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Hegemonic European Communist memory narratives in Central European Museums

This dissertation aims to critically scrutinize how transnational knowledge bases create a hegemonic European Communist memory narrative in museums. It fills a conceptual and empirical gap in the field of memory studies. First, the concept of mnemonic hegemony, though has been used by various scholars in memory studies, has not yet been properly developed; thus, it opens up an analytic optic that specifically focuses on mnemonic power struggles for obtaining a special advantage or authority. Second, while there is a substantial amount of research on the European memory of Communism, the transnational network organizations of European memory, as well as the museums of Communism, there is no research that specifically deals with how museum members of the Platform for European Conscience narrate Communist past.

The objectives of this research is to (1) further develops the conceptualization of “mnemonic hegemony”, (b) analyze whether a European Communist past is hegemonic in European-level policies and debates,  (c) deconstruct the narrative of the European Communist past in museums that are members of the Platform of European Memory and Conscience, (d) conduct interviews with the museum’s curators and researchers regarding the (memory) narrative of the museum, and (e) compare these (memory) narrations with those in museums that claim to have or are supposed to have a more national or commercial focus. Thus, the research asks how a particular narrative of the European Communist past is hegemonic in museums of the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland.

This research operates within geographical, institutional, theoretical, and temporal scopes. First, it focuses on Central European states, namely the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland. Second, it focuses mainly on the museum members of the Platform of European Memory and Conscience. Third, it operates within the post-structuralist paradigm. Fourth, the data it analyses are those available during the writing of this dissertation, specifically from 2019 to 2023.