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Systems Thinking as a Tool for Sustainable Cultural Heritage Management in Times of Change

The lecture focuses on applying systems thinking to museology and heritage. Systems thinking is an approach that enables a holistic understanding of complex systems, their components, and interconnections, which is crucial for contemporary cultural heritage management.

Lecture content: (1) The theoretical foundations of systems thinking – an introduction to key concepts (feedback loops, emergence, self-organisation, robustness, resilience) and their relevance to the heritage field; (2) Cultural heritage as a complex adaptive system: analysis of the interlinkages between physical artefacts, intangible heritage, communities, and political and economic factors; (3) System models for heritage interpretation: This presentation presents practical tools for modelling the complex relationships between stakeholders and heritage elements; (4) Case studies: concrete examples of applying a systems approach to sustainable management of heritage sites, involving communities in decision-making processes, developing the resilience of heritage systems to climate change, and digital transformation of museums and heritage institutions; (5) Participatory workshop: demonstration on using system diagrams in heritage project planning.

Participants will: (1) Learn the basic principles of systems thinking; (2) Understand how to apply systems models to the field of cultural heritage; (3) Gain practical tools for analysing complex heritage systems; (4) Develop the ability to identify patterns and feedback loops in heritage practices; (5) Improve their capacity to design sustainable heritage management strategies; (6) The lecture will be helpful for researchers, practitioners, and students who wish to broaden their methodological repertoire to address contemporary challenges in heritage.

Dr Tadeja Jere Jakulin is a full professor of systems at the University of Primorska, Faculty of Tourism Studies, a member of the UNESCO UniTwin network. She holds a PhD from the University of Maribor in the field of systems theory – management of information systems. She researches, studies, and teaches in the field of soft systems, developing models within the system dynamics framework to address problems related to natural and cultural heritage. Her research and teaching work have earned her international, national and university awards of excellence. In 2020, she was nominated, together with colleagues from the University of Ljubljana and the University of Maribor, for the Balzan Prize, an annual award of the International Balzan Foundation for outstanding achievements in the fields of systems, humanities, natural sciences, culture, as well as for the pursuit of peace and the brotherhood of man. From 2011 to 2016, she served as Vice-Rector of the University of Primorska. She lectures at local universities and at institutes and universities abroad. She is Vice-Dean for Internationalisation and Quality and Head of the Chair for Cultural Tourism. She is a member of the UNWTO panel of tourism experts, ICOMOS, and the President of the Slovenian Society for Systems Research. In 2001–2005, she was the head of the cultural art foundation 'Jože Ciuha' in Bled, and together with her team, she organised art exhibitions and concert evenings. Since 2022, she has led the bilateral Slovenia/Turkey project BI-TR/22-24-012, which compares Slovenian and Turkish legislation on dispute resolution mechanisms regarding the ownership of works of art and culture. In cultural heritage-related courses (Management of Cultural Events, Cultural Events in Tourism), charity cultural events, which are part of the students' study obligations, connect students with local and national cultural heritage and representatives of institutions.

International Summer School of Museology and Heritage 2025

Research and Practices
in a Rapidly Changing World
Koper, 25 August–5 September 2025



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<https://doi.org/10.26493/978-961-293-501-6.23>