



Research meeting History Department  
June 13, 2017

***Playing with Sensitive Heritage:  
Learning and Leisure***

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NWO research (2009-2014) *Heritage Education, Plurality of Narratives, Shared Historical Knowledge*





New York/Oxford, 2016  
Edited by Carla van Bortel,  
Maria Grever & Stephen Klein

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New research program, July 2015 - 2019

**Research Excellence Initiative**  
Funded by Erasmus University Rotterdam

***War! Popular Culture and European  
Heritage of Major Armed Conflicts***

Maria Grever (main applicant)  
Stijn Reijnders (co-applicant)



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**Problem definition**

Legacies of war and major armed conflicts can have a long lasting impact on people and communities (trauma).

Tourism, social media, museums, musicals and other popular genres influence the way people deal with that violent past.

Public longing for direct experiential contact with the past

**What are the consequences of popular heritage practices related to major violent conflicts for enhancing historical consciousness of young people?**




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**Popular uses of heritage: some recent developments**

- 1. Obsession with authenticity** (Lowenthal 1997; Zerubavel 2003; Lindholm 2008)
- 2. Museums emphasize multi-sensory experience** (Pine & Gilmore 1999; Van Vree 2008; Stone & Sharply, 2008)
- 3. Use of new media, blurring boundaries between past/present; real/ unreal; authors/readers/users** (De Groot 2009; Rigney 2010)
- 4. Connections between local and global heritage** (Meskell 2015)




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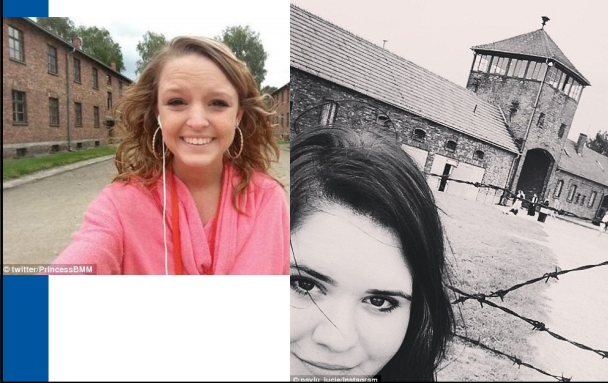
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**Sensitive heritage: youngsters take smiling selfies in former concentration camp Auschwitz**



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**Instagram: "Have fun in Berlin!"**



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**Musical "Soldaat van Oranje"**



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War Video Games: a scene from Call of Duty 3

"Bunker Day", June 6, 2016  
Leisure or learning?

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Memorial Center Srebrenica  
in Potocari

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**Central research question REI:**

*How is the heritage of modern war history represented and appropriated in contemporary popular culture, and which modifications or additions can be advised to harmonize these appropriations with the requirements and principles of democratic and civic education?*

heritage      popular culture

civic education




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**Heritage** (L. Smith 2006)  
Dynamic approach; "remains" of the past; constructing and justification of identities

**Difficult heritage** (Macdonald 2008)  
Refers to traces of a past that is **contested** for public reconciliation with a positive, self-affirming contemporary identity. It may **break through into the present** in disruptive ways, opening up social divisions, perhaps by playing into imagined, even nightmarish futures.




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**Popular culture**  
**influential phenomenon involving available artefacts, social processes and widely favoured cultural utterances (including performativity), mostly expressed in the public arena** (Ribbens, 2002; Winter 2010; Korte & Paletschek 2012)

Also a pedagogic domain allowing educators new opportunities to connect their work with students' experiences (Silberman-Keller et al. 2008; Grever & Van Boxtel 2014)

**Civic education**  
**Evidence, arguments, multiperspectivity, respect for democratic principles**




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**Research team War!** (interdisciplinary collaboration)

**Supervisors**  
Maria Grever, Jeroen Jansz, Franciska de Jong, Stijn Reijnders, Kees Ribbens





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**Researchers**

Siri Driessen: *Touching war: contemporary visits to twentieth-century war sites and cemeteries in Europe*

Pieter van den Heede: *Games set in war-devastated European (urban) landscapes*

Laurie Slegtenhorst: *Popular culture and the Second World War* (Erfgoed Nederland)

Susan Hogervorst: *The use of digital testimonies on war and liberation in educational contexts* (Open University)



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