

collective memory  
memory collective  
memory politics

“Monuments are intended to be permanent, but their lives are often cut short by the turbulent events of history. In Central Europe this is a well-known phenomenon. Political change in this region tends to involve **a transformation of urban scenery,** such as the removal of Communist public sculptures after 1989 or the toppling of Prague’s Marian column in 1918.

For whatever reason it happens, the defacement, destruction or replacement of monuments is integral to their function.

**They are not aesthetic objects that invite contemplation, but political ones that participate in public discourse, and consequently the response to them is also political.”**



“After coming into power in 2010, the government led by Viktor Orbán decided to restore Kossuth Square to its 1944 state. The project fitted into the official historical narrative promoted by the government, according to which Hungary **had lost its independence in 1944 with the Nazi German invasion, and only truly regained it in 2010.**

Memorial for victims of the German Occupation, 2014, Liberty Sq., Budapest

The reconstruction project is certainly **an example of centrally directed memory politics**, (...) promoting a historical narrative favoured by the government and the positive reevaluation of the Horthy regime (1919-44) that forms a part of this.”

“Instead of helping a democratic community tackle the legacy of a difficult historical event, it fuels the **politics of resentment.**”

The Trianon Peace Treaty brought the end of the old Kingdom of Hungary and created the modern-day Hungary.

Named after the Baroque palace in Versailles where the Hungarian delegates signed the document, the peace settlement reduced the territory of the new state by 72 percent and annexed these areas to the neighboring states that emerged on the victorious side in the First World War. The Trianon treaty had left a deep scar in Hungarian collective memory.”

While the population in these territories – now part of present-day Romania, Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Austria, Slovakia, and Ukraine – was majority non-Hungarian, around 3.3 million Hungarians also found themselves outside the new borders. Today these transborder Hungarian communities constitute one of the largest ethnic minority populations within Europe.”



“The memorial, despite its name, does **not represent a national community** or seek to express what unity means for Hungarians today. Rather, as if stuck in time a century ago, it mourns the loss of former territory and glory.

1. Its style is inspired by an international aesthetic, yet the project was commissioned by the state **without any public discussion** or input on the design.
2. the problem with the **list of places (13000)**: Instead of reflecting an authentic snapshot of the Kingdom’s geography in 1913, many of the names on the list were the result of decades of forced Hungarianization.
3. The aim was to erase local multi-ethnic, linguistic, and socio-cultural diversity and replace it with a **distorted homogenizing Hungarian glaze**. Such oppressive tactics were widely used by the British colonials, and, closer to home, they are reminiscent of the nationalist policies directed against the Hungarian minority in Ceaușescu’s Romania during the 1970s-80s.”





“The architecture of memorialization is a form of **collective pedagogy**, aiming to **instruct** posterity about how to interpret the past.”



“At best, memorials are **symbolic tools within the public sphere**, aiding democratic communities in the articulation of common goals.

At worst, they are unilateral imprints of ruling elites and their narrow **instrumentalization of the past** – undemocratic performances for the present and not reflections on the future.”

[László Szabolcs: Memory Politics in an Illiberal Regime  
Hungary's new Trianon memorial](#)