

School Life Museum: Oral testimonies and documentation at the exhibition “LEARNING RESOURCES”

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Oral history continues today in the Museum School Life Museum to function as a vital part of the museum's policy by contributing to research, documentation of collections, organization of exhibitions and the interpretation of its exhibits with primary concern being its connection with the local community and empowering. One of the Museum's goal is to support its policy in the systematic collection and utilization of oral testimonies, in interactive public communication with exhibits using new technologies, in the Interpreting and creating meaning for public participation, but always under the responsibility of the scientific community of the Museums

The oral testimony, the personal look, the narratives of personal experiences offer precious material which in combination with other conventional historical sources and recordings give a multidisciplinary view of the past. Oral testimonies, the 'common reason' of people often come to counter or challenge historical narratives substantiated by different material.

The reconstitution of the experience through the oral narratives, "humanizes" the story, while exploring the notion of subjectivity, the confusion of the real with the imaginary, the individual with the public, the memory with the interpretations of history, the politics with the daily Zoe.

The paper will present how to use oral testimonies in the third periodical exhibition of the Museum titled "LEARNING RESOURCES". The report attempts to present representative teaching tools over time and to focus on the learning process that is the key to the pedagogical process.

Key words: oral history, policy

1. A little introduction: The Birth of the School Life Museum and the Oral History:

“The oral history is that kind of history which...”

- Is constructed among people
- animates the history itself and broadens its horizons
- brings history into the community and takes it out of it at the same time
- offers a challenge to the common sites of history
- is a way of radically transforming the social significance of history

(Thompson, 2002)

The journey of the School Life Museum and the documentation of the knowledge it transmits to its audience, from the moment of its birth until today, is inseparably linked to oral history. At key phases of the Museum's development oral testimonies are multiplied in order to strengthen the interpretation of the permanent collection, the documentation of the exhibits of a periodic report, activating the local community, fertile intergenerational communication, linking formal to informal education.

The first public appearance of the School Life Museum, of which I am a founding member and Chair Person of the Friends' Association, was based on an informal collection of oral testimonies of its creators, which were incorporated into 8 pages quotes on a local newspaper of Chania entitled “ONE SCHOOL...ONE HISTORY”. The curators of the first exhibition by which the Museum was set up for its audience with the title “Let's bring life to the wooden desks”, they point out in a statement to

“The collection of the Museum today consists, to a large extent, of objects donated either by individuals who were in their possession as students or teachers, or schools that are no longer functioning. These objects cover a period from the late 19th century until today. The Museum also has a rich photographic archive, as well as a very interesting record of oral testimonies, a result of the voluntary effort of Dimitris Kartsakis and Maria Drakaki. We have therefore decided to let the protagonists express themselves, mainly students, as well as teachers, older people today, who have testified and recalled memories since their school years. These testimonies were largely used to illuminate the objects we chose to expose. Based on the old wooden desks, the bags, the ink cartridges, the memories from the lesson, the descriptions of the punishment, the utensils of the bag, the photographs, we drew a report that illuminates aspects of school life in earlier times, from the from the 1930s to the late 1960s mainly...” (Gazi A & Economou, 2016)

The main purpose of the School Life Museum is the collection, recording, documentation, care, study and promotion of objects and testimonies related to school life and the educational system in all periods of local and general Cretan

history, as well as their connection with the educational activity. The Museum aspires to become a lively attraction for both the young and the elderly, through exhibitions, innovative educational programs, scientific meetings, honorable events for distinguished educators, the formation of witness testimonies and the study of historic schools and much more. In addition, however - and this is of particular interest in this communication - the Museum seeks to encourage intergenerational communication, and in this effort the use of oral history on a scientific basis is a focal point of its interpretative policy.

1.1 The oral history at the School Life Museum today

Oral history continues today in the School Life Museum to function as a vital part of the museum's work by contributing to research, documentation of collections, organization of exhibitions and interpretation of its exhibits, focusing primarily on its connection with the local community and her empowerment. The oral testimony, the personal look, the narratives of personal experiences offer precious material, which in combination with other conventional historical sources and recordings, give a multidisciplinary view of the past. Oral testimonies, the 'common reason' of people often come to counter or challenge historical narratives substantiated by different material.

The reconstruction of the experience through the oral narratives "humanizes" the history, while exploring the notion of subjectivity, the confusion of the real with the imaginary, the individual with the public, the memory with the interpretations of history, the politics with the everyday life.

This paper will focus on the use of oral testimonies in the third periodical exhibition of the Museum titled "LEARNING TOOLS", which was edited by the writer with a group of volunteer professionals from the Friends of the Museum Association. Through the Friends' Association the School Life Museum gathers volunteer groups to design and implement cultural and educational interventions for the cohesion and development of the local community, as a part of a cultural policy with an emphasis on its educational component. With the rationale of linking culture to education and aiming at organizing a museum exhibition that will broadcast the message of lifelong learning with the choice of the appropriate means to stimulate the trainee's attention, the Friends of the Society volunteered to design and implementation of the third periodical report of the School Life Museum.

1.2 The philosophy of the current periodic exhibition of the School Life Museum "Learning Tools"

"Learning is the key to any pedagogical process. Learning is a personal affair, but also each student is unique. The use of multiple media strengthens the aims of teaching,

activates students' attention and awakens curiosity. Each tool can function as a "psychological trap" and captures creatively the interest of the educated person". (Drakaki, 2014)

The exhibition attempts to highlight the variety of learning tools from the early 20th century school, along with an anticipation effort for the immediate future. There are presented illustrations, models, samples and printed materials, audio sources, student creations and teacher constructions, capture and imaging systems, embossed maps, instruments and devices of natural sciences workshop, primary and secondary education materials that marked the teaching over time with the educational policy implemented in the country.

At the same time, visitors have the opportunity to get acquainted with elements of educational technology using audiovisual devices that are in operation during the exhibition.

The power of art in the pedagogical process as a method of learning, communication and expression is also emerging in the exhibition as an important parameter of the modern era that evolves dynamically with communication and information technologies to lead to the necessity of familiarizing students with the super-magical, multimodality and polygraphisms.

1.2 Ways of using the oral history in the exhibition "LEARNING RESOURCES"

In the "Learning resources" exhibition, oral history is exploited in different ways, by giving voice to objects that would otherwise be silent, but also as a digital application that distributes thematic testimonies of pupils from their school years, encouraging new visitors after they navigate the soundtrack of the school years of another to add their own narration on the spot by recording their own memories.

The dominant object of the exhibition in the permanent collection room is the 4-seasons map that marked generations of teachers and students and was the exclusive supervisor of teaching throughout the school year. The map served the teaching methodology of unified centralized teaching in the 1970s. The informant Folklore Teacher Stamatis Apostolakis describes in a typical way how he used it to multiple his daily routine. His speech is a loan from the Ornamental History Center of Ramnes Apokoronas. It is a quote of the biography of the interview given and recorded as part of a volunteer interview program. The interviewer is the incoming speaker who has been trained in the methodology of oral history and collected interviews on the subject of EDUCATION within the framework of the program Methodology and Principles of Oral History implemented by the Prefecture of Chania with the scientific collaboration of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki in 2009 in Chania. The 40-hour seminar was held from September to December 2009, with

members of the Scientific Committee, Maria Resoupi, Tasoula Vervenioti, Riki Van Busshotein, Giorgos Tsiolis and Pavlos Pantazis. During the seminar the trainees conducted a pilot interview, which was subsequently evaluated in working groups and at the end of the program, each trainee held further interviews. "Oral history in museums can reinforce the historical knowledge of visitors and encourage them to think about, not only the content of their narratives, but also their direct or indirect communication with informants, bodies, persons express their words, the hesitations that visitors can see, hear and even touch and feel" (Nakou, 2009).

The excerpt from the interview of Master-Laureate Stamatis Apostolakis was not chosen at random and with a unique criterion to justify the use of the 4-seasons map in the LEARNING RESOURCES exhibition. The curator aimed and invested in the interview's soundtrack, having the full comparative picture of the informant's narrative profile, which is composed of a particularly attractive interview soundtrack. "The audio world of oral testimony gives privileged access to the executive dimension of narration. The voice that fades, silences, interrupts, intervenes, the voice that shakes, accelerates, the cold weak, strong or indifferent voice".

1.3 The use of oral history in the museological act of the School Life Museum and its communication policy

The "spoken testimony" as characterized by Marlene Mouliou , oral history is mainly used in the School Life Museum not only as a complementary exhibit but also as a "tool for research, documentation and interpretation of its collection, as an alternative way of approaching the community to which it is addressed and encouraging its participation in its actions, but also as a channel of communication between the members of a community, (Halikias, 2006).

«The oral history is exploited with a double goal as part of the museological act of the third periodical LEARNING RESA. On the one hand, it is exploited with interpretive targeting and on the other hand, it serves to connect members of the local community of the Museum. Moreover, at another point in the exhibition, as an interactive application entitled "The History of Education, where with the voices of YOUTH NEROKOUROU live memories of school life that have been deposited in the Museum of Oral Testimonies of the Museum since its foundation in 2006»(Drakaki, 2014)

In particular, in response to an invitation from the museological study group of this exhibition, Nerokouros Youth (a volunteer scheme of students of the 1990s of Nerokouros Primary School, where the old school is housed in the Museum) undertook to contribute to the organization of an interactive application in the reception area of the Museum. The young people lent their sound color to the recorded moments of school life from various parts of the country that museum

visitors had left in the past. However, this activity encouraged them to intervene in the Museum's activities and they, on their own initiative, conducted interviews from their family environment in order to enrich the existing bank of testimonies and to contribute to the collective memory of the history of the operation of the Primary School Nerokouros.

"Through the oral interviews, life stories are recorded that interpretally help to understand the historical context of their time. The narrative, functionally included in the Exhibition, in the form of an audio file, provokes the interest of the public because it contains the element of surprise and incarnation of history and contributes to the cultivation of empathy. On the other hand, it must never be forgotten that it is a product of subjective perception and interpretation and, ultimately, a product of selective processing of historical memory "(Mazarakis-Zygouris, 2015).

1.4 The oral history is a link between formal and informal education

"The quote of oral testimonies strengthens historical understanding as it urges museums to present the past through multi-level explorations that reveal pluralistic alternative and contradictory stories and offer the possibility of multiple alternative readings. Instead of offering closed responses to set up truths through closed narratives, oral history helps to raise the museum with fertile, interesting and critical questions that encourage visitors to follow different alternative paths to approach the past in historical terms". (Papazaka, 2010)

The dynamic linking of oral history with documentation in knowledge in the contemporary pedagogical process is a demand for both formal and informal education today. For this reason, the School Life Museum has attempted to exploit oral history as a basis that can link formal to informal education. Thus, from the experience of the oral history seminar described above, excerpts of informational interviews describing school life encouraged introductory activity in the context of a curriculum script were used by the Center for the Greek Language for the subject of Language in Grade C. (Drakaki,2012) The scenario attempts to create incentives for students to improve and enrich the daily schooling by actively intervening and participating in all areas: defining goals for the new school year, aesthetics, care of infrastructure, renewing the contract of the class. Each group has a snippet of a videotaped interview on school life. The people they narrate are retired teachers and old schoolchildren from elementary schools in Chania. (The narratives are small excerpts of experiential narratives that were collected exclusively by the scriptwriter and belong to the Oral History record of the Ornamental History Center of Ramne, Apokoronas, Chania). The teacher's instruction is as follows: "Watch carefully the video at your disposal. Record after discussing: what are the possible questions for what the informants describe? Record at least 3 questions. The activity aims at

developing critical thinking with emphasis on the skill of active listening and the formulation of the possible corresponding queries that led to the particular recall of memory and descriptive testimony.

2. As a conclusion

"A series of conflicts between the staff and the public, the individual and the institutional, the subjective and the objective create new intense relations between the museum and the memory. Personal memories and academic memories interact with the production of personal expectations and collective representations. The sustainability of these conflicts is constantly being tested by museum exhibitions. In particular, exhibitors in modern museums are turning to the recording of memories based on the oral history method and thus aim at creating spaces where individuals and groups will be able to exchange, compare and contrast memories, and even connect with wider historical narratives. (Nakou, 2009)

The School Life Museum seeks to become a modern center of educational research of the history of education in Crete starting from the prefecture of Chania. One of his objectives was to support its policy in systematic collection and use of oral testimonies, in the search for new ways of presenting oral testimonies in its journals, in interactive public communication with exhibits using new technologies, in interpreting and the creation of meaning with the participation of the public, always with the responsibility of the scientific community. Its education and yesterday school life mark the history of the site by defining the context on which the educational system of the era that was created. The recording and display of the testimonies of the older students and teachers is important, because they give us the stigma of the era, the spirit of education but above all reveal the rules and principles of the school, the values of the school community and all "Small" education as featured by the unforgettable Alexis Dimaras,(2013) the historian of Greek Education who was supported the foundation of School Life Museum in 2006.

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More specifically for Oral History, indicatively on websites:

- <http://www.epi.uth.gr/index.php?page=home> last visit 11/09/2018
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<http://www.epi.uth.gr/index.php?page=teams> last visit 11/09/2018
- <http://creteoralhistory.org/whoweare/>, last visit 11/09/2018
- About the third exhibition “Learning Resources” of School Life Museum of the Municipality of Chania available at <http://www.archaiologia.gr/blog/photo/%CE%BC%CE%BF%CF%85%CF%83%CE%B5%CE%AF%CE%BF-%CF%83%CF%87%CE%BF%CE%BB%CE%B9%CE%BA%CE%AE%CF%82-%CE%B6%CF%89%CE%AE%CF%82/>, last visit 11/09/2018