



**1st HERMES Summer Course
Weimar 2004**



**‘Cultural Heritage and Regional Development
in Europe’**

– REPORT –

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Introduction

In the time of 14-28 August 2004, the first of five HERMES Summer Courses (Work Package 5) was held in Weimar under the title 'Cultural Heritage and Regional Development in Europe'. The course was organized and facilitated by Sebastian Schröder (Institute of European Urban Studies, Bauhaus University Weimar), research assistant to the HERMES project.

The purpose of this full report is to inform about the general concept of the course and its activities, and to present the main results and outcomes of the event.

Objective of the course

The overall objective of the Summer Course was twofold. On the one hand, it aimed at providing insights into the topic of cultural heritage, especially in connection with the aspects of regional development and EU integration. This thematic field was to be illustrated by practical examples, partly from the HERMES context.

On the other hand, the Summer Course sought to bring together young professionals from and within the HERMES context, with the aim of establishing a network of junior experts for future collaboration. For this purpose, all HERMES partner institutions were invited and encouraged to nominate participants.

Preparation

The preparatory work for the Summer Course began in April 2004. After the dead-line for applications in mid-June, the selected participants were contacted by e-mail. Reading lists and relevant literature (as pdf-files) were circulated in advance, as well as the course plan and time-table. Participants were encouraged to think of active contributions to the course (workshops, presentations etc.), and they were requested to deliver short written assignments ('homework') on the topic of heritage and identity.

Participants

Out of thirteen participants in the event, altogether six were sent directly by HERMES partners, while the rest were affiliated to the project from a wider context. This ensured that many of the regions and countries involved in HERMES were represented in the Summer Course.

Direct representatives of HERMES partner institutions

DOBRANOWSKA, A.; Małopolska Institute of Culture, Kraków, PL
GYARMATHY, D.; Hungarian Radio, Budapest, HU
LICHEVA, S.; Bulgarian National Radio, Sofia, BG
PETKOVA, D.; National Centre for Regional Development, Sofia, BG
STEFANOVA, M.; National Centre for Regional Development, Sofia, BG
TZVETANOV, T.; Bulgarian National Radio, Sofia, BG

Participants from a wider HERMES context

DJUMALIEVA, K.; Bulgarian Ministry of Culture, Sofia, BG
HANUSCH, A.K.; Munich; GER
HO, A.; Goethe-Institute, Hong Kong, China
POLYÁK, L.; Budapest, HU
SOTIROVA, K.; Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Sofia, BG
VAKITSIDOU, F.; Society for the Protection of Prespa, GR
WYŻYKOWSKA, A.; Kraków, PL

Methods and activities

Throughout the course a combination of various methodical approaches was applied. Apart from lectures and discussions of selected texts, there were workshops, excursions, and several presentations of material participants had brought to Weimar. Behind this variety of activities was the intention to ensure that the central aspects of the course programme would be grasped by the participants, and that light would be shed on the main ideas from different angles.

Lectures

One important part of the course were lectures which were held predominantly in a more traditional, 'ex cathedra' way. In chronological order, there were the following events:

Dr. Michael Weninger (advisor to Romano Prodi, European Commission, Brussels) delivered a speech on the topic of 'Perspectives of European Ethics'. His views provoked strong criticism among the course participants, partly because of a missing distinction between 'Europe' and the EU, and because of a certain exclusionist approach towards European integration (e.g. the case of Turkey).

Hellmut Seemann (president of the Foundation Weimar Classic and Art Collections) presented his views of Weimar as a European meeting place. His remarks contained many references to the history of Weimar, especially to Goethe and his contemporaries, and he strongly emphasized the importance of learning and education ('Bildung').

Dr. Burkhardt Kolbmüller (co-ordinator of the HERMES project) gave a brief introduction to European regional and structural policy, thereby focussing on the Interreg programme in particular. He then described the framework and the objectives of the HERMES project and discussed these with the course participants.

Dr. Holger Rescher (German Association for Housing, Urban and Spatial Development, Berlin) also presented certain aspects of EU funding for projects in the field of regional development. After a description of the 'European Route of Brick Gothic' (EuRoB), a project from the Baltic Sea Region, he initiated a session of group work, in which the participants developed and presented own ideas of transnational European projects.

Prof. Dr. Zdzisław Mach (Institute of Sociology and Centre for European Studies, Jagiellonian University, Kraków, Poland) delivered a lecture on 'Culture and Identity in Europe' in which he combined theoretical considerations on that subject with many illustrative examples. After his lecture, Professor Mach assisted Anna Dobranowska in her work shop (see below) by commenting on the results from a sociological perspective.

Last but not least, *Miriana Jordanova* (National Centre for Regional Development, Sofia, Bulgaria) contributed to the Summer Course information relating to Bulgaria. After a general description of the framework of EU structural policy, she turned to the specific characteristics of the Bulgarian case. She illustrated the implications of EU integration for Bulgarian regional development strategies with a practical example from the border region with Greece.

Reading and discussions

Around these lectures and sessions moderated by external guests, another core element of the Summer Course was the reading of several texts which were intensively discussed in class. The following sources were used for this purpose (in alphabetical order):

Azaryahu, Maoz (2003): RePlacing Memory: the reorientation of Buchenwald. – In: Cultural geographies 2003 (10): 1-20.

Graham, Brian, G.J. Ashworth, J.E. Tunbridge (2000): A Geography of Heritage. Power, Culture & Economy. London: Arnold, v, 284 p.

therein:

Introduction – heritage and geography, pp. 1-7;

The uses and abuses of heritage, pp. 11-26

Hall, Stuart (2002): Introduction. – In: Hall, Stuart (ed.): Representation. Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices. London etc.: 1-11.

Süssner, Josefina (2002): Culture, Identity and Regional Development in the European Union. – In: Informationen zur Raumentwicklung 4/5.2002: 199-206.

Tunbridge, John E. (1998): The question of heritage in European cultural conflict. – In: Graham, Brian (ed.): Modern Europe. Place, Culture and Identity. London: 236-260.

Workshops

Apart from lectures, reading sessions, and group discussions, there were several workshops initiated and moderated by participants (partly spontaneously). These were, in chronological order:

'*Self-identity and collective identity*' (concept and moderation: A. Dobranowska, co-moderated by Z. Mach) – in this workshop, which was widely regarded as very stimulating and successful, participants were invited to express their view of their own individual identity by means of life-size drawings on paper. In some works there was explicit reference to collectives and cultural communities such as nations or states (often symbolized by flags or 'national' colours), while in others such connections were absent, and self-identity expressed exclusively in terms of individual biographies and relationships to other

individuals. This workshop was followed by a short exercise on ‘European values’, in which participants had to select certain keywords from a range of options, and arrange them according to their importance for the European idea.

‘*The relevance of national stereotypes*’ (concept and moderation: S. Licheva) was intended to illustrate certain characteristic traits of nations. It became clear that it is very difficult to make statements about ‘imagined communities’ such as nations, and that it is mostly a reproduction of widespread, learned stereotypes.

In the short workshop ‘*Humanity and group identity*’ (concept and moderation: T. Tzvetanov), which was inspired by the previous visit to the memorial site at Buchenwald, participants were asked to reflect upon the categorization and terrorization of prisoners of the former concentration camp.

The last workshop dealt with the topic: ‘*Images of Weimar – how does a place communicate itself?*’ (concept and moderation: L. Polyák). It invited participants to express their image of Weimar through a collage of pictures, slogans etc. taken from various sources (advertisements, flyers etc.). Furthermore, the task was to consider the way in which their perceptions of Weimar had changed during their stay. One interesting outcome of this workshop was the obvious relevance of personal experiences with a place, in other words, the way in which a place becomes part of individual biographies. This illustrated very well the general importance of ‘meaning’ for culture and identity, a central argument of the texts which had previously been discussed in class.

Field trips and excursions

Another aspect of the course were guided tours and field trips to several places inside and outside of Weimar. All of them were intended to make the participants familiar with Weimar and its environs, especially with regard to cultural heritage, while some supposedly also satisfied the interest in tourist attractions. The following activities were organized:

- a tour of the historic *inner city of Weimar* (with Michael Lehr, StattReisen);
- a cycling tour through the Ilm Valley to the former *Wieland estate Oßmannstedt* (an important HERMES heritage site);
- a bus trip to *Naumburg and the Saale Valley* (with Justus H. Ulbricht, an expert of local history) or alternatively, to *Jena*, both important sites for the history of the region, and of Germany;
- a guided visit to the memorial site at *Buchenwald* (former concentration camp) on the Ettersberg outside Weimar (with Michael Lehr, StattReisen);
- an evening trip to either *Ettersburg Castle* (with Justus H. Ulbricht) or to *Belvedere Castle* (with Frithjof Reinhardt), both important historical sites in the environs of Weimar.

A somewhat different excursion took the participants to the studios of *Radio LOTTE*, another partner of HERMES in Weimar. The radio station was presented by Pierre Deason, HERMES journalist, and by Detlev Fengler, the manager of Radio LOTTE.

Presentations

Most participants also presented material from their work-place and/or from their home region. These were, in chronological order:

- *F. Vakitsidou*: a detailed slide presentation of the Prespa region (GR, ALB, FYROM) and the work of the Society for the Protection of Prespa in the field of natural and cultural heritage (accompanied by rich printed material from the organization);
- *D. Petkova*: photographs of different places and regions in Bulgaria, with particular regard to architectural styles, and also natural heritage;
- *D. Gyarmathy*: a presentation of a collage of different sounds, representing her ‘view’ of the cultural heritage of Hungary;
- *A. Ho*: photographs of HongKong (in stark contrast to the immediate Weimar environment) and some background information on the city as a meeting point of ‘East’ and ‘West’;
- *K. Sotirova*: a presentation of the EU-funded project DigiCULT, which deals with the digitization of culture and cultural heritage, thereby raising important questions – why, what and how to preserve cultural heritage? who preserves? etc. Special attention was paid to the case of Bulgaria.

Although each presentation was a relevant contribution to the course in its own right, there was an evident need for better integration with the general event.

Main results

‘Cultural heritage and regional development in Europe’ – a mind map

The title of the Summer Course already indicates four central terms: ‘heritage’, ‘Europe’, ‘region’, and ‘development’. Taken together, they cover a substantial part of HERMES’ activities and objectives, albeit not every aspect of the project. Each of these four cornerstones, written in inverted commas so as to emphasize their abstract nature, represents a certain set of loosely associated terms and phrases (see diagram, Annex 2). The strong connections between them may not be self-evident at first. However, it was the assumption that ‘heritage’, ‘Europe’, ‘region’, and ‘development’ are interrelated in every possible direction in a strong and complex way, which served as a point of departure for the concept of the entire course. The aim throughout the course was to shed some light on the central concepts and to pose crucial questions about their nature and their functions.

The term ‘heritage’, as in ‘cultural heritage’ or ‘natural heritage’, is seldom questioned or explained. Nevertheless, it is frequently used, in many different contexts, and for many different things. It even denotes something, for the protection of which a significant amount of money is spent. Therefore, the term clearly deserves closer scrutiny.

According to a constructionist view, heritage is the result of social processes, in other words: a product or construct, rather than a natural phenomenon. If one adopts this view, then one has to ask: Who decides what is heritage, and what isn’t? How does heritage, be it objects or ideas, acquire its meaning and its significance? How does this quality change in the course of time? If heritage does indeed play a crucial role in the construction of group identity, then what comes first: the collective or ‘its’ heritage? In the light of these questions, of which the majority cannot be answered in a general way, the understanding of heritage as an instrument serving certain purposes becomes convincing. Heritage, by virtue of its quality to refer to a certain past (often to a history represented as the shared past of a group) and to certain historical events (be they portrayed as positive or negative ones), is inevitably an expression of power relations at the time of its negotiation. The question whether it stabilizes and reinforces existing power structures, or rather seeks to establish new ones, is of secondary importance. The adoption of a constructionist view of heritage should not be interpreted as a fundamental critique of the concept of heritage in general. It is perfectly possible to subscribe to certain values which are symbolized by heritage, and at the same time to be aware of the way how these symbols came into existence.

As is expressed in the title, the frame of reference for the Summer Course was ‘Europe’. Put more concretely and precisely, it was the European Union, which is of course not identical with ‘Europe’, even if the terms are used synonymously all too often. The EU can be regarded as a newly emerging political institution or entity which is seeking to increase its influence and power. This often takes place at the cost of other institutions such as nation-states. As a fairly new actor on the political scene, the EU requires legitimacy. In other words, it is dependent on the acceptance and the identification of its citizens. If the EU fails to achieve this, then its entire existence is in doubt.

One possible strategy to gain legitimacy is the construction of a European heritage. It shall not be argued that the funding of European heritage solely serves this purpose, nor that the EU is the only actor in heritage management and protection on a European level. Nevertheless, one can safely assume that the desire to gain legitimacy is one important reason for the inclusion of heritage in EU financial programmes such as Interreg.

Where does the ‘region’ come into play in this context? First of all, being the main recipients of structural funds, regions are the target group of EU regional policy. In order to fulfil this task, they require an administrative capacity to deal with financial subsidies, and they need to have legitimacy as an emerging political entity. The latter aspect is a common feature of both the EU and the regions of the EU member states.

Some questions come to mind: Why is the EU so keen on promoting and strengthening regions? How can regions gain political legitimacy, despite the fact that they are mostly perceived as new, artificial constructions without much tradition? How can they justify their growing weight in European power relations?

In order to be accepted and to become part of the daily lives of their inhabitants, regions need to be recognizable and recognized. They need to have an identity, a history, a territory, some specific features, a certain image etc. In other words, regions have to be built in a way similar to the ‘nation-building’ of the 19th and 20th century. One important element among others in this process is the identification and promotion of regional heritage. According to this logic, it comes as no surprise that the EU, too, is interested in fostering regional heritage.

Last but not least, the role of ‘development’ has to be discussed. To generate regional development – mostly understood as regional economic development – is the ultimate goal of EU regional and structural

policy, one of the main policy areas of the EU in terms of budget (second only to the Common Agricultural Policy). Development, which, by the way, is another possible means to achieve legitimacy, is usually measured and expressed in terms of regional categories. For this purpose, the EU has invented its nomenclature of statistical units (NUTS). It is out of question that the improvement of living standards for the inhabitants of a given region is in the interest of both the EU and the region in question. This is especially true if one subscribes to the 'new development paradigm', which emphasizes the role of regions as economic and political actors. This neo-liberal way of thinking about development has been adopted by many regional politicians. Since many 'new' regions still draw heavily on primordial concepts of identity, any distinction between 'new' and 'old' regionalism is questionable, as Süssner shows. The widespread and increasing use of regional symbols contributes to the evolution of 'regional heritage', the promotion of which in turn strengthens the concept of 'region'.

It has to be emphasized that the region, and EU policies directed towards it, are not the only link between heritage and development. Regardless of the political conditions under which heritage is constructed, one can observe a widespread commodification of heritage, especially through tourism. A large share of so-called cultural tourism is dedicated to heritage sites, which is not necessarily a bad thing. However, one must take into account the fact that the tourism industry (tour operators etc.) is by its very nature profit-seeking and that it is organized according to market principles. The meaning of heritage, subject to continuous re-negotiation and re-production, may easily be changed through this use. It is up to society to decide how this problem is dealt with, and which kind of heritage should be excluded and protected from pressures of commodification. Yet economic use of heritage does not only pose a threat, of course, but also an opportunity. After all, it is one of the general objectives of HERMES to search for ways how heritage sites can be promoted and utilized for economic purposes (to the benefit of the region in which a given heritage site is situated). The danger of over-utilization and exploitation on the one hand, and of neglect due to a lack of economic potential on the other, should always be borne in mind when discussing the inherent value of heritage for economic development.

The case of Buchenwald

Buchenwald was one topic which enjoyed particular attention with the Summer Course. Although there is no direct connection between the memorial site at Buchenwald and the HERMES project, this subject was chosen as a key element of the course for two main reasons: Firstly, Buchenwald is undoubtedly a very important aspect of Weimar, the venue of the Summer Course and one of the sites of the HERMES project; and secondly, Buchenwald represents an interesting and complex case of cultural heritage, albeit admittedly an extreme one.

With particular regard to this second quality, the case of Buchenwald served to illustrate the many possibilities and difficulties of (re-)presenting historical events, and at the same time, the necessity to do so. It is extremely important for a society to remember certain aspects of the past by maintaining memorial sites such as Buchenwald. On the other hand, however, it is impossible to find a solution which pays justice to conflicting memories and viewpoints and which avoids contradictions. Since Buchenwald as a place symbolizes so many seemingly incompatible historical layers and meanings, it vividly illustrates many of the inherent difficulties (dissonance, to use a term from Graham et al.) and dangers of 'heritage' in general.

General conclusion

As for the academic aspect of the course, one main result was the possible understanding of cultural heritage as a social construct, i.e. as the outcome of social processes in which meaning is attached to objects, events or ideas. It was shown how the concept of heritage integrates the past, the present and the future, and how it serves important cultural, political and economic purposes. Furthermore, the importance of heritage for 'imagined communities' such as nations and regions was discussed in the context of individual and collective identities.

The participants were able to contribute to the course in many different ways, thereby making visible their variety of backgrounds, work experiences and fields of interest. Many participants have remarked, either in the evaluation form or in personal conversations, that this Summer Course has enriched their knowledge about the chosen topics, and broadened their horizon for their professional as well as personal dealing with the subjects in question.

Concrete output

Apart from the results described above, the Summer Course has already produced several radio programmes as concrete output. Reports and interviews by Radio LOTTE in Weimar and by Hungarian Radio (D. Gyarmathy) have already been broadcast, and there will be several more programmes produced by Bulgarian National Radio (S. Licheva, T. Tzvetanov).

Critical assessment

One of the two main objectives of the HERMES Summer Course 2004 was to provide insights in topics which are central to the HERMES project. The intention was to question certain concepts which are widely taken for granted and regarded as quasi-natural, and to spark debates among participants on the basis of suitable scientific literature and practical examples. Generally speaking, this aim was achieved to a great extent. If one takes into account the relatively short preparation time, the early stage of the project, the great diversity of backgrounds of participants, and also the varying degree of proficiency in English, then this first HERMES Summer Course can be regarded as a success. The most important aspects of cultural heritage and regional politics in the EU were discussed, and some elementary ideas from contemporary social science were introduced. Furthermore, thanks mainly to the initiative of some external lecturers and some participants, the course was significantly enriched through an element of creative and practical work, either individually or collectively.

One should not neglect the fact, however, that less material was used than originally intended, and that certain topics and texts had to be omitted from the course plan completely (e.g. the geopolitics of European integration, the EU as a neo-liberal project etc.). This was due to certain difficulties which many participants seemed to have with this part of the seminar, either because of an unfamiliarity with the reading and discussing of scientific texts in general, or because of difficulties with the English language.

The second objective of the Summer Course was to bring together young experts from different cultural and professional backgrounds in order to establish a network for future collaboration. The general impression regarding this second objective is that it was also partly achieved. A certain number of participants showed great interest in most or even all of the subjects treated by the Summer Course, they participated actively in discussions and other activities and were ready to discuss aspects of the course not only in class, but also on other occasions. It is no coincidence that it is basically the same group of people who have continued their exchange of ideas beyond the end of the course via e-mail up to the time of writing. It is hoped that at least some of these five to six people will further participate in future HERMES activities, especially those who work for HERMES partner institutions anyway.

Outlook

Future summer courses will pursue the same approach of combining several methods on a theoretical and practical level, albeit probably with a stronger focus on 'hands-on' workshops and contributions from the participants' side. It is hoped that, in the future, more immediate HERMES partners will send suitable representatives to Weimar, so that the idea of a network of experts will be realized to an even greater extent.

The HERMES Summer Course 2005 in Weimar (13–27 August 2005) will focus on the role of the media (radio, internet, television, but also literature, cinema etc.) in the construction, preservation and utilization of cultural heritage. It will be prepared and announced well in advance, in order to allow for the closest possible collaboration and communication between participants before, during, and after the meeting in Weimar.

Sebastian Schröder,
1 October 2004