

Urban uncomfortable heritage. Reimagining Navarre's contested post-dictatorship memoriscapes through an international lens.

Field of Study : Anthropology, History, Law

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ABSTRACT

The public spaces of many European cities are haunted by the material and symbolic legacies of the dictatorships that marked the history of the continent in the 20th century. These legacies include monuments, memorials, urban planning or sites of repression. However, the political, social, and cultural transformations that European societies have undergone have prompted a critical reassessment of these dissonant legacies, sometimes leading to proposals for their modification. While reuse remains one of the most common strategies, approaches have also included destruction, relocation, re-signification, musealisation and practices of disremembering. This research aims to examine Spain's, and particularly Navarre's, challenging urban heritage from the Spanish Civil War and Franco's dictatorship to the present day. The study first investigates the material and imaginary construction of these legacies, their evolution, and their integration into the urban spaces in which they are located. It then explores the shifting meanings that different political and social actors have ascribed to them over time. Lastly, it analyses current debates surrounding these legacies and the alternatives proposed by various groups, ranging from political representatives to grassroots organisations. The study is built upon the analysis of extensive archival material and interviews, through which case studies are developed and compared with the history and practices of uncomfortable heritage management across Europe. The proposal is particularly pertinent at a time when these disputes have been revived in Spain. Debates and policymaking can benefit from a better interdisciplinary understanding of this heritage and of the different international approaches to its administration.



Research aims and methodology

The proposal seeks to achieve the following objectives:

1. Conduct an exhaustive literature review: This review will encompass a comprehensive analysis of national and international studies concerning uncomfortable heritage. Particular emphasis will be placed on research that examines disputes and different approaches to the management of such heritage.
2. Investigate the material and conceptual development of Spain's uncomfortable heritage: The focus will be on the evolution of this heritage, with a specific emphasis on Navarre, from its creation to the present. This investigation will consider both the objectives and actions of the authorities and the agency of local communities and the urban landscapes that have co-produced these heritage spaces. The analysis will employ a case study methodology, well-established in anthropological and microhistorical research. The utility of microanalysis in such studies is evidenced by works such as those by Sharon Macdonald. The research will explore several case studies in Navarre, with a particular focus on Pamplona's 'Monument to the Fallen', which has been the subject of controversy in recent years. The study will rely on primary sources from local, regional, and national archives, as well as newspapers. A bottom-up approach will also be adopted, incorporating individual interviews and focus groups with relevant social and political actors.
3. Examine contemporary disputes surrounding uncomfortable heritage in Spain and Navarre: This analysis will explore the range of alternative strategies proposed by various stakeholders for managing such heritage. The study will assess how these conflicts—where public, private, and community-based actors intersect and often compete—can be resolved in a manner that is both democratic and satisfactory. Additionally, it will evaluate how uncomfortable heritage can be integrated into the cultural landscape in an effective and participatory manner. This section will draw on interviews and focus groups involving (1) residents from areas adjacent to these sites and other parts of the city, (2) members of historical memory associations, (3) political actors representing diverse political identities, (4) representatives from local and regional political institutions responsible for heritage management, and (5) local professionals and experts in history and heritage.

Relevance and added-value of the proposed research in relation to the current state of knowledge

Over the past 25 years, research on Francoism and its aftermath in Spain has undergone a significant transformation. The analysis of political violence has expanded to encompass a wide array of aggressions, while numerous studies have illuminated the spectrum of social attitudes ranging from resistance to complicity with the dictatorship. At the same time, some scholars have examined how the Francoist regime transformed the built environment to assert and consolidate its power, as well as the enduring presence of this Francoist legacy. However, much of this research has not attempted to integrate the study of the built environment and its persistence with the study of political violence and social attitudes. This proposal seeks to unify these lines of inquiry by analysing the evolution of this heritage and the diverse social and political perceptions and disputes surrounding it. Informed by critical heritage studies, this research aims to complement institutional approaches with an analysis of the co-production of heritage, recognising the agency of the communities and urban spaces involved. The proposal also adopts an international and interdisciplinary perspective—one that is uncommon in existing Spanish literature—where History, Law, and Anthropology intersect.

The proposal is particularly pertinent in the context of current social and political debates in Spain. Despite the enactment of state and regional legislation on historical memory over the past two decades, there remains a lack of broad social consensus on how to address the numerous instances of uncomfortable heritage that persist across the country. Recent months have seen particularly intense controversy surrounding the repeal of several regional historical memory laws, with disputes often centring on the legacies of the dictatorship and the political uses of history in public spaces.



In Navarre, the regional government has actively promoted memory policies and research for more than a decade. However, in recent times, regional institutions and various political and social actors have been deeply engaged in heated debates, especially concerning the so-called 'Monument to the Fallen'. In this context, the project aims to generate valuable knowledge that will enable communities and their political representatives to make informed and participatory decisions regarding the future of heritage spaces that occupy both the physical and symbolic centres of cities.

Interdisciplinary nature of the research together with the alignment with the CHORAL programme and complementarity expertise of the teams

The study of uncomfortable heritage resides at the intersection of several academic disciplines, including History, Law, and Anthropology. The research plan further integrates insights from Urban Studies and the Sociology of Social Movements, ensuring the availability of essential analytical frameworks to achieve the stated objectives. These objectives align with the domain of the 'Study and Preservation of Tangible Cultural Heritage' as outlined in the CHORAL programme.

The teams involved in this project possess the required expertise to advance this proposal and meet the interdisciplinary, international, and inter-sectoral research goals established by CHORAL. The Departamento de Ciencias Humanas y de la Educación at the UPNA is home to the [Fondo Documental de la Memoria Histórica \(FDMHN\)](#), which offers over a decade of experience in researching and disseminating knowledge on repression in Navarre. Additionally, the department organises seminars, offering the candidate opportunities to present their progress. The candidate will also have the opportunity to collaborate closely with the [Instituto Navarro de la Memoria](#), a governmental institution responsible for implementing research and memory policies in partnership with UPNA. Dr. Daniel Oviedo Silva, a member of the FDMHN, has supervised research projects as well as MRes and BA dissertations on related topics.

Professor Anna Mastromarino, in turn, is a full professor of Public Law at the University of Turin (UNITO), and brings considerable academic and research experience to the project. Her recent work has concentrated on the study of memory policies and disputes over traumatic pasts. Furthermore, she possesses substantial experience managing international mobility programs, such as Erasmus. She serves as a board member of the ['Istituto Piemontese per la Storia della Resistenza e della Società Contemporanea "Giorgio Agosti"'](#), an institution where the candidate will be able to present their work and engage with fellow scholars who share similar interests.

The doctoral training will be further enriched by a three-month secondment at the University of Nottingham (UoN). This institution hosts a robust and interdisciplinary group of scholars specializing in the study of traumatic pasts in Europe and Latin America. Academics such as Professor Stephen Roberts (Department of Modern Languages and Cultures) and Dr. Rúben Serém (Department of History) are well-qualified to supervise the candidate's progress. UoN is also home to research groups such as the [Centre for the Study of Post-Conflict Societies](#) and the [Urban Culture Network](#). Additionally, the candidate will have the opportunity to visit the prestigious [Centre for Urban History](#) at the nearby University of Leicester.

Output plan including publication and dissemination activities

Academic Publications:

- The candidate intends to submit their doctoral thesis to a reputable international publishing house for publication as a monograph.
- The candidate will pursue the publication of peer-reviewed academic articles based on distinct sections of their thesis in high-impact journals, such as the [International Journal of Heritage Studies](#), [Memory Studies](#), and [Urban History](#).



Presentations at academic conferences, seminars, and colloquia:

- The candidate will commit to participating in at least one international conference annually. Notable examples include the [Memory Studies Association Conference](#) or the [European Social Science History Conference](#).
- The candidate will also present their ongoing research at seminars organized by the three collaborating universities (UPNA, UNITO, and UoN) as well as by relevant research groups.

General outreach and dissemination to the broader public:

- The candidate will work in collaboration with the UPNA Communication Office to disseminate research findings to a wider audience.
- Additionally, the candidate will aim to publish articles in popular History magazines such as [La Aventura de la Historia](#) and will engage with both local and national media outlets.
- The candidate will also actively participate in outreach events organized by the universities involved, including the [European Researchers' Night](#).

Estimated schedule

The proposed schedule outlines a year-by-year plan detailing the primary tasks to be undertaken. In accordance with the application guidelines, the candidate will complete a 6-month secondment at the co-supervising university (UNITO) and a 3-month secondment at the University of Nottingham (UoN).

-Year 1: Universidad Pública de Navarra (Spain) and University of Nottingham (UK):

Months 1-3: Personalised Career Development Plan (PCDP).

Months 1-9. UPNA. Reading, preliminary literature review and archival work.

Months 10-12. UoN. Further reading, analysis, networking and discussion.

Additional objectives: Giving a research paper at the UoN and attending an international conference.

- Year 2: University of Torino and return to the Universidad Pública de Navarra:

Months 13-18. UNITO. Further reading, analysis, networking and discussion.

Months 18-24. UPNA. Individual interviews and focus groups.

Additional objectives: Giving a research paper at UNITO and attending an international conference.

- Year 3. Universidad Pública de Navarra:

Months 25-36. Writing and discussion.

Additional objectives: Giving a research paper at the UPNA and attending an international conference.

