

Peer Review

Review of: "Who Owns the Past? Symbolic Authority and Heritage Revitalization in Czech Borderlands"

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Thank you for a challenging article. I have read it with interest; however, I am both thrilled and concerned. I am thrilled because this is exactly what heritage and memory studies need: a focus on the revitalization processes and their complexity. I am concerned because the text seems to be, on the one hand, spot on, but at the same time, it shows a distance from the topic, particularly from the ethnographic ground work. As an old-fashioned ethnographer, I miss the closeness to the people on the ground and the particular "color" of the place. There are interviews and voices, and these are connected to several theoretical frames, but the thick anthropological description is missing. The theory and ethnography are not speaking to each other. The theory appears to try to encompass it all. This is a very common problem at the beginning of research.

Hence, all the "right words" are used, and they all can be found in the memory and heritage literature. This unfortunately leads to thoughts about whether AI is involved with this text. I certainly hope not, because the topic is too urgent and important to be discarded because of any association with an AI-generated text. The reference list is long and consists of a combination of classic literature and new ones, and some in languages that I cannot read (my fault). I am very much in favor of including non-Anglo-Saxon literature as well.

Because of its strong focus on theory, the text oscillates between accurate statements and jargon, on which the ethnographic material is attached. Sometimes it works; sometimes it feels artificial. There are also sentences and paragraphs that sound profound, but when I look closer, what do they really mean? For example, "It employs a "memory nodes" approach, which conceptualises the restored objects—such as chapels, churches, and technical monuments—as dynamic centres of memory that function as physical repositories and symbols of cultural identity." There are many of these quasi-profound

statements that need to be entangled and connected to the real world. But there are also brilliant statements that claim that the article demonstrates the connection between “historical authenticity and integrating modern narratives”. However, firstly, we do not really know what authenticity is, and secondly, I do not think the text delivers evidence for this connection. There are several of these kinds of statements that are not covered enough, for example, the highly interesting statement of “discontinuity and “emptiness” on the border space..”, which is at the core of this particular research problem.

Finally, I miss a source for the title “Who owns the past?”. It would have been appropriate to refer to the classic book *Who Owns Antiquity* by James Cuno (2008), which has inspired much of the following work.

I do not think this text is ready for publication yet, but I hope it will be reworked because it is important and urgent research. Again, thank you for an inspiring read.

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Declarations

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.