of the Occupation of Latvia in Riga, the House of Terror in Budapest, as well as museums in former Yugoslavia.

Founded in September 2001 as a non-institutional organization, *schnittpunkt. exhibition theory & practice* is an open, transnational network aiming at critical reflection on the exhibitionary complex and its discourses. By theoretically founded analyses of exhibitions, of institutions and of non-institutional contexts, current exhibition practice comes under scrutiny and experimental exhibition forms are tested. Dedicated to fostering a general awareness of how interpretation and operation patterns in institutions are determined by cultural and socio-political conditions, *schnittpunkt* is currently active in Vienna with partners in Budapest, Bucharest, Ljubljana, Sarajevo, Sofia and Berlin.