

Past and Power

Public Policies on Memory.
Debates, from Global to Local

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Textos en
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Observing Memories

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Foreword*

Tony Judt said that, “Post-national, welfare-state, cooperative, pacific Europe was not born of the optimistic, ambitious, forward-looking project imagined in fond retrospect by today’s Euro-idealists. It was the insecure child of anxiety. Shadowed by history, its leaders implemented social reforms and built new institutions as a prophylactic, to keep the past at bay”. But now that these social reforms and these new institutions are in crisis, the past is shadowing us once again. The common European project is tottering; it looks at itself in the mirror and seeks answers. If the “ghost of history” was one of the driving forces of the common European project, if it served as a lever to leave behind the destructive past that had devastated the continent and to design a new Europe, what has become of it? Can we turn to this ghost again? Would it be any use?

Something tells me that the public authorities have not successfully resolved the management of the traumatic memory of the wars, dictatorships and massacres to which the European project was always intended to be a counterpoint. The shadow of suspicion hangs over those in power, always tempted to use the past to political ends. However, if in the past the conflict concerning memories tended to develop inside the borders of nations, it has now leapt into the European arena (a logical step, on the other hand). This has also led to the confrontation and questioning of the great narratives established in the common memory, especially with countries of the East joining the European Union. Each community, group or nation maintains common memories, which do not always fit in or converge with a general overall account. The UB Solidarity Foundation’s European Observatory on Memories wanted to consider this problem in the course of the first international symposium, “Memory and Power: A Transnational Perspective”, held 6-8 May 2014 in Barcelona. The results of the conference have been collated in this book, along with the contributions of other specialists. On the following pages there will be an

* Translation by Andrew Stacey.

overview of the discursive problems of the past that impact on Europe today, how conflicts of memory are dealt with in national and international contexts, and how they are reflected in the cultural heritage. We hope that this will help explain problems that affect us close to home and far away, and, as far as is possible, to rethink a common European project in which we can see ourselves reflected and with which we are able to identify.

DÍDAC RAMÍREZ I SARRIÓ

Introduction: Observing Memories in their Complexity and Multiplicity: Why a European Observatory on Memories?*

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Tackling the definition of a transnational network concerning the memory of our recent past is complicated when the perplexing nature of the present prevents us from having reliable perspectives — or simply opens a new window for us onto the immediate emotional reaction of memory. This simple statement may confuse the reader, but the reality is that I am sitting in front of the computer screen, unable to concentrate, trying to compose a brief introduction for this volume about the use of the past in some European cases while my thoughts and eyes are constantly being diverted towards the window to my right. I am in Paris, on Boulevard Richard-Lenoir. A few weeks ago my window looked out onto an urban space, a not especially glamorous junction of the Parisian boulevard. Today this corner seems to be a memory space. Is it? Will it be? I think so. An unwanted memory, fortuitous, recent: *Je suis Charlie*. By chance the scene of a murder is just outside my window. The public repercussions of the event, the terrorist attack, have gone around the world. The space is local, national, but its dimension is international. The symbols travel via Internet, the sentences become icons, the representations are repeated in public space and in public discourses and narratives, and show their solidarity with a cause that prior to the tragedy was invisible for many — even criticized by some, quite a few.

The memories existing in Europe are a phenomenon of the present and for the future, they are not the past. The reference is in the past, but the re-examination of these memories explodes in the most fervent present — our uncertain, fleeting, and also violent present. The complex nature of remembrance lies in the constant multiplicity and the permanent mutation of its concepts, uses and consequences. We see how “non-historical” memories intersect be-

* Translation by Andrew Stacey.

tween the work of writing the history of past events and how we remember the catastrophes of the twentieth century. We see how critical concepts of collective memory, cultural memory and historical memory extend into transnational accounts, into a variety of linguistic concepts that expand the term “memory” towards the infinite and hinder empirical classifications.¹

As a historian I doubted the ability to analyse the memory of terrorism in Europe today. It is a memory at the heart of which there is an international, religious, radical, political, geostrategic and cultural conflict. But, learning and analysing the concepts in a transnational and comparative manner, I have turned my doubt into reflection. The memories of 9/11 in New York, 11 March in Madrid, Utøya in Norway and *Charlie Hebdo* in Paris, among so many others, are also European memories in their complexity and their multiplicity; multiple because not all the events are the same, and above all because not all citizens react the same way to the violence and the conflicts that occur. Some will attempt to make political capital, others will react empathetically and emotionally, and yet others with rage and hatred.² The spontaneous transformation of the events into a collective tribute is interesting because of a double attitude: that of seeking the profound root causes of the atrocities, and, on the other hand, that of reflecting on the transformative potential of knowing about them.

Thus, the work of memory cannot be restricted to writing the history of events and remembering them in nice books or on digital or audiovisual platforms. It must transgress, transform the present and act as a reflexive contribution for future generations. It must be associated with the current custom of re-examining the past, whether spontaneously, identifying a group, or sentimental, as a condemnation or as mourning. It has to be a memory that copes with the social, cultural and civic interactions that we experience in relation to our distant and not so distant atrocities. The process of repercussions in the national and international public sphere in the present is almost more important than the historical event in itself for tackling the task of memory.

It is, therefore, difficult to keep one's eyes on a single point. Those of us who “observe” what memory policies develop in local and international spheres — not just European — and how they do so see that the points of view multi-

1 Maurice HALBWACHS (2004). *La memoria colectiva*. Zaragoza: Publicaciones de la Universidad de Zaragoza; Andreas HUYSEN (2002). *En busca del futuro perdido*. Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica; Ricard VINYES (ed.) (2009). *El Estado y la memoria*. Barcelona: RBA.

2 Marie-José MONDIZAIN (2014). “Nous ne nous en sortirons que par une révolution politique”, *Ateliers Varan*, 11/12/2014.

ply, are juxtaposed and diversify massively. We are perhaps experiencing the end of the memory boom, the “saturation of memories”, even the “hypertrophy” of memory (see the studies by Andreas Huyssen [2002], Régine Robin [2005], Enzo Traverso [2011], Tzvetan Todorov [2002] and Beatriz Sarlo [2005]). We are experiencing a public and political fever for commemorative anniversaries at a time when there is still a long way to go and, in some “democratic” countries, many victims still to be compensated and many anonymous corpses to be rescued and disinterred from oblivion.³ The debate is necessary, but in some areas the political uses of processes of remembrance have alerted essayists and academics to the need for caution, thorough analysis and social awareness of the uses of the past.⁴

This volume hopes to contribute to this debate with new and rich thoughts about the variety of memories in Europe — and not just in Europe — and the necessary transnational and comparative work in the twenty-first century. It also hopes to break the solid discourse that seems to dominate in some European spheres and institutions about the uniqueness of memories in Europe and about the competition provoked between the two so-called great European totalitarian systems. This ignores other processes and realities and seeks opportunistic tensions to shape a “new” and “model” European identity which, being unique and model, cannot possibly exist.

Europe is rich in the diversity of memories, and the true horizon is to create instruments to promote and value the work of memory as a transforming civic and democratic European asset. Diversity is wealth and it is at the same time an essential challenge in the face of the different crises that we are currently experiencing. The idea of observing how the continent remembers is added to a series of cultural and educational values that attempt to counteract the various crises today that call into question the very concept of the European Union. Nevertheless, the word “counteract” is perhaps excessive when, in fact, we are looking at a political idea of Europe rather than a reality: Europe is an economic and geopolitical treaty between governments where the strongest rules. However, within the various European crises (cultural, social, political, economic, migratory, and of power), the memory and the democratic memory, along with the struggles or resistance movements against barbarism, emerge as a transformative and sensitive asset. In this respect they are a field of work that reinforces the values of our identity: experience and memory.

3 Francisco FERRÁNDIZ (2014). *El pasado bajo tierra*. Barcelona: Anthropos.

4 Georges MINK and Laure NEUMAYER (2007). *L'Europe et ses passés douloureux*. Paris: La Découverte.

Memory as a common European asset has been increasingly defended since 2004, with the enlargement eastwards, towards the countries of the former Soviet Union, among others. And new political trends give their full backing to memory as a symbol of common identity. From 2002 to 2006 the European Parliament even began to promote a series of laws, decrees and resolutions that basically agreed with one of the Parliament's legislative principles: "To build the future, one has to look critically at the past".⁵

Yet these principles and declarations conceal a double-edged sword. On one hand, the political use of the term "memory" as an interested reinterpretation of historical processes; on the other, the chance to give a new European identity to millions of citizens who are joining the European Union and who only recognize their own national identity. It is here where we find some of the current problems in the uses of European memories: we speak of construction of Europe on the foundations of the victim status of countries that suffered atrocities (the Nazi and Soviet occupations), but the role of the citizens with regard to their own past and to the barbarism itself is avoided. In any case, the growth of a European memory does not mean the end of the "enchanted" versions of national histories. It could be a chance to propose alternative projects and, based on the national imaginaries, improve them and remake them.⁶

EUROPE: MEMORY AS A TRANSMITTER OF TRANSFORMATIVE AND CONTROVERSIAL VALUES AND OF CIVIL RIGHTS

Memory is to a certain extent a creative reconstruction, a re-examination of conflictive events — events that evoke atrocity and excess, but in which the positive values of the struggles for contemporary social freedom in the twentieth century were reaffirmed. These values, this memory, have a transformative capacity, since in some ways they try to repair the damage, they transmit collective knowledge and they engender new civic and ethical values. I therefore analyse the so-called "duty of memory" as an ethical and political responsibility of the public authorities (on all levels: international, European, national, regional and local). As the philosopher Josep Ramoneda says, "Without re-

⁵ Decree 1904/2006/CE, European Parliament and Council of Europe, 12 December 2006. Order approved OJEC L 378/32, 27 December 2006.

⁶ François FORET and Oriane CALLIGARO (2002). "La mémoire européenne en action. Acteurs, enjeux et modalités de la mobilisation du passé comme ressource politique pour l'Union européenne", *Politique Européenne*, No. 37.

sponsibility there can be no politics". Yet, socially speaking, memory is clearly a civil right that has to foster participation in the public forum, a source of collective growth, rather than a duty.⁷

Public Policies of Memory as the Reaction of a European Project in Crisis

Europe and its institutions are perceived as distant, far removed from the citizens, their daily problems and their social reality. And — what is worse — a Europe that does not respond to the internal and external conflicts of its own contractual reality. Not so much because of the rise in populist and Euro-sceptic political platforms on the left and right, to the north and south of our European space, but especially because of the social, political and economic crisis that is assailing society, a crisis that is devastating us partly due to the lack of truly extensive European public policies in social, political and cultural matters. The European institutions, lagging behind this situation, have become more sensitive to memory programmes; they have acknowledged these transformative values of the democratic memories and the struggles against barbarism. But it is still not enough. Multiple conflicts and debates emerge in the creation and development of public policies of memory on a European scale.

Study of the war-torn past automatically generates conflict in the present. This examination is chiefly political — in the broad sense of the word — and generates permanent public tension with regard to the public and the private, the intimate and the collective, and between the subjectivity of memory and historical analysis. Resistance to conflict or the "fear of remembering" are clearly seen in the feeble way certain democratic powers face up to their past in a normal way, as a construction of knowledge and civic sense that includes conflict and transgression. However, not assuming the controversial nature of memory may eventually become a problem.

Trying to deny all traces of controversy in memory is a pipe dream. Politics tries to use a conflict-free *à la carte* memory, but it does not obtain positive results, and this is the habitual attitude as far as policies on the use of the past are concerned. The work of conflict-free memory is the most widespread attempt at manipulation in the practice of memory politics at the beginning of

7 Josep RAMONEDA (2014). "Repensar Europa", inaugural speech of "Memory and Power", first international symposium of the European Observatory on Memories, University of Barcelona, 6-8 May 2014.

the twenty-first century. Memory is structured around the remembrance of controversial events, and it generates a conflict that cannot be ignored. Moreover, an adequate revision can produce reparatory effects and transmit civic values.⁸ Thus, conflict and transgression are two intrinsic concepts in the work of memory. The first concept is related more to the dialectic between history and memory, between the events and the memory of them, their interpretation or remembrance. The second brings us closer to the past's assault on our political, physical and cultural spaces. The struggle against memory-as-conflict and memory-as-transgression is represented chiefly in the field of public policies of memory, not so much in academe or research and even less so in the associative world of resistance or politically committed art.

The knowledge of memory is demolished and crushed by what is now being called "the good memory", an intrusive species that comes from politically correct authority. This "do-goodism" with regard to memory is attributed to a fashionable or *à la carte* way of managing memory, according to the political interests of the moment and the strategic sophisms of certain group pressures. The subject-as-victim is unquestionably very closely linked to this do-goodism, also defined as "complete memory" by some Latin American authors when they analyse the memory politics in the countries of the Southern Cone in relation to their recent dictatorships.⁹ Another influential factor in this memory do-goodism is the positive or negative "equation" of the interpretation of violence where there are always two or more sides fighting one another. It is an equation — and in Spain we know a lot about this — made with the intention of presenting the barbarism of the past as an anomalous fact that must not be repeated, trying to strip contemporary political history of all ideology. Therefore, a whole society is made out to be a victim, memories are universalized and victim status is distributed at will by the official authorities that are incapable of tackling the controversial nature of the uses of the past. All it needed was the official declaration in Catalonia of 15 October as "National day in memory of the victims of the Civil War and the Francoist repression" to give the best example of this manipulation.¹⁰ Moreo-

8 Ricard VINYES (2011). *Asalto a la memoria. Impunidades, reconciliaciones, símbolos y éticas*. Barcelona: Libros del Lince.

9 Elizabeth JELIN (2012). *Los trabajos de la memoria*. Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos; Beatriz SARLO (2005). *Tiempo pasado: cultura de la memoria y giro subjetivo. Una discusión*. Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI.

10 Government agreement/146/2015, 8 September, whereby 15 October 2015 is proclaimed National day in memory of the victims of the Civil War and those of the repression of the Francoist dictatorship, *Diari Oficial de la Generalitat de Catalunya* (DOGC), No. 6954 – 10/09/2015.

ver, with this gesture, those in charge of that government are equating — as “victims” — both the victims and the tormentors. The president of the Catalan government, Lluís Companys i Jover, captured in France by the Nazis and Francoist agents and shot by firing squad on 15 October 1940 in Barcelona, must now be remembered on the same day as others who “fell for God and for Spain”, who fought for the dictator and the repression that executed him — deliberately, not by chance. This example allows me to add yet another consideration. The case of Companys is related to the transverse and transnational nature of memories in Europe. In his capture and handover three responsible European countries took part: Germany, France and Spain. He was the only democratically elected president to be extradited and shot by firing squad during the Second World War and, furthermore, he was killed in a supposedly neutral country, Spain. Germany apologized in some ways, and France did too although more timidly, but it had already sentenced the Spanish spy who handed him over to death in a trial in Paris in 1940. The case of Companys can tell us various things about memory, history, justice, reparation, the symbolism of memory, the struggle for democracy, values and the treaties to protect political refugees, and many, many more. On the other hand, the laws of Catalonia make the anniversary of his execution a false universalism of memory, condemning important historical processes to being simple aseptic interpretations of a false victimist do-goodism.

The political error is to criminalize the past in order to beatify the present, to obscure the past in order to whitewash the present and increase an artificial and conventional contrast.¹¹ The present is good, so leave misfortune to the past. But the past is not a receptacle of conflict where we can deposit the traumas of several generations. The complex nature of today’s conflicts makes it impossible to place Europe in a peaceful oasis — even though the hope is to fit this idea into the present need for more Europe. One only has to analyse the current war and political strife in Ukraine or the constant movement of immigrants towards the coasts of Greece, Italy and Spain as a gateway to the brilliant and peaceful Europe. These are two current realities originating in the badly resolved imperial and colonial past, a reality that the highest European institutions cannot get round with emergency summit meetings, but as the fundamental axis of the political work and also of the analysis of their causes. But colonialism is still an awkward reality, an embarrassing memory for the

¹¹ Markus J. PRUTSCH (2015). *European historical memory: policies, challenges and perspectives*. Brussels: Artikel.

countries that practised it. I endorse Timothy Snyder's analysis of the interpretation of the twentieth century in Europe as a permanent, diverse and multiple process of colonization and decolonization between countries, political territories and old empires. But the reality of the European memory of colonialism is an awkward one for the countries that practised it, and not just an analytical metaphor: so awkward in fact that, in the light of the most recent events, the treaties holding the European Union together are placed in doubt.

The European Union, as a project of "peace and stability" shunning the violent past, carries with it some important qualifications. This approach conceals a few traps, as it is made from a narrative that tries to promote justice and integration within the European project based on a plan of execution of the partially distorted memory. From it have derived the current European programmes and projects in defence of civic values against the catastrophes of the past. A past that is intended to be common to all European citizens in the failed attempt to create a single identity. But a past that, on a local, European or national level, is still a rough diamond with regard to its capacity for transformation and social growth.

The "Uniqueness" and "Competition" of Memories Between Nazism and Stalinism

I interpret the "uniqueness" of memory as a competitive but interested duel between Nazism and Stalinism, a public account that has been promoted by a political demand that has emerged strongly since the countries of the former Soviet Union joined the European Union, just over ten years ago. This "demand", which equates Nazi crimes with those of Stalin, has been high-pressure, it has determined public policies and resolutions and it has also been strongly protested against, especially in academic circles.¹² I am interested in the development of this "uniqueness" of memory as a public policy, but also as an endeavour to dodge responsibilities. The first immediate consequence has been to play down the Holocaust, which, as has been said, has gone hand in hand with the silence about the role of some countries and their local populations in the perpetration of crimes. The second consequence has been exclusion, i.e., excluding the diversity and complexity of other European wars of the

¹² Marie-Claire LAVABRE and Sarah GENSBURGER (2012). "D'une mémoire européenne à l'euro-péanisation de la mémoire", *Politique Européenne*, No. 37.

past. To a certain extent, the effort to discuss the violence of the past in different conflicts, dictatorships, crimes and wars has been avoided, beyond the just acknowledgement and analysis of the two most atrocious violent regimes. It may therefore seem simplistic, but it is essential to talk about this “uniqueness”, which also entails an equation of the different categories of victims according to the interests of the “official” policies of memory in the various nations and their re-examination of the past. In short, an official historical account of European and national memories has been established — and it is still on-going — in which complexity and multiplicity are eliminated, asserting that we were all “victims” or we were all “heroes” or “resistance fighters”.

Of course, any story of the experience is open to interpretation, but we must be vigilant with these equations on all levels: between victims and tormentors, between resistance fighters and collaborators, between anti-fascists and fascists, between global and national memories, and — currently the most common equation in Europe — between Nazism and Stalinism. This equation limits the need to work on a transnational level with other multiple transformative memories that help to improve our open society and our democracy. The space of memory has to be seen as a social articulation between different scales: local, national, regional and international. This geographical and territorial scale interacts in different dimensions: material, social, political, cultural, economic. In this respect the work of memory in the twenty-first century is presented as the challenge of working in the complementarity between scales and dimensions. Without the interaction of multiple realities and factors (scales and dimensions) one may fall into the centrifugal and exclusive competition to remember, an exclusion driven by political interests and pressure groups. Taking the uniqueness of memory to an exclusive terrain obviously implies fatal risks for the memory’s capacity to transform.

Luckily, these debates are emerging in different academic, political and social spheres. The equation or uniqueness of memory is in vogue, and, with the excuse that it can engender a common European identity, museums and over-simplistic accounts of the past are constructed. However, explicit criticism is increasingly made of European Union decrees, national decrees and “memory laws”, and actions in the public space in this direction that intend to impose memory “from above”.

The latest campaign in this respect was launched via some sectors that promote the said equation. Apart from having their European Day of Remembrance, 23 August (the date on which the Molotov-Ribbentrop Agreement was signed between the USSR and Nazi Germany), they resort to symbols identifying “23 August” as an icon and a trademark of European pride, and thus they

manufacture pins, badges, games and all sorts of promotional material about a memory that, while it was of course painful, gives one the feeling that it is treated according to political criteria and in a rather frivolous manner. These political groups, through their elected leaders, are those that proposed and voted for the said European resolution of 23 August. And of course the neoliberal West defended them and supported them in every way.

One is sometimes struck by how strongly they appeal to the memory of the terror of the occupations to justify the gaps or the lack of critical analysis of the role their citizens played during that period. Which Estonians or Latvians shot Jews, resistance fighters and prisoners in general in the Baltic fields and woods? How many of them were there? Who were they? These are awkward questions that are not answered in these countries' remembrance discourses when the places of memory and extermination are visited, where the role of the "local people" is camouflaged and, in certain cases, positively justified. Furthermore, the equation discourse — see the sculpture of the locomotive in the Museum of Occupations in Tallinn — justifies the repressive actions and the local collaboration with the Nazis due to the fact that they were fervent nationalists and anti-communists. "We Latvians killed civilians, most of them Jews, and we threw them into common graves, but you do not know that the Jews were Communists and that many of them later went to work for the KGB", said a Latvian citizen when asked about the huge memorial in the Bikernieki woods, where tens of thousands of people were exterminated by Nazi — and Latvian — bullets. The same thing happened in so many other countries (Ukraine, Romania and Poland among them). Where is the local sense of responsibility for this violence? After a journey of initiation around the discussions on memory in the North and East, passing through *Mitteleuropa*, we must unquestionably reread Christopher Browning's book *Ordinary Men* to enter the debate about the role of local people and native citizens with regard to the violence and extermination in those countries.¹³

All this is summed up by the new monument about the Nazi occupation in Hungary, in the city of Budapest. In this national, official commemorative monument Hungary and the Hungarians appear represented by the Archangel Gabriel, as victims of the "Nazi eagle". And in the House of Terror Museum in Budapest we find signs of a marked ideological discourse — and a museum display that leaves no one indifferent — where the collaborationist and violent role of the "natives" during the dictatorship of Miklos Horthy and during the

13 Christopher BROWNING (2002). *Des hommes ordinaires*. Paris: Les Belles Lettres.

period of the mass deportations and exterminations is ignored. Fortunately, in the face of the political lie transgressive memory appears in Freedom Square in Budapest in the form of a “living memorial”, a social interaction that seeks justice and truth as opposed to the manipulation of memory, a spontaneous action in the public space that undermines the official monument, turning it into a recently inaugurated ruin.¹⁴

Comparative Memory

The cultural memory upheld by Huyssen is treated as if it were in a moment of transition, full of changes and mutations. And the perspective of a transnational study once more appears necessary. The basis of knowledge is history, and comparative history can explain some keys to the mutation of memory, but not all. It is the field of remembrance, in practical customs and experiences, where it is possible to establish links and make progress in the analyses. But the understanding and the representation of the traumatic past require cooperation between historians and memoir writers (Carol Gluck established a curious neologism for this, “memorians”, which in some way defines the work of many and not just — of course — the historians). The analysis of public customs can enlighten us about the processes of memory, processes that are experiencing a boom, a certain “hypertrophy” of memories that corresponds to multiple factors but which also denotes a lack of confidence in the imagined future, above all in Western societies.

For example, there is no historical link whatsoever — or only a very symbolic one — between the commemoration of the 9/11 attacks in New York, with its monumental remembrance site and museum, and the memorial in Berlin to the Jews exterminated in Europe. Both place their memories on different levels of social message. In Berlin we find a civic memorial on a national and collective level, dedicated to the victims and their families in a distant way, historically and geographically, as it intends to offer a global European memory of the Holocaust. On the other hand, the 9/11 memorial focuses first and foremost on the family and individual memory, tracing a very faint line, almost non-existent, between the intimate and the political. The Berlin me-

14 Sam SOKOL (2014). “German Occupation Statue in Budapest not a Holocaust Memorial”, *Jerusalem Post*, 11/06/2014; Katy MARTON (2014). “Hungary’s Authoritarian Descent”, *New York Times*, 04/11/2014; BBC Monitoring Europe — Political, “Hungarian Expert Criticizes Historian’s Ideology, Treatment of Holocaust”, 09/07/2014.

morial tries to teach the world about the history of Germany — and Europe — with a national commitment to the public memory. The New York memorial tries to bring current politics and private memories closer together, immersed in an open conflict and in some ways ignorant of the historical processes.

I fully agree with Huyssen's analysis, which also anticipates events, as his comparative consideration is prior to the inauguration of the 9/11 Memorial at Ground Zero. This perspective is also reflected in the thinking of James E. Young, who, with his long experience in the analysis of memorials in public places, enlightens us by pointing out once more the need to travel and compare before acting, and to take part in the discussions that have arisen over the designs and their significance. These processes of memory creation are usually more important than the end result of the memorials in themselves.¹⁵ Hence public discussion and controversy are the keys to comparative analyses.

These brief thoughts fuel the analysis and the need to “observe” the public policies of memory in Europe horizontally, comparatively and transnationally.¹⁶ Applying them to local and national cases opens the doors for us to the treatment of the memory of the present and the future, confirms for us the controversial and transgressive practices of the processes of memory and warns us of the *à la carte* uses and the abuses with regard to the victims, the violence and the conflicts. The comparative memory appears as a transformative agent that can — and should — achieve more than one set of ideas that creates discussion and counter discussion. Limiting ourselves to the impulse of national memories without transnational practices may generate series of national — and nationalistic — memorials whose effects are contrary to the connectivity of memory (Hirsch, 2013). Accepting the current challenge to act with transnationality, trans-culturality and mobility, one may achieve a new “ethic of the transcultural nature of the memorial” to boost processes of connectivity, complementarity, solidarity and civic participation or involvement.

Another interesting concept, which I interpret as a precursor of what I defined as “multiple memory”, is the one coined by Michael Rothberg as “multidi-

¹⁵ James YOUNG (2015). “The Memorial’s Arc: Between Berlin’s Denkmal and New York City’s 9/11 Memorial”, speech in the seminar “Memorials Today: Between a Collective History of Loss and New Artistic Strategies”, KOS Museum, January 2015.

¹⁶ Talking of the concept of transnationality in the work of memory, we must mention the critical reflections of Aline Sierp and Jenny Wüstenberg, which help us to better understand its increasingly widespread use among those involved in memory and even local projects. Aline SIERP and Jenny WÜSTENBERG (2015). “Linking the Local and the Transnational: Rethinking Memory Politics in Europe”, *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, 23: 3, 321-329.

rectional memory”.¹⁷ Rothberg contrasts the competition of memories with their multidirectional nature, which rewrites the public sphere as a field of protest where memories interact in different and unexpected ways. His theory is based, chiefly, on pointing out the existence of an intellectual and artistic response that links the memory of genocide with that of colonialism. The author’s analysis is most interesting when he stresses how the processes of decolonization and the civil rights movements in the Caribbean, Africa, Europe, America and elsewhere have unexpectedly given a boost to the memory of the Holocaust.

In other cases the multidirectional approach does not bring us closer but it does take us more deeply into the difference or the political decision about the use of memories or the construction of the “official memory”.¹⁸ I am thinking here about the dispute over what I have called “awkward memories”, as it deals, especially in the political sphere and the public domain, with the colonial memories in certain countries. One example is the project on which we are working: Montluc prison (Lyon). Recovered from 2009 as an “outstanding place of the French national memory”, it nevertheless avoids a series of memories and historical layers of the jail as a military and judicial prison, the most controversial of which is the memory of the colonial war in Algeria. Some of its prisoners were guillotined inside its grounds. In this case, the memory is deliberately unidirectional and politically selective.

Another awkward memory could be the historical work done on the memory of the “tormentors” or the “perpetrators”. In France, too, the trials of the torturers are presented as a key moment of change in the development of its policies of memory. Claus Barbie and Maurice Papon are two decisive examples. The Papon case allows me to cite an excellent study, which ought to be a point of reference on the use of testimony through art and civic participation: Jochen Gerz’s project, *Les témoins* (The Witnesses).¹⁹ Avoiding the indiscriminate and industrial use of the victim (so widespread in some projects), Gerz uses the memories of the women of Cahors to talk about the collaboration with fascism and the figure of Papon in a qualitative approach that supplies an exceptional wealth of detail in relation to the repressive “subject” or perpetrator (it is a novel approach in many ways although the project is already quite a few years old).

17 Michael ROTHBERG (2009). *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*. Stanford University Press.

18 Eduardo MANZANO and J. Sisínio PÉREZ GARZÓN (eds.) (2010). *Memoria histórica*. Madrid: CSIC / La Catarata.

19 Jochen GERZ (1998). *Les témoins*. Printemps de Cahors / Actes du Sud.