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A contested past: Memories, pluralism and democracy

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Frank van Vree is the Dean of the Faculty of the Humanities of the University of Amsterdam since 2012. Before becoming Dean he was chairing the Department of Media Studies and full professor of Media Studies, particularly Journalism. Previously he also held a chair in Media History at the Erasmus University (Rotterdam). In 2010-2011 he was visiting scholar at New York University and, previously, visiting professor at various other institutes abroad.

Frank van Vree studied modern history and philosophy at the University of Groningen (1972-1979) and received his PhD from the University of Leiden (1989). His publications include a study on the memory of the Second World War, *In de schaduw van Auschwitz. Herinneringen, beelden, geschiedenis* (1995), books and articles on the history of Dutch media and journalism as well as a number of essays and articles in the field of historical representation, historical culture and cultural history. Moreover he was co-editor of *History of Concepts - Comparative Perspectives* (1998), *Feit & fictie* – a journal on the history of representation – and, most recently, of two volumes on the dynamics of the memory of World War II, *De dynamiek van de herinnering* (2009) and *Performing the Past, Memory, History, and Identity in modern Europe* (2010).

Currently he is supervising a dozen PhD-projects in the fields of history, journalism studies and history and memory. Together with Rob van der Laarse (University of Amsterdam) he initiated a major research program, *The Dynamics of War Heritage, Memory and Remembrance*.

Over the years Frank van Vree has been a member of numerous boards and committees.

A Contested Past: Memories, Pluralism and Democracy

The essence of democratic rule is generally considered to be lying in free elections, free speech and the rule of law. However, a certain degree of pluralism with regard to memory culture – acknowledging that individual and social memories diverge, opening up the public sphere for different, often conflicting memories of various mnemonic communities – may also be seen as a reliable indicator for the democratic nature of a society. It is not hard to find convincing proof for this argument, running from historical cases in West and Eastern Europe with regard to World War II, up to contemporary efforts to 'renationalize' memory culture, such as Putin's Russia.