Memory, Don't Speak! Monumental neglect and memorial sacrifice in contemporary Estonia

Francisco Martínez (iD)
Tallinn University, Estonia; University of Leicester, UK

Abstract
In this article, I discuss how memorials exist in time by conceptualising memory politics in relation to monumental neglect and a lack of maintenance work. I also study the way political discourses have material resonances by foregrounding how the Soviet memory is silenced in Estonia through the crumbling materiality of its cultural heritage – as a slow-motion sacrifice. In my research, I focused on the Maarjamäe memorial complex in Tallinn (which comprises a Soviet monumental landscape design, a cemetery of German soldiers, a Russian palace currently hosting the Estonian History Museum and the newly-built memorial of Victims of Communism), to show how part of it has been devalued by the political work of disrepair and institutional neglect, thus presenting the socialist past as something separated from the present. New developments at this site might potentially change its situation of abandonment since the construction of a novel antagonist element – the memorial of Victims of Communism – might produce a more attentive maintenance of the Soviet monumental design (adding another layer of meaning), or its final demolition in turn (thus producing a haunting afterlife). In any case, Maarjamäe makes clear that material memorials never simply speak for themselves and are, instead, multiple and contested in meaning. It also shows that if the tidiness of a memorial is the reminder of an obligation to remember, then its neglect can be but an invitation to forget, or to remember badly.

'Scars have the strange power to remind us that our past is real'

– Cormac McCarthy[1]

Corresponding author:
Francisco Martínez, School of Humanities, Tallinn University, Estonia.
Email: fran@tlu.ee

The materiality of memory

Inspired by current literature on the socio-material decay and ruination of modern projects,[2] this article addresses the different ages of memory and the dynamic ways in which national identity and historical representations are constructed through materiality. Specifically, the research deals with one large site consisting of a number of memorials (a Soviet monumental design, German crosses, Estonian corpses in German uniforms and a new Estonian memorial to the victims of Communism). Through descriptions and visual documentation of the site, discourse analysis and informal conversations with other visitors, I have investigated how the deliberate cultivation of decrepitude and decay of the Maarjamäe landscape memorial has generated a negative affect in relation to the Soviet past and produced 'undone' memories. Thus, in this article, I explore how disrepair is brought into political action, as well as the complex relationship between the tangibility and intangibility of cultural heritage.

The research highlights how the decay and abandonment of memorials is a political performance, here turned into a resource in the process of state legibility, and part of the stabilisation and/or disruption of historical representations. By presenting disrepair as a form of state intervention, the article raises important questions pertaining to the sustainability of and responsibility and care for undesirable memorial legacies from a previous past (radically different from the actual one). It also reflects on how experiences of material decay, breakage and dirtiness in relation to cultural heritage are generative of undone memory, producing a symbolic reordering. This eventually shows that the complex embeddedness of memorials is also visible through their disrepair, neglect and ruin.

Ethnographically, the research takes the planned abandonment and deliberate deaccession of cultural heritage as a form of memory politics and as evidence of wider systems of value, foregrounding that memorials are also identity-forming spaces in their neglect. In this sense, it shows different modalities of silencing memory and how disrepair can be a material carrier of hegemonic historical representations. Traditional accounts present memorials as a collective mirror of identity formation and belonging; an approach that takes memorials as a reflective device that gives shape to abstract representations of history, making them available as public experiences. However, I propose going beyond discussions about the public usefulness of monuments and memorials by accounting how their discarding and disregard may have been employed as a means for the articulation of new historical representations. In other words, if the tidiness of a memorial is the reminder of an obligation to remember, the neglect in turn of specific memorials can be considered as an invitation to forget, or to remember badly.

Certainly, it is not a novelty to argue that heritage can be contentious and contested, yet there is a need to provide new vocabulary for the study of the neglect of memorialising materiality, especially around issues of depoliticisation, decontextualisation and misappropriation. The innovation brought by this paper thus lies in showing that material neglect involves a series of political negations and aesthetic devaluations; therefore, the disregard of memorials should be interrogated as something that exists through (a failure of) relations, and that concerns state legibility. This does not have to do with a way of managing ruination and the taking over of/by nature,[3] or with counter-preservation practices that take the intentional dilapidation of legacies as a subversive act.[4] It is, rather, a strategy to present a given memorial as a symbol of failure, devalued and silenced – a signifier of power, not of history or remembrance.

The research is based on a contemporary archaeology of forgetting by digging through layers of discourse and material neglect to gather fractured and muted memorial traces.[5] Tracing the relation between political histories and material remnants allows us to discover the labour of the negative in memory-making related to neglect, sacrifice, displacement, abandonment or defacement.[6] Such
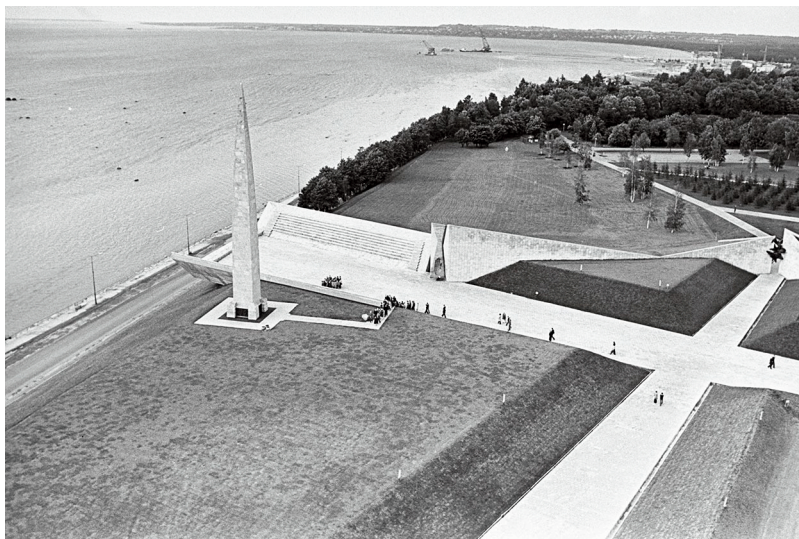
Figure 1. View of the memorial. Jüri Vendelin. 1977. Rahvusarhiiv.

is the case of the Soviet memorial landscape of Maarjamäe – the key object of study of this article, a place dense with symbolic things left behind by those who came before us.

Memory undone

What remains or endures is hardly accidental. Changes in historical representations, the discontinuation of political regimes, and the replacement of cultural values are perceived in the present through the material mediation of new memorial elements, yet they are also realised through the negative emotions generated by the crumbling materiality of the old ones. In other words, memory making unequivocally produces neglect and abandonment, since caring for the past is always done at the expense of some other one. In Estonia, memory itself is used in the sacrifice of the Maarjamäe landscape design as part of a strategy for the deactivation of the Soviet cultural memory, getting rid of something that appears difficult to integrate in the current cultural order and collective memory.[7]

Estonia was an independent Republic between 1918 and 1940, then part of the Soviet Union, and finally regained independence after the break apart of the USSR. The recovered independence in 1991 suddenly produced piles of memorial waste in this country. On a symbolic level, a historical rush appeared to erase any physical representations of the Soviet era from the city centres; new monuments, street names and museums quickly emerged and the old *stigmatised* ones produced itineraries that call to mind symbolic imprisonment or quarantine.[8] Such extensive re-orchestration of official memory through the redesign of newly commissioned memorial elements followed a spatial pursuit of legitimacy and the articulation of a new geography of affects.[9] Many monumental elements were then considered unworthy of maintenance and made invisible or symbolically purged. In turn, the newly-built memorials acquired a newness value, whilst the old Soviet ones were displaced from the city-centre and re-contextualised as residual, despite their original *Kunstwollen* ('will to art').[10]

Yet, the issue we are dealing with here is not as simple as removing some monuments in order to erect new ones, but also about which memorials and monuments are supposed to be next to the newly-established centres of memory-making, thus presenting certain elements (of the past) as

Figure 2. Soviet ceremony. Oskar Viikholm 1940 Rahvusarhiiv.

Figure 3. Nazi ceremony. Oskar Viikholm 1944 Rahvusarhiiv.

Figure 4. Landscape memorial newly built. Valdur-Peeter Vahi. 1975 Rahvusarhiiv.

Figure 5. Landscape memorial newly built 2. V. Puhm 1975 Rahvusarhiiv.

Figure 6. President Lennart Meri in the farewell ceremony to Russian troops. Toomas Volmer 1994 Rahvusarhiiv.

symbolically polluting and generating neighbouring effects. This became evident with the removal of the Soviet Bronze Soldier (also called *Alyosha*), originally placed in the centre of Tallinn (in front of the National Library) and later repositioned in the corner of a military cemetery in 2007 (in front of a highway, 30 minutes walking distance from Freedom Square). The initial presence of this WWII Soviet hetero-memento between the parliament, the city hall, the national library and the museum of occupations materialised radically different understandings of national identity and collective memory in Estonia.[11] Accordingly, the decision to relocate *Alyosha* and silence this monument in a more peripheral place did not just refer to the (unwelcome) presence of a given legacy in the present, but also to a strategy that aims at presenting the Communist past through material invisibility, decay and degradation.

Conservation, however, is based on the idea that some things must be preserved and retained for the benefit of future generations. Legislation is then mobilised to protect designated objects, which acquire in turn a higher (memorial, political, representative) value and visibility. Nonetheless, the complexity foregrounded by our case study is that memorialisation entails a combination of both official passivity and activity, as much as remembering entails forgetting. Memory-making is always intertwined with selection, discard and replacement in many ways. In Eastern Europe, history had to be rewritten and the immediate past had to be rejected because of the need to create new political identities[12] and reinforce the regained sovereignty with a solid legal and discursive foundation. Historian Marek Tamm[13] describes this understanding of memory politics in Estonia as an 'ideology of restoration', according to which all legal measures were dedicated to restoring pre-war traditions and institutions. In parallel, this policy led to the reinstitution of old anniversaries and holidays, the restoration of monuments to the War of Independence and the reburial of pre-war Estonian politicians, such as the last President of the first Republic, Konstantin Päts (since Estonia's regained independence, over hundred monuments have been rebuilt).[14]

Several political figures and institutions have stated the importance of using historical arguments and discourses of national trauma to legitimise the new independent state. For instance,

Lennar Meri, first President of the country after the recovered independence, insisted that 'the experience of occupation gave meaning to our freedom today',[15] while the original mission statement of the Estonian Heritage Society highlighted that their work would focus on 'the final objective to become true masters of our past'.[16] Such a desire to rehabilitate and restitute what was before the Soviet time, and the insistence on the legal continuation of the Estonian Republic, the illegality of the Soviet Occupation and the demand of an official apology from the Russian government for the crimes of Communism, has been motivated to keeping a particular perception of the state's past self-intact for the present needs.[17] As political scientist Maria Mälksoo observes, memory laws have been a strategic element of 'mnemonic security' in Estonia, making certain historical remembrances secure by delegitimising others.[18] Also, on this matter, and in the context of the nineties, anthropologist Sigrid Rausing[19] identified three aspects of the 'social amnesia' present in the Soviet world in this country: the intentional lack of transmission of memories between the generations, the suppression of practices to which social memories are intricately linked, and an 'organised oblivion' of the state characterised by an anti-Communist government rhetoric.

In the attempt to conceptualise the premature death and neglected potentials of the Maarjamäe memorial complex – not fulfilled because of political decisions, this memorial can be taken as a wasted legacy. The wasting of a legacy thus indicates social de-structuration and institutional (in) activity, dematerialising a given past and turning it invisible in order to materialise a new historical regime.[20] We can speak of 'affective transmissions' occurring at the intersections of subjectivity, materialities and representations of the past,[21] engendered by the instabilities of the transformation period,[22] but also distributing specific forms of destructive agency by the state.[23] Hence, it is worth studying the ageing and material sustainability of memorials, here approached through the problematic of neglect and how present concerns determine a past to be remembered and a memory to be undone. Moreover, the Maarjamäe case shows that any study of the ages of memory and the social and material status of a given memorial requires, therefore, an understanding of the relations around it, of its intervals of neglect and of the political work of disrepair.

The Maarjamäe memory complex

The core of the Maarjamäe memorial complex is composed of a Soviet monumental landscape design and a cemetery in which around 3,000 bodies are buried (mostly Germans, but also Russians, Estonians and Finns). Soviet soldiers were first buried there in 1940. Then, in 1941, the Nazis dug the bodies out and buried their own soldiers on the site. In 1960, a white obelisk with bronze plaques was erected on the same site to commemorate the Bolshevik sailors killed in Tallinn in 1918 (when allied nations intervened in the Russian civil war against Soviet forces). The obelisk was designed by sculptor Lembit Tolli and architect Mart Port (known for his work in the modernist Väike-Õismäe district of Tallinn). Then, between 1965 and 1975, a series of sculptures and architectonic elements (carved hands imprints, a flock of birds entitled 'Perishing seagulls', an aircraft landing runway, ten symbolic graves that link the dead with the living,[24] and the eternal flame for the unknown soldier) were added to extend the remembrance to all those who died in the fight against fascism.

Maarjamäe, made of concrete and limestone, supports a modernist ensemble of landscaping elements. Traditionally, hard materials are meant to solidify a referential *anno cero*, which, in the case of Maarjamäe, does not exist or appears as multiple. The construction of its memorial hardware and software remained incomplete, however, as the unfinished concrete structures towards the sea manifest, along with the lack of integration of the future decay into the planning. The abstract shapes and geometrical surfaces were pioneering in terms of public monuments in Estonia, yet its 'formalist' design did not remain unnoticed for breaking with the socialist realism tradition.

The winning design by the Estonian architect Allan Murdmaa and sculptor Matti Varik was later overseen by two more architects, Valve Pormeister and Henno Sepmann, and the project halted suddenly, in 1975, despite remaining unfinished.

During a flight over the monument in a helicopter, the authorities discovered that the promenades form the shape of a cross, this halting the construction of the memorial until today. According to the design team, the Soviet authorities recognised other Christian symbols in some of the forms of the memorial; namely, they claimed that Varik's Mother and Child sculpture could be seen as an image of the Virgin Mary. In 1997, the original architect, Allan Murdmaa, explained that there was no point in looking for hidden meanings in the memorial; indeed, they had tried to avoid 'Soviet phantasmagorias'.[25] However, Murdmaa acknowledges a certain holiness in Maarjamäe based on its design qualities, albeit one that allows changing interpretations, to the point that both heroes and victims may feel represented.

After regaining Estonia's independence, then-President Lennart Meri ironically remarked that everybody was talking about the death of Communism, but nobody had actually seen its body.[26] In August 1994, Meri organised a ceremony in the Maarjamäe memorial for the final withdrawal of the Russian troops from Estonia. After the removal of the Red Army, the eternal flame was extinguished, the plaques were removed, and the corpse of Communism was finally seen in Estonia. Yet, as sociologist Robert Hertz pointed out, someone's death is only accomplished when the composition of the corpse is over.[27] The memorial was not destroyed, however, as this would have resulted in an outcry from Moscow; rather, it was considered easier to let it fall passively and vanish entropically. Since 1994, nature has taken over this landscape memorial in the form of growing shrubs – the ecological effects of lack of maintenance. Decades of official neglect are visible in the crumbling structures, fragmented tiles, broken glasses and grass covering the mound – traces by which un-remembering is materialised, and a specific memory and past silenced. Nonetheless, in 1997, sets of triple granite crosses in the style common to German WWII military cemeteries were added by the *Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge* (an organisation that takes care of military cemeteries all over Europe).

As noted by architect Toivo Tammik,[28] one of the actual problems of this memorial is that it lacks connectors with its surroundings, such as green corridors or more frequent public transport. In his view, this generates a feeling of peripherality that does not correspond with the design qualities of the memorial, nor its distance from the city centre. For architectural historian Karin Paulus, this is indeed one of the key works of landscape architecture in the country, where people can walk calmly and think about history.[29] Likewise, architectural photographer Tõnu Tunnel holds that 'it's a unique and colossal piece of land art of a bygone era', with a 'grandiose scale' that risks becoming 'an unused monumental wasteland'. He also notes that the redesign of other public spaces in town erased sensitive traces and lost cultural histories.[30]

What is decaying and fragmented has a strong power of evocation.[31] Nowadays, the Maarjamäe memorial is visited as an edgy, spacious site, instead of being taken as a place for mourning and remembrance, or as a Nora's dixit, a *lieu de mémoire*.[32] Visitors of different ages come to the landscape memorial all day long. Some of the people I met were neighbours who go there to walk their dogs, ride a bike, skate, or pleasantly look at the sunset. Their motivation is thus far from solemn, yet still relying on the particular design qualities of the space – open, spacious and facing a sharp cliff, and with vistas to the sea and to the silhouette of Tallinn's old town.

The crumbling condition of the memorial also adds an edgy touch to Maarjamäe, which is rather appreciated by the youngsters, who come here for drinking and smoking in the evening, embracing the atmosphere of contemplation generated by material decay. The lack of lighting gives the space an intriguingly dark aura, which is also enjoyed by couples who come to steal a romantic first kiss. I was one of them for a while, as a friend of mine lived nearby and the memorial was one of our

escaping points. Two years prior, the state had put up a preventing metal barrier with a sign saying 'No Passage. Danger of Collapsing', yet both locals and tourists still sneak into the site to enjoy the vistas, sit there or take photos. The tiles of its entry road, originally designed to invite for a solemn procession, are now full of broken glass, decomposed materials, strange socio-biological entanglements and are broken themselves.

In 2021, Maarjamae is still a moving and atmospheric place. For instance, Christopher Nolan filmed part of his last movie 'Tenet' in this memorial. The actual decay gives a spectral dimension to the site.[33] Despite its condition of neglect and of not being located in the city centre (on the Pirita road, 2 km northeast of the city centre along the coast), the Maarjamäe landscape memorial is still in the mental map of many locals, standing as a counter-memorial.[34] Complaints about its current state were frequent during my encounters with visitors, who would point at specific pieces of glass and broken tiles. Although this memorial has been available and accessible for many years, it subsequently remained unattended as a form of official neglect. Here, we talk of neglect, and not indifference,[35] because the disrepair of some elements of the Marjamäe memorial can be related to a wider official strategy to create a new hierarchy of social signs and make new national narratives appear more real, thus contributing to delineating what a community should remember from its past and what not.[36]

In a recent study, Anni Martin, chief of architectural heritage at the National Heritage Board, developed a discourse analysis to investigate the changing meanings of the memorial between 1966 and 2018. As shown, media representations evolved from foregrounding the artistic value, architectural achievements, beautiful landscape and talent of the authors, to associations with 'historical injustice', cultural trauma and the need to distinguish between victims and executioners.[37] Besides the open bounds of the past, a legal complication for the repair of the Soviet landscape memorial is its fragmented ownership. The obelisk is registered as property of the city of Tallinn, while the rest of the memorial appears as unreformed land belonging to the Estonian state in the cadastre.[38]

The actual major of Tallinn, Mihhail Kõlvart, has expressed the municipal will to repair the memorial on the condition that the state handled the ownership to the city. In 2018, however, then-Justice Minister Urmas Reinsalu stated that the memorial could be torn down as it was not listed under the heritage protection act, and that a new memorial for the Victims of Communism would be built nearby. The current Minister of Internal Affairs, Mart Helme, was of a similar opinion in his suggestion of dismantling the Soviet memorial in order to expand the one for the Victims of Communism or, if not, to allow the nearby located Estonian Academy of Security Sciences to use it for training.[39] Another opinion, stated by Andres Põder, Archbishop of the Estonian Lutheran Church in an official letter, sent in August 2020, proposed giving a new meaning to the crumbling memorial, for example, by dedicating it to the Virgin Mary. Põder even suggested to place a statue of Mary on the top of the obelisk, celebrating the eight centuries since the hill was renamed 'Maryland' (Maarjamäe).[40]

'Something should be done with this space', was a recurrent answer I received on my visits to the site. Encounters with the Maarjamäe memorial invited for personal retrospection, as well as political reconsiderations. On the *Tripadvisor* website, I read many similar comments, most of which were written by tourists on recent visits to the site. I have selected a few of the passages by six users and provided them below:

'It is a pity that such an impressive ensemble of different forms of monuments is poorly maintained, and in certain places, turned into ruin'– O.

'What's interesting is how it remains. . . the "abandoned" nature of the memorial is what makes it somewhat fascinating. A memorial erected by an occupying government, with whom the independent government would just as soon forget' – C.

'The rather odd sight of a memorial that seems to be split across the main road catches the attention. More so when the inland section has youngsters sitting on it during the long summer evenings, dangling their legs high above the road' – C.

'As you get near you see more of the area opening up. . . No signs or explanations of what it is. You do get the feeling that it was built to represent something of significance and it was' – B.

'The Soviet monument is not maintained at all so it's literally falling apart. The place is not safe for small children: there may be shattered glass on the ground and towards the sea there is quite a fall with no rail at all! It is unlikely Tallinn is interested in investing in the monument of Soviet oppression, which may lead to the point where the area is eventually closed when it's simply not safe anymore. If you are interested, go before this happens. . .' – E.

After the break-up of the Soviet Union in 1991, in Estonia, the cult of soldier heroes was super-seded by narratives of deportation and death under a Communist regime. Still, in April 2005, the government commemorated the end of World War II in the site, 'dedicated to those who took part of the defensive battles of 1944. Maarjamäe, therefore, symbolises the tragic fate of the Estonian soldier in WWII', as explained by the Estonian Government Communication Office.[41] Moreover, the Eesti Memento Liit (Estonian Memento Union) publicly stated that they would prefer a more central location for the new memorial than the Maarjamäe hill, arguing, firstly, that there was not enough room there for a new memorial, and, secondly, that the current, neglected condition of the Soviet memorial would create an unusual contrast with the new one and that the two memorials were 'ideologically incompatible'.[42]

The newly-created Memorial of the Victims of Communism was inaugurated on the 23rd of August 2018. The cost of the new 30,000 m^2 memorial (over €4.5 million) was covered by the Estonian state. The memorial includes the names of approximately 20,000 'victims of the Soviet regime'. Architect Kalle Komissarov, member of the selecting board for this competition, explained to the journal *Sirp* that: 'The new memorial was first and foremost a continuation of the memories of Maarjamäe, and the focus of the competition was clearly to create a large public and monumen-tal whole. . . And the authors are expected to solve the contact zone issues during the design pro-cess'.[43] During its building process, the remains of 84 German soldiers were discovered by construction workers, thus reopening the already 'buried memory'.[44] The subterranean past was then moved up to the surface again by the construction works of another memorial. This meta-phoric resurfacing shows that remains are never produced in the past as such, but rather in a press-ing political present.[45]

This memorial is effective in conveying feelings of tranquility and of denouncing the excesses of totalitarian regimes. This new Estonian infrastructure of memory has two parts, a corridor, called 'Journey', with the names of the victims on its wall, and the 'Home garden' on the side, a quiet park surrounded by apple trees and with honeybee figures on the wall that is experienced as a relief after the long and considerably tense corridor.[46] One of the entries to the design competi-tion,[47] however, proposed repairing and transforming the Maarjamäe landscape Memorial into a field of plural remembrance entitled 'Memories of Memories' and using novel landscape tech-niques such as tree-staircases. An interesting side-effect of opening the memorial to the Victims of Communism is that its surroundings seem to be better maintained; as I noted in my last visit in July 2019, broken glass and trash laying around was finally taken care of.

My first visit to the new memorial was the very day of its public opening – the 23rd of August 2018 (recognised as the European Day of Remembrance for Victims of Stalinism and Nazism). Many people of different ages were visiting it, and one could feel strong feelings in the air, with

descendants searching for their ancestors or pointing at the name with a finger on the wall. After the official ceremonies, I talked to five people at the site, and started by commenting on the achievements of the design and the importance of this kind of memorial, and then juxtaposing the new one with the old abandoned Soviet landscape just a few metres away. Two of them reacted positively about this comparison and argued that there was no money for taking care of everything, but that it would be repaired at some point. Three of them, however, felt offended by my question and reacted emotionally, so I understood that it was not the best context to bring this topic up; this scene made me ponder as to whether the Estonian society is ready to deal differently with Soviet memorials, and overall, if the discourse that has dominated the country's memory culture over the past thirty years (organising along societal orders of worth), might leave room for other historical narratives and for its own self-questioning.

The interval of neglect

There is great value in studying the ageing, retirement and afterlife of monuments and memorials, and learning, for instance, about how heritage practices entail processes of categorising, curating, preserving and communicating.[48] While decaying, some of the memorial elements might appear as desirable and acquiring patina, while others become part of the abject – too grim to be embraced, conflicting and repulsive in the present.[49] Memorials not only produce meaning in their preservation, but also in their destruction and disrepair, generating an interpretive excess and, in some cases, liberating negative energy during their entropic decay. As if it were the processing of analogue photography, we could even say that negative memorial elements take part in the production of a positive memorial side.[50] The way memorials speak is, however, far from natural, and rather based on all-too-human decisions, acts and interventions, as, for instance, how a memorial is contextualised, maintained, placed, communicated or abandoned. Thus, the relation between remembrance and forgetfulness is not a linear process but a tense complex one, conditioned by fragments, traces and also what is absent – eventually creating glitches in our perception of historical time.[51]

Despite its definition, which references a particular historical event, figure or period, memorials are all about the present and undergo constant change. Likewise, even if the meaning of memorials is contingent on political interests, the interpretations and experiences associated to a site of remembrance are, however, not reducible to political decisions since definitions are contested and renegotiated through multiple actors and interactions in the present.[52] Memorials always include a component of selective remembering, symbolic domination and emotional sovereignty, which makes difficult to disentangle memory-making and heritage-making. As noted by Bendix, Eggert and Peselmann,[53] heritage regimes are meant to produce a sense of identity and continuity, and often function as a way of making politics and as an extension of the state. Paul Connerton[54] also pointed out that the disrepair of places of memory does not reflect passivity but rather part of the strategic acts of forgetting that involve heritage regimes. In his view, memorial neglect can be a conscious process, which often follows a systematic and institutionalised attempt of producing oblivion; and yet, these places are carriers of memories and show obduracy, obstructing any attempts at inducing amnesia.[55]

Memorials rarely fall into ruin; instead, they raise into it owing to their monumentality and how they are designed.[56] Memorial materiality exists across time, and its value reveals itself through different stages, often acquiring patina through a gradual degrading. In his classic essay 'The Modern Cult of Monuments: Its Character and Origin', art historian Alois Riegl (1903) proposed considering monuments through an evolutionary sequence based on social perception and situational performance, as opposed to defining them by objective criteria. Age value appeared in his view as a key quality, since monuments acquire patina with the years, and thus reinforcing their

right to exist (*Existenzberechtigung*). Writer John Brinckerhoff Jackson also observed how there has to be an interval of neglect, a sort of discontinuity, before elements of the past are elevated to the status of heritage.[57] Yet, time and material decay are not enough; material traces, crafted narratives and a rather sequential ordering of the remains are needed to make them perceptible and provide the incentive for preservation.

The observation of these sequences of neglect and redemption teaches us about the complex ways in which memorial elements relate to their spatial, social and cultural contexts, how the set of values framing the preservation of memorials is, to a great extent, open and that historical regimes are also learned as an aesthetic process, not simply as an abstraction. The intersections of subjectivity, materialities, place and representations of the past are being attentively discussed within the subfields of contemporary archaeology, cultural geography and memory studies, focusing on the affective and methodological aspects that material encounters attain.[58] Through the analysis of traces, we can learn different modalities of imagining and perceiving the past since they enable dialectic engagements with 'gone' histories. Likewise, traces signal the limits of representation, materialising gone histories.[59] Despite the sedimented layering of time, cracks, fault lines, fragments and surface changes point at the simultaneity of different durations. Hence, they remain important embodiments of social memory since the process of imprinting memory is always linked to what has been forgotten, vanquished or compressed.[60]

Yet, what happens to the places of memory at the moment when they are no longer wanted? And how is forgetting being actualised in space? These were the questions Ilić and Škrbić Alempijević asked in their study of the actual disrepair of a Partisan cemetery in Mostar.[61] As a result of the violent disintegration of socialist Yugoslavia, some of the nationalities present in the cemetery were not to be remembered anymore, and the popular references to Communist partisans started to be publicly questioned. In that case, forgetting was manifested through vandalism – through defacement, broken stone plates, graffiti, removed names and littered rubbish. However, there are no evident signs of vandalism in the Maarjamäe landscape memorial. There, rather, we speak of a different kind of neglect that involves policy-makers: If the break in history and politics is represented in Mostar through vandalism, in the case of Tallinn, we can recognise it in disinvestment and abandonment – as a slow-motion sacrifice.

The memorial is still acquiring patina despite the current interval of neglect. Even if it stands as a memorial without memory, the Soviet landscape memorial should not yet be considered a ruin as it does not stand beyond repair. It might be evacuated of memory but not of meaning, as this memorial still mirrors our society, speaking of us in the present, not in the past. In the case of Maarjamäe, the accumulation of memory and forgetting elements has not generated, however, a harmonic layering, but rather produced an exponential increase of its haunting value, multiplying its memorial charge. Several of the memorial elements made invisible through decay, however, did not vanish to the end, and still intrude on the contemporary scheme of things. Thus, it has become, rather, a landscape of forgetting, which remains in the city as the negative of the Soviet ideal and as a hetero-memento within the current historical regime.

Condemnation of memory

Umberto Eco noted that a device has still not been invented that helps voluntary forgetting, 'but there are devices for remembering badly'.[62] In an existentialist manner, we can argue that building a memorial is the beginning of its ageing and dying, and potentially of remembering badly. In theory, design should anticipate the ageing of memorials. In practice, however, it is hard to foresee radical political ruptures like the one that happened in Estonia. Like many other Soviet-built forms, the Maarjamäe memorial landscape was designed to be permanent, explicitly realised for

monumental purposes, entailing an artistic and architectonic merit, and meant to acquire patina over time (Riegl 2004 [1928]).[63] This currently unwanted memorial was originally built to reinforce cultural messages that are nowadays made unmemorable – against the original interpretation and will of their makers.[64]

Monuments and memorials do not simply refer to a particular figure or historical period, but they are also a demonstration of power. In this sense, they not only have meaning by themselves, but also by their location, material condition and the resources mobilised by social elites for their construction and maintenance.[65] Further on, memorial materiality is perceived both backwards and forward, playing an important role in composing historical narratives phenomenologically, through everyday practices and emotional attachments that are not dependent on verbalised meanings.[66] From an artistic perspective, monuments might be damaged simply by modifying its context, location and narrative, 'without having been itself physically transformed'.[67] Yet, material interventions (active or passive) are usually more effective, even if less subtle; already in Ancient Rome, rulers ordered the defacement of monuments and to scratch the name of the damned as a form of condemnation of memory (*damnatio memoriae*), thereby communicating a shift in power relations.[68] Neglecting the Soviet landscape design, as a condemnation of memory, can be, therefore, considered part of representing and making the Estonian national history.

Besides the Soviet landscape memorial, the German cemetery and the memorial of the crimes of Communism, there is a fourth element of memorialisation in the Maarjamäe area – the Estonian History Museum.[69] Two hundred years ago, there was a sugar factory on the same hill – the 'Clementzsche Zuckerfabrik' – which was in the hands of German merchants. In 1873, count Anatoli Orlov-Davydov bought the land and built a summer palace there, yet the count and his family left the Russian empire in 1917, right after the Bolshevik revolution. Then, in the 1930s, the palace was transformed into a cabaret-restaurant, and finally into a flight school. After WWII, the palace was reshaped into an apartment complex, and only in the 1980s did a Museum of Revolution and History of ESSR open there. There was indeed a project to transform the whole district into an area conveying the friendship of nations by interconnecting different monumental elements (including the grounds of the Singing Festival), yet it remained unfinished.

In 1987, in the main hall of the palace-museum, local artist Evald Okas painted an ambitious mural with symbols of Soviet labour achievements, such as cosmonauts, gymnasts and scientists. In 1991, it was covered up; so, in less than 3 years after making the frescoes public, they were already hidden with a veil. It only became accessible again in 2008. In 2014, there was an incident, however, which created heated discussions in Estonia and put the display of the mural at risk once more. Students of the Tallinn Linnamäe Russian Lyceum made a class photo using the frescoes as a backdrop. As informed by the media, this picture had an anti-Estonian undertone.[70] The mural 'Friendship of Nations' by Evald Okas still remains as part of the museum, yet somehow muted, with little exposure and no information about the artist.

In February 2018, the permanent exhibition of the Estonian History Museum was reopened with the telling title 'My free country', in which the narratives of the exhibition are in Estonian and English, but not in Russian (there is just an audioguide in this language, despite 27% of the population acknowledging that Russian is their native language).[71] In the backyard of the Estonian History Museum, we can also find the *Outdoor Exhibition of Soviet Monuments* (opened in April 2018). For two decades, these 15 monuments and sculptures had been laying on the ground and presented by the webpage of the museum as 'homeless monuments', 'ideological' and 'a forgotten heritage'. Yet the official description of the monuments has now changed, and one can read on the website that these sculptures deserve to be preserved 'from a historical point of view' because of their 'high artistic quality. . . and in spite of recalling painful events'.[72]

We can correlate the material decay, disrepair and relocation of these monuments and memorials with the engineering of affect, state legibility and how political sensibilities are articulated.[73] As if it were a forensic testimony, we can also identify political forces, wills, narratives and relations in crumbling memorials, which can be treated as 'both a sensor and an agent' of damage.[74] To abandon something means to go away, to withdraw and terminate, to stop, thus foregrounding a sense of ending or disruption of the previous past and political regime. Hence, these are not simply forms for remembering badly, but rather the materialisation of a condemnation of memory. In Estonia, institutionalised forgetting led to the active neglect of Soviet legacies, which, in turn, contributed to rendering problematic the Communist past. We are talking of memorial power in reverse, and of the work of disrepair and neglect, which are not a natural process but rather part of disqualifying strategy, and hence a product of particular decisions, of attentions and inattentions.

Conclusion

This article contributes to ongoing discussions about the overlapping character of remembering and forgetting, how monumental legacies of a previous past are perceived into the present, and the way the disrepair of memorials can be brought into political action.[75] Since the built environment contributes to concretising values, solidifying memory representations and distributing orders of worth, discourses also have a material life.[76] Yet, if there is an ideology in the built environment, we might also argue that the neglect of the inherited is also a form of politics.

The examination of the social dynamics and discourses surrounding this site brings to light to the massive process of undoing memory that has gone on in Estonia after the break-up of the Soviet Union, while it also shows how institutionalised forgetting led to the active neglect of Soviet legacies, which, in turn, contributed to rendering problematic the Communist past. The article has reflected on how the neglect of a Soviet memorial landscape indicates a shifting memory and a failure of relationships. In Estonia, the Soviet past was rendered as residual and made unsustainable by generating negative affective transmissions through cultural heritage in disrepair. The research analysed a multi-layered memory site in Tallinn, which includes various memorials from different time periods and political regimes. The current neglect of the Maarjamäe memorial, letting it crumble into pieces, is thus part of a wider strategy of disremembering the Communist past in its original terms, thus producing a palpable sense of decomposition and failure.[77]

In the case of Soviet legacies, the level and amount of degradation and the short time period involved teaches specific lessons about memory unworking. By examining the relationships between material crumbling and the state, through this paper, I demonstrated the working effects of disrepair[78] and how the disrepair of Soviet memorials not only support state legibility[79] but also condition broader political sensibilities.[80] Equally, it reminded the reader that forgetting should not be considered as an error of memory but rather as a part of the affirmation of a new one. Organised oblivion and institutional neglect are, however, a way of returning to a previous past, instead of its overcoming. The past, when it is not healed gradually and organically, tends to end up returning precisely through the cracks left. Memory unwork is tangible through the deficit, the scar, the gapand other forms of dematerialisation, dismembering and interruption within material forms.[81] We can indeed conclude that the shrubs growing big in the Maarjamäe memorial not only exemplify material brokenness but also existing social tensions and antagonist memorial narratives that have not been made compatible.

Attentive to how forgetting constitutes a tangible part of local affective history, I accounted for the material presence of the Soviet past in contemporary life, and therefore, dealt with the living memory recorded in material remains, with the materialisation of ongoing events, and also what things have become and to the way their present being affects the production of local affective history.[82] I argued

that the unsustainability of unwanted memorials is based on the strategy of turning it in a wasted legacy in order to erase its original meanings or even prepare its future demolition.[83] The actual condition of this contentious memorial is a form of materialisation of political discontinuity (indexing the Soviet past as unwelcome into the actual realm of political representation), yet with an increasing banalisation of the monumental design (despite the different layers for remembrance present in and on the site).

However, in Maarjamäe, one gets an impression of how certain memorials can be instrumental in reconciling the past, for instance by suturing incoherent historical fragments and antagonistic interpretations. In this vein, a more active dialogue between the Memorial to the Victims of Communism, the Tombs of German Soldiers and the Soviet landscape design could contribute to both understanding the painful history of Estonia in the 20th century and circulating more positive and inclusive affects in the public sphere of the country. After discussing the material condition of both the memorial complex and the memory policy in Estonia, I argue that Maarjamäe deserves to be preserved in its complexities; therefore, the Soviet time memorial needs to be renovated, and a more symmetrical co-curation or dialogue between all the elements of the memorial complex should be established. Eventually, this may help to reconcile the antagonist memorial narratives, heal the open wounds of the post-socialist transformations and contribute to a rethinking of history in a plural way.

Funding

ORCID iD

Francisco Martínez ![iD] https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2113-9987

Notes

1. C.McCarthy, *All the Pretty Horses* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993). The title of this article paraphrases V. Nabokov's autobiographical memoir *Speak, Memory* (1951).
2. See for instance: T.Edensor, *Industrial Ruins: Space, Aesthetics and Materiality* (Oxford: Berg, 2005); A.L.Stoler, 'Imperial Debris: Reflections on Ruins and Ruination', *Cultural Anthropology*, 23, 2008, pp. 191–219; G.Gordillo, *Rubble: The Afterlife of Destruction* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014).
3. C.DeSilvey, 'Making Sense of Transience: An Anticipatory History', *cultural geographies*, 19, 2012, pp. 31–54; and C.DeSilvey and T.Edensor, 'Reckoning with Ruins', *Progress in Human Geography*, 37, 2013, pp. 465–85.
4. D.Sandler. *Counterpreservation: Architectural Decay in Berlin Since 1989* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016).
5. M.T.Starzmann and J.R.Roby (eds), *Excavating Memory Sites of Remembering and Forgetting* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2016).
6. S.Küchler, 'The Place of Memory', in A.Forty and S.Küchler (eds), *The Art of Forgetting* (Oxford: Berg, 1999), pp. 53–72; M.Taussig, *Defacement. Public Secrecy and the Labor of the Negative* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).
7. G.Bataille, *The Accursed Share* (New York: Zone, 1989).
8. B.James, 'Fencing in the Past: Budapest's Statue Park Museum', *Media Culture & Society*, 21, 1999, pp. 291–311; N.Johnson, 'Mapping Monuments: The Shaping of Public Space and Cultural Identities', *Visual Communication*, 1, 2002, pp. 293–98; P.Williams, 'The Afterlife of Communist Statuary: Hungary's Szoborpark and Lithuania's Grutas Park', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 44, 2008, pp. 185–98.
9. Y.Navaro-Yashin, *The Make-Believe Space: Affective Geography in a Postwar Polity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012).

10. A.Riegl, 'Modern Cult of Monuments', in V.Schwartz and J.Przybylski (eds), *The Nineteenth Century Visual Culture Reader* (London: Routledge, 2004 [1928]), pp. 56–9.

11. The Bronze Soldier controversy remains out of the scope of this article. For more on this topic, see: S.Kattago, 'War Memorials and the Politics of Memory: The Soviet War Memorial in Tallinn', *Constellations*, 16, 2009, pp. 150–66; and K.Norman (ed), *After-War* (Tallinn: Centre for Contemporary Arts, 2009).

12. Verdery 1999; R.Nugin, A.Kannike and M.Raudsepp (eds) *Generations in Estonia: Contemporary Perspectives on Turbulent Times* (Tartu: University of Tartu Press, 2016).

13. M.Tamm, 'In Search of Lost Time: Memory Politics in Estonia, 1991–2011', *Nationalities Papers*, 41, 2013, pp. 651–74.

14. M.Strauss (ed), *Vabadussõja mälestusmärgid I [The Memorials of the War of Independence I]* (Keila: Strauss, 2002), pp. 307–8.

15. Cf. in M.Piipuu, 'Remembering the Occupations Will Remain at the Heart of the Museum', *ERR.ee* (25 February 2016).

16. P.Kask and T.Tiivel. 'Uus ärkamisaeg Eesti Muinsuskaitse Seltsi asutamisest', [A New Era of Awakening. From the Founding Meeting of the Estonian Heritage Society], *Looming*, 2, 1988, pp. 278–81.

17. M.Mälksoo, *The Politics of Becoming European. A Study of Polish and Baltic Post-Cold War Security Imaginaries* (London: Routledge, 2010). Also E.C.Pettai and V.Pettai, *Transitional and Retrospective Justice in the Baltic States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

18. M.Mälksoo,'"Memory Must Be Defended": Beyond the Politics of Mnemonical Security', *Security Dialogue*, 46, 2015, pp. 221–37; See also M.Kuus, 'Banal Huntingtonianism: Civilizational Geopolitics in Estonia', in S.Guzzini (ed), *The Return of Geopolitics in Europe?: Social Mechanisms and Foreign Policy Identity Crises* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 174–91; And F.Martínez, 'To Whom Does History Belong? The Theatre of Memory in Post-Soviet Russia, Estonia and Georgia', *Anthropological Journal of European Cultures*, 23, 2017, pp. 98–127.

19. S.Rausing, *History, Memory, and Identity in Post-Soviet Estonia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

20. V.Buchli and G.Lucas (eds), *Archaeologies of the Contemporary Past* (London: Routledge, 2002); F.Martínez, *Remains of the Soviet Past in Estonia* (London: UCL Press, 2018a).

21. Navaro-Yashin, *The Make-Believe Space*.

22. C.Schwenkel, 'Post/Socialist Affect: Ruination and Reconstruction of the Nation in Urban Vietnam', *Cultural Anthropology*, 28, 2013, pp. 252–77.

23. M.Laszczkowski, *'City of the Future': Built Space, Modernity and Urban Change in Astana* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2016).

24. As observed by Hans Ruin (2019), graves constitute a solemn link between the living and the dead, imbued with commemorative, sacred time that makes visitors recreate an experience of pastness, turning grounds into places of memory (see also Kattago 2020). H.Ruin, *Being with the Dead* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019); S.Kattago, *Encountering the Past within the Present* (London: Routledge, 2020).

25. A.Murdmaa, *Luup*, December 1997.

26. L.Meri, Speech by the President of the Republic at the Presentation of the Estonian Translation of 'The Black Book of Communism', Tallinn, December 12, 2000; Cf. in Mälksoo 2010: p. 91.

27. R.Hertz, *Death and the Right Hand* (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1960[1907]).

28. Sirp, http://www.sirp.ee/s1-artiklid/arhitektuur/maarjamae-memoriaalidest-ja-avalikust-ruumist/

29. See Opinion digest: 'Tear down Maarjamäe Soviet Memorial, or Keep it?' *Postimees*, 9.01.2018 https://news.err.ee/653033/opinion-digest-tear-down-maarjamae-soviet-memorial-or-keep-it

30. T.Tunnel, 'Is a Monument Land Stuck in Time?' *Estonian Art*, 1, 2018, pp. 19–28.

31. Edensor, *Industrial Ruins*.

32. P.Nora, 'Between Memory and History: Les lieux de mémoire', *Representations*, 26, 1989, pp. 7–25.

33. L.Frers, 'The Matter of Absence', *cultural geographies*, 20, 2013, pp. 431–45.

34. A memorial that does not provide final answers, but questions – provoking discussion and critical thoughts in regards to the commemoration they are related to. See J.E.Young, 'The Counter-Monument: Memory against Itself in Germany Today', *Critical Inquiry*, 18, 1992, pp. 267–96.

35. P.Wilson, 'Monumental Indifference in Tallinn', *Public Art Dialogue*, 5, 2015, pp. 170–90.

36. (Yampolsky, 'In the Shadow of Monuments'; S.Macdonald, *Memorylands* (London: Routledge, 2013); G.Zubrzycki, *National Matters. Materiality, Culture, and Nationalism* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2017).

37. A.Martin, 'Maarjamäe Memorial Ensemble as a Failed Problem', *Estonian News Service* 13.03.2020. https://kultuur.err.ee/1063515/anni-martin-maarjamae-memoriaalansambel-kui-nurjatu-probleem.

38. See Tallinn land cadaster: https://www.maaamet.ee/en/objectives-activities/land-cadastre

39. See the editorial of the main Estonian journal, *Postimees*, 26.08.20. https://www.postimees.ee/author/55078?_ga=2.86532312.1747313654.1598442946-1973763980.1598442946

40. See the Estonian News Service, 25.08.20: https://news.err.ee/1127181/archbishop-proposes-virgin-mary-statue-for-maarjamae-memorial

41. Statement issued the 27.04.2005, https://www.valitsus.ee/et

42. See Merle Karro-Kelberg 2018. 'Kas naabrist parem?' (The best neighbour?), Sirp https://www.sirp.ee/s1-artiklid/arhitektuur/kas-naabrist-parem/

43. Also referred in Merle Karro-Kelberg's article, 2018. Own translation from Estonian.

44. Küchler, 'The Place of Memory'

45. The corpses were then reburied in the adjacent German military cemetery, both Nazi and Red Army soldiers are buried. Approximately 35 000 German soldiers dead in WWII are buried in Estonia.

46. Kalle Vellevoog, Jaan Tiidemann, Tiiu Truus, Martin Prommik and Lidia Zarudnaja of the Arhitektuuribüroo JVR won the architecture design competition.

47. By Koit Ojaliiv, ending up as finalist.

48. R.Harrison, et al. *Heritage Futures* (London: UCL Press, 2020).

49. J.Kristeva, *Powers of Horror. An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982); A.González-Ruibal 'Time to Destroy: An Archaeology of Supermodernity', *Current Anthropology*, 49, 2008, pp. 247–79.

50. M.Yampolsky, 'In the Shadow of Monuments: Notes on Iconoclasm and Time', in N. Condee (ed), *Soviet Hieroglyphics: Visual Culture in Late Twentieth-Century Russia* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), pp. 93–113. C.DeSilvey, *Curated Decay. Heritage beyond Saving* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2017).

51. Buchli and Lucas, *Archaeologies of the Contemporary Past*.

52. R.Nelson and M.Olin (eds), *Monuments and Memory, Made and Unmade* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); P.Carrier. *Holocaust Monuments and National Memory Cultures in France and Germany Since 1989* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2005).

53. R.Bendix, A.Eggert, and A.Peselmann (eds), *Heritage Regimes and the State* (Göttingen: Universitätsverlag Göttingen, 2012).

54. P.Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

55. A.González-Ruibal, 'Land of Amnesia: Power, Predation, and Heritage in Central Africa', in M. Starzmann and J. R. Roby (eds), *Excavating Memory Sites of Remembering and Forgetting*. (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2016), pp. 131–52.

56. See R.Smithson, *The Collected Writings* (New York: University of California Press, 1996), p. 72.

57. J.B.Jackson, *The Necessity for Ruins and Other Topics* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1980). As Jackson wrote, "A monument . . . is venerated not as a work of art or as an antique, but as an echo from the remote past suddenly become present and actual" (1980: 91).

58. Buchli and Lucas, *Archaeologies of the Contemporary Past*; R.Harrison and J.Schofield, 'Archaeo-Ethnography, Auto-Archaeology: Introducing Archaeologies of the Contemporary Past', *Archaeologies*, 5, 2009, pp. 185–209; Pétursdóttir and Olsen, 'An Archaeology of Ruins'.

59. V.Napolitano, 'Anthropology and Traces', *Anthropological Theory*, 15, 2015, 47–67, p. 47.

60. See L.Olivier, *The Dark Abyss of Time* (Lanham: AltaMira Press, 2011); R.Koselleck, *Sediments of time: On Possible Histories* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2018); and Kattago, *Encountering the Past*.

61. K.Ilić and N.Škrbić Alempijević, 'Cultures of Memory, Landscapes of Forgetting', *Studia Ethnologica Croatica*, 29, 2017, pp. 73–101.

62. U.Eco, 'An Ars Oblivionalis? Forget it!' *PMLA*, 103, 1988, pp. 254–61, pp. 259.

63. N.Vukov, 'The "Unmemorable" and the "Unforgettable": "Museumizing" the Socialist Past in Post-1989 Bulgaria', in O. Sarkisova and P. Apor (eds), *Past for the Eyes* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2008), pp. 307–34.

64. Communist memorials were characterised by their size and abundance. For instance, the number of statues of Lenin estimated in Russia in 1994 was over 40.000. See Yampolsky, 'In the Shadow of Monuments'. Also D.Gamboni, *The Destruction of Art: Iconoclasm and Vandalism since the French Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).

65. L.Hershkovitz, 'Tiananmen Square and the Politics of Place', *Political Geography*, 12, 1993, pp. 395–420; G.Forest, J.Johnson, and K.Till, 'Post-Totalitarian National Identity: Public Memory in Germany and Russia', *Social and Cultural Geography*, 73, 2004, pp. 219–30.

66. M.Kwint, C.Breward and J.Aynsley, (eds.) *Material Memories. Design and Evocation* (Oxford: Berg, 1999); Buchli and Lucas, *Archaeologies of the Contemporary Past*; J.Schofield, W.G.Johnson and C.M.Beck (eds), *Matériel Culture. The Archaeology of the Twentieth Century Conflict* (London: Routledge, 2002); Zubrzycki, *National Matters*.

67. Gamboni, *The Destruction of Art*, p. 20.

68. J.Elsner, 'Iconoclasm and the Preservation of Memory', in R. Nelson and M. Olin (eds), *Monuments and Memory, Made and Unmade* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), pp. 209–31.

69. A new film museum has been also erected in the area, which falls out of the scope of this research.

70. T.Kaukvere 2014. A Curtain (again) falls on Soviet mural. *Postimees*, 21 November https://news.posti-mees.ee/3001289/curtain-again-falls-on-soviet-mural; See also the artwork of Kristina Norman, "Festive Spaces" (2016), on the topic.

71. For the cultural journal SIRP, I wrote a critical review of the 'My Free Country' exhibition, along reflections about banal nationalism in Estonia (see M.Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage, 1995). My article generated an interesting feedback among locals. On the one hand, five people wrote a private message to me saying thanks for making this view public and complaining that the narratives promoted by the Estonian History Museum are not appropriate anymore. Also, the article received ten times more readers than an average article of the journal. On the other hand, the article generated heated public comments, asking the editor in chief to resign and accusing me of being a 'Marxist' and a 'Red professor' for criticising 'the Estonian nation'. See 'Achtung! Banaalse rahvusluse epideemia levib üle riigi'. *Sirp* 2 March 2018.

72. See Maarjamäe Loss, 'Outdoor Exhibition of Soviet Monuments', http://www.ajaloomuuseum.ee/exhibitions/permanent-exhibitions/noukogude-aegsete-monumentide-valinaitus

73. J.C.Scott, *Seeing Like a State* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998); J.Rancière, *Politics and Aesthetics* (London: Continuum, 2006); Navaro-Yashin, *The Make-Believe Space*; S.Oushakine, 'Remembering in Public: On the Affective Management of History', *Ab Imperio*, 1, 2013, pp. 269–302; J.Chu 'When Infrastructures Attack: The Workings of Disrepair in China', *American Ethnologist*, 14, 2014, pp. 351–67.

74. E.Weizman, 'Introduction: Forensis', in E. Weizman (ed), *Forensis: The Architecture of Public Truth* (Berlin: Sternberg, 2014), pp. 9–32, pp. 16.

75. Connerton, *How Societies Remember*; S.Küchler, 'Landscape and Memory: The Mapping of Process and Its Representation in a Melanesian Society', in B.Bender (ed), *Landscape: Politics and Perspectives* (Oxford: Berg, 1993), pp. 85–106; J.Boyarin (ed), *Remapping Memory: The Politics of Timespace* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1994).

76. C.Humphrey, 'Ideology in Infrastructure: Architecture and Soviet Imagination', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 11 (2005), pp. 39–58.

77. T.Yarrow, 'Remains of the Future: Rethinking the Space and Time of Ruination through the Volta Resettlement Project, Ghana', *Cultural Anthropology*, 32, 2015, pp. 566–91, pp. 569.

78. Chu, 'When Infrastructures Attack'.

79. Scott, *Seeing Like a State.*

80. Rancière, *Politics and Aesthetics.*

81. Buchli and Lucas, *Archaeologies of the Contemporary Past.*

82. Þ.Pétursdóttir and B.Olsen, 'An Archaeology of Ruins', in B. Olsen and Þ. Pétursdóttir (eds), *Ruin Memories* (London: Routledge, 2014) pp. 3–29.

83. As shown in the case of the central-north seaside of Tallinn, the strategy of erasure follows three steps: letting it break, then produce discourses of danger and trash, and finally talk of potential and that 'there is nothing there'. See F.Martínez, '"This Place Has Potential": Trash, Culture, and Urban Regeneration in Tallinn, Estonia', *Suomen Antropologi*, 42, 2018b, pp. 4–22.

Author biography

Francisco Martínez is an anthropologist dealing with contemporary issues of material culture through ethnographic experiments. In 2018, he was awarded with the Early Career Prize of the European Association of Social Anthropologists. Currently, he works as associate professor at Tallinn University and convenes the Collaboratory for Ethnographic Experimentation (EASA Network). Francisco has published several books – including *Peripheral Methodologies* (Routledge, 2021); *Politics of Recuperation in Post-Crisis Portugal* (Bloomsbury, 2020), *Repair, Brokenness, Breakthrough* (Berghahn, 2019), and *Remains of the Soviet Past in Estonia* (UCL Press, 2018). He has also curated different exhibitions – including 'Objects of Attention' (Estonian Museum of Applied Art & Design, 2019), and 'Living in Decline' (Estonian Mining Museum, 2021).