Landscape biographies of commemoration

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ABSTRACT
All social structures, ranging from world-wide cultural communities to local networks of individuals, develop more or less specific memory cultures to connect places, buildings and land to memories and notions of ancestry and origin. One can focus on several histories in the landscape or bring one moment in time to the exclusive attention. This paper will discuss two examples of landscapes of commemoration using a landscape-biographical approach. This approach is used to demonstrate a multi-vocal past with its complex overlapping layers of social, economic and political history. Wars are etched on the memories of nations, communities and individuals. What people remember, and how, changes with time, especially now that historic events are disappearing in living memory. This paper analyses how nations, local communities and individuals reshaped their violent past through time.

Landscape biography
The landscape-biographical approach was developed by Dutch archaeologists in the 1990s (Roymans, Gerritsen, Van der Heijden, Bosma, & Kolen, 2009, pp. 337, 338). It was developed as an alternative to the traditional methods for valuation and selection in cultural history (van Londen, 2006, p. 171). It uses a historicising longue durée perspective and focuses on the study of the interrelationships between spatial transformations, social and economic changes and the construction of identities (both national and individual) in a region. The American geographer Marwyn Samuels (*1942), a pupil of Donald Meinig (*1924), was the first who proposed to use the term ‘biography’ in an almost literal sense (Roymans et al., 2009, pp. 337, 338). In his work, Samuels (1979) connected the histories of landscapes, life histories and the social environment of individuals that have shaped landscapes overtime. The history of a landscape is above all the result of human actions in the past (Kolen, 2005, p. 12; Samuels, 1979, p. 72).

Landscapes are no passive by-products of anonymous economic and social developments. The history of a landscape can only be fully understood by means of the history of its inhabitants: authored landscapes (Roymans et al., 2009, p. 339). In the choice of representing the landscape, for instance by means of monuments, the author expresses a powerful message. Of course, other groups (ethnic groups, individuals, nations) can have different views on the same landscape (Misztal, 2003, pp. 5, 87; van Londen, 2006, p. 179). A biographical approach to the study of conflict landscapes is crucial for a full understanding of their changing meanings. Memories of past events are never fixed but change continuously, influenced by individuals, groups, or nations (Login, 2015, p. 16; Misztal, 2003, p. 126; Suleiman, 2006, p. 4).

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The concept of a biography of a landscape can be used as a tool to work on multi-disciplinary topics (van Londen, 2006, p. 171). An important aspect of a landscape-biographical approach is authorship which will be demonstrated in the case studies of Ypres and the Potsdamer Platz, Berlin. Obviously, landscapes are an essential part of the world that people live in and perceive. Landscapes are connected with people at an individual level, with their personal histories, but they are also part of a wider, collective world history. Landscape can be regarded as a social (cultural) construct (Cosgrove & Daniels, 1988, p. 13; Roymans et al., 2009, pp. 351, 352).

The landscape-biographical approach is used to study the historical layeredness of a landscape in the past and in the present. This stratification can be of importance for the ‘functional’ history of an area. First, the spatial ordering can be seen and the palimpsest of the resulting spatial structure at a particular moment in time. These can be both tangible as well as intangible, such as transmitted traditions. Secondly, as the perspective of individuals and groups in a multi-vocal landscape changes constantly, the way in which the past is experienced shifts as well and the heritage adapts itself to the new era (Rass & Lohmeier, 2011, p. 193; Smith, 2006, p. 48). Thus, the concept of the biography of a landscape can be used to make explicit in what way the construction of heritage is embedded historically in landscape developments, as a valuation to indicate important and unimportant landscapes, and to research (local) identities. Of course, using this concept as a narrative can be substantially subjective (van Londen, 2006, pp. 172, 173, 179).

Scope and definition of heritage

Nations frequently rely upon the past to create their present by offering a notion of historical validation for the constructed national identity (Smith, 2006, p. 57; van der Auwera, 2012, p. 50; van Londen, 2006, p. 174; ). The heritage of a nation state is usually politically coloured (Misztal, 2003, p. 10; Suleiman, 2006, p. 64). Individual experience may be less politically determined and can be very different from the ‘official’ heritage policy of a nation. Heritage can be used both as a determination of the tangible past and also as an expression of the ideas and values of contemporary society (Smith, 2006, p. 30; van der Auwera, 2012, p. 51). Dealing with the past within the landscape is an integral part of the spatial condition of societies (Kolen, 2005; Roymans et al., 2009, p. 339). Heritage is often contested and exists both of material and immaterial culture which is cultivated by different individuals and social groups (Frijhoff, 2007, pp. 37–40). Groups and individuals can be subdivided on the bases of religion, ethnicity, nationality, political orientation. Even amongst these groups there is no true ‘collective’ memory (Frijhoff, 2007, pp. 8, 9). Collective memory refers to both a shared past as well as a collectively remembered past and changes overtime (Misztal, 2003, pp. 13, 51; Smith, 2006, p. 60; Wertsch, 2002, pp. 43, 76).

From a landscape-biographical view, heritage is closely tied up with the values and identities in contemporary society and local communities. Heritage is never an objective historical given, both memories and constructed histories need to be understood within the context of the present. (Roymans et al., 2009, pp. 351, 352; Smith, 2006, p. 58). Places in the landscape (for example, a tree, a house, a monument), which anchor people to their living environment, were and are of key importance for the identity of a local community (Suleiman, 2006, p. 167). A reciprocal and historically grounded relationship is present between community and landscape. The landscape generates both the symbols and the means through which communities define themselves and represents a sense of identity and belonging. Societies change overtime and thus the attitude towards their heritage (Gerritsen, 2003, p. 113; Login, 2015, p. 17; Smith, 2006, pp. 48, 77, 83). Heritage sites can be researched by means of a landscape-biographical approach, visualising physical and symbolic changes (Login, 2015, p. 29).

Heritage is valued and cultivated on different levels. What is considered heritage at a given moment can lose its importance or, on the contrary, strengthen its significance. Heritage has also become more and more part of the entertainment industry and is used in many regions or places for commercial exploitation. The past is actively used for purposes in the present, and therefore heritage is often more meaningful for the present than for the past. Heritage is an active process in which meaning is achieved
through remembering (Misztal, 2003, pp. 47, 61; Kolen, 2005, p. 15; Skeates, 2000, p. 9; Smith, 2006, pp. 33, 66, 83).

However, the whole history is seldom displayed. Histories of blooming times are more often presented than histories of deterioration (Smith, 2006, p. 58; Suleiman, 2006, p. 39; Wertsch, 2002, pp. 134, 135). This often results in an idealised past, the way people would like to see the past, not how it really was (Misztal, 2003, pp. 60, 79; Rass & Lohmeier, 2011, pp. 196, 197; Suleiman, 2006, p. 1). But what exactly is heritage? The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) outlines heritage as: ‘Our legacy from the past, what we live with today, and what we pass on to future generations. Our cultural and natural heritages are both irreplaceable sources of life and inspiration’ (UNESCO, 2016). Heritage includes all features, traditions and objects from the past that a society or a social group has decided to preserve for future generations. A finer terminology of heritage does not exist since there is no uniformity between countries (Ahmad, 2006, p. 292). However, heritage is an ideal way of creating and cultivating a ‘collective’ memory, and it has been used and abused widely in this way, dominated by ideological values. It can be used to construct a sense of identity for a vivid claim to power, land and legitimacy (Misztal, 2003, p. 20; Smith, 2006, p. 75). According to heritage specialist Laurajane Smith (2006, p. 44), heritage: ‘is a cultural process that engages with acts of remembering that work to create ways to understand and engage with the present.’

**Landscapes of commemoration**

Landscapes of commemoration are of great significance to our present-day world. During the twentieth century, Europe’s landscapes of commemoration have significantly increased in number, spatial and social scale and cultural importance. According to various scholars, this process started after the First World War, when European societies felt a strong need to express their mourning for the millions of dead (Meire, 2003, p. 166; Mosse, 1990, p. 94; Winter, 1995). However, already in the 1790s, the practice of listing individual names on local monuments started in Prussia and France (Savage, 2009, p. 239). Individual burial of soldiers was already pursued during the American Civil War (1861–1865) and the Franco-Prussian War (1870–1871). Nevertheless, memorialisation of war did not emerge as one of the primary phenomena in Europe until the late twentieth century (Login, 2015, pp. 31, 33, 34).

The need for memorial landscapes was revitalised after the Second World War, when the emphasis gradually shifted from the national and heroic to a global commemoration of (Jewish) victims, making the ‘holocaust experience’ a dominant factor in international commemorative practices. These practices were also becoming more democratic and local and less influenced by nationalism (Misztal, 2003, p. 130; Mosse, 1990; Planzbaum, 1999; Young, 1993). Various (international) anniversaries such as the 50th celebration of the end of the Second World War (1995) or, more recently, the centenary of the First World War (2014–2018), significantly increased commemorative practices (Misztal, 2003, p. 2, 127; Smith, 2006, p. 57).

The fast-growing popularity of landscapes of commemoration not only encourages new developments, but also raises new questions and problems. Most of these are centred on notions of authenticity, uniqueness and identity, matters of ownership and accessibility (who owns the past?), historical interpretation and integrity (which story to tell?), and tensions between global tendencies and local practices and traditions (Landsberg, 2004; Lowenthal, 1996; Smith, 2006, p. 58). Furthermore, the tourist value can differ from the academic value (van Londen, 2006, p. 176). Although museums are organising collective memory (and can, for instance, give a central focus to nationalism), tourists are not simply ‘consuming’ heritage sites but can also influence museum developments and conservation movements (Misztal, 2003, p. 21; Savage, 2009, pp. 176, 177; Smith, 2006, pp. 30, 197).

Important questions are how and why both individuals and groups who share the same landscape have different and often opposed ways of understanding its significance. Memory and emotions are often interconnected (Misztal, 2003, pp. 1, 5). Memory can be expressed in many ways, such as monuments, museums, formalised rituals of commemoration (Figure 1), archives and centres of education, which symbolically unfold the history of the nation or that of its region and communities.
Individuals and social groups will make different choices in regard to remembering and forgetting, two very important formative principles for a landscape (Misztal, 2003, pp. 11, 79; Roymans et al., 2009, pp. 339, 351; Smith, 2006, p. 58). Cultural amnesia is equally important as a memorial practice. Memory can be characterised by its fluidity and variability. The meaning of the past is continuously rewritten and reinterpreted by the present (Misztal, 2003, p. 17; Smith, 2006, p. 58; Suleiman, 2006, pp. 139, 172; Wertsch, 2002, p. 172).

For example, the official memory of the Second World War was very different in East Germany (1949–1991) compared with West Germany. Between 1945 and 1965, both states used the past to justify its own political order. Not surprisingly, East Germany glorified the contribution of anti-fascist and communist resistance and marginalised the Jewish suffering. In West Germany on the other hand, various groups were included, even the military, and the Jewish suffering was recognised. A focal point became the coming to terms with the past. In East Germany, no alternative versions of the past were tolerated and the official memory remained stable (Misztal, 2003, p. 59, 60; Wertsch, 2002, p. 78).

How should one deal with the material traces of war and conflict in the landscape? Personal connections with the memories presented are weakening as time passes by. As a consequence, identities are no longer based upon a shared experience of the past but derived from a common heritage rooted in the past (Lowenthal, 1996; Misztal, 2003, p. 135). Memories are both continued as well as transformed by successive generations, adapting and expanding their cultural memory and choosing a suitable past. The history of commemoration is characterised by change and transformation (Savage, 2009, p. 11). Commemoration of conflicts varies strongly from one era to another as well as between regions. Erecting monuments, public exposure of battle remains, creating songs or myths are just a few examples. The western perspective on heritage also substantially emphasises materiality and authenticity (Smith, 2006, p. 3). The heritage of conflict sites is always political, dynamic and contested (Saunders, 2004, p. 7).

**Ypres and the commemoration of the First World War**

As outlined above, monuments are a powerful expression of how people experience the past (Bradley, 2002, p. 12; Miles, 2016, p. 55). The region of Ypres has a long and diverse history but the former battlefields of the First World War might give the impression that this landscape of commemoration is solely shaped by this event. On the former British battlefields of the First World War, of which Ypres is...
one of the most important, three main memories are cultivated. Firstly, the official, state-sanctioned patriotic memory, created by the British government. Secondly, a different and more nuanced memory was created by the veterans themselves. Finally, a ‘historic’ memory was created by tourists who visited the battlefields in the years after the war up to the present day (Prost, 1998, pp. 377, 394, 397; Savage, 2009, pp. 176, 177).

During the war the area around Ypres had transformed into a battlefield, a completely desolated landscape, destroyed by artillery with soldiers sleeping, fighting, living and dying in the mud (Saunders, 2001, p. 38). As discussed, the end of the First World War was followed by a new form of memorialisation on an unprecedented scale. The world had never seen warfare and destruction on such a large scale before and it demanded remembrance (Login, 2015, p. 98; Mosse, 1990; Todman, 2008, p. 209; Winter, 1995). For many, the war was a decisive moment in a longer term trend, influencing the nature of commemoration practices, war memorials and even types of mourning (Misztal, 2003, p. 45; Rass & Lohmeier, 2011, p. 196). After the armistice the following problems announced themselves: which memories of which era should be contained and preserved in the landscape? The national narratives, focused on the heroic sacrifice, and personal commemoration, concentrated on private mourning, were very different (Login, 2015, p. 75; Misztal, 2003, p. 121; Suleiman, 2006, p. 43). The farmers claimed back their land, while the soldiers and civilians wanted a place to mourn. The locals voted for the reconstruction of their hometown, whereas the ‘foreigners’ wanted to preserve the ruins (Meire, 2003, p. 132; Van Eeno, 1999, p. 7).

Every community of a former conflict site deals with the past in its own way. However, four main possibilities can be distinguished. In the first place an attempt towards a reconstruction of the pre-war situation, as happened in Ypres. The second option is an attempt to ‘freeze’ the past (Bender, 1992, pp. 735, 736), to conserve the ruins of a town or village and consider it as Holy Ground, the so-called ‘village martyr’. In France, such villages still have a (symbolic) mayor. The most well-known village martyr is without a doubt Oradour-sur-Glane, 20 km south of Limoges (Figure 2). Time stands still for eternity at 10 June 1944 between 16:00 and 17:00 h when members of the 2. SS-Panzer-Division ‘Das Reich’ surrounded the village and killed 642 inhabitants. A third option is not to conserve a whole town but just one specific ruin, a ‘zone de silence’ like the Atomic Bomb Dome in Hiroshima, Japan, or the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gedächtniskirche in Berlin. The final option is to build a complete new town on the foundations

Figure 2. Conservation of destruction. Oradour-sur-Glane, 2015 (Author).
of the older city as happened in Rotterdam. Obviously, many sub-forms are possible within these four main options (Chielen, 1999, pp. 221–230).

Winston Churchill (*1874–†1965) was one of the supporters of preserving Ypres as a ruin. The Belgian architect Eugène Dhucque (*1877–†1955) shared this opinion, deeming that every era deserved its own place in history (Dendooven, 2006, pp. 99–101; Miles, 2016, p. 55). As a ruin, the city would most likely have had a more powerful symbolic value. The main reason for rebuilding Ypres was that the inhabitants could best identify themselves with the past in this way. The former buildings were what anchored them (Meire, 2003, pp. 119–121; Suleiman, 2006, p. 167). Nonetheless, memory is more often an idealised reconstruction of past events, not a reproduction (Misztal, 2003, pp. 60, 79; Suleiman, 2006, p. 1). For example, after the war, several demarcation stones were placed on the former western front to mark the furthest advance of the German Army with the inscription: HERE THE INVADER WAS BROUGHT TO A STANDSTILL. During the Second World War, the Germans removed this inscription on most demarcation stones or completely demolished them. Nevertheless, several did survive the deliberate attempt to erase this part of history. However, these demarcation stones were never at the exact spot were the German Army was halted. One such demarcation stone was erected in front of Kemmel Hill, suggesting that the summit was never taken (Figure 3). But the Germans did seize the hill on 25 April 1918 and thus advanced several kilometres further than implied by the monument.

While the memory of the First World War is nationally specific, it does transcend national boundaries (Suleiman, 2006, p. 2). However, it was mainly the British Government that made the most effort to arrange a lasting commemoration of the dead. Because of this contribution the landscape has become for the larger part a British commemorative landscape (Meire, 2003, p. 25). The British Government used the memorials as a narrative of patriotism and glory, whereas relatives wanted to focus on the grief and suffering (Misztal, 2003, p. 121; Suleiman, 2006, p. 41).

There is no doubt that the landscape of commemoration would have been developed quite differently if the Germans had won the war. On the former western front, several military cemeteries, constructed by the Germans during the war, still exist. Most can be found in the sparsely populated Wallonia in contrast to densely populated Flanders and are a reminder of the Battle of the Frontiers (1914). Saint Symphorien Military Cemetery (Figure 4) provides a good insight into the way Germany would have designed the military cemeteries. The opponent was buried in the same cemetery with equal honours and each regiment received its own commemorative stone. Officers and common soldiers

Figure 3. An inaccurately located demarcation stone. At the background Kemmel Hill (Author).
were buried side by side, a practice copied by the Allies in the years after the war when the cemeteries were rearranged. The densely populated Flanders, on the other hand, contained over 670 German military cemeteries in 1919. Between 1925 and 1929 this number was brought back to 128 cemeteries and German soldiers were removed from most Allied cemeteries. From 1955 to 1959, the remains of German soldiers were concentrated at just four military cemeteries: Langemarck, Vladslo, Menen and Hooge (Dewilde & Wyffels, 2014, pp. 41–46). Over 300 military cemeteries of the Commonwealth are located in Flanders at present, making the German presence much less visible in the landscape.

Directly after the First World War, remembrance was focused on the fallen soldiers of the victors. Veterans wanted to give a meaning to the war and their sacrifice. Those who actually experienced the war often had a far more inclusive approach to commemoration. The brutality of modern warfare was for the larger part neglected. Battlefield tourists, an ever growing number, had other needs (Saunders, 2001, p. 43; Van Eeno, 1999, p. 7). Battle tourism already started before the war was over. Between 1918 and 1939, the battlefields were visited by veterans and next of kin (Miles, 2016, pp. 13–15).

After the Second World War, there was a cultural indifference to the First World War (Login, 2015, p. 34; Miles, 2016, p. 20). However, tourism increased again after the 50th anniversary of the end of the war in 1968. The commemoration of the dead also shifted: they were not seen as ‘sacrifices’ anymore but as ‘victims’ (Meire, 2003, pp. 29, 91–93; Todman, 2008, p. 210). Remembrance no longer focused on triumphs but started to victimise the soldiers. This shift did not dishonour them but displayed the memory of the common soldier (Login, 2015, p. 120; Savage, 2009, pp. 237, 284).

The centenary of the First World War produced an explosion of attention. Several museums were renovated and new memorials built, such as the Christmas Truce memorial near Messines, a European football (UEFA) memorial near Ploegsteert (Miles, 2016, p. 26), the Welsh National Memorial near Langemarck and memorial trees, symbolising the local front line of 1915–1917, at The Bluff. Nowadays even the German opponents are seen as victims. On 11 November 2014 a new memorial was unveiled at Notre-Dame-de-Lorette, a former battlefield in Nord-Pas-de-Calais. It commemorates all 579 606 known fallen soldiers in the region, including the names of over 147 000 Germans (Figure 5). During the British and Belgian remembrance ceremonies to commemorate the Third Battle of Ypres in 2017, the Germans were included. The representation of the conflict has been reframed into a new narrative (Login, 2015, p. 120; Miles, 2016, p. 26).

Figure 4. Saint Symphorien Military Cemetery. In the front, German war graves. Commonwealth graves can be seen in the background (Author).
A multi-layered urban landscape of commemoration

In contrast to Ypres, Berlin is a region that can be characterised as a diverse, complex and stratified historic landscape. The city was once situated at the very heart of Germany. From this central point of the German Empire (1871–1918), it was almost 600 km to Aachen in the west and about the same distance to Königsberg (present-day Kaliningrad, Russia) in the east. It is actually quite remarkable that the city evolved into a metropolis. Two little villages were established on both sides of a sandy riverbank, Cölln and Berlin. The name ‘Berlin’ was derived from the Slavic word ‘brl,’ meaning ‘village in the swamp.’ Berlin-Cölln did not have a productive hinterland but was able to grow because of its location on the river Spree, an important trading-route between Central Europe and the Baltic Sea. About 8000 people lived here around 1400 AD. By the time Berlin became the capital of Prussia (1701), the population had grown to 55 000 people (Taylor, 2007, p. 23–28). The historical layeredness of the city can be illustrated by the Potsdamer Platz. The name of this square can be traced back to 1685, when it was a trading post just outside Berlin’s customs wall.

The Potsdamer Platz holds multiple histories (which cannot be discussed inclusively as this goes beyond the purpose of this paper). The six-cornered traffic junction became an ever-changing symbol of Berlin. After the Franco-Prussian War (1870–1871) the German Empire was established. Berlin expanded rapidly and the Potsdamer Platz was now in the centre of a metropolis. In the ‘roaring twenties’ of the nineteenth-century Berlin was the third-largest city in the world after New York and London (Remarque, 2014, p. 125). The Potsdamer Platz was a symbol of modernity and the metropolitan status of the German capital. The very first electrical streetlights of Berlin were placed here as well as the first traffic light in Continental Europe. Shops, theatres, hotels, restaurants, cafés and wine-houses rapidly appeared. Some of them even became internationally known. One of the major hotels on this square was Hotel Esplanade which had opened its doors in 1908. Kaiser Wilhelm II often organised ‘gentlemen’s evenings’ in a hall named after him: Kaisersaal. Amongst the famous guests who stayed at the hotel were Greta Garbo (*1905–†1990) and Charlie Chaplin (*1889–†1977). In July 1944, some of the conspiring officers of the attempted murder of Adolf Hitler (*1889–†1945) waited in this hotel for the code word Walküre (Remarque, 2014, p. 110; Schneider, 2014, pp. 28, 47).

The square was heavily damaged during the Second World War. The Potsdamer Platz was located near the Bendlerblock, which was used by several departments of the German Supreme Command of
the Armed Forces, and Hitler’s New Reich Chancellery. Therefore, the area was an important military
target for both the Red Army and the Allied bombers (Figure 6). The combined British-American air
raids turned Berlin almost completely into ashes. Between August 1943 and March 1944 19 large-scale
air raids were executed. In total, 17 000 tonnes of high-explosive bombs and 16 000 tonnes of fire-
bombs were dropped by Allied bombers. At least 9390 civilians were killed as a result of these attacks
(Friedrich, 2002, p. 117).

The air raids were followed up by the ground invasion of Soviet troops. The first artillery shells hit Berlin
on Hitler’s last birthday on 20 April 1945. In the night of 25–26 April, Soviet troops entered the district
of Neukölln in the southern parts of Berlin. From this day onward, the cruel urban fighting and large-
scale rapes by Soviet troops also started here. According to an estimate from the two largest hospitals
of Berlin, at the very least 95 000 women in the city were raped by Soviet troops. More than 100 000
civilians died during the battle that ended on 2 May 1945 (Beevor, 2002, pp. 336, 337, 434–437). After
the war, the Potsdamer Platz became a symbol of the devastation of the war (Remarque, 2014, p. 111).

During the Cold War (1947–1991), this square was the only place in Berlin where three occupying
forces came together: the American, British and Soviet-sector. In 1951, on the 80th birthday of Karl
Liebknecht (*1871–†1919), the East German authorities erected a pedestal for the murdered socialist
leader at the Potsdamer Platz. Here, on 1 May 1916, Liebknecht wanted to start a revolution and end
the war. Remarkably, no attention was given to his working partner Rosa Luxemburg (*1871–†1919),
who was murdered at the same time. In the eyes of Soviet leaders, she was a controversial person
due to her contacts with Lenin (*1870–†1924). However, the monument was never fully completed.
Exactly ten years later the Berlin Wall (1961–1989) was built across the Potsdamer Platz. Now the square
became a symbol of the divided city and clash of two cultures: East and West, communism vs. capitalism
(Remarque, 2014, p. 109; Schneider, 2014, p. 29). In the East, the only past allowed was a state-produced
version with no attention to negative heritage places. During the Cold War years, competing voices
were abruptly reduced (Smith, 2006, p. 81; Wertsch, 2002, pp. 73, 74). With the fall of the Berlin Wall, a
revision of the past was needed.

Figure 6. German soldiers on top of the Berlin Zoo-Flakturm, 16 April 1942 (Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-G1230-0502-004/Pilz/CC-BY-SA
3.0 Public domain).
At the Potsdamer Platz, a lane of old linden and just two buildings survived the Second World War, the removal of pre-war buildings during the Cold War and the building activities after the collapse of the Soviet Union (Remarque, 2014, p. 109; Schneider, 2014, p. 29). One of them was the Kaisersaal, the other wine-house Huth. The latter building became known as the last remaining house of the Potsdamer Platz. It was constructed in 1911–1912. Because the storage room had to contain large volumes of wine barrels, the owner had chosen a steel construction, groundbreaking at that time. On the first floor, a wine restaurant was situated. Due to its strong steel skeleton, the building survived the bombing and the Soviet attack remarkably well. Simply because it survived the Second World War and the following Cold War, the building had become important enough to preserve. For this reason, Haus Huth has already been protected as cultural heritage by the West German authorities since 1979. It was one of the last examples of ‘modern’ corporate architecture of the ‘Belle époque’ (1870–1914) (Remarque, 2014, p. 111; Schneider, 2014, p. 47). When the owner died in 1967, Haus Huth was sold to the district of Tiergarten, which established apartments in the building. Shortly before the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Daimler AG business group had already bought large parts of the fallow area which was once the Potsdamer Platz. After November 1989, the area became the most disputed building site of the city and it was quickly nicknamed ‘Potsdaimler Platz.’ To save Haus Huth (Figure 7), Daimler AG had to invest 50 million Euros (Remarque, 2014, p. 121; Schneider, 2014, pp. 35, 36). The heart of the city had to be reconstructed on this tabula rasa. Celebrated architects from all over the world were invited to present a design for a building at the Potsdamer Platz (Remarque, 2014, p.

Figure 7. Haus Huth, Potsdamer Platz, Berlin (Author).
Since the square had become a symbol of the divided city, it now had to become a symbol of the reunification of Germany. It was decided that a ‘critical reconstruction’ should be preferred. Strict rules were applicable to the reconstruction of the Potsdamer Platz: 20% of the buildings should be residences and the historic pattern of the main roads had to be respected (Remarque, 2014, p. 118).

The new Sony Centre was already planned and the remaining Kaisersaal of the former Hotel Esplanade stood in the way. During the Second World War, about 90% of the hotel was destroyed. During the following Cold War, the ruins were used several times as a movie set for movies such as Cabaret (1972) and Der Himmel über Berlin (1987). After a storm of protest it was decided to integrate the Kaisersaal into the Sony Centre. To this end, it had to be moved about 70 metres. Costs: 75 million German Marks (Remarque, 2014, p. 110; Schneider, 2014, p. 47).

There is not much left of the pre-war Potsdamer Platz. Again and again a part of the history of this site was forgotten or even intentionally erased from the collective memory and then regained once more in a different form (Saunders, 2004, p. 10, 2007, p. 77). When the reconstruction of the square began in 1995, the never-completed monument for Karl Liebknecht was removed. In 2002, however, the pedestal was replaced. When the Berlin Wall came down, nobody wanted to be reminded of the Soviet era. Nowadays, the wall has been made visible again by means of ground markings. At the centre of the square a replica of the first traffic light was placed (Remarque, 2014, p. 111). The meaning of the Potsdamer Platz and its symbolism have changed continuously. It contains many memories and histories, which sometimes contradict each other: it is a true multi-layered urban landscape of commemoration but foremost, the square is a symbol for the revival of Berlin.

Conclusion

A historical analysis focuses on cause and effect in search of the ‘truest’ version of past events. However, in order to study the historical layeredness of a landscape in both past and present, another approach is needed. Memory is a mix of history, testimony and imagination (Suleiman, 2006, pp. 10, 59). Heritage, memory and history are indissolubly connected. How are they related and what is or was their specific role in the creation of a landscape of commemoration? Much has been published about the rituals of memory, but far less about the transformation and (re)development of commemorative landscapes. In this paper, a landscape-biographical approach has been used to analyse two war-torn commemorative landscapes. Landscapes of commemoration are constantly changing and are often contested or even contradicting (Smith, 2006, pp. 33, 83; Suleiman, 2006, p. 4). Using this theoretical framework it is possible to research the practices of remembrance, its tensions, and social change at the same time.

Obviously, using this approach as a narrative is hugely subjective since memories are always coloured and influenced (van Londen, 2006). Memories can be contested and processes of remembering and forgetting are formative for a landscape of commemoration (Misztal, 2003, p. 11; Roymans et al., 2009, pp. 339, 351; Smith, 2006, p. 44). What is important enough to preserve for future generations and what will be excluded? Commemorative landscapes are places where successive generations cultivate, adapt and expand their cultural memory. Over the years, newer generations gained some inner distance from the events (Rass & Lohmeier, 2011, p. 193). The purpose of the landscape-biographical approach is to make both these physical as well as the symbolic changes visible (Login, 2015, p. 29).

In each landscape, there are several ‘authors’ of the landscape: nations, social groups and individuals, all with their own interests. The ‘author’ of the landscape is generally the victor (Benjamin, 1996, pp. 145, 146). Heritage has been used and abused as a tool by nations, societies, communities and individuals to construct, regulate, legitimise and express a sense of belonging and identity (Smith, 2006, pp. 75, 82; van Londen, 2006, p. 174). Societies decide what, how and when we remember. The present is always influenced by popular memory. In both case studies, I have demonstrated that the public memory underwent significant modifications (Misztal, 2003, pp. 11, 61, 128).

Conflict sites nestle themselves into the landscape and change both the physical landscape as well as the way they are perceived and remembered. At first, the landscape is transformed by nature and humans. Later, memories will change when narratives are altered. Over time, events are reduced to an
indirect, abstract and often idealised image of the past, even though both World Wars are fairly recent and well documented (Misztal, 2003, pp. 60, 79; Rass & Lohmeier, 2011, pp. 196, 197; Suleiman, 2006, p. 1). Collective memory is used in the transformation of heritage and heritage is used to construct and reconstruct social values, cultural values as well as meanings of the past for the present. Although memory and identity are often linked and crucial in giving meaning to our world, they have not often been subject to critical research (Misztal, 2003, p. 1; Smith, 2006, pp. 2, 5, 58).

In the twentieth century, commemorative landscapes increased considerably (Login, 2015, p. 31; Mosse, 1990, p. 94). At Ypres, the First World War has the exclusive attention. Although memories were less state-sanctioned compared with East Germany, collective memory was still politically coloured. Monuments are a very powerful expression of the past and they are usually placed on locations where one can distract its meaning (Gerritsen, 2003, p. 113; Miles, 2016, p. 55). For instance, by concentrating the German war graves at just four locations, the sacrifice of the Commonwealth was underlined with over 300 military cemeteries (Dewilde & Wyffels, 2014; van der Auwera, 2012, p. 56). Over the years, the narrative shifted from glorification to victimisation of the fallen (Login, 2015, p. 120; Suleiman, 2006, pp. 13, 266; Todman, 2008, p. 210).

The Potsdamer Platz expresses a more multi-vocal past. A dramatic sequence of events transformed both the material as well as the immaterial appearance of the Potsdamer Platz. Some histories were part of key moments of the identification of the German nation as well as for individuals and social groups. East and West Germany had different commemorative agendas. In East Germany, ‘official’ memory remained stable for decades since alternative versions of past events were not tolerated (Misztal, 2003, pp. 59, 60; Wertsch, 2002, p. 78). The meaning and expression of multiple histories of this square changed through time, both for individuals, social groups and even the nation as a whole (Misztal, 2003, p. 14). Remembering is truly dynamic and an active, social process (Wertsch, 2002, pp. 67, 178).

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