



*Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study
in the Humanities and Social Sciences*

Terrorscapes

Transnational Memory of Totalitarian Terror and Genocide in Postwar Europe

Workshop at NIAS, 29 November 2011

Organisers:

Prof. Rob van der Laarse (UvA / VUA)

Prof. Georgi Verbeeck (UM / KU Leuven)

Theme:

In this workshop an interdisciplinary, international group of researchers will prepare a new major research field related to the heritage and memory of conflict and war, and present their plans and proposals for a NIAS themegroup *Terrorscapes*. This project will critically analyze the various ways in which key sites of twentieth-century terror and mass violence within Europe present, interpret, and represent the past, and the way these presentations, interpretations, and representations operate as vehicles of local, national, continental and global identity formations. By studying the way in which governments and citizens of various European nations have been dealing with conflicting pasts, *Terrorscapes* may provide an interdisciplinary perspective on the reason why resurrected regional identity politics and ethnic passions vie and often clash with official European cultural policy and memory politics. In particular in “new” Europe the old clarity provided by national borders has been replaced by a totality that reveals many-layers of sometimes opposing and sometimes overlapping mnemonic and commemorative practices and discourses. Yet it will also pay attention to what has become, at least within the European context, a dominant set of issues: the staging of Holocaust sites and Holocaust tourism; the multiple, contested meanings of Auschwitz and other sites of terror; the ‘spatial (re)turn’ in post-1989 European thinking, and the legacies of the Yugoslav war.

Terrorscapes offers an outstanding opportunity to develop and test an innovative, comparative approach to the dynamics of memory from transnational and European perspectives, linking the current NWO research line *The Dynamics of Memory* that is mainly focused on Dutch war memorials and heritage sites, with the work of foreign scholars. *Terrorscapes* will seek to move beyond the work done to date by comparing those discourses and sites within a common analytical, political and spatial framework, allowing for a clearer assessment of the relationships between past networks of terror with modern topographies of memory. The theme group members, as well as a number of associated scholars with complementing expertise will examine not only trends and developments, but also discrepancies and dissonances within the transnational framework of European postwar memory works.

The following questions will be discussed:

- To what extent, and for which purposes, have political, cultural, ideological or juridical agents shaped and staged these ‘terrorscapes’?
- Though many of the sites were preserved and presented to serve the interests of the nation states, is it proper to consider them now from the perspective of Europe as a dynamic transnational space?
- If the newly united, humanistic and peaceful Europe was founded on the memory of Auschwitz (Stockholm Declaration of 2000), did the rapid rise of a fear of Islam and a populist criticism of multiculturalism, and the emergence of Euroscepticism after the War on Terror (2001) and the EU’s eastwards enlargements (2004/2007) challenged the idea of a ‘Holocaust-centered European mnemonic community.’ (Kansteiner 2006)?

And will it perhaps be able to answer what to do with these sites in a common European future currently marked by the prospect of financial stress, economic uncertainty, social instability, and diminished political legitimacy?

More Information (f.e. program): Communication@nias.knaw.nl

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