

Changing Perceptions of the Holocaust *Competing Histories and Collective Memory*

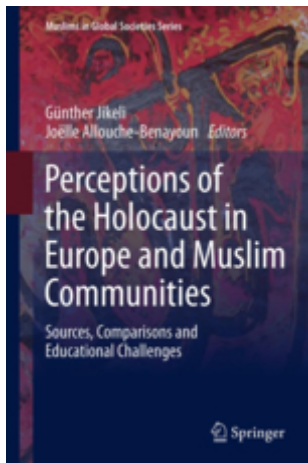
NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies

Invitation for an Expert-Meeting, 5 June 2013

'The way people think about the Holocaust is changing.' This observation from the recent study *Perceptions of the Holocaust in Europe and Muslim Communities* can be backed up effortlessly by various studies on the politics of memory, holocaust education, holocaust commemoration, as well as antisemitism research that came out in the first decade of the 21st century.

'Change' may be taken in numerous instances as a euphemism for a lack of interest, trivialization or downright denial of historical facts. In other cases, however, we indeed may encounter a *new trend*, an *altered perception*, and a *change of words* or a *shift of interpretation* of the Jewish Genocide. The latter being the case, we as historians working in the field of antisemitism studies, would like to invite scholars for a one-day event to discuss these newly discernible trends and turning points in the presence of the Holocaust in contemporary consciousness.

In addressing the historiographical and methodological debates on Holocaust memory, our central focus lies with multicultural society as the context for research and as the explanatory framework to account for views and sentiments on the Holocaust.



On the occasion of the publication of *Perceptions of the Holocaust in Europe and Muslim Communities* we would like to take the opportunity to reflect upon the manner in which multiethnic society has been taken as unity of research and multiculturalism has become one of the central issues in Holocaust studies. We have contributed to the volume with an article on classroom observations of history lessons and are involved in a project on contemporary anti-Semitism that explicitly starts from a focus on four separate migrant communities in the Netherlands. At this juncture we feel the need to examine the assumptions on which our research is based. Does our project suffer from ethnicism?

There are several issues we would like to discuss during this event. Over the decades, the Holocaust has been compared to other acts of large-scale violence. In the Netherlands, calls for an official acknowledgement of Dutch involvement in slavery and the transatlantic slave trade have evoked Holocaust analogies. How do these processes shape the location of the Holocaust in public memory?

Research and commemoration of the Holocaust is expressed in words – extermination, genocide, occupation – which are highly charged but the meanings of which are not fixed. For example, whereas ‘occupation’ for many Dutch visitors of the Anne Frank House first of all means the German occupation of the Netherlands between 1940 and 1945, for others it may primarily be associated with the territories occupied by Israel in 1967. Do participants signal modifications in the use and meaning of terms?

In many countries, the Holocaust functions as an identity marker. In the Netherlands, as in other European countries, indifference, insensitivity or resentment among Muslims towards Holocaust commemoration has been understood as a sign of failed integration and a lack of historical consciousness. How does the Holocaust serve as an instrument of cohesion or disintegration?

Programme

In the morning, professor Evelien Gans will introduce the theme of the expert-meeting. The session will be devoted to a discussion of two papers on Holocaust memory in the Netherlands.

The afternoon will be devoted to an assessment of the current academic and public debate on Holocaust memory in Europe. The editor of *Perceptions of the Holocaust in Europe and Muslim Communities* shall reflect on the state of the art in the field. A discussant will respond with an analysis of the volume in the light of current academic debates about public memory and Holocaust education.

The conference will be held 5 June

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Changing Perceptions of the Holocaust
Competing Histories and Collective Memory

- 9.00-9.15 Welcome
- 9.15-9.20 *Opening*
Nanci Adler (Division Head Holocaust and Genocide Studies, NIOD)
- 9.20-9.30 *The Dynamics of Contemporary Antisemitism, an Introduction*
Evelien Gans (Chair Modern Jewish History at the University of Amsterdam, NIOD)
- 9.30-10.45 *Performances of Postcolonial Holocaust Remembrance in the Netherlands*
Remco Ensel (NIOD/Radboud University Nijmegen)
- Discussant: Alejandro Baer (Stephen Feinstein Chair and director of the Center for Holocaust & Genocide Studies, University of Minnesota)
- Discussion*
- 10.45-11.15 Coffee break
- 11.15-12.30 *Dutch and Turkish Memories of Genocide: Contact or Competition?*
Annemarike Stremmelaar (NIOD)
- Discussant: Martijn de Koning (lecturer anthropology, Radboud University Nijmegen)
- Discussion*
- 12.30-12.45 *Summary*, Iwona Gusc (NIOD)
- 12.45-13.45 Lunch break
- 13.45-14.15 *Perceptions of the Holocaust in Europe and Muslim Communities*
Günther Jikeli (Groupe Sociétés, Religions, Laïcités / CNRS, Paris / International Institute for Education and Research on Antisemitism)
- Questions*
- 14.15-15.00 Discussant: Karen Polak (Anne Frank House)
- Questions*
- 15.00-15.15 Break
- 15.15-16.30 *Discussion: What about Dancing, Joking or Mimicking as Commemorative Performances?*
- 16.30 Drinks