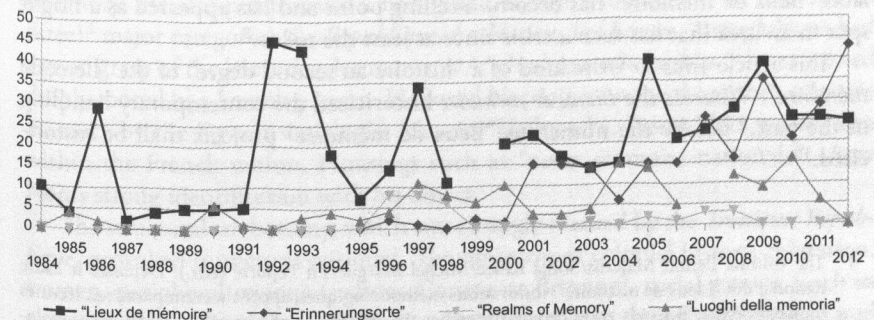


Benoît Majerus

## The "lieux de mémoire": a place of remembrance for European historians?

During the last 30 years, "lieux de mémoire"<sup>1</sup> has evolved into one of the most popular terms in European historiography. It was coined by the French historian Pierre Nora in the late 1970s. Initially established with the aim of providing new ways for relating national history, the "lieux de mémoire" spread quickly all over Western Europe. The concept certainly belongs to the most successful transfers in European historiography of the last decades, independently of the occasionally fundamental criticism given to Pierre Nora's seven-volume work or to similar projects elsewhere. The paradigm not only crossed language borders without any apparent problem, it also left its primary academic frame: today the term "lieux de mémoire" is used in academia as well as in tourism.<sup>2</sup>

Table 1 – Number of mentions in WorldCat<sup>3</sup> (request 10 December 2012)



The reasons for this success are multifaceted. Without any doubt, the "lieux de mémoire" proved to be a meaningful code for historians who wanted to partake in the *memorial turn*. Whereas the linguistic turn vanished quite quickly into thin air, memory studies were institutionalised rather fast and successfully so: handbooks,

1 I refer to the general concept of the idea when written with inverted commas, I use italics when referring to the books edited by Pierre Nora.

2 In 1993, there was an early double recognition of the term, both linguistic and legal. "Lieux de mémoire" was added to the French dictionary *Le Grand Robert de la langue française*. In the *loi du 8 janvier 1993 pour l'aspect paysager*, the "lieu de mémoire" became a legal category for heritage preservation.

3 WorldCat ([www.worldcat.org](http://www.worldcat.org)) is the world's biggest bibliographical data base, with more than 72.000 participating libraries: "WorldCat", in: Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, 2013.



study courses and journals were conducive to a stable establishment of this new field. Philosophers and sociologists as well as political scientists and art historians could participate in this very heterogeneous area of research. By creating the term "lieux de mémoire", one historian provided this new interdisciplinary field of scholarship with a central, yet accessible concept.<sup>4</sup>

The "lieux de mémoire" permitted the writing of a new kind of national history. Since the 1960s, the classic, linear narratives of nations had been under pressure. While some historians turned towards other areas – be it micro-history, entangled history, transnational or global history – several scholars tried to narrate national history in a new way. The result is what Pierre Nora meant with the term "histoire au second degré"<sup>5</sup>, when summarising his approach. This kind of historiography does not focus on "wie es eigentlich gewesen", but on how history is told. It is not the story of the nation-state recounted with all its heroes and villains, but an account of the different stories that were deployed to narrate the nation-state. Pierre Nora's project can thus be understood as a counter-project to all the many national histories, written *inter alia* by convinced social historians.<sup>6</sup> Finally, the project fostered a successful model of publication with two winners: the academics, on the one hand, who had the impression to spread their knowledge in a 'playful' way; the "lieux de mémoire" became a working medium for popularising academic research. The editors, on the other hand, benefitted equally from the project:<sup>7</sup> the label "lieux de mémoire" has become a selling point and has appeared as a bright spot in an area that has seen a crisis since at least the 1980s.<sup>8</sup>

This article aims to write kind of a "histoire au second degré" of the "lieux de mémoire". Whereas the *Lieux de mémoire* historicised the contemporary handling of the past,<sup>9</sup> hereby the numerous "lieux de mémoire" projects shall be historicised.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>4</sup> The volume Benoît Majerus/Sonja Kmec/Michel Margue/Pit Péporté (eds.): *Dépasser le cadre national des "Lieux de mémoire": innovations méthodologiques, approches comparatives, lectures transnationales*, Brussels 2009 brought together the reflections of historians, social anthropologists, geographers, sociologists, political scientists and literary scholars.

<sup>5</sup> Pierre Nora: *Pour une histoire au second degré*, in: *Le Débat*, 1 novembre 2002, pp. 24–31.

<sup>6</sup> E.g. the following provoked some controversy: Fernand Braudel: *L'identité de la France*, Paris 1986; Heinrich August Winkler: *Der lange Weg nach Westen*, vol. 2, Munich 2000; Georges Duby: *Histoire de la France: des origines à nos jours*, Paris 2006.

<sup>7</sup> In March 2001, the French project (all editions) counted more than 81.000 sold copies (François Dosse: *Pierre Nora: homo historicus*, Paris 2011, p. 327). The German project saw its third edition in 2002, only one year after the publishing of the first. The Luxembourgish project saw a second edition within the first year of publication, which also sold out quickly (altogether a print-run of 2000).

<sup>8</sup> Philippe Olivera: *Édition d'histoire*, in: Christian Delacroix/François Dosse/Patrick Garcia/Nicolas Offenstadt (eds.): *Historiographies*, Gallimard 2010, pp. 112–123.

<sup>9</sup> François Hartog: *Temps et Histoire. Comment écrire l'histoire de France?*, in: *Annales HSS* (1995), n° 6, pp. 1233–1236.

<sup>10</sup> I have drawn together a list of all "academic" *lieux de mémoire* projects undertaken so far; the complete list can be found in my blog article: Benoît Majerus: *Lieux de mémoire: a never ending story* (<http://majerus.hypotheses.org/617>). See as well Nicole L. Immler: "Gedächtnisgeschichte" –

## National Realms of Memory

Pierre Nora's project grew within the national frame of French historiography, itself closely bound to the birth of the French nation-state in the nineteenth century. Its aim was to tell the 'history of France'. The *Lieux de mémoire* got somehow stuck halfway. On the one hand, Pierre Nora tried to overcome the classic master narrative of the nation. From the 1960s, narrating and remembering slowly became his main interests. Hints of this can be detected in his manner of writing history – as in his studies on Ernest Lavisse and his work as the editor for humanities at the French publisher Gallimard – e.g. in the series *Archives* or in books such as Georges Duby's *Dimanche de Bouvines* or Philippe Joutard's *La légende des Camisards*, which were in some way forerunner of the *Lieux de mémoire*.<sup>11</sup> Without being committed to cultural history, Pierre Nora belonged to a circle of historians who rejected the classic social history promoted by the Annales movement, trying instead to write a new (political) history. On the other hand, Nora stood in the tradition of nineteenth-century French historiography, represented *inter alia* by Ernest Lavisse, to whom Nora dedicated an article in the *Lieux de mémoire*. One of his colleagues, Jacques Revel, even called him the "Lavisse des temps nouveaux"<sup>12</sup>. Starting from a rather pessimist stance – the disappearance of remembrance in French society – Pierre Nora not only wanted to save the past from being forgotten by creating an inventory. He also put forward a new grand narrative for France, on the basis of three<sup>13</sup> major categories: *La République*, *La Nation*, *Les France*. Though Nora had a good grasp of the latest developments in Anglophone scholarship,<sup>14</sup> he remained deeply rooted in a French pattern. He based his project on the theory on collective memory by the French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs. Pierre Nora wrote from within the French nation. Phrasings such as "notre mémoire nationale", show Nora's strong identification with his object.

The structural trichotomy, which was strongly marked by the *Troisième République*, provoked numerous critiques. The omission of colonial history, migration, women, peripheral regions (such as Corsica or Brittany), social groups (such as peasants and workers) was criticised as contributing to a narrative that celebrated

Ein Vergleich von Deutschland und Österreich in Bezug auf Pierre Noras Konzept der lieux de mémoire, in: Ian Foster/Juliet Wignmore (eds.): *Neighbours and strangers. Literary and Cultural Relations in Germany, Austria and Central Europe since 1989*, Amsterdam 2004, pp. 173–196; Kornelia Koriczal: *Pierre Noras folgenreiches Konzept von les lieux de mémoire und seine Re-Interpretationen: eine vergleichende Analyse*, in: *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 62 (2011), n° 1–2, pp. 17–36.

<sup>11</sup> François Dosse: *Pierre Nora*.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 567.

<sup>13</sup> A tripartite division is a typical feature of French history writing. Until today, "dissertations" written by French history students consist of three parts.

<sup>14</sup> He himself wrote several articles about the United States and contributed a lot to the French reception of American and English anthropology and sociology as editor of Gallimard: François Dosse: *Pierre Nora*.



French history as a coherent unity, unconcerned by processes of exclusion.<sup>15</sup> The "Nation" had not been undermined, but reinforced. Although this critique pointed mainly at the content of the book, its proponents seem partly to have taken issue with the authors of the seven-volume series, who were mainly male, French, historians, and who had a position at a Paris university or research institution.<sup>16</sup> The authors represented the French historiographical establishment.

The French project very soon saw a double transfer: a translation into other languages, and a transfer of its approach. At a first stage, parts of the *Lieux de mémoire* were translated into German and English. Tilmann Robbe showed how important – and equally delusive – the German reception of Nora had been during the first years, partly due to an 'exacerbating' translation by Wagenbach<sup>17</sup> in 1990.<sup>18</sup> *Zwischen Geschichte und Gedächtnis* contained articles from Nora that he wrote in and about the *Lieux de mémoire*. But Wagenbach's translated articles were published in 1990 two years before the last volume of the *Lieux de mémoire*. This booklet depicted a very conservative Nora, an image that endures in Germany until today. In many succeeding German projects, the translation by Wagenbach tended to be quoted rather than the original texts. They did not do justice to many of Nora's contributions in the early 1990s, which carried an entirely different tone than those of the 1980s. Thus, a "Nora imaginaire"<sup>19</sup> was created, whose changes of tone over the ages were ignored, while Nora himself altered his positions considerably on several points during the eight years of the *Lieux de mémoire* project: in 1984, he regretted the disappearance of remembrance, in 1992 he regretted the bulimia of remembrance.

In the United States, several chapters of the *Lieux de mémoire* were published in 1996. The three-volume edition – *Conflicts and Divisions, Traditions, Symbols* – was supervised by Lawrence Kritzman, one of the most influential American professors in French literature. It contained mainly articles of *Les France*. The collection tried to find a balance between the theoretical texts and those that matched how North Americans imagined France (e.g. *coq gaulois*, *Tour de France*).<sup>20</sup> Later, translations were made i. a. into Japanese, Czech, Hungarian, Russian, Polish, Portuguese ...<sup>21</sup>

At a second stage, Nora's approach was transferred to different European national contexts. For some time, Pierre Nora observed this transfer critically. In

an article from 1993, entitled *La notion de "lieu de mémoire" est-elle exportable?*, he put forward several arguments, pleading against a translation from one historiographical culture to another. First of all, the word "lieu de mémoire" itself, an adaptation of Cicero's *locus memoriae*, could not be translated into English, German or Spanish, according to Nora. Second, he was convinced that his undertaking was born in a specific French context, marked by a transition from history to memory. In no other country would historians have played such an important role in the nation-building process. Finally, the structure of the undertaking was genuinely French. In no other country would the three-fold distinction make any sense.<sup>22</sup> Even if Pierre Nora's opposition weakened over the following years, his scepticism remained. In 1994, he pleaded for a compared history of memory and concluded that "en matière de mémoire, il n'y a pas d'exception française". [There is no 'French exception' in terms of memory.] But only a few pages further, he spoke of a "surdétermination mémorielle" [over-determination by memory] that would be specific for the French model.<sup>23</sup> By 2001, his opposition had further weakened: the differences between Germany and France were no longer considered to be of a conceptual nature but rather related to the contents.<sup>24</sup> The numerous national projects<sup>25</sup> differed from each other in their specific approaches, they did have several things in common. The inspiration they took from Nora was generally acknowledged: their aim was to question the national master narrative and to write the history of that narrative. Thus, as with the *Lieux de mémoire*, the starting point of these projects is the reflection on national narratives. They belonged to a wider wave of historiography, that told the national tradition through cultural history ("als Kulturgeschichte der nationalen Tradition").<sup>26</sup> Most of the projects were dedicated to the metaphoric use of the term "lieu", defined as a projection screen for identities, being either of immaterial or material nature. Most, however, were also in favour of telling less coherent narratives. Étienne François and Hagen Schulze,

15 Hue-Tam Ho Tai: Remembered realms: Pierre Nora and French national memory, in: *The American Historical Review* 106 (2001), n° 3, pp. 906–922.

16 Benoît Majerus: *Lieux de mémoire – A European transfer story*, in: Stefan Berger/Bill Niven (eds.): *Writing the History of Memory*, London 2014, pp. 157–171.

17 Pierre Nora: *Zwischen Geschichte und Gedächtnis*, Berlin 1990.

18 Tilmann Robbe: *Historische Forschung und Geschichtsvermittlung: Erinnerungsorte in der deutschsprachigen Geschichtswissenschaft*, Göttingen 2009.

19 Étienne François: Pierre Nora und die lieux de mémoire, in: Pierre Nora (ed.): *Erinnerungsorte Frankreichs*, Munich 2005, p. 8.

20 François Dosse: Pierre Nora, pp. 351–353. Later, there has been another translation project of the University Press of Chicago, being published as *Rethinking France* between 2001 and 2010.

21 The most translated part of the project is the first article by Pierre Nora, written in 1984: Pierre Nora: *Présentation*, in: idem (ed.): *Les lieux de mémoire*, I: La République, Paris 1984.

22 Pierre Nora: *La notion de "lieu de mémoire" est-elle exportable?*, in: Pim den Boer/Willem Frijhoff (eds.): *Lieux de mémoire et identités nationales*, Amsterdam 1993, pp. 3–10.

23 Pierre Nora: *La loi de la mémoire*, in: *Le débat* (1994), n° 78, p. 188 et 190.

24 Pierre Nora: *Nachwort*, in: Étienne François/Hagen Schulze (eds.): *Deutsche Erinnerungsorte*, vol. 3, Munich 2003, pp. 681–686.

25 By the middle of 2013, 12 "national" projects had been finished. Apart from the French project, these were: Ole Feldbæk (ed.): *Dansk identitetshistorie*, vol. 4, Copenhagen 1991; Pim den Boer/Willem Frijhoff (eds.): *Les Lieux de mémoire et identités nationales*, Amsterdam 1993; Mario Isnenghi/Ersilia Alessandrone Perona (eds.): *I luoghi della memoria. Simboli e miti dell'Italia unita*, Rome 1996; Étienne François/Hagen Schulze (eds.): *Deutsche Erinnerungsorte*, Munich 2001; Emil Brix/Ernst Bruckmüller/Hannes Stekl (eds.): *Memoria Austriae 1, Menschen, Mythen, Zeiten*, Munich 2004; Henk Wesseling: *Plaatsen van herinnering: een historisch succesverhaal*, Amsterdam 2006; Sonja Kmec/Benoît Majerus/Michel Margue/Pit Péporté (eds.): *Lieux de mémoire au Luxembourg. Usages du passé et construction nationale*, Luxembourg 2007; Georges M. Nivat: *Les sites de la mémoire russe*, Paris 2007; Jo Tollebeek et al. (eds.): *België, een parcours van herinnering*, Amsterdam 2008; Martin Sabrow (ed.): *Erinnerungsorte der DDR*, Munich 2009; Georg Kreis: *Schweizer Erinnerungsorte: aus dem Speicher der Swissness*, Zürich 2010.

26 Lutz Raphael: *Geschichtswissenschaft im Zeitalter der Extreme: Theorien, Methoden, Tendenzen von 1900 bis zur Gegenwart*, Munich 2003, pp. 261–262.



editors of the German *Erinnerungsorte*, wrote that they, "anders als Pierre Nora, nicht von einem einheitlichen kulturellen Kanon ausgehen können. Die Vielfalt deutscher Geschichten und ihr Übermaß an Verwerfungen, Brüchen und Brechungen bringen eine Vielfalt oft disparater, widersprüchlicher Erinnerungsorte mit sich".<sup>27</sup> In the Swiss project the editor claimed: "Während Pierre Nora beinahe normativ von einem allgemeinen und festen und in der Regel bereits älteren Bestand an nationalen Erinnerungsorten ausgegangen ist, den er womöglich noch in der Schule gelernt hat, wird, wenn wir versuchen, das französische Konzept auf andere Gesellschaften – zum Beispiel die schweizerische – anzuwenden, deutlich, dass ein solcher Bestand objektiv nicht besteht."<sup>28</sup> Many projects tried to extend the theoretical foundation, which was hardly articulated in Nora's work and based on only few authors. Thus, the *Erinnerungsorte* were considerably inspired by Henry Rousso, and Aleida and Jan Assmann. The former, a French historian, highlighted the tension between forgetting and remembering; the latter, two German scholars, questioned the sharp contrast drawn by Nora between history and memory, by differentiating between 'history as science' and 'history as memory'. Most German projects integrated Aleida and Jan Assmann's models as a complementary frame of reference. The difference between communicative and cultural memory, as well as the central role of space for memory, proved stimulating.<sup>29</sup> But despite their conceptual opening and attempt to overcome national borders, these projects have remained strictly bound to their particular national historiographies. These narratives of national history were written from within, as illustrated by the percentage of foreign scholars involved in these projects.

Table 2 – Percentage of foreign scholars among the authors of four "lieux de mémoire" projects

Lieux de mémoire	Erinnerungsorte	Luoghi della memoria	Lieux de mémoire au Luxembourg
8 %	15 %	0 %	5 %

Without doubt, the most successful national projects were the German and Italian ones. Both caused a broad debate in their particular countries. Both were considered a reformation of national historiography. Both were great editorial successes. Both were partly translated into French. The Italian project, however, also illustrated the complexity of transferring a historiographical model. In the

27 Étienne François/Hagen Schulze: Einleitung, in: idem (eds.): *Deutsche Erinnerungsorte*, vol. 1, p. 18.

28 Georg Kreis: *Schweizer Erinnerungsorte*, p. 317.

29 Jan and Aleida Assmann had been aware of Pierre Nora's project from an early date and included it in their analysis, thus actively contributing to both paradigms being seen as connected: Jan Assmann: *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen*, Munich 1992; Aleida Assmann: *Erinnerungsräume: Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses*, Munich 1999.

conclusion of its first volume, Mario Isnenghi, editor of the Italian project, wrote: "La prima (...) dalle stimolazioni venute dal grande progetto portato a termine de Pierre Nora a dai suoi collaboratori inventando e divulgando anche il concetto dei 'lieux de mémoire'".<sup>30</sup> Nora's project was thus explicitly pointed out as meaningful. At the same time, Pierre Nora felt deceived. He felt so for methodological reasons, as the Italian project was not a "histoire au second degré". The *Luoghi della memoria* offensively took the side of the nation state in the dispute between central state and regions.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, Nora was disappointed that he had not been involved in the project. He had plans to launch himself a collection of Italian "lieux de mémoire", which he cancelled once the Isnenghi project had been published. This clash revealed two problems. First, the *Lieux de mémoire* quickly became an editorial stake. Second, it raised the question of who owns the 'copyright' of the concept.<sup>32</sup>

This first wave of transfer of the 1990s and early 2000s was coined by the adoption of this national point of view, especially in Western Europe. Indeed, the former Iron Curtain played a considerable role for the (non-)reception of the *Lieux de mémoire*. Pierre Nora's seven-volume work were to be found in all Western European national libraries, but were absent from most in Eastern Europe. All the national projects were carried out in Western Europe.

## Regional realms of memory

In the first decade of the new millennium, this changed with the first regional projects appearing on the market.<sup>33</sup> The transfer from the nation to the region had different reasons. On a historiographical level, regions appeared as an attractive alternative to the national level. On a political level, there has been a revaluation of regional identities over the last 30 years, going together with a strengthening of regional centres of decision.<sup>34</sup> These direct political reasons were important for

30 Mario Isnenghi: Conclusion, in: idem/Alessandrone Perona (eds.): *I luoghi della memoria*, vol. 1, p. 594.

31 François Dosse: Pierre Nora, pp. 356–357.

32 N. Weill: Démarquage sauvage des "Lieux de mémoire" en Italie, in: *Le Monde* (supplément littéraire), 03/01/1997.

33 By the middle of 2013, six "regional" projects were finished: Ingo Kolboom/Sabine A. Grzonka (eds.): *Gedächtnisorte im anderen Amerika: Tradition und Moderne in Québec*, Heidelberg 2002; Philippe Martin/François Roth (eds.): *Mémoire & lieux de mémoire en Lorraine*, Sarreguemines 2003; Marek Czaplinski/Hans-Joachim Hahn/Tobias Weger (eds.): *Schlesische Erinnerungsorte: Gedächtnis und Identität einer mitteleuropäischen Region*, Görlitz 2005; Carsten Fleischhauer/Guntram Turkowski (eds.): *Schleswig-Holsteinische Erinnerungsorte*, Heide 2006; Kurt Boht/Peter Winterhoff-Spurk (eds.): *Erinnerungsorte – Ankerpunkte saarländischer Identität*, St. Ingbert 2007; Peter Steinbach/Reinhold Weber/Hans-Georg Wehling (eds.): *Baden-Württembergische Erinnerungsorte*, Stuttgart 2012.

34 Thomas M. Wilson: The Europe of Regions and Borderlands, in: Ullrich Kockel/Máiréad Nic Craith/Jonas Frykman (eds.): *A Companion to the Anthropology of Europe*, 2012, pp. 163–180.



establishing most regional projects, to the point that studies of regional "lieux de mémoire" can often be linked to a *region-building process* quite similar to the *nation-building process* of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. History appears – once more – as a 'legitimizing science' for new political spaces.

*Mémoire et lieux de mémoire en Lorraine*, edited by two professors of the University of Nancy, is a good example in this regard. First, the editors demonstrated that smaller social groups had their own "lieux de mémoire" and that these can construct their identity in similar ways. Second, one of the editors, Philippe Martin, made two important contributions that have often been overlooked. He introduced a scale (based on the number of people who can relate to a *lieu*) by distinguishing between "le lieu de souvenir, le lieu d'identité [et] le lieu de mémoire" (site of remembrance, site of identity and site of memory). Moreover, he also made some pertinent remarks about the events, people, and places that had never become or ceased to be "lieux de mémoire".<sup>35</sup> Both aspects had been overlooked in Nora's *Lieux de mémoire*, whose vision was clouded by the national approach and which did not take into account the variation in scale. At the same time, the Lorraine project was being politically used by the elite of the region. In France, regions have gained a greater importance as administrative units since the onset of decentralisation in the 1980s and when *conseillers régionaux* (regional councillors) were elected directly by their constituencies. In his introduction to the Lorraine volume, the president of the regional council voiced a political agenda: "j'ai pu mesurer combien la Lorraine avait été dépossédée de ses lieux de mémoire par l'évidente nécessité, pour la République, de constituer sa cohésion. (...) Ce concept de carrefour culturel, profondément ancré dans l'histoire et la réalité lorraine, la Troisième République nous en a dépossédés en partie. Aujourd'hui, la Paix, retrouvée grâce à la construction européenne, nous fait l'impérieux devoir de reconstruire nos lieux de mémoire. (...) la région Lorraine est naturellement, et de toujours, un espace de rencontre."<sup>36</sup>

The Baden-Württemberg project, published on the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the federal state's foundation, similarly appears as part of regional identity-building. In Baden-Württemberg, the lack of a common regional identity caused an acrimonious argument between Baden and Württemberg in the early 1950s, at the time of the federal state's foundation. Thus, the borders between academic and purely patrimonial projects are increasingly blurred. The writing of history was often closely intertwined with debates on memory politics.

35 Philippe Martin: Jalons pour une approche des lieux de mémoire en Lorraine, in: idem/Roth (eds.): *Mémoire & lieux de mémoire en Lorraine*, pp. 13–25.

36 Gérard Longuet: Préface, in: Martin/Roth (eds.): *Mémoire & lieux de mémoire en Lorraine*, pp. 9–12.

## Transnational realms of memory

The movement away from national historiography and towards other levels gained speed by the growing number of projects on transnational "lieux de mémoire", especially during the first decade of the new millennium. Today, this type of projects dominates.<sup>37</sup> The transnational trend comes with three characteristics. The first of these is a geographical shift: Central and Eastern Europe, until then hardly studied, came to the fore. In these regions, nation-building processes started later and have repeatedly been interrupted. Many transnational projects developed at a time of strong nationalisation in that part of Europe, with the war in former Yugoslavia seeing its climax. In this context, "lieux de mémoire" did not necessarily represent a possible deconstruction of national discourse, instead they were seen as a means to construct positively connoted European narratives, in opposition to negatively connoted national(ist) narratives. The transnational space appeared as a potential solution to national constriction. Most of the scholars involved defined the analysed sites by their transnational character, to which a national approach seemed to be impossible. Matthias Weber describes Eastern Central Europe as a "zerrissenen, dezentralen Raum"<sup>38</sup>, its ethnic, religious, and social jaggedness seemingly so conspicuous that homogeneous cultures of remembrance could never establish themselves as they have in Western Europe. We observe partly an inversion of Pierre Nora's original idea: instead of questioning the existing images, the central objective was to invent new ones and to solidify these.<sup>39</sup> In some cases,

- 37 By middle of 2013, 16 "transnational" projects have been completed: Jacques Le Rider/Moritz Csáky/Monika Sommer (eds.): *Transnationale Gedächtnisorte in Zentraleuropa*, Innsbruck 2002; Wolfgang Weber (ed.): *Europäische Erinnerungsorte im Mittelalter*, Paderborn 2002; Rainer Hudemann (ed.): *Stätten grenzüberschreitender Erinnerung: Spuren der Vernetzung des Saar-Lux-Raumes im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, Saarbrücken 2002; Rudolf Jaworski/Jan Kusber/Ludwig Steindorff (eds.): *Gedächtnisorte in Osteuropa: Vergangenheiten auf dem Prüfstand*, Frankfurt a. M. 2003; Elke Stein-Hölkeskamp/Karl-Joachim Hölkeskamp (eds.): *Erinnerungsorte der Antike: die römische Welt*, Munich 2006; Inge Adriansen/Matthias Scharl (eds.): *Erindringsstedernordogstforgrænsen*, Schleswig/Sønderborg 2006; Bernd Henningsen/Hendriette Kliemann-Geisinger/Stefan Troebst (eds.): *Transnationale Erinnerungsorte: Nord- und südeuropäische Perspektiven*, Berlin 2009; Antoine Marès: *Lieux de mémoire en Europe centrale*, Paris 2009; Christoph Marksches/Hubert Wolf (eds.): *Erinnerungsorte des Christentums*, Munich 2010; Matthias Weber et al. (eds.): *Erinnerungsorte in Ostmitteleuropa: Erfahrungen der Vergangenheit und Perspektiven*, Munich 2011; Matthias Haake/Michael Jung (eds.): *Griechische Heiligtümer als Erinnerungsorte. Von der Archaik bis in den Hellenismus*, Stuttgart 2011; Pim den Boer et al. (eds.): *Europäische Erinnerungsorte 1: Mythen und Grundbegriffe des europäischen Selbstverständnisses*, Munich 2011; Hans Henning Hahn/Robert Traba (eds.): *Deutsch-Polnische Erinnerungsorte Band 1: Geteilt/Gemeinsam*, Paderborn 2012; Kolboom/Grzonka (eds.): *Gedächtnisorte im anderen Amerika: Étienne François/Thomas Serrier: Lieux de mémoire européens*, Paris 2012; Anne Gangloff (ed.): *Lieux de mémoire en Orient grec à l'époque impériale*, Bern 2013; *Erinnerungsorte der Sozialdemokratie*, <http://erinnerungsorte.fes.de/> (12 July 2013).
- 38 Matthias Weber: *Erinnerungsorte in Ostmitteleuropa. Erfahrungen der Vergangenheit und Perspektiven*, in: Weber et al. (eds.): *Erinnerungsorte in Ostmitteleuropa*, p. 11.
- 39 Jacques Le Rider/Moritz Csáky/Monika Sommer: Vorwort, in: idem (eds.): *Transnationale Gedächtnisorte in Zentraleuropa*, pp. 7–11.



the editorial principle of "lieux de mémoire" even appeared as an explicit project for a "tragfähige politische Identität" in Europe, as proposed by Claus Leggewie, a request that would be incompatible with the political agenda of many regional or national projects.<sup>40</sup>

Second, the point of view was no longer one from the inside, but historians were now writing on spaces they did not necessarily belong too. A remarkable example for this is the Vienna based project on Central Europe. Ten of the eleven articles are written by Western European scholars.<sup>41</sup> In the national "lieux de mémoire" projects, the analysed space was normatively configured by the nation-state's current borders. The question what space or community was actually analysed could be left unaddressed. In transnational projects, this is far less evident. What is Eastern Europe? What Central Europe? What about Eastern Central Europe? And what is Europe in the first place? In choosing a certain space, the historian interfered directly with the normative definition of the particular "lieux de mémoire". This became especially clear in the European "lieux de mémoire" project of the Leibniz Institute of European History in Mainz. In the backdrop of a polarised debate on the borders of the European Union, the editors deliberately chose a wide definition: Russia was integrated with an article on the "third Rome", Turkey with an article on Istanbul.<sup>42</sup> While Nora's concept of "lieu de mémoire" was at the base, the idea of deconstruction was far less present. The authors' position emerged most clearly in the project on Christianity: "Ausgangspunkt aller Überlegungen ist dabei jeweils das Verständnis eines Erinnerungsortes *hier*, im deutschsprachigen Raum, und *heute*."<sup>43</sup> A quick glance at the scholars who wrote transnational *Lieux de mémoire* proves as interesting as for the national projects. The Mainz project was mainly written by German (70%), male (74%) (despite its wide conception of Europe). Thus, one can wonder to what degree these European "lieux de mémoire" are not actually German. This 'colonial' point of view is overcome only sporadically in transnational projects. In most cases, they reflect the view of Western European academics on Eastern Europe. An exception is the German-Polish project by the Center for Historical Research of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Berlin and the Carl von Ossietzky University in Oldenburg, which included authors from both countries and aimed at an *histoire croisée*, not only in theory, but also in practice.

Third, the link between the geographic frame and identity was broken. Although the "lieux de mémoire" were intended from the beginning to refer to more than material places, the analysed identities were defined in spatial terms

(Belgium, Schleswig-Holstein, Eastern Europe etc). In this – so far final – phase, religious, periodical or political categories have come more and more to the foreground. Pierre Nora has argued that "lieux de mémoire" could be found for any identity: "Lieu de mémoire, donc: toute unité significative, d'ordre matériel ou idéal, dont la volonté des hommes ou le travail du temps a fait un élément symbolique du patrimoine mémoriel d'une quelconque communauté."<sup>44</sup> In the French project, political, generational, or religious identities were occasionally discussed,<sup>45</sup> but the national identity remained decisive. In projects on Christianity, Antiquity or the German Social Democrat Party, this link between identity and space was opened up. For the first time, the contrast between the specific projects and Nora's paradigm was openly discussed.<sup>46</sup> In their introduction, Christoph Marksches and Hubert Wolf mentioned that: "Der hier vorgelegte Band *Erinnerungsorte des Christentums* erscheint zwar unter dem von Pierre Nora geprägten und vergleichbaren Bänden aufgegriffenen Titel. Allerdings ist das hier zugrunde gelegte Konzept der *memoria*, des Gedächtnisses und der Erinnerung, ein genuin christliches, denn das Christentum als Offenbarungsreligion ist nicht anders denn als Erinnerungsreligion zu denken."<sup>47</sup> In another 'transnational' project, the transfer of "lieux de mémoire" from an academic context to a successful mediation tool was also acknowledged.<sup>48</sup> The editors of *Erinnerungsorte der Antike* justified their project with the following words: "Dass daher Publikationen zum 'kulturellen Gedächtnis' einerseits und zur griechisch-römischen Geschichte andererseits gefragt sind, die in zugänglicher Weise und ohne (überflüssigen) Jargon, aber präzise und differenziert den Stand der kultur- und altertumswissenschaftlichen Forschung widerspiegeln, bedarf angesichts der anhaltenden Nachfrage keiner weiteren Begründung."<sup>49</sup> In another project dedicated to Antiquity, the "lieux de mémoire" were explicitly not limited to (post)modernity (i. e. nineteenth to twenty-first century). Instead, the authors asked which sanctuaries represented "lieux de mémoire" from archaic to Hellenist times.<sup>50</sup> Here we observe a decisive shift from the initial paradigm. Nora's *Lieux de mémoire* were not only 'nationally' bound, but also 'temporarily', as a con-

40 Claus Leggewie: Der Kampf um die europäische Erinnerung. Ein Schlachtfeld wird besichtigt, Munich 2011, p. 7. Since 2007, the European Union labels "lieu d'identité européenne", places that should contribute to a corporate feeling. In 2010, 60 of these places were chosen across 18 countries: Marie-Anne Sire: Patrimoine, in: Delacroix et al. (eds.): *Historiographies*, pp. 828–829.

41 Le Rider/Csáky/Sommer (eds.): *Transnationale Gedächtnisorte in Zentraleuropa*.  
42 Marlene Kurz: Istanbul, in: Pim den Boer et al. (eds.): *Europäische Erinnerungsorte 2: Das Haus Europa*, Munich 2012, pp. 299–305; Christine Roll: Drittes Rom, in: *ibid.*, pp. 291–298.

43 Christoph Marksches/Hubert Wolf: "Tut dies zu meinem Gedächtnis", Das Christentum als Erinnerungsreligion, in: *ibid.* (eds.): *Erinnerungsorte des Christentums*, p. 25.

44 Pierre Nora: Comment écrire l'histoire de France?, in: *ibid.* (ed.): *Les lieux de mémoire*, Paris 1992, p. 2226.

45 The third part of the *lieux de mémoire*, *Les France*, is mainly dedicated to these non-national identities, as in Marcel Gauchet: La droite et la gauche, in: Nora (ed.): *Les lieux de mémoire*, pp. 2533–2601; Gérard Noiriel: Français et étrangers, in: *ibid.*, pp. 2433–2465.

46 In Germany, the publisher Beck distinguished itself as editor of the *Erinnerungsorte*, with projects about Germany, the GDR, Christianity and Antiquity.

47 Marksches/Wolf: "Tut dies zu meinem Gedächtnis", p. 10.

48 Robbe: *Historische Forschung und Geschichtsvermittlung*, pp. 168–169.

49 Karl-Joachim Hölkamp/Elke Stein-Hölkamp: Einleitung: "Erinnerungsorte" – Begriff und Programm, in: *ibid.* (eds.): *Erinnerungsorte der Antike*, pp. 13–14.

50 Haake/Jung (eds.): *Griechische Heiligrüner als Erinnerungsorte*. Only one article of Jacquemin deals with the question, whether this concept, created for (post)modern societies, can also be applied to ancient societies. Recently, another research project found a conclusion close to the project of Haake/Jung: Anne Gangloff: *Mémoires et lieux de mémoire dans l'Antiquité gréco-romaine*, in: *ibid.* (ed.): *Lieux de mémoire en Orient grec à l'époque impériale*, pp. 1–22.



cept focusing on periods characterised by a caesura with the past: "*Lieux de mémoire* are fundamentally vestiges, the ultimate embodiments of a commemorative consciousness that survives in a history which, having renounced memory, cries out for it. The notion has emerged because society has banished ritual. It is a notion produced, defined, established, constructed, decreed, and maintained by the artifice and desire of a society fundamentally absorbed by its own transformation and renewal."<sup>51</sup> But in this project, this caesura did not exist: extremely ritualised societies across the ages appeared in most articles. Michael Jung commented on this wider temporal scope, stating that a determining factor was that "die Erinnerung auch in traditionellen Gesellschaften ebenso Ausdruck einer Identitätsbestimmung und Selbstdefinition wie in der Moderne [ist]."<sup>52</sup>

Finally, the 'transnationalisation' of "*lieux de mémoire*" has shown the enormous resonance this originally French concept has received in German-speaking countries. 12 of 16 transnational projects were published in German.<sup>53</sup> Three reasons for this success may be put forward. First, nobody continued Pierre Nora's work in France, where his central and hegemonic position proved a hindrance; in Germany, the project leaders François and Schulze never had the same function. Second, research on Central and Eastern is more widespread in Germany than in France. The Eastern European space seems particularly adapted for the transnational approach, especially with respect to the culture of remembrance, thus becoming a successful playground for German Eastern European studies. Third, this 'histoire au deuxième degré' seems more appropriate to emphasise breaks and discontinuities than the previous national narratives of a more teleological type; again this seems more suited to a Germany marked by World War Two and the subsequent two German states. While primarily created to analyse the centralised state of France, the concept has in the long term been deemed more fitting for telling the history of disappeared (e.g. GDR), disappearing (e.g. Belgium), or becoming (e.g. European Union) states.

## Conclusions

This article did not answer the question whether one could speak of a "gesamteuropäische Erinnerungskultur"<sup>54</sup>. It asked instead how the term "*lieu de mémoire*" developed into a pan-European historiographical concept. It certainly represents one of the most successful concepts in European historiography of the

last 30 years. Hardly any other catchword has seen a similar spread, a phenomenon accelerating over the past ten years.

Table 3 – Academic "*lieux de mémoire*" projects

1980–84	1985–89	1990–94	1995–99	2000–04	2005–09	2010–13
1	0	2	1	8	13	10

Few other concepts have been adopted across so many different European languages and cultures, becoming one of the few terms that are well known to the majority of (Western) European historians. It could thus be seen as a sign for the development of a common European communication area between historians.<sup>55</sup> "*Lieux de mémoire*" have themselves developed into a "*lieu de mémoire*" for historians. The different national, regional, and transnational projects led to important methodological and political controversies. Few other works have been so massively reviewed in journals and newspaper supplements over the last decades, as seen with the *Lieux de mémoire* in France, the *Erinnerungsorte* in Germany or the *Lieux de mémoire au Luxembourg* in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. So far, the history of "*lieux de mémoire*" has been a *Streitgeschichte*.<sup>56</sup>

Intended as a programmatic deconstruction of national narratives, the concept developed primarily, yet paradoxically, within those same national frames, both with respect to the content of projects – the areas discussed – and with respect to practice – French historians writing on France, Italian historians on Italy etc. But, over the past ten years, there has been a considerable change.

The many "*lieux de mémoire*" projects point at wider developments in historiography on three levels:

European historiography struggles to overcome the separations created by the Cold War. The "*lieux de mémoire*" had for a long time remained an exclusively Western European product, almost like a relict of the Cold War. Most Western European countries had a "*lieux de mémoire*" project – with the notable exception of Great Britain.<sup>57</sup> If the concept has been adopted in Eastern Europe<sup>58</sup>, it happened mostly as a result of Western initiatives, e.g. the German Eastern European institutes. An exception to this is the German-Polish project, in which Polish historians have taken the lead. Maciej Gorny and Kornelia Konczal put this thesis

51 Pierre Nora: General Introduction: Between Memory and History, in: idem: *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past*, New York 1996, vol. 1, p. 6.

52 Michael Jung: *Methodisches: Heiligtümer und lieux de mémoire*, in: Haake/Jung (eds.): *Griechische Heiligtümer als Erinnerungsorte*, p. 14.

53 All in all, 20 of 33 reviewed projects are written in German.

54 Étienne François: Ist eine gesamteuropäische Erinnerungskultur vorstellbar?, in: Henningsen/Kliemann-Geisinger/Troebst (eds.): *Transnationale Erinnerungsorte*, p. 13–30.

55 Though Nora's concept was received and discussed in other continents, there has not yet been a mature project in America, Africa, Asia or Australia.

56 Martin Sabrow/Ralph Jessen/Klaus Große Kracht (eds.): *Zeitgeschichte als Streitgeschichte große Kontroversen nach 1945*, Munich 2003.

57 Whether this exception should be understood as deficient integration of Great Britain in Europe or as a hint to another culture of remembrance, remains to be analysed.

58 Maciej Gorny and Kornelia Konczal refer well-founded on the fact that there has not been any large-scale *lieux de mémoire* project in Eastern Europe as well as in Scandinavia: Maciej Gorny/Kornelia Konczal: The (non-)travelling concept of les lieux de mémoire. Central and Eastern European perspectives.



into perspective by analysing how Nora's texts were translated into Czech, Polish and Russian in the late 1990s. At the same time they also talk of a "Nicht-Reise" of the concept to Eastern Europe.<sup>59</sup>

The different "lieux de mémoire" projects reflect the current crisis of national historiography. The national editorial successes have demonstrated the existing demand for national narratives. And yet, the concept of "lieux de mémoire" failed to fulfil two of its objectives. First, all projects were repeatedly accused of not questioning the nation, but consolidating it. Paul Zahren's critique of the Luxembourgish *Lieux de mémoire* has been iterated in similar terms in many other European countries: "Les promoteurs du projet font des pieds et des mains (...) pour sortir de cette logique (de l'impasse?) 'nationaliste' ... sans grand succès."<sup>60</sup> Second, the term "lieu de mémoire" quickly left academia to be used by the heritage movement. Pierre Nora himself has described this development in critically terms: "Etrange destinée de ces *Lieux de mémoire*: ils se sont voulus, par leur démarche, leur méthode et leur titre même, une histoire de type contre-commémoratif, mais la commémoration les a rattrapés. (...) Mais si forte pourtant est aujourd'hui l'emprise de la mémoire que la boulimie commémorative d'époque a absorbé jusqu'à la tentative destinée à maîtriser le phénomène; et que, aussitôt lancée l'expression 'lieu de mémoire', l'outil forgé pour la mise en lumière de la distance critique est devenu l'instrument par excellence de la commémoration."<sup>61</sup> Travel guides, coffee table books, advertisement brochures avidly took up the term.<sup>62</sup> Coined by the academic world, "lieu de mémoire" has become a selling point for tourism.

To get out of the national dilemma, and because Western Europe stands no longer in the centre of interest, there has been an adjustment of the analysed levels of the *Lieux de mémoire* in the last years. Now, regional and transnational frames are in the focus. The topography of 'lieux de mémoire' has fundamentally changed.<sup>63</sup> The *Lieux de mémoire* thus illustrate a wider development of the European historiography that embraces the transnational paradigm in the last 20 years.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Paul Zahren: Tous aux abris. L'identité dans tous ses états, in: forum 273 (February 2008), p. 10.

<sup>61</sup> Pierre Nora: L'ère de la commémoration, in: idem (ed.): Les lieux de mémoire, p. 4687.

<sup>62</sup> E.g. the French travel guide publisher Petit Futé published the following guide in 2005: Jean-Paul Labourdette/Pascaline Ferlin: Guide des lieux de mémoire, Paris 2005.

<sup>63</sup> Kirstin Buchinger/Claire Gantet/Jakob Vogel: Einleitung: Räume europäischer Erinnerungen, in: idem (eds.): Europäische Erinnerungsräume, Frankfurt a. M. 2009, pp. 9–19.

<sup>64</sup> Micol Seigel: Beyond compare: comparative method after the transnational turn, in: Radical History Review 91 (2005), n° 1, pp. 62–90.

Kornelia Kończal

## Realms of Memory beyond the Nation:

What can happen to an old Concept in new Surroundings?

The international career of the category of *lieu de mémoire*, coined in the 1980s by Pierre Nora, French historian and series editor at Gallimard, was all but predictable. Nora's intention was to create a new tool that would be useful for rethinking the history of France. In the beginning, the originator and editor of the seven volumes of "Les Lieux de mémoire" (1984–1992) was even convinced that his concept could be applied only to the French past. Having completed his long-term project, Nora nonetheless adjusted his conviction regarding the French 'exclusiveness' of his category:

*What began as an empirical, experimental, almost playful attempt to track down lieux de mémoire would thus open up infinitely more exciting new vistas: a notion improvised for the needs of the moment would then become a category in terms of which contemporary history could be made intelligible, or perhaps even more than a category, a 'concept' – a thing quite rare in history.<sup>1</sup>*

The last 20 years have proved that the concept of realms of memory – to use the problematic English translation of *les lieux de mémoire* preferred by Nora himself – can be applied with success in a variety of geographical and temporal settings. Consequently, there can be no talk of French 'exclusiveness' of Nora's notion, if only because from the mid-1990s onwards historians from many Western European countries have been conceptualising large-scale research projects inspired by Nora's idea. While nationally designed approaches still dominate the landscape of memory studies conducted by historians, some attempts have already been made in a bid to combine the history of memory with regional, comparative and transnational perspectives.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Pierre Nora: Remembrance of Things. French, trans. Arthur Goldhammer, in: Pierre Nora (ed.): *Lieux de mémoire: rethinking the French past*. English-language edition, ed. By Lawrence D. Kritzman, vol. 1: Conflicts and Divisions, New York 1996, pp. IX–XXXIV, p. XVIII.

<sup>2</sup> François Audigier: Les lieux de mémoire: un concept, son invention, sa mise en œuvre et sa réception, in: Philippe Martin (ed.): *Mémoires et lieux de mémoire en Lorraine*, Sarreguemines 2003, pp. 29–43; Pim den Boer: "Loci memoriae – Lieux de mémoire, in: Astrid Erll/Ansgar Nünning (eds.): *Cultural memory studies: An international and interdisciplinary handbook*, Berlin 2008, pp. 19–25; Kornelia Kończal: Pierre Noras folgenreiches Konzept von les lieux de mémoire und seine Re-Interpretationen: eine vergleichende Analyse, in: *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 62, 1–2 (2011), pp. 17–36.