

EVENTS AND CONFERENCES

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Digital Heritage in Cultural Conflicts (DigiCONFLICT) – A New Joint Programming Initiative in Cultural Heritage and Global Change Project

DigiCONFLICT, implemented in the years 2018-2021 by a British-Swedish-Polish international consortium, is aimed at exploring the impact of digital heritage on contemporary engagements with the past in specific national frameworks in Poland, Sweden, and Israel. Focusing on oral history, photography, and multimedia museums as some of the most common media used to digitize cultural heritage, the project endeavours to critically examine widespread claims about the universality and democratizing capacities of digital heritage. Even though digital heritage has the potential to increase cohesion across nations and social groups, it can also be used to cement elite power structures, define what counts as important in cultural heritage, and determine whose cultural heritage is worthy of preservation. While acknowledging the role digital heritage plays in shaping and distributing cultural heritage, the project's point of departure is that digital heritage should not be considered in isolation from the accompanying historical, cultural, and national contexts. The project has three main aims:

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1) to explore how national politics affect digital definitions of cultural heritage; 2) to investigate who creates and engages with digital heritage, and in what ways; and 3) to study how the scope and values of cultural heritage are being negotiated and reformulated in the digital context. The consortium will elaborate innovative research approaches to digital heritage through analysis of policy documents and case studies in order to understand how specific institutions, governments, and communities define, mark, and share cultural heritage. To achieve its aims, the consortium will employ interviews with professionals and members of communities who participate in the digitization of cultural heritage. It will study what parameters affect the creation of digital heritage products; inquire as to what is gained and lost when cultural heritage becomes digital; and explore who are the main beneficiaries. Its findings will mainly be disseminated via scholarly and mainstream publications, workshops, and a dedicated interactive website.

The UK team, led by Gil Pasternak (De Montfort University in Leicester), will examine and assess the popularity of state-led digital heritage initiatives in Israel. It will investigate how digital heritage is employed within Israel's politically turbulent reality to stabilize dominant power structures. The study will focus on state-created opportunities for communities to partake in digitization activities and analyse how the dissemination of tangible cultural heritage can promote social interaction amongst one nationally coherent social group while at the same time excluding other national as well as ethnic minorities. To this end, the team will specifically study the implementation of the project "Israel Revealed to the Eye". Having been instigated by the Israeli government in 2009, this project was conceived with the objective of digitizing family photographs of Jewish-Israeli citizens and disseminating them online and via physical public exhibitions in order to promote national values amongst the young generation of Jewish-Israelis. The team will employ fieldwork, archival research, participant observations, interviews, and analysis of the project's resulting products to provide insights into the way the inclusive nature of digital heritage may be easily employed for the exclusion and marginalization of the Arab and the Palestinian population within Israel's legitimate, as well as its disputed, borders.

The Swedish team, under the leadership of Malin Thor Tureby (Linköping University), will critically evaluate how Swedish cultural heritage institutions contribute to both creating and dissolving boundaries between the cultural heritage of national communities. The project will investigate how and under what conditions digital heritage – both about and with the participation of immigrants – has been initiated, created, and curated. It will draw on empirical methodologies to explore the Nordic Museum archive, paying close attention to two born-digital collections of life stories, entitled *Voices of Migration* and *Refugees Sweden*. The collections were created through cooperation with the Swedish Migration Board and the newspaper "Dagens Nyheter". Since their digitization they have been made publicly available via the Museum's website. The team will consider how cooperation with the pub-

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lic, as well as with political and media, institutions and the inclusion and exclusion of immigrants and ethnic minorities influence the narration of cultural heritage.

The Polish team, based at Liber Pro Arte, a non-profit organization dealing with the digitization of cultural heritage, will carry out research based on collaboration between the Institute of Art of the Polish Academy of Sciences and the UNESCO Chair of Cultural Property Law at the University of Opole. The team, under the leadership of Ewa Manikowska (Institute of Art of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw), will focus on the recent phenomenon of multimedia museums, where digital heritage plays an equal, or even predominant, role vis-à-vis tangible heritage. Since the growing importance of digitization is still not reflected in museum legislation, the aim of the Polish team is to draft a definition of the multimedia museum and a new code of conduct addressing the challenges faced by such institutions. The team will focus on four museums. The Museum of Polish Jews in Warsaw will serve as a case study for examining the relationship between digital and tangible heritage in a museum institution. Based on the example of the European Solidarity Centre (a complex cultural institution which combines various functions, including that of an agora and of a museum), the team will consider the role of digital heritage in wider networks of social and cultural participation and education. The issues of property and copyrights will be considered based on the example of the Museum of the Second World War. The Auschwitz Memorial Museum will serve as a case study for analysis of the growing role of social media in the museum's activities and tasks. All four institutions under consideration are based in Poland, but given their international impact and reach they will also serve here as universal case studies.