

JOURNAL
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Insights Issue

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The Difficult Heritage of
Non-Sites of Memory.
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, PhD in History of Art, independent researcher in Memorial Studies and Visual Studies, collaborates with historical institutes and foundations among which Villa Emma Foundation, Modena and Monte Sole Peace School, Bologna.

Nevertheless, the question then arises as to why excavate to reveal these traces? And there are numerous reasons such as preventing looting, proving evidence to negationists, contributing to historical researches... Above all, this process becomes particularly relevant for the relatives of the victims who are given a place for private and public mourning and commemoration.

After more than seventy years since these dramatic events occurred, the reflection on these places could constitute an alternative for memory practices. The recent movie *Austerlitz*, directed by Sergei Loznitsa (2016), illustrates the risks of tourism consumption associated to places of memory, as demonstrated by the often superficial experience recorded by the people visiting the numerous concentration camps that have been transformed into memorials and museums. Loznitsa shows people walking, chatting, shooting photographs, selfies or videos, and yet in their eyes one may seem to register that “there is nothing to see”.

The “hypervision” of our epoch paired with the narrative of the Holocaust gives us the erroneous presumption that we already know and understand it all as visiting sites of memory stripped of the political rituals of the past, seems to be reduced to the mere communication of information. On the contrary, experiencing non-sites of memory could contribute to rethinking and reshaping the notion of these sites.

— Elena Pirazzoli



The Difficult Heritage of Non-Sites of Memory. Contested Places, Contaminated Landscapes

by Roma Benayra

REMEMBERING KILLING SITES

scapes

contaminated lands

www.ck12.org

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memories

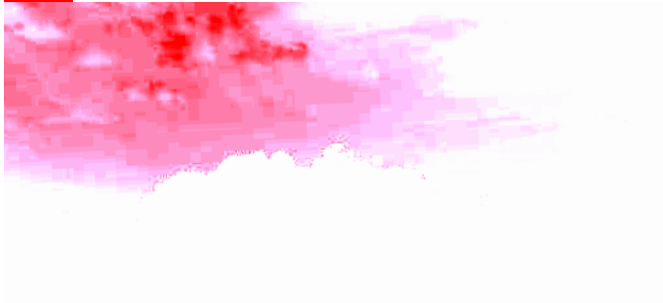
Consider these contested,
left-out sites as diagnostic objects, raising
fundamental issues regarding regional
memory cultures in Eastern Europe.

Why are so many sites,
which are potentially
meaningful based on their
relevance for the European
identity, relegated to
common "memory works",
"visits", "quests to save",
"volunteer-run heritage
projects"?

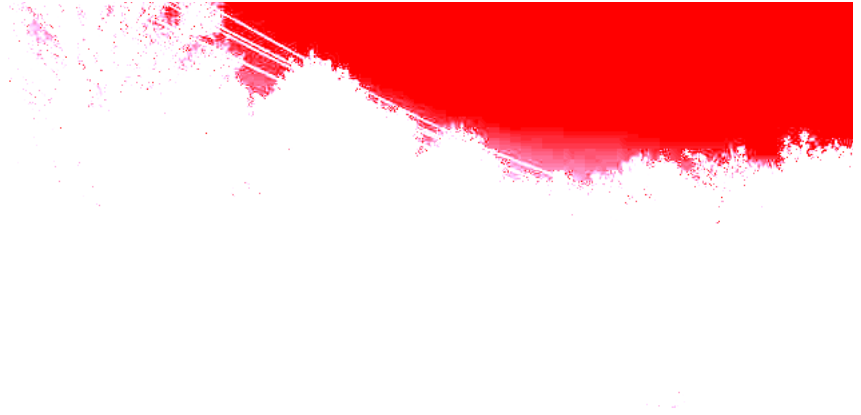
RECOGNISING CLANDESTINE SITES

immovable heritage

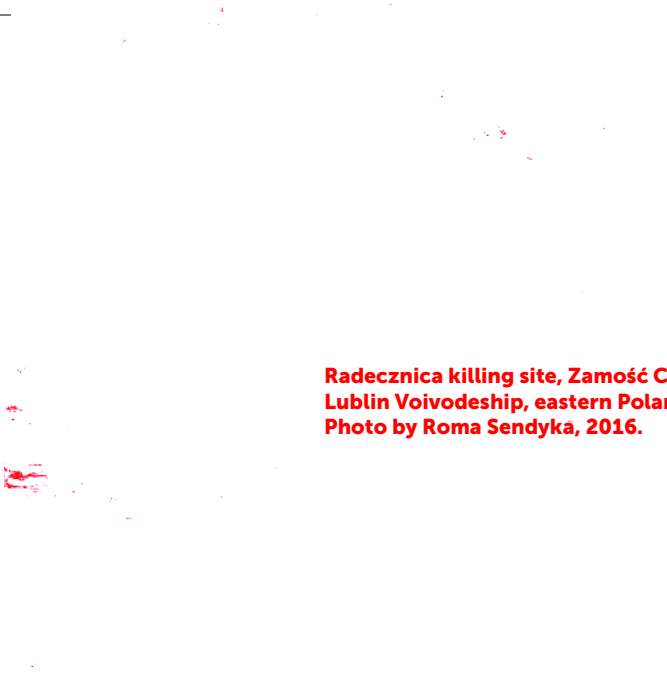
since they cannot be physically removed, they remain within a space of a given community and are in some ways used, managed, manipulated or processed.



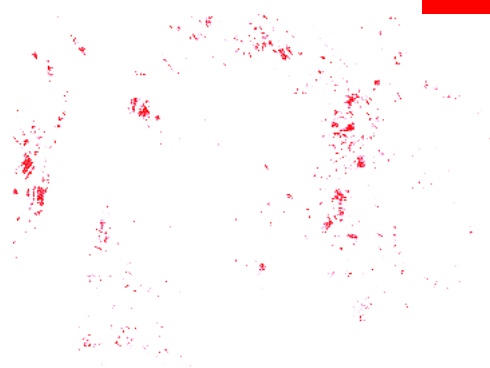
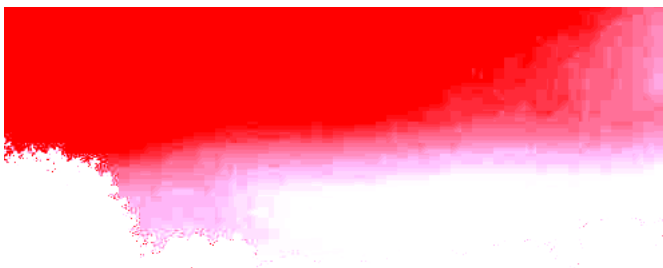
**Matków, Hrubieszów County, Lublin Voivodeship, eastern Poland.
Site of a mass grave of 49 victims depicted prior to a commemoration
by Rabbinical Commission for Cemeteries in November 2013.
Courtesy of Rabbinical Commission for Cemeteries.**



**Pomiechówek Fort III penal-inquisitorial prison, Mazovia county, Poland.
Photo by Roma Sendyka, 2016.**



**Radecznicza killing site, Zamość County,
Lublin Voivodeship, eastern Poland.
Photo by Roma Sendyka, 2016.**



**Łaskarzew, Garwolin County,
Masovian Voivodeship on Promnik river.
Unmarked grave of two Jewish victims, 2016.
Courtesy of Rabbinical Commission for Cemeteries**

What are the reasons of neglecting the past of contested sites? What allows for reconciliation practices? What allows for the inclusion of a site into memorial practices? What will anchor the site into the identity processes of a given group?

How to illustrate European memory cultures when including left-out, uncommemorated killing sites into European "memorylands"?

What makes these sites essential? Essential for understanding the memory cultures of Eastern Europe, but also other post-conflict regions?

These sites convey something astonishing that sets them apart. They are imbued by a sense of meaningfulness. They share the fundamental quality of invisibility, transparency, in the sense that they do not hold the gaze of the passerby.

DEFINING NON-SITES OF MEMORY

sculptures

sculptures

sculptures as sites of memory

Why and how do we conceive them as sites despite everything, granting "there is nothing left"?

sculptures as memory

Why are these sites despite everything, the sites par excellence, the essential sites?

(Didi-Huberman 2007, 115)

1984 Les Lieux de Mémoire

Pierre Nora

1986 Le Non-Lieux de la Mémoire

Claude Lanzmann

1990 Les Lieux Défigurés

Claude Lanzmann

1995 Lieux Malgré Tout

Georges Didi-Huberman

1997 Bad Place

Dolores Hayden

1997-2003 Voids

Andres Huyssen and Daniel Libeskind

1999 Phantomsites

Aleida Assmann

2005 Traumasclapes

Maria Tumarkin

2008 Difficult Heritage

Sharon Macdonald

2013 Memorylands

Sharon Macdonald

2013 Terrorsclapes

Rob Van der Laarse

2014 Contaminated Landscapes

Martin Pollack

places

words

phantoms

memories

memories

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**They embody a peculiar mixture
of repressed memories, things that we know
about but do not want to discuss,
or have no words to describe.**



The “non-sites of memory” are not permanently forgotten.

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