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The idiom ‘a balancing act’ refers to a moment when one has to juggle certain elements to maintain balance. Taking part in the iC-ACCESS workshops and site visits, as part of an artistic ‘roaming residency’, whilst contemplating possible artistic responses required such an act- given the plethora of intersecting practical, political and historic discourses, whilst being mindful of a potential viewer or audience. This has been a thematic concern of artists dealing with the Holocaust more generally.

‘Competing Memories’ is a project that was borne out of these challenges and engagement with situations at former camps examined as part of the iC-ACCESS project and it led to the production of artworks connected to these issues. It specifically responded to the fact that visitors to memorials and museums expect some sort of experiential encounter, forensic and archaeological findings are challenging established narratives and political shifts have seen histories mobilized for various political agendas. What is being proposed in Competing Memories is not a representation of the Holocaust but an instigation of debate about the current situation of the camps, where the potential for new understanding creates challenges as to how we create an experience for the audience, that is both informative and offers them agency in their encounter.

The first stage of the project involved the observation of iC-ACCESS workshops. These events were very much live projects: at some sites, scientific archaeological research was taking place whilst at other sites, visits and discussions took place as part of the development of an online platform. As a ‘resident’ this posed certain problems in taking in all that was on offer whilst also providing a dense fabric of textual information.

At Treblinka extermination camp in Poland a Total Station survey, Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR), photogrammetry and excavation were used across the site by the project’s archaeologists to pinpoint the location of various historical buildings and human remains, whilst discussions simultaneously took place about the new knowledge gained from a range of disciplines.

At Camp Westerbork, GPR was used to investigate the remains of buildings whilst a guest speaker introduced new approaches to archiving Holocaust-related material. Alongside this, a prototype VR interface was tested whilst a living survivor testimony gave gravitas to the project, offering a humane experience amongst the challenges of dealing with facts and contradictions.

In the Croatian village of Stara Gradiška, site visualisations were created using various drone and laser scanning technology whilst, at the nearby Jasenovac memorial, discussions along with photographic documentation explored the use of the concentration camp complex up to 1990s.

At Pilsen, we visited the Lety site of a camp dedicated to Roma, and a controversial decommissioned pig farm which now sits on the site, before moving on to uranium mines where political prisoners were put to work by the communist regime.

All these experiences led to a personal conundrum, how would I respond? In what way could I bring new findings into the realm of public debate whilst maintain the notion of ‘competing memories’ used in the title of the project to reflect a primary objective? In some cases, art can be used in the service of science to offer interpretations to assist in understanding complex information. This is something encountered co-curated the ‘Finding Treblinka’ exhibition with archaeologist Caroline Sturdy Colls. This exhibition focused on addressing these issues with commissioned artworks that responded to forensic archaeological investigations at the site (Sturdy Colls and Branthwaite 2017). The question arising is therefore what strategy could be used to also offer room for debate, bringing conflicting experiences and information into the same realm to offer not just a visual experience that is a conduit to scientific fact, but also an experience that can become personal, subjective and meaningful. It was noted that it might be necessary to accept confusion as part of the process – In fact there may be something more human in creating a sense of anxiety in the face of such new thinking and information as it leads us towards notions of plural understandings and away from the idea of a single linear truth.

My strategy was to arrive at each location as an empty vessel and to be open to all that was happening, this would allow a sense of the *iC-ACCESS* project to permeate through the work and also generate new context from which to understand the camps as no hierarchy of needs would be imposed on the materials being gathered. My main source of documentation and recording would be a DSLR camera meaning it could be quickly transformed to film as well as taking photographic stills. For each workshop, an itinerary was circulated prior and it was immediately apparent that in most cases I would not see or take part in everything This led to the philosophical questioning of what I could actually do, how would the experiences and the information (factual/ photographic and video) become colligate in some meaningful way?

The approach developed from this was to see the camp/locations as they were, as an entity that was moving and mobile in its meaning and context. These artworks facilitated the exploration of themes, identified by the *iC-ACCESS* project team during the course of our interdisciplinary work as a means of ensuring public engagement with a wider range of issues pertaining to material culture, archaeological processes and narrative creation.