Critical Heritages of Europe

EUROPEAN MEMORY IN POPULISM

REPRESENTATIONS OF SELF AND OTHER

Edited by
Chiara De Cesari and Ayhan Kaya

European Memory in Populism

European Memory in Populism explores the links between memory and populism in contemporary Europe. Focusing on circulating ideas of memory, especially European memory, in contemporary populist discourses, the book also analyzes populist ideas in sites and practices of remembrance that usually tend to go unnoticed. More broadly, the theoretical heart of the book reflects upon the similarities, differences, and slippages between memory, populism, nationalism, and cultural racism and the ways in which social memory contributes to give substance to various ideas of what constitutes the 'people' in populist discourse and beyond.

Bringing together a group of political scientists, anthropologists, and cultural and memory studies scholars, the book illuminates the relationship between memory and populism from different angles and in different contexts. The contributors to the volume discuss dominant notions of European heritage that circulate in the public sphere and in political discourse, and consider how the politics of fear relates to such notions of European heritage and identity across and beyond Europe and the European Union. Ultimately, this volume will shed light on how notions of a shared European heritage and memory can be used not only to include and connect Europeans, but also to exclude some of them.

Investigating the ways in which nationalist populist forces mobilize the idea of a shared, homogeneous European civilization, *European Memory in Populism* will be of interest to scholars and students in the fields of European studies, heritage and memory studies, migration studies, anthropology, political science, and sociology.

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Amsterdam and Istanbul

Abbreviations

AfD	*Alternative für Deutschland* (Alternative for Germany)
ANAP	*Anavatan Partisi* (Motherland Party)
API	Application Programming Interface
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
CDU	Christian Democratic Union
CEE	Central and Eastern Europe
DHA	Discourse-Historical Approach
DP	Democrat Party
DYP	*Dogru Yol Partisi* (True Path Party)
EU	European Union
FN	Front National
GD	Golden Dawn
GDR	Democratic Republic of Germany
HVA	*Hogeschool van Amsterdam*
IPN	*Instytut Pamieci Narodowej* (Institute of National Remembrance)
JDP	*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* (Justice and Development Party)
JOBBIK	The Movement for a Better Hungary
KOD	Committee for the Defence of Democracy
LGBTI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex
M5S	*Movimento Cinque Stelle* (Five Star Movement)
MHM	Military History Museum
MNAC	*Muzeul Național de Artă Contemporană* (National Museum of Contemporary Art)
NF	National Front
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NPD	National Democratic Party of Germany
NR	National Rally
NSI	*Nova Slovenija*
P1453	Panorama 1453 Museum
Pegida	Patriotic Europeans against the Islamization of the West
PiS	*Prawo i Sprawiedliwosc* (Law and Justice Party)
PO	*Platforma Obywatelska* (Civic Platform)

PvdA	*Partij van de Arbeid* (Labour Party)
PVV	*Partij voor de Vrijheid* (Party for Freedom)
RNP	*Rassemblement National Populaire* (France, 1940s party)
SB	Security Service of the Ministry of Internal Affairs
SDS	*Slovenska Demokratska Stranka* (Slovenian Democratic Party)
SLD	*Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej* (Democratic Left Alliance)
SMAK	*Stedelijk Museum Voor Actuele Kunst, Ghent* (Municipal Museum of Contemporary Art)
TCAT	Twitter Capture and Analysis Toolset
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
ZZB	Association of Partisan Veterans

Introduction

Ayhan Kaya and Chiara De Cesari

This volume responds to the scholarly neglect and under-conceptualization of the role of memory and cultural heritage in far-right-wing populist discourse, in both memory/heritage (Bull and Hansen, 2016; Levi and Rothberg, 2018; Traverso, 2019) and populism studies. Our conviction is that such a critical nexus must be investigated from a transnational/comparative, non-(Western-) Eurocentric perspective and by developing a new dialogue between humanities and social science approaches. The rise of the far right arguably represents the most conspicuous, transnational phenomenon to rock European (and non-European) politics in the last decade, with a stunning eight countries of the European Union (EU) being newly controlled, as we write, by nationalist, racist populist parties that have challenged key principles of liberal democracy and the post-war social consensus upon which the union is built. In other key European countries, such as France, right-wing populists have notched remarkable electoral successes and have managed to shape the terms and language of public debate well beyond their own electorate, despite not conquering power. These populist parties and their followers use the past in manifold and powerful ways. Cultural heritage as the ostensible essential foundation of a political community is key to the way they understand the world and political dynamics. Also, contemporary right-wing populism is haunted by the memory of fascism: Is it fascism or is it not? We see it as a matter of urgency for scholars in the field of memory, heritage, and populism studies to reflect on populist mobilizations of memory and heritage, and on the very entanglement of concepts and narratives we have contributed to (public memory, European cultural heritage) with this momentous rise. Building on emerging research, the present volume makes a start in this direction.

A few vivid examples can convey more forcefully what we aim to analyze. Turkey's governing Justice and Development Party (JDP) claims to represent the power of the people, contrasting itself with the ostensible elitism of the former modernist-secularist, militarist Kemalist regime and referring to the Ottoman past. The rhetoric of President Erdoğan himself highlights how right-wing populists construct 'the people' by referencing the past. Recapturing a glorious Ottoman heritage and Islamic civilization in the service of JDP's

Islamist, expansionist agenda is at the core of this party's populist discourse: for some, indeed, 'Erdoğan is making the Ottoman empire great again', mobilizing heritage to expand its power regionally (Colborne and Edwards, 2018; see also Kaya, 2015).

At the other end of Europe, at the Front National party congress of March 2018, the first since the 2017 presidential race and the one where Marine Le Pen proposed renaming the party to *Rassemblement national* (National Rally, NR) to prepare for the next European Parliament elections, she rallied her audience with a strident programmatic speech that was largely about issues of identity, traditions, heritage, and civilization. 'Our fight is nothing less than a challenge for civilisation', Le Pen said. *The Guardian* summarized her speech: 'She attacked the EU, globalisation, the free market, Islamism and immigration. Sections on French values and traditions, the French language, national identity and heritage brought cheers and applause. At one point the hall erupted into chants of "On est chez nous" (this is our home)' (Willsher, 2018). 'The people' Le Pen wants to rally are essentially defined by their (national) cultural heritage: there is no demos, no functioning political community without a tight cultural one that grounds it, cast as a bundle of language, identity, history, traditions, and values. Another 'present past' (Huyssen, 2000) looming in the background of the congress (and of the entire party history) is that of Vichy, for the new name *Rassemblement National* clearly resonates with the *Rassemblement National Populaire* (RNP), an extreme-right fascist collaborationist group devoted to 'protecting race' and supporting the Nazi occupation of France between 1941 and 1944. Such heritage claims contradict Marine Le Pen's long-standing efforts to shed the antisemitic image of the party that her father, convicted for Holocaust denial and incitement to racial hatred, founded.

NR's politicians and supporters are not alone in believing that cultural diversity, especially Islam, is deteriorating, diluting, and corrupting European/national culture and that this constitutes a political problem. According to this narrative, immigrants do not belong here both culturally and politically because 'this is our home' and their cultural heritage is a threat to 'ours'. Arguably, Le Pen radicalizes a key logic of nationalism and a crucial device by which modern nation-states have legitimized themselves. The cultivation of national identity via heritage and collective memory has long played into the formation of the imagined community of the nation (Anderson, 1983; Assmann, 1995). Nations are based on a clear identification with a common past, cultivated by way of history school curricula, museums, memorials, and other sites of memory as well as multiple other remembrance practices (Nora, 1989; De Cesari and Rigney, 2014). Cultural heritage is the substance, the glue of the nation, which gives the nation its distinctiveness and without which the nation ceases to exist as a bounded entity, neatly separated from others (Handler, 1985, 1986; Rowlands, 2002). Nationalism is sustained by an 'objectifying logic that continually invents cultural things, while simultaneously imagining these provisional symbolic constructs to be naturally bounded, continuous, and absolute'

(Handler, 1984: 58). Cultural, political, and territorial borders are deemed perfectly isomorphic.

Yet, producing such isomorphism and maintaining strict cultural boundaries is doomed to fail, as this is a task impossible to achieve (for 'culture' is plural, processual, emergent, open-ended). This fact instigates nationalists' anxiety and fears of disappearance, of being unable to 'stem the tide of [cultural] pollution' (Handler, 1984: 60). Right-wing populists like Le Pen stoke these anxieties by banking on alleged threats to the integrity and distinctiveness of the nation (see Wodak 2015; de Koning and Modest, 2017). This politics of fear, however, is hopeless, condemned to produce 'cultural despair' (Traverso, 2019, loc. 1122), for nations are neither ontological entities nor a collection of solid traits but rather socio-cultural constructs (Anderson, 1983).

If collective memory and cultural heritage have historically been entangled with politics, especially nationalism, since at least the nineteenth century (e.g. Gillis, 1994; Rowlands, 2002; Swenson, 2013), this entanglement has taken up a qualitatively different and augmented form in a transnational process that began in the latter part of the twentieth century and became full blown in the twenty-first (e.g. Erll, 2011; De Cesari and Rigney, 2014). This is what some scholars have called the 'memory boom': the emergence of 'present pasts' as key social and political concerns, politics' 'turning toward the past that stands in stark contrast to the privileging of the future so characteristic of earlier decades of twentieth-century modernity' (Huyssen, 2000: 21). This turn towards the past challenges the older politics of nationalist commemoration centred on positive origin myths, golden ages, and national heroes.

The development of memory studies itself is a response to the rise of a so-called politics of regret (Olick, 2007), namely, the proliferation of narratives of past suffering, war, trauma, and victimization in the public sphere, and a new emphasis on processes (apologies, truth commissions, the establishment of memorials and museums, memorial days, etc.) that attempt to address (and make amends for) previous traumas enacted upon marginalized or otherwise oppressed groups by the state. The Holocaust is the cornerstone of this transnational memory culture. The politics of regret is based on a Freudian logic: that to achieve positive, peaceful social relations, societies must heal from their murderous pasts by mourning them, namely, by 'learning the lessons of the past'. Germany and South Africa are the foremost examples of societies going though social processes of 'past mastering' (*Vergangenheitsbewältigung*). This is why prospective Germans have to learn so much about the Holocaust in citizenship courses – because memory is thought to instill a respect for human rights and to teach people to be better citizens (Levy and Sznaider, 2006; see also Rothberg, 2009, 2014). Memory of murderous pasts is assumed to guarantee non-repetition.

European institutions and elites have put a peculiar emphasis on memory and heritage (e.g. Rigney, 2014). The foundational narrative of the EU views it as rising from the ashes of World War II and the Holocaust – the telos of

an upward movement 'from war to peace' (significantly, the title of President Herman Van Rompuy's acceptance speech for the 2012 Nobel Peace Prize awarded to the EU). The idea of Europe as the product of memory work, and as guarantee that the errors of the past will not be repeated, is enshrined in many recent cultural policies implemented by the EU to promote a shared European memory and identity (Assmann, 2006; Rigney, 2014; De Cesari, 2017). If the dominant paradigm, grounded in the remembrance of the Holocaust, sees memory as fostering an inclusive political culture and a cosmopolitan morality, far-right-wing populist political forces have turned this model upside down in the service of altogether different political agendas (Bull, 2016; Bull and Hansen, 2016). The chapters of this volume together shed light on how memory and cultural heritage can be used not only to include and connect Europeans but also to exclude some of them.

The problem with multiculturalism

Alongside the emergence of memory as a key social and political concern, another global trend that affects populist cultures is a broader culturalization of politics – for which identity politics is a shorthand. (For Müller, 2017, populism is itself an exclusionary form of identity politics.) Globally, forms of political claim-making grounded in identity and culture have proliferated since the late twentieth century in a marked shift from a politics of wealth redistribution to a politics of recognition. Beginning in the 1960s, various social movements have mobilized from identity banners such as gender, sexuality, race, and ethnicity, including the women's movement and the Indigenous sovereignty and Black freedom movements. These movements have foregrounded claims for the recognition of cultural worth, cultural difference, and group identity, stressing cultural domination and social misrecognition as major forms of oppression (see e.g. Taylor, 1994; Kymlicka, 1995; Fraser, 1997, 2000). According to postcolonial critics such as Paul Gilroy, and Minoo Moallem and Iain Boal (1999), liberal elites in Western states have responded to the challenge posed by such movements by way of liberal multiculturalism, articulated in a set of policies to counter the crisis of liberal institutions in dealing with burgeoning cultural differences triggered by decolonization and postcolonial migration.

Political philosopher Nancy Fraser has warned against (liberal) multiculturalism's tendency to conceal social politics and economic inequalities, as well as essentialize cultures and identities (see also Povinelli, 2002, 2011). Fraser identifies two main problems in the ways in which the politics of recognition has been articulated by liberal institutions:

> First, this move from redistribution to recognition is occurring despite – or because of – an acceleration of economic globalization, at a time when an aggressively expanding capitalism is radically exacerbating economic inequality. In this context, questions of recognition are serving less to

> supplement, complicate and enrich redistributive struggles than to marginalize, eclipse and displace them. I shall call this *the problem of displacement*. Second, today's recognition struggles are occurring at a moment of hugely increasing transcultural interaction and communication, when accelerated migration and global media flows are hybridizing and pluralizing cultural forms. Yet the routes such struggles take often serve not to promote respectful interaction within increasingly multicultural contexts, but to drastically simplify and reify group identities. They tend, rather, to encourage separatism, intolerance and chauvinism, patriarchalism and authoritarianism. I shall call this *the problem of reification*.
>
> (Fraser, 2000: 108, emphasis in original)

When European liberal politicians like Angela Merkel, David Cameron, and Nicholas Sarkozy denounced multiculturalism as a 'failed experiment' in 2010–2011, they argued it had caused a whole range of social problems from 'ghettoisation' to 'radicalisation', from youth unemployment to homophobia and sexism, and advocated that immigrants integrate or assimilate into native national cultures (e.g. Lentin and Titley, 2011). Whether or not one agrees with these politicians' tacit understanding of 'multiculturalism' – a messy concept spanning issues of policy and philosophy – it is clear that with their denunciation they were not simply interpreting the public mood but rather fully endorsing a broadly circulating discourse painting immigration as a recent, disruptive problem and a shock for European societies because of the 'invasion' of people from other cultures and civilizations. This discourse entails a 'yearning for a Europe that never existed: a Europe disentangled and distinct from the rest of the world' (Valenta, 2011). In endorsing this discourse, these politicians were effectively placing cultural diversity and lived multiculturalism outside of Europe. In so doing, they adopted the discourse of right-wing populists who had meanwhile hijacked multiculturalism's idea of the necessary recognition of cultural difference and cultural worth and applied it, topsy-turvy, to the white majority – accusing proponents of multiculturalism of 'reverse racism', an oxymoron in itself.

What is populism?

For some, the notion of populism is too ambiguous to have strong analytical purchase. It is 'an empty shell, which can be filled by the most disparate political contents', and as such, it is a 'political tool useful for stigmatising opponents' (of the neoliberal order) that tells us more about those who brandish it than about those labelled by it (e.g. Traverso, 2019, loc. 283–286; see also D'Eramo, 2017). One of the problems with this notion is that (some of) its uses tend to erase the distinction between left and right, making populism a matter of political style. The authors in this book deploy populism as a heuristic tool because it helps us zoom in on the construction of 'the people' so key to populist politics, namely,

the interpellation of working-class, non-immigrant people (often male, always white) – the 'French of French stock' (*français de souche*) for Le Pen – while showing how memory and heritage give substance to this political subject. We focus on far-right and right-wing populism, a variety of political forces in Europe and beyond that have the following key features: extreme nationalism radicalized into racism and xenophobia, 'civilizationism' and a culturalizing discourse foregrounding essential cultural traits, and ideological incoherence or the bringing together of disparate ideological content (see esp. De Cesari, Bosilkov, and Piacentini; Kaya and Tecmen; Lähdesmäki, this volume). Some critics prefer to classify this phenomenon as 'postfascism' (Traverso, 2019); we decided to stick with the term 'populism' instead because these forces are different from classic fascism and neo-fascism (even though, of course, there are close connections). Additionally, the concept of populism allows us to include in our discussion very useful comparative cases of right-wing populist forces in Turkey and Israel that have no connections with 1930s European fascism.

In 1967, researchers at the London School of Economics, including Ernest Gellner, Isaiah Berlin, Alain Touraine, Peter Worsley, Kenneth Minogue, Ghita Ionescu, Franco Venturi, and Hugh Seton-Watson, organized a conference on populism in different world regions and published a pioneering volume out of it (Ionescu and Gellner, 1969). One of the important arguments of that project, which is still meaningful today, is that 'populism worships the people' (Ionescu and Gellner, 1969: 4). However, that path-breaking project did not bring about a consensus beyond this tautology. In their introduction to the volume, one of the first extensive comparative analyses of the concept, Ionescu and Gellner write:

> There can, at present, be no doubt about the importance of populism. But no one is quite clear just what it is. As a doctrine or as a movement, it is elusive and protean. It bobs up everywhere, but in many and contradictory shapes. Does it have any underlying unity? Or does one name cover a multitude of unconnected tendencies?
>
> (1969: 1)

For Isaiah Berlin,

> We are all probably agreed that a single formula to cover all populisms everywhere will not be very helpful. The more embracing the formula, the less descriptive. The more richly descriptive the formula, the more it will exclude.
>
> (1967: 6)

Despite the vast amount of ink that has been spilled on populism ever since, these reflections are still valid today.

Definitions of populism indeed vary. Drawing on Edwards Shils's (1956) work in the aftermath of World War II, some scholars define it as a 'thin-centred *ideology*' (Mudde, 2004, 2007, 2016, emphasis added). For others, populism is a *strategy* adopted by sundry political parties to generate and sustain power by means of plebiscites, referenda, and a distinctive public rhetoric (Weyland, 2001; Barr, 2009). For other scholars, it is a *discourse*: populist politicians instrumentalize this part-time phenomenon whenever they want to build a stronger link with 'the people' (Wodak, 2015; Hawkins, 2010). Utilizing Antonio Gramsci, yet other scholars see it as a *political logic* (Laclau, 2005) that is essential to politics in general and potentially an emancipatory force because it mobilizes marginalized sectors of society (see also Mouffe, 2018).

In his seminal work, Marxist scholar Peter Worsley (1969: 247) argues that populism is not specific to a particular world region, nor is it the unique bastion of any ideological side of politics. Rather it is an aspect of a variety of political cultures and forces. Building on Worsley, important works on populism define it as a *political style* (Taguieff, 1995; Moffitt, 2016). Pierre-Andre Taguieff states:

> The only way to conceptualize populism is to designate a particular type of social and political mobilization, which means that the term can indicate only one dimension of political action or discourse. It does not embody a particular type of political regime, nor does it define a particular ideological content. It is *a political style* suitable for various ideological contexts. . . . [Accordingly] a democracy or a dictatorship may have a populist dimension or orientation, they can have a political style.
>
> (1995: 10, 41, emphasis added)

Unlike socialism, communism, environmentalism, feminism, social democracy, or fascism, populism is not a fully fledged ideology because it does not present a coherent, unified vision of the world, articulate a set of norms and values, or offer a set of policies. There are different national and regional manifestations of populism across the world. The ideology of individual leaders and political parties might be, say, communist, socialist, Islamist, nationalist, fascist, or ecological, but their *discourse*, *strategy*, *political logic*, or *political style* can still be populist.

We consider left-wing populism an altogether different political phenomenon from the right-wing version, despite some superficial similarities in style. For left-wing populists, class is the glue of the people; for right-wing populists, culture and heritage play that role but in a way that makes them subtle code words for 'race'. Right-wing populism entails anti-elitism, anti-intellectualism, and anti-establishment positions; the celebration of religion and past history; racism, nationalism, nativism, xenophobia, antisemitism, Islamophobia, and anti-immigration ideologies; the promotion of the ideal of a socially, economically, and culturally homogenous organic society; frequent mobilization

of conspiracy theories to understand the world we live in; faith in a leader's extraordinariness and simultaneously in their ordinariness, bringing the leader close to the people; statism; and the sacralization of 'the people' (Ghergina, Mişcoiu, and Soare, 2013: 3–4).

Approaches to the study of populism

There are various approaches to analyzing populism. The most common political science approach explains populism with socio-economic factors. This approach argues that populist sentiments emerge from the detrimental effects of neoliberal modernization and globalization, which force the working classes into conditions of unemployment, marginalization, and structural outsiderism (Betz, 1994, 2015). Accordingly, the 'losers' of modernization and globalization respond by rejecting mainstream political parties and generating a sense of ethnic competition against migrants (Fennema, 2004).

The second scholarly approach tends to explain right-wing populism as resentment against cosmopolitan constructions of national and/or transnational communities that are perceived as elitist. This approach highlights how right-wing populists foreground the nation as a homogenous ethnicity. They want to return to 'traditional values' as the only way to engage with challenges and 'threats' coming from outside 'enemies' – be it globalization, Islam, the European Union, or refugees – and emphasize an 'ethno-nationalism rooted in myths about the distant past' (Rydgren, 2007: 242). This approach could be named the anti-elitist approach. Accordingly, a growing number of people in the EU believe that elites have pushed forward liberal rights – such as gender equality, gay rights, mobility, ethnic diversity, multiculturalism, and environmental protection – against the will of ordinary people, conceived as the main constituent element of the nation. A quantitative study conducted by the Bertelsmann Foundation in August 2016, however, shows that the anti-elitist approach can hardly illuminate the sources of right-wing populism. This study proves that anti-elite sentiments are not only common among right-wing (or left-wing) populist parties, but also among the supporters of other political parties (de Vries and Hoffmann, 2016). Also, right-wing populists do uphold liberal values, at least under certain circumstances (Balkenhol, Mepschen, and Duvyendak, 2016; Brubaker, 2017).

A third approach does not see populist political parties and movements as a response to outside factors, but rather underscores the *strategic means* employed by populist leaders and parties to appeal to their constituents (Laclau, 2005; Beauzamy, 2013). Here, populism is depicted as a style employed by some political leaders. This approach assumes that the relative success of right-wing populist parties lies in their ability to utilize ethnicity, culture, religion, the colonial past, tradition, and myths to politically mobilize lower-middle-class and working-class people alienated by globalization, de-industrialization, unemployment, poverty, social-economic-political deprivation, forced mobility, and increasing inequality.

Mabel Berezin (2009) makes use of two analytical axes to capture the nuances of European populism: the *institutional axis* and the *cultural axis*. In the institutional axis, populists' local organizational capacity, agenda-setting capacity, and national policy-recommendation capacity are the primary subjects of inquiry. The cultural axis foregrounds populists' intellectual repertoire: answers to the detrimental effects of globalization; readiness to accommodate xenophobic, racist, and Islamophobic discourses; and the harnessing of memory, myths, past, tradition, religion, colonialism, and identity. These two analytical axes allow researchers to evaluate populist successes and/or failures at local and national levels. They can explain why and how many populist parties in Europe have become popular in particular cities but not in the entire country, as well as the role of non-rational elements such as culture, the past (or pasts), religion, and myths in the consolidation of populist parties' power. Berezin further argues that the institutional axis of right-wing populist parties is not developed enough to offer articulated, effective responses to major challenges such as rising unemployment, societal/political exclusion, and humiliation. Therefore, populist leaders tend to generate a communication strategy capitalizing on the *cultural axis* to mobilize the masses. The exploitation of a cultural and civilizational discourse built on the use of the past, memory, and heritage by these political parties frames social, political, and economic conflicts in terms of inherent cultural-religious differences, as several contributions to this volume show (esp. Bialasiewicz and Sariaslan; Karolewski; Proglio).

Right-wing populism wins at the national level when its leaders are able to blend elements of both axes, for example by bringing together economic resentment and cultural resentment. It is only when socio-economic frustration (e.g. unemployment and poverty) is linked to cultural concerns (e.g. immigration) that right-wing populists distinguish themselves from other critics of the economy. This is why right-wing populists capitalize on ideas of culture, civilization, migration, religion, and race while left-wing populists capitalize on class-related issues. As Ernesto Laclau (2005) aptly notes, what creates the conditions for a 'populist moment' (Mouffe, 2018) is when a plurality of unsatisfied demands coexist with an increasing inability of the traditional institutional system to absorb them. For Laclau and Mouffe, this populist rupture may well be sometimes right-wing and sometimes left-wing populism, depending on the specific historical and socio-political context.

Populist parties across Europe and beyond draw on different political imaginaries and traditions, construct different national identity narratives, and emphasize different issues in everyday life. As Ruth Wodak (2015: 2) points out, some parties in Europe gain support by linking themselves with the fascist and Nazi past, such as in Austria, Hungary, Italy, Romania, and France. Some parties gain legitimacy by stoking fears of Islam, like in the Netherlands, Denmark, Poland, Sweden, and Switzerland (Balkenhol and Modest; De Cesari, Bosilkov, and Piacentini, this volume). Others endorse an evangelical Christian fundamentalist rhetoric, such as in the US. Some establish their legitimacy

through Euroscepticism, as in Finland and Greece (Lähdesmäki, this volume). And finally, other parties build up their legitimacy through an Islamist ideology and a perceived threat originating from unidentified enemies outside and within, like in Turkey (Kaya, 2015; Bozoğlu; Kaya and Tecmen, this volume). Populist parties in different national settings follow a path-dependent lineage, picking distinctive and yet connected discourses to mobilize their constituents.

An eclectic use of these approaches is the best way to analyze 'the Real which lurks in the background', as Slavoj Žižek (1999: 204) would put it. The first approach is more applicable to Western and Southern European contexts, while the second best explains dimensions of Eastern European populisms. Since the third approach concentrates on the organizational capacity and style of the populist leaders and parties, it helps us understand different kinds of contemporary populisms.

Our definition

In this volume, we define populism as a response to and rejection of the order imposed by neoliberal elites, an order that fails to use the resources of the democratic nation-state to harness global processes for local needs and desires (see Mouffe, 2018). Such populism originates in the deep-rooted structural inequalities and general impoverishment that mainstream political parties – both on the liberal right and the liberal centre left – have actively contributed to in their embrace of neoliberal governance. We tend towards anthropological approaches understanding populism as 'the moods and sensibilities of the disenfranchised who face the disjuncture between everyday lives that seem to become extremely anomic and uncontainable and the wider public power projects that are out of their reach and suspected of serving their ongoing disenfranchisement' (Kalb, 2011: 14). Bringing together the socio-economic and cultural dimensions, anthropological approaches focus on 'those left behind by the march of neoliberalism' – those essentially abandoned by social democrats and the traditional centre left that have embraced neoliberalism since the 1990s – and stress the many continuities between liberalism and illiberalism (Boyer, 2016).

We insist that socio-economic deprivation is not the only factor explaining populism's appeal. Cultural and memory factors play a crucial role, too. Gest, Reny, and Mayer (2017) call it 'nostalgic deprivation', referring to an existential feeling of loss triggered by the crumbling of established notions of nation, identity, culture, and heritage in the age of globalization. Building on the work of literary scholar Lauren Berlant (2007), Andrea Muehlebach and Nitzan Shoshan call it 'post-Fordist affect': a longing for lost job security, stability, belonging, a sense of futurity, and also solidarity among workers – 'those senses and sensitivities that have emerged in the wake of the dissolution of the Fordist social contract through market fundamentalism and that, while achingly present, are often discursively unavailable' (2012: 318).

In short, we see populism not as a disease or irrational anomaly, as it is often portrayed, but as the symptom of structural constraints that have been disregarded if not exacerbated by mainstream liberal political parties in power in the last three decades. Populism is a systemic problem with deep structural causes. Populist parties' voters are dissatisfied with and distrustful of mainstream elites, who are perceived as cosmopolitan, and they are hostile to immigration and growing ethno-cultural and religious diversity – what Steven Vertovec (2007) calls 'super diversity'. While some of these groups feel economically insecure, their hostility springs from a combination of socio-economic deprivation and nostalgic deprivation (Gest, Reny, and Mayer, 2017) resulting from their belief that immigrants and ethno-cultural and religious minority groups are threatening societal and national security (Reynié, 2016). In other words, the anxieties driving support for these parties are rooted not solely in socio-economic grievances but in cultural fears and a (cultivated) sense of cultural threat coming from globalization, immigration, multiculturalism, and diversity, which have been stocked by liberals too (see Balkenhol and Modest; Bialasiewicz and Sariaslan; Eckersley, this volume). The discriminatory, racist, nationalist, and nativist rhetoric towards 'others' poses a clear threat to democracy and social cohesion in Europe and beyond.

At the very heart of the rise of right-wing populism lies a disconnection between politicians and their electorates. Right-wing populist parties have gained greater public support in the last decade in the midst of two global crises: the financial crisis and the refugee crisis. The former, combined with neoliberal governance, has created socio-economic deprivation for some Europeans, while the latter has triggered nostalgic feeling that established notions of identity, nation, culture, tradition, and collective memory are endangered by immigration. The populist moment has both strengthened many of the former far-right-wing parties or created new ones. Some of these right-wing populist parties include the Party for Freedom in the Netherlands; the Danish People's Party in Denmark; the Swedish Democrats in Sweden; the Front National (now National Rally) and Bloc Identitaire in France; Vlaams Belang in Belgium; the Finns Party in Finland; Lega (League), CasaPound and the Five Star Movement in Italy; the Freedom Party in Austria; Alternative for Germany in Germany; Viktor Orbán's Fidesz and Jobbik Party in Hungary; the English Defence League, the British National Party, and the UK Independence Party in the UK; and Golden Dawn in Greece.

Populists often construct a racialized enemy. They feed on a culturally constructed antagonism between the 'pure people' and 'the corrupt elite' and other 'enemies'. In Europe, populists define 'the people' largely in ethno-religious terms while more or less openly rejecting the principle of equality. Despite national variations, populist parties are characterized by their opposition to immigration; a concern for the protection of national culture and European civilization; adamant criticisms of globalization, multiculturalism, the EU, representative democracy, and mainstream political parties; and the exploitation of

a discourse of essentialized cultural difference, which is often conflated with religious and national difference (see esp. Dayan; Eckersley; Kirn, this volume). The myth of a strong leader is also very common among populist movements across the world. Populists believe that mainstream politicians corrupt the vital link between leaders and supporters, put their own interests first, and create artificial divisions within the 'people', without adequately protecting them from the existential threat of cultural diversity (Mudde, 2004: 546).

The global financial crisis and the refugee crisis of the last decade have accelerated and magnified the appeal of right-wing populism in Europe. However, it would be wrong to reduce the reasons for the populist surge to these two crises. They have played a role, but they are at best catalysts, not causes. After all, if 'resentment' as a sociological concept posits that losers in the competition over scarce resources respond in frustration with diffuse emotions of anger, fear, and hatred, then there are other processes that may well have contributed to generate such resentment, such as de-industrialization, rising unemployment, growing ethno-cultural diversity, terrorist attacks in the aftermath of September 11, and so on (Berezin, 2009: 43–44).

Cultural racism and postcolonial melancholia

Our reading of right-wing populism foregrounds the transposition of socio-economic issues into cultural and identity issues, from a class antagonist to a cultural antagonist, through racism and xenophobia. The racism in contemporary populist discourse originates in the 'classic' racism of eugenics and yet departs from it in that the ground for discrimination is explicitly cultural, not biological. In this way, its proponents are able to combine their ideology with the celebration of liberal, even transnational values (Balkenhol, Mepschen, and Duvyendak, 2016; Brubaker, 2017). French essayist and writer Renaud Camus, known for his conspiracy theory of *le grand remplacement*, the alleged replacement of ethnic French people with Muslim immigrants from the Middle East and Africa, is a good example. According to Enzo Traverso, 'by obsessively denouncing immigration, melting pots, and cultural hybridity as a lethal threat to culture and civilisation, Camus . . . update[s] the old fear of "blood mixture" (*Blutvermischung*) . . . rehabilitat[ing] the concept of "race", even if he defines it as the legacy of "a largely shared history" rather than a "biological filiation"' (Traverso, 2019, loc. 1089–1097).

Many (but by no means all) right-wing populists deny being racist. Yet, their discourse turns cultural heritage into inescapable destiny – a vital, close-to-biological trait of human beings that neatly divides us into distinctive civilizations and cultures that are incommensurable with each other and cannot be mixed. In this ideology, cultures and civilizations are not seen as equal but as arranged according to a global taxonomy of value (Herzfeld, 2004) that is fully Eurocentric: the non-European 'other' is presented as less than the European self. When another champion of this discourse, the late Italian journalist

Oriana Fallaci, stigmatizes 'the sons of Allah [who] breed like rats' and 'destroy the Catholic churches, burn the Crucifixes, soil the Madonnas, urinate on the altars' (Fallaci, 2002: 125), it becomes clear how this new cultural racism or 'cultural fundamentalism' (Stolcke, 1995, 1999; Balibar, 1991; Goldberg, 2006, 2015; Lentin, 2014) makes culture into nature or at least fully blurs the lines between them. Both threatened and protective (Muehlebach and Shoshan, 2012), national and European cultural heritage is exalted and cultivated as a solid 'bulwark against globalisation's compound insecurities' (Gilroy, 2009: 2).

Europe's postcolonial identity crisis reverberates with raging battles over history, memory, and heritage. What Paul Gilroy (2004, 2009) calls 'postcolonial melancholia' is deeply entangled with this new racism. Building on Freud, Gilroy explains postcolonial melancholia as 'Britain's unresolved relationship to its imperial history' (2009: 2) and the disavowed fact of decolonization. We can apply his ideas to other European contexts. This stubborn disavowal of decolonization generates 'an erotically charged, narcissistic combination of victimage and victory' (3) – on the one hand, a longing for the 'grandeur' of empire in days perceived to be of decline, and on the other, an animosity towards those 'invaders' that the very history of colonialism has made into the natives' neighbours. ('We are here because you were there', as Stuart Hall used to say.)

Cultural racism, then, can be seen as a product of colonialism's 'tenacious durabilities'. The latter is a concept Ann Laura Stoler (2016) offers to think through the persistence of the colonial past in the present, including the 'rot' and 'ruination' it produces (2008). In fact, a growing body of literature in postcolonial and race studies – by scholars such as Paul Gilroy, Achille Mbembe, David Scott, Gloria Wekker, Saidiya Hartman, David Theo Goldberg, Alana Lentin, and Ghassan Hage – has begun to examine how a past that appears long gone, namely, colonialism and its racial taxonomies, endures and lives on in the current European 'racial crisis' (De Genova, 2018). These scholars have begun to unravel what one of our reviewers, Astrid Erll, has called 'the power of the implicit cultural memory' embedded in European societies, institutions, vocabularies, and habitus – a suppressed, unspoken, unconscious repository of memory of colonialism or 'cultural archive' (Wekker, 2016). This is also a problem of memory; however, memory studies has never really considered the persistence of race and racism.

The figure of the Muslim has emerged in populist discourses to play a similar role as historically the figure of the Jew (which populists also still deploy today), and Islamophobia has been added to antisemitism (Goldberg, 2006; De Genova, 2018). The paradox is that antisemitism often coexists in populist discourse with support for Israel and its oppression of Palestinians, whom populists tend to view collectively as Muslim terrorists. But there is a further paradox. Populists construct Islam through lack and backwardness, aligning it with radical non-Europeanness (Said, 2003). In so doing, they rearticulate Europeanness as 'racial formation of postcolonial whiteness' (De Genova, 2016: 90). They also mobilize a distinctive discourse of liberal values to prop up

their exclusionary form of identity politics (Müller, 2016), rallying women, feminists, LGBTI people, and others in the name of a constructed fear of an oppressive Islam ostensibly challenging the liberal way of life.

Such othering and dehumanization allows European citizens to be racist – and to mobilize Third Reich language against Muslims, like Fallaci does – despite years of politics of regret and a culture of public commemoration of the Holocaust that promises not to let genocide and mass murder based on race happen again and to build an antiracist culture of respect for human rights. How is it possible today, after the politics of regret, that Black and Muslim refugees continue to drown in mass numbers in the Mediterranean without Europeans seeing how this is also racialized mass murder? For some critics, a now ritualized public memory of the Holocaust deprived of its original emancipatory potential (Traverso, 2019, e.g., loc. 946) actually works in reverse as a 'screen memory' (Rothberg, 2009) because racism in Europe is discursively connected exclusively to the Nazis and, as such, seen as long past (Goldberg, 2006; De Genova, 2018).

The power of social media and digital populism

The rise in popularity of extremist populist political movements goes hand in hand with the intensification of social media in politics (see esp. Proglio; van den Hemel, this volume). The social media following for many of these parties dwarfs formal membership, consisting of tens of thousands of sympathizers and supporters. This mix of online and offline political activity is the way millions of people, especially young people, relate to politics in the twenty-first century (Bartlett, Birdwell, and Littler, 2011). The changing role of the media, especially social media, has certainly emancipated citizens and enhanced their political participation while demystifying political parties and political office more broadly. More and more people believe that they have a good understanding of what politicians do, and think that they can do better (Mudde, 2004: 556). Almost all populist parties and movements make massive use of social media to communicate their messages to large segments of society, who no longer seem to rely on the mainstream media. Beppe Grillo, the founder of the Five Star Movement in Italy, is a good example of a party leader managing to mobilize millions of people via Twitter, Facebook, and his personal blog (beppegrillo.it) (Moffitt, 2016: 88), as is Lega's Matteo Salvini (Proglio, this volume). Dutch politician Geert Wilders (@geertwilderspvv) is also very successful in exploiting the Internet to mobilize masses by posting Islamophobic messages. Digital populism has become a spectre roaming around Europe for all mainstream political parties.

Social media, as populists' preferred medium, also shapes their message, brevity and fragmentation arguably fostering ideological incoherence and allowing populist politicians to dispense with an articulated ideology and set of policies to respond to political challenges. Moreover, social media facilitates and magnifies

the affective and psychic dimension of politics – socialized emotions and attachments, fears, and fantasies (Ahmed, 2004). It creates powerful 'affective publics' (van den Hemel, this volume). If fear is 'both a response to, and a disavowal of, the impossibility of self-sovereignty' (Fst, 2010: 159; see also Wodak, 2015), it is also an affect that populists effectively cultivate via social media.

Outline of the book

This volume examines the memory and heritage politics of a variety of different right-wing populisms that deeply affect European and non-European lives, including in countries that are outside of the EU (Turkey) and outside of what is considered geographical Europe (Israel). The focus on Europe originates in the EU-funded project on European memory, heritage, and identity this volume sprang from. Yet, this is a global phenomenon (think of Donald Trump in the US, Vladimir Putin in Russia, Narendra Modi in India, and Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil) that has taken up a distinctive European morphology, bringing together fascist elements with (a modicum of) liberal values (see especially the French National Front and the Dutch Party for Freedom; Brubaker, 2017). Before Erdoğan's authoritarian turn in the aftermath of the Syrian crisis and the failed 2016 coup against him, Turkey's JDP did display a comparable mix of liberal and illiberal values.

This volume's strength lies in its interdisciplinarity, bringing together scholars from political science, sociology, political geography, anthropology, memory, heritage and museum studies, postcolonial studies, and cultural studies. Arguably, the cultural dimension of populism and the key role of heritage and memory in it has slipped through the cracks between the humanities (which usually do not deal with political phenomena like populism) and the social sciences (which usually do not deal with culture and memory, with the exception of anthropology). This volume aims to bridge this divide. Although some chapters focus on a specific country and its specific discourse of the past mobilized by local populists, all include a transnational dimension by pointing at multiple connections criss-crossing national boundaries.

While we focus on 'Europe', we do not understand it as a bounded geographical and cultural entity the way populists do. Instead, we conceptualize 'Europe' as a floating signifier whose signification is always already contested, the name of a battle for hegemony over its contours. We initially planned to include contributions on the US and more Mediterranean countries, but unfortunately the scholars we had invited to write these chapters could not complete them because of unforeseen circumstances. We regret we do not have a US comparison, especially in light of the massive global impact of its brand of far-right populism now in power with Donald Trump as well as questions of Confederate/slavery memory and racism/antiracism in the present (Black Lives Matter) on the other side of the Atlantic. But we are confident that the chapters as a whole do shed important light on these issues.

A number of common themes run through the volume. Emotions and affect figure prominently, showing how populism's capacity to harness, cultivate, channel, and augment post-crisis societies' deep resentments unfolds in different contexts. Several chapters (e.g. those by De Cesari, Bosilkov, and Piacentini; Kirn; Lähdesmäki; and van den Hemel) address the question of European memory and heritage by exploring how this discourse, which EU institutions promote as the ground for more inclusive, open identities, is appropriated by populists in the service of exclusionary agendas. Other chapters examine historical revisionism and recent dramatic shifts in public memory and heritage politics in Turkey, Israel, Germany, Poland, and Slovenia, where regret is transformed in surprisingly paradoxical ways (see Bozoğlu; Dayan; Eckersley; Kaya and Tecmen; Karolewski; Kirn). Another common thread is the entanglement of racism, xenophobia, and colonial forgetting – that is, the unmourned and unresolved legacy of European colonialism (Balkenhol and Modest; Bialasiewicz and Sariaslan; Proglio; also De Cesari, Bosilkov, and Piacentini). Some of our authors track these processes in the broader public sphere (e.g. De Cesari, Bosilkov, and Piacentini; Karolewski; Kaya and Tecmen; Lähdesmäki; Proglio). Others look specifically at how they play out within museums and cultural institutions, and at how institutional debates spill over into other spaces (Balkenhol and Modest; Bialasiewicz and Sariaslan; Bozoğlu; Eckersley). The ambivalence of populist memory, its simultaneous hegemonic and counterhegemonic dimensions, is also an important theme (Dayan; Eckersley; Kaya and Tecmen), as is the complex relationship between antisemitism and Islamophobia (van den Hemel; Dayan).

Based on the extensive fieldwork and eighty in-depth, semi-structured interviews of right-wing populist parties' supporters in Greece, Italy, France, Germany, and the Netherlands conducted by Ayhan Kaya's CoHERE team in the spring of 2017, chapter 1 explores the paradox of right-wing Eurosceptics believing in a common European heritage. Although European right-wing populist parties have been vocal in their opposition to the European Union, they have also often invoked a notion of 'European heritage' to legitimize their anti-immigrant positions and to discriminate against migrants and minorities based on alleged irreconcilable civilizational differences between European values and Islam. Authors Chiara De Cesari, Ivo Bosilkov, and Arianna Piacentini investigate the diffusion of this 'cultural racism' from the party elites to their supporters, detailing how while populists locate European heritage in Greek, Roman, and Christian traditions, this does not translate into a belief in a common European culture. Ultimately, it is the cultural construction of an existential civilizational threat coming from multiculturalism and a perceived 'Islamization' of Europe – and the erasure of the colonial legacy – that feeds into populist narratives of a common European heritage. Chapter 1 concludes by pointing at the 'perverse confluences' between populist and EU narratives of European heritage (cf. Clarke et al., 2014: 175).

Following the first survey chapter, Gal Kirn focuses on a country, Slovenia, which tends to be seen as peripheral to the EU but reveals something key

to EU memory politics and historical revisionism. Kirn analyzes two major postsocialist Slovenian memorial monuments: Ljubljana's Monument to the Victims of All Wars, which illustrates the dominant postsocialist ideology of national reconciliation by equating local fascists and partisan antifascists as victims of World War II, and the Home Guard memorial in Grahovo, which demonstrates how the national reconciliation process has led to the rehabilitation of (local) fascism and facilitated pro-fascist monuments in recent years. Chapter 2 also shows how ideas once thought to be gone – namely, historian Ernst Nolte's revisionism relativizing Nazism in the context of the famous 1980s German Historians' Debate – have recently turned into a key memory paradigm not only in Eastern Europe but also in Brussels thanks to the EU's adoption of the anti-totalitarian narrative equating fascism and communism.

Chapter 3 examines heritage politics in a site of contested Europeanness – Turkey – by analyzing the kind of historical revisionism implemented by the conservative Islamist Justice and Development Party (JDP) in power since 2002. Ayhan Kaya and Ayşe Tecmen discuss how the JDP has used the past and how this use is perceived by an educated group of party supporters. To challenge the common belief that the JDP's electorate is rather homogenous, Kaya and Tecmen interviewed a more cosmopolitan and educated group of JDP supporters. They offer a discourse analysis of the party's official texts and of speeches by party leaders and government officials. Kaya and Tecmen show how the JDP has relied heavily on neo-Ottomanism and Islam to appeal to its supporters. They argue that the JDP has selectively revived the Ottoman past. Kaya and Tecmen conclude that the JDP's Ottoman-Islamist heritage differs from the secular heritage promoted by the republican Kemalist party dominant in Turkish politics before the JDP. The Kemalist modernization project was defined as equal to Europeanization, secularization, and universalization. In this regard, the Kemalist project is shaped by future-oriented projects of internationalization, technological advancement, urbanization, and secularization. The JDP's alternative modernist projection instead highlights tradition-oriented concepts like re-Islamization, renationalization, de-Europeanization, and a deep-rooted scepticism towards progress, science, and technology.

In chapter 4, Gönül Bozoğlu analyzes how the JDP's neo-Ottomanism informs museum displays. She focuses on the celebrative representation of the 1453 Ottoman conquest of Constantinople, then the capital of the Byzantine Empire, in Turkish museums and memory culture. Bozoğlu argues that Turkey's JDP has placed a combination of Islam and neo-Ottomanism at the heart of mythopractice and public historiography. Based on fieldwork conducted in Istanbul's spectacular Panorama 1453 Museum, a centrepiece of the ruling party's discourse of the past that opened in 2009, her analysis focuses on visitors' experience and responses to this government-authorized heritage that appeals to multiple senses and arouses strong emotions. She shows how the JDP invests in a nostalgic populism aiming to recover a glorious Turkish past that is depicted as having been stolen by the JDP's political foes and secular

predecessors in government, in the context of a deepening societal and political polarization in the country.

Gabriele Proglio's is the first of two chapters devoted to memory and heritage politics in Italy, where the 2018 elections brought to power a new government dominated by right-wing, anti-immigrant populists. Chapter 5 discusses the contemporary production of narratives about migrants' arrival in Italy via the dangerous Mediterranean route, with a particular focus on the discourse and tweets of Matteo Salvini, deputy prime minister of Italy and minister of the interior, who belongs to the xenophobic League. Through a discourse analysis of newspaper articles, photographs, TV footage, and movies, Proglio scrutinizes the role of cultural memory and the public narration of contemporary events by linking a failed engagement with the colonial archive(s) with populist narratives of Europe's postcolonial condition. Mobilizing psychoanalytic theory to interpret the double space of 'discursivity' empowering populist narratives and repressing migrant subjectivities, Proglio concludes that European societies' ongoing fears, anxieties, and phobias cannot be understood without reference to the unresolved legacy of colonialism.

In chapter 6, Luiza Bialasiewicz and Lora Sariaslan examine these same fears and anxieties through the powerful lens offered by a historical engagement with the circulation of an item of material culture, 'oriental' carpets. They highlight two recent artistic interventions in public space that used 'oriental' objects such as carpets to draw attention to Europe's long histories of engagement with the 'East' but that, counter to the artists' intentions, provoked rather anti-Islamic resentment among the local audiences in Venice and Modica, Sicily. Bialasiewicz and Sariaslan illustrate how oriental carpets, long perceived in Europe as aesthetic objects and signs of conspicuous consumption, have now turned into fearful objects whose presence is resented as 'out of place' in European cities. Tracing oriental carpets' re-signification from markers of status to objects to be feared (as prayer rugs associated with Islam), they highlight how carpets have been both 'Islamicized' and made into the sites of a (geo)politics of fear, feeding into both wider nostalgic re-evocations of European cultural purity as well as the securitization of 'anything Islamic'.

In chapter 7, Ernst van den Hemel analyzes the distinct civilizational narrative mobilized on social media by right-wing populists with a particular focus on the Dutch Freedom Party (PVV). Based on social media analysis techniques, Hemel critiques dominant approaches to 'populism as a style' because populist heritage is also a matter of content and heavily polarized pasts. He shows how the form of the message – the brevity of tweets – shapes content and how this strongly appeals to receivers' emotions. The heritage mobilized by Dutch right-wing populists on social media is a Judeo-Christian one, despite a seeming contradiction between this notion and the fascist roots of these political forces. The social media posts analyzed by Hemel highlight how PVV politicians exploit a 'Judeo-Christian-humanist tradition' to appeal to their followers

by way of a narrative of civilizational-cultural-religious heritage and a prejudiced understanding of an alleged Islamic, 'non-European' way of life.

Concluding this set of essays on the Netherlands, Markus Balkenhol and Wayne Modest come back to one of the core issues of the volume: the link between colonial forgetting and racism and xenophobia. Chapter 8 focuses on colonial museum collections in the Netherlands (especially the National Museum of World Cultures, the Tropenmuseum, and the Afrika Museum) and the public discourse and debates surrounding them today. The authors question how Dutch right-wing populists have called for severe budget cuts to the arts sector. Yet the same populists continue to invest in institutions such as the Tropenmuseum as legacies of colonial grandeur. Populist colonial nostalgia clashes with museum institutions as well as proliferating decolonial initiatives by postcolonial citizens. Within the sometimes conflicting processes of memorializing the colonial past in museums, the authors situate museums at the heart of a broader debate in Dutch society around the 'afterlives of colonialism'. By looking at museums as contested sites and as forums for public debate, the authors offer insight into the entanglement of race and neoliberal policies in the making of cultural heritage.

In chapter 9, Tuuli Lähdesmäki explores how the idea of a common European history, heritage, and culture is used by right-wing populist parties to justify their xenophobic, anti-immigration, anti-globalization, and monoculturalist political attitudes. Lähdesmäki analyzes the political rhetoric of the right-wing populist Finns Party in Finland. Lähdesmäki carries out a discourse analysis of selected articles published in the party newspaper between 2004 and 2017 to flesh out how the party leadership has instrumentalized topics such as the EU, the idea of Europe, and a common European history, heritage, and culture to consolidate its appeal. Lähdesmäki's analysis demonstrates that the party newspaper depicts Europe as a cultural and value-based community sharing a common Christian heritage, as well as shared traditions and moral norms, particularly when a threat is experienced as coming from outside Europe's imagined geographical or cultural borders. For Lähdesmäki, appeals to a common European history, heritage, and culture function as rhetorical tools through which 'others' can be talked about with a vocabulary concealing prejudice and discrimination.

Chapter 10 explores contested processes of memorialization and heritage making in a key site of German heritage: Dresden. Susannah Eckersley details how right-wing and left-wing groups adopt contrasting narratives of the past when commemorating the devastating bombing of the city at the end of World War II. Drawing on interviews, participant observation, and museum display analysis in Dresden, Eckersley shows how left-wing groups tell a history of 'perpetrators' and 'shame and pity' whereas right-wing groups mobilize a narrative of 'victims' and 'fear'. She then examines the two different narratives along two axes: the *axis of appropriation* and the *axis of appropriateness*. The former refers to how both groups repurpose contemporary political issues such as

migration, while the latter foregrounds the contrasting practices of commemoration, protest, and representations of the past discursively constructed as either 'emotional' or 'rational'. More broadly, this chapter sheds light on the ongoing contestations surrounding the unfinished process of coming to terms with the murderous World War II past in a polarized Germany.

Ireneusz Paweł Karolewski explores what he calls 'memory games' in post-communist Poland vis-à-vis the country's authoritarian communist past and how transitional justice can be instrumentalized by right-wing populists. Chapter 11 links a memory politics of lustration and de-communization with the rise of the right-wing populist party, the Law and Justice Party (PiS), in power since October 2015. Karolewski discusses how transitional justice in Poland has been accompanied by a reframing of public memory around themes of guilt, suffering, and righteousness during communism. Finally, he zooms in on the Institute of National Remembrance, which has been instrumentalized by the ruling party to stage memory games for the consolidation of its legitimacy.

Hilla Dayan explores the fundamental ambivalence of populist memory, focusing on the power of memory politics in binding Mizrahi Jews originating from the Middle East to the ruling right-wing populist forces in Israel. For Dayan, Zionism is a European, Ashkenazi project that has historically excluded Mizrahi Jews. Chapter 12 details the complexity of the current surge of Mizrahi memory in the Israeli public sphere and the ongoing interest in retelling the history of the Mizrahis' 1950s arrival in Israel beyond the older Eurocentric Zionist narrative privileging the Ashkenazi experience. This return to the past amounts to a colonization of the political centre by Mizrahi Jews. Dayan interprets the surge of Mizrahi memory as a hegemonic struggle to redefine 'the people' unfolding in the context of right-wing populist appropriations of the Mizrahi agenda. As an apt conclusion to the volume, this chapter foregrounds, on the one hand, the democratizing, emancipatory elements of populist memory (the inclusion of long-suppressed narratives and groups in the national story) and, on the other, its opposite impact in channeling counter-hegemonic Mizrahi cultural production to prop up the legitimacy of the right-wing Israeli establishment against Palestinians who remain fully excluded and oppressed.

Finally, our commentators Ruth Wodak and Astrid Erll reflect on the volume as a whole while opening up new questions for future research. Concentrating on the role of media, Wodak emphasizes how populist memory narratives recontextualize and redefine national and European identities, including some and excluding many others who are in Europe but assumed to be not of it (Balibar, 2004). Erll powerfully argues for a memory politics for the future able to support energizing, empowering narratives of Europe's constitutional diversity and the necessarily transnational, transcultural quality of memory and identity. All the essays combined offer valuable tools for dissecting proliferating populist narratives of homogeneous people-cultures and monolithic histories imbued with colonial nostalgia and racism and for stimulating alternative ones instead opening up to more humane futures.

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Chapter 1

(Why) do Eurosceptics believe in a common European heritage?

Chiara De Cesari, Ivo Bosilkov, and Arianna Piacentini

This chapter reflects on the paradox of Eurosceptic populists critical of the European Union mobilizing ideas of European values, heritage, and civilization. We examine the role of the past and especially of a certain understanding of 'European heritage' in far-right-wing populist, nationalist discourse in Europe today. We also interrogate the 'perverse confluences' (cf. Clarke et al., 2014: 15) of such populist ideas with allegedly inclusive notions of European heritage promoted by EU institutions. For many right-wing populists, Europe is comprised of diverse cultural nations and regions that unite in a moral 'communion of shared values' (Thran and Boehnke, 2015: 192) that are grounded in a shared civilizational heritage. This brand of Europeanism coexists with a strong sense of national identity and even a militant nationalism. The best example is Pegida (Patriotic Europeans against the Islamisation of the West), a German nationalist, anti-Islam, and anti-migrant right-wing movement that has informed populist attitudes across Europe and now has chapters in several other countries, including the UK and the Netherlands. Amidst fluttering Dutch flags, a banner at a recent Pegida demonstration in the Netherlands reciting 'Islamization=EUthanasia' (*Islamisering=EUthanasie*) shows that populists view an alleged ongoing 'Islamization' as a deadly threat not only to national culture but also to Europe, which some of them hold dear.

Our argument is based on a qualitative data analysis of the responses given by approximately eighty populist parties' supporters across Europe. Ayhan Kaya and Ayşe Tecmen's CoHERE team interviewed them between 15 March and 30 May 2017 in France, Germany, Greece, Italy, and the Netherlands. What do these people think of 'European culture' and a 'European heritage', and how do such understandings relate to their belief in national culture? We asked Kaya and Tecmen to include these two questions among the ones they administered. Populist supporters' answers illuminate how a discourse of civilizational European heritage coexists in varying degrees of tension with populism's emphasis on the centrality of the nation.

In the tradition of Ruth Wodak (2015), we define right-wing populism as a political discourse rather than a fully fledged, articulated ideology: a loosely connected set of ideas, attitudes, and socialized and politicized emotions.

Populist discourse fundamentally relies on a sharp us/them divide and on a distinctive understanding of 'the people' as non-immigrant, white, and disenfranchised (Wodak, 2015; see also Mouffe, 2005). 'The people' are discursively pitted against an enemy 'other'. Antagonistic towards political elites, populists however scapegoat migrants and minorities for rising inequalities and poverty, thus substituting a class enemy with a cultural, racialized one. Such others are imagined as hard, if not impossible, to assimilate, and are therefore regarded as a threat to what populists view as the indispensable foundation of a political community: a primordial, essentialized national culture.

By excluding migrants and minorities from both national and European collectives on the ground of their alleged cultural incommensurability, right-wing populist discourse mobilizes what social scientists since the late 1980s have called 'new racism' or 'cultural racism' (Balibar, 1991). With older, biologically based racial hierarchies being discredited due to their association with Nazism, a new form of racism in disguise has emerged that emphasizes the incompatibility of heritages and values (Lentin and Titley, 2011; Lentin, 2014). This racism is 'concealed inside apparently innocent language about culture' (Barker, 1981: 3; Stolcke, 1995). In the late 1990s, Verena Stolcke observed in Europe

> the resurgence of the old demon of racism in a new guise. [There is] a perceptible shift in the rhetoric of exclusion. . . . From what were once assertions of the differing endowment of human races, there has risen since the seventies a rhetoric of inclusion and exclusion that emphasizes the distinctiveness of cultural identity, traditions, and heritage among groups and assumes the closure of culture by territory.
>
> (1999: 25)

Nation, identity, culture, heritage, and territory are conflated and made isomorphic in populist discourse: people are 'fixed in place' by their cultural belonging and heritage. Through cultural racism, ideological constructs of heritage and memory, rendered immutable and natural, are mobilized to shape new racialized understandings of 'the people'.

Populists do not believe in the hard-and-fast existence of national cultures and heritages only. Even nationalist political forces may legitimize themselves by donning the mantle of European heritage – often talked about as European civilization. According to Roger Brubaker (2017: 1193), the national populisms of Northern and Western Europe, including those of France and the Netherlands, mobilize a discourse of 'civilizationism' that constructs the 'opposition between self and other not in narrowly national but in broader civilizational terms'. In this discourse, Islam and the figure of the Muslim are placed in the position of the other. Such deep preoccupation with an alleged Islamic civilization threat ('Islamization' is the code word for stoking fears of Europe's disappearance) drives a paradoxical stance: the combination of 'identitarian Christianism' with a fervent defence of secularism and liberal values such

as gender equality, gay rights, and freedom of speech – which coexist with the traditional social conservatism and illiberal authoritarianism of the far right.

The most successful among the European right-wing populist parties have combined a rhetoric of citizens' resentment towards elites for the financial crisis and ensuing austerity, with accusations of a cultural decline, enabled – so they believe – by overly liberal immigration policies. Parties like the National Rally in France, the Party for Freedom in the Netherlands, and Alternative for Germany have drawn on racist sentiment to assert that Islam is incompatible with European values and traditions and, by extension, that multiculturalism (which they associate with the EU) is unsustainable. Despite their nationalist ideology, however, by establishing Muslims as the universal out-group, these parties implicitly unify the people of Europe by defining non-Muslim Europeans as a community rooted not in political loyalty towards the EU but rather in their common heritage. Our analysis of the CoHERE populism interviews reveals the existence of a sense of shared European heritage – even if vague and implicit – among many populist supporters alongside their deep attachment to national cultures.

These in-person interviews were conducted in the native language of the respondents. Selected via snowball sampling, female and male populist parties' supporters aged eighteen to sixty-five were interviewed. Supporters belonged to the National Rally (then known as the National Front, NF) in France, Alternative for Germany (AfD) in Germany, Golden Dawn (GD) in Greece, the Five Star Movement (M5S) in Italy, and the Party for Freedom (PVV) in the Netherlands. We captured populist voters' attitudes towards European culture/civilization and European memory/heritage by inviting open-ended answers.

Answers were subsequently analyzed using the classic qualitative method of grounded theory (Glaser, 1978) in a three-stage process. In the first stage, we inductively constructed analytical codes and abstract categories extracted from the data. Applying narrative identity theory (Scalise, 2015), we avoided ambiguous categories like 'pride', 'attachment', and 'loyalty' as well as 'scaling' perceived degrees of belonging to Europe, and paid attention instead to emic categorization and the distinction between meanings attributed to Europe and meanings attributed to the EU. In the second stage, we built on quantitative research on European cultural identity (Mitchell, 2014; Schilde, 2014; Westle and Segatti, 2016) to perform theoretical sampling and refine the categories obtained in the first stage. In the third stage, we integrated these categories into a theoretical framework (Charmaz, 2006).

Overall, despite confounding the EU, Europe, and European heritage, interviewees tend to contrast a negatively connoted EU as economically disadvantaging for the nation-state and the working classes with a positively connoted idea of European heritage combining ancient Greek and Roman history with Christianity and the Enlightenment. World War II is frequently mentioned as a key shared experience within an often broadly and vaguely understood

'European history'. Unlike in Brubaker's sample, it is especially the French and German interviewees in our sample who uphold a sense of a common European heritage. This is not so much the case among Dutch populist supporters, but it is possible that the timing of the CoHERE interviews, which took place immediately after a heated 2017 electoral campaign dominated by public debate on 'Dutch norms and values', may have influenced interviewees' responses. The Southern European populists in the CoHERE sample support political formations that are very different from the Northern European ones, and very different among themselves. While far-right parties throughout Europe have changed or at least rebranded themselves by donning some kind of liberal mantle, Greece's ultranationalist Golden Dawn is neo-fascist and explicitly draws on Nazi symbols and references. Its leader proudly identifies as a racist (Halikiopoulou and Vasilopoulou, 2016). Among the CoHERE Greek interviewees, negative feelings about Europe abound but cannot be interpreted as a repudiation of European heritage. Rather, these feelings are connected to interviewees' perception of being forcibly excluded by the EU (and more powerful European nations) from a European civilization Greece itself originally birthed. The CoHERE Italian interviewees supporting the Five Star Movement (which, despite claiming to be non-ideological, has embraced the anti-immigrant positions of its coalition partner in government, the far-right Northern League) also remarked that European countries share the same history.[1]

Across the sample, there are frequent references to Christianity, and sometimes a Judeo-Christian civilization, as the shared European heritage. At times this heritage is qualified as European, at times as broadly Western (which includes the US). Overall, while a notion that a common European heritage, and especially a common European history, is widely shared, its translation into a common cultural identity is not at all straightforward. Populists' cultural racism, in other words, does not solidify into the idea of a common European culture and identity.

Populist parties' vision of Europe as a tight bond of European nations

When asked about their ideas of European heritage, many interviewees, especially in France and Germany, espoused positions similar to those aired during the much-mediatized congress of European far-right populists in Koblenz on 21 January 2017, the day after Donald Trump's inauguration in the US. The congress envisioned a 'new Europe' to be remade by populists. In her speech, Marine Le Pen set out the vision of a 'Renaissance of Europe' propelled by resurging European cultures and a 'diversity' of strong nationalisms living in freedom and harmony with each other (Engelhart, 2017). Thibaud Gibelin, NF parliamentary aide and spokesperson, told a *New Yorker* journalist during the congress that Europeans clearly share a cultural heritage: 'We have our

Roman roots, our language, our culture; the cathedrals you see, whether in Cologne or Paris, that are gothic, that's transnational; the Renaissance was a European phenomenon; and the great religious moments that marked Europe, the spread of Christianity, the Reformation, those were never isolated to one nation' (Zerofsky, 2017). This is a list of the historical periods, processes, and movements that are broadly seen as the pillars of European heritage also by many non-populists, including EU institutions (e.g. Shore, 2006; Delanty, 2009). The Enlightenment is placed at the top of this list as the pinnacle of European civilization and source of the idea of freedom this populist congress explicitly celebrated.

The meanings that such parties attach to Europeanness is most often implicit and relational: Europe and European heritage are pitted against both the EU and migrants/Islam – these latter two are often brought together. In AfD's programme, for example, beyond the standard opposition to the EU and the euro, Europe is mentioned only briefly, and in the section about asylum policy, which argues that 'the future of Germany and Europe must be secured in the long term. . . . Migratory movements from Africa to Europe can destabilize the continent in a few years' time' (Zuwanderung and Asyl, 2018). On the party's website, statements by prominent AfD members explain why migration is a threat to Europe and its heritage. The party's deputy, Beatrix von Storch, claims that 'European *Leitkultur* [lead culture] stands on the basis of common value canons: the three hills Golgota, Acropolis and Capitol, which are the foundation of occidental culture and which Islam is incompatible with'. But for von Storch it is not only Islam that stands against a European 'lead culture'. 'Brussels' central state is ahistorical and uneuropean [*sic*], going against the motto of unity in diversity' (Alternative für Deutschland, 2018). Here, von Storch seizes on this key EU principle and the idea of Europe by turning it against itself while implying that right-wing populists are its most genuine adherents.

The Rassemblement National (National Rally, NR), led by Marine Le Pen, refers to Europe in the first paragraph of its program for the 2017 presidential elections, but this reference is used to promote Euroscepticism or criticism of the EU and European integration. The NR's first priority is to return national sovereignty to France as the country becomes part of a 'respectful Europe' and a 'Europe of independent nations' (Engagements présidentiels Marine, 2017). While equally hostile to Islam and migrants as the AfD, the NR claims to defend French (rather than European) culture and civilization, as stated in article 91 of the electoral programme. As for the Dutch PVV, its leader, Geert Wilders, has asserted that there is 'no single European identity', reaffirming his party's absence of a clear programmatic position on the issue. Nevertheless, in several speeches, Wilders has echoed AfD's von Storch by referring to a 'European civilization . . . based on the legacy of Jerusalem, Athens and Rome', and to Europe's problems of 'Islamization, terrorism and mass immigration' (Wilders, 2017). The PVV holds the populist view that the EU usurps European identity and imposes an artificial political community upon the true European patriots.

The Greek GD is a far-right fascist movement, its main objective being a Greek 'nationalist revolution'. In the 'Ideology' section of its official website, it calls for a 'Europe of nations', like other populists do, as such a Europe would be a 'political expression of ideological patriotism and nationalism at a pan-European level', based on an intergovernmental approach that preserves national character (Tassios, 2016).

Instead of foregrounding ethno-nationalism, the ideologically ambiguous and internally heterogenous Italian M5S prioritizes reforming the EU's economic policies and ending austerity. According to the party programme, the only way to tackle Europe's economic problems is by approaching them as sovereign and independent states in a multipolar world – a view that is consistent with other European populist parties. But the M5S also seeks to build an alliance of Southern European countries to 'prevent Italy from becoming the source of cheap manual labor for Northern European countries and their tourist fun park'. According to the programme, Europe is 'a geographic identity, whose values, history and peculiarities do not identify with the European Union and even less with the Euro' (Movimento 5 Stelle, 2018). To sum up this brief sketch, populist political programmes point to the emergence not of a common populist doctrine of European cultural identity but rather at an ensemble of shared ideas and attitudes – a sense of European heritage and values as superior to non-European ones, by which what is meant is often Islam – underpinning nationalist ideology.

What does a far-right European heritage look like?

When asked about the existence of a European culture, the CoHERE respondents gave negative answers. But this was not the case when respondents reflected on the existence of a common European history. In the interviews, there are mentions of the Greek, Roman, and Christian heritage of Europe to which both supporters and party manifestos refer, yet only a minority of respondents perceive those cultural and religious roots as a basis for a coherent and tangible European culture. As many respondents stress, even though these common roots and shared experience of historical events represent 'common points across Europe', eventually each nation developed and retains its own culture. But how do 'cultural' conceptions of Europe and ideas of a common civilizational pool vary across our interviewees?

Despite their pronounced ideological differences, interviewees from the European South share an idea of European heritage, yet one that they feel is betrayed by a (Northern) Europe that does not appreciate Greek/Italian contributions to it. Greek respondents in particular, and to an extent also the Italians, take credit for the values and principles the European Union was built upon – democracy and even civilization itself. However, there is a notable absence of a spillover from the narratives on heritage/memory to those on culture/civilization. A few Italian M5S supporters emphasize that the Roman Empire once tried to keep Europe united, while almost all Greek interviewees

proudly state Europe's Greek ancestry: 'When we were teaching them [other Europeans] civilization, they were living in caves'.[2] For many Golden Dawn supporters, what is now called 'European heritage' is actually the heritage of Greek civilization. As an interviewee points out, 'There is Greek memory and heritage in the European one, not the other way around' (Male, 57, lawyer, Argos). In this view, Greek civilization is the origin of European civilization, but Europe refuses to recognize its 'classical debt' (Hanink, 2017).

Different are the arguments put forward by the Northern interviewees – the Dutch, Germans, and French – who tend to distantiate themselves from Southern (and Eastern) Europeans, painting them as homogeneous blocks. Unlike in Brubaker's (2017) sample, populist supporters in the Netherlands appear to be the most averse to notions of European culture. The French express the greatest concern about its current deterioration, while the Germans position themselves between the two. While a number of Dutch respondents recognize the existence of 'common points' across European countries, they do not consider them to be defining elements of an overarching European culture and civilization. Instead, they emphasize the differences between European countries, drawing a clear line between 'us' and 'them'. 'There are too many differences between Southern Europeans and Northern Europeans, they are not the same. So we are more related to Germans, but I wouldn't like to compare myself with Polish or Romanian people' (Female, 54, housewife, Rotterdam). PVV supporters' statements about the non-existence of a European culture and heritage are tied to their strong perception of the persistence of *both* cultural and economic differences within Europe – they clearly distinguish between poorer and richer countries – but also to their negative opinions concerning the EU. As we elaborate in more detail in the next section, the tendency to 'culturalize' economic and political divides and processes, and the related idea of distinct cultural regions within Europe, play an important role in shaping narratives of European identity, which is especially important in the Dutch case. Italy and Greece are mentioned by Dutch respondents as 'economic problems' for the Netherlands and its citizens, depicting the EU as a malfunctioning organization using Dutch taxpayers' money to pay other countries' debts.[3]

By expressing concerns about European culture's deterioration due to immigration (without mentioning economic disparities), many French respondents indirectly endorse the idea of a common identity. The majority explicitly acknowledge the existence of a shared European heritage and historical memory grounded in common experiences and religious roots, which finally culminated in the EU's creation. This European heritage is imbued with colonial nostalgia for the past 'great empires'. Such is the narrative:

> Yes, there is a European culture. Christianity is one of the factors unifying Europe. There is a culture with Greek-Latin bases. The great empires, and the Christian civilization, are factors unifying the Europeans.
>
> (Male, 31, parliamentary assistant, Toulon)

However, only half of the sample agree on the actual existence of a European culture and civilization in the present. Instead, the other half claim that 'a European history does exist, but not a European culture' (Male, 50, unemployed, Romorantin-Lanthenay), because each country retains its own culture and traditions. This indicates a considerable level of convergence between the Dutch and French narratives, as respondents from both countries express contradictory meanings of common heritage and common culture, ultimately decoupling the two and minimizing their mutual influence. For most of the French interviewees, the perceived spread of Islam and Muslim communities in Europe facilitates a nation-centred narrative instead of a European one. The NF supporters stress the importance of preserving their state's *laïcité* or (alleged) neutrality towards religious beliefs to preserve French identity and culture. Nevertheless, a few French interviewees do see an 'Islamic threat' challenging the whole of Europe.

Among the AfD respondents, the sample is evenly split between those recognizing the existence of both a European culture and memory/heritage and those who, instead, believe that there is no European culture because countries are too dissimilar. Yet, the German respondents do also point out, like in the Dutch sample, that the German nation and culture are very similar to other Northern European nations. As in the French NR sample, the German respondents foreground the religious and historical roots of Europe. As a consequence, AfD supporters are very concerned, as are their NR counterparts, about the possible contamination and deterioration of European culture and values by migrants from culturally and religiously different countries:

> We have a European culture because we are all similar to each other. We are different from Italians or Greeks but at the end we, as people from Europe, are more similar compared to people from Arabic countries.
>
> . . . That wave of asylum seekers is a threat to our European heritage because they want 'Arabistan' here.
>
> (Female, 56, saleswoman, Dresden)

As one of our reviewers, Markus Balkenhol, pointed out (see also Barker, 1981), right-wing populist understandings of identity here come very close to tribal ones, particularly to how anthropologists have rendered identity dynamics and 'contextual ethnicity' in classic segmentary societies, like the Nuer of Sudan (Evans-Pritchard, 1940). The Nuer nation is divided into tribes and those into segments that have many of the characteristics of a tribe itself, like a distinctive name, a unique territory, and a common sentiment. For Evans-Pritchard, 'the members of any segment unite for war against adjacent segments of the same order and unite with these adjacent segments against larger sections'. In other words, segments or lineages form an in-group identity when they are at war with other neighbouring lineages, but the same lineages that were once opposed may unite against a tribe of a bigger order – in the name

of common ancestors. These tribes, in turn, can form a comprehensive tribal identity when faced with an external enemy, for instance the British or the neighbouring Dinka nation. The populists in the CoHERE sample and particularly the AfD supporters of the last quote deploy a similar logic: the 'German nation' is defined vis-à-vis the Italians, Greeks, and Poles. All of them can and in fact must unite – so the logic goes – in the face of an external, existential threat like Islam(ization), specifically those 'asylum seekers' who are said to aim to turn Europe into 'Arabistan'. This logic makes ethnic groups into entities simultaneously bounded and flexible, ascribed via primordialist bonds, territorial boundaries, and cultural traits, and yet shifting contextually, according to the specific scalar process at stake in any given moment.

Ethnic regionalism versus the EU

The idea of a Europe made up of different nations and cultural regions undergirded by shared values and a shared civilizational heritage is widely recognizable among our interviewees. Also common – if implicit – is the related notion that this European heritage is superior to others. A Le Pen supporter offers this narrative:

> Europe was renowned all over the world, and spreads everywhere its values of democracy, its values of freedom, its culture. . . . In my opinion, there is a European civilization, which is important, which is beautiful, which besides is diverse, really diverse. . . . When you are travelling in Europe, you see that it is diverse everywhere. There are the Eastern countries, which are the Slavic countries. There are the Northern countries. They are the Anglo-Saxons. . . . All the countries . . . Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands. . . . It's also different. And there are the Latin languages. . . . All these mixes are contributing to define Europe as a renowned civilization.
>
> (Male, 39, unemployed, Toulon)

This narrative foregrounds a number of key populist tropes – all shot through with contradictions. First, many interviewees refer to a common cultural foundation, mostly articulated as a common European heritage/history and a set of shared 'European values'. This common cultural foundation does not rule out national cultures. To the contrary, the nation's primacy is buttressed by European values that are the product of a shared history and heritage. Second, Europe is both one and diverse. Such diversity is equated with the different European nationalities but also with broad and vaguely defined European cultural regions, illustrated by the way the quote above slips from the national ('Belgium') to the regional ('Northern Europe'). Here, culture (European, regional, national) is both fixed and flexible – deep rooted, primordial ('Anglo-Saxon', 'Latin'), anchored in space, and mapped onto a distinctive territory

whose boundaries must however remain conveniently fuzzy for this European puzzle to (seemingly) make sense. Third, this narrative exudes a sense of European superiority tinged with a nostalgic longing for colonial 'grandeur' of which the present is only a pale, 'watered-down' imitation.

The fact of populist discourse articulating the idiom of 'diversity' reflects the institutional EU language of 'unity in diversity', which percolates through political discourses opposed to it. But the way in which this NR supporter and many others in our sample speak about cultural diversity resonates with the right-wing theory of ethno-pluralism or ethno-regionalism, which divides the world into ethnically and culturally homogeneous nations and regions and accuses migrants of 'messing up' this naturally harmonic order (Thran and Boehnke, 2015: 200).

An important influence for the NR and other far-right formations across Europe, the French New Right (*Nouvelle Droite*) since the late 1960s has been theorizing ethno-regionalism as an alternative to multiculturalism, based on a strong idea of 'cultural differentialism' and the rejection of the fact of lived multiculture in Europe. For the New Right, immigration corrupts and culturally destroys both the host and immigrant societies (Spektorowski, 2003). As the New Right manifesto declares, humanity is irreducibly diverse, made up of a variety of 'races, ethnic groups, languages, customs, even religions' and ultimately of different cultures, which alone provide the setting for human life to flourish: 'Man [*sic*] is rooted by nature in his culture' (de Benoist and Champetier, 2012: 28, 19). In the twenty-first century, the 'future belongs to large cultures and civilizations' (de Benoist and Champetier, 2012: 38), like the European and the North American ones, in a world in absolute need of 'clear and strong identities' (de Benoist and Champetier, 2012: 32). Grouped around the think tank GRECE (Research and Study Group for European Civilization), New Right intellectuals such as Alain de Benoist have theorized the rebirth of an old/new ethno-regional Europe united by a common cultural foundation. While New Right proponents loudly argue that their ideas are not racist because their differentialism is 'culturally' and not 'racially' based (Betz, 2003; see also de Benoist, 1999), their civilizational Europeanism and vision of a cultural Europe where alleged non-Europeans have no place smacks of a deeply racialized European superiority as well as also of ethnically cleansed, projected geographies.[4] (For de Benoist, 'the European race is not the absolute superior race. It is only the most apt to progress', quoted in Spektorowski, 2016: 126).

In our sample, cultural difference is always, if more or less explicitly, marked, its renderings sliding into cultural racism. Ideas of cultural hierarchies and moral taxonomies of cultures and heritages within and beyond Europe percolate through the CoHERE interviews. Some cultural regions do move in and out of Europe in interviewees' perceptions, depending on where they contingently draw Europe's borders, which is always a very context-dependent exercise. Europe is often equated with Western Europe or a Western Europe

plus (a 'core Europe' surrounded by a lesser European periphery or a fluid borderland of uncertain European status). These are some sound bites:

> When I say Europe I mean Western Europe, I cannot relate with people coming from Romania.
>
> (Female, 54, housewife, Rotterdam)

> European civilization and culture exist, and it's limited to some countries – Italy, Spain, England, Portugal, France, Germany. Maybe also Hungary and Poland.
>
> (Male, 54, executive in industry, Romorantin-Lanthenay)

> Europe expanded from six to twenty-eight countries. I agree to integrate countries, but poor countries such as Romania or Bulgaria is [*sic*] not good.
>
> (Male, 23, graphic designer, Romorantin-Lanthenay)

> With this blatant enlargement of the EU, taking countries such as Bulgaria, the whole idea of European culture has been watered down.
>
> (Male, 49, printer, Dresden)

Whatever they think about a cultural Europe notwithstanding, CoHERE interviewees have a negative opinion of the European Union. The EU is often described as a failure, a 'union of the bankers' (M5S), devoid of equality among its member states (GD), using money to pay other countries' debts (PVV), and causing nations' loss of sovereignty (NF). The Italian and Greek respondents stress the EU's inability and unwillingness to help its own member states cope with the economic and the refugee crises, as well as the 'disparities and Germany being the master of EU' – a 'cruel' union of unequally treated countries in which the richest countries' well-being is preserved at the expense of the suffering ones. Deep frustration with the EU institutions is dominant in the CoHERE interviews. Images of corruption abound. Dutch interviewees share negative feelings towards the EU, but they justify them by complaining that 'our money is used to pay their debts' – 'their' refers to Greece, Italy, and sometimes Portugal. The overwhelming impression is one of disappointment, frustration, and failed expectations about Europe – and the sense of a deep lack of solidarity, which is sought, instead, in the nation.

Corrosive multiculturalism: culture as nature

Rejection of immigration and multiculturalism is a standard feature of nearly all the interviews. NF supporters are not alone in their anxieties about an alleged 'Islamization'. Respondents from all five countries claim a loss of culture and heritage by way of a multiculturalism they strongly associate with failing EU policies. The Italian interviewees are the only relative exception

to this tendency, which can be explained by the M5S's ideological specificity and anomaly ('beyond Left and Right'). Yet, even in the M5S sample a number of interviewees oppose multiculturalism as a form of 'cultural contamination' provoking a loss of identity. The following is far from an uncommon idea:

> We [Europeans] have a legacy, and this from being positive has become negative because we are in an era of dislocation, multiculturalism. There are wars between cultures with a will to form one culture to take the other's place and make it disappear: I think of Islam, which wants to impose itself as the new European culture.
>
> (Male, 54, executive in industry, Romorantin-Lanthenay)

If people are rooted in their cultures, which are in turn anchored to specific territories, immigration and cultural mixing compromise this order and lead to 'wars between cultures' and a gloomy scenario of alternating cultural invasions and cultural extinctions. We see here a politics of fear that stokes anxieties about an Islamic invasion (Wodak, 2015; de Koning and Modest, 2017).

But the CoHERE interviews also display what Markha Valenta (2011) calls a 'politics of bad memories', erasing cultural change and exchange as well as migration and global connections from the history of Europe. For Valenta, this politics generates a public memory of shocking change whereby people with irreconcilable values and civilizational 'others' disrupt an imaginary stable sociality of rooted, homogeneous communities of mutuality. But 'this yearning for the old pre-immigrant Europe is a yearning for a Europe that never existed: a Europe disentangled and distinct from the rest of the world', for Europe was made through its 'extra-European' entanglements, at the very least from colonialism and imperialism onwards. As noted earlier, appealing to colonial nostalgia – what Paul Gilroy (2004) calls 'postcolonial melancholia' – is common in some populist discourse. Here it is reflected in the interviewees' responses when they refer to something that no longer exists, rather than to something that has never existed:

> This European culture is disappearing. It doesn't exist anymore; it's composed of national cultures opposing each other.
>
> (Male, 54, executive in industry, Romorantin-Lanthenay)

Culture and heritage here become human nature and are fixed in place. All the interviewed supporters emphasize a strong perception of essentialized cultural differences, understood not so much as biological but as fundamental and essentially unchangeable (and thus almost biologized) traits. National and regional cultures (often associated with religions) are facts of a person's life and radically different from each other. Muslims are not part of France or Europe because they are alien to French and European culture and history. The assumption is

one of a strict isomorphism nation/Europe-culture-territory that alone can guarantee social harmony. Fascist GD supporters make this point clear:

> The Homeland-Religion-Family ideal is falling apart, and I do not want it to collapse. I want the Greek to be a Greek.
>
> (Male, 39, cafe owner, Nafplio)

> Greece should accept immigrants, but under some conditions, with rules, like in the rest of Europe. It will not become Europe's dump. Greeks first and then others.
>
> (Male, 63, dentist, Agia Triada)

These statements are based on a menacing fantasy: the presence of non-Greeks and cultural 'others' on Greek soil endangers the particular 'homeland-religion-family' set-up that makes a Greek, a Greek (in Greece).[5] At the heart of nationalism is the idea of the primordial existence of the nation 'whose "peculiar character" is . . . constituted by cultural factors such as language or historical awareness' (Leerssen, 2006: 560). According to nationalist logic, a nation is a nation because of its distinctive culture and heritage (Handler, 1985). But the twin ideas of the primordial existence of the nation and of homogeneous national cultures rooted in place are an invention, a fiction, generated by a multitude of sites, institutions, discourses, and practices (Anderson, 1983; Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983). The very discipline dedicated to the study of culture, anthropology, has critiqued since at least the 1980s this notion of bounded, territorialized cultures and unchanging systems of beliefs, values, and practices (e.g. Gupta and Ferguson, 1997). Cultures and heritages are not neat locations on a map. Consequently, supporters easily slip between national and European sets of values and ways of life.

Several NF and AfD voters embrace their party's cues and express concern about European cultural decline. In many cases, the presence of Muslims and immigrants is identified as a national danger. Dutch respondents are highly critical of what some call a 'forced melting pot' imposed by the EU through its 'bad' policies and regulations. The Dutch interviewees come out as the most nationalist and xenophobic of all, declaring that many or even most refugees are only 'pretending to be refugees' to benefit from Dutch welfare. They stress the need to protect Dutch people and the Dutch nation, and they reject multiculturalism as a way to preserve 'the nation's cultural core'. The latter is a fiction that is supported by many non-populists as well. Significantly, the (liberal) Dutch prime minister, at the time of these interviews, had bragged about 'Dutch norms and values' during the electoral campaign in an open letter telling those who do not respect Dutch customs and criticize Dutch values to leave the country (Henley, 2017).

Like the Dutch respondents, the German populist supporters reject a multicultural Germany. But they specifically highlight the incompatibility of Muslim

and Christian religious traditions and social norms according to a logic that leads many of them to the conclusion that integration is impossible. For many French interviewees, immigrants' 'assimilation' into French society is better than multiculturalism and a much-demonized 'communitarisme', but it is essentially doomed to fail. A German AfD supporter goes back to the 'origins of Europe' to draw a lesson for the present about the dangers of muddling this order of discreet, territorialized cultures and heritages:

> With the ancient Rome, we had a European heritage. But you already know why the old Rome had fallen, right? Because all the politicians were corrupt and because everything was multicultural there. That is why you can see striking parallels to today, and if you do so, you should pay attention at all costs, right?
>
> (Male, 42, unemployed, Dresden)

Several French Le Pen supporters viewed things similarly. For one, mixing cultures is a 'bad cooking recipe' as it is 'absurd' to expect that doing so would produce something good;[6] for another, 'vivre-ensemble is a total illusion, a kind of stick, and they slap us with that from the morning to the night, and make us accept a situation which does not run and which had never run'.[7] Mixing does not work because cultures are unchangeable, with very deep roots in a specific territory and the past, and incommensurable with each other.

A heritage both religious and secular: Islam as the non-European

In Pegida's discourse, the signifier 'European' largely overlaps with 'Western', but it essentially refers to no more than 'non-Islamic'. In this logic, Europeans should unify against the threat of an Islamization which, if implemented, would mean the death of Europe and its values. Europe's common heritage is explicitly Christian, at times Judeo-Christian, as a German AfD supporter explained:

> The foundations for our European heritage were laid in ancient Athens and Jerusalem. We are Christian-Jewish and have our roots in the Roman Empire. Our roots also lie in scholasticism, for example, Thomas von Aquin. The Enlightenment is, of course, also crucial to the European heritage, just like the Reformation of the European-Western world. All in all, the civilising draft of a Western European civilisation began long before our time.
>
> (Female, 67, retired, Dresden)

This is a positive, celebratory narrative. The 'tripod' (ancient Greek democracy + Roman legal tradition + Christianity) that, per Vasilopoulou (2017), grounds the far right's civilizational definition of Europe, combines here with a

celebration of the source of liberal values (the Enlightenment) and colonial nostalgia. This complex statement, which resonates with other interviewees' narratives, encapsulates the crucial features of the populist idea of European heritage. Here, evoking a '(Western) European civilization', implicitly understood as superior to others, goes together with a form of 'postcolonial melancholia' (Gilroy, 2004) reminiscent of the 'civilizing mission' and the old colonial 'grandeur' – a discourse which of course erases the massive violence of colonialism and its enduring, pernicious effects in the present (Stoler, 2011, 2016). But colonialism is not the only murderous past of Europe that is erased from this narrative. So too is the Holocaust – what many well beyond the EU agree is the very foundation of a common European memory. Indeed, as Adorno and others have shown, celebrating 'the civilizing draft' of Western European civilization is only possible if one 'forgets' its barbarism (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1972).

Interviewees' narratives are rife with tensions and contradictions. First, these are supporters of parties with (not too distant) illiberal roots and even fascist histories of antisemitism, yet they champion liberal values and even forms of 'philo-Semitism' (Brubaker, 2017). Second, their emphasis on religion (primarily Christianity but also, here, Judaism) as the source of core European values clashes with their celebration of Europe's *laïcité* and Enlightenment secularism. These contradictions, however, serve an important ideological role in right-wing populist discourse: if a liberal philo-Semitism enables populists to protect themselves from defaming accusations of racism (which in Europe tends to be associated exclusively with the Nazi past), their embrace of secularism marks their distance from an Islam deemed irredeemably illiberal in the negative sense.

These contradictions begin to make sense if one considers them in light of right-wing populists' distorted perception of Islam. What strengthens the European bond in populists' eyes is what they identify as Europe's most dangerous enemy: Islam's radical otherness. A German AfD supporter underscores this: 'We have a European culture because we are all more similar to each other than for example to Arabs or Turks. . . . This wave of asylums is a threat to our European heritage'. This is a very good example of what David Theo Goldberg (2006) has called 'racial Europeanization' or the racial 'contouring' of Europeanness which today sees a 'shift in Europe's dominant fixation of concern and resentment from the figure of "the Black" (and prior to World War II that of "the Jew") to that of "the Muslim"' (349).

This is a reactionary mobilization of Europeanness – reactionary because it is a response to the perceived invasion of cultural 'aliens' that makes Europeans unify and rediscover or reinvent their commonalities. It is also a very good example of the essentialist notion of separate civilizational heritages as unchangeable sets of cultural traits, traditions, and values rooted in a deep-seated history, which undergirds much right-wing populist discourse as well as more widespread forms of cultural racism (Lentin and Titley, 2011). One of the

features of today's 'new racism' is precisely its own denial (e.g. Goldberg, 2015), the staunch refusal to admit the durability of institutions of the past in the present, of long-standing hierarchies of cultural worth and their differential impact on people's lives and very life chances (Stoler, 2016; Wekker, 2016). Many populists (and non-populists) today deny being racist but admit strong ideas of cultural difference and incommensurability. 'It's about culture, not race' is the argument. But for many, 'culture' is a code word for race as it has the power to solidify the fluid fact of cultural difference. Heritage plays a role in this dynamic, for it renders culture as deep rooted and thus immutable. A (political) community is its culture, its way of life, its traditions, its heritage. And the gist of the argument of this new racism is that immigrants and refugees, particularly Muslims, as cultural others and radically alien to both national and European heritage, threaten to destroy the homogeneity of such 'civilization'.

As our interview analysis demonstrates, populist right-wing forces uphold an essentialized notion of European heritage that tends to go overlooked in political science analyses. That a fiery nationalism and a focus on national traditions, norms, and values coexists with a sense of Europeanness and a shared European civilization in the discourse of the new populist right (itself remarkably transnational) is a paradox that deserves more scholarly attention. This broader sense of cultural identity resonates with Samuel Huntington's idea that the world is divided into different civilizations, marked by different cultures and religions, which clash with each other as the main source of today's conflict (Huntington, 1993) – ideas that have become tremendously influential well beyond scholarly circles after 9/11 and the war on terror. For Huntington, Western civilization includes the US and Canada but not the Balkans and Greece, which are part of the Orthodox world, and is engaged in a major conflict with the world of Islam. Unsurprisingly, our interviewees distinguish the 'Eastern' and 'Slavic' countries as a separate bloc and refer to a Christian (sometimes a Judeo-Christian) civilization as the shared heritage of Europe.

To sum up, our interviews show a number of tensions in populist supporters' notion of heritage, which emerges as an important category in people's personal and political lives. Heritage gives depth, roots, and continuity to today's cultures and identities. If 'Europe' is a Europe of nations (like the name of the populists' group at the European Parliament), right-wing populists espouse a sense of civilizational Europeanness and of European heritage, which is however fuzzily defined by its radical otherness from Islam – both secular (in the tradition of the Enlightenment) and Christian at the same time.

The problem(s) with European heritage

The populists in our sample mostly rule out the existence, let alone the desirability, of a European culture, yet many of them refer to a common European heritage. Their narratives articulate a form of civilizational Europeanism grounded in ideas of a shared civilizational pool and shared histories, which

translate into shared values. These are radically different, incommensurable with those of other civilizations, particularly with regards to religion. Populists deftly combine this belief in a shared cultural foundation with a strong sense of a diversity of discreet European cultures – national and sometimes regional. Northern European interviewees doubt whether Eastern and, at times, Southern Europe are truly part of European civilization. While even the Southern European interviewees in our sample feel forcibly excluded from it, for certain there is no space for non-Europeans, however defined. Despite being riddled with such tensions and contradictions (for instance, where are the borders of such civilizational Europe?), this brand of Europeanism exudes colonial nostalgia and a sense of European superiority; however, this is perceived as being currently under mortal attack by other civilizations.

Our findings show that embracing Europeanism does not at all rule out embracing vicious nationalism and forms of cultural fundamentalism and cultural racism. Even more troubling is the long shadow this populist European discourse casts on EU cultural policies themselves. These findings indicate that, despite multiple European crises, Europe is increasingly imagined as a diverse but essentially united cultural space, a bounded culture-based community, which is racialized in subtle ways and therefore excludes those who are 'in' Europe but not considered 'of' it (Balibar, 2004). EU policymakers as well as scholars working in EU-funded projects like CoHERE, who both study and produce European memory and heritage, are often unintentionally involved in the very processes of racialization that we criticize. While both policymakers and intellectuals like Derrida have long celebrated the progressive, inclusive, 'post-national' qualities of European memory and heritage, as opposed to national and nationalistic ones, 'actually existing' constructions of European heritage often depart substantially from such post-national visions. In fact (some) EU cultural policy indirectly reinstates asymmetric us/them distinctions that it was originally meant to supersede.

The populist Europeanism we have analyzed in this chapter points to key pitfalls of widely circulated constructions of European heritage. The first problem is the fiction of the closure of culture and heritage by territory and the naturalization of a normative isomorphism nation/Europe-culture-territory, which erases the reality of multiculture and turns cultural diversity into a matter of national differences. The EU's motto of 'unity in diversity' is often interpreted in this way. A good example is the inaugural exhibition *It's Our History!* of the first museum of Europe in Brussels, which centres on the video testimonies of contemporary European citizens narrating their own life stories. Chosen for their nationality (one individual with one testimony per EU member state), these Europeans are all white and do not show any sign of religious or other, non-national diversity.

The (lack of) diversity of this allegedly representative sample of Europeans then exposes the second major problem of these kinds of Europeanism – that

is, the lurking risk of constructing European heritage as Christian and, subtly, white. For Yildiz et al. (2016), 'the overtly racist outrages of neo-fascist/far-right populisms merely make explicit and blunt the delicate matter of the inextricability of *any* Europeanism from the propagation of "European"-ness as a formation of racial whiteness, even as it emphatically dissimulates race in favour of ostensibly "cultural" or "civilizational" constructions of difference' (see also de Genova, 2018). Contemporary dominant narratives of Europeanness tend to obscure the long, tentacular history of colonial domination and the ways in which these global entanglements have forged Europe's past and present. In so doing, they produce fictional reconstructions of European history as an 'insular and hermetically-sealed affair' (Yildiz et al., 2016), as illustrated by the new major Brussels museum of Europe, the European Parliament's House of European History, which devotes to colonialism only a small section of its nineteenth-century gallery. What do we do with this idea of 'European heritage' that is so ambiguous – both potentially open-ended, inclusive, even emancipatory and, on the opposite end, tinted with cultural racism?

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Notes

1 Less than ten years old, the Five Star Movement purports to have overcome the traditional left-right divide by bringing together traditional themes, stances, and policies of both the left and the right, from the defence of the commons to the opposition to migration, into a heterogeneous mix – all under the sign of a celebration of e-democracy. The Five Star Movement then is an outlier in ideological terms, not defining itself as right wing like the other parties of the CoHERE sample.
2 This is an extremely popular phrase – common sense – since it was mentioned almost verbatim by a considerable number of Greek interviewees.
3 These are the quotes: 'Stop sending money to European countries which will never pay them back, like Greece or Italy and Portugal, in the future. This is lost money that should be spent in our own society' (Female, 54, housewife, Rotterdam). Or 'Cooperation is good but only with some countries like Germany and Belgium, our main economic partners. We don't need Italy and Greece' (Male, 56, unemployed, Rotterdam).
4 Interestingly, New Right thinkers like de Benoist are anticolonialist and anti-imperialist because they see the direct connection between colonialism/imperialism and migration, which is a long-term consequence of it (de Benoist, 1999; de Benoist and Champetier, 2012; Spektorowski, 2003).
5 Unlike the Germans and the French, the Greek respondents did not specifically mention Islam as a threat but emphasized migrants as triggering negative cultural dynamics.
6 Male, 44, local civil servant, Toulon.
7 Male, 65, retired, Grenoble.

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Chapter 2

Anti-totalitarian monuments in Ljubljana and Brussels

From nationalist reconciliation to the open rehabilitation of fascism[1]

Gal Kirn

Towards a new anti-totalitarian Europe

The European memorial landscape after 1989 became a site under permanent (de)construction, where 'historical revisionism' and anti-totalitarianism became the material forces that guided this process. Historical revisionism was integrated in the new state apparatuses in the former Eastern bloc, emerging as a dominant critical lens through which to view the past and the future. Anti-totalitarian ideology bears a central *equation* between socialism/communism and fascism/Nazism. The path of the East was based on a juxtaposition of a European democratic future with the socialist/totalitarian regimes of the past – one the one hand, a beacon of freedom and democracy, on the other hand, the regimes that exterminated populations and were marked by the absence of freedom. This ideological operation is based on general anticommunism (Traverso, 2017) and specific nationalist projects. Furthermore, Badiou (2010) observes that anti-totalitarian 'reason' prevents us from distinguishing between those regimes while also legitimizing the status quo and condemning emancipatory thinking to eradication in the gulag. Badiou's writing was still inscribed in a time of neoliberal utopian horizons, but today Europe struggles with the resurrection of neofascist ghosts. This should be not read merely as a recent non-response to the neoliberal crisis, but as Losurdo (2015) argues, it can also be read as a long-term policy that began with *nouveaux historiens* with *counter*-revolutionary motives: they aimed to eradicate the whole emancipatory legacy of the past, from the French Revolution to anticolonial struggle, to underscore the supremacy of European civilization and justify the continuance of (humanitarian) interventions in its name (Hansen and Jonsson, 2014).[2]

This chapter undertakes a close reading of how historical revisionism and anti-totalitarian ideology took shape in the post-Yugoslav context and, as the 1990s showed, had brutal consequences for that reality. I will focus on how the critique of totalitarianism – anything connected to Yugoslavia, socialism, Tito, or even antifascist partisan struggle (cf. Jovanović, 2012 for the Yugoslav context) – became the main perspective from which to understand the major push to rewrite history. In the context of Slovenian revisionism, these motives

became concrete, for example, in a project of 'national reconciliation' (*narodna sprava*) focused on World War II and the civil war in Slovenia. National reconciliation is not a Slovenian invention (for a brief comparison with South Africa, see Černič, 2013),[3] but it became the dominant motto of all 1990s political parties that wanted to heal the wounds of the past civil war and equate fascist collaborators with partisan fighters of World War II.

I argue that national reconciliation as a specific memorial appropriation of anti-totalitarian ideology can be read as a strong warning of the retro-avant-garde right-wing populism now widespread in Europe, just two decades later. The consequences of the materialization of historical revisionism and right-wing populism came to full light during the ethnic wars of the 1990s. Various theorists on (right-wing) populism warn that the populist political process starts with a specific construction of the people that is 'exclusionary' (ethnic cleansing), while also closely aligning this new 'people' with European civilization (Močnik, 1995). I argue that the transformation of the memorial landscape and the erasure of antifascist monuments played a considerable role in advancing this construction.

This conservative retro-avant-garde is documented in a range of texts and 'revisionist' monuments. I will present three cases that are the most emblematic of commemorative revisionism: the first monument is located in the center of Ljubljana and is a representative of *nationalist reconciliation*. The second monument in Grahovo symbolizes the open *rehabilitation of local fascism*. National reconciliation, I argue, opened the intellectual-memorial gates to the rehabilitation of (local) fascism. I support my analysis with a close reading of the key texts by Spomenka Hribar, Slovenia's foremost authority on World War II memory. The final example will show how 'anti-totalitarian' ideology came back to the heart of the European Union[4] in the form of a European Day of Remembrance for Victims of Totalitarian Regimes on August 23, the most important new commemorative event of its sort in the EU, which has been celebrated yearly since 2009 on the anniversary of the signing of the 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. In 2018, the European Commission announced plans to erect the very first anti-totalitarian monument in the central square of the EU district in Brussels. Ironically, this ideological equation between communism and fascism that was defeated in the famous *Historikerstreit*[5] during the late 1980s – Nolte's position included relativization of the horrific crimes of fascism – became the dominant form of memory politics in the former East and, it will be claimed, has now finally returned to the center of Europe.

National reconciliation as a call for equal victim status and de-ideologization

While Western European political discourse has long had its share of historical revisionism, for a large majority in the former East, revisionism came to constitute the very ether of the ideological state apparatus implemented during

the 1990s. Revisionism materialized in new historical textbooks, the museums of 'double occupation' (Radonić, 2009), new monuments to glorious national past/figures, memorial parks that displayed totalitarian monuments, and other memorial forms that remediated and revised recent history. Postsocialism is a perfect example of memorial de/reconstruction, a veritable playground of memory, or what Ashworth, Gregory, and Tunbridge call 'dissonant heritage' (1996). I will now turn to the first specific case of 'dissonant heritage' to be 'solved' in the Slovenian context by a project of national reconciliation.

The discourse of national reconciliation aims to manage conflict and neutralize dissonances regarding recent and more distant history. In the concrete Slovenian context, the tragic events concerned all relate to the semi-recent past of World War II, which is seen both as a war against the fascist occupation and a partisan civil war in which antifascists fought local fascist collaborators, the Home Guards. Extermination campaigns were led by (local) fascists, key battles during World War II were waged between those two sides, and extrajudicial killings of local fascists were carried out immediately after the war. The advocates of national reconciliation claim that this major historical wound has to be 'healed' in order to move forward as a mature nation (Hribar, 1986). The nationalist reconciliation campaign launched during the late 1980s was first seen as a heretical idea that attacked the central foundations of socialist Yugoslavia.

The most famous symbolic gesture of reconciliation in the Slovenian context took place in July 1990: the (now late) Catholic bishop Alojzij Šuštar shook hands with the head of the former Communist Party and first president of independent Slovenia, Milan Kučan. Kučan also gave a speech on the need for reconciliation of all Slovenians.[6] This was the announcement of a long-term project that involved very different agents: church officials, intellectuals, civil initiatives, and politicians all insisted on settling accounts related to World War II and the civil war that divided Slovenia.[7] The agents of reconciliation agreed that the crimes of both sides must be fully acknowledged in order to move forward as a nation. However, the debate was asymmetrical, since the advocates of reconciliation also claimed that the time for a new truth had arrived. It is noteworthy that in Yugoslavia the partisan side enjoyed all of the attention and privileges of official commemoration. While a critical stance towards the dominant ideology of socialist Yugoslavia is necessary, it still is correct to say that the partisans represented the only antifascist resistance throughout the entirety of World War II, while all other political and military formations collaborated with the fascist occupiers (Tomasevich, 2001). In the post-Yugoslav context, however, the time had come for the tables to be turned entirely, and a new way of remembering the crimes of the totalitarian regime emerged.

I argue that the new type of commemoration displays a specific form of Slovenian nationalism that posited Slovenia as the morally superior and most economically advanced 'nation' in the former Yugoslavia, the only nation to undertake a 'decent' reckoning with its own bloody past. National reconciliation

was introduced to renegotiate memory of the civil war within World War II, and I argue that it gradually opened a window for the rehabilitation of fascist collaborators. For the political elites, *national reconciliation* became the vector of unification in the transition process, where it became ideologically aligned with another motto of the new state: *de-nationalization* (the transfer from public to private ownership).

The material effects of national reconciliation are many: from establishing a committee to locate collaborationist remains and organize graves and memorial sites, to the public financing of related documentaries, books, and exhibitions (Kirn, 2012). But any serious discursive analysis must first ask a few very simple questions: Who was supposed to be reconciled – and why? Who is the intended subject of commemoration? Despite the hard-won victory of liberation and the responsibility of facing the threat of fascism, the sorest spots that developed immediately after the war cannot be ignored. Revisionist commemoration worked on and from this spot, successfully instituting a new 'realm of memory': Kočevski Rog.

At the end of World War II, the Nazi army was pulling out of Yugoslavia. With the local fascist collaborators, they succeeded in crossing the border into southern Austria (Bleiburg), which was held by British forces. The British returned around 30,000 POWs to Yugoslavia, while the partisans had already captured 40,000. Part of the fascist soldiery was sent to prisons and faced trial, while another part was assembled in the forests of Kočevski Rog. During May/June 1945 some 30,000 local fascists, Croatian Ustasha, Serbian Chetniks, Slovenian Home Guards, and others were executed without a trial by the secret service of the Communist Party and detachments of the 3rd Yugoslav Army (see Troha et al., 2017). Let me clearly state that these post-war killings were war crimes and post-war crimes for which nobody was held accountable, and for which there is absolutely no political or moral justification despite the horrific crimes of the fascists during the four-year war in Yugoslavia (Tomasevich, 2001). Under no circumstances, however, should the condemnation of the post-war killing absolve the fascist collaborators of their war crimes.

World War II and its immediate aftermath are commonly seen as the source of the major ideological divide within twentieth-century Slovenia. The most elaborate account of dealing with the past came from the pen of dissident intellectual Spomenka Hribar. She revealed her rediscovery of the post-war killings through Edvard Kocbek[8] in the essay 'Guilt and Sin', published in 1986 and 1987, and appearing in the most famous issue of *Nova Revija* that openly demanded Slovenian independence for the first time.

Hribar's text on reconciliation built a humanist-Christian bridge between national, liberal, and Christian understandings of the nation and the citizen, and suggested a way of overcoming the sins and guilt to heal the nation.[9] I will touch upon two major problems with Hribar's meditation: Firstly, as Irena Šumi cogently argues, Hribar's call for reconciliation is 'morally vague', since it 'disperse[s] the perpetrators and victims in a reciprocal way that would demand

mutual apology and set the goal of reconciliation without unconditional recognition of guilt' (2015: 73). Secondly, Hribar decontextualizes World War II and mentions neither (the fight against) Nazism nor the antisemitism that accompanied the anticommunism of the Slovenian Home Guards and the Catholic Church.

Another problematic moment in Hribar's embrace of reconciliation is her demand for a separation between individuals as 'human beings' and the 'ideology' they espouse:

> Reconciliation should be understood as agreement about our history. It would enable us to ultimately see both revolutionaries and counterrevolutionaries as unlucky 'sons from the same mother,' that is, from a perspective that recognizes them as people (of one epoch). That does not mean that we accept their ideology! Errors are human, but one need not accept and perpetuate them. But rejecting ideology does not also mean we must excommunicate its bearers; we need, then, to distinguish between the man AND his ideology.
>
> (1987: 102)

An elementary naiveté underlies this premise of pretending there is a way to separate individual citizens from ideology beyond some moral-liberal laboratory. It is itself symptomatic of the ideology at work in Hribar's text. She understands reconciliation primarily as a moral process that should be structured slowly around 'heart' in vehement opposition to 'avant-garde hate' (ibid.). Reconciliation is an excavation of the 'soil, where *love* and *memory* grow' (101) and can only happen 'between us as human beings' (100). Most importantly, and here the evident ideological call is sounded, reconciliation should take place between us as human beings, but especially within the *national* context, that is, within the 'Slovenian nation'. It no longer has anything to do with European or Yugoslav history. The act of stripping the individual of all his or her ideological identifications while emphasizing national belonging has been criticized by the historian Lev Centrih:

> [National reconciliation] has been understood as a call for the mutual recognition and respect of all sides engaged in the conflict, on the grounds that they all belong to the same motherland, to the same Nation, even though they may perceive their devotion differently and are marked by errors and crimes. Nation and motherland have been perceived as pregiven qualities of every individual, that is, as essentially separate from one's affiliations to political, production, or ideological practices.
>
> (2008: 70–71)

It would require too big a detour to analyze how Hribar's concept of ideology approaches it as a manipulative force instilled only by the evil party.[10] However,

it would be wrong to assert that Hribar proposes a conservative rehabilitation of fascism by talking about the need to condemn fascist *ideology* and the crimes committed in its name. Furthermore, her intervention came during late socialism, when the silence around the post-war killings was still thick, so identifying her first target as 'avant-garde hate' was a direct attack on political bureaucrats.

However, the more problematic aspect of her argument is that for the goal of national reconciliation, Hribar needs to beat the major enemy: the perpetuation of avant-garde hate that she says will prevent reconciliation between humans on Slovenian 'soil'. If her critique of the logic of 'avant-garde' and the infallibility of party is to be taken seriously, we need to be very careful of one major ideological displacement in the text. Why is there no serious discussion of the principle of hate that started World War II? Hribar does not mention that the principles of ethnic hatred and 'national soil' actually started World War II. Nor does she note that local collaborationists adopted the fascist principle of ethnic and racial hate and stood with fascism until the very end of the war. Fascist collaborators were vital to the military-political apparatus that terrorized and executed any political opponents (anticommunism) and ethnic minorities (antisemitism) who did not fit into the new order. Ethnic and political cleansing formed the *central political border* that partisans and antifascists were not prepared to cross. This line divided the nation fundamentally and explains why the nation as a whole did not unite together against the occupation.

Two *non-reconcilable* principles underlie the context of World War II: on the one hand, the fascist principle of ethnic/racial hate under a collaborationist regime, and on the other, partisan inclusion of everyone that fought against fascism, worked for multinational solidarity, and constructed different, federative, and multinational political entities. In a political sense, this translates into an ethical choice: either fascist occupation or national liberation struggle. The perversity of the moral universe of national reconciliation is that by our accepting the premise, or the challenge, we perform a degree of moral relativization and historical abstraction of World War II. Conversely, we could give this call for national reconciliation a more generous reading and ask whether it meditates on a third option beyond these two exclusive alternatives. On what moral and ideological grounds can citizens be forced to retroactively mourn all the victims of World War II, fascists and antifascists alike?

Despite its morally vague bearings, Hribar's text had a visionary effect. She called for a 'monument to national reconciliation' as early as the mid-1980s and largely defined the coordinates of dominant memory politics in Slovenia:

> The obelisk should stand in the center of Ljubljana . . . and scream to the sky about the tragedy of a small nation that, in the struggle for its own existence and in incomprehensible human destiny, became simultaneously its

> own executioner and persecutor. This obelisk should read simply: 'Fallen for the Homeland'. Indeed, they *all* died for their homeland. Each dreamt of their own beloved homeland. . . . All of us that are alive today are descendants of their yearning and suffering. If, as a nation, we cannot accept all of this suffering as the suffering of our nation, then we cannot end the civil war that has decimated us. If we are not able to see a human being in the criminal, and if we feel no human pity for the criminal himself, then the sting of the war has not subsided and catharsis will not be reached.
>
> (1986: 8, translation mine)

Her mnemonic call to arms interpellates 'us' as current and future descendants of the Slovenian *nation* who must learn to see partisans and fascists as belonging to the same 'homeland'. To live free and united, we must pity and forgive each other, even the criminals on both sides of the civil war. This moralization departs from the premise of cutting ties with ideology, while its final call for a new, revised memory identifies us (individuals) as subjects of the Slovenian nation organized around the central concept of 'national soil' alone. The alleged exclusion of ideology, besides minorities and marginalized groups, is a cornerstone of (any) nationalist ideology.[11] After expressing moral condemnation of fascism and communism, Hribar ends up with a new form of totalitarianism: that of the nation.

Hribar's prayer for the obelisk was answered three decades later, when it became part of talks in the European Parliament calling for the proper acknowledgment of totalitarian crimes. In 2009 the Slovenian parliament adopted a law on war cemeteries, which included plans for the Monument to the Victims of All Wars in Ljubljana, commissioned by the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities. The location for the monument was found in the very heart of the country's capital, where it could embody the spirit of 'national reconciliation' and help to heal the Slovenian nation. The inclusively named Monument to the Victims of All Wars would stand just one hundred metres from Parliament, on the edge of Zvezda (*Star*) Park, commemorating all military conflicts, victims, and fighters who died for the Slovenian cause in the twentieth century. The fact that the great majority of victims commemorated died during World War II speaks to the monument's dominant ethical requirement: the 'national reconciliation' of Slovenians.

The Commission of the Ministry awarded first place to a group of architects: Rok Žnidaršič, Mojca Gabrič, Samo Mlakar, Žiga Ravnikar, Dino Mujić, and Martin Kruh. The commission stated that the monument's particular symbolic strength lay in 'its very neutral form that lacks unnecessary pathos . . . and does not carry any inappropriate monumentality in such place and time' (see Image 2.1).[12]

The commission's conclusions can reasonably be challenged, both as to formal neutrality and the absence of monumentality. The topic, location,

Image 2.1 Monument to the Victims of All Wars, Ljubljana (Zvezda Park).
Source: Photo by Gal Kirn

and, most notably, the massive pillars are all highly representative and monumental and transform the space next to Zvezda Park into a kind of 'square of reconciliation'. Nor is the chosen symbolism as neutral as the commission suggested. Another statement of the commission even contradicts this claim, stating that the monument represents:

> two pillars of the nation connected at the base . . . this abstract form conveys both the metaphor of and allusion to the concept of unity in duality. The pillars are distanced both along the length and depth, determining the central site of the monument, where wreaths (of flowers) can be placed.[13]

This text and the monument's sheer monumentality do much to reveal the political unconscious of the nationalist reconciliation discourse. Surely the duality of form and the separate pillars of the unified nation refer precisely to the civil war during World War II? The form and symbolism express the divided nation. The wounds of civil war are likewise evident in the monument (see Image 2.2), and it is only the work of memory and the reconciliation discourse that can heal the Slovenian nation.[14]

Image 2.2 Side view from Zvezda Park of the Monument to the Victims of All Wars, Ljubljana. The platform inclines slowly; a quote by a partisan poet appears at the bottom right corner.

Source: Photo by Gal Kirn

On the central square of the monument, we can see two large rectangular slabs made from armored concrete of white cement and stones from Slovenian rivers and quarries. A large inscription on the side, a quote by the major Slovenian poet Oton Župančič, reads as follows:

> Homeland is one that is given to all of us, and one life and one death.

The choice of the quote selected by the ministry is neither coincidental nor uncontested. The poet's grandchildren objected to the decontextualization of the choice. At first glance, the line seems a perfect poetic embodiment of nationalist reconciliation: we live and die, regardless of our affiliation or the side we fought for, and we return always to the breast of the homeland. But three scandalous facts complicate this reading. *Firstly*, Oton Župančič was a partisan poet whose 'Do you know your debt, poet?' (1941) was the first printed partisan poem. It called on artists in occupied Ljubljana to fight for the partisans with any means possible. *Secondly*, the chosen verse was taken from the original (longer) poetic inscription that Župančič wrote for a partisan memorial sarcophagus in 1949. *Thirdly*, and even more problematically, a reading of the full poem gives us a

sense of how reconciliatory decontextualization and renationalization of commemorated subjects occurs (Repe, 2016):

> We are loyal to freedom, for the struggle we are chosen,
> what is life, what is death? The future is belief,
> whoever dies for it is elevated in life after falling into death.

This poem cannot be read as come-all-ye for some eternal homeland that equally embraces all victims. For Župančič, it makes a whole world of a difference if and how we decide to fight. The centrality of the partisan struggle entails a belief in a future (world) for which it is worth dying. The world of fascist occupation was structured around a cult of death and oriented towards the romantic past of an Aryan race unsullied by other ethnicities. It can be argued that quite a significant portion of Europe's population believed that such a world was worth fighting and dying for. But the partisans dreamed of a profoundly different world: not only did partisans and fascists embrace mutually exclusive principles during World War II, the partisans fought against the general oppression in the prewar world. The causes for which victims of 'all wars in the twentieth century' died are many, but the fact of being born in the same nation unified the dead under the same monument.

From victims to heroes: open rehabilitation of local fascism in Grahovo

Almost simultaneous to the crowning of national reconciliation, right-wing populists were taking steps to commission the first monument to openly rehabilitate local fascism. This new trend was visible around 2013–2014, but in other war-torn regions of the former Yugoslavia it had already existed since the early 1990s (Pavlaković, 2018). The new monument and commemorative practices no longer focus on the post-war massacres, but on local collaborationists and their World War II battles.

The profascist monument is located in Grahovo, a small town that already had a few World War II monuments: three partisan monuments and one honoring the poet France Balantič, who fought for the fascist Home Guards. The Slovenian Home Guards were established by the SS just two months before the battle remembered in the new monument. The Home Guards were instrumental to the SS strategy: they waged a guerilla war against partisans in Slovenia, massacred and tortured civilians, and brought opponents and Jews to concentration camps. The new monument indicates a clear shift from the ideological consensus of national reconciliation. It is dedicated to thirty-two fascist collaborators who died during World War II (22–23 November 1943) when the local unit of the Home Guards was besieged by a partisan brigade at an important patrol post in the village. Despite demands to surrender, the Home

Guards held their post until the morning of the twenty-third, when partisans killed a large majority of the fascist unit.

The Monument to Silenced Victims was an initiative of the civil society group *Nova Slovenska Zaveza*, which has close ties with the Catholic Church, but is also supported by the largest right-wing parties, *Slovenska Demokratska Stranka* (SDS) and *Nova Slovenija* (NSI, the former Christian Democrats). When choosing when to erect the monument, instead of 23 November, the day that most of the thirty-two collaborators died, the initiators choose 6 April (2014) instead. This was the day that fascist forces invaded the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and the representatives of the old dominant political forces in Slovenia established the National Council (*Natlačen*), which openly collaborated with the fascist occupiers. This date was chosen strategically, then, and the initiators clearly framed their political message in the memorial plaque's inscription:

> On this site, in the year of our Lord 1943, a unit of Home Guards of the Slovenian national army was defeated by cannons and fire unleashed on them by communists, brothers in descent, and strangers in thought. We await united in the earth, for the day that your proud lineage will break the lying chains of silence and our stolen honor may be restored; only the truth will revive your (descendants') will for future growth.

Without mention of World War II or the fact that the Home Guards sided with the Nazis, the inscription reduces the context to the civil war and the 'bad guys' to the communists. Here, the Home Guard is made representative of the Slovenian national army. The whole poetic interpellation is permeated with the biologization of the divided nation ('brothers in descent') that must be cleansed of 'strangers in thought' (ideological enemies: 'communists'). The open rehabilitation continues with the metaphor of resurrection, expressing hope that this fallen line will break the 'chains of silence' and 'restore' lost honor. In contrast to the monuments to post-war massacres, the central affect of commemoration in Grahovo is resentment built on the defeat of local fascists. The Monument to Silenced Victims does not mourn the past but is future oriented (the 'will for future growth', see Image 2.3).

The local branch of the Association of Partisan Veterans (ZZB) issued a complaint to the Ministry of Culture, calling the monument a troublesome falsification because it 'represents traitors to the homeland as the Slovenian army'. Also, the position and sheer 'size of the monument blocks the visibility of another monument, one dedicated to the victims of fascism'.[15] The ministry rejected the complaint, arguing that the monument was located on private land. Consisting of a semicircular wall 9 metres long and 3.1 metres high, the monument, it must be noted, is quite a substantial intervention in the town centre. It is shaped like the windows and door of the besieged Home Guard post. On it are engraved the names of the thirty-two fallen fascists, along with

Image 2.3 Monument to Silent Victims, Grahovo, Slovenia. Its monumental wall refers to a house where fascist collaborators were killed and displays a Catholic cross next to a memorial inscription. To the left a small partisan monument is now practically invisible to visitors.

Source: Photo by/courtesy of Božidar Flajšman

the inscription quoted above. Close to the monument is a table, also made of stone (a place for meditation and rest), and there are flag posts for displaying flags on commemorative days. The monument in Grahovo was designed by architect Franc Popek (see Image 2.4), the designer of many Home Guard memorial plaques, granite crosses, and sites. Yet this monument marks a clear break from earlier forms of fascist commemoration: although Popek's early monuments commemorated post-war killings, they were also very pious and symbolically Christian (see Kirn, 2012).

Last but not least, the ceremonial opening on 6 April 2014 was attended by the leadership of the right-wing spectrum in Slovenia. A representative of Nova Slovenska Zaveza and a local priest, Maks Ipavec, delivered the speeches, while Janez Janša, former prime minister and leader of the biggest right-wing party, wrote on Twitter that the visitors had come to exercise their 'fundamental human right' to dignity, to grieve and to remember, and that they would not be 'threatened by the advocates of this crime, their propaganda and lies' (6 April 2014). His claim that a battle in wartime is part of a 'communist crime' is indicative of the recent radicalization of the right wing, which is increasingly embracing the open rehabilitation of local fascism.

Image 2.4 Rear view of the Grahovo monument that highlights its centrality and magnitude, with a Catholic church in the background.

Source: Photo by/courtesy of Božidar Flajšman

From antifascism to anti-totalitarianism: Brussels' new Pan-European Memorial

In the concluding section of this chapter, I want to show how the troublesome trend of historical revisionism and anti-totalitarianism returned to the heart of the European Union just two decades after ravaging the postsocialist landscape. At the time of writing, preparations are already under way for erecting the first Pan-European Memorial for the Victims of Totalitarian Violence in Brussels, commissioned by the Platform of European Memory and Conscience. This project brings together fifty-five private and public institutions across the European Union and has been long active in revisionist commemoration policies, research, networking, and PR events that promote anti-totalitarian and nationalist perspectives. The Pan-European monument will be the crowning glory of the 23 August European Day of Remembrance for Victims of Totalitarian Regimes' commemorations. The memorial and the name of the event effectively equate fascism with communism, as does the selection of the date, the anniversary of the infamous 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. This day of remembrance was designated by the European Parliament in 2009 and subsequently adopted by a large majority of national parliaments in the EU.

Despite its stated aim of rejecting extremism and oppression, the commemorative day is an attempt to equate all victims and all regimes that go by the name 'totalitarian'.

Kirsten Ghodsee has warned that the moral equivalence in totalitarianism can bring negative consequences and even justification for 'acceptance of neo-fascism' (2014: 137). The commemorative aim is to condemn the horrific purges and exterminations carried out by political entities – Nazism, fascism, and Stalinism, and one could add colonialism – but it should never be to blur the distinctions between such very different ideological, economic, and political formations. If the Pan-European monument aims to represent the major mission and memory of Europe, then it fails to embrace multidirectional memory while presenting no affirmative point that could mobilize a common transnational identity. Are Europeans victims of totalitarian crimes? Are they also perpetrators of totalitarian violence? Are we only supposed to be protected by the common framework of the EU? The blurring of differences cannot do justice as serious historical research: it is not as if all real existing socialisms shared experiences of gulags or the imperialist tendencies of the later Stalinist period. Moreover, how do we explain the new EU focus on the 1939 pact while failing to address the historical context of Western military intervention after the October Revolution or, indeed, the fact that the first confrontation between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany occurred during the Spanish Civil War?

When the fronts between antifascism and fascism were being drawn in Spain, most European governments were trying to prevent their citizens from going to Spain to fight for the republican antifascist side. Instead, (Western) European governments remained neutral and allowed fascism to take over Spain; also, in the aftermath of defeat, many brigadistas were incarcerated in concentration camps in France (e.g. at Gurs).[16] Why 23 August? Why not pick the official date of the Munich agreement, 30 September 1938? Because it openly recognized collaboration between Western Europe and Nazi Germany and allowed Nazi Germany to annex major parts of the Sudetenland/Czechoslovakia? Western European countries welcomed this historical appeasement of Hitler with grand headlines about the evidently imperialistic attitude of central powers in Europe towards the eastern and southern countries on the one hand, and tolerance of Nazi expansion in Eastern Europe on the other.

Choosing which date and which political agents should be cast as the victors and the enemies is quintessential for the project of a new European memory. For that reason, it should have been addressed as a site of confrontation rather than alleged consensus. If acknowledging the horrors of Stalinism in Europe is desirable and morally right, why push for the moral equation of communism and fascism (Neumayer, 2018)?

Nor can we ignore from the historical fact that the bloodiest battles of the World War II were waged between the Soviet Union and the Third Reich on the Eastern Front in 1942 and 1943, marking the major turning point of World

War II. Remembering anti-totalitarianism on 23 August erases this historical fact while it also contributes to the current downsizing of the role played by the Soviet Union and communist-partisan forces in defeating fascism in World War II. In early 1943, with a few exceptions, continental Europe was a Nazi-fascist entity. Europe then was not always a space of freedom and democracy, but a site where fascist policies were jointly implemented by foreign occupiers and local collaborationists. Reducing the importance of communist parties and communist-inspired movements and groups in the fight against fascism is one major blind spot of the European Day of Remembrance for Victims of Totalitarian Regimes. It illustrates a major shift in post-1989 memorial focus: once decidedly antifascist, the memorialization of post-war (old) Europe is redirecting attention from, for example, Holocaust memory,[17] to the crimes of communist regime(s).

Since at the time of writing the Pan-European monument has not yet been constructed, I can only analyze the public competition call and the declaration of the winner(s) of April 2018. The monument will stand in central Brussels on Jean Rey Square in the 'European district' and will serve as the central site of an annual commemoration every 23 August. This process was a major undertaking with an internationally renowned jury including the EU commissioner, Tibor Navracsics, the deputy mayor of Brussels, Geoffroy Coomans de Brachene, and the architects Norman Foster and Julie Beckman. The competition announced that 'no memorial yet has been created to the countless millions of victims of Fascism, National Socialism and Communism in Europe' (https://www.memoryandconscience.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Competition-announcement.pdf). There may be no such memorial in Brussels, but the Platform of European Memory and Conscience is certainly familiar with the proliferation of this type of memorials and monuments in the former Eastern bloc. The stated aim of the new memorial is to represent 'the main reason for the existence of today's peaceful democratic European Union – the lessons learned from the totalitarian past and the determination to never allow history to repeat itself'. The new memorial's main goal is to 'visualize this humanitarian message'.

One of the main reasons why the EU could be created in the first place was the victory over fascism in World War II. Oddly, the European Commission call fails to provide historical contextualization or to mention that particular 'lesson learned'. It in no way differentiates experiences of Nazism from those of communism. It gives no other central reasons for the rise of fascism or how such ideas and organizations originated in the first place. Nothing is said of the global capitalist crisis or the intensified capitalist exploitation that fueled the colonial and imperialist projects that supported the logic of European politics from 1914 to 1945. There is no mention of the rampant nationalism and resentment after World War I or of Western interventions in Russia after the October Revolution, which led to the isolation of the Soviet Union after the end of the civil war. Even though major clashes occurred on the left (between social democrats and communists), Western liberal democracies' ongoing tolerance

towards the emergence of fascism during the 1930s cannot be forgotten. In the stripped-down historical context of the call for a monument, these distinctions and lessons learned are blurred to enable a new form of commemoration to stress the European struggle against both Nazism and communism. If the call clearly identifies Europe as a space where the struggle 'for freedom and democracy' took place, the reader is left wondering which 'Europe' that might be.

The memorial call and its execution are part of a top-down process that enjoys the 'high patronage' of the European Commission. As such, a much more open, transparent, and democratic process could reasonably be expected from an EU-led and organized project. For example, does this revisionist memory really reflect the heritage of the majority of Europeans, and the histories it leaves out? Red flags that conservative revisionism underlies the platform's commemorative policy abound in the call and the platform's previous and current projects. In fact, the call and the Pan-European monument are structured as self-fulfilling prophecies; they self-legitimize the perspective that Europe is a beacon of freedom and democracy while anticipating a future Europe that can move forward, free of guilt or remorse about the past, after it commemorates away the 'foreign' occupations and catastrophes of Nazism and communism.

Unsurprisingly, the top three designs (https://www.memoryandconscience.eu/2018/03/28/memorial-competition-winner/) selected by the competition are aesthetically and politically mediocre. This is not entirely their fault, since they had to respond to the self-glorifying narrative of a Great Europe free of totalitarianism. Despite strong institutional backing and knowledge, the Platform of European Memory and Conscience seems to have ignored ongoing academic and artistic discussions on memory and monuments that in the last few decades have become increasingly critical of top-down projects that 'preach history' from a one-sided, self-legitimizing perspective. The idea that one central monument in the center of the new Europe can perform such an ambitious pedagogical task – teaching us the lessons to be learned and mistakes never to be repeated – is flawed and naive. How can a centralized monument commemorate and reflect upon the theoretical and historical problematic if its organizing principle is to equate all catastrophes and crimes – fascist, Nazi, or communist – by blurring the definitions of 'totalitarian'? But even if we accept that the premises of such an ambitious call will always be problematic, we can still ask if the winning proposal for the Pan-European monument succeeded in giving future visitors a deeper understanding of 'totalitarian regimes'.

The first place was awarded to Tszwai So, a member of UK-based Spheron Architects (see Image 2.5). The title of So's monument, 'Echo in Time', evokes the fantastic journey from the first book of Lindsey Fairleigh's *Echo Trilogy*, where time travel offers a route to Atlantis. If we conceive of the European Atlantis of the twentieth century as its communist and fascist catastrophes, then the new centre of power – Brussels – can finally learn, and commemorate, its lessons. Tszwai said that his design was heavily influenced by 40,000 letters he received from victims of totalitarian violence. His proposal consists of a very

Image 2.5 Tswai So, winner of the public call for the Pan-European Memorial to Victims of Totalitarian Crimes, to be erected in Brussels (2019).

Source: From www.memoryandconscience.eu/2018/03/28/memorial-competition-winner/

classical spatial solution common in 1990s monuments; it focuses on a floor plan on which the magnified letters of personal testimonies are engraved. This memorial solution would display the personal testimonies of numerous victims on the central square. Visitors walk on the content of the letters, which is written in many languages. At best, their multilingualism provides the most, if limited, opportunity of evoking the shared experience of totalitarian crimes.

At the centre of the design is a woman in a red coat, perhaps recalling the iconic girl from Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List*. Perhaps this image announces the girl's and Europe's maturity, now commemorating all twentieth-century violence and horror in the same red coat? It is impossible to judge exactly where her gaze is pointed from the artist's rendering and the modest description on the website, but it points to somewhere below, towards a construction that suggests an opening.

The very commemorative process of walking and reading through the square resembles several Holocaust memorials in Berlin, such as the monument to the violence of the Nazi regime at the Brandenburg Gate, or the book-burning monument in front of Humboldt University. In the Pan-European monument, the symbolic framework of the Holocaust is expanded to equate all types of

violence. Extending this framework relativizes the unique horror of the Holocaust. If we are to recognize and condemn the logic of terror, the purges and killings perpetrated by communist – especially Stalinist – regimes as well as the unique suffering connected to the memory of diverse groups and individuals, we must be careful to distinguish the difference between the logic that motivated this violence from Nazism and antisemitism specifically. These logics/regimes must be distinguished from each other not only in the analysis of the 'idea of communism' (Žižek, 2001) and the origins of Nazism (Landa, 2015), but also for what concerns the scale and intensity of totalitarian violence, as well as its targets. The industrially perfected extermination campaign of virtually the entire Jewish population of Europe in a matter of three years also targeted people with disabilities, Roma and Slavic people, homosexuals, communists, and antifascists, to name a few.

We can compare the numbers of victims but cannot equate ideological and political roots of the Nazi and different communist regimes. Asking who died under the brutal policies of the Soviet Union, especially in the Stalinist period, reveals a fundamental difference in its logic of terror. Rather than being driven by ethnic-racial hatred and the idea of a superior race, political violence in the Soviet period targeted a class enemy and was fueled by the paranoia of Stalin and his entourage and also extended to the cleansing of any dissenting voices within the party. A closer look at the great purges and Stalinist trials shows that violence was directed at the innermost circles of the Communist Party, including dedicated members and long-term communists, Marxists, and avant-garde artists, as well as towards workers and peasants, all of whom were deemed supporters of the Soviet state. Stalinism produced the most horrific mechanisms for consolidating political power and instilling fear in the masses across the Soviet space, but it did not designate a racial other or promote anti-Enlightenment ideology. By contrast, the victims of Nazi-fascist violence were profiled on racial, ethnic, and religious grounds on the one hand, and on political grounds on the other (especially communists, anarchists, and antifascists, and eventually anyone democratic).[18]

The humanitarian equation of all victims obfuscates a proper understanding of the historical events and logic that motivated the terror. The memory and history of violence and oppression is complex enough to demand detailed analysis, not just a body count and personal testimonies. Also, by not attempting a more truly all-encompassing representation, the Pan-European monument has missed another opportunity to commemorate the colonial legacy of the European project. The Pan-European monument could have invited visitors to make important historical connections with clear definitions and distinctions between socialism/communism on the one hand, and Nazism, Stalinism, and fascism on the other hand. Alas, this type of memory would not be congruent with Europe's desired morally superior image as a place of freedom and democracy and would challenge the wisdom it has supposedly learned from its past.

Conclusion

In reviewing the specific materialization of anti-totalitarian ideology and historical revisionism in the Slovenian context, I have analyzed two major monuments and discursive formations that emerged in the last three decades. I have shown how the dominant ideology of national reconciliation aimed to heal the wounds of the Slovenian nation by equating the victimhood of local fascists and partisan antifascists during World War II (Ljubljana's reconciliation monument). This can be seen as a perverse twist on the European condemnation of totalitarian terror, since national reconciliation forces us to forgive even the most criminal elements on both sides of World War II. I have also argued that national reconciliation paved a path to the rehabilitation of (local) fascism that has facilitated a range of openly profascist monuments in recent years (e.g. the Grahovo Home Guard memorial). The memorial revisionism exhibited in these cases illustrates the alarming extremes to which allegedly humanist calls for the recognition of all victims can lead. This perspective demands the condemnation of communist violence but also demands partisan antifascist violence during World War II to be equated with fascist violence. The way this feeds into mobilizations of the extreme right in Slovenia needs no further spelling out.

What should be emphasized is the return of memorial revisionism from Slovenia and the former Eastern bloc to the center of the European Union, in the form of the Pan-European monument: one monument to commemorate all victims of all totalitarian regimes, fascist, Nazi, and communist. I also showed how current EU memory has signaled a clear shift towards the commemoration and criminalization of communist crimes, while antifascist memory is gradually erased from European memory policy. The gradual departure of the official European Union from the antifascist legacy on anti-totalitarian topics allows the current autocratic regime in Russia to present itself as the 'official' guardian of the antifascist past and a central critic of fascism. The consequence of this not only strips antifascism of its communist legacy, flaunting it via military parades in Moscow as a part of the glorious 'Russian' past, but it can inadvertently advance Russia's dubious self-projection as an 'anti-imperialist' geopolitical power in a world dominated by the United States.

As more and more extreme right-wing parties and governments appear on the scene across the European Union, it becomes more urgent to convey and remember the lessons of the oppressed, and to strengthen the memory of *antifascism*. So that we can learn a negative lesson from the (post-)Yugoslav context that first deployed historical revisionism in the ethnic wars and then the rehabilitation of fascism. But also, so that we can learn a more definitive and affirmative lesson from a distant past: beating fascism can only be accomplished by a major popular coalition that unites different democratic agents and groups, a front that promises social emancipation to target the causes for the rise of (neo)fascism.

Notes

1 Part of this chapter will be published in my book *The Partisan Counter Archive* (forthcoming). I would like to thank the editors of the volume for their additional comments.
2 They wrote a resourceful study on the specific continuation of the European project after its colonial project in Africa, which they named 'Eurafrica'. The latter has not featured in historical textbooks or European memory.
3 This chapter's stance that Slovenian political and media culture are permeated by fear of speaking the truth about World War II is noteworthy. Černič's claim is problematic in light of continuous research and reporting on post-war killings by right-wing media (*Demokracija*, *Reporter*), on public television (RTV), in the research centers (e.g. Centre for National Reconciliation), and in the commemorative policies of NGOs and the Catholic Church.
4 For a very thorough analysis of the criminalization of communism within EU institutions, see Neumayer (2018).
5 For a contextualization of the *Historikerstreit*, see the editors' introductory text.
6 The entire speech is accessible online: www.bivsi-predsednik.si/up-rs/2002-2007/bp-mk.nsf/dokumenti/08.07.1990-90-92.
7 For a good summary of Hribar's argument for national reconciliation, see Šumi (2015).
8 Edvard Kocbek was the major figure of Christian socialism and the first minister for culture in the partisan revolutionary government founded in 1943. After the war he wrote a series of texts on (un)justified revolutionary violence during and after the war and remained isolated for the next two decades.
9 Her text was published in different issues of *Katedra* (1986), while some short sections appeared in her seminal article in *Nova Revija* (1987) that I refer to here.
10 The theory of ideology is a complex topic with a long history of confrontations. Let me simply say that alongside the Heideggerian school of Spomenka and Tine Hribar, the Slovenian theoretical landscape of the 1980s served as the venue for some of the most productive re-readings of Marx and Freud, e.g. those by Mladen Dolar, Slavoj Žižek, and Rastko Močnik.
11 See Spreizer and Šumi (2011).
12 Public call for Ljubljana monument to the victims of all wars: www.zaps.si/index.php?m_id=natecaji_izvedeni&nat_id=119&elab_id=634#nagr
13 Ibid.
14 Ibid.
15 The report includes the major points of complaint: www.rtvslo.si/slovenija/v-grahovem-najprej-poklon-zrtvam-nacizma-nato-blagoslov-spomenika-domobrancem/333932.
16 The multi-layered history of the Gurs concentration camp could serve as a specific portrayal of Western collaboration with fascism, where brigadistas were joined by socialists before Vichy, and then by the Jewish population: https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/gurs.
17 Holocaust memory was not self-evident after World War II; rather, it emerged through a combined process of the continuous efforts of historians, activists, and families of victims on the one hand, and decolonizing movements on the other hand. The latter is a vital reference point for Rothberg's study on multidirectional memory (2009).
18 Žižek wrote an important contribution on thinking through the differences in terms of the anti-modern part of Nazism and the continuation of the Enlightenment on the side of communism (2001); see also Landa on the liberal tradition of fascism (2009, 2015).

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Chapter 3

The use of the past in populist political discourse

Justice and Development Party rule in Turkey

Ayhan Kaya and Ayşe Tecmen

Introduction

Similar to its counterparts in Europe, the populist discourse of the Justice and Development Party (JDP) is centred on criticisms of globalization while promoting nationalism (*milli*) and nativism (*yerli*) to legitimize their take on the selectively constructed heritage and history narrative. In addition, JDP shares features of populist movements and parties such as anti-EU sentiments, neoliberal economic strategies, strong leadership, and strategic exploitation of crisis. However, JDP is different from its counterparts, such as *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD), Front National (FN), Party for Freedom (PVV), Five Star Movement (M5S), and Golden Dawn (GD), that we explored in the CoHERE project. JDP has been the governing party in Turkey for the past sixteen years; thus they had sufficient time, influence, and access to resources to formulate a hegemonic discourse on heritage. The transformation of national policies and politics under JDP rule translates into a more prominent, more visible reconnection with the Ottoman past through the retelling of Ottoman history as well as new myths and narratives surrounding historical key events and notable figures.

JDP's populist rhetoric is driven by attempts to address the political periphery's societal and economic needs. As we discuss below, the framing of cultural and religious ties with the Muslim world as well as the persistent, strategic references to the grand narratives and heroism of the Ottoman era are politically and economically pragmatic means of establishing a stronger position for Turkey in the global order. Neo-Ottomanism within the foreign policy context is therefore an extension of the party's need to maintain its discursive construction of a glorified Ottoman legacy to satisfy its constituency. This is aligned with other European right-wing populist leaders' assertion of historical antagonisms between 'the Judeo-Christian Western countries' and 'the Muslim Ottoman Empire' (see Image 3.1). As we illustrate, JDP and its counterparts have deployed this strategy to construct a civilizational discourse in the last two decades (Kaya, 2016, 2017; Kaya and Tecmen, 2018). This articulates a common transnational memory using the past to 'other' Muslim

Image 3.1 Sixteen Turkish states in history represented at the Presidential Palace in Ankara on 12 January 2015.

Source: www.tccb.gov.tr/en/news/542/3357/president-abbas-of-palestine-at-the-presidential-palace

societies, in this case signified by the Ottoman Empire, through its juxtaposition with the West.

This chapter argues that the JDP has instrumentalized a triangulation of political discourses of Islamism and populism and neo-Ottomanist in international relations. Since the 2000s, Turkey experienced the proliferation of cultural productions, including television series, movies, museums, and cultural projects, as well as the increased use of symbols denoting and connoting Ottoman heritage. These government-sponsored and/or endorsed representations of the past combined with JDP's interventions in the cultural and religious identity space are an outcome of the transformations in the official state discourse in domestic politics. By extension, neo-Ottomanism is a post-imperialist political ideology promoting greater engagement with ex-Ottoman territories.

Following a discussion of methodological preferences, this chapter will first analyze the ways in which the JDP has instrumentalized Ottomanism, Islamism, and populism as the main driving forces of its governance in domestic politics. Subsequently, the chapter will focus on neo-Ottomanism's role in JDP's foreign

policy. The chapter will conclude with a review of findings collected from the discourse analysis of the speeches of main political actors and of the interlocutors, JDP supporters, interviewed in Istanbul. Our interlocutors were mostly from higher social-economic status with higher education levels. In this sense, they represent a minority among JDP supporters, and they demonstrate the party's support by a heterogeneous group of voters.

Methodology

JDP's emphasis on Ottoman culture and heritage in the national identity narrative has both a national and an international dimension. On the one hand, we observe that extensive references to the Ottoman past aids in reformulating the Turkish national identity narrative by selectively reconceptualizing the past in the framework of their populist political rhetoric. On the other hand, particularly after 2007, JDP instrumentalized Ottoman culture to reconnect with ex-Ottoman territories through emphasis on a shared past, culture, and heritage. JDP leaders emphasize this reconnection to legitimize their increasing political and economic ties with Muslim countries. This is called 'neo-Ottomanism', an economic and cultural ideological formation comprised of both national and foreign policy interests, based on nostalgia for the Ottoman past.

The authors of this chapter will track the indications of JDP's neo-Ottomanist, Islamist, and populist forms of governance by analyzing the speeches of prominent political actors and face-to-face interviews conducted by the authors with JDP supporters. This chapter conducts discourse analysis of two different types of resources. Primarily, we conducted a discourse analysis of the speeches of JDP officials, focusing on key figures such as party leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, and Ahmet Davutoğlu, former foreign minister and former prime minister and the architect of JDP's foreign policy strategy. This preliminary research provided the contextual framework for the articulation of the JDP's populist discourse, leading to our identification of conservative democracy, neoliberalism, and neo-Ottomanism as the key elements of this discourse. In doing so, Ottoman past, comprised of history, heritage, and culture, is a signifier in this populist discourse, providing a historical context for the Islamization of Turkish politics.

We also conduct a discourse analysis of the fieldwork from CoHERE project's Work Package 2, titled 'The use of past in political discourse and the representation of Islam in European museums', carried out with JDP supporters between March and May 2017 in Istanbul. In our analysis, we focus on the responses to following questions: (1) Do you think there is such a thing as a European culture/civilization? If so, what is it about? What is its relationship to your national culture?; (2) Do you think there is such a thing as a European memory/heritage? If so, what is it about? What is its relationship to the past of your nation?; and (3) Are you aware of the JDP's approach to the European Union? Do you agree/disagree with this approach?

As the interlocutors' responses indicate, their views on the JDP were critical in many cases, but they still expressed support for the party. This stems from the fact that they could not identify another political party that can represent their advocacy for representation of Islam in the public and political sphere. The snowball sampling method also became restrictive because some interlocutors no longer wished to participate in a study on European heritage and memory because during the fieldwork there were widely mediatized conflicts between Turkey, and the Netherlands and Germany. This caused a surge of anti-EU and anti-European sentiments amongst the JDP electorate. This also limited the number of individuals willing to participate in the CoHERE fieldwork.[1] Additionally, in 2017, the increasing number of refugees hosted in Turkey, as well as the consequent uncertainties about their economic and cultural accommodation, exacerbated anti-immigrant sentiments. In turn, the rights provided to Syrian refugees were a source of discontent for the interlocutors, which also accounts for their criticisms of the JDP government.[2]

Justice and Development Party: conservative democracy and populism

The Justice and Development Party (JDP) was established in 2001 when Turkey experienced the strongest economic crisis in its history. As populism literature contends, populist parties take advantage of such crises, as voters tend to seek new political attachments during these transitional periods (Berezin, 2009). Utilizing the economic crisis, the JDP immediately gained popularity with its anti-elitist, anti-Kemalist, anti-corruption discourse reinforced with a strong Islamist, and paradoxically Europeanist, discourse fitting into the culturalist and civilizationist paradigm of the 2000s. While economic liberalization and the quasi-liberal and clientelist Turkish economic system originated in the 1980s, years of crisis and/or recession succeeded rapid growth. The February 2001 financial crisis was the most severe crisis in Turkey's economic history since World War II (Arpac and Bird, 2009). Additionally, between 1991 and 2002, inefficient coalition governments had governed Turkey, lowering the confidence in the existing parties and political institutions. The November 2002 elections confirmed this attitude when all governing parties were swept from the parliament, and the JDP won an unexpected majority of the seats in the parliament and formed the government.

JDP's commitment to neoliberal reforms and policies, despite having constituents from lower echelons of society who were looking for 'social justice', is paradoxical (Öniş and Keyman, 2003). Since its inception, the party became increasingly popular among poor masses and social groups such as housewives, followed by farmers, private sector labour, and the unemployed. Therefore, as the 'populism' literature suggests, the JDP was mainly supported by the unorganized and poor sections of society. In the early 2000s, Turkey's representative

institutions, such as political parties, labour unions, and autonomous social organizations, were weak. This paved the way for the direct, personalist mobilization of heterogeneous masses by Erdoğan and the JDP. In fact, deep crises result in populism as they cause a breakdown between citizens and their representatives (Moffitt, 2016). In turn, the emergence of populism in Turkey in the early 2000s is not surprising. Other conditions in Turkey that were conducive to populism were weakness of the rule of law, the politicized nature of the state, the lack of political accountability, high inequality and unmet social needs, and a cultural tradition favouring charismatic and paternalistic leadership. Therefore, when a leader like Erdoğan, who was skilled in transmitting the populist message of the neoliberal ideology to the masses, emerged, populism was inevitable.

The JDP gained an absolute majority of parliamentary seats in the 2002, 2007, 2011, and 2015 general elections, as well as in the 2004, 2009, and 2014 local elections. It became the first party since 1987 to win the majority of seats in the Turkish parliament. Furthermore, it was only the third Islamist party ever to become a part of a government in modern Turkey. Additionally, subaltern, conservative, and religious circles considered Erdoğan as one of them, distanced from the aristocracy, the military, the oppressive state, and the elitist Kemalist republicanism (Tuğal, 2009: 176, 2012). His family background, namely the fact that he was raised in Kasımpaşa (a conservative, suburban district of Istanbul), his Islamic discourse in everyday life, his sermon-like public speech style, the slang-like language that he used from time to time in Istanbul, and his Sunni-dominant rhetoric made him appealing to a large segment of the population (Tuğal, 2009: chapter 5).

Taking over executive power through the electoral process in 2002, the JDP managed to make a political and societal alliance with the European Union, the Gülen movement (Seufert, 2014), and liberals, as well as with its electorate to fight against the military tutelage, which had banned JDP's predecessors in the preceding years. However, the party could not consolidate its absolute power until the 2007 presidential elections when parliamentary democracy put an end to the power of distinctly secular President Ahmet Necdet Sezer, who was an ally of the laicist army and often refused to sign bills proposed by the JDP. President Sezer had vetoed several JDP legislative proposals, participated in secular demonstrations against the JDP, and openly warned the public against the threat of Islamization during his term in office. After Abdullah Gül – who was Erdoğan's companion in their progressive faction against Erbakan's conservative leadership in the Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi*, RP) originating in the National Vision trajectory (*Milli Görüş*) – was elected president, the JDP started to exercise a more authoritarian rule in Turkey (Kaya, 2015). From 2007 onwards, the JDP's policies became increasingly illustrative of neoliberal populism centred on the establishment of a new dominant Muslim elite economically supported by the JDP. Then, new codes of conduct and values were (re)introduced, legitimized, and normalized within the scope of Ottomanism and Islamism.

JDP's populism and Islamization of politics and society in Turkey

As we discuss throughout, the JDP is a populist party promoting the power of the people against the elitist and institutionalist character of the former modernist and militarist Kemalist regime. Recapturing the Ottoman heritage and an Islamist discourse is at the core of the JDP's populist discourse. Similar to other populist parties, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and the JDP leadership often explain social and political movements through conspiracy theories and accusing international powers such as the EU, the USA, Russia, and an 'international interest lobby'. Furthermore, it has generated a very strong polarizing form of governmentality perpetuating the religious-secular divide, especially after the *Occupygezi* movement of June 2013. Another populist characteristic of the JDP is its growing Euroscepticism after EU accession negotiations began in 2005. Moreover, JDP's current populist rhetoric is centred on anti-establishment views appealing to the political periphery, more specifically the socio-economically disadvantaged Sunni-Muslim-Turkish fragments of Turkish society.[3]

Since its inception, JDP adopted a conservative democratic ideology with an emphasis on secularism, social peace, social justice, the preservation of moral values and norms, pluralism, democracy, free market economy, civil society, and good governance (Bilge-Criss, 2011). By using this discourse, JDP aimed to mobilize socially and economically marginalized classes who resented the inequalities deriving from the processes of globalization and urban life. JDP also became attractive to the liberal and secular bourgeoisie, and upper-middle and middle classes, who were disenchanted with the political system because of political and economic instability (Hale and Özbudun, 2009: 37). The JDP immediately took the initiative to increase toleration and respect for the freedom of religion and conscience, and for the protection of religious rights such as the right to practice religion in public and private space. This kind of conservative Ottoman-like multiculturalism celebrating cultural differences, local values, and the past was complemented by an acceptance of the inevitability of political and economic reforms demanded by the processes of globalization, and informed by universal values such as democracy, human rights, rule of law, protection of minorities, and the free market (Houston, 2006: 166).

The revitalization of the Ottoman past and the tolerance discourse through Ottoman heritage is an essential characteristic of the JDP's populist rhetoric. However, the revitalization of the tolerance discourse does not lead to fairer treatment of ethno-cultural and religious minorities, who have always been stigmatized and problematized in Turkey because they do not fit into the definition of nation (*millet*) prescribed by the 'holy trinity' of Sunni-Muslim-Turk. For instance, Kurds, Alevis, Circassians, Georgians, Lazis, non-Muslims, and Romas disrupt the unity of the nation as they are not ethnically Turkish, nor religiously Muslim, nor Sunni. Like the Ottoman Empire's modernization in the nineteenth century, neither has the recent Europeanization process of

Turkey yet challenged the conventional definition of the Turkish nation. This has led to the re-stigmatization of these ethno-cultural and religious minorities through their differences. As long as these groups pay their tribute to the Turkish state and accept a subaltern and secondary position, they are tolerated. Otherwise, those groups will be inclined to encounter further ontological challenges.

The revitalization of the tolerance discourse in contemporary Turkey contributes to what Wendy Brown (2006) calls the 'depoliticization of the social'. As Mircea Eliade asserts, ruling groups can revitalize myths when social, political, and economic conditions of a group of people become unpleasant. Eliade underlines his point with the following words:

> Merely by listening to a myth, man [*sic*] forgets his profane conditions, his 'historical situation' as we have accustomed to call it today. . . . [W]hen he is listening to a myth, forgets, as it were, his particular situation and is projected into another world, into a Universe, which is no longer his poor little universe of every day. . . . The myth continually reactualizes the Great Time, and in so doing raises the listener to a superhuman and suprahistorical plane; which, among other things, enables him to approach a Reality that is inaccessible at the level of profane, individual existence.
>
> (1991: 58–59)

Similar to Michael Herzfeld's (2016) discussions of cultural intimacy, social poetics, and practical essentialism, myths become resurgent in times of crisis when reality hits at least some members of a larger society. For instance, ruling groups revitalize the myth of tolerance to conceal the reality of inequality, subordination, and injustice experienced by those individuals or groups. In Turkey's case, these groups are those who are not Sunni-Muslim-Turks. Currently, in Turkey and elsewhere we observe the rise of the tolerance discourse which is leading to what Wendy Brown (2006) calls the culturalization, thus depoliticization, of what is social in the age of the neoliberal form of governmentality, which relies on the reduction of civilization to religion. Against this background, there is a discrepancy between the JDP's religious-based civilizational perspective and Turkey's long-standing European perspective of becoming a soft power in the Middle Eastern region. As we discuss below, the JDP is more inclined to use the neo-Ottoman tolerance discourse and religious-based civilization rhetoric to attract Middle Eastern populations to disseminate Turkey's hegemony in the region.

Turkey's unique experiences with modernization have also contributed to its relations with the West and, particularly, Europe. In the early years of the republic, modernization was defined as a transformation along the lines of Western civilization, requiring alignment with Western countries and separation from Eastern countries. Particularly in the Kemalist era, introduction of a Roman alphabet-based Turkish alphabet (replacing the Ottoman alphabet)

and the establishment of a secular state (restricting the role of Islam in the public sphere) changed the dynamics of Turkey's relations with Middle Eastern countries and served to endorse an assumed superiority of Western civilizations (Bozdağlıoğlu, 2008). Despite its attempts to modernize, Turkey's volatile relations with the EU demonstrate Turkey's contested modernization. Turkey's cultural location in between Europe and the Middle East remains an important issue. The JDP government has addressed the predicament regarding Turkey's role between Western and Eastern cultures. For instance, Erdoğan noted that Turkey has responsibilities towards the Middle Eastern region stemming from its historical ties, and stated that:

> Turkey is facing the West, but Turkey never turns her back on the East. We cannot be indifferent to countries with whom we have lived for thousands of years. We cannot abandon our brothers to their fate.[4]

His speech is an explicit depiction of his post-imperial nostalgia for the Ottoman way of managing cultural and religious diversity in this geography based on the idea of negotiating between different ethnicities, cultures, and faiths. In a public speech that he delivered in Istanbul on 3 March 2017 at an event organized by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Erdoğan expressed his fear of globalization with the following words by implicitly using an Ottoman nostalgia:

> A culture and a civilization cannot be built by works that have no depth or permanence and are produced and consumed daily. We have to focus on permanent and long-term works. . . . How we greet people, how we sit down and stand up, what we wear, what we eat and drink and how we decorate our houses are all determined by our culture. . . . The world is moving fast toward becoming a monoculture. . . . This situation not only effects Turkish culture. It is a big threat against all cultures. Our generation is the last user and witness of the richness of local cultures. The new generations are unfortunately left devoid of this richness and will continue to be so if things go on like this. We will be left in the claws of a cultural drought if we cannot understand the culture of a person walking in the streets of Istanbul from his clothes, shoes, hat and posture. . . . If we lose our identity, character and individuality, we will get lost among the masses. That's why we say, 'One nation, one flag, one country, one state.' These principles are the safety locks of our independence and future.[5]

The critical media interpreted Erdoğan's statements as Ottoman nostalgia because he was referring to the differentiation of the code of clothing in the Ottoman Empire in accordance with religious differences that constituted the *Ottoman Millet System*. The management of ethno-cultural and religious diversity in the Ottoman Empire was mostly accomplished through the *millet*

system, which was the basis of its multicultural ideology. The Kemalist regime removed this cultural memory from the Turkish identity narrative to formulate a widespread rupture from the Ottoman past and its multicultural memory.

Islamism and the victimization discourse

As opposed to its predecessor conservative political parties such as the Democrat Party (DP), the Motherland Party (ANAP), and the True Path Party (DYP), the JDP claims to represent the excluded values of society, such as Islamic values, and bring these values to power. Their aim is to create a perception of resemblance between the lifestyle of the nation and of those occupying political power. Rather than using an elitist jargon in their everyday language, JDP leaders have always been meticulous in using a language shared by the masses. As such, the use of slang language has become commonplace. For instance, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Bülent Arınç (former head of the National Parliament), and Egemen Bağış (former minister of EU Affairs) have successfully created solidarity with the masses through their use of everyday language. Besides, the lifestyle of JDP leaders, especially then prime minister Erdoğan's lifestyle, was admired by various groups of the subordinate people as they found it akin to their own lifestyles. Cihan Tuğal eloquently describes this symbolic capital of then prime minister Erdoğan as an instrument of contributing to the hegemony of the JDP:

> Although the leader of the JDP, Erdoğan, had openly shunned Islamism and adopted neoliberalism, his past involvement as an Islamist, his shared everyday practices with the poor, and his origins in an urban poor neighbourhood enabled popular sectors to read non-neoliberal meanings into the party. Although he was the municipal mayor of Istanbul, Erdoğan broke his fasts in slums or shanties together with the poor. Right after he was elected as mayor, he had his hair cut in the poor neighborhoods where he grew up. Erdoğan became even more popular after he spent time in jail due to an Islamist poem he had read at a rally before he had shunned Islamism. Hence, the symbolic capital circulated by the Islamist movement (piety, suffering for the religious cause, shared origin and practices with the people, etc.) was still deployed by the JDP, even though it had ideologically quit Islamism.
>
> (Tuğal, 2009: 91–92)

As these common religious values are the JDP's main cultural capital, the party elite instrumentalized these values to overcome class differences between themselves and their poor constituency. By appointing devout Muslims to ministries and the bureaucracy, the JDP aimed to create identification between the party and the nation.

Furthermore, the JDP successfully employed a vigorous political victimization discourse to mobilize the masses along with its own political and societal

agenda. Continuing the former Milli Görüş line, the party elite argued that the Kemalist-laicist regime continuously victimized devout Muslims. In this regard, pro-Islamist political parties including the JDP regarded and presented laicism, which is the secularization of political and social institutions, as anti-Islam and anti-religion. Freedom of religion has always been the main discursive tool of such political parties to sustain their power. Laicism was also classified as 'anti' or 'hostile towards' religion by some scientific circles, who argued that the JDP endorsed a secularism that entails *freedom of religion*, while the Kemalist-laicist model promoted one constituting *freedom from religion* (*inter alia*, Yavuz, 2009). However, there are other scientific circles claiming that the Kemalist regime has institutionally supported, promoted, and financed a distinct interpretation of Sunni Islam through the Directorate of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet*) established in 1925 (Hanioğlu, 2012). One of our interlocutors addressed the JDP's meticulous set of realignments:

> The party came to power with a liberal view on religion, addressing issues like the headscarf dilemma. There were many debates on this issue, whether those wearing a headscarf could go to school or not. The party solved the problem quickly. That's when people began to favour Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Then they moved on to history, prepared a programme around neo-Ottomanism, there were several diplomatic openings. They took on a selective approach to history. They focused on our history after 1299 because it fit their agenda. They didn't start with the Seljuks because then they would have to include Shi'ites in their agenda. They are very good at being selective. They focused on religious values and Erdoğan began to look like the leader of the Muslim world, sort of like the Caliphate. That's how they promoted him abroad as well. He became very well-known after Davos. He always addressed issues about Palestine. He was very vocal in Davos and he put Israel in its place. . . . He challenged Israel's authority. He stood by those who were victimised and reinforced his position as a leader. People like siding with victims but they love strong leaders more. I think the people of the Muslim world were expecting a leader to represent them internationally. They were waiting for an Islamic state to rise in the Middle East. Tayyip Erdoğan filled in that position. I should also note that it's not a coincidence that Turkey and a Turkish leader became the face of Islam. Turks are not Arabs and they are different from Arabs so we are not subjected to the same prejudices. We are more like the face of modern Islam.
>
> (25, male, assistant at a municipality in Istanbul, Istanbul, 1 March 2017)

Erdoğan's persona during the Davos crisis (January 2009) also introduced a more antagonistic performance towards international actors, marking the beginning of Turkey's tendency to take unilateral actions in the international relations. This performance has also become a turning point and a symbol of

Erdoğan's anticipation to represent Muslim Middle Eastern countries. More recently, Erdoğan used the failed putsch of 15 July 2016 to reinforce his self-presentation as struggling with the Turkish people against the visible and invisible forces of evil (the military, the shadowy Gülen network, and all the other outside forces) as opposed to the face of a populist leader who is trying every opportunity to consolidate his might.

Multiculturalism in political rhetoric

Despite the JDP's emphasis on multiculturalism, the Syrian refugee crisis was a critical issue for the interlocutors. For a majority of the interlocutors, multiculturalism referred to different cultures united under Turkish language and Islam. This formulates those who do not speak Turkish and non-Muslims as the 'other'. For example, an interlocutor explained 'Turkish multiculturalism' through the Ottoman *millet* system but noted that it has been modified to fit the JDP's political agenda. Despite their support for multiculturalism, a majority of interlocutors were concerned with Syrian culture's effects on Turkish culture, indicating that multiculturalism is almost exclusively associated with new immigrants in Turkey.

> I think Syrian refugees affect Turkish multiculturalism negatively. They have a negative effect on Turkey's image. I mean its image in general. I don't want to sound callous and cold. I mean I feel bad for them because we hear about Aleppo every day, the news about that is everywhere.
>
> (30, female, fitness instructor, Istanbul, 30 February 2017)

The majority of interlocutors noted their fear of terrorism and fundamentalism. They articulated refugees' leanings towards fundamentalism and terrorism as an outcome of negative socio-economic circumstances and isolation, which can be remedied through education and access to the job market.

Despite these criticisms, the interlocutors still emphasized a shared-kinship with Syrians, and that it was Turkey's 'duty' to accept refugees. Nonetheless, they also asserted that the JDP needs a new strategy mainly because Syrian refugees have started to leave the refugee camps to seek work in urban areas.

> I'm uncomfortable with migration. Especially Syrian refugees. . . . I accept that we have taken in Syrian refugees; there is nothing we can do about that now. But I'm uncomfortable with the fact that Syrians find jobs when there are so many unemployed Turkish people. They should not be able to move around the country and get jobs.
>
> (45, female, retired craftsman, Istanbul, 29 February 2017)

Competition in the labour market was a source of concern for most interlocutors, who claimed that refugees were willing to work for less than minimum wage when provided with accommodation and living expenses. In turn,

employers preferred to hire Syrians and exploit their dire circumstances rather than employing Turkish citizens for whom they need to pay insurance and higher wages. This was a result of the fact that the JDP's constituency is comprised of socio-economically disadvantaged masses who compete with Syrian refugees in the labour market.

> Because of Syrian immigrants, the health care system and the job market have become very complicated. Syrians have a work permit. They work for less, so they are getting our jobs. . . . Syrians are given too many rights. It's simply too much. They have more rights than Turks do.
>
> (50, female, textile worker, Istanbul, 29 February 2017)

There were also cultural concerns such as widely mentioned fears that Syrian refugees were "taking over" Turkish culture, specifically concerning the linguistic presence of Arabic in migrant-populated areas of Istanbul, mainly Fatih, a historical district housing Syrian immigrants. This issue elicited emotional and apprehensive remarks:

> I don't understand why we have to integrate them into our society. We are all trying to find a way to accommodate them, but we don't ask if they are happy here or if they want to integrate. They don't seem keen on adjusting themselves to our way of life. It's more likely that we are becoming more like Syrians, learning about Syrian culture rather than vice versa. Have you been to Fatih lately? Even the names of the stores are written in Arabic. Most of us can't read Arabic. It is very unsettling not to be able to read the signs in your own neighborhood.
>
> (22, male, student/works at a municipality's public relations department, Istanbul, 10 April 2017)

As such, the main issue regarding Syrian refugees is not solely about accommodating their way of life but rather about socio-economic rivalry among the JDP's electorate base and the Syrian communities residing in Turkey. In this sense, the JDP's nostalgia for the *millet* system falls short of recognizing the short-term and long-terms effects of such economic and cultural clashes.

The Turkish identity narrative and Ottomanism

There was consensus among the interlocutors regarding their support for JDP's approach to the Ottoman past, noting that they felt an incomplete sense of history and national identity due to the omission of Ottoman heritage and culture from the Turkish identity narrative. To reiterate, the Kemalist government in the early Republican era followed a top-down approach to modernization. This forced modernization implemented an ethnocentric monocultural understanding of Turkish identity centred on Sunni-Muslim-Turkish identities. Interlocutors constructed this as a 'gap' in their memory resulting in a forced

national identity narrative, which caused a cultural trauma that was persistently removed from the public and political spheres through military coups. This mirrored the JDP's anti-establishment and anti-Kemalist views. The sentiments expressed by the interlocutors were similar to that of Davutoğlu and Erdoğan:

> I support the government's emphasis on the Ottoman Empire and our heritage. We should not forget our past, our history. We should emphasise our Ottoman heritage and keep it alive for the next generations. We need to know and sometimes be reminded of what we are, where we come from. We owe it to ourselves to protect our cultural heritage.
>
> (37, male, fitness instructor/former logistics specialist, Istanbul, 2 March 2017)

Interlocutors discussed the rupture after the Kemalist revolution to distance the newborn Turkish nation from the Ottoman past to underline JDP's and Erdoğan's success in restoring an uninterrupted sense of heritage (see Image 3.2). The JDP elite repeated this mantra in the last decade to build a 'New Turkey' and to 'close a hundred-year-old parenthesis' of the Kemalist Westernization project. In the early 1990s Davutoğlu discussed the 'Kemalist-modernist parenthesis' to reject the Western 'modernist paradigm' because of the 'peripherality of revelation', that is the West's emphasis on reason and experience, versus divine revelation, which he argues results in an 'acute crisis of Western civilization' (Davutoğlu, 1993: 195). Davutoğlu's intervention goes beyond the boundaries of modern Turkey and claims hegemony in the Middle

Image 3.2 World Ethnosports Confederation chairman Bilal Erdoğan at the commencement of the Ethnosports Culture Festival in Istanbul.

Source: www.aa.com.tr/tr/turkiye/menzil-okculugu-yarislarinda-acilis-atisini-bilal-erdogan-yapti/636515

East, particularly in the former Ottoman territories. He assumes subsequent to World War I the imperial powers had imposed their will upon the peoples of the Middle East, dividing them up into artificial nation-states. They then subjugated the Middle East by propping up despotic regimes. Davutoğlu's interventions resonate among JDP supporters particularly in relation to the Turkish identity narrative. As one interlocutor noted:

> When I was in elementary school, all we learned was Atatürk. What he did, who he was, how he lived. There were no mentions of the Ottoman Empire. It was as if the Empire never existed. It was traumatic not to know our heritage. There was a huge gap in our history, and no one talked about that.
>
> (22, male, student/works at the Istanbul Municipality public relations department, Istanbul, 10 April 2017)

However, interlocutors also recognized the failures in the JDP's implementation of Ottomanism, specifically the party's deployment of the Ottoman past for exclusionary purposes, which conflicts with the Ottoman multicultural ideology:

> I like the idea of Ottomanism and neo-Ottomanism. That was an original idea. I used to read a lot about Ottoman history and I took a special interest in the party's approach to it. But its implementation wasn't good enough. . . . Ottoman culture was built on multiculturalism and coexistence. Now they are excluding different groups in the name of Ottomanism. It goes against everything the Ottomans believed in.
>
> (25, male, assistant at a municipality in Istanbul, Istanbul, 1 March 2017)

Nonetheless, despite some diverging opinion, the interlocutors conveyed their support for the 'official' narratives surrounding the Ottoman past, centred on Ottoman nostalgia vis-à-vis the re-actualized memories of the Ottoman Empire. It is also significant that JDP supporters did not necessarily define the party's identity narrative but rather echoed the anti-Kemalist sentiments introduced in the JDP's populist discourse.

Revival of the Ottoman past in Turkish foreign policy: leveraging Ottoman past in regional policy

As noted above, the JDP first emerged as a pro-EU political party, which could consolidate Turkey's Westernized political structures with its Muslim cultural characteristics. As such, between 2001 and 2005, JDP passed nine constitutional packages anticipating EU harmonization. These packages concerned the legal protection of social, cultural, and political rights of all Turkish citizens irrespective of religious and ethnic origin, redefining the role of the military in

Turkish politics, minimizing its potential influence on politics, and enhancing legal protection of freedom of speech. The European Commission acknowledged the rapid reformation process, and accession negotiations began on 3 October 2005. However, Euroscepticism in Turkey and Turkosceptism in Europe affected EU-Turkey relations, which were already strained due to the JDP's increasingly Islamic populist rhetoric (Marcou, 2013: 6). Against this backdrop, the neo-Ottomanist discourse gained momentum as a reaction to the rejection from the European Union, which was instrumentalized by JDP officials to legitimize their emphasis on former-Ottoman territories (see Image 3.3).

The JDP's neo-Ottomanist discourse is rooted in Ahmet Davutoğlu's work titled *Strategic Depth* (2005), which was implemented in the scope of the 'zero problems' policy approach that is based on six core principles:

> A balance between security and freedom, zero problems with neighbors, a multidimensional foreign policy, a pro-active regional foreign policy, an altogether new diplomatic style, and rhythmic diplomacy. . . . Though these principles were by no means static, they have since inspired our institutional foreign policy approach. Together, they formed an internally

Image 3.3 President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan receiving a flag with the Ottoman seal at the Kut Al Amara Victory commemoration ceremony on 29 April 2016.

Source: www.tccb.gov.tr/en/news/542/43805/milletimizin-binlerce-yillik-tarihini-neredeyse-1919-yilindan-baslatan-tarih-anlayisini-reddediyorum

> coherent set of principles – a blueprint, so to speak – that both guides our approach to regional crises and helps Turkey reassert itself as a preeminent country in the international system.
>
> (Davutoğlu, 2013b)

Davutoğlu's vision aimed to realize Turkey's rightful place in the religious-historical narrative through neo-Ottomanism. This approach is also tied to the JDP's attempts to rise as a regional power that can serve as a bridge between the West and the East. Davutoğlu also articulated leveraging Turkey's Ottoman past in reinvigorating regional ties as an attempt to balance Western hegemony. As Davutoğlu warned,

> The future cannot be built with recently created concepts of state that are based on nationalist ideologies wherein everyone accuses everyone else and that first appeared with the Sykes-Picot maps, then with colonial administration, and then on artificially drawn maps. We will shatter the state of mind that Sykes-Picot created for us.
>
> (Davutoğlu, 2013a)

Furthermore, Davutoğlu positions Turkey as the epicentre of historic events. His vision advocates a more balanced approach to international and regional actors, focusing on Turkey's economic and political significance to its surrounding regions (Danforth, 2008: 91). In contrast to the Kemalist ideology's isolation from regional affairs, JDP's foreign policy constructs Turkey as a proactive regional player that has the responsibility to mediate regional affairs. The JDP's increased activism in the Middle East is also a product of economic pragmatism because, when the EU lost its appeal after the economic crisis in late 2000s, the East (Middle East, North Africa, and post-Soviet region) became viable alternatives (Öniş, 2010: 11–12). The 'zero problem' approach lost its momentum in the early 2010s because of the Arab Spring and domestic turmoil, which demonstrated that this new pragmatic and neoliberal foreign policy approach made Turkey vulnerable to civil unrest.

Davutoğlu's vision also discursively constructs the Middle East in a way that suits the JDP's Islamic identity in which Turkey's political, economic, and socio-cultural reconnection with the region is a contribution to the country's position in international relations. However, interlocutors doubted the sincerity of these reconnection attempts and articulated the JDP's neo-Ottomanism as a way of governing citizens. They viewed it as a political strategy commercializing Turkey's Ottoman heritage rather than internalizing the newfound remembrances of the past:

> They have been doing important things in terms of Ottomanism and our history. I like their approach to history and cultural heritage. We need to

> remember our past; we need future generations to know where we come from. But I don't like their approach to historical landmarks. They need to be protected. Unfortunately, Turkish people don't know the value of history. I saw people stepping on historical mosaics or even eating on top of tables that were on display in a museum. Turks like being the heir to the Ottoman Empire. I think it is being exploited by the government. They have commercialized our Ottoman history.
>
> (26, female, language teacher, Istanbul, 2 April 2017)

The confusion over neo-Ottomanism stems from its broad definition and its implementation. To that end, there is an intense sense of grandeur attached to the JDP's reconceptualization of the Ottoman past but its implementation is hollow and opportunistic:

> We should have preserved the state culture of the Ottomans, the separation of state and religion. They utilised Islam to unite the society, not as a way of ruling the people. Now we say the Ottomans were great, we praise the empire. But that's a hollow approach. There is a sense of grandeur but it's simply a way of managing the public's perception (*algi yonetimi*). This sense of grandeur caused the fall of the Empire, we have to keep this in mind. We are very visual people. That's why people wrote the 'tall man' song about Tayyip Erdoğan. We care about appearances too much. The way we keep our Ottoman heritage alive is by sticking with the one-man regime, sort of like the sultanate.
>
> (25, male, chief assistant at a municipality in Istanbul, Istanbul, 1 March 2017)

Despite the JDP's attempts to reconcile the East/West dichotomy in its foreign policy, the debates surrounding the possibility of an axis-shift argument became apparent in the early 2010s. The axis-shift argument formulates the JDP's 'zero problems' approach as an imperialist and expansionist agenda which was used to legitimize the 'Middle-Easternization' of Turkish foreign policy (Kardaş, 2010: 115). This is predicated on the assumed mutual exclusivity of the East and the West, meaning that Turkey's emphasis on Islam in national politics, supplemented by involvement in the Middle East, came at the expense of its secular domestic stakeholders and European allies. This stems from the fact that Turkey did not only turn to the Middle East, but to the *Muslim* Middle East (Danforth, 2008: 86) which mirrored the Islamization of domestic politics. For instance, Naci Koru (2013) noted that the region 'shared a common destiny and contributed extensively to the world civilization, in particular our common civilization, the civilization of Islam', thus the 'Turkish-Arab brotherhood and friendship' is not understood in the West. However, for some interlocutors, JDP's relations with the Middle East, though

articulated as a regional policy implemented in the Balkans and Asia, were a source of concern:

> I think we have a problem with diplomacy. Look at what happened with the Netherlands. We are moving away from globalization, trying to be more local, more regional. We are very close with the Arab world. Soon we will be so isolated from the West. Maybe we can have a slumber party with the Arab world. . . . I don't think that we should pursue the West and leave out the Middle East. But I don't understand this obsession with the Middle East either. Financially we depend on Europe and Western countries.
>
> (26, female, language teacher, Istanbul, 2 April 2017)

The JDP's neo-Ottomanist discourse remains a strategic neoliberal move in its rejection of the dichotomies between the West and the 'others'. In doing so, it articulates Turkey as the rightful heir to the Ottoman Empire, which the interlocutors emphasize to understand why Turkey remains the 'other' of Europe. This is apparent in the interlocutors' shared anxiety over being rejected from the EU:

> The EU is afraid of us. We are surpassing them. We are becoming stronger. They are afraid of Islam. . . . We are modernising but we are not European. We have different cultures and beliefs and we cannot overcome that.
>
> (37, male, fitness instructor/former logistics specialist, Istanbul, 2 March 2017)

Conveying the JDP's political discourse, interlocutors discussed the turmoil between Turkey and the EU with references to the Ottoman Empire. This was also reminiscent of other European populist political discourses (Kaya and Tecmen, 2018), which emphasize historical contentions between the Judeo-Christian West and the Muslim East to make sense of contemporary dynamics:

> The Ottoman Empire, more precisely Europe's encounters with the Empire, has kept Europeans together. Their fear of the Ottomans made them unite. If the Ottomans hadn't existed, Europeans wouldn't have united against a common enemy based on their fear. Instead they would have been fighting against each other.
>
> (28, male, financial consultant, Istanbul, 10 April 2017)

In terms of creating bilateral economic relations in a liberal global market economy, neo-Ottomanism remains a way of deploying heritage and tradition to survive in a highly competitive environment. Interlocutors also acknowledged that they view neo-Ottomanism as a mere promotion strategy, and some interlocutors noted that the JDP reinterprets Ottoman history to their advantage to collect more votes:

> The JDP has a very emotional approach to history and historical values. For example, Erdoğan refers to Abdulhamit II very frequently. He talks about the West's approach to the Sultan and how they tried to overthrow him. This is a made-up historical account of Abdulhamit II. They use this false information to explain Western countries' approach to the JDP. They try to create links with the present and the past. People like hearing these similarities, even if they are not true. They use the past to explain the present. We have to understand that they are talking about two different time-periods. . . . The JDP also emphasizes the religious characteristics of Ottoman sultans. This is a very reductive approach to history. Turkey is a Republic; the Ottomans were an Empire. We need to be able to make this distinction.
>
> (38, female, PhD student in social sciences, history, Istanbul, 12 April 2017)

Neo-Ottomanist ties with ex-Ottoman territories were also accompanied by questions on the country's allegiances, which remains a popular criticism of the JDP's foreign policy. This image attempts to reconcile Turkey's traditional relations between Western centres and Eastern peripheries.

Conclusion

In the early 2000s, the party's articulation of conservative democracy alongside a liberal economic approach was a new political rhetoric demarcating from the dogmatic ideologies of previous governments. At that time, the revival of Ottoman heritage in domestic policies was constructed as the revitalization of the Ottoman *millet* system, connoting multiculturalism and diversity. However, Islamism in domestic politics and neo-Ottomanism in foreign politics have become instrumental for the JDP's populist rhetoric since the late 2000s. While conservatism has always been one of the pillars of the JDP and Erdoğan's political agenda, Islamism and Islamization have since dominated the party's political rhetoric. In this sense, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's populist discourse has neglected to consider the views of the opposition, and the Gezi Park protests and the 2016 attempted coup have illustrated the shift from conservative democracy to a more dogmatic Islamic ideology neglecting the views of its opposition. This also coincided with the beginning of a de-Europeanization process that become apparent with the JDP's and Erdoğan's increasingly populist and antagonistic political style centred on anti-EU and anti-globalization sentiments. This was supplemented by the 'othering' of Europe through the implementation of Ahmet Davutoğlu's neo-Ottomanist foreign policy strategy.

As we discussed throughout, in regard to national policies and programmes, neo-Ottomanism refers to the revival of Ottoman culture and tradition through remembrance of the Ottoman heritage in both popular culture and political discourse. The controversial nature of this revival stems from its contradiction with the traditional Kemalist state ideology, which was solely Westward-oriented

with detachment from the Middle East to avoid instability and sectarianism. Drawing on the transformation of domestic politics, the JDP's neo-Ottomanist political discourse presents the Ottoman Empire as an influential global actor, which contributed to Western civilizations while maintaining the ability to represent Muslim communities in the global political arena. This discourse is seen as both 'imperialist' and 'expansionist'. Nonetheless, it is essential to the JDP's regional and global power rhetoric that relies on the decontextualization of Ottoman history and its articulation under the Kemalist ideology. The revitalization of Ottoman heritage in both domestic and foreign politics has been instrumental to the JDP's electoral victory.

This chapter has also revealed that the JDP has used heritage and myths to prompt its constituents to engage in acts of remembering and to create ways to understand the present. In this sense, the policymakers strategizing the past are also aware of the fact that resorting to what is monumental – the heroic, grand, rare, or aesthetically impressive in the practices of heritage – is an efficient way of coming to terms with the socio-economic and psychological constraints of the present. In other words, the JDP case reaffirms what Roland Barthes (1972: 3) said earlier regarding the functional use of myths by the ruling elite, as '[myths] organize a world which is without depth, a world wide open and wallowing in the evident'. As Sharon Macdonald (2013) also clearly shows, memory is never only about the past but is strongly connected with the present and the future. Hence, the use of the past by right-wing populist political parties seems to be a concious act of governmentality that is being performed to design the present and the future for the consolidation of their power.

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Notes

1 For media coverage of these polemics, see an example: www.theguardian.com/world/2017/mar/12/netherlands-will-pay-the-price-for-blocking-turkish-visit-erdogan.
2 For further discussion on the reception, protection, and integration of Syrian refugees in Turkey, see Kaya (2017).
3 Due to the lack of space in this chapter, the authors cannot go into a detailed explanation of the theories of right-wing populism in modern times. However, the authors of this chapter want to underline that their analysis of the JDP as a right-wing populist party rests on the assumption that the JDP has successfully combined the social, economic, political, and psychological deprivation of various segments of the Turkish society with a very strong civilizational, cultural, and religious form of populist political style originating from a Manichean understanding of the world. (For further readings on the theories of populism that the authors have benefited from, see Taguieff, 1995; Laclau, 2005a, 2005b; Berezin, 2009; Moffitt, 2016; Mudde, 2016; Müller, 2016; Kelsey, 2016; Wodak, 2015.)
4 *Daily Sabah*, 08.04.2010, www.sabah.com.tr, entry date 13 June 2018.

5 *Hurriyet Daily News*, www.hurriyetdailynews.com/cultural-superficiality-one-of-biggest-problems-of-our-era-president-Erdoğan-.aspx?pageID=517&nID=110433&NewsCatID=338.

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Chapter 4

'A great bliss to keep the sensation of conquest alive!'

The emotional politics of the Panorama 1453 Museum in Istanbul

Gönül Bozoğlu

Introduction

The quotation in the title of this chapter is from a comment endorsing the Panorama 1453 Museum, made upon its opening in 2009 by Özleyis Topbaş, wife of the then-mayor of Istanbul, Kadir Topbaş.[1] Until recently, the comment was used to market the museum on its website, alongside others by prominent members or supporters of the conservative-Islamist administration of the *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* (Justice and Development Party, henceforth JDP). The JDP has focused significant effort on fostering public memory of the capture of the Byzantine city of Constantinople on 29 May 1453. Festivities, re-enactments, public imagery, and the spectacular Panorama 1453 Museum tell a glorious story of the Ottoman victory and the magnanimous treatment of the defeated Byzantines. In these narratives, public audiences are invited to identify with the Ottomans, and to celebrate a 'Turkish' claim to presence reliant on the *Hadith* in which the conquest is prophesied. Meanwhile, references to the Ottoman past in JDP discourse are frequent.

One aim of this chapter is to foreground the interplay of official heritage and political discourse. Here I will argue that in the populist rhetoric and cultural interventions of the JDP the historic, expansionist encroachment on others is glorified, and Islam is placed at the heart of the story of Turkish identity and homeland, contrary to the secular, Westernized identity of the early Republic. A second aim of this chapter is to analyze the responses to this governmental and authorized heritage by visitors whom I surveyed though short interviews. Here, the politics and affects of people's encounters with the Conquest in the museum need to be related, on the one hand, to the emotional appeals of the JDP's nostalgic populism – which concerns the need to recover a glorious past that has been stolen by political foes – and, on the other, to visitors' resentment towards those very foes: the disempowered secular elites. These, rather than the Byzantines, are the real enemy for the museum's audiences. Finally, this chapter explores the social and political role of the museum in providing a space for the expression of animosity. This consolidates social division and polarization in the interests of the status quo, while also representing the

overlaps between political, emotional, and memory cultures and communities. In exploring this, I seek to work in alignment with recent thinking in heritage studies that develops understandings of the interrelations between historical memory culture, politics, and emotion, as exemplified by Laurajane Smith and Gary Campbell:

> If we accept that heritage is political, that it is a political resource used in conflicts over the understanding of the past and its relevance for the present, then understanding how the interplay of emotions, imagination and the process of remembering and commemoration are informed by people's culturally and socially diverse affective responses must become a growing area of focus for the field.
>
> (2015: 18)

In this chapter it is Ottoman heritage that is the 'political resource' described above. This is because it offers a compendium of values that can be mined by party-political actors to present ideals of national identity and citizenship. At the same time, my research found that such official attempts to 'bring back' the Ottoman past as national history – foregrounding 1453 and not 1923 (the foundation of the Turkish Republic) – was a potent means of tapping into conservative-Islamist audiences' sense of long suffering and suppression under the stridently secularist regimes prior to JDP ascendancy. This means that remembering the Conquest is bound up with a sense of loss, anger, and antagonistic reference to one's enemies at home, alongside a sense that it is finally possible to return to a true identity after decades of injustice.

In the 1994 local elections, an Islamist party – the Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi*) – won a decisive victory and conservative-Islamist mayors were installed in many municipalities, including Istanbul; then, in the 1995 general elections, the party won the majority of the vote. With the rise of the Welfare Party, the prominence of Islam in the public domain increased (Göle, 1997; Navaro-Yashin, 2002) and Ottoman history became yet more visible (White, 2014: 8–9).

The change also occurred in celebration and commemorations of national historical moments. The key events identified by Ottoman historiography were not celebrated during the early Republican era (Çınar, 2001: 365). Rather, during that time new national days were 'invented' in the sense articulated by Hobsbawm and Ranger ([1983]1992) to commemorate Atatürk and the reforms of the early Republic. These include 29 October (the foundation of Turkey in 1923), 23 April (the First Assembly was established in Ankara in 1922; Atatürk devoted this date to children), and 19 May (the date that Atatürk started the War of Liberation). Alongside this is a prominent visual culture relating to Atatürk – who, we should recall, died in 1938 – including literally thousands of photographic and sculptural images of him in public space, not to mention the proliferation of his image in people's houses, or his signature, replicated in bumper stickers and tattoos.

Nevertheless, in recent years the JDP has moved away from big public celebrations associated with the Republic, to focus instead on Islamic and Ottoman ones. Instead of the celebration of the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923, historical events like the Conquest of Constantinople in 1453 have become more central in the public and official sphere, through celebrations and festivities (Çınar, 2001). The Conquest was not absent from state historiography or public commemoration before the changes described above (it was celebrated in 1953, for example), but was of second-order significance compared to the public memory culture relating to Atatürk. In 1994 Erdoğan became mayor of Istanbul, and since then celebrations of the Ottoman past have taken place and gained more stridently Islamist character (Zurcher, 2016). This has involved what I have elsewhere called 'memory wars' (Bozoğlu, 2020), in which memory actors, who are also political actors, more or less associated with party positions, have sought to destabilize or erase memory cultures that they see as inimical to their own. The memory cultures of Atatürk exist today in a tense interrelationship with those of Neo-Ottomanism. But in many ways they also influence and depend on one another, for the stories of heroism and victory are comparable and each relies on its righteous and intransigent opposition to the other. This makes it particularly important for the current administration to invest in the grandeur of 1453. In the anniversary celebrations, re-enactments of the battle symbolically 'perform the conquest again' (Çınar, 2001; Büyüksaraç, 2004; Hürriyet Daily News, 2016). There is also often a re-enactor who plays the role of Sultan Mehmet on his white horse, 're-entering' the city. The meanings of these re-enactment practices can be seen to connect to official practice in museums, and also to political discourse, media representations, and global power plays: as part of the 2017 celebrations, 1,453 lorries were assembled as a world record attempt in a vehicular parade to mark construction of the new Istanbul airport – a past-present relay between the might and achievement of the Ottomans and contemporary Turkey as global powerhouse.

One of the dimensions of so-called neo-Ottomanism is the use of a selective account of the Ottoman past to power identity constructions among the citizenry in the present (Girard, 2015: 3). The JDP's project to rewrite national history with an emphasis on the Ottoman past has been subject to significant and extensive attention and critique.[2] In one authorized heritage discourse (Smith, 2006), the Ottoman past is presented as a source of pride, and a compendium of virtues and values for people to emulate: indomitable strength, valour, self-sacrifice, and piety. As part of a public discourse of ancestry and descendence, promoted by JDP actors, some people make elective, highly emotional connections between themselves and 'the Ottomans', constructing historical continuities that position them as the inheritors of a legacy of greatness that should be preserved and restored. This discourse, together with immersive spectacles in which people can imagine themselves *as* Ottomans within the historic scene of the Conquest, are what Geoffrey Cubitt (2007)

terms 'cultural devices'. These enable people to incorporate a remote past into autobiographical memory, and to bridge the dissonance between past and present: as Topbaş says, to 'keep the sensation of the Conquest alive'. This also occurs in forms of temporal bridging across public and private space: it is possible to buy neo-Ottoman houses; Ottoman clothes are fashionable for events such as circumcision celebrations; JDP politicians break ground for new grand projects on 29 May (the day of the Conquest); Ottoman military music is played in public spaces during Ramadan; and Erdoğan often surrounds himself with men dressed up as Janissary Guards during official appearances. All of these, and many other examples that there is no space to cite, normalize a practice of shuttling between past and present that forecloses any sense of cultural difference between the two.

The discourse of Ottoman revival is articulated across an array of forms of representation, not all of which are in the idiom of 'heritage' in the sense of designated sites, museums, protected traditions, and so on. Indeed, for the Ottoman past to seem really present, it is important that it is not restricted to containers of the past such as museums, but rather spills out into everyday practices and cultural forms. Some of this overspill is manifest in banal discursive connections made in political speeches, or the official naming of new features of the urban landscape. Then, as with the comment from Topbaş and the other dignitaries who endorsed the Panorama 1453 Museum, there are instances in which the apparent divide between heritage politics and party politics is bridged: when politicians open museums, or use spectacular, state-funded historical re-enactments as opportunities for giving speeches. Before discussing these relations, I will introduce the museum and its visitors, setting them into the broader context of neo-Ottoman memory culture.

Panorama 1453 Museum

The Panorama 1453 Museum (P1453) is sited in the Topkapı area of Istanbul, adjacent to the Land Walls of Istanbul. It was opened in 2006 by (then) Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. By some (but not all) reports, it was Erdoğan himself who introduced the idea of a panorama after having visited panoramic museums in Europe during his tenure as mayor of Istanbul (1994–1998) (Bozoğlu 2020). One of Erdoğan's successors as mayor of Istanbul, Kadir Topbaş (in office 2004–2017), was another key figure in the museum's development, intervening directly in structuring the museum and subsequently using it as a showcase to impress dignitaries and sympathetic journalists (Bozoğlu 2020). While it is clearly not unusual for museums to be opened and used by politicians, in the case of P1453 there was and is an explicit link between the museum and the JDP, and an open correspondence between the party-political uses of the Ottoman past and the stated aims of the museum. In the last lines of the web material, the cultural wing of the Metropolitan Municipality states that it is 'freezing this historical moment and giving it as a gift to the future from

the 1453 Panorama Museum, which is in a place whose soul enlightens our present as well as our future'. It continues, 'We hope that you will always keep enthusiasm for the conquest alive and that it will inspire future conquerors'.

In governmental terms then, the museum's project of influencing (or indeed 'inspiring') its visitors is not banal, subtle, or subtextual: as we have seen, the political link with the JDP is celebrated. Although expressly partisan, the very use of the museum form – although P1453 has no collection in the conventional museal sense – constitutes an appeal to accuracy and truth-telling about the Conquest. Verbal interpretation makes frequent reference to academic historians consulted during the museum's development, and to the producers' rigorous use of source materials. If this co-presence of an accuracy claim *and* proudly partisan politics seems paradoxical, it need not be, so long as one accepts that the JDP itself 'speaks truth'. In this sense the party avails itself of the museum as a technology of authority, appropriating its associations as the archetypal institution of objectivity and rigour.

A brief account of the museum's development and its mission and orientation was, until recently, given on the website.[3] It starts with the description of *Topkapı* Cultural Park, where the museum is situated:

> Topkapı Cultural Park, a place where an era was closed and a new era was opened, where the epic of the Conquest was written, where Mehmed the second was named as 'Conqueror', a place where Byzantium, Istanbul and hearts were conquered. The Culture Park is the place [*adres*] of the Ottoman family who flourished in the shadow of the mountains covering the horizon in Söğüt, who opened the breach in the walls of the City and turned into a mighty oak which sprouted many branches.

The oak tree relates to the Dream of Osman I, recounted in the thirteenth-century Turkish-Anatolian epic poem of the same name, in which Osman's vision of a tree prefigures the Ottomans, as a metaphor of the future growth and spread of Islam. The park itself is home to a number of pavilions, each of which showcases the traditional 'Culture of the Turkic World Neigbourhood' (*Türk Dünyası Kültür Mahallesi*). This Pan-Turkism goes beyond the Ottoman Empire, for it includes states that were not under Ottoman control. Although it cannot strictly be called a neo-Ottomanist gesture, there are important points of contact, for they both involve reference to Turkey's historic influence in the wider world. In this way the park frames the museum, bringing together different dimensions of neo-Ottomanism as a recovery both of local cultural identity and of global power. This was made yet more explicit in Erdoğan's speech at the museum's opening ceremony:

> Istanbul is the heritage of the great world empire; as much as it represents Bursa, Van, Diyarbakır, Trabzon, Sivas, Konya, Edirne and Sakarya, it also represents Sarajevo, Kmotini, Skopje and Pristina. Our children [*yavru*]

> who will visit the museum will say, 'wow, who was I [how glorious I once was]!' We do not want our youth to be raised with an inferiority complex.
> (Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality Website, 2009)[4]

P1453 is phenomenally popular and receives, according to official records, a high volume of visitors for its small physical size: up to 6,900 a day sometimes, and over half a million per year. During my own numerous visits, the museum was frequently packed, with large crowds often predominantly populated by conservative Muslim visitors (conspicuous because of Islamic dress) who engage closely, not just by reading and looking but also through other behaviours. These include bodily gestures, exclamations, expressions of emotion and being moved, including crying, and taking selfies against the backdrop of the panorama.

The museum is not spectacular from outside: it is a small, domed building with reproductions of nineteenth-century, Western orientalist engravings on its exterior walls, such as those common in magazines like the *Illustrated London News*. As we move into the museum, we are greeted by a mannequin of Sultan Mehmet II, often called 'Fatih', or 'the Conquerer',[5] and we then negotiate a complicated route through a number of corridors. On the walls of these are reproductions of images of Constantinople and of Sultan Mehmet II, accompanied by text panels containing around 15,000 words of historical narrative of and explanation for the Conquest, and characterizations of Sultan Mehmet II. As an example, one of the English-language summaries of the Turkish texts gives an account of the predestination of the Conquest:

> This painting [actually an enlargement of a passage of calligraphic Islamic script] illustrates the Conquest Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad. The most well-known evangel regarding the Conquest of the city is the 'Conquest Event'. 'The city of Konstantinniye is destined to be conquered. The Commander that will conquer that city is a good one. And the army that will conquest [*sic*] the city is a good one.' This Hadith encourages the conqueror and his army even more, thus his army conquered the city with a great will and determinism [*sic*].

This is one of several references to the importance of the *hadith* and to Islam, framing other texts about the necessity for conquest, since Constantinople was in decline and 'waiting' for a new era, the technological ingenuity of the Ottoman forces, the innovative use of artillery cannon, and Sultan Mehmet II's character: Mehmet II was 'clever, stubborn, sharp, active and liked physical sports', understood literature and science, and 'grew up dreaming of the Conquest'. One text states that his 'sword was never sheathed; his boots never left his feet'. Another key theme is the 'tolerance' and the 'justice' of the Ottomans towards the defeated Byzantines:

> By way of their *gaza* politics [a name given to a holy war waged in order to protect or spread Islam], justice, tolerance and social, cultural and religious practices, the Ottomans firstly conquered people's hearts and then their castles.

The interpretive framing of the Conquest presents it explicitly as divinely ordained, rightful, and progressive. Nevertheless, the texts show an obvious political inflection in which a singular view of the Conquest emerges. As might be imagined, there are competing stories of the Conquest, including many from primary sources (Mansel, 1995: 1; Feldman, 2008), and these are much less glorious in nature. Some recount, for example, gratuitous slaughter after the fall of the city, and the pressing into sexual slavery of the city's youths. No space is accorded to contradictory narratives such as these. The idea of 'conquest' is unambiguously positive where in other settings it might be a term that bespeaks violent invasion and appropriation, thus providing material to build a 'politics of regret' into Turkish national identity frameworks. Any such qualms are dispelled because of the idea of predestination, the selective remembering of events, righteousness, and the focus on the victorious Sultan Mehmet II's magnanimity and fairness, when he issued a firman allowing for the continued practice of diverse religions among his new subjects. Indeed, in the museum there is a film of the firman being read in public, to the joyful and relieved responses of the assembled citizens.

After this textual set-up, we proceed to the panorama room itself. The panorama shows the battle in progress. We emerge from a staircase as if into the past, finding ourselves in a domed room, with a monumental 360-degree painting of the battle, 3D replica weapons strewn around, and an audiotrack of battle sounds and traditional *mehter* military music. There are reputedly over 10,000 figures in the painting, and all of them men at war, characterizing the masculinized nature of the national story on display. On occasion, the warding personnel wear Ottoman costume. When we look at the scenes in the painting, we first face an image of a tree, a further reference to Osman's vision. To the right is Sultan Mehmet II on horseback, directing the battle (Image 4.1). In the sky projectiles fly overhead, and the sun breaks cloud cover – perhaps a play on the long-standing Western pictorial tradition of signalling victory and a new, better era through depicting meteorological changes. There is some magic here too: an image of Sultan Mehmet's face is discernible in the cloud formations. Elsewhere we see corps of soldiers rushing into battle; 'sappers' digging tunnels under the walls of Constantinople for explosives; defensive 'Greek fire' (large ceramic pots of flaming oil and rags) falling down from above as if on the visitors themselves (Image 4.2); and the walls being breached in various places. In one of these scenes, the soldier Ulubatlı Hasan (Hasan of Ulubat) hoists the Ottoman flag on the walls (Image 4.3). There is a well-known story that he defended the flag heroically, inspiring the Ottomans and disheartening the defenders

Image 4.1 Sultan Mehmet II on his white horse in the middle of his retinue. Panorama 1453 Museum.

Source: Photo by Gönül Bozoğlu. Art Director of the Museum is Haşim Vatandaş. Artists are Haşim Vatandaş, Ramazan Erkut, Yaşar Zeynalov, Oksana Legka, Ahmet Kaya (storyboard), Hasan H. Dinçer, Atilla Tunca, and Murat Efe.

Image 4.2 A group of visitors look at the Greek fire flying towards the Ottoman soldiers.

Source: Photo by Gönül Bozoğlu. Art Director of the Museum is Haşim Vatandaş. Artists are Haşim Vatandaş, Ramazan Erkut, Yaşar Zeynalov, Oksana Legka, Ahmet Kaya (storyboard), Hasan H. Dinçer, Atilla Tunca, and Murat Efe.

Image 4.3 The breaching of one of the bastions: Ulubatlı Hasan (Hasan of Ulubat) is first to hoist the Ottoman flag on the wall.

Source: Photo by Gönül Bozoğlu. Art Director of the Museum is Haşim Vatandaş. Artists are Haşim Vatandaş, Ramazan Erkut, Yaşar Zeynalov, Oksana Legka, Ahmet Kaya (storyboard), Hasan H. Dinçer, Atilla Tunca, and Murat Efe.

notwithstanding the multiple arrow injuries from which he subsequently died. Hasan is widely celebrated in ubiquitous imagery and public statuary in Turkey – an Istanbul metro station is named after him near the site of his supposed feat of heroism – but his real existence has been doubted (Hür, 2014). He is nevertheless an influential symbol of Ottoman valour and self-sacrifice.

Indeed, the different scenes in the panorama are far from obscure in their references: they were noticed by various respondents during my visitor studies, and this is unsurprising given their prominence in popular culture, for example in the 2012 film *Fetih 1453* about the Conquest, in which characters such as Hasan of Ulubat appear. In 2015 I conducted 103 ten- to thirty-minute interviews with visitors to understand the importance for them of the museum visit.[6] There is no space here for a full account of the responses (see Bozoğlu 2020 for this); instead, I concentrate on exemplary themes and statements from visitors. These included some of the tropes discussed above, as, for example,

when visitors frequently referred to the Ottomans as their ancestors (*ecdat*), often expressing shame that they could not live up to their memory:

> We were curious about what the Ottomans did for us. Although this is my fifth visit, I am still astounded by what they did. We do not even pray for them! Not in a mosque or in everyday life! I will continue to come back here again and again.
>
> (Female, 28, housewife)

Some expressed a desire to return to or reprise an Ottoman existence. For example, visitors promised themselves to cultivate more 'Ottoman' behaviour in future (in one case, a 'more Ottoman soul'). Some used the panorama to imagine themselves into the battle, feeding into desires to revert to old ways of life that were also expressions of loss of identity and refusal of modernity:

> Experiencing that moment [the Conquest] is so different. I wish I was on one of those horses. Why did that not happen? I really want that, I mean it: to be one of those who were holding a shield. At least to teach swords and shields to people is our duty.
>
> (Male, 29, butcher)

Alongside pride and admiration of the Ottoman achievement (e.g. 'We have intimidated the world!'), another conspicuous theme was the importance of regaining memory that had been forgotten or, more often, 'taken away' by others. In some statements, these 'others' were not explicitly named ('They took our ancestors away from us'), but could clearly be identified with the secular, Kemalist elite, as was made explicit by others:

> The Republican period erased our society's memory. Where is *my* [ruler]? They sent him into exile!
>
> (Male, 60, retired civil servant)

And one twenty-one-year-old male commented:

> In fact, the new generation and we included have been forced to focus on the Republic's [history and ideology] and they have been trying to make us forget about our origin and *real* past. This museum was established to stop this. In a similar way, making films and TV serials has the same reason: to prevent us from forgetting our self ['*öz*'].
>
> (Male, 21, student)

Turkish National TV channels show serials about the Ottomans such as *Diriliş* (*Resurrection*). There are also film productions such as *Fetih 1453* (*Conquest 1453*), and at the time of writing more such shows are being produced,

notably *Payitaht: Abdülhamid*. Many respondents mentioned these. This cross-referencing between televisual and museal representations of the Ottomans is indicative of the intertextuality of different representations and their integrated meaning for people for whom the Ottomans have become salient for identity. This intertextuality is actively supported by the JDP: alongside endorsements of P1453, Erdoğan has also encouraged people to watch historical dramas about the Ottomans, such as *Diriliş* and, subsequent to my data collection, *Payitaht: Abdülhamid*, so that '[we may] understand our history' and 'know what we once were' (Armstrong 2018).

The project of regaining a past, and an identity connected to it, also carried through into a number of statements directly or indirectly connecting the Ottomans to Erdoğan or suggesting that it was the JDP who were responsible for bringing back the 'forgotten' and 'real' past:

> I have come to see what the Ottomans did for us. The people [i.e. politicians] who are fighting for a seat should come and see this place. Also, the ones who begrudge Erdoğan his position should come and see this. I feel very emotional. This is my first visit but I will come back here. You see how Turkey was rescued with such difficulty, how we have come to this situation with such difficulty. With such difficulty, our integrity ['*namus*'] and honour were rescued and now we are here. People should pray and give thanks. Like the Ottomans, our dear president [Erdoğan] is also fighting for these values. People should know the value of our president.
>
> (Female, 65, housewife)

Responses of this kind, and those that involve implicit or explicit expressions of grievance towards secular Republicans, support the argument that the appeal of the JDP's neo-Ottomanist nostalgia is to 'mend' people's relationship with the past, and to reinstate what Atatürk disestablished in 1923 (Temelkuran, 2015: 11). What should be evident from this is that responses of this kind were about something that was not evidently present in the museum: there was no explicit mention in displays of Atatürk or of the early Republic, and yet this was a key reference point and object of resentment for many of my respondents. 'Resentment' (and '*ressentiment*') has nuanced and varied definitions across literatures (Demertzis, 2006), but in the setting of P1453 I mean, with *resentment*, the sense that emerged from respondents of having been unjustly deprived – by a dominant political elite with unshared values – of one's historical memory and identity. What was 'taken' from visitors by this enemy group, in other words, was that faculty to identify oneself in history as Ottoman. This faculty pertains to complex contemporary political and social contests, including a clash between secularism and state-sponsored Sunni Islam.

This begs the questions: To whom did the panorama's producers think the museum would appeal and why? What effect did its producers hope for in those audiences? There is insufficient space here to discuss the interviews I undertook

with its producers (for more discussion, see Bozoğlu, 2020), but three main themes emerged from this. Firstly, the producers insisted on their historical neutrality and objectivity, in what was both a disciplinary ideal of achieving accuracy and a means of warding off the accusations of partisanship and selective remembering that had appeared in unsympathetic news media outlets (Aytalar and Oktay, 2009). Secondly, the producers were content to see the emotional and indeed the religious response that the museum provoked in its visitors:

> Well, people get very emotional and say they have goose bumps, because there are a lot of reasons, and we worked hard on it, and there are so many details, and that gets an appreciative response. We were neutral here and we just showed how Istanbul was conquered. . . . There are queues on the weekend, and we hear people cry, and we hear people pray, so we are happy with what we achieved.
>
> (Interview with a producer, 2015)

Thirdly, the insistence on historical 'truth' meant that the producers disavowed any attempt to target specific visitors, even if in fact the audience profile is limited. For them, the panorama was not a matter of tailoring the past to suit a particular group; it was simply truth-telling. Of course, neutrality in curatorship is a long-standing fallacy in museology, and the denial of governmentality it involves may be a question of institutional face and/or naturalization processes at work. Actors of governmentality do not all covertly subscribe to a surreptitious project of forging citizenship that they hide from audiences and interviewers. In her work on Northern Cyprus as a 'make-believe' state, Yael Navaro-Yashin (2012) discusses banal, pervasive, and coincidental affects of administrations and modes of governance that are generative. They can 'produce' a state, but potentially also its history. In a governmental view, such affects may frame the 'objective' worldviews and desires of producers as self-regulating subjects themselves, contributing to the slow repetition of stories and expert claims made in public memory culture and authorized heritage discourse (Smith, 2006). If it seems easy to debunk the apolitical neutrality of the curatorial position described in the quotation, it certainly seems not to match the political and antagonistic content of the visitor comments, the pride taken by producers in visitors' heightened emotional and religious responses, or the complex political history of the museum and its overt party links. To read against the grain of the quotation, which I have taken care to say does need not be considered disingenuous, a more nuanced understanding of the museum's situated meaning for politics and society is needed. I turn to this now.

Discussion: emotional politics of the past

To understand why visitors expressed resentment against an absent enemy, we must consider the museum in its time. It opened in 2009, although it had been

in germination and development for some years previously. By the time of the opening, the JDP had been in power for nearly seven years, and the museum can be seen as part of a general project of instituting a neo-Ottoman memory culture to accompany, or in another view to supplant, the memory cultures of Atatürk and the early Republic that have such pronounced public visibility in Turkey (Navaro-Yashin, 2013; Tharoor, 2017). These can be and have been seen as antagonistic memory cultures with separate heroes, symbols, narratives, and meanings that crystallize in different political and civil ideals of the nation: as secular, modernist, and Westernized; or as (Sunni) Islamic, fundamentally non- or anti-Western and atavistic (Zencirci, 2014: 3). These antagonistic ideals attach to antagonistic groups, each of which celebrates one past but not the other, avails itself of an associated, specific repertoire of emotional practice, and takes a specific political side. It is in the interplays between historical memory, emotion, and political standpoint, among other dimensions, that group identities are made and maintained. The JDP and its supporters were, upon the opening of the museum, in a position of consolidated strength. Indeed, the JDP was later to increase its percentage of the vote in the 2011 general elections, marking its third victory at the ballot (of four, at the time of writing). The secular legacy of Atatürk and its supporters were beleaguered.

This brings up a question: Why, at a time when the JDP and its supporters enjoyed dominant status, was there a need for the museum? One possible answer is that in Turkey there is always a sense of the latent possibility of dramatic political change, for example through coup attempts or as threatened in cases of mass civil disorder such in the 2013 Gezi Protests (Whitehead and Bozoğlu, 2016), that make any regime fragile, however dominant it may seem. Notwithstanding its typically large margin of support at the ballot box, the JDP needs to actively cultivate its supporters and provide identity resources for them. As a consequence, we may see P1453 as such a provision, offering objects of attachment (the Ottomans) and *implicit* objects for resentment (secularists/Kemalists). Atatürk and his political followers are, in this sense, an *absent presence* (Law, 2002) at the museum: they are not there in the displays, images, and texts, but their absence is built into the historiographical structure of the representation; the museum has been, as it were, designed against their memory. Beyond the museum, Ottoman historical memory and identity is more generally discursively pitted against the JDP's secularist enemies, as when Erdoğan, at a 2014 rally, exhorted his followers to give the Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*) an 'Ottoman Slap' at the ballot boxes (Reuters and Haaretz, 2014). By authorizing the story of the Conquest and celebrating the Ottomans and through its intertextual arrangement in public discursive space, the museum opened up an alternative nationalist historiography to contrast with the previously dominant Republican national story. At the same time, the glorification of Sultan Mehmet II can be seen as an attempt to supplant Atatürk's post-mortem cult of personality, as if to create a new national hero for attachment. In these senses it is unsurprising that visitors identified

modern secularists as their enemy, rather than the Byzantines. The Byzantines were definitely, definitively defeated; the secularists, only temporarily (the fragility of the JDP ascendancy has indeed been verified at the time of writing, in the June 2019 municipal election won by Ekrem İmamoğlu, leading a coalition of the secularist Republican People's Party and the Good Party (*İyi Parti*), both of which represent secularist and Kemalist interests).

So far, I have shown the close interrelation between historical memory politics and party politics in the governmental framing of the museum. P1453 presents an emotionalized, selective, and dramatic narrative of the past into which visitors have the opportunity to imagine themselves and thus to configure identities – for themselves and for their enemies. It could be argued that P1453 shares many of the techniques of populist discourse: the great and special man (Sultan Mehmet II), magically predestined to greatness; the friend-and-foe dynamics (Mudde, 2004; Kaya, 2016); the heroic struggle and righteousness of the ordinary people, including emblematic heroes like Hasan who trigger learned emotional responses; and so on. To this we might add the popular appeal of the representational technology of the panorama, with its high drama and direct messages. It is not a long stretch to suggest that Mehmet II might function as a proxy figure for Erdoğan. As far back as his Istanbul mayoral campaign prior to election in 1994, he had played on the theme of the 'second conquest' of the city, which he promised to carry 'from darkness to light', 'just as Sultan Mehmed of the Ottoman Empire had done when he had conquered the city in 1453' (in Büyüksaraç, 2004). There is then a strategic interdependence of heritage discourse and party politics.

I have also presented a sample of visitor comments that represent those visitors' enthusiastic take-up of the opportunities presented by the museum. These are opportunities for visitors to relay imaginatively between past and present (once again, keeping the 'bliss of the Conquest alive'). Smith and Campbell point out that people *desire* to have emotional responses, and they seek them out and look to museums and heritage sites to mediate them; they become skilled at recognizing and 'working with' their emotions in such settings (2015: 445). Although it would be misleading to suggest that this is universally true of all museum visitors, at P1453 the obvious emotional behaviour of visitors chimes with Smith and Campbell's view. The immersive, time-travel technology of the panorama is important here. You need to be able to travel back in time to fully experience what you have lost, and therefore to be able to savour that loss. Consequently, the museum acts as a space in which to express emotional grievance against a social and political enemy group responsible for depriving visitors of their notional past and identity. In my sample, this enemy group represented a loose construct of repressive secularism against which respondents felt it was finally possible to rail, after decades of privation.

However, such emotional expressions did not involve an evident release, so much as a mixture of continued animosity and vigilance. Rico et al. (2017) suggest that it is anger, and not fear, that is the defining emotion of populism,

which, as a 'Manichean ideology that conceives politics as the antagonistic struggle between the benevolent people and the evil elite' (drawing on Mudde, 2004), should be 'more appealing to angry than to anxious citizens', and more likely to mobilize subjects who, in a fearful state, would be passive. Certainly, my visitor studies showed expressions of anger. But I have tried to suggest that this is also a result of latent anxiety about political futures: that the foes who repressed people's senses of their 'history' and identity may return to power. A way through this is to suggest that it is more helpful to see the emotions of fear and anger as consecutive rather than singular, and that, as Margaret Wetherell suggests, emotions may run in 'affective-discursive loops', triggering and flowing into one another recursively (Wetherell, 2012). This also accounts for flows and relays between other emotions in P1453, including shame at not living up to the example of one's notional ancestors.

What is needed, in cases like P1453, is a relational study of memory, politics, and emotion capable of capturing the meanings, uses, and salience of the past in the present in public institutions, space, and discourse and in people's lives. The study of emotion in politics has a relatively developed tradition, especially relating to the surge of interest in populism (see Clarke et al., 2006; Wright-Neville and Smith, 2009; Eklundh and Massey, 2013; Kassab, 2016; Rico et al., 2017). In this literature, broadly speaking, there have been moves to overcome rationalist models that see emotion as extraneous to or undesirable within politics, towards understandings of politics and emotion as always entangled (Clarke et al., 2006: 7–8). Meanwhile, in memory and heritage studies there is an ongoing turn to affect (Smith, 2006; Macdonald, 2013; Smith and Campbell, 2015; Witcomb, 2015, 2016; Tolia-Kelly et al., 2017). Here too, there has been a move away from reductively cognitive understandings of people's understandings of the past, towards more integrated models of meaning-making that include embodied, sensory, and affective dimensions. In this view, the past can be emotional matter, and we can ask socio-political questions about why this is, for whom, when, and where.

In both literatures, there is the possibility of focusing on the emotional work of the powerful actors – party politicians, or museums, for example – which may aim to elicit, prompt, and mobilize emotions among citizens. Otherwise, one can focus on the emotional responses of the citizens who are the targets of this work. A third way is to see this relationship dynamically. Certain emotional memory cultures – such as those tied to the commemoration of specific events like the Conquest of Constantinople, or historical individuals like Sultan Mehmet II – have a pre-existence and salience among some social groups, and members of those groups go both to sites of 'heritage' and memory, be they museums or historical re-enactments in public space, and to the ballot box. In some cases, such memory cultures are, because of the familiarity of their narratives and emotional patternings, amenable to cultivation, exploitation, reworking, and investment that are simultaneously in the interests of powerful political actors, while also responding to the emotional needs of citizens

to conceptualize and position themselves in history and society. This is better seen as an interplay between top-down and from-below emotional memory practice – a tacit negotiation between the needs of political actors and those of citizens – rather than a unidirectional emotional manipulation of the masses by way of imposed historical memory. The museum is at once a strategic mobilization of emotions and a site for the willing to practise emotion and to exercise a politico-historical identity based on animosity.

In the still-somewhat-separate literatures on affect and emotion generally, politics and emotion, and heritage and emotion, we find discrete conceptions of community. *Emotional* communities share emotional repertoires (see Wetherell, 2012). *Political* communities share political beliefs, interests, and standpoints (Walzer, 1983). And *memory* communities share attachment to given pasts (Irwin-Zarecka, 2007). I suggest that these are not so much comparable as overlapping structures. So, for example, groups who share political beliefs often also share attachments to certain pasts, and emotional repertoires that make these politics and attachments meaningful and personal. Nor, obviously, are these dimensions of community the only ones that we can speak of – religiosity, for example, is another. The overlap between such dimensions of community may not always be total. It is unlikely that everyone for whom the Ottomans are important identity references will also be ardent JDP supporters. But my suggestion is that there are cases, such as the one represented by my P1453 study, where there is a high degree of consonance between the political, emotional, and memory dimensions of community, or, to put it differently, where these dimensions interlock closely and tightly.

Final thoughts: historical memory and social division

The next steps for understanding the emotional politics of the past are to understand this multidimensional nature of community and, then, what this means for broader social relations *between* communities who have to negotiate what Ash Amin calls the 'politics of propinquity' (2002), which 'derives from the fact that groups marked, perceived and/or identifying as different from one another live in the same "places"' (Whitehead and Lanz, 2020). Different negotiations of propinquity can involve significant intergroup tension, as I saw in my research, which showed up again the well-remarked antagonism between conservative Sunni Muslim groups and secular Kemalists (Zencirci, 2014: 3). Such tension may be tantamount to social division and polarization.

In Ian Lustick's classic definition, a deeply divided society is where 'ascriptive ties generate an antagonistic segmentation of society, based on terminal identities with high political salience, sustained over a substantial period and a wide variety of issues'. This characterizes well the situation where family, social networks, and ways of life can lead to relatively static identities and attachments both to political and memory cultures in Turkey. Lustick adds that, as a minimum condition, 'boundaries between rival groups must be sharp enough so that membership is clear and, with few exceptions, unchangeable' (Lustick,

1979: 325; see Guelke, 2012, for alternative definitions), and this too is recognizable in clear distinctions of the physical habitus – particularly between secularists and many conservative Muslims – and the relative difficulty of, and lack of inclination for, 'breaking out' of one's social milieu or changing one's dispositions. The museum also functions as a performative site of membership, for the self-selection of the audience and their evident physical and emotional engagements with the museum displays are also behaviours that construct collectivity and the sense that there are like-minded people here. There is no space in this chapter to explore this important aspect, but we should remember that visitors' behaviours and gaze are not entirely oriented towards their solitary encounters with the displays, but also towards one another.

Lustick's 'deeply divided society' can also be understood in relation to polarization – a common but imprecise catchword in Turkey – which, in Jack Barbalet's discussion, is when different social groups 'fail to share common reference points cognitively and affectively, that is to say they literally live in different worlds'. This means that there is a fundamental breakdown in sympathy, so that the 'humanity of the other is simply not accessible' (Barbalet, 2006: 46–47). The result is a deep divide and animosity that cannot be bridged unless there is a significant change of circumstances, such as, perhaps, the entrance onto the scene of a new common foe that unites previously antagonistic parties. The antagonistic play of different repertoires of historical narratives, symbols, and heroes can be seen as part of this divide, as 'reference points' specific to one group that are not shared by another, meaning that people 'live in different worlds', or rather, different imaginations of Turkey, and fail to sympathize with others to the point of resentment.

What P1453 helps to show is the way in which political and emotional attachments to a particular past can build and consolidate social division. In Lustick's 'control' model of divided society, as opposed to a consociational model based on forms of collaboration and compromise, a divided society requires mechanisms to impose stability. Such mechanisms may include legal ones or the persecution of dissidents as enemies of the state, but they may also include official heritage management and uses of the past. We might, in this sense, see P1453 as a physical and symbolic site for the cultivation of animosity that is in some sense a mechanism of control. This mechanism may help to guarantee the stability and ascendancy of one political community, that is also a memory and emotional community, at the expense of another – not only to keep the 'sensation of the conquest alive', but also to keep alive resentful affects and the corollary inclination to act against foes, if not 'with swords and shields', then with the vote.

The critical point is that emotionalized historical memory cultures are imbricated with the 'politics of propinquity', and that imbrication is both foundational and dynamic. We can talk of strategically opportune constructions of memory to achieve political ends, as when the JDP 'invents tradition' (Hobsbawm and Ranger, [1983]1992) or develops new historical mythologies. But it is important to recognize that these are often affective transformations of durable structures

of public memory, including latent or sometimes suppressed ones, which is why they have power and salience for communities; it is why ideological approaches are invisible to some producers or naturalized as objective, neutral history – 'telling it as it happened'. It is also why there is a need to find ways to understand and show the mutuality of political, emotional, and memory cultures. P1453 offers an immersive return to the past, an occasion for imaginative work through which people simultaneously regain an imagined past while also facing up to its loss and vilifying contemporary social and political foes. Here, the significance of the Conquest is that it has to be 'alive' and yet 'taken away from us' simultaneously, in order for people to feel both loss and the blissful possibility of rebecoming, to feel both grievance and the promise of vengeance, and to be both victim and victor.

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Notes

1 Topbaş, Özleyis (2009). *Comment from museum guestbook reproduced in 'Significant Visitors' section of the Panorama 1453 Museum website*. Notably, subsequent to the resignation of Kadir Topbaş as Mayor of Istanbul, comments by him and his wife about the museum were removed from the website, alongside others. The new 'Significant Visitors' page on the museum website only has one comment, made by the president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan: https://www.panoramikmuze.com/en/significant-visits (accessed 14 May 2019).
2 Another, related, dimension is the use of the Ottoman Empire as inspiration for regaining a position of international geopolitical power, as discussed by Kaya and Tecmen in this volume.
3 'About' section, Turkish Panorama 1453 Museum Website (2018), http://panoramikmuze.com/panorama-1453/hakk%C4%B1nda.aspx# (accessed 15 May 2018), my translation. These texts reflect the content of the website until 2018, during which changes were made and texts removed.
4 'Türkiye'nin ilk panoramik müzesi "İstanbul'un Fethi'ni" yeniden yaşatacak . . .' http://www.ibb.gov.tr/tr-TR/Lists/Haber/DispForm.aspx?ID=17004 (accessed on 14 July 2019).
5 This was put in place in 2016.
6 This was a random sample (approaching every third visitor or visitor group) over weekdays and weekends. The resulting data was coded using NVivo. It should be noted that this is not a statistically representative sample of the whole population of visitors, but rather a view into the dispositions and responses of a limited number of people. Alongside the short interviews, I employed a number of other qualitative visitor studies that are not presented here.

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Chapter 5

The Mediterranean as a mirror and ghost of the colonial past

The role of cultural memory in the production of populist narratives in Italy

Gabriele Proglio

Introduction

'Italians first': this slogan was used by all right-wing parties during past elections in Italy. There were three main aims connected to this use: firstly, to affirm a new sovereignty against migrations and globalization; secondly, to sustain a nonalignment and rupture with European institutions and their requests; thirdly, to attack mismanagement in Italy, following several cases of corruption, Mafia affiliation, and bribery.

National elections in March 2018 were won by two parties: the League, with a concentration of preferences in the North and Centre, and the Five Stars Movement in the South. After an initial period of instability during which a return to the ballot box seemed inevitable, the two parties, led respectively by Matteo Salvini and Luigi Di Maio, formed a new government. Both parties used populism in their propaganda; national and international analysts warned about the new Italian political agenda. From 1 June 2018, despite the new government being led by Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte, Matteo Salvini became the de facto leader of the new governing coalition, making ongoing public interventions against migrants and for controlling Italian frontiers in the Mediterranean Sea and Europe.

In this chapter, I analyze Salvini's populist propaganda against migration, both on social networks and in his speeches, as part of a public process of narration which is giving new meanings to Italian colonial memories. In the first part of the chapter, I discuss my theoretical framework and how populism is connected with the colonial archive. The second part of the chapter is dedicated to analyzing a genealogy of populism. The third part, then, focuses on Salvini's narrative on migrations, Europe, and Italian frontiers. Finally, I connect the two parts of this chapter by way of a double interpretative perspective, framing what has happened and is happening in the Mediterranean as simultaneously a 'ghost' of the colonial past and a 'mirror' of the new national identity.

Colonial archive, ghost and mirror

My theoretical framework is based on the idea of the colonial archive as a place where representations, practices, and imaginaries are deposited. In particular, I use the formula 'record domain' in order to bring together the representation of the other and otherness and the biopolitical construction of society. My intention is to focus on two combined but rather different aspects of this connection: the ghost, namely the legacy of colonial narratives and practices, and the mirror, the recognition of the self in a national imagined community. In studying populism in Italy, and in particular League's propaganda by Matteo Salvini, this double gaze shows an interchange of memory which is spread between the public sphere and private contexts. On the one hand, populist narratives act by mobilizing colonial representations on new bodies and subjects arriving in Italy and Europe, attributing inferiorizing, discriminatory, and racialized subjectivities to non-EU and non-Italian people. On the other, the same narratives are used against these groups and individuals considered as dangerous intruders, and in support of Italians, the 'real native people'. This movement of images and narratives, spread in two different directions at the same time, turns a fragmented 'national' body – such as the Italian one, with its differences in terms of North/South, class, gender, cultural identity, and so on – into a unique and homogeneous entity as compared to the otherness coming from outside the national boundaries.

Since the 1980s, there has been an intense debate in the field of history and other disciplines over the role of the Italian colonial past, bringing light on violence in former colonies, for example, the devastating use of the chemical weapon *iprite* (mustard gas) by Fascist aviation to destroy the Ethiopian resistance in 1936 (Del Boca, 2007; Belladonna, 2015). In other cases, scholars have investigated the power relations and respective genealogies in the colonies, with a specific focus on race, gender, and colour (Sorgoni, 1998, 2001; Poidimani, 2009). In the field of postcolonial studies, then, a large debate has focused on new forms of racism, discrimination, and cultural-spatial-social segregation in the Italian media and representations after the end of colonialism (1945–1960) (Giuliani and Lombardi Diop, 2013; Giuliani, 2015).

Despite coming from different disciplines, theoretical approaches, and methodologies, the vast majority of the scholars of Italian colonialism and the Italian postcolonial condition have asserted a specific interpretation of the memory of the Italian colonial past. According to these scholars, colonial memory was repressed after the end of Fascism. Racisms and other forms of discrimination, then, are the signs of a past which is re-emerging and the consequences of a collective unconscious reaction to such forgetting (see Proglio, 2018).

I see the thesis above as problematic, for at least three different reasons. Firstly, how is it possible for a colonial country, such as Italy, to have removed and repressed the colonial past from its public memory? According to the

psychoanalytic literature, the person who represses the memory of the past is the subject who suffered but not the perpetrator of violence, as in the case of Italian colonialism in Africa. But apart from that far from secondary issue, a violent event was supposed to have happened and touched, directly, all Italian souls. As we know from several important historical works (Labanca, 2002; Stefani, 2007; De Napoli, 2009, among others), Italy imposed its power and dominion on so-called colonized people using different tools: approving racial laws; adopting a segregational organization of colonial societies; through murders, rapes, and detention camps.

Secondly, what kind of violence were Italy and Italians subjected to? And particularly, is it possible that a colonial society, at the end of its empire, felt an emotion so deep, strong, and intense to require a psychological separation from the object of reference, the colony? This second set of questions is strictly connected with the specific Italian post-war context and the fact that Italy tried to regain its colonies during and after the Paris Peace Treaties in 1947 (Morone, 2016). Hence, it is highly improbable that Italy was remembering former colonies – and moving from disappointment to a desire to continue to shape the future of those countries – and simultaneously repressing the memory of the colonial period.

Thirdly, it is important to analyze the relationship between public and private memory during the thorny and complicated transition from the colonial period (1911–1943) to the post-war era (De Luna, 2015, 2017; Passerini, 1984; Crainz, 2012). Italy was facing several problems: the transformation from dictatorship to democracy and the problem of what to do with the Fascist bureaucracy, as well as the reconstruction of the country's infrastructures. I argue that in that intense, crucial historical moment, the whole country wasn't shocked by the loss of the empire and colonies. In addition to that, it is remarkable how this interpretation of the colonial legacy lacks a subject (see Loriga, 2010). In fact, the nation is not a unique and homogeneous entity – especially in Italy, which is divided between North and South, and many other small fragmented communities – and may be considered as a result of several narrations (Bhabha, 1990). More generally, it is difficult – if not impossible – to affirm that a collective trauma involving the major part of the Italian people was enacted during that period. This does not exclude the possibility that someone, or perhaps a part of the society which was more involved in colonialism and colonization, was feeling rage or delusion; but this has not been scientifically proved. From another perspective, it is not clear when public and private memories encounter each other.

Based on these considerations, I argue that colonial memory was not repressed and removed from both public and private spaces: this is the starting point of my theoretical framework. In Italy, the racist imaginary did not end after the fall of the African colonies: it endured but with new targets. Simply, new subjects after the colonized – Jews, Roma, and so on – were discriminated against. An example would be the *meridionali*, namely, the people who have

emigrated from Southern Italy to work in the industrialized Northern Italian cities since the 1950s; Albanian migrants since the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s; or Maghrebi and sub-Saharan Africans in the period after the Arab revolutions.

Ann Laura Stoler has offered the notion of aphasia to highlight how the colonial past is not forgotten but is both absent and present in the postcolonial condition (Stoler, 2011, 2016). In her last book, *Dureless* (2016), she asserts: 'Racist perceptions and practices occupy global space and permeate the private sphere, scholarly accountability has been sought in making sense of the tenacious resilience of race as a social, political and psychological category that continues to define people and confine their options, to exclude and embrace, to grant and withhold entitlements' (19). In her opinion, the colonial past is 'disabled and deadened to reflective life, shorn of the capacity to make connections' (Stoler, 2016: 24). Chiara De Cesari considers the 2008 Italy–Libya Friendship Treaty as a case of aphasia. She states: 'They are voided memories, diminished, belittled through their opportunistic misuse. Even more so, these are memories voided of their potential to provoke critical reflection' (De Cesari, 2012: 323).

Starting from Ann Laura Stoler's thesis on colonial archives and governance (2002, 2010), I will introduce the concept of the 'domain record' as an outcome and tool connected to the archive at work. Ontologically, I mean it as a memory device able to combine forms of representation (self/other) with practices of dominance and/or hegemony (Guha, 1997). In this sense, the domain record unites representation – that is, the decoding of a body considered other, an action, a concept, and its recording according to the canons of the hegemonic subject(s) – with the practices that take hold of it to realize the power relations between different subjects. It brings together the form and action of the hegemonic discourse.

Colonial records were neither only a state of exception (Agamben, 2003) nor a norm (Foucault, 1972). Consequently, the domain record is not an expression of a lack of something (just as racism is not a consequence of a lack of education) and does not define an extemporaneous condition. Colonial records are not talking directly about the norm: the norm, as sets of positionalities occupied by subjects' inner landscape of power relations' genealogies, is the kernel – present, central, and structurally essential but not visible.

Moving from the archive as 'fact' to the archive as 'process' (as suggested by Stoler, 2010: 20) means, in the case analyzed in this chapter, shifting the focus from context coherence to narrative assemblages via several 'archival forms' (Foucault, 1972). As pointed out above, each record may be considered as a borderland where representations of the other are in touch with actions which are able to translate the meanings into action.

I see Stoler's 'grain' of the archive as a historical operation referring to the 'combination of a social place, "scientific" practices, and writing' (De Certeau, 1988: 57). Each 'record' is an effective and constitutive part of this process,

which makes evident anxieties, fears, desires, repulsion, attraction, angst, dismay, unease, panic, and many other emotions of the 'self' in encountering the other.

I consider the domain record as a liminal space where aesthetic representation meets practice in constructing the world, re-actualizing colonial stereotypes on other bodies. As a consequence of this linkage, the memory of colonialism and its actualization in the postcolonial context in Italy have two relevant figures: the mirror and the ghost. These devices are forms of governmentality (Foucault, 1991) used by hegemonic subjects to organize subjectivities in spaces through genealogies, power relations, and practices of domain.

The ghost is a historical negative which has been elaborated by hegemonic subjects in terms of expectation and disappointment, intention and dissatisfaction. In the Italian colonial context, the 'ghost' is made by both the narrative elaborated during presence in Libya and the Horn of Africa, and feelings of white Italians about the domain and loss of power over African lands and Black bodies.

The 'mirror', on the contrary, is a set of narratives and practices centred on the act of self-recognition in an imagined community (Anderson, 1991). Jacques Lacan introduced the concept of the *mirror stage*: 'a child, at an age when he is for a time, however short, outdone by the chimpanzee in instrumental intelligence, can nevertheless already recognize as such his own image in a mirror' (Lacan, 1949: 502). 'He experiences', Lacan adds, 'in play the relation between the movements assumed in the image and the reflected environment, and this virtual complex and the reality it reduplicates' (Lacan, 1949: 503). I place this schema in a specific theoretical perspective: that of the recognition and identification of Italian people in an imagined community (Anderson, 1991) through media narratives. This 'self', as postulated by Lacan, is made by the 'imago as threshold of the visible world', between hallucinations and dreams (504). This experience is based on a temporal dialectic which decisively projects the formation of the individual onto history: 'the mirror stage is a drama whose internal thrust is precipitated from insufficiency to anticipation' (Lacan, 1949: 505), with a transition from a 'fragmented body' (which, for us, is the single person not yet part of a community) to its 'orthopaedic totality', as called by Lacan – the imagined community for us (Anderson, 1991).

I will use this double gaze – 'ghost' and 'mirror' – to analyze 'domain records' concerning populism in contemporary Italy. At this point, it is important to explain how I would like to consider populism – my theoretical interpretation of this phenomenon from a historical perspective and my focus on memory.

For a genealogy of populism

De Genova introduces a reflection of primary interest for my approach to populism from a memory study perspective. He states:

> Inasmuch as populism presents itself as an authentic expression of the political will or desire of 'the people', it ventriloquizes the People, which was meant to be consigned to a mute silence in the solemnity of the crypt from which our political modernity was born. Thus populism mischievously invokes the spectral presence of the People, that enigmatic, indeed phantasmatic, fetishized figure of democratic sovereignty. There is quite simply no other credible or legitimate source of ultimate 'democratic' authority than the People. Consequently, when 'the people' speak, invariably in the odd and sundry idioms of populism, people – all of us – (are compelled to) listen. Yet this apparent 'return' of the People is always inherently impure. Populism's exaltation of 'the people' therefore conjures the ghost of the People and appears to present the sovereign power of the state with a more authentic manifestation of the originary and constituent power of popular sovereignty, from which the state officially derives its legitimacy and for which the state presumes to be a permanent and ever-vigilant caretaker.
>
> (2018: 367)

I combine De Genova's theory with the interpretative framework sketched above and the idea of the 'domain record'. I see populism as a process through which the 'ghost' and 'mirror' devices combine in producing citizenship boundaries. On the one hand, the memory of the past – particularly, but not only, colonialism – is mobilized by hegemonic narratives to bestow new meanings and forms to earlier images, practices, and profiles of otherness. On the other hand, each person recognizes himself or herself as part of a national community, in a specific image – as in the 'mirror stage'. Narratives against migrants as 'enemies/aliens', and in support of Italians as 'real native people', are mobilized by politicians and intellectuals to turn a fragmented 'national' body into a unique and homogeneous entity.

According to De Genova's statement, populism ventriloquizes the people. As a consequence of this action, narratives produce a ghost of the people. I have introduced the concepts of 'ghost' and 'mirror' as linked to the legacy of colonialism and the concept of the archive. In this sense, the idea proposed by De Genova could be completed as follows: on the one hand, with the idea of the ghost as a legacy of the colonial past in terms of representations and feelings; on the other, the presence/absence of the people in the populist narrative entails a recognition of the self in a community through opposition to the various forms of otherness and the myth of the national land invasion.

The memory in question appears in several forms: as part of a cultural construct which is reshaped by new contexts, aims, and forms of otherness; as a device connecting the archive(s) mobilized and the postcolonial condition(s), individuals, and politicians/intellectuals/writers; and as a constitutive act of subjectivation and its intrinsic genealogies based on race, gender, colour, ethnic, and religious categories. Furthermore, its ability to produce a mimicry in individuals and to entail a shared public imaginary of the society are

consequences of two different activities: 'simplification' and 'aggregation'. By 'simplification' I mean the act of mapping the society with the simple tool 'nativity-foreignness' and to attribute a specific positionality around and starting from borders. Each simplification involves the aggregation of several sometimes-contradictory images (such as those of Black people reduced to arms and muscles for agricultural work and of Blacks as lazy people who spend time on the Internet with their super-technological and expensive mobile phones). My intention, in the next part of this chapter, is to use the theoretical framework proposed above to analyze Matteo Salvini's speeches and public communications on social networks.

Salvini, a new leader

On 1 June 2018, Matteo Salvini, leader of the Lega, became deputy prime minister of Italy (together with Luigi Di Maio of the Five Star Movement) and minister of the interior. A Eurosceptic and xenophobic politician, his speeches usually were and are focused on migration as a target, making two different attacks against migrants: as the main reason for problems in Italy and Europe, and as a consequence of a political-economic-financial power interested in controlling Rome and the whole country. He has definitively changed the profile and political vocabulary of his party. In September 2013, he became the Lega's secretary. During his mandate he worked to move the party from supporting Padania's independence – the secession of the Northern Italian regions, acclaimed in 1990 by Umberto Bossi in Pontida, the place where the Po River originates – to extending to the whole peninsula the Lega's xenophobic and racist political agenda.

His political programme is based on a simple formula: 'more work, more security, less taxes, less immigration'.[1] One of his main keywords is *buonsenso* (common sense) which is immediately connected with its opposite meaning, revolution. In fact, the League's slogan is 'the common sense revolution. It is time to give again to our children the certainty of a better future'[2] and its political programme is summed up in 72 pages. The part about migration opens with a very populist sentence: 'No one has to leave his/her country and roots for economic reasons. We really can help the most disadvantaged areas of the world by supporting projects in Africa: we can't welcome all migrants! Africa doesn't fit in Italy!'[3] Arguably, this discourse asserts the supposed superiority of Europe over Africa in economic, political, and social terms. This was a recurrent theme in colonial propaganda at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century (Labanca, 2002). 'Supporting disadvantaged areas' in Africa means affirming and imposing an economic and military presence outside and beyond European borders; it means aiding, encouraging, and promoting new forms of colonialism.

All these topics are confirmed by Salvini's communications on social networks. His communication staff usually combines 'selfies' and pictures of his everyday

life with posts politically engaged against migration. For example, Salvini is represented in a picture with Modica's chocolate, or a crowd in Rosolini, a small town near Syracuse. On his profile on Twitter, he publishes his daughter's drawings and a picture of friends at their wedding. This narrative shows him as a common Italian person, as a 'man of the people' and, consequently, an active part of the nation. This feature was common to most twentieth-century dictators, and highlights how propaganda spreads the image of the 'head of the nation'. Mussolini, for instance, spent time constructing his image as one of the Italian people: the many pictures where he was represented with children are clear examples of this communicative strategy (Melis, 2018).

In other posts, Salvini talks about migration. He has three main targets: (1) to attack internal enemies, such as migrants; (2) to affirm the government's main lines on migration and the control of flows in the Mediterranean Sea; (3) to criticize the left-wing parties and movements, called the '*buonisti*' (bleeding hearts). In the following pages I will focus my analysis on the first two points. The third point is specifically about the 'Italian left-wing-oriented enemy', such as the intellectual Roberto Saviano, cartoonist Vauro Senesi, journalist Gad Lerner, mayor Michele Orlando, writer Michele Camilleri, politician Laura Boldrini, and so on. I will focus my attention on the counter-position between the representation of the self and the Black (internal or external) otherness.

Invasion versus 'Italians First'

One of the main narratives about migration, since the beginning of the League's story, was based on the idea of invasion. Italy, as the nation at the centre of the Mediterranean Sea, was imagined as a place of landing for several populations coming from outside Europe – in Italian, the so-called *extracomunitari* (non-EU people). Salvini reused this tale – which is actually a popular shared imaginary not sustained by facts and scientific data – in opposition to the key concept of 'Italians first'.

On 2 June, just one day after the start of the new government, he stated his intention to defend the borders and his aim to expel migrants. The main slogan is 'let's take back our country'. On Twitter, he announced his visit to Sicily: in particular, he would visit Catania, Pozzallo, and Modica. He commented: 'We will ensure spending less money and time on illegal migrants: this shameful business in Italy will be less convenient: boatmen and deputy-boatman are warned'. In another speech in Catania, he used again the term *common sense* and affirmed: 'Italy and Sicily can't be the refugee camp of Europe'. Furthermore, he stated: 'Our goal is to defend Italy and its frontiers. We don't want migrants, no more. My commitment will be to enforce good laws and to change bad laws. To welcome women and children escaping from wars, to save these lives is sacrosanct . . . but Africa doesn't fit in Italy'.

He started his work as a minister by coining the motto 'the fun is over', referring to illegal migrants (Sky TG24, 5 June). Some days before, Salvini had

decided to close Italian harbours to *Aquarius*, an NGO (non-governmental organization) ship which had rescued 629 people off the coast of Libya. On 11 June, he posted this message on Facebook: 'First victory! 629 migrants on Aquarius are moving to Spain. It is written nowhere that all migrants have to disembark, always, in Italy'. His post ends with the hashtag #chiudiamoiporti (let's close the harbours).

The problem, in his opinion, 'has to be solved on the other shore of the Mediterranean. Italy has looked up after several years of silence' (TG1, 12 June). The sea becomes the source of problems for Italy in his interview at Matrix, a transmission to 105 Radio (14 June). Talking as a father of two children, he affirms in a video on Facebook: 'I don't want to harm children in the Mediterranean. I'm fed up of children's deaths in the Mediterranean because of the illusion of finding homes, jobs and food for all, I'm fed up of these deaths provoked by the State' (16 June). After the *Aquarius* affair, his opposition to the NGOs becomes more straightforward: 'Two other ships . . . arrived in waters off the Libyan coasts. They fly the Dutch flag [*Lifeline* and *Seefuchs*]. They are waiting for their load of human beings who are abandoned by smugglers'.

On social networks, he usually replies by sending emoticons or kisses to enemies who attack him, such as in the case of the *Espresso* cover where he is represented in a counter-position to Aboubakar Soumahoro, the Black Italian trade unionist who denounced the situation of illegal jobs in Gioia Tauro (16 June); to activists singing 'I hate the League, open harbours, let's kick out Salvini' (17 June); or to Giuseppe Grezzi, mayor of Valencia, who asked 'Was it Salvini or Mussolini?' after the interior minister's intervention in the Agorà TV broadcasting (18 June).

His populist scheme is based on a specific paradigm. He aims 'to defend Italian borders': thanks to that activity, in his opinion, 'Italy is great again, with its pride and dignity' (Non è l'Arena, 19 June). The Mediterranean is full of NGO ships which fly the flag of other European nations, such as the Dutch *Lifeline* (20, 22, 26, 27 June), *Open Arms*, and *Aquarius* (23 June). In his opinion, the NGO activists are 'disgraced' and guilty of endangering migrant lives with their 'precious load of human meat' (20 June). The main slogan is 'reducing departure, reducing deaths: controlling Italian frontiers' (23 June). For Salvini, most NGO funding comes from George Soros (Telese Diretta de LA7, 24 June, 3 July), and his Open Society Foundation aims to realize a specific social project: 'to invade Europe and erase the ethnic identity' (Porta a Porta, 28 June).

For Salvini, there are other free open harbours in North Africa, such as in Tunisia and Libya. The money spent on saving migrant people should be used for the 5 million Italian people living in poverty (Festa della Lega Caravaggio, Bergamo, 28 June). Paris and Berlin, who in the past would have left Rome alone, are imposing their actions in the Mediterranean, for example in the cases of the Italo-French frontier in Ventimiglia and in Libya (Festival del Lavoro, 22–29 June).[4] He asks to stop the illegal trafficking of human beings, using the

word ‘slave’ to mean ‘migrant’ (2 July). Furthermore, Libyan migrant centres are not dangerous and are well equipped by the UN (27 June): ‘These are not detention and torture camps’, Salvini, against all evidence, states.

He uses military and Fascist jargon – he writes ‘honour to the Italian Marine Caprera’s crew’ (25 June) – and publishes a photo of himself with Italian and Libyan Marines. He mobilizes the memory of soldiers fallen during World War I for a new action in defending frontiers. After quoting Simone Weil – ‘the person who eradicates a human being is criminal’ – he asks to spend money in Africa (2 July). It is in this specific framework that Salvini proposes an action for signing agreements with Libya (24 June) and realizing Italian missions in Niger, Mali, Chad, and Sudan as African strategic countries for controlling migration flows (TG5, June 26), aiming to build ‘schools, streets and houses in Africa’ (Festa della Lega Nord di Adro, Brescia, 8 June).

Analyzing his narratives with the theoretical tools proposed before, it is possible to highlight the fear of invasion by people considered as barbarians, which was also used during colonialism. In the public imaginary, one of the reasons for conquering the Mediterranean was to avoid possible invasion both from the southern and eastern shores of the basin (Labanca, 2002; Trinchese, 2005; Proglio, 2015). This discourse is centred on defending the country from an invasion of subjects who are not as civilized, modern, and educated as the Italian people. These subjects, such as in the Italo-Turkish war for conquering Libya, are violent, barbaric marauders and fanatical Muslim people and populations (Proglio, 2015). According to Mussolini’s speech on thalassocracy, made in Tripoli on 8 April 1926, Italy has its destiny in the Mediterranean Sea, colonizing or having privileged relationships with lands, nations, and people in the basin. Mussolini would increase Italy’s relationships with Arab countries – particularly Egypt, Lebanon, Libya, and Tunisia – in opposition to the French and English presences in North Africa (Spadaro, 2012). The same thing seems to happen in the new Italian government’s populist propaganda.

The defeat of national frontiers is strictly connected with the redefinition of ideas of Italy and Italianness, as happened during several wars (Libya 1911–1912; World War I; Ethiopian conquest; World War II). Salvini justifies his intervention in the political sphere as the father of two children. This ongoing symbolic reference during his speeches is common in colonialisms and national wars: he mobilizes the imaginary of the ‘patria’ (homeland) as a place of fathers of the nation, as male and white native people who take care of the future of the land, which since the Risorgimento has been represented as a woman (Banti, 2011). This narrative had consequences during Italian colonialism: the masculinity about ‘fathers of the nation’ was productive in terms of conquering new African lands and bodies, with territorial domains and erotic dreams (Sorgoni, 1998, 2001).

In fact, Salvini’s rhetoric is not limited to containing migration (because ‘Africa doesn’t fit in Italy’): his aim is to impose a new central role for Italy

in the international field. This kind of discourse has two different directions, just as during Italian colonialism. Firstly, against Europe – both during the 1911–1912 mission in Libya and the 1935–1936 war in Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa (Labanca, 2002) – in order to affirm a new role for Italy in terms of power relations with other nations. Secondly, outside Europe, as a new form of colonialism 'linked with' and 'justified by' the urgency of controlling migration flows. Salvini uses nationalist jargon (honour, pride, dignity, etc.) and 'images' coming directly from colonialism, such as that of Italians as 'good people', as builders of schools, streets, and houses. The same stereotype was denounced by Angelo Del Boca in dealing with the crimes of Italian soldiers in former colonies in Africa (Del Boca, 2007). Internal enemies of Italy, in Salvini's political vision, are Europe – just as it happened with the UN and its sanctions on Rome for the Ethiopian invasion – and Soros, a billionaire who is organizing a global conspiracy against the ethnic identity of Italy/Europe.

Violence versus order

As stated before, Salvini's aim is to affirm a new role for Italy in Europe and beyond. His narratives are based on the idea that Italy, as a consequence of several decades of misgovernment, has become a Far West, a huge illegal migrant camp or place for crimes. In this mindset, his attempt to create order is opposed to previous political disregard which provoked violence. Analyzing his communication, one encounters a complex and sometimes contradictory genealogy of migrants. Let's take into account several faces of the public imaginary mobilized.

On 2 June, he asserts: 'Tunisia seems to me a free and democratic country where there are no wars, epidemics, famines, plagues. This country does not export gentlemen; it is exporting criminals. Migrant disembarkation must be reduced and expulsions must be increased. We must open expulsion centres in every region, to sign agreements with lands of departure and to renegotiate the role of Italy in Europe'. In TV news broadcasted by TG1, migrants become children who have to be educated by Italian authorities. The camera shows him during the Pozzallo visit, where he is attending an Italian class for migrant people. On RTL 102.5 radio's microphones, after declaring his positive evaluation of former minister of the interior Minniti's work, he affirms that 'more desperate people leave, more desperate people risk death'. In the Bari speech he repeats the slogan 'Italians first' and adds 'to false refugees, we will expel them with their luggage'.

Migrants are part of a Black group called 'illegals'. This term is used to describe a specific profile of violent people up against Italians as white people. They are 'violent sellers who assault policemen during a control' in Florence (6 June), or people provoking a huge brawl in Pisa (19 June, 28 June);[5] they are false refugee people (21 June, Agora Rai 3); they are criminals arrested

after a police sting in Bergamo[6] (20 June) or Islamists and terrorists who have been expelled from Italy (4 July); they are pushers, thieves, or violent people (4 July),[7] they are smugglers (7 July, La7); they are 'vu-cumprà' (*vu-cumprà* is the racialized jargon for illegal peddlers: this term mimics the Italian 'Vuoi comprare?', 'Do you want to buy something?') trying to sell low-priced necklaces on Italian beaches and accused of being part of the Mafia system (6 July, Tgcom24); they are 'Nigerian refugee people' when they are arrested for heroin trafficking in Perugia (7 July); they are violent hijackers of the Diciotti's Marine ship who are named according to their nationality (twenty-three Pakistanis, four Moroccans, four Algerians, etc.) (11 July). Visiting the San Ferdinando camp, Salvini states: 'Civilization and legality are two keywords'. They are involved in illegal trafficking of prostitution, drugs, and illegal labour (11 July). For all these cases he uses the hashtag #tolleranzazero (zero tolerance).

Conversely, Salvini talks about the single migrant in a different way: as a 'Tunisian man with a long criminal record',[8] a 'rude and ill-mannered man',[9] and a 'killer of Italians' (25 June, 3 July).[10] He has also positive words for a single Senegalese man who asked to get a selfie with him in Siena (3 July), and about the Libyan deputy prime minister, Ahmed Maitig, for his help in controlling 'trafficking in human beings' (5 July). He also talks about sport from two different perspectives. He does congratulate the Italian Black women's running team for winning the 4 × 100 metre race. He affirms: 'It is not a question of colour. It is about how people make our country grow' (2 July). In contrast, he taunts footballer Mario Balotelli, who called for attention to citizenship reform (*ius soli*). Salvini states: 'It is not our and Italy's priority. Have fun, Mario, running behind the ball'.

Paying attention to some colonial sources such as novels, which are one pre-eminent source for studying the national imaginary, once can see how stereotypes about Arab, Black, and Muslim people in North Africa are being reproduced – for instance in novels by Luciano Zuccoli (1923), Mario Dei Gaslini (1928), and Guido Milanesi (1927), among others (Proglio, 2017; Boddi, 2012; Camillotti, 2014).

There are two typologies of narrative: as a collective group and a single person. In the first case, a specific negative subjectivity is attributed to Black people. Rapists, thieves, smugglers and sellers of slaves, pushers: the 'sign of the plural' mobilizes a memory of the colonial past about various forms of violence by Black bodies on white people. In this typology of stereotypes, Ania Loomba has convincingly argued that only the European subject is individuated: 'The mark of the plural – as suggested by Albert Memmi – is a sign of the colonised's depersonalization' (2015: 53). In this sense, the symbolic expression of Italy, as 'body of the nation', has to be freed from these dangerous subjects. Only Black subaltern people – who are working to create a new Italy owned only by white rich Italian people – are welcome.

Ghosts and mirrors: populism as a new way for totalitarianism?

As pointed out in previous parts of this chapter, there are some continuities between colonialism and Salvini's rhetoric. Past images of colonialism – about colonies and colonized people – and explorations of non-European lands have been re-signified by Salvini's narrative. These fragments of the colonial archive have remained active and ready to be used in new contexts (see Wekker, 2016). From a memory perspective, neither an act of repression nor forms of forgetting are central to this phenomenon. In my analysis I have decided to focus on active and transformative dimensions of memory. In this sense, my aim has been to show that it is not important whether or not Italians remember colonialism. There is an ongoing process of re-actualization of images concerning the hegemony of the self on various forms of alterity – namely the power relations between the white Italian subject and many different racialized bodies. Images coming from the colonial archive – and in some cases slavery – are reused to talk about 'illegal' migration in the Mediterranean Sea.

If ghosts deal with various forms of otherness in terms of heritage and meaning from the past, mirrors are centred on the role of Italians and Italy. Salvini proposes himself as 'father of the nation' endowed with common sense working to reach Italian goals and fighting against various internal and external enemies. In so doing, he mobilizes forms of propaganda which are similar to those active long ago during the colonial wars and conflicts. Borders and frontiers are the edges upon which narratives are reshaped in the postcolonial condition in Italy: colonial memories on other subjects and bodies.

On one hand, ghosts produce new forms of subjection, invisibility, and exploitation, depersonalizing and reducing the person to the representation supplied by the Italian narrative. On the other hand, mirrors evoke the imaginary of a 'Great Italy', which was always denied and refused in history, activating a sort of xenophobic and racist idea of social redemption. Both parts are not only imagined: they are real, for example in terms of deaths in the Mediterranean Sea. The problem is not Salvini: it is to deactivate this language which seems to exceed politics and to be incarnated in the everyday lives of millions of Italians.

More generally, what is happening in Italy is part of a wider phenomenon: a lack of memory involving all European countries. In this sense, the proposed analysis of the heritage of Italian colonialism – and its implications in terms of ghost and mirror effects – is relevant for all former European imperial countries. Countries which did not have a colonial past, such as Hungary, Greece, Croatia, and Switzerland, are also involved in this process. This is possible because the European memory of colonialism overlaps with and is constituted by that of each nation. This archive of knowledge is also used by countries without a colonial past to attribute categories to unwelcome individuals and

groups. In this sense, populism is an empty language based on shared and well known images. These images are able to pull people's heartstrings and are based on asymmetrical power relationships, such as those originating in European colonialisms. From this perspective, the (re)invention of the other as 'migrant', once again, is an image reflecting back Europe's colonial past and the attempt to extend, both outside and inside the national and communitarian borders, the domains of those bodies considered as out of place.

Notes

1 See Salvini Premier, official Matteo Salvini website: www.salvinipremier.it/t_programma.asp?l2=1802 (last accessed on 10-07-2018).
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
4 Il Secolo XIX – Jun 22sn, 2018. www.ilsecoloxix.it/p/imperia/2018/06/22/ADSbfoC-ventimiglia_documento_gendarmi.shtml.
5 Qui news Pisa. www.quinewspisa.it/pisa-rissa-in-piazza-vittorio-emanuele-gambiani-georgiani-tre-identificati-ed-espulsi.htm.
6 Eco di Bergamo. www.ecodibergamo.it/stories/bassa-bergamasca/maxi-blitz-di-150-carabinieri-a-zingoniaperquisiti-tre-palazzi-anna-armi-e-dr_1282213_11/.
7 Pisa Today. www.pisatoday.it/cronaca/sicurezza-4-persone-espulse-dall-italia-partono-dalla-questura-di-pisa-per-il-rimpatrio.html?1.
8 Gazzetta di Reggio. http://gazzettadireggio.gelocal.it/reggio/cronaca/2018/06/17/news/reggio-emilia-allarme-in-carcere-da-fuoco-alla-cella-e-inneggia-all-isis-1.16972581.
9 Il Giornale. www.ilgiornale.it/news/politica/pisa-immigrato-fa-campagna-sinistra-e-insulta-l-italia-1542223.html.
10 Huffington Post. www.huffingtonpost.it/2018/06/25/gambiano-fermato-a-napoli-doveva-compiere-un-attentato_a_23467133/;
www.liberoquotidiano.it/news/italia/13356288/sessa-aurunca-immigrato-africano-ammazza-a-pugni-77enne-in-ospedale.html.

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Chapter 6

Textures of urban fears

The affective geopolitics of the 'oriental rug'

Luiza Bialasiewicz and Lora Sariaslan

Introduction: missing mosques

> During my preparation for the exhibition in Sicily, I noticed that, despite the large Muslim community, not a single classical mosque had been erected. . . . The objective of the work *Missing Architecture* is to throw light on this fact, and insert in the public space the elements which symbolically represent the missing place of worship for Muslims.
>
> (Igor Grubic, 2018, personal communication)

> THE MOSQUE will serve as a place of activity for the Venice Muslim Community and will offer an ongoing schedule of educational and cultural programs available to the general public [and will include] the physical attributes of Muslim worship – the qibla wall, the mihrab, the minbar, and the large prayer carpet oriented in direction of Mecca – juxtaposed with the existing Catholic architecture of the Church of Santa Maria della Misericordia *in a visual analog*.
>
> (Icelandic Arts Council [IAC] Press Release, 2015)

The two previous citations refer to two artistic exhibitions (or 'interventions', as both artists referred to them): in Modica, Sicily, in 2012 and in Venice in 2015, attempting to materially 'make space' for Muslim worship in the two Italian cities. Given the lack of existing formal sites of worship, the artists Christoph Büchel and Igor Grubic used select 'physical attributes of Muslim worship' (IAC, 2015), including oriental 'prayer' carpets, in order to create (virtual) sites of prayer and, especially, to draw public attention to their absence.

Grubic's installation was part of an arts festival organized by the city of Modica (in the province of Ragusa, Sicily) in August 2012, entitled *I Vespri. Civic Forum in Five Acts*. Drawing inspiration from Verdi's nineteenth-century drama *I Vespri Siciliani* (*The Sicilian Vespers*), based on the historical events of the Sicilians' revolt against French domination in 1282, the exhibition strove to 'create a public discussion . . . with people coming from across the Mediterranean with the aim of putting on stage an opera between past and present, local and global' (Blogazine, 2012).

Büchel's exhibition, on the other hand, was commissioned by the Icelandic Art Council as its contribution to the 56th Venice Biennale of Contemporary Art, taking place from May to November 2015. This biennale was hailed by the international media as 'the most political yet' even before it opened – both because of the particular mix of exhibitions featured in the national pavilions but also because its central exhibition, under the heading of *All the World's Futures*, made the iniquities of the contemporary global condition its central theme (Biennale di Venezia, 2015). Büchel's THE MOSQUE (the official name of the exhibition in capital letters with the subtitle 'The First Mosque in the Historic City of Venice'), proposed to offer just such a 'counter-historical' project: it lasted, however, only two weeks before being shut down by the local authorities for 'public health' reasons.

We will discuss in detail the two exhibitions and their vicissitudes in the paragraphs to come, focusing on the emotional public reactions they both evoked, albeit to different degrees. Needless to say (and as other chapters in this volume highlight), such reactions have become far from isolated incidents in contemporary Europe. Indeed, as Nilüfer Göle has argued in a number of her recent works (2013, 2015), they reflect many other similar self-styled 'citizens' revolts' against a purported 'Islamization' of European cities, even though *Missing Architecture* and THE MOSQUE were 'simply' art installations, material and visual analogues of (to be) Muslim spaces. Yet this is precisely why the popular reactions they provoked are perhaps even more revealing of the ways in which a diffused fear of anything indicating Muslim presence has become a political obsession in today's Europe, provoking what anthropologist Michael Fischer (writing about the Danish Muhammad cartoon controversy a few years back) termed 'emotional excess' (2009: 27; see also the discussion in Göle, 2009). In our case, that emotional excess engages an everyday, private object – the oriental carpet – deliberately brought out into the public realm by the two exhibitions, becoming something entirely different in the process. The carpet as common domestic object once 'aired' in the public spaces of the two cities is, literally, made other: it becomes the signifier of a Muslim prayer space and, as such, arguably 'out of place' in the contemporary urban landscape of the two Italian cities. It provokes precisely the sort of affective reactions described by the editors in the introduction to this volume, drawing on the work of Berlant (2011 and others: a nostalgic desire to reconstitute a culturally pure European space that never was.

Indeed, such attempts at material purification are particularly striking in the two locations chosen for the installations: Venice and Sicily, which both have long histories in the mediation of material and symbolic exchange between Europe and 'the Orient', both key sites for the arrival of 'oriental objects' to Europe from the fifteenth century onward. What is more, the urban fabric of both Venice and Modica is today still significantly marked by Islamic architectural styles and influences. It is this legacy that also renders the public reactions to the two exhibitions all the more telling of a wider politics of resentment against 'anything Muslim': even in places where that 'anything' is very much part of the urban built environment and historical memory.

As numerous authors have noted, the politics of resentment[1] in contemporary Europe frames its claims around struggles for limited resources: economic, political, but also identitary and mnemonic (see, among others, Wodak et al., 2013; Wodak, 2015; Muller, 2016). As Cramer (2016: 9) argues, 'A politics of resentment arises from the way social identities, the emotion of resentment, and economic insecurity interact'. Indeed, Cramer's analysis notes how struggles to define and delimit social identities provide an (albeit partial and temporary) attempt at reclaiming space – figurative, as well as material. The two instances discussed here are suggestive of that dynamic. In an Italian political context marked by growing economic precarity, if not impoverishment, of a significant proportion of the population,[2] exclusionary identity politics has taken centre stage (see Mauro, 2018, and also other chapters in this volume).

It is striking that the once separatist Northern League (Lega Nord) party dropped the 'North' from its name (and largely from its electoral programme) for the 2018 elections in order to also appeal to disaffected southern voters: a strategy that has proved highly successful, with Lega politicians ably combining economic as well as identitary (if not directly racist) arguments to invoke the imaginary of an Italy 'under siege' both from those determined to impoverish it (the EU and international capital) and those conspiring to destroy its national identity (migrant hordes and 'multicultural do-gooders') (for a longer genealogy of these political imaginations, see Antonsich, 2016. Such imaginaries allowed the Lega to capture votes even in regions such as Sicily, previously the uncontested bastion of first Christian Democratic and subsequently (Silvio Berlusconi's) Forza Italia parties. Although it was the Lega's subsequent coalition partner, the anti-establishment *Movimento Cinque Stelle* (Five Star Movement, M5S), that captured the majority of the vote of the Italian South (including every single electoral district in Sicily), the appeal of the Lega's virulent anti-immigrant rhetoric in the southern regions reflected a profound shift in Italian politics (see Turco, 2018). The vote in Venice itself also reflected this momentous shift: while the Veneto region had long been the pre-eminent space of Lega support (for a history of the Lega in the Veneto, see Bialasiewicz, 2006), the city had always been an outlier, voting consistently for centre-left parties. For the first time in 2018, Luigi Brugnaro, a formally 'independent' but Lega-affiliated candidate, was elected as mayor.

Resentment, made material

How can we relate these wider shifts in Italian politics to the localized reactions forming the focus of our discussion? We will argue that it is precisely by interrogating such 'excessive' emotional reactions (Fischer, 2009) that we can perhaps begin to interpret how wider geopolitical fears touch down in specific places, how they are made sense of, and how they are translated into objects and bodies 'to be feared' – and whose presence is resented as 'out of place'.

Specific material objects, just like specific bodies, are central to understanding the politics of resentment, as recent work in cultural and political geography

on 'affective geopolitics' has emphasized.[3] As Gillian Rose and Divya Tolia-Kelly note, the guiding aim of such work has been to better ground accounts of cultural and political transformations within situated analyses of both 'the bodies [as well as] the material infrastructures of societies' politics, inequalities and ideologies' (2012: 2). Especially pertinent to us is the stress placed by this literature on 'the (geo)politics of embodied, material encounter and engagement' (2012: 3): that is, the (geo)politics that emerges, that is (co)constituted by contact with things and bodies and everyday material landscapes.

As Anderson and Wylie (2009: 320) argue, 'things' matter because they 'act as a lure for feeling, for feeling that "something matters"'. Feelings 'stick' to things as they stick to bodies; or, better yet, they are 'made to stick', as Sara Ahmed (2000, 2004/2014) has argued in her work for almost two decades now. Describing the 'affective economies' that determine to what and to whom certain feelings 'stick' (to which things, to which bodies), Ahmed compellingly delineates how 'emotions accumulate over time, as a form of affective value' (2014: 11). What is particularly important, she argues (speaking directly to the concern of the present volume with memory politics), is that things and bodies acquire particular affective value precisely only

> by an erasure of these histories, as histories of production and labour. But whilst Marx suggests that emotions are erased by the value of things (the suffering of the worker's body is not visible in commodity form), I focus on how emotions are produced. [So] it is not so much emotions that are erased, as if they were already there, but the process of production or the 'making' of emotions. In other words, 'feelings' become 'fetishes', qualities that seem to reside in objects, only through an erasure of the history of their production and circulation.
>
> (Ahmed, 2014: 11)

A particular body, a particular object, a particular landscape thus becomes 'inherently' fearful or resented as being 'out of place' for the 'work of emotions involves the sticking of signs to bodies and objects' (Ahmed, 2014: 13) while masking both the longer histories and the 'labour' of making such emotions 'stick'. What is occluded, in other words, is *the process of dis-placement, the process of making the (object or body) 'other', 'foreign'* – but also *the process of its re-placement into a new, different set of imaginaries* (in our case, the carpet now signified as 'other' or 'Muslim').

Political geographers have extended Ahmed's work on 'affective economies' further by looking also at the 'generative powers' of objects themselves: whether they be bodies, things, or physical landscapes. As Vicky Squire (2015) argues, it is by looking at the mutual enactment or 'co-constitution' of subjects, objects, and environments that we can best discern the workings of such affective economies in shaping the contemporary (geo)politics of fear. Squire returns to the work of Karen Barad (2003, 2007) and in particular her notion of 'agential realism' that

> rejects the assumption that bodies and things are already-existing entities, and instead looks at their production through processes of materialization and 'thingification'. [Barad introduces] the neologism of 'intra-action' in terms that reconfigure the concept of interaction, and can be understood as a play of forces that emerge through the relations between different elements. Barad discusses these elements in terms of both discursive processes and material phenomena, suggesting that the relationship between these various elements produce particular material-discursive configurations of the world.
> (Squire, 2015: 150, citing Barad, 2003: 812–814)

It is with the Baradian notion of 'material-discursive intra-action' that we would like to approach the analysis of the two exhibitions described in this chapter, for it allows us to draw attention to the longer-standing 'affective economies' that have contributed to the contemporary re-signification of the oriental carpet, to the 'othering' of carpets as (necessarily) 'Islamic' – and thus 'alien' – objects in European urban spaces.

The (forgotten) histories of the oriental carpet

> In many ways [oriental carpets] represent the epitome of Western concern with alien things.
> (Spooner, 1986: 195)

As Leonard Helfgott writes in the opening lines of his social history of carpets, *The Ties That Bind* (1994: 1), oriental carpets have always 'functioned historically as both reality and metaphor' and, in particular, as both metaphor and embodiment of elsewhere(s). The oriental carpet or rug[4] has long occupied a prominent place in Europe's and Europeans' imaginations of the 'Orient' and oriental 'others' and otherness. Yet as Rosamond Mack (2001) and countless others have argued, carpets were not just imagined objects: they were key commodities in the trade of luxury goods and, from the 1500s on, an everyday presence in the palaces and stately homes of Europeans. During the reign of the Venetian Republic, large oriental carpets were prominently displayed in public for special occasions, including both (Catholic) religious celebrations but also to commemorate military successes, such as the victory over the Ottomans (Mack, 2001: 77–78).

From the fifteenth century onward, hand-knotted carpets from the Islamic world became much-coveted furnishings in aristocratic homes and palaces, as well as religious residences. They were markers of status, opulence, and power and, as Jardine and Brotton (2003) suggest, one of the first 'globalized' objects. During the Renaissance, carpet trade greatly increased with the growing Mediterranean commercial exchange, and oriental rugs became a common presence in Italian and subsequently Northern European Renaissance paintings,

especially after the formation of the Dutch East India Company in 1602 as the commerce of rugs passed almost completely to Northern Europe (Mills, 1983: 22). Recent scholarship in Renaissance studies on the social history of domestic objects notes how carpets were crucial signifiers of wealth, social status, and identity and were thus purposefully incorporated into the paintings that the Italian elite of the day commissioned, highlighting the culturally and historically specific connotations of this valuable commodity. Since the days when the German art historian, curator, and museum director Wilhelm von Bode first assigned to major design types of early carpets the names of certain European painters in whose works depictions of such carpets appeared (among others, Lotto, Holbein, Memling, and Crivelli) (Denny, 2009: 239), the oriental carpet became an integral part of European material culture.

The role played by carpets within European paintings of the period is somewhat marginal in the art historical literature because they play an odd role in these pictures. Iconography allows for the identification of depicted characters as Christian saints or pagan figures, while ornamental interiors or landscapes can be interpreted in much more straightforward, literal fashion. The depiction of carpets, however, falls between these two categories, and although they originally may have carried symbolic meanings, carpets become purely decorative when represented within such paintings. 'There is little evidence about how pre-modern Europeans understood Islamic carpets', as David Carrier writes (2005: 2). A telling example is the account given by Denny (2002: 24–25) of the 1478 visit of the Venetian envoy Gisafat Barbaro to Uzun Hasan, the ruler of Tabriz: Barbaro is reputed to have commented that the ground was covered with 'the most beautiful carpets', but fails to provide any description of them. To the fifteenth-century European eye, carpets were simply objects of beauty, to be coveted as material, but also representational, 'capital'. In her path-breaking work Rosamond Mack (2001: 75–76) describes, indeed, how a single Anatolian (Ushak) carpet design was reproduced in over a hundred Renaissance paintings between the early sixteenth and mid-seventeenth centuries (see also Nabavi Nejad, 2012).

The European re-signification of the oriental carpet through courtly painting speaks precisely to the sort of material-discursive intra-action described by Barad: a reclaiming and renaming through painting that turned the carpets into something else. Indeed, just as Ushak carpets hailing from Western Anatolia became popularly known as 'Lotto carpets', other carpets, also of Anatolian origin but with different motifs, came to be known with the name of another sixteenth-century European painter, Hans Holbein the Younger (although similar carpets also featured prominently in several famous works of the Italian school of the fifteenth century, including work by Domenico Ghirlandaio and Piero della Francesca; for a fuller discussion, see Boralevi, 1999).

From the end of the fifteenth and especially in the sixteenth century, carpets were represented often in portraits of important members of the Republic of Venice, highlighting the prominence of rugs as a luxury good in the trade of

which Venice specialized and a luxury object demarcating wealth, power, and trade connections among the most prominent governors of the city. The signoria of the city thus purchased carpets in significant numbers, with the largest examples used during important public events (as was already noted), including both religious processions and political gatherings of the governors of the city (Spallanzani, 2007: 92). Small Anatolian carpets called *sajjada* ('for prostration') or *ceyrek* ('a quarter of the measure' or 'prayer rug') were used to decorate windows and balconies on the occasion of official ceremonies in Piazza San Marco (Denny, 2007: 188). As David Young Kim notes, carpets allowed 'a façade [to] participate in the ritual life of the city', with 'hanging textiles transforming the architectonic cityscape into a flexible and malleable civic space' (Kim, 2016: 182).

In the process of making-carpets-also-European, the question of their 'Islamic' association was not considered relevant: or, better yet, was not seen as any impediment to their purchase, display, and enjoyment. Indeed, 'in addition to decorating the interior (and, occasionally, the exterior) of patrician homes, carpets also furnished religious and confraternal spaces [such] as the Scuola Grande di San Rocco' (Kim, 2016: 183). Mack (2001: 5) speculates that perhaps it was the absence of any religious icons in their decoration due to the Islamic prohibition of idolatry, along with a shared Byzantine artistic heritage, that could be one reason for the unproblematic popularity of these Oriental objects in Europe. So while carpets were certainly associated with the 'Orient', their association with religiosity/religious symbolism, and especially directly with Islam, was not at all evident (see also Nabavi Nejad, 2012). As Mills, among others, has argued (1983: 16), even 're-entrant' carpets, also known as 'keyhole' or 'Bellini' carpets, were not seen by their Venetian (or other) collectors as in any way 'religious'. We note this aspect in particular since the carpets used in both focused exhibitions provoked differing levels of controversy precisely as 'prayer carpets'. But as Mack (2001: 84) notes, 're-entrant' carpets became commonly referred to as 'prayer carpets' largely because

> the directional design of these and later related carpets and their standard portable size became associated with the Muslim ritual of praying five times a day facing Mecca. . . . The characteristic niche is believed to symbolize both a doorway to paradise and the mihrab, the mosque niche orienting prayer toward Mecca, and the lamp commonly suspended in the niche refers to a verse in the Quran likening Allah to a lamp in a niche. The keyhole at the bottom of the niche has been interpreted variously as the basin for ablutions before prayer, a niche-within-a-niche, or a mountain providing elevated ground for prayer.

'Nevertheless', Mack is careful to note, 'the pre-Islamic origins of most, if not all of the stylized forms that have been presumed [by Islamic art scholars] to symbolize the niche, mihrab and lamp in carpets raise questions about the validity of the term "prayer rug"' (Mack, 2001: 84). It is also interesting to

note that most contemporary collectors' guides to oriental carpets consider the 'prayer rug' as simply a distinct design and 'format', and also dispute their necessarily 'religious' intent and function. Perhaps the most authoritative and consulted work on Persian carpets, A. Cecil Edwards's 1953 volume is illustrative in this sense, cautioning against attributing any symbolism – religious or mystical – to carpet design and motives, taking them to be simply 'art for art's sake': 'the Persians are an artistic people who regard design as an end in itself. . . . The end which they had in view was delight through symmetry and beauty; but no more' (Edwards, 1953: 51). Edwards's considerations on Persian carpets are emblematic of his era, displaying a fascination with an uncorrupted relationship with beauty and the preservation of forms of ancient craftsmanship (before these were transformed by the market for 'Westernized' designs): forms of craftsmanship and 'meaning-making' that depend, nevertheless, on the persistence of a 'backward', tribal existence,[5] as also Helfgott (1994: 85) has argued.

Beyond the discursive meaning-making that has always accompanied the travels of the oriental carpet, their material use also disputes any direct or necessary association as 'Islamic' things. Murray Eiland (1981: 20) remarks that 'in the Middle East, prayer rugs are seldom seen in use for their intended purpose. [Indeed] despite their romanticizing in older rug books, it appears likely that most "prayer" rugs reaching the West were actually never used for prayer'. Indeed, it was most often the keyhole carpets (that became known as 'prayer rugs') that were most commonly found in European religious depictions and material settings (see Ruvoldt, 2006).

What happens to 'oriental' carpets, then, to make them what they are today? What set of 'material-discursive intra-actions' (to return to Barad) has transformed them from objects marking status and ideal beauty to Islamic 'prayer rugs' that mark the presence of undesirable others and draw fear and suspicion? David Sylvester, writing in his introduction to the catalogue accompanying the 1983 retrospective exhibition on 'The Eastern Carpet in the Western World', lamented how in the twentieth century Europeans' relationship to 'Eastern Carpets' had become 'unhealthy', with carpets 'withdrawn from life and lodged, away from wear and tear and ultra-violet, in museums, [ensuring] that those carpets will never again be seen as they ought to be – on the ground, or a table' (Sylvester, 1983: 9). Oriental carpets had become something out of the ordinary, Sylvester remarked, and especially removed from ordinary, quotidian spaces. The cover image of that exhibition's catalogue is illustrative: the much-reproduced painting of *The Somerset House Conference* from 1604 (artist unknown), the peace conference between England and Spain. As Sylvester (1983: 9) comments, here:

> the carpet is depicted in an altogether healthy situation. This artefact imported from an alien culture is shown to be used, cherished, given a central place at great occasions. . . . While cherished, it is not neurotically

conserved but allowed to play a part in life, spread out as a no-man's land between the opposing teams of great sly men of state.

As Mack (2001), Howard (2000, 2002), Carboni (2007), and countless other scholars of Venice's relations with the Orient suggest, any absolute geopolitical divides between Europe and an 'Islamic other' had always been complicated by commercial but also power-political interests. As Donald King, former Keeper of Textiles at the Victoria and Albert Museum, has argued, projecting contemporary understandings of 'an essential opposition between west and east, between Christian and Islamic powers' gives 'a vertiginously foreshortened view of history' and 'is wholly misleading', for 'the frontiers between the two sides were never closed or watertight' and diplomacy and, especially, trade bridged them constantly: 'To combat the Ottoman Turks, Venice sought an alliance with the Turkomans in Tabriz; Francis I of France, on the other hand, allied himself with the Turks to fight the German Emperor' (King, 1983: 25). The continued presence, also in formal, diplomatic settings – as in the example cited by Sylvester above – of oriental carpets was testament to such ongoing exchange.

Airing the rugs I: Venice

There are approximately 20,000 Muslims who live or work in Venice and its hinterland today, and who for fifteen years have been campaigning to have a site for prayer within the city. The Swiss artist Christoph Büchel created THE MOSQUE project in direct collaboration with the Islamic Community of Venice and the Association of Muslims in Iceland. Büchel's stated aim was to both answer the local Muslim community's need for a gathering space but also to bring attention to Venice's connections to the East (for a fuller discussion of the politics of the exhibition, see Bialasiewicz, 2017). Prior to the Venice installation, Büchel was already well known for his projects that directly intervened into urban spaces, such as his transformation of a London gallery into an (apparently) fully functioning community center (Piccadilly Community Centre, 2011) or turning a museum into a shelter for refugees (S.M.A.K. Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst, Ghent, 2017).

Büchel decided to present THE MOSQUE outside of the main Biennale exhibition spaces in the old Venice Arsenale and surrounding gardens, selecting instead the deconsecrated church of the Santa Maria della Misericordia in the Cannareggio district (Image 6.1).

The baroque white façade of the Church during the exhibition (8–15 May 2015) displayed no indication whatsoever of that which lay within. Only once inside the main entrance, the glass panels of the interior wooden door announced 'Centro Culturale Islamico di Venezia' – 'La Moschea della Misericordia' [Venice Islamic Cultural Centre – the Misericordia Mosque], with an Arabic inscription above. The main nave of the deconsecrated church had been

Image 6.1 View of Santa Maria della Misericordia in the Cannareggio district of Venice.
Source: Photo by Luiza Bialasiewicz

converted into a space resembling a mosque prayer hall, with carpet covering the entire floor, and other 'visual attributes' of a functioning mosque, including a mihrab niche indicating the qibla, created in between two former altars, and a minbar from which the imam could address the congregation (Images 6.2 and 6.3). Within the installation, a wooden barrier marked the boundary between the (to be) religious and non-religious space, with instructions to visitors to remove their shoes and observe Islamic custom (for women, veils were provided) should they wish to enter into what was supposed to be the area of prayer, delimited by the carpets.

It was these instructions and the delimitation of a 'religious space' that brought the wrath of a self-declared 'spontaneous citizens' committee' of local opponents who lodged a protest with the city authorities within a couple of days of the exhibition's opening (Mion and Mantegoli, 2015: 20). Some particularly incensed local residents made the 'shoe question' into a rallying point, forcibly attempting to enter the carpeted 'prayer space' in shoes, 'to see what these people can do to us', as one woman cited in an article in the Italian daily *La Repubblica* argued, 'these people . . . who consider women as inferior . . . just try to keep your shoes on and see what happens' (Berizzi, 2015: 25). Needless

Image 6.2 Christoph Büchel, THE MOSQUE, 2015, Installation view at the Icelandic Pavilion, Venice Biennale.

Source: Photo by Luiza Bialasiewicz

Image 6.3 Christoph Büchel, THE MOSQUE, 2015, Installation view at the Icelandic Pavilion, Venice Biennale.

Source: Photo by Luiza Bialasiewicz

to say, nothing happened to visitors who wittingly or not violated the shoe rule,[6] but the exhibition's demarcation (and perceived 'real' re-signification) of a (formerly) Christian space by the laying down of an 'Islamic' carpet became a crucial point of the contestation.

Although the protest focused on the 'carpeting' (and thus presumed claiming) of a former church in this instance, the appeals of the protesters to physically violate the religious prescriptions of a to-be-Islamic space drew upon a much longer history of contestations in Northern Italy of 'real' spaces of Muslim religious practice, most famously the actions of the right-separatist Lega Nord politician (and for a time vice-president of the Italian Senate) Roberto Calderoli, who had called for 'A Pig Day' to 'infect' land granted by municipalities for the possible construction of new mosques (Calderoli brought his own pig to stroll across the terrain of the land granted for the Lodi mosque in 2005) (*La Repubblica* 2007).

When the Venetian municipal authorities decided to shut down the installation on 22 May (just two weeks after the opening, and months before its official closing date) it was not formally due to any violation of religious or cultural sensibilities. The Venice Procura announced that THE MOSQUE would be

shut down for public health reasons, citing sanitary and fire safety regulations[7] (interestingly, applying regulations that usually govern 'real' places of worship and public gathering spaces). Following a flurry of commentary on the local and national media, and some outraged statements from various representatives of the art world, the question slowly fizzled out.

The Icelandic Art Center in Reykjavik, the organization that had commissioned the installation, issued a formal statement disputing the closure, noting that the very purpose of Büchel's mosque was to 'materially draw attention to the political institutionalisation of segregation and prejudice in society' and 'to provide a platform for dialogue about and communication between different cultural positions' (cited in Ruiz and Panzeri, 2015). The staged contact with a material Muslim space and its material objects including, most prominently, the contested 'prayer carpet' did not achieve this intended outcome, however. If anything, it served to further 'materialize' a series of broader fears regarding Muslim presence in the Italian North-East, furnishing a specific set of spaces and objects around which right-populist narratives of 'nostalgic deprivation' could be focalized.

Airing the rugs II: Modica

The Croatian artist Igor Grubic, like Büchel, has long used his artistic practice as a form of political activism, with many of his works created in and for public spaces, including site-specific intervention, photography, and film.[8] In 2012, Grubic travelled to the southern Sicilian city of Modica for his intervention entitled *Missing Architecture*. During his research, Grubic noticed that despite the presence of a large Muslim community, not a single formal mosque existed in the city. Instead, members of the Muslim community would rent houses or apartments that would turn into meeting places for prayer. In conversations with locals, Grubic learned that the construction of mosques was, in practice, forbidden.[9]

So what do you do when the construction of a communal space devoted to praying is not permitted? Can you simulate one? Can you create a virtual and simultaneously 'real' open-air mosque in its place? After a period of fieldwork, Grubic began to make contacts with the members of the Modica Muslim community, including the imam. There was one common thread in all the conversations, he noted: their desire for a mosque (Grubic, 2018, personal communication).

Given the institutional obstacles to the construction of a 'real' mosque, Grubic decided to symbolically create a mosque in the open spaces of the city through the use of three elements: carpets, posters, and the call to prayer; carpets to symbolize the ground to pray on, posters with oriental patterned tiles hung on the walls of the old city symbolizing the walls of the mosque, and the call to prayer by the muezzin to symbolize the minarets. For the first time in modern times on Sicilian soil, a muezzin recited the five times a day call to

prayer in different public spaces on the artist's invitation. Grubic set the carpets in five locations in Modica with a strong symbolic significance: the municipal building, the stadium, an abandoned factory, in front of a Catholic church, and in the city's main square (Images 6.4, 6.5, and 6.6).

The choice of physical sites was not incidental, for the artist saw them as enabling an interaction between Modica's citizens and institutions: 'I intended to suggest that some place of worship for Muslim people should also have an important role regarding citizens' equality in a democratic society. Perhaps, in some of these strategic sites, a mosque could also have been imagined' (Grubic, 2018, personal communication). By re-siting the chosen objects – carpets and wall-like posters – Grubic thus attempted to (at least temporarily) re-signify a non-religious public space, opening it to the possibility of prayer. 'The dream [of the local Muslim community] is to have the classical mosque with a minaret built one day. The objective of the work *Missing Architecture* is to throw light on this fact and insert in the public space the elements which symbolically represent the missing place of worship for Muslims' (Grubic, 2018, personal communication).

Just as in the case of the Venice exhibition that was supported by the local Islamic centre, the imam of the Modica Muslim community played a crucial role in Grubic's project also in very material fashion. As the artist notes, 'He actually allowed me to use their carpets from the [existing informal] "mosque".

Image 6.4 Igor Grubic, *Missing Architecture*, 2012, Installation view in Modica, Sicily.
Source: Courtesy of the artist

Image 6.5 Igor Grubic, *Missing Architecture*, 2012, Installation view in Modica, Sicily.
Source: Courtesy of the artist

Image 6.6 Igor Grubic, *Missing Architecture*, 2012, Installation view in Modica, Sicily.
Source: Courtesy of the artist

This aspect is very important because it made the difference between fiction and reality'. The carpets used in the exhibition thus came from the functioning mosque, which can also be considered as a masjid and in the case of Modica was located inside an apartment rented by the Muslim community. In addition, the imam contributed to the project by 'acting' as the muezzin reciting the call to prayer in the public space in different locations, performing the audible part of the installation (Image 6.7). The interventions or 'simulations' (as the artist referred to them) took place one after the other, as Grubic was re-placing and transporting the same carpets from one location to the other. In each case, carpets were 'aired' for a few hours during the whole twenty-four hours *I Vespri* presentation. During this period, the public was provided with maps showing the location of the works and performance schedule, and the public programming included curator and artist talks.

How did the Modica public react to the work? When asked if the exhibition provoked tensions, Grubic commented, 'The gallerist was quite afraid for the possible reactions, but the [*Vespri*] curator told him that I, as an artist, would take all responsibility and likewise him as the curator'. Vocal and visible protests of the sort encountered by the Venice exhibition did not occur – and, according to Grubic, the representatives of the Muslim community were satisfied to be involved in the event. Several mentioned that this gesture was particularly politically important as perhaps for the first time in contemporary Sicily it

Image 6.7 Igor Grubic, *Missing Architecture*, 2012, Installation view in Modica, Sicily.
Source: Courtesy of the artist

created the possibility to publicly hear the Islamic call to prayer recited by the muezzin at prescribed times of the day. Since Modica is in a canyon, it was a 'really magnificent experience to hear the *adhan* as it is resonating and echoing early in the morning, before dawn, above and in the city while all city was still quiet and sleep' (Grubic, 2018, personal communication). Nevertheless, not everyone appreciated Grubic's re-invocation of the traces of Muslim presence in the Sicilian town: through the course of the exhibition various attempts were made to remove the posters during the night, but since they were strongly glued they were difficult to completely destroy.

Grubic has more recently attempted to realize a new version of the *Missing Architecture* presentation in Bucharest (Image 6.8), as part of the seventh edition of the public art programme *Expanded Space* titled *Cool Monuments – Hot Heads* (11 October–15 November 2017). The *Expanded Space* was organized around

> the conceptual tension between the strategic process of regularization of the public and the 'nomad' forces that dislocate it. In other words, the artworks are situated in between the authoritarian process of monumentalization of the past and fixation of collective identity in grandiose visual forms and stable conceptual frames, on the one hand, and the destabilizing action of disruptive interventions in the public sphere, which aim to challenge instituted structures of power and to spontaneously reinvent the relations between social agents that are shaped by these configurations.[10]

Image 6.8 Igor Grubic, *Missing Architecture* 2, 2017, Installation view in Bucharest, Romania.
Source: Courtesy of the artist

Grubic's *Missing Architecture 2* (2017) was originally planned as another multimedia intervention in public space. Just as in Modica, Grubic was surprised by the absence of a formal site for Muslim prayer in Bucharest, despite the city's sizeable Muslim population. *Missing Architecture 2*, framed around the scaffolding of an imaginary building under (re)construction, was to be in fact a direct response to the uncertain situation of the biggest mosque to be built in Bucharest (the Bucharest Mosque), following a government decision from 2015 which was met with a string of protests, marked by strong chauvinism and xenophobia against the local Muslim community. The temporary counter-monument designed by Grubic aimed to speak directly to such hostile reactions to the making of a Muslim space. Although the focus of the *Expanded Space* programme (under the aegis of which Grubic was invited to participate) was on the 'transformative' role of public art, ironically Grubic's work did not get the permission for public installation, and the artist had to present it in the courtyard of the National Museum of Contemporary Art (MNAC) in Bucharest. His work was, moreover, excluded from public communication about the exhibition, as the organizers were concerned with possible reactions, given continuing large-scale protests against the building of the Bucharest Mosque.

Transgressing rugs

In many ways, the reactions provoked by Büchel's THE MOSQUE and Grubic's *Missing Architecture* reflect similar contests over the building of 'real' mosques, in Italy and elsewhere in Europe: both in the popular reactions they evoked (much more pronounced in the Venetian case) as well as the concerns expressed by the organizing institutions. Over the past decade, a considerable body of academic work has examined the geographical politics of what has been (somewhat problematically) termed 'the Islamization of space' in European cities and, more broadly, the various ways in which Islamic presence in European cities has been subject to negotiation in different local contexts (see, among others, Allievi, 2009; Cesari, 2005; Gale, 2004, 2005; Göle, 2011, 2013, 2015; McLoughlin, 2005). Recent work by geographers and anthropologists on the racialization of spaces has extended this discussion in important ways by also considering the affective geographies generated by 'Islamic spaces' and 'Islamic bodies' (see especially the special issue edited by Tolia-Kelly and Crang, 2010; also Astor, 2014, Haldrup et al., 2006; Ruez, 2012; Swanton, 2010). Such studies have been particularly important in drawing out precisely the sort of 'emotional excesses' (Fischer, 2009) provoked by the appearance of Islamic sites and Islamic bodies but also, as we have tried to show, the making visible of 'Islamic things' like carpets in European urban spaces.

As Göle (2011: 383) has argued, the 'visibilization' of Islam in public 'cannot be thought independent of [its materialities], namely aesthetic forms, dress codes, or architectural genres'. The 'things' associated with Muslim presence

have thus become active agents in the 'material-discursive intra-action' that produces both the discourses but also real, physical practices of exclusion in urban spaces. As we have tried to highlight here, this has also been true of 'virtual' artistic attempts to bring into public view – to 'air' – objects that have now been 'made Muslim', rendered foreign and thus 'out of place'. By drawing attention to the longer traces of 'carpet memory' in Venice and Sicily – and thus to the longer histories of Muslim presence in those sites, both symbolic as well as material – the two exhibitions attempted to remind audiences of the other affective economies (to cite Ahmed, 2014) within which carpets were once located and made sense of; affective economies within which the oriental carpet was a known and coveted object. Grubic's 'airing' of the carpets in Modica (as Büchel's intervention in Venice) was aimed not only at creating new spaces, but also at 'airing' the Sicilian past: using past material objects like the carpet to re-materialize the memory of a different past of religious and ethnic coexistence, of the co-presence of 'Islamic' and 'European' memory-objects.

The use of oriental carpets in the two installations in order to tell 'other' stories of Europe's pasts, to attempt to re-weave the long-standing relations and exchanges between East and West, is particularly poignant also because of carpet's unique role as, precisely, 'storytelling' devices. In the first issue of the journal *Oriental Carpet and Textile Studies*, German scholar Werner Brueggemann remarks upon Walter Benjamin's discussion of the concept of 'aura' as 'a singular vision of the remote, however close it might be' (Benjamin, 1935, in Brueggemann, 1985: 283). As Brueggemann (1985: 283) notes, 'the central word "remote" is not to be understood as distant in space, but rather as its quality of being unapproachable'; unapproachable since Benjamin sees the origin of all art in ritual:

> 'The unique value of the true work of art', Benjamin writes – and here we may include that of a carpet – 'has its roots in ritual, in which it possessed its first and original function'. By this he means that even when the art object becomes divorced from its function, something belonging to the ritual is still apparent. The experience of 'aura' in this sense is therefore always 'a celebration of the numinous'.
>
> (Brueggeman, 1985: 283)

Brueggemann (1985: 283) suggests that 'it was no accident that Benjamin discovered the "aura" for aesthetic theory', citing Benjamin's biographer Werner Fuld's (1979: 19) description of the former's childhood as marked by the experience of being surrounded by antique and exotic objects. Benjamin's father 'worked at Lepke's, the well-known auction house in Berlin', Brueggemann remarks, and as a child, Benjamin 'spent his life close to collectors' items', 'breathing in their "aura"' and, especially, developing an appreciation of the relationship between objects and their collectors and observers. In Benjamin's aesthetics the relationship between the object and its observer is crucial:

a relationship that, as Benjamin argues, is fundamentally transformed in the modern age.

Nevertheless – and this is relevant to our analysis – even in the process of the modern disenchantment and 'estrangement' of art objects, they are never entirely stripped of their 'aura'. Theodor Adorno, commenting on Benjamin, emphasizes the persistent, 'indissoluble', nature of the 'aura' as 'a residue' that 'opposes the world's disenchantment' (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1969: 8). Brueggemann recalls, indeed, Adorno's notion of 'investment' as that 'element of human work that adheres to objects' and thus invests them with layers of meaning; he cites Adorno's letter to Benjamin where the former 'asks "is not the aura the mark left by the unremembered human attributes of the object?", by which he means that it carries the past relationships between men and objects into the present' (1985: 285). The 'aura' that is 'literally woven into the carpet', Brueggemann suggests, allows the collector (as too the observer) 'to follow in them the traces of past humanity' (1985: 285). Nevertheless, he importantly cautions (following Benjamin himself) that 'our aesthetic attitude should not be merely that of one who persists in contemplation, nor should the experience of the 'aura' be lost in nostalgia. It requires . . . that we submit the historical material stored by the carpet to the "touchstone of the critical intellect"' (1985: 285).

How can we relate this to the reception of the carpets brought into public view in Venice and Modica? In many ways, the intent of the two exhibitions was to use the carpets' 'aura' to remind audiences of Adorno's 'unremembered human attributes'; to make use of the carpet-as-memory-object that 'carries past relationships between people and objects into the present'. Yet the 'airing' of the carpets appears to have evoked not the sort of 'critical intellectual' reaction called for by Benjamin but rather its opposite – a nostalgic, indeed 'ritualistic' (in Benjamin's terms) attempt to remove the offending object, and thus with it its offending aura. In both cases, the exhibits seem to have evoked reactions marked by precisely the sort of 'nostalgic deprivation' highlighted by the editors in the introduction to this volume as characteristic of contemporary right-populism.

As Göle (2009: 278) has argued in her analysis of another installation that provoked similarly resentful protests, 'The realm of art has emerged at a privileged interface in relating as well as confronting different publics and cultures', most visibly those of 'Europe' and 'Islam'. In disrupting accepted notions of proximity and distance, art installations that materialize 'Muslim' things in the public spaces of European cities 'cross symbolic and spatial boundaries, provoking anxiety' (2009: 283). Such exaggerated anxiety – the 'emotional excess' noted by Fischer (2009) that we cite at the outset of this chapter – must be understood, Göle suggests, in the political context of contemporary Europe where 'the representation of the "other" has shifted from the distant unknown "Orient" to that of Muslims living in proximity with Europeans, and perceived as threatening intruders' (2009: 285).

The 'othering' of carpets that form the crux of both exhibitions thus needs to be read in their multiple 'material-discursive intra-actions'. The carpets 'claiming space' in Venice and Modica become objects of anxiety and transgression precisely in their role as carriers of (hi)stories and 'auras' of past interactions of Europe and the 'Orient'. By rejecting their materialization and entanglement in the spaces of the two Italian cities, the protesters staged or 'wove' their own threads of storytelling: a nostalgically idealistic 'reminicense' of an 'uncorrupted' European (aesthetic) tradition, free of an 'other'ly presence – past and present. It is, needless to say, an impossible nostalgia, as Valenta (2011) reminds us: a 'yearning for a Europe that never existed: a Europe disentangled and distinct from the rest of the world'.

Notes

1 We choose to use the 'politics of resentment' (following Cramer, 2016) rather than the more common term 'populist politics' as we believe it better captures the popular reactions we wish to discuss here (for a review of the usage of 'populist politics', see Gusterson, 2017; Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2017).
2 Not just in the Italian South, but also the once booming North-East region where Venice lies.
3 Drawing on the wider 'material turn' in anthropology and cultural studies, in particular the work of Barad (2007) and Bennett (2010); for a broader overview, see Buchli (2002, 2004), Coole and Frost (2010), and Hicks and Beaudry (2010); in geography, see Cook and Tolia-Kelly (2010).
4 The choice of terminology ('carpet' or 'rug') is itself marked by the histories of contact and trade and is itself a colonial legacy (see Edwards, 1953, for an overview – itself highly colonial).
5 Edwards closes the section on 'Symbolism in Persian Design' thus: 'I suggest, therefore, that caution is indicated in our approach to these matters. A tribal weaver, as she crouched over her horizontal loom, is more likely, I think, to seek inspiration from what she sees than from what she thinks – if, indeed, she thinks at all' (1983: 51).
6 The Icelandic Art Center (IAC) responded directly to the 'shoe controversy': 'Visitors to THE MOSQUE project are NOT required to remove their shoes nor cover their heads with veils. Inside the exhibition in the Pavilion there is a sign SUGGESTING that visitors remove shoes as a part of the exhibition and the installation, and as a way to respect the cleanliness of the site. Veils are provided for OPTIONAL use by anyone wishing to use them. It is entirely left up to visitors to choose whether to remove or wear their shoes, and whether to try wearing a veil' (Icelandic Art Center 2015, emphasis in original).
7 A strategy that has been deployed in initiatives to block the construction of mosques in other European cities (see, among others, Cesari, 2005, and the edited collection by Göle, 2015).
8 It is worthwhile to note that, as we write, it was announced that Grubic was selected to represent Croatia at the 2019 Venice Biennale.
9 While the building of mosques is not formally forbidden in Italy, a variety of legal obstacles have been invoked to block their construction, including architectural and 'landscape preservation' norms (see Saint-Blancat and Schmidt di Friedberg, 2005).
10 The VolumArt Association, *Cool Monuments – Hot Heads* (October 11–November 15), http://volumart.org/?amp&lang=en (accessed on 15 July 2019).

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Chapter 7

Social media and affective publics

Populist passion for religious roots

Ernst van den Hemel

Introduction

> Rouvoet [leader of ChristianUnion] says I am abusing judeo-christian tradition in my resistance against islam. The leader of the ChristianUnion as supreme dhimmi!
>
> (Wilders, Twitter, 15 January 2010)

This tweet, in which Dutch populist politician Geert Wilders accuses a rival politician of collaborating with Islam and betraying the Dutch Judeo-Christian tradition, contains a number of well-known populist tropes. Firstly, there is the fiery attack on elites, which are perceived as selling the people out to 'the enemy'. Scholars have long emphasised how such attacks on elites as the people' enemies constitute a key element in populist discourse (see e.g. Laclau 2005). Secondly, Wilders articulates this attack using social media, a dimension of populist politics that has received significant academic attention since the mid-2000s. Yet the tweet also contains a third element that has been considerably less studied: references to Judeo-Christian traditions and appeals to an idealised past (van den Hemel 2014). As demonstrated in the introduction to this volume, the connections between populism and heritage remain understudied. In this chapter, I want to contribute to filling this lacuna by focusing on populist discourse concerning heritage on social media. How is the category of heritage mobilised on social media? And, inversely, how does the use of social media influence populist invocations of heritage?

To address these questions, I will focus on the Dutch Freedom Party's Twitter data. The Dutch Freedom Party (PVV), epitomised by its leader Geert Wilders, became one of the earliest and best known examples of right-wing populism in Western Europe. Wilders is also known for using Twitter as his main method of communication (van Kessel and Castelein 2016). Accordingly, Wilders's party provides a telling example of populist discourse, not least in its emphasis on heritage and social media use.

Having first situated my approach in relation to current definitions of populism, I will argue that critical approaches that stress the 'style' of populist discourse over its substance impede a more detailed, content-oriented

understanding of populist social media data. The relatively scant references to heritage in populism studies is a striking example of a lacuna created by this emphasis on form over content. As I will show, references to heritage on social media are used to construct an 'affective public' along religious-cultural lines excluding those who fall outside its embrace. I will subsequently present a dataset of PVV tweets, which I will use to map the references to religious-cultural traditions and heritages.

Methodologically, I have done this through software named TCAT (Twitter Capture and Analysis Toolset).[1] Developed by the Digital Methods Initiative at the University of Amsterdam, TCAT is a toolset for capturing and analyzing Twitter data (Borra and Rieder 2014). Using Twitter's Application Programming Interfaces (APIs), TCAT makes it possible to retrieve data from Twitter users' timelines (the tweets sent by an individual user). Data can be culled according to whether it is linked to selected keywords or hashtags (the tweets using certain hashtags or keywords), a user network, or through a so-called 1% sample. Relevant for this chapter is that TCAT has allowed us to harvest tweets from the timelines of all PVV politicians on Twitter. By entering their user IDs and using TCAT to capture their tweets, a dataset of all PVV tweets was assembled. Through subsampling and analysis, TCAT makes it possible to map and interpret the dataset. This means, for instance, that captured tweets can be charted according to the use of certain terms, the number of times they have been retweeted, or other variables pertaining to the dataset (such as location, device used, or date).

Importantly, this method of capturing is dependent on and limited by a number of factors. Since TCAT uses Twitter's APIs, Twitter determines and constrains its capacity for data retrieval. Moreover, working with Twitter data also entails subscribing to Twitter's user agreement, whose privacy concerns need to be followed (Ahmed, Bath, and Demartini 2017; Williams, Burnap, and Sloan 2017). I have anonymized the findings of my dataset (see the graphs presented below), and, where I cite individual tweets, I limit myself to those sent by the PVV's party account or in its name. As a political party embroiled in current events, the PVV tweets do not constitute sensitive personal data. Where I refer to people tweeting under a personal title, as opposed to in the name of a political party, I have anonymised the tweets.

Populist social media use: populism as communicative style

From the outset of academic studies of populism, scholars have tended to associate populism with a particular style rather than particular content. We can see this in influential early works in the field, such as Ernesto Laclau's well-known approach to populism. Laclau analysed populism as a political logic that could be used by the left, right, and centre (Laclau 2005). It represents a 'style' of political discourse, and does not entail allegiance to a class, ideology, or vision

of society (Laclau 2005). The style functions by setting up a conflict between the good people and its enemies. Laclau emphasises how populism has no predefined centre, and any demand can become a populist demand (Laclau 2005). We can also see the emphasis on style over political content in more contemporary approaches. Take for instance the series of definitions mapped by Cas Mudde, who stresses how populist ideology is 'thin-centered':

> Populism is a thin-centered ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic camps, 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite,' and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people.
>
> (Mudde 2007, 23)

Populism, here, is defined by its style, function, and workings, not its content. This emphasis resonates with many other publications and definitions of populism. Influential strands in the study of populism tend to associate it with a style that is characterised by a sense of transgression and a rhetorical division in which the people are set against its enemy.

This approach has influenced how scholars have approached populist use of social media. By engaging directly with followers, social media can be used to bypass mainstream media and more traditional political outlets (Moffitt 2016). Social media are seen as a 'popular' medium, in closer and more direct proximity to 'the people' than say newspapers, magazines, or books disseminated by publishing houses. Scholars have emphasised that the format of short messages lends itself well to perpetuating outrage (Manucci 2017); expressing transgressive behaviour without intercession from a third party (Cunningham 2017); and setting up of an 'echo chamber' in which populist messages resound without opposition (Barberá et al. 2015). The term 'echo chamber' describes the tendency of communication to remain in the same sphere. In particular, the algorithms of particular digital media platforms can be said to create echo chambers by design (Zuiderveen Borgesius et al. 2016). On a Facebook feed, for instance, users predominantly see the sort of information shared by their peers, but not that shared by people outside their sphere. Google's algorithms provide results partly based on the user's previous searches, and a Twitter feed is based on one's followers and liked tweets. As populations across the world increasingly come to rely on social media for access to news, such algorithms represent political forces of great significance. And yet, among the general public they remain generally ill understood. In this context, populism is seen by some as intimately connected to the rise of social media echo chambers. The connection is especially pronounced when populist social media is compared to other forms of political functioning, which need more long-form modes of expression, based on rational arguments and a coherent and substantive ideology.[2] For instance, in their recent volume *Populism and the Web*, editors Mojca Pajnik and Birgit Sauer set out three ways in which the rise of social media has fostered the growth of

populism. Authors describe the transformation from consensual party politics into 'antagonistic symbolic politics', in which 'right-wing populist communication reproduces echo-chambers of simplified, antagonistic worldviews' (Pajnik and Sauer 2017). In this argument, populism is approached as a style of doing politics that is concerned less with content than antagonism. Social media use in this frame incubates this form of doing politics in that it is characterised by polarisation and antagonism, not content and consensus.

In this chapter I do not aim to contribute to debates on the potentially nefarious influence of social media on democracy, nor do I wish to chime in with the debate on whether populism was engendered by social media. Rather, the argument I want to make is twofold. Firstly, the analysis of social media use of populist movements has frequently focused on style or mechanics over political content. This framework, in which populist style is defined as a division between the people and its enemies along relatively arbitrary lines, has generated important insights into elements shared by populist movements across the globe: their transgressive behaviour; separation of the people and the elite; and direct address to followers independently of moderating third parties. Yet the emphasis on form or style in these approaches can also lead scholars to downplay significant questions. The references to 'Judeo-Christian tradition' in the tweet with which I started this chapter, for instance, can be seen as a textbook example of 'simplified antagonistic worldviews', as a superficial way to oppose 'Islam' and 'the West'. As I will show, however, there is considerably more to say about these invocations of tradition and the role of religion.

First of all, if we see populist language as predominantly focused on style, to which content plays a merely subservient role, we run the risk of missing the content of populist language. References to Judeo-Christianity are a clear example of this. Frequently dismissed as 'mere populist rabble-rousing', certain questions about references to Judeo-Christianity remain largely unanswered. For instance, why is the rhetorical opposition between 'Judeo-Christianity' and 'Islam' more effective than other factors that could be invoked to divide groups, such as enlightenment or race? Why would one focus on '*Judeo*-Christianity' and not Christian *Leitkultur* as far-right ideology has often done in the past? We know that populism divides the people and its others, but it is significant that it invokes religious traditions in doing so. What lines does the reference to religious heritage draw?

In the following section, I argue, firstly, that to understand what populist references to heritage mean, we need to look at what populists themselves say they mean, and what they mean for their followers. I am interested in questions not of veracity ('Is there such a thing as a Judeo-Christian tradition?'), but rather of connotation and circulation ('What does the Judeo-Christian tradition mean?' and 'How do these terms circulate and contribute to the formation of populist audiences?'). Social media data can be of use in approaching these questions. Secondly, I stress how if we see populist social media use as an extension of a style of politics that antagonizes people using simplistic worldviews, we run the risk of forgetting the specific affordances of the media in question. Accordingly,

I ask: what effect does social media use have on how populist movements use the past? In what follows, I want to focus on the questions raised hereby honing in on references to 'Judeo-Christianity' in the PVV's Twitter discourse. First, though, let me introduce the PVV and its fascination with religious-cultural identifications.

Tweeting Judeo-Christianity

References to Judeo-Christianity have been a hallmark of the PVV's discourse since more or less the party's inception (van den Hemel 2017). The term has frequently appeared in Wilders's discourse since the early days of the PVV. In 2006, for instance, the PVV suggested that Article 1 of the Dutch constitution (which outlaws discrimination) be replaced with another proclaiming the primacy of 'Judeo-Christian tradition' in the Netherlands (Wilders 2006, 2007). In parliament, the PVV explained its proposal by referring to secular values that are anchored in Judeo-Christian roots: 'separation of Church and State, the notion that man is the measure of all things, and the right to life and freedom in the present' (PVV 2006). Here 'Judeo-Christianity' functions as a reference not to the practice of believers. It refers instead to cultural tradition, to the roots of contemporary secular society, the heritage that has shaped and continues to shape our present and for which we should care lest Dutch society loses its identity. In 2010, prominent PVV member Martin Bosma published his take on contemporary Dutch society: *De Schijn-Elite van de Valsemunters*. In the book Bosma states that:

> Dutch citizens should cherish above all the Christian background of this country. Almost all our crucial accomplishments are connected to Christianity. Democracy, separation of Church and State, tolerance, but also values such as a work ethic and efficiency. Those of us who have read Max Webers' *The Spirit of Capitalism* know that our economic successes are linked to Christianity.
>
> (Bosma 2010: 68, my translation)

Bosma concludes that 'the PVV is now the second largest Christian party of the Netherlands' (69). Describing the PVV as a Christian party is somewhat of an anomaly in Dutch political history. The PVV claims that atheism, gay marriage, and feminism are central accomplishments of Dutch Judeo-Christian culture, despite the fact that these social developments are – I put this lightly – not widely associated with confessional politics. Almost invariably, the PVV's references to religion relate to religion as culture. In the party's discourse, references to religion are used to describe Dutch culture; secular values are associated with a religious-cultural background, and secular accomplishments are reframed as dependent on a culturalized religious identity (Mepschen, Duyvendak, and Tonkens 2010). In short, religion as heritage is integral to the PVV's conception of secularity.

The PVV might be the most electorally successful proponent of this discourse, but it did not invent it. The recent Dutch turn to the right has important precursors, not least populist pioneer Pim Fortuyn and liberal Frits Bolkestein, who stressed the significance of the religious-cultural roots of secularity (Fortuyn 2002; van den Hemel 2014). Bolkestein, for instance, gave an influential lecture, often seen as a starting point of the upturn of right-wing politics in the Netherlands, stating that: 'Humanism and Christianity have, after a long history that includes many black pages, brought forth a number of fundamentally important political principles, like the separation of Church and State, freedom of speech, tolerance and non-discrimination' (Bolkenstein 1992: 182). Bolkestein then proceeds to insist on the necessity of taking a tougher stand on immigration and integration. In a 2009 interview, he stated:

> The shared myth [of Christianity] is gone. And now the question is whether we can function without that myth. . . . [W]e can say: 'hurray! We are no longer Christian!' but I wonder whether that attitude will be sufficient. I'm afraid not. Some intellectuals converted to Catholicism for that reason. For me that would be too artificial, because I am not a religious person, but culturally speaking, I am most certainly Christian.
>
> (Bolkestein 2009)

Bolkestein highlights that for him, as a non-believing liberal politician, religion's relevance lies not in personal faith, but rather in a 'shared myth', that is, a shared framework, or culture that binds a society together. References to religion, in the Dutch turn to the right, frequently are meant in this sense: religion is seen as a shared heritage that provides the indispensable foundation for contemporary secular society. Although it is not the topic of this chapter, this way of speaking about heritage can also be seen in more international conservative circles. It figures prominently, for instance, in Samuel Huntington's 'A Clash of Civilizations?' (1993). It is worth noting how Huntington, who in turn paraphrases Bernard Lewis, connects religion to the heritage of contemporary secular society:

> This is no less than a clash of civilizations – the perhaps irrational but surely historic reaction of an ancient rival against our Judeo-Christian heritage, our secular present, and the worldwide expansion of both.
>
> (Huntington 1993: 32)

In this extract, the secular present is connected to 'Judeo-Christian heritage'. For Huntington, then, religious heritage is not a thing of the past. Both Judeo-Christian heritage and the secular present are, apparently, in the process of expanding worldwide. Whereas the clash of civilisations is often presented as secular, in Huntington's famous phrasing of this struggle 'Judeo-Christian heritage' is already cast as the inextricable basis of the globalisation of 'our secular present'.

Let us return to the PVV. As I have discussed above, the PVV has created a new space in Dutch politics, which is neither quite secular, nor confessional. The PVV's references to Judeo-Christianity, therefore, do not fit neatly into academic narratives that identify the populist turn as a secular reaction against the return of religion through migration. Scholars and commentators have noted that there is a certain vagueness as to precisely what is meant by terms like Judeo-Christianity (Nathan and Topolski 2017) or Western society's Christian values (van Kessel 2016). Scholars of religion, for instance, have emphasised the theological incoherence of this notion (Wallet 2012). Scholars have pointed out that in light of the history of Christian antisemitism, the idea of a common Judeo-Christian identity is a fabrication (Nathan and Topolski 2017). Furthermore, the fact that Wilders sees explicitly secular values as hallmarks of Judeo-Christianity has led commentators to conclude that the PVV's conception of Judeo-Christianity is outright contradictory and ultimately self-defeating (van Kessel 2016). As a result, the PVV's statements have been dismissed as 'mere populist rabble-rousing', an incoherent, paradoxical discourse, testifying to how populist strategies favour deepening emotional divisions, regardless of ideological coherence. However, the upshot of this critical emphasis on what the PVV's notion of Judeo-Christianity cannot mean – not true religion, not a cohesive ideology, etc. – is that what *is* meant by this invocation has been left understudied. This constitutes a lacuna, a missed opportunity in understanding how populist language works. Highlighting the incoherence of populist references to Judeo-Christianity has led to a lack of understanding of what these references mean to those who produce and use them, and therefore of how these terms function politically.

Determining what Judeo-Christianity means for the PVV represents a considerable challenge, not least because of the dearth of source material. Populist movements like the PVV do not frequently engage with mainstream media outlets nor express their worldview in ideological publications (indeed, unlike most other political parties in the Dutch parliament, the PVV does not have a scientific bureau). The study of social media, however, offers a potentially productive methodological approach to this quandary. Since the PVV uses social media as the major outlet through which it communicates with both party followers and the press, using social media data to broach these questions represents a logical addition to scholarship on populism.

In what follows, I provide an analysis of the tweets sent out by official PVV accounts during the party's first decade. TCAT was used to harvest a total of 110,000 tweets from these accounts. Having determined that considerable confusion and academic interest surrounds the term Judeo-Christianity in populist language, I have queried how this term is used and how its two constituent terms, Judaism and Christianity, function. In doing so, I have used a lexicon of terms associated with each religion (Judaism, Jew, synagogue, Torah, etc. for Judaism; Christianity, Christian, church, Bible, etc. for Christianity). I then mapped out co-occurrences in which terms associated with Judaism and

Christianity appear together. The results were grouped in clusters. Image 7.1 shows how the following thematic clusters predominate.

Let me illustrate these categories with the following examples.

> Is this about Dutch or Turkish youth? – Concerns about antisemitism amongst youth in the Netherlands.
>
> (Han IJssennagger, tweet, 9 March 2013)

This tweet, by a representative of the PVV in the Provincial Council (*Provinciale Staten*), reacts to a newspaper article on the rise of antisemitism amongst Dutch youths. The tweet raises the question as to whether the children engaged in this antisemitism are 'Dutch' or 'Turkish'. I will leave aside the tweet's deliberate confusion of cultural background and nationality. My point here is that references to Judaism in PVV Twitter data occur largely in the context of Islamic antisemitism. Indeed, most PVV tweets associate Judaism with antisemitic acts or views attributed to Muslims. Many more examples could be given: 'Moroccan kids harass Jewish family', 'Synagogue defaced by muslims', 'no longer safe to walk Dutch streets with a yarmulke'. In the majority of instances, keywords associated with Judaism in our dataset appeared in connection with antisemitism (allegedly) perpetrated by people with some connection to 'Islam'.

The second major thematic cluster of the tweets relate connections between Judaism and Israel. In this cluster, Israel is generally referenced as an ally of the

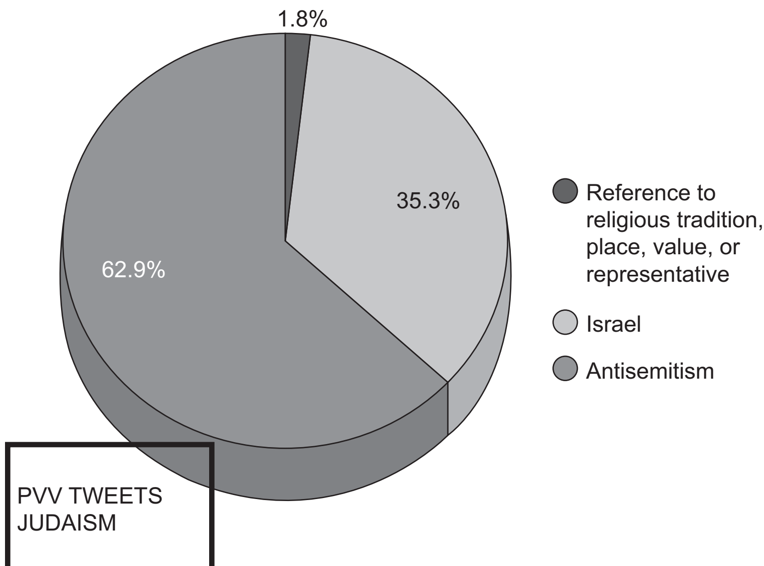

Image 7.1 PVV tweets referencing Judaism, January 2010–January 2019.

West and a 'beacon of democracy'. Moreover, in this cluster of Tweets, Israel is largely presented as the object of 'Islamic' aggression.

> Israeli heroes fight Hamas terrorist and raid long range rocket facility http://t.co/AoWawPfaiT #islam
>
> (Marcel de Graaff, tweet, 13 July 2014)

This tweet by Marcel de Graaff, PVV member of the European Parliament, focuses on Israel's role in the struggle against Hamas. As the hashtag #islam indicates, de Graaff's tweet associates Hamas with Islam in general. Honing in on the PVV tweets that reference Israel, we can see that a majority of 61.2% fall in this category: Israel is referenced positively but only in the struggle against 'Islam'. Of the 38.8% of tweets that do not mention Islam directly, a considerable number reference events or organizations which seem to suggest a link to Islam (e.g., tweets that reference Hamas, or 'terrorist religion of hate' which might not mention Islam literally but can be counted as less-direct references to Islam). Combining these findings, we see that Islamic antisemitism is the prime referent of 76% of the tweets referencing Judaism.

References to Judaism, then, predominantly function as a stick with which to hit Islam. This would resonate with some of the scholars I cited above, who stressed that notions such as Judeo-Christianity serve to counterpose an in-group against Islam, dividing populations into in-groups and out-groups. This is seemingly corroborated by the thinnest sliver on the pie chart: the PVV tweets referring to Judaism hardly ever stress Jewish tradition, places, values, or representatives unless they are threatened by Islam. There is no discernable interest in, or appreciation of, Jewish contributions to Dutch history or culture. Instead, the majority of tweets refer to Islamic hostility towards Jewish people and institutions.

The picture differs significantly, however, when we construct a similar pie chart for tweets referring to Christianity. Image 7.2 shows how the tweets referencing Christianity can be mapped out.

Like the tweets relating to Judaism, here we see that there are scarcely any references to Christianity-as-religion in its own right, and that the largest group of tweets references Islamic intolerance towards Christianity. The range of topics in this dataset, however, is significantly more diverse. We see references to not just Islamic intolerance, but also more varied aspects of Christianity that do not directly mention Islam. Different branches of Christianity appear (a level of detail conspicuously absent in the tweets referring to Judaism), and a more diverse cast of opponents are identified and challenged. There are numerous references to leftist forces in churches that are not sufficiently proud of their religion; religious representatives who do not adhere to the public meaning of Christianity in the right way; and relentless attacks on the Christian identity of the Netherlands, whether from Muslims or self-hating elites. A recurring point of focus is how secular Dutch society as intimately connected to the religious

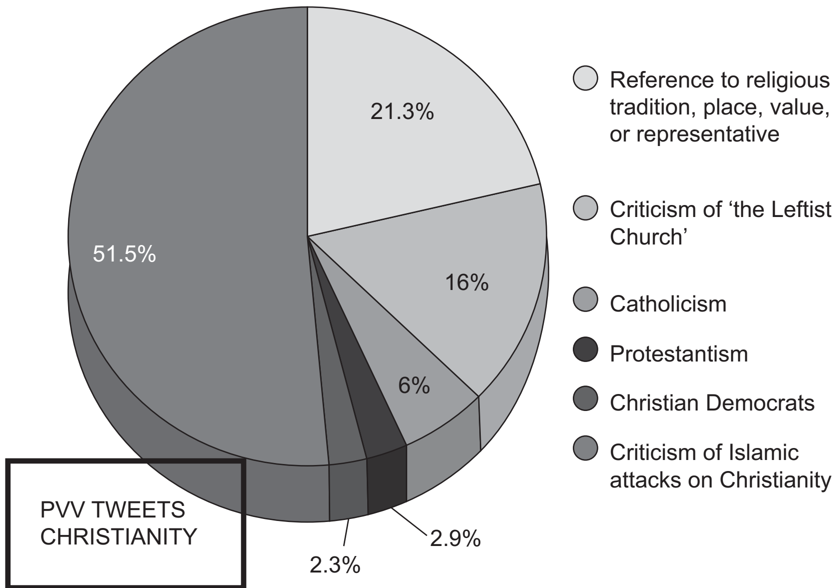

Image 7.2 PVV tweets referencing Christianity, January 2010–January 2019.

past. Let me provide some illustrations. The following tweet, sent by a PVV representative from the province of Groningen, serves as a good example:

> @ajboekestijn A true Western liberal understands that the notion of freedom, just like Christianity, is a product of Western culture
>
> (Dennis Ram, tweet, 24 June 2011)

Here we see how a positive, if rather vaguely defined, notion of freedom is conflated with Christianity on the grounds that both are products of Western culture. Note also how this tweet anchors Christianity in the West; 'Christianity is a Western cultural product'. This is a small example of an idea that recurs in both the social media dataset and PVV's parliamentary discourse. The tradition of Judeo-Christianity does not encompass, to name just two examples, Ghanaian Christians or Ethiopian Jews. It is rooted in the West. This tweet sets up an affinity of sorts between 'freedom', 'the West', and 'Christianity'. In this way, the tweet illustrates the PVV's Twitter discourse more general tendency to present Christianity as the historical foundation of contemporary secular society. In other tweets, the separation of church and state, religious toleration, feminism, and gay rights are all posited as cultural accomplishments of Christianity.

References to Christian heritage, however, are not entirely abstract in this cluster. A significant number of tweets reference the importance of material

heritage. The following tweet, for instance, covers the destruction of a Belgian village church, which burned down. It shows a concern with a particular object of religious heritage. This starkly contrasts with the lack of such detail or concern for tangible heritage in the tweets referencing Judaism. In that dataset, Jewish heritage is mourned only insofar as it can be perceived as the object of Islamic aggression.

> This object of heritage unfortunately destroyed by fire – Intense fire destroys church in Westkapelle
>
> (Alexander van Hattem, tweet, 26 March 2013)

What do these examples show? First of all, let us retrace our steps. These tweets display the classical elements of populism that I outlined in the beginning of this chapter. 'The people' is opposed to its enemies - often foreigners and elites - and attempts are made to provoke outrage. The tweets, or at least those pertaining to Judaism, seems to confirm the existing view that the PVV has no interest in actually existing Judeo-Christian traditions. Judeo-Christianity, in this analysis, is a battle cry, void of content. Our mapping of PVV tweets provides a more nuanced picture. Certainly, the tweets referencing Judaism often oppose Jewish victims to Islamic aggressors. But the tweets pertaining to the second term of Judeo-Christianity are different. We find detailed, though no less provocative and ham-fisted, appeals to Christianity's cultural importance. These discussions focus on classical loci of heritage, buildings, traditions, and rituals but also on more secular and immaterial heritages, which include notions of religious freedom, tolerance, and atheism.

The tweets might seem to present a hodgepodge of ideas, a set of seemingly unrelated references to secular and religious topics without a coherent framework. Indeed, from the perspective of political theory, the idea that atheism is a Christian value is a contradiction in terms. Similarly, from the perspective of theology or religious studies, the conflation of secularity and religion suggests that these manifestations of populist discourse have neither a coherent grasp of religion nor a real interest in religion's contributions to Dutch history.

Things appear differently, however, if we approach these references to Judeo-Christianity as a discourse aiming to generate a community based on emotion, as opposed to clearly circumscribed dogmas or statements of principle. As I will emphasise, the PVV's invocation of a shared heritage on social media should be seen as setting up 'affective publics'.

Social media and the shaping of affective publics for the past

In the previous section, I outlined how a broad set of denominators function as referents for the Christianity part of the Judeo-Christian equation. These include references to an idealised religious past but also to secular values. The

challenge here, it seems to me, is not to disqualify this apparently incoherent set of associations because they lack ideological logic, but to understand how publics are shaped by this discourse of Judeo-Christianity, to grasp the 'structures of feeling' that it is constructing.

This notion of 'structures of feeling', borrowed from Papacharissi's (2015) reading of Raymond Williams, does not indicate a structure in the sense of a pre-existing communal set-up. Instead, it indicates a 'structure in the sense that you could perceive it operating in one work after another which weren't otherwise connected' (Williams 1979: 159, quoted in Papacharissi 2015: 115). These structures of feeling are shared, cited, and repeated without being explicated in a coherent, explicit manner: 'People weren't learning it from each other; yet it was one feeling much more than of thought – a pattern of impulses, restraints, tones' (ibid.). Papacharissi emphasises that we can see a similar effect in social media discourse:

> In the same manner, we may understand and further interpret collaborative discourses . . . on Twitter as structures of feeling, comprising an organically developed pattern of impulses, restraints and tonality. . . . They are organised enough to facilitate sharing, yet open enough to permit differentiated classes of people to locate meaning in them and further infuse them with meaning.
>
> (Papacharissi 2015: 116)

Papacharissi argues that collaborative discourses on Twitter should not be seen as deliberative structures presented through 'rationally organized modalities of civic engagement' (ibid.), but rather that 'sentiment, pre-formed and mediated, leads the way into locating one's own place in a converged sphere of activity' (ibid.: 117). Papacharissi states that these networks of feeling form publics that are bound not necessarily by ideological coherence, but by affect: 'affective publics'.

What makes approaches such as Papacharissi's productive for the question underlying this chapter is that she grasp social media as neither forces that in themselves bring about change through techno-determinacy, nor as mere vehicles for communication of an already existing ideology. She presents a more nuanced view: social media function 'as environments that invite particular varieties of behaviours, depending on their affordances *and* the sociocultural context within which these affordances are utilised' (ibid.: 121, my emphasis). An affective public comes about then by both appealing to pre-formed scripts *and* through mediation. Affective publics remain fluid: there is no sense of ideological coherence or a predominance of rational argumentation, just a fluid invitation to find one's place. Affective publics are defined as 'networked public formations that are mobilized and connected, or disconnected through expressions of sentiment' (ibid.: 125). On this account, the focus of critical

questioning should move from the messages articulated in individual tweets, or the ideologies underlying them, and hone in instead on what these publics 'sound like'. One of the ways in which this question can be approached is to attend to storytelling. What narrative universe does the environment of populist Twitter use engender? How does the Twitter medium allow people to place themselves in the story?

Judeo-Christian affective publics in PVV tweets: a Christmas carol

Let us return to the dataset of tweets I presented above. Instead of searching for ideological or theological coherence, the idea that Twitter offers a platform for collaborative narrative frameworks in which a public places their own sentiments offers a more productive approach to the dataset. For starters, we would do well to remember that the phrase 'Judeo-Christian' – or, as Wilders sometimes puts it, 'Judeo-Christian-humanist traditions' – is itself a narrative, a story, which moves from the 'Judeo' to the 'Christian' to the humanist secular present. The very phrase, therefore, invites people to situate their experiences in a narrative. It presents the past as the root of the present, and connects the past to a home threatened by external enemies. The plethora of seemingly contradictory ideas of the past invoked in this discourse invites people to project their own sense of home, and the past.

Take for instance the following tweet about Ahmed Aboutaleb, currently the mayor of Rotterdam. For more than a decade, Aboutaleb has been a favourite target of criticism from the PVV. Both a practising Muslim and a member of the Labour Party PvdA, Aboutaleb can be framed by the PVV as an enemy of the people because of both his faith and his membership of the (social-democratic) elite. The scene was set for Twitter outrage, then, when Aboutaleb stated in a 2016 interview that he does not erect a Christmas tree in his house during the December holidays.

> and yesterday Aboutaleb heavily disappointed me when he said on Radio1 that he never puts up a Christmas tree #awaywithusculture What about his two eldest daughters? Would they put up a christmas tree?
>
> (Maurice Meeuwissen, tweet, 25 December 2018)

Here, Aboutaleb's comment on the Christmas tree is taken as the proof and symbol of his imputed hatred of all things Dutch. The tweet continues by reflecting on whether Aboutaleb's daughters would reproduce his attitude towards Christmas trees, thus casting doubt on whether the children of a Muslim are able to participate in Dutch society. What I want to focus on here is how the tweet presents the Christmas tree as a symbol of Dutchness. A closer look at how Christmas trees show up in our dataset indicates that references to Christmas

trees are invariably associated with threats to Dutch national identity, because of either alleged Islamic hostility or the alleged actions of a self-hating elite. When we hone in on which words appear most frequently alongside the phrase 'Christmas tree' (*kerstboom*), we see the following dominant co-occurences: 'threatened' ('*bedreigd*'), 'away-with-us' ('*wegmetons*'), outlawed ('*verbod*'), and 'Islamization' ('*islamisering*'). The presence of the hashtag #wegmetonscultuur ('away-with-us-mentality') further indicates a perception that the Christmas tree is under attack by self-hating elites.

A case in point is the debate concerning the Christmas tree at the HvA, a polytech university in Amsterdam (the Hogeschool van Amsterdam). It was reported in 2017 that the HvA had banned Christmas trees from their premises because of pressure from Islamic students (NRC, March 1, 2017). This led to a firestorm on Twitter, which, in turn, led to questions in parliament and a number of parliamentary debates. When it turned out that the reporting was incorrect (people started tweeting images of Christmas trees in the hallways of the HvA), one would have expected the outrage to subside. After all, there was no self-Islamization at the HvA: the Christmas trees simply were not banned. Our look at our dataset shows a different picture. Long after the controversy was debunked, the HvA was still mentioned as an example of the 'away-with-us' mentality which had apparently taken hold in institutes of higher learning in the Netherlands. In particular, Christmas trees function in 'slippery slope' arguments, one in a series of instances in which Dutch identity is progressively done away with. Maikel Boon, PVV member of the Provincial Executive of North Brabant, provides a prime example of this:

> First Black Pete, now Easter before you know it Christmas. Save the Netherlands and vote @geertwilderspvv #riseup #PVV
>
> (Maikel Boon, tweet, 13 March 2016)

Here, attacks on Easter, Zwarte Piet,[3] and Christmas are placed in a single narrative in which the existence of the Netherlands is in grave danger. Since there is no space in this chapter to engage with the other two examples mentioned in this tweet, let it suffice to refer to Markus Balkenhol's work on Zwarte Piet and my earlier analysis of the Dutch 'war on Easter' (van den Hemel 2017; Balkenhol and van den Hemel 2019). What I want to stress here is that the 'attack' on Christmas circulates more or less permanently in the PVV's Twitter discourse as an example of how Dutch identity is seriously threatened. Heritage – in particular key Christian traditions like Easter and Christmas – are taken to symbolise threats to Dutch national identity. Although Christianity is mentioned, it is present as a cultural rather than a confessional identity.

Although until this point I have focused on the Twitter discourse of PVV representatives, now I want to make a foray into the Twitter discourse of PVV supporters. In this context, the slippery slope argument – in which one instance of Christian heritage after another is threatened – is a frequent trope. Take for

example the following reaction to a prior tweet by a Twitter user sympathetic to the PVV's cause: 'Indeed the Netherlands is no longer the Netherlands. No Christmas, No Easter. . . . Before you know it we are all forced to celebrate the Sugar Fest. That's why I vote PVV'.[4] Here we see how references to Christmas and Easter are connected to a familiar past (in which, presumably, the Netherlands was still the Netherlands), a past that is now gravely threatened or on the brink of being lost.

References to Christmas trees are just one example of how ideas of cultural heritage function in PVV Twitter discourse. One could make similar analysis of Easter, the Saint Nicholas celebration, or dilapidated church buildings. Indeed, practically all references to Christian heritage in PVV's discourse form part of a story in which a 'home' is gravely threatened and the past is valued as something without which cultural identity would be irrevocably lost. Present-day threats to Christmas trees and Easter celebrations are contrasted with a past in which these threats did not exist – a past to which we should return. The tweets expressing these emotions are not adequate descriptions of an actually existing Dutch past. They rather function as a recurring invitation to place oneself in a narrative stressing the importance of having a home among escalating threats, and attachment to a familiar past. The affective public constructed by this discourse which recognises that these examples of threatened heritage are not primarily descriptive, but that they express a structure of feeling, in which heritage stands for a threatened past, now well on the way to being lost forever.

The online past as a foreign country no longer

An increasing number of academic studies attend to the role of affect. Its political relevance has been emphasised by scholars such as Butler and Spivak (Butler and Spivak 2007) and Chantal Mouffe (2000) who suggest that affect has often been overlooked in political theory. The rise of populism has drastically reoriented agendas towards the study of affect, yet received misgivings about emotions continue resonating. Frequently, populism's capacity to generate affective responses has led to a telling disqualification of populist discursive content. Studies of social media do highlight Twitter and Facebook's capacity to engender and circulate emotion, though often with thinly veiled sadness about the demise of consensus-politics and the rise of emotional polarisation.

What I have attempted to determine is not whether affective politics is right or wrong, but what makes it stick. As Sara Ahmed suggests, affect is a sticky business, tying together ideas, values, and objects in a sustained bond: 'Affect is what sticks, or what sustains or preserves the connection between ideas, values, and objects' (Ahmed 2010: 34). Invocations of the religious past, tied to controversies concerning Christmas trees, church buildings, or Easter eggs, aim to create such sticky affective identifications. In inviting people to associate themselves with homely sentiments of belonging and innocence, they provoke outrage about threats to this home.

One of the things that Papacharissi's approach has added to this debate is that one should not forget that social media's capacity to generate affect is always based on, and part and parcel of, existing developments in larger currents in society. This allows us to question how affective publics sound and which elements take on special meaning in certain mediatised spheres and discursive practices. In the above, I have attempted to show that to understand the effectiveness of populist discourse we need to combine populism studies with scholarship on social media. This opens the way, paraphrasing Papacharissi, to focusing on which narratives and feelings populist discourse creates on social media. The past has proven an effective ingredient in conjuring affective publics.

As L.P. Hartley's famous line in *The Go-Between* goes, 'the past is a foreign country'. Taking his cue from this famous line, David Lowenthal wrote his 1985 book on how the past needs to be continuously reperformed. In a revised edition, published in 2015, Lowenthal stresses how the past becomes of personal and collective interest. In describing how modernity occasions longings for a simpler past, he cites a *New York Times* columnist with a clear case of technophobic nostalgia:

> Before texts and tweets, when there was time. Before apps, when there were attention spans. Before social media, when we were social. Before celebrities, when there were stars. Before identity theft, when nobody could steal you. Before the Greens, when we faced the Reds. Before movies-on-demand, when movies were demanding. Before dystopia, when utopia beckoned. Before Facebook, when there was Camelot. Before reality shows, when things were real. Before attitude, when there was apathy. Before YouTube, when there was you and me. . . . We managed just the same, without passwords, even in black and white.
>
> (Cohen, *New York Times*, 5 October 2010, cited in Lowenthal 2015: 32)

According to Lowenthal, the loss of the past gives rise to new forms of living the past in the present: 'The public at large cannot tolerate an alien past and strenuously domesticates it . . . the past cherished at home becomes a haunt of chauvinist heritage, nostalgic tribalism . . . rather than a foreign country, the past becomes our sanitized own' (Lowenthal 2015: 595). This sanitized past is lived through the elevation of heritage as symbol of a time before current threats. In the narrative played out in PVV's Twitter discourse, there was no variety in how people celebrated Christmas; there was no intra-confessional strife between Protestants, Catholics, or Jews. Before the advent of mass migration, it is presumed, people basked in a past in which they felt at home. The phrase 'Judeo-Christian tradition', as I argued above, is itself a narrative that sanitises a past rife with conflict, antisemitism, and religious bigotry by presenting a smooth unbroken stream of inspiration to our threatened present. The PVV tweets about Christian heritage analysed above similarly sanitise the past to construct affective publics in the present.

Conclusion

The main question with which I began this chapter addressed the content rather than the style of populist social media language. I noticed how references to religious heritage among the populist right wing in Europe and the United States have been significantly understudied. Taking this as my point of departure, my analysis has honed in on how references to religious heritage function on social media. In the analysis of a dataset of Twitter discourse by PVV representatives, a significant difference is discernable between references to Judaism on the one hand and references to Christianity on the other. The references to Judaism fit in well with the existing hypothesis that contemporary right-wing notions of 'Judeo-Christianity' largely serve as a glorified way of critiquing Islam. The references to Christianity, however, are decidedly more complex. In the dataset we saw quite diverse and detailed references to religious heritage, including Christmas trees, church buildings, and Easter celebrations. Having noted the prevalence of these references in the dataset, our question became how to interpret these results and why the religious past has been taken up as a suitable resource for populist political agency. Referring to Papacharissi's notion of 'affective publics', I discussed how Twitter discourse sets up a structure of feeling, as opposed to a stable exchange of ideas of rational subjects. Critical focus then turns on how Twitter discourse sets up an affective public around Christian religious heritage. A recurring way in which Christian heritage is narrated was illustrated by the example of Christmas trees. By referring to largely nonexistent threats to traditions (in this case that of erecting Christmas trees), and by placing this threat as but one in a line of increasingly grave encroachments upon Dutch national identity, this Twitter discourse spins a narrative in which the past is projected as a familiar place, but which is now under threat. Thus, Christian heritage has come to symbolise a 'home' to be urgently protected in a narrative that invites individuals to weigh in with their own sanitized images of the past. I started this chapter with a tweet by Geert Wilders in which he accuses a representative of a confessional political party of siding with Islamic forces by not adhering to Wilders's own definition of Judeo-Christian tradition. Whereas Wilders' tendency to lecture confessional politicians on what Judeo-Christianity means has been the topic of much mockery and scathing critique, my analysis has shown how the Christian past plays a central role in constructions of populist affective publics.

Notes

1 For documentation, see the entry 'Twitter Capture and Analysis Toolset' on the wiki of the Digital Methods Initiative: https://wiki.digitalmethods.net/Dmi/ToolDmiTcat. For technical issues, this research greatly benefited from the help of Emile den Tex.
2 See for instance the World Forum for Democracy' s session named 'Is Populism a Problem'. During this forum, a lab was dedicated to 'Bursting Social Media Echo Chambers'.
3 The blackface figure of Zwarte Piet (Black Pete) is traditionally part of the Sinterklaas celebrations in the Netherlands. The stereotypical depiction of a Black servant/enslaved

has been increasingly protested over the last years and has become the topic of escalating polarized debates. Within right-wing populist movements, maintaining Zwarte Piet has become a rallying cry of sorts.

4 I have paraphrased this tweet in accordance with privacy regulations. See the methodological paragraphs in the chapter's introduction.

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Chapter 8

Caring for some and not Others

Museums and the politics of care in post-colonial Europe

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Introduction

In November 2011 Martin Bosma, member of the 'Freedom Party' (PVV), a right-wing populist political party in the Netherlands, filed a motion in the Parliamentary Commission for Education, Culture, and Science. On the commission's agenda for that day was the national government's budget for the coming policy period. The specific discussion to which Bosma made his motion was focused on funding for the Tropenmuseum, one of the leading ethnographic museums in the Netherlands, and coincided with broader discussions around governmental support for the cultural and international development sectors. Earlier that year, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had announced its intention to stop the subsidy of the Royal Tropical Institute, the umbrella institution under which the Tropenmuseum fell and a major Dutch institution within the field of international development cooperation.

There was general support for the Tropenmuseum across the different political parties, including the PVV. Bosma, however, while supportive, desired another kind of Tropenmuseum. For him the current orientation of the museum towards development cooperation and its critical museological approach was not worth supporting. He argued that 'our colonial legacy should no longer be swept under the rug (*wegmoffelen*)'. To get the support of his party, he proposed that the Tropenmuseum 'revert back to the Colonial Museum':

> State Secretary Knapen will take the Tropenmuseum off the subsidy drip feed. In NRC Handelsblad he says that Benin is more important than Amsterdam. The PVV can agree with the closure of the Tropenmuseum. Columnist Elma Drayer writes in Vrij Nederland: 'this museum has been forcing down our throats (*inpeperen*) for years the idea that the West is no good.' We do not need to subsidize this kind of self-hate. . . . My faction would much rather see the Colonial Museum in this place. This is how the Tropenmuseum once started. This is what the building is built for. You can still see it beautifully on the building, which showcases our colonial history.[1]

Bosma's interest in this return to a museum of the past may be surprising for many, as it goes against the grain of a commonly held trope in the Netherlands today. As several authors[2] have argued, the colonial past is regarded by many, including right-wing populists, as a thing of the past, a history that has little if any relevance for contemporary Dutch society. For example, charismatic, right-wing populist Pim Fortuyn argued in 2002 that:

> The slave trade and slavery are practiced by the forerunner of modernity, so by our ancestors. . . . We would not be able to do it again, now, and would not do it . . . there is no reason to feel guilty, especially because the daughter should not be blamed for the father's actions, and certainly no reason for financial compensation.
>
> (Fortuyn 2002: 158)

For Fortuyn, slavery and colonialism were things that were done in the past and things of the past. It is a past for which no one in the present should be blamed or feel any shame. Moreover, contrary to the suggestion of several activists, there should be no need for present generations to consider reparations for colonialism. Fortuyn rejects responsibility for the colonial past and slavery; he does not suggest that this is a history which current generations should be proud of.

Bosma takes a similar position in terms of shame or guilt; unlike Fortuyn, however, he does not want to forget the colonial past, demanding instead the nation's colonial grandeur to be showcased in the museum. A critical stance towards this history, what he believes is the current stance of the Tropenmuseum, amounts to an attack on the nation.

At stake in Bosma's motion was not simply the future of the Tropenmuseum, or the way people deal with the history of colonialism and slavery in the Netherlands. In his motion, the colonial past forms part of the narrative of a nation in peril. This is a narrative about a Dutch nation whose presumed real people, its values, and its heritage need to be cared for.

In this chapter we explore the complex overlap between the colonial and slavery past, right-wing populism, and narratives of caring for the nation. We take Martin Bosma and his publicly expressed opinions about the Tropenmuseum as points of departure for our speculation on how a return to the colonial museum might be understood as a curatorial practice of self-love, a love for the nation. Our intention here is neither to vilify nor to celebrate Bosma; nor do we want to celebrate the Tropenmuseum. One of the underlying arguments we want to make in this chapter, which coincides with the general thrust of this publication, is that any simple dismissal of the stance of the political right risks reducing our abilities as academics to understand the growing popularity of right-wing populism in the present (Mouffe 2018). Moreover, even if we hold a different political position, such a dismissal presupposes the idea of a right-wing political ideology that is restricted to one group of people. As several commentators have

already pointed out, mindful of the results of recent elections across Europe and in the USA, so-called populist ideology has become more and more distributed across different political parties in recent years, especially as liberals try to increase their credibility with specific groups of voters (Gourgouris 2018). Similarly, we will suggest that within this rising tide of populism, there may be no need for a return to the colonial museum for a celebratory narrative of the nation and its past. Such narratives that resist criticism may, in fact, be more widely distributed across numerous other heritage institutions in the Netherlands, even in Europe, whose presentation of the colonial has come under criticism in recent years as being celebratory of Dutch glory, or Eurocentric, while eliding the complexity and violence of the slavery or colonial past.

We will explore the entanglement of questions of caring for the future of the nation – importantly, this is an accusation often proffered onto postcolonial and (post)migrant citizens regarded as not caring enough – with the care for the national heritage, in museums and their collections, and the care for non- or (presumed) lesser citizens. As we will suggest, right-wing political narratives argue for a differential economy of care that places citizens within a hierarchy of who is deserving of care based on their presumed right to citizenship. Within this differential hierarchy, racialized and culturalized others are deserving of a different kind of care, based on benevolence, tolerance, and compassion (Balkenhol 2016; Muehlebach 2018). Moreover, postcolonial and (post)migrant citizens are either regarded as not caring enough about the nation or even a threat to the nation's future, its values, and its culture.

In what follows we will explore in more detail Martin Bosma's ideas, which we take as offering a measure of some of the anxieties about the present and future of the Netherlands, indeed, of Europe today. Taking critically his suggestion of a return to the colonial museum, we will place questions of heritage, and especially colonial heritage in museums, at the core of our discussions of the Netherlands in peril, which, on our account, has received insufficient scholarly attention in these discussions. We will trace how Bosma developed his idea that the nation is neglected, under siege, and therefore in need of care. We will then explore what populists perceive as a 'lack' of care for the nation, its past, and its values. Finally, we will speculate about some of the paradoxes raised by the populist politics of care and its implications for the possibility of convivial futures in the Netherlands.

The making of the populist or the radicalization of Bosma

How might we understand Martin Bosma's care about colonial history? And to what kind of colonial museum would he want to return? Answers to these questions may be found in his own words, in his memoirs in which he positions himself as the representative of an 'oppressed majority', tyrannized by cultural elites and strangers.

Born in 1964, Bosma is a Dutch politician who has been described as the chief ideologist for the right-wing populist 'Freedom Party' (PVV).[3] His biography embodies a populist sentiment marked by the intertwining of Islamophobia, an attack on 'the leftist elites', and a neoliberal worldview (Oudenampsen 2018).

A political scientist by training, Bosma began his career as a journalist, working for various Dutch national newspapers as well as for CNN during a five-year period in the United States, when he also studied at the prestigious progressive university the New School. His career switch to politics coincided with a specific event that has often been cited as a turning point in the Netherlands (Stengs 2009), the 2004 murder of filmmaker Theo Van Gogh. Bosma frames the murder as an event that deeply affected him and the neighbourhood in which it took place, throwing Dutch society into shock and turmoil. In his account, a pleasant neighbour, loving father, genius radio maker, and a visionary among the blind had been killed for standing up for the good. Van Gogh was brutally murdered.

At the time of the murder, Bosma was already in conversation with Geert Wilders, the founder of the Freedom Party and today the figurehead of the populist right. He admired Wilders for his courage to stand up for his beliefs and was enchanted by Wilders's vision, but he was in doubt whether to give up the relative safety of his career as a journalist. The Van Gogh murder, he says, took away his doubts:

> That Tuesday morning, the choice had been made for me. The jihad had announced itself around the corner. Theo was dead. Slaughtered, bled out, mopped up. On Linnaeusstraat during rush hour. The mothers with cargo bikes (*bakfiets*) had to make a detour because someone had had to carry out the work of Allah.[4]

Like many others in the neighbourhood, and indeed across the country, Bosma was shocked that such a thing could happen in a peaceful nation such as the Netherlands. This murder was therefore a sign of something much larger; it demonstrated that there was something fundamentally wrong with the direction in which Dutch society was headed. The shock of Van Gogh's murder was the shift, the springboard from which he would launch an attack on those who threatened the nation, 'the elites' and foreigners:

> Next to the murder, another abhorrent thing happened: the entire elite went into a multicultural cramp (*multikulkramp*). . . . It was sickening (*Het was allemaal zum Kotzen*).[5]

While for him the murder itself was horrific, what ultimately made him move towards Wilders was the response of politicians and the media. Instead of standing by Van Gogh and condemning 'Islam', he felt that they were far

too accommodating towards minorities. In his view an end should be put to 'multiculturalism'.

> And thus I had to go to The Hague. If it failed, so be it. Standing on the sidelines was no longer an option. I thought of the words of Todd Beamer, on 11 September 2011 on board United Airlines flight 93. That day, too, citizens had to fix the mess. Without guns and with the courage of desperation they attacked the jihadists. Beamer's last telephone call ended with the words: 'Let's roll'.[6]

Quoting Enoch Powell's so-called rivers of blood speech from 1968,[7] Bosma was convinced that 'to see, and not to speak, would be the great betrayal'. Faced with what he understood to be an accommodating response of the political and cultural elites, he saw it as his duty to get involved. For 'did not Churchill say: "You have enemies? Good. That means you've stood up for something, sometime in your life"' (Bosma 2011: 16).

His motivation to join Wilders's populist movement was framed as an ethical imperative of an existential nature. It was not just about standing on the right side of history. Faced with the murder of Van Gogh he saw his switch to politics as a question of literal survival: the murder of an individual becomes the 'murder' of free speech, the 'murder' of the values the Dutch nation stands for, indeed, a threat to the nation itself. It was not an act that emerged out of a hatred of Muslims or for the cultural elite. Rather, this was an act of love of the people – out of self-love (Rousseau's *amour de soi*) and an instinct to survive (Ahmed 2004).

It is, arguably, within this idea of love for the people that Bosma's lack of support for a critical museum of so-called self-hate emerges. For him, a return to the colonial museum would therefore be a practice of caring for the nation and of self-love.

Right-wing populism, the slavery past, and the museum

Martin Bosma's narrative that presents the notion of a people under threat from the elites and outsiders taps into a broader populist discourse which frames postcolonial critique as a threat to the nation. Indeed, such narratives have been on the rise ever since the early 1990s, when Black grassroots organizations placed the Dutch involvement in the transatlantic slave trade and its afterlives in the present on the national public and political agenda. Their work has, for example, resulted in the creation of a number of slavery memorials, the best-known being in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and Middelburg (Balkenhol 2014). Similarly, a growing number of city guides have been published that explore the traces of slavery in cities like Utrecht, Amsterdam, and Groningen (Hondius et al. 2019).

Museums, too, have started to address the theme in more sustained ways, with growing numbers of exhibitions addressing slavery being staged in

some of the main museums in the Netherlands. In 2013 alone, four major museums curated temporary exhibitions on this topic, as part of the national commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the abolition of slavery in the Dutch kingdom. The Rijksmuseum, ostensibly the Dutch national museum, reopened after more than a decade of renovations with one section of its displays dedicated to the slavery past. Today, across the Netherlands, museums are grappling with how to include slavery and colonialism in their narratives. NTR, a major television network, produced a ten-part series dealing with the Dutch slavery past. And annually there are national commemorations of slavery on 1 July, with the central one in Amsterdam being televised in a live broadcast.

This increased attention to slavery emerged alongside a vibrant memory politics around slavery in the Netherlands, which has involved a broad spectrum of actors ranging from the prime minister and other ministers of governments to amateur historians, museum curators, concerned parents, academic historians, and members of the fascist Dutch People's Union (Nederlandse Volks-Unie, NVU). All these actors have divergent stakes in these discussions.

The populist right in the Netherlands has also been vocal in these discussions over how slavery is to be remembered. In fact, the topic has received sustained attention from some of its key figures, including Pim Fortuyn, Rita Verdonk, and Geert Wilders. For them, questions of how to remember the colonial past coincide with narratives of a 'Dutch culture', indeed 'Western civilization', under siege. This populist engagement in postcolonial memory politics adopts a restricted and 'nativist' notion of 'Dutchness', of 'the people' that is homogenous and timeless, threatened both by outsiders and the elite who, blinded from reality, continue to celebrate the multicultural society. Within this nativist narrative the colonial past is part of the glorious history of a presumed real people, who have become a minority in 'their own' country. It is a past beyond criticism, for which one should have positive affections, reverence, and love.

It has long been established that nations are always 'imagined' (Anderson 2006[1983]), their traditions 'invented' (Hobsbawm and Ranger 2012), and therefore historically specific constructions. Imagining the nation, indeed Europe, works through processes of 'silencing' or selective remembering, often ignoring the formative role of the colonial past in shaping the plural polities that now characterize much of Europe today (Trouillot 1995). For such narratives to work, colonialism is expelled: it happened over there, and should remain over there, including those people who were colonized. Alternatively, colonialism is framed as a benevolent practice: we were there to help. Within Bosma's framing, then, what we need is a museum that would help *us* as a people, as 'the people', understand greatness and beneficence – after all, or so the narrative goes, 'our colonial past brought modernity across the world' (see n. 8 Taylor 2018).

Our intention here is not simply to call out this narrative as wrong. As we mentioned before, numerous scholars have already critiqued this melancholic view of the nation in relation to colonialism (Gilroy 2005). Our intention is rather to understand how such populist narratives partake in the differential framing of 'the people', of who belongs to the nation, and the impact of such narrative on issues related to museums and heritage more broadly. Such an understanding is important because as a highly influential ideology, it shapes the political landscape more broadly, and therefore the possibilities of envisioning what Dutch society might look like now and in the future. Again taking a cue from the idea of not supporting a museum of self-hate, and the demand for a return to the colonial museum, we want to explore how these politics of care participate in defining who is a 'real' citizen and who is not. First we would like to examine briefly what was the colonial museum to which Bosma referred.

Curating self-love – Bosma's appeal for a colonial museum

To what museum does Bosma want to return? If indeed, as he, quoting Elma Drayer, suggests, the Tropenmuseum had long been curating Western self-hate, what might a more caring colonial museum that promotes self-love look like? Bosma refers to the beginnings, when the Tropenmuseum was the Colonial Museum. He also refers to the building which 'beautifully' showcases 'our colonial history'.

While the name Tropenmuseum forms part of the national imaginary for many Dutch citizens, as the museum they visited as children, and is synonymous internationally with among other things a critical, postcolonial reflexive practice, this name was only adopted by the current institution in the middle of the twentieth century, long after the museum was actually built. Indeed, his reference was to the period prior to 1950, when the museum was called the Colonial Museum, and part of what was known as Colonial Institute.

The Colonial Museum itself originated in Haarlem in 1864, opening in 1871, as a private initiative of the Dutch Association for the Advancement of Industry. Van Hout (2017: 87) describes the aim of the Colonial Museum as 'to study and exhibit raw materials and arts and crafts from the colonial territories, both to promote the exploitation of the colonies and to stimulate Dutch industry'. She writes further, 'according to the articles of association, the knowledge acquired was to be shared with the Dutch public in a clear and systematic manner through exhibitions and publications'.

From the outset, the Colonial Museum was intended as a space to make visible and knowable Dutch colonial expansion and the promise of wealth and industry that came with it. From its beginnings the museum garnered relative success, and already by the end of the nineteenth century it had outgrown

its location and a plan was developed to create a more ambitious institute in Amsterdam.

Van Hout continues:

> It was intended as a central colonial institute for science, education, trade and industry, where practical knowledge in the colonial economic field was linked to scientific research. The aim was to collect and disseminate knowledge about the Overseas Territories and to support the colonial interest of both the Netherlands and the colonies.
>
> (2017: 100)

The museum would move in the second decade of the twentieth century when in 1926 a new purpose-built institute opened in Amsterdam that was suitable both in size and stature for the purpose of housing a museum that represented the colonial interest of the Netherlands overseas to a Dutch public. In addition to the collections that were part of its earlier iteration in Haarlem, the ethnographic collections of the Artis Zoo, collected within a framework of late nineteenth-century social Darwinism (van Duuren 2011), were also included in the new museum. The new Colonial Institute comprised three different museological departments that together formed the Colonial Museum: a trade museum department, an ethnographic museum, and, the smallest, a museum for tropical hygiene. The institute also housed a department of physical anthropology from 1903 until the end of the 1970s. The new museum strengthened its scientific role and adopted museological standards commensurate with the time (Van Hout 2017).

Ironically, the museum's expansion coincided with the decline of the Dutch colonial empire. In the period after the museum opened in 1926, its focus would change, reflecting different shifts in Dutch colonial and international relations. Around the period of World War II, and especially with the rising nationalist fervor in Indonesia, the museum was confronted with questions about its focus. In fact, the Colonial Institute of which the Colonial Museum was part got caught up in questions surrounding the Indonesian independence struggles. If the main colonized territory of the Dutch kingdom was to become independent, what then would be the focus of the museum? In 1945, Indonesia unilaterally declared itself independent, although the Netherlands did not accede to this decision until 1949. The museum had for a short time even changed its name to the Indische Museum (the museum of the Indies) in this period, arguably to coincide with efforts to maintain Indonesia's colonial status. At the end of the decade the Netherlands finally conceded to Indonesian independence. With these changes in mind, it could be argued that the new museum was from its inception a commemoration of a time past.

When Indonesia officially gained its sovereignty the museum underwent yet another identity crisis and decided to change its name to the Tropenmuseum, shifting its framework beyond a limited focus on Dutch colonial territories

to focus more broadly on the 'tropical' world. It was at this moment that the museum moved away from being a colonial museum to focusing more directly on international development (Hildering et al. 2014).

With this brief history in mind, the question is, to what moment in the history of the colonial museum does Bosma want to return and how does this colonial museum fit in his narrative of the nation under threat? Certainly, it is unlikely that he would have remembered the museum prior to its tenure as Tropenmuseum, having himself been born after 1950. Moreover, if we take his motion in parliament as also one where he or his party didn't endorse international development aid, then clearly it is not the period of the museum for development cooperation. Hildering, Modest, and Aztouti (2014), like several other scholars, have argued that in the period after Indonesian independence the museum's foregrounding of the international development cooperation coincided with limited attention, even shame, within the Tropenmuseum for any celebratory focus on the colonial.

His proposed return is to a museum that fashions nostalgic notions of a great and beneficent nation whose colonial project was not exploitative of colonized peoples but brought Western civilization, values, and improvement. Interestingly enough, it is a museum imbued with the spirit of development, what Tania Murray Li (2007) would describe as a 'will to improve'. Within this space the museum cares for objects from the colonies and displays them in exhibitions that help us to understand what we have done in the colonies and for the colonialized.

There is already a robust literature critiquing ethnographic museums and their links to the colonial project (Boast 2011; Karp et al. 1992; Golding and Modest 2013; Price 2007; Penny 2002). This critique has pushed against such notions of colonial benevolence, to see these museums as part of a technology of colonial rule that helped in justifying colonialism. The museum, as one critique would describe it, was part of fashioning a 'progressivist taxonomy' of the 'relations between peoples and races which culminated in the achievements of the metropolitan powers' (Bennett 1995: 82). The representational economy to which these museums ascribed used objects from colonized people to represent them as out of time but also place them outside of Europe (Fabian 2002[1983]). Based in a complex entanglement of race and culture, and practising what some scholars would call a place/culture isomorphism (Gupta and Ferguson 1992), they represented colonized and racialized peoples as belonging to elsewhere other than Europe. Over the last few years, critique of this form of representation would only increase from activists, so-called source community members, and academics alike, demanding that museums address their colonial practices.

Bosma's critique of the Tropenmuseum as a space for self-hate, then, emerges in response to the museum's attempt to address such a critique. For him an earlier museum practice that spoke about colonial benevolence, with colonized peoples represented as belonging to specific spaces elsewhere and not to

Europe, coincides with his narrative of who could belong to the nation. The colonial museum, indeed the ethnographic museum of the past that presented colonialism as an act of benevolence while teaching the Dutch audience about the people from over there without having to meet them in the streets, is for him a museum of self-love, one that cares for 'the people'. On the contrary, a museum that is critical of the colonial past, in his view, is one of self-hate.

In the next section of this chapter we show how memory politics unfold around the colonial memory of an economy of care, based on a racialized understanding of who is the true Dutch, deserving of care. Moreover, we will show how museums become implicated in these discussions, organized around different political desires – right, left, or center.

Curating self-love or caring for some bodies and not others

Care is political. We take it as a discursive practice that defines who and what is deserving of care, thereby drawing political boundaries between self and others. At its most mundane, care may appear in different guises. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the verb 'to care' can refer to concern or interest, or to attaching importance to something, but also to look after and provide for the needs of someone or something. Like the verb, the noun 'care' also highlights both cognitive and physical aspects: 'the provision of what is necessary for the health, welfare, maintenance, and protection of someone or something', and 'serious attention or consideration applied to doing something correctly or to avoid damage or risk'. Care, according to this definition, can be given to both persons and objects.

The museum is a quintessential site for thinking about care. As institutions responsible for the preservation of (a nation's) artistic, scientific, or historical heritage and memory, they have established long traditions of procedures and processes to preserve collections and are thus burdened to care for this heritage in perpetuity. Indeed, at the core of many museums there are collections care and management departments. Care, then, is the aegis of the museum.

Given the importance of museum collections in debates about European (imagined) futures, we extend, even if provisionally, this notional concern with care to try to understand how a politics of multiculturalism and race is or can be done through material culture – the care for objects and hence, by extension, people. Taking Bosma's cue, we want to ask: How do museums care for colonial heritage, and for whom (see Hall 2005)? Indeed, for whom does or should the museum care?

More than just static and lifeless collections of old things, museum objects are entangled in relations with people. They are experienced in embodied and emotional ways – they are a means of world making. People know the world and their place in it through their embodied experience of the material world, and the museum imagines possible worlds through its objects. We feel who we

are as much as we know who we are, and this is eminently a relation between people and things. As David Miller (2005: 6), referring to Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice, has argued, objects have the power to implicitly condition human actors as they acquire a particular habitus. In other words, the way we furnish the material world is central to our socialization and to the normalization of possible social relations.

Bosma's mobilization of the Tropenmuseum in his anxiety about the future of the nation invites us to think about our social imaginary as an entangled field comprising people, objects, institutions, and discourses. Within this social imaginary colonial objects, like the colonial museum, form part of discussions about what role we give to the colonial past in shaping who we think we are as nation. How we care for such histories often coincides with discussions of how to define the nation – who belongs and who does not belong. For, it is our argument, within Europe today discussions of who is a citizen, who is deserving of a careful or caring state, what we will here call *economies of care*, are distributed in ways that often reflect colonial differentials that take some subjects as deserving of care and others not and that museums provide an important site for thinking about these differential economies of care.

Over the last few decades, there has been an extensive scholarly, popular, and museological (curatorship, learning, and conservation) push for museums to move beyond being places just about objects to becoming a place for people (Weil 2012). Done in the wake of what has been described as New Museology (Vergo 1997), this resulted in museums paying increased attention to the needs of their diverse publics. While the literature, as well as the practices developed in response to this more audience-focused work, have been uneven, it is undoubtable that this push has helped to transform museums towards more inclusive practices. For ethnographic museums like the Tropenmuseum, this meant the development of (theories and) practices around questions of participation, collaboration, and inclusion of source or originating communities (Brown and Peers 2003). At the core of such practices there were attempts to shift the matrix of power between the museum and those the museum represented to address issues of authority, voice, and even the question of who owns cultural objects. Foregrounding issues of diversity is now a rule rather than an exception, especially in many former settler colonies, such as New Zealand, Canada, and Australia, where working with Indigenous and other formerly colonized peoples has helped to shape New Museological practices.

While in Europe some of these practices have followed similar practices of inviting Indigenous communities from across the world to work with museums' collections, much of this work has emerged in relation to Europe's changing polity. These practices are of course not without criticism. Indeed, several scholars have argued that some of this work has mobilized reductive understandings of community or origins and, while doing important work, has also served to re-inscribe fixed and static ideas of culture and difference. Others have critiqued this work for not really addressing structural inequality and dealing with

only project-based rather than structural issues. Moreover, the work of museums with multiculturalism or migration has in some instances fallen prey to forms of culturalism that draw on race as its primary indicator of cultural difference.

Critique aside, museums have been one of the key sites where shifting discourses about multiculturalism, citizenship, and belonging have landed (Golding and Modest 2013; Mears and Modest 2012). Mirjam Shatanawi has described how the museum was conscripted into multicultural policy initiatives from as early as the 1980s.

> Multicultural policies were introduced in the Netherlands in the late 1970s, and were initially based on the recognition of the right to cultural and religious difference. The Ethnic Minorities Policy, which was effective between 1983 and 1994, applied to the largest migrant groups: Moroccans, Turkish, Surinamese and Antilleans. These ethnic groups were encouraged to preserve their own culture and language on the grounds that pride in one's cultural background would facilitate integration into Dutch society. . . . In the field of arts and culture, inclusive policies were introduced in 1982. They followed the same principles as the general policy: migrants were addressed as ethnic minorities, with an emphasis on preserving their own culture. Secretary of State Rick van der Ploeg (1998–2002) made inclusiveness one of the spearheads of his policy.
>
> (Shatanawi 2011)

What interests us here is to try to understand these activities as important for thinking about Europe's recent political shifts, especially in relation to ideas about the success or failure of multiculturalism, or anxieties about the future of Europe. Indeed, many of these initiatives have emerged in response to a Europe thinking through how to deal with its shifting polity, Europe's history after colonialism, and the future of the welfare state that feels a threat from those 'others' regarded as a burden or undeserving of such welfare provisions, in response to one of the fissures along which politics is divided. What we want to suggest here is that despite the often-repeated statement that museums are cultural and not political institutions, the question raised of the Tropenmuseum invites us to think about museums' function within divides between left- and right-wing politics or within the political battlefield about history, heritage, and the nation. Bosma's claim is one that would see museums' investment in the multicultural as symptom of a people under siege from others.

The colonial past and self-love – curating survival

Martin Bosma's politics of (national) emotion would return more recently in a 2018 parliamentary debate[8] about the safeguarding of cultural heritage. In this context, he expressed loathing for the 'self-hate' of the 'handmaidens of May 1968,

who want to understand our history primarily as a source of shame': 'Many museums are now first and foremost a temple of self-hate. Our colonial past, although it brought modernity all over the world, now has to be torn apart constantly'. He asked the culture minister whether she planned to safeguard and stand up for 'our heritage abroad'. He rejected what he sees as a 'Stalinist' falsification of history orchestrated by leftist parties who have occupied the structures of decision-making: 'History is being rewritten by the leftist elites. The mark of a totalitarian ideology. Nineteen Eighty-Four [in English]'. It may seem paradoxical for him to demand an intervention by the government in curatorial policy – exactly what he accused his opponents of doing. But the idea of survival and protecting the people may warrant such a Machiavellian approach. Indeed, he sees himself as the people's voice, arguing, 'It's what the oppressed people want'.

In what he describes as a 'Stalinist' fashion, the leftist elites attempt to dictate curatorial decisions that paint a bleak picture of Dutch history, one that gives the Netherlands a bad name. Slavery, in this view, is portrayed in a one-sided manner, concentrating only on transatlantic slavery. Instead, museums ought to include, if not focus on, the 'Muslim' slave trade, which according to Bosma made 'more victims than the transatlantic trade'. Such so-called elision was also an element of the critique of the Tropenmuseum in 2011.

According to Bosma, a group of people he interchangeably refers to as 'whites', 'Europeans', and 'Dutch' were the victims of 'Muslims', 'Arabs', and 'barbarians'. Bosma glosses over the much more complex history of Mediterranean slavery, in which Europeans frequently sided with North Africans against other Europeans whom they were at war with (Drescher 2009: 33). For Bosma, Europeanness and Dutchness merge into one unified white body that is pitted against the 'Arab', 'Muslim' body. A focus on transatlantic slavery, or the silencing of the Arabic slave trade, on his account, is part of the self-hate that he accuses museums of – it is key to the leftist project of besieging the nation.

Folded in his narrative, never quite explicit but nevertheless efficacious behind the scenes, is a notion of a 'deserving people', a people who have the ultimate right to the nation. It is present when Bosma talks about 'the Dutch' who do not want a slavery museum:

> What does [the liberal democratic party] D66 as a liberal party think about the fact that this cultural-marxist ideology is being forced down the throats of the Dutch? Tax payers are not keen on it, nothing indicates that. And yet this ideology is being pushed through by way of a museum.[9]

Clearly Dutch citizens of African descent who petition for a museum are not counted among 'the Dutch'. Neither are they counted among the 'taxpayers', suggesting that they profit from, but do not contribute to, society. The same trans-historical articulation of whiteness and Dutchness that is operative in Bosma's historical narrative is also operative in his perspective on the Netherlands today. 'The Dutch', in Bosma's view, remain oppressed by 'Arabs', with

the help of the leftist, 'Stalinist', and 'cultural-Marxist' elites, the handmaidens of 1968. After almost 1,400 years of Arab oppression, the tortured body of the people is still in need of care. In other words, a picture emerges of the 'true' Dutch citizen, a figure painted in Bosma's narrative as 'white', 'European', and 'Christian'.

Such arguments are of course not very original. Organizations like the English Defense League, for instance, have long claimed to act not out of hate but out of their love for the nation. When the nation comes under threat, you act in its defense out of love and by implication you hate those who threaten it. As Sara Ahmed has argued, this can be seen as a cultural politics of emotion through which self and other emerge: 'Emotions work to shape the surfaces of individual and collective bodies. Bodies take shape of the very contact they have with objects and with others' (2004: 1).

In Bosma's anxious politics (Modest and De Koning 2016), the image of an imperiled nation, an onslaught of 'Islam' and 'Muslims', new museum practices, and an attack on 'our' colonial past have merged. They are part and parcel of a populist politics of care in the Netherlands. In other words, he conscripts the museum in his politics of care.

Epilogue – speculations towards more careful futures

Within the economy of care we have described, right-wing political formations circumscribe those deserving of care as an imagined 'people', framed around racialized ideas of who belongs. While such narratives are often restricted to certain provisions of the state, for example jobs or housing provisions, Bosma conscripts the museum in such narratives. The colonial museum about which he speaks is not so much a museum that exists or even existed, but an imagined space to come: a space of a particular kind, celebrating the past and the future of a nation that never actually existed.

It is not surprising, then, that Bosma is a fervent opponent of the Tropenmuseum's reflexive turn of the past decades. As we argued, the museum has adopted a more critical engagement with the colonial past and its own implicatedness in the Dutch colonial project; moreover, such a reflexive practice, which shared alignments with New Museological approaches, drew on theories and practices that were more supportive of the multicultural society that Bosma himself disavowed. Indeed, for many in the museum, the UNESCO's 2003 convention on cultural diversity was an important framework for thinking. For Bosma these kinds of museums are part of the leftist network fed by the leftist political elite supportive of multiculturalism. Whatever his intention, what is sure is that this critical stance on the Dutch colonial project, what is described as Western self-hate, was not welcomed. His colonial museum, then, was a return to an imagined moment when the greatness of the Dutch in the colonies was on show, a moment without shame or blame but a celebration of the kingdom.

Of course, we could ask why a focus on the Tropenmuseum, or the Colonial Museum as he would have it? Why does the colonial past seem suitable for this project of imagination? One might argue that other museums, or other kinds of museums, lend themselves much better for such a utopian imagination, or at least for a less complicated celebration of the nation and national history. Would not the Van Gogh Museum or the Rembrandt House Museum, focused as they are on the quintessential founding fathers of the Dutch nation, lend themselves much better for a project of curating self-love or care for 'the people'? Or are these museums not already doing this work?

Bosma's care for the Tropenmuseum and its collection may be regarded as paradoxical. Within his economy of care that has only space for restricted notions of the people, diasporic objects in the museum – heritage from elsewhere – would seem to have little space. What seems to be at stake is not just to deny care for things elsewhere but rather a discourse of care for otherness that is non-critical, seemingly nonthreatening, an other that will always celebrate the benevolence of 'the real people'.

This has implications for the people connected to these objects – people in the former colonies and their diasporas from which these objects originate. It is not so much that Bosma does not care about them, but rather that these people are cared for in a way different than 'the people' are cared for; unlike 'the people', they are not the recipients of love but of other kinds of emotions. In Bosma's narrative fear is prominent, but despite his rejection of development aid, his fantasy of colonial greatness also implies a paternalistic care for those who supposedly cannot care for themselves. Both fear and compassion can function as powerful modes of othering. In other words, this differential economy of care institutes a differential status of citizenship: one that is of the nation and one that is in but not of the nation.

Bosma's plea for self-love is a textbook example of what has been called imperialist nostalgia (Rosaldo 1989) or postcolonial melancholia (Gilroy 2005): the desire for a return to lost greatness, which is intricately entwined with the self-image of an imperial nation. Whatever we may think of his appeal, it is clear that he cares about the colonial past. Equally, we need to acknowledge that his ideology hinges on a notion of care for the Netherlands, for the 'ordinary Dutch'. Paradoxically, this care should be enacted through a museological or curatorial strategy that mobilizes 'foreign' objects in a celebration of the Netherlands. This could in some ways be seen as a continued colonial project now projected on to the objects of others for which we are custodians. The people who are also connected to these objects historically, however, do not belong but are presented as a threat to the nation once they fall out of their roles as grateful recipients of paternalistic care.

What is remarkable is that even populist discourse cannot imagine the nation without also thinking the colonial. Without question, Bosma's appeal for caring for the nation is neither singular nor restricted to the Netherlands. Indeed, such racialized battles over who belongs and is deserving of care have wider

implications across Europe and North America as right-wing political parties increase in popularity. Importantly, what this example brings forward is the ways in which museums and other heritage institutions are conscripted into these narratives about love for the nation and for 'its' people. Such ideas demand a way of understanding Europe's colonial legacy in benevolent terms and contemporary European urban polities not as afterlives of the colonial but as problems created by a left-leaning politics. It is no small wonder that over the past years we could see a rise in projects such as the much critiqued Ethics of Empire project announced by Oxford University.

At stake in thinking about Bosma, then, is how we deal with the struggles over colonial memory in the face of the increased political move to the right. In these discussions, one has to question deeply whether museums are in fact so left leaning as we imagine them, or whether many of the museums developed during and as a result of empire – the British Museum or the Victoria and Albert, the Louvre or the Quai Branly, the new Humboldt Forum or museums here in the Netherlands – are not also part of narratives that present the colonial past as past, or even a past of which one should be proud. With regard to populist narratives of care, museums occupy an ambivalent position of being both conscripts in the populist project and potential agents of change.

Notes

1 Het Tropenmuseum wordt door staatssecretaris Knapen van het subsidie-infuus gehaald. Hij zegt in NRC Handelsblad dat Benin belangrijker is dan Amsterdam. De PVV kan zich goed vinden in de sluiting van het Tropenmuseum. Columniste Elma Drayer schrijft in Vrij Nederland: 'dit museum pepert ons al jaren in dat het Westen niet deugt'. Dit soort zelfhaat hoeven wij niet te subsidiëren. Er bestaan nogal wat volkenkundige musea: het Museon in Den Haag, Museum Volkenkunde in Leiden en het Afrika Museum in Berg en Dal. Dat is eigenlijk wel genoeg. Veel liever ziet mijn fractie op die plaats weer het Koloniaal Museum. Zo is het Tropenmuseum ooit begonnen. Daar is het gebouw ook voor gebouwd. Je ziet het nog prachtig mooi af aan het gebouw, dat onze koloniale geschiedenis toont. Dossier Nr. 33000-VIII nr. 153, 2011–2012. See https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/kst-33000-VIII-153.html.

2 See for instance the volume edited by Oostindie in the run-up to the unveiling of the Dutch slavery memorial (Oostindie 2001).

3 For instance, on his Wikipedia page, 'Martin Bosma': https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin_Bosma (accessed 18 October 2018).

4 Maar die dinsdagochtend was de keus al voor mij gemaakt. De jihad had zich om de hoek gemeld. Theo was dood. Afgeslacht, doodgebloed, opgeruimd. Tijdens het spitsuur in de Linnaeusstraat. De moeders met kinderbakfiets moesten omrijden omdat iemand even Allahs werk had moeten uitvoeren (Bosma 2011: 17).

5 Behalve die moord gebeurde er nog iets weerzinwekkends. De hele elite schoot in zijn multikulkramp. . . . Het was allemaal zum Kotzen (Bosma 2011: 17–18).

6 En dus moest ik naar Den Haag. Ging het mis, dan ging het mis. Aan de kant blijven staan was geen optie meer. Ik dacht aan de woorden van Todd Beamer, op 11 September 2001 aan boord van United Airlines-vlucht 93. Ook toen moesten burgers het zelf opknappen. Zonder wapens en met de moed der wanhoop gingen ze de jihadisten te lijf. Beamers laatste haastige telefoongesprek eindigde hij met de woorden: 'Let's roll' (Bosma 2011: 18).

7 A speech by British Member of Parliament Enoch Powell at a meeting of the Conservative Political Centre in Birmingham on 20 April 1968, in which he attacked 'mass immigration' and concluded with a line from Virgil's *Aeneid*: 'as I look ahead, I'm filled with foreboding; like the Roman, I seem to see "the River Tiber foaming with much blood"'.
8 Tweede Kamer, Handelingen, nr. 107, item 21. See https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/h-tk-20172018-107-21.html.
9 Tweede Kamer, Handelingen, nr. 107, item 21. See https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/h-tk-20172018-107-21.html.

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Chapter 9

European culture, history, and heritage as political tools in the rhetoric of the Finns Party

Tuuli Lähdesmäki

Introduction

Interpretations of the past are a common tool utilized in politics by all parties in the political spectrum. These interpretations – as well as misinterpretations – of the past have increasingly gained attention in Western countries along with the rise and establishment of diverse populist radical right movements and parties. Their ideological views and political agendas commonly focus on fostering and protecting 'the nation' as an ethno-cultural community, whose communality, unity, and originality are perceived as stemming from the past through chains of ancestry and intertwined ancestral and cultural inheritance. Thus, national history, culture, and heritage commonly form a cornerstone of populist radical right movements' and parties' 'politics of the past', that is, how the past is utilized for political purposes in the present.

Besides 'the national', various Western populist radical right movements identify with a 'shared European history'. Several recent studies have noted how these movements utilize the effectiveness of 'the transnational' by highlighting certain historical events and their representation as icons that are repeated and circulated in their communication, particularly in social media. The battle of Vienna in 1683 as a victory over the Ottoman Empire in Europe (Bhatt, 2012; Feldman, 2012), the image of a medieval crusader as a defender of Western civilization (Schröder, 2017), and a Viking solder as a white Northern power (Teitelbaum, 2017) are examples of widely utilized imageries in the European populist radical right movements. They appeal across national borders and, thus, form a transnational layer of historical imagery among the populist radical right scene in Europe. The links between the nation as an ethno-cultural community and Europe as a transnational religious-cultural community have been recently emphasized particularly by the identitarian movements in Europe, such as the 'Generation Identity', whose anti-immigrant, racist, and xenophobic agendas (Vejvodová, 2014) are rhetorically veiled into a concern with the preservation of ancestors' ethno-cultural tradition and the cultural heritage characterizing the continent of Europe (Generation Identity, 2018).

Although the agendas of today's populism and radical right are multifacetedly linked with the past, this link appears to be an ambivalent asset, as Klandermans

(2017) notes. Indeed, the legacy of the past that is used to empower populist radical right groups varies, not only in different countries, but also within different factions of these groups, and it changes along with temporal transformation of the political and social contexts in which these groups seek to increase their support. A rise from an alternative fringe movement into a parliamentary political party, as has happened to many of these groups in Europe, impacts how the past is used as their image-making instrument and political tool. For example, Teitelbaum (2017: 104) describes how the radical right party Sweden Democrats is publicly silent about fantasies of the Viking past while seeking to reach new supporters and has instead utilized folk culture, such as folk music and dance, to soften their image.

Various studies on populist radical right parties have focused on examining how the idea of the nation and national culture are produced in their political rhetoric and action. How do these parties narrate and give meanings to the ideas of European culture, heritage, and history? How is 'the European' utilized as a tool in populist politics whose core interest is 'the national'? This chapter seeks to answer these questions by analyzing the political discourse of one of the most politically successful populist parties in Europe, the Finns Party (*Perussuomalaiset*), which has managed to develop from a marginal political group into a key player in parliamentary politics, recently holding several core positions in the Finnish government. Through critical discourse analysis of selected articles from the party's newspaper *Perussuomalainen*, the chapter seeks to explore how the party's discourse and its relation to the past developed and transformed from 2004 to June 2017, when the party broke up into two parts. The radical faction took over power in the party congress, while the more moderate faction resigned and later founded a new party, the Blue Reform (*Sininen tulevaisuus*).

The chapter starts from a discussion on populism as a movement and rhetoric, and the intersecting core features of ideologies of the populist radical right. This theoretical section is followed by an introduction to the case party, a description of the selection and characteristics of the data, and a discussion of the analytical method. The analysis section brings forth the key findings discussed through several quotations from the data. The chapter ends with a discussion on the meanings of the findings and draws conclusions from the analysis.

Populism as a movement and rhetoric and the ideological core of the populist radical right

Rhetoric has a crucial role in populism (Laclau, 2005; Mouffe, 2013; Wodak, 2015). It constructs and mobilizes populist movements and parties and should be, thus, perceived as performative and functional. Populist rhetoric is often described as relying on an affective, emotive, and metaphoric language; polarization; simplification; stereotypification; vague expressions; perceiving threats,

faults, and enemies (Bos and Brants, 2014; Laclau, 2005; Lähdesmäki, 2015); and appeals to 'cultural commonplaces' (Thévenot, 2011), meaning shared physical places or more abstract sentimental areas of cultural meanings that need no justification and cannot be rationalized. The 'discourse of people' forms the core of populism's rhetorical strategies (e.g. Hellström, 2006; Mudde, 2007). However, the notion of people in the discourse is profoundly flexible and can be used in various meanings, referring to 'men on the street'; people who live in the same state and form the nation; or more abstract 'us' who share common experiences, history, and culture (cf. Canovan, 1999: 5).

In all meanings, the 'discourse of people' in the rhetoric of populism either explicitly or implicitly constructs the idea of the nation. Mudde (2017) has emphasized nativism as one of the ideological cornerstones of populism. By nativism he (2017: 4) refers to 'an ideology that holds that states should be inhabited exclusively by members of the native group (the nation), and non-native (or alien) elements, whether persons or ideas, are fundamentally threatening to the homogeneous nation-state'. Nativism as an ideology combines nationalism and xenophobia and links and lays the groundwork for diverse discriminative attitudes and practices among European populist parties, such as white supremacism, welfare chauvinism, misogyny, and homophobia. Its emphasis on generational ties, ancestral roots, and 'blood lines' present the nation as a container, as a family to which one has access and belongs by birth (Norocel, 2013; Wodak, 2015: 76–77). In this ideology, the nation means a limited and sovereign community that exists and persists through time and is tied to a specific territory (space), inherently and essentially constructed through in/out opposition (Wodak, 2015: 76–77).

The populist radical right parties' objection to the EU and European integration stems from this nativist ideology. For these parties, the promotion of a pluralistic model of society and supra-national institutions and political actors in Europe represents an attempt to destroy nations and the 'natural' order of nationalism, and thereby a sense of belongingness and identity (Betz and Johnson, 2004). The ideologies of the populist radical right function in an intersection of diverse social, cultural, spatial, ethnic, racial, religious, and reproductive ties and interdependencies.

Laclau has theorized the discursive and performative nature of rhetoric in populism and its attempts at hegemony through the concepts of 'floating' and 'empty' signifiers. In his theory, 'floating signifiers' refer to elements that are particularly open to different ascriptions of meaning (Laclau, 2005: 133). 'Floating signifiers' have different connotations depending on the discourse in which they are used and, thus, they belong to an ongoing struggle between different discourses to fix the meaning of signs. 'Floating signifiers' are open to continual contestation and articulation to different political projects (Worsham and Olson, 1999: 1–2). An 'empty signifier' is simply 'a signifier without a signified' (Torfing, 1999: 301). Often becoming over-coded, 'empty signifiers' mean everything and nothing; they are emptied of any precise content

(Torfing, 1999). For Laclau (2005: 133), these concepts are, however, closely connected.

Europe is a commonly recurring theme in the rhetoric of European populist parties. It is an idea and concept that can be represented as manifesting diverse unwanted phenomena, threats, and crises. However, it is also an idea that can include in populist rhetoric various positive connotations and appreciated values. Hellström (2006: 57) has seen the concept of Europe in populist political rhetoric as 'an "empty signifier" that lacks essence, since it is so over-coded with meaning that it signifies everything and nothing at the same time'. Lähdesmäki (2015: 84) has described Europe as a 'floating signifier', 'which can be filled with various meanings depending on the speaker's political aims. Their meanings are not only different in different political discourses, but they are also "floating" within a discourse'.

The 'floating' or 'empty' nature of signifiers can be used in populist rhetoric as a political tool to locate diverse faults outside the imagined 'us' and to project various threats and fears of 'others' on a common scapegoat. In European populist radical right rhetoric, the EU commonly functions as a scapegoat that can be blamed for various fundamental faults and threats, such as shaking the foundations of identity, culture, and heritage in Europe (Lähdesmäki, 2015: 83).

The Finns Party newspaper *Perussuomalainen* as data, and method of analysis

The Finns Party (*Perussuomalaiset*) was established in 1995 on the base of the disbanded Finnish Rural Party (*Suomen maaseudun puolue*). Since its establishment, the party has brought together a broad variety of social and political protests under its political umbrella. One of the major concerns of the party has been the EU and its integration politics. However, the level of Euroscepticism in the political discourse of the party and in the personal views of the party members has varied. The Finns Party can be characterized as nationalist-populist – both terms have been used in a positive way in the party programmes and the writings of longtime party chairman Timo Soini (Mickelsson, 2011). The national emphasis in the party strengthened and took a new direction in the end of the 2000s when nationalist views were increasingly combined with concerns about the impact of immigration on Finland and the development of multi- and intercultural societies in Europe.

In recent years, several scholars have identified at least two significant factions in the Finns Party: agrarian conservatives and a (radical) anti-immigration wing (Jungar, 2016; Pernaa et al., 2012: 408–409; Ylä-Anttila and Ylä-Anttila, 2015). The older of these factions, represented by the former cadre of the Finnish Rural Party gathered around party chairman Timo Soini, combined moral conservatism and left-wing social and income distribution politics with strong populist anti-establishment appeals critical to the EU and the political

consensus dominating Finnish political culture. The newer, decidedly right-wing faction focused particularly on opposing multiculturalism and immigration (Norocel et al., 2018). This faction got its inspiration particularly from blog postings of Jussi Halla-aho, who was selected to the Finnish Parliament in 2011 and to the European Parliament in 2014.

In fifteen years, the Finns Party grew from a political margin into a central player in the Finnish political sphere. It gained a major victory in the parliamentary elections in 2011 by receiving 19 percent of the vote. Polling close to 18 percent in the 2015 parliamentary elections, the party joined the central-right governmental coalition. The party succeeded to negotiate five ministerial positions in the government, including minister for foreign affairs (Timo Soini) and minister for European affairs, culture and sport (Sampo Terho). Governmental work and populism are, however, difficult to combine; by joining the government, a populist party merges with those to whom it objects and to whose politics it seeks to function as an alternative. This controversy blurred the political rhetoric of the Finns Party (Vaarakallio, 2017: 213–214) and led to a decrease in its support. The different factions of the Finns Party used to have fluid contours among the party members. However, in June 2017 the views of the factions escalated into a splitting of the party. The anti-immigrant right-wing faction took over the party, selecting Halla-aho as its new party chairman. Soini and over half of the Parliament Members of the party, including all the ministers, resigned and set up a new party.

Several scholars have analyzed the political position of the Finns Party, particularly in comparison with other Nordic populist and/or radical right parties. While some scholars have emphasized its difference compared with other radical right parties, such as Sweden Democrats (Wiberg, 2011; Herkman, 2015), others have pointed out their similarities and juxtaposed it, for example, with the Sweden Democrats (Jungar, 2017; Jungar and Jupskås, 2014). The different views can be explained through the previous factions in the party and its transformation over the years. The anti-immigrant faction indeed has similarities with other radical right parties, but defining the whole party as such before its split is misleading (Palonen and Saresma, 2017: 37). Before the split, the party's leadership, programme, and government policies cannot be perceived as radical right, as Mudde (2017: 6) notes.

The Finns Party has an ambivalent relationship to cultural matters. While its political agenda and discourse emphasize both national and local cultures, the party has suggested cuts to cultural funding. The party's cultural programme, published for the 2011 parliamentary elections, included strongly disputed statements and suggestions, such as an objection to contemporary art:

> The Finns Party perceives that its primary concern is to preserve the Finnish cultural heritage in contrast to supporting contemporary postmodern art. State funds for supporting culture have to be steered in a way that they strengthen the Finnish identity. It would be wise to leave economic

> responsibility for arty postmodern experiments to individual actors and the market.
>
> (The Finns Party Program, 2011: 10)[1]

The party's explicit emphasis on national cultural heritage and identity seeks to appeal to voters' national sentiments by simultaneously objecting to cultural forms easily claimed as elitist, such as contemporary art (discussed with the concept of postmodern in the party programme). This reference to postmodern art got a lot of critical attention in the Finnish media after the launch of the programme. As a result of this criticism, some of the core party members, including Soini, downplayed the meaning of the reference by claiming it as a joke or as an intentional 'hook' in the programme aimed at raising media attention (Rantanen, 2011).

Through emphasis on the 'national' and with strengthening anti-immigrant views, the concept of culture has become more and more value-loaded and politically charged in the political discourse of the Finns Party. 'National' is often intertwined in this discourse with religious references brought forth by several party members. Christian metaphors and references to the Bible are particularly common in the rhetoric of Soini, who is a devoted Catholic (Parkkinen, 2017). Moreover, 'national' in the discourse of the Finns Party functions as a contact point that ties together different cultural and social dimensions, as the following quotation from the party's cultural programme indicates:

> Certain distinctive features, such as language, customs, art, notion of justice, nature, myths, and beliefs, impact each nation's identity. These features are unique for each nation, and this is exactly what diversity and richness in the world is about. Regardless of how strong the trend of internationalization might become, the significance of nationalities and national identity will never disappear.
>
> (The Finns Party Program, 2011: 8)

To examine the Finns Party's discourse and its relation to the past and the 'European', the analysis focuses on the party newspaper *Perussuomalainen*. The data of this chapter consists of texts published in *Perussuomalainen* between January 2004 and June 2017. The data collection took place in two phases: first, the texts were searched with the headwords the EU, Europe, nation, identity, and/or culture; and second, after a pre-read of the texts found, 732 of them were selected as the data because they contained more frequent uses or a deeper discussion about the headwords.[2] The data includes texts written in various genres. Their authors are typically Parliament Members of the Finns Party, key members in the party organization and the local sections of the party, and regular editors of the party newspaper. The data also includes opinion pieces written by party members and supporters. Although *Perussuomalainen* functions as an arena for building political communality within the party, it also enables communication of its agendas and aims to non-members.

The articles published in *Perussuomalainen* focus on the party's core areas of interest: economics, social politics, and criticism of the EU. The newspaper has also increasingly published texts on immigration and refugees. Texts that primarily discuss culture, history, or heritage are rare. However, texts that primarily focus on socio-economic issues may still include short, secondary, or implicit references to culture, history, and heritage through which diverse socio-economic issues are contextualized and given meanings – and politics related to these issues are motivated and justified. Thus, references to culture, history, and heritage, however modest they might be, participate in the formation of the political discourse of the party.

To scrutinize the discourse on culture, history, and heritage and their entanglement with the notion of Europe in the rhetoric of the Finns Party, the chapter utilizes critical discourse analysis in the examination of the data. With this method, the analysis seeks to trace the connections between micro-level linguistic expressions and macro-level socio-cultural structures to understand their mutual interaction and interdependence. By relying on a dialectical-relational approach within critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2009), the analysis treats the meanings of linguistic expressions and representations as not only 'local' or situational, but as social processes dialectically related to others. This approach emphasizes how each micro-level expression participates in the production and reproduction of the macro-level social-cultural structures and practices. Similarly, the macro level forms the framework in which the micro-level expressions are able to take place (Fairclough, 1995: 35).

Laclau and Mouffe have defined discourse as an attempt to fix a web of meanings. This attempt involves structuring of signifiers into certain meanings in order to exclude other meanings (Laclau and Mouffe, 2011). Fixing a web of meanings is an exercise of power seeking to gain hegemony. Thus, critical discourse analysis can be understood as an examination of the reproduction and reformation of a wider social world and the hegemony of practices within it. In practice, the analysis of the data took place through careful reading and re-reading of the data and examining first how the ideas and notions of culture, history, heritage, and Europe were entangled at the linguistic micro level and then what kinds of hierarchical structures, ideologies, positions, and exercise of power this entanglement produces.

Discourses of the entanglement of Europe, culture, history, and heritage

The Finns Party's ambivalent relation to Europe (Lähdesmäki, 2015, 2017) is manifested in *Perussuomalainen* through the ambiguity of the notions of European culture, history, and heritage used in its political rhetoric. This ambiguity can be explained with divergent patterns that Vasilopoulou (2017) has identified from the radical right opposition to European integration. All these patterns – rejecting, conditional, and compromising Euroscepticism – are in favor of a cultural definition of Europe, meaning acceptance of common

cultural, historical, and religious European characteristics and the common heritage of European peoples. Conditional and compromising patterns also support principles of cooperation in Europe. While compromising aspects still support certain European policy practices, all are against future EU polity (Vasilopoulou, 2017).

These patterns can be found in *Perussuomalainen*, in which the discussion on the EU and Europe brings forth the different factions within the Finns Party. Despite the general Euroscepticism, texts written by or reporting the views of party members representing the agrarian-conservative faction emphasize the importance of cooperation with and within the EU. In this discourse, the 'Union is not only a fortress of evil', as it creates 'dialogue between European nations' (*Perussuomalainen* [later PS]11/2013: 12) and it 'cannot be taken as a mere fortress of darkness, as it has enabled European cooperation, for example in trade and solving environmental problems' (PS 12/2013: 11), as articles introducing the views of Sampo Terho, a Member of the European Parliament, and Pirkko Ruohonen-Lerner, a leader of the parliamentary group of the Finns Party, explicate.[3]

Vasilopoulou (2017) notes how the radical right's cultural definition of Europe stems from a tripod composed of ancient Greek democracy, Roman legal tradition, and Christianity, creating at the same time a spatial definition of Europe. In the data, this tripod was a few times explicitly explained as the bases of Europe's culture and civilization. These elements were, however, commonly emphasized separately in the texts – and in a less highbrow manner.

The cultural definition of Europe in *Perussuomalainen* is actually much more complex than the tripod described by Vasilopoulou. In *Perussuomalainen*, Europe is a floating signifier whose meaning transforms depending on the political situation in which it is used. Therefore, also the entanglement of Europe, culture, history, and heritage is not static or stable but a flexible 'web of meanings' in which new discursive links and ideological connections are constantly in the making. While some texts in the data stress the legacy of democracy, law and order, and Christian belief and traditions in Europe, others include in the cultural definition of Europe ethnic and moral meanings and thus produce Europe as an ethno-cultural or cultural-moral entity. When this 'web of meanings' is combined with nativist ideology, it may lead, for example, to naturalization of the idea of monocultural nation-states or to (cultural) racism, emphasizing a tie between cultural and ancestral roots, the ethnic origin of Europeans, and, thus, whiteness. In the following subsections, the entanglement of Europe, history, culture, and heritage is explored through four discourses that were identified in the analysis of the data.

Naturalization of a Europe of nation-states

'Nation' is a core entity that is used in the political rhetoric of the Finns Party to argue and justify diverse political attempts. In this rhetoric, 'nation' binds

together the ideas of sharing the common national past, heritage, and ethnicity with the idea of the political sovereignty of a nation-state. Nationalism and nativism naturalize concrete and symbolic borders and cultural differences between nations. Moreover, the linkage between nation, nation-state, and political sovereignty defines in the data the idea of a 'real' democracy. This 'web of meanings' is crystallized in the following extract from Soini's column:[4]

> It is necessary here to repeat the principle of national sovereignty, which is the cornerstone of democracy. National sovereignty means that only and exclusively such a people that forms its own nation, distinct from other nations, has an eternal and unlimited right to always and freely decide on all its own issues.
>
> (PS 3/2010: 10)

In the extract, the idea of a nation as a distinct unit and a political entity is explained in relation to time; it is eternal and, thus, static and unchanging. In this discourse, the idea of a nation can also be naturalized in other ways, such as by emphasizing biological and evolutionist reasons for boundaries between nations. In the following extract, Vesa Saarakkala, an assistant of Soini, defends the nation-state by claiming that in borderless societies people regress:

> No one should be hated, but one's own local community and own nation-state create security for people and enable to them carry out in life also other things than just survival. In a borderless society people regress because there are no natural relationships of trust between people, but instead individuals have to be controlled and their behavior starts to be based on a stimulus-reaction type of activity, similar to animals.
>
> (PS 15/2008: 8)

This kind of combined nationalist and nativist logic of a nation creates the basis for the Eurosceptic views of the party. While nation, cultural-ancestral roots, the bordered space of a nation, sovereignty, and democracy are closely intertwined in this discourse, the EU is perceived as a threat to this 'natural' entity. The EU is seen as an impossible construction (because it lacks a 'nation') and a threat to 'real' nation-states because of its attempts to establish a 'new nation-state' (Lähdesmäki, 2015). This threat is crystallized in the summary of the party programme published in *Perussuomalainen*:

> The Finns Party thinks it is sheer madness to imagine that one nation could be formed, by force and with success, in multinational Europe. Since democracy is the power of the people, it seems that those who have accepted the Treaty of Lisbon are not supporters of the power of the people.
>
> (PS 7/2009: 21)

Europe is perceived in this discourse as a multinational and, thus, a multicultural entity in which all nations represent their own coherent culture stemming from their national past. This kind of Europe is, however, perceived in the discourse as threatened by the EU's integration process and the 'multicultural mingle' leaking over the borders of Europe, as a town councillor of Kotka, Freddy Van Wonterghem, notes:

> We want Europe to remain a patchwork in which independent states and nations are different both linguistically and culturally. We want to preserve the cultivated cultural heritage of Shakespeare, Sibelius, Mozart, Beethoven, Picasso, Michelangelo, and Rubens, which is threatened by the multicultural mingle – seasoned with American Cocacolazation – leaking over the borders. We support a Europe in which each nation can be proud of its national identity and traditions.
>
> The Finns Party wants the diversity of Europe to remain for the forthcoming generations. In the long run, the EU elite wants to turn us into a gray European mass that wanders from one country to another. The main goal of this elite seems to be a mono-cultural Europe rather than the good old multicultural Europe.
>
> (PS 5/2009: 5)

In the extract, cultural heritage is described with high cultural figures whose legacy is related to the 'good old Europe'. The figures who belong to the canon of European art and cultural history are used in the extract to promote the distinctness of national cultures in Europe. In the discourse of the data, Europe is, thus, naturalized as a 'Europe of nations' or rather a 'Europe of nation-states' – a bordered space of distinct ethnic nations demarcated by their national culture, heritage, and state-borders (Lähdesmäki, 2015, 2017).

The past in the meaning-making of the EU

In the political discourse of the Finns Party, the EU and its political elite represent the key opponent of the people (and the party). In the data, the objection to this elite utilizes various references to the national past, the history of the EU, and twentieth-century political history in Europe. The power hierarchy between the European elite and the Finns is emphasized by calling this elite, for example, the 'lords of Brussels' or the 'lackeys of Brussels', who are represented as dominating or ignoring the poor and powerless common people. Due to this dominance 'the Finnish farmer, who used to be the master of his own land, has ended up as a crofter under the rule of the lords of Brussels' (PS 7/2009: 16), as Erkki Havansi, a candidate in the election for the European Parliament, states. This emphasis on the unfair power of the elite in the data puts Finland and Finns in the position of victim. The rhetoric that appeals to one's 'own land', its historical continuity, traditional life, and sense of justice is a means often used

in the data to convince the readers of the moral legitimacy of the speaker and the party (Lähdesmäki, 2015).

The rhetoric of injustice also defines the narration of the history of the EU in the data. As Soini writes, 'Greece practically forced its way into the monetary union and Italy manipulated its financial figures. The EU started back then as an unholy alliance of German bankers and French socialists' (PS 1/2005: 8). Both the history and present day of the EU are described as a battleground of competing national interests, in which bigger and more powerful nations deprive the smaller nations in Europe's peripheries. The political attempts of these bigger nations are explained to reflect their national past, as Ahti Moilanen, the third chairman of the party, writes:

> One farmer pondered why agricultural producers shouldn't be paid for the wood they sell. The answer can be found in the colonial background of France, Germany, and England. These countries have had to leave from their colonies with their tail between their legs, so now they practice exploitation in the peripheral areas of the EU!
>
> (PS 4/2006: 15)

When other nations are perceived as threats to Finland and the sense of order and justice in Europe, they can be stereotypified in the data with cultural epithets, such as 'French wine farmers', 'Italian pasta manufacturers', and the Greek 'Zorbases'.

Hellström (2006: 182–183) has noted how 'Europe's other' is often searched for from outside its territorial borders, although it could be distinguished in time rather than space. In the pro-European discourses and official EU policy rhetoric, European integration is often justified by appealing to the prevention of the recurrence of Europe's warlike history, particularly the horrors of World War II. In *Perussuomalainen*, history is also used as a warning example for contemporary Europe, but from a different point of view. In the texts, the EU and European integration are paralleled with the Soviet Union and its undemocratic decision-making and authoritarian and oppressive politics. The EU is repeatedly referred to as 'the EU Kolkhoz', 'Kolkhoz of money', 'Kolkhoz ship', and 'Eurostoliitto' (combining the Finnish words for Europe and the Soviet Union, Neuvostoliitto). The pro-European politics of the Finnish government is described as contemporary Finlandization: 'We used to bow to Moscow with scabbed knees, today it's Brussels', as a letter to the editor states in the newspaper (PS 11/2007: 19). Besides Brussels, multiculturalism and Islam are perceived as new Moscows. 'The Finnish political elite is always lying prostrate in diverse directions. It used to be the Soviet Union, now it's Brussels and Mecca' (PS 7/2009: 9), the newspaper reports.

In the data, elements common to the EU and the Soviet Union are found in undemocratic decision-making, subordination of nation-states under the same union, economic crises, bureaucracy, and propagandist machinery (Lähdesmäki,

2015). Moreover, links are drawn between silencing of dissidents in the Soviet Union and restricting public expression of radical right (racist) views. As a town councillor of Oulu, Olli Immonen, writes:

> Day by day the EU (i.e. Eurostoliitto) starts to remind us more of the Soviet Union, where persecution of dissidents and criminals of thought was a daily practice. In the Soviet Union, dissidents were shut away in mental hospitals. We will see if the EU follows the Soviet Union in this practice, also.
>
> (PS 9/2010: 23)

In the last few years the references to the Soviet Union, however, diminished in the data. This change in the discourse reflects the rise of a new threat to the Finns Party's political agenda. It also manifests the change in the party's quest for hegemony. The discourse on 'a lesson learned from the Soviet Union' transformed into discourse on defending the nations and Europe from the threat of the 'non-European'.

Europe as a cultural-religious-moral entity

The antagonist 'other' in the political discourse of the Finns Party varies flexibly and takes different forms depending on the political potential of the 'other' to increase the support of the party. Moreover, the different antagonist 'others' form in the discourse a complex web of meanings in which 'the others' are seen as connected or even allied. The increased migration and forced mobility to and in Europe in the 2010s influenced and transformed the discourse on the 'other' in *Perussuomalainen*. Besides the core antagonist of the party, the EU elite, the discourse started to more and more reflect various fears of 'non-European' cultural features, religions, and social and societal values perceived as leaking into and gaining ground in Europe. The culprit in the increase of this 'unfamiliar' element in Europe was commonly found in the integration politics of the EU and the pro-immigration-minded and 'over-liberal' politics of the European left, as party board member in Espoo Simon Elo notes:

> The Soviet Union's utopia collapsed under its own impossibility. The Left across Europe has taken the promotion of multiculturalism, the idea of an enriching coexistence of different cultures within a state, as its new goal. The cultural relativism that is dominating Europe has given a little finger to cultures whose values do not reflect the western sense of justice nor European values stemming from Christian ethics and the philosophy of antiquity.
>
> (PS 15/2009: 23)

As the extract illustrates, the threat of the 'other' produces in the discourse a sense of 'us' distinguished from the 'other'. In the data, 'us' commonly refers to the core populist unit, a common people, particularly when it is perceived

as oppressed by the elite. When the antagonist 'other' is located in the EU, the 'us' is commonly narrated as a nation, the Finns. The identification of the non-European 'other' transforms the focus of the discourse. In that case the nationalist emphasis of the discourse extends beyond national borders and includes in 'us' an ambiguous community of Europeans. This community is explained as sharing various common elements in terms of culture, history, heritage, values, religion, and morality. In this discourse, multiculturalism thus refers to an encountering of European and non-European cultures, which are both perceived as forming their own essentialist and 'pure' entities.

The discourse that produces Europeans as 'us' in the data commonly brings forth Christianity as the basis of common values, morality, and mentality in Europe. This emphasis was first triggered by the EU candidacy of Turkey, as the following quotation from Soini's column illustrates:

> Contrary to my stand and proposal, the Finnish government participated in removing the reference to a Christian value basis from the new EU constitution. Was this in anticipation of Turkey's possible EU membership or was it just about disregarding Europe's core value basis? When talking about Turkey, we also need to talk about Islam and religion.
>
> (PS 9/2005: 3)

The emphasis on the Christian value basis of Europe creates 'non-European' Islam as its antithesis. In the data, Islam is defined as a negation of Europe, representing not only an antithetic religion but also contrary cultural, mental, and moral norms – which in the rhetoric of the data are closely intertwined with religion. In these views, Islam and Europe (or the West) are seen as two coherent entities that have their 'own lands', their original spatial homes. Christianity and Islam are commonly culturalized, spatialized, and outlined as essentialist sources of behaviour and identity for the people within 'their' territories (Lähdesmäki, 2015).

The fear of 'Islamization' and the defense of Europe's liberal heritage

The populist construction of a boundary between the imagined democratic West/Europe and the antidemocratic Muslim 'other' has been broadly discussed in recent literature (e.g. Mulinari and Neergaard, 2012; Lähdesmäki and Saresma, 2016). This construction also takes place through visual imageries repeated and circulated in the media as illustrations accompanying texts and talks about the Muslim 'other' (e.g. Richardson and Wodak, 2009; Macdonald, 2006). In *Perussuomalainen*, articles dealing with immigration and refugees are also commonly illustrated with iconic images: women wearing burqas, aggressive armed Arab men, and migrating masses, thereby manifesting the unfamiliarity, difference, and fear of the Muslim 'other'. This fear

produces in the data a discourse on Europe's 'Islamization' that is argued, for example, through demographic statistics and birth rates of 'Europeans' and 'non-Europeans'. This discourse stems from the fear of the 'other' and at the same time utilizes this fear as tool to create anxiety among Finns and, thus, increase the support of the party. The discourse on 'Islamization' in the data draws forth the Huntingtonian idea of a clash of cultures or civilizations, which is foreseen as eventually leading to 'the end of European culture and civilization' (PS 10/2007: 6), as the vice town councillor of Oulu and the leader of the local section of the party, Veli-Pekka Kortelainen, claims. The views on clashing civilizations are combined in the discourse with evolutionist notions on combating cultures and a cultural 'battle' in which the strongest wins, as well with the 'scientific' approach using statistics to indicate how this 'battle' is proceeding. This discourse reflects populism's partial shift from nationalism to 'civilizationism' that is driven by the notion of a civilizational threat from Islam, as Brubaker (2017) notes.

The fear of Islam in the data blurs the previous logic of the Finns Party's populist discourse. Framing Muslims as the antagonist 'other' of the party produces a new image of 'us'. In the political rhetoric of the data, this new antagonism is manifested through a concern for and a promotion of values and ideas that the party discourse has previously ignored, dismissed, deprecated, or even objected to. The discourse on 'Islamization' constructs the party as a defender of liberalism, freedom of speech, gender equality, women's and girls' rights, LGBT rights, tolerance, and even a 'right kind of' intercultural diversity, as 'Islam does not accept multiculturalism' (PS 12/2010: 23), as the title of the opinion piece by Anne Lempinen states.

By standing up for values and culture defined as Western/European, the radical populist right in the Western European countries has managed to promote itself as an uncompromising defender of Europe's liberal heritage (Betz and Johnson, 2004: 319). Indeed, recent studies have pinpointed how Western European populist radical right parties incorporate into their discourse and political agenda certain hegemonic elements of liberal politics, such as gender equality and LGBT rights, in order to gain broader hegemony in those societies (Norocel et al., 2018; Brubaker, 2017; Marzouki, McDonnell and Roy, 2016; Wekker, 2016; Lähdesmäki and Saresma, 2016). A similar tendency can be identified in *Perussuomalainen* in the last years of the data. As the immigration working group of the Finns Party states:

> Europe, and particularly the Northern European welfare states with their generous social security systems, is a tempting target for immigrants who do not have skills needed in the labor market or who, due to religious or cultural reasons, do not want to adopt European notions, for example, of gender equality and freedom of expression that are important for integration.
>
> (PS 1/2015: 3)

Besides the concern for 'European liberal values', the discourse on 'Islamization' includes a concern for Muslim women's and girls' rights, perceived as oppressed in patriarchic migrant communities. Mulinari and Neergaard (2012: 17) describe how this kind of 'caring self' is created in populist radical right discourse to support racist views legitimized with the 'worry' about others. They call this kind populist concern 'caring racism' (see also Lähdesmäki and Saresma, 2014).

The discourse on 'Islamization' in the data commonly culturalizes religions, both Islam and Christianity, and treats them in a nativist framework. Therefore, religion, culture, and moral values are perceived as forming a tight entity and representing generational continuity. This continuity is seen as nearly impossible to break, as 'deeply rooted culture-based customs cannot not be changed' (PS 6–7/2016: 12), as interviewee 'Ossi' notes in an article that deals with Muslims' attitudes towards gays. The notion of culture as a moral entity stemming from the past through generational ties emphasizes culture as a static and unchanging sphere of values. In this notion, people are seen as representatives of 'their' culture and heritage and thus also static and unable to transform. This notion is crystallized in Jari Pekka Vuorinen's opinion piece in which he writes:

> It is easy to install a new operating system in a computer, but just try to do the same to a human who is a product of a foreign culture. Authorities, even with the help of the police, have now awoken to educate refugees and asylum seekers by telling these representatives of a foreign culture about women's rights in Finland, among other things. However, each culture includes in itself a firewall that is difficult to penetrate. When a culture is the result of hundreds or thousands of years, a week or even a decade is not enough for our own culture to gain a sufficient foothold in a foreign operating system.
>
> (PS 8/2016: 5)

Vuorinen's view on culture as a 'firewall' reflects more generally the notions of culture in this discourse. Culture is not seen as an arena that enables and advances encountering and dialogue between individuals and groups with different cultural backgrounds. It is rather perceived as hindering the possibilities for communication and understanding between 'us' and the 'others'.

Conclusions

The analysis of the political discourse in *Perussuomalainen* indicates how language use and rhetoric are crucial tools in populism. Through them, populist parties are able to create a web of meanings that link together certain notions of culture, heritage, history, religion, values, morality, and Europe as a physical and mental space. Language is an efficient tool in the quest for hegemony and attempts to increase support for the party.

In the analysis of this web of meanings, four core discourses were identified. Stemming from populism's nationalist and nativist emphasis, the first core discourse in the data seeks to naturalize the idea of a Europe of nation-states, in which each nation has its 'own' national culture and heritage threatened particularly by the EU's integration politics and the EU elite as the 'other'. Second, the history of the EU forms in the data a topic that is discussed in reference to the Soviet Union, thereby constructing Europe's political history as the 'other'. Third, the nativist emphasis of populism is also extended to include all of Europe as a cultural-religious-moral entity. This entity is particularly constructed around the idea of Christianity as a definer of cultural behaviour, values, morality, and mentality in Europe in comparison with 'non-European' or 'foreign' 'other'. Fourth, the fear of 'Islamization' and the Muslim 'other' produces in the data a discourse whose speakers present themselves as defenders of Europe's liberal values and liberal political heritage.

The meanings of Europe in the data can be described as 'floating', following Laclau's views on different roles of signifiers in populist rhetoric. In some texts of the data, Europe does not have any common culture or heritage, as only nations are defined as their 'natural containers'. In others, Europe is perceived as sharing a common culture and heritage. On one hand, these diverse views can be partly explained by the heterogeneity of the Finns Party. The party draws together different kinds of agents connected by dissatisfaction with the current policies and a fear of various threats. On other hand, the 'floating' nature of meanings can be used in the populist discourse as a political strategy to locate threats outside the imagined 'us' and to project fears of 'others' on scapegoats. Although the meanings of Europe vary in the political discourse of the party, their articulation has a common motive: to defend the common people against the threat formed by its antithetic and 'othered' opponents.

The analysis reveals how a nativist notion of culture can be extended from the idea of a nation to Europe as 'a native community'. The notions and interpretations of a common European culture, history, and heritage form a powerful tool of exclusion when they are perceived as a sphere of meanings that cannot be identified with without having ancestral roots and generational ties to it or ethnic origins in it. Indeed, populist claims commonly include xenophobic or racist notions, but their explicit expressions are often avoided, censored, or cleaned up in the official discourse of these parties. The discriminatory views can be rhetorically hidden under seemingly neutral utterances. For example, the populist rhetoric commonly refers to 'culture' instead of 'ethnicity' or 'immigration' instead of 'race' (cf. Balibar, 1991: 20). By using this kind of rhetorical mechanism, 'others' can be discussed in populist discourses with a vocabulary that veils the prejudiced or racist connotations (Lähdesmäki and Saresma, 2014, 2016). Appeals to 'European' culture, history, and heritage in the discourse of the Finns Party is an example of this rhetorical mechanism.

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Notes

1 All quotations from the Finnish texts are translated by the author.
2 Part of the data has been previously used to analyze the notions of Europe in the Finns Party's political discourse (Lähdesmäki, 2015, 2017).
3 All persons in the data are introduced in the position that they held during the publication of each quoted text.
4 Soini's blog postings are regularly published as columns in *Perussuomalainen*.

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Chapter 10

Between appropriation and appropriateness

Instrumentalizing dark heritage in populism and memory?

Susannah Eckersley

Introduction

This chapter takes an interdisciplinary approach to the subject of memorialization and commemoration, protest and populism in relation to the performative enacting and official presentation of difficult history. It analyzes the various actors instrumentalizing the same dark heritage in different ways, by different means, and for different purposes, to draw conclusions about processes of coming to terms with the past (*Vergangenheitsbewältigung*) in relation to the contemporary context of populism and migration.

It analyzes a range of case studies connected to the memory and heritage of the 13 February 1945 firebombing of Dresden by the British Royal Air Force, under the command of Arthur 'Bomber' Harris, and the US Air Force. These case studies include museums, heritage sites, public exhibitions, 'official' city commemorations, 'unofficial' public commemorative acts, protests and counter-protests, and interviews with supporters of Germany's populist *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD) party from Dresden.[1] Location not only of the 1945 firebombing but also the former GDR's third city and cultural nexus, Dresden is potentially now equally well known for the populist group Pegida (whose acronym stands for 'Patriotic Europeans against the Islamisation of the Occident') as it is for its art, music, and historic architecture. Previous analyses of the notion of Germans as 'victims' of World War II as well as perpetrators have addressed the mediation of this history and cultural memory more generally (in particular Niven 2006; Joel 2013). Taking theoretical work from a range of disciplines, including Habermas's idea of 'communicative action' and rational discourse (1984), Ruth Wodak's work on a 'politics of fear' (2015) and Jeffery Olick's on the 'politics of regret' (2007), Aleida Assmann's on traumatic memory (2016) and Sharon Macdonald's on difficult heritage and memory (2009, 2013) as its foundation, the chapter will examine in detail empirical data from fieldwork at these multiple sites and events. The range of case studies permits both a broad and a deep questioning of the realms of instrumentality within cultural policy, museums, heritage, and collective cultural memory practices. The analysis combines the theoretical with the empirical in arguing that two axes exist

within commemorative, museum, and protest practices – an axis of *appropriation* and an axis of *appropriateness*.

This provides a new theoretically based approach for scholars – whether from heritage, museum, or memory studies or from political, discourse, or populism studies – to frame and analyze uses of the past in relation to contemporary social and cultural phenomena (and vice versa). Going beyond the dichotomy of the victim/perpetrator narrative (part of what I term the axis of appropriation, based on either a 'politics of fear' or a 'politics of shame and pity'), it identifies a second, intersecting public dichotomous narrative. This focuses on the contrast between practices of commemoration, protest, and representations of the past which appear 'emotional' and those which appear to be 'rational' (part of what I term the axis of appropriateness).

This detailed examination of the Dresden 13 February commemorations and memory practices therefore illuminates the strategies within official and unofficial practices. It also frames the actions, arguments, and behaviour of the various actors in relation to both contemporary society and theories of communication, memory, and heritage, and draws out the interconnections between them within the ongoing dynamics of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*.

Analytical framing

The notion of 'dark heritage' is one which has emerged from various perspectives of looking at the difficult, contested, and problematic parts of the past, in relation to how they are presented to the public today, and why people choose to visit sites associated with such pasts. The associated phenomenon of 'dark tourism' has been an object of academic study since the 1990s (Seaton 1996; Foley and Lennon 1996; Stone 2011; Stone et al. 2018).

Over recent decades, heritage and museum studies scholars have examined various aspects of dark heritage in order to understand the impact of difficult history on museums, heritage, public memory, commemoration, the ways in which such histories are presented to or hidden from the public, and the public responses to their encounters with these histories and public presentations of them. Macdonald coined the terms 'continual unsettlement' (2009: 192) and 'past-presencing' (2013) in relation to the need for a future-facing and ongoing engagement with difficult pasts in the present. She emphasizes that this is intended to disrupt 'linear notions of past preceding present preceding future' (2013: 16).

The emerging academic discipline of memory studies is rooted in the work of Nora (1989) and Halbwachs and Coser (1992) but also connects to dark heritage, difficult histories, and how different memories and commemorative acts influence and shape societies. Much of this is based on traumatic memory in relation to the Holocaust and the changing collective, cultural responses to it (Hirsch 2012; Rothberg 2009; Olick 2007; Caruth 1995). Aleida Assmann's work (especially 2016) is particularly relevant to this study, in that it addresses the ongoing relationship between the history and memory of the

recent German past with strategies for developing new memory discourses within contemporary societies. Levi and Rothberg (2018) specifically address the challenge of how memory studies can engage with the contemporary far right's use of memory in a transnational and globalized society.

Analysis of memory in relation to public commemoration is inevitably linked to issues of emotion – and even more so when the commemoration is both for a contested past and through controversial practices and actors, such as the far right. While emotion was considered to have been a neglected subject matter within academic study (Williams and Bendelow, in Bendelow and Williams 1997: xii), the history of emotions has been analyzed (Frevert 2011; Plamper 2015). The practices of 'instrumental cultural policy' (Gray 2007) and the strategic use of emotions, affect, and empathy in museums and the heritage sector is widespread – particularly in the Anglophone countries – with a growing body of academic research (Smith, Wetherell and Campbell 2018). In Germany, however, there has long been a more guarded and sceptical view of instrumentalism and intentionally emotive engagement with the past in cultural policy, museums, and the heritage sector, largely in response to the propaganda uses of the past by the Nazis (Burns and van der Will 2003; Eckersley 2007, 2012). This legacy (Sternfeld 2013: 38) is still evident in Germany within museum practice and the attitudes of cultural sector professionals. Therefore, museums and the heritage sector in Germany are expected to provide factual, objective presentations of the past for their visitors, whether in relation to objects, sites of memory, or practices of commemoration.

In light of this, Habermas's work on communicative action and discourses of rationality (1984) becomes significant in aiding a reading of the events observed for this study. Habermas's ideas on communication, rationalism, and instrumentalism have been the basis of both research and criticism in various disciplines. Crossley's critical analysis of Habermas's failure to include emotion as a factor (in Bendelow and Williams 1997: 29) is particularly relevant to this chapter. For Crossley, Habermas sees *communicative* rationality as underpinning communicative situations which are focused on understanding and agreement, while *instrumental* rationality is the basis of a strategic form of thinking and communicating, the purpose of which is a given desired outcome based on a "means-end calculation" (ibid.), rather than mutual understanding.

It is on this broad and interdisciplinary foundation that this study rests, taking a deep view of the phenomenon of dark heritage, memory, and commemoration. The chapter does this through a wide selection of cultural case studies focusing on public presentations and practices relating to the 13 February 1945 bombing of Dresden.

Approaching the field

A significant body of fieldwork data was collected during a one-week period in Dresden in February 2018. This week (8–14 February 2018) of intensive

immersion into the official and unofficial practices and processes of memory, commemoration, and presentation provided a wide range of material for analysis, gathered using a combination of approaches from anthropology, museum and heritage studies, and memory studies. This data allows for particularly rich insights, firstly into the issue of how and why the presentation and commemoration of a difficult past can continue to be so challenging for public cultural organizations. Secondly, it exposes the heightened tensions present within the city in a compressed time and space, and the emotive nature of public participation within official and unofficial, political and civic acts of memory.

Fieldwork included architectural and display analysis, staff interviews at Dresden's Military History Museum (MHM) and City Museum, and a qualitative, semi-structured interview with a representative of the Saxon regional government's culture department. Exhibition analysis was undertaken at the Dresden 1945 Panorama, and site analysis in and around the *Frauenkirche*. Attendance and participant observation at a commemorative concert, at the official public commemoration ceremony at the *Heidefriedhof*, and at official public participatory commemorations were included. Several protests and counter-protests taking place within the city of Dresden during the time frame were observed. These included a neo-Nazi march (on 10 February) and associated left-wing counter-protest; a populist right-wing commemorative protest (on 13 February) and the simultaneous left-wing counter-protest; and numerous smaller public acts of commemorative intervention in the city. Additional data from interviews undertaken by an associated researcher in 2017 with AfD (*Alternative für Deutschland*, a populist right-wing party) supporters in Dresden are brought to bear on the material gathered in February 2018.

The myth of Dresden – appropriation and appropriateness

The ongoing use and misuse of the 'victim narrative' as part of the popular memory and populist revisionism of the Dresden 1945 firebombings, from the immediate period after the bombing and before the end of World War II, through the GDR, and to the present day has been analyzed extensively (Niven 2006; Joel 2013; Gegner and Ziino 2012: 197–218, Dresdner Hefte 84 and 115). The idea of the '*Mythos Dresden*' (Neutzner in Dresdner Hefte 84: 38–48) is based on the notion of Dresden as a 'special city' due to its Baroque architecture and artistic and musical strengths combined with historically inaccurate perspectives of it as an 'innocent city' – based on factually incorrect ideas that it was populated primarily by German refugees, women, children, and the elderly, and of no military significance. The resonance of this continues to shape and influence much of the contemporary discourse, commemorative, cultural, and museological practice within the city.

The far right have long used the victim narrative as a means by which to justify their presence at and public participation in the official commemorations,

even to some extent shaping the nature of the official commemorations – whether by causing such disruption that the city and Land governments chose not to hold official commemorations (Haase in Dresdner Hefte 115: 4–14) or, from 2005 onwards, through their influence *within* the city and Land assemblies, as elected members of those houses (Neutzner in Dresdner Hefte 115: 75–85).

Academic discussion of the Dresden firebombing and its memory has therefore previously focused primarily on the problematics of this perceived victim/perpetrator dichotomy. Significant as this still is, a second apparent dichotomy emerges from the current analysis of these events, which is equally significant – if not more so – in its relation to the changing dynamics of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* and the future. This focuses on the behaviours (and the *perception* of behaviour) of those commemorating and protesting the remembrance of the Dresden 1945 firebombing – an apparent dichotomy of behaviour which appears as either 'emotional' or 'rational'. These two supposed dichotomies can be better understood as two axes. The use of victim/perpetrator narratives by various groups in relation to the past, as well as

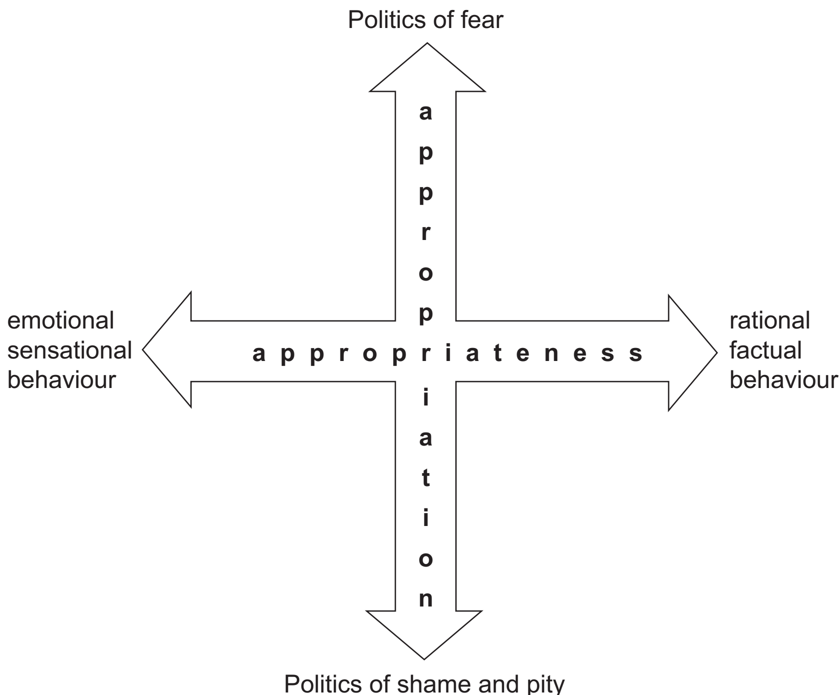

Image 10.1 The axes of appropriation and appropriateness.

Source: Graphic by Susannah Eckersley

in relation to the social context of the present, is represented by the axis of *appropriation*. The use of supposedly emotional or rational behaviours and communications is represented by the axis of *appropriateness*.

Against the backdrop of contemporary politics and discourses around multiculturalism, the integration of refugees, and the perceived marginalization of autochthonous populations, the impact of Dresden's specific history during and after the Third Reich, in the GDR, and following German reunification on the city and its population adds to the layers utilized within the axes of appropriation and appropriateness.

Appropriation of the past – the Holocaust as frame for both victim and perpetrator narratives

The 'anniversary week' in 2018 included multiple events, connected either to Dresden's civic institutions and representatives or to grassroots civil society actors and groups. In adherence with Germany's laws of assembly, all officially registered demonstrations are both regulated and protected. Participant observation undertaken at many of these events confirmed the use of 'victim' and 'perpetrator' narratives, both framed around differing attitudes towards the Holocaust and its status within the present memory complex (Macdonald 2013) of Dresden.

Far-right groups, who gathered for a '*Gedenkmarsch*' (memorial march) through the streets of Dresden on 10 February, positioned themselves as mourning victims of a past which they see as being inadequately commemorated, all framed in relation to relativizing the Holocaust. Around 600 self-proclaimed neo-Nazis marched, carrying banners which included the groups' far-right affiliations. These clearly positioned their revisionist view of the bombing of Dresden in relation to this victim narrative by including slogans such as 'Dresden's Bombing Holocaust' or showing inflated numbers of dead from the firebombing as a counterpoint to the numbers of Holocaust victims.

The city's official public commemoration of the anniversary of the bombing was a wreath-laying ceremony at the Heidefriedhof on the edges of the city, the site of the largest burial of ashes from the firebombing victims. Attended by official representatives from the Dresden Synod, the CDU (Christian Democratic Union), members of Pegida, the AfD, the NPD (National Democratic Party of Germany – a far-right-wing political party), and uniformed members of at least two *Burschenschaften* (historically based right-wing student 'fraternities') – the Dresden branch of Burschenschaft Arminia zu Leipzig and the Dresdener Burschenschaft Salamandria – as well as descendants of the dead, this sombre event was marked by the highly visible presence of armed police in protective clothing. The official commemoration included speeches, music, and a sombre procession to the 13 February memorial, with reflection at the Holocaust memorial en route.

a

b

Image 10.2 Banners from the neo-Nazi 'Gedenkmarsch' on 10 February 2018. Banner slogans read, a: 'We remember the victims of the bombing Holocaust on Dresden' and 'The bombing of Dresden was a crime against humanity', and b: 'We remember the victims of the Allied bombing terror'.

Source: Photos by Susannah Eckersley

a

b

Image 10.3 AfD (a) and Burschenschaftler (b) carrying wreaths at the Heidefriedhof commemoration on 13 February 2018.

Source: Photos by Susannah Eckersley

The AfD and NPD representatives and the Burschenschaftler, although ostensibly accompanying the official commemoration, separated themselves from it. The AfD and Burschenschaftler processed directly to the 13 February memorial in advance of the main commemoration, and the NPD after

the main commemoration – both groups very pointedly *not* pausing at the Holocaust memorial on their way to the firebombing memorial. The wreaths they laid included ribbons with messages focusing on victims and the duty to remember them. To one side of the main proceedings a couple of police officers easily and quickly prevented an attempt to protest against the commemoration by a small group whose banner read '*Where were you on 27 January?*', referring to Holocaust Memorial Day. This vignette highlights one of the key points of contest within the memory of 13 February as it is enacted by different groups, as well as of much of Germany's dark heritage – the centrality of the Holocaust as a frame for both victim and perpetrator narratives.

The 'perpetrator narrative' underpins much of both the left-wing activism and protest as well as the official presentations of Dresden's firebombing and its commemoration. Dresden's City Museum and Military History Museum (MHM) situate their presentations of the history of the firebombing very clearly and intentionally within the context and consequences of the Nazi regime and the Holocaust. They do so in a 'factual' manner which aims to reject the 'Dresden myth' and instead underline the population's complicity in Nazism, and to contextualize their suffering as a result of the firebombing. A member of the staff from Dresden's City Museum reflected on the challenge of this:

> We ask ourselves this all the time, why is it so special here? Of course, immediately after the destruction the National Socialists built up the myth idea – the number of victims, the innocence of the city – this was immediately built up and was then carried on in the GDR. The 'Anglo-American bomb terror', 'innocent city' and so on . . . it has stuck, and it gets carried

Image 10.4 Wreaths at the Heidefriedhof memorial.

Source: Photo by Susannah Eckersley

Image 10.5 Wreaths laid by Burschenschaft Arminia zu Leipzig and the NPD, whose dedications read: 'In deepest mourning for the German victims', and 'We remember the victims of 13 February 1945' respectively.

Source: Photo by Susannah Eckersley

on more and more. . . . So I see it as a duty to make sure that this is re-factualised or objectivised more.

(Interviewee from City Museum)

Breaking down the myths of Dresden as an 'innocent city' and the emotive power of the idea of 'countless victims' through the use of historical evidence and factual, somewhat detached, information-giving and museum interpretation texts is therefore a conscious and considered strategy to counter populist and revisionist discourses on Dresden's past. In both the City Museum and MHM, the Dresden bombing displays contain a minimal number of objects, using a few deeply symbolic objects combined with text providing factual information on the bombing and its consequences. In the MHM, Dresden is juxtaposed with other cities which suffered significant bombing during World War II: an intentional strategy to undermine the notion of Dresden's 'uniqueness' in the history of aerial warfare (interviewee from MHM). In the City Museum, the historical context prior to and subsequent to the bombing is emphasized, again, as an intentional strategy to undermine the myth of Dresden as an 'innocent city' and a city of 'powerless victims' (interviewee from City Museum). The agency of both individuals and groups, as perpetrators and *Mitläufer* (fellow-travellers) within Nazism, is communicated by means of the objects on display and their positioning and interpretation within the museum space.

The city's cultural and heritage organizations' commemorative activities also focused on the history of Dresden's complicity within Nazism and the Holocaust, whether in relation to specific places associated with the Nazi regime's programme of discrimination against Jews (such as at the sites of the *Stiftung Sächsische Gedenkstätten*) or in marking and making visible traces of the victims and the perpetrators of Nazism within the city of Dresden (for example the plaque commemorating the deportation of Jews at Dresden-Neustadt station). Events were organized by multiple groups from religious and civic organizations, creating a plethora of memorializing and commemorative activities within the space of a few days, many of which had the Holocaust and Holocaust memory as their focus.[2] This includes *Freunde der Frauenkirche* (Friends of the Frauenkirche) – an organization whose basis is in the peace movement which was active in the GDR as a form of anti-government protest (Niven 2006: 116–117) – and other cultural actors. For example, Shostakovich's 13th Symphony, *Babi Yar*,[3] was performed by the Dresden Philharmonic in the Dresden Kulturpalast concert hall on 11 and 13 February for their annual '*Gedenkkonzert*' (memorial concert), again juxtaposing the atrocities committed against Jews during the Nazi regime and the Holocaust with the contemporary processes and controversies around the memorialization of 13 February in Dresden.

This focus on the victims of Nazism and the strategic awareness-raising of Dresdeners' complicity has two purposes. Firstly, it attempts to undermine the

Image 10.6 The 'Dresden View' in the Military History Museum Dresden, positioning destroyed paving stones from Dresden with destroyed architectural elements from Rotterdam and other cities bombed during World War II.

Source: Photo by Susannah Eckersley

victim narrative of the right wing by highlighting the context of the bombing internationally as well as locally, as the museums do. Secondly, it aims to draw out the history and rich culture of religious pluralism in Dresden's past and thereby make parallels with contemporary discourses around multiculturalism and belonging. The ensuing narrative of peace based on the Holocaust remembrance phrase of 'never again' connects to the contemporary ideal of a 'culture of welcome' towards refugees and migrants. This is publicly articulated as a strategy to counter the right-wing populist and extremist activity within the city. While those adhering to either a victim or a perpetrator narrative are diametrically opposed in their understanding of history and politics, what they have in common is that both are appropriating and instrumentalizing the past as a means to shape the future and in counterpoint to present perceptions of reality.

Appropriation through transposition – a *politics of fear* as opposed to a *politics of shame and pity*

Dynamic and contested processes of dealing with Germany's difficult past within changing social contexts have been central to coming to terms with it – to *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* – as the *Historikerstreit* of the 1980s aptly demonstrates (the 'historians' debate' raised by Habermas and Nolte is documented in Augstein 1987). Through the varied examples relating to Dresden, we can

see how the appropriation and instrumentalization of a dark heritage takes on an added layer of meaning when transposed onto contemporary social conflicts.

Significantly, the narrative of perceived German victimhood is used by populist groups not only in relation to the bombing of Dresden as an event from the past; in fact, they transpose it onto the contemporary politics of the 'migration crisis' of multiculturalism and the integration of refugees in Dresden. Their position as supposed 'victim', seen in the discourses centring on February 1945, is also re-appropriated to underpin their anti-immigration standpoint, as seen in this interview with an AfD supporter in Dresden:

> What upsets me is that . . . we get a tiny pension and the so-called refugees get everything. . . . We have to find a normal way again, where foreigners are not valued as better people than Germans.
>
> (Interviewee 16)

The perpetuation of a collective victim mentality results in part in a perceived need for self-protection within the group, combined with the active and at times aggressive 'othering' of those who may threaten this status. While in Dresden in the past, these 'others' consisted of intellectual, cultural, or political 'elites', such as left-wing and centre politicians, civil servants, church leaders, academics, and cultural sector professionals, in particular historians (see Richter in Dresdner Hefte Nr. 115: 63–70) – an 'oppositional habitus' (Wodak 2015: 47) – the focus has shifted more recently to less powerful 'others'. The development of the Pegida group, notably in Dresden originally, and the success of the AfD in gaining seats in both Dresden's city hall and the regional Saxon parliament means that criticism of these previously 'elite' bastions of civic and regional power would now be something of an own goal. Instead, a shift to a 'governmental habitus' (Wodak 2015: 47) and a re-appropriation of the victim narrative has been necessary.

The focus of right-wing populist criticism in Dresden has therefore shifted from elites to some of the most vulnerable in the local population, refugees from Syria, Iraq, and elsewhere, and those whose appearance marks them out as visibly different to the majority of the local population. Within the discourses of Pegida and the AfD, the term 'refugee' or 'asylum seeker' has become synonymous not with victimhood and innocence (terms the right-wing populists reserve for German refugees during the Dresden bombing), but instead with perpetration and malicious intent. For example: 'The AfD always warned us that a lot of asylum seekers are criminals' (Interviewee 2); or

> The AfD has pointed out that among all refugees that came here, 500,000 are unregistered, therefore illegal in Germany. Most of them are terrorists or at least primitive people. Most of those who come to our country simply have no morals, no decency.
>
> (Interviewee 8)

and finally, 'I could tell you hundreds of examples showing that these people who came to us are not refugees, but social asylum seekers, parasites' (Interviewee 11). The discourses observed from Pegida and AfD supporters both during the anniversary week and in these interviews make it evident that the notion of the German as 'victim' is being transposed from those impacted by World War II bombing by so-called 'Anglo-American' bombers (a phrase stemming from Nazi and GDR propaganda) to contemporary Dresdeners with xenophobic fears of being 'overwhelmed' by non-European, non-Christian refugees. This may seem ironic, given the centrality of the idea of 'innocent refugees' to the 1945 Dresden victim narrative. However, the appropriation and perpetuation of Pegida and AfD supporters' historically based victim mentality in relation to contemporary issues align with both psychological and cultural analysis of trauma and memory (Caruth 1995; Hirsch 2012; Rothberg 2009). This re-appropriation of the past and transposition of the victim mentality onto the present is very evident when this AfD supporter speaks of heritage:

> In Europe we had a bad heritage with the First and Second World War. . . . In Germany . . . we have feelings of guilt, we have to. . . . There is a limit to everything. And with everything the government did in the past years, the limit is exceeded and that is dangerous for the German and European heritage. When we have an Islamic caliphate in Germany one day, the European heritage is gone. Maybe it sounds exaggerating, but I think we should be really careful. Many of the Muslim refugees have dangerous thoughts in their minds. Otherwise you would not think of driving a bus into a crowd [referring to the December 2016 attack on Breitscheidplatz in Berlin].
>
> (Interviewee 16)

Furthermore, the victim mentality follows the characteristics of a 'micro-politics of fear' outlined by Ruth Wodak, where she argues that key discursive strategies employed by right-wing populists include the reversal of victim-perpetrator narratives, combined with blame-shifting and revisionist historical narratives, underpinned by 'the *topos of history* and the *topos of saviour*' (2015: 66–67). The central significance of 'the past', 'history', 'heritage', and 'memory' to populist rhetoric is again evident from analyses of populism as a whole and in the specific examples of the 13 February commemorations and protests in Dresden. Indeed, Assmann's 'Guidelines for Dealing Peaceably with National Memories' (2007: 11–25) could almost have been used in reverse to inform the practices and discourses which have emerged in Dresden. The ideals of progressive memory work, as outlined in Assmann's 'guidelines' (ibid.) and Macdonald's 'past-presencing', are being appropriated as a tactic of the politics of fear, where blame-shifting and othering as part of the conflation of different victim-narratives are merged into contemporary political discourse, civic action, and far-right commemorative practices, which are themselves instrumentalized to mobilize public support for populist nationalism.

The left-wing protest events observed in Dresden also framed their arguments simultaneously on both the Holocaust and on contemporary multiculturalism. Many of the same protesters took part in the counter-protests to the right-wing march on 10 February and on the evening of 13 February. Music, dancing, the provision of hot food and drink, and the presence of many families with young children created something of a party atmosphere in the early phases of the left-wing protests, in marked contrast to the sombre, funereal atmosphere created intentionally by both the neo-Nazi '*Gedenkmarsch*' on 10 February and the AfD candlelit commemoration on the *Altmarkt* (old market square) on 13 February. The counter-protests to the right-wing demonstrations on the evening of 13 February also transposed discourses from the past onto those of the present – firstly, Holocaust remembrance and the narrative of the 'ordinary German' as perpetrator, and secondly, multiculturalism and a culture of welcome for contemporary refugees. This re-appropriation of the past in relation to the present was evident in the banners, chants, and flags, for example, the banner about Holocaust Memorial Day seen at the Heidefriedhof reappeared. Others addressed German perpetration and contemporary racism. Clearly audible chants switched from 'there is no right to Nazi propaganda', to 'refugees are welcome here' and back again, while rainbow flags and 'Refugees Welcome' flags were waved. Such examples show how left-wing groups, as well as the radical right, appropriate leitmotifs from the past, transposing them into the present and instrumentalizing them to further their political objectives in the present day and for the future.

As the evening of the thirteenth progressed, and the number of riot police on the Altmarkt increased visibly to keep the two demonstrations – the AfD/Pegida '*stilles gedenken*' (silent commemoration) and the left-wing counter-demonstration – apart, the atmosphere became heated and tense. A small number of the left-wing protesters surged towards the right-wing demonstration to mount a sit-in. This sparked a reaction from the police, who proceeded to kettle all of the left-wing protesters (and passers-by who happened to be in that part of the Altmarkt), not allowing anyone to leave the area for the next few hours, despite the sub-zero temperatures. At the same time, the right-wing demonstration was permitted to continue unhindered and even protected by the police, with AfD representatives giving speeches and participants able to move freely within the Altmarkt and to leave it unhindered.[4] While this ostensibly adheres to German laws of assembly providing officially sanctioned demonstrations protection from hindrance and possible violence, as both the right- and left-wing demonstrations were formally registered and approved, both should have been accorded equitable treatment from the police.[5] The discourse of peace was therefore evident within the left-wing protest but set within the apparently contradictory setting of disturbance strategies, including noise, aggressive language, and the physicality of sit-down blockades as part of their counter-protest activities.

a

b

c

d

Image 10.7 Left-wing protest banners from the evening of 13 February 2018 at the Altmarkt, Dresden, reading, a: 'Where were you on 27 January?'; b: 'Your racism makes us sick'; c: 'German perpetrators are no victims'; and d: 'You are not responsible for that which has happened, but you are responsible that it never happens again'.

Source: Photos by Susannah Eckersley

Image 10.8 Candles in front of the Frauenkirche during the bell ringing on the evening of 13 February 2018.

Source: Photo by Susannah Eckersley

The final event on 13 February was the official candlelit commemoration during the ringing of the Frauenkirche bells, which toll from 9.45pm until 10pm – marking the time from the sounding of the air-raid sirens to the first wave of bombing. This otherwise silent and uncontextualized symbolic act of commemoration attracted large numbers of people (many of whom may have come from other events earlier in the evening, whether right- or left-wing demonstrations or civic commemorations), who stood alongside one another in silent reflection. During the GDR years, the ruins of the Frauenkirche (it was not rebuilt until the 1990s) had become a kind of peace memorial – a focus for the growing anti-GDR and pro-peace movement (Joel in Gegner and Ziino 2012; Niven 2006: 116–117). The symbolism of peace was uppermost not only at the Frauenkirche, but also at other civic commemorative acts, such as the human chain organized by the rector of Dresden's Technical University, Professor Hans Müller-Steinhagen. This involved thousands of people – ordinary citizens, including many families, politicians, academics, and significant figures within the cultural sector – forming a human chain around the old town of Dresden. They held hands in silence for several minutes, in a symbolic act of both mourning and protection, before dispersing into the city again just as the right- and left-wing demonstrations on the Altmarkt (which is on the edge of the old town) began.

These narratives of peace and of welcome not only put the bombing into the historical context of Nazi perpetration but again transpose it onto the contemporary narrative relating to refugee, migration, and multiculturalism

Image 10.9 The human chain commemoration at the Dresden Altmarkt in the early evening of 13 February 2018.

Source: Photo by Susannah Eckersley

issues. Again, the protesters, activists, and cultural professionals (whether in museums, music venues, or memorial sites) use appropriation as a tactic of their politics – this time to highlight narratives of peace and multiculturalism. This is based on what I will call a politics of shame and pity. This is different to Jeffrey Olick's notion of a politics of regret (2007), given its direction towards the contemporary and future world, with parallels being drawn between Germany's Nazi past and the recent 'refugee crisis'. Olick describes 'a kind of political guilt or public culture of collective remorse [which] has taken unique and historically important forms in the Federal Republic of Germany' (2007: 13) and sees the politics of regret as related to 'peace and reconciliation' efforts within national political frames, such as Germany or South Africa (ibid.: 15). While this may be the foundation for much of the historical political memory and commemorative actions in Germany more broadly, the Dresden situation is more complex. On the one hand, those seeing themselves as 'victims' of the firebombing are part of the same national, civic, and cultural community as those who see themselves as descendants of the 'perpetrators' of Nazi crimes – the difference is not based on divergent pasts, but on differing perceptions and memories among individuals with a shared past experience and history. On the other hand, those adhering to a politics of shame (at the German past) and pity (for both past victims and for contemporary refugees) are not working through guilt and regret in order to achieve reconciliation with (or between) victims or perpetrators of past wrongs (as Olick describes in relation to earlier German political narratives of working through the past, ibid.). Instead, they are using it as a means to endorse a contemporary political discourse of inclusion, to differentiate themselves from the populist and extreme right, and potentially as a form of redemptive 'self-flagellation' (see also Olick 2007: 143 for the ways in which such 'self-flagellation' appeared within German politics of the 1960s) in what has been described as a 'politics of pity' in relation to media representations of refugees (Chouliaraki and Stolic 2017). Groups identified here as participating in both the politics of fear and the politics of shame and pity utilize *strategic* and *selective* appropriations of the past and then re-appropriate these in and for the present.

Appropriateness in the present – strategies of communication and behaviour

Returning to the idea of communication and the notion of rationality at this point allows for analysis of a further significant layer of the memory, commemoration, representation, and action around the Dresden firebombing. The notion of a supposed 'rationality' in discourse, behaviour, or presentations of the past (whether in museums or memorial sites or at events such as commemorations) can be related back to Crossley's analysis of rationality and communication in Habermas's work (in Bendelow and Williams 1997), and also back

to Olick (1997). In analyzing German collective responses to the Holocaust, Olick raises the idea of rationality connected to an

> unwillingness to accept collective guilt . . . [which] reflected Germans' inability to understand their own implication in what had happened . . . there is widespread evidence that many German people – often obsessed with their own victimhood – could not even imagine why anyone should think that collective guilt was appropriate.
>
> (Olick 1997: 928)

Crossley points out that 'we have expectations about reasonable and appropriate emotional responses to certain types of situations and we make judgements about the appropriateness and reasonableness of such responses' (in Bendelow and Williams 1997: 19). Judgements about 'appropriateness' are being made on many levels in relation to Dresden – by museum professionals, by civic and religious representatives, by activists, protesters, and populists in civic society, by the police and legal officials from the *Versammlungsbehörde* (Office for Assemblies), and by the media and general public.

One of the factors influencing museum practices and display strategies in Germany is a general distaste for what may be perceived as the 'instrumental' or 'sensational', which can be seen within German cultural policy more widely (Eckersley 2007). This appears to stem from a reaction against the Nazi use of cultural institutions including museums and exhibitions as a key part of their propaganda – an extreme example of instrumentality in cultural policy, but one which has arguably had a lasting impact on the structures of culture as well as on actors and participants within the cultural sector and the general public (ibid.). The two museum examples have already shown how the notion of a need for 'factual' and unemotional presentations of the past is articulated by museum curators and directors, not only – but particularly urgently – in the case of controversial uses of the past, such as in Dresden.

The expectations for a museum exhibition may be very different to those for a commemoration, and certainly the expectations for a protest are very different to both. However, when one protest is framed as being an act of commemoration and the other is framed as a counter-protest, the expectations about what might be considered 'reasonable and appropriate' behaviour and responses for each come into conflict with one another. Layered above that is the frame of what might be considered 'reasonable and appropriate' for a far-right march in Germany, set within the bounds of what is or is not legal within German freedom of expression laws, combined with laws protecting the German democratic constitution. Of course, no matter how apparently 'rational' or 'factual' a form of communication may appear or may be intended to appear, there is almost always an emotional appeal behind communicative praxis (Crossley in Bendelow and Williams 1997: 30). This is evident within the museum staff interviews, where the intent behind their preference for 'factual' display is to

counter extremist views by helping citizens to expand their understanding of the historical realities rather than be swayed by politically motivated discourses:

> Sometimes, themes such as 1945 spark discussions of xenophobia [among visitor groups]. We are used to this, we have to stay very factual, even if something unfair comes up, we stay factual and then it can move forward.
> (Interviewee from City Museum)

As staff member at the MHM points out:

> The impressive, emotional staging will always make a bigger impression, but I think it is very important for historical perspectives to show a rational view on this. We need to use our rational faculties, nowadays it is often too emotionalised and this has a kind of 'erosion effect'. I think we need a good strategy how to bring both together. To present something neutral, technical, and then also something more emotional and explain how they are part of the same. . . . It is always possible to emotionalise people more, but if that is what success is, well I would question that.
> (Interviewee from MHM)

Although the museum staff shy away from overtly emotive or otherwise instrumental means to transmit this message to their visitors, the architectural design of those exhibition spaces does create a change of mood and pace for

Image 10.10 Exterior view of the Military History Museum Dresden showing the 'Libeskind Keil'.

Source: Photo by Susannah Eckersley

visitors to both the City Museum and the MHM. For example, in the MHM the so called '*Libeskind Keil*' – a shard of metal mesh which pierces the outer shell of the MHM building, stabbing into the heart of the internal structure – creates an internal space where the Dresden bombings are addressed separately to the rest of the museums' collections. In the City Museum, a similar effect is achieved – although on a much smaller scale and through less dramatic means – to create a narrow display area situated in between the displays on Nazism and the Holocaust and on the post-war rebuilding and early GDR period.

The exhibition strategies of foregrounding the perpetrator narrative and of contextual juxtapositioning of Dresden's bombing with other cities, evident within both museums, are also utilized at the panorama of Dresden 1945. This is an immersive, panoramic image of Dresden, created by artist Yadegar Asisi and housed in a historic gasometer in a semi-industrial district of Dresden. An artistic display strategy is inevitably different to a city or historical museum's display strategy; however, the Dresden 1945 panorama and exhibition was developed in conjunction with historians from the MHM. The history of panorama displays is also more closely connected to overtly – and often political – instrumental ambitions (Bozoğlu 2019), and therefore runs counter to typical approaches to museum display in Germany.

Here, the use of strongly emotive sensory effects – changing light, colours, and sounds – culminating in the panorama showing a large-scale view of the destroyed city, is in stark contrast to the museums, despite the more nuanced contextual and historical positioning of the small exhibition which precedes the panorama itself. The overtly emotive and affective nature of this sensory experience, and the artistic license used in creating a single image within which time is compressed (it somehow manages to visually represent the city before, during, immediately after, and an indeterminate time after the bombing within its single panoramic image), results in an experience within which an emotional rather than a rational response seems inevitable – as well as intentional. The emotionality of the panorama means that – despite contextualization of the bombing in relation to both the Holocaust and other bombed cities – it aligns much more closely with the strategies employed at the different demonstrations. Firstly, its open appeal to emotions echoes the emotionality of the left-wing protests. Secondly, it reflects the emotive undercurrent to the right-wing commemorations, marches, and demonstrations. This mixing of the 'emotional' with the supposedly 'rational' may seem counter-intuitive, but is in fact what underlies all attempts to separate emotionality and rationality:

> Emotions are seen to be the very antithesis of the detached scientific mind and its quest for 'objectivity', 'truth' and 'wisdom'. Reason rather than emotions is regarded as the 'indispensable faculty' for the acquisition of human knowledge. Such a view neglects the fact that rational methods of

Image 10.11 Dresden City Museum's narrow display area focusing on the Dresden firebombing.

Source: Photo by Susannah Eckersley

Image 10.12 The Panorama Dresden 1945.
Source: Photo by Susannah Eckersley

> scientific inquiry, even at their most positivistic, involve the incorporation of values and emotions.
>
> (Williams and Bendelow in Bendelow and Williams 1997: xiii)

The use of an apparently 'rational' and 'unemotional' response to the controversy around Dresden's firebombing can also been seen in the 'memorialization' and protest behaviour of the far-right groups, in stark contrast to that of the left-wing protesters. It appears that the populists and far right are using 'appropriateness' as a political tactic – by adopting the behavioural criteria and values of the centre, they manage to appeal for wider acceptance. Their use of terms such as '*stilles gedenken*' (silent remembrance) is a means to take the 'moral high ground' from the political and activist left wing. The left-wing protests and activist events where phrases like 'Bomber Harris, do it again!' have been repeated in relation to both Dresden's history and contemporary issues with the far right become problematic as an 'inappropriate' response to civic commemoration or individual mourning. The impact of such 'inappropriate' slogans, together with the intentionally disruptive protest behaviour of the left-wing demonstrators, is that the underlying sense of potentially violent emotional behaviour undermines their position as a whole as coming from a desire for peace. The more extreme and emotionally loaded behaviours and statements of some of those protesting against the populists and the far right become associated with all of those on the left, in the same way that the measured, seemingly more 'appropriate' silent

commemoration behaviour of the populists and far right provides them with a cloak of respectability.

Drawing out the uses and strategies of 'appropriateness' highlights striking differences between the uses of emotions (not only in museums, but also in commemoration, protest, and public discourse in different countries) and indicates the significance of the perceived 'rationality' or 'emotionality' of responses to politically charged dark heritage and within the wider cultural and memory context – in Germany and beyond.

Conclusion

While the narrative of victimhood is used to underpin discourses of othering, exclusion, racism, and xenophobia (what Ruth Wodak terms a politics of fear, 2015), the narrative of perpetration supports discourses of peace, inclusion, and welcome – what I am terming a politics of shame and pity.

These two narratives are very evident in the opposing political extremes involved in the demonstrations (as well as commemorations) taking place against the backdrop of 13 February, but also, in a more nuanced way, in the centre ground representations of this history and memory, such as the museums, memorial heritage sites, cultural performances, and public discussion forums. Added to this, the contemporary context of migration, multiculturalism, integration, and exclusion provides a further means by which not only the protesters but also the museums and cultural institutions continue these narratives. We can clearly see a politics and discourse of fear from the far-right and populist movements – presenting themselves as culturally marginalized – and a politics of shame and pity from left-wing 'peace' protesters and the cultural institutions – where both 'ordinary complicity' during Nazism and positivist contemporary multiculturalism are highlighted.

So, while museums in general may feel they are being pulled in the direction of having to create more emotional encounters for visitors, amidst an international 'affective turn' in museum display, others are turning away from the use of emotion in order to gain legitimacy. We saw how right-wing protesters appear to have become aware of the value of presenting themselves as taking a serious role in commemoration in a socially 'appropriate' way, while their left-wing counterparts appear not to realize that their socially 'inappropriate' behaviour could be undermining their message. Either way, the historical facts of the bombing and the contemporary reality of refugees become subordinate to the manner in which the past is being presented to the wider public and to public perceptions of appropriateness and inappropriateness.

Investigating the multi-layered nature of, and multiple perspectives on, the approaches to commemoration and the presentation of the past in Dresden has provided a wealth of material for analysis. This has produced significant insights into the role of emotions and behaviours not only within dark heritage but also in contemporary uses of the past for political purposes. Memory, heritage, and

'past-presencing' combine in all the sites and settings analyzed – from large and small museums to far-right protests and left-wing counter-protests – to highlight the significance of not only the past itself but also of our relationships to it, in the present and for the future.

In identifying the two axes – of appropriation (of the past, of commemorative practice, of public space) and of appropriateness (in emotions, behaviour, discourses, and public history) – this study creates new intersections between disciplinary boundaries, providing a significant new analytical framework for understanding the changing nature of public, professional, and political responses to and manipulations of heritage, memory, and commemoration. The example of Dresden and the multiple case studies within it indicate how a 'shared' past, memory, and heritage may be used in diverging ways (and for divergent purposes) by different actors. This has particular relevance to Germany, given the long-standing societal process of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, yet the two axes can also be used to analyze both historical and contemporary social, cultural, and political phenomena elsewhere, allowing researchers to identify the strategies being adopted by other actors to push their own political agendas and to reach wider audiences. In a time characterized as being both part of a 'memory boom' and a 'post-truth' era, it may be more important than ever to develop and apply such tools in order to analyze, understand, and respond to the appropriation of political, social, and cultural history for contemporary political purposes.

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Notes

1 Interviews conducted by Susannah Eckersley with one staff member at Military History Museum, Dresden, on 8 February 2018, one staff member of Dresden City Museum on 13 February 2018, and one staff member of Saxon State Ministry for Culture on 9 February 2018. Survey interviews conducted by CoHERE project researcher with supporters of AfD in Dresden in 2017.
2 Many of these are listed on http://13februar.dresden.de/de/veranstaltungen.php.
3 Around 100,000 people were massacred by the Nazis at Babi Yar, near Kiev.
4 This information was gathered through direct participant observation – I observed the protests from the side of the Altmarkt where the left-wing counter-demonstration was located and as a result was kettled with this group until late in the evening. My colleague, Ian McDonald, who was making a film of the events for the CoHERE project, crossed from the left-wing protest area to the right-wing protest area when the sit-in protest began and remained with the right-wing demonstrators until the protests dispersed. Prior to this we had been working alongside one another to observe and record the variety of events of 13 February commemoration and protest, and we met up again later that evening after the two protests had mainly dispersed to compare notes on events from our different standpoints. The reporting of the two protests and the course of events

surrounding them in the official print media as well as on Twitter by the police and press included a number of factual errors – the length of time left-wing protesters were kettled, for example – in comparison to my own recording of events. Ian McDonald's film of the protest events is available online at https://vimeo.com/303706985.

5 Both demonstrations were carefully observed by experts from the *Versammlungsbehörde* (Office for Assembly), who did step in to ensure that actions and statements being made publicly did not run counter to German laws on freedom of assembly, freedom of speech, and Holocaust denial. A record of police interventions on 13 February was provided by the Saxon Interior Ministry in response to a question from a member of that parliament: https://kleineanfragen.de/sachsen/6/12481-strafermittlungen-anlaesslich-der-versammlungen-rund-um-den-13-februar-2018-in-dresden.

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Chapter 11

Memory games and populism in postcommunist Poland

Ireneusz Paweł Karolewski

Introduction

There are a variety of issues in the growing field of transitional justice research with regard to Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), a region that has been subject to a complex political, economic, and societal transformation after 1989. Beyond the institutional aspects of the complex transition to democracy and capitalism, one of the key aspects has remained the question of coping with the communist authoritarian past of the societies of the region, in particular how to remember the victims, the perpetrators, and the heroes that are part of the constructed remembering and forgetting of the past. In this sense, the field of transitional justice includes both politics of commemoration (e.g. Spillman 1997; Wertsch 2002; Kattago 2016) and questions of justice and reconciliation (e.g. Teitel 2000; Elster 2004; Lawther, Moffet, and Jacobs 2017), which in turn are sometimes explored together with regard to Eastern Europe (Mälksoo 2009; Blacker and Etkind 2013; Laczó and Wawrzyniak 2017).

The point of departure of this chapter is that politics of commemoration are subject to power relations between competing groups within the political elites. In this sense, public commemoration is not only about public mourning and regret as a way of dealing with the painful or traumatic past (Etkind 2013) but is also closely connected to 'power over memory' in which memory can be viewed as a form of 'symbolic power'. In this sense, politics include 'strategic public claim-making and struggle over public meanings in specific cultural contexts' (Müller 2004: 25). Against this background, governments (but also other public actors) engage in memory games with the goal of establishing 'mnemonic legitimation' of their political claims (Müller 2004: 26). According to Mink and Neumayer, memory games 'generate public policies around political uses of memory'. Furthermore, 'the concept of memory games encompasses the various ways by which political and social actors perceive and relate to certain historical events, according to the identities they construct, the interests they defend and the strategies they devise to define, maintain or improve their position in society' (Mink and Neumayer 2013: 4).

In the research on CEE, scholars have dealt with commemoration practices also in the context of transitional justice, which in turn focused on the

so-called lustration and de-communization, that is, political practices of dealing with the former employees of the communist security services and the informal collaborators of these services (e.g. secret informants from within the dissident groups; Horne 2017) as well as the presence of former communist apparatchiks in the postcommunist public sphere after 1989 (Szczerbiak 2018, 2017; Stan 2013; Nalepa 2010). However, further issues were of interest as well, including the access to communist secret files (with information on who were the confidential informers and whom they were spying on), reconciliation between victims and victimizers, and the historical assessment of communism in general (Szczerbiak 2016; Stan 2017; Williams, Fowler, and Szczerbiak 2005; Stan 2009). The concept of 'lustration' stems probably from the ancient Roman *lustratio purification ritual*, but it has been applied in the CEE discourse mainly to the vetting of public officeholders regarding their links to communist security services. It has also acquired a broader meaning relating to the question of who were the communist 'spies' and 'informants' that made political and business careers in the transformation period after 1989.

The aim of this chapter is to explore key aspects of memory games in post-communist Poland (also called the Third Republic) vis-à-vis the country's authoritarian communist past. In particular, the chapter is interested in the populist moments of lustration and de-communization, and also after October 2015 when the right-wing Law and Justice party (PiS – *Prawo i Sprawiedliwosc* in Polish) won the parliamentary and presidential elections in Poland. The argument that I put forward here is that even though legitimate considerations of lustration and de-communization play a role in Polish politics (Killingsworth 2010), commemoration politics and transitional justice are related to populist legitimation by the ruling Law and Justice party. Populist legitimation reframes the public discourse on transitional justice in a way that it is used to justify controversial public policies in tune with the interests of the groups currently in power, which present themselves as the true voice of the people, as opposed to traitors, liars, communist informants, and beneficiaries of the shady transformation from communism to capitalism.

The concept of 'memory games' does not only describe controversies and conflicting positions surrounding transitional justice. Mink and Neumayer (2013: 1) maintain that 'conflicted memory is reactivated and memory-related representations used politically either to stigmatize or discredit a political opponent or, more broadly, to reopen a historical "case" in the hope of changing the verdict'. In this sense, memory games reflect intentions of political actors to mobilize supporters of 'what may be described as symbolic yet bellicose identity demands – demands put forward in internal political arenas but also addressed to the world at large' (Mink and Neumayer 2013: 2).

I argue that memory games in Poland go beyond narrow electoral considerations aimed to decrease opponents' electoral chances; rather they should be also viewed as a powerful ideological instrument for legitimizing the controversial restructuring of the Polish state that has been promoted by the PiS since

2015. After October 2015, Poland under the PiS government – with the PiS chairman Jaroslaw Kaczynski as the actual decision-maker – has experienced a new surge of lustration controversies, unlike in Hungary under Viktor Orbán or Slovakia under Robert Fico where lustration and de-communization have not played any relevant role in their versions of nationalist populism. However, the recent memory games in Poland seem to reflect key aspects of populism as discussed in recent literature on the topic. The populist games of lustration in Poland convey a binary image of society consisting of good ordinary people (who all were victims of communism) and the (morally and politically) corrupt elite of former communists and liberal parts of the anticommunist opposition that were in league during the transformation processes in the 1990s and afterwards. In other words, the negotiated transition to democracy and capitalism is framed as having occurred largely due to bargaining between the security service informants from within the opposition and their communist handlers. This strongly resembles the more general conceptual approximations of populism highlighting (1) the belief in the ordinary people versus the corrupt elites, (2) the necessary and radical fight against the 'swamp' or the 'deep state', and (3) disdain for pluralism in the public discourse, as the 'truth' about genuine Poles cannot espouse a multitude of interpretations (for the discussion on populism, see Mudde and Kaltwasser 2017: 9ff; Müller 2017). As a consequence, the political memory of communism is reframed to legitimize the new separation between the truly patriotic Poles (the real victims and heroes of communism) and the traitors associated with the postcommunist networks of communist apparatchiks as well as neoliberal traitors of the true anticommunist opposition; both the latter groups are accused of having penetrated the Polish state at the expense of the ordinary people. As a radical restructuring of the state, in particular by limiting the independence of the court system, is under way, the discourse about who are legitimate (and illegitimate) political actors is also being reconstructed to fit the new ideology of populist revolution (Krastev 2007a). For that reason, post-2015 Poland can be viewed as a case of the 'new' populism (to distinguish it from the radical and authoritarian populism of the 1930s) that is not about abolishing democracy per se but rather thrives on democratic support (or rather the support of a majority), and in particular on the backing of angry citizens who can easily be drawn into memory games.

Against this background, the chapter explores how the issue of transitional justice in Poland has been accompanied by the reframing of the political memory about guilt, suffering, and righteousness during communism. For that reason, the core of the chapter will deal with three main aspects of the Polish *memory games*: (1) the meandering of lustration (mainly with regard to the position of the PiS/Law and Justice and PO/Civic Platform – the largest Polish political parties since 2005), (2) lustration as a function of power, and (3) the role of the Institute of National Remembrance as a case of institutionalized memory games. I approach these issues by using secondary literature on lustration in Poland as well as Polish media discourse concerning

lustration controversies. I use reports of the traditional mass media including newspapers such as the liberal-conservative *Rzeczpospolita*, the liberal *Gazeta Wyborcza*, and the centrist *Dziennik Gazeta Prawna* as well as TV news stations such as TVN24. The aim is not to analyse the entire discourse on the subject at hand but rather to highlight specific nodal points of the Polish memory games, an engagement with a subject matter that would need more systematic research.

The meandering of lustration

Lustration has experienced various versions and waves of interest in Poland after 1989 or the so-called Third Republic. Lustration can have a varied scope and depth by including a higher or lower number of professions to be examined and involving different forms of punishment ranging from criminal charges or blacklisting from public offices to being only named 'lustration liar' (the latter in cases where someone failed to confess his or her collaboration with the communist secret services). David (2003: 388) defines lustration rather broadly as 'the examination of certain groups of people, especially politicians, public officials, and judges, to determine whether they had been members or collaborators of the secret police, or held any other positions in the repressive apparatus of the totalitarian regime'. Szczerbiak (2018: 4) argues in favor of adopting the Polish convention, which 'defines lustration as being aimed at revealing whether an individual (generally an occupant of, or candidate for, a particular post) had links with the communist regime that were kept secret from the public, such as working, or collaborating as an informer, for the communist security services'.

The CEE countries adopted various approaches to lustration in the 1990s. Whereas the Czech Republic introduced the more radical version in 1991 (all employees of the communist secret police were barred from public offices including the judiciary, army positions, management of state-owned enterprises, and senior academic positions), Slovakia had no lustration law until 2000 and even afterwards dealt with the issue very reluctantly (Nedelsky 2008). Poland also introduced a reluctant version in the early 1990s, associated mainly with the 'thick line' of the first noncommunist prime minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki, which came to symbolize a preference of integration of communist actors (including the communist confidential informants) into the new political system over settling the past. One of the reasons was probably that the noncommunist governments of the early 1990s were aware of the explosiveness of the 'Bolek affair' – the accusations that the legendary Solidarity-leader Lech Walesa and the Polish president elected in 1990 was an informant of the security service (SB) in the 1970s – but also possible collaboration of several former opposition politicians thus endangering the legitimacy of the democratization. While Solidarity, as the first social and political movement in the Eastern bloc that successfully challenged communism, was a powerful force, it started

disintegrating into various political parties in the early 1990s, often competing with each other. For that reason, lustration took place with a limited scope and was mainly about screening of the communist security service functionaries, rather than broader backlisting of these functionaries like in the Czech Republic. Even though two governments (in 1991 and in 1995) collapsed as a result of the controversies surrounding lustration issues in Poland, the victory of the postcommunist SLD (Democratic Left Alliance) in the parliamentary elections of 1993 and then a victory of the SLD candidate – Aleksander Kwasniewski – in 1995 and then again in the 2000 presidential elections supported the strategy of lustration avoidance.

As a result, in the 1990s lustration was carried out only in the communist civilian security service with the exclusion of the military intelligence. Of the 24,000 communist security service functionaries, 14,000 were screened by verification commissions determining whether they were disqualified in the face of law violations or human rights infringements. Of these, 10,439 functionaries were verified positively and around 5,000 of the former communist functionaries were re-hired by the new State Security Office (replacing the communist Security Service), while the other positively reviewed found employment with the police and private security firms (Szczerbiak 2018: 13). Still, the verification process was uneven among districts, prompting charges of gross unfairness and even 'procedural nihilism' (Stan 2009: 78). In addition, the lustration law providing for obligatory declarations of all candidates for higher public offices with regard to their collaboration with the communist security service passed only in 1997. The law was quite mild, as a lustration court with access to the security service archives was supposed to determine who was a 'lustration liar', in case there were any doubts in this regard. In 2000, the postcommunist president Kwasniewski submitted to the parliament an even more diluted proposal of a new lustration law. Among other things, the lustration court had to pass a clear guilty or not guilty verdict, rather than setting cases aside for lack of evidence, thus privileging 'unclear' cases as not guilty decisions. Also, the concept of 'collaboration' had been narrowed down to include only actions that harmed church organizations, the democratic opposition, and trade unions, thus exempting many SB functionaries whose exact tasks were often in the dark and so the harmful consequences of the actions were difficult to establish (Szczerbiak 2018: 30).

The lukewarm approach to lustration was one of the reasons why parts of the Polish political spectrum (in particular on the right, but not only) argued that there is a need of a thorough truth finding and purification of the Polish political system of the former SB collaborators similar to the approach in the Czech Republic. The problem with lustration was, however, that despite avoidance of the postcommunist and partially liberal elites, the issue kept returning in various forms to haunt the public in Poland. For instance, during the late 1990s there were a number of public scandals involving security services (Szczerbiak 2018: 49) and a variety of politicians both involved in the postcommunist SLD

and surrounding Lech Walesa during his term as Polish president in 1990–1995. For instance, the lustration court found in 2002 that former head of Walesa's Presidential Office Tomasz Kwiatkowski did not divulge that he was formally registered as an SB agent in 1974–1975, while Walesa himself was cleared by the lustration court of his collaboration with the SB in 2000, even though there was some compelling evidence against such a verdict. In 2003, the minister for European Union integration in the SLD government, Slawomir Wiatr, declared that he willingly collaborated with the SB, but the Sejm's European Integration Commission approved him to keep the post anyway. A further legendary leader of Solidarity, Marian Jurczyk, was cleared by the Supreme Court of the decisions of lower courts stating that he was a 'lustration liar' in 2002. Also, another legendary activist of the opposition who spent six years in prison for his dissident activities – Leszek Moczulski – the first politician to file for his own lustration in 1999 was found to be a 'lustration liar' after a series of highly dubious court verdicts. In 2001 Moczulski was cleared by the court of first instance that he was a security service informer, but a court of appeal annulled the verdict and referred the case back to the first instance court. Then, this court decided that Moczulski was a 'lustration liar', a verdict sustained by a court of appeal in 2008. Moczulski appealed to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, which found the verdict of 2008 highly problematic, since the defendant, among other things, was not granted access to his court files, which violated his right to defense, and it referred the case back to the Polish court (Gawlikowski and Lewandowski 2018).

This shows how opaque, inconsistent, and contradictory the court verdicts in various lustration cases (including the Walesa case) were and how little they established to reveal the truth. Instead, they produced the conviction that anybody could have been an informer of the communist secret police, since SB-falsified documents abounded, witnesses died, and archives were incomplete. On top of that, the courts with their unprofessional trials have violated the rights of the plaintiffs and often employed former SB functionaries as expert witnesses in lustration trials, which made lustration a rather grotesque procedure. It has become difficult to believe that the real informants will ever be unveiled and the genuine dissidents cleared. Under such circumstances, the meandering lustration has not only become a field of electoral politics but also allowed to formulate calls for moral purification, nationalist revival, and populist slogans about 'traitors' and 'Poles of lesser quality', as the PiS chairman Jaroslaw Kaczynski put it during a TV interview in 2015 (TVN24 2015).

Lustration as a function of power

Since 2015 the PiS government introduced a number of controversial reforms, including placing of party loyalists in the Constitutional Court and attempting the same procedures with the Supreme Court as well as the ordinary courts. At the same time, the government took over the state-owned media which have

been used to spread government-friendly news and straight-out propaganda. The reactivation of the lustration issues seems to be connected with that as a form of 'mnemonic legitimation', as many arguments of the PiS government in favor of state restructuring point to the necessity of removing communist collaborators from the state apparatus and especially the court system.

Traditionally, the biggest supporters of the lustration were parties and politicians that claimed the legacy of Solidarity, whereas the postcommunist SLD and PSL (officially the Polish People's Party, but better known as as the Polish Peasant's Party) were reluctant and averse towards more serious forms of lustration. During the parliamentary and presidential elections of 2005, the two strongest parties – Civic Platform (PO) and Law and Justice (PiS) – adopted a more radical approach to lustration. Both parties have strategized to form a coalition government and thus to replace the postcommunist SLD government, even though they were in fierce competition towards each other, as the leader of PO, Donald Tusk, and the PiS leader, Lech Kaczynski, were competing to become president in 2005. The calls for more radical lustration (for instance to include universities, municipal governments, and public media) were formulated by Jan Rokita – the PO candidate for the post of prime minister in 2005. While the PO and PiS have been virtually undistinguishable in many regards until 2005, after the lost double elections the PO began modifying its program to include more liberal-centrist positions. Aleks Szczerbiak (2018: 30) argues that in 2006–2007 the PO downplayed the lustration issue to appeal to 'liberal-left cultural and media establishment', whereas the PiS turned to more radical positions as it was seeking support from more nationalist and populist actors. While a more radical lustration law was formulated and passed through the parliament, the Constitutional Court ruled in 2007 that numerous parts of the law were unconstitutional. The new law came into force with some corrections, and it introduced a number of new groups as subjects of lustration (for instance the higher-level employees of universities) and was in this sense more ambitious. Interestingly, both the PO (2007–2015) and PiS (2015–present) gave up any notion of more ambitious lustration law.

However, after October 2015 there was a new surge in de-communization and lustration rhetoric by the PiS, who reappeared as winner of both parliamentary and presidential elections. Shortly after the government was formed in November 2015 a series of reforms were hastily introduced, including new media and counterterrorism laws, and controversial appointments at the Constitutional Court soon followed. A new law of December 2015 changed the set-up of the Constitutional Court and introduced a new two-thirds majority rule, which some observers argued made it de facto difficult for the court to act at all, thus weakening the checks-and-balances principle vital for democratic pluralism. This produced a wave of protests in the country that lasted for months and claimed to be a form of opposition outside the parliament. In particular, the KOD movement (Committee for the Defence of Democracy) seemed to be a new and vibrant platform that organized a series of protests

against the government (Karolewski 2016). Despite the protests the Constitutional Court was transformed in a political appendage of the PiS and lost its function as an independent institution. As a result, the European Commission started a probe into the rule of law standards in Poland in 2017 and formulated a number of recommendations that were rejected by the Polish government. In 2018, a number of judges of the Supreme Court were forced to retire as a result of a judicial system reform, thus paving the way for new appointments by judges controlled by the PiS. These moves also produced a wave of protests in defense of the Supreme Court in 2018 (BBC 2018).

All these radical reforms have been accompanied by a populist radicalization of the public discourse on lustration, as the main rationale for the rule of law violations (e.g. the forced retirement of the judges of the Supreme Court) was that due to insufficient lustration postcommunist cronies and the liberal traitors hijacked various branches of the Polish government including the courts, which can only be remedied by radical changes in the structure, personnel recruitment, and functioning of key state institutions such as the Supreme Court. Since Poland's judicial system has been criticized for years for its slow pace and lack of competence, a functional critique of courts has been discursively merged with the topic of lustration within the discourse on the state renewal. In fact, the Polish courts were fined several times by the European Court of Human Rights for their long trials. In 2012, 61 percent of respondents in a Center for Public Opinion Research (CBOS) poll were convinced that the Polish legal system functioned deficiently (CBOS 2017: 6). In particular, in the recent conflict over the Supreme Court, the PiS representatives argued that some of the judges were involved in the communist court system and collaborated with the security service, which should disqualify them. For instance, one of the Supreme Court judges, Jozef Iwulski, was supposedly working for the military intelligence in the 1980s and took part in court trials against political dissidents (Rzeczpospolita 2018). For the PiS, this example delegitimizes the entire personnel of the Supreme Court, as it reflects a more general trend of postcommunist cronyism, thus making a purification of the institution necessary. The arguments of Iwulski's contemporaries that he actually wanted to help one of the dissidents by supporting the non-guilty verdict and that trial was the only one regarding 'political' matters (the judge moved on to criminal cases afterwards) did not seem to have any mitigating effect for the PiS representatives. In addition, the argument was extended to other judges of the Supreme Court who did not share the biography of Judge Iwulski, thus placing them under general suspicion.

This is the more striking, as the PiS itself has become a harbor for a number of former communist apparatchiks, including former communist prosecutors involved in political trials of the 1980s. One of the more prominent examples is Stanislaw Piotrowicz, who had held a position in the chancellery of the prime minister under Jaroslaw Kaczynski in 2007 and played an active role in dismantling the Constitutional Court in 2016. Piotrowicz was a communist

prosecutor during the martial law in Poland (1981–1983) and was provably involved in charging dissidents (Lazarkiewicz 2015). This produces a conspicuous decoupling of lustration and de-communization in the transitional justice discourse of the PiS. The key issue seems to be whether somebody collaborated with the communist security service, even though he or she might not have damaged anybody's life or career. But if somebody was, for instance, a communist prosecutor without ties to the SB, he can be easily integrated into the personnel of the PiS. This seems to suggest that the moral outcry regarding matters of the transitional justice has an instrumental dimension closely connected to power.

As mentioned previously, the security service counted 24,000 functionaries that controlled about 90,000 informal collaborators, which in comparison to the roughly 3 million members of the Communist Party (in the heyday of the membership in 1980) is a rather modest number. Consequently, the new lustration discourse seems to fulfil legitimation functions in the context of the 'new' populism in Poland. The 'new' populism is not about abolishing democracy (even though it might have such consequences). Instead, it rather thrives on the support of a (often thin) majority, in particular on the backing of angry citizens (Krastev 2007b). In this sense, the PiS attempts to channel real grievances of the citizens (in this case the malfunctioning of the courts) and to give politics an emotional twist of anger while constructing a new identity line between the real Poles and the traitors (even though the fault line between the communist perpetrators and the PiS supporters who fancy themselves as victims of communism and the Third Republic tends to be blurry). At the same time, the PiS claims that the party itself represents the legitimate voice of the people and might seek more radical institutional change to realize their political goals, since the goal is a revolutionary change establishing historical, political, and social justice.

There are additional moments suggesting that 'lustration without de-communization' is closely connected to the power legitimation strategy of the PiS. One of the more salient ideologists of the PiS, the sociologist Andrzej Zybertowicz (current advisor to President Andrzej Duda and advisor to Lech Kaczynski, the former Polish president), self-anointed expert in lustration and communist security services, said in an interview that one of the major tasks for the PiS should be the creation of the 'Machine of Narrative Security' (MaBeNa – *Maszyna Bezpieczeństwa Narracyjnego* in Polish) which would be a concerted system of 'narrative' activities involving the Polish diplomacy, public administration, and propaganda (Dziennik 2018; Wronski 2018). This (somewhat grotesque sounding) notion of a propaganda machine is supposed to be directed at foreign countries with the aim of legitimizing the institutional changes carried out by the PiS. However, it also reflects the manner of thinking about legitimization and de-legitimization of political processes and can be equally applied to the domestic politics of Poland. According to Zybertowicz, 'There should be a rapid neutralization of lies about Poland. A synchronization of resources, based on

certain algorithms, would be a powerful tool for the protection of reputation and creation of a positive image of Poland. The MaBeNa, consisting of various elements, should be designed, constructed and then set in motion. After a period of "manual" political calibration, it should be able to function in the self-regulating mode without additional energy supply' (Dziennik 2018). Zybertowicz is also the author of the idea that the Polish state has been penetrated by 'grey networks' of former communist security services (Kondzinska 2015), even though there appears to be no serious evidence to confirm it. For Zybertowicz, the public protests against the rule of law reforms of the PiS since 2015 can be seen as a form of hybrid war Russia might be leading against the new Polish government and the 'Polish nation' (Wilgocki 2016). This resembles the recurrent argument that protests against the PiS government might be initiated and even provoked by the Russian government with the goal of the destabilization of Poland. In this vein, lustration appears to be necessary as a tool of security of policy and needs to be carried out sooner rather than later.

Against this background, lustration in the discourse of the PiS is not necessarily only about transitional justice, truth revelations, and punishment of communist crimes but also about the security of the state that is penetrated by agents of influence and former security service collaborators, in league with liberal-leftist elites, who in turn collaborate with the European Union in the weakening of the Polish nation. Zybertowicz argued in a further interview that 'the splitting of the Polish national community has much to do with the conflict over the Constitutional Court' (Wilgocki 2016). In this sense, the memory games connected with lustration have the goal of making and remaking threatened identities that mobilize parts of the Polish society in support of the changes in the state structure heralded by the ruling PiS party.

Institute of National Remembrance or institutionalizing memory games

After years of meandering, the lustration law of 1997 established the Institute of National Remembrance (IPN – *Instytut Pamieci Narodowej* in Polish). While the IPN was given scholarly and educational tasks, it became the main political actor investigating claims of collaboration and screening the background of politicians and public officeholders. The IPN became both the guardian of the SB archives and prosecutor of lustration cases before courts. Until 2005, the prosecutorial tasks lay with the Office of the Spokesman of the Public Interest, but in 2005 the PiS endowed the IPN also with these powers and the IPN became the one and only lustration institution. In 2000, the parliament appointed an independent senator, Leon Kieres, to be the head of the IPN for a fixed term of five years. The goal was to regulate the access to the SB files on the one hand and to tread carefully on the other hand, as hitherto the experience with political manipulation of files, unconfirmed lists of agents, and delegitimization strategies, in particular on the right side of the political spectrum,

had been ubiquitous after 1989. Also, there were voices that politicization of the IPN could heavily damage the reputation of the institution.

However, the IPN was unable to insulate itself from memory games and with time became a major platform, if not a political actor, for often-controversial decisions on lustration. The first of these was the decision of Leon Kieres to grant Lech Walesa a status of a 'victim' of communist security service, which allowed a person to access his or her files. Given the controversies of Walesa's past and the provisions of the 1997 lustration law that only a person who did not collaborate with the SB (in whatever form) can be granted such as status, this decision was heavily criticized. The critics argued that granting Walesa the status of a 'victim' immunizes him from further investigation of his problematic past and thus is in tune with the political interests of the PO, thus suggesting that the IPN represented a specific political perspective on the issue. Leon Kieres indeed became a PO senator in 2007 and was nominated by the party as a judge of the Constitutional Court in 2012. For many critics, this was a further proof that the IPN followed specific political sympathies rather than exercised its mandate of truth revelation (Jakucki 2009).

Still, one of the most explosive controversies surrounding the IPN was the so-called Wildstein list. In 2004, the conservative journalist Bronislaw Wildstein copied without official IPN permission a partial list of names of people who allegedly worked for the SB as confidential informers. He subsequently made the list of about 162,000 names public through an online publication. Wildstein argued that he wanted to 'unblock' the lustration process. While the Wildstein list gained much attention in Polish media and politics, the IPN came under heavy criticism. The Wildstein list was published in early 2005 in the middle of the double election campaign, as Poland was facing parliamentary and presidential elections in September 2005. It turned out that the list contained a number of names of people that might have been, for various reasons, persons of interests for the SB, but not actually recruited agents. For instance, the list had also consisted of prominent people who were cleared by lustration courts, which cast serious doubts on the 'usability' of the list for lustration purposes. Instead, the Wildstein list produced the so-called wild lustration, where people were often accused of SB collaboration based on the mere similarity of the names on the Wildstein list.

At the same time, Leon Kieres came under attack in particular from the right side of the political spectrum, since given the scope of the Wildstein list he appeared to be too passive in his lustration job. In addition, it has become clear that the IPN failed in regulating the access to the secret files, which could be used irresponsibly in tune with political interests, causing damage and personal tragedies of innocent people accused of collaboration. The list copied from the IPN server allowed for unrestricted manipulations as it was in a simple PDF file, afterward published online in an HTML format. There were no measures taken to guarantee that the list could not be modified, new names added or names deleted. While the PiS hailed Wildstein as a new apostle

of moral revolution, critics stressed that this type of lustration allows for populist revenge and intoxicates domestic politics in Poland, rather than having a cathartic effect. Wildstein himself was appointed a chairman of the state TV by the PiS government in 2006, and since 2016 he is a member of the IPN board, also with the PiS support. However, for the liberal political milieu, the IPN became an institution resembling 'memory police', resorting to the methods of the SB and actually directing them at the victims of the communist services. According to Adam Michnik, 'These policemen violate the truth and fundamental ethical principles' (Michnik 2008). One of the major points of criticism was that the IPN wields too much power and because of that tends to tilt towards specific political views, rather than guarantee neutrality and fair process. In comparison to similar institutions in other European countries, only the IPN holds prosecutorial power.

Ironically, even the election of the next IPN chairman to follow Leon Kieres in 2005 became subject to memory games. One of the candidates, Janusz Kurtyka, the head of IPN branch in Cracow, was challenged by Andrzej Przewoznik, a reputable historian with serious chances for the position. However, in the process documents were found suggesting that Przewoznik might have collaborated with the SB. The documents were handed out in the Cracow branch of the IPN and damaged Przewoznik's candidature. He was disqualified by the recruitment committee and by the same token lost against Kurtyka. Przewoznik was cleared of the accusations only after the election of Kurtyka and his appointment (Zawadzki 2005). The judge of the lustration court pointed out by clearing Przewoznik that 'this case shows the scope of arbitrariness the decisions about somebody's collaboration with the SB are taken outside of institutions dedicated to these matters' (Czuchnowski 2005). Even more, the court stressed that the document implicating Przewoznik was modified (which constitutes falsification) to suggest his being an SB agent.

A further controversy related to the governance of the IPN in 2010, when the PO was the ruling party. The PO government wanted to amend the law regulating the work of the IPN in order to depoliticize its activities, and Mr Kurtyka was viewed as being too close to the PiS party. Not only had he allowed the controversial publication of the 2008 book on Lech Walesa by Cenckiewicz and Gontarczyk (see the following section on the 'Bolek affair'), heavily criticized by a number of historians for its methodological deficits, but he also attacked the former president Aleksander Kwasniewski, who defended Walesa, by accusing him of being a registered SB agent, which could not be confirmed afterwards. In the view of the PO, Kurtyka basically became a PiS politician playing memory games rather than an independent historian (Czuchnowski 2009). On the one hand, the PO sought to make the replacement of the IPN chairman easier and to shift the IPN activities more strongly towards research on the other. The governing board of the IPN – the college – was replaced by a council consisting of members with professional qualifications (coming from university history departments). This move was heavily criticized by the PiS, as

in their view the IPN would lose its function as lustration agency and become a research institute. With a new IPN chairman, Lukasz Kaminski, a historian from Wroclaw University, elected in 2011, the IPN became less involved in domestic politics but was criticized by the PiS for reducing its role in lustration.

Still, the IPN kept its prosecutorial prerogatives and continued to hold its triple powers: of the prosecutor, of the guardian of the evidence (also the classified files, unavailable to the defense and the scholars), and of the main (and often the only) source of expert witnesses (assessing the credibility of the documents). In other words, neither the court nor the defense were able to contest the powers of the IPN in any given lustration processes. With the double electoral victory of the PiS in 2015, the new ruling party did not return to the issues of lustration in the traditional radical manner. There were pledges to open the access to secret SB files that had hitherto been classified due to their national security relevance (which was criticized by some right-wing commentators as a mere pretext to cover up the truth) and some rather unexceptional proposals to extend lustration to sports clubs (Szczerbiak 2018: 35). The PiS changed the ruling body of the IPN; it replaced the council with the college (as before 2010), which elected Jaroslaw Szarek as the new chairmen close to the ruling party.

In addition, the IPN has been involved in the one of the most controversial practices of making and remaking of heroes – the 'Bolek affair' (Szporer 2009; Skórzyński 2016). The accusations of Lech Walesa – the legendary workers' leader (1980–1981) and the Polish president (1990–1995) – to have been a security services' informant in the early 1970s (codename 'Bolek') had been around since the 1990s. Still, Walesa, the Nobel Peace Prize winner of 1983, was for the bulk of the 1990s primarily associated with the anticommunist opposition and his role as a living hero of the anticommunist Solidarity movement. In 2000, Walesa was cleared by the Lustration Court of charges that he collaborated with the communist secret service. However, the court cleared Walesa on technical grounds, since some original documents could not be found (some of them vanished from archives during Walesa's presidency). Still, serious doubts, backed by further documents, remained, and in 2010 Walesa lost a libel case against one of his critics – Krzysztof Wyszykowski – who publicly accused Walesa of being a communist agent.

Nevertheless, Lech Walesa was courted by some parts of the liberal elite of Poland, in particular the PO, a party in which the son of Lech Walesa – Jaroslaw Walesa – has been a visible member as well as being a member of the European Parliament for the PO since 2010. Jaroslaw Walesa has also been a head of the PO think tank Civic Institute. In 2004 the Gdansk airport was named after Lech Walesa, and in 2007 the then-prime minister Donald Tusk recommended Lech Walesa to become a member of the Reflection Group (Wise Men Group) to advise on future reforms of the European Union.

However, the issue of Walesa's collaboration with the security services returned in 2008 when two conservative historians working for the Institute of

National Remembrance, Sławomir Cenckiewicz and Piotr Gontarczyk, published an archive-based monograph, *Lech Walesa: A Contribution to a Biography*, that, quoting SB documents (registration cards, memos, and reports from the informant), argued that Lech Walesa was a paid informant for the SB in the early 1970s. This reignited the controversies of the 'Bolek affair' and polarized Polish society. Walesa himself conceded that he was meeting SB agents but only to play them and to learn their methods of operation, but to many critics these explanations were unconvincing, in particular given the financial side of the collaboration. The proponents of Walesa stressed his historical role nonetheless and argued that he was able to free himself from the early collaboration that he started as a naive and young shipyard worker before he realized that he was being manipulated. He went on to become a legendary workers' leader, essential for the processes of delegitimizing communism and its eventual breakup (Legvold 1997; Dobbs, Karol, and Trevisan 1981). The opponents went so far as to describe Walesa as a pawn of the communist secret service also during his presidency in 1990–1995, which would explain a number of his (seemingly) erratic decisions. The latter account became central to the discourse of the PiS on the 'Bolek affair' after 2015.

When the PiS came to power in 2015, the leading politicians of the party had been highlighting the 'Bolek affair' by denying Walesa's role in combating the communist repressive system. For the PiS, Walesa has become a key enemy and a symbol of the pathologies of the Polish state after 1989. As Szczerbiak (2018: 126) shows, this went hand in hand with a vision of post-1989 Poland as a 'bastard child' of the communist security services that are portrayed as having laid foundations for the Polish Third Republic.

For many other former opposition activists, the 'Bolek affair' amounts to an attempt to replace Walesa as the hero of Solidarity with Lech Kaczynski, the deceased brother of Jaroslaw Kaczynski – the powerful PiS chairman (Harlukowicz 2016). In 2010 then Polish president Lech Kaczynski died in the Smolensk catastrophe; since then he has been the subject of a heroizing politics of commemoration, which includes building monuments in his honor and naming streets after him.

The intention to make Lech Kaczynski the new symbol of Solidarity was expressed already in 2010 by Jaroslaw Kaczynski in an interview for the rightist *Gazeta Polska*. He said: 'Lech Kaczynski can naturally be viewed by many as a great figure of "Solidarity" . . . and will become a symbol of the "Solidarity movement" in the face of the inevitable disgrace of Walesa' (Robinski 2010).

Conclusions

I have argued in this chapter that the transitional justice discourse in postcommunist Poland shows features of 'memory games' that are based on a conflicted memory that becomes reactivated and used politically to stigmatize and

discredit political opponents as well as to construct exclusionary identities based on the populist division between the true people and the traitors. As Mink and Neumayer (2013) argued, memory games often aim at reopening 'historical cases' and changing the 'verdict', and Poland after 2015 has been a prime example of that.

Grounded in the specifics of the Polish lustration, there seem to be a number of reasons why the lustration topic became so central and explosive in Poland, as opposed to other countries in the region including Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia. Firstly, this is a result of inconsistent lustration legislation as well as contradictory (and questionable) court verdicts in famous lustration cases (including the case of Lech Walesa) that laid the ground for the populist retooling of lustration. Secondly, starting in 2000, subsequent Polish governments endowed the Institute of National Remembrance with prosecutorial powers, which is an exception if compared to similar institutions in other countries. This not only institutionalized memory games; it also made the institution susceptible to political influence, which is clearly visible in the course of the history of the Institute of National Remembrance.

Furthermore, the flare-up of lustration appears to go hand in hand with the takeover of government power by the right-wing PiS that since 2015 has engaged in a radical restructuring of the state, including violating the rule of law. In the state renewal discourse of the PiS, the issue of lustration has been closely connected with delegitimating strategies towards the Polish Third Republic and the ideology highlighting that networks and conspiracies of former security service agents and their collaborators placed in the anticommunist opposition highjacked Polish democracy after 1989. In this context, memory games seem to be part of a legitimization strategy to support the controversial restructuring of the state. This discourse resembles similar populist calls attacking the 'deep state' and promising to dry out the political 'swamp' that is the enemy of the true people. Since controversial policies need particular legitimation, in some countries memory politics seem to offer a repertoire of tools that can be used to generate such legitimation with parts of the citizenry.

Lustration in Poland appears to be connected to a more universal logic of the 'new populism', as (often thin) majorities are not only sought for electoral purposes but also used to change the rules of the democratic game between elections. In this sense, the politics of commemoration is power-driven, as the past can be 'retooled' even after many years. The question remains, however, if this is a paradox of memory or rather the more pervasive logic of memory politics. This is not necessarily (that frequently) about the politics of regret and mourning and a way of coping with the painful past or healing and reconciliation. Instead, the politics of commemoration can be related much more strongly to a power politics of 'mnemonic legitimation' and populist tools of identity making.

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Chapter 12

Mizrahi memory-of and memory-against 'the people'

Remembering the 1950s

Hilla Dayan

Introduction

At the onset of sovereignty in 1948, the state of Israel set in place two apparatuses of population control: one for denying citizenship to and blocking Palestinian refugees' return after the 1948 war, and another for pulling in and using immigrants from the Middle East region to capitalize on the territorial and economic possessions from that war. Zionism universalized the European identity, making the Ashkenazi-Israeli diasporic experience normative but repressing the experience of Jews from the Middle East, which became overly visible as well as ethnically and politically charged (Shohat 1988; Ben-Dor 1997). 'Absorption' of new immigrants post-1948 meant that all traces of 'the Arab' had to be erased in order for their process of socialization as generic Israelis to succeed (Chetrit 2009; Shenhav 2006). The de-Arabization project was highly successful in pushing underground all expressions of cultural specificity that didn't conform to the Ashkenazi-Israeli norm. In hindsight, as this chapter goes to show, what began in the formative decade of the 1950s as a project of assimilation failed to achieve an agreement on who the 'people' of Israel are and on the centrality of a European heritage.

Mizrahi heritage and popular culture existed for decades only as a marginalized culture unworthy of public attention. Yet today mainstream discourse and popular culture in Israel is dominated by Mizrahim, Israeli Jews of Middle Eastern descent. Expressions of Mizrahi heritage are highly visible as well as heterogeneous and complex. They share neither one form of politics of recognition nor do they convey a particular habitus or class position. The backdrop of this explosion of Mizrahi heritage is hegemonic constructions of the Jewish settler as simultaneously a native of the land and European. The body politic in the Zionist construction came into existence in 'waves' from the vanguard of Russian-empire settlers, then European refugees, then Holocaust survivors after World War II, then – only after state sovereignty was established, considered neither pioneers nor refugees – Jews from the Middle East. In Zionist discourse the notion of a society gradually expanding, fulfilling values of Jewish solidarity and in-gathering, obscures the structural inferiority or absence of Middle Eastern Jews from the Zionist official narrative. Mizrahi genealogy

does not neatly fit a tale of pioneering heroism, of state building, or of Jewish redemption. Its invocation constantly throws these discursive foundations into disrepute.

Independent researcher and Mizrahi icon Shoshana Gabay has shown in her studies the populist bent of 'culture wars' supposedly raging between Mizrahim and Ashkenazim today (Gabay 2014, 2015, 2016, in Hebrew). Culture wars, rather than expressions of genuine political struggle, she argues, tend to generate ratings and profits and do not threaten Israel's structures of power.[1] This conflict, which for decades was depicted as 'ethnic cleavage' (*shesa adati*, Smooha 1994), has been newly framed as the clash between the authentic voice of the majority – 'the people' – and the minority, or 'elites'. A central figure in this polarization, typical of populist discourse, is Miri Regev (Urbinati 1998). Regev is a de-Arabized name – substituting for Siboni, a Jewish-Moroccan family name – of the minister of culture from the governing Likud party. Enfolded in her persona and rhetoric are all the facets of *the figure of the new Mizrahi*: in power, representing the common people, promoting herself and Mizrahi heritage as a hot brand (Najad 2018).

Instead of criticizing populist appropriations, what I wish to open up is the question of the democratizing/de-democratizing power of Mizrahi memory. Rather than speaking of a monolithic Mizrahi collective memory, I address the manifold representations and the visibility of Mizrahim as a *memory surge* which has no discernable center or political aim. In my reading, it nonetheless unleashes deep-seated grievances revolving around contestations over 'peoplehood'. As a *political principle*, in Pierre Rosanvallon's dialectic reading, 'the people' is both power and enigma: 'the word "people" necessarily means too much or too little', he quotes the French Revolution contemporary the Marquis de Mirabeau (Rosanvallon 2007: 83). Chantal Mouffe advances the idea that radical democracy is never about social unity, a goal that is ultimately 'killing' democracy, but about the articulation of difference and ethico-political relations to others (Mouffe 1992). The memory surge conveys the power and the enigma of 'the people' and constitutes an open-ended and radically democratic articulation of difference, yet at the same time, it erases the other – Palestinian existence and memory – and affirms Jewish exclusive claim to the state. I ground this analysis by returning to stories about the 1950s in the city I grew up in, Holon, a suburb to the south of Tel Aviv. The local story enables the reconstruction of the immediate post-Nakba context of the Mizrahi primary site of formation as 'people' – the *ma'abarot*, the Hebrew name for 'absorption' camps constructed in the 1950s. I shall begin then from a reconstruction of the quintessential 1950s to ponder its endurance in living memory.

The 1950s as a black box

Michael Warshavsky once said that Zionism is one massive factory of repression (*Mifal Hadkhaka*). Factory is the literal translation of the word *mifal* in Hebrew but also a cynical allusion to the Zionist pathos of a grand endeavor:

ha-mifal ha-Ziyoni or 'the national endeavor' (Warshavsky 1999, in Hebrew).[2] The period of the 1950s, for example, is as valourized as much as it is subject to organized erasure: the state is guarding access to, and even destroys, relevant archives of the period (Akevot 2016).[3] While censorship in relation to the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is normalized and defended on security grounds, state-led repression of the history of the 'absorption' of Mizrahim is a much less straightforward and a particularly contentious affair. Why is it repressed? What happened?

In the 1950s, a primarily European society called the *Yishuv* suddenly transformed into *a new society*. Palestinians became overnight an enemy-minority group not included in the new sovereignty (the exodus was of around 700,000 people, 80 percent of the Arab population; about 160,000 or 20 percent remained and were denied citizenship until June 1966). The Jewish population swelled from approximately 500,000 to over a million just between 1949 and 1950 and a half a million more by the mid-1950s. As a result of conditions of war with countries in the region, their Jewish communities were uprooted and their civilization was destroyed. The depopulation of Palestine and its repopulation with Jewish immigrants from the region are thus the two intimately interlinked socio-historical processes that have set the stage for all that followed (Behar 2007); in Shohat's words: 'As the Palestinians were being forced to leave, the Sephardim underwent a complementary trauma, a kind of image in negative, as it were, of the Palestinian experience' (Shohat 1988: 12).[4] As is long established in the pioneering studies of Mizrahi history, how to deal with the 'human material' or 'human dust', as the immigrants were labelled, preoccupied the orientalist European establishment of the new state: newcomers could hardly be distinguished either from the Arabs of their countries of origin or the local Arabs that were just (partially) ethnically cleansed (Morris 1987; Pappe 2006; Hirsch 2009, 2014, in Hebrew).

The powerful *Mapai* party (first prime minister David Ben-Gurion's party) had dominated the government and the Zionist establishment. Implementing grand plans required subservience, or in the words of central planners, 'all our economic plans pertaining to the mass Aliyah (immigration) are conditioned upon control through sovereign rule' (Krampf 2015: 60, in Hebrew). To advance its national goals, the state established military rule over Palestinians and civil-authoritarian rule over Middle Eastern immigrants. The state coercive policies in the 1950s are the subject of the documentary series *Salah, Here Is Eretz Israel* (the title in English is *The Original Sin*, but I shall henceforth call it in short *Salah*).[5] The series, as part of the memory surge, got prime-time airing in 2018 by a commercial channel and was shown in public screenings all over the country and widely commented on. The series paints a shocking picture of the period's zeitgeist as reflected in state protocols, exposing the racial panic and authoritarianism of the Mapai establishment.

The zeitgeist of the era was also to enforce *mamlachtiut* (statism) in Zionist parlance, commonly understood as an equal demand from everyone, but

particularly from newcomers, to worship the Yishuv-state and put its goals above their individual considerations (Ben Porat 2013). The self-proclaimed republicanism of the statist approach should be taken with a grain of salt. Israel of the 1950s was run in a manner more akin to a Mafia state, demanding loyalty to the family-run *mifal*. As Smadar Sharon shows, all major operations were run by a tight-knit formal and informal network of few, and very powerful, scientists, administrators, planners, and decision-makers, chief among them the charismatic first prime minister David Ben-Gurion. The network often operated outside democratic frameworks. Sharon further sheds light on knowledge transfer and a warm reception in Israel in the 1950s for the model of fascist internal colonial policies implemented in the south of Italy in the 1930s, when the state forcefully dislocated and relocated poor populations in an attempt to re-educate them and make them more productive and loyal to the new regime (Sharon 2017b: 140, 144, in Hebrew; see also Sharon 2017a).

Writing on Venezuela, Rafael Sànchez depicts a 'ceaseless process of collection and dispersion' that accompanied the radically democratic postcolonial moment of the end of Spanish rule in the nineteenth century and the European settler-society fear at this junction from 'highly heterogeneous, intensely mobile, delocalized populations' that early on set the political stage for a 'populist governmentality' to emerge as the dominant form of sovereignty in Latin America (Sànchez 2016). Like in Venezuela, the Mapai government embarked on a policy of population collection and dispersion – collection by directing immigrants to the ma'abarot, the transit camps, and dispersion to the periphery and to government locations. The policy of dispersion went by the ominous name 'population scattering' (*pizur uchlusiya*). The new immigrants were thus directed by decree to sites of depopulated Palestinian villages and towns or hastily constructed, often entirely new locations where there was nothing at all, neither community structures nor state infrastructure. Being forced to construct their own shacks and dwellings is a recurrent story of former ma'abarot residents (see Image 12.2).

To put things in some chronological order, the policy of 'scattering' was implemented in various stages throughout the decade. In the initial phase (1949–1954), newcomers were directed to ma'abarot with the idea of gradually moving them into government-built housing projects. Since many of the ma'abarot were erected near urban and existing settlements, this meant that despite the abject conditions there was still a social fabric the immigrants landed into. Matters got worse from 1954 onwards as the policy took a twist under the title of 'from the boat to the settlement', skipping the ma'abarot and sending immigrants straight to remote locations (Picard 2013). The ma'abarot achieved neither the goal of organizing populations in preparation for 'scattering' nor the goal of creating only temporary 'absorption centers'. In many urban areas ma'abarot turned into depressed poor neighbourhoods with social housing blocks. To use an apartheid-era terminology, Israel's map is still dotted with urban 'sore spots', pockets of poverty of third and fourth generations of Mizrahim (see Image 12.1).

Newcomers moreover landed into a settler-colonial context and were expected to further settler colonialism in Israel's frontiers, well beyond the designated partition lines. Those sent to the periphery were often instructed or expected to form small agricultural collectives. It is difficult to explain in hindsight the rationality of this plan: most immigrants were not familiar with Zionist collectivist ideas developed in Tsarist Russia; most were urban dwellers but orientalistically mistaken for peasants, while having no experience whatsoever with agriculture; and the plan further stood in contrast to economists' push for rapid *industrial* development. Most strikingly, the Yishuv-society itself had lost interest in following the footsteps of pioneers. The will to bow to collectivist goals was in rapid decline in the 1950s (considered in Zionist mythology still a period of 'idealism'). In Zionist sources, veterans post-1948 are depicted as ready to 'take care of themselves' or to 'rip the fruit of earlier sacrifices'. The Yishuv-society expected, in other words, to be simultaneously uplifted from hardship by *their* state and to socially reproduce a pioneering way of life (Picard 2010: 116, fn. 24, in Hebrew; Goldstein 2017).

Ruled by a civil-authoritarian apparatus, the immigrants were not asked if they wished to be or become 'pioneers', a concept wholly removed from their life-world and immediate devastating conditions. Their situation was of political limbo: 'not yet ready' for citizenship, their status was de facto 'suspended', even if on paper they were full-fledged citizens. This stood in sharp contrast to the boost of power their very presence as a demographic block in the land gave to the Yishuv-state, as I shall henceforth call it, essentially enabling it to fulfil veteran's expectations of reward and uplifting. Note that I am using terms like Yishuv-state and Yishuv-society that are not in common use in relation to Israel as a sovereign state. If normally the term 'Yishuv' is referring to pre-state Jewish society in Palestine, I address it as the ruling minority (Yishuv-society) controlling the state (Yishuv-state) to emphasize the continuity of a governmental power that benefited the European governing minority most in the context of the existence of an overwhelming majority of disenfranchised populations post-1948 – Palestinians and Mizrahim (Lavie 2018).[6]

Although state power in the 1950s appeared unlimited and executing grand plans was a top priority, in practice, implementation proved difficult since immigrants resisted state plans. Despite enforcement of restrictions of movement and heightened policing, immigrants frequently abandoned locations or attempted to refuse to leave the buses and trucks that carried them to their designated locations (Kemp 1998, 2002). The majority of North Africans, however, stayed put in locations that later became 'development towns', essentially reservoirs of cheap labor, because they were coerced to, as Adriana Kemp showed, by threats to deny provisions they depended on for basic livelihood, by police monitoring, extortion, bribes, and worse – for instance, the hair-raising threat that the state would deem them neglectful parents and take their children away to foster care if they abandoned locations.[7] Mizrahi marginalization in the country's periphery continues to date (Cohen 2002; Lavie 2018). The segregated nature of the

'scattering' stood moreover in blatant contradiction to the myth of Israeli society as a 'melting pot', a point not lost on some members of the Mapai establishment that regardless pushed it forward in the name of statism (*mamlachtiut*).

The afterlife of the 1950s

In the 2017 hit TV series *Zagouri Empire*, depicting a turbulent North African family in a remote development town, the father is scolded by his son, the soldier, who is shocked by his vulgar refusal to pay respect to the sacred rituals of Holocaust Day. 'This is the history of the Jewish people!' the son shouts, and Beber Zagouri lashes out in return: 'And I am not the history of the Jewish people? Do they have any clue what happened with me here?' – a rhetorical question, of course, since unlike the memory of the Holocaust, 'what happened' to Beber is still 'taboo memory', as Shohat argued, that under the active racial formations of Zionism must be silenced and repressed (Shohat 2000, 2006). Yet much of the content of the memory surge today does center on 'what happened' to the Mizrahim in the 1950s: (1) *Permanent minority rule:* Then, the masses were ruled by decree as the out-group of the Yishuv-society. Today, Israel's Ashkenazi-dominated establishment constitutes a continuation of minority rule – an insult for the Mizrahi 'majority'. (2) *Permanent disenfranchisement and misrecognition:* Then, the state determined the conditions for the inferior destiny of individuals and entire communities for generations, and today it refuses to recognize and rectify this historical injustice. (3) *Permanent racial insult:* Subject to orientalist racial rejection, which informed practically all state policies, Mizrahim still suffer from a racialized Eurocentrism that deems them inferior. (4) *Permanent class resentment:* Mizrahim still constitute Israel's Jewish working class. Without disregarding the impact of a large and affluent Mizrahi middle class, inequality and the legacy of *an engineered underclass* remains a thorny heritage.

The story of the Mizrahim that keeps resurfacing in documentary series and cultural productions is, to sum up, a story of destitution *in and by the 'state of Ashkenaz'*. The expression 'state of Ashkenaz', although currently ascribed to the young, radical Mizrahi poet Roy Hassan, is not a new figure of speech. Yet unlike its old use by first- and second-generation immigrants to express their exclusion, today its poise is lodged in the name of 'the majority' or 'the people'. To demonstrate the discursive transformation with another example, in the late 1970s and 1980s the Mizrahi struggle gave birth to a curious dichotomy between the first Israel and the second Israel (*Israel ha-rishona ve-Israel ha-shnia*). The first and the second imply both a strict order of hierarchy and, importantly, a temporality: some were 'the people' first, Yishuv-society and its descendants. The claim today is that the second Israel is the only Israel there is, rendering both the hierarchical distinction and the relevance of temporality obsolete. This is simultaneously an expression of a Mizrahi radical democratic imagination and of a Zionist common sense of loyalty to the state that

Mizrahim widely share. The desire to abolish the 'state of Ashkenaz' in no way contradicts the indoctrination to worship the state. In fact, it affirms it. This begs the question, how can we speak of a radical democratic imagination when a Mizrahi memory surge asserts a Jewish claim to exclusivity in the state, disregarding all 'others'?

Jacqueline Rose, carefully dissecting Freud's thinking about collectivities and particularly the Jewish people, considers his deep resentment of group identification in general and suspicion of Jewish nationalism in particular, and neatly sums it up – 'nothing simply belongs' (Rose 2017: 161). In Rose's reading, Eros and trauma both separate and unite. For Israel–Palestine, this spells hope: if Israeli society only accepts that the Palestinian other and its trauma (the Nakba) is as constitutive of its self as the quintessential Jewish trauma (the Holocaust), unity will follow. But what if there is no such agreement on the foundational trauma of the then *new, post-Nakba Israeli society* and no coherent (European) 'self' of Israeli Jewish society to speak of today? The Mizrahi trauma is not even registered as defining the Israeli psyche, while its afterlife in the obsessive return to the 1950s can hardly be ignored. This points at both the implausibility and the Eurocentrism of any imagined dualism or bi-nationalism of the 'Palestinian' and the 'Jewish' peoples.

In what follows I confront Zionist myths I grew up on in the 1980s with my hometown Holon's Mizrahi heritage of the 1950s that came to my attention only in recent years. True to Rose's adage that 'nothing simply belongs', I choose not to make any bold assertions regarding Mizrahi *collective memory* in telling the story of Holon (Shenhav 2002, in Hebrew). I take from sociologist Gil Eyal the critique of memory, the impossibility of validating assertions that societies have too much or too little of it or lend themselves to abuse or distortion of memory (Eyal 2004). Eyal suggests that we speak instead of a human 'will to memory', a concept that seems to capture well the multidirectional and open-ended spirit of the Mizrahi memory surge. Yet what cannot be glossed over is that a Mizrahi 'will to memory' always unfolds in the context of repressive racial structures (Ashkenazi hegemony) and an ongoing Nakba – the dispossession and erasure of Palestinians and their memory. Is Mizrahi memory then a democratizing force? Why should we remember at all? In recalling her own personal attempt to bring memory back from a frozen past, Shohat poses the ultimate gut-wrenching question: 'Can memory exist apart from the desire to memorialize?' (Shohat 2017: 354). Below I further explore both the Mizrahi heritage of my city and the politics of memorialization.

Holon: 'the city that grew from the sand'

Holon is today a large urban metropolitan area south of Tel Aviv. It has a very short history, beginning as late as 1940, when in a ceremony on behalf of 'her majesty Queen Elizabeth', the British governor Sir Robert Edward Harold Crosbie declared five isolated and thinly scattered Jewish settlements in the

area known as 'the southern dunes' united under the name Holon (from *holot*, sands). Growing up in the 1980s we never heard of anything existing 'before' Jewish settlements, despite the fact that the area was heavily populated by Palestinians. I also didn't know about *Moledet* (homeland), where one hundred Yemenite families lived in the early 1930s. Holon, we were told, simply 'grew from the sands'. There was nothing but sand as far as the eye can see. Evidently, the first settlers were not surrounded only by sand since during the 1936 Arab revolt they had to be evacuated from the area to the nearby agricultural school 'Mikve Israel' to be protected from Arab attacks. After the crushing of the Arab revolt, all residents were allowed to return, but the Yemenites didn't: Moledet was abandoned. This disappearance is mysterious and connected to the exceptional history of Yemenite settlement in Palestine, which began early on in the nineteenth century. The Yemenites were not part of the Yishuv-society but its Black (Jewish) labor (Nini 1996, in Hebrew). According to the city historian, Rami Aharoni, they did not return to Moledet because their meagre workers shacks were quickly covered in towering sand dunes and they had indeed nothing to return to, a sensible explanation that underlines their disconnect from the Zionist settling apparatus that made sure all other residents were able to return.[8]

After 1948, the city annexed Palestinian land surrounding it. The annexation is documented in a 1949 letter sent by Dr Kugel, Holon's first mayor, to the department of planning. Kugel writes:

> In our letter to the Custodian of Absentees Property with regard to the annexation of new territories to Holon we raised the issue of two areas, Yazour and Tel-Arish [the former Palestinian villages]. . . . [S]hack neighborhoods and *blokonim* [ma'abarot type of small-houses] were erected without any consultation with us (Swartz 2005: 34).

It is not clear who was erecting shacks without city permission; but what I learned from city chronicles and veterans' books is that eventually three huge ma'abarot locations were erected in Holon. This fact, that ma'abarot ever existed in my hometown, came as a shock to me: I never knew about their existence and the pivotal role they had played in the city's urban development. With 7,000 ma'abarot residents at its peak (in 1952), it soon became one of the biggest shack towns in the country and eventually developed into one of the most densely populated cities in Israel. In other words, if in the Zionist myth the city grew naturally and organically from the pioneering settlement into a big city, what happened in this post-Nakba locality was nothing short of a dramatic turn of events: before 1948 Jewish presence in the area was thinly spread and rather precarious. A chain of events – war, depopulation, land annexation, and the decision to direct mass immigration to it – made Holon the jungle of concrete, the solid permanent presence as we know it.

Image 12.1 Ben Shushan family, residents of Mishmar Yam ma'abara, 1961, private archive.
Source: Courtesy of Efrat Ben Shushan Gazit

Image 12.2 Dayan family picture taken inside the Kfar Shalem ma'abara shack, 1954.
Source: Courtesy of the author's family archive

This begs the question, if the town's ma'abarot were so critical to its development, why is their memory repressed in city mythology? According to Holon native and historian Dalia Gavrieli-Nuri, conditions were abysmal, with abject poverty, lack of water infrastructure, sewage, and electricity, flooding, and outbreaks of diseases. In many respects, Holon's 1950s history is no exception to the general rule: a city ruled by a Mapai establishment to which thousands of immigrants were directed and in which they lived under dire circumstances. Yet, in memoirs of city veterans, quite a complex picture emerges. Ma'abarot in Holon seemed to have acquired a rather good reputation among immigrants. A kind of civil army worked on a daily basis to assist the new residents pouring into the city. Holon apparently recruited local professional cadres to serve the national mission of 'absorption'. Services such as the welfare office, a post office, a bank, and a municipal services office, including services specifically catering to the needs of children, were built on-site, as opposed to other ma'abarot where people had to make long and arduous journeys on foot to receive basic services. Holon's educational institutions incorporated all the children of the ma'abarot into the schools in the city, unlike other cities that segregated them. Another hugely important factor was the level of unemployment, which was relatively low in Holon, whereas everywhere else unemployment in ma'abarot was a particularly explosive issue that led to riots and expressions of collective hostility against the Mapai establishment. Not just the fact of being adjacent to the metropolitan Tel Aviv helped. Holon quickly developed its own industrial infrastructure, and the city supported small businesses. In one of the memoirs, the ma'abara resident Yosef Cohen recounts:

> My family was among the first families to settle in ma'abarat Holon. Because it was close to Tel Aviv many of the olim aspired to get to ma'abarat Holon and not to any other ma'abara. *The privilege to get there* was difficult to obtain. Fortunately, I could, thanks to my Zionist activities in Iraq (Swartz 2005: 35).

This account makes a subtle allusion to the Mafia-like state: it appears that Holon was generally an attractive destination, and that Mizrahim who took part in Zionist endeavours in Arab countries in some ways tried to make their record acknowledged upon arrival (which of course does not suggest they succeeded, more frequently they failed). Another resident, Yosef Yavin, tells us about the circumstances of his family's migration from Iraq. They first land in the Sha'ar Aliya absorption camp, and there they are told they will be sent to Halasa ma'abara in the upper Galilee (see endnote 6), bordering with Lebanon:

> We were notified that *we will be sent* to Kiryat Shmona to Halasa ma'abara. I consulted friends and they told me immediately: 'don't dare [going there]! try to get to Holon'. I came to the station chief [state official] and told him: 'we are not going'. He started shouting and threatening, and then I

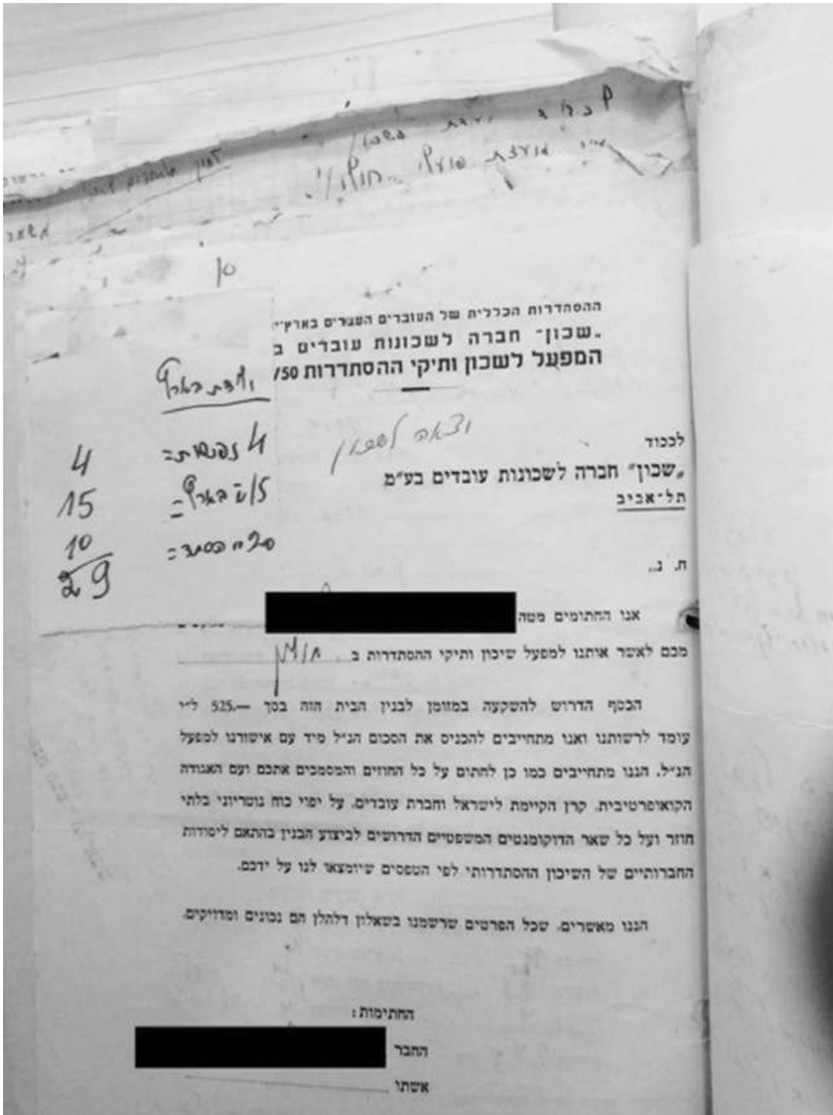
> remembered the little note I had in my pocket. I went to the Histadrut workers' council and looked for the man whose name was on my note. He gave a note to the station chief and this way, from note to note, we were sent to Holon (Swartz 2005: 36, my emphasis).

'From note to note, we were sent': what we learn here is not only about the desperate attempts to remain close to the country's center and resist being 'scattered' to the periphery but also something crucial about the way the governmental apparatus functioned.

To illustrate what these 'notes' were all about, we can pick at a document I encountered during a one-off visit to the archives of the Holon workers' council (*moetzet hapoalim*) (see Image 12.3). The document, like thousands of others stored in decaying paper files, has a small note attached to it. The 'notes' (*ptakim*) were attached to official forms filled by prospective applicants for housing, in this case Histadrut 'veterans housing'. Again, the story of Holon is no different than that of other cities where the Histadrut, the most powerful governmental labor movement union at the time, built housing projects for veterans. Applicants were ranked chiefly on the basis of the number of years in the country, and as certified members of this or other Zionist institutions (as in Image 12.3: four persons = 4 points, fifteen years in the country = 15 points, twenty years of membership in Histadrut = 10 points, total = 29 points). This system became infamously known as Mapai's 'notes method' (*Shitat Haptakim*), invoking associations of injustices, corruption, and abuse of power.

The process of dismantling ma'abarot started as soon as they were erected, but it took most of the 1950s, and in some cases well into the 1960s and 1970s, to finally erase the last physical remnants. By 1958 tents, shacks, and *badonim* (a type of shack) vanished from view almost entirely in Holon, replaced commonly by the modernist housing blocks popularly called *shikunim* (dwellings). I grew up near the former Palestinian village of Housmasa in a less abysmal late 1960s shikun, in an environment saturated with traces of 1948 battles and Palestinian ruins. Palestinian ruins are the hyper-visible yet 'silent' testimonies of the drama of 1948. By contrast, there was not a trace left of the history of the ma'abarot (not to mention of Moledet before it), so we knew virtually nothing about it. In an op-ed published in 2015, Gavrieli-Nuri protests the forgetting of the ma'abarot. She argues for archaeological research and cultural revival of their heritage in mainstream civic education. She describes how difficult it is to memorialize Holon's ma'abarot: 'I know the city well, I grew up in it, and despite that, only after a long search I thought I found one tin shack from those days' (Gavrieli-Nuri 2015, in Hebrew).

Following her footsteps out of sheer curiosity, I ventured to look for traces of the ma'abarot myself, and following general directions from Rami Aharoni, the city historian, I visited together with archaeologist Gideon Sulimani a neighbourhood close to where I went to high school, where to my great surprise we saw a Swedish wooden cabin from that era still standing intact (see Image 12.4).



ההסתדרות הכללית של העובדים העברים בארץ־י׳

„שכון״ חברה לשכונות עובדים ב

המפעל לשכון ותיקי ההסתדרות 50/

לכבוד

„שכון״ חברה לשכונות עובדים בע״מ

תל־אביב

ת. נ.,

אנו החתומים מטה

מכם לאשר איתנו למפעל שיכון ותיקי ההסתדרות ב

הכסף הדרוש להשקעה במזומן לבנין הבית הזה בסך —.525 ל״י עומד לרשותנו ואנו מתחייבים להכניס את הסכום הנ״ל מיד עם אישורנו למפעל הנ״ל. הננו מתחייבים כמו כן לחתום על כל החוזים והמסמכים אתכם ועם האגודה הקואופרטיבית, קרן הקיימת לישראל וחברת עובדים, על יפוי כוח נוטריוני בלתי חוזר ועל כל שאר הדוקומנטים המשפטיים הדרושים לביצוע הבנין בהתאם ליסודות החברותיים של השיכון ההסתדרותי לפי הטפסים שיומצאו לנו על ידכם.

הננו מאשרים, שכל הפרטים שרשמנו בשאלון דלהלן הם נכונים ומדויקים.

החתימות:

החבר

אשתו

Image 12.3 The 'notes system': an application form for social housing with a note attached on upper left side. The name of the applicant is erased by the author for reasons of privacy.

The wooden cabin seemed spacious and its garden lush and beautifully kept. The cabins were a one-time gift from the government of Sweden to the new state. In 2015 there were still traces of the era's material culture in Holon, rarely found elsewhere.

Mesmerized by the sight of the cabin, we learned of its resident, 102-year-old Nagwa Shalev (formerly Shalo, a Jewish-Iraqi name), who lived there with her migrant-worker caregiver, from her son. He recounted that the family arrived in Holon in 1952 after a long journey, passing through many ma'abarot, including Pardes Hannah, Ramat Hachayal, and Jaffa.[9]

The experience of encountering actual material evidence of the ma'abarot brought forth questions of framing and narrative. It was difficult to find any written stories of the ma'abarot in veterans' memoirs. Aryeh Krishek's *Written on the Sand: The Story of Holon* is one of the most comprehensive city chronicles I encountered, written with poignancy and unique Zionist pathos. Krishek was born in 1952 in Israel to a family of Polish immigrants. He summarizes the ma'abarot epoch thus:

> The ma'abara . . . this temporary station . . . , is where the young country experienced its main melting pot – the shaping of the nation. . . . Were the ma'abarot a low point, leaving a [moral] stain? Were there injustices done that are unforgivable? These are difficult questions that have no simple or straightforward answers. One thing is clear beyond doubt: a city where there was a ma'abara was in permanent danger of being backward. . . . Holon was open to absorb, assist, and increase its

Image 12.4 Nagwa (Shalo) Shalev Swedish cabin from the ma'abara period, Holon's Neve Arazim neighbourhood, July 2015.

> population – *without any differences of origin and class*, and on the other hand [Holon's ma'abara] was the preferred destination of a mass of immigrants that had the aspiration, from all over the world, to arrive to this place, to the city called Holon (Krishek 1986: 183, original emphasis).

Krishek is conveying straightforwardly the Ashkenazi fear of degeneracy, fear that gripped the Yishuv-society at large in the face of Middle Eastern masses. That he sincerely believes people aspired to move from modern 1950s Baghdad to the abysmal ma'abarot is not easy to comprehend. But Krishek has a point about the city, which had high-level contacts in the government and put relentless pressure on the highest echelons of Ben-Gurion's government to build housing projects for the immigrants. The pace of resettlement was so fast in Holon that Mordechai Namir (originally Namirovsky, of Russian origin), the next minister of labour, declared festively in 1956 that Holon will be the first town to eliminate its ma'abarot.

It is thus ironic that our desire today is to memorialize ma'abarot, while abolishing them at the time was celebrated as a great achievement and rightfully so. Interestingly, and perhaps this is a unique aspect of the epoch in Holon, the city 'scattered' the population within its municipal borders in an organized fashion. The plan was to spread people across six to seven distinct areas of the city in order to integrate and mix them up well with the veterans. As a result, for decades the city maintained a form of educational and infrastructural ethnic diversity and integration, hence its bland indistinctness and lack of Mizrahi character. Holon is a flourishing suburban middle-class city, and perhaps the most average town in Israel, ranking 5 out of 10 in Israel's socio-economic scale. Why, then, remember Holon's ma'abarot at all? Why should people be educated about it? For most Mizrahim, Gavrieli-Nuri as an example, the Nakba and the history of the annexed land is not part of the story of either the city or the Mizrahim. What would an imagined 'golden era' of historical recognition of the Mizrahi past then bring? Mizrahi heritage appears to be in direct contradiction with the desire to preserve the Palestinian heritage and memory of 1948. After all, Palestinian claims of return to lands where Mizrahim were settled severely undermines Mizrahi righteousness and threatens it to the core.

The Mizrahi political imagination is thus never only possessed with one mortal 'enemy' such as the Ashkenazi elite or the 'state of Ashkenaz'. Palestinians are another quite prominent mortal enemy, very much present as a competing people with competing claims. It is in that double sense that we can speak of a Mizrahi *memory-against* Ashkenazi dominance in the name of 'the majority', and *memory-against* Palestinians that must be absent and disappeared, so as not to threaten the claim of 'the people' to power. Mizrahim under the influence of Zionist indoctrination often deny state crimes committed against them or claim that the state was justified in acting authoritatively in the 1950s for their own good or out of necessity. They 'forgive' the state in the name of

love and loyalty to the Zionist project. Clearly, 1950s truths – that the Palestinian 1948 loot was grotesquely unevenly divided and that the first-generation immigrants were a tool at the hands of an authoritative criminal state – are still harshly (self-)censored. The story of Holon further demonstrates that putting the annexed land to use by settling people there ultimately benefited the general Jewish population of the area. What, then, are the radical democratic possibilities or foreclosures of Mizrahi memory? Of course there is no straight answer. What is clear is that the will to memory is intimately connected, both psychologically and materially (a connection the makers of the series *Salah* wilfully choose to ignore), to the Palestinian question and to the question of the decolonization and the final status of Israel-Palestine. Such memory work that connects people's genealogies rather than separates them is not, and can never be, either a state project or censored by the state, which is why it is both radical and radically open.

Epilogue

Elaborating on Hannah Arendt's thoughts on the concept of the people, her biographer and close friend Margaret Canovan traces four categories that Arendt comes up with to describe the difference between what Arendt considers 'real people' – conceptually and phenomenologically – and 'non-people', for which she reserves disparaging terms such as 'the Mob', 'the Masses', and the 'nationalist tribe' in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* and 'the starving multitude' in *On Revolution*. For Canovan, the most important distinction Arendt makes is between people who are united around mutual goals ('world' in Arendt's terminology) but still capable of retaining difference and plurality, and fascist mobilization, people acting as one or mobilizing around racist ideologies that proclaim them superior to others. The more noble sort of peoplehood of the first kind is actually extremely rare for Arendt, and the more common phenomenon is that of mobilized mobs, masses, tribes, and starving multitudes. Yet a recurrence or sudden formation of 'real people' is always a historical possibility. In that, Canovan argues, Arendt is a 'populist' who believes not in permanent entities with distinct memberships but in the diffuse and always available *political possibility* of a republican version of the people emerging: 'the people' is not in itself a democratic concept, but it can always potentially democratize (Canovan 2002).

Stubbornly sticking to this possibility, I have explored the democratic potential of Mizrahi claims to peoplehood and their radical democratic imagination. I argued that there is no clear trajectory to the memory surge, neither in the direction of generating fascist mobilizations nor in the 'good' or democratizing direction. The surge simply plays out in the realm of a politics of reclaiming, recognition, and memory-production. Devoid of immediately apparent practical implications, I therefore argued that rather than treating it as 'collective memory' we should see it as indicative of an alive and well Mizrahi will – a will

which remains wholly unsatisfied and is heavily repressed – to come to terms with what happened in the 1950s and their discrimination by the state.

The potential of the current memory surge to develop into a real challenge to the existing Zionist hegemony must not be exaggerated, however. As 'people' Mizrahim are a sociological and political enigma, to recall Rosanvallon, that the current political landscape in Israel barely reflects. It is an enigma that has not yet found a power or a unified political expression. The story of Holon allowed a glimpse into the messy picture of the formative years, introducing complexity to the entire righteous story of Mizrahi grievance and victimhood. It is a reminder that remembering the 1950s can also generate conformity to Zionist myth-making that sanctions the erasure and disappearance of the Palestinian people. Another aspect of its de-democratizing power is fantasies of Mizrahi exclusive superiority (in an obvious inversion of Mizrahi genealogy) that expose the extent to which the contemporary Mizrahi struggle is a fantastic playground for the extreme right. Unfortunately, memory as a phenomenon of power is much more easily identifiable than its elusive emancipatory impulses. It is much more difficult to pinpoint what is democratic about it.

This chapter's case study points at the way memory work is interwoven with a bifurcated concept of 'the people' and hence both populistically democratizing and subject to de-democratizing right-wing appropriations at the same time. It explored the desire to both disrupt a social unity and affirm it through the work of memory, hence memory-of and memory-against 'the people'. In particular, against the dominant perception that the Zionism and the state of Israel emancipated the Jews and enabled them to establish a democratic polity, this chapter dealt with the authoritarianism of a Eurocentric state in the past and its continued democratic insult to its non-European 'people', 40 percent of the Jewish society in the present. Canovan reminds us that while 'the people' is a dangerous myth no matter what context, it is still a necessary one for democratic struggles. And so, too, the case of Israel-Palestine with all its excesses of nationalisms and claims to peoplehood ought not to damn it. The way forward, in other words, is dependent on our will to remember the story of 'the people' in ways that resist memory's obvious foreclosures.

Notes

1 The influential Mizrahi blog *Haokets* engages in such analysis regularly. See especially all essays by Shoshana Gabay, and more recently the eye-opening critiques of right-wing political appropriations by Omri Najad (in Hebrew, though some articles may be also available in English), see www.haokets.org.
2 This is from the introduction to a booklet dedicated to Shohat's (1988) essay, issued by the Alternative Information Center in Hebrew in 1999. The booklet features Ella Shoaht, Moshe Behar, and Zvi Ben-Dor and first appeared in English as special supplement of the Alternative Information Center's journal *News From Within* Vol. XIII, No. 1, 1997.
3 Akevot, the Institute for Israeli-Palestinian Conflict Research, issued a detailed report on the censorship and destruction of archive materials in April 2016. See Akevot, Point of Access, Barriers for Public Access to Israeli Government Archives, English version: www.akevot.org.il/en/point-of-access/.

4 Linking the dispossession of Palestinians and of Arab-Jews rather than treating it as a domestic or 'internal' issue was the breakthrough analytical framework in Shohat's early work in the late 1980s, and it is central in works of Lavie, Behar, Ben-Dor, Shenhav, and others. This chapter builds on the pioneers of Mizrahi studies, and I wish to thank Ella Shohat especially for commenting extensively on an earlier draft.
5 The name 'Salah' is a common Arab first name, the name of the father of the series maker David Deryi. It is also a reference to the famous Israeli film directed by Efraim Kishon in 1962, *Salah Shabati*, whose protagonist is a Mizrahi patriarch – Salah – who lands with his family in one of the ma'abarot. On the film and its history, reception, and critical analysis, see Shohat (1989).
6 The case of the township Kiryat Shmona, whose early beginning was the Halasa ma'abara in the upper Galilee on the northern border with Lebanon, is a fascinating example of what I mean by disenfranchisement at the time. The Galilee was depopulated of Palestinians and was politically dominated by kibbutzim organized into regional councils. At first the kibbutzim pushed back against the pressures of central planners to send new immigrants to the region. When they finally conceded to play a role in the national goal of 'scattering', they dominated both the plan and its execution. Their leadership established the Halasa ma'abara and determined the number of immigrants and its boundaries. The 'representative' of the ma'abara vis-à-vis state agencies was a member of the kibbutz. The relation between the township and its surrounding kibbutzim is historically fraught with tension and animosity. Amir Goldstein depicted it in detail (see Goldstein 2017). Goldstein also initiated a permanent exhibition in Kiryat Shmona museum in recognition of the ma'abara founding families, framing the population as *Halutzim* (pioneers). For another important Zionist Mizrahi perspective on the scattering policy, see the work of Avi Picard. In Picard account (2010, in Hebrew), the lack of pioneering will of the veterans is described on p. 116; see also fn. 24.
7 See Adriana Kemp (2002, in Hebrew). Sociologist Eitan Cohen (2008, in Hebrew) suggested looking at the phenomenon of mostly Moroccan Jews remaining put in development towns from a culturally sensitive perspective. He deems it a form of active resistance to the settling-establishment *to actually stay put*. According to him, Moroccans in particular were traditionally anti-authoritarian and particularly defiant of the Mapai regime. The distance from any central authority enabled a collective escape from state control, Cohen argues. Those who stayed were thus uniquely able to sustain a Moroccan ways of life and spirituality against the erasures of Zionism and the pressures of Israeli mandatory secular culture. For a political economy analysis, see also Guy Ben Porat (2013).
8 Rami Aharoni interview, 21 June 2015.
9 There seems to be a wealth of visual and other traces of the ma'abarot in Zionist and city archives. I suspect that this extensive state visual documentation exists because in the 1950s the ma'abarot were presented proudly to sponsors as evidence of the heroic effort to build the new state, and Holon was considered a model city for it.

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Final commentary

Learning from the past(s)? Contesting hegemonic memories

Ruth Wodak

2018 – a controversial year

The year in which the manuscript of this volume evolved, 2018, was a very special year – also for Austria: the year which saw one hundred years since the end of World War I being commemorated, with 1918 signifying the end of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy and the year in which the post–World War I order was decided upon. It marked eighty years since the so-called *Anschluss*, that is, since the German Wehrmacht and the Nazi regime occupied Austria (12 March 1938), leading to horrific, antisemitic, and racist discriminatory practices against Austria's Jewish population, opposition politicians, and members of the Social Democratic and Communist parties, as well as against Roma, physically challenged people, and homosexuals. These terrorist activities were manifested most clearly in the so-called November Pogrom of 9 November 1938, when almost all Jewish synagogues in the Third Reich were set alight and thousands of Jews tortured, deported, and killed.[1]

Moreover, 2018 also marked seventy years since the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 and fifty years since the invasion by Soviet troops of the former Czechoslovakia on 20 August 1968 and the emergence of the ''68 movement' (May 1968), which took off in Paris and spread to universities and cities in the West. And finally, it marked a decade since Barack Obama became the first Black president of the US in 2008. Hence, many exhibitions, scholarly conferences, TV documentaries, films, and media reports focused on a range of dimensions of the aforementioned events; politicians, intellectuals, scholars, museum curators, and journalists discussed which lessons from the past were the most relevant and would, or should, be learned – and, more poignantly, if lessons from the past could be learned at all.

For example, the *Haus der Geschichte* ('House of History') opened in Vienna on 10 November 2018, after many years of controversial debates about its form and content.[2] The museum is dedicated to the salient ruptures and continuities of the century from 1918 to 2018. Immediately after the formal opening of the *Haus der Geschichte*, the national-conservative government launched a new debate requesting a change of name to *Haus der Republik* (House of the

Republic), which is being vehemently contested by the opposition and the curators and director of the museum.[3] A name change would, it is argued, rewrite the history of the past hundred years, possibly backgrounding or even deleting the 'dark heritage' of Austria stopping being a republic, that is, Austro-fascism from 1934–1938, and 1938–1945 as part of the German Third Reich. Specifically, the period from 1934 to 1938 has remained an object of much dispute between the Social Democrats and the Conservatives: the former define this period as Austro-fascism, a dictatorship by the Christian Social Party; the latter define it as a legitimate 'corporative state'. In this way, the contentious past continues to influence the present[4] (see Balkenhol and Modest, this volume, for a similar example of contested Dutch politics of memory).

The year 2018 was, however, simultaneously marked by huge political upheavals, crises, and challenges accompanied by, and instrumentalized for, the rapid rise of the populist far right, gaining votes at national elections in Brazil, Hungary, Italy, Sweden, and Turkey. Of course, far-right populist and national-conservative governments have a sometimes quite unpredictable but nevertheless relevant impact on identity politics and the politics of memory and the past, as illustrated throughout this volume, with telling case studies situated in Germany, Finland, Israel, Italy, Poland, Slovenia, the Netherlands, and Turkey, while investigating a broad range of discursive, symbolic, and material practices. In each of these countries, the (re)writing of histories, due to their respective revisionist politics of the past, follows different interests, objectives, and functions, according to their differing context-dependent historical alliances, victories, and defeats.[5] For example, Kaya and Tecmen (this volume) discuss the JDP's struggle for hegemony regarding the interpretation and instrumentalization of Turkey's past (the Ottoman Empire) as representative of the aforementioned processes and developments. In a similar vein, Lähdesmäki (this volume) elaborates how the idea of a common European history, culture, and heritage is being instrumentalized by the Finnish radical right Finns Party to establish the imaginary of a common Christian European heritage – quite similar to other far-right populist parties such as the Hungarian *Fidesz* and the Polish PiS.

In this way, nationalism, once declared an obsolete force, especially after World War II and the establishment of the European Economic Community in 1957, has obviously returned with renewed vigour. It seems to be the case that – in spite of an ever more connected and globalized world – more borders and walls arise, defining nation-states and protecting them from dangers, both imagined and real. Such border politics obviously reminds us of nationalist body politics in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Musolff 2010; Wodak 2018a), although Delanty and Kumar (2006: 3) rightly point out that the 'changed nature and function of nationalism' today requires consideration of 'a wider range of social phenomena'. In their view, 'nationalism is present in almost every aspect of political community and social arrangements. It pervades the global and the local dimensions and can even take cosmopolitan forms' (Delanty & Kumar 2006: 3).

Before elaborating on the impact of the populist far right on hegemonic commemorations, it makes sense to define some relevant concepts used throughout this volume. Thereafter, I briefly consider two opposing visions of the European Union, both propagated and disseminated in 2018 by two of the most important European players, the French president Emmanuel Macron and the Hungarian prime minister Viktor Orbán. I then proceed to discuss the role of the media in the construction of history and memory. Finally, I conclude by pointing to the future: In which manifold ways will the fact that Europe is a continent of immigration – and thus EU member states should therefore be regarded as migrant societies – influence traditional collective memories and the staging of commemorative events?

Commemoration, memory, and populism

Individual and collective memories

Histories consist of normatively established relations, of interpretations of connections between people, places, events, and actions in time, that is, *narratives*. Apart from the public functions of commemoration and historiography, *personal and individual memories* elicited via oral interviews, for example, pose a well-known dilemma: how to speak about the 'unspeakable' (such as trauma, genocide, the Holocaust, and so forth) (Laub & Allard 1998: 802). The history emerging from biographical interviews as post factum and meaning-infused narratives is always a subjective construction, as is common with any kind of story, and life stories in particular.

Accepted histories are thus the result of negotiation, a struggle for hegemony and co-construction, and such complex processes decide which stories about past events can convey the majority's values and perceptions of the world, and thus be accepted as memories (Heer et al. 2008).[6] This mediated relationship with the past, through the present and via an imagined future, is realized through language or other discursive and material practices, as Koselleck (2002: 27) proposes in his seminal work, *The Practice of Conceptual History*:

> What has happened, and has happened beyond my own experience, is something that I can experience merely by way of speech or writing. Even if language may – in part – have been only a secondary factor in the enactment of doings and sufferings, as soon as an event has become past, language becomes the primary factor without which no recollection and no scientific transposition of this recollection is possible. The anthropological primacy of language for the representation of past history thus gains an epistemological status, for it must be decided in language what in past history was necessitated by language and what was not. In anthropological terms, any 'history' constitutes itself through oral and written

communication between generations that live together and convey their own respective experiences to one another.

Assmann (2009, 2011) distinguishes two kinds of *memory transmission* via narratives and other genres (such as photos or different kinds of material practices): intergenerational transmission and transgenerational transmission. *Intergenerational* transmission implies transfer through the family of embodied, frequently traumatic experiences. *Transgenerational* transmission relates to (national or cultural) collective memory, conveyed via a range of symbolic systems. The concept of '*post-memory*' (Hirsch 1997), on the other hand, implies a relationship between the memories of Holocaust survivors and the next generation, with fragmented emotional references to traumatic events. Moreover, as Achugar (2016: 15) states, there is also a need for a 'distinction between familial (identification with family members) and affiliative post-memory (identification with contemporaries) as different forms of identification in the transmission process'. Obviously, the context of commemoration and transmission (familial or institutional) seems salient, in addition to the quality and content of narratives and symbols (individual vs. group memories, cultural values vs. affective orientations, and traumatic vs. 'normal' experiences).

Kellermann (2011) reviews four strands of research dealing with *post-traumatic disorders* and intergenerational transmission, which come to different, but also complementary, conclusions. In spite of the broad range of studies (with different variables, samples, and so forth), it seems obvious that trauma can be transferred latently (silence) or explicitly (too much talk) via specific communicative dynamics (oscillating between overprotection and projection of blame), via socialization patterns and specific behaviours, and even by genetic heritage. These studies, however, also display a surprising array of *strategies of resilience* in terms of the many ways in which children of traumatized parents succeed in leading interesting and healthy lives, in spite of the terrible experiences of their parents (Berger & Wodak 2018). Dayan (this volume) illustrates such phenomena very well indeed: she investigates why the far-right populist Israeli government seems to attract Mizrahi Jews more than other political parties. She detects that many Mizrahi Jews are reclaiming certain pasts and returning to the 1950s, a period when – they suggest – their colonization by the European Ashkenazi Jews (who had survived the Holocaust and arrived in Palestine/Israel) began. The far-right populist ideologies allow for a redefinition of the '*true people*' – a label that the Mizrahi Jews claim for themselves.

Along this vein, Welzer explains that 'both individual and collective life stories are constantly overwritten in light of new experiences and needs, and especially under conditions of new frames of meaning from the present' (Welzer 2010: 15, quoted in Achugar 2016: 48). Indeed, as socio-historical circumstances change, both individual and family stories are continuously reconstructed and rewritten. Analyzing family conversations about the past, Achugar (2016: 62)

found that '*individual* identity requires a process of differentiation from parents (and previous generations) that allows the young to mark themselves as agents who contribute something unique to the meaning-making process, resulting in a generational identity'. In sum, Achugar states that traumatic memories can be conveyed by parents in two ways: (1) *implicit* parental embodied behaviours expressed through *material non-verbal practices* (e.g. not talking about the topic, or making impersonal and generalized references to it) and (2) *explicit* parental practices (e.g. answering children's questions, editing narratives, or justifying their actions). Thus, with nearly every type of narrative, the *authenticity and credibility* of the teller/telling primarily rest on personal experience, and thus on a correspondingly positioned, that is, 'performed', narrative *voice*. The means of this positioning are manifold and yet typical:

> Credibility, i.e. the possibility for a story or a narrator to be accepted as truthful, is often based on the idea of the primacy of personal experience over other forms of experience and knowledge, hence the widely held view of narrative as a privileged genre for communicating personal experience. . . . [E]mbedding narratives into accounts increases their plausibility and . . . people gain credibility through narratives because these contain many details and give particular vividness to the reconstruction of facts.
> (De Fina & Georgakopoulou 2012: 137)

Collective memory could thus be termed a collection of traces of events that are significant for the historical trajectory of a specific group, something endowed with the capacity to relive these shared memories of rites, celebrations, and public festivities (Halbwachs 1985). Collective memories as selectively constructed narratives about the past mediate between past and future (Stone 2013; Ricoeur 2004; Koselleck 2004) and thereby create and co-construct identities (Assmann 2006).

In the detailed, context-dependent, in-depth cases in this volume, some generalizable features become visible, drawing on various individual and collective memories, thereby constructing new narratives of victimhood and heroization, and thus recontextualizing hegemonic histories and related commemorative practices to the *far-right populist/radical-right worldview*. Indeed, the dichotomous view of society (a merger of anti-elitism with a nativist nationalistic anti-pluralism) implies belief in a common narrative of the past, where '*we*', the arbitrarily defined and homogenously imagined '*true people*', were either heroes or victims of evil.

Commemoration: rewriting histories?

Commemorations and commemorative practices can be understood as 'ongoing dynamic process[es]' (Olick 2007: 82) through which narratives about the past, about 'us' and 'them' as well as beliefs and values contained in these stories, are

continuously (re)produced. This facilitates making room for the creation of unity but also – as mentioned previously and characteristic of current European (and global) political tensions and debates – the collision of opposing political interests and interpretations of the past (Durkheim 1965; Olick et al. 2011). When the past is recalled as part of a commemorative event, it is mediated by the immediate political agenda of (typically institutional) 'memory makers', articulated to the preoccupations and discourses of the context, and according to the hegemonic narrative of a range of social actors, that is, heroes, villains, perpetrators, victims, and bystanders.

Obviously, these processes and related practices may involve both spaces/objects (e.g. monuments, museums, graves, and archives) as well as discursive and material practices (e.g. speeches, parades, anthems, and memorial days). Paraphrasing Turner's (2006: 206) definition of (national) commemoration, it would make sense to define commemoration as being about *all those devices through which groups recall, mark, embody, discuss or argue about their past, and to all those devices which are intended to create or sustain a sense of belonging or 'we feeling' in the individuals who belong to it, a sense of belonging which may or may not provide for a means of addressing future tasks and possibilities*.

Turning to populist far-right parties and their attempts to rewrite histories according to their narratives of victimhood or heroization, *revisionist histories* blend all past woes into success stories of the *Volk* or stories of treachery and betrayal by others, supported by various *conspiracy theories*. Of course, conspiracies are part and parcel of the discursive *construction of fear* (Wodak 2015: 66–67), which frequently draws on traditional antisemitic and anti-elitist tropes (Richardson 2017). Furthermore, such parties endorse traditional, conservative values and morals (family values, traditional gender roles) and support common sense simplistic explanations and solutions (anti-intellectualism). Usually, a 'saviour' is appealed to, the (more or less) charismatic leader of the respective party who oscillates between the roles of Robin Hood and 'strict father' (Lakoff 2004).

Overall, the new renationalizing policies and ideologies across Europe and beyond entail an *intentional, strategic, and urgent search for new narratives of the past, present, and future*, resulting in new commemorative practices, new *lieux de mémoire*, and – frequently – in shifting blame and guilt, in the challenging and redefining of accepted historical facts, in destroying elements of the hegemonic post-war consensus, and reviving fantasies of past power and control. In this way, we are confronted with 'memory games' (Karolewski, this volume) and the denial of the many horrific skeletons in each country's cupboard, the 'dark heritage' (Eckersley, this volume: 211), such as the many colonialisms, the Holocaust, fascism, National Socialism, Stalinism, and so forth, during the two World Wars and their aftermath.

De Cesari, Bosilkov, and Piacentini (this volume) elaborate the far-right populist identity narratives and their search for a common European historical imaginary, drawing on vast fieldwork in several EU member states (Germany,

France, the Netherlands, Greece, and Italy). More specifically, they describe the *culturalization of commemoration* in these countries, that is, the far-right populists claim that the Christian European heritage cannot and should not be integrated/merged with other cultures or civilizations. Strategies of denial, silence, shifting the blame, recontextualization, and redefinition mark this new politics of the past. Moreover, Proglio's case study (this volume) of Italian deputy prime minister Salvini's attempts to criminalize migrants and refugees arriving in Italy fits into this general picture. The *topos of culture* (their culture is different, thus *they* do not fit in with *us* and should not be allowed to migrate to, and stay in, Europe) is instrumentalized, drawing on fears and anxieties which stem, as Proglio argues, from colonial times.

Furthermore, Karolewski (this volume: 241) investigates the 'reframing of the political memory about guilt, suffering, and righteousness during communism', that is, how the Polish postcommunist society dealt and continues to deal with controversies and conflicting positions surrounding transitional justice in order to foreground the innocence of some and the guilt of others, while backgrounding the many horrific incidents during Nazi occupations in which some Polish citizens were also involved as perpetrators. Similar *memory games* can be observed across many EU member states, which formerly were part of the so-called Eastern bloc, such as in Hungary, the former German Democratic Republic, Romania, the Baltic States, Bulgaria, Croatia, and so forth; but the same is true for Western countries that have a fascist and National Socialist past, such as Italy, Spain, Portugal, Austria, and Germany.

Some countries have to cope with the experience of two totalitarian regimes in the past, such as Hungary, Romania, and the former GDR. Most countries, moreover, have skeletons in their cupboards, related to war crimes, denunciations, and collaboration with totalitarian occupying forces (Judt 2007). In this way, dark heritage is redefined ubiquitously, as illustrated, for example, in the case of the AfD and Pegida in Germany (Eckersley, this volume), Italy (Bialasiewicz and Sariaslan, this volume), and Slovenia (Kirn, this volume). Recontextualizing and redefining national identity narratives therefore implies including some in and excluding others from the allegedly 'true and pure people' in their so-called homelands (e.g. Wodak 2015).

(Re)nationalizing EU-rope

While examining the discursive-political changes and shifts dominating European debates and developments with respect to re/definitions of European and national identities and narratives of the past, I briefly juxtapose two contrary visions for Europe and the EU, metonymically identified with Emmanuel Macron, on the one hand, and Viktor Orbán, on the other, to illustrate the huge polarization dominating European political debates, between Europhiles and Eurosceptics, between those claiming to have learned their lessons from the past and those who are overwhelmed with nostalgia for an imagined grand

past (as heroes) or who want to correct perceived injustices (as victims) inflicted upon them.

For example, May 2018 saw two remarkable speeches: Macron, the French president, was awarded the Karl's Prize in Germany; while Orbán, Hungary's prime minister, inaugurated his new government after having been re-elected with an impressive majority for his national-conservative party, Fidesz. Although both countries are EU member states, the two speeches staked out two significantly different positions on migration and diversity, on nationalism and globalization. They also offered two incommensurable visions for the future of European democracies and the European Union, and thus also differing interpretations of the past. Most importantly, what are the lessons of the past is assessed very differently.

The construction of a nation's collective past often takes the form of a *(heroic) narrative* (e.g. Kaya and Tecmen, this volume). Significantly, such narrativization entails the selection and representation of, inter alia, key events, actors, and places to establish a meaningful framework in which to interpret the existence and continuity of the nation or people, given that communities of this scale or nature are not real but imagined, in Benedict Andersen's (1991) sense. Due to their reach and salience, albeit in strikingly different ways, *commemorative (and other official hortatory) speeches* as a genre of political discourse present salient aspects of the discursive construction of national identities (Rheindorf & Wodak 2017).

In his speech, Macron made the case for a 'united Europe', stating:

> Let's not be divided! The risk of extreme division tends to reduce most debates to overlapping nationalisms. Barbed wire is reappearing everywhere across Europe, including in people's minds. But our only solution is unity: divisions push us towards inaction. . . . Seventy years of peace; this myth presupposes a perfect Europe, and subsequently implies that we would only have to take care of this heritage. But I don't believe this myth, because Europe is and continues to be marked by its history, by the tragedy of its history. We cannot deal with such tragedy by relying on administrative routines, we have to keep moving; each new generation is required to harness all its strength and reinvent hope.[7]

In this way, while reminding his audience of Europe's dark heritage, he argued against new walls and fences ('barbed wire'), against divisive nationalisms which – as he maintains – are very dangerous for the EU and, as he stated later, built upon a politics of fear instead of hope: 'Let's not be afraid; it means not being afraid of one another. . . . We have got to fight for something which is greater than ourselves, a new stronger Europe again!'

Macron repeatedly uses the *topos of history* (Reisigl & Wodak 2001: 43ff.). As Forchtner (2014: 21) maintains, 'It is the specific context of our time, "the age of apology" (Gibney et al. 2008) which renders possible a variety of uses of *historia magistra vitae*'. He distinguishes four functions of this *topos*, which may

also be combined in specific contexts: *rhetorics of judging* (i.e. because cooperation with dictators is wrong, we need to learn the lesson that we have to oppose dictators now), *rhetorics of failing* (i.e. because a terrible wrongdoing was committed in the past, we need to remain alert and prevent a repetition), *rhetorics of penitence* (because we were responsible for wrongdoing, we have to constantly monitor ourselves to prevent repetition of our past failure), and, finally, *rhetorics of judge-penitence* (we were responsible for past wrongdoings and we have learned our lesson, thus we are morally superior vis-à-vis those countries and groups and peoples who have not learned this lesson; ibid.: 26–38).

The range of *topoi* is always integrated with types of narratives that represent specific interpretations of past events, according to the context and intentions of the speaker, as well as the expectations of the recipients. Forchtner (2016: 117) argues that a *rhetoric of penitence* strongly fuses past and present: 'There is a complex dialectic of rupture and continuity at work as the in-group embodies a temporal continuum which, at the same time, cannot be affirmed in a straightforward, heroic way'. While acknowledging past wrongdoings of the in-group, the narrative also requires a demarcation from those past wrongdoings, a sort of internal othering. Thus, 'being pushed and pulled between continuity and rupture', the collective We is reconstituted as a reformed moral being, both good now and forever marred by what We did then. Macron's previously quoted speech extract foregrounds the rhetorics of failing combined with the rhetorics of penitence: the wrongdoings of the tragic past have to be remembered in order to prevent such tragedies being repeated. Such rhetoric allows for collective learning processes, for a 'Never again!'

In contrast, Orbán argued for a Christian-based, illiberal democracy, maintaining that everything should be done to ensure the 'survival' of the Hungarian nation. Of course, the two contexts are very different – Macron is speaking in a foreign country, Germany, and is reaching out to a huge international audience; while conversely, Orbán is primarily addressing his fellow Hungarians. Nevertheless, both politicians used the respective occasions for programmatic, rhetorically well-polished and persuasive statements and, crucially, for elaborating their respective views of the future:

> In my view, the age of liberal democracy is at an end. Liberal democracy is no longer able to protect people's dignity, provide freedom, guarantee physical security or maintain Christian culture. . . . We are Christian democrats and we want Christian democracy. . . . The survival of Hungarians as a nation is not automatic. Hungarian policy should be predicated on the possibility that we could disappear, we could become extinct. Survival is a question of life force. We are a unique species. We have a language that is unique to us. There is a world which we alone see.[8]

Here, Orbán explicitly embraces the concept of an *illiberal democracy*; he defines Hungary (and the EU) as primarily Christian while drawing on its Christian

heritage and thus denying Europe's diversity. He appeals predominantly to fear, fear of being invaded (by so-called illegal migrants) equated with having been invaded by the Soviets in 1956. This fallacy (the analogy between poor and destitute refugees and the strong and victorious Soviet army) is foregrounded, whereas Hungary's own fascist past in the 1930s and the occupation by Nazi Germany is not mentioned. In this way, he alludes to a different history than Macron, to different threat scenarios, depicting a dystopian future should Europe's integration proceed. He endorses both nationalism and uniqueness, not unity and diversity. It is primarily a rhetoric of judging which – as Forchtner (2014: 39) illustrates – usually blocks collective learning processes due to the silencing of internal doubts as a potential motor of learning. This far-right populist narrative relates well to several case studies in this volume (e.g. De Cesari, Bosilkov, and Piacentini; Lähdesmäki; Bialasiewicz and Sariaslan).

Even at first glance, it becomes apparent that the European Union is polarized by these conflicting visions. Put simply, Europe is *at a crossroads*: either opting for some necessary reforms, remaining a bulwark of liberal democracy and human rights, and fighting for solidarity, diversity, and more equality; or instead, redefining itself as a mainly economic, nationalistic federation of states that would exclude all non-Christians, aiming to dismantle the very concept of liberal democracy. Both visions draw on memories and histories, but on different ones, or on different interpretations of the same facts. Of course, the reasons for such a polarization are manifold, historical, socio-political, economic, and influenced by global as well as local developments, which cannot be elaborated in this chapter.[9] There obviously exist many 'in-between' positions, apart from these two totally polarized views (Plešu 2018).

Commemoration and media

Commemoration evokes schematic understandings of the past via the selective deployment of testimony, the invocation of heroes and their deeds, and argumentative *topoi* that legitimate the deaths of civilians in war. The publicacquires narratives about trauma and the experiences of others via TV, cinema, museum visits, and so forth– what Landsberg (2004) terms *prosthetic memories* and Crownshaw (2010) refers to as *vicarious witnessing*. Van den Hemel (this volume) contributes an important case study related to a detailed investigation of social media and their functions in the far-right populist agenda. Social media, of course, play an enormous role in the 'anti-politics' currently experienced in Europe and beyond (Wodak 2019). Van den Hemel illustrates how the far-right identity narrative is shaped around a revisionist politics of the past, focusing on concepts such as 'Judeo-Christianity', 'Christian tradition', or 'Christian culture'. Interestingly, this case study refers to the Dutch PVV, the German Pegida, and the French Rassemblement National (RN, formerly Front National), thus Western European countries that are becoming increasingly secular. Nevertheless, 'religion' is established as a significant and salient indicator.

Levy and Sznaider (2006) examine the various forms that the collective memory of the Holocaust has taken in Germany and Israel, and they demonstrate how such 'memories' have been detached from their original contexts and instead used as a way of posing abstract questions of good and evil. Looking specifically at Auschwitz and the limits of representation, Chare and Williams (2013) examine the ever-greater impact of testimony in media such as film, video, and literature previously marginalized because they fall outside dominant ideas about the Holocaust. It is vital to bear in mind that coherence in historic narrative often rests upon the elision of alternative details. Accordingly, 'what is remembered is not just what is "remembered" but what is omitted, distorted, falsified or "forgotten" in the service of the present, and the process by which certain narratives of the past (or the "past") come to prominence over others' (Stone 2013: 173). This is, of course, part and parcel of the aforementioned memory games.

Modern mass media may relate to commemoration as a discursive practicein various ways (Wodak et al. 1994), most significantly perhaps in *reporting* on commemorative practices (such as speeches given by politicians, commemorative events, etc.) and in *engaging* in commemorative practices themselves, for example by directly covering the historical events commemorated as well as their conditions and consequences. Whether and to what extent a particular medium engages in either of these probably depends on factors such as journalistic quality, self-understanding and mission, resources, and (unofficial) political orientation (Richardson 2017, 2018a, 2018b).

Commemorative events are thus conveyed, performed, represented, and disseminated via discourse and text, that is, via *semiosis* combining discursive and material practices (De Cillia & Wodak 2009). Van Leeuwen (2015) defines *recontextualization* as the way discourses, genres, and arguments move between spatially and temporally different contexts; they are subject to transformations that depend upon relationships and differences between such contexts, and are represented in the context of other social practices. These transformations in volve selective representation, addition, substitution, and deletion of meanings motivated by the needs and interests of contextually empowered groups.

Recontextualization is concretely manifested in the *intertextuality* and *interdiscursivity* of discursive and material practices. The intertextuality of a text concerns how it incorporates elements of other texts (words, phrases, arguments, topics); interdiscursivity means the particular combination of different discourses (e.g. of the Holocaust, the genocide in Srebrenica, and the current so-called refugee crisis), linking discursive and material practices to other intertextually related practices in order to, for example, normalize or relativize war crimes (Heer et al. 2008).The field of remembrance and its genres (e.g. speeches, marches, ceremonies and mass commemorations, public funerals, minutes of silence) reflect complex processes of individual and collective memory and the ways in which they mediate and interact in social and historic contexts. Events recalled as part of a commemorative event are mediated by the

immediate political agenda of (typically institutional) 'memory makers', articulated to the affordances of the newcontext and according to the hegemonic narrative of heroes, villains, perpetrators, victims, and bystanders.

Transnationalization of commemoration – learning from the past in migrant societies

Internationally, commemoration has moved to the centre of *discourses on national identity* since the 1980s, especially in political and representational contexts in which national identity is performed in ritualistic events and spectacles (e.g. Uhl 2008; Alexander 2004; Kellner 2003). While such trends are less visible in Austria than, say, Germany, coming to terms with the past (*Vergangenheitsbewältigung*) and securing past wrongs (*Vergangenheitsbewahrung*; Assmann 2011: 105) have become cornerstones of commemorative practices. *Commemoration*, in this perspective, does not simply narrativize difficult pasts but *constructs specific meanings or lessons to be learned for the present*. As already mentioned, commemoration has become deeply intertwined with implicit and explicit claims to recognizing or knowing the lessons from respective pasts (Forchtner 2016: 1). While commemorations have largely concerned the reproduction of positive self and negative other representations, the focus has shifted over the last three decades towards *traumas of genocide* and, in particular, the *Holocaust*, often involving self-critical forms of remembering and commemoration (Brooks 1999; Celermajer 2009; Barkan 2000; Tavuchis 1991).

However, since 2014, we are dealing with another important aspect of commemorative practices: hundreds of thousands of Middle Eastern and African refugees have been fleeing to Europe, imagined to be a haven safe from the wars in Iraq, Syria, and South Sudan, and from dictatorship in Eritrea and political oppression in other African countries. Some 65 million people around the world, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates, were fleeing for their lives in 2016.[10] Unfortunately, as in 1938 and 1939, national borders are being or are already closed; many countries have indicated that they are not prepared to take any refugees, or only a very small number or only specific refugees – for example, only Christians, and so forth.

In September 2015, Hungary built barbed-wire fences along its borders with Croatia and Serbia in order to prevent asylum-seekers entering; other countries are considering similar measures or have already followed the Hungarian example (Wodak 2017, 2018b; Rheindorf & Wodak 2018). Asylum is a national concern and does not fall within the remit of European Union institutions. Each EU member state is thus regulating the flow of asylum-seekers according to its own laws, rather than in accordance with any general EU policy; however, all signatory countries to the Geneva Convention are obliged to protect refugees and offer them shelter and support.[11] In order to restrict the number of potential refugees, many debates concern *the definition* of 'real' asylum-seekers, that is, defining who *deserves* protection and who does not.

Who is an economic migrant, and thus travelling voluntarily, and who is in danger of being tortured or even killed (Wodak 2018b)?

Importantly, one has to emphasize once and for all that nobody can or should compare the socio-political and economic situations of 1938, 1939, 1945, and 2015 in any simplistic way (Wodak 2018c). Civil and postcolonial wars in the Middle East and Africa differ in many ways from the Nazis' murderous ideology, which justified the systematic extermination of Jews, Roma, homosexuals, and disabled people. Nor is a comparison with Stalinist terror, the Gulags, and Communist dictatorship conceivable. Nevertheless, the 'body and border politics', as well as the accompanying rhetoric in some European states and beyond in 2015, bears some resemblance to the 1930s (Norocel 2013; Wodak 2015). Once again, we hear the well-known justificatory slogans: 'The boat is full!' or '*They* don't belong here with *us*' (Proglio, this volume).

In light of the salient question of 'Who and what is commemorated by whom, how, when and where, and to what effect?', the case studies in this volume specifically analyze the material and symbolic, also multimodal, processes employed in commemoration, their potential for activating and channelling memories in mass audiences, and the extent to which contested accounts of the past articulate and reflect controversies and debates in Europe. Obviously, such processes become ever less constrained by national (and other) borders: we are more and more confronted with *transnational memories*. Levy and Sznaider's (2006) study on the cosmopolitanization or recontextualization of the Holocaust in different national contexts is a case in point. The driving forces for such a transnationalization are and have been the media (e.g. through the 1979 series *Holocaust* and a new media ecology, Hoskins 2011). Such transnationalization of the past and related commemorative practices, however, are radically affected by migration and do themselves also affect the formation of new migrant societies. This begs the question of *how national memories and memories of migrants and refugees interact and shape new, multiple, and transnational identities* (Bauböck 1998; Glynn & Kleist 2012).

Huyssen (2003), for example, asks whether or not 'migration into other pasts' is possible and even desirable. After all, Arabs or Pakistani, to name a few, have no place in the European triad of victims, perpetrators, and bystanders, carrying the danger of establishing a new essentialism that might block 'migrants' from truly becoming members of their new country (Rothberg & Yildiz 2011). Hence, the voices and dealings of migrants, along with their individual and collective memories, should be given space in their new home countries in schoolbooks, speeches, and commemorative events. Host and migrant societies have to learn from each other, convey their memories and stories to each other; in this way, the fallacious instrumentalization of different pasts can be adequately countered.

Hegemonic narratives can, and do, shift occasionally in unexpected ways. In contrast to individual memory (and individualized psychological states, such as trauma or mourning), remembrance and commemoration are social and always seek to modify an existing state of affairs through *pedagogic processes* (i.e. teaching,

learning, illuminating, influencing, persuading). As Confino (1997: 1390) argues succinctly, 'Every society sets up images of the past. Yet to make a difference in society, it is not enough for a certain past to be selected. It must steer emotions, motivate people to act, be received; in short, it must become a socio-cultural mode of action'.

Notes

1 See "Terminübersicht: Gedenken an den Novemberpogrom 1938–2018," www.erinnern.at/bundeslaender/oesterreich/termine/terminuebersicht-2013-novemberpogrom-1938-2013-2018 for the specific events, staged in Vienna 8 and 9 November 2018, commemorating the *Novemberpogrom* 1938 (accessed 3 December 2018).

2 See "Haus der Geschichte Österreichs," www.hdgoe.at/ for details of the museum; see also Weiss (2018).

3 "'Haus der Geschichte' soll zum, Haus der Republik' werden," *Die Presse* 24 October 2018, https://diepresse.com/home/zeitgeschichte/5518639/Haus-der-Geschichte-soll-zum-Haus-der-Republik-werden (accessed 30 November 2018).

4 See "Debatte über 1933–1938," *Österreichischer Rundfunk* Ö1, 7 October 2011, https://oe1.orf.at/artikel/287821 for a brief summary of this debate (accessed 30 November 2018).

5 There exists a vast literature on this topic. See, for example, Seymour and Camino (2017), Forchtner (2016), Wodak and Richardson (2013), Steinmetz (2011), Wodak and Auer-Boreo (2009), Heer et al. (2008), and Wodak et al. (1994).

6 Tracing such historical processes in their multiple and multi-level contexts qualitatively and quantitatively has been the focus of much interdisciplinary critical discourse studies, usually oriented towards a discourse-historical approach (DHA) (e.g. Wodak et al. 1990; Wodak 2011, 2015; Reisigl & Wodak 2015).

7 See "Festakt zur Verleihung des Internationalen Karlspreises 2018 an Emmanuel Macron" (*Frankreich in Deutschland, Französische Botschaft in Berlin*), https://de.ambafrance.org/Festakt-zur-Verleihung-des-Internationalen-Karlspreises-2018-an-Emmanuel-Macron (accessed 16 May 2018).

8 See Verseck, K., Viktor Orbán - Osteuropas Anti-Macron? *Deutsche Welle*, 15 May 2018, www.dw.com/de/viktor-orb%C3%A1n-osteuropas-anti-macron/a-43789383 (accessed 16 May 2018).

9 For a range of interdisciplinary approaches and the vast number of studies attempting to cover and explain the rise of populism and the differences between East and West, North and South, see e.g. Finchelstein (2014), Krastev (2017), Lamont (2018), Mouffe (2018), Müller (2016), Salzborn (2014), Snyder (2018), Stavrakakis and Katsambekis (2014), Wodak and Pelinka (2002), and Wodak (2015).

10 See "Figures at a Glance," *Statistical Yearbooks UNHCR* (The UN Refugee Agency), https://www.unhcr.org/figures-at-a-glance.html (accessed 14 January 2019).

11 See "The Geneva Conventions of 1949 and Their Additional Protocols," ICRC (International Committee of the Red Cross) (29 October 2010), https://www.icrc.org/en/doc/war-and-law/treaties-customary-law/geneva-conventions/overview-geneva-conventions.htm (accessed 14 January 2019).

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Afterword

Against populism: memory for an age of transformation

Astrid Erll

Ours is an age of ongoing and profound change.[1] Globalization, worldwide migration, digitalization, terrorism, the financial crisis. In earlier decades life may not have been more secure or economically stable, but it may have seemed a more clear-cut affair. Populism comes with the promise to simplify the complex. What it has on offer is the identity-template of 'the people' and, even more importantly, the identification of 'the people's other', the cause of their felt misfortune, whether in the guise of foreign nations, religions, immigrants, elites, the media, global capitalism, or the financial sector. Populism even has a vision for the future: deliverance from these others. In other words, populists offer ideas about identity and alterity, power and causality, present and future; not bad for a political movement. Indeed, many more careful and realistic political groups would have great problems creating such an all-inclusive package.

One of populism's most powerful resources is the past. Memory is used to legitimize populist claims and delegitimize complexities encountered in the present. Across the board – from India to Turkey, Hungary, Germany, and the United States – populists have aired hair-raising counterfactual histories and divisive interpretations of the past. They have strategically tapped certain forms of memory that modern democratic societies deem illegitimate: fascist, racist, or crudely nationalist modes of remembering. Those who express such warped memories will often do so under the pretence of finally breaking a taboo and telling the truth about the past. And all too often, stunned onlookers are not quick enough to refute their outrageous claims. Worse still, through endless repetitions of populist versions of the past (by the populists themselves or a media fascinated by populist transgression), memories raised from the abyss of premodern, imperialist, or totalitarian pasts may creep into mainstream collective memory, where much-repeated stories tend to stick.

What does this mean for the field of memory studies? This is the first time in a two-decade academic career that I am commenting not on how memory works, but on how it *should* work. This shift from the descriptive and the analytic to the normative may have become part of the scholar's responsibilities when faced with rampant populism at home and across the world.

In our age of transformation, I hold that public articulations of memory, whether made by politicians or other actors in the public arena, should have three qualities, which differentiate them from populist memory-making. They should be true, they should be non-divisive, and they should have the potential to generate a humane future.

Veridicality

Memory studies agrees that all memories – whether individual or collective, elaborated in academic historiography or at the family dinner table – are constructs. But this does not mean that they are pure inventions. What psychologists call 'veridicality' or 'correspondence' (the degree to which a memory matches past reality) should be the first question we pose. Memory scholars know that the ideal of an objective image of the past is unattainable. The standpoint and perspective of the rememberer, the inevitable selectivity of both experience and memory, the necessary operations of ordering and narration: all this is part of the memory process and complicates the relation between past events and present memory.

But it should be just as clear that false memories, such as those aired by Donald Trump and other populists, are just that – false – and that they should not have a place in what purports to be factual public discourse. While it is near impossible to establish a 'once and for all true' memory, it is quite easy to identify the kind of false memories that populists have come up with. A quick consultation of historical sources will do to sweep away Trump's allegations about Obama's Muslim background or the German AfD's attempts to suggest that the Nazi regime had only a minimal significance in the course of German history.

A more difficult question is that of the social sanctioning of non-veridical memories. Populists have been successful in widening out the zone of what is sayable in public, from racist comments to historical lies. This is not a minor misdemeanor; it calls for 'zero tolerance'. At no dinner table in the world – whether in Pakistan, Austria, Nigeria, or Canada – would slander or lies be accepted from a child. Standards of behaviour that families around the globe accept as the bedrock of their childrearing should be minimum requirements for political actors.

Relationality

One of memory studies' most cherished ideas is that memory always emerges from, expresses, and produces collective identity, which is opposed to some kind of alterity. This idea goes back to the field's founding figures, such as Ernest Renan and Maurice Halbwachs. It has the benefit of being both historically and philosophically convincing. Of course, throughout history (and again, in our present age of populism) social groups have called on memory

to vilify or exclude other groups, nations, religions, or ethnicities. And even when an exclusionary logic of 'us versus them' is not immediately apparent in an act of memory, it is sometimes claimed that *any* selection of one element to be remembered implies the deselection of other elements, which go unremembered. When I commemorate the expulsion of Germans from Silesia, I do not – or cannot – commemorate the expulsion of Poles from the Kresy, or so it would seem.

Although this argument may appear neat, it underestimates the mind's capacity for taking multiple perspectives. Moreover, it reinstates the unfortunate idea of 'pure entities', that is, bounded groups in conflict with one another, and their separate histories: the very stuff, in other words, that populist memory is made of. At the same time, it obscures what is just as fundamental – indeed, perhaps more fundamental – to both history and memory. Histories are always entangled histories. It is very difficult to find a historical event that goes back to just one particular group and which is neither influenced by nor impacts upon neighbouring groups. Similarly, memories are always relational memories, the result of social interaction. This is the cornerstone of all scholarship on collective memory. You only remember with the help of other people and groups, never alone.

If both the identity/alterity hypothesis and the relationality hypothesis are equally valid, why does public discourse brim with the 'us versus them' variant of remembering and recognize relationality so rarely? Why do we not encounter in equal measure a consideration of entangled histories and the co-production of memories?

What and how people remember is based on cultural scripts. It is as much and as little as that. *As much as that*, because cultural scripts – especially those of the 'us versus them' type – are enormously tenacious, and prove sticky across generations (this is why populists can resurrect stereotypes that we thought had been long forgotten). *As little as that*, for if a script is cultural, it is human-made, and it can be changed. But such change requires alternatives: memories which create or follow other scripts, scripts of entanglement, co-production, and indebtedness. Veridical but differently scripted memories would entail, for example, acknowledging that the cultural foundations of the West are not a 'pure product' of what is seen today as Europe, but rather result from close entanglements among ancient Greece, Egypt, and the Near East; that African art is at the basis of early twentieth-century European modernism; or that after 1945 Germany was rebuilt not by Germans alone, but in collaboration with the then newly arrived 'guest-workers' from Turkey, Italy, or the former Yugoslavia.

Humane generativity

Successful public memories are generative. They generate debate, elicit other memories, shape and change thinking, initiate action and lead it along certain paths. There are memories whose generativity is prone to be negative and sometimes even inhumane. Often these memories follow the 'us versus them'

script. Of course, I can choose to remember in a public speech how during the Napoleonic wars, German soldiers fought heroically against French soldiers. But what kind of generativity would I expect from such a memory in the present, when Germany and France are peaceful neighbours, working together in and for Europe?

One memory project with the declared aim of generating a more humane future is the Refugee Tales project (refugeetales.org). It uses Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* (ca. 1400), a medieval story cycle about a group of pilgrims, to enable refugees who are indefinitely detained in the UK to tell their stories. In a populist perspective, *The Canterbury Tales* could be interpreted as a closed-off national heritage (albeit only by denying its French and Italian influence). Quite in contrast, the Refugee Tales project uses this canonical text as a framework within which new arrivals can articulate their experiences. Life stories are told in collaboration with a number of well-known authors. This relational memory work has the potential to engender a more humane vision of migration. Surely, such memory-making is a far cry from populist slogans. But why not draw attention to a benchmark of memory-production, which generates humane relations rather than eliminating them?

Positive and generative forms of memory should also be available to those who appear to be populist voting constituencies: to those in Eastern Germany, for example, who feel that their multi-layered memories of the socialist past are not properly recognized and that global migration is transforming a nation in which – precisely because of that lack of inclusive memory – they themselves have not yet fully arrived; or to those in Turkey who nostalgically long for the former greatness of the Ottoman Empire. In principle, these are memories which have the potential for humane generativity, too (consider the hope for a more equal society originally connected with socialism, or the multicultural Ottoman past). The worst case is that such memories fall into the hands of populists who, as in the case of Germany, improperly short-circuit them, forcing them into lockstep with the worn out modes and scripts of fascist memory.

Hence, I propose to ask three simple questions when it comes to the public and political articulation of memory in the present age of transformation: Is it true? Does it connect (rather than divide)? And does it have the potential to bring about a better future? Populist memories will always fail to fulfil two, and often all three, of these criteria. Such memories should therefore be sent back to Orcus, from whence they arose.

Of course you can call all this elitist. But this is an elite to which every human being on earth should belong.[2]

Notes

1 I would like to thank Ann Rigney (as ever!) for her critical reading of my piece, Johannes Völz for our conversation about populism's empty mnemonic signifiers, Chiara De Cesari and Ayhan Kaya for generating such vital knowledge about the memory of populism, and Simon Ferdinand for his meticulous and critical editing of my piece.

2 Although this piece is meant as a personal comment and not as a strictly academic essay, I would like to indicate some relevant literature, especially for readers who are not memory scholars. The accuracy or veridicality of memory is studied by psychologists, particularly with regard to false memories, for example of childhood abuse (see Schacter, 1996, for a gripping and still informative introduction to psychological memory studies). Hayden White (1973) demonstrated the ineluctable narrativity and perspectival character of historiography. In the 1920s, Maurice Halbwachs (1997), a founding figure in the field of memory studies, coined and theorized the term 'collective memory', which he tied closely to the social group. The connection between collective memory and collective identity – one of nationalism's cornerstones, as Ernest Renan (1947) had already argued in 1882 – was emphasized by new memory research in the 1990s (for a good overview of relevant texts, see Olick et al., 2010; for an introduction to memory studies, see Erll, 2011). In a polemical book against this trend, Lutz Niethammer (2000) criticized what he saw as an overemphasis on collective identity in political and academic discourse, drawing attention to the 'secret sources' of this 'uncanny boom' – among them the ideas of Carl Schmitt. Memory studies' transcultural and transnational turn in the early 2010s (Crownshaw, 2011; De Cesari and Rigney, 2014) was above all motivated by the question of how to imagine memory beyond containerized identities (such as those of the nation, ethnicity, or religion). With his concept of 'multidirectional memory', Michael Rothberg (2009) has shown how memory can be seen as a source of solidarity (rather than antagonism) between different groups. More recently, I have studied the fundamental relationality of memory using the case of Homer (Erll, 2018), and Ann Rigney (2018) has addressed the relevance of memory – and memory activism – for building the future.

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