

## Public Memory, Commemoration, and Transitional Justice: Reconfiguring the Past in Public Space

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Transitional justice is usually addressed through institutional processes such as lustration, restitution, prosecution, and truth commissions, around which a comprehensive academic literature has developed. However, this chapter explores a relatively neglected symbolic dimension of transitional justice,<sup>1</sup> namely practices of memorialization and commemoration that are represented, played out, and contested in urban space. There is widespread acknowledgment within the transitional justice literature that memorialization – in the form of monuments, statues, and museums – has a key role to play in healing the wounds of the communist past. Such memorials “represent a critical terrain where the past is confronted and conflict can be addressed.”<sup>2</sup> Memorialization is a means of giving recognition to those who suffered hardship, repression, exile, or death under communist regimes. The practice makes a visible statement about what (and who) a political order considers worthy of remembrance and is a means of reaching large numbers of people over an extended time period.

This chapter focuses on the ways in which transitional justice for the victims of communist regimes is expressed in the highly complex entanglement of urban cultural landscapes, public memory, and commemorative sites and practices. We contend that attempts to shape public memory through practices of commemoration and memorialization are important (if neglected) aspects of transitional justice, that have much to tell us about how post-communist societies choose to remember and forget the period of Communist Party rule. Following a review of the relationships between public memory and urban space, we begin by examining efforts to erase the commemorative landscape produced by communist regimes. We then look at the variety of initiatives (by diverse elites and publics) to commemorate the victims of communist regimes, with particular reference to monuments, memorials, and museums. We also highlight the importance of both domestic

and international tourism to these sites of memory as central to the way in which they “work.”

#### PUBLIC MEMORY, COMMEMORATION, AND URBAN SPACE

Public memory can be defined as “a body of beliefs and ideas about the past that help a public or society understand both its past, present, and by implication, its future.”<sup>3</sup> It is not only a society’s collective understanding of the past, but also the ways that this past is represented in the present.<sup>4</sup> Since memory is integral to the formation of identities, collective (or public) memory has long been important in the construction of collective identities.<sup>5</sup> In particular, nation-states construct and promote a particular understanding of the past within nation-building projects that are intended to foster social cohesion and allegiance to a particular “imagined community.”<sup>6</sup> The formation of such a collective memory involves choices about what a society wishes to remember. Nevertheless, while states may play a leading role in the construction of collective memory they do not enjoy a monopoly over this process. Instead, various elites and publics both within and without the state (each of which may be fractured by competing and contesting agendas) participate in the process<sup>7</sup> so that the formation of public memory is a fluid process of negotiation.<sup>8</sup> Public memory “emerges from the intersection of official and vernacular cultural expressions”<sup>9</sup> and, for this reason, it is best regarded as an activity or process, rather than an outcome.<sup>10</sup>

Public memory is a process which is worked out in the public arena. This is achieved through various practices of remembrance and commemoration intended to reify public memory by turning it into visual spectacle. In particular, human geographers argue that urban space – or landscape – is essential to the “working” of public memory.<sup>11</sup> All political orders seek to create an “official public landscape”<sup>12</sup> intended as a rhetorical statement of specific political values. Remembrance and commemoration are central aspects of such landscapes: Edensor<sup>13</sup> has coined the term “memoryscape” for those parts of the urban landscape that are given over to collective remembrance. The urban environment can be the setting for a range of temporary (if cyclical) commemorative practices including ceremonies, parades, festivals, and rituals. However, most forms of commemoration are permanent and include statues, monuments, memorials, and other public buildings, along with commemorative names attached to streets, buildings, and other urban landmarks. Such commemorative practices concretize “official” conceptions of public memory, rendering it immutable in the public arena. They can also be sites for the expression of opposition to and contestation of this official public memory.

Since public memory is produced in a particular political context it is vulnerable to political change. In particular, all shifts of political power “generate a reconfiguration of the ‘known past.’”<sup>14</sup> This issue is of particular relevance in post-communist societies which have sought to build political identities based on an emphatic rejection of communism (a strategy which generally enjoyed widespread popular support). Such societies faced the need for a new, appropriate, and “usable” past to replace now discredited communist-era constructions of the collective past. The most readily available exemplar was that of the period before communist rule.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, Central and Eastern Europe has focused on the pre-communist past as the model for a post-communist future. As Katherine Verdery argued, this is about effectively excising the communist period from the historical time line and connecting the post-communist present with the period before World War II.<sup>16</sup> This enabled post-communist societies to “resume” the historical trajectory that they would have followed had it not been for the “aberration” of four decades of communist rule. Clearly in post-communist contexts, the past is fluid and flexible, with different state and non-state groups competing to establish a new historical narrative (see [Chapter 7](#) in this volume).

Similarly, public memory is also in a state of reformation.<sup>17</sup> Within the political transformation from totalitarianism to democracy, post-communist societies face new choices about what (and who) they want to remember, and how (and where) this remembrance will be enacted. At the same time as seeking to forget communism, the new societies want to remember the repression and violence of the former regime and to honor the victims of state persecution. There may also desire to remember the events that brought about the collapse of communist regimes (even if, in some cases, these events did not in themselves bring about a clear break with those regimes). Moreover, given that the urban landscape is central to the expression of public memory these debates will, in some way, be worked out in urban space. In particular, there will be a significant remaking of the commemorative landscape. People and events honored by the previous regime will be de-commemorated and their memorials removed from the public arena. New acts of commemoration will subsequently follow in a way that accords with the political values and public memory of the new regime.

In this way, practices of commemoration and memorialization within the urban landscape can be important (if often overlooked) elements of transitional justice projects in post-communist states. Indeed, memorialization and collective remembrance are fundamental processes in societies recovering from traumatic pasts.<sup>18</sup> Barsalou and Baxter argue that memorialization has a number of roles in such projects: it offers symbolic reparations to the victims

of violence; it can promote reconciliation; it can encourage engagement with education programs about the recent past; and it creates specific sites that can be the focus both of individual mourning and official ceremonies of remembrance.<sup>19</sup> Of particular relevance to this chapter is that memorialization makes a highly visible statement in the public arena about a post-communist society's commitment to a new set of political values. In fact, of all the forms of transitional justice, memorialization is the most visible and can have an impact on the everyday lives of the greatest number of people. However, to date, there has been only sporadic attention in the transitional justice literature to the role of memorialization projects within the urban landscape. This reflects a broader context in which political scientists have paid relatively little attention to the role of monuments and memorials as political symbols.<sup>20</sup> In the following sections we explore changing practices of memorialization in post-communist Central and Eastern Europe, focusing first on the removal of the commemorative landscapes created by communist regimes, and then on efforts to create new memorial sites and landscapes within transitional justice projects.

#### ERASING THE COMMEMORATIVE LANDSCAPE OF COMMUNISM

When communist regimes came to power in the late 1940s they immediately set about remaking public memory. This was principally achieved through a comprehensive rewriting of history and total control over the education system. It also included a comprehensive remaking of the urban landscape to decommemorate the historical narrative associated with the discredited former regime. Since communist regimes attached special importance to the transformative power of public space for creating a new socialist consciousness,<sup>21</sup> the public arena effectively became an instrument of state propaganda. An entirely new commemorative landscape was produced which was saturated with a variety of symbols (including statues, memorials, monuments, plaques, murals, banners, and slogans) that were intended to shape the ways that people thought about their individual and collective pasts.<sup>22</sup>

As communist regimes collapsed in 1989 their official commemorative landscapes swiftly became the targets of protest, resulting in the familiar process of "landscape cleansing."<sup>23</sup> This activity was initiated by the populace during the euphoria that accompanied the collapse of communist rule and was continued by the new post-communist administrations. This process satisfied the demand to see evidence of political change.<sup>24</sup> Czepczyński identifies a number of strategies for landscape cleansing: removal, renaming, rededication, and reuse.<sup>25</sup> The most visible strategy is removal, where

monuments placed by the communist states were directly expunged from the urban arena. By far the most iconic images of the collapse of communist regimes were the removal of statues of Soviet figures such as Lenin. These events required considerable organization and resources and so were usually orchestrated by the state.<sup>26</sup> They provided a dramatic and highly visible proclamation that political order was changing. However, in most cases the eradication of communist statuary was both less spectacular and less immediate, with most removals taking place quietly during the early years of post-communism.<sup>27</sup> Only in a few instances were communist monuments destroyed in situ, the dynamiting of Georgi Dimitrov's mausoleum in Sofia in 1999 being the best example.<sup>28</sup>

In most instances communist monuments and statues were not destroyed but instead they were simply moved to new locations. For example, in Hungary, the Budapest city authority made the decision in 1991 to remove over forty communist-era statues and monuments and relocate them in an open-air museum on the edge of the city, named "Statuepark," which opened to visitors in 1993. This strategy allowed the monuments to be retained both as historical artifacts and as reminders of a traumatic past but in a way that emasculated their symbolic power within the urban landscape.<sup>29</sup> In other cases, the removal of communist statues was vigorously contested. The best example is the "Bronze Soldier" in Tallinn, Estonia, which commemorated Soviet soldiers who had fallen in the liberation of the city at the end of World War II. As an obviously Soviet symbol, its presence in the city centre was unwelcome for the post-communist Estonian government, which, in 2007, made the decision to move the memorial to a military cemetery on the edge of the city. This provoked violent protest by Estonia's Russian minority, who interpreted the removal of the statue as an attack on their heritage and identity.<sup>30</sup>

A less dramatic strategy was the renaming of streets, buildings, and other urban landmarks to de-commemorate events and personalities from communist-era historiography. This practice has been termed "toponymic cleansing."<sup>31</sup> Such renaming is "an act of political propaganda with immense proclamative value and public resonance"<sup>32</sup>: it makes an immediate statement that public memory is changing and is relatively quick and simple to implement. Renaming was intended to decommemorate the communist past and place a new narrative of national history and memory into public space. However, renaming urban streets and buildings was relatively limited in scale and was most prominent in the central areas of towns and cities. Since many toponyms allocated during the communist era had no ideological connotations, they did not need to be renamed. For example, in Bucharest

only 6.6 percent of the city's streets were renamed after 1989.<sup>33</sup> In other post-communist cities, the proportion was lower.

Strategies of rededication and reuse were applied mostly to museums. Communist regimes attached considerable importance to museums<sup>34</sup> as a means of socialist propaganda so that hundreds of new museums were established in communist Central and Eastern Europe. Most countries had at least one museum dedicated entirely to the history and activities of that country's Communist Party. These were complemented by a network of regional and local museums, all of which interpreted local history through the lens of Marxism-Leninism. With the fall of communism, the museums dedicated to Party history were swiftly closed. Some reopened as different museums (for example, in Bucharest the former History Museum of the Communist Party and of the Revolutionary and Democratic Movement of Romania reopened in 1990 as the Museum of the Romanian Peasant<sup>35</sup>), while in other cases the buildings were put to entirely new uses. As the formerly communist states were gripped by "collective amnesia" about the recent past almost all museums simply closed any galleries which dealt with the communist period: the displays remained in place but in locked rooms with no public access. Bădica<sup>36</sup> describes this as the "black hole paradigm" where the historical narrative presented in museums simply ended in 1945.

Overall, the efforts to neutralize the commemorative symbols of communism (and the public memory that they represented) was a crude first step in achieving redress for the abuses and hardship of the communist era. However, the process of landscape cleansing was always partial. It was applied most thoroughly to the central parts of cities (particularly capitals) and to a lesser extent (sometimes hardly at all) in more peripheral districts. Its target was the most visible and iconic symbols of the communist regime, while smaller or more inconspicuous symbols were often ignored or overlooked. Removing or reconfiguring the commemorative landscape of communism effectively cleared space in the urban arena for an entirely new set of commemorative practices specifically intended to remember the victims and abuses of communism. These are discussed in the following section.

#### COMMEMORATING THE VICTIMS OF AND RESISTANCE TO COMMUNIST REGIMES

Within strategies to redefine public memory there have been two broad strands to the remaking of commemorative landscapes. First, in the effort to (re)establish a "normal" past post-communist societies have attempted to correct the distortions of communist-era historiography. In addition to

de-commemorating key figures from the communist version of history there has been a focus on reinstating and re-commemorating those people (politicians and monarchs) who were excised from public memory by communist historians. This, in turn, resulted in new practices of memorialization in the public arena and, once the official public landscape had been de-communized, it could be repopulated with new monuments, statues, memorials, and toponyms. The most straightforward way to do this was by returning streets to their pre-communist commemorative names. For example, in central Bucharest fourteen streets commemorating pre-communist politicians that had been renamed by the communist regime returned to their former names, as did four streets that commemorated the Romanian monarchy.<sup>37</sup> Over time, new statues and monuments were commissioned to commemorate those figures who had been disavowed during the communist period. For example, a statue of Tomáš Masaryk was erected in Prague in 2000, and a statue of King Carol I (based on an earlier statue destroyed by the communist regime) was unveiled in Bucharest in 2010. Such practices represent a symbolic correction of a form of historical injustice, although they are not usually considered as part of transitional justice projects.

Second, post-communist societies faced the challenge of how to remember the communist period and how to commemorate its victims. Although in many countries there was an initial desire to forget the communist past completely, at a later stage there was general agreement that the abuses of communism should be memorialized. The construction of memorials, monuments, and museums is a means of acknowledging the abuses of the communist era, giving recognition to the victims, and promoting a sense of social cohesion and belonging that is rooted in a traumatic recent past.<sup>38</sup> A range of actors both within and outside the state participate in such memorialization. In some countries, governments have been very active in promoting remembrance of the abuses of communist regimes as a form of transitional justice that complements other legal and institutional measures.<sup>39</sup> States can also use practices of memorialization to affirm and legitimate (to both domestic and international audiences) their commitment to political values that are the antithesis of communism.<sup>40</sup> Civil society groups and non-governmental organizations have also been active in memorializing the communist past, particularly in those countries where former communist officials have remained in power and have been more unwilling to condemn the communist era.<sup>41</sup> In addition, ordinary individuals can also be involved in the process of remembrance through creating and placing their own, informal memorials in the urban landscape. The commemorative landscape is therefore characterized by a bricolage of memorial forms, dedicated to different subjects and

groups, in a wide range of locations, and with a wide range of sponsors. In what follows, we focus on two broad categories of memorialization: (1) monuments and memorials and (2) museums (with associated practices of tourism).

### *Monuments and Memorials*

For states engaged in enacting transitional justice, the erection of monuments and statues in the public arena has provided one means of recognition of communist-era injustices. As a result, there are many examples of such commemoration, although it is by no means a thorough, consistent, and comprehensive practice. Indeed, what is perhaps surprising is the relative paucity of such memorials combined with the controversy that they sometimes generate. Representing the condemnation of the communist past and its injustices through memorialization is not, therefore, a straightforward process.

The memorials that have been erected differ widely in terms of their form, the subject that they commemorate, and the sponsoring organization behind them. Some memorials commemorate the actions and death of a specific individual. While they focus on the sacrifice of the individual they implicitly draw attention to the broader injustices of the regimes responsible. Examples here include the monument in Prague to Jan Palach, the student who committed suicide in January 1969 in protest against the Soviet repression of the Prague Spring. A bronze cross is now embedded into the spot outside the national museum where he died. Palach is also commemorated through the naming of a square in Prague, several other memorials throughout Europe, and even the naming (by a Czech astronomer) of an asteroid after him. Other memorials are dedicated to groups of individuals who died in specific sites. A key example is the memorials to those killed trying to cross the Berlin Wall. The White Crosses memorial features seven crosses inscribed with the names of thirteen people who were killed in this way. First erected by a private group in 1971 in West Berlin, it has always been associated with key symbolic parts of the urban landscape, initially being located near the Reichstag and now beside the offices of the new unified German government. Deaths associated with the Berlin Wall are also commemorated generically at the Gedenkstätte Berliner Mauer (Berlin Wall Memorial).

Some memorials acknowledge deaths associated with specific events or more broadly with specific aspects of totalitarian oppression. These include a series of memorials to victims of the KGB in Tartu, Vilnius, Riga, and Potsdam, and memorials to the Katyn massacre. In Moldova a stone cross at Răzeni commemorates the ten victims of the Soviet-led massacre of 1941, while in Chişinău there is a Memorial to the Victims of Stalinist Repression. A plaque in a square



just off Rustaveli Avenue in Tbilisi, Georgia, commemorates those killed by Soviet forces during protests in 1956 (protests partly motivated by the denouncement of Stalin). In Gdańsk (Poland) the Monument to the Fallen Shipyard Workers of 1970 memorial was unusually erected during the communist period itself (in 1980). Other memorial sites are aimed more broadly at remembering the national experience of communism. For example, the Memorial to the Victims of Communism in Prague, erected in 2002, seeks to shape the collective memory of those who died under Czechoslovak communism. Supported by the local authority and the Confederation of Political Prisoners (KPV) it seeks to commemorate those who suffered politically and personally, detailing the numbers shot or who died in prison, were arrested or exiled. A bronze plaque reads: "The memorial to the victims of communism is dedicated to all victims not only those who were jailed or executed but also those whose lives were ruined by totalitarian despotism." This memorial has attracted some criticism for its gendered nature (no female figures are represented) and for its aesthetic qualities, raising the issue of the public reception of such forms of commemoration.

Finally, some monuments commemorate collective suffering under communism and are intended to denounce the period as a whole. Such monuments sometimes prove to be controversial. The Gloria Victis Memorial is located on the outskirts of Budapest, Hungary, and seeks to honor "the 100 million victims of communism."<sup>42</sup> This memorial, the first to commemorate all the victims of communist repression, was erected in 2006 (the fiftieth anniversary of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution). This memorial is more complex than those commemorating individuals or specific groups, and incorporates local, national, and international representations of the victimization of citizens. It includes a world map of victims; memorials to the Ukrainian minority in Hungary; tablets commemorating the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, Jewish and Roma victims of communism, and the Katyn massacre; and the text of Resolution 1481 (2006) of the Council of Europe on The Necessity of International Condemnation of the Crimes Committed by Totalitarian Communist Regimes. Clearly such a memorialization process becomes significantly more complex when trying to represent the suffering of all the victims of communism, compared to the memory of an individual.

In addition to memorializing the abuses of communist regimes, various monuments commemorate the events that brought about the overthrow of communist regimes in 1989. Pearce suggests that some post-communist states have encountered problems in trying to establish official commemorative practices around the events of 1989 (such as which key dates or events should form the basis of state-sponsored commemoration).<sup>43</sup> In some cases, the official

narrative of events is strongly contested. For example, in 2005 Romania erected a *Memorial of Rebirth* in Bucharest to symbolize the struggle against the Nicolae Ceausescu regime and to commemorate those who died in the violent “revolution” of 1989. It is the official site of remembrance and the setting for state-led performances and rituals which attempt to shape post-communist visions of Romania’s past and future. However, the monument has been roundly criticized on aesthetic and architectural grounds. Moreover, the site holds little resonance for many Romanians who interpret the events of December 1989 more as a coup d’état than a genuine popular revolution. Consequently, the *Memorial of Rebirth* has failed to become the focus of popular allegiance and its role in shaping public memory among Romanians is unclear.

This overview of the use of monuments, plaques, statues, and memorials is not intended to be exhaustive, but instead seeks to demonstrate the range of types of demoralization practices which attempt to place transitional justice into the public arena. There is not space here to discuss in detail the design and symbolism of each of these sites (although this is an important subject for further research). Moreover, we know relatively little about the public reaction to and reception of such commemorative landscapes. However, the examples above give hints of how even what might appear to be a straightforward process – condemning communism and commemorating its victims in public space – can be contested and subject to debate. The example of the Memorial of Rebirth illustrates that while political elites may seek to shape transitional justice projects and the remembrance of the victims of communism, they may not always succeed. Instead, projects to shape commemoration and public memory can sometimes be contested and challenged by the populace. The public reception of sites and practices of demoralization remains a neglected aspect of transitional justice.

### *Museums and Tourism*

To fully appreciate the role of museums in transitional justice projects it is important to recognize that museums are not simply collections of objects put on public display for the education and entertainment of visitors. Instead, museums have always had a broader ideological purpose. They are a form of public culture through which political elites tell a society about itself and where it has come from. In particular, museums that are sponsored by the state have an important role in “telling the national story.” They are institutions that are intended to be visited by the citizenry and which have a clearly articulated educational mission. They aim to communicate a particular understanding of the past and thus play a significant role in the making (and remaking) of public

memory. More broadly, as a means of “staging” the nation<sup>44</sup> museums contribute to the formation of collective identities and their importance within nation-building projects is widely acknowledged.<sup>45</sup> As the earlier discussion noted, communist regimes were fully aware of the educative and propagandist role of museums in communicating their political agenda (and the associated narrative of national history) to a broad public.

In the post-communist context, museums are important “vehicles of memory”<sup>46</sup> within projects to memorialize the communist past. In particular, museums can tell the story of the oppression, human rights abuses, and suffering inflicted by communist regimes. This, obviously, is a story that has not been formally told before (since it was not something that communist regimes were likely to draw attention to). Moreover, museums can interpret the communist period from the perspective of the people who lived through it. This is a bottom-up narrative of history that focuses on everyday lives of ordinary people, rather than the macro-political agenda of the communist state and its leading party. Memorial museums also interpret communist rule for future generations who did not experience it themselves in order to help them understand the experiences that shaped their parents’ and grandparents’ generation. Museums can also be locations for ceremonies and rituals intended to commemorate the victims of communist rule. Overall, memorial museums that are established as part of transitional justice projects are institutions intended to encourage remembrance, reflection, and civic engagement.<sup>47</sup> However, they are not just about the communist past: museums can also be used to make an unambiguous statement about a state’s post-communist political identity and aspirations. In this context, they are sites for “performances of democracy, not static representations of national identity.”<sup>48</sup> The use of museums in this way is as ideological as anything seen during the communist period but for entirely different ends.

What is important, but frequently overlooked, is the role of tourism in this process. Memorial museums are intended to be visited (and as such they function as visitor “attractions” even if their subject matter is far from attractive). Some of the visitors to memorial museums will be children and young people, studying the communist period as part of their educational curriculum. However, most people will be visiting during their leisure time. Furthermore, many of these people will be tourists (conventionally defined as people staying away from their home area for at least 24 hours) who can be both domestic (citizens of a country traveling within that country) and international (visitors from other countries). Although political scientists may be inclined to dismiss tourism as trivial and with little to offer in understanding politics, there is growing interest within the discipline of tourism studies in

the ways that tourism can contribute to broader political projects and objectives.<sup>49</sup> For example, visiting historic buildings and monuments is a means of “connecting” with the broader community of the nation.<sup>50</sup> As such, tourism can be identified as one form of banal nationalism.<sup>51</sup> Tourism can also be used to project political identities to an external audience. For example, recent studies have explored how the Central and Eastern European countries have used their state-sponsored tourism promotional materials to project a distinctly *post-communist* political identity to the wider world.<sup>52</sup>

In the context of transitional justice projects, tourism at memorials and museums can be used to communicate a message about the communist past and the post-communist future. Moreover, many of the visitors to such places will be heritage tourists who are interested in and receptive to learning during their leisure time.<sup>53</sup> For domestic tourists, the visit to a memorial museum performs the same role as other monuments and memorials: it is a reminder of the traumas of the recent past, a recognition of the victims of that past, a warning to future generations, an affirmation of the rejection of communism, and a commitment to broader “European” values. However, international tourists are an equally important (and sometimes numerically dominant) audience (and for this reason most memorial museums make extensive use of displays and interpretation in the English language and often in a range of other European languages). Most international visitors will have no direct experience of living under communist rule (and often little background knowledge or understanding of communism). Therefore, museums are a way of telling such visitors the story of “what we lived through” and “the events that shaped us.” This is also a way of affirming and legitimating a commitment to the same political and economic agendas that have underpinned European integration since World War II.

There are an increasing number of museums in the Central and Eastern European countries that explicitly address the communist era. Most countries have a national museum (usually a monumental building located in the capital city) and these frequently include a gallery dedicated to the recent past (although such galleries are fairly neutral historical accounts of the communist period). There are also museums specifically dedicated to interpreting the nature of life in a communist state. Some (such as the Museum of Communism in Prague or the DDR Museum in Berlin) have been set up by private entrepreneurs to cater to the interest of Western visitors, rather than being intended to contribute to transitional justice projects. However, many other museums have been established with the direct or indirect support of the state authorities specifically to remember the abuses and victims of communist rule. Perhaps the best examples are Estonia’s Museum of Occupations

(which opened in 2003 in a purpose-built structure), the Museum of the Occupation of Latvia (opened 1993), and Lithuania's Museum of Genocide Victims (established 1992 in the former headquarters of the Soviet Security service). Each is located in the respective capital city. All are run by foundations with state support. The motto of Latvia's museum, "Remembering, Commemorating, Reminding,"<sup>54</sup> clearly indicates the place of the museum within the broader project of achieving transitional justice. The displays of these museums focus on the nature of totalitarian rule; its impact on politics, economy, and domestic life; the nature of domestic repression and human rights abuses; the activities of resistance groups; and the struggle for and achievement of independence in the early 1990s. All receive large numbers of foreign tourists and are included in the itineraries of visiting politicians and dignitaries.

Other museums have been opened in buildings that were formerly prisons or were associated in other ways with the repressive apparatus of communist regimes. The conversion of such buildings into memorial museums is a form of symbolic "re-inscription" that is intended to give them a new use for memorializing the practices that they formerly hosted. The best example is the Memorial to the Victims of Communism and to the Resistance in Sighet, Romania. This opened in 1998 in a building that had formerly been used as a prison and in which the majority of the pre-World War II Romanian political, military, social, and academic elite had been imprisoned after the communist regime took power. The museum was developed by the Civic Academy Foundation (a non-governmental organization) with the financial support of the Council of Europe. It hosts summer schools for young Romanians and publishes regular volumes of academic study about the communist era.<sup>55</sup> Its significance as a site of public remembrance of the human rights abuses of the communist regime was recognized by the Romanian government, which declared it a site of national interest in 1997.

Another celebrated example is the former headquarters of the East German security service (the Stasi) in Berlin, which opened as a memorial and research centre in November 1990. The site was managed by a non-governmental civil rights organization, although with the support of the German government. The complex includes a museum with displays about the history and activities of the Stasi. Elsewhere in Berlin, a former Stasi prison and interrogation centre opened in 1994 as a museum and memorial (the Berlin-Hohenschönhausen Memorial). It is run by a private foundation with government support and aims to encourage "a critical awareness of the methods and consequences of political persecution and suppression in the communist dictatorship."<sup>56</sup> Another example is Budapest's House of Terror, again established by a public

foundation with government backing. It is housed in the former headquarters of the Hungarian security police (ÁVH). This site is intended as a memorial to those Hungarians who were interrogated and tortured by the communist regime, an interpretation of life in communist Hungary, and an account of the struggle against the communist regime which ended in 1989.<sup>57</sup> Significantly, it is also one of Budapest's most popular tourist attractions. Elsewhere throughout post-communist Central and Eastern Europe there are numerous smaller prisons and interrogation centers that have been turned into museums, intended for both domestic and international visitors.

Memorial museums are not without their critics. Although tourism is one of the principal means through which memorial sites are encountered, there has long been a tendency to dismiss the practices of visitors to such places as trivial or insignificant. At best, tourists who visit places associated with trauma or tragedy are regarded as passive and unquestioning consumers incapable of fully appreciating the significance of the story presented to them and, at worst, as shallow thrill-seekers motivated by "a morbid and senseless curiosity."<sup>58</sup> However, recent research in the disciplines of tourism studies and anthropology has demonstrated that the behavior of visitors to memorial places is far more purposeful and significant than is often appreciated and that visitors can undertake highly meaningful acts of remembrance and engagement with the subject matter they encounter.<sup>59</sup> Other authors accept that visits to memorial museums may be associated with short-term learning, understanding, and changed attitudes but they question the longer-term impacts of such visits in bringing about deeper learning and a broader engagement with the issues of transitional justice.<sup>60</sup> Overall, the consumption of memorial museums by their visitors is clearly a subject which merits much fuller research.

#### CONCLUSION

Issues of memorialization and the reformulation of public memory are often considered to be "soft" aspects of transitional justice, and consequently they have not received as much academic attention as the "hard" politics of truth commissions, lustration, or restitution. However, we argue that the issue of shaping public memory through commemorative practices and landscapes is an integral element of transitional justice projects which merits much fuller investigation. In concluding, we highlight the importance of considering the cultural politics of transitional justice and we identify the lessons of accepting such a perspective.

One lesson that emerges from considering public memory and its expression in the urban landscape is that transitional justice is not only played

out in the spaces of courtrooms, legislatures, and administrations. It is also worked out in public squares, memorial landscapes, and museums. We need to recognize the vast range of sites and spaces in which multiple practices of transitional justice works, through the initiatives of both elites and publics. In this context, it is important to acknowledge that the past itself (and ways that it is represented and memorialized) is fluid, multifaceted, and contested. While states are active players in the commemoration of the communist past and in broader efforts to shape public memory, they do not have a monopoly on the process. Instead, there are a range of other organizations and individuals involved in such commemoration, and consequently there is a diverse range of monuments, memorials, and museums dedicated to the abuses and victims of communist regimes. These are sites where individual and personal negotiations of transitional justice occur, alongside the official memorials, ceremonies, and rituals sponsored by the state.

Another key issue is the reach of these spaces of transitional justice. While processes such as lustration and even restitution symbolically show that post-communist states are acting to address past injustices, in societal terms their impact may be relatively limited. Not everyone in society was able to reclaim property or necessarily had a personal connection to key figures who were placed on trial. Hence, such practices arguably may have a limited impact on the everyday lives and practices of the majority of the population. However, monuments and commemorative landscapes can reach far more people in the course of their daily lives and to address their wish for justice in a much more immediate and visible way. For most people, commemoration in the public arena is a form of public recognition that is important in coming to terms with past injustices.

Furthermore, there are important temporal aspects to transitional justice that should be considered. The largest waves of restitution have been completed and there is probably considerably less scope for lustration (since those who could be tried either already have been, or are too old, or have died). Memorialization in the public arena has a potentially much longer impact with the possibility of shaping public memory across generations. Twenty-five years have now elapsed since 1989 and perhaps the forms of transitional justice projects must reflect this. Shaping public memory through commemorative landscapes may well assume a greater importance as other processes decrease in frequency and effectiveness. If the purpose of such memorialization is to help society to move on (without forgetting) then public commemorative landscapes perhaps hold the key. The construction of memorial landscapes may follow on from other, more contentious, processes of transitional justice (which, in turn, may shape the nature of commemorative practices). If such

commemoration becomes a more long-term form of transitional justice which persists in public space for decades to come, then it will require careful consideration and management.

The final lesson from our chapter is that there is a need to explore public reception of landscapes and memorialization. This is the area in which the literature is most weakly developed. As Barsalou and Baxter suggest, “The impact of *all* transitional justice processes – memorialization among them – remains under-researched.”<sup>61</sup> They note the difficulty in determining what memorialization actually contributes to reconciliation and justice. Thus, we need to explore questions such as: How do people relate to memorials and landscapes linked to transitional justice projects in their everyday lives? Do memorials work effectively as vehicles of transitional justice? Are they sites of remembrance or contestation, or do they simply become a backdrop to the everyday use of space in the city? Are they even regarded with apathy or simply ignored? Again, these issues have temporal and generational dimensions, and will vary across multiple publics and elites. For example, some authors are skeptical about the long-term impact of museums on the public consciousness.<sup>62</sup> Furthermore, as Clark suggests, there is a danger that too much memorialization may inhibit societies’ ability to move on.<sup>63</sup> Moreover, different generations may have very different responses to the ways in which commemorative landscapes function as part of transitional justice, responses shaped by interactions between the generations mediated through the family and representations of history. An important issue for further research is the public reception of memorialization aimed at righting the wrongs of the communist era in order to help support the longer-term achievement of transitional justice and its expression in public space.

#### NOTES

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