Challenging Legacies in Postcolonial and Postsocialist Notions of Place

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Political oppression has been experienced in many parts of the world, notably through colonialism in Africa, India and South America, as well as socialist oppression in Central and Eastern Europe. In the aftermath of regime changes in many of these geographies, there is a shared move towards art practices articulating postcolonial or postsocialist identities. Such identities are in turn often related to notions of place, in culturally informed notions of place existing in the social imaginary, representational discourse or in lived interactions with places. Using comparable strategies, and often working with intersecting concerns across geographies, artists who work with notions of place might actively counter or interrogate historic understandings of the contexts they engage with. Such artistic practices could also be seen as an attempt to create an ‘authentic’ expression of national belonging, responding to the problematic residue of cultural objects, images and ideologies perpetuated (or retained) in a postcolonial/postsocialist milieu.

For this session, we seek papers that specifically engage with notions of place, landscape or site, and that critically respond to the visual legacies inherited from oppressive regimes. The focus may be on postcolonial or postsocialist contexts but might also include responses to countries where both contexts co-exist (such as Angola and Mozambique). Approaches might include interrogations of archives/public monuments; engagements with landscape traditions; strategies for negotiating historic trauma associated with place; or any revisionist approach to renditions of place that aims to undermine colonial/socialist ideology.