

Jan Lofström

Reparations for Historical Injustices – Implications for Museums when Dealing with the Issue of Difficult Heritage

In the last 20 years there has been a growing public interest in the issues of setting the past 'right' and repairing the injustices of the past. Recognizing the traumatic but all too often marginalized experiences and memories of the victims of injustices is seen as one way of dealing with the painful heritage constructively. However there is not much research on how citizens reflect upon the idea of historical reparations. In the presentation I will report some results from a study on Finnish high school students' reflections on this issue. I will ponder on the implications of the findings for school history curriculum and, relating directly to the theme of the ICMAH conference, for museums. The lecture will try to identify the challenges and potential dilemmas that the museums face when dealing with painful heritage, ranging from the questions of cultural citizenship and recognition of particularistic memories and narratives of the past, to the demands of reflexivity and multiperspectivist interpretations that modern history education has to meet, and further to the image of the museums as the caskets of historical truth among the audiences. The presentation will ponder on the strategies available to the museums in tackling the challenges and contributing to a constructive approach to difficult, painful past.

CV

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