

**DEMHIIST OPEN TALKS 2025**

**PARALLEL NARRATIVES**

**CALL FOR PAPERS**

**WHEN?** 11-12 June

**16.00-19.00 CET** (Paris Time)

**WHERE?** Where you see fit because DEMHIIST Open Talks are series of Online Events

**The next topic for our talks will be Parallel Narratives or how can we expand Interpretations in Historic House Museums?**

Historic house museums are often perceived as places that tell a single, linear story. But history is rarely that simple. House museums are more than just doors into the past—they are layered spaces where multiple histories intersect, collide, and sometimes contradict one another. Yet too often, these spaces present a **single, dominant narrative**, leaving out the voices, stories, and perspectives that complicate the past. But what if we leaned into these complexities instead of smoothing them over? Every place holds multiple layers of meaning—shaped by different periods, perspectives, and personal experiences. Behind every room, every artifact, and every curated interpretation, multiple perspectives coexist—some celebrated, others forgotten, contested, or deliberately erased. House museums are complex spaces where past and present intersect, shaped by overlapping histories, cultural shifts, and evolving interpretations.

**How do we acknowledge and interpret these parallel narratives in house museums?**

This year's **DEMHIIST Open Talks 2025** will explore **parallel narratives**—the coexistence of multiple, sometimes competing, stories within a single historic house museum. From shifting interpretations over time to contested memories and overlooked voices, we will investigate how museums can **embrace complexity rather than erase it**.

**DEMHIST Open Talks 2025** invites house museum professionals, researchers, and practitioners to examine how different, and sometimes conflicting, perspectives coexist within the same space. How do museums balance official and unofficial narratives, reconcile competing historical interpretations, and engage audiences in a way that respects complexity rather than simplifying the past? How do house museums navigate conflicting histories? How can interpretation acknowledge tension without reinforcing division? How do we balance truth-telling with engagement and accessibility?

We welcome contributions that address the challenges and opportunities of presenting multiple perspectives in a way that is inclusive, thought-provoking, and engaging for diverse audiences. Whether through historical research, exhibition design, digital tools, or community collaboration, by embracing parallel narratives house museums can foster deeper understanding, critical thinking, and meaningful engagement with history.

This conversation isn't about finding easy answers—it's about exploring ways to **expand storytelling, deepen interpretation, and engage visitors in a more meaningful way**. How can house museums navigate these parallel narratives to create richer, more inclusive storytelling?

## **Subthemes**

### **1. Beyond the Official (Story): Interpreting Overlapping Histories**

Many house museums focus on a dominant historical figure or a single period, often overlooking the complex, multi-layered history of a place. But what happens when different narratives—official and unofficial, past and present—overlap, contradict, or even clash?

This subtheme explores:

- Case studies of house museums balancing multiple historical narratives
- Strategies for presenting contested or overlooked perspectives
- Addressing power dynamics in storytelling: who speaks, and who is left out?
- Engaging communities in co-creating historical interpretation

### **2. Shifting Perspectives: The Evolving Narratives of House Museums**

History is not static. The stories we tell about the past change as society evolves, reflecting new research, cultural shifts, and contemporary concerns. How do house museums adapt their narratives to stay relevant while remaining historically responsible?

This subtheme invites discussions on:

- Revisiting and revising past interpretations in response to societal change
- The impact of new research, activism, and digital technologies on house museum narratives
- Storytelling techniques that highlight the fluidity of historical meaning
- Case studies of house museums reinterpreting their collections or histories

## How to Participate

We seek papers, case studies, and creative approaches from museum professionals, researchers, and heritage practitioners. Presentations should focus on real-world examples, innovative methodologies, or thought-provoking theoretical explorations.

### Submission Guidelines:

- **Abstract length:** Maximum **300 words**
- **Format:** Online presentation or video tour (detailed guidelines will be provided)
- **Deadline for submissions:** 23 March 2025
- **Notification of acceptance:** 13 April 2025

**Interested in presenting?** Submit your abstract to: [secretary@demhist.icom.museum](mailto:secretary@demhist.icom.museum)

## FAQ

**How to attend the Open Talks?** Registration for the Open Talks will be open from 23 March 2025 you will be able to register through the DEMHIST website. The event is free of charge for all participants whether or not you are a DEMHIST member. A single link will be provided for accessing the sessions, through the online platform (no personal account required; upon registration you will be required to sign a GDPR compliance form).

**Technical Requirements:** Ensure you have a stable internet connection. Use a device with audio and video capabilities (e.g., computer, tablet, smartphone). It is recommended to use updated browsers such as Chrome, Firefox, or Edge for the best experience.

**Joining the Sessions:** The Open Talks link will be sent to registered participants 3 days before the event date. Simply click the link to join the conference sessions. Follow the prompts to enter your name and join the session. Please remember to connect with the same email account you made your registration with, and to properly identify yourself (name, institution) when joining the sessions.

**Support and Assistance:** If you encounter any issues with registration or accessing the conference, please contact our support team via the contact information that will be provided on the DEMHIST website.

NOT MEMBER OF DEMHIST? JOIN US TODAY! contact us at:  
[secretary@demhist.icom.museum](mailto:secretary@demhist.icom.museum)

ALREADY A MEMBER? SEND US A PHOTO AND SHORT TEXT ABOUT YOUR HOUSE MUSEUM AND BE PLACED ON THE DEMHIST WORLD MAP AT:

<https://demhist.mini.icom.museum/>

Join us as we explore **parallel narratives** and expand the ways we interpret the past in house museums!