



THE ISSUES AND CHALLENGES FACED BY MEMORY INITIATIVES ON CONTEMPORARY INTERNATIONAL CRIMES

Lessons learned from the practices of the actors involved

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These recommendations and lessons learned draw on the exchanges between participants at the seminars held on 12 December 2014 and on 18 & 19 June 2015.

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PREAMBLE

The inspiration for this project came not only from the challenges RCN Justice & Démocratie faces in its work in Belgium and in Central Africa but also from a firm belief in the importance of engaging in memory initiatives on contemporary international crimes.

RCN J&D finds it unacceptable that the memory of acts as extreme as genocide and crimes against humanity should vanish with the passing of time. The humanity that these crimes violated is one and the same; it cannot be divided, either temporally or geographically. We all have a Rwanda, Cambodia or Bosnia inside us. Remembering these crimes means standing up for humanity.

It is also in light of its support for restoration of the rule of law in countries affected by mass violence that RCN J&D has chosen:

- to contribute to preserving the memory of these crimes by collecting the stories of those who experienced the violence;
- to situate its approach within the broader context of transitional justice processes by highlighting the links and complementarities between memory initiatives and the processes of justice, truth-seeking, reparation and reconciliation.

Since starting to work on these issues, RCN J&D has however already faced some major challenges. These challenges are linked to the closeness in time of the events and to the memory still being raw, and susceptible to both personal (trauma) and collective tensions (contestation of the facts, political exploitation of memory for partisan purposes, especially among diaspora groups). Moreover, in some contexts, such as the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), human rights violations are still occurring, making it impossible for the passing of time to put matters into historical perspective. A further challenge lies in the lack of archival materials and the often controversial nature of existing documents.

Despite these challenges, the preservation and passing on of the memory of contemporary international crimes addresses both a gap and a need. For this reason, RCN J&D decided to organize two seminars (the first, in December 2014, in collaboration with Commission Justice & Paix and the second in May 2015) with the goal of bringing together organizations active in Belgium, Europe and Lebanon to discuss and share the lessons each has learned from its practices so as to enhance the impact and complementarity of memory initiatives.

This publication sets out the key issues involved in memory initiatives that emerged from the discussions held during these two events. It also aims to give prominence to the experiences of organizations that work to establish dialogue between memories, highlighting the sensitive nature of this work and the need contextualise these memories.



The necessary complementarity between justice and memory initiatives.

RCN Justice & Démocratie (Belgium)

RCN Justice & Démocratie was founded in 1994 in response to the indignation of Belgian citizens (legal professionals, doctors, artists, etc.) at the horror and inaction of the international community during the genocide in Rwanda. For the past 20 years, RCN J&D has been supporting restoration of the rule of law and the right to justice in contexts where there have been large-scale deadly conflicts, in Rwanda, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Chad and South Sudan. Since 2001, it has also been working in Belgium.

The history and engagement of RCN J&D in Belgium is closely linked to a trial that made legal history – that of the ‘Butare Four’, four Rwandans accused of taking part in the genocide. As a Belgian organization working in the justice sector in Rwanda, RCN J&D considered it essential to preserve the memory of the trial. The organization accordingly requested and obtained permission from the President of the *Cour d’Assises* [Assize Court] to record and transcribe the full proceedings.

The trial, which was exemplary in many ways, was a major milestone in the fight against revisionism and denial of the 1994 Rwandan genocide, embodying the advent of a justice without borders through application of the law of universal jurisdiction. The energy invested in discovering the judicial truth was remarkable (18 lawyers and 127 witnesses appeared before the court), but the trial did not put an end to the hate speech and mistrust.

The realization that the court verdict was not sufficient to overcome tensions and divisions led RCN J&D to launch a dialogue between memories project in May 2002 with members of the Rwandan Diaspora in Belgium. For several months, RCN J&D worked with a group of people from the Rwandan Diaspora with the aim of breaking down prejudices, going beyond standard community reflexes and encouraging a commitment to (re)building peaceful coexistence both in Belgium and in their country of origin.

RCN J&D continued its efforts to preserve the memory of international crimes and maintain dialogue with a 2006 initiative to collect testimony from those who had experienced crimes of genocide, war crimes or crimes against humanity. In the radio series *‘If it’s there, it’s here’*, these individuals (Rwandan, Burundian, Congolese, Bosnian and Cambodian) tell their stories, explain how they rebuilt their lives, and discuss their engagement, challenging our own capacity to help build a world that is more just. Through extensive broadcasting of these life stories, particularly in schools, RCN J&D also seeks to highlight the common values that unite us, beyond distance and differences, and to raise awareness about our responsibility and capacity to mobilize and express our indignation when our humanity is wounded by crimes of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

For more information:
<http://www.rcn-ong.be>

INTRODUCTION

In the aftermath of the two World Wars, many countries resolved to take action to ensure that the horror of armed conflict and mass atrocities would not recur, declaring 'Never again' and affirming their determination 'to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war'¹. And yet the end of the Cold War has not brought peace to the world, nor has Europe been spared.

The violence in today's world is set against the backdrop of a complex global context characterized by increased interdependence. The issue of European jihadists as well as the current wave of refugees highlights the interconnections between conflicts, civilians and combatants that cut across geographical boundaries.

In a world characterized by the perpetuation of war and extreme violence, by the persistence of ideologies of hatred and by a tendency towards identitarian closure and radicalization, the achievements of democracy are proving fragile. There is accordingly a pressing need to find avenues for dialogue so as to examine what is at stake today and prevent new violence. RCN Justice & Démocratie is firmly convinced that memory initiatives are among the tools that enable such dialogue to be established by providing the keys to dealing with and learning from these human tragedies, both now and in the future. However, engaging in memory work requires caution, not only because of the risks of memory being exploited for political or partisan ends but also, paradoxically, because of the courage needed to open up the domain of memory to the diversity of our societies and to the challenges of an interdependent world.

The tensions that arise over the issue of remembrance not only concern those directly affected by violence but also extend beyond geographical borders, and make themselves felt in the media and in the political arena². During the minute of silence observed in the Belgian Parliament in April 2015 in memory of the victims of the Armenian genocide, considerable controversy was caused by the absence of a Member of Parliament of Turkish descent and by his subsequent comments on social media, expressing his exasperation at the accusations being made against Turkey and questioning the use of the term genocide.

While our societies may be increasingly multicultural, policies of remembrance often reveal power relations and divisions by imposing the memory of 'the strong'. The memories of minority groups or countries on the political or economic 'margins' are overlooked or neglected, with the memories of the 'weak' being driven underground, where they develop 'unofficially', sometimes competing with official memories and running the risk of fuelling tensions.

Going beyond the 'duty to remember', our aim should be to make plurality and dialogue central to our thinking. Memory initiatives also need to be extended to the issues specific to contemporary international crimes³ by building on the lessons learned from those who work on a daily basis to facilitate dialogue between conflicting memories.

The publication is structured around four main themes: time, plurality, dialogue and responsibility.

¹ Preamble to the Charter of the United Nations.

² AUSSEMS E., *Passé, Histoire, mémoire... Quand la politique s'en mêle*. Commission Justice et Paix aux éditions Couleurs Livres, 2014. Brussels

³ The term 'international crimes' is used here to refer to serious violations of international law, whether committed in time of peace or in time of war, including war crimes, genocide, crimes against humanity and torture, regardless of whether prosecution has been brought.

“How can we work for the coming generations and at the same time respecting the previous generation?”

(Valérie Rosoux, Université Catholique de Louvain)

Unlike historical research, which aims to understand and interpret the past, memory work turns to the past to shed light on the present and to build the future. Time therefore lies at the heart of memory initiatives.

Past, present, future: striking the right balance

Along this time continuum that links past, present and future, the right balance must be struck between the necessity of dealing with the crimes of the past and the need to prevent the energy devoted to doing so from encroaching on the present and the future. Paradoxically, both a surfeit and a denial of memory may prevent a society from projecting itself into a future of reconciliation, by imposing a past that continues to influence and guide the present.

In a case such as that of Lebanon, the fact that the past has not been dealt with in a consistent and transparent manner means that time has stopped, affecting communities down the generations.

“In Lebanon, everyone is silent. People say they don't speak so that it doesn't happen again, but it does happen again!”

(Nayla Abi Nasr, Sustainable Democracy Center)

In former Yugoslavia, while commemorations do exist, they do not bring together all the victims of conflict. Each of the previously warring groups has its own commemorations, which even now serve as a platform for nationalist and divisive discourse, sustaining conflict between the former protagonists in their roles as 'victim' and 'enemy'.

The 'right time' to launch memory initiatives

When is it feasible to embark on memory work and by when should this work be completed? At what point is it advisable to engage in memory initiatives in relation to other post-conflict priorities? How can the necessity of not rushing the victims be reconciled with the urgent need to address the risk of violence recurring? How can the long period of time required for individual and societal memory work be reconciled with the constraints of institutional time dictated by the prevailing political issues?

The answers vary according to the specific circumstances of each context.

The experiences shared by the organizations working in post-conflict countries (Northern Ireland, Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Lebanon, Basque Country (Spain)) highlight the complexity of engaging in memory work in a context that is often still unstable, and where there are many issues and priorities (ensuring physical safety, rebuilding political and judicial institutions, restoring basic social services, reviving the economy).

In the face of this complex agenda, a spontaneous need to remember does not always make itself felt, especially if the populations affected by conflicts still face safety and survival problems. The time required before memory initiatives can be undertaken also varies according to the subject's distance from the experience; there is often a latent period before the victims can begin dealing with their trauma and grief.

“In certain places and at certain times, remembering is a luxury, especially if basic needs are not being met. At the more personal level, not everyone is ready to talk about the violence they have experienced. We need to be aware of these differences.”

(Iratxe Momoito Astorkia, musée pour la Paix de Guernica)

And yet memory work is not simply an option. In countries emerging from violent conflict, an ignorance of the history of past violence that stems from weakness or bias in the official version of events, or from the taboos that still prevail within families and communities, leads to susceptibility to propaganda and the risk of recurrence of violence.

“What is being done in terms of commemoration and memory in the Balkans today is like the preparations for another war. There is an urgent need to facilitate dialogue!”

(Ivana Franovic, Center for non-violent action)

For some victims and perpetrators of crimes, haunted by traumatic memories, memory work is essential for their survival in the present, but requires caution

“For the people we work with (torture survivors), exploring painful memories in a safe and supportive environment is essential.”

(Lis Murphy, Music Action International)

Amid the conflicting pressures and constraints of post-conflict reconstruction at the individual, societal and institutional level, the actors engaged in memory initiatives need to organize their work in light of multiple objectives

and stakeholders in order to identify the ‘right time(s)’ to begin their work. Individual time is not the same as social time or institutional time.

The desired changes at the individual level (overcoming trauma, acknowledging suffering, restoring dialogue) should be considered in terms of generational time. Institutional time, on the other hand, follows political rationales that are often shorter-term and less predictable. These range from ‘imposed forgetting’, through policies of impunity and amnesty laws, to the decision to establish the facts and prosecute the perpetrators of crimes (especially if they are former ‘enemies’). A trial or truth commission can sometimes lead to a more open-minded approach to examining the past but can also create the illusion of closure when the process of dealing with the past at the societal and individual level is not yet over.

Conversely, when memory initiatives are undertaken at societal level but not acknowledged or communicated at state level, and when no prosecutions can be brought or any institutional reform undertaken, these initiatives may seem woefully inadequate to the suffering populations, who expect justice, truth, acknowledgement and reparation.

The timeless mechanisms of violence

In Western Europe, actors involved in remembrance education on the crimes of the Second World War are now focusing on more recent history and conflicts, capitalizing on their experience in this field. Their initiatives have enabled the scope of memory work to be gradually extended to take account of geographical and historical diversity, uncovering the sadly similar mechanisms that engender violence and discrimination.

Unlike memory initiatives on contemporary crimes that are conducted in the actual countries of conflict, no 'waiting time' is needed in countries not directly affected by conflict. However, caution is needed when accounts are still disputed and memories still raw.

While comparisons may provide insights into mechanisms that are timeless, memory work must be placed within a historical perspective. Each story must be understood in the context where it originated and must be interpreted in light of the historical background. However, establishing the historical context is a challenging task, as the violence that occurs is often poorly documented and the facts contested.

In Belgium and the Netherlands, Kazerne Dossin and NIOD have built bridges between their educational work on the Holocaust and other contexts affected by extreme violence.

The mechanisms of collective violence.

Kazerne Dossin (Belgium)

Built in the eighteenth century, the Dossin barracks were the scene of the deportation of 25 484 Jews and 352 gypsies between 1942 and 1944. A memorial, museum and documentation centre on the Holocaust and human rights, the Kazerne Dossin is today a unique place of commemoration in Belgium.

However, the museum does not only deal with 'Belgian case' but also with massive violence in general. Taking the Holocaust as a basis, it examines the timeless mechanisms of group pressure and collective violence ('mass', fear, discrimination), mechanisms that can result under certain conditions in mass murder and genocide. Each theme is illustrated with contemporary examples that highlight the tragic repetition of horror, while examples of resistance are also given.

Parallels are drawn between the discrimination against Jews in Occupied Belgium between 1940 and 1942 and the lynching of black people in the United States up to the 1960s. The behaviour of the perpetrators and opportunists serves as basis for alerting the visitor to collective violent mechanisms among us and to the possibility to say 'no' and to resist.

For more information:

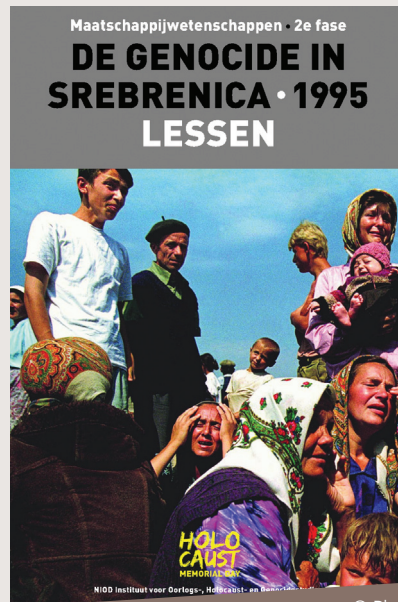
<https://www.kazernedossin.eu/FR/>

Learning about genocides.

NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust
and Genocide Studies (Netherlands)

The Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) in the Netherlands is coordinated by the NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies with several partners. Each year in January, activities, lessons and events are organized reflecting on the Holocaust and other genocides. HMD has developed several lessons on genocide for different levels. This year, a full lesson on the Armenian genocide was launched (also available in English) as well as a lesson on the genocide in Srebrenica. While historical knowledge is the basis, understanding the genocidal process is as important. In all lessons, discussing the context and stages of mass violence, using original source material and analyzing images, leads to better understanding of genocide and genocide prevention.

For more information: www.niod.nl



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PLURALITY

“Plurality is not a problem but rather a condition for embarking on memory work.”

(Valérie Rosoux, Université Catholique de Louvain)

“By choosing to address the diversity of memory, we must acknowledge and accept that there will be conflicts and contestation.”

(Maarten Van Alstein, Vlaams Vredesinstituut)

Diversity of accounts

Memory is multiple: individual, family, community, national and sometimes transnational. Reflecting the way an individual or a group interprets experience, memory is made up of feelings, sociocultural representations and multiple interpretations of past events. It is also multiple in the sense that these memories are contested, and often conflicting, especially in countries marked by recent violence. While national commemorations normally indicate a desire for unity, expressed through a monolithic official discourse, memories, on the other hand, are generally plural.

Plurality is at the heart of the practices of those engaged in memory initiatives; in this way, multiple visions of a conflict can be incorporated, reflecting each person's unique experience, and the memories of those generally excluded from official history can be brought into the picture. By acknowledging the diversity of memories, memory practitioners accept the tensions that may emerge from or be generated as a result of this plurality.

The memory maze: towards a 'multi history' of Lebanon?

Sustainable Democracy Center (Libanon)

Since 1840, the history of Lebanon has been marked by a succession of conflicts, and no historical consensus seems to have been reached. In the absence of any official transitional justice and reconciliation processes, history continues to be determined at the individual community level. Without any collective memory, and confronted with fragmented accounts of the past, it is prejudice, hatred, a culture of violence and fear of others that prevail and are passed down to the young.

Since 2010, in partnership with Alter Natives and young members of SDC's Citizenship and Peace Clubs, SDC has collected testimony that reflects the diversity of memories of the different groups living in Lebanon. These accounts led to a 2013 exhibition in the form of a maze, which facilitated direct dialogue between the various opinions and accounts of the conflicts that have marked the country.

The different experiences and perspectives are displayed side by side, reflecting the dilemmas posed by this fragmented history, and sometimes leaving the visitor disoriented and confused. But the young guides who take people round the exhibition encourage them to express their point of view, leading to a dialogue around these memories, which are at last shared. This travelling exhibition has been shown throughout the country, enabling the young guides to discover and face up to the complexity of their history through inter-generational dialogue. These encounters also included collective conflict mapping.

In the longer term, this experience will continue, with more widespread promotion of these 'multi memories' for a common 'multi history', the objective being to reach a national and political audience, though this remains a challenging task.

For more information: www.sdclebanon.org ;
Facebook : SDCLebanon



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Nevertheless, the concept of plurality raises various questions and challenges that memory practitioners must address. How can we respect diversity without falling prey to relativism or revisionism? How can we organize and build upon memory initiatives in relation to historical and judicial truth-seeking processes? How can we ensure that the plurality of memories does not impede the construction of a common collective memory, necessary for the stability of a society?

Paradoxically, this challenge is also a great opportunity to enrich existing history by uncovering some of its little-known chapters, or, in contexts where no judicial or historical processes exist, to fight against oblivion by remembering history and its victims. Moreover, by comparing the accounts given, such work helps reinforce the facts by enabling events to be identified and confirmed, thus avoiding the risks of relativism or revisionism. In the Basque Country, the MemoriaLAB project aims to give priority to people's stories, letting the facts emerge from the participants' accounts rather than imposing them *a priori*.

In Lebanon, the Sustainable Democracy Center has developed a travelling exhibition in the form of a maze, which immerses visitors in their country's plural history and invites them to reflect on its contradictions.

Plurality of voices

Plurality is also established through the diversity of the individuals and groups who embark on and take part in memory initiatives. This plurality is essential for the inclusion and acceptance of multiple narratives throughout the process: plurality of voices, plurality of partners and of members of organizations working on memory.

Organizations such as Healing Through Remembering have made participation and plurality central to their practices by ensuring that representatives of groups formerly in conflict are included at each stage of project planning. While this participatory process is long, and a potential source of tensions, it is also a powerful instrument for rap-

prochement and recognition of the suffering experienced by the different groups.

“It took months, or even years, for some people to agree to sit in the same room, the same space as those that they saw as from ‘other sides’ in the conflict. At first, there was a reluctance to get involved, but after the initial apprehension, people did engage.

(Triona White Hamilton, Healing Through Remembering)

Acceptance and ownership of memory work depend largely on organizations' ability to include within their structures people from the different groups that were in conflict. This plurality is crucial for the organization not be seen as partisan and therefore lacking in credibility to a part of the population. When testimonies are being collected, the fact that the different groups in conflict are represented is one of the initial factors in establishing the trust needed for people not only to tell their stories and make them public but also to have their voices heard.

In Croatia, Documenta has done an impressive job of collecting testimonies from victims of the violence that has cast a shadow over the country since 1941. Documenta has made a special effort to give a voice to those who are generally excluded from official history (ethnic or religious minorities, women, young people), favouring the collection of oral accounts (audio or video), in which the speakers can express themselves without any intermediary.

Personal memories of war and political violence

Documenta (Croatia)

Since 2004, Documenta has been engaged in memory projects that complement initiatives aimed at strengthening dialogue and demands for justice; the complementarity of the organization's goals make its work unique.

Documenta works in a context where debate on war-related events in Croatia, then Yugoslavia and post-Yugoslav countries from 1941 to 2001 is still very much alive. The war events continue to be the subject of public questioning, raising the spectre of revisionist comments and positions. For these reasons, Documenta has undertaken to contribute to truth-seeking efforts and to support and strengthen personal and social processes of dealing with the past so as to build sustainable peace.

Since 2001, thanks to the network of trust the organization has developed, Documenta has collected over 500 audio and video testimonies and has been in contact

with over 1000 people. The choice of testimony reflects the aim of representing a wide range of places, ethnic communities and ages, and of enabling the voices of those usually excluded from official histories (survivors, minorities, marginalized groups) to be heard. These accounts can be accessed on the 'Croatian Memories' Internet platform by anyone interested in learning more. Through these testimonies, the Centre wishes to show that it is possible to gain deeper insights into the unrest and conflicts, particularly their otherwise hidden aspects.

For several years, short videos have been produced annually as part of an extensive television campaign in which citizens share their expectations of justice. The videos feature people from different ethnic communities and regions, contributing to greater acknowledgment of one another's experiences and suffering. Many of those who took part in the Croatian Memories project have lent their faces and voices to this campaign, thus confirming the complementarity of memory and justice initiatives.

For more information:

www.documenta.hr



© Photo DOCUMENTA

DIALOGUE

The plurality of memory requires the establishment of frameworks for dialogue; this is essential for enabling mutual recognition of suffering and for jointly establishing an account of events that includes the plurality of experiences.

Agreement on a common narrative is a vital starting point for building a new model of society that has broken with the divisions that are the legacy of past violence.

When confronting events as serious as genocide, some organizations have chosen not to get bogged down in definitions of the term, since the facts cannot be denied and priority must be given to maintaining dialogue.

This work aims not only to raise awareness of little-known chapters of history but also to bring about a change in perceptions and relationships that requires time and perseverance.

To address these challenges, memory practitioners use a wide range of approaches and methodologies, in which innovation and creativity play an important part.

Dialogue and everyday life

Some organizations have succeeded in making surprising connections between memories of the past and everyday activities (music, cooking, etc.) and objects.

By taking everyday life as a starting point, such initiatives make it possible not only to explore past conflict by moving away from the tragedy of it, but also to reach as many people as possible by enabling them to connect with everyday life. Furthermore, these everyday activities and practices create bonds by enabling participants both to share their own memories and to learn from those of others.

Everyday objects transformed by the conflict.

Healing Through Remembering (Northern Ireland)

Healing Through Remembering (HTR) is a cross-community organization whose members come from different (political and religious) backgrounds but have decided to work together on the legacy of conflicts in Northern Ireland. At the official level, the reconciliation and transitional justice processes that took place were heavily politicized and divided. Even though today's government brings together the two main political parties, this has not led to the construction of a shared narrative. With no common narrative and with contrasting representations of the history of the conflict in Northern Ireland, it is a struggle for society, and for teachers in particular, to address the country's history.

With the exhibition *'Everyday Objects Transformed by the Conflict'*, Healing Through Remembering has chosen to emphasize diversity and to move away from the political by exploring people's everyday lives during the conflict. After an audit that identified 420 000 objects associated with the conflict from public and private collections, 50 objects were finally selected and borrowed. The stories they tell are both unique and at the same time common. Printed on the back of a bus ticket, you can read «If you have information about murders, explosions or other serious crimes, ring L:DERRY 2340 in complete confidence».

The objects selected represent the full spectrum of perspectives: Protestant, unionist, loyalist, Catholic, nationalist/republican, victim, survivor, security forces, etc. Each object has a label written by its owner, explaining the significance the item has for them. The decision to work with everyday objects has made the

exhibition accessible to a large number of citizens, while helping them tell their own stories in a non-dramatic way. The aim is not to agree on one single version of history but instead to let people from various backgrounds speak for themselves.

The exhibition organized by Healing Through Remembering has been highly participatory from the very start. Discussion groups were formed, made up of volunteers, members of HTR and collectors, and HTR is convinced that the dialogue and consultation process that led to the exhibition being staged has been as important as the exhibition itself.

Thanks to this process, which lasted almost a decade, not only were some discussion group members able to overcome their own reluctance but an exhibition was put together that fulfilled the expectations of the people of Northern Ireland. The various discussion groups wanted the stories to be presented side by side, even if that led to contradictions. Through this choice, they wanted to show that, despite their different representations of the past, they can now live together.

For more information:

www.healingthroughremembering.org



© Photo HTR

In Northern Ireland, *Healing Through Remembering* has been working for nearly a decade on a long process of dialogue and consultation between representatives of groups previously in conflict. In 2011, this work culminated in an exhibition where the different stories are presented side by side.

Dialogue and the arts

The use of the arts (music, visual art, theatre, etc) as opposed to a purely cognitive approach reaches deeper and more emotional parts of our memories as well as creating a means of going towards 'the other' that are less intimidating. Artistic creation is also an important channel for stimulating and supporting the expression of experiences that may have been buried because of fear, denial or repression. In the United Kingdom, Music Action International uses singing in its work with refugees who were victims of torture in their home countries. Through song, they gradually regain self-confidence and find their place in the local community. By focusing on individual creativity, art can bring about change by helping participants imagine alternatives to violence and destruction. Through metaphor and through fiction, artistic creation can take a multitude of stories into account, generating dialogue between memories and between periods and bringing history to light in all its complexity.

In the Basque Country, MemoriaLAB has developed innovative methodologies that challenge people's vision of the conflict there, allowing dialogue to be established after decades of silence.

A creative laboratory of memories.

MemorialAB (Basque Country, Spain)

After nearly 40 years of violence and silence, the announcement of a 'permanent' ceasefire by ETA in October 2011 opened up new ground and created a unique opportunity for dialogue. In 2013, against this backdrop, three foundations with extensive experience in the culture of peace (Guernica Peace Museum, Bakeola and Gernika Gogoratuz), along with two methodology experts (Iñigo Retolaza and Alex Carrascosa), launched the MemorialAB project, designed to be a 'laboratory of social memory'.

MemorialAB works with groups of volunteers (20 to 25 people for each two-day session) representing a microcosm of Basque society from a cultural, linguistic and ideological viewpoint, a key factor in the joint creation of an inclusive social memory. Bringing together these disparate groups has proved a difficult task. More often than not, the only transmission of memory across the generations consists in silence, making it difficult for the young, in particular, to connect with a reality they are unfamiliar with. To address this challenge, the project has developed innovative methodology.

During the two-day MemorialAB sessions, away from their home environment, participants explore not only their own memories but

those of others, with a gradual shift from the individual to the collective. Using the individual as the starting point has helped to address the various feelings and resentments engendered by experience of the conflict and to give these meaning, both individually and collectively. MemorialAB's methodology puts people's stories before facts; in this way, the facts emerge from the stories, rather than being imposed. The rich variety of methods used, which include bodywork and artistic expression, has made it possible to take a 'lighter' approach to the complex process of building an inclusive social memory.

By starting off at the individual level, the MemorialAB project aims gradually to set a broader social movement in motion that could offer a different view of social reality and of people's experiences of the Basque conflict.

For more information:

www.museodelapaz.org et www.bakeola.org



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Dialogue and risk management: do no harm

At the heart of memory work are accounts of the suffering experienced by the victims of violence, and the trauma that such accounts can reawaken. The risk of retraumatization means that memory initiatives must adopt a cautious approach.

“We start from the assumption that we are doing good. To what extent do we take into account the risk our work involves?”

(Christoph Sperfeldt, Australian National University)

Such caution requires accepting the silence of those who cannot speak, as the memory is still too raw or painful, or those for whom silence is a choice, their way of dealing with the trauma. It is also important to identify and support those who do not speak - not out of choice but because they were forced to remain silent for too long. The issue of trauma also affects the members of organizations working on memory initiatives who come face to face with horror on a daily basis without always having the resources needed to cope. This risk of vicarious trauma in members of such organizations is even greater for those who have themselves faced violence.

As well as the risk of (re)traumatization, there may be security risks for organizations and those who bear witness who, by revealing the hidden chapters of history, challenge dominant narratives and draw attention to the responsibility of those who took part in the violence.

Building in mechanisms for dealing with trauma and for managing security risks ensures that such initiatives do not harm those they are intended to help, in both the present and the future. The work of Music Action International shows how therapeutic work can gradually help victims reconnect with their memories, at their own pace and with respect for their needs.

Healing through music.

Music Action International (United Kingdom)

Since 2011, Music Action International has developed and facilitated ‘Stone Flowers’, a therapeutic, creative music project with survivors of torture in their countries of origin, now living in exile. The project is delivered in partnership with Freedom from Torture, a British foundation for the medical, psychological and social recovery of survivors of torture.

The trauma experienced as a result of extreme violence is often compounded by the pain of living in exile and of the inhumane asylum application processes. Trauma damages memory, and this can have a devastating impact when survivors are required to prove their claim for asylum. ‘Stone Flowers’ uses music and creativity to enable participants to reconnect with their emotional and physical experiences in a safe environment, to reconnect with positive memories of home before the trauma took place, to express themselves through music and song without using words, as well as singing in their own language and that of other participants.

The music here is used to reduce the effects of trauma and isolation with the goal of improving the mental health of participants, and to support their integration into often hostile communities by creating a framework of trust and exchange between participants from different countries. Over the years, creating original music has gradually allowed the participants to share both happy and more painful events just as it has helped to develop their self-esteem.

The ‘Stone Flowers’ project adds an extra element to the therapeutic use of music, through public perfor-

mances of their group's original work. It can be a real challenge for torture survivors living in exile to perform in public, since they or their families could still be at risk, and since trauma can cause anxiety, flashbacks and panic attacks and prevent people from feeling safe in their local community. As well as this, most participants have not practised or performed music before.

Despite these obstacles, the performance is a unique opportunity for survivors to restore an image of themselves that was often damaged, to make them visible, to initiate positive interactions with their local community and to share an important message. The acceptance that their music has received has enabled survivors to contribute within their community, and to speak publicly, notably in a documentary film where they tell their stories (mostly anonymously), thus raising awareness of the human rights violations they have suffered.

For more information: <http://musicaction.org/>



© Photo Marc Sethi

RESPONSIBILITY

Responsibility for the most serious crimes is often multiple (international, historical, political, societal or moral), and the same applies when it comes to the 'responsibility to remember'.

In light of the balance needed between the past, the present and the future, the responsibility to remember must be assumed by those who experienced or were instrumental in the violence, those who are now suffering its indirect consequences, and those who could contribute to building a new vision of society that has turned its back on conflicts and violence, even beyond the borders of the countries affected.

This is not a task that should be left only to the survivors; the responsibility must be shared. As human beings, we all share some part of the responsibility and we must accept it.

(Vesna Teršelič, Documenta, Croatia)

Responsibility of populations divided by conflict

In a context marked by recent violence where wounds remain unhealed, groups previously in conflict tend to remain entrenched in generalizations about identity: 'them' (the enemy figure) and 'us' (the victims). Narratives on conflict thus become mired in irreconcilable viewpoints. It is the group as a whole that is labelled as victim or criminal. Nuance is lost, erasing the reality of contexts where individuals can in turn be victim and perpetrator of crimes. Challenging these identities inherited from conflicts is therefore vital in setting a truthful process of memory work in motion, where each person can not only analyse his or her role in the violence but also acknowledge the suffering experienced by the other group, an essential stage in creating a common future.

The Center for Nonviolent Action (CNA) has been working since 2002 in Serbia and in Bosnia and Herzegovina with representatives of veterans from the various armies that

Ex-combatants become defenders/ guardians of peace.

Center for non-violent action
(Serbia & Bosnia and Herzegovina)

The CNA works in a climate dominated by nationalistic rhetoric. Indeed, in Serbia and in Bosnia and Herzegovina commemorations divide rather than unite people, often feeding the memory of the enemy and the person's own victim status and denying the victimhood of others.

In 2002, the CNA decided to focus on the veterans of various armies who had fought in the war in former Yugoslavia in the 1990s. It was because they received no attention and were regarded as the most radical of the nationalist ideologues that the CNA decided to work with them.

The activities conducted with the veterans started off with public forums known as 'Four Views', where ex-combatants talked about their war experiences and their past and present motivations. During these exchanges, the focus was on openness to dialogue and deconstruction of the image of the enemy. In 2008, after several training sessions and on the strength of these many exchanges, the CNA organized joint visits with the veterans organizations of 'old enemies' to places of crime and suffering with the aim of paying tribute to the victims on both sides. Due to the fact that these visits also included unmarked atrocity sites, they are important reminders that there are crimes largely denied in different communities. Thus these visits contribute to the recognition of previously ignored victims. A further step was taken when the veterans attended official commemorations and public ceremonies to honour civilian victims from both their own and the 'enemy' group, causing surprise and some confusion within

local communities. These activities and initiatives are not without risks. By taking part in them, the veterans may be regarded as traitors, with some even receiving death threats. Through this initiative, the CNA has taken up the challenge of conducting a comprehensive and non-selective treatment of the past in which everyone is encouraged to examine their actions and responsibilities. This is a crucial step before engaging in the work of reconciliation that goes beyond borders. The CNA is currently carrying on its work with groups of former combatants and plans to continue to mark unmarked atrocity sites, which would be a major step in terms of public preparation for a non-selective and unconditional reconciliation.

For more information:

<http://nenasilje.org/en>



© Photo CNA

fought in former Yugoslavia. Through this initiative, the CNA is challenging the perceptions of veterans by confronting them with crimes committed by their own army and inviting them to join in commemorations with the victims.

Responsibility of national and international authorities

Memory initiatives pay particular attention to extremely grave crimes (crimes against humanity, war crimes and genocide) and to large-scale crimes (mass violence), where the repressive state apparatus (e.g. the police, judiciary, army, public administration) and institutions that are vectors of ideology and values (schools, media, religion, etc.) were often the instigators and propagators of verbal abuse and armed violence, or, on some occasions, impassive observers.

The role of the authorities is often key, not only in terms of their actions before and during the violence but also for post-conflict reconstruction. It is necessary for them to distance themselves from the discourse and practices that led to the violence so that they can propose a new model of society. In addition, globalization and the creation of international institutions create responsibilities that go beyond the confines of conflict zones in terms of both crimes and their prevention.

At the official level, since the end of the twentieth century, there has been a wave of official apologies for injustices committed, both in the more distant past (e.g. slavery, colonization, the Holocaust) and in more recent years (apartheid, the Rwandan genocide, etc.). In some cases, the admissions and expressions of regret have been accompanied by compensation payments, or the promise of compensation. But how do these official initiatives relate to memory work at the societal level? In what ways are such initiatives catalysts of change?

While the work of CEC does not deal directly with international crimes, it reveals the propaganda mechanisms that were used to justify Belgium's tragic colonial enterprise in the Congo (now the Democratic Republic of Congo - DRC). This work also illustrates the way in which the discourse of propaganda permeated the collective unconscious and still fuels

present stereotypes in both Belgium and the DRC, linking colonial propaganda with the responsibilities of Belgian and Congolese citizens today when it comes to the perpetuation of stereotypes that are a legacy of the colonial period.

Responsibility of future generations

How can we deal with the legacy of history, and with historical guilt? How long must you bear this responsibility, if, for example, you are the granddaughter of a member of the SS, or of a survivor?

(Barbara Boender, NIOD, Netherlands)

Apart from the populations directly affected by conflict, the trauma or memory of a conflict is passed down from one generation to the next, sometimes crossing the borders of the countries where the violence occurred. Even in exile, those who have experienced violence continue to carry and to pass on traumatic memories, often remaining entrenched in divisions that are a legacy of the conflict.

The young then become the victims of unresolved tensions and malaise, even though they themselves did not live through the events. They are turned into victims or perpetrators by an identity that they did not choose and which does not reflect their experience. These affiliation patterns heighten mistrust and in some cases may result in present-day violence.

However, far from being a static process, memory can be renewed according to the experiences of groups in conflict as well as by the way in which events are commemorated and passed on to the new generations. While the young are and will remain the heirs of this history, it is important to know what they will keep of it and how they will bring about change.

If young people are made aware of the importance of a critical and pluralistic analysis of the past and its transmission, they may be able to free themselves from the burden of this inherited debt of hurt (victim) or guilt (per-

Historical taboos and the persistence of prejudice.

Coopération par
l'éducation et la culture (Belgium)

Coopération par l'Éducation et la Culture (CEC) is a Belgian NGO that actively supports development projects in the field of culture, education and training in the Global South. CEC also organizes education and development initiatives in Belgium with a focus on reflection, exchanging ideas and raising awareness of the barriers that result from our societies' ignorance of the cultural and human values of the developing South.

For the last 15 years, CEC has worked on deconstructing stereotypical representations of Africa and Africans in general. As the former colonial power, Belgium left a lasting impression on the memories of Belgians and Congolese living in Belgium and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Drawing on existing archives in both countries, on research conducted 'over there' as well as 'here', and with the support of a Belgian-Congolese team, CEC aims to ensure that its work reflects this dual perspective.

Designed to follow up on a first exhibition, organized in 2000, the 'Notre Congo, Onze Congo' exhibition reveals Belgian colonial propaganda through the display of a series of pictorial and audio-visual archives from the Belgian-Congolese colonial period. Through images and sounds, CEC examines how the various channels of propaganda of the time justified the colonial enterprise. The monotonous repetition of the slogans of the period is a root factor in conceptions of colonization in the collective unconscious. The exhibition also explores the persistence of stereotypes in memories of the colonial period, on both the Congolese and Belgian sides. It

was decided to make it a travelling exhibition in order to reach different audiences, particularly young people in both Belgium and the Democratic Republic of Congo. The exhibition is also available to community groups, cultural associations and the teaching community.

In parallel with its exhibitions and presentations, CEC runs many activities on the theme of persistent stereotypes and conflicting memories of colonization (film screenings, discussion forums, etc.). Current events serve as an almost daily reminder that deconstructing stereotypes is a long-term undertaking.

In Belgium, the exhibition has given rise to much discussion, reflecting the conflicting memories latent in the population. For CEC, this is one of the positive outcomes that were expected from the initiative: establishing dialogue after a long period of taboos and unspoken assumptions.

For more information: www.cec-ong.org



© Photo CEC

petrator). This process is central to ensuring that the new generations can envisage a different future.

Responsibility in the name of shared humanity

Responsibility for remembering is not only the business of those who experienced or were involved (directly or indirectly) in the violence; it is everyone's business on the basis of the principles of humanity violated by these crimes.

Memory work addresses the challenges posed by an ever more connected world that is paradoxically also increasingly polarized, where violence and its terrible consequences are shown daily on our screens and broadcast beyond the borders of the countries at war.

In the face of the persistence and proximity of war, critical reflection on both past and present violence is needed, not only to highlight the erosion of democracy and to prevent future violence but also to reaffirm the importance of coexistence and solidarity. When memory work places emphasis on stories of hope, it can be a source of inspiration and help overcome a feeling of impotence by bearing witness to the attitudes and choices of those who have chosen not to give in to hatred.

'Throughout history, man has made war, but has also brought about peace. Human solidarity, dignity and friendship are values that even war cannot destroy. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, drawn up on 10 December 1948 (after the cruel suffering of the two world wars), represented a major milestone in history. The Declaration continues to represent a crucial frame of reference for trying and prosecuting current crimes against humanity⁴.'

Through a role-play activity, the youth organization Tumult is encouraging young Belgians to reflect on their capacity to use critical thinking skills and to make choices when faced with war and violence. By putting the young people into the context of the First World War, the game illustrates the changes Belgium has undergone in terms of rights and freedoms.

⁴ Touchstone for remembrance education. A manual for the quality of remembrance education projects. Bijzonder Comité voor Herinneringseducatie. Belgium. 2015. Page 35.

A First World War role-play.

Tumult (Belgium)

Tumult is a Belgian youth organization set up in 1964 to defend the position of conscientious objectors and to promote peace education. The organization targets not only children and young people but also their educators, and works in three main areas: managing conflicts and violence between people; fostering intercultural dialogue between different groups; and exploring war and peace across the globe.

Developed for 12 to 16-year-olds, *Dilemma 14/18* is a role-play that tells the stories of 22 characters who lived during the war years (1914-18). The game confronts the young with the difficult choices facing those who lived during the period of the First World War. Each group takes on the role of one of the characters.

By putting young people into a given political and historical context, the game seeks to draw their attention to the importance of context in the choices we make. The game also aims to show that these characters did not have the same options as we do today and explores the young people's abilities to make choices and be critical thinkers.

For more information:

www.tumult.be



© Photo TUMULT

RECOMMENDATIONS

From Belfast to Sarajevo, via Beirut, Amsterdam and Brussels, this publication has aimed to highlight the experiences of organizations engaged in memory initiatives. On a daily basis, these actors persevere in their endeavours to ensure that the tragedies of the past (sometimes still very much alive) do not recur by reminding us of our common humanity and responsibility.

The seminars made a modest contribution to identifying common trends and points of note that highlight the issues and challenges facing memory initiatives. The findings, which are summarized below, should nevertheless be considered with caution since memory work remains closely tied to the specific context; there is no single transferable model.

The seminars were also an occasion to underline the importance of memory issues in a difficult global context, where violence continues and divisions are widening.

Despite the plurality of the world, of Europe and of nations, societies seem to be increasingly polarized, with the principles of democracy and human rights questioned by those who find themselves on the margins of society and feel neither acknowledged nor listened to. The challenges involved in memory initiatives that focus on dialogue and conflict prevention are therefore considerable, but confirm the importance of this work.

Finding a balance between past, present and future

Memory work is a reading of the past that aims to shed light on the present and to build the future. The question of time is therefore central. A balance needs to be found between too many and too few memories so that the past can exist without constraining the possibilities of building the present and the future.

In contexts marked by recent conflicts, the challenges of reconstruction are multiple, and the need to remember is rarely expressed spontaneously. Knowledge of the context and specific needs of different sections of society is therefore essential in assessing the right time to engage in memory work.

Until recently, remembrance education in Western Europe was solely devoted to the First and Second World War. Today, organizations build bridges between the educational work they are doing on the Holocaust and other contexts affected by extreme violence.

Their work allows to highlight, beyond the specificities, the unfortunately timeless mechanisms of violence and discrimination.

Embracing plurality

As a reflection of the way an individual or group interprets experience, memory is multiple, especially where a history of conflict is concerned. Indeed, plurality is a condition for undertaking memory work and requires us to accept the tensions and disagreement that inevitably ensue.

Plurality is also established through the diversity of the individuals and groups who embark on and participate in memory work. Acceptance and ownership of multiple narratives require each group to feel meaningfully involved throughout the process.

The choice of a plural approach does, however, require the establishment of ethical guidelines to avoid propagating revisionist thinking or falling prey to relativism. Paradoxically, this choice also provides a great opportunity to enrich and consolidate our knowledge of the past on condition that such initiatives enable different perspectives and little-known chapters of history to be included. This should however be done in conjunction with the fact-finding work carried out by judges, historians or political scientists.

Enhancing dialogue

The plurality of memories and the dissension this can lead to mean that dialogue is vital in enabling mutual recognition of suffering and establishing an account of events that can include the plurality of experiences.

This process of dialogue aims to achieve both cognitive and emotional change at the individual and collective level. The complexity of such change means that time, and often creativity, are needed. The use of artistic expression not only offers less 'threatening' ways of meeting with others but is also a more effective means of fostering empathy and stimulating the expression of a different kind of response.

Memory initiatives are not however risk-free; they may awaken trauma and threaten the security of those who speak as well as members of the organizations engaged in memory work. These risks must be analysed and taken into account so that they do not harm those they are intended to help.

Facilitating dialogue between memories and moving from individual to collective narrative is a long-term undertaking. Despite the willingness of organizations to cooperate in national and international processes, these initiatives often remain too narrow and local in scale.

Questioning responsibility

Responsibility for embarking on memory work is often multiple. The challenges vary according to the actors involved in the process and their roles before and during the conflict, their proximity to the violence and its aftermath, and their ability to participate in rebuilding a society that has moved on from the conflict.

For the populations directly affected, there is a need to challenge the identities carried over from conflict ('them/ the enemy' and 'us/the victims') to enable a truthful

account of the past to emerge and a future free from violence to be envisaged.

Far from being a static process, the memories borne by groups in conflict can be renewed according to the way in which events are passed on to the new generations. For those who were left a legacy of violence, a critical and pluralistic analysis of the past and its transmission is essential so that they find the strength to free themselves from the burden of this debt.

Memory initiatives pay particular attention to mass crimes where the political authorities, whether repressive or not, were often the instigators and propagators of violence or, on occasion, impassive observers. As representatives of authority, they play a key role in the process of setting institutional conditions for preventing further violence.

Finally, on the basis of the principles of humanity violated by these crimes, responsibility for remembering is everyone's business. This is fundamental for the coming generations that continue to face violence and hatred but also bear responsibility for building the future.

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