
**Reflecting the Fractured Past: Memorialization, Transitional Justice and the Role of “Outsiders”**

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**Introduction**

Over the past decade, memorialization has become linked to the emerging field of transitional justice.  

1 Focused on “facilitating a transition to democracy,”  

2 transitional justice encompasses a range of interventions promoting truth-seeking, justice and reparations for victims, including symbolic reparations in the form of memorials, public apologies and other public memory initiatives.  

Increasingly, transitional justice and memorialization involve outside actors—individuals from other societies who provide specialized expertise through organizations operating at the regional and international levels. Some “outsiders” also get drawn inadvertently into memorialization through their work as peacekeepers or development practitioners involved in post-conflict peace building or reconstruction initiatives, as central to this chapter. But, despite growing interest in the role of historical memory in societies experiencing conflict and undergoing transitions,  

4 the contribution of memorialization to transitional justice remains under-studied, especially the impact of outsiders

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involved in memorialization. This gap reflects the fact that efforts to assess the impact of transitional justice more broadly are relatively recent and inconclusive.5

In 2006, the United States Institute of Peace organized the Memorialization Working Group to engage practitioners in reflective examination of the challenges they have faced with respect to memorialization. This chapter shares insights from those discussions, as well as perspectives from other practitioners engaged in memorialization since then.6 It focuses on practical questions with which practitioners continue to grapple: What is memorialization, and what forms does it take? Who is involved and what are their motivations? How do different forms of memorials reflect different types of conflict? How is memorialization connected to transitional justice? What specific roles can and do outsiders play in memorialization, and what pitfalls should they anticipate?

Defining Memorialization: Forms, Timing, Initiators and Intentions

The urge to remember violence and repression is as prevalent as the impulse to eradicate terrible memories and move on. Memorialization encompasses a wide range of forms and processes to honor and commemorate victims and survivors. While some initiatives are designed to reduce conflict and promote reconciliation and social reconstruction, others aim at the opposite effect by valorizing polarizing figures and historical narratives. Depending on the balance that memorial initiatives strike between promoting truth and justice for victims, fostering or inhibiting transitions to democracy, and advancing or retarding social reconstruction, viewers inevitably perceive some initiatives as a confiscation of history. Memorialization thus represents a powerful arena of contested memory and the complex nexus between politics, trauma, collective memory and public art. Regardless of what type of conflict a society experiences—a civil war, a war between states, genocide or internal

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political repression—the urge to publicly document who died, by what means and why appears to be nearly universal.

Memorialization initiatives mainly take three forms that often converge: constructed sites (museums, commemorative libraries, monuments, walls of names of victims and virtual memorials on the World Wide Web); found sites (gravesites, locations of mass killings, torture centers and prisons); and activities (anniversaries of historical events, demonstrations, vigils, walking tours, parades, temporary exhibits, public place renaming and apologies). Without wanting to establish a hierarchy among these expressions of the past, this chapter considers primarily, though not exclusively, constructed sites, since they are central to this volume.

Initiators of memorials range from individual survivors and the communities in which they live to civil society organizations, national governments, international organizations and even private sector enterprises. The form and shape of memorials reflect the time when they were initiated as well as the views of people who created them. Grieving relatives often create impromptu place memorials immediately after their loved ones died. Larger, formal memorials undertaken by the state generally do not appear until at least five-to-ten years have passed, reflecting the fact that more urgent issues take priority, including providing care to victims, rebuilding institutions, reestablishing the rule of law, and engaging in truth-telling and criminal prosecutions. Decisions about what should be depicted, where and how are often marked by lengthy and contentious debates—witness the decade-long wait before the opening of 9/11 memorial in New York City. Delays may also reflect the years needed to raise funds to construct expensive memorials.

In short, memorialization takes place not only after violence ends but throughout the whole conflict lifecycle. During periods of unstable peace or rising conflict, the erection of confrontational, one-sided or negative memorials may aggravate an escalation in conflict or violence. As peace is achieved through negotiations, or as societies engage in transitional justice activities that signify the

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7 For more discussion about the concept of the conflict lifecycle, see Barsalou, Judy and Baxter, Victoria, op. cit., page 22.
8 For example, regular memorial marches and demonstrations, and widespread wall-art portraits of Egyptian victims of the 2011 uprising, have raised tensions among security personnel about whether they will be held accountable for injuring and killing demonstrators.
onset of (or, at least the aspiration to achieve) democracy, memorialization can be based on materials collected through criminal proceedings and truth commissions, through the preservation of site-specific places at which traumatic events occurred, and through the development of interactive museums and educational curricula that reinterpret the past.

Significantly, memorialization can perform a variety of positive and negative functions. On the positive side, it can promote truth telling through representation of human rights violations while creating places to mourn victims—important especially in societies where families of “disappeared” victims have no gravesites they can visit. It can serve as a form of symbolic reparation by honoring victims and reinstating their reputations in cases where they were vilified during the course of the conflict. Memorialization can also symbolize a community’s, or a nation’s, commitment to positive political values, such as democracy and human rights, and can help consolidate a new national identity and repair relations among contending groups. Additionally, memorialization can help foster civic participation by engaging the wider community in dialogue about the past and by promoting discussions of a peaceful future based on coexistence. Finally, it can advance education by retelling history for future generations whose memories of the past are dim or by facilitating preservation of sites or materials from a specific era of history.

In contrast, the dark side of memorialization involves efforts to use memories of the past to fan the flames of ethnic hatred and violence, consolidate a group’s identity as victims, demarcate differences among identity groups, and reify grievances. Memorials that help individual survivors feel more at peace may actually promote future conflict. Memorialization can stir up the worst in a community. Interested parties can use memorial sites to seek absolution for the commission of violent acts, lodge accusations against their enemies, establish competing claims of victimhood or promote ideological agendas.

Memorialization often navigates the complicated relationship between reflecting and remembering, on the one hand, and deliberately promoting a political position, on the other. This blurring occurs

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For a detailed discussion please refer to the chapter by Naidu in this volume.
particularly in ongoing conflicts. For instance, Khiyam Prison in southern Lebanon has been converted into a site of remembrance to honor victims but also to denounce the enemy during the occupation of southern Lebanon by a mercenary force supported by Israel. The hastily built Elian Gonzalez monument in Havana in 2000 was a rallying cry to political action, reinforcing Cuban demands for the United States to return the boy to his father in Cuba after his mother died at sea. Memorial wall art and graffiti honoring people shot on Muhammad Mahmud Street in downtown Cairo during anti-military demonstrations in November 2011 coexist alongside calls to overturn the military-led transitional government. Regardless of the intention of memorials, remembering involves refashioning the past through selective highlighting of elements of subjective relevance.

National memorial projects in democratizing societies often reflect the aspirations, rather than the reality, of transforming countries. These memorials may not address the immediate needs of victims/survivors and their families but work instead to consolidate new notions of nationhood. For example, South Africa’s Freedom Park in Pretoria was placed directly opposite the Voortrekker Monument, which was built to honor early settlers from Cape Colony who moved into the interior of South Africa.10 Freedom Park seeks to negotiate the triumphant nature of the Voortrekker Monument by depicting a variety of stories, ranging from the Anglo-Boer War to the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa. In doing so, Freedom Park acknowledges the survivors, broadly defined, of the conflict, but focuses mainly on drawing together the different racial, ethnic and cultural narratives of a richly diverse country in an attempt to portray a nation moving forward into a transformed, peaceful future. Even in countries where no national memorials or museums are built by the state as reminders of past conflict, civil society efforts can partially fill the gap. The Lebanese NGO Umam (Nations) created an electronic database, a library and cultural programs featuring documents, films and photography exhibits that explore the fifteen-year civil war, even as former warlords or their proxies continue to occupy the highest positions in government.

Survivors may have negative opinions about nationally- and future-focused memorials that do not honor specific victims, restore the good names of those involved in struggles against oppression, or

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10 For a detailed discussion please refer to the chapter by Naidu in this volume.
commemorate particular types of violence. Survivors may object to memorials representing aspirations of a transforming society that appeal to the broader community and that allow bystanders and/or perpetrators of the conflict to “participate” in the meaning of the memorial. They may also be offended when local entrepreneurs initiate memorials as a means of generating tourism revenue, especially if they are expensive to build, are located in places where victims/survivors continue to live in poverty, and where profits do not directly benefit survivors. For instance, furious Kurds in Northern Iraq destroyed a museum commemorating victims of a chemical warfare attack in Halabja, a community in Iraqi Kurdistan, by the Ba’ath regime. One resident said, “Kurdish officials used Halabja to gather money. Millions of dollars [have] been spent, but nothing reached us.”

Memorialization and Types of Conflict

Much research on memorialization is limited to descriptions of specific memorial efforts, revealing little about how they reflect different types of social trauma, or how they contribute to social reconstruction or transitional justice. While some forms of memorialization are common to many conflicts, arguably, there is a correlation between some types of conflict – whether dictatorship, political repression, ethnic conflict, mass violence or genocide – and forms or functions of memorials, as explored in the following.

Dictatorships and Political Repression

When fueled by authoritarianism and repression during dictatorships, internal conflict often results in the torture, extrajudicial execution and “disappearance” of regime opponents. In many cases, state violence is used in a top-down manner to intimidate and destroy political opposition. Regarding disappearances, repressive regimes use it precisely for the deniability of the act. The result is that surviving family members are left without physical locations to mourn their dead. Accordingly, sites commemorating disappearances generally reflect the absence of bodies, often including walls of

names of the disappeared and other information focused on recasting their identities from “subversives” to victims.

Societies recovering from large-scale disappearances or illegal detention and torture also tend to create memorials at police stations, prisons and clandestine torture centers, where victims and survivors are encouraged to explore the history of state-sponsored torture, extrajudicial detention and killings. Depending on the level of legitimacy the former regime still enjoys and public attitudes about the subsequent political transition, there can be an uneasy relationship between the state and these site-specific centers and museums. For instance, in 2001, a coalition of survivors and NGOs attempted to create a monument to the disappeared in Kashmir. A day after the group laid the foundation stone for the monument the Indian government razed the site. In Chile, a similar coalition took the initiative to convert Villa Grimaldi, a former torture center, into a site-specific memorial.12 After the demise of the military dictatorship led by General Augusto Pinochet, the first few democratic governments did little to promote Villa Grimaldi officially or incorporate the site into national education initiatives because, for many years after the transition, Pinochet continued to enjoy substantial support throughout Chile. By contrast, the Argentine government has been very involved in the formation of a human rights-themed museum at a former torture center in the Naval Mechanics School. A coalition of human rights and survivor organizations called Memoria Abierta (Open Memory) has been closely involved with the government and a number of other groups in designing this site to make it accessible to the public, and the government has been relatively open to their participation. Thus, the creation of the museum was a widely debated, interactive process.

In addition to physical monuments, the Internet is turning into a platform for memorial sites. Even before mobile phones and Internet access spread widely, victims and survivors started generating, storing and sharing memorial materials on the World Wide Web. Proyecto Desaparecido (Project Disappeared) is a notable example in that it includes links to memorial organizations in multiple countries, news updates about forced disappearances and an archive on torturers and other materials.13 Another on-line initiative addresses historical memory in Iran, a country where civil resistance led

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12 See also the chapter by Klep in this volume.
13 See http://www.desaparecidos.org/eng.html.
to the overthrow of the monarchy, and where Islamist revolutionaries filled the resulting power vacuum. A project of the Adorrahman Boroumand Foundation based in Washington, DC, the Omid Memorial operates both as a virtual database of human rights abuses in Iran since 1949 and as a memorial to victims executed by the Islamic Republic since it was established in 1979. More recently, Egypt’s uprising gathered force after the establishment of a Facebook site, We Are All Khaled Said, which memorializes a 28 year-old man beaten to death by Egyptian police seven months before the 2011 uprising. Many other civil society initiatives have created platforms to post and preserve memorial materials from Egypt’s uprising. One initiative with a regional scope, R-Shief, aggregates and analyzes data from Twitter and the Web relating to the so-called “Arab Spring;” as of November 2011 it had collected some 128 million tweets. All these sites demonstrate that the Internet is an increasingly important tool of political activists working in societies that limit free expression and suppress opposition.

**Ethnic Conflict**

Ethnically divided societies usually produce memorials that honor a narrowly defined ethnic group and its “martyrs.” In such societies, violence may operate vertically between or among social and/or political groups, and, frequently, all sides feel as if they are victimized in the process. One example is the Kosovo Polje Tower, which Slobodan Milosevic incited one million Serbs to visit in 1989, on the six-hundredth anniversary of the Serbian defeat by the Ottomans, in an effort to whip up ethnic sentiment. Sometimes, however, memorials are used to promote a new, multicultural identity after conflict has ended and a democratic transition is underway. Robben Island Museum in South Africa tells the story of the “Rainbow Nation” through the collective struggle of anti-apartheid prisoners on the island, even while the dominant narrative is that of the party (the African National Congress) that

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15 See [http://www.facebook.com/ElShaheeed](http://www.facebook.com/ElShaheeed). The site had 1.8 million members as of January 2012.
came to power through the conflict. South Africa continues to struggle to integrate memorials honoring Afrikaner culture and history with the “Rainbow Nation” themed memorials that celebrate black African culture, democracy and racial tolerance. The difference between the two approaches—reconciliatory or provocative—often has to do with how the conflict ended and whether or not an inclusive democratic transition is underway; how much time haselapsed since the violence ended; and whether the memorial was initiated by local actors (seeking to preserve memory of a very personal nature) or national actors (reframing historical memory to forge a new national narrative or identity).

**Mass Killings and Genocide**

In cases of mass killings and genocide, where top-down violence resulted in an extremely high number of fatalities, memorialization often revolves around human remains. Displaying or preserving human remains becomes a central way to educate people about the sheer scope of death that occurred. In Rwanda, for example, victims’ bodies from the 1994 genocide are preserved in the schools and churches where they were found. These sites are open to visitors and seek to convey the scale of the genocide through the presentation of an overwhelming number of bodies. In some “killing field” memorials in Cambodia, tour guides will assist visitors in digging up remains, such as bone fragments and teeth.

When the violence occurred fairly recently, memorials often do not offer visitors an analysis of or educational background about the conflict, or cover only one side of the story. A memorial in Kigali, Rwanda to the Tutsi victims of the 1994 genocide, which fails to mention some 200,000 Hutu victims of post-genocide Tutsi retaliation, is an example of the latter. In places where more time has elapsed, memorials are more likely to provide explanations of the roots of the violence and present larger lessons. For example, many of the Holocaust museums or exhibits centered on the loss of Jewish lives under National Socialism in Germany draw upon a larger historical context and offer a coherent “story” for visitors. The designers of the U.S. Holocaust Museum and Memorial made a point of

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18 For more information please refer to the chapter of Viebach in this volume.
presenting a relatively narrow narrative (focused on the systematic slaughter of six million Jews by people who considered themselves to be racially superior) that visitors can easily follow and understand, rather than a more complicated narrative encompassing all aspects of the genocide.

While many such memorials are reminders of a violent past, some honor positive actions. The Yad Veshem memorial in Jerusalem honors those who protected victims of the Jewish holocaust. In Yerevan, the Garden of the Righteous remembers non-Armenians who helped Armenians before, during and after the 1915 genocide. Such memorials help postwar societies celebrate courageous people and positive values that existed even during their darkest periods.

**Connecting Memorialization to Transitional Justice and Reconciliation**

Memorialization has become recognized as an important component of transitional justice, because many practitioners believe it can help promote reconciliation by providing a form of symbolic reparation for victims. But any discussion of the contribution of memorialization to reconciliation requires clarification of the meaning of the word “reconciliation” itself. Dictionary definitions emphasize a persuasive element, requiring a party to win over another to accept a disagreeable thing, or the restoration of friendly relations after settling a conflict. A simple definition, however, does little to convey the complexity of the term. For some, reconciliation carries a specific meaning based on religious injunctions to forgive and forget, while others define it in terms of changes in attitudes, beliefs and identities, or in changed relationships. Those who think they understand what reconciliation looks like on the personal level may have trouble defining it on the societal level. Accordingly, some who are uncomfortable with the term “reconciliation” prefer the terms “social reconstruction or “reclamation”.

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Without trying to contend with all the conflicting definitions of reconciliation and what must be done to achieve it, many practitioners believe that it is a multilevel process that involves national-level responsibility but also requires coordination and holistic approaches that include all sectors of a society. Diverse legal, social, political and economic policies and dynamics need to be at work if reconciliation is to be achieved, and no single policy or intervention is likely to suffice. A long-term process that requires management of expectations, reconciliation, they argue, should be viewed conservatively as a goal to peacefully reduce, rather than eliminate, conflict. Memorialization is important because it can contribute to reconciliation through its power to shape identities, myths and memories.

Practitioners sometimes argue that reconciliation is both a goal and a process. But is it a state of being that can be observed and measured at various points, or is it a longer-term goal defining relationships among individuals and within societies? Must specific reforms—such as ensuring that the judiciary operates fairly and security forces are accountable—be in place before reconciliation can be achieved? Where should policymakers and others begin? These questions are not easily answered and require more research.

Despite ongoing debate about the meaning of reconciliation, some consider it to be a key component of transitional justice, which assumes that: 1) truth telling (a full accounting of the past) is necessary for reconciliation; and 2) justice (holding perpetrators accountable through legal processes or restorative measures, such as compensation) helps pave the way to sustainable democracy. These assumptions are just beginning to be empirically tested and the findings are mixed, underlining the difficulty of measuring the impact of transitional justice more generally. Eric Stover and Harvey Weinstein, for example, challenge an assumed causal relationship between criminal trials and

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reconciliation. They argue that justice is often more broadly defined by those immediately affected by atrocities and civil violence, and contend that criminal trials do not always have therapeutic value for survivors of violence. Researcher James Gibson concludes, however, that South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission did help promote reconciliation. Clearly, more research drawing from a broad range of disciplines and social theories is needed to explain more fully the relationships among truth, justice, memorialization, reconciliation and democratization in a variety of contexts.

Many practitioners believe that effective transitional justice interventions must pass three tests that are also highly relevant for memorialization processes. First, the wider population must see the intervention as legitimate and impartial. For public memory initiatives, this means that remembering and honoring must not simply convey victors’ justice but instead a thoughtful reflection of a complex past. Second, any policy decisions or outcomes regarding transitional justice must be subject to genuine consultation with those most affected by the conflict. For memory projects, this means that survivors must be directly involved in the discussion of what should be remembered, and how. Third, effective transitional justice interventions have to be accompanied by a range of other initiatives aimed at promoting the rule of law, respect for human rights, economic and political reconstruction and other aspects of social repair that restore faith in government and the social order. Thus, memorialization, too, should be viewed as one among many tools available for implementation over many years by countries emerging from violent conflict.

Practitioners involved in memorialization as an element of transitional justice sometimes see memorialization undertaken at the national level as a logical next step after criminal prosecutions and truth commissions have concluded. Handled effectively, the latter can help the public better understand aspects of the conflict that were previously hidden or repressed. In so doing, they can help reframe national narratives about the conflict, to be conveyed by memorials representing new “truths” in an effort to promote reconciliation.

25 See Stover, Eric and Weinstein, Harvey, op. cit.
Some practitioners also see an intimate link between memorialization and public education, both through memorials and museums and through school-based learning. They view curricular and pedagogical reforms in schools, along with education programs based at memorials and museums, as essential to extending the impact of truth commissions and tribunals.27 They caution, however, that memorials with the most positive impact are those that promote dynamic performance of civic engagement or interaction among former antagonists.28 Those that merely list the names of victims without providing education about the past or a space for contemporary dialogue or interaction run the risk of being either ignored or amended by others who perceive the memorials as frozen in the past. Static memorials that do not promote active learning quickly lose their meaning and value for younger generations that did not experience the conflict directly.

So what is the record of transitional justice with respect to memorialization? A partial answer can be found by looking to how truth commissions have addressed this question.29 A number have included recommendations for memorialization, among them the truth commissions in Chile, Guatemala, South Africa, Ghana and Sierra Leone, by specifically endorsing the use of symbolic reparations to promote reconciliation. But even in those cases, memorialization was largely an afterthought, reflecting inadequate consultation with victims and survivor. Truth commissions generally have not articulated in much detail what memorialization means, how it should be connected to other transitional justice processes, or who should take charge. Arguably, by not taking into greater account the role of memorialization and the educational processes that should accompany it, truth commissions are losing an important opportunity to extend their impact.

Peace agreements offer another opportunity to propose memorials as a form of symbolic reparation for victims, but it is relatively rare for them to take advantage of this option. Generally they include procedural components that outline processes to stabilize the country as well as structural

28 For example, through the education programs at the District Six Museum in South Africa, younger generations understand what their parents and grandparents lived through, enabling that museum to retain meaning for new generations.
components describing the new political order. While faced with the urgent need to end violence and establish stable peace in the short term, drafters of peace agreements could also include clauses designed to encourage memorialization and other symbolic reparations at the national level in future years.

Even when memorialization is not a conscious outgrowth of truth commissions or peace agreements, memorialization and transitional justice interventions of all types share a dependence on documentation. For this reason, progress made in implementing other elements of transitional justice can benefit memorialization. Too often, however, little is done to develop effective policies for collecting, storing and sharing materials than can be used for more than one purpose. In part, this reflects problems that arise when materials are looted from their original location. Materials essential for legal prosecutions must meet high evidentiary standards (including establishing where a document was found and what else was found with it), while the requirements of memorials and museums generally are less stringent. Another problem arises when the collected materials are voluminous. In Iraq following the deposing of the Ba’ath regime, materials seized by the U.S. government alone amounted to some 300 million documents, while many other groups and individual victims also snatched large amounts of material.\(^\text{30}\) Managing, preserving and making those materials accessible in appropriate ways has created a substantial burden on those who hold them, particularly NGOs with limited resources and professional capacity. Even large, well-financed initiatives, such as truth commissions and legal tribunals, do not always think ahead about what they will do with collected materials once they finish their work. Although such materials could provide essential evidence upon which memorialization depends, planning for their disposal is generally not a high priority.\(^\text{31}\) Finally, many organizations wrestle with the issue of access. The International Tracing Service, established in London in 1943 and relocated to Germany in 1945 to help relatives of Nazi victims determine what happened to them, only recently agreed to make its thirty million documents

\(^{30}\) See http://www.dw.de/dw/article/0,,1063329,00.html.

available to the public, citing privacy as the reason for keeping its archives closed for sixty-one years.  

32 All these factors limit the value gleaned from collected materials.

**Getting Involved: The Role of Outsiders in Memorialization**

Outside actors are drawn into playing various roles in memorialization, sometimes deliberately and consciously but also unwittingly and without prior planning. But how does one define the term, “outsider?” Significantly, the term includes not only persons from outside the country but also “local outsiders” from other parts of the country in question. Residents of Kliptown, a community located near Soweto Township, viewed experts from a South African NGO based in Braamfontein, about forty kilometers away, as outsiders when they were brought in to consult on the building of a memorial. A similar dynamic occurred at the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum, a former prison and torture center in Cambodia. Local residents objected when Chuch Phoeurn, then-secretary of state of the Cambodian Ministry of Culture in Phnom Penh, decided to turn the museum’s yard into an ornamental garden with walkways and flowers. As one of them expressed, “My opinion is we should leave the old things the same. It’s our heritage.”

Given their cultural and linguistic knowledge and their legitimacy as citizens of the state in question, “local” outsiders can take on tasks that are daunting to, or inappropriate for, international outsiders. One case in point is the Egyptian group, *Askar Kazeboon* (Military Liars), which is collecting and displaying video footage in dispersed communities around Egypt, documenting the use of violence against demonstrators, memorializing victims and challenging narratives about the uprising propagated by state-owned media. In view of local sensitivities about foreign donors and NGOs in Egypt, this activity would be impossible for foreigners to lead. In some contexts, however, survivor communities regard foreign experts as uniquely able to help them navigate contentious relationships and perspectives. For instance, a team from the University of California, Berkeley’s Human Rights Center, working with staff from an NGO called Facing History and Ourselves, encouraged the

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national government to revive the teaching of Rwanda’s contemporary history. A decade after the genocide, they helped the Ministry of Education reform history curriculum and pedagogy after various local stakeholders tried and failed to complete this highly controversial task. 35

So what roles do outsiders find themselves playing in memorialization? For example, in Germany, Allied troops intervened to preserve the Nazi death camps—sites that many Germans were eager to deny, erase and forget. Peacekeeping troops in Kosovo were tasked to stand guard over an incomplete Orthodox cathedral in downtown Pristina, a unpopular symbol of former Serbian domination. Such sites are crucial to a country’s historical memory and can later become the basis for historical site museums and monuments. When the “losers” of conflicts want to hide evidence of their crimes or the “winners” want to remove reminders of a hated past, temporary foreign control of such sites can be essential to their survival.

Outside military forces also can find themselves in the middle of confrontations when locals try to erect one-sided or partisan memorials and peacekeepers are expected to intervene. A politically divisive memorial proposed in Prizren, Kosovo is a case in point: UN authorities insisted that elected city officials make the final decision, which they did—to prevent the memorial from being built. International authorities may also be caught up in battles over contested cultural icons. Kosovar Albanians successfully sought the assistance of Michael Steiner, head of the UN Interim Administration in Kosovo, to facilitate the return of a 6,000-year-old figurine known as the “Goddess on the Throne” to the Museum of Kosovo after it was removed by Serbs and placed in the Belgrade Museum.

Outsiders may also be drawn into memorialization when they are engaged as civilians in various post-conflict reconstruction activities. International organizations, such as UNESCO, may be asked to contribute to educational missions and cultural promotion projects that run up against memorialization controversies about representing or preserving historical memory. In another

example, a trauma specialist from Eastern Mennonite University spent four months working with family members of missing persons in a small city near Sarajevo. When the group decided that they wanted to build a memorial, he was asked for advice about what form it might take, although this was not his original focus.

Outsiders can also be directly involved in legal accountability and truth-telling processes that are part of transitional justice and essential to memorialization. As mentioned earlier, they can play helpful roles by collecting and preserving materials that can later aid memorialization. Foreign control of such materials, however, can lead to struggles over ownership. A case in point is the current standoff between the Iraqi and U.S. governments; the latter possesses the largest collection of documents and other artifacts that reveal the inner workings of the Saddam Hussein regime, some of which are now stored at Stanford University. Many feel that these materials are the property of the Iraqi people and should be returned to the Iraqi National Archive.36

Additionally, outsiders can facilitate local discussions about how to integrate memorialization into other peace building and transitional justice processes by exploring options for including memorialization plans in peace agreements and truth commission recommendations. They may also be asked to advise on practical matters, such as appropriate policies relating to public access to sensitive materials. Additionally, outside actors can help by bringing together disparate local and international professionals whose combined work helps create successful memorials. Legal experts, historians, museum designers, artists, filmmakers, trauma specialists and human rights activists, among others, usually do not view themselves as having significantly overlapping professional concerns, but their interests and skills intersect in key ways in memorial projects.

As the field of memorialization has become professionalized, local authorities sometimes ask international experts to advise directly on memorial projects. For example, experts from Latin America have consulted with counterparts in Spain and India about how to memorialize their conflicts, and South African experts advised Americans involved in designing the 9/11 memorial in

New York City. In addition to providing direct expertise on memorial projects, outsiders can also assist by making funds available to enable local actors to learn about how other societies have managed memorialization challenges. Various international affinity groups have sprung up to share knowledge and best practices, notably, the International Coalition of Historic Sites of Conscience, which maintains seven regional networks, and the Documentation Affinity Group, which was established by the International Center for Transitional Justice with five partners in 2005.

Outsiders can also help plan and implement memorial projects if they bring skills and perspectives not readily available in survivor communities. Because memorialization is a highly politicized process, designing a memorial without adequate study of local needs, priorities and interests can lead to the development of a site that, at best, carries little meaning for survivors and, at worst, raises unrealistic expectations or generates hostility. Outsiders can help by facilitating widespread consultation and assessment of options before taking action, as the process of engaging the protagonists of a conflict in discussions about memorialization may be more important than the construction of any given memorial project. Outsiders may be asked to conduct feasibility studies to determine the interests, needs and desires of local communities vis-à-vis memorialization; map diverse audiences and stakeholders, ranging from victims and survivors to visiting schoolchildren and foreign tourists; and clarify the key goals and desired outcomes of a proposed memorial. Additionally, they can help local stakeholders secure funding to build memorials and develop revenue streams (through tourism, endowment campaigns and other methods) to ensure their maintenance.

Lastly, outsiders with experience in other settings may be especially helpful in advising local actors about appropriate research strategies to assess the impact of memorial initiatives. Many tough challenges confront those interested in impact assessment, including achieving random research samples in unstable environments, modifying standardized scales developed elsewhere and maintaining the confidentiality of respondents. Because memory is not static, and “received” memory is reinterpreted from one generation to another, getting a fix on the impact of a memorial may be
possible at a particular moment but may look very different with the passage of time. Effective evaluation, therefore, involves developing strategies to reassess attitudinal and behavior shifts over time related to memorialization.

**Limiting Outsiders’ Roles and Avoiding Pitfalls**

Whether or not outsiders choose to play proactive roles in memorialization, how can they avoid pitfalls? First, outsiders both from abroad and outside the immediate community should be prepared to encounter a strong desire to forget or “move on,” and to anticipate that any urging on their part to create memorials may be met by indifference or hostility. Receptivity to foreign NGOs or international organizations may be greater than to government-to-government aid programs if those governments previously provided support to a discredited regime. Outsiders should also remember that while they may feel they are more objective or balanced in their understanding of the conflict, those who lived through the conflict may view them as anything but.

Second, before entering the country, outside organizations should educate their staff members about the complex nature of memorialization, and warn them that they may encounter memorial sites or initiatives that spur conflict, rather than dampen it. Their staff members need to become familiar with the key stakeholders involved in memorialization, and to understand the historical context that it reflects. Mapping the main local actors (including survivor groups and government agencies responsible for cultural preservation), and other international actors (such as peacekeeping troops and international organizations focused on transitional justice and historical memory) can help reveal who “owns” or controls critical resources and sites, and any conflicts that may arise relating to contested materials or artifacts. At a minimum, outsiders intent on doing no harm should also make sure that their staff also understand local practices, beliefs and rituals relating to conflict management, death and burial. Additionally, they should be prepared to designate staff members

37 Memorials at Gettysburg, the site of an American Civil War battle in 1863 that resulted in 51,000 casualties, illustrate how the impact of memorials can shift. Initially, many of the regiments that fought in the battle erected their own memorials, around which they organized separate reunions. Eventually, however, these sites became the basis for joint reunions of relatives of Union and Confederate soldiers.
who will be tasked with managing problems that arise in their own work from memorial activities undertaken by others.

Third, outsiders should recognize that it is not always obvious which sites have deep meaning for local residents. For example, following attacks on Sikhs in India, Sikh temples acquired added significance as places of refuge and victim commemoration. While their architecture has evolved to make them less accessible to non-Sikhs, outsiders generally do not recognize them as memorial sites. Outsiders not attuned to a society’s past also may not notice the absence of memorials to significant events. It is easy to miss the fact, for example, that there is no physical memorial in India to the approximately 600,000 victims of the 1947 partition of India and Pakistan.38

Given all the above, many practitioners argue that it is essential that outsiders, however defined, limit their activities primarily to building or supporting indigenous expertise and capacity, promoting participation by local actors from all sides of the conflict, and encouraging transparency and accountability in memorial projects. Outsiders have to win the respect and trust of locals by engaging in empathetic listening, taking care not to impose their own views, and being ready to tackle moral complexities. Practitioners strongly caution against memorial sites that are initiated, controlled or dominated by foreign outsiders which, they argued, are doomed to failure. If memorials are to help (re-) unite a society, they must be the outgrowth of a consultative process led by those who lived through the conflict, not by outsiders from abroad.

Conclusion

While the urge to remember loss and injustice through memorials is a human impulse widely expressed around the world, the forms that memorialization take are as varied as the complex societies in which they occur. Moreover, those forms are evolving rapidly and become increasingly transnational. As more of the world’s population connects to new digital technologies and social media, memorialization increasingly is assuming “virtual” forms. In the process, the interpretation of

38 A civil society initiative has created a virtual memorial: http://noosphere.typepad.com/virtual_memorial/2008/08/virtual-memoria.html
history and memorialization is becoming democratized; anyone with a mobile phone or Internet connection can post their materials or provide comments. Purely individual or local initiatives can rapidly “go viral” when compelling video footage, photos or music are uploaded to the Internet and viewed by millions. Digital technologies raise the stakes for authorities tasked with managing conflict spurred by memorial initiatives, but they should also be viewed as important tools available to political actors to shift historical narratives in directions that promote justice, accountability and social reconstruction.

As outlined in this chapter, outsiders can play important roles in reconciling former enemies to work together, but few international actors are prepared to deal with memorialization. Other initiatives—such as advising on constitutional, judicial or security sector reform or on criminal prosecutions and truth commissions—generally take their attention first. Most outsiders involved in postwar reconstruction or transitional justice have left the scene by the time societies are ready to think proactively about national memorial projects designed to recast national identity or project positive values. Yet, by promoting better understanding of the links between memorialization, transitional justice and social reconstruction, outsiders arguably can make their assistance more effective.

Finally, it must be emphasized that it is extremely challenging to assess the impact of memorialization and how it contributes to perpetuating conflict or promoting reconciliation among former enemies. While some political scientists are now studying memory as an independent variable affecting political outcomes, such work is relatively new.\footnote{See, for example, Barkan, Elazar, The Guilt of Nations: Restitution and Negotiating Historical Injustices (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000); and Cruz, Consuelo, “Identity and Persuasion: How Nations Remember Their Pasts and Make Their Futures,” \textit{World Politics} (25:3) (April 2000), pp. 275-312.}

\textbf{Bibliography}


interventions is also in its infancy and presents complex methodological challenges. As difficult as evaluating impact is, however, efforts to do so are essential if we are ever to get a firmer grasp on the elusive role of public memory.


