

Preface: Memory Policies and Public Uses of History

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Memory policies refer to the discourses and practices through which it is decided who, how, when and under what conditions, a society chooses what to remember or forget. These choices are materialized and revealed in the uses that are publicly made of history (In school, public space, ritual commemorations, museums, monuments and other “places of memory”) as a legitimate identity narrative for the community. These policies of memory are constantly in dispute, the various social actors seek to consolidate its own memory as hegemonic and refuse the forgetfulness and silences to which they or their ancestors have been subjected, and as a result, the uses which are made from history are subject to constant redefinition and transformation.

The collective memory as an issue of social and human sciences is already present in the work of thinkers on the border of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. However, its truly consolidation comes until the twenties with the pioneering work of the sociologist Maurice Halbwachs and the art historian Aby Warburg. Although they are not usually recognized within the canon of memory studies, the literary works of George Orwell *Animal Farm* (1945) and *1984* (1949) are implicit critics of memory policies implemented by twentieth-century totalitarianism. Instead, *In Search of Lost Time* by Marcel Proust, written between 1913 and 1922 - is a widely recognized benchmark in this field. However, after 1950, the year in which Halbwachs publishes *The Collective memory*, the issue of memory as reflection and research field would be abandoned, until its resurgence in the seventies and eighties boom,

when the so-called *memory boom* took place. Also known as shift to the past or subjective turn, the *memory boom* is a phenomenon characteristic of the second half of the twentieth century, which emerged after the Second World War, and marked in the seventies and eighties by the increasing globalization of the capitalist market and cultural industries. There are two converging trends that explain this shift to the past, especially sensitive during the eighties: first, the acceleration of time and historical experience, the emergence of a new presentist “regime of historicity” in the shade of which there was a growth in the concern of the assets as well as in the celebrations and the “places of memory”, and secondly, the emergence of the testimony of the victim / survivor of major traumatic events, especially *the Holocaust* in Germany, *Apartheid* in South Africa and military dictatorships in Latin America. Both phenomena contributed to the depletion of historiography (national-official) as the only valid account, authorized and possible about the past.

Research and reflections in this dossier

This edition of *Memoria y Sociedad* presents articles which address the relationship between memory, history and politics in different Latin American countries between the nineteenth and twenty-first century, from case studies and theoretical considerations. The research, from the history, social science and transdisciplinary approaches undoubtedly contribute to current debates on social memory. The articles in *this* dossier offer different themes or analytical inputs to study

the processes of development of social memory. Marta Penhos reflects on the link between image, truth and temporality from the analysis of images produced at different historical moments: the etchings that illustrate the report of the Voyage of the Beagle to Tierra del Fuego in the early nineteenth century, the front and profile photographs that objectify from an anthropological and forensic view the indigenous from Patagonia in the context of the desert campaign in the late nineteenth century, and identity identification photographs of the missing-arrested during the military dictatorship in Argentina, resignified by human rights organizations, families and artists. The text emphasizes the continuities- from a temporary registration to another- of the representation schemes and power relations which they underpin, specifically, are evident connections between the imperial and national civilizing project in the nineteenth century and state terrorism from the twentieth century.

In turn, the contributions of Gabriel and Maria Gabriela Micheletti Samacá explore the political tensions inherent in ritual observances. Both the case of the death anniversary of General Santander (Colombia, 1939) and the birth centenary of Estanislao López (Argentina, 1886) show the existence of phenomena such as: the key role assigned to heroes and great men in the historiography and other records in the national memory, the disputes between the capital city, heart of the state and regional elites to establish an official version of the genesis of the nation and define its historical agency in this process, the expert and watchful role of the lawyers gathered in various academies, scientific associations and commemorative commissions, the production of cultural objects as texts, monuments and public works, places and memory vehicles accompanying the celebrations and reaffirming their sense, and, finally, the contradictions and contingencies of the Commemorations: the distance between celebration plans and their effective implementation. The articles by Jefferson Jaramillo and Carlos del Cairo, Camilo de Melo and Monica Giedelman and Oscar Rueda account for the processes of musealization and patrimonialization associated with objects, practices and symbols that societies choose as part of its historical development and

are constitutive of its identity and cultural values, each deserving protection, preservation and recognition. The first article addresses the controversial entry in the collection of The National Museum of Colombia of a personal item belonging to a famous guerrilla as well as the setting of exoticizing Ecomuseums in the Colombian Amazon. The second presents an interesting reflection on the relationship between museums, memory and heritage, and socializes the Project *Girasol-Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology USP*, which was held recently in a favela in São Paulo. Finally, the third takes the departmental development plans from Santander (Colombia) as a source for the study of processes of patrimonialization and stimulus of the cultural and historical tourism set up in this region.

Another proposed analytical input is the relationship between of memory with space, with the territory. Along with the celebrations, most of the studies dealing with the memory policies and public uses of history are based on the relationship between memory and space, especially in relation to monuments, memorials, territorial markings and historical sites. Paolo Vignolo presents an interesting approach to a “memory place” par excellence: the cemetery, the “city of the dead”, which functions as a mirror that reflects the history and cultural, identity policies, and the memory of the “city of the alive “. Specifically, Vignolo delves into the history of the Central Cemetery of Bogotá and what seems to become the new “memory Avenue”, El Dorado Avenue or 26th Street to finish highlighting the relevance-at the present time of historical memory construction and peace negotiations in Colombia- of the newly opened Center for Memory, Peace and Reconciliation.

Moreover, the article by Victor Francisco Sampeдро Blanco, Bruno Miguel Carriço dos Reis and José Manuel Sánchez Duarte introduces us to the problem of the influence of the media in shaping the collective memory, especially in transitional justice contexts, historical truth finding and repair. The authors trace the historical representations of Franco and the transition to democracy in the television serial *Wonder Years* from a field study with questionnaires in thirty-two discussion groups, which yielded the identification of eight different types of memories regarding

these historical processes, determined by the generation, socio-political environment and the degree of politicization of the participants.

The final article from the dossier, by Graciela Rubio, stands at the crossroads between memory problems, justice and forgiveness. The author analyzes the discourses on historical memory present in the public debate in Chile during the democratic transition, taking as main primary sources reports of the historical truth commissions (Retig, 1994 and Valech, 2004). Rubio points out the influence of Catholic culture in the processes of historical memory processing in Chile, and raises the impossibility of forgiveness as a condition

for reconciliation, which runs the risk of becoming impunity if it is preceded by the guarantee of justice and truth.

This special issue is intended to be (self) critical of theories and memory studies, discuss their role, approaches and scope, and, above all, seeks to give historical depth, approaching the subject proposed from a long-term perspective, to articulate the problem of memory policies and public uses of history with structures such as coloniality, the nation state and not exclusively from armed conflicts and social traumas of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.