

# Conclusion

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This collection on the narratives of memory has explored issues of xenophobia and migration in the European Union and Canada. Rather than being a systematic exploration of the memorialization of xenophobia and migration, the essays in this volume reflect the result of the participants' profound learning experience during the field school. The volume brings to the forefront the participants' confrontations, relationships, and

experiences with their varied pasts and, in particular, with what Ruth Kluger has termed “timescapes.” Timescapes builds on Appadurai’s “articulation of the five dimensions of global cultural flows” (i.e., ethnoscapescapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, finanscapes, and ideascapes) (Appadurai 1996, 100-20), thus bringing in notions of time and memory to an important conversation about the global cultural flows.

A “timescape,” for Kluger, “indicates a place in time, that is, at a certain time neither before nor after” (2001, 65). Timescapes suggest a “standstill” position whereby one’s experiences are confronted and reshaped through memorialization. Kluger writes “I want my timescapes: Evocation of places at a time that has passed” (2001, 66).

The concept of a timescape is extremely useful to tease out the lessons learned from this innovative and ambitious project. The contributions to this edited volume reveal how the memorial experiences with migration and xenophobia were elicited with visits of Holocaust and human-rights memorial sites and museums. This is a significant outcome as it speaks to the power of the site itself to provide an important dimension of lived and embodied memory. Critics of memorial sites refer to them as “antiseptic and clean, utterly devoid of the stench of death” (Katz 2009, 55) because they are missing the “smell of smoke” (Katz 2009, 214); and indeed, museum sites tend to be deliberate, clean, beautifully and thoughtfully set buildings, and sometimes they include designed landscapes such as parks and lakes. Kluger recalls a visit: “I once visited Dachau with some Americans who had asked me to come along. It was clean and proper place, and it would have taken more imagination than your average John or Jane Doe possesses to visualize the camp as it was forty years earlier” (Kluger 2001, 65).

Yet, as noted by the students and participating faculty these memorial sites also generated both individual and group “timescapes.” These took the form of distinct reflections and self-reflections — the sum of these many experiences, for some, barely scratched the surface of the suffering, while for others, they were nearly intolerable. For all, however, they are memorial experiences that marked a summer, and a life, with indelible self-reflection and awareness.

Acknowledging their visits to concentration camps and other memorial sites such as Ravensbrück (Germany), Les Milles (France), and the Hungarian Keleti Railway Station, as well as, the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, in Winnipeg, Canada, the authors to this edited collection build on their disciplinary knowledge to relate and

narrate their own personal and collective perception; including in deeply personal and transformative perceptions of events such as the Holocaust and concurrent issues of migration and xenophobia, and of the trauma of colonialism, as documented at memorial sites and museums. What is particularly extraordinary is the sheer emotional, sometimes heart-breaking engagement with the evidence with which the authors were confronted with when walking through the memorial sites.

While reading these chapters leaves the reader with the sense that experiencing memorial sites on the Holocaust in Europe was a significantly and qualitatively different experience than that at the Canadian sites, the timescaped reflections, critiques, and lessons were of the same standing and duress. Participants drew on profound feelings of self-reflection and on the re-discovery of aspects of their identity and humanity. These timescaped experiences changed their engagement with how memory shaped their perceptions of both past and present-day events.

Charlotte Schallié and Dániel Péter Biró were the two principal instructors of the summer school. They took all the students to visit all four memorial sites: the Keleti Railway Station in Budapest (Hungary) was the first site, the Ravensbrück Memorial Site (Germany) came second, the Site-Memorial of the Camps des Milles (France) was third, and on the way back to Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, they visited the Canadian Museum for Human Rights (Winnipeg). Each site was chosen for its exploration of cultural narratives of the past, memorialization, and as a site of engagement with public policy pertaining to the migration crisis and the resurgence of nationalism and xenophobia today.

The field school commissioned three musical compositions inspired by the various sites: Syrians held at the Keleti Railway Station in Budapest inspired Hungarian composer Andrea Szigetvari for her *Beet Kohlrabi Cantata*. This site has dual significance for the school, as Hungarian Jews were deported from the Keleti station in 1944. The visit to the Ravensbrück Memorial Site inspired Syrian composer Zaid Jabri, who composed, with reference to the Universal Declaration for Human Rights, *Thirty articles for Viola and Electronics*. Dániel Péter Biró composed *Gvul* (Hebrew for border) for the Memorial Site of Les Milles Camp.

We see that self-awareness changes everything in a number of the student contributions to the volume. Emily McCallum, who in discussing the music of Luigi Nono's *Il Canto Sospeso*, notes that music refuses

to present the answer to an image, underscoring that music challenges the listener to actively question how sounds are related to the world. Similarly, Kimberley Farris-Manning highlights the gap between the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations)<sup>1</sup> and what she observes at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, which she describes as an “idea museum.” She maintains that there is often a gap in linking exhibits of “historical traumatic events ... on genocides around the world” to “current events.” Farris-Manning suggests this gap should be bridged by art because “art can highlight its own artifice as a means through which to find not just one truth but all truths.”

Similarly, Paige Thombs’ focuses on linking memory to photographs because “every photograph is a certificate of a presence.” Thombs’ essay questions the role of photography as an act of memorialization; an act in between timescapes, or an act of social agency and reflective truth. The images of Buchenwald and Ravensbrück’s crematorium are at stake here; which one is most real — the one found on the internet or the one that is “my photo.” The act of taking the photography is much more “visceral.” Thombs writes: it “shut down my entire being; I could not move.” Indeed, the photo taken today is not just a photo; it is not just about what was seen, because it also encourages newer timescaped feelings imprinted onto the image: “I feel what I felt,” which fixates a sentiment of immediacy and of unforgiving reality.

Alain Chouraqui and Lena Casiez militate for a “duty of memory” and “exceptional vigilance.” Their argument is that the processes that lead to pan-social phenomenon of abuse, xenophobia, oppression, and violence can be resisted, that prejudices, xenophobia, and fear can and should be fought “every day.” They argue that such language is to be resisted and that all resistance starts with “righteous acts” as expressed at the Les Milles Museum’s Wall of Righteous Acts; a huge educational display three metres tall and eight metres long. The Museum’s primary function then is as a long-term reference across time and space, which includes representations of both memorialization of the past and daily exceptional vigilance in the present.

Memorialization is also understood through a more political and social lens by some of the authors. Ildikó Barna, in reviewing the various Hungarian political campaigns — the nationalist and

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1 Article One of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*: “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.”

conservative Fidesz Party, led by Viktor Orbans and anti-immigrant and anti-European Party — points-out that propaganda uses “stereotypes,” “selections” of facts and “censorship,” as well as “repetition,” “lies” and “assertion,” “pinpointing the enemy,” and, ultimately appealing to “authority.” In sum, Barna surmises, instrumentalizing xenophobia, using stereotypes, and sustaining the illusory “symbolic enemy” has been so successful that fear of immigrants, even panic reactions, have led to laws criminalizing migrants and assistance to migrants. Yet, this is happening in a country where there are very few migrants.

In a similar vein, Tamara Gonçalves’ Brazilian exploration provides an important comparative point of view to the French, German, and Canadian studies, suggesting that the Brazilian regimes of the last 25 years compares well with the rise of the conservatives and nationalists, and today’s autocratic Hungary. What grounds her argument is the continuous presence of the political reflexes of Brazil’s post-dictatorship and militarized regimes, despite laws of amnesty instituted in 1979, a new constitution in 1988, and a post-2012 Truth Commission. To this day, Brazil remains deeply socio-economically divided, violent, and oppressive. Indeed, as Gonçalves reminds us, one-third of Brazilian people “are deprived of basic goods and services out of the rule of law.”

Coming back to Canada, Dawn Smith (Nuu-chah-nulth) provides the reader with the view of an Indigenous student, drawing on her reflections from a different field school, one that focused exclusively on the Holocaust. Smith’s essay explores memories of Self-Determination, and of Truth-and-Reconciliation, in parts because “the field school was an opportunity to study racism, intolerance, and antisemitism, but also a safe place to learn.” Smith admits an “overwhelming feeling of ignorance” about the Holocaust, and observes that “there was so much respect ... for those who perished in the Holocaust.”

Smith discovers a German, possibly European, fascination for Indigenous people and is dismayed at the discovery that there was a relationship between the Nazi regime’s Holocaust ambitions and the “American conquest of the west as a model for Germany’s conquest of the (European) east.” And, she underscores that in Canada, Self-Determination and Truth-and-Reconciliation guide the relationship between Indigenous people and settlers; indeed, “Canada is still desperately negotiating with hundreds of First Nations to have them surrender, once and for all, their title to the lands given to us by the creator.” She notes that Self-Determination varies from nation to nation and that Truth-and-Reconciliation remains a huge issue because

“Canada’s genocidal history with Indigenous people and residential school is horrific and ugly, and it will require time to heal.” Smith concludes: “genocide is genocide; it knows neither race nor bounds.... Education is key to reconciliation but also to building and understanding of who we are as human beings.”

In sum, interactions with memorial sites and museums led to self-reflection, to finding one’s humanity, to thinking about oneself and to reflecting on what memories are about; past and present intertwined. Confrontations, in particular with the survivors of genocides own expression of memories through art production or afterwards, indeed, led to “a whirlwind of intense emotional reflective contemplation.” In the end, each participant confronted their own timescapes, and in so doing, ended up bridging their own humanity and sense of self.

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