ABSTRACT

In the “era of victims”, which have to a large degree replaced heroes and martyrs narratives, the Holocaust and genocide template serves as a role model for one’s own victimhood narrative. This proves how universalized the Holocaust has become as the negative icon of our era, a development at the same time driven by competing victimhood narratives. Variants of this “Holocaust template” are the “double genocide” narrative in Eastern Europe and the depiction of one’s own group as the “new Jews of today”, for example in the successor states of former Yugoslavia. I discuss these controversies on the example of memorial museums – flagships of national identity. I argue that during the Eastern Enlargement of the EU, one group of memorial museums took western Holocaust museums as its role model in order to prove their county’s Europe-readiness. Another group of museums argued that Europe and the West must acknowledge their country’s suffering under Stalinism. Finally, I will show what happens when mnemonic warriors are in government, start abolishing democratic rights, checks and balances and remodeling the museum landscape.