



## Conflictual european memories at the heart of the citizenship debate in Europe

- For two days Barcelona hosted the conference "European citizenship in Challenging Times. Remember, engage, debate! ", promoted by the European Commission through the European Observatory on Memories.
- The keynote speeches by Adam Michnik on 31 May and Andreas Huyssen on 01 June stimulated the debate at roundtables and panels that brought together some 200 representatives of networks and projects on memory, solidarity and citizenship at various venues at the University of Barcelona and El Born Centre Culture i Memòria.

**Barcelona, 7 June, 2016** – The philologist Andreas Huyssen delivered the keynote speech of the sixth networking meeting of organizations active on the field of memory, citizenship and remembrance within the conference "European citizenship in times of challenges. Remember, engage, debate", organized by the European Commission through the European Observatory on Memories of the University of Barcelona Solidarity Foundation with the collaboration of Barcelona City Council. During his speech the past 1st of June, the Columbia University professor proposed the concept of "global memory" through the analysis of the artistic discourses of Colombian Doris Salcedo, German Christian Boltanski and South African William Kentridge. According to Huyssen, while the limits of European citizenship can be defined politically, memories go beyond European borders. "Memories are multi directional nowadays", he stated.

The networking meeting took place on the second day of the conference and was held at El Born Centre de Cultura i Memòries. The panels of debate and workshops allowed the leaders of the main projects on memories in Europe to exchange their most successful practices. The Commissioner of Memory Programs of the City of Barcelona, Ricard Vinyes, opened the meeting accompanied by the Deputy Mayor of Barcelona Jaume, Asens, the representative of the European Commission, Pavel Tychtl, and the historian Jordi Guixé, director of EUROM. "We started these networking meetings in 2011 in order to better understand local contexts and to approach the complexity of European memories," said Tychtl. EUROM's director stressed "the emergence of creative memorial processes" in which "public debate and controversy" are key elements.

During the panel on memory, citizenship and solidarity, professor of Islamic and Middle Eastern Politics at the University of Denver, Nader Hashemi, engaged the debate with his statements on the situation of Syrian refugees. "What is happening in Syria does not stay in Syria," said Hashemi, for whom the origin of the so-called refugee crisis lies in serious problems of international politics. "Colonialism is still alive and the memory of imperialism



is currently used for extremist alternatives," he summarized, emphasizing the need for a *transnationalization* of memories to find solutions.

Siobhan Kattago, philologist at the University of Tartu (Estonia), pointed that we should not forget that the history of Europe is "a history of wars, genocides and expulsions," and in this sense the current refugee crisis proposes a new lens to understand the process of construction of European memories. As an example, she highlighted the "irony" of building walls at European borders after the fall of the Berlin Wall while Eastern Europe remembers the crimes of communism as part of the collective European memory. "I wonder if the memories of the refugee crises of the early twentieth century have been forgotten or if they are selectively remembered."

During the second panel, the Commissioner of Memory Programs of the City Council of Barcelona, Ricard Vinyes, and the anthropologist Francisco Ferrandiz, from the Higher Council for Scientific Research in Spain (CSIC), analyzed the public policies of memory in Spain from the perspective of the recent experiences in Barcelona and the approval of the Spanish Law of Historical Memory in 2007. Presented by historian Montserrat Duch, the debate concluded with an open discussion on monuments and Francoist symbols.

The two workshops that followed the debates presented the main lines of action of memorial projects with greater impact today in different parts of Europe. Social and civic participation stood out as a common strategy of many local projects such as the Living Memorial Budapest, as well as on transnational examples such as Euroclio, an NGO formed by high school teachers from Spain, Italy, Germany, Hungary and France and whose objective is to develop critical educational tools on the recent history of these countries and Europe.

The second workshop identified and discussed the experiences of European networks on memory through the examples of the European Network Remembrance and Solidarity (ENRS), based in Poland; Memory Lab, Germany; Mémoires européens des Frontières, led by the University of Perpignan Via Domitia and EUROM; Instituto Nazionale per la Storia del Movimento di Liberazione in Italy (INSMLI); Memorial of the Shoah in France; International Committee of Memorial Museums in Remembrance of Victims of Public Crimes (ICMEMO); and Contemporary Social and Archives (Asklia), Greece.

Historian Bruno Groppo, from the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS) closed the session with an overview of Russian memories, with emphasis on the memory of Stalinism in post-Soviet Russia. "Currently, half of the Russian population has a positive image of Stalin as a military leader and responsible for the modernization of the country." According to him, the reconstruction of this memory feeds a series of tensions with the memories of the neighboring countries, especially the Baltic countries and Poland. At the heart of these conflicts stands the memorialization of the Russian resistance to the German invasion and the victory of the Red Army over Nazism, "the only positive episode" that emerges from the reconstruction of Russian history after the end of socialist regimes, a memory that includes a series of massacres and violence.

The closing ceremony of the conference was attended by the Deputy Head of Unit of the DG Home Affairs of the European Commission, Marc Richir, the Councillor of Participation of Barcelona Gala Pln, and the Vice Rector of the University of Barcelona Carme Panchón. They thanked both the organization and the audience for their active



participation. "It has been successful in participation and assistance, but also in terms of the quality of the discussions", stated Gala Pin, who stressed the importance of the recovery of democratic memories for the construction "of a new Europe for everyone."

### **Memory as transforming agent of citizenship**

The conference "European Citizenship in Challenging Times. Remember, Engage, Debate!" was held in Barcelona on May 31 and June 01 in order to bring the EU closer to citizens and contribute to the understanding of the history and diversity of Europe. The debates began on 31 at the University of Barcelona with the intention of shedding light on key issues of the two main strands of the program Europe for Citizens, represented by citizens groups and memory networks. The presentation was held by the Vice Rector of the University of Barcelona, Carme Panchón; the Director of Justice and Consumer Affairs of the European Commission, Francisco Fonseca Morillo; the director of the European Observatory on Memories, Jordi Guixé; and the Director of International Cooperation of the Government of Catalonia, Manel Vila.

Jordi Guixé remarked that memory is a central issue of civic and democratic values , "a transforming agent," which reminds us of the "resistance to violence and exclusion." Manel Vila asked for more generosity for refugees, recalling his own life as the son of an exiled man who was locked up in a field during the Civil War and grandson of a republican buried in a mass grave. "I cannot forget to remember the silence on Sarajevo," said the founder of the Foundation District 11. "One day the same will happen with the current refugee crisis." Francisco Fonseca Morillo pointed to the need to promote a sense of belonging in order to make way for a true European civil society, while Carme Panchón stressed that public participation is a needed element to articulate social and political changes within the European Union.

The Polish journalist, Adam Michnik, recently awarded the Ortega y Gasset in Spain, was in charge of the inaugural conference. The chief editor of the newspaper Gazeta Wyborcza revealed his concern about the "revival of nationalism and extremism in Europe." According to Michnik, we should not underestimate the "fragility of democracy." "Democracy lost in Weimer because anything seemed better than liberal democracy. If the world is not fair, you must create a new one - that was the discourse of the great utopies" of the twentieth century. "And if today we hear similar stories about the annihilation of the European Union, we must remember how that ended."

### **Further information**

The videos of the conference are published on [EUROM's Youtube channel](#).

A summary of media and social media coverage can be accessed on our [Storify account](#).



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## Sobre l'Observatori Europeu de Memòries

L'**Observatori Europeu de Memòries** (European Observatory on Memories-EUROM) és una xarxa transnacional d'institucions i organitzacions compromeses amb la investigació i la promoció de polítiques públiques de memòria històrica. El seu principal objectiu és contribuir a la reflexió al voltant de la història recent defensant la diversitat i pluralitat de memòries. L'EUROM està impulsat des de la [Fundació Solidaritat de la Universitat de Barcelona](#) amb el suport del programa Europe for Citizens de la Comissió Europea.

## Sobre la Universitat de Barcelona

La Universitat de Barcelona és la primera universitat pública de Catalunya pel que fa a nombre d'estudiants, uns 66.000, i a oferta formativa. Ocupa el primer lloc en producció científica de l'Estat, fet que la converteix en el principal centre de recerca universitari d'Espanya i un dels més importants d'Europa, tant pel nombre de programes de recerca com per l'excel·lència assolida en aquest terreny.

La Universitat de Barcelona és la institució d'educació superior líder a Espanya en els principals rànquings internacionals. A més, és l'única universitat de l'Estat espanyol que aconsegueix posicionar-se entre les 200 millors universitats del món a l'Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU) —més conegut com a rànquing de Xangai—. Als QS World University Rankings 2015-2016, també és la primera universitat d'Espanya i una de les 200 millors del món. A més, és l'única universitat de l'Estat que forma part de l'elit de les 100 millors universitats del món en 16 de les 42 àrees del coneixement, segons els QS World University Rankings 2016 by Subject.

Membre de les xarxes universitàries d'excel·lència més rellevants a escala internacional, com ara la Lliga d'Universitats de Recerca Europees (LERU), la Universitat de Barcelona ha estat escollida per liderar, a l'Estat, la nova comunitat de coneixement i innovació (KIC) centrada en vida saludable i envelleixement actiu, EIT Health. La Universitat de Barcelona disposa de 301 grups de recerca consolidats i, segons un informe de BiGGAR Economics, sol·licitat per la LERU, té un impacte de 1.400 milions d'euros en el valor afegit brut (VAB) de Catalunya —que representa el 0,72 % sobre el total català—, i un impacte directe en 21.870 llocs de treball (dades de 2014).

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