

Heritage and Society



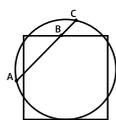
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Heritage and Society

Edited by Robert Kusek and Jacek Purchla

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Landscapes of Memories: Wide Narrations on Contentious Heritages¹

Cristina F. Colombo

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I feel European
because I cross borders that I consider thresholds and no more frontiers
feeling at home in the World.
Amazing play: trying to practice this balancing
World – Europe,
Europe – Home.
But maybe I am wrong.²

The terms “landscape,” “environment,” and “territory” are closely related and often used as synonyms, especially in non-specialist languages. Still, their meanings have substantial differences. “Territory” is commonly conceived as a concept that exceeds a mere geographic indication. It is rather the synthesis of a multifarious set of environmental, cultural, social, economic, and political factors, and is associated with feelings of belonging and identity. “Environment” and “landscape,” on the other hand, are sometimes perceived as external conditions with which an organism, an individual, or a community interact. What many scholars claim is that

1 This paper ensues from the research project “TRACES – Transmitting Contentious Cultural Heritages with the Arts: From Intervention to Co-production,” which has received funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement no. 693857.

2 “Mi sento europea / perché varco i confini considerandoli soglie e mai più frontiere / sentendomi a casa nel Mondo. / Gioco stupendo: tentare di praticare questo conguaglio / Mondo – Europa, / Europa – Casa. / Ma mi sbaglio forse.” Melita Richter, “Alcune regioni minime per cui mi sento europea,” [in:] *Compagnia delle poete*, http://compagnia-dellepoete.com/content/testi_madrigne/Alcuneregioni.html (access: 19 July 2017).

identities are “relational” and constructed by continuous interactions with other people and the environment. As Doreen Massey explains,

[i]dentities are forged in and through relations (which include non-relations, absences and hiatuses). In a consequence they are not rooted or static, but mutable ongoing processes. [...] An understanding of the relational nature of space has been accompanied by arguments about the relational construction of the identity of place. If space is a product of practices, trajectories, interrelations, if we make space through interactions at all levels [...], then those spatial identities such as places, regions, nations, and the local and the global, must be forged in this relational way too, as internally complex, essentially unboundable in any absolute sense, and inevitably historically changing.³

This is a crucial assessment. If spaces are to be thought relationally, it is evident that environments and landscapes should also be conceived in an evolutionary perspective and in close association with the communities which were and are settled there. Referring more generally to places (localities, regions, nations), Doreen Massey uses the expression “places of ‘negotiation.’”⁴

A reflection on the concept of “landscape” reveals the extent of what lies beneath an unconscious visual perception. Landscape, in fact, is a compound ecosystem in which natural elements and anthropic factors coexist in a dynamic equilibrium. The geographical space combines material traces of historical processes of transformation and settlement, cultural and artistic expressions, and the evolution of production techniques and human lifestyles.

The processes of spatial appropriation (“territorialisation”) of land can be observed when a person or a social group commences to identify with, occupy, use, and control certain space, implicating radical alterations of the environment, to which they transfer their cultural ideals, attributing symbolisms to local resources. In the anthology *Archaeologies of Landscape*, Bernard Knapp and Wendy Ashmore define landscape as the “arena in which and through which memory, identity, social

3 Doreen Massey, “Geographies of Responsibility,” [in:] *Geografiska Annaler*, vol. 86B no. 1 (2004), p. 5 (5-18).

4 *Ibidem*, p. 6.

order and transformation are constructed, played out, re-invented, and changed.”⁵ Values concerning the affective, economic, juridical, political, linguistic, ideological, and religious spheres of life are expressed in artefacts, changes in the environmental traits, as well as in the assignment of toponyms, i.e. all elements that define the identity of a place.

Man and societies establish complex interactions with the territory in which they live. The nature of the relationships they build is dual: an individual and a community are at once “actors,” who transform the environment by means of their planning and cultural actions, and “spectators” observing and studying the impact of their acts.⁶ The assumption comes from the words of Martin Heidegger: “Building and thinking are, each in its own way, inescapable for dwelling. The two, however, are also insufficient for dwelling so long as each busies itself with its own affairs in separation instead of listening to one another.”⁷

The progressive modification of lifestyles, cultural changes, and the interaction with persons with different beliefs, moral values, and backgrounds are all phenomena that have contributed to each territory, accounting for its unique traits, as well as sanctioning the persistence of some material and intangible memories and the dissolution of others. Territories and landscapes are constituted of multifaceted stratigraphies determined by processes of planning, construction, sedimentation, and amendment, which constantly question the relationship of a population with the place it inhabits. Evolution demands an unceasing reappraisal of the founding ideas of the collective identity.

Mapping a territory is therefore an extremely ticklish issue which merits special attention. First, it is necessary to identify the spatial extension of the region and the *milieux* to represent. An accurate research that investigates the principal phases of the transformation of a site, through a meticulous reading of the signs that express both the remains of past events and the subsequent evolution (traces revealing changes and space-time relations), is not enough. Moreover, mappers should

5 Bernard A. Knapp and Wendy Ashmore, “Archaeological Landscapes: Constructed, Conceptualized, Ideational,” [in:] *Archaeologies of Landscape: Contemporary Perspectives*, Wendy Ashmore and A. Bernard Knapp (eds.), Malden, Mass. 1999, p. 10 (1–30).

6 Eugenio Turri, *Il paesaggio come teatro: Dal Territorio vissuto al territorio rappresentato*, Venezia 1998, p. 13.

7 Martin Heidegger, “Building Dwelling Thinking,” [in:] *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter, New York 2001, p. 158 (143–159).

unveil the lasting formal matrices, which have been shaping the historical development of an area, and critically select the most distinctive and persisting traits. This process requires analysing delicate relationships between space/identity, identity/alterity, time/identity.

The cultural distinctiveness of a territory is also influenced by the viewer. As stated by the French anthropologist Marc Augé, a landscape awakens two kinds of memories: a collective memory, inscribed in the nature and history of monuments or places, and countless individual memories, reflecting the stay or the passage of all the people who contemplated it.⁸ Hence, the act of observing a landscape carries strong cultural connotations, which are influenced by the personality and the background of the observer.

Moreover, the nature, the theoretical and practical knowledge, and the interests of the mappers inevitably influence the cartographic restitution, it being a canonical account of the typicality of a territory, or a less literal and codified interpretation based on artistic purposes. John Brian Harley successfully addresses this issue while underlying the specific cultural perspective that is implicit in every cartographic representation:

Much of the power of the map, as a representation of social geography, is that it operates behind a mask of a seemingly neutral science. It hides and denies its social dimensions at the same time as it legitimates.⁹

In addition, Harley draws a distinction between the external and the internal power of cartography. A map is subject to the influence of an “external power,” exerted by those who promote and finance the work with the purpose of assuming social and cultural control, while the “internal power” is inherent in the process of selecting, synthesising, and transmitting the information. Harley continues:

Cartographers manufacture power: they create a spatial panopticon. It is a power embedded in the map text. We can talk about the power

8 Marc Augé, *L'antropologo e il mondo globale*, trans. Laura Odello, Milano 2014, p. 35.

9 John Brian Harley, “Deconstructing the Map,” [in:] *Cartographica*, vol. 26 no. 2 (1989), p. 7 (1–20).

of the map just as we already talked about the power of the word or about the book as a force for change. In this sense maps have politics.¹⁰

Maps have been widely employed in other areas besides traditional cartography to express subjective views of the world. Many artists have used maps as effective and transversal media to tell stories about controversial political, economic, and social issues. Innovative mapping techniques have largely been employed in the study of urban settlements and territories to investigate relational networks and ongoing processes of change in founded spatial arrangements.¹¹

Thematic Maps and the Transmission of Difficult Heritages

A particular type of cartographic representation is the thematic map. The identification of elements scattered over a wide area and relevant to the presentation of a specific aspect of the history of a country usually entails a top-down institutional action. This is all the more true in territories that transcend national frontiers. Thematic maps are instrumental in performing legitimacy, building identity-narrations, and starting preservation programmes.

The extension of the survey, along with the specificity of the heritage displayed in a thematic map, often preclude the involvement of the local community during the editorial stages, with the risk of hindering the acceptance of the resulting environmental restrictions. This is especially true, for instance, where contentious memories are listed under protection.

Territories certainly do not only witness positive and cohesive events. Even when promoters succeed in establishing a constructive and inclusive public debate also open to minorities, it is not easy for the local population to accept the preservation of sites of traumatic episodes or symbols of perpetration. Material remains of atrocious past events or totalitarian regimes, as well as barriers erected to strengthen borders, are uncomfortable legacies that most wish to obliterate. In situations of

¹⁰ Ibidem, p. 14.

¹¹ See James Corner, "The Agency of Mapping: Speculation, Critique and Invention," [in:] *Mappings*, Denis Cosgrove (ed.), London 1999, pp. 213–252. The author offers a brief but interesting insight into four mapping practices that emerged in contemporary design and planning, which he labels "drift," "layering," "game-board," and "rhizome."

political instability and social unrest, the population can suddenly decide to destroy the traces of a controversial past. The demolition of statues of former contested leaders like Stalin or Saddam Hussein are well-known examples, which show how the act of removing and destroying the icons of dictatorship can be liberating, regardless of their artistic or aesthetic value.

Difficult heritages, to use the expression coined by Sharon Macdonald, must be preserved for posterity as means of documenting the negative sides of a country's history and conveying a warning and pedagogical lesson.¹² A policy of conservation is also the evidence of a mindful stance by the institutions under whose jurisdiction such memories fall.

If we admit the relational nature of identities, which are built through unceasing interactions between people and the environment, we must acknowledge that both the community and the place are responsible for all the aspects which contribute to defining their identity, including the transmission of memories of controversial and troubling events. In an article titled "Geographies of Responsibility," Doreen Massey drew from a passage of *Collective Imaginings* by philosophers Moira Gatens and Genevieve Lloyd¹³ to explain that we are responsible for the past we carry (temporal dimension of responsibility), as well as for our impact on places (spatial dimension).

The notion of responsibility for the past has led to a spate of "apologies" for it. Apologising does not always amount to the same thing as taking responsibility. But were the "distance" to be spatial, and in the here and now rather than imagined as only temporal, the element of responsibility – the requirement to do something about it – would

12 "I call 'difficult heritage' [...] a past that is recognised as meaningful in the present but that is also contested and awkward for public reconciliation with a positive, self-affirming contemporary identity. 'Difficult heritage' may also be troublesome because it threatens to break through into the present in disruptive ways, opening up social divisions, perhaps by playing into imagined, even nightmarish, futures." Sharon Macdonald, *Difficult Heritage: Negotiating the Nazi Past in Nuremberg and Beyond*, London and New York 2009, p. 1.

13 "In understanding how our past continues in our present we understand also the demands of responsibility for the past we carry with us, the past in which our identities are formed. We are responsible for the past not because of what we as individuals have done, but because of what we are." Genevieve Lloyd and Moira Gatens, *Collective Imaginings: Spinoza, Past and Present*, New York 1999, p. 81.

assert itself with far greater force. The identities in question, including those of place, are forged through embodied relations which are extended geographically as well as historically.¹⁴

Many countries have been addressing difficult heritages related to events which occurred during World War II – and here I refer in particular to memories linked to the Nazi regime – through exhibitions, opening documentation centres, and promoting educational projects that provide information about the history of the sites. Germany has shown the greatest commitment as it has undertaken a delicate process of elaborating its recent past and transmitting its material traces, especially after the country's re-unification. Conversely, other aspects of recent European history have been obliterated and their memory sites remain neglected. Indifference and silence are sometimes planned strategies in order to remove difficult memories from the narrations of national identities: “silencing,” as Sharon Macdonald writes, “may involve the physical destruction of material heritage.”¹⁵

John Brian Harley states that maps have always been used as instruments to represent a peculiar view of reality:

The power of the map-maker was not generally exercised over individuals but over the knowledge of the world made available to people in general. Yet this is not consciously done and it transcends the simple categories of “intended” and “unintended” altogether. I am not suggesting that power is deliberately or centrally exercised. It is a local knowledge which at the same time is universal. It usually passes unnoticed. The map is a silent arbiter of power.¹⁶

However, what happens when the drafting of a map is a participatory practice? Assuming that participation cannot itself prevent omissions or alterations, I wonder whether a map could turn into a shared tool/platform/terrain for negotiation.

I suggest that participatory studies, mappings, and museum practices which are mindful of the experiences and feelings of minority groups and

14 Doreen Massey, “Geographies of Responsibility,” op. cit., p. 10.

15 Sharon Macdonald, *Difficult Heritage...*, op. cit., p. 10.

16 John Brian Harley, “Deconstructing the Map,” op. cit., p. 15.

free from the interference of dominant élites could be more objective and contrast the dangerous processes of “memory loss,” which have been known to give rise to the emergence of historical negationist phenomena and revisionism of past events, in line with ideologies of contemporary political powers. The preservation and an inclusive narration of memories become imperative in the light of the current nationalistic movements which are emerging in some countries in Central and Eastern Europe, promoting a conscious amnesia to remove from their recent history traumatic facts such as Nazi occupation and the communist era. Poland is currently at the centre of a delicate debate after the presentation of a controversial legislation, criminalising the attribution of complicity in crimes committed by Nazi Germany during the Holocaust to the Polish state or Polish nation.

In an essay focused on European war museums, Luca Basso Peressut stresses the relevance of a complete transmission of the recent past and an institutionalisation of shared recollection for “overcoming the ‘divided memories’ that have dramatically marked the populations of the European continent,” which is “an essential requirement to build the political and cultural identity of Europe.”¹⁷ The recognition and musealisation of places of memories is crucial, due to their capacity to engage both local communities and visitors.

The choice of people taking part in the mapping process is of primary importance and can turn out to be controversial as each subject carries a particular vision, influenced by one’s education, social *milieu*, personal beliefs or interests; intentionally or unconsciously, one exerts an ideological influence on the contents of the map and the method of representation. The result is a critical – yet questionable – interpretation and narrative of reality.

When a map is assumed as an operational tool to launch a museographical programme on a territorial scale, its relativity must be accepted as a matter of fact. Hence, an accurate documentation of the elaboration process becomes fundamental. Cartographers should state the socio-cultural context in which they are operating, the promoters and the subjects involved (which must be the most plural possible, representing diverse groups that form the community living in the territory requiring restitution: delegates

17 Luca Basso Peressut, “Narratives of Conflicts: Architecture and Representation in European War Museums,” [in:] *European Museums in the 21st Century: Setting the Framework*, vol. 3, Luca Basso Peressut, Francesca Lanz, and Gennaro Postiglione (eds.), Milan 2013, p. 731 (638–738).

of local councils, citizens, stakeholders, members of local associations, activists, etc.), the objectives and the elaboration phases (survey, data selection, debate, negotiation, choice of the illustrative symbols). Thus, the lack of neutrality of the map will partially be compensated by the declaration of the production process and the actors that have contributed to define the cultural and identitarian messages the map conveys.

Landscape of Memories: Reweaving Fragments

Interesting considerations could emerge while investigating the particular case of difficult memories placed in contested – or formerly contested – territories. In 2011 Nora Sternfeld wrote an article in which she extended the definition of “contact zones” introduced by Mary Louise Pratt¹⁸ and James Clifford¹⁹ to memorial sites. “The term,” she states, “describes shared/divided social spaces of contact, challenging existing concepts of community at the same time: it thwarts notions of ‘authenticity’ as well as those of ‘powerlessness.’”²⁰ Moreover, she stresses the possibility for questioning the cultural message museums or memorial sites carry, defining contact zones as “organic structures, in which different social struggles are reflected as ongoing processes of fighting for the power of interpretation.”²¹ Can the study and mapping of cultural heritages foster a transcultural dialogue or, to some extent, re-appropriation and reconciliation processes?

I would like to address the issue by presenting two paradigmatic examples of artefact systems diffused on a territorial scale, whose symbolic and testimonial value could also be important in the light of recent events. The first group consists of monumental structures built in the former Yugoslavia at the time of Josip Broz Tito. The second one includes the buildings erected along the internal borders of the European States which lost their function after the Schengen Agreement entered into force in 1995.

Adopting the adjective “fragmented” as the keyword, they could be labelled as “Fragmented memories: *Spomeniks* in the former Yugoslavia”

18 Mary Louise Pratt, “Arts of the Contact Zone,” *Profession* (1991), pp. 33–40.

19 James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*, Cambridge and London 1997.

20 Nora Sternfeld, “Memorial Sites as Contact Zones: Cultures of Memory in a Shared/Divided Present,” [in:] Eipcp.net (European Institute for Progressive Cultural Policies, 2011), <http://eipcp.net/policies/sternfeld/en> (access: 22 July 2017).

21 *Ibidem*.

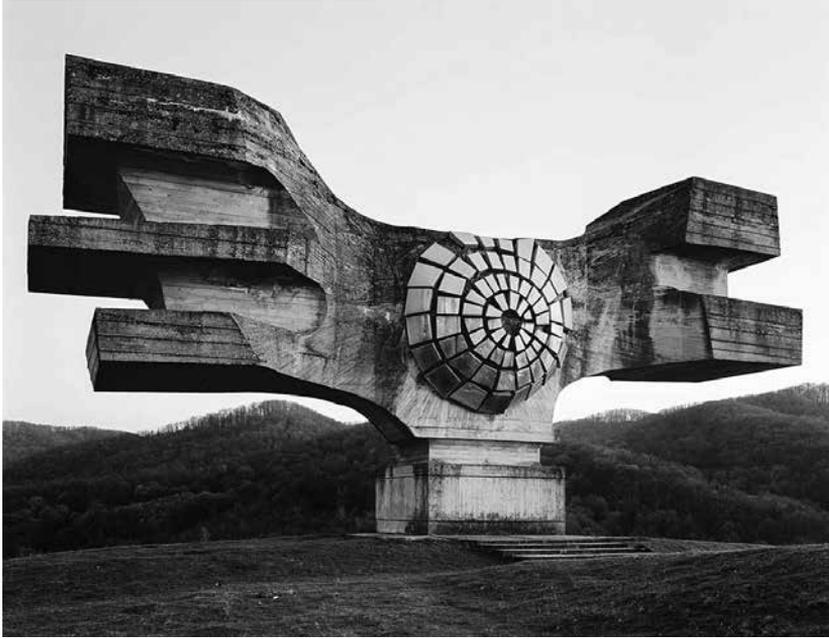


Image 1: Jan Kempenaers, *Spomenik*, 2006–2009. *Spomenik* #1 (Podgarić, Croatia), 2006
© Jan Kempenaers (School of Arts Ghent)

and “Memories of a fragmentation: forsaken border crossings in the united Europe.”

These particular heritages have not passed unnoticed by researchers, stakeholders, and artists, though they have not yet become the object of museums and educational programmes; neither have they been methodically charted, presented, and inserted in cultural itineraries.

Fragmented Memories: *Spomeniks* in the Former Yugoslavia

Jan Kempenaers is the author of the photographic series *Spomenik*, 2006–2009, which documents the relics of the commemorative monuments commissioned by the former Yugoslavian president Josip Broz Tito in the territories then belonging to the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.²²

22 Jan Kempenaers, “*Spomenik*, 2006–2009,” [in:] *Jan Kempenaers*, <http://www.jan-kempenaers.info/works/1/> (access: 19 July 2017). The term *spomenik* literally means “monument.”

A relevant number of memorials, different in size and design, were built in the 1960s and 1970s to celebrate the victory over Nazi-Fascism and in memory of the victims of World War II. They were placed on the sites of bloody battles (i.e. Tjentište, Kozara, and Kadinjača), mass murders, detention and concentration camps (i.e. Jasenovac and Niš). *Spomeniks* were largely diffused in the mountainous regions of the country, towering over even plateaus, soaring aloft on hilltops, in strategic outcrops and valleys, marking the landscape with a constellation of memory sites. The most astonishing were massive structures designed by architects and artists²³ – some of whom are still alive – in abstract forms, to praise the pomp and glory of the Socialist Republic.

An impressive and well-preserved example is the Monument to the Revolution of the People of Moslavina (*Spomenik Revolucije Naroda Moslavine*) located in Podgarić, Croatia, and designed by the artist Dušan Džamonja in 1965–1967. A ten-metre-high and twenty-metre-wide structure in reinforced concrete, with a central element in polished aluminium panels, was built to commemorate the community's uprising against Ustaše occupying forces during World War II. An organic composition that unfolds with two giant wings from a circular, faceted core, symbolically embraces the village of Podgarić and the surrounding hilly landscape, as a metaphor of freedom, solidarity, and resistance. A crypt complex is set along the pathway leading to the sculpture and hosts the remains of about 900 Partisan soldiers who died while being treated at hospitals in Podgarić.

The difference in scale between the monument and the scattered buildings nearby intensifies the emotional potential of this site, which emerged in the war period as a nerve centre of the Partisan movement that rose up against the ethnic policy perpetrated in Croatia at the time. “Memorial parks sublimated the memory of the war by connecting the individual tragedy with a greater suffering of humanity through an abstract and associative artistic form, thereby creating an idealized image of the collective past,” wrote the art historian Vladana Putnik.²⁴ Still,

23 Among them sculptors Dušan Džamonja, Vojin Bakić, Miodrag Živković, Jordan and Iskra Grabul, and architects Bogdan Bogdanović and Gradimir Medaković.

24 Vladana Putnik, “Second World War Monuments in Yugoslavia as Witnesses of the Past and the Future”, [in:] *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change*, vol. 14 no. 3 (2016), p. 208 (206–221).

their message reached out to the socialist era to promote a Yugoslavian cultural and social cohesion.

Other relevant sites are in the Mrakovica area of Kozara National Park, Bosnia (1972), also created by Dušan Džamonja; in Niš, Serbia (1963) by the sculptor Ivan Sabolić and architect Mihajlo Mitrović; in Jasenovac, Croatia (1966) and Mitrovica, Kosovo (1973) by the architect Bogdan Bogdanović; in Tjentište, Bosnia and Herzegovina (1971) by the sculptor Miodrag Živković with architect Ranko Radović; and in Kadinjača, Serbia (1979) with the architect Aleksandar Đokić.

The list could be long, formed by sites whose stories are equally worthy of narration, but at least one more place should be mentioned: Ilinden Memorial in Kruševo, Macedonia. Kruševo *Spomenik* was designed by the sculptor Jordan Grabul and architect Iskra Grabul (born Iskra Spirov) in 1970–1974, following a national architectural competition to commemorate the Macedonian insurgents who took part in the Ilinden Uprising in 1903 against the Ottoman Empire, and to celebrate the Partisans who fought in the National Liberation War (World War II). The symbolical significance of the place is therefore wider. The monumental complex consists of several parts: a plateau with a series of abstract sculptures, a crypt, and an amphitheatre designed by Petar Mazev, which articulate a path, culminating in a twenty-five-metre white concrete dome commonly known as “Makedonium.” This absolutely unconventional construction can be accessed via an aerial ramp, which leads to an impactful interior, imbued with colourful light projected through stained glass panels realised by artist Borko Lazeski in the protruding alcoves.

The gigantic dimensions and stunning aesthetic of the *Spomenik* conveyed an ideological message as they succeeded in evoking emotions, fascination, admiration, and a genuine patriotic fervour.

The Yugoslavian wars of the 1990s provoked the destruction of the majority of these monuments; others, having survived the fury of this period, were subsequently miserably abandoned to decay by natural elements and vandalism. The radical change of their status merits further considerations. These sites used to be the venues of heartfelt popular celebrations, attracting large crowds of visitors. Now they are ghostly, unclaimed presences, a heritage whose very nature is contentious: built to share memories, under the aegis of one flag, by people who had once fought against the Nazi-forces, but were simultaneously the protagonists of a cruel civil and ethnic war. Today these monuments are no longer part of a narrative system conceived to establish a patriotic

attachment and the collective and individual experiences they evoke are often silenced.

Spomeniks are the material traces of the unitary past of a region that is still torn by profound divisions and wounds. In this sense, once their role of public memorials ceased, *Spomeniks* became disturbing presences,²⁵ historical artefacts that all of a sudden turned out to be dissonant in the process of affirmation of post-Yugoslavian national narrations; moreover, these sites inspire disparate nostalgic feelings, i.e. “Yugonostalgia,” that is the yearning for the unitary past of the nation established by Tito,²⁶ or simply the nostalgia for personal past experiences. According to Sharon Macdonald, there is a “complex of ways of doing and experiencing the past within Europe. [...] [I]t is a repertoire of (sometimes contradictory) tendencies and developments.”²⁷ The fate of the *Spomeniks* certainly proves how public (and private) forms of recollection can change – be established and then vanish – over time; additionally, it shows that material heritage is a powerful, lasting agent for transmitting cultural and social values, and building ideologies, whereas historical processes could turn it into an unwanted burden. In spite of this, what certainly remains is their architectural and sculptural value.

The work of Jan Kempenaers is a photographic reportage, which is significant to the disclosure of a heritage hardly known outside the former Yugoslavian countries and often neglected in those same territories. Willem Neutelings wrote an accompanying text to the series, in which he remarks that the photographer’s work “allows the viewer to enjoy the melancholy beauty of the *Spomeniks*, but in so doing, forces us to take a position on a social issue. The photographs raise the question of whether a former monument can ever function as a pure sculpture, an autonomous work of art, detached from its original meaning.”²⁸ The reportage certainly lacks a critical analysis of why the *Spomeniks* are currently neglected as well as a careful reflection on prospective future actions, be they an extended supranational project of musealisation, the conservation of just few relevant sites as “reified symbols

25 For the use of the terms “remembrance” and “past presencing,” see Sharon Macdonald, *Memorylands: Heritage and Identity in Europe Today*, London and New York 2013, p. 12.

26 Ibidem, pp. 104–105.

27 Ibidem, p. 2.

28 Willem Jan Neutelings, “Spomenik, the Monuments of Former Yugoslavia,” *Jan Kempenaers* (2012), <http://www.jankempenaers.info/texts/03/> (access: 27 July 2017).

of the past”²⁹ (as described by Matthew Rampley) or the intentional prosecution of a policy of unconcern and negligence.

While the memory of the trauma provoked by the wars in the Balkans in 1991–2001 may still be too vivid to start a coordinated supranational project of musealisation, other actions could be undertaken in order to foster public debate: historical and anthropological researches with a multi-temporal approach,³⁰ architectural studies, exhibitions, artistic actions, and, last but not least, an accurate mapping programme.

Memories of a Fragmentation: Forsaken Border Crossings in the United Europe

Photography is the expressive medium used in another relevant art project dealing with difficult memories: Ignacio Evangelista’s *After Schengen* series.³¹ His photos portray old border checkpoints, mostly in the territory of the European Union, that decayed in the aftermath of the Schengen Treaty entering into force in 1995. Prior to the ratification of the agreement, these sites were the thresholds between delimited and closed territories, symbols of separation and sovereignty, places where the travellers’ expectations and hopes could come true or be eliminated. People had to stop, show their documents, and wait for a verdict. Deprived of their coercive role, these places have lost their aura of authority and now have been reconverted to different uses or, in some cases, completely abandoned to the action of vandals and natural elements.

The structures rarely have an architectural significance, nevertheless they are the physical memento of an era of political divisions. Crossing

29 According to Matthew Rampley, heritage “negotiates a relation to the past primarily through reliance on reified symbol of the past,” be them single events in history, prominent individuals, buildings, sites, or artefacts. These memories are therefore burdened with meanings by the communities that claim them as icons to construct a particular local or national identity. Matthew Rampley, “Contested Histories: Heritage and/as the Construction of the Past: An Introduction,” [in:] *Heritage, Ideology, and Identity in Central and Eastern Europe: Contested Pasts, Contested Presents*, idem (ed.), Woodbridge 2012, pp. 6–8 (1–20).

30 Sharon Macdonald, *Memorylands...*, op. cit., pp. 54–56.

31 Ignacio Evangelista, “After Schengen,” [in:] Ignacio Evangelista, <http://www.ignacioevangelista.com/index.php?seleccion-natural/work-in-progres-after-schengen/> (access: 19 July 2017). See also Cristina F. Colombo, “Ignacio Evangelista, ‘After Schengen’: National Borders as Contact Zones Questioning a European Cohesion,” [in:] *TRACES 4* (2017).



Image 2: Ignacio Evangelista, *After Schengen*. Ždanky-Pstrazna (CZ-PL), 2012
© Ignacio Evangelista

points are expressions of power, but also contact zones. After Schengen the internal posts turned into ideal thresholds, places where citizens could relate with the “outer than self,” what once was foreign, distant, forbidden. The abolition of the Schengen area’s internal frontiers is the tangible outcome of an economical and social policy; however, first and foremost, it discloses strong bonds of amity among nations that officially share common cultural roots. Borders separate homogeneous landscapes, introduce unnatural fractures to mark domains, create antagonisms and hostilities, which usually increase along the territorial margins. Claudio Magris and Angelo Ara offer a telling representation of the feelings of citizens living near the borders:

A frontier is a strip which divides and links, a sour gash like a wound which heals with difficulty, a no-man’s land, a mixed territory, whose inhabitants often feel that they do not belong to any clearly defined country, or at least they do not belong to any country with that obvious certainty with which one usually identifies with one’s native land.³²

32 Angelo Ara and Claudio Magris, *Trieste: Un’identità di frontiera*, trans. Lucretia Steward, Torino 1982, p. 192.



Image 3: Ignacio Evangelista, *After Schengen Portalet (E-F)*, 2011
© Ignacio Evangelista

Margins are artificial lines that establish barriers between people who share similar stories and dwell in the same environment, thus having parallel collective memories. The solitude of the posts portrayed by Evangelista symbolises the historical importance of the decision of opening up national borders to the free circulation of people, arousing many reflections in a moment in which the future of the European Union is seriously challenged. A physical barrier objectifies a political boundary – the miles of razor wire that Hungary has set along the lines with Serbia and Croatia are an example – and marks a rigid separation that strongly interferes with the process of developing cultural identities, expressing a rejection and a stigmatisation of what is perceived as the “other.” The political attainments of the Schengen Agreement should not be taken for granted. Even the smallest or most ruined border crossing holds a strong power of agency, by virtue of its ability of conveying such a political message over time. Though Ignacio Evangelista’s *After Schengen* series is far from being a systematic census, it unveils the importance of recording and mapping the presence of the dismissed checkpoints as the relics of a recent past of fragmentation and disharmony in European history.

Conclusion

The photographic projects of Jan Kempenaers and Ignacio Evangelista have a documentary relevance, but they raise extremely controversial questions. Eventually, the main concern of these works is to reflect upon the way in which extended landscape narrations can contribute to re-frame contentious heritages by connecting distant traces located in wide territories – not necessarily confined within national borders. Mapping is a process that involves acknowledgement, recognition, selection, and narration. It is about tracing a sign that affirms and marks a presence. In this perspective, I believe thematic maps are essential for offering tools to approach landscape narrations on difficult heritages and fostering a participative dialogue on memory processes and identity issues.