

Producing Truth: Public Memory Projects in Post-Violence Societies*

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Abstract

How do societies remember historical political violence? We draw on an original dataset of nearly 200 memorialization projects proposed by truth commissions in 28 post-violence countries, from 1970 to 2018. These projects include the removal of monuments, installation of museums, inauguration of national days of remembrance, and more. Truth commission recommendations data allows us to not only consider memory sites once established, but also to examine blueprints for the types of memory that could have been made. We develop a typology and inductively generate a theory of the political contests and conflicts that different memory projects are likely to trigger—contests and conflicts that we expect influence the likelihood of project initiation and completion. We conduct an initial probe of the theory using our new data. In so doing, we offer the first systematic, global study of setting and implementing the memorialization agenda in post-violence societies.

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Introduction

In 2003, a construction team broke ground in Pretoria, South Africa to build Freedom Park—one government response to the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) which had concluded a few months earlier. The park was built as a space where “South Africa’s unique heritage and cultures can be remembered, cherished and celebrated.”¹ In addition to commemorating victims of apartheid-era crimes, the park overlooks the nation’s capital, keeping close watch over South Africa’s democracy. Visitors enter the park, which ambitiously begins its reflection at the beginning of human existence, tracing the struggle for freedom and human rights, from ancient African civilizations to the colonial period to the present day. Drawing upon native influences, the park “challenges visitors to reflect upon our past, improve our present and build on our future as a united nation” and seeks to “accommodate all of the country’s experiences and symbols to tell one coherent story.”² This bold endeavor to memorialize the past would likely not have been possible without the TRC, which established an authoritative account of political violence during apartheid and outlined plans for redress, including through memorialization.

Half a world away in Dili, Timor-Leste, the Comarca-Balide prison, once a site of torture during the 24-year-long Indonesian occupation from 1975 to 1999, now houses ‘living memory’ exhibition spaces, a human rights center, and the archives of the Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation (CAVR). The transformation, which was recommended by the CAVR and partially funded by the government, was spearheaded by PT Rosario—a company headed by a former political prisoner.³ Elements of the building’s time as a prison have been purposely preserved, from graffiti

¹ Freedom Park, ‘About Freedom Park,’ freedompark.co.za/index.php/corporate/about (accessed March 4, 2022).

² Ibid.

³ CAVR, ‘The Comarca,’ CAVR Timor-Leste, cavr-timorleste.org/en/comarca.htm (accessed June 20, 2022).

on cell walls to the complex's barrack-like buildings.⁴ Previously ironically referred to as “sacred” by prisoners, it has come to symbolize efforts to understand the atrocities that occurred there.⁵

On the other side of the Pacific Ocean, the mayor of Asuncion, Paraguay ordered in 1991 the removal of a statue of former dictator Alfredo Stroessner in Lambaré Hill on the east bank of the Paraguay River. The military—on behalf of the national government, which was unsatisfied with the order—tried to block the removal. So soon after the dictatorship, and with many groups still divided over the country's political future, removal was controversial. But the statue came down. It was placed in storage for four years before artist Carlos Colombino was commissioned to create a new monument: a dismembered version of the original, with Stroessner crushed between two large cement blocks, an homage to victims of repression who were themselves crushed by the dictatorship. Twenty-five years later, in 2016, a student group's decision to remove a bronze plaque dedicated to Stroessner also ignited controversy. The civil society organization Mesa Memoria Histórica defended the students' removal efforts and referenced Paraguay's truth commission: “The action of the young students is protected by the Recommendations of the Truth and Justice Commission, an official body created by law of Congress, which examined the crimes of the dictatorship and human rights violations.”⁶ The truth commission, which released its recommendations in 2008, prescribed that the government “dismantle public monuments and erase the names of public places linked to people responsible for human rights violations.”⁷

How these spaces transitioned from one meaning and memory to another, or created new meaning and memory altogether, is demonstrative of a choice in transitional justice: whether and

⁴ Pandaya, ‘Comarca Balide Prison: A Monument of Tragedy,’ *The Jakarta Post*, 13 September 2009, thejakartapost.com/news/2009/09/13/comarca-balide-prison-a-monument-tragedy.html (accessed August 8, 2022)

⁵ Michael Leach, ‘Difficult Memories,’ in *Places of Pain and Shame: Dealing with 'Difficult Heritage,'* ed. William Logan and Keir Reeves (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2008), 144.

⁶ ‘Comunicación a la Opinión Pública,’ *Mesa Memoria Histórica*, May 12, 2016. [facebook.com/mesamemoriapy/posts/832089996895564](https://www.facebook.com/mesamemoriapy/posts/832089996895564) (accessed June 20, 2022).

⁷ Among truth commissions worldwide, this recommendation is the only one calling for the removal of a monument.

how to memorialize a traumatic past.⁸ These three examples demonstrate that memorialization projects differ greatly across contexts. The post-conflict memory landscape is malleable and contentious—actors in the post-conflict reconstruction process push for their interests before the landscape solidifies. Truth commissions, quasi-judicial bodies tasked with investigating past human rights violations, have an especially prominent voice in this process, as they recommend memorialization projects for the government to implement. In this article, we explore how the various intents and methods of memorialization proposals influence their implementation. Truth commissions represent an ideal vehicle through which to study memory production, as they make reports and recommendations, against which we can methodically evaluate government choices to implement or not to implement a variety of memory projects.

We draw on an original dataset of nearly 200 memorialization projects proposed by truth commissions in 28 post-violence countries, from 1970 to 2018. These projects include removing monuments, installing memory museums, inaugurating national days of remembrance, and more. Truth commission recommendations data allows us to not only consider memory sites once established, but also to examine blueprints for the types of memory that could have been made and contrast this against the ones that were ultimately made. In so doing, we offer the first systematic, global study of setting and implementing the memorialization agenda in post-violence societies.

From our data, we develop a typology of memorialization projects and inductively generate a theory of the likely political contests and conflicts that different projects will trigger and, consequently, what projects governments will choose to implement and not to implement. We break down recommended memory projects into four parts, addressing the intent, subject, location, and medium.

⁸ We contend that both proposals for memorialization and implementation decisions are made strategically, by the truth commission in the first instance and the government in the second instance. Proposals can involve both high- and low-hanging fruit, with a goal that something, if not everything, is implemented and implemented in a timely fashion. The same is true for implementation. We acknowledge that implementation may be shaped by a government's *ability* to act, not only its *willingness* to act.

First, we begin with project intent: to remove existing structures like monuments to the former dictator, to reclaim spaces like former detention centers—making them into memory museums—or to construct new sites of memory altogether. We expect that recommendations with the intent to construct new memory are more likely to be implemented than those with the intent to remove or reclaim existing memory. The former are likely to be less controversial than the latter because there is less of a direct confrontation with the past.

Second, we consider project subject, and we offer a competing set of expectations about recommendations to memorialize specific incidents versus overall patterns of abuses and recommendations to memorialize individuals relative to groups. Certainly, some specific events and figures may be contentious, raising challenges for implementation.⁹ Still, there may be a consensus around specific events and figures; simply, they may be more difficult to deny. The choice to address an overall pattern of harm and groups may also be controversial if key stakeholders believe a memorial project should be more targeted—if there is to be one at all—or if stakeholders disagree on what aspect of the group or the pattern of harm should be portrayed.¹⁰

Third, we address project location. Recommendations calling for memory projects at sites of atrocity, we argue, are less likely to be implemented than those calling for memorialization at graves, public areas, or intangible locations. The rationale here is that memorials situated at trauma sites are more disruptive—and potentially transformative—than would be memorials in other areas.

Last, we turn to project mediums. We propose that recommendations for memory projects in the form of monuments are less likely to be implemented than those to establish museums, events, or special recognitions. The logic here is that monuments are fixed and inflexible, unlike museums

⁹ We recognize that memorials focused on an individual could, at least in theory, simultaneously represent the group of which the individual is a part; still, this is not a given.

¹⁰ Memorials encompassing groups could provide members of the in-group a rallying point that could make government implementation more likely. But, this could also provide members of the out-group a counter-rallying point that could make implementation less likely.

that can feature different exhibits over time, and unlike events and special recognitions that have a degree of impermanence.

No case of memorialization is cut-and-dry—the process often reflects the complexity of the conflicts it seeks to commemorate. Still, we maintain that memorialization can be better theorized and analyzed in component parts.

Memory Production: The State of Knowledge

Transitional justice encompasses a range of state actions to reckon with past human rights abuses. Generally implemented in the years following a period of armed conflict or autocratic rule, transitional justice mechanisms range from institutions like trials and truth commissions to policies like reparations and reforms.¹¹ While trials usually focus on individual criminal accountability, truth commissions are quasi-judicial and collect evidence and testimonies to produce a final report and related policy recommendations. Truth commissions seek to promote acknowledgment and accountability by establishing an official truth—a jumping-off point for remedies for the past and safeguards for the future.¹²

Permeating most transitional justice processes is a desire to contemplate on the past. Memory production is often a concrete result. Some memory projects during transitional moments are informal or temporary, such as “spontaneous shrines” that appear at a death site, but many are officially undertaken by governments as a part of transitional justice.¹³ Some of the most formal and

¹¹ Paige Arthur, ‘How Transitions Reshaped Human Rights: A Conceptual History of Transitional Justice,’ *Human Rights Quarterly* 31(2) (2009): 321-367

¹² Kelebogile Zvobgo, ‘Designing Truth: Facilitating Perpetrator Testimony at Truth Commissions,’ *Journal of Human Rights* 18 (1) (2019): 92-110.

¹³ Jack, Santino, ‘Performative Commemoratives: Spontaneous Shrines and the Public Memorialization of Death,’ In *Spontaneous Shrines and the Public Memorialization of Death*, pp. 5-15 (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

detailed project proposals can be found among the recommendations that truth commissions make in their concluding reports.¹⁴

Generally, the role of memorialization in transitional justice is to honor those who suffered or died during a period of violence and confront the past in order to address contemporary problems or challenges. Memorialization projects often have associated goals, such as promoting social recovery, advancing reconciliation, and encouraging civic engagement.¹⁵ But memory is not a given—it is a product of dialogue and conflict. Often, societal remembering involves a struggle between opposing memories, meanings, and interpretations of history.¹⁶ Leaders reconstruct the past through memorialization, deciding which abuses and victims should be remembered, elided, or modified to fit their desired narrative.¹⁷ Memorials can also be harnessed as vehicles for democracy promotion in transitional societies, though the politicization of these projects can sow division and invite cooptation and sabotage.¹⁸ Global inequalities and power structures can also drive contestation of memory.¹⁹ Often, elites in a society have access to resources and networks that allow them to shape the discourse around memorialization, including in education systems, and can thus serve as powerful forces in either challenging official memory or upholding it.²⁰

¹⁴ Kelebogile Zvobgo, *Governing Truth: NGOs and the Politics of Transitional Justice* (Unpublished book manuscript, 2023).

¹⁵ Judy Barsalou and Victoria Baxter, 'The Urge to Remember: The Role of Memorials in Social Reconstruction and Transitional Justice,' *Stabilization and Reconstruction Series* 5 (2007): 1-22; Jeffrey K. Olick, 'Collective Memory: The Two Cultures,' *Sociological Theory* 17(3) (1999): 333-348. Mneesha Gellman, 'Teaching Silence in the Schoolroom: Whither National History in Sierra Leone and El Salvador?' *Third World Quarterly* 36(1) (2015): 147-161.

¹⁶ Elizabeth Jelin, 'Public Memorialization in Perspective: Truth, Justice and Memory of Past Repression in the Southern Cone of South America,' *The International Journal of Transitional Justice* 1(1) (2007): 138-156.

¹⁷ Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

¹⁸ Sebastian Brett et al., *Memorialization and Democracy: State Policy and Civic Action* (New York: International Center for Transitional Justice, 2007).

¹⁹ Krista Billingsley, 'Memorialization as a Mechanism of Power in the Present: The Creation and Contestation of National Narratives in the Wake of Internal Armed Conflict,' *Social Science Quarterly* 102(3) (2021): 1167-1178.

²⁰ Mneesha Gellman, 'Remembering Violence: The Role of Apology and Dialogue in Turkey's Democratization Process,' *Democratization* 20(4) (2013): 771-794; Mneesha Gellman and Michelle Bellino, 'Fighting Invisibility: Indigenous Citizens and History Education in El Salvador and Guatemala' *Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies* 14(1) (2019): 1-23.

Early scholarship on memorialization in the modern era focused on Western war memorials, in particular those erected following the First and Second World Wars. Scholars found that memory projects serve symbolic, aesthetic, and utilitarian functions.²¹ The location of a memorial is also important—one located in a public area may serve a different function than one located at an atrocity site.²² Still, the focus on Western conflicts in early scholarship on memorialization produced a one-dimensional understanding of how societies remember the past—a vision of elaborate, resolute monuments to bravery and heroism. More recent scholarship has turned toward definitions that acknowledge unsettled memory and uplift the voices of victims.²³ Memorialization can extend beyond the physical, for instance, through days of remembrance and commemoration, that bring the collective past into the present.²⁴

Recent works account for differences in forms of memorialization; however, scholars often do not scrutinize memorialization at a granular level, adopting instead coarse conceptualizations of memory production.²⁵ A more nuanced analysis of the function of memorials can help us better understand related intention and controversy, especially when governments use memorials' constituent elements to subvert or enhance their impact. When governments intentionally place an otherwise effective memorial far from the public eye, for instance, unless the location is also scrutinized, the project might be considered a success.

Surprisingly, in transitional justice, memorialization projects are often studied separately from other mechanisms since they are seen as less strategic.²⁶ Scholars have affirmed the political nature of memorialization, frequently in studies of particular countries or contexts. But memory is

²¹ Bernard Barber, 'Place, Symbol, and Utilitarian Function in War Memorials,' *Social Forces* (1949): 64-68.

²² James M. Mayo, 'War Memorials As Political Memory,' *Geographical Review* (1988): 62-75.

²³ Billingsley, *supra* n 19 at 6.

²⁴ Jelin, *supra* n 16 at 6.

²⁵ Duncan Light and Craig Young, 'Public Memory, Commemoration and Transitional Justice: Reconfiguring the Past in Public Space,' *Post-Communist Transitional Justice: Lessons from 25 Years of Experience* (2015): 233-251.

²⁶ Brandon Hamber, Liz Ševčenko, and Ereshnee Naidu, 'Utopian Dreams or Practical Possibilities? The Challenges of Evaluating the Impact of Memorialization in Societies in Transition,' *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 4(3) (2010): 397-420.

often mistaken as a binary choice—something the government either will or will not do, rather than a moldable political choice that can be implemented to varying degrees of success.²⁷ Or it is characterized as an afterthought or weaker political objective—something less desired than other elements of transitional justice and thus undertaken whenever governments get to it.²⁸ Nonetheless, many scholars acknowledge memory production in the context of transitional justice as uncharted scholarly territory.²⁹

Because memorialization efforts are frequently led by civil society organizations, it is often characterized as distinct from government-sponsored transitional justice.³⁰ Often, non-governmental products such as locally-established peace museums serve to “fill the memory gap,” particularly when states perpetuate cultures of silence.³¹ Tensions between state and civil society agendas complicate the process. When they do undertake memorialization projects, governments are sometimes more interested in neutralizing disagreements about the past than they are committed to challenging conventional wisdoms.³² Still, governments do frequently engage the idea of post-violence memorialization, as is evident in the nearly-two hundred recommendations truth commissions have made for memory projects over the past half century.

Memorials can also flame political contestation, which is why deconstructing sites of memory is rare.³³ For example, conservative Afrikaners in South Africa resisted the removal of racist memorials after apartheid; thus, removal was never considered viable by the government, which

²⁷ Victoria Bernal, ‘Diaspora, Digital Media, and Death Counts: Eritreans and the Politics of Memorialisation,’ *African Studies* 72(2) (2013): 246-264; Patricia Pinkerton, ‘Resisting Memory: The Politics of Memorialisation in Post-Conflict Northern Ireland,’ *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 14(1) (2012): 131-152.

²⁸ Robin Adèle Greeley et al., ‘Repairing Symbolic Reparations: Assessing the Effectiveness of Memorialization in the Inter-American System of Human Rights,’ *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 14(1) (2020): 165-192.

²⁹ Light and Young, *supra* n 25 at 7.

³⁰ Dženeta Karabegović, ‘Who Chooses to Remember? Diaspora Participation in Memorialization Initiatives,’ *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 42(11) (2019): 1911-1929.

³¹ Gellman, *supra* n 20 at 6.

³² Brett et al., *supra* n 18 at 6.

³³ Cillian McGrattan and Stephen Hopkins, ‘Memory in Post-Conflict Societies: From Contention to Integration?,’ *Ethnopolitics* 16(5) (2017): 488-499.

avored “national unity.”³⁴ Many of these sites, like the statue of Paul Kruger in Pretoria, remain standing to this day. Some governments instead choose to reframe existing memorials to avoid the debate over removal.³⁵ With regard to the current debate over Confederate monuments in the United States, scholars have focused on the adoption of strategies of preserving, recontextualizing, and reclaiming monuments in addition to removing them.³⁶

This article regards memory making as a public policy response to truth commissions, often considered a prime transitional justice opportunity for a country. We seek to address the following questions: What memorialization projects do truth commissions recommend and what projects do governments implement? In addition, does implementation vary with the intent and suggested subject, location, or medium of memorialization projects?

We refine existing memorialization frameworks by identifying categories of intent to comprehend the values and goals of memorialization proposals. Further, we disaggregate memory production into its constituent elements: subject, location, and medium. Building on data from the *Varieties of Truth Commissions*,³⁷ we analyze implementation (and non-implementation) of memorialization projects recommended by truth commissions within a decade of their conclusion—a window of opportunity for reflection and action on the past. By systematically analyzing sites of memory, we can better understand the politics of memorialization.

³⁴ Robyn K. Autry, ‘The Monumental Reconstruction of Memory in South Africa: The Voortrekker Monument,’ *Theory, Culture & Society* 29(6) (2012): 146-164.

³⁵ Elizabeth Rankin, ‘Creating/Curating Cultural Capital: Monuments and Museums for Post-Apartheid South Africa,’ *Humanities* 2(1) (2013): 72-98.

³⁶ Joanna Burch-Brown, ‘Should Slavery’s Statues Be Preserved? On Transitional Justice and Contested Heritage,’ *Journal of Applied Philosophy* (2020).

³⁷ Zvobgo, supra n 14 at 6; Kelebogile Zvobgo, ‘Demanding Truth: The Global Transitional Justice Network and the Creation of Truth Commissions,’ *International Studies Quarterly* 64(3) (2020): 609-625.

The Politics of Memorialization

Extending prior research, we develop a four-part typology of memory production, with each proposal assessed by intent, subject, location, and medium. This typology asserts a new method of analysis for memorialization—that there is a definable logic during the conceptualization of a given project that influences its success. We then propose the likelihood implementation based on our typology.

Intent

Calls for memorialization typically fall under three categories of intent. The first category of intent is *removal*, the act of taking down existing elements of the commemorative landscape.³⁸ Consider Confederate monuments in the United States, whose removal represents a powerful stance against a racist and violent past. Second, memory projects can seek to construct memory in a form that did not previously exist. Examples of memory *construction* include memorials like the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. and museums like the Apartheid Museum in Johannesburg, South Africa; they were built from scratch. A third category of intent is *reclamation*. These memory projects seek to convert or restore an existing site—often a trauma site—into a site of memory, such as the Comarca-Balide in Timor-Leste, which we discussed earlier. By categorizing recommendations by intent, we can assess whether some memory projects are more likely to be implemented because of their most basic goals.

Drawing upon previous research and empirical observations, we theorize that construction is less controversial than reclamation and removal because it represents a less-direct threat to the existing memory landscape and anti-transitional justice interests. Reclamation and removal inherently alter existing spaces and invite contestation and conflict during the implementation process; there are likely more “veto players”—actors that may seek to inhibit the success of a reclamation or removal project.

³⁸ Light and Young, *supra* n 25 at 7.

Thus, we propose that the intent of a recommended memory project will influence its initiation and completion. Recommendations with the intent to construct are less controversial than those calling for removal or reclamation and may, therefore, be more likely to be implemented.

Hypothesis 1: Recommendations with the intent to construct new memory will be more likely to be implemented than those with the intent to remove or reclaim existing memory.

Subject

Beyond intent, we seek to comprehend how the context and substance of a proposed memory project can affect its adoption. In its subject, a memory site can address incidents or overall patterns, individuals or groups. By incidents, we refer to single events or atrocities with limited time periods, whereas an overall pattern captures an extended period of violence or conflict. For example, the Kenyan TRC's recommendation for the creation of a monument at Wagalla, Wajir to remember the region's February 1984 massacre would be considered a specific incident. The commission's call for the President and other government officials to publicly apologize for and commemorate violations during the TRC's mandate period, however, squarely falls into the category of an overall pattern of abuse. Likewise, individual subjects commemorate specific people, while group subjects memorialize a group of individuals, such as the fallen listed on the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial in Washington, D.C.³⁹ We use a relational approach based on the commission's original mandate to determine whether a memory project addresses a subgroup of victims beyond those included broadly in the commission's mandate. For example, Canada's 2009 truth commission focuses on the Canadian Indian residential school system, so recommendations targeted at survivors and victims of the system are categorized within the subject of overall pattern. In contrast, Brazil's recommendation for the memorialization of LGBT repression during the dictatorship indicates a subgroup within the commission's mandate.

³⁹ Robin Wagner-Pacifici and Barry Schwartz, "The Vietnam Veterans Memorial: Commemorating a Difficult Past," *American Journal of Sociology* 97(2) (1991): 376-420.

Based on existing research, the import of the subject of a memory project is not clear. While some specific events and figures can be points of great contention, the choice to address an overall pattern of abuse or groups of victims can also be controversial. Thus, we propose a competing set of hypotheses.

Hypothesis 2a: Recommendations to memorialize specific incidents of abuse are more likely to be implemented than those to memorialize a pattern of abuse.

Hypothesis 2b: Recommendations to memorialize specific incidents of abuse are less likely to be implemented than those to memorialize a pattern of abuse.

Hypothesis 2c: Recommendations to memorialize individuals are more likely to be implemented than those to memorialize groups.

Hypothesis 2d: Recommendations to memorialize individuals are less likely to be implemented than those to memorialize groups.

Location

We also categorize memorialization based on the suggested location of the project, including atrocity sites, public areas, graves, and others. Memory projects situated at atrocity sites, such as the ‘S-21’ detention center in Cambodia, seek to remember the specific events that occurred there.⁴⁰ On the other hand, sites of memory in public areas, like outside a national parliament building, do not form this spatial link, but seek integration into the everyday landscape.⁴¹ Memorialization at graves can occur within cemeteries or other resting places, while intangible locations include projects that do not have a clear physical position, such as dates of remembrance or commemorative ceremonies. We propose that memorials located at sites of atrocity will be more controversial than those situated at public areas, graves, or intangible locations because they are located at the site of the initial contest.

Monuments, events, and museums in general public areas, which lack a geographical link to the subject being memorialized, are the most highly visible form of memory. Often located in city

⁴⁰ Patrizia Violi, ‘Trauma Site Museums and Politics of Memory: Tuol Sleng, Villa Grimaldi and the Bologna Ustica Museum,’ *Theory, Culture & Society* 29(1) (2012), 36-75.

⁴¹ Ebru Erbas Gurler and Basak Ozer, ‘The Effects of Public Memorials on Social Memory and Urban Identity,’ *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 82 (2013): 858-863.

centers, parks, or tourist areas, they serve as an easily accessible and prominent reminder of the past. In so doing, they work toward the ultimate goal of strengthening the society's social framework of memory.⁴² Although the process of implementing public memory can surely engender conflict, disagreements typically center around aesthetic concerns such as the specific design and form of the memorial.⁴³ Due to the physical separation from the triggering site, dissent in these contexts lacks the emotion and connection that may lead to deeper, more sustained contestation. The non-sacred sense of place, alongside the fact that many public memorials also fulfill a utilitarian purpose, may also create less controversy among potential stakeholders.⁴⁴

Spatial significance to historical trauma is the key aspect that makes memorialization at atrocity sites particularly vulnerable to contestation. Unlike those in public areas, these projects must bear the burden of reframing and presenting history in a way that is cognizant of the memories inherent in the space.⁴⁵ The process of memory production at places of trauma must encompass a wide spectrum of social purposes: memorializing the lived experiences of both the atrocities and resistance to them, serving as a site for survivors to remember and mourn, and functioning as a hub for community engagement.⁴⁶ Even before friction arises over the best way to achieve these functions, there is the initial divide between those advocating for the commercialization of the space and those fighting to reclaim it as solely a site of memory.⁴⁷ Memorials situated at trauma places are also far more disruptive and transformative than memorialization in public areas. The act of bringing people together to interact in a space with such heightened symbolism and significance allows for

⁴² Ibid., 862.

⁴³ Jelin, *supra* n 16 at 6.

⁴⁴ Mayo, *supra* n 22 at 7.

⁴⁵ Violi, *supra* n 40 at 12.

⁴⁶ Stephanie N. Arel, 'The Power of Place: Trauma Recovery and Memorialization,' *Stellenbosch Theological Journal* 4 (2018): 16.

⁴⁷ Jelin, *supra* n 16 at 6.

evolution on an individual and societal level.⁴⁸ This transformation can lead to political movements for change.⁴⁹

Memorialization at grave sites shares a similar emotional gravity to memorialization at atrocity sites. Often, these burial places are located near places of historical violence, including mass killings. However, with memory production at resting places, the individual and their personal story is centered. The broader political and historical context of oppressive and violent acts is set aside in order to focus on those who died. Thus, these memorials function more as a space for loved ones and survivors to grieve than for mobilization and confrontation.

Memory that lacks a physical location, typically correlated with mediums like events and special recognitions, is characterized by its nonspatial nature. Without a clear grounding in a particular location, ties to the past may be weaker. Physical place provides a necessary social function, particularly when memorials encompass powerful sentiments that benefit from groups gathering together at the place to express them.⁵⁰ Thus, intangible memorialization may produce weaker emotional reactions, leading to reduced dissension among stakeholders.

Hypothesis 3: Recommendations calling for memory projects at sites of atrocity are less likely to be implemented than those calling for memorialization at graves, public areas, or intangible locations.

Medium

Finally, we examine the various mediums through which memory can be produced: monuments, events, museums, and special recognitions. Museums and archives, like the Kigali Genocide Memorial and the Museum of Memory and Human Rights in Santiago, Chile, aim to gather, preserve, exhibit, and explain the past through a guided experience.⁵¹ Monuments can take the form of physical

⁴⁸ Violi, supra n 40 at 12; Arel, supra n 46 at 13.

⁴⁹ Arel, supra n 46 at 13.

⁵⁰ Barber, supra n 21 at 7.

⁵¹ Amy Sodaro, *Exhibiting atrocity: Memorial museums and the politics of past violence*. (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2017); Laia Balcells, Valeria Palanza and Elsa Voytas, 'Do transitional justice museums persuade visitors? Evidence from a field experiment,' *The Journal of Politics* 84(1) (2022): 496-510.

structures, statues, and plaques, while events include commemorations and days of remembrance.⁵² Memorialization can also occur through the granting of special recognition or status to a place, individual, or group. We theorize that memorialization projects calling for monuments are more likely contested than museums, events, or special recognitions because monuments present a “fixed” memory and are least able to absorb criticism or foster productive discourse, even amendment.

Despite being subjectively and strategically shaped, museums are often regarded as authoritative versions of the past.⁵³ Still, museums do not go uncontested, as the display of an object intended to inform and invite conversation can be controversial.⁵⁴ Curators are agents of memorialization that create generative spaces built on a mission or principle. For existing museums and sites being converted into museums, what is preserved and what is excluded is up for debate, particularly when museums engage with human rights issues.⁵⁵ Museums, however, are structured to embrace criticism—they can acknowledge nuance in permanent collections and highlight untold truths through temporary exhibitions and experience-based programs.⁵⁶ Further, museum professionals have internal networks of consultation to receive criticism and effect change when needed.⁵⁷ For example, when conservative political appointee Darío Acevedo was named the director of Colombia’s new National Museum of Memory, victims’ associations and fellow academics widely criticized his treatment of victims’ stories. The backlash was so strong that Acevedo was pushed out

⁵² Jelin, *supra* n 16 at 6.

⁵³ Fiona Cameron, ‘Transcending Fear-Engaging Emotions and Opinion—A Case for Museums in the 21st Century,’ *Open Museum Journal* 6(1) (2003): 1-46.

⁵⁴ Willard L. Boyd, ‘Museums as Centers of Controversy,’ *Daedalus* 128(3) (1999): 185. Neil Harris, ‘Museums and Controversy: Some Introductory Reflections,’ *The Journal of American History* 82(3) (1995): 1113; Patricia Davison, *Museums and the Re-Shaping of Memory* (London: Routledge, 2005), 204.

⁵⁵ Richard Sandell, ‘Museums and the Human Rights Frame,’ in *Museums, Equality and Social Justice*, ed. Richard Sandell and Eithne Nightingale (London: Routledge, 2012), 207.

⁵⁶ Thomas Woods, ‘Museums and the Public: Doing History Together,’ *The Journal of American History* 82(3) (1995): 1113. doi:10.2307/2945116

⁵⁷ Boyd, *supra* n 54 at 15.

in July of 2022.⁵⁸ Museums are thus a dynamic space whose narratives encourage dialogue and capture a fusion of official and public views of the past, with a certain amount of power balancing.⁵⁹

Whereas museums catalog and contemplate the past, monuments tend to be either celebratory or reflective in nature. While the term “monument” often evokes a spirit of triumph or victory, monuments as a type of memory making include physical structures that remember or pay tribute to victims, individuals, or heroes.⁶⁰ Often, fewer narratives are presented in a monument. While museums serve not only as objects but indeed as subjects, even actors, in the memorialization landscape, monuments are more static. Monuments can be places of teaching and discourse, but shaping these conversations often requires additional programming that the monument alone does not offer.⁶¹ Art history debates on the importance of context have complicated the assertion that monuments are tied to their iconography and political intentions. Recently, though, art historians have begun to understand monuments as temporary “placeholders”—intended to be continuously reevaluated.⁶²

Like monuments, events such as ceremonies and commemorative dates can present one “fixed” narrative. Lying in between museums and monuments in malleability, commemorative events are permanent on a calendar but can be shaped by programming and perceived importance. Some events have past cultural significance that can facilitate future reconciliation, such as locally-based ceremonies in post-conflict Cambodia influenced by popular Buddhist rituals.⁶³ Others can be

⁵⁸ El Espectador, (2022, July 7). Darío Acevedo resigns from the direction of the National Center for Historical Memory, *El Espectador*, [elspectador.com/colombia-20/paz-y-memoria/dario-acevedo-renuncia-al-centro-nacional-de-memoria-historica](https://www.elspectador.com/colombia-20/paz-y-memoria/dario-acevedo-renuncia-al-centro-nacional-de-memoria-historica).

⁵⁹ Davison, supra n 54 at 15. Gellman, supra n 20 at 6.

⁶⁰ Sierra Rooney, Jennifer Wingate, and Harriet F. Senie (Eds.), *Teachable Monuments: Using Public Art to Spark Dialogue and Confront Controversy* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021), 6.

⁶¹ Robert S. Nelson and Margaret Olin, *Monuments and Memory, Made and Unmade* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

⁶² Rooney, Wingate, and Senie, supra n 60 at 16.

⁶³ Gellman, Mneesha, ‘No justice, no peace? National Reconciliation and Local Conflict Resolution in Cambodia.’ *Asian Perspective* 32(2) (2008), 37-57.

controversial since they are subjective and many stakeholders are involved.⁶⁴ Still, events are ephemeral. While they can leave lasting impressions, they do not take up permanent physical space and are not constant reminders of an atrocity. Thus, attendance or viewership is less “mandatory” than memorialization with a physical footprint.

Special recognition is the least concrete medium of memorialization and the least direct in messaging, which can depend upon audience demographics. Memorials deemed “heritage sites” by UNESCO, for example, can have reflective significance, but are also often shaped by tourism as a “structured form of meaning-making.” Likewise, tourism can give meaning to a site.⁶⁵ Tourism also has inherent monetary motivations.⁶⁶ While other memorial sites can draw tourists, special recognition alone is not enough to ensure visitors will interact with the historical significance of the site. Since special recognition is so variable, is the most voluntary in memory “participation,” and can involve other motivations, it is likely less contested than other mediums, and certainly monuments.⁶⁷

Hypothesis 4: Recommendations calling for the establishment of monuments are less likely to be implemented than those calling for the establishment of museums, events, or special recognitions.

Variation in memorialization subject, location, and medium presents a dynamic in which some projects are set in the built environment, whereas others occupy the psychic space. Timing and placement can determine whether one is forced to acknowledge a memorial—for instance, some commemorative dates can be more fluid in interpretation than physical monuments. Even so, the same physical monument can have greater gravity if it is located in a central square of a city or a former site of atrocity versus a non-symbolic location on the outskirts. Thus, subject, location, and

⁶⁴ Warwick Frost and Jennifer Laing, *Commemorative Events: Memory, Identities, Conflict* (London: Routledge, 2013).

⁶⁵ Michael A. Di Giovine, *The Heritage-Scape: UNESCO, World Heritage, and Tourism* (Lanham, Lexington Books, 2008), 10.

⁶⁶ Brian L. VanBlarcom and Cevat Kayahan, ‘Assessing the Economic Impact of a UNESCO World Heritage Designation,’ *Journal of Heritage Tourism* 6(2) (2011), 143-164.

⁶⁷ Hazel Tucker and Elizabeth Carnegie, ‘World Heritage and the Contradictions of ‘Universal Value,’ *Annals of Tourism Research* 47 (2014), 63-76.

medium interact with each other. Though they cannot be perfectly separated, analyzing each aspect in turn allows us to assess the factors driving varying levels of project initiation and implementation.

Research Design

To assess the success of truth commissions' memory proposals, we draw on a series of datasets collectively known as the *Varieties of Truth Commissions*. One of the datasets captures approximately 6,000 recommendations made by truth commissions around the world, from 1970 to 2018.⁶⁸ Among these are 162 recommendations on memorialization.⁶⁹ We build on these data following the coding protocol in Zvobgo (2023) to construct two key dependent variables: *Implementation initiated* and *Implementation level*.⁷⁰ Each of these variables is examined within a ten-year window of the release of the truth commission's final report. The resulting dataset, *The Global Memory Production Project*, can be obtained via the Harvard Dataverse.

Implementation initiated is a binary variable that receives a 1 for a given recommendation if any evidence exists of some progress on the memory project, otherwise 0. A report from a federal agency, a speech from a legislator, a debate within parliament on the topic of the recommendation, etc. all qualify as evidence of initiation. The three-point variable *Implementation level* describes whether an initiated recommendation achieved minimal, intermediate, or full implementation.

If implementation was initiated, the level of implementation is automatically coded as *minimal*. For example, the truth commission in Côte d'Ivoire recommended the creation of a national memorial and regional memorials that would serve as sites of memory and archives for information on the Ivorian conflicts. Although a 2020 government press release indicates support for the construction of national and regional memory sites, there is no evidence of further progress.

⁶⁸ Research shows that there is not substantial variation between the general types of recommendations made by post-conflict and post-autocratic commissions. Zvobgo, supra n 14 at 6, chapter 4.

⁶⁹ Where do recommendations come from? Recommendations are the product of victim testimony, civil society suggestions, and truth commission officials' own initiative.

⁷⁰ Zvobgo, supra n 14 at 6, chapter 4.

If evidence suggests full implementation was likely within the ten-year period of analysis but heretofore incomplete, then implementation is coded as *intermediate*. For instance, Germany's second truth commission on the East German dictatorship proposed the construction of a memorial and official documentation center in Berlin to commemorate the June 17, 1953 uprising. While the memorial was unveiled within five years, in 2000, in front of Berlin's Federal Ministry of Finance, no official information and documentation center supplementing the memorial was established within ten years.

If every aspect of the recommendation was achieved within the ten-year timeframe, then implementation is coded as *full*. As an example, the 1999 Burkina Faso truth commission recommended the organization of a National Day of Forgiveness. On March 30, 2001 the President inaugurated a national day of forgiveness to apologize to the nation for the crimes committed against them by the State.

Identifying Recommendation Intent, Subject, Location, and Medium

We seek to predict implementation of memorialization recommendations based on characteristics of the proposed project, as outlined in our substance coding—disaggregated by intent, subject, location, and medium, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Categories of Memorialization.

Intent		
Removal	Reclamation	Construction

Subject	Location	Medium
Incident of abuse	Atrocity site	Monument, statue, plaque
Pattern of abuse	Public area	Event, day of remembrance
Specific individual(s)	Grave site	Museum, archive
Group(s)	Intangible location	Special recognition

A variable was coded 1 if a recommendation called for that form of memorialization, otherwise it was coded 0. For a single recommendation, at least one variable was coded 1 from each category. In other words, a recommendation could not forgo a category entirely—for all memorialization, there must be an intent, subject, location, and medium. If a recommendation did not specify, say a specific location, it was coded as ‘other.’ Recommendations can call for projects with multiple intents, subjects, locations, or mediums, which is reflected in the coding. For instance, in Sierra Leone, the commission wrote:

The Commission calls on the Government of Liberia to publicly acknowledge the role of its predecessor in promoting war and armed conflict in Sierra Leone. The Government of Liberia should consider an act of symbolic reparation to Sierra Leone and its people. This could be in the form of an event or the erection of a monument in Sierra Leone to the memory of all those who died in the conflict.⁷¹

⁷¹ Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission (SLTRC), *Witness to Truth: Report of the Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission* (Accra, Ghana: Graphic Packaging Ltd., 2004), 56.

In this case, the commission called for a monument and an event in one recommendation. Thus, both *Medium: Monument* and *Medium: Event* were coded as 1.

Our coding scheme counters the notion that memorialization processes are more haphazard than other transitional justice processes. Our implementation framework has been used to measure a number of other topics of interest, from personnel reforms to exhumations.⁷² Thus, we analyze the implementation of memorialization recommendations with similar rigor as other processes.

Analysis

We begin with a descriptive analysis of the intent, subject, location, and medium of recommended memorialization projects. The vast majority called for the construction of new memory (115 recommendations, or 71 percent). Meanwhile, 47 recommendations (approximately 29 percent) called for reclamation. Only one called for removal.

Construction. The data suggest that commissions prefer to recommend construction of new memory and, as we show later, governments seem to prefer to implement construction projects. This is consistent with our expectation that new memory is easier to produce because it is less contentious; simply, it does not intensely threaten “old” memory or the existing memory landscape. Instead, new memorials can consider public support and place emphasis on whatever project is deemed most feasible. And since the sites do not already exist, the government can also pick and choose what to implement and where, and what to ignore.

Reclamation. Commissions handle differently the choice to reclaim or construct. For only three commissions were reclamation recommendations in the majority: Central African Republic, Kenya, and Mauritius. Many more chose to recommend construction above other intents, including Brazil, Canada, Germany, Morocco, South Korea, Sri Lanka, and Togo. We note that opportunities for reclamation, while important in preserving spaces or maintaining their symbolic meaning, are

⁷² Zvobgo, *supra* n 14 at 6, chapters 4-7.

limited, since reclamation depends on a site existing in order for it to be altered. Commissions may still have an inclination toward construction for ease of production and comparatively low resistance, but there may also simply be fewer opportunities to reclaim than to construct.

Removal. Several factors can explain the low number of removal recommendations among truth commission reports worldwide. First, many memorials are destroyed, whether intentionally or unintentionally, during the violence preceding the transition. Moreover, in transitional settings not all intentional memorialization waits for the establishment of a truth commission and the conclusion of its work. Often, reactive memorialization—which tends to involve removal of existing monuments, whether through official or unofficial means—precedes the commission. A striking historical example of this phenomenon is post-WWII West Germany, where any monument, statue, name, or building that glorified or preserved the old Nazi regime was methodically taken down. By the time the Federal Republic of Germany made the display of swastikas illegal in 1949, the vast majority of Nazi memorialization had been demolished by the Allied Control Council. Thus, the practical need for recommendations relating to removal may be nonexistent in different contexts, explaining the overall low number of removal recommendations. That said, if monuments from a previous regime exist, removal is controversial. In some contexts, it is even seen as undesirable. Many commissions conduct their work with a “never again” mindset—committed to remembering the past so that it is not forgotten or misremembered. In this vein, commissions may see removal as erasure. Reclamation, the transformation of a space, may be seen as a more favorable or thoughtful alternative to removal.

We find that the distribution of recommendations among our subcategories varies, but generally one category enjoys a majority. A pattern of harm, as opposed to specific incidents, constitutes a majority of all subjects. Suggested locations for memory projects are split between sites of atrocity, public areas, and intangible sites. Monuments, statues, and plaques comprise a majority of all mediums. These data are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Recommendations by Subject, Location, and Medium.

Subject		Location		Medium	
Incidents of abuse	23 (14%)	Atrocity sites	49 (30%)	Monuments, statues, and plaques	83 (51%)
Patterns of abuse	108 (67%)	Public areas	66 (41%)	Events, days of remembrance	52 (32%)
Specific individuals	16 (10%)	Grave sites	13 (8%)	Museums and archives	33 (20%)
Groups	42 (26%)	Intangible locations	58 (36%)	Special recognitions	26 (16%)
Other	5 (3%)	Other	8 (5%)	Other	6 (4%)
Total Number of Recommendations			162		

Note: Percentages in each category (i.e., subject, location, and medium) exceed 100 because of compound recommendations.

Subject. It is interesting to note that recommendations calling for memorialization of an overall pattern of abuse are recommended at rate of roughly four to one to those seeking to memorialize a specific incident. This could indicate that referring to a more general trend of violence or abuse is seen as more politically feasible than pinpointing a particular event, perhaps because the language allows for more leeway in interpretation. However, it may also be the case that the category of ‘overall pattern’ simply encompasses more recommendations because of its inherently broad nature. The low number of recommendations to honor specific individuals, as compared to groups, may point to the risks of memorializing a single person who, by virtue of being remembered in a post-violent context, is most likely recognizable and divisive enough to provoke controversy. As the United States and other countries witnessed in 2020, memorials of controversial historical figures are often the ones that receive the most public attention and outcry, indicating that it may be easier for activists to mobilize protests around individuals.

Location. The near-three-way split of recommendation locations between public areas, atrocity sites, and non-spatial memory may indicate that the architects of post-violence memory production believe it is important to at least propose, if not implement, sites in various regions and realms of public consciousness. Implementation might be more difficult for recommendations concentrated in one area, due to public opinion or logistical challenges.

Medium. The fact that recommendations for monuments, statues, and plaques comprise the majority of mediums in the dataset indicates that they may be perceived as more politically feasible than we initially thought, as compared to other mediums of memory, particularly museums. As we outlined, museums, special recognition, and events are more malleable in their interpretation than monuments. Monuments may thus be more politically effective and steadfast representations of the implementing government's stance on the past. Monuments may also be simpler to put in place than museums, which are typically expensive and more complicated, requiring facilities, staff, and visitors to stay active.

Time may also play a role: the more extensive planning necessary to create a museum could lead to consideration and implementation years, even decades, after other memorialization mediums. In such a case, many museums would not be captured within our dataset's ten-year window. To give an example outside our project database that reflects this idea, Mexico's monument to the victims of the Tlatelolco Massacre was erected in 1993, while the doors to the Memorial 68 Museum did not open until 2007. Despite the fact that both sites memorialize violence from the same year, 1968, the museum opened nearly 15 years after the monument. The low cost and relative ease associated with granting special recognition to a site or declaring a national holiday, by contrast, may result in less of a time lag. This perhaps explains why both intangible mediums and monuments, which are quicker to construct, appear more often in our database; it appears governments balance the cost, political permanence, and logistical feasibility in choosing from the menu of memorialization options.

Implementation. Of the 162 memorialization recommendations in our dataset, 91 were initiated (roughly 56 percent). Of those that were initiated, 52 percent stalled at minimal implementation, 21 percent reached intermediate status, and 27 percent were completed.

Statistical Analysis

We evaluate our hypotheses using logit regressions to study whether implementation was initiated and ordered logit regressions to study the level of implementation reached. We begin with initiation. As displayed in Table 3, there is a positive association between recommendations about construction and project initiation, consistent with our first hypothesis. But, the difference between these recommendations and those about removal or reclamation is not statistically distinguishable from zero.

Table 3. Effect of Intent on Initiation.

	DV = Initiation	Coef. (SE)	p-value
Intent	Construct	0.41 (0.34)	0.23

Notes: Reference category: Removal and Reclamation. Model is a bivariate logit regression. Standard errors in parentheses, clustered by commission.

Moving on to the level of implementation, among initiated recommendations, there is a negative association between recommendations about construction and the outcome, contrary to our first hypothesis. See Table 4. Still, the difference between recommendations about construction and those about removal or reclamation is not statistically significant at a conventional error level. Overall, we find weak support for Hypothesis 1, that recommendations with the intent to construct new memory will be more likely to be implemented than those with the intent to remove or reclaim existing memory.

Table 4. Effect of Intent on Implementation Level.

	DV = Initiation	Coef. (SE)	p-value
Intent	Construct	-0.31 (0.43)	0.47

Notes: Reference category: Removal and Reclamation. Model is a bivariate ordered logit regression. Standard errors in parentheses, clustered by commission.

Tests for our second, third, and fourth hypotheses are displayed in Tables 5 and 6. Consistent with Hypotheses 2a and 2d, we find that the association between recommendations to memorialize specific incidents and project initiation is positive and statistically significant, and the association between recommendations to memorialize individuals and project initiation is negative and statistically significant. Moving on to Hypothesis 3, as expected, we find a negative association between recommendations for memorialization at atrocity sites and project initiation, but the association is not statistically significant. Last, running counter to Hypothesis 4, we find that monument recommendations are positively correlated with initiation, though the relationship is not statistically significant.

Table 5. Effect of Subject, Location, and Medium on Initiation.

	DV = Initiation	Coef. (SE)	p-value
Subject	Incident	0.91 (0.36)	0.01
<i>Notes: Reference category: Pattern of abuse.</i>			
Subject	Individual	-1.14 (0.59)	0.05
<i>Note: Reference category: Group.</i>			
Location	Atrocity Site	-0.30 (0.31)	0.33
<i>Notes: Reference category: Graves, Public areas, Intangible location, and Other.</i>			
Medium	Monument	0.14 (0.27)	0.61

Notes: Reference category: Museums and archives, Events and days of remembrance, and Special recognitions. Models are bivariate logit regressions. Standard errors in parentheses, clustered by commission.

The results somewhat differ when we turn to the level of implementation. Similar to the initiation analysis, the level analysis reveals a negative and statistically significant effect for recommendations to memorialize individuals. The implementation level analysis also reveals a positive, though not statistically significant, effect for monument recommendations. Dissimilar to the initiation analysis, however, the level analysis shows a negative effect for recommendations to memorialize specific incidents, though the effect is only marginally significant. The implementation level analysis further shows a positive effect of recommendations for memorialization at atrocity sites, though the effect is not statistically distinguishable from zero. Overall, we only find strong support for Hypotheses 2d, regarding memorialization of individuals. For all others, we find mixed or no support across the initiation and level analyses.

Table 6. Effect of Subject, Location, and Medium on Implementation Level.

	DV = Level	Coef. (SE)	p-value
Subject	Incident	-0.44 (0.27)	0.10
Subject	Individual	-17.04 (0.55)	0.00
Location	Atrocity Site	0.38 (0.35)	0.29
Medium	Monument	0.42 (0.38)	0.27

Notes: Reference category: Pattern of abuse.

Notes: Reference category: Group.

Notes: Reference category: Graves, Public areas, Intangible, and Other.

Notes: Reference category: Museums and archives, Events and days of remembrance, and Special recognitions. Models are bivariate ordered logit regressions. Standard errors in parentheses, clustered by commission.

Discussion

Our analysis helps scholars understand why governments choose to implement certain memorialization projects over others, as well as which projects are most likely to be proposed and implemented. Still, our results do not mean only historically successful projects should be attempted. Some more challenging or long-term projects—such as granting special recognition to places and peoples or transforming former atrocity sites—are not quickly implemented but are significant when they are implemented. And the very fact that they were recommended is significant. While our analysis focused on the “blueprints” truth commissions provide for memory production, allowing us to disaggregate proposals and systematically track their implementation, not all post-violence societies have commissions. Future research might apply our typology and theory to memorialization plans in other contexts or prompted by other transitional justice processes. Future work may also explore in greater detail “missed opportunities” in post-violence memory making.

Not all memorialization debates occur in the aftermath of political violence, to be sure. In many cases, memorialization is a lingering question, one that persists for decades, even centuries, after a regime of abuse. In this sense, countries like the United States have not vigorously confronted past political and memory regimes—including slavery, the Confederacy, and Jim Crow segregation.⁷³ Regrettably, transitional justice scholarship traditionally excludes the U.S. case.⁷⁴ Doing so falsely signals that transitional justice in otherwise “stable” democracies is not a worthy area of study, and perpetuates myths of American and Western exceptionalism. Further systematic analysis is needed on public memory production and memory contestation in Global South and Global North contexts, the United States included.

⁷³ Colleen Murphy and Kelebogile Zvobgo, ‘Transitional Justice for Historical Injustice,’ in *Research Handbook on Transitional Justice*, 2nd edition, ed. Cheryl Lawther and Luke Moffett (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2023), 422-435.

⁷⁴ Daniel Posthumus and Kelebogile Zvobgo, ‘Democratizing Truth: An Analysis of Truth Commissions in the United States,’ *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 15(3) (2021): 510-532.