



Identity and Conflict

Cultural Heritage and the Re-construction of Identities after Conflict



Recent conflicts in Europe, as well as abroad, have brought increased awareness of the deliberate destruction of the heritage of others, as a means of inflicting pain. Such destructions have substantial impact on the reconstruction of societies after conflict. Nonetheless the processes involved and their long-term consequences are poorly understood. Heritage reconstruction is therefore not merely a matter of design and resources - at stake is the re-visioning and reconstruction of people's identities.

The European Commission has awarded a four-year grant to a project investigating these processes. The CRIC project aims to analyse the ways the destruction and subsequent selective reconstruction or abandonment of the cultural heritage impact identity formation. The project seeks to illuminate both the empirical and theoretical relationship between cultural heritage, conflict and identity as shaped within the processes of reconstruction. In particular, it will examine how destruction as well as reconstruction affect notions of belonging and identities at different scales ranging from the individual to the pan-national, and in various contexts ranging from urban to rural landscapes and from wars between nations, civil wars and ethnic conflicts.

Spain: Mourning and memory

The Spanish research explores mourning and the material manifestation of mourning, and looks at contested heritage within the urban politics of space and symbolism. The research will be divided between Madrid and Gernika. In Madrid two cases will be explored in particular detail: the prison of Carabanchel and the out-pouring of public mourning in the aftermath of the bombings of 11th March 2004. The first instance will look at how a politically contested site evolves with time, and how neglect and ruination affect its meanings. In the latter, the focus will be on the phenomenon of public grief and mourning and the emergence of spontaneous shrines and memorials. The case of Gernika will concentrate on how the memory of a traumatic event is transmitted and evolves over time. The project will provide insights into how memory becomes attached to places, and how contested symbolic sites emerge. Throughout the Spanish research, the destruction of cultural heritage will be regarded not as a series of isolated events but rather as part of a process that has a transformative effect on the social, cultural and political landscape.



Árbol de Gernika

France: War, Landscape and Identity



Montfaucon: WWI Monument and ruins of pre-war village

Research in France will investigate the relationship between conflict and cultural heritage in the so-called 'Eastern frontier'. This area, disputed militarily at various times, bears the traces of repeated destructions and reconstructions and contains significant military heritage. The 'frontier' as concrete, militarised landscape and as imagined space and symbol plays a central role. The study of the impact of war on the landscape and rural builtscapes will search out perceptions of heritage and notions of identity at local, regional, national and European levels. It will address the question of how the world wars are remembered as they slip out of personal and family memory and become part of public history.

Five European case studies (France, Spain, Germany, Cyprus and Bosnia) have been selected to provide historical depth, variation, and different trajectories, while the shared methodologies and axes of investigation ensure comparative measures are reached.

The project is directed from the University of Cambridge and conducted by an inter-disciplinary and international team including archaeologists, social anthropologists, geographers, historians, political scientists, psychologists and sociologists. Partnering universities, research institutes and NGOs across Europe address the following questions:

1. What conditions and ideologies inspire the deliberate destruction of cultural heritage?
2. What are the consequences at local, national and regional levels of this destruction, and what measures can be developed to better inform reconstruction processes?

Germany: Dresden out of the ruins

Nowhere in Germany has emotional and ritual remembrance been recalled to such an extent as in Dresden. The city became a symbol of the wartime terror caused by the bombardment of cities and civilian populations. Dresden was especially suited to become a symbol because of its long history of self-representation as a treasured site, a development that dates back to its image as a Baroque city and which was further shaped by romanticism. The research project dedicated to Dresden will focus on the symbolic meanings of the physical townscape as well as specific buildings and sites. It will look at how the city was represented within Germany and how it was perceived internationally, investigating opposing interests and conflicts about the city and its appearance after 1945. The historical-cultural image associated with the city will be addressed by developing biographical narratives of certain places, perspectives and buildings as well as the city's location within a cultural and natural environment.



Dresden: Zwinger in ruins and rebuilt



Cyprus: Ethnic tension and selective pasts

Research on Cyprus will focus on conflict along the line of ethnic differences and diversities, and investigate how this has been expressed through different uses of the cultural heritage. One of the underlying questions will be how the conflict has affected the way that different groups evaluate specific aspects of heritage. The various ethnic communities identify with particular cultural sites and practices and see them as evidence of the uniqueness and historical continuity of their group within Cyprus. This results in selective preservation or neglect. The contemporary sense of affinity becomes expressed through selective versions of the past. There has been a recent change in attitudes encouraging the restoration of the cultural heritage of the 'other' community or of 'neutral' trans-ethnic heritage sites. This new development will form part of the analysis.



Armenian Club/Arab Ahmet Cultural Centre

Bosnia: 'Reinvention of the Past' and the 'reconstruction of the future'

The Bosnian war of the 1990s saw violence of genocidal proportions returning Europe. It shattered the hopes and optimism that had reigned throughout the continent in the first years of the post-Cold War era, yet it also mobilized European and international communities to resolve the conflict. This study will investigate the role of cultural production and heritage in identity formation in the aftermath of the war. It will identify continuities and ruptures of meaning in the temporal sequence of cultural sites, their preservation, neglect, destruction and reconstruction. One of the tasks will be to explore changing meanings of heritage sites from the socialist era and earlier (both during the war and after), as part of the nationalist mobilization and ethnicization of heritage. The Bosnian case study will provide key insights into contemporary issues concerning European identities including the ethnicization of identity, the political influence of ethno-religious groups and the role of Islam in Europe.



Kozara World War II Monument, North-western Bosnia

Spain

Mourning and memory

The Spanish research explores mourning and the material manifestation of mourning, and looks at contested heritage within the politics of urban space and the construction of symbolic places. The research is based on the two case studies Madrid and Gernika.



Public mourning: Madrid, 11 March 2004



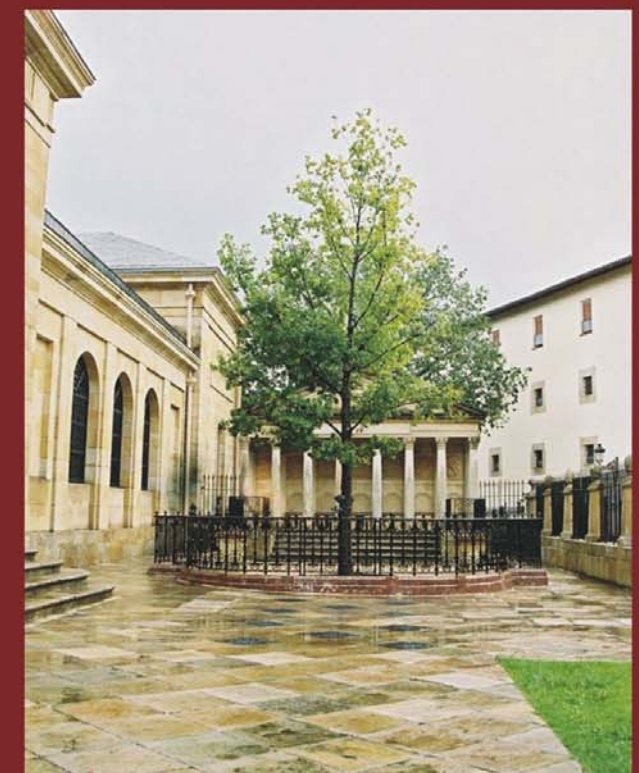
Spontaneous memorials in reaction to the Madrid bombings, 11 March 2004



Madrid: Carabanchel Prison in ruins

The project will provide insights into how memory becomes attached to places, and how contested symbolic sites emerge. Throughout the Spanish research, the destruction of cultural heritage will be regarded not as a series of isolated events but rather as part of a process that has a transformative effect on the social, cultural and political landscape.

In Madrid, the prison of Carabanchel is used to investigate how a politically contested site evolves over time, and how neglect and ruination affect its meanings. The study of the out-pouring of public mourning in the aftermath of the bombings of 11th March 2004 focuses on the phenomenon of public grief and mourning and the emergence of spontaneous shrines and memorials. In Gernika, research concentrates on analysing changing perceptions of the history of the event, the processes and politics of reconstruction and how the memory of a traumatic event is transmitted and transformed over time.



El Arbol de Gernika: Old and new tree, old and new symbol

