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Critical Thought, Media and Practice: Introduction

Matt Mahon

This conversation originated in a roundtable discussion at the London Conference in Critical Thought (LCCT) in 2016, part of a stream addressing questions around media and the production of critical research in the academy and elsewhere. The discussion attempted to address the question or problem of what is *critical* about critical thought, via a discussion of the media in which we presented work specifically designated as 'critical'.[1] At the time, I expressed the problem as follows: Under what conditions can we call thought 'critical', and what does the defining of thought as critical actually do? As the pieces included below illustrate, to address this question it is necessary to go beyond a simple binary between 'criticality' and 'complicity' and engage with forms of work often subordinated to criticality: namely, exaggeration and experimentation.

As a result of my involvement in LCCT, I came to consider the condition under which work comes to be called 'critical' to be an increasingly vital question. Over time the conference has aggregated a huge body of work under the rubric of 'critical thought'. We have never been prescriptive in defining it, and naturally the idea of criticality is invoked very often in abstracts submitted to the conference. Often it serves as an empty signifier – or maybe as what

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[1] I would like to thank the anonymous reviews for their important contributions to this collection. I am also grateful to London Critical, the panellists and all the attendees who contributed to the discussion, both in the session and afterwards by other means. Special thanks go to Lee Mackinnon, who drew on the work of Karen Barad and Hal Foster, among others, to ask what qualities can be recuperated from and resistant to the privileging of datafication and quantity; and to Alice Corble for her account of "how libraries, both historically and today, are crucial levers for bridging, intersecting and evolving the lines that demarcate the (often illusory) binaries of critical/not critical, form/content, digital/analogue, physical/virtual." Corble, Alice and Mackinnon, Lee. 24 June 2016. Papers presented in the "Publishing Critical Thought" roundtable panel at the London Conference in Critical Thought.

McKenzie Wark might call 'a familiar way of describing something that destroys what is familiar'.[2]

I am not aiming here to assert the banality of claims to criticality. Instead I suggest that we should be interested in the conditions under which work that is called 'critical thought' is produced. How do those conditions produce the effect of criticality? And what forms of criticality are privileged if we don't attend to the conditions of their production?

These are very general questions – to shed any light on them, it is necessary to bring in factors more granular than 'conditions of production' in such a broad sense. So 'conditions of production' need to be considered (at least) in terms of the human and technical infrastructure that underpin the creation of critical work, the specific economic situation of the institution in which that thought is produced, the prevailing political winds and a host of other factors, material or otherwise. Those can be considered the parts of the *assemblage* of criticality – to put it in Deleuzean terms, they are its material components, its content[3] – but we should also consider the parts that may seem harder to apprehend, but which cut across the assemblage all the more sharply for that: the expressions of criticality as they appear in specific disciplinary formations, and the moralising dimension of the term 'critical'.

To illustrate what I think is at stake in this discussion, I examine a controversy that began in 2016 in relation to the discipline of Digital Humanities, which concerned its place in the neoliberal university and the idea of (post)criticality. I use this example to describe how the notion of critical research can be mobilised in the interests of an assemblage of interrelated concepts: disciplinarity, morality and complicity; and I suggest experimentation is a more productive terrain on which to address these questions in light of the digital. I also propose that the focus on those concepts over the consideration of infrastructure and economy can itself privilege a narrow idea of criticality.

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[2] Mackenzie Wark, 'The Sublime Language of My Century', Public Seminar blog, 2016, accessed December 13, 2016, http://www.publicseminar.org/2016/05/the-sublime-language-of-my-century/.

[3] Gilles Deleuze and Feliz Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (London: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 88. See Paul Patton, *Deleuze and the Political* (London: Routledge, 2000), 44.

Following this, Ian Rothwell presents an example of a different practice which may help to go beyond criticality in its simple form. Rothwell uses the example of Ian Bogost's online game Cow Clicker to show the value of exaggeration in marking out the limits of traditional forms of criticality online, using the work of Baudrillard and Latour to suggest that questions of failure highlight the limits of our understanding of criticality. Read together, these two articles can help us move towards an understanding of criticality, and its relation to the medium of its production, which suggest an engagement with the critical that is more attentive to the conditions in which it appears and the functions it performs.

Criticality, Experimentation and Complicity in the *LA Review of Books*' Digital Humanities controversy

Matt Mahon

In order to understand the way in which criticality appears as a concept, it is instructive to look at its deployment in policing the boundaries of disciplines. Here I examine a controversy that began in mid-2016, in which the boundary of the humanities (as a general disciplinary grouping of research activity) in general was drawn against Digital Humanities as a subdiscipline, on the grounds of its complicity in the neoliberal economics of the university and the alleged failure of its function as a 'critical' discipline.

The Digital Humanities controversy started with an article by Daniel Allington, Sarah Brouillette and David Golumbia in the LA Review of Books in May 2016.[1] The authors set out a polemic which strongly critiqued the place of Digital Humanities in academia. While the polemic is instructive, and in some respects serves to caution against enthusiastic alignment with market forces in the university, it is the nature of the response to their polemic (from both supporters and opponents of their argument) that I focus on here. That response is particularly interesting in helping us to understand how the idea of criticality is shaped in the interests of an assemblage of interrelated concepts: disciplinarity, morality and complicity. The authors make three key charges against Digital Humanities.

Firstly, they call it the exemplary neoliberal discipline, in that it accelerates tendencies towards neoliberal working conditions already present in the academy: insecure, project-based and 'alt-academic' work presented as the product of empowering career choices, and the redefinition of technical expertise as 'the superior form' of humanist knowledge.[2] The discipline also allows these tendencies to be extended into spaces of the academy that were previously immune to it, namely the bastions of 'individual scholarship' in the humanities.

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[1] Daniel Allington, Sarah Brouillette and David Golumbia, 'Neoliberal Tools (And Archives): A Political History of Digital Humanities', LA Review of Books, May 1, 2016, accessed June 14, 2016, https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/neoliberal-tools-archives-political-history-digital-humanities/,

Secondly, they argue that from its inception as a subdiscipline of textual studies, Digital Humanities has always been part of a general movement opposed to interpretation. They say:

> Digital Humanities has often tended to be anti-interpretive, especially when interpretation is understood as a political activity. Digital Humanities instead aims to archive materials, produce data, and develop software, while bracketing off the work of interpretation to a later moment or leaving it to other scholars – or abandoning it altogether for those who argue that we ought to become 'postcritical'.[3]

And as a corollary to that, Digital Humanities tends to bracket off questions of identity and politics more generally. 'What it stands in opposition to, rather, is *the insistence that academic work should be critical*, and that there is, after all, no work and no way to be in the world that is not political.'[4]

Given these failures, the authors finally argue that in the Digital Humanities '[p]urported technical expertise trumps all other forms of knowledge'.[5] Even where the impulse exists to do better – which for the authors can only mean to avoid reproducing the neoliberal university – the lure of funding and the pressure from managers will force researchers to push on and those neoliberal conditions are reached anyway.

At the end of the article the authors stop short of calling for disengagement, but they conclude that the success of the discipline is entirely premised on its complicity with a neoliberal agenda: 'a consequence of its constitution, from the outset, as precisely such a recapitulation' to the values of Silicon Valley startup culture.[6] If its premises are accepted, the critique has to be taken as damning the

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[2] Allington, Brouillette and Golumbia, 'Neoliberal Tools (And Archives)'.

[3] Allington, Brouillette and Golumbia, 'Neoliberal Tools (And Archives)'.

[4] Allington, Brouillette and Golumbia, 'Neoliberal Tools (And Archives)'. Emphasis in original.

[5] Allington, Brouillette and Golumbia, 'Neoliberal Tools (And Archives)'.

[6] Allington, Brouillette and Golumbia, 'Neoliberal Tools (And Archives)'.

Digital Humanities to the scrapheap. Given the three charges (being the acceleration of neoliberalisation of the institution, the bracketing of the interpretive and the political, and especially that Digital Humanities by its very nature wills the neoliberalisation of the academy through the primacy of the technical), it seems difficult to come to any kind of compromise. By implication, this polemic is a call for a moral stance against Digital Humanities by any academic who wishes to call themselves 'critical'.

I don't want to attempt an answer to the question of whether Allington, Brouillette and Golumbia are right in implicitly calling for such a stance. Since the initial controversy in 2016, a large number of respondents have taken them to task for saying so; for example, Brian Greenspan sensitively addresses the "'*ressentiment*' implicit in the article while recognising the important role that digital humanities serves in "scandalously reveal[ing] the system's components.'"[7] I don't think that such a call (to disengage from the types of research included in the Digital Humanities, or conversely to endorse them) would make sense in light of my earlier question: under what conditions can we call thought 'critical', and what does the defining of thought as critical actually do?

Broadly, there have been two types of response to the polemic. The first is those that only engage with the idea of Digital Humanities as a critical discipline narrowly bounded by a moralistic definition of criticality – and end up arguing that Digital Humanities is a 'good' discipline, because of the content of the work that it produces.[8] The counterpart to this response is that the addition of technical tools and software and data to humanities research is good, in that it permits critique, again on the level of content. Equally, some suggest that in response to the material effect (and, arguably, cause) of the 'problem' of Digital Humanities – the acceleration of neoliberalism in the academy – we should take an accelerationist approach. After all, we can't defeat neoliberalism with interpretation (says Alan Jacobs), so we may as well enthusiastically engage with its effects.[9]

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[7] Brian Greenspan, 'The Scandal of Digital Humanities', Carlton Hyperlab blog, January 23, 2018, accessed June 4, 2018, https://carleton.ca/hyperlab/2018/the-scandal-of-digital-humanities/.

[8] Alan Liu, 'Drafts for *Against the Cultural Singularity*' (book in process), Alan Liu Institutional homepage, May 2, 2016, accessed November 13, 2016, http://liu.english.ucsb.edu/drafts-for-against-the-cultural-singularity/.

The responses that I find more productive are those that do not dead-end in a narrow definition of critique, but rather break down the dichotomies that the authors of the LARB piece establish: support staff versus researchers, critical-interpretive work versus corporate startup culture, the solo researcher versus the lab. (I should note at this point that Alice Corble's contribution to the LCCT roundtable discussion addressed this very question in more detail than I could do justice to here). Stewart Varner, among others, has argued that the distinction between support staff and researchers is nowhere near as clear cut in this field as is made out. Quoting Laurie Allen, he argues that outside of the specific case of Digital Humanities, '[h]umanities scholarship has always been dependent on "huge amounts of hidden and unpaid or unacknowledged labor" from students, research assistants, contingent faculty, librarians, archivists and others'.[10] Equally, Jacobs highlights the 'long history' of critical and scholarly work carried out under the aegis of corporate funding – Claude Shannon's long employment by IBM is his prime example, suggesting that linking criticality to moral purity would expel us all from the category.[11]

So what is really happening in this critique of Digital Humanities? One factor is, obviously, a policing of discipline through a concept of criticality understood as a moral category grounded in the interpretive or hermeneutic tradition of literary studies. There is also a genuine attempt to offer some reaction to the neoliberalisation of the academy, but in doing so the authors create a scapegoat in Digital Humanities that privileges a narrow and fairly conservative idea of the conditions under which critical work can be produced.

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[9] Alan Jacobs, 'Critiquing the Critique of Digital Humanities', The New Atlantis blog, May 2, 2016, accessed November 13, 2016, http://text-patterns.thenewatlantis.com/2016/05/critiquing-critique-of-digital.html.

[10] Stewart Varner, 'A few thoughts on the whole DH, neoliberalism, LARB thing', stewartvarner.com, May 6, 2016, accessed June 1, 2016, https://stewartvarner.com/2016/05/06/a-few-thoughts-on-the-whole-dh-neoliberalism-larb-thing/ (Varner is partially quoting Laurie Allen here).

[11] Shannon was employed by IBM as a researcher when he produced his groundbreaking communications theory. See Wendy Chun, *Programmed Visions: Software and Memory* (London: The MIT Press, 2011).

Alan Liu, whose own fraternal critique of Digital Humanities is quoted in the LARB article, has rightly pointed out that the concept of critique deployed here is aimed at shutting out other forms of work which might be thought of as critical even if they do not resemble the kind of interpretive, hermeneutic approach that the authors prefer. He suggests Digital Humanities could enact a form of critique through infrastructure as a possible alternative: he turns to social constructivism and neoinstitutionalism from sociology and information science, to create a 'portfolio' of methods that together form a 'weak antifoundationalism'.[12] He says,

> Taken together, these approaches explore how organizations are structured as social institutions by so-called 'carriers' of beliefs and practices (i.e., *culture*), among which information-technology infrastructure is increasingly crucial.

This seems to me to be a fairly weak replacement for any kind of unbounded criticality, and one which doesn't necessarily open up the terrain beyond the narrow terms of interpretive critique that the LARB authors seem to prefer. Indeed, he goes on to concede that compared to network studies or new media studies, Digital Humanities avoids 'broader commentary directed externally at society and social justice.'[13]

Perhaps the best afterword to the original controversy is one provided by David Golumbia himself in a 2017 blogpost. Addressing his critics, and engaging with what he considers to be their misreading of his argument, he suggests that the real issue with Digital Humanities isn't simply that it takes funding away from the 'traditional' humanities by deploying novel technologies in research. The problem is broader, and stems from the 'alignment of the [Digital Humanities] project against what it falsely projects as 'traditional' academic practice.' He argues that practitioners of Digital Humanities (with a few notable exceptions, including Liu) have no desire to maintain the humanities as they are, and as such accept the definition of all humanities research (outside Digital Humanities) as 'traditional' and therefore as stale and replaceable by Digital Humanities.[14]

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[12] Liu, 'Drafts for *Against the Cultural Singularity*'.

[13] Liu, 'Drafts for *Against the Cultural Singularity*'.

By untethering the original critique from the question of technology, Golumbia's argument becomes circular: 'traditional' humanities comes to stand for anything outside of Digital Humanities, and Digital Humanities is defined by its lack of interest in preserving anything outside itself. The dismissal of the humanities in general as traditional, he says, is what produces the possibility for Digital Humanities work to so routinely disregard the humanistic research Golumbia finds appealing.

The way in which the original argument is modified is instructive. Although the target shifts (not the destructiveness of the tools used in digital humanities research, but the framing of the discipline itself), the terrain on which the debate plays out is still one which accepts the premise that good 'critical' research is humanistic and moral. The alliance between digital humanists and the financial engines of research is threatening to Golumbia because it represents the end of critical humanism as the basis of the critical. Golumbia quotes from Immanuel Wallerstein at length: 'Historical capitalism has been, we know, Promethean in its aspirations' and we should thus be suspicious of the Promethean nature of Digital Humanities.[15]

Just as I do not want to propose a moral stance towards Digital Humanities as a proxy for a moral stance towards capitalism, I also don't want to make a proposal for an alternative definition of criticality here. By way of opening this discussion back up to that general question – what are the conditions of production of criticality – I would point to an argument about method made by Jussi Parikka, and more broadly to the value of experimentation as it appears throughout Deleuze's writing.[16]

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[14] David Golumbia, 'The Destructiveness of the Digital Humanities ('Traditional' Part II)' Uncomputing blog, June 5, 2017, https://www.uncomputing.org/?p=1868.

[15] David Golumbia, 'The Destructiveness of the Digital Humanities'.

[16] As laid out in, for example, the plateau 'Introduction to Schizoanalysis': see Gilles Deleuze and Feliz Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (London: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 371, especially the footnote quoting John Cage: 'The word experimental is apt, providing it is understood not as descriptive of an act to be later judged in terms of success and failure, but simply as of an act the outcome of which is unknown.'

Discussing media labs and maker spaces (which we could probably take to be a particular flavour of Digital Humanities space, if we steer clear of the narrow definition that Allington, Brouillette and Golumbia employed), Parikka raises the idea that we need to think differently about the temporality of the emergence of such spaces. He argues that we should ask '[n]ot just *what is a lab* but *why now*?'[17] The lab is a symptom, and as such we should think of it 'not merely as an internal place of new methods or new forms of creative or academic activity but as a fold between such techniques and external political and economic conditions of current institutions'.[18] This is in aid of making explicit the assemblage which engenders such spaces, without an over-reliance on fixing that definition – if we do so, we murder in order to dissect.[19]

So, after Parikka, might we be able to ask not just 'what is criticality?', but: 'why is criticality being invoked now, for this end, as the moral kernel to be protected from the neoliberal university?' What if we instead thought of the concept of criticality as itself at stake in this folding of techniques and conditions? And as a corollary to that, in this particular context, why do the lines of the dichotomy 'critical/not critical' appear to fall along the distinction between archive, data, software, image on the one hand and published matter – text – on the other?

I would argue that this points to the limit of criticality as a concept – it is restricted by its pairing with complicity, as it is presented in the original LARB account. If your relationship to your subject (and by extension your discipline and the material infrastructure that supports it) should be critical, properly, and you engage with it 'improperly', you are complicit by default. But complicity needs to be analysed over criticality. The corollary question should be asked, then: What methods are available to us to escape the dichotomy? The way to find out is to experiment with the limits of what might be considered 'critical'.

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[17] Jussi Parikka, 'The Lab as a Symptom', Machinology blog, May 10, 2016, accessed June 14, 2016, .

[18] Parikka, 'The Lab as a Symptom'.

[19] See Claire Colebrook, 'Time that is Intolerant', in *Memory in the Twenty-First Century: New Critical Perspectives from the Arts Humanities and Social Sciences*, ed. Sebastian Groes (London: Palgrave, 2016), 153.

A ‘Critical’ Social Game on Facebook: *Cow Clicker* and pleasure in disappointment

Ian Rothwell

Click on cow; click on cow...

This repetitive list encompasses the game-play element of Ian Bogost’s social game *Cow Clicker,* which was released on Facebook in July 2010. It goes without saying that the game was unsatisfying and disappointing. It was totally and completely boring.

Cow Clicker was initially released for a seminar on social gaming at New York University. Bogost fabricated it in order to reveal and make apparent the mechanics of online social games. It was his view that these games, for example, and in particular FarmVille, operate by dumbing down the user’s interaction with the game to merely clicking. They also create a desire for more clicks, which can then be sold to the user. In this understanding, ‘click-based’ social games are games without the ‘play’ element: this is to say an industry that offers no marked difference from the system of production surrounding the player. *Cow Clicker* was made to be fully functional on Facebook. But it exaggerated the repetitive and boring aspects of click-based gaming. We might understand these exaggerations as Brechtian-type ‘alienation effects’, produced in order to alienate or distance the user from the game, thus allowing them to reflect upon and achieve a more critical understanding. However Bogost’s game was a success. It inadvertently achieved a level of popularity comparable to the games it sought to criticize.

‘You get a cow’, Bogost writes, ‘you can click on it. In six hours, you can click it again. Clicking earns you clicks. You can buy custom “premium” cows through micropayments…and you can buy your way out of the time delay by spending it. You can publish feed stories about clicking your cow…Cow Clicker is Facebook games distilled to their essence'.[1] The games that *Cow Clicker* 'distilled' are, primarily, those made by social game developer Zynga, whose most popular titles include ChefVille, CityVille, CastleVille, FishVille, YoVille, Café World, and the aforementioned FarmVille. Eighty percent of Zynga's revenue is reported to come from in-game payments, usually for more clicks, by Facebook users. FarmVille is its most popular game and it allows users to tend to a plot of farmland with click-based game-play. It was launched on Facebook in June 2009, and reached 10 million daily active users within six weeks. By January 2013, its sequel had a reported 8.1 million daily active users and 43.5 million monthly active users.[2]

Players begin with a simple farm, which they are given the opportunity to personalize and expand. They are allowed to plant virtual crops that can be harvested. The technology journalist Doug Gross explains that there is 'no way to "win"', instead 'players take satisfaction in building big, fancy farms that they can showcase to their friends.'[3] To cater to this demand FarmVille offers a range of desirable commodities (namely, cute farmyard animals) that can be purchased with more clicks. The 'click' is the most significant commodity in FarmVille's economy. Players are assigned a limited number, but can buy more. An article in TechCrunch magazine reported that as of February 2013, FarmVille (which is initially free to play) had generated over $1 billion dollars through such in-game purchases.[4] By creating consumer desire for the ability to click, Zynga established a wildly successful business model. Brian Reynolds, Zynga's chief game designer, outlines the approach in simple terms:

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1 Ian Bogost, 'Cow Clicker: The making of Obsession', Ian Bogost [personal website], July 2010, accessed March 2, 2013, http://bogost.com/blog/cow_clicker_1.

2 See Mike Thompson, 'The Top 25 Facebook games of January 2013', Inside Social Games, January 2013, accessed August 1, 2013, http://www.insidesocialgames.com/2013/01/01/the-top-25-facebook-games-of-january-2013/.

3 Doug Gross, 'The Facebook games that millions love (and hate)', CNN News, February 2010, accessed August 2, 2013, http://edition.cnn.com/2010/TECH/02/23/facebook.games/?hpt=Sbin.

4 See Anthony Ha, 'Zynga's Pincus Says FarmVille Has Passed $1B In Total Player Purchases', TechCrunch, February 2013, accessed August 1, 2013, http://techcrunch.com/2013/02/05/farmville-1-billion/.

'We'll give you, whatever, 50 clicks today, and tomorrow you can have 50 more…[b]ut if you want 100 clicks today, we'll sell you more clicks.'[5]

This coerced form of pleasure has led to numerous comparisons between online social games and the 'Skinner Box' (otherwise known as an Operant Conditioning Chamber). This was a cage developed in the 1930s by the behavioral psychologist Burrhus Frederic Skinner that illustrated the manipulation of behavior through simple stimulus and reward mechanisms. The 'Skinner Box' revealed that a rat would become ensnared in an open cage fitted with a lever, which it could hit in order to receive a jolt of reinforcement – i.e. a food pellet. Skinner's test went on to show that the rat became conditioned by this process and continued to remain in the cage even when the reinforcement stopped. For critic Nick Yee, this manipulation typically now takes place in online role-playing games, in which clicking is a predominant part of the game-play. Yee suggests that people on these games begin to 'feel achievement through continuous mouse-clicking', despite there being no reward or substantive incentive.[6] From this perspective, we might argue that the users of FarmVille become ensnared like rats in an open cage. The 'alienation effects' employed in Bogost's game function to make this Skinner's Box analogy clear. The game restricts interaction to merely clicking on a cow thereby foregrounding the prescriptive and monotonous labour required to play a game like FarmVille. Furthermore, as in FarmVille, *Cow Clicker* allowed players to purchase in-game currency that could be used to buy more cows and more clicks. When a player clicked a cow, their profile would announce 'I'm clicking a cow' on the Facebook newsfeed: advertising the application and instigating competition in other gamers. 'As a play experience', Bogost explains in an article in Wired magazine, 'it[s]…nothing more than a collection of cheap ruses, blatantly designed to get players to keep coming back, exploit their friends, and part with their money'.[7] He continues to make clear that he 'didn't set out to make it fun…Players were supposed to recognize that clicking a cow is a ridiculous thing to want to do'.[8] So, by glibly drawing attention to the phrase 'cash-cow', Bogost's application was intended to present the online social game for what it really is: simply, an industry that offers no challenge, no effort, and no gain for the player.[9]

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[5] Brian Reynolds quoted in Jason Tanz, 'The Curse of Cow Clicker: How a Cheeky Satire Became a Videogame Hit', *Wired*, December 20, 2011, accessed March 2, 2013, http://www.wired.com/magazine/2011/12/ff_cowclicker/all/.

[6] Nick Yee compares the MMORPG *Everquest* to a Skinner's Box in an article titled 'The Virtual Skinner Box'. He suggests that particular forms of online games condition their players into perpetuating specific operations: 'Once the rat learns that pressing the lever is rewarded, a food pellet does not need to be dropped every time and the rat will still continue pressing the lever. It is in the same way that *EverQuest* shapes players to pursue more and more elaborate blacksmithing or tailoring combinations.' See Nick Yee, 'The Virtual Skinner Box', Adriane – Understanding MMORPG Addiction, accessed April 20, 2015, http://www.nickyee.com/eqt/skinner.html.

In this respect *Cow Clicker* set out to reveal that our seemingly insignificant clicks have a material exchange value: that they are a source of value and thus constitute a form of labor, which is exploited by online service providers like Zynga. To help illustrate the laborious aspect of click-based gaming, Bogost implemented absurd restrictions on *Cow Clicker's* game-play. A player was allowed only one click every six hours, and in-game rewards required excessive dedication: for instance, a player would receive a 'golden cowbell' after reaching 100,000 clicks. Despite these limitations and the simple fact that the game was designed to create dissatisfaction rather than pleasure, it became hugely popular. It even maintained its popularity after Bogost announced the 'Cowpocalypse'. This was an attempt, ultimately in vain, to kill interest in the social game. Bogost removed all the cows and left only patches of grass. Post-'Cowpocalypse' players could only click on blades of grass, and 100,000,000 clicks would be rewarded with a 'diamond cowbell'. The fact that players continued to play, despite the overwhelmingly dissatisfying experience and meager set of rewards on offer, exposed a strange and unexpected outcome of

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[7] Ian Bogost quoted in Tanz, 'The Curse of Cow Clicker'.

[8] Bogost quoted in Tanz, 'The Curse of Cow Clicker'.

[9] Bogost details four aspects of this type of online social gaming that he finds to be problematic on his website. They are listed, as follows: 'Enframing' - a reference to Martin Heidegger's use of the term in 'The Question Concerning Technology' (1954). For Bogost's purpose enframing refers to the abstraction of 'friends' within social games; i.e. that 'friends' are treated as resources, both for the player and for the game developer, who relies on word-of-mouth advertising among friends to replicate the system and get more users. 'Compulsion' - this refers to the Skinner Box analogy, compelling players to stay in the proverbial cage. 'Optionalism' - Bogost suggests that social games applications are divorced from any sense of challenge or effort, and therefore represent 'actuations of operations on expired timers…social games', he argues, 'are games you don't have to play'. 'Destroyed Time' - this point is self-evident. See Bogost, 'Cow Clicker'.

Bogost's game. It revealed a form of radically empty consumption and radically empty pleasure, indicated by our repetitive clicking on a schematic representation of grass, which looks like a plain green rectangle. This is perhaps symptomatic of Maurizia Boscagli's diagnosis of contemporary mass culture in her book *Stuff Theory: Everyday Objects, Radical Materialism* (2014). Boscagli writes that 'we are finally consuming the unconsumable…the very meaninglessness of life, and the impossibility of finding satisfaction in the commodity…now we consume both their immateriality and our recognition of their ineffectuality as commodity fetishes'.[10] And, as in *Cow Clicker* (particularly after the Cowpocalyspe), we 'consume the acknowledgment that we see through them'.[11]

Bogost did not anticipate this new form of empty consumer pleasure. His critique was not experienced as critique, but as just another game. Ironically, Bogost himself also became ensnared in the social game environment that he had created. He admits taking pleasure in designing new cows for people to buy. It is as if he couldn't help but willingly participate in the machine of repetitive, meaningless and empty consumption that he had knowingly established as such. 'I was spending more time on it than I was comfortable with', Bogost admits. 'But I was compelled to do it. I couldn't stop'.[12] We might suggest, then, that *Cow Clicker's* critical game was ultimately no different from FarmVille, or anything that Zynga has produced. In support of this, we can look to a strangely unironic review of the game on a gaming aggregation website, which praises *Cow Clicker* as:

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[10] Maurizia Boscagli, *Stuff Theory: Everyday Objects, Radical Materialism* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 243.

[11] Boscagli, *Stuff Theory*, 243.

[12] Jason Tanz details Bogost's personal obsession with the game in his *Wired* article. Tanz writes: 'Bogost kept his players hooked by introducing new cows for them to purchase using virtual mooney or real money. They ranged from the crowd-pleasingly topical (a cow covered in oil and sporting a BP-esque logo on its rump) to the aggressively cynical (the Stargrazer Cow, which was just the original cow facing the opposite direction and for which Bogost charged 2,500 mooney). They may have looked simple, but they were time-consuming to conceive and draw. By the end of the year, Bogost was devoting as much as 10 hours a week to Cow Clicker. Drawings of cows cluttered his house and office'. See Tanz, 'The Curse of Cow Clicker'.

> a wonderful and addictive Incremental Clicking/Tapping video game…It allows you to buy a Cow and keep on clicking it to earn money that will help you buy more cows and upgrades. You keep on clicking on the cows to earn more clicks, use them to buy upgrades or send them to your friends and enjoy playing this brilliant time killing game. *Cow Clicker* is a great source of entertainment for all those who want to spend time clicking and clicking and clicking. If you love playing Idle clicking video games, you should definitely check it out. With all the wonderful visuals, involving and addictive game-play and easy touch, tilt and click controls, Cow Clicker offers plain clicking and tapping fun.[13]

In order to understand how Facebook digested the purportedly oppositional *Cow Clicker* platform, dissolving its critical intention and rendering it the same as everything else, we can look at Facebook's EdgeRank system. This is a tool, or algorithm, by which Facebook structures its content. EdgeRank arranges all objects existing in each user's network of relations (friends, liked products, associated groups, and general activity) and orders them on the user's 'Newsfeed'. Objects are ranked according to their 'edge'. This refers to the amount of interaction that the object has been subject to. More interaction means a stronger 'edge' and a more prominent position on a Newsfeed.[14] EdgeRank shows how Facebook orders, restricts and frames user generated content. It gives information a statistical value that is wholly indifferent to Bogost's critical intention. Therefore, whilst the *Cow Clicker* project went 'viral', it did so, we can suggest, only according to the rules of an EdgeRank system that ironed out its critical intent and parodic import. People played, and maybe people played sarcastically, but it all inevitably led to the standardized Newsfeed advert: 'I'm clicking a cow' – a disclosure of the user's recognition of its meaningless and empty sort of consumption, which they nevertheless go along with. Presumably, this recognition has always been a part of Zynga's applications. It seems, therefore, that Bogost's game worked too well. And, despite his best intentions, each morning, millions of farmers around the world rise to continue toiling in the digital fields of FarmVille and the empty pastures *of Cow Clicker*.[15] It is partly because of Facebook's valorisation of quantitative data rather than qualitative content that Bogost's *Cow Clicker* did not achieve its intended impact. As long as it produced data (which it did), it was OK: it didn't cause any friction in Facebook's system, despite aiming to criticize its lucrative social game industry. This is perhaps because all activity and communication on Facebook falls under the rubric of 'immaterial labor', which, in Seb Franklin's words, 'describes a radical dispersal of value production into all activity that adds value to an object or service'.[16] These are activities not normally recognized as work, but that, in Facebook's system of production are apprehended as purposeful or productive behavior. Certainly this is related to the apparent failure of Bogost's critique. However, to my mind, the fact that users willingly and enthusiastically participated in its unsatisfying experience demands further pause for thought. This unforeseen effect also caused significant disruption to Bogost's critical intention, as its mass of users gleefully affirmed the passive role designated to them by the click-based social game.

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[13] Saif, '29 Games like Cow Clicker', More Games Like, November 12, 2015, accessed June 18, 2016, http://www.moregameslike.com/20-games-like-cow-clicker-for-android-and-ios/.

[14] Technology journalist Jason Kincaid explains this process in more detail: 'First, there's an affinity score between the viewing user and the item's creator — if you send your friend a lot of Facebook messages and check their profile often, then you'll have a higher affinity score for that user than you would, say, an old acquaintance you haven't spoken to in years. Second, there's a weight given to each type of Edge. A comment probably has more importance than a Like, for example. And finally there's the most obvious factor — time. The older an Edge is, the less important it becomes'. See Jason Kincaid 'EdgeRank: The Secret Sauce That Makes Facebook's News Feed Tick', Tech Crunch, April 2010, accessed March 10, 2013, http://techcrunch.com/2010/04/22/facebook-edgerank/.

Jean Baudrillard believed that the strength of the 'mass' resided in its inertia, its neutrality; its ability to frustrate the logic of the system that addresses it as such. In this respect, the mass never simply 'constitutes a passive receiving structure for media messages'.[17] Whilst the agency of the mass does not dismantle the system that calls it into existence, it has the tendency to undermine it in its use. For instance, it often displays what Baudrillard calls an 'excess of conformity' to cultural norms, 'giving the same coded responses, with the same exasperating, endless conformity, only to better escape', Baudrillard writes, 'any definition as object'.[18] Patricia Cormack has usefully glossed Baudrillard's concept, she explains that:

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[15] This phrase is taken from Doug Gross's research into Zynga's FarmVille. We can equally apply it, I think, to Cow Clicker. Gross states that the most common time for users to play FarmVille is between the hours of 8 and 9 am. So it tends to be something people do as soon as they wake up, becoming a part of a morning ritual. Gross, 'The Facebook games that millions love (and hate)'.

[16] Seb Franklin, *Control: Digitality as Cultural Logic* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015), Kindle edition.

[17] Jean Baudrillard, *In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities…Or, the End of the Social and Other Essays,* trans. Paul Foss, Paul Patton and John Johnson (New York: Semiotext(e), 1983), 42.

> As a mass, we do not deflect back the messages projected on to us, nor do we take up the projects of History…or the Social…handed to us, but instead enthusiastically take on the formless object position claimed for us. This passivity allows for the absorption of messages and suspension of meaning. When asked to exercise a serious and considered political will, we offer instead an endless delight in popular spectacles. When asked to express consumer preferences, we vacillate capriciously. When asked to be objects of social policy, we refuse to provide or comprehend practical information. Since this system of communication requires that we, as a mass, are at once subjects (with real wants, desires, opinion, wills) and objects (to be addressed, measured, polled, surveyed…) the production of confusion, hyper-conformity, circular talk, contradiction and infinite hesitation works to…neutralise the logic of the media system.[19]

It is the awkward aspect, or negative potential of the passivity of the mass, as Baudrillard defined it, an impulsive tendency to do what is, or what seems to be, not wanted, that arguably accounts for the absurd pleasure expressed in the disappointment and boredom of Cow Clicker. Indeed we might argue that it was in this aspect that Bogost's work achieved some semblance of criticality. After all, Baudrillard's discussion of the mass was part of his formulation of an agency that does not dismantle, subvert or transgress, as, for instance, the historic avant-garde is often theorised. Instead, he writes, it displays, amongst other things, an 'immanent form of humour' that neutralises, confuses and contradicts the system that addresses it.[20] Certainly there is a similar sort of humour that emerged on *Cow Clicker*: not the humour of Bogost's satire, but the humour of its users, playing along despite the shoddy experience offered by the game.

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[18] Baudrillard, *In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities*, 33.

[19] Patricia Cormack, 'Masses', in *The Baudrillard Dictionary*, ed. Richard G. Smith (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 119.

The question of 'criticality' in the current context forms the focus of an essay in Hal Foster's recent book *Bad New Days* (2015). Foster seeks to defend the continuing importance of 'criticality' in the contemporary public sphere, despite the many threats to it which he acknowledges, including for instance, the 'real-time' of communication technologies that dissuade reflective thought; the denial of an 'outside' position, or what is otherwise known as *critical distance*, within an age of 'real subsumption'. What Foster means by 'criticality', he explains, is 'resistance to any operation whereby human constructs…are projected above us and granted an agency of their own, from which position and with which power they are more likely to overbear us than to enlighten us'.[21] So criticality equates to resisting and criticising, or at least exposing mystification and its oppressive functions.

Certainly the culture of our times is characterised by the kinds of oppressive and mystifying operations Foster describes. However, as we have seen with *Cow Clicker*, these oppressive and mystifying operations are often already known: here users are complicit in their own exploitation, meaning there is no need for the demystification tactics of traditional criticism. This was perhaps Bogost's mistake with *Cow Clicker*. He seems to enact the role of the self-important 'courageous critic', discussed in Bruno Latour's essay 'Why has Critique Run out of Steam?' (2004). This is a critic who takes upon themselves the duty of showing 'that what the naïve believers are doing with objects is simply a projection of their wishes onto a material entity that does nothing at all by itself'.[22] This figure, Latour writes with tongue firmly in cheek, 'who alone remains aware and attentive, who never sleeps, turns those false objects into fetishes that are supposed to be nothing, but mere empty white screens on which is projected the power of society, domination, whatever'.[23] The problem with this position is that the critic, here, for instance, Bogost, does not turn their critical or anti-fetishistic gaze back on their own beliefs. This unreflective belief in the traditions and tactics of criticism and demystification, Latour leads us to suggest, counts as a fetish in its own right. Certainly Bogost did not turn his critical gaze back on the supposed criticality of *Cow Clicker*, which was debunked by its users gleefully played along with a sort of Baudrillardian 'mass humour', in the process confusing and extinguishing its critical claim.

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[20] Baudrillard, *In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities*, 30.

[21] Hal Foster, *Bad New Days: Art, Criticism, Emergency* (London: Verso, 2015), Kindle edition.

[22] Bruno Latour, 'Why Has Critique Run out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern', *Critical Inquiry* 30, no. 2 (Winter 2004), 237.

This, I think, brings into the open a significant challenge facing criticality in the contemporary world. It exposes us to the problem of a critical perspective grounded in dated tropes, derived from a time when oppositions such as consumption and production, leisure and labour, criticality and complicity (etc.) were more fixed. In this respect, these so-called 'critical' positions can only perpetuate an implausible representation of our social situation. Now, I think, by contrast these oppositions seem interweaved and twisted together; and I think not just our critical vocabulary, but our critical imaginations – our capacity to imagine new forms of criticism and opposition – must be renewed accordingly. Without question, this is something that we can glean from the putative failure of Bogost's critical social game.

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[23] Latour, 'Why Has Critique Run out of Steam?', 238.

Introduction: Objects of Memory and Rituals of Memorialisation as Fields of Struggle

Federica Rossi and Kanika Sharma

Monuments, memorial stones, flags, museums, street names, and official commemorations all act as objects and sites of memory. They seek to perform multiple roles and actions at once: they attempt to embody individual and collective memories of events and people; and act as a bond between the memory, the person(s) that they seek to incarnate, and the public to whom they are addressed. While doing so, their most important role is to invoke an emotion in the viewer – these emotions can vary from anger, to shame, to victimhood, to pride and nationalism, amongst others. Not only do objects and sites of memory invoke such emotions, they also help to celebrate the ability of the human spirit to overcome particular events. Memorials to genocide and war including the Holocaust memorials, or geo-spatial commemorations of national events such as Nelson's column in Trafalgar Square or the Monument in central London, each stand as a marker to the perseverance of the human spirit. In addition, these sites provide the viewer with a space to communicate – this communication may be with one's self in order to come to terms with a personal loss; or to communicate with the deceased, for instance at sites of accidents and murders marked by a proliferation of cards and flowers, such as in Paris, where the terrorist attacks took place in 2015, or in London, at the Grenfell Tower. The site, or object, allows for communication with other members of the public who may visit the space in the future, or can act as a call for political action. Often the type of communication will be determined by the type of memorial and who creates it – here it is important to distinguish between planned and spontaneous memorials. National or cultural memorials are often planned and created by the state and exist on grand scales; they epitomise the official or dominant interpretation of historical events. These sites are conceived of and built to signify the unity of a society, its reconciliation after a conflict, and go a long way in materially representing the national identity. Through their mostly unquestioned presence in public spaces they underscore the legitimacy of the imagined community[1] towards whom they are aimed. In opposition to this, people, communities, or groups, also spontaneously build their own collective memorials to commemorate specific events. This kind of community memorial may call for the state to mark the site and commemorate the event in an official way, or it may act as a counter-narrative challenging the official one and giving visibility to marginalised memories and groups.

Despite the claim of unity and cohesion that official memorials seem to express, these objects and chosen sites are the product of political decisions, competitions, and negotiations within and outside the political field. Their selection is imposed from a position of socio-political and legal power, and they reflect the construction of a dominant narrative of the past. For each memory that they include, such sites hide memories and concurrent divergent interpretations of the past that the state wants to exclude from national historiography. In this perspective, they tell more about the power relations that characterise a society at a given moment than about the past event they refer to. What happens when an official memorial triggers conflicts and resistances instead of the unity and cohesion that the state seeks to generate? The official character of these objects or sites never completely hides the cracks that surround them: interstitial memories, memories that are sought to be silenced by those very political strategies of memorialisation, the neglected memories of the subalterns or defeated struggles can, under certain circumstances, re-surface and claim their share. And these symbols of the past become fields of struggle between the sovereign (not only the nation-state, but also international and multi-national organisations and companies, local or global bourgeoisie, armed forces and the like) and counter-hegemonic movements and forces (including peoples' mobilisations, local uprisings, anti-colonialist struggles, class struggles, workers' movements and others).

Numerous social scientists have highlighted the role of monuments, museums, memorial stones, and commemorations as fixing and shaping the collective memory/knowledge of past events, as well as the processes through which these spaces and symbols are decided and organised. Ceremonies of commemoration have been analysed as forms of ritual action and social practice: Paul Connerton, for example, defines commemorations as specific types of ritual action through which the past is represented (or performed) and re-enacted.[2] The functionalist tradition, following Emile Durkheim's[3] approach, sees the goal of all ritual representations as the social reproduction of cohesion and the moral unity of society or of a given community. Memory studies, however, have generally paid less attention to the conflicts, contestation, questioning of those objects and rituals, to the visible and less visible interactions that are shaping the life of, and reinvesting, those sites of memory.[4] This collection situates itself in a more critical tradition, and instead prefers to analyse, as suggested by Stephane Latté[5], commemorative celebrations – both official and unofficial – as forms of political mobilisation. This means that commemorations and memorials are observed as sites where political divides and dissent from official narratives of past events appear and become (at least temporarily) manifest. The aim of the present collection is to unveil the unofficial and conflictual processes that constantly unmake and remake the memorial sites.

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[1] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined communities* (London: Verso, 1983).

The discussions generated by the stream 'Objects of memory and rituals of memorialisation as fields of struggle' emphasised the conflicts surrounding social representation of the past and the need to analyse memorial sites as fields of struggle and power relations that reflect wider power relations in a given society at a specific time. The collection consequently aims to reintroduce political agency and conflict at the heart of the analysis, grounding it in empirical case studies, and thus questioning aspects that are often overlooked by studies of social and cultural memories. The three studies presented in the collection challenge the univocal, supposedly consensual, representation that official memorial stones, monuments, and commemorative days attempt to impose. Instead they attempt to show how present (political) struggles shape the representation and understanding of the past, and how the legacy of past events is continuously reconstructed retrospectively, questioned and contested. They place those conflicts in their historical, political and social contexts, and critically analyse the dynamics of memorialisation: following the approach that Peter Novick developed in his study of the Holocaust in American life[6] and using the works of the French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs, the papers presented here question how "present concerns determine what of the past we remember and how we remember it".[7] This collection aims to question the complex relation between the past and the present as it is expressed through monuments, symbols, and rituals of memorialisation; that is the way in which past events are given visibility through physical contours in order to 're-shape' history to serve the aims of the present. It explores the spatio-temporal politics of objects of memory, the way they contribute to the politicisation of public space, and the social and political meaning they carry and/or contest.

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[2] Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

[3] Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (New York: The Free Press [1915] 1965).

[4] Pierre Nora, *Lieux de mémoire* and Nora (Paris : Gallimard, 1992) and Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire", *Representations* 26 (1989).

[5] Stéphane Latté, "Le choix des larmes. La commémoration comme mode de protestation" *Politix* 110 (2015).

This means that each contribution, as well as the collection as a whole, presents a study of a specific case in its socio-political and historical context, articulates different levels of analysis, from local to national, and associates the examination of particular events or policies with the understanding of long term conflicts and divides. These articles show the social and political dynamics of what may at first glance be perceived as static objects, such as a memorial stone or a monument: not only do they underline how political interests and historical contingencies shape memory policies, but they also draw attention to the lasting existence of marginal, interstitial memories that continue to oppose and challenge, with their very existence, the dominant representations of the past and official attempts at reconstructing a policed, consensual national memory. These are the memories carried by groups that the power holders try to exclude or silence, memories that are expressing *other* identities and taking the forms of everyday and micro-resistances, social interactions, and hidden transcripts.[8] These memories and resistances are rooted in local areas and crystallised into objects or rituals of memorialisation, and all three studies of this collection highlight the significance of space as a support for collective memory. Following Halbwachs's approach they look at the spatial and social frameworks of memory[9] and collective memories to simultaneously combine multiple levels of memories and identities:

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[6] Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American life* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999).
[7] Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American life*, 3.
[8] James C. Scott, *Domination and the arts of resistance. Hidden transcripts* (London: Yale University Press, 1990).

> We can understand each memory as it occurs in individual thought only if we locate each within the thought of the corresponding group. We cannot properly understand their relative strength and the ways in which they combine within individual thought unless we connect the individual to the various groups of which he is simultaneously a member.[10]

Struggles, however, are the central focus of this collection, as they make it possible to seize the complexity of memory policies and politics in a way that the official historiography cannot.

We start in Italy where Federica Rossi's paper examines the polemics and mobilisations surrounding two memorial stones in two different Italian cities: the plaque in memory of the anarchist militant Giuseppe Pinelli in Milan, and the one in remembrance of the victims of the far right bombing at Bologna's railway station. The analysis of the political and social contexts in which these two stones are laid and contested casts light on the recurrent controversies over the political violence and events that characterised the 1970s in Italy. In the second paper, Conny Klocker analyses the recent attempts made by the Russian state to put an end to the people's commemoration of the deportation of Chechen and Ingush populations to Siberia by Stalin in 1944 in the form of an annual 'Day of Memory and Grief'. Instead Vladimir Putin sought to recodify the day as the 'Defender of the Fatherland Day' in an attempt to rewrite history and remove any commemorations that were critical of the state and replace them with a tribute to Russian patriotism. In the last article Ceylan Begüm Yıldız (with some input from Laurent Dissard, who was her co-presenter at the conference) takes us to Turkey to analyse the attempts by the state on one hand, and by people's groups on the other, to assign opposing meanings to the bullet-holed, millennium-old, four-footed minaret in Diyarbakır. While people's groups sought to portray the monument as a space of mourning for the death of a particular human rights activist, Tahir Elçi, and for the death of human rights in the area more generally, the state sought to pursue a neo-liberal agenda by sanitising the monument of all references to the recent conflict and instead portraying it as a site of tourism.

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[9] Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (Chicago, 1992).

[10] Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 53.

Even though the articles in this collection are separated in space and time, the central concern of each paper is the way in which states use their hegemony to label one particular reading of history as the only authentic narration possible. The individual papers focus on the contested meanings attached to particular objects of memory, especially when one of those meanings is attributed by the state and the other by the public or non-governmental groups. Through this juxtaposition, the papers are not attempting to portray the public perception or counter memory of the historical event as the only legitimate version in opposition to the state's view of the event, but rather they are questioning the process through which historical 'authenticity' is sought to be established. While doing so, they examine the process of selection of a particular memory object and the competing discourses that spring up around it. This process also gives us a glimpse of the forms that state-based historiography takes in different countries, and the power of the people to contest and reimagine, or reaffirm and accept, the space/event.

By bringing these papers together, this collection shows how different national contexts shape rituals of memorialisation and conflicts around the social and political memory of past events. It allows us to examine the ways in which state sponsored attempts at memorialisation are questioned, and possibly repudiated, and gives us an opportunity to highlight the similarities and variances in the way social conditions in different countries, in different periods of time, allow a counter-memory to challenge the hegemonic nature of the dominant discourse.

Contested memorial stones and the conflicting memories of the "years of lead" in Italy

Federica Rossi

The decade of the 1970s, following the wave of students' and workers' protests in 1968, is characterised in Italy by the emergence and radicalisation of leftist groups and their growing use of violence as a means of political struggle, including kidnappings, targeted shootings and assassinations. Those years were also marked by neo-fascist militancy and violence, particularly associated with bombings in public places, as in Piazza Fontana in Milan in 1969, in Piazza della Loggia in Brescia in 1974, and at Bologna train station in 1980.[1]

Since the early 1980s the preceding decade has commonly been referred to as the "years of lead"[2] and continues to be a source of debate. Controversies about political and judicial, individual and collective responsibilities, as well as the state's involvement and support of neo-fascist bombings, frequently re-appear in the public sphere at various occasions, such as the release of a new film or publication of a book on the 1970s, commemorations, trials, etc. The persistence and vigour of polemics about this recent history reveal the co-existence of multiple interpretations and concurrent memories of the 1970s and, more specifically, of political violence. On the one hand, the official memory, celebrated through commemorations, plaques and discourses, highlights the victory of the Italian democracy over "terrorism" and subversive projects, reaffirms the State order and heroises victims (especially if state officials). On the other hand, sceptical, alternative and oppositional representations of the past also exist, preserved and maintained through local or activist forms of memorialisation.[3]

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[1] For the history of the 'years of lead', see Donatella Della Porta, *Terrorismi in Italia* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1984), Robert Lumley, *States of emergency: cultures of revolt in Italy from 1968 to 1978* (London: Verso, 1990), Isabelle Sommier, *La violence politique et son deuil: l'apres 68 en France et Italie* (Rennes: PUR, 1998), Sidney Tarrow, *Democracy and disorder. Social protest and politics in Italy, 1965-1985* (Oxford: OUP, 1988).

[2] The expression "years of lead" started to be used in the Italian media, after the release of Margarethe Von Trotta's film *Marianne and Juliane* in 1981 fictionalising the story of two sisters, one of whom was involved in a German armed group (Red Army Faction). The German title *Die Bleierne zeit* was translated in Italian as "years of lead".

The two cases examined here resonate closely with the other studies presented in this collection, all of which show the simultaneous attempts to use the political instrumentalisation of historical events to silence minorities and deny state violence, and the incessant forms of resistance they face.

This paper explores the controversies surrounding two memorial stones referring to two key events and landmarks in the construction of the "years of lead" narrative. The first is the plaque commemorating the anarchist railway worker Giuseppe Pinelli, located on the Piazza Fontana in Milan; the second one is the plaque commemorating the neo-fascist bombing at Bologna train station. These two cases objectify the constant tensions and struggles that characterise the memorialisation of the specific events, and more generally of the 1970s in Italy. They are also key to understanding processes of politicisation and depoliticisation of memory and debates about past events, and to seizing the articulation between the local and national context.

Activist memorialisation: resisting and contesting the official truth

On 12 December 1969, after two years of growing and intense workers' and students' movements, a bomb exploded inside the Bank of Agriculture in Milan causing the deaths of 16 people and dozens of casualties. The police investigations were initially directed against radical left groups and two anarchist activists, Giuseppe Pinelli and Pietro Valpreda, were arrested and held at the Milan Police Station to be questioned. Three days later, Giuseppe Pinelli was found dead outside the police headquarters, allegedly from falling from the fourthfloor window of the Superintendent Calabresi's office. In a period of intense politicisation and powerful social movements, Pinelli's death sparked fierce polemics and campaigns against the police and particularly the Superintendent Calabresi. Official inquests into the circumstances and responsibilities for what happened were conducted, while radical groups also organised their own counter-investigations.[4] The judicial inquiry closed in 1975, and the public prosecutor Gerardo D'Ambrosio concluded the trial by acquitting all police officers and affirming that the anarchist's fall had been caused by fainting and losing balance due to long hours of stressful questioning. This decision, instead of appeasing the disagreements, triggered a long-term controversy and reinforced the political activists' mistrust of the state's role and involvement in violent episodes throughout the decade. In establishing an official truth, the verdict created an unbridgeable gap between the state's account of the event and the citizens' and activists' views that is still dividing people almost fifty years later. It is precisely this conflict that is re-enacted and reproduced incessantly through the controversies about the memorial stones, to the extent that today two plaques jostle for space in the memory of Pinelli in Piazza Fontana.

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[3] On the memory of and controversies about the 1970s in Italy, see Andrea Hajek, *Negotiating memories of protest in Western Europe. The case of Italy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), Anna Cento Bull and Paul Cooke, *Ending Terrorism in Italy*, (London: Routledge, 2013), Giovanni De Luna, *Le ragioni di un decennio* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2012), Federica Rossi "La lutte armée entre justice, politique et histoire. Usages et traitements des années de plomb dans l'Italie contemporaine (1968-2010)" (PhD thesis, Université de Nanterre, 2011).

The first plaque was placed in the square in 1977 by a group of activists, students, members of the antifascist resistance and friends during the annual commemoration for Pinelli organised by the anarchist collective *Ponte della Ghisolfa*. It contained the following inscription: "To Giuseppe Pinelli, anarchist railway worker, innocent who was killed in the premises of Milan police headquarters on the 16th December 1969. Students and democrats from Milan".

The choice of locating the stone at Piazza Fontana, was highly symbolic and carried a double denunciation of the state. Not only did its words contest the official truth about Pinelli's death, but it also blamed the state's involvement in the bombing. By placing the memorial stone at the square, rather than where the anarchist died in front of the police station, Pinelli was included among the victims of the explosion, as "the 17th victim", that is, among the victims of the state collusion with neo-fascist violence.[5] In the following days, local politicians and members of the police forces demanded for the plaque to be immediately removed on the grounds that it was not authorised and it was defaming the Milan police officials, whereas the judicial verdict had acquitted them two years earlier. In fact, the main problem faced by the authorities was not the existence of an illegal plaque commemorating the activist, but the fact that its inscription was re-opening an uncomfortable polemic that it was hoped had been solved. The redefinition of Pinelli's death as murder was challenging the official narrative affirmed by police officers and corroborated by the judicial inquiry, defying the state's capacity to define historical truths in the court.

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[4] Numerous intellectuals and public figures campaigned and signed a petition accusing the police, Dario Fo wrote the theatre play *Accidental death of an anarchist*, and several songs have been written for Pinelli.

Despite several attempts and campaigns to remove it, the plaque remained and became a site of memory[6] and a cornerstone of the militant memory of the city.[7] Over the years, the plaque has been damaged and destroyed several times by far-right activists, but every time remade and replaced by Pinelli's anarchist comrades. At the end of the 1980s, during the mayoral electoral campaigns, the socialist party promised that the plaque would be removed. After the elections, the newly elected socialist mayor announced the council's will to move the memorial stone to the Museum of Contemporary History of Milan. The declaration was received with immediate public protests and mobilisations from political groups, intellectuals, students, and citizens. Under the pressure, the mayor decided to suspend the removal, but inevitably received criticisms from police unions and right wing representatives.

It was only in 2006, towards the end of his mandate, that the right-wing mayor Gabriele Albertini[8] gave the green light to remove the memorial stone, which was replaced in the middle of the night by a new official plaque by Milan council. The new inscription changed only two words, but fundamentally modified the meaning of the inscription and reaffirmed the official interpretation of the anarchist's death: "To Giuseppe Pinelli, anarchist railway worker, who tragically died in the premises of Milan police headquarters on the 16th December 1969". This substitution has two implied significances: firstly, it legitimised the existence of a plaque in memory of the activist, as the Council acknowledged the fact that it could not just remove the unauthorised stone; secondly, it acted as an admission that the main issue with the previous plaque was less its illegality than the counter-narrative it was displaying on the public space.

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[5] *La strage è di stato* (This is a state massacre) was the slogan often used in the radical press and demonstrations at that time, as well as for the bombings that happened in other cities in later years.

[6] Pierre Nora, *Lieux de mémoire* and Nora (Paris : Gallimard, 1992) and Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire", *Representations* 26 (1989).

[7] Also see John Foot, "La strage e la città: Milano e Piazza Fontana, 1969-1999", in *La memoria contesa. Studi sulla comunicazione sociale del passato*, ed. Anna Lisa Tota (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2001).

[8] Elected in the coalition list including Berlusconi's party and other right wing parties.

A few days later various groups and citizens marched to the square to place a new plaque, with the original wording, next to the council's plaque. Since then, both plaques have coexisted on the square and are the objects of incessant debates and controversies. They are also the target of direct actions from neo-fascist groups that damage the anarchists' plaque, or, more often, from radical left groups that "correct" the words on the council's plaque and replace "tragically dead" with "murdered".

Memory of violence and the political identity of the city

On 2 August 1980 at 10:25 am a bomb exploded in the second class waiting room at Bologna train station causing the death of 85 people and seriously injuring a further 200. It was the fourth and the deadliest of a series of similar attacks perpetrated since 1969. Since the immediate aftermath of the bombing, local authorities, victims, intellectuals and political activists have blamed neo-fascist groups and the state's secret services for the attack; however, almost 40 years and several trials and inquests later, the judicial truth is still uncertain and no one has been held accountable for organising the attack.[9]

The memorial site at the station is made up of several components: the split in the wall destroyed by the explosion has been kept visible, the memorial stone saying "2nd August 1980. Victims of fascist terrorism" lists all victims and their ages and is placed over the hole left by the bomb and next to the partially destroyed wall; the hands of the clock on the front entrance of the station are stopped at 10:25, time of the explosion. The station therefore has become something beyond its immediate functionality as the main train station of the city: it is also a site of memory, where annual commemorative marches converge. Bologna is a city with a strong leftist tradition, known for student movements and activism, and where the memory of the resistance against fascism is still strongly alive. Every year, the commemorations of the bombing are widely followed by the population and become an occasion to reaffirm the anti-fascist identity of the city, as well as to express political discontent towards the central governments.[10] In this perspective, the commemoration of the bombing in Bologna visibly performs the additional role of a collective action of protest.[11]

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[9] Antonella Beccaria and Riccardo Lenzi, *Schegge contro la democrazia. 2 agosto 1980: le ragioni di una strage nei più recenti atti giudiziari* (Bologna: Editrice Socialmente, 2010).

In contrast to the case previously studied, the controversy about the memorial stone does not come from political activists challenging the official discourse, but rather from right-wing politicians who attempt to oppose the memory of the urban community and the widely accepted political definition of the event. In a way, these attempts resonate with the example of the suppression of local memory of the deportations in Chechnya, and the replacing of the 'Day of memory and grief" with the "Defender of the fatherland day" by pro-Russian authorities, which are discussed in Klocker's contribution to this collection. Likewise, in Bologna, changes in the political climate, political parties and power relations open the possibility of attacking local memories, shared by the community, and attempt to redefine them.

In Bologna, the inscription "fascist terrorism" on the memorial stone has been contested since the beginning by right-wing politicians, at local and national levels, arguing that there is no judicial evidence pointing at a neo-fascist plotting.[12] Nevertheless, it was only during the late 1990s and early 2000s that demands to modify the plaque's wording could be openly articulated and became more audible. In large part, this became possible due to the rise of a new right on the country's political scene, and the legitimation of Silvio Berlusconi and his allies, some of whom were activists in far-right groups in the 1970s. It is interesting to note that during the same period, the political elite displayed a fierce will to rewrite the political history of the country, more specifically in relation to the period of fascism and anti-fascist resistance, through the requalification of specific historical events or the establishment of new commemorative days.[13]

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[10] Anna Lisa Tota has conducted an ethographic study of the commemorations: Anna Lisa Tota, *La città ferita. Memoria e comunicazione pubblica della strage di Bologna* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2003) and "Ethnographying public memory: the commemorative genre for the victims of terrorism in Italy" *Qualitative Research Methods,* 4 (2) (2010).

[11] Stéphane Latté, "Le choix des larmes. La commémoration comme mode de protestation" *Politix* 110 (2015).

[12] Trials and investigations in relation to the bombing in Bologna have been marked by contradictory verdicts and the condemnation of three neo-fascist militants for the actual execution of the plan, but no one as the masterminds of the bombing.

The election of a right-wing mayor in 1999, Giorgio Guazzaloca,[14] for the first time in the history of Bologna, intensified the pressure from right-wing politicians to have the plaque's inscription modified: the spokesperson of the right-wing coalition (PdL) defined the "fascist matrix" of the attack as a "political and judicial dogma".[15] The mayor did not authorise the change of the memorial stone, probably aware of the discontent this would trigger among the population and especially from the Association of victims of the attack. However, he always omitted the adjective "fascist" during the annual commemorative speeches for the duration of his mandate. The original expression was re-included in the official speech only by the new left wing mayor, Sergio Cofferati,[16] after his election in 2004.

A new controversy about the memorial at Bologna railway station was sparked by the placement of an additional plaque by a delegation of UNESCO in 2010, following the inclusion of the station in UNESCO's programme on 'Heritage for a culture of peace and nonviolence.' The new plaque says: "This site, witness of the terrorist massacre of the 2nd August 1980, has been included in the 2001-2010 Unesco's programme on 'Heritage for a culture of peace and nonviolence' so that the sorrow is not immobile in the memory, but living witness of the will to defend peace in the mind of the youth". This wording not only reactivated the right/left divide, but also triggered the protests of intellectuals, students, activists and other actors of civil society that had been critical of the absence of the epithet "fascist". The Italian UNESCO delegate Vittorio Covino defended the inscription presented as an "objective choice", while right wing groups and parties welcomed the new wording.[17] The president of the Association of victims of the attack, Sergio Bolognesi, also welcomed UNESCO recognition, as long as the old stone remained untouched.

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[13] Two examples of these are the establishment in 2004 of the Day of remembrance for the victims of the very controversial Foibe massacre after WWII and the establishment of the Day of freedom to commemorate the fall of the Berlin wall in 2005. More cases of the requalification of past events are analysed by Angelo Del Boca (ed) *La storia negata. Il revisionismo e il suo uso politico* (Vicenza: Neri Pozza, 2009).

[14] Member of the People of Freedom (Pdl), the right-wing party coalition led by Silvio Berlusconi.

[15] Paolo Cascella, "E il Pdl annuncia: dal 2010 manifestazioni separate", *La Repubblica,* August 3rd, 2009.

[16] Member of the centre-left party Democrats of the Left.

Resilient memories: between depoliticisation and re-politicisation

Collective memories are shaped by ceremonies, memorials, symbols, monuments and days of remembrance and are part of the process of constructing a nation, as an imagined community.[18] Nevertheless, they can also be the battleground that cements social groups and their oppositional identity. The two cases above present challenges to official declarations of unity, consensus and cohesion of the national community over past events: the resilience of activist and local memories delegitimise the official discourse, by making the cracks in official monuments' stones visible. It is in these interstices that forms of micro-resistance surface and claim their share. Focusing on the micro- or local level of struggles for memorialisation, as in here for Milan and Bologna, has the potential for going beyond the dichotomy opposing the state and the suppressed or marginalised voices to examine the complex and continuous interplay of actors, groups and levels that shape the interpretation of the past in each context. It offers the possibility for understanding official historiography as an attempt, rather than an achievement and a conclusion, that is always open to being contested and deconstructed in different ways in different places. It also allows us to look at how 'sites of memory' are constantly re-created in their material, symbolic and functional aspects to crystallise and secrete collective and/or minoritarian memories.[19]

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[17] Eleonora Capelli, "L'Unesco e la strage non più fascista. Così si travisano sentenza e verità", *La Repubblica,* September 25, 2010.

[18] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined communities* (London: Verso, 1983).

[19] Pierre Nora, *Lieux de mémoire.*

As with the other papers in this collection, the forms of resistance and contestation discussed here reveal the extent to which commemorations, sites of memory and monuments are at the heart of political struggles that reflect the continuity of past controversies as much as present political interests, competitions and interpretations.

From this perspective, the difficult and divisive life of Pinelli's plaque in Milan objectifies practices of micro-resistance to the definition of the past in consensual terms imposed by an official truth. In the case of the Italian 'years of lead', this mainly coincides with the judicial truth, as the political crisis was handled primarily with a judicial, more than a political, approach based upon the criminalisation and depoliticisation of non-state violence.[20] This case then illustrates not only how militant forms of memorialisation resist the official discourse that aims to reconcile the society through the forgetting of its political divisions; by staging the dissent over the past event, it prevents both its forgetting and its depoliticisation. Hence, the coexistence of the two memorial stones on Piazza Fontana in Milan signifies the failure of the holders of power to impose a depoliticised and pacified narrative of Pinelli's death and the irreconcilability of conflicting memories of a politically and emotionally charged past. Inscribed in local history, the political field and power relations, the struggles around Pinelli's plaque epitomise the wider controversies and polarisations that still characterise the interpretation of the 'years of lead' at the national level.

Similarly, the debates surrounding the memorial stone at Bologna train station, although rooted in the local context, resonate at national level, because they echo the broader tendency to depoliticise the political violence of the 1970s and rely upon the judicial definition of the events. The judicialisation of the interpretation of the decade leads to the extraction of specific events from their historical circumstances and subsumes collective political acts into their individual criminalisation. The growing moral and humanitarian discourse in the definition of past conflicts is particularly evident in the more recently placed UNESCO plaque. The public discourse on the 'years of lead' has been increasingly dominated since the 1980s by the emphasis on 'terrorism' at the expense of the political significance of social struggles. However, the elaboration of a decontextualised discourse on terrorism that posits the necessity of the condemnation of violence – of any kind of non-state violence, regardless of contexts, ideologies and goals – and the celebration of the suffering of victims has been the hallmark of the turn of the century.[21] In this ideological context of the early 21st century, those mobilisations and debates are less significant for what they achieve than for what they reveal about contextual power relations and how the past is reconstructed according to the conditions and to fit the frames of the present.[22]

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[20] Federica Rossi "La lutte armée entre justice, politique et histoire. Usages et traitements des années de plomb dans l'Italie contemporaine (1968-2010)".

Conclusion

The controversies and mobilisations around the memorial stones in Milan and Bologna illustrate the extent to which memory is a competitive field, permeated by power relations and reflecting the present (rather than the past) *zeitgeist.* More specifically, these two cases show that the memory of the 1970s in Italy continues to be divided and divisive, and remains politically charged for at least three reasons: firstly, that decade was a period of intense and deep political polarisations, and the two events mentioned (Pinelli's death and the bombing in Bologna) were politically motivated and deepened those polarisations in society. Secondly, the interpretation of the two events, as well as of the whole decade, is still political because it is continually re-politicised by different actors that instrumentally use the past for current political purposes. Finally, it is a political memory because all official representations of the past – plaques, monuments, street names, commemorations – are the result of power relations and political struggles to give a sense to past events, to construct an official narrative that aims to be consensual and politically neutral, but which is (or may be) constantly challenged.

This analysis contributes to the discussion of how local, marginal and militant memories – and objects and rituals that embody them – are shaped by official truths, but also challenge, resist and subvert the dominant narrative on the past. Together with the other two articles in this collection, this paper has aimed to uncover the interactions, oppositions and conflicts as ongoing processes that use, mould and impact on the interpretation of events and incessantly recreate meanings, symbols and motives for political agency.

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[21] Didier Fassin, *The Empire of Trauma. Inquiry into the Condition of Victim* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009); Michael Ignatieff, *Human Rights as Politics and Idolatry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Robert Meister, *After evil: a politics of human rights* (New York: Colombia University Press, 2011).

[22] Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (Chicago, 1992).

Suppressing collective memory: Chechnya's 'Day of Memory and Grief' and the rehabilitation of Stalinism in today's Russia

Cornelia Klocker

The 'Day of Memory and Grief' is a day of commemoration in Chechnya. It marks the beginning of the deportation of Chechens and Ingush from the Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (Chechen-Ingush ASSR) to Siberia and Central Asia ordered by Joseph Stalin on 23 February 1944. Today, the commemoration is being obstructed by bans on gatherings on the original date combined with the dismantling of the memorial devoted to the event. The 'Day of Memory and Grief' memorialises the deportation of entire peoples – an example of the atrocities committed by Stalin from the 1920s until his death in 1953. Devoted to this collective memory, the day stands in stark contrast to the Russian official line of remembrance of the Stalin era focussed on the victory in the Great Patriotic War in 1945. In the following, an account of how local collective memories contesting this official historical narrative are conceived by the authorities as impeding the construction of a national Russian identity based on patriotism and the love of the fatherland will be presented.

The deportation

In Soviet times, the 'Red Army Day', a national holiday devoted to soldiers' achievements and patriotism in general, was celebrated on the 23rd of February. However, on 23 February 1944, the events took a different turn in what was then the Chechen-Ingush ASSR. A decree was read out to the Chechens telling them that they had been found guilty of treason, of collaborating with Nazi Germany during the Second World War – which has become known as the 'Great Patriotic War' in Russia. For this reason, the entire Chechen and Ingush population, was deported to Central Asia and Siberia. Around half a million people were loaded onto trains and trucks, many died during the journey due to poor sanitary conditions and many more died in the provisional camps set up for them – the 'special settlers' as they were called – in the hostile Russian steppes or in Siberian labour camps.[1]

It was only in 1957, with Stalin's regime gone and Nikita Khrushchev's power established, that the Chechens were exculpated and were allowed to return to their homeland, the Chechen-Ingush ASSR. Although local Russian authorities tried to prevent their return, the Chechen-Ingush ASSR was eventually re-established in the same year and replaced the Grozny Oblast – the region's official name during their exile. When the Chechens returned, ethnic Russians lived in most of their homes and their graveyards had been destroyed, as had their cultural and religious sites such as mosques. After clashes between the returned and the new occupants, the Chechens eventually re-established their presence in their homeland.[2] During the Soviet era, the deportation was remembered locally through stories of what had happened and passed on to the next generation by survivors as there was no official or public platform to commemorate. The Soviet government did not allow any commemorations and did not compensate the victims.[3]

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the deportation was increasingly discussed in public and efforts were made to preserve the collective memory of the Chechens. These efforts were supported by the Chechen independence movement headed by Dzhokhar Dudaev, who grew up in exile himself. Chechnya declared its independence from Russia in 1991.[4] In 1992, a memorial was erected in the capital Grozny and large rallies were held to commemorate the deportation, in particular in 1994 due to its fiftieth anniversary.[5] Shortly afterwards, the First Chechen War between Chechnya and Russia, which lasted from 1994 to 1996, began. After the defeat of the Russians, Chechnya experienced a period of de facto independence before being invaded again by Russian forces in 1999. Following a year of heavy fighting including air strikes and the shelling of Chechen towns and villages, this Second Chechen War continued with sporadic attacks and fighting between insurgents and forces of the Chechen Republic which took over from the Russian forces.[6]

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[1] Brian G. Williams, "Commemorating "The Deportation" in Post-Soviet Chechnya," *History and Memory* 12 (2000): 112; "Жертвы политического террора в СССР," Human Rights Centre Memorial, December 13, 2012, accessed June 16, 2017, http://lists.memo.ru/; when it comes to commemoration in Ingushetia, the authorities there support commemorations, which is another indicator for the situation in Chechnya stemming from Kadyrov's loyal ties to the Kremlin: Valery Dzutsati, "Official Grozny Fails to Mark 70th Anniversary of the Chechen Deportations," *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 11, March 5, 2014, accessed June 16, 2017, http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=42045&cHash=4d1d552469bfabcb0574f512d012cef2#.V2JkdPkrLIU.

[2] Moshe Gammer, "Nationalism and History: Rewriting the Chechen National Past," in *Secession, History and the Social Sciences*, ed. Bruno Coppieters et al. (Brussels: Brussels University Press, 2002), 130-131; Williams, "Commemorating "The Deportation" in Post-Soviet Chechnya," 114-115.

[3] Williams, "Commemorating "The Deportation" in Post-Soviet Chechnya," 106-107.

[4] Williams, "Commemorating "The Deportation" in Post-Soviet Chechnya," 119.

Silencing minority collective memory

The deportation of the Chechen people was remembered traditionally by Chechens on 23 February. However, in 2011 the Kremlin-loyal Head of the Chechen Republic, Ramzan Kadyrov decided to relocate the commemoration from the 23rd of February to the 10th of May. Just a year after declaring the 23rd of February the date for official commemoration of the deportation, Kadyrov changed the dates again and slightly amended the name of the day to ‘Day of Memory and Grief of the nations of the Republic’. In addition to opposition to the change in date, this change in name was criticised for downplaying the effect of the deportation on ethnic Chechens.[7]

The 10th of May marks the burial of Akhmad Kadyrov, the Chechen leader appointed by Vladimir Putin during the Second Chechen War and father of Ramzan Kadyrov. He was assassinated by pro-insurgent forces on 9 May 2004 when a bomb exploded in Grozny’s football stadium during the Victory Day parade celebrating the defeat of Nazi Germany. Now, the ‘Day of Memory and Grief’, which originated from the deportation of an entire people, has been linked to the death of a controversial politician, who installed a repressive regime, persecuting alleged insurgents and their families.[8]

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[5] “Чеченские власти демонтируют Мемориал памяти жертв депортации в Грозном Источник,” *Caucasian Knot*, February 14, 2014, accessed June 16, 2017, https://www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/238169.

[6] Emil Souleimanov, *An Endless War: The Russian-Chechen Conflict in Perspective* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2007), 95-172.

[7] Aude Merlin, “Remembering and forgetting in Chechnya today: Using the Great Patriotic War to create a new historical narrative,” in *Chechnya at war and beyond*, ed. Anne Le Huérou et al. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), 45-47.

[8] “Residents of Chechnya do not agree to treat May 10 as mourning date,” *Caucasian Knot*, May 10, 2016, accessed June 16, 2017, http://eng.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/35534/;

Furthermore, the 23rd of February is now again devoted to the Russian-wide commemoration of the 'Red Army Day', which was renamed 'Defender of the Fatherland Day' by Putin in 2002. It is a day devoted to the commemoration of soldiers, of the sacrifices they made for the country and a celebration of patriotism and masculinity in general, which in addition to its military character can be seen as the counterpart to Women's Day[9] – a Men's Day where alleged traitors and the elderly, women and children dying during deportation and in exile, have no place. Aude Merlin cites a Grozny intellectual analysing the change in the date as follows: 'this was "to avoid being sad during a celebration," which would have been the case had the 23rd of February been maintained as a national Chechen day of mourning'.[10] As she rightly observes, the focus was on the heroes to be remembered, not the victims.[11]

Since 2011, when Kadyrov moved the commemoration to the 10th of May, public commemorations of the deportation on 23 February have been suppressed. For instance in 2014, the President of the Assembly of Caucasian Nations, Ruslan Kutaev, was sentenced to four years of imprisonment after speaking out against the ban of commemoration events on the original date.[12] In the same year, the memorial to victims of the deportation built in 1992 and located in Chechnya's capital Grozny was dismantled. The memorial consisted of an array of gravestones brought from all regions of Chechnya surrounding a raised arm with a dagger and an open Quran. On the wall behind the memorial was the inscription: 'We will not cry! Not lose! Not forget!'. Officially, the memorial was moved due to the sale of the land where it stood to a private businessman, but local residents spoke of a deliberate move to suppress memory of the deportation. Several gravestones, parts of the memorial, were brought to another site located on the Akhmad Kadyrov Square and placed next to a

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"Жители Чечни заявили о подмене Дня памяти и скорби трауром по Ахмату Кадырову," *Caucasian Knot*, May 10, 2015, accessed June 16, 2017, http://www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/262046/.

[9] Ekaterina Turysheva and Vladimir Erkovich "Russia celebrates its men on Army Day," *Russia Beyond the Headlines,* February 22, 2013, accessed June 16, 2017, http://rbth.com/arts/2013/02/22/russia_celebrates_its_men_on_army_day_23175.html.

[10] Merlin, "Remembering and forgetting in Chechnya today," 45.

[11] Merlin, "Remembering and forgetting in Chechnya today," 39-41.

[12] "Court in Chechnya sentences Ruslan Kutaev to four years in prison," *Caucasian Knot*, July 7, 2014, accessed June 16, 2017, http://eng.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/28644/.

memorial commemorating fallen members of local pro-Russian security forces with no separate inscription or explanation as to the different meaning associated with the gravestones.[13]

Taken together, all these campaigns against the commemoration and the combination of the remembrance of the deportation with that of Kadyrov's assassination appear to be aimed at silencing this particular collective memory of the Chechen people. It is downplayed, separated from its date and as it might be intended by the Federal as well as Chechen authorities, hopefully forgotten.

A similar strategy can be observed in Russian annexed Crimea, where the Russian administration has banned the commemoration of the deportation in 2014. Just as in the Chechen case, the Crimean Tatars were deported in 1944 by order of Stalin on treason allegations. The Crimean Tatars commemorate this part of their history on the 18th of May but since 2014, commemorative gatherings were prohibited and people speaking out against it arrested.[14] These acts are part of a broader campaign against the Crimean Tatars under Russian rule branding them as extremists and banning their organisations.[15]

Creating a Russian national identity

According to Maurice Halbwachs' study on collective memory, 'the past is not preserved but is reconstructed on the basis of the present'.[16] He argues that '[c]ollective frameworks are, to the contrary, precisely the instruments used by the collective memory to reconstruct an image of the past which is in accord, in each epoch, with the predominant thoughts of the society.'[17] What is of particular interest in these quotes in the present context, is the reference to 'predominant thoughts'. Talking about the reconstruction of the past, Halbwachs observes that the recreation of memory is happening under the pressure of society. This pressure leads to a 'transfiguration' of the past and a reproduction of memories with 'a prestige that reality did not possess'.[18] The resulting transfigured version of the past denotes society's 'predominant thoughts'. Essentially, these thoughts have led to the ban of deportation commemorations on the original date in Chechnya and to a silencing of the local collective memory conflicting with the official Russian narrative of the Stalin era focusing on the victory in the Second World War.

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[13] "Chechen authorities dismantle Memorial to deportation victims in Grozny," *Caucasian Knot,* February 14, 2014, accessed June 16, 2017, http://eng.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/27286/; "Чеченские власти демонтируют Мемориал памяти жертв депортации в Грозном Источник,"; Aleksander Cherkasov, "Память бывает разная," *Эхо кавказа*, February 23, 2014, accessed June 16, 2017, http://www.ekhokavkaza.com/a/25274546.html.

[14] Greta Uehling, "Genocide's Aftermath: Neostalinism in Contemporary Crimea," *Genocide Studies and Prevention: An International Journal* 9 (2015):13-14; see also Nanci Adler, "Reconciliation with – or rehabilitation of – the Soviet past?," *Memory Studies* 5 (2012): 327-338.

[15] Halya Coynash, "Crimean Tatar Mejlis Leader Arrested on 'Extremism' Charges," Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group, May 13, 2016, accessed June 16, 2017, http://khpg.org/en/index.php?id=1463067076; Halya Coynash, "Russia bans Mejlis, declares war on Crimean Tatar people while the West watches," Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group, April 27, 2016, accessed June 16, 2017, http://khpg.org/en/index.php?id=1461673479.

[16] Maurice Halbwachs, *On collective memory*, edited, translated, and with an introduction by Lewis A. Coser. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992) 40.

Official attempts to emphasise certain memories and to suppress others are indicative of a historical narrative aimed at fostering a certain idea, an ideology or a national identity – a development visible in Russian state policy today.[19] In the post-Soviet era, Boris Yeltsin admitted that Russia needed a 'Russian idea' after he failed with his attempt to democratise the country against Soviet nostalgia supported by a poor economic situation. Putin, who took over after him, decided to make this search for such an idea one of his priorities.[20]

Putin launched broad educational campaigns including the rewriting of history textbooks in order to demonstrate a contingency in Russian history, pointing at Russian victories and achievements over centuries, aiming at educating young people to be patriotic and to love their country.[21] This 'love for the fatherland' is a notion deriving from Soviet patriotism described as 'the natural feeling of millions of citizens who ardently love' their country 'which has given them a happy, prosperous life.'[22] During Putin's second presidential term, Alexander Filippov, the deputy director of the National Centre for Foreign Policy, an organisation close to the Federal government, did a great deal to support this patriotic affection for the country. Filippov wrote handbooks for teachers describing Stalin's actions as resulting in the modernisation of the country and as necessary in a time preparing for war with Nazi Germany. In his depiction, the mass repression and killing were considered a means to an end and are dealt with only briefly before turning to the heroic victory in the Great Patriotic War when the Soviet Union rescued the world from fascism.[23] With the beginning of the new school year in autumn 2016, several history textbooks which attempted to present a more comprehensive version of the Stalin era against that official narrative, were sanctioned. Addressing the Second World War and the time under Stalin, these books included an account of Stalin's relationship with Nazi Germany as expressed in the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact as well as of Stalinist repressions.[24]

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[17] Halbwachs, *On collective memory*, 40..

[18] Halbwachs, *On collective memory*, 51.

[19] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, revised edition (London: Verso, 2006).

[20] Murod Ismailov and Nozima Ganieva, "In Search for the Russian National Identity: Do History Textbooks Hold the Answer?," *Journal of Alternative Perspectives in the Social Sciences* 5 (2013): 384-388.

[21] Tatyana Tsyrlina-Spady and Michael Lovorn, "Patriotism, History Teaching, and History Textbooks in Russia: What Was Old Is New Again," in *Globalisation, Ideology and Politics of Education Reforms,* ed. Joseph Zajda (Heidelberg: Springer, 2015), 42-43.

The emphasis on the victory in the Great Patriotic War represents a cornerstone in the attempt to form a 'Russian idea' and a Russian identity.[25] A national identity is not easily built on a past where Stalin's regime deported entire peoples such as the Chechens, Ingush and Tatars. It is rather built on achievements – on Stalin's efforts to industrialise the country, to conquer space and to defeat the fascists in the Great Patriotic War.[26] Changing the date of the commemoration of the deportation of Chechens under Stalin contributes to this endeavour as it clears the Defender of the Fatherland Day from negative connotations. Furthermore, it indicates the scale of the government's identity-building project, ranging from re-writing curricula to re-designing or rather suppressing, regional commemorations.

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[22] Olga Nikonova, "Soviet patriotism in a comparative perspective: a passion for oxymora," *Studies in Eastern European Thought* 62 (2010): 370.

[23] Thomas Sherlock, "Confronting the Stalinist Past: The Politics of Memory in Russia," *Washington Quarterly* 34 (2011): 96.

[24] Ola Cichowlas, "How Russian Kids Are Taught World War II: A new history curriculum is raising concern among teachers," *The Moscow Times*, May 8, 2017, accessed June 16, 2017, https://themoscowtimes.com/articles/how-russian-kids-are-taught-world-war-ii-57930; Michail Chernysh, "Collective memory and its Cultural Antecedents in Russia," in *Collective Memories in War,* ed. Elena Rozhdestvenskaya et al. (London: Routledge, 2016), 20; Thomas Sherlock, "Russian politics and the Soviet past: Reassessing Stalin and Stalinism under Vladimir Putin," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 49 (2016): 53.

[25] Justyna Prus, "Russia's Use of History as a Political Weapon," *Polish Institute of International Affairs Policy Paper* 12, May 2015, accessed June 16, 2017, http://www.pism.pl/files/?id_plik=19763.

[26] Thomas Sherlock, *Historical Narratives in the Soviet Union and Post-Soviet Russia* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 165-167; Nanci Adler, "The Future of the Soviet Past Remains

As Thomas Sherlock has written, a considerable number of Russians today perceive Soviet times and in particular the Stalin era 'as a time of political and economic stability, of international prestige, but perhaps most important, of national purpose and cohesion' which provided 'meaning to individual and collective existence.'[27] The Federal authorities want to take up on these sentiments in order to foster a positive unified Russian identity. Yet simplified historical narratives, nostalgia for certain periods which in that form might have never existed and the creation of a myth centred on the victory over fascism in the Great Patriotic War are abstracting from the historical facts to an incomprehensible collection of images.[28] And between those images are gaps – gaps representing information considered unwanted, unnecessary or simply not worth mentioning. One additional problem here is the widespread lack of interest in the atrocities committed under Stalin which is particularly the case for the younger generation of Russians.[29] This indifference or negligence allows the Federal authorities to deal with the issue relatively undisturbed.

A national identity for the majority

In the pursuit of this Russian national identity, legislation has been adopted at Federal level aimed at unifying the Russian majority against minorities such as the Chechens. This stands in contrast to initial

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Unpredictable: The Resurrection of Stalinist Symbols Amidst the Exhumation of Mass Graves," *Europe-Asia Studies* 57 (2005): 1097-1101.

[27] Sherlock, *Historical Narratives in the Soviet Union and Post-Soviet Russia,* 149-150; Sherlock, "Russian politics and the Soviet past: Reassessing Stalin and Stalinism under Vladimir Putin," 12: A study in 2014 revealed that 52% of interviewed Russians considered Stalin to have 'definitely' or 'more likely than not' played a positive role in the life of the country.

[28] Liudmila Mazur, "Golden age mythology and the nostalgia of catastrophes in post-Soviet Russia," *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 57 (2015): 215-218.

[29] Sherlock, "Russian politics and the Soviet past: Reassessing Stalin and Stalinism under Vladimir Putin," 12-13; see also Sherlock, "Confronting the Stalinist Past: The Politics of Memory in Russia,".

attempts by the Putin-led government at creating such a national identity based on the unifying effects of the Great Patriotic War. Now in his third presidential term, Putin is not focussing on gathering the entire Russian population under his flag, but only the majority – therefore deliberately excluding certain groups and uniting the majority against them by adopting divisive laws such as those referred to below.

This represents one of the practices and tactics related to the imposition of a certain historical narrative that is reserved for the regime in power – the imposition of sovereign violence through law, a point Yıldız refers to in relation to the understanding of counter-archives by Motha and van Rijswijk who describe a reorientation of 'the law in the wake of histories of violent sovereign impositions'.[30]

In the present context, the 'commission to counter attempts to falsify history to the detriment of Russia's interests' active from 2009 to 2012[31] and the related law against the 'rehabilitation of Nazism' adopted in 2014 are illustrative.[32] Both are aimed at the creation of an official historical narrative, bolstered by criminal sanctions in case of contraventions.[33] The law against the rehabilitation of Nazism is not, as it is the case in other countries such as Austria and Germany, aimed at prohibiting the denial of the Holocaust and the dissemination of other Nazi propaganda, but is referring to 'Nazism' as the term was used in the Soviet Union after the Second World War to 'demonize political opponents'.[34] For instance, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov accused the Ukrainian government of following 'openly nationalist, radical, neo-Nazi trends' in April 2016.[35]

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[30] Stewart Motha and Honni van Rijswijk, "Introduction: A counter-archival sense," in *Law, Memory, Violence: Uncovering the counter-archive*, ed. Stewart Motha et al. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), 2.

[31] Presidential Decree establishing the Commission: Указ Президента Российской Федерации от 15 мая 2009 г. N 549 "О Комиссии при Президенте Российской Федерации по противодействию попыткам фальсификации истории в ущерб интересам России", accessed June 16, 2017, https://rg.ru/2009/05/20/komissia-dok.html; Presidential Decree dissolving the Commission: Указ Президента Российской Федерации от 14.02.2012 г. № 183 , accessed June 16, 2017, http://kremlin.ru/acts/bank/34810.

[32] Федеральный закон от 5 мая 2014 г. N 128-ФЗ "О внесении изменений в отдельные законодательные акты Российской Федерации", accessed June 16, 2017, https://rg.ru/2014/05/07/reabilitacia-dok.html.

[33] Nataliya Danilova, *The Politics of War Commemoration in the UK and Russia* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 175-207.

This strategy might intend to strengthen Putin's position generally at the cost of minorities – and this is also true for the suppressed commemoration of the deportation of entire peoples under Stalin. Since the local narratives of these peoples, be them Chechens, Ingush or Tatars, do not conform to the government line on commemoration, their collective memory is suppressed at worst and ignored at best by the authorities.

A look at the different case studies presented in this collection highlights the constantly changing, challenged and evolving nature of objects of memory and rituals of memorialisation. Together, they cover the imposition of historical narratives by sovereign violence as well as counter-hegemonic movements and practices, indicating the process of memorialisation and the impact of the present in general and current power relationships in particular on the way the past is remembered and reconstructed. The suppression of local collective memory in the course of state-funded identity-creation projects is illustrative not of a society's unity, but of a forced, imposed uniformity, a superficial cover for underlying tensions within a state's society to create artificial homogeneity. Violent impositions of narratives of the past only increase these underlying tensions and impede chances for reconciliation which in theory represents one of the core functions of memorials and commemorations. Although official commemorations are not *per se* harmful to local collective memory, the way in which those commemorations are held is crucial. Due to the power that comes with a state apparatus, violent impositions of certain narratives suppressing alternative collective memory are likely to benefit from such resources. It is this violence, trying to force a national identity upon a society, that suppresses the local collective memory.

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[34] Ivan Kurilla, "The Implications of Russia's Law against the "Rehabilitation of Nazism," *PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo* No. 331, August 2014, accessed June 16, 2017, http://www.ponarseurasia.org/memo/201408_Kurilla.

[35] "Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's remarks and answers to questions at the meeting in Mongolia's Foreign Ministry," Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, April 14, 2016, accessed June 16, 2017, http://www.mid.ru/en/web/guest/meropriyatiya_s_uchastiem_ministra/-/asset_publisher/xK1BhB2bUjd3/content/id/2233937.

An interesting contrast between the papers in the collection can be found in the ways in which violence is imposed and how it relates to the affected groups and their struggle. Whereas the left-right divide between political movements in Milan and Bologna engulfs the population of these cities as such, Russian and Turkish authorities have used the Chechen and Kurdish minority identity to frame their actions and separate these groups from the majority population. This identity framing might have facilitated or contributed to the severe measures the states have taken in response to local collective memories and identities conflicting with the official narrative; outright bans of commemorations, curfews and military operations.

When it comes to collective memory in the context of Russia, it is useful to keep in mind the very flexible and surprisingly unpredictable character of its history. As the Soviet Union collapsed only in 1991, Russia as a state is still relatively young and there is a sense of trying to regain this feeling of 'national purpose and cohesion' present in Soviet times among Russians today. A particular fitting depiction of this situation is drawn by Coser in his introduction to Halbwachs' *On collective memory*. He talks briefly about his own experience with Soviet colleagues (writing in the nineties) and notes their reluctance to discuss current events coming to the following conclusion: '[T]hese people had been forced in the last few years to shed their own collective memory like a skin, and to reconstruct a largely different set of collective memories.'[36]

The search for a national identity as pursued by the Russian Federal government has highlighted the resistance it encountered when faced with contesting local collective memories which do not conform with the 'predominant thoughts' centred on the achievements during the Stalin era, such as the deportation of Chechens, Ingush and Tatars by Stalin. As one Chechen resident speaking out against the new date for remembering the deportation has put it: 'For any self-respecting Chechen, February 23 was, is and will be the mourning day for the victims of Stalin's deportation. Even the Soviet power failed, for decades, make us forget about this tragedy;

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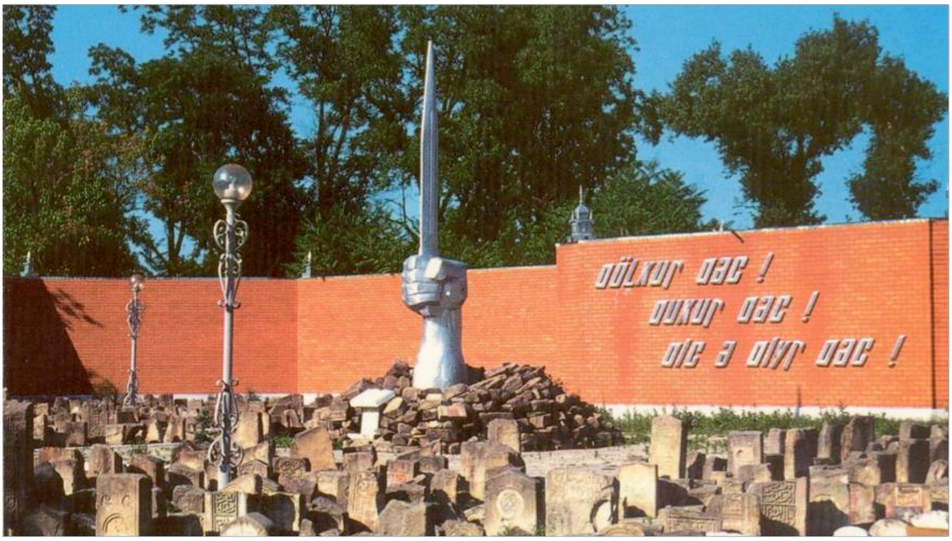
[36] Halbwachs, *On collective memory*, Introduction by Lewis A. Coser, 21.

moreover, our current authorities will not manage to do it, although, I must say, they make just incredible efforts towards it.'[37]

This account of local collective memory of the deportation of the Chechens under Stalin and the official narrative based on the achievements during Soviet times has shown how narratives of the past are constantly reshaped. The violent imposition of a national identity based on patriotism and the great achievements of the Russian state throughout history has failed to unify all groups of society. Acknowledging that, the present government has decided to suppress and neglect local collective memory contradicting the official account of the past. This forced suppression however, will only provide some apparent uniformity on the surface of Russian society, while resistance and struggle against it are likely to grow underneath, challenging the 'predominant thoughts' promoted by state power.



http://www.sakharov-center.ru/asfcd/pam/?t=photo&id=108 - photo by M.Chemchieva, printed as a part of a postcard collection "Destroyed city"(Разрушенный город) from the series "Russian-Chechen war 1994-1996", GRAND INTERNATIONAL, Grozny, 1998. web-database "Memorials to victims of political repressions in former USSR", www.sakharov-center.ru/asfcd/pam

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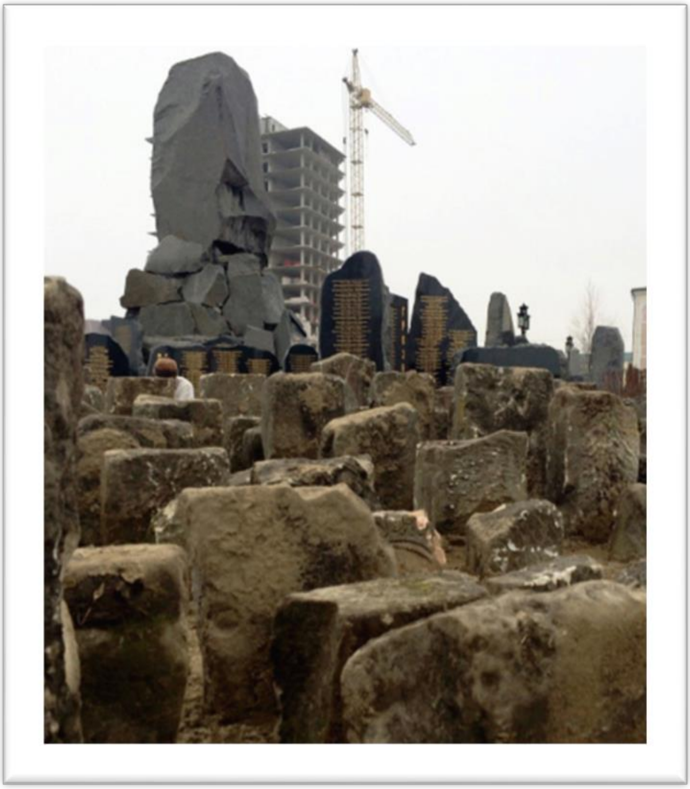
[37] "Residents of Chechnya disagree to combine Remembrance Day with mourning for Akhmad Kadyrov," *Caucasian Knot*, May 10, 2017, accessed June 16, 2017, http://www.eng.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/39323/.



Memorial commemorating fallen members of local pro-Russian security forces (with the added gravestones – the memorial itself consists of the grey column and the black stones with golden inscriptions), Grozny, _provided by Internet-agency Caucasian Knot www.kavkaz-uzel.eu_

Diyarbakır's Objects of Memory: "Restoration" of the Kurdish City into a *Biblokent*[1]

Ceylan Begüm Yıldız

Turkey's military take-over between August 2015 and April 2016 of Diyarbakır —the unofficial Kurdish capital of Southeastern Turkey — caused the deaths of several hundred people, the eviction of 50,000 more and the destruction of countless houses and monuments in its historic heart known as the Sur district. This article examines two speeches given in Diyarbakır at the time, which offer contrasting views not only on the recent conflict, but also on the city's identity and Turkey's so-called "Kurdish question" more generally. This paper investigates how the landmarks and monuments of the historical city have become bearers of those two contesting political positions through their significance as the city's objects of memory.

The first speech was delivered by Tahir Elçi, a prominent Kurdish human rights lawyer, on 28 November 2015 in front of a damaged four-footed minaret. It was a call to end the violence which the minaret represented for Kurdish citizens under military operations. On the contrary, the second speech delivered by then Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, on 1 April 2016 after the intensified military intervention in the historical district of Diyarbakır, reflected the government's policies to wipe the spatial presence of the Kurdish identity, politics and resistance from the city through its "restoration" into a *biblokent*, or a "souvenir city" cleansed of the Kurdish identity for the consumption of tourists.

This article, in conversation with two other articles in this collection, exposes how landmarks and monuments obtain political meanings and become objects of contestation in relation to identity and memory.

Violence Resurrecting

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[1] In memory of Tahir Elçi. I am indebted to Laurent Dissard for his invaluable

The results of Turkey's general elections on 7 June 2015 dealt a significant blow to President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi,* hereafter AKP) and resulted in AKP losing the Grand National Assembly's majority, due in part to an increase in the popularity of the Kurdish party-led leftist coalition party the People's Democratic Party (*Halkların Demokratik Partisi,* hereafter HDP). This defeat would bring forth the end of an already shaky peace process between the Turkish state and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (*Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan*, hereafter PKK), which began in early 2013 and was mediated by the HDP.

After the June elections, Turkey's Southeastern[2] Kurdish regions quickly plunged into a spiral of violence. Officially ended in August 2015, the peace negotiations were quickly replaced by round-the-clock curfews and operations by the Turkish military in the Kurdish-majority cities. In the meantime, neither the AKP nor other parties succeeded in forming a government. As a result, general elections were repeated on 1 November, in the run-up to which repression of other parties' campaigns was intensified. In line with targeting the representatives of local government in Kurdish-majority cities of the Southeast, the HDP's campaign was targeted across Turkey with police raids on the party's offices and the detention of its members. In the November re-elections, the AKP came out as a clear winner by regaining the majority in parliament. While the Erdoğan-led AKP government had rekindled anti-Kurdish sentiments and policies after the first election through curfews and operations, the new regime of violence expanded rapidly across Kurdish-majority cities of Southeastern Turkey after the second.[3]

Zeynep Gambetti and Joost Jongerden in their recent work invited scholars to "shift the attention from outcome-oriented analysis of transformation in time towards a spatial analysis" in regard to

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[2] The region's name changes according to one's political projection. While for some the geographic location is Southeastern Turkey, for others it is Northern Kurdistan. In this paper the region will be referred to as Southestern Turkey with the aim of underlining the power of the Turkish state over the geography.

[3] For statistical data of violations that occurred before and after the second election see: Human Rights Association, "Violations of the Right to Live During the Curfews Between the Dates of 16 August 2015 – 11 February 2016: Statistical Data", accessed March 30, 2017, http://www.ihddiyarbakir.org/en

Turkey's so called "Kurdish question".[4] This paper discloses some of the links existing between the recent social and political changes in state policies towards Kurds and the spatial transformations taking place in the region, with both indicating different aspects of state violence that are projected onto Diyarbakır's iconic artefact: the four-footed minaret.

Through the curfews and military operations of 2015, the region seemed to have returned to the infamous 1990s, during which the very same geography was subjected to a double regime of state of emergency rule and counter-terror law. However, what constitutes the main difference between the 1990s and 2015/16 is the spatial shift from rural to urban, which also determines the means of political contestation. As Joost Jongerden points out, although it had effects in the cities, the armed conflict of the 1990s was carried out in the rural spaces around Southeastern cities where Turkish military forces and PKK guerrillas fought to control the geography by establishing checkpoints in the rural space.[5] On the contrary, by 2015 clashes had moved from a rural to an urban context, due in part to the forced migration triggered by the rural contestation of the 1990s. This spatial movement re-shaped the form of politicisation. Cities being the new battleground presented both new challenges and possibilities and had transformed the playbook of the Turkish state forces and of the Kurdish movement. While the role of the Turkish military and its rural extension through village guards (known as *korucular)* had slowly been reduced, the police and its expanding Special Operation Teams (*Polis Özel Hareket – PÖH*)[6] became the main forces conducting the operations of 2015. In response, the Kurdish movement began to use new in-city tactics such as digging ditches, building barricades, and covering narrow streets with bed sheets to disable the movement and vision of armoured vehicles.[7] As Haydar Darıcı also observes: "[t]he curfews in Kurdish-populated towns have made it clear that the war is now taking place in cities rather than in the mountains".[8]

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[4] Zeynep Gambetti and Joost Jongerden, "Introduction: the Kurdish issue in Turkey from a spatial perspective" in *The Kurdish Issue in Turkey*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2015): 2.

[5] Joost Jongerden, "Looking beyond the state: transitional justice and the Kurdish issue in Turkey" *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 41(2018): 721-738.

[6] The government expressed plans to expand Special Operation Teams to combat terrorism in 2011 ; Bianet, "Özel Harekatçılar "Çoğalarak" Geliyor" *Bianet*, July 23, 2011, accessed December 28, 2017, http://bianet.org/bianet/toplum/131680-ozel-harekatcilar-cogalarak-geliyor The most recent amendment regarding the Special Operation Teams was made on 3 October 2016 by emergency decree no. 676 to ease the criteria for applicants. See, Resmi Gazete, "Olağanüstü hal kapsamında bazı düzenlemeler yapılması hakkında kanun hükmünde kararname" Resmi Gazete, October 29, 2016, accessed December 28, 2017, http://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2016/10/20161029-5.htm

A further element of dissimilarity is worth mentioning. Over the last decade, the AKP-led government's discourse towards the Kurdish minority changed drastically. Unlike the persistent denial of the 1990s, the official state narrative of 2015 was acknowledging the existence of Kurds but preserved its opposition against the politicisation of Kurdish identity. However, the climate of peace and normalisation in Kurdish-majority cities also enabled an active political engagement and a flourishing civil society, which impacted on the dominant identity of the public space in Diyarbakır.[9]

In the introduction to this collection, Kanika Sharma and Federica Rossi highlight the importance of the creators of memorials in giving a form to the communication that objects of memories generate. Sharma and Rossi mention that, while natural and cultural memorials are often created by the state, such objects of memory can also be created as a reaction by people, spontaneously and on personal level. Furthermore, they add, while the former generates more of a nationalist message signifying 'the unity of a society', the latter challenges this portrayal. In the case of Diyarbakır, this emphasis on "the creator" takes another form. The creator of the memorial and the city's objects of memory is also the author, who determines the form and terms of the conversation taking place in the public space; in other words, its dominant narrative. During the peace process, the Turkish state narrative of the 1990s, which was dominating the public space through military presence, was transformed into a lively discussion over Kurdish politics. The sudden reignition of violence in 2015 was not only a punishment for the June elections but also an attempt of the Turkish state to re-gain control over the city's dominant narrative through a systematic cleansing of Kurdish identity and politics.

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[7] Group of Communities in Kurdistan (KCK) Executive Board Co-Chairpersonship made a statement on 23 December 2015 on carrying out the struggle in cities; Bianet, "KCK: Resistance to be Carried Out to the End" *Bianet*, December 24, 2015, accessed December 28, 2017,
http://bianet.org/english/politics/170470-kck-resistance-to-be-carried-out-to-the-end

[8] Haydar Darıcı, "Of Kurdish Youth and Ditches", *Theory & Event* 19 (2016).

[9] Zeynep Gambetti, "The Conflictual (Trans)formation of the Public Sphere in Urban Space: The case of Diyarbakır" *New Perspectives on Turkey* 32 (2005): 43-71.

This contestation over public space was first authored by Tahir Elçi, and later by then-Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, through the four-footed minaret. It is contestation over narration of the curfews, whether it is destructive or constructive, which holds the power of controlling the city's memory and thus to carve its future. In this regard, the manipulation of the memory and history of the minaret becomes yet another battleground between the Turkish state and the resisting Kurdish identity.

The press release in front of the minaret led by the prominent Kurdish human rights lawyer Tahir Elçi on 28 November 2015 and the speech delivered by then Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu on 1 April 2016 represent the crystallisation of an identity struggle embodied in spaces and objects. While the discourses offered two different perspectives on Diyarbakır's past, present and future identity, they both nonetheless agreed in selecting objects of memory to transmit their broader political message. Representing the spatial shift from rural to urban that took place in the conflict, the city's historical landmarks, ancient monuments, architectural heritage and artefacts, as objects of memory, also gained heightened political significances at once. Building Diyarbakır's future, whether it is Elçi's vision of peace with Kurdish identity preserved or Davutoğlu's so-called "restoration" project, not only reflects on the city's objects of memory but the half-a-century-old political struggle is also being carried out in a new battlefield to gain authorship over the space through its objects of memory. This article focuses on one of those objects of memory as a starting point to think critically through Diyarbakır's politics of memory and the government's attempt to first destroy and later reconstruct its historic centre according to its identity as envisioned by the state. While the identity struggle of the Kurds took a spatial turn by tying Kurdish identity to the city's streets and monuments, the government's neo-liberal response of rebuilding Diyarbakır as a tourist attraction, a *biblokent*, aims to erase exactly that identity. The reconstruction project is an attempt to create a new collective memory of the past through narrating its future.

Tahir Elçi and the Four-Footed Minaret

In the midst of this rekindled conflict, on 26 November 2015 the human rights lawyer Elçi, who dedicated his life to defending Kurds within the Turkish legal system, posted a photograph from his Twitter account in opposition to the recent clashes in Kurdish cities (see figure 1). The image Elçi posted is of Diyarbakır's four-footed minaret, one of the city's architectural icons, recently caught in crossfire between Turkish security forces and resisting Kurdish youth, with two of its columns punctured by bullets; an act which Elçi called "an assassination" in his social media post. Two days later, on 28 November 2015, Elçi, accompanied by a group, delivered a press release calling for peace. Concerned with the deteriorating situation in the region, Tahir Elçi in his speech calls to end this resurrection of a regime of violence in Diyarbakır and other Kurdish-majority cities.

However, his call for peace was quickly silenced. Shortly after the end of the speech, gunshots erupted at the back of the crowd and a bullet struck Tahir Elçi in the head, killing him on the spot. After his assassination, people in Diyarbakır and Istanbul gathered in the streets mourning the human rights lawyer's death. Their chants of "We are all Tahir Elçi" echoed the marches organized in January 2007 after the assassination of the Turkish-Armenian journalist Hrant Dink in front of his Istanbul office.[10] Like the pavement and the street on which Hrant Dink was found lying dead, the four-footed minaret transformed into an object of memory, a memorial of Tahir Elçi. However, before the minaret was inscribed by his death, it was Elçi himself who had chosen one of the historical icons of the city as a monument of the curfews.

Elçi labelled the damage done to the monument as an assassination; attributing it to an action done by a subject towards another living being. Such subjectification of the minaret inevitably recalls the people killed during the military operations in Kurdish cities under conditions resembling a siege. Here, the minaret is inanimate, silent, but standing tall while bearing the bullet wounds, and transformed into an object of memory of the ones killed during the operations and representing the escalated violence of 2015. Similar to the court cases that Elçi brought to the state's legal institutions, which told a different story to the 1990s, which a decade later led the state to recognise the existence of hundreds of mass graves across the Kurdish landscape,[11] this time the official narrative of the 2015 curfews was being challenged by the counter-archive embodied by the minaret.[12] The minaret standing tall in the middle of the violence and bearing those bullet wounds serves as an archive of the curfews' times.

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[10] A few days later, Agos (the newspaper co-founded by Hrant Dink), published its headline in Kurdish; *Kevokeke din hate kuştin* or they have killed yet another pigeon. Agos, "Kevokeke din hate kuştin", *Agos*, December 3, 2015, accessed April 30, 2017, http://www.agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/13569/kevokeke-din-hate-kustin

The situation of the Kurdish/Turkish conflict resonates with the suppression of Chechen-Ingush identity by pro-Russian authorities that is discussed in Cornelia Klocker's contribution to the collection. As Klocker highlights, the struggle over identity is embodied in the monuments and landscapes by which spaces and objects gain a certain political significance and transform into objects of memory. To contribute further to her observations, I would like to emphasise the archival character of those objects of memory. It is this archival character of the objects of memory which transforms them into objects of political contestation. It is a political contestation to be the dominant narrative attached to the archive. As mentioned above, in the case of Diyarbakır during curfews, the identity struggle transformed into not only a struggle over the ownership of the cultural heritage, but also a struggle over the authorship of archive, which dominates the past, present and future through narrating the collective memory. Similar to the archival character of the two memorial plaques in Italy that Federica Rossi discusses in this collection, which generated a clash over their narrative, the situation of Diyarbakır's historical centre where the minaret is located resulted in two opposing narratives of the curfews. Furthermore, as the discussion generated from the opposing narratives of the two plaques in Italy reflects a discussion over shared memory of the 'years of lead', in the context of Diyarbakır the struggle over the narrative is a struggle over establishing a collective memory of the 2015 curfews.

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[11] According to Human Rights Association's special report of 2014 on mass graves in Turkey, 49 mass graves were estimated to be in Diyarbakır alone, of which only 8 have been opened, consisting of 77 people. Human Rights Association, "Türkiye'de Toplu Mezarlar Raporu", 2014, accessed July 11, 2017, http://www.ihddiyarbakir.org/Content/uploads/28148ca9-d128-4b4c-afde-87cec90eef89.pdf

[12] More on the law as counter-archive see; Stewart Motha and Honni van Rijswijk, "Introduction: A counter-archival sense," in Law, Memory, Violence: Uncovering the counter-archive, edited by Stewart Motha and Honni van Rijswijk, 1-15. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016)

In the press release the lawyer gave a voice to the minaret; "They have shot me from my feet, I have seen so many disasters and so many wars, but I have never seen such a betrayal."[13] Through the minaret's subjectification, the lawyer alongside his group of activists had approached this specific object of memory as a counter-archive standing against state-legitimised violence and military glorification. But, Tahir Elçi, as the next section exposes, would not be the only one using Diyarbakır's icon to narrate its memory.

Diyarbakır as a *Biblokent*

After Elçi's assassination, curfews and operations intensified even further in Diyarbakır as more military tanks, assault vehicles and soldiers occupied the city's historic district of Sur. In addition, the intervention caused the destruction of houses, shops, churches, mosques and numerous other buildings. More than 50,000 people had now been displaced by the conflict in Diyarbakır's centre between August 2015 and March 2016, while the ones left were facing evictions due to the renewal plans.[14]

On 1 April 2016, Ahmet Davutoğlu, then Prime Minister, delivered a victory speech in the historical district of Sur. In his speech Davutoğlu blamed the city's destruction on the "terrorists" who put up barricades, dig trenches, break cities apart and "separate Turkish citizens from the Turkish nation."[15] His government, he claimed, however, was able to overcome these obstacles and was prepared to wage the necessary war "until the day the valleys, mountains, plains of this beautiful country find calm and peace."

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[13] This quote and the ones in paragraphs further are taken from the transcript of the press release originally delivered in Turkish by Tahir Elçi. See: Bianet, "Tahir Elçi'nin Sözleri Unutulmasın", *Bianet*, December 1, 2015, accessed April 30, 2017, http://bianet.org/bianet/yasam/169777-tahir-elci-nin-sozleri-unutulmasin

[14] Amnesty International, "Displaced and Dispossessed: Sur Resident's Right to Return Home", *Amnesty International*, 2016, accessed March 30, 2017, http://www.amnestyusa.org/sites/default/files/displaced_and_dispossessed_-_eng5_-_online_version.pdf

[15] The quotes in the paragraphs below all refer to Ahmet Davutoğlu's speech given on 1 April 2016. See; Ak Parti YouTube Chanel, "Başbakan Davutoğlu, Diyarbakır Sur'daki Hasan Paşa Hanı'nda Konuştu", *YouTube,* 2016, accessed April 30, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9g7Vgt6Sa8E

Ahmet Davutoğlu, in other words, arrived in Diyarbakır as its self-proclaimed saviour. His choice to speak inside a historic building located in the heart of the historical district of Diyarbakir was not a coincidence. Like Elçi four months earlier, the then- PM instrumentalised the city's iconic objects when he announced massive restoration projects in and out of the old city. His speech revealed the neo-liberal future projected by the government onto the Kurdish geography: "we will preserve the Heysel Gardens that are on the UNESCO cultural heritage list and will open it to tourism."[16] D Davutoğlu announced that the historical district of Sur will be transformed into a *biblokent*, or in other words a "souvenir city"; a sanitized place where tourists can freely come to visit. Here, the role of UNESCO is noteworthy. In October, it was the city's UNESCO-listed fortification walls' turn to be heavily damaged. Although the UNESCO cultural heritage list has been considered as recognition and an attempt at the preservation of Kurdish identity, similarly to the Italian case that Rossi highlights in this collection, during the times of clashes UNESCO adopted an objective discourse which disregarded the violence issued by the Turkish government. While UNESCO's report regarding the cultural heritage sites in Diyarbakır acknowledges the violent situation by stating that "[t]he security situation in Diyarbakır remains challenging for heritage preservation," the analysis fails to address the nearly half-a-century-old political contestation over identity that caused the damages done to those cultural sites.[17] However, the Kurdish case reveals an interesting interplay of politicisation/depoliticisation through UNESCO: while being on the UNESCO cultural heritage list itself has a political significance for a minority whose identity has been unrecognised and systematically supressed, UNESCO's sterile discourse over such politically charged spaces and objects serves to depoliticise and ahistoricise the Kurdish cities, transforming them into *biblokents*.

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[16] UNESCO added the Diyarbakır Fortress (the outer border of the Sur district) and the adjoining Hevsel Gardens to its world heritage list in July 2015, see; UNESCO, "Diyarbakır Fortress and Hevsel Gardens Cultural Landscape", *UNESCO*, 2015, accessed March 30, 2017, http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1488.

[17] Four months after the end of the military operation in Sur, UNESCO held its 40th meeting in Istanbul and released an observation report regarding the damage inflicted. UNESCO, "Reports on the State of Conservation of Properties Inscribed on the World Heritage List", *UNESCO*, 2016, accessed March 30, 2017, http://whc.unesco.org/archive/2016/whc16-40com-7BAdd2-en.pdf

Moreover, the then PM not only wished to offer the city newly restored objects, but newly imagined collective memories as well. According to his speech, “the process that we [his government] launched in 2013 was in fact a restoration project to challenge the bad memories…” As Klocker and Rossi highlight in their contributions in reference to Maurice Halbwachs, collective memory is a reconstruction of the past through the lens of the present.[18] D Davutoğlu’s *biblokent* project for Diyarbakır is an attempt at creating a new collective memory through the perversion of the past and a shaping of the future in which a city aligns itself to the state’s dominant vision.

Once over, the military operation had killed multiple birds with the same stone. Supposedly initiated to eradicate terrorism, it had led to the possibility of gentrifying a city not only materially but also to cleanse it of its ethnic identity. The word “restore” is key throughout Davutoğlu’s speech. Allegedly carried out to “restore” order, the intervention would transform Diyarbakır’s urban identity also in terms of a neo-liberal project, by forcibly evicting the poor and later re-building to attract rich tourists and wealthier investors to profit from its future “restoration.” The AKP moreover hopes the city’s conversion into a *biblokent* will, in the long run, replace terrorism with tourism.

Conclusion

Towards the end of his speech, Ahmet Davutoğlu compares the four-footed minaret to the Eiffel Tower, pointing out one major difference between the two monuments. While the Eiffel Tower only conjures up the image of Paris, he argued, the minaret evokes countless emotions, feelings and memories for different people. When declaring that “whoever visits the four-footed minaret sees something within themselves reflected on it,” Davutoğlu, after all, is perceiving the monument like Tahir Elçi did as an object of memory. But, even if the AKP does succeed in creating its *biblokent*, it will nonetheless have a difficult time eradicating the Kurdish identity and politics from the city. As Diyarbakır’s iconic object of memory, the monument has turned into a *mournament* evoking the memories of Tahir Elçi as well as the other nameless victims of the military operations of 2015/16.

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[18] Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (Chicago, 1992).

This collection contributes to the literature on how monuments and landmarks obtain political meanings and become objects of contested identity and memory through three distinct cases. Rossi, uncovers the ongoing politicisation and re-politicisation of political memory in Italy. She decrypts the political contestation reflected onto the objects of memory of two plaques which became symbols of political agency. Klocker adds another layer to the discussion and reflects on how a struggle over identity is a struggle over memory. She analyses the contestation embodied in the 'Day of Memory and Grief' in Chechnya and Russia's recent systematic attempts to build a national identity through its perversion. This article contributes to the literature analysing the "Kurdish question" through a spatial lens to expose how landmarks and monuments not only reflect a violent past and present but are also instrumentalised as sites of contestation over memory, history and identity. The objects of memory reveal the struggle between politicisation and depoliticisation, official narrative and counter-narrative, national identity and minority identity. As long as the struggle over political memory and identity continues, political contestations will always be reflected in plaques, monuments, landmarks, commemoration sites and days and they will bear significant meanings capable of inspiring political agency.