



# Sandra Vitaljić

**Neplodna tla** | Infertile Grounds



NARODNI MUZEJ CRNE GORE  
ATELJE DADO

## Neplodna tla – fotografija kao mjesto sjećanja

Holm Sundhaussen detaljno je analizirao konstrukciju sjećanja i mitova u Jugoslaviji i njenim državama sljednicama na temelju teze da su “sjećanja” ovisna o društvenom okruženju i kontekstu, te da su podložna promjeni.<sup>1</sup> S raspadom Jugoslavije raspalo se i jugoslavensko “sjećanje” na niz nacionalnih “sjećanja” koja su trebala uspostaviti nove identitete svake pojedinačne nacije.

Rasprave koje su uključivale odnos prema prošlosti, različita tumačenja i manipulacije prema političkim ciljevima bili su sveprisutni u medijima. Imena poput Jasenovca i Bleiburga nadišla su svoju topografsku referentnost te sa svakim spominjanjem uključivala različite moguće interpretacije i kontekstualizacije. Nagnalo me to na razmišljanje o kulturi sjećanja i mjestima koja na razne načine konstruiraju nacionalnu povijest i identitet. Tako sam 2008. godine započela istraživanje, a 2009. i snimanje serije fotografija koje sam nazvala *Neplodna tla*, metaforički označavajući nemogućnost razvoja na području neračišćenih povijesnih računa. Zanimala su me mjesta koja je politička retorika obilato koristila u svojim huškačkim govorima tijekom 1990-ih, mjesta institucionaliziranog sjećanja, kao i ona koja nikada neće biti obilježena nekom spomen-pločom. Slično kao nakon Drugog svjetskog rata, i nakon rata u bivšoj Jugoslaviji politike sjećanja označavale su ono čega se treba sjećati, a potiskivale ono što je bilo poželjno zaboraviti. Svaka strana u sukobu ima potrebu komemorirati samo vlastite žrtve i uskratiti pravo na sjećanje drugoj strani.

Pierre Nora tvrdi da je pojam mjesta pamćenja nastao zato što su u našem društvu nestali rituali. Muzeje, arhive, groblja i zbirke, blagdane, obljetnice, spomenike, svetišta Nora smatra ritualima društva bez rituala što ih umjetno uspostavlja, određuje i dekretom proglašava zajednica iz temelja ponesena promjenom i obnavljanjem. Spontanog sjećanja nema te se ga nastoji stvoriti iz arhiva, obilježavajući obljetnice i organizirajući proslave, vršeći operacije koje po Nori više nisu prirodne. Teško je shvatiti što to priječi da hrvatski građani koji su silno željeli vlastitu samostalnost na dan državnih praznika istaknu hrvatsku zastavu na svojim domovima. Iz godine u godinu televizijske ankete otkrivaju da građani ove zemlje ne znaju koje državne praznike slave na koji dan. “Svaka grupa što se želi konsolidirati kao takva nastoji stvoriti i osigurati prostore koji nisu samo pozornice njezinih oblika interakcije, već i simboli njezina identiteta i sidrišta njezina sjećanja”, piše Assman.<sup>2</sup> Tako je *Oltar domovine* značajno ustanovljen na zagrebačkom Medvedgradu za Tuđmanove vladavine 1994, a nakon njegove smrti zapušten je i slabo posjećen. Tuđman je kao povjesničar bio opsjednut povijesnim revizionizmom i uspostavljanjem rituala sjećanja koja će izgraditi autentični hrvatski identitet. No jedina mjesta koja jesu posjećena i imaju značaj u kulturi pamćenja su mjesta stvarnih događaja iz recentne povijesti, mjesta masovnih zločina i stradanja. Naravno, samo ona koja su u službenoj kulturi pamćenja priznata, obilježena spomen-pločama i spomenicima.

“Najizvorniji je medij svake mnemotehnike smještanje u prostor”, kako ističe Assman. No dok mnemotehnika operira sa zamišljenim prostorima, kultura sjećanja postavlja znakove u prirodnom prostoru.<sup>3</sup> Kada je u Varivodama postavljena spomen-ploča srpskim žrtvama koje su ubijene nakon vojno-redarstvene akcije Oluja, ona je razbijena već sljedećeg dana. Isto se dogodilo i u uvali Slana na otoku Pagu gdje je od sredine lipnja do 25. kolovoza 1941. postojao ustaški logor u kojem je u tom kratkom vremenu ubijeno između 15 i 18 tisuća ljudi, mahom Srba i Židova.

1 Sundhaussen, Holm, “Jugoslavija i njene države sljednice. Konstrukcija, destrukcija i nova konstrukcija ‘sjećanja’ i mitova,” u Brkljačić, M., Prlenda, S. (ur.), *Kultura pamćenja i historija*, str. 242.

2 Assman, Jan, “Kultura sjećanja”, u Brkljačić, M., Prlenda, S. (ur.), n. dj., str. 54.

3 Isto, str. 70.

U kolektivnom sjećanju to mjesto gotovo ne postoji, a individualna sjećanja čuvaju potomci stradalih koji imaju potrebu komemorirati svoje mrtve.

Mjesta pamćenja nisu jednoznačna, već su njihova značenja fluktuirajuća, a promjena političkog sistema može potpuno promijeniti i značenje nekog mjesta. Ličko mjesto Srb u Jugoslaviji je bilo označeno monumentalnim spomenikom u znak sjećanja na dan ustanka naroda SR Hrvatske protiv nacizma i fašizma, no s osamostaljenjem Hrvatske obilježavanje Dana antifašističke borbe mijenja i svoju lokaciju i datum, a spomenik u Srbu je miniran i srušen.<sup>4</sup>

Fotografije iz serije *Neplodna tla* prikazuju puste pejzaže, uglavnom izbjegavajući spomen obilježja u kadru. Spomen obilježja oznake su politički motivirane kulture sjećanja i podložne su uništavanju, promjeni značenja i ideološkoj ikonografiji. Assman naglašava da "čak i krajolici mogu služiti kao medij kulturalnog pamćenja"<sup>5</sup>, a tada su u cijelosti uzdignuti na razinu znaka – naziva ih mnemotopima.<sup>6</sup>

Pejzaž je društveni konstrukt, a Liz Wells ga definira kao pogled koji obuhvaća istovremeno i prirodu i utjecaj koji je čovječanstvo na nju imalo.<sup>7</sup> Mitchell tvrdi da je pejzaž medij razmjene između čovjeka i prirode, odnosno subjekta i drugog.<sup>8</sup> "Pejzaž je istovremeno prisutni prostor i prikazani prostor, označitelj i označeno prikazivanja prirode, odnosno okvir i ono što okvir obuhvaća pogledom, osjećajima i razumom."<sup>9</sup> Stoga u seriji fotografija *Neplodna tla* za polazišnu točku uzimam upravo pejzaž i promatram ga kao mjesto konstrukcije kolektivnog sjećanja. Neke od tih mjesta ideologija jest uzdigla na razinu znaka, pa sama topografska natuknica kao naziv fotografije evocira u gledatelju cijeli niz općih/proizvedenih znanja i medijskih interpretacija. "Imenovanje pretvara *prostor u mjesto*", piše Wells.<sup>10</sup> Jednako tako je za fotografa pri samom činu snimanja pejzaž onaj "prisutni prostor" koji doživljava i interpretira uključujući balast tih znanja i emocija nastalih u meditativnom procesu snimanja velikoformatnom kamerom. Povijest nije vizualno inskribirana u sam pejzaž, no činjenica jest da su ista stabla rasla one zime kada su ustaše pretvorile Donju Gradinu u nepregledno područje masovnih grobnica kao i u trenutku fotografiranja iste lokacije, gotovo 70 godina kasnije. *Topola uzdah* ili *Topola fra Sotone*, kako su zatočnici logora Jasenovac nazivali stablo o koje su ustaše vješale svoje žrtve nakon svirepog mučenja, apsorbirala je i sadrži sjećanja na te događaje ili barem možemo vjerovati da se među njezinim godovima nalazi i taj, nama nečitak zapis.

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4 Spomenik u Srbu obnovljen je 2010. godine, no događaji u Srbu iz srpnja 1941. i dalje su podložni različitim kontroverzним tumačenjima.

5 Assman, Jan, "Kultura sjećanja", str. 70.

6 Halbwachs je također pisao o legendarnoj topografiji Svete zemlje kao izrazu kolektivnog pamćenja, objašnjavajući to potrebom svake grupe da svoje sjećanje lokalizira i monumentalizira. Umjetnički dvojac Broomberg i Chanarin u svojoj knjizi "Chicago" jedno vizualno poglavlje posvetili su i palestinskom pejzažu čiju povijest suvremeni Izrael sistematski briše, nastojeći uništiti svako sjećanje na arapski život prije nastanka države Izrael 1948. godine.

Pustinjski predjeli pošumljavaju se borovima u suvremenom ritualu u kojem se na taj način komemoriraju žrtve terorističkih napada i poginulih vojnika. Ti šumarci postaju popularna izletišta, a ljepota pošumljenog krajolika priziva sliku rajskog vrta i domovinu Židova davno izgubljenju. No taj se novi šumski pejzaž zapravo nalazi na ekspropriranom zemljištu arapskih sela koja su uništena, a stanovnici nasilno evakuirani 1948. Broomberg i Chanarin svojim fotografijama ukazuju na pejzaž kao prostor brisanja sjećanja i kolektivne amnezije.

Vidi: Broomberg, Adam, Chanarin, Oliver, *Chicago*, Steidl/MACK, Göttingen, 2006.

7 Wells, Liz, *Land Matters – Landscape Photography, Culture and Identity*, I. B. Tauris, London, 2011, str. 2.

8 Mitchell, W. J. T., *Landscape and Power*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1994, 2002, str. 5, navedeno prema prijevodu u Šuvaković, M., *Pojmovnik suvremene umjetnosti*, str. 448.

9 Prema Mitchellu navodi Šuvaković.

10 Wells, *Land Matters – Landscape Photography, Culture and Identity*, str. 3.

Za razliku od mjesta koja su institucionalizacijom trajno osigurala mjesto u kolektivnom sjećanju poput Jasenovca i Donje Gradine<sup>11</sup>, neka su mjesta tek nedavno otkrivena, još su nedovoljno istražena i njihov geografski naziv pobudit će interes tek nekolicine upućenih u tematiku. Takva su mjesta Ključ Brdovečki i Gornji Hrašćan, lokacije na kojima su partizani navodno neposredno nakon Drugog svjetskog rata proveli masovne egzekucije i ukop stotina ustaša, domobrana ili pripadnika Wermachta. Potisnuto, a u Jugoslaviji i kriminalizirano pamćenje, nije moglo spriječiti ljudske kosti da povremeno izrone iz svježe preorane plodne zemlje u okolici Zaprešića. Pogled u pejzaž ovdje je pogled ni u što, ili kako to Mitchell bilježi: "Poziv da se promotri vidik je dakle sugestija da se pogleda ni u što – ili preciznije, da se promotri sam čin gledanja – da se pozabavi svojevrsnom svjesnom apercepcijom prostora koji se otkriva na određenom mjestu."<sup>12</sup>

Tamo gdje samo imenovanje lokaliteta nije dovoljno<sup>13</sup>, tekst koji faktografski navodi povijesne događaje upućuje gledatelja u kontekst prostora koji gleda na fotografiji. Upravo ta povijest prikazani pejzaž iz općenitog i nedefiniranog *prostora* pretvara u *mjesto*.<sup>14</sup>

Neke lokacije svojim nazivom evocirat će samo lijepa sjećanja na obiteljske izlete vike-ndom na zagrebačko Sljeme, poput nekad popularnog planinarskog doma Adolfovac. No to je i mjesto egzekucije Aleksandre i Marije Zec koje su 7/8. prosinca 1991. tamo odveli pripadnici pričuvnog sastava MUP-a iz tzv. eskadrona smrti Tomislava Merčepa, nakon što su na Trešnjevci, u obiteljskom domu, ubili njihovog oca i supruga Mihajla Zeca. Slučaj likvidacije članova obitelji Zec vrlo je poznat u hrvatskoj javnosti, osobito stoga što su ubojice i nakon priznanja krivice pušteni na slobodu, no mjesto stradanja nije obilježeno i nije dio službene kulture sjećanja. I sam planinarski dom Adolfovac spaljen je do temelja 1993. godine. Fotografije čine više od pukog referiranja na stvarni lokalitet, za gledatelja one mogu postati stvarno *mjesto*.<sup>15</sup>

Upravo iz tog razloga serijom fotografija *Neplodna tla* nastojim kreirati *mjesto* sjećanja unutar *prostora* fotografije, alternativni memento koji ne kreira ideologija, nego potreba da se otvori prostor sjećanja i za žrtve koje nikada neće dobiti svoje mjesto u oficijelnoj kulturi pamćenja.

## Sandra Vitaljić

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11 Jasenovac i Donja Gradina i danas su bojno polje različitih kultura sjećanja. Nekoć dio jedne cjeline pod nazivom Spomen područje Jasenovac, danas se te dvije lokacije nalaze u dvije različite države, Jasenovac u Hrvatskoj, a Donja Gradina u BiH, odnosno Republici Srpskoj. Na komemoracijama na različitim obalama Save spominju se i različite brojke stradalih. Tijekom godina različite strane manipulirale su brojem žrtava Jasenovca pa se taj broj kretao od 30.000 do 700.000. Prema dosadašnjim istraživanjima Memorijalnog centra Jasenovac, realan broj žrtava kreće se između 80.000 i 100.000. U travnju 2010. objavljen je poimenični popis žrtava Jasenovca, u kojem se koristeći više stotina različitih izvora i kritičkim preispitivanjem podataka za svaku žrtvu ponaosob došlo do brojke od 80.914, što još nije konačna brojka. Vidi [www.jusp-jasenovac.hr](http://www.jusp-jasenovac.hr).

Na službenim stranicama Spomen područja Donja Gradina istaknut je podatak da je u logoru Jasenovac život izgubilo više od 700.000 žrtava, od toga 366.000 u Donjoj Gradini. Vidi <http://www.jusp-donjagradina.org/>.

12 Mitchell, *Landscape and Power*, str. viii.

13 Fotografije uvijek prati tekst koji objašnjava događaje na prikazanoj lokaciji. Neke su mjesta općepoznata i nije nužno detaljno pojašnjavanje, no to uvijek ovisi i o kulturnom nasljeđu gledatelja.

14 Odnos između prostora/space i mjesta/place ključno je pitanje u kontekstu pejzaža. Vidi više u Mitchell, *Landscape and Power*, str. viii.

15 Autorica Kitty Zijlmans ističe kako je upravo to razlog što fotografije nosimo sa sobom u novčaniku, gledamo ih, dodirujemo ili ljubimo. Također ih koristimo da neki privremeni prostor kao što je hotelska soba markiramo i familijaliziramo, pretvorimo u vlastiti prostor. Zijlmans, Kitty, "Place, Site and Memory in Contemporary Works of Art", u Westgeest, Helen (ur.), *Take Place: Photography and Place from Multiple Perspectives*, Valiz, Amsterdam, 2009, str. 221.





## Jasenovac

Koncentracijski logor Jasenovac bio je logor smrti u kojem su ubijani muškarci, žene i djeca zbog svoje vjerske, nacionalne, ideološke pripadnosti ili seksualne orijentacije od kolovoza 1941. do 22. travnja 1945. Logor su osnovale vlasti Nezavisne Države Hrvatske, instalirane od strane nacističkih okupacijskih snaga, a njime su upravljale ustaške jedinice. U logoru je bilo zatočeno, tjerano na prisilni rad i sustavno likvidirano rasnim zakonima diskriminirano stanovništvo - Srbi, Židovi i Romi. U logoru je stradao i znatan broj Hrvata - komunista i antifašista, kao i članova njihovih obitelji i drugih protivnika ustaškog režima. Logor u Jasenovcu miniran je, spaljen i uništen prilikom povlačenja ustaša u travnju 1945. Pejzaž spomen područja Jasenovac danas je obilježen udubinama i humcima. Udubine označavaju mjesta na kojima su se nalazili logorski objekti, a humci označavaju grobnice i mučilišta unutar samog logora. Tijekom godina različite strane manipulirale su brojem žrtava Jasenovca pa se taj broj kretao od 30.000 do 700.000. Prema dosadašnjim istraživanjima Memorijalnog centra Jasenovac pravi broj kreće se između 80.000 i 100.000.

The Jasenovac concentration camp was a death camp in which men, women and children were killed because of their religion, ethnicity, ideological affiliation or sexual orientation between August 1941 and April 22nd 1945. The camp was built by the authorities of the Independent State of Croatia, installed in Croatian territory by the Nazi-fascist occupation forces and run by the Ustasha units. The camp in Jasenovac was a place of imprisonment, forced labour and executions, primarily of the Serb Orthodox population, along with Jews and Roma, who were discriminated by racial laws. A large number of Croatians were killed in the camp as well – communists and Anti-Fascists, along with members of their families and other opponents of the Ustasha regime. In April 1945, during the retreat of the Ustasha units, the concentration camp was mined, burned and destroyed. Today, landscape of The Jasenovac Memorial Site is marked by mounds and hollows in the ground. The hollows mark the places where the camp buildings used to be, and the mounds mark the sites of graves or execution sites within the camp. Over the years, various interested parties have manipulated the number of Jasenovac victims, therefore the number of people killed has ranged from 30,000 to 700,000. According to research done by the Jasenovac Memorial Centre the accurate number is between 80,000 and 100,000.



## Uvala Slana – Otok Pag

U ustaškim logorima Slana i Metajna na otoku Pagu, kao i u logoru Jadovno na Velebitu, ustaše su provodile prve masovne likvidacije zatočenika (Židova i Srba) u Nezavisnoj Državi Hrvatskoj. Djelovali su od sredine lipnja do 25. kolovoza 1941., kada su Talijani okupirali to područje NDH.

U logorima na Pagu ubijeno je između 15 i 18 tisuća ljudi. Zatvorenici su iscrpljivani glađu i žeđu, likvidirani bacanjem u jamu ili su odvoženi brodovima na pučinu, ubijani i bacani u more.

Na mjestu ovih logora nema nikakve oznake ili spomen ploče.

In the Slana and Metajna concentration camps on the island of Pag, as well as in Jadovno on mountain Velebit, the first mass liquidations of detainees (Jews and Serbs) were conducted in the Independent State of Croatia. The camps were operational from mid-June to August 25th 1941, when the Italians occupied that area. In the camps on Pag from 15.000 to 18.000 people were killed. The prisoners, often exhausted by hunger and thirst, were thrown into a pit or taken out to sea by boat, killed and thrown overboard.

There are no commemorative plaques or markings in the places where these camps were located.



## Ključ Brdovečki

U proljeće 2009. u mjestu Ključ Brdovečki kod Zaprešića mještani su prilikom obrađivanja polja otkrili masovnu grobnicu. U grobnici su navodno pokopani pripadnici hrvatske domobranske vojske, civili, te vojnici „Plave divizije“ njemačkog Wehrmachta. Likvidirali su ih pripadnici partizanskih postrojbi u svibnju 1945.

Nakon što su leševi zakopani zemljom, mještani su ih zalijevali vapnom zbog nesnosnog smrada koji se širio selom. O tim se događajima nije govorilo za vrijeme socijalizma, a i danas ih mnogi osporavaju. Usprkos najavamama u medijima, iskopavanje i ekshumacija još nisu započeli, te se točan broj žrtava ne može ustanoviti. Prema neprovjerenim izvorima, grobnica možda skriva i nekoliko tisuća tijela.

While working in the fields in the spring of 2009, the villagers of Ključ Brdovečki discovered a mass grave. Apparently members of the Croatian regular military units called domobrani (Home Guards) and soldiers of German Wehrmacht Blue Division were buried there along with a number of civilians. They were executed by members of the Yugoslav liberation units (partizani) in May 1945. After the corpses were buried villagers poured calx on them to prevent the stench of decomposing flesh to spread throughout the village. These events were not talked about during Socialism and still are disputed by many. Despite the announcements made in the media, excavation and exhumation have not yet started and the exact number of victims is not known. According to some unreliable sources, the number of the victims could reach a few thousand.



Donja Gradina







## Infertile Grounds – the Photograph as a Site of Memory

Holm Sundhaussen has analysed in detail the construction of memory and myths in Yugoslavia and its successor states, positing that memories are dependent on social setting and context, and are consequently subject to change.<sup>1</sup> When Yugoslavia broke up, the Yugoslav memory was broken down into a number of national memories that were given the task of setting up the new identities of each individual nation. Debates that involved an attitude to the past, different interpretations and manipulations according to given political goals were omnipresent in the media. Names like Jasenovac and Bleiburg went beyond their topographical referentiality, and each time they were mentioned included different possible interpretations and contextualisations. This prompted consideration of the culture of memory and of the places that in various ways construct the national history and identity. Thus in 2008 I started the research and in 2009 began taking series of photographs that I named *Infertile Grounds*, metaphorically signifying the impossibility of development in an area in which historical accounts had never been settled. I was interested by places that political rhetoric had used copiously in inflammatory speeches during the 90s, places of institutionalised memory as well as those that had never been marked by a single memorial plaque. As after World War II, so after the war in the former Yugoslavia, the politics of memory labelled what needed remembering, and suppressed what it was desirable to forget. Each party in the conflict has the need to commemorate only its own victims and deny the right of the other party its memories.

Pierre Nora claims that the concept *lieux de memoire* was created because in our society rituals have vanished. Nora believes that museums, archives, cemeteries and collections, public holidays, anniversaries, memorials and shrines are the rituals of a society without a ritual, artificially established, determined and decreed by a society deeply absorbed in its own transformation and renewal.<sup>2</sup> There is no spontaneous memory, hence the endeavour to create it from archives, marking anniversaries and organising celebrations, carrying out operations that according to Nora are no longer natural. It is hard to understand what it is that prevents Croatian citizens who so heartily wanted to have independence hanging out the Croatian flag on their homes on the days of state holidays. Year after year television polls show that citizens of this country do not know which national holidays are celebrated on which day. "Every group that wants to consolidate itself as such endeavours to create and secure spaces that are not just the theatres of its forms of interaction but also symbols of its identity and moorings for its memory," writes Assman.<sup>3</sup> And so the *Altar of the Homeland* was, significantly, set up at Zagreb's burg of Medvedgrad during the rule of Franjo Tudjman, the first president of Croatia, in 1994, and after his death was neglected and little visited. As historian, Tudjman was obsessed with historical revisionism and the establishment of rituals of memory to build up an authentic Croatian identity. But the only places that are visited and that do have an importance in the cultural memory are places of real events from recent history, sites of mass crimes and suffering. Naturally, only those places that in the official culture of memory are accepted, marked by memorial plaques and monuments.

1 Sundhaussen, Holm, "Jugoslavija i njene države sljednice. Konstrukcija, destrukcija i nova konstrukcija "sjećanja" i mitova", in Brkljačić, M., Prlenda, S. (ed.), *Kultura pamćenja i historija*, Golden marketing-Tehnička knjiga, Zagreb, 2006., p. 242

2 Nora, Pierre, *Between Memory and History: Le Lieux de Memoire*, Representations No. 26, Spring 1989, University of California Press, p. 12

3 Assman, Jan, "Kultura sjećanja", in Brkljačić, M., Prlenda, S. (ed.), *Kultura pamćenja i historija*, Golden marketing-Tehnička knjiga, Zagreb, 2006., p. 54, translated from Croatian

“The most original medium of any mnemonic device is location in space,” as Assman points out. But while mnemonics operate with imagined spaces, the culture of memory sets up signs in natural space.<sup>4</sup> When in Varivode a memorial slab was erected to the Serbian victims killed after the military operation Storm, it was smashed the very next day. The same thing happened in the Bay of Slana on Pag island, the site of a concentration camp where 15,000 to 18,000 people, mostly Serbs and Jews were killed from mid-June to August 25, 1941. In the collective memory, this place hardly exists. Individual memories are cherished by the descendants of those who were killed, by those who have the need to commemorate their own dead.

Places of memory are not unambiguous; rather, their meanings are in a state of flux, and a change in the political system can completely change the meaning of a place. The village of Srb, in Lika, was marked in Yugoslavia by a monument commemorating the day of the uprising of the people of the Socialist Republic of Croatia against Nazism and fascism; however, when Croatia became independent, the commemoration of Anti-Fascist Struggle Day changed its location and date, and the monument in Srb was blown up and destroyed.<sup>5</sup>

The photographs of the *Infertile Grounds* series show empty landscapes, on the whole avoiding putting any memorial emblems in the frame. Memorial signs are indications of a politically motivated culture of memory and are subject to destruction, change of meaning and ideological iconography. Assman points out that “even landscapes can serve as a medium of cultural memory”<sup>6</sup> and then are entirely elevated to the level of sign. He calls them mnemotopes<sup>7</sup>. Landscape is a social construct, which Liz Wells defines as the look that comprehends both nature and the impact that humanity has had upon it.<sup>8</sup> Mitchell states that landscape “is a medium of exchange between the human and the natural, the self and the other. It is both a represented and a presented space, both a signifier and a signified, both a frame and what a frame contains.”<sup>9</sup> Accordingly, in the series *Infertile Grounds* I take the landscape as the point of departure, and look upon it as site for the construction of collective memory. Some of these sites have been raised by ideology to the level of the sign, and the actual topographical reference as title of a photograph evokes in the viewer a whole series of common/produced knowledge and media interpretations. “Naming transforms space into place”, writes Wells.<sup>10</sup> For the photographer too, in the very act of photographing, the landscape is that “present space” that he or she experiences and interprets while including the ballast of all that knowledge and all those emotions created in the meditative process of recording with a large format camera. History is not visually inscribed in the landscape itself, but the fact is that these selfsame trees were growing in the winter when the Ustasas turned Donja Gradina into an immense region of mass graves and when the same location

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4 Ibid., p. 70

5 The Srb memorial was reconstructed in 2010, but the actual events in Srb in July 1941 are still subject to various controversial interpretations.

6 Ibid.

7 Halbwachs also wrote of the legendary topography of the Holy Land as expression of collective memory, explaining it by the need for each group to localise and monumentalise their own memory. In the previous chapter, Broomberg and Chanarin, already mentioned, dedicated the only visual chapter in their book *Chicago to the Palestinian landscape*, whose history contemporary Israel is systematically erasing, attempting to wipe out every memory of Arab life before the creation of the state of Israel in 1948. Desert areas are afforested with pines in a contemporary ritual in which the victims of terrorist attacks and fallen soldiers are commemorated. These woods have become popular excursion sites, and the beauty of the afforested landscape calls to mind the image of a paradisaical garden, calling to mind the lost homeland of the Jews. And yet, this new forest landscape is actually located in the expropriated lands of Arab villages that have been destroyed, the inhabitants forcibly evacuated in 1948. Broomberg and Chanarin with their photographs draw attention to landscape as a space for the deletion of memory and of collective amnesia. See Broomberg, Adam, Chanarin, Oliver, *Chicago, SteidIMACK*, Gottingen, 2006.:

8 Wells, Liz, *Land Matters - Landscape Photography, Culture and Identity*, I.B. Tauris, London, 2011, p. 2

9 Mitchell, W.J.T., *Landscape and Power*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1994, 2002, p. 5

10 Wells, Liz, *Land Matters - Landscape Photography, Culture and Identity*, I.B. Tauris, London, 2011., p. 3



was photographed almost 70 years later. *Poplar of Sighs* or *Poplar of Brother Satan*, as the inmates of Jasenovac Camp called the tree on which the Ustashas hanged their victims after first savagely torturing them, has absorbed and also contains memories of these events, or we can at least believe that among its grains there is this inscription, if illegible to us.

Unlike places that by institutionalisation have permanently secured a place in the collective memory, like Jasenovac and Donja Gradina<sup>11</sup>, some sites have only recently been discovered, have still been insufficiently investigated, and their geographical names will arouse the interest of just the handful of initiates. Such are the places Kljuc Brdovecki and Gornji Hrascan, locations at which the Partisans allegedly, immediately after World War II, carried out the mass executions and burial of hundreds of Ustashas, regular soldiers and members of the Wehrmacht. This memory was repressed and even proscribed in Yugoslavia, but that was unable to prevent human bones occasionally being turned up in the fertile ploughland in the surroundings of Zapresic. A look at the landscape here is a look at nothing, or as Mitchell records: "The invitation to look at a view is thus a suggestion to look at nothing - or more precisely, to look at looking itself - to engage in a kind of conscious apperception of space as it unfolds itself in a particular place".<sup>12</sup> Where the naming of the locality is not enough<sup>13</sup> a text providing the factual details of the historical events inducts the viewer into the context of the space that he or she is looking at in the photograph. It is this history that the landscape shown transforms from a general and undefined space into a *place*.<sup>14</sup>

Some locations by their very names will evoke just nice memories of a family weekend trips to the Zagreb mountain, Sljeme, like the popular hiking lodge Adolfovac. But this was also the site of the execution of Aleksandra and Marija Zec, who on December 8, 1991, were taken there by the police reservists of the so-called squadron of death commanded by Tomislav Mercep, after they had murdered their father and husband Mihajlo Zec in their home in Tresnjevka. The case of the liquidation of the Zec family is very well known in the Croatian public, particularly since the killers, even after their admission of guilt, were released; but the place of their murder is not marked, is not a part of the official culture of memory. The hiking lodge Adolfovac was itself burnt down to the ground in 1993. The photographs are more than a mere reference to a real locality, for the viewers they can become a real *place*.<sup>15</sup>

For this reason, in the *Infertile Grounds* series I endeavour to create a *place* of memory within the *space* of the photograph, an alternative memento that is not created by ideology, rather by the need to open up the space of remembrance for victims who are never going to acquire their own space in the official culture of memory.

## Sandra Vitaljić

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11 Jasenovac and Donja Gradina are a battlefield for different remembrance cultures. Once part of a single unit called Jasenovac Memorial Area, today these two locations are in two different states – Jasenovac in Croatia and Donja Gradina in Bosnia and Herzegovina, or rather, in Republika Srpska. At commemorations on the different banks of the Sava, different numbers of victims are mentioned. During the years, the different sides have manipulated the number of victims of Jasenovac, and the figure has ranged from 30,000 to 700,000. According to the most recent research of the Jasenovac Memorial Centre, the real number of victims ranged between 80,000 and 100,000. In April 2010, a name-by-name list of the victims of Jasenovac was published, in which, using more than a hundred different sources, and with a critical re-examination of the data for each individual victim, the number of 80,914 was reached, although this is still not a final number. See [www.jusp-jasenovac.hr](http://www.jusp-jasenovac.hr).

12 Mitchell, W.J.T., *Landscape and Power*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1994, 2002., p. viii

13 The photographs are always accompanied by a text that explains events at the location shown. Some places are generally known and it is not necessary to explain them in detail, but it always depends on the cultural heritage of the viewer.

14 The relationship between space and place is a key question in the context of landscape. See more in Mitchell, W.J.T., *Landscape and Power*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1994, 2002., p. viii

15 Author Kitty Zijlmans points out that it is this that is the reason that we take photographs with us in our wallet, looking at them, kissing or touching them. We also use them to mark and familiarise some temporary space, like a hotel room, to turn it into our own space. Zijlmans, Kitty, "Place, Site and Memory in Contemporary Works of Art", in Westgeest, Helen (ed.), *Take Place: Photography and Place from Multiple Perspectives*, Valiz, Amsterdam, 2009, p. 221



## Sljeme – Adolfovac

Sedmog prosinca 1991. oko 23 sata, pet pripadnika pričuvnog sastava MUP-a iz tzv. eskadrona smrti Tomislava Merčepa ušlo je u stan srpske obitelji Zec u Poljaničkoj ulici, na zagrebačkoj Trešnjevci. Mihajla Zeca, koji je nakon što su mu naredili da pođe s njima pokušao pobjeći, ubili su na licu mjesta. Njegovu suprugu Mariju i 12-godišnju kćer Aleksandru, koje su svjedočile ubojstvu, odveli su kombijem do planinarskog doma „Adolfovac“ na Sljemenu. Ispred doma su iskopali jamu, do nje doveli Mariju i Aleksandru Zec i u njih ispalili više hitaca.

Ubojice - Igor Mikola, Nebojša Hodak, Siniša Rimac, Munib Suljić i Snježana Živanović - su priznali krivnju pred istražnim sucem. Unatoč tome oslobođeni su zbog proceduralne pogreške tijekom istrage.

Hrvatska vlada odlučila je 2004. isplatiti jednokratnu novčanu pomoć preživjelim članovima obitelji Zec u iznosu od 1,5 milijuna kuna. Njihov odvjetnik povukao je nakon toga tužbu protiv hrvatske države podignutu na Općinskom sudu u Zagrebu. Adolfovac je 1993. spaljen. Nekad popularan planinarski dom, danas je samo ruševina za koju rijetki znaju.

On December 7th 1991, around 11PM, five reservists of the Croatian police (so-called Merčep's escadrons of death) entered the apartment of a Serbian family named Zec in Zagreb neighborhood Trešnjevka. Mihajlo Zec, who tried to escape, was killed on the spot. His wife Marija and 12-year-old daughter Aleksandra, who witnessed the murder, were taken by van to the mountain lodge Adolfovac on Sljeme near Zagreb, shot and buried there. Although the killers Igor Mikola, Nebojša Hodak, Siniša Rimac, Munib Suljić i Snježana Živanović were arrested and pleaded guilty before a magistrate, they were released because of procedural errors during the investigation. In 2004 the Croatian government decided to pay financial assistance to the surviving members of the Zec family in the amount of 1.5 million kuna. Subsequently, their lawyer withdrew a lawsuit against the Croatian state in the Zagreb Municipal Court. Adolfovac burned down in 1993. Once a popular hikers' lodge, today is a just a forgotten ruin.



## Sisak

Tijekom 1991. i 1992. godine u Sisku je ubijen velik broj civila srpske nacionalnosti. Broj građana koji su bili mučeni i/ili likvidirani kreće se, prema različitim izvorima, od stotinu do čak 600. Siščani srpske nacionalnosti odvođeni su, zlostavljani i mučeni na lokacijama na kojima su bile smještene jedinice tadašnjih antiterorističkih grupa: "Barutana" u Capragu, lječilištu Jodno i omladinskom brigadirskom naselju ORA u Galdovu. Tamo su ispitivani, mučeni i likvidirani, nakon čega su tijela bacana u Savu. U nekim slučajevima nestajale su cijele obitelji.

U srpnju 2007. godine Državno odvjetništvo odbacilo je kaznenu prijavu Zajednice Srba u Republici Hrvatskoj protiv Vlade demokratskog jedinstva Republike Hrvatske zbog zločina u Sisku.

U lipnju 2011. uhapšeni su bivši sisačko-moslavački župan Đuro Brodarac te ratni zapovjednik specijalne jedinice MUP-a u Sisku Vlado Milanković zbog zapovjedne odgovornosti za ratne zločine nad srpskim civilima 1991. i 1992. godine u Sisku. Drago Bošnjak uhapšen je pod optužbom za neposredno izvršenje zločina.

During 1991 and 1992, a number of Sisak's citizens of Serbian origin, although not involved in the rebellion, fell under suspicion and were taken away by groups of Croatian defenders. They were assaulted and tortured at various locations where Croatian anti-terror units were placed. Detainees were executed and their bodies were thrown into the Sava River. In some cases, whole families disappeared. The number of citizens who were tortured and/or liquidated ranges, according to various sources, from one hundred up to six hundred. Until recently no one was prosecuted for those crimes. In July, 2007 The State Attorney's Office rejected the charges for the crimes in Sisak brought by the Community of Serbs in Croatia against the Government of National Unity. In June 2011 three persons were arrested in Sisak under accuse of organizing and ordering questioning, torture and liquidations of Serbian civilians in Sisak.



**Sandra Vitaljić** rođena je u Puli 1972. godine.

Magistrirala je fotografiju na Akademiji za film i TV (FAMU) u Pragu, a na istom fakultetu doktorirala je iz područja povijesti i teorije fotografije. Zaposlena je kao izvanredna profesorica na Odsjeku snimanja Akademije dramske umjetnosti u Zagrebu.

U sklopu umjetničke rezidencije CEC ArtsLink boravila je u Ansel Adams Center for Photography u San Franciscu (1997). Dobitnica je Fulbright stipendije (Rochester Institute of Technology, 2006/7), CCN Award (Graz) i prve nagrade na natječaju T-HT@MSU.hr.

Objavila je knjige "Neplodna tla" i "Rat slikama - Suvremena ratna fotografija".

**Sandra Vitaljic** was born in Pula, Croatia in 1972.

She graduated with an MFA in photography from the Academy of Performing Arts, Film and TV (FAMU) in Prague, Czech Republic and completed her doctoral studies (PhD) in history and theory of photography at the same university. She is employed as associate professor at the Cinematography Department of the Academy of Dramatic Art in Zagreb, Croatia.

She was awarded ArtsLink residence at the Ansel Adams Center for Photography in San Francisco (1997), a Fulbright fellowship at the Rochester Institute of Technology (2006/7), CCN Award in Graz (2013) and first award at T-HT@MSU.hr - Award for Croatian Contemporary Art (2014).

She published two books: *Infertile Grounds* (Eikon Studio, 2012) and *War of Images - Contemporary war photography* (Algoritam, 2013).

She exhibited in Croatia and abroad in a number of solo and group exhibitions.

### **Samostalne izložbe | Solo exhibitions**

2014. Neplodna tla, Galerija Knežev dvor, Rab

2013. Voljena, Galerija Klovićevi dvori, Zagreb

2013. Voljena, 6. Photodistorzija, Galerija Zuccato, Poreč

2013. BELOVED, Dhaka Art Center, Festival Chobi Mela VII, Dhaka, Bangladeš

2012. Infertile Grounds, Photon- centar za suvremenu fotografiju, Ljubljana

2011. Infertile Grounds, Latvian Museum of Photography, Riga, Latvia

2010. Neplodna tla, Modul memorije, Hanikah, Sarajevo

2009. Neplodna tla, Galerija Karas, Zagreb

2007. Latentna slika, Galerija Lang, Samobor

2004. Live on CCTV, Fotogalerija Kic-klub, Zagreb

2003. Mjesta i ljudi, Galerija Prozori, Zagreb

2002. 10 Žena, Moderna galerija, Zagreb

2001. Proud To Be Croat, Galerija Josip Račić, Zagreb

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## Donja Gradina

Gotovo polovica od ukupnog broja žrtava kompleksa koncentracijskog logora u Jasenovcu ubijeno je na najmonstruoznije načine u Donjoj Gradini, na desnoj obali Save. Prve likvidacije zatočenika dogodile su se u Donjoj Gradini u siječnju 1942. kada zbog jake zime nije bilo moguće kopati grobove. Ustaše su mještane obližnjeg sela Jablanac prevezli skelom u Donju Gradinu i pobili ih, zapalivši ih u kućama prognanih stanovnika. To je područje zatim korišteno za masovne likvidacije zatvorenika sve do zadnjeg dana postojanja logora 1945. Na devet grobnih polja nalazi se 105 masovnih grobnica ukupne površine od 10.130 m<sup>2</sup>. Naknadno su pronađene još 22 masovne grobnice.

Na ušću Une u Savu nalazi se *Topola uzdaha* ili *Topola fra Sotone* kako su je nazivali zatočenici. Pod topolom i na njenom stablu počinjena su klanja i vješanja tijekom kojih su žrtve mučene na najsvirepiji način. Topola se srušila 1978., te je zaštićena i sačuvana u horizontalnoj poziciji kao prirodni spomenik počinjenim zločinima.

Nearly half of the total number of victims of the concentration camp in Jasenovac was killed in the most gruesome ways in Donja Gradina, on the right bank of the Sava River. The first mass liquidation of prisoners in Donja Gradina, took place in January 1942. Since the winter was harsh, it was impossible to dig graves, so the Ustasha transported the villagers of Jablanac by ferry to Donja Gradina, killed them and then burned their bodies in the houses of the evicted villagers of Donja Gradina. This area was then used as a killing field until 1945.

In nine burial fields 105 mass graves are located, covering an area of 10,130 square meters. Later another 22 mass graves were found.

At the point where the river Una enters the river Sava, there used to be a poplar tree called *Poplar of sighs* or *Friar Satan's Poplar* because of numerous hangings and slaughter carried out in the most atrocious ways under or on the tree. The tree fell down in 1978. It was then preserved and protected in a horizontal position as a natural monument to the atrocities committed there.

## Bučje | [Naslovna strana](#) | [Cover](#) |

Na samom početku Domovinskog rata, srpski pobunjenici i snage Jugoslavenske narodne armije organizirale su, u Bučju kod Pakraca, koncentracijski logor. Zarobljenici su držani u zgradi Veterinarske ambulante. U posebnom prostoru bilo je zatočeno desetak žena.

Kroz logor, koji je djelovao od kolovoza do prosinca 1991., prošlo je više od 300 branitelja i civila. Zatvorenici su držani u neljudskim uvjetima, izgladnjivani, premlaćivani, ponižavani i tjerani na prisilni rad. Dvanaestoro ljudi je ubijeno, a sudbina 41 osobe još je uvijek nepoznata. Nakon rasformiranja logora zatočenici su prebačeni u zatvor Stara Gradiška, a potom, u siječnju 1992., razmijenjeni pod nadzorom Međunarodnog Crvenog križa.

Za zločine u logoru Bučje nitko još nije osuđen.

At the very beginning of the Croatian War for Independence, the Serbian rebels, assisted by the forces of the Yugoslav Army, organized a concentration camp in Bučje, near Pakrac. The prisoners were held in the building of the veterinary clinic. A dozen women were detained in a separate area.

The camp was operational from August to December 1991. More than 300 Croatian soldiers and civilians were detained in the camp at various times. They were tortured, starved, beaten and humiliated. Twelve people were killed and the fate of 41 people is still unknown. After disbanding the camp, the detainees were taken to Stara Gradiška prison and they were exchanged in January 1992 under the supervision of the International Red Cross.

No one has yet been convicted for the crimes at the Bučje camp.