

EDITORIAL

Introducing our new issue of *Observing Memories* proves to be quite a challenge against the backdrop of bombs falling near our homelands, the loss of lives among civilians of all ages and the repeated violation of human rights, starting with the fundamental right to life. I want to make it clear that I condemn all forms of violence, particularly the kind perpetrated by political powers, States and armed groups. At this very moment, they are destroying and torpedoing civilian spaces in Gaza. We should take a moment to reflect on the year 1864 when an international declaration was signed for times of war, explicitly respecting medical units, hospitals and ambulances. However, how many wars have transpired since then, and how often has this international declaration been ignored? It is imperative to condemn violence. Those who disregard international law regarding contemporary violence show both a lack of wisdom and responsibility. To avert present-day violence, we must explore every possible avenue to protect lives. Every single life matters. We dedicate ourselves to examining past instances of violence from the vantage point of the present – not only as an exercise in knowledge and discipline but also as a universal right. The right to memory serves as a collective legacy of learning, potentially a preventive measure, and certainly a source of enrichment and fortification for our democracies, which are inherently fragile, volatile and fluid.

At the European Observatory on Memories, our commitment to transnational work is steadfast. As always, we engage in analysis, reflection, observation and active social and cultural involvement to assert the right to bring the past into the present as a fundamental citizen and civic right. It is the responsibility and duty of the State, those in power, and public administrators to uphold and champion this right.

From EUROM, we present our most critical and reflective public platform: the annual magazine *Observing Memories*. Once again, we commend the abundance and excellence of the contributions and analytical insights made. Our gratitude goes to the authors who have made this new issue possible. The central, though not exclusive, theme of this volume revolves around the image, spanning analogue, digital and audiovisual formats. In the realm of public memories, digital production is burgeoning, offering nearly infinite realms for reinterpreting and transmitting the legacies of the past. It also unlocks avenues for artistic creation and applications that the traditional – perhaps outdated – analogue world could not fully explore. Each day, countless memorial transmissions take place through numerous channels, systems and personal or collective creations in the digital universe.

Similarly, the current volume reflects EUROM's increased and deeper involvement in networking with institutions, professionals and civil society associations across various parts of the globe. It is the culmination of 12 years of collaborative efforts, horizontal work and an ongoing comparative analysis of processes, examples and diverse realities within the field of memory studies. In this regard, we have provided a platform for colleagues from various disciplines, introducing new experiences and institutions that, drawing from their accredited expertise, shed light on projects, recent creations or reflections. Much like Jonathan Safran Foer in *Everything is Illuminated*, a young man exploring the memory of his family through geographical traces, images and objects from the past embarks on an initiatory journey of his personal memory that evolves into something collective, universal and shared. This encapsulates EUROM's overarching goal and, specifically, this seventh issue of our magazine.

Once more, the intertwining and comparison of plural memories draw us into intricate and fascinating realities. Nevertheless, we cannot overlook the improper appropriation of historical terminology in political and journalistic discourses within the European and international arenas. We need to be vigilant about these inappropriate uses that power, States, or certain interest groups are increasingly employing. The trivialisation, historical relativism and terminological frivolity concerning past international genocides, the Holocaust, dictatorships, etc., are recognised, as is the use made of victims in the justification of policies.

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We have selected one of the artistic pieces by the author and friend Fernando Sánchez Castillo for the cover of the magazine, not as a rhetorical choice, but with a hint of irony. The image, as the central theme, is interpreted from the present as a piece artistically reproduced, with an unequivocal evocation of past events. This decision concerns us in the cautious interpretation of the dangers posed by current antidemocratic trends. The rise of far-right movements, nostalgic for totalitarian regimes and systems, must also and can fall. We also delve into the magnificent exhibition featuring the piece in a dedicated section of the magazine.

It is interesting that the European Commission incorporates memory programmes into the broader Citizenship, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) programme. This constitutes an expansion of the field of memory studies, a cause that EUROM has long championed. What is termed “social transfer of knowledge” at university level finds practical expression in multidisciplinary and multidirectional networks or platforms, engaging citizens in participatory processes that embody values of equality and democratic progress. Hence, from these pages, we aim to shed light on the small yet significant contribution that persistent, transnational, comparative and collaborative efforts at the horizontal level bring to ensure professional diversity and interconnectedness. Such endeavours are vital for constructing societies that are more just and free, devoid of the many forms of violence often orchestrated in offices far removed from the realities of citizens and social justice.

In this year's issue, our focus is on the power of images and audiovisual media as channels for transmitting memory. To explore this theme, we collaborated with philosopher George Didi-Huberman, who cautions against the temptation to freeze images in the eyes of past scholars. He reminds us that images encapsulate time – a time that reflects the perspectives of those photographed, those taking the photograph, and those observing it. Consequently, a revealing dialectical movement emerges. We also sought the expertise of filmmakers Arnaud Sauli and Ania Szczepanska, who candidly share their insights in a sincere conversation. They discuss their respective viewpoints and some of the dilemmas they face when addressing the Holocaust behind the camera, covering motivations, the landscapes of the Shoah and its evocations, the daily lives of people impacted, the narratives conveyed by objects, and the treatment thereof.

On the 50th anniversary of the fateful coup d'état by General Augusto Pinochet in Chile and the death of Salvador Allende, we wanted to interview the acclaimed filmmaker Patricio Guzmán. Introduced by the specialist in documentary cinema, Nancy Berthier, Guzmán highlights some key aspects of his work as a film director and the relationship he has established over the years between his films and the memory of the Chilean dictatorship.

In the section dedicated to memory policies in Europe, Professor Jenny Wüstenberg deconstructs the concept of “democratic memory” to precisely analyse the types of relationships that can genuinely be established between “memory” and “democracy”. Meanwhile, historian Olivier Wieviorka underscores the political significance of the memory of the Second World War. Among

its diverse applications, it has played a role in consolidating supranational structures such as the European Union in the past and in fostering discourses of confrontation between countries in the present.

In the section featuring short articles, we have the collaboration of museologist Kaja Širok, who delves into the intricate relationships between the world of museums and politics in Slovenia. Moreover, researcher Ana Paula Brito explores the realm of museums and traumatic memories in Brazil. Additionally, the director of the Rivesaltes Camp Memorial, Céline Sala-Pons, and historian Nicolas Lebourg provide insights into the origins, evolution and current challenges of the memorial facility. Meanwhile, Professor Dominique Trouche describes the key aspects of Günter Domenig's architectural intervention in the Documentation Centre on the Nazi Party Rallying Grounds in Nuremberg. Lastly, writer Marta Marín-Dòmine commemorates the 100th anniversary of Jorge Semprún's birth by reflecting on his figure and thinking.

In the reviews section, we feature insights from photographer Ana Sánchez, who provides an overview of the exhibition on the air-raid shelters of the Spanish Civil War held at the Model prison in Barcelona. She served as the curator for this exhibition alongside historian Xavier Domènech.

Additionally, Ricard Conesa offers a brief overview of both the exhibition *El Tragaluz Democrático* [The Democratic Skylight], for which the EUROM team produced a series of accessible audiovisual reports and interviews, available on our website. He also touches upon the recent book about the former women's prison in Les Corts (Barcelona) and the associated memorial space – a project closely connected to our organisation. Furthermore, we present a review by our colleague from the Fundació Solidaritat UB, Marc Díaz, focusing on museums addressing Soviet repression in Kazakhstan.

And lastly, in the section dedicated to our EUROM network partners, Vojtěch Blodig, the director of the Terezin Memorial, provides insights into the evolution of this memorial established in 1947, tracing its journey to the present day. He explores the various episodes it has witnessed throughout the history of former Czechoslovakia and the current Czech Republic. Additionally, he outlines the ongoing efforts they are undertaking to raise awareness of the Holocaust memory.

I hope you find the magazine's contents interesting and enjoy reading it, at least as much as we have enjoyed putting it together.



Jordi Guixé

Director of the European
Observatory on Memories