

Ernst Jakob Kirchheimer

# Transitional Justice and the Politics of Education in Guatemala and Peru

Social Inequality, Violence and Memory  
in Textbooks and Classrooms



Nomos

Studien zu Lateinamerika  
Latin America Studies

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Volume 47

Ernst Jakob Kirchheimer

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## 1) Introduction

### *1.1) Connecting Education and Transitional Justice*

Since the third wave of democratization gave rise to Transitional Justice (TJ) as a concept for dealing with the legacies of authoritarianism and armed conflict, truth commissions have become a global phenomenon. Initially criticized as a weak alternative to retributive justice and accountability, there appears to be a relatively broad consensus that institutionalized truth-telling represents an important component of dealing with the past. Common arguments for Truth Commissions include the normative imperative to recognize the victims' right to truth (Orentlicher, 2005) or the contribution Truth Commissions can make to institutional reforms through their investigations and recommendations (Mendeloff, 2004, p. 358). Moreover, TJ has come to be discussed as a cultural process, and a considerable body of literature now deals with civil society struggles over memory (eg. Elizabeth Jelin, 2003a; Oettler, 2004); the formation of narratives on the past in local, national and transnational contexts (eg. Bunselmeyer, 2020; Capdepón, 2015; K. S. Theidon, 2004; Willems, 2019); and artistic responses to the past (eg. Milton, 2018; Weissert, 2015).

Beginning with the Argentinian Commission on Disappeared Persons (CONADEP) in 1985, Truth Commissions have attempted to investigate the effects of violence on education and have released relatively comprehensive recommendations on educational material and sectorial reforms. Following Julia Paulson and Michelle Bellino, one may argue that such forms of engagement have become increasingly common and diverse (Paulson & Bellino, 2017, 13–15). It appears, however, that until the 2010s education remained at the margin of political and academic debates on TJ and on peacebuilding and security.

In 2011, UNESCO's *Education for All Global Monitoring Report* concluded that on a global scale the effects of armed conflict on education were systematically underestimated. At the time of the report, education received only 2% of all humanitarian aid spent worldwide: no other sector had a smaller share of appeals funded, meaning that requests for aid in education were half as likely to be approved than the average of all sectors (UNESCO, 2011, pp. 3 & 159). Two UNICEF reports on the role of education in

## 1) Introduction

peacebuilding concluded in the same year that education sector reforms represented a marginalized issue in peacebuilding practices and that interventions and development aid addressing education sectors rarely integrated a systematic approach to peacebuilding into their strategies (Novelli & Smith, 2011, 25; Smith, McCandless, Paulson, & Wheaton, 2011, 8).

Limited literature exists that would allow global conclusions to be drawn about education's role in TJ interventions. Recently, a significant increase in articles has explored conceptual overlaps between TJ and education from a theoretical or normative perspective, and a number of case studies have explored projects on dealing with the past in schools.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, a number of more extensive studies have investigated selected aspects of education reform processes, including curriculum reforms in Peru (Paulson, 2009) and South Africa (Weldon, 2009), civics education, memory and classroom practices in Guatemala (Bellino, 2017) and history education and textbook implementation in Rwanda (Bentrovato, 2017). However, it was not until 2017 that Paulson and Bellino published the first article that systematically investigated Truth Commissions' educational recommendations on a broader, comparative basis. While their research shows that Truth Commissions frequently established recommendations on education and in some cases also engaged directly with actors of the education system, their findings raise doubts as to whether such institutions perceived schools as central spaces for dealing with the past. The authors found that only 7 of the 20 investigated Commissions actually recommended that the history of armed conflicts be included into the curriculum (Paulson & Bellino, 2017, 17 & 28). One may suspect that the limited attention given to education may be linked with the fact that debates on Transitional Justice have traditionally focused on questions of security and liberal macro-reforms (Miller, 2008; D. N. Sharp, 2015; C. Sriram, 2014). Nevertheless, the marginality of education in TJ discourses represents a striking research gap for a number of reasons:

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1 Notable examples include two edited volumes that emerged from research collaborations between UNICEF and the International Centre for Transitional Justice (Ramirez-Barat & Duthie, 2017) as well as conferences organized in collaboration between the ICTJ and the Georg Eckert Institute for international textbook research, where the author was located during the time of research (Ramirez-Barat & Schulze, 2018). Moreover, a special issue of "Comparative Education" has recently been dedicated Conflict Transitional Justice and Education (Bellino, Paulson, & Anderson Worden, 2017).



First, education is a human right and an important part of the UN's sustainable development goals, widely considered a precondition for macro-economic development and individual social mobility. Exclusion from education is likely to result in substantial social grievances that may undermine the chances of constructing a sustainable, positive peace. According to the UNESCO's 2011 Global Monitoring Report, *Education for All*, 42% of the world's out-of-school children lived in conflict-affected countries (UNESCO, 2011, 2).

Second, educational policies and curricula are increasingly recognized as factors that may contribute to the emergence and escalation of conflicts. Authoritarian states have, for instance, segregated schooling to perpetuate the reproduction of unjust and racist economic and political regimes. Furthermore, textbooks themselves have been frequently found to disseminate historical narratives and representations of social identities that transmit distrust or hatred or legitimize inequality and exploitation (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000).

Third, an inherent conceptual overlap exists between TJ and education. After all, trials and truth commissions have regularly been described as interventions that symbolically reinforce norms and stipulate a reflection on violence on a societal level (Minow, 1999; Osiel, 1995). Ignoring the education system thus means forfeiting a strategic chance to disseminate the findings and normative messages of TJ interventions.

Fourth, the limited attention awarded to education systems appears drastically disproportionate, considering their size and ubiquity. A plethora of studies in TJ literature reflects on the immediate effects of singular events, such as trials or public hearings of truth commissions, and memory cultural spaces and artifacts, such as memorials, museums and truth commission reports on public debates. Academic research on TJ also goes to great lengths to study memory-political practices among politicians, human rights professionals, or civil society activists and community leaders. However, we know remarkably little about the working conditions, practices, and political agency of teachers, who represent the single largest professional group employed to transmit historic narratives and discourses on collective identities, peace, democracy and citizenship. While many studies have been devoted to analyzing the discourse of truth commissions and reflecting on the ways they emerged and were received, research is far less common on how truth commission reports are represented in textbooks and curricula, and how pedagogic discourses on mass crimes are produced, negotiated and received, even though it can be assumed that

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educational media address a far wider audience, and that their print-runs and effective dissemination will, in most cases greatly supersede those of truth commissions.

Fifth, the disregard for education is striking because political theories assign a central position to the school as a locus of power and ideological and cultural reproduction. For Durkheim, the viability of modern society and nation states depends on an institutionalized, public education system (Wesselingh, 2013, 31). Likewise, critical theorists such as Bourdieu, Passeron and Althusser coincide in the argument that power in modern capitalist societies primarily functions via disciplining and socializing subjects in schools and transmitting cultures and ideologies that normalize or legitimize the status quo (Althusser, 2004; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Thus, it would appear plausible to argue that shifts in power relations and the transition from authoritarian to democratic regimes are likely to affect pedagogic discourses as well as the ways they are produced and implemented.<sup>2</sup> Consequently one would also argue that investigating curricula and school textbooks will reveal a lot about the questions of whether and how Truth Commissions have actually had an effect on the political culture of a given state. Since assessing or quantifying the impact of Truth Commissions has become increasingly important for TJ scholarship, researching the relation between truth-telling and pedagogic discourse would be highly beneficial for the field's theoretical development (Bakiner, 2014a; Oettler, 2015; Olsen, Payne, & Reiter, 2010; Thoms, Ron, & Paris, 2010; Wiebelhaus-Brahm, 2010).

This study sets out to contribute to the emerging debate on TJ and education by exploring how the findings and recommendations of Truth Commissions in Guatemala and Peru affected the discourses of curricula and pedagogic media. Moreover, the book asks how educational policies responded to the legacies of armed conflict and the role that education played for its emergence. A special agency lies on agency: the research investigates who is involved and who is marginalized in the formation and negotiation of policies, textbooks and curricula and how teachers deal with the past in their pedagogic practice.

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2 This was the fundamental working hypothesis that gave rise to this project. As the theoretical elaborations in ch. 2) and the empirical case studies in Chapters 3, 4 and 5 will demonstrate the relation between power and education is however quite complex, meaning that shifts in the institutionalized political sphere do not necessarily translate into changes in the pedagogic discourse in a linear manner.

Methodologically, this book contributes to the debate by taking a rather broad, approach to investigating the education systems. Drawing from Bartlett and Vavrus' the research is based on comparative, vertical case studies (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2014). In other words, it investigates the emergence of policies and discourses of the politics education in connection to memory-political conflicts, studies historic narratives in textbooks, and finally explores how teachers implement, appropriate or resist the pedagogic proposals of textbooks in various social and geographic contexts. Thus, it sheds light on the question of whether and how research on textbooks and curricula may inform the debate on evaluating the impact of TJ. Furthermore, it also represents a multi-sited investigation in a double sense: On the one hand it investigates the agency of teachers in schools located in different regional and social contexts. On the other hand, it compares the processes of education reforms, pedagogic discourses and agency in two different states. Thus, the research not only demonstrates the diversity of struggles over education and memory but also illuminates parallels regarding conflict structures and discourses in two apparently independent contexts. Thereby, the project also seeks to stimulate the critical debate on globalized discourses, models of education reform and dealing with the past, as well as the ways they contribute to or undermine the potential of the politics of education to contribute to sustainable and just peace.

Fundamentally this study can be characterized as an inductive and exploratory endeavor that seeks to contribute to the emergence of further mid-level theories on education, TJ and conflict, rather than testing theories by means of case studies. It is, however, not void of theoretical debates. It seeks to bring approaches to memory studies, which are prominent in the emerging debate on TJ and education, into conversation with critical, sociological theories of education, which have so far remained at the margins of the discussion. Moreover, it draws from emerging approaches to investigating education from a neo-Marxist perspective inspired by authors like Jessop and Fraser and their recent application in education research by Novelli, Cardozo, and Smith (2015). Social justice understood as parity of participation as well as the dialectical relation between agency and structure stand at the center of the research agenda. Thus the project also seeks to contribute to closing the frequently lamented gap between social justice and Transitional Justice (Mani, 2002; Miller, 2008; D. N. Sharp, 2013).

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### 1.2) Transitions, Transitional Justice, and Education Reforms in Guatemala and Peru

By now the Guatemalan and the Peruvian transition can be considered classical examples of TJ research.

In 1996 the Guatemalan peace accords brought an end to one of the most protracted and bloodiest armed conflicts in recent history of Latin America. As the Truth Commission CEH concluded in 1999, the struggle between the insurgent organizations of the *Unidad Nacional Revolucionaria de Guatemala* (URNG) and the increasingly militarized and authoritarian state left more than 200 000 persons dead or disappeared (CEH, 1999a, 17). It was however not just the sheer amount of the death toll but also the patterns of violence and legal characteristics of the perpetrated crimes that put Guatemala's *conflict armado interno* (CAI) on the map of the international debate on peacebuilding and TJ. The investigations of the CEH did not only assert that 93% of the human rights violations committed during the conflict were attributable to state forces and associated paramilitary actors, but it also found that between 1981 and 1983 successive governments and the military had designed and implemented a genocidal strategy of razed earth, collective massacres and forced displacements in various rural regions (ibid., 38-42). The commission concluded that 83% of the registered victims could be identified as Mayans. This is especially notable because, according to the national census of 2002, only 39.3% of the population identified themselves under this category (INE 2018, 25). The CEH was the first truth commission in the Americas to conclude that acts of genocide occurred. In 2013 this conclusion was further asserted by a high-profile trial against the former dictator and retired general Efraín Ríos Montt, who became the first former head of state to be found guilty of genocide by a national court in his native country.

In Peru, the armed conflict broke out in 1980, when the Maoist movement Sendero Luminoso (PCP-SL) declared the so-called popular war on the very day that democratic elections ended a period of 12 years of military dictatorship. In 2003 The Peruvian Commission for Truth and Reconciliation CVR estimated that around 69 000 persons had been killed between 1980 and 2000. According to the statistical estimates of the commission, 54% of the fatalities could be attributed to the PCP-SL and 37% to state forces and paramilitary actors the so-called *rondas campesinas* or self-defense committees that had emerged in rural communities (CVR, 2014, 13). As in the case of Guatemala, the rural, indigenous population

was disproportionately affected by the armed conflict and human rights violations. 75% of the victims registered by the commission spoke Quechua or another indigenous language as their native idiom, while the 1992 census estimated that only 20% were not native Spanish speakers (ibid., 15-16). While the PCP-SL's activities rapidly diminished after the arrest of its leader and founder Abimael Guzmán in 1992, this did not put an end to systematic human rights violations and restrictions on civil rights. Over the course of the 1990s, the Fujimori government, which initially assumed power through democratic elections in 1989, became increasingly authoritarian and threatened civil society organizations and its political competition through repressive counterinsurgency laws and violence. In addition, democracy and the rule of law were subverted by the systematic corruption and manipulation of elections and electoral laws (Burt, 2018, 6). Faced with a series of scandals and massive public protests over his re-election in 1999 and the corruption network that the administration had spun over the years, Fujimori finally fled the country in 2000, and a transitional government headed by Valentin Paniagua prepared democratic elections and laid the base for the following processes of dealing with the past.

While the political circumstances of the transitions of Guatemala in 1996 and Peru in 2000 differed substantially, it can be argued that both societies and states were confronted with similar challenges in regard to dealing with the past. In both cases, systematic human rights violations and authoritarian rule had undermined the functioning of public institutions and the legitimacy of the state. In addition, the findings of the CEH and CVR incriminated great parts of the political and institutional elites of Guatemala and Peru for their direct criminal or political and moral responsibility. Moreover, the conflicts revealed drastic social inequalities, and structural racism entrenched in the political, cultural, and economic spheres.

Until today the results of the Truth commissions remain the subject of contested and highly polarized debates. Neither the two truth commissions nor the subsequent trials stopped the political comeback of implicated elites. At the time of writing, the largest faction in the Peruvian congress is headed by Alberto Fujimori's daughter, Keiko Fujimori, and after a legal tug-of-war that lasted several years the constitutional court ruled that her father may be released from prison on the basis of a so-called humanitarian pardon issued by former president Pedro Kuczynski, who is currently living under house-arrest awaiting a trial for charges of corruption (Süddeutsche

## 1) Introduction

Zeitung, 2022). In post-peace accords Guatemala military actors – including Efraín Ríos Montt himself and the former head of the military secret service Otto Perez Molina – took control of the government. Moreover, while the genocide trial of 2013 resulted in a guilty verdict and thus an acknowledgment of the CEH's conclusions, principles of the rule of law, accountability for mass crimes, and the recognition of human rights violations were systematically undermined by a broad alliance of political parties, military actors and successive governments. This roll-back of the human rights agenda can be seen in the vacation of the guilty verdict against Efraín Ríos Montt on technical reasons by the constitutional court in 2013, the unilateral decision of the Morales government to end the mandate of the UN-sponsored international commission against impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) in 2019 and in the same year the congress's amendment of the national reconciliation law of 1996, which established a de-facto amnesty for crimes against humanity (OAS, 2019; Oglesby & Nelson, 2016, 137; WOLA, 2019). What is at stake in the current debates over dealing with the past is however not only the narrow issue of whether individuals like Ríos Montt or Fujimori should be prosecuted. As chapters 3) and 4) will show, these are also memory-political conflicts that revolve around the question of whether and how physical and structural violence should be acknowledged and which political implications they have for the present. Thus, different memory-political positions also refer to different visions of national identity, citizenship, and democracy in the present.

Considering the central position that political theories assign to the school as an institution of civic socialization and/or ideological reproduction, turning to educational policies, textbooks, and curricula and their implementation would be warranted in any case in which societies struggle over memory, identity, and social or criminal justice. However, there are a number of reasons why Guatemala and Peru are particularly interesting cases for research on education and TJ.

The CEH and the CVR represent relatively early examples of Truth Commissions that did not just investigate and catalog specific complexes of human rights violations but contextualized their research with historic, social-scientific analyses that sought to explain the outbreak of conflict and patterns of violence against the backdrop of social conflicts and inequalities (Grandin 2005, 48). Moreover, the broader scenarios of social inequality in Guatemala and Peru also continue to be reflected by inequalities in education. Until today, indicators on educational access, quality, and the achievements of students, indicate significant disparities between urban

and rural spaces and in regards to indigenous and non-indigenous students (Benavides, Mena, & Ponce, 2010, 62–100; UNDP, 2012, 83–93). As Chapter 3 will elaborate, it can be argued that the politics of education in these countries have contributed to reproducing different dimensions of social inequality, which in turn contributed to the outbreak and dynamics of the respective armed conflicts.

Further, educational institutions became spaces of political mobilization and subsequently also arenas of political violence. Both commissions documented atrocities committed against university and school teachers as well as their students. For the CVR the nexus between education and conflict became especially important because the Sendero Luminoso recruited its cadres among university students and later utilized secondary schools as bridgeheads to establish itself in rural, Andean communities (CVR, 2014, 57).

Finally, the respective transitions coincided with and contributed to rather fundamental education reforms. As a result of the Guatemalan peace accords, indigenous civil society organizations and the state negotiated a review of curricula and administrative structures with the declared goal to not only guarantee the basic right to education but also to promote broader political and social changes through a project of multicultural nation-building (Comisión Paritaria de Reforma Educativa, 1998, 11). While the CEH did not directly participate, it established a number of recommendations on education. Moreover, as Chapter 3 will discuss, a plethora of national civil society organizations and international actors turned to writing history and civics textbooks and reviewing curricula to promote different visions and versions of dealing with the past in schools. In Peru, the publication of the CVR reports coincided with a broad public debate on the bad performance of students in the international PISA tests, which set the stage for a subsequent process of reviewing administrative structures and curricula. To secure follow-up to its reports, the CVR established a comparatively extensive catalog of recommendations for the politics of education and engaged directly with the ministry of education, and stipulated the creation and dissemination of educational materials that should serve as a blueprint for developing pedagogies of the armed conflict.

As the empirical chapters 3, 4, and 5 will show, neither of the two education reforms met the high goals that were set when they were conceived. It can even be argued that projects of dealing with the past and democratizing education have been quickly marginalized after the respective transitions. However, exactly because two decades after the respective transitions in

## 1) Introduction

memory culture, collective identities and notions of citizenship and social rights still remain contested issues, they provide illuminating examples for studying struggles over the formation of pedagogic discourses and their implementation and everyday practices of dealing with the past in adverse political conditions.

Before closing the introduction, I need to briefly discuss the historical context in which this book was produced. The project was a long time in the making. The field research in Guatemala and Peru was conducted in 2015 and 2016 and the thesis was submitted in spring 2022. This was a period of profound political crises: On a global level one may point to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Russian invasion in Ukraine, and the Trump presidency as three moments that challenged the hegemony of liberal discourses on democracy and human rights as well as the international security architecture, trade, and human development. In Guatemala and Peru, the grave effects of the coronavirus in terms of public health but also in terms of the social and civic rights of the population – including education – still remain to be fully understood. Moreover, both countries experienced several political crises that demonstrated the precarious nature of their democracies. As Chapter 3 will elaborate Guatemala's politics were marked by a conservative rollback of the peace process and initiatives on behalf of successive governments and congresses to institutionalize impunity for corruption and human rights violations. In 2023 this even culminated in open attempts to tamper with the electoral process and to prevent the transition of power (HRW, 2023). In Peru, the Odebrecht scandals resulted in criminal investigations against large parts of the political establishment, a political deadlock between the executive and legislative, and several constitutional crises. The most recent one occurred in December 2022, when the populist president Castillo, an indigenous former school teacher, made an illegal attempt to dissolve Congress. Following his arrest vicepresident Dina Boluarte announced to govern for the remaining time of his term. The events caused massive protests calling for new elections, which were however met with disregard on behalf of the government and disproportionate repression. In February 2023 the National Ombudsman for Human Rights reported 58 civilian deaths in the context of protests 47 of whom died due to the use of firearms by police or military forces (WOLA 2023).

Whether and how the events outlined above affected educational policies and the ways they are negotiated, curricula, textbooks and pedagogic practices remain important questions for future research. Unfortunately it was impossible to implement a second phase of data collection- and



*1.2) Transitions, Transitional Justice, and Education Reforms in Guatemala and Peru*

analysis in order to comprehensively react to these shifts in the political landscapes of Guatemala and Peru. However, at the time the dissertation was submitted in 2022, the latest curricula and textbooks reviewed for this study were still in circulation. Moreover, it can be observed that in the past educational policies and discourses in Guatemala and Peru tended to develop slowly and in incremental steps rather than revolutionary turns. Consequently, I am optimistic that the findings presented in this book may help scholars and the interested public within and beyond the two countries to better understand the status quo and future developments.



## 2) Theoretical and Methodological Considerations

### *2.1) Memory Studies and Transitional Justice*

In this chapter, I provide a basic introduction to fundamental concepts and debates on social memory in the field of TJ, summarize recent debates on history education as a specific mode of collective memory, and problematize the relation between collective memory and dealing with the past in current academic and political debates. Specifically, I show how politics that frame history education as a means to achieve the formation of collective national identities will tend to displace key goals of dealing with the past, including a social debate on violence and its structural causes and the transmission of knowledge critical to act as an informed and emancipated citizen.

#### 2.1.1) Memory and Politics of Memory as a Research Perspective

Memory studies and TJ fields deal with overlapping problems but they are historically rooted in different disciplinary traditions that may have inhibited the integration of their different debates. While the scholarly TJ discourse has long been dominated by law and international relations, memory studies is strongly influenced by cultural studies, history, and sociology.

In TJ, the first research that sought to integrate memory studies in a systematic way, emerged around the turn of the millennium. Typically, such investigations focused on the interplay between political discourses and policies of dealing with the past, truth commissions, and practices of memorialization employed by civil society actors in Latin America (Barahona de Brito, Alexandra; Gonzalez-Enriquez, Carmen; Aguilar, 2002; Jelin, 2003; Molden, 2016b; Oettler, 2004).

The field of memory studies is diverse in its research questions, units of investigation and terminologies. However, there are some core theoretical positions that bind it together, which are highly relevant for the research undertaken in this book. A fundamental proposition is a sociological perspective on memory, which interprets the process of remembering as a dis-

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cursive phenomenon supported by social structures. Maurice Halbwachs, who pioneered this idea in the 1920s, understands social thinking itself as constructed through memory and vice versa argued that memory is supported via communication (i.e., language and symbols) and structured through social frames of reference (A. Assmann, 2014, 26-29).

Following Halbwachs, Aleida and Jan Assmann proposed to differentiate between three dimensions of remembering: neuronal, social, and cultural. Neuronal memory refers to personal recollections that will fade once the individual carrier passes away. Social memory refers to memory as a communicative network of shared memories in which events and their meanings are recollected and interpreted through direct exchange and interaction within a group. Neuronal and social memory are intertwined in the sense that the latter builds on the recollections of the individual forming the group and that individuals contextualize and affirm their personal memories through narratives that circulate within a social group's everyday communication. Finally, the Assmanns differentiate cultural memory from neuronal and social memory. While the former are dependent on the individuals reproducing them and connecting them to their own recollections, cultural memory essentially refers to an institutionalized mode of remembering and canonized knowledge and is hence exteriorized (A. Assmann, 2014, 31-33). Cultural memory, then, is established through a process of selecting relevant bodies of knowledge, evaluating the past under normative criteria, and stabilizing such memories through representative practices and objects such as texts, memorials, museums, and days of remembrance. Through its exteriorization and institutionalization cultural memory allows for the expansion of the timeframe and social reach of remembering. It can refer to a distant past and include individuals from very different social groups not linked by interactions in everyday life. Furthermore, Jan Assmann holds that the process of institutionalization of memory goes hand in hand with the emergence of specialized elites and specialized codes of representing the past. Once such activities are built around the construction of a shared identity foundational to a political community, Assmann speaks of political or specifically national memory (J. Assmann, 2008, 111-118). For TJ research, and especially for investigating the political dynamics around truth commissions, the insertion of memory appears to be a productive approach for several reasons.

Rather than treating historiography in a positivist, Rankean, way as the objective representation of the past as it really happened, memory studies

emphasize its selective nature and as a discourse that reduces complexity and seeks to evoke affective identification (Bevernage, 2014, 8–9). Although memory studies recognize the constructed, or to speak with Anderson, imagined character of national narratives, they recognize it as a salient political factor (Anderson, 1991, 5–9; Barahona de Brito, 2010, 361). Consequently, the social and political dimensions of memory appear in the center of interest, be it related to official discourses or the ways that individuals and social groups refer to memory in the creation of social meaning for the past and present and expectations about the future. In times of systemic change to the political, social or economic structure of a society, political memory and the politics of history<sup>3</sup> appear as essential for democratization or reversely the perpetuation of authoritarian practices, because they represent a dimension for the exercise of hegemonic power as well as a space for counterhegemonic political projects (Molden, 2016a).

Truth commissions, have been argued to mark a specific post-authoritarian mode of memory making, when continuous practices of actualizing national memory are interrupted. Rather than simply adding new content to the canon of memory culture, basic parameters of identity and norms are brought into public discussion (Barahona de Brito, 2010, 360). In this context, research on democratization will have to go beyond procedural questions about elections and rule of law and will have to include how the past is represented and how such representations are constructed and contested. In such a perspective research can also focus on truth commissions' epistemologies and their relation to social memories, which helps us to better understand agency and power relations within TJ interventions: Rather than assuming that revealing the truth about past conflicts is a technical task, recent studies on memory and truth commissions show that TJ institutions' politically negotiated mandates and their research perspectives and narrative practices frame and limit the range of topics and perspectives essential for institutionalized truth-telling (Bakiner, 2015; McEvoy & McConnachie, 2013; Shaw, Waldorf, & Hazan, 2010). This work has contributed to critical TJ research focused on the relation between globalized discourses on human rights and dealing with the past and the political agendas and social practices that develop in national and local contexts (Nagy, 2008; D. N. Sharp, 2013, 158–162). Moreover, focusing on

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3 A number of researchers employ the term politics of history, in order to demarcate the specific field of negotiating the representation of the past in public discourse and institutions (Molden, 2009; Wolfrum, 2010).

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the discursive practices of truth commissions also reveal that despite the normalization of TJ on a global scale and the emergence of an increasingly standardized TJ toolkit (Nagy, 2008), experiences vary substantially, as truth-telling has moved from a narrow, quasi-legal approach to a broader historiographic analysis open to aspects of structural and cultural violence (Bakiner, 2016; Grandin, 2005; Oettler, 2006, 28–29).

Research on social memory and TJ may benefit particularly from turning to pedagogic discourses, and in particular curricula and school-textbooks. In light of the debates summarized in this short section, I will emphasize the following points in more detail: First, education has been a niche issue in the broader TJ debate. But for memory culture, hegemony, or the politics of history and memory, textbooks and curricula are the most interesting sources for research that embodies the definition of political memory. After all, they are typically regulated or even produced by a specialized institutional apparatus charged with distinguishing permissible and non-permissible perspectives on the past and the core of canonized knowledge from historic sidenotes. Furthermore, as the following section 2.2) shows, the function of education is frequently framed in explicit identity-political terms. And as a substantial body of literature on so called culture wars has shown, textbook content have become an issue of heated debates about culture, identity, and memory in many countries (Carretero, 2011; Fuchs, 2011; Grever & van der Vlies, 2017). Hence, some researchers have turned to the textbook to illustrate a state's *official* history, or argued that the act of consecrating a historic position as the narrative of a state funded textbook signaled that it had become official (Molden, 2014, 128; Weldon, 2009, 37).

As mentioned above, truth commissions are typically associated with extraordinary moments, in which routine processes of reproducing memory culture appear in conflict with political and social struggles over collective identity and political and legal norms. But TJ scholars hold that the effects of TJ interventions cannot be grasped when research is reduced to the narrow timeframe of a transitional process and the immediate reactions and debates that truth commissions or trials cause (Oettler, 2015, 46–48). In contrast to such irruptions of memory that may dominate the public debate for relatively short periods of time, processes like curriculum reform and textbook admission or revision move relatively slowly and in many cases may be periodically repeated. This indicates that the system of educational media production is marked by a certain inertia and does not respond to issues that dominate the public debate of the day. It also means that textbooks