

# Multiple and contested geographies of memory: remembering the 1989 Romanian 'revolution'

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## Introduction

This chapter is concerned with the memory and commemoration of the violent events and civil war that were part of the complex downfall of Romanian Communism in 1989-90. The departure from state-socialism in Romania was distinguished by its violent nature, with the Romanian 'revolution' leaving over a thousand people dead and around 3,500 wounded, with more deaths and injuries in the *Mineriadă* of 1990. What exactly happened during the fall of the Ceaușescu regime in December 1989 is still the subject of debate. Together with the subsequent trajectories of Romanian post-socialist politics, which have been marked by considerable continuities from the Communist regime, this has produced a complex context in which commemoration and memory of these events remain highly contested. Official, state-led processes of commemoration do not resonate with popular memory, which remembers in different ways which ignore or contest the narratives of the post-socialist nation-state.

This case therefore provides an important context in which to explore the multi-faceted nature of the memory of war and violence. The nature of memory formation in post-socialist Romania points to the need to explore the inter-relationships and entanglements between official (state-led) memory and variegated collective and individual memories. There is certainly a materiality to this, as the state and other elites have created particular landscapes encoded with their preferred readings of 1989. However, popular imaginings of these events are expressed in and through different spatial settings and processes, which require analysis of their 'more than textual, multi-sensual worlds' (Lorimer 2005: 83). Memories of conflict are constructed within the inter-relationships of landscape/materiality/object, practice, atmosphere, affect and environments, and how these complexly shape and reshape each other (Thrift 1996, 2004; Lorimer 2005; Anderson 2009; Anderson and Harrison 2010). In this chapter we therefore explore the 'more-than-human' worlds of memories of civil strife using landscape analysis, media and archival sources, fieldwork at memorial sites and focus groups with young Romanians (conducted in 2009 as the twentieth anniversary of the revolution approached) to trace how place, rituals, performances, identities and embodied and affectual experiences intertwine to shape memory.

To begin with we establish, as far as is possible, a short narrative of the events of 1989-90 associated with the end of the Ceaușescu regime. We then explore the nature of commemorative landscapes, their performance and emotional and affectual responses to them in two ways: official (state-led) attempts at commemoration and popular practices and imaginings. Here we do not wish

to suggest that these are simply opposites, though they can be distinguished in terms of their spatial arrangements and how they are performed, but to draw attention to how official and public processes of memory formation interact. The analysis therefore considers material landscapes and representations initially, but also pays close attention to the ‘more-than representational’ processes of memory, in which personal, emotional and affectual responses and bodily practices and performances play a key role. To conclude we consider the importance of the locally contingent national context and wider social processes for the nature of this memory formation.

### **The 1989 Romanian ‘revolution’**

In 1989 the Socialist Republic of Romania was ruled by Nicolae Ceaușescu, an autocratic and neo-Stalinist dictator. Ceaușescu’s decision to pay off Romania’s national debt in the 1980s caused unprecedented austerity since most food was exported and energy was rationed at the same time as Ceaușescu pursued a Pharaonic project of rebuilding the capital city. Though Ceaușescu and his wife Elena were universally unpopular, he was the subject of an extravagant personality cult constructing him as the culmination of Romania’s historical development and the embodiment of the peoples’ aspirations (Tismaneanu 2003).

On 16<sup>th</sup> December 1989 plans in Timoșoara to evict a dissident Hungarian church minister escalated into mass public protest. On Ceaușescu’s orders this was quashed by the army and internal security forces (*Securitate*), leaving 21 dead and over a hundred wounded (Siani-Davies 2005). Ceaușescu called a mass public rally in *Piața Palatului* (Palace Square – now renamed *Piața Revoluției*: see Figure 4.1) in Bucharest on 21<sup>st</sup> December intended to demonstrate his control. However, he was heckled by the crowd and the dictator’s confusion was broadcast live on television. Realising that this was their opportunity to bring down Ceaușescu’s regime, Romanians took to the streets in protest. The army and *Securitate* opened fire, leaving 49 dead and over 400 wounded but this failed to deter the crowds who, the following day, stormed the Communist Party Headquarters. Ceaușescu escaped by helicopter but was later captured. A group called *Frontul Salvării Naționale* (National Salvation Front (NSF)), led by Ion Iliescu, took power. The army now declared itself on the side of the people and three days of civil war followed during which the army fought against forces supposedly loyal to Ceaușescu. These events culminated with the trial and execution of the Ceaușescus on 25<sup>th</sup> December. The NSF committed itself to abolishing the Communist Party and supporting political pluralism and economic reform.

FIGURE 1 HERE

These events, in which 1,104 people died and 3,352 were wounded, became known as the ‘Romanian revolution’. Initially it appeared to be a genuine ‘people’s revolution’, but by January 1990 doubts were being expressed about the ‘official’ version of events. It was clear that the NSF had organised itself after the revolution began (Sislin 1991) but quickly took control. It was dominated by second-tier Communist Party members and Iliescu himself had once been a high-level Party figure. Critics suggested that the revolution was in fact a *coup d’etat* by a faction within the Communist regime intent on overthrowing Ceaușescu without relinquishing power and, furthermore, there are claims that the NSF may have been involved in prolonging the conflict in order to cement its position as the ‘guardian of the revolution’. Much of what happened remains shrouded in mystery but Siani-Davies’ (1996) account of events – that a revolutionary situation arose without producing a revolutionary outcome – is a good summary. While in official discourse these events are referred to as ‘the revolution’, most Romanians are sceptical and subscribe instead to the *coup d’etat* interpretation, referring instead to a ‘so-called’ or ‘stolen’ revolution. Thus

throughout this paper we use the term ‘revolution’ for the sake of simplicity although we are fully aware of the highly contested nature of this term. Indeed, it is the highly contested nature of these events which are significant in shaping the ways in which they are remembered.

### **Elite landscapes of memory and popular responses**

Studies of memory frequently highlight the importance of the state in shaping remembering or forgetting in constructions of ‘the nation’ (eg. Nora 1989; Halbwachs 1992; Legg 2005a; Forest et al. 2004) and nation-states and other elites frequently try and shape popular imaginings by producing particular material landscapes. Thus we begin our analysis with an analysis of elite, particularly state, commemorative landscapes but then look beyond this to the little-understood public consumption of elite landscapes. Here we argue that the state and other elite groups have attempted to sustain a particular memory of the revolution but that the broader public’s emotional and affectual responses to elite landscapes and narratives do not cohere around this narrative.

Following Ceaușescu’s overthrow the Romanian state led the way in shaping memorialisation of the revolution (Siani-Davies 2001) and sought to institutionalise the ‘peoples’ revolution’ interpretation of events. The status of ‘revolutionary’ was bestowed on anyone claiming to have participated in the events granting them privileges, such as tax breaks. Cities that had experienced fighting were declared ‘martyr cities’ (eg. Brașov, Sibiu and Târgu Mureș). Between 1989-2009, most of the 216 new pieces of legislation relating to the revolution were concerned with honouring ‘revolutionaries’ (Chamber of Deputies 2011). Other levels of the state were also active. In the early 1990s the street names commission of Bucharest *Primărie* (City Hall) renamed twenty-nine streets in honour of the revolution (Light 2004). Significantly, the emphasis is on the individuals who died rather than the meta-narrative of a popular uprising which overthrew Communism.

This method of commemoration is reflected in a variety of other monuments erected by different parts of the state. During the revolution the NSF took control of the television centre and called upon the people to defend it and 62 people lost their lives there. These events are memorialised in the form of a *troița* (a traditional wooden memorial commonly found in rural Transylvania) bearing the inscription ‘The revolution existed in our souls, you made it reality with the price of the supreme sacrifice. Your bravery is recognised! 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1989’. Once again this is a form of memorialisation which focuses on ordinary Romanians rather than elites. Nearby houses still display bullet marks from the fighting. This theme is also apparent in Paul Neagu’s sculpture *Century Cross*, erected in 1997 as the result of a competition held by the *Primărie* to produce a monument to the victims of the revolution.

In Bellu Cemetery victims of the revolution are buried in rows of uniform graves (recalling practices of the burial of war dead) bearing the Romanian tricolour. The metro station opposite the cemetery has been named *Eroii Revoluției* (Heroes of the Revolution). However, this official commemorative landscape is also overlain by personal acts of remembrance, as the graves are decorated with items left by relatives and they act as the sites for personal acts of remembering. Beside the cemetery is the *Biserica eroilor martiri ai revoluției din decembrie 1989* (the Church of the Martyr Heroes of the December 1989 Revolution, 2003) administered by the Romanian Orthodox Church, but built at the initiative of an association of the relatives of the dead. The Romanian Orthodox Church holds special ceremonies each year to commemorate the victims of the revolution at the Patriarchal Cathedral and other significant churches, and these ceremonies are attended by many ordinary Romanians. Thus, official and personal landscapes and practices of remembrance intersect in these multiple spaces of memory in ways which extend and blur elite memory formations beyond the spaces and narratives of the state.

Another elite actor in the commemoration of the revolution is the Romanian Army. Although initially implicated in the repression in Timișoara, the army played a pivotal role in the revolution by switching sides and has thus subsequently positioned itself as the guardian of the ideals of the revolution. The NSF was keen to retain the army's support and so in January 1991 released funding to the Ministry of Defence to commemorate fallen military personnel (*Monitorul Oficial* 1991). One key memorial is located at Bucharest's international airport where 49 soldiers were killed in a 'friendly-fire' incident. This marble monument features individual memorials to each soldier and a central memorial bearing the inscription: 'To our country speak this truth: we were where we were told to be'. This memorial commemorates those who died as a result of a tragic mistake that occurred within the chaos of the revolution, rather than the overthrow of the Ceaușescu regime. The Army also maintains a gallery in the National Military Museum including a memorial inscribed with the names of the soldiers who died and regular services of remembrance are held here. Displays show uniforms, military paraphernalia from December 1989, a 'revolutionary' Romanian flag (with the emblem of the communist republic cut out of its centre) and photographs from the revolution with captions such as 'In defence of the Revolution, Bucharest 1989' and 'The army is with us', representing the role of the army as supporters of the revolution.

Thus multiple elites have actively shaped a complex set of memorial practices. However, it is the state that has been the most powerful actor involved in shaping memorial landscapes in Bucharest, and we now turn to their efforts and popular responses to them. The NSF swiftly set about creating an official commemorative landscape. *Piața Palatului* (Palace Square) was renamed *Piața Revoluției* (Revolution Square) (*România liberă* 10 January 1990), an attempt by the new regime to sanctify the place where the revolution began. As Azaryahu (1996, 2009) has argued, in a revolutionary context the renaming of urban places is a powerful political statement that something has changed, and a way for a new regime to declare its aspirations. A decree of 7 February 1990 declared Revolution Square to be a '*loc al spiritului dezinteresat, care va iesi din sfera pasiunilor politice*' (*Monitorul Oficial* 1992). This translates approximately as 'a place of the disinterested spirit, beyond the sphere of political interests', and is thus an attempt to depoliticise the 1989 events and to enshrine the official narrative of the 'people's revolution', closing down other memories.

The first official memorial was inaugurated in Revolution Square in 1990 on the initial anniversary of the revolution. This pyramid-shaped memorial bears the text 'Glory to Our Martyrs', but the monument is small-scale and sober rather than triumphant. The apex points to the balcony where Ceaușescu gave his last speech – the event that everyone can agree upon as the start of the revolution. The flowers in the monument may represent a stream of blood, again affirming the narrative of the bloody revolution in which the people rose to overthrow a tyrant.

Thus *Piața Revoluției* has thus become a site in which successive post-Ceaușescu governments have commemorated the revolution as the event which brought about the overthrow of Ceaușescu. The square has come to be associated with opposition to (and the end of) Communist Party rule (an inversion of its communist-era meanings when it was a place for Party ceremonies). In 2003, the Social Democratic Party government (the heir to the NSF with Iliescu again the state president) erected a second memorial here. As Failler (2009) suggests, state strategies of remembrance at official sites can be attempts to shield the state itself from reflecting upon its own role in traumatic events. The monument is known as the *Memorialul Renasterii* (the Memorial of Rebirth - see Figure 4.2) and the winning design was chosen by Iliescu himself. It is a much larger monument than that erected in 1990, and the memorial complex includes a short 'Avenue of Victory' leading to a 'Square of Reflection', a 'Wall of Memory' and the centrepiece of the ensemble, a 'Pyramid of Victory'. Inaugurated in August 2005, it is the central location for official ceremonies commemorating the revolution.

FIGURE 2 HERE

However, analysis of the reception of this monument by varying elites and publics illustrates how official memoryscapes do not simply shape collective memories but can be open to different readings, subversion and/or resistance (Atkinson 2008; Legg 2005b; Forest et al. 2004; Foote and Azaryahu 2007). This was a top-down project, led by the state elite, which enjoys little popular support. The Romanian press dismissed the monument, saying it was built with taxpayers' money without public consultation. Architects and critics derided it as of little architectural merit (*Adevărul* 2005a). Organisations representing those who participated in the revolution have also rejected the monument (*Adevărul* 2005b). In fact, it is so unpopular that most of the mayoral candidates in 2008 promised to demolish it if elected (*Gândul*, 2008).

This negative response to this official memorial landscape is also reproduced more widely in the everyday personal practices of the Romanian public. In everyday discourse the monument is referred to as the *țepușa cu cartoful* ('the stake with the potato'), or 'the impaled potato', or even just 'the potato' (see Figure 4.2). The indifference towards this memorial mirrors broader scepticism about the official narrative of the revolution and that the 'potato' is regarded as the project of a government with roots in the communist regime. This narrative parallels the argument of Forest et al. (2004) that in post-socialist regimes the public may associate state-led commemorative practices with continuity in state power from the communist period. In terms of embodied practice the monument is largely ignored by Bucharesters who rarely enter this official memorial space, even during state-led commemorative events. On the other hand, the monument is occasionally the subject of mocking graffiti. For example, stencilled graffiti around the monument state 'Monumentul erorilor', which plays on the similarity in Romanian between the words for 'heroes' and 'errors': thus 'the monument of errors' rather than 'the monument of heroes'.

Given this lack of engagement with the official site of memory it is people's unseen relationships with the state-led memorial material landscape that is significant for understanding the nature of memory formation in response to them. The state-sponsored memorials intend to construct *Piața Revoluției* emotionally and affectually as a solemn place of remembrance. However, few Bucharesters regard the square in this way, dismissing it as 'just a stage' and rejecting the meanings intended by the state. Here a focus on affectual, emotional and sensational responses (Thrift 2007) to the monument are significant. As one respondent stated:

It has no meaning for me. I really don't like the monument. It's a joke I have with my friends, but the only thing about it that makes me sad or uncomfortable is the marble benches [ie. trying to sit on them] (Focus group, Female, 20s).

Another stated that: 'There's nothing about it that is about respect. I don't feel sorrow...it makes me angry, actually.' (Female, 20s). While there are personal emotional and affectual responses to the monument – apathy, dislike, anger – they are very much not those intended by the state (solemnity, celebrating overthrowing Communism).

In this light the focus group discussed what would form a suitable memorial for the revolution, with one saying that:

I think the revolution should have a common monument that represents what people feel like, not some statue designed by an architect. Like a space where you can express yourself as a citizen (Female, 20s).

Here, a suitable memorial space which would allow citizens to practice their own senses of commemoration would be a very different space.

Significantly, the official commemorative spaces of the revolution have not become the focus of a shared sense of public memory. Instead, they are largely treated with indifference or even explicitly rejected, illustrating what Rose-Redwood (2008) terms the performative limits of official commemorative landscapes. While elites seek to inscribe the public landscape in different ways, their efforts can be ignored or contested by citizens through myriad counter-performances of memorial spaces and the desired emotional politics is not achieved. This, then, raises questions about ‘alternative’ memories of the revolution embedded within different landscapes and popular practices.

### **Alternative commemorative practices and landscapes**

Many Romanians are indifferent about the official narrative of the revolution, but agree that the individuals who died deserve remembrance, thus producing a separate memorial landscape focusing not on the ‘big events’ – the downfall of communism – but instead remembering those killed. Here we explore the alternative geography of these counter-memorials (Young 1992) and the differing personal performances and emotional responses underpinning these counter-memories (Legg 2005a; Tabar 2007; Zerubavel 1995; Alderman 2010).

The principal site of counter-memory is *Piața Universității* (University Square – see Figure 4.1). This square – and specifically a small, previously un-named area within it now called *Piața 21 Decembrie 1989* – has special significance. A number of people died here during the first night of the revolution and it quickly became a site of informal remembrance as Bucharesters brought wooden crosses and candles and erected improvised, ephemeral memorials (Beck 1993). It contains small and unobtrusive memorial plaques and crosses with simple inscriptions such as ‘For the heroes of the Revolution, 21-22 December 1989’ and ‘Here they died for freedom, 21-22 December 1989’. There is nothing to identify who erected them – they represent informal, private commemorations.

In *Bulevardul Bălcescu* which runs past *Piața 21 Decembrie 1989* are a number of much older stone crosses, one of which has been inscribed by a local painter with the text ‘To the heroes of the revolution’. A wooden cross was also erected here by a group representing revolutionaries with the blessing of the Romanian Orthodox Church. Further along the boulevard is a collection of memorials to the first victims of the revolution (Figures 4.1 and 4.3). Again, these are small, private memorials, grouped informally on the edge of a busy pavement beside a shop entrance, some of which were erected by relatives. These sites also demonstrate the performative nature of memory as they are frequently decorated with candles and flowers. On the Post Office building a plaque erected by Post Office workers to commemorate a colleague reads ‘On 25 December 1989, on the fourth day of the Romanian revolution our innocent colleague was taken at only 22 years old’. All of these acts of commemoration are initiated outside the state and they inscribe a parallel set of counter-memories onto the landscape. They are deliberately placed in different locations from official monuments and focus on the individuals who died rather than the revolution itself. These are deathscapes (Maddrell and Sidaway 2010) or sites of death, loss and mourning (Hallam and Hockey 2001) in which private grief is publically displayed through smaller, individual and highly personalised forms of memorialisation. Acts such as lighting candles and laying flowers constitute a form of ‘commemorative vigilance’ (Nora 1989) performed by ordinary Bucharesters, acts which involve a more sensual and tactile engagement with sustaining memory than the efforts of state institutions which are largely centred on conventional monumental structures.

FIGURE 3 HERE

However, *Piața Universității* was also the site of further events which reinforce these counter-memories. In 1990 it was apparent that the NSF was dominated by former Communists. When it announced its intention to stand in the 1990 elections students and young people set up a protest camp in *Piața Universității*. The NSF won convincingly and Iliescu was elected president with 85% of the vote provoking further protest. In response, thousands of miners were brought to Bucharest on chartered trains and told that Romania's new democracy was under attack from anarchists, deviants and foreign agents. On reaching University Square they attacked the protesters and ransacked the University, with most of the brutal violence occurring in *Piața 21 Decembrie 1989*. Officially seven people died but the actual total is believed to be in the hundreds. This shocking event (the *Mineriadă* or 'Miners' Rage') demonstrated that the post-Ceaușescu regime was as willing as its predecessor to use violence.

Unsurprisingly, the state has made no attempt to commemorate these events. However, the square has become the most significant site of counter-memory in the capital and it contains a diverse range of memorials to the young people killed in the *Mineriadă*. The university building in *Piața 21 Decembrie 1989* bears a memorial plaque with the inscription 'Here students and lecturers fought for freedom and civil rights in December 1989 and April-June 1990'. The Architecture School opposite was also the site of spontaneous and personal commemoration as it was extensively graffitied with protest slogans throughout the 1990s (this was cleared in 2001 when the Social Democratic Party, successor to the NSF, was in power). In the centre of *Piața 21 Decembrie 1989* is a metal cross erected by a local artist, Constantin Popescu. Writing on the cross states that it is 'for the anti-communist heroes' and invites passers-by to place a flower in memory of those who died, a practice which is entirely non-state led. The cross is regularly cared for and repainted, apparently by the painter himself.

*Piața Universității* – and in particular *Piața 21 Decembrie 1989* – is an informal but powerful site of counter-memory which directly challenges and subverts official narratives, reminding ordinary Bucharesters that the deaths of December 1989 did not bring about the desired political change (Antonovici 2009). What happened in June 1990 further challenged the official state narrative of a 'people's revolution'. This is a place that has far more emotional resonance for the people of Bucharest than *Piața Revoluției*. As one focus group participant stated:

For me the area around University Square is more powerful...[The graffiti on the Architecture School building] should have been left. That would have been a better monument than the 'impaled potato'. So a better monument would not even need to be a monument. There are bullet holes in the walls of the National Museum of Art. That is a better monument (Male, 20s).

In the popular imagination there is a distinction between the official commemorative landscape of *Piața Revoluției* and the informal memoryscape of *Piața Universității*. The latter is inseparable in public memory from resistance to communism and post-1989 neo-communism. This is reflected in people's embodied performance of these spaces. In contrast to the formal, disciplined and staged ceremonies that unfold in *Piața Revoluției*, in *Piața Universității* people perform memory in a much more mundane, everyday and informal way (such as laying flowers). As a result the affectual atmospheres of remembrance are entirely different in each space, representing a diversity of post-conflict landscapes of affect (Navaro-Yashin 2009, 2012).

The post-Ceaușescu state has always had an ambivalent relationship with *Piața Universității*, particularly when former Communists were in power. However, apart from removing graffiti there have been no attempts by the state to reinscribe the meaning of the square or to intervene with these alternative, personal acts of commemoration. This tension between official and popular memory was apparent during the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the revolution in 2009 when official ceremonies

unfolded in *Piața Revoluției*, but it was in *Piața Universității* that revolutionaries and Bucharesters gathered to remember.

### Countermemory beyond landscapes and sites of commemoration

Countermemories of the revolution are also formulated beyond both official and personal commemorative landscapes, illustrating the wider production of memory throughout society in more quotidian and mundane spaces (Atkinson 2007, 2008). Here, memory is psychological and embodied (Legg 2005a), and commemoration is an individual process within a broader social construction of memory (Boym 2001). In this section we explore the nature of these countermemories as personal memories, but how they are shaped by wider social processes within different spaces such as the family or mediated and virtual spaces.

Within the focus groups, when asked if their families would do anything special to mark the anniversary of the revolution, one respondent highlighted this lack of engagement with official processes, saying ‘Not really. *They know*. They don’t have to do anything special...’ (Male, 20s). Memory is thus formed and sustained through internalised and often individualised practices: as this respondent said ‘We might light a candle, or something’. This point was also discussed by several of the focus group respondents (emphasis added):

I wasn’t involved in the revolution, but you are aware, but *in the back of your mind*, because you know that if it wasn’t for the revolution we wouldn’t be living as we do now, but it doesn’t matter in the way that you would celebrate it. *It’s personal, it’s inside us* [general agreement]. I see it in a very symbolic way, the revolution means a step towards freedom, towards being what we are today (Male, 20s).

Another commented on how it was important that their memories of the revolution functioned in this way:

I don’t like to see it on the news. It makes me sick if there’s any cynicism about it. If I saw any sign of it being ‘commercialised’, that would be it. *It’s something that’s personal, that’s inside me, and that’s how I think about it* (Female, 20s).

Here there is an explicit rejection of any attempt by the state or media to take control of and shape narratives of the revolution. Thus memories of the revolution are more the product of a population shaping their individual memories rather than the outcome of state-led processes of memory formation. However, memory is differentiated among different generations. Some young people retain direct memories of things that happened during December 1989, though at the time they were shaped by interaction with their families and of course were seen from the perspective of a child. For example:

At the time I was in Bucharest with my parents. I remember my mum moving the furniture onto the window ledge [to stop bullets] and crying because my father was out on the streets (Female, 20s)

We were living in Ploiești. My parents were watching TV and it stopped and we realised that the revolution was really happening. My parents were happy but scared... (Male, 20s)

However, there is a generation born after the revolution which does not have any direct memories but nevertheless are able to narrate postmemories or re-memories (Hirsch 1996; Tolia-Kelly 2004),



which illustrate the trans-generational shaping of memory (Adelman 1995; Weingarten 2004). As the focus group discussed their memories of the revolution, it became obvious that they were shaped by different forms of interactions within different families:

My parents don't have a problem. If I ask a question they answer it. But it is not a topic which comes up a lot. My neighbours used to discuss it, how it wasn't a Christian thing to shoot [the Ceaușescu] on Christmas Day... (Female, 20s).

My grandfather always talks about it, he is passionate about history (Female, 20s).

The transgenerational construction of individual memory and re-/postmemory thus varies considerably in relation to family dynamics, with different family members exhibiting different degrees of willingness to remember, or forget.

These re-/postmemories among younger people are also highly mediated (van Dijck 2007, 2008; LeMahieu 2011). Younger people 'encounter' the revolution through the education system, television, documentaries and books in ways which shape their understandings and memories:

I remember after the Communist period there were many documentaries about the revolution. And there are many books. And now they are trying to write the truth about it (Male, 20s).

Usually in December there's something on TV around that time. And they say 'this happened' and they retell that story (Female, 20s).

However, younger generations' memories are additionally mediated by the development of new technologies, especially the Internet. As van Dijck (2008: 70) argues 'embedded in networked systems, pictorial memory is forever distributed, perpetually stored in the endless maze of virtual life'. Virtually distributed representations of the revolution are key in shaping younger people's memories:

And of course there's YouTube and whoever wants to can see those movies and Ceaușescu's last speech (Male, 20s).

There are many internet versions of Ceaușescu's last speech and the crowd turning on him, which have received millions of views.

The mediated nature of memories among this generation was strikingly illustrated when the focus group members unanimously claimed to remember the execution of the Ceaușescu, even though they probably never actually saw it. The execution was shown repeatedly on television (to demonstrate the Ceaușescu really were dead) and the footage can be viewed on internet sites such as Youtube. The graphic violence of their execution is ingrained into young peoples' memories because of its traumatic content, a form of memory that is sometimes referred to as 'flashbulb memories' (Kensinger and Shacter 2009):

...when they shot the Ceaușescu, I still have that 'screenshot' in my mind. I don't know if I saw it later or I still have it in my mind from that period. My parents were discussing if it is normal or not to kill him on Christmas Day (Female, 20s)

I remember the video of the shooting. They were scared. And they shot them even after they were dead. They kept shooting. It was horrible (Female, 20s).

However, these responses indicate that, although they hold strong memories of this event, it was difficult for these younger people to untangle them from subsequent media exposure, complicating the relationship between media and memory:

Q: did you see the image of the shooting on TV?

...[general confusion among the group]...I don't know if I saw it at the time. I don't know if it was broadcast on TV. They were lying on the floor with the blood flowing, and their eyes open... (Female, 20s).

Thus there is not a simple linear relationship between distributed digital representations and memory formation. van Dijck (2008) argues that digital technology loosens the control of individuals (and, by extension, elites) to maintain power over how images are manipulated and framed in public contexts such as the Internet, a process heightened by the democratisation of memory (Atkinson 2008) in the post-socialist context. Digital music and video technologies allow younger generations to mutate iconic images into new representations of the past which inform their memories in different ways. As one focus group respondent said 'There's even a music remix using Ceaușescu's last speech. It's art...it's turning into art' (Male, 20s).

For example, a remix by DJ RA7OR samples part of the televised speech where Ceaușescu repeatedly shouts to the crowd 'Alo! Tovarăși! Așezați-vă liniștiți!' ('Hello! Comrades! Everyone be quiet!'). The iconic image of Ceaușescu's last speech has been reworked within youth culture in a way which frames the remembrance of the revolution quite differently, which illustrates that 'memory products...invite subversion or parody, alternative or unconventional enunciations (van Dijck 2007: 7).

Thus, for most Romanians the formation of memories of the revolution does not occur through official commemorative landscapes but instead is personal and shaped in the quotidian space of the home through mundane interactions with their families, and during leisure activities where they interact with mediated memory products which are consumed and reproduced in complex ways. Here memory is less bounded and more fluid and continually reconstituted (Atkinson 2008).

The existence of these diverse individualised, institutionalised, transgenerational and mediated counter-memories has important implications for how personal and public memory formation interacts with official attempts to commemorate the revolution as the foundation myth for a 'new' Romania (Boia 2002). In official discourse the revolution is the event that symbolises the end of communism. In this sense the state has attempted to mobilise remembrance of the revolution within nation-building strategies as part of creating an 'imagined community' (Anderson 2006). However, counter-memories of the revolution work in a very different way - the revolution is remembered in terms of respect and sympathy for those individuals who died but with few specifically national resonances. For example, a focus group respondent said:

You celebrate the National Day because it's something that you understand and everybody does it, but the revolution doesn't have that meaning (Female, 20s).

Thus the celebration by the state of a national day has resonance but attempts to use memories of the revolution for this purpose do not work. Another focus group respondent illustrated this when he gestured to the pub sound system playing the Michael Jackson song 'Thriller' and said:

...like, it's more important that Michael Jackson died [general laughter]...yeah, actually it is, that's something everyone talks about...if the media made the revolution more 'trivial' then maybe everyone would talk about it too (Male, 20s).

The contested nature of the revolution, and the way that it is remembered by Romanians of all ages, means that it is difficult for the state to generate and sustain a coherent memory of the revolution to underpin new myths of 'the nation'. Instead, people's everyday practices and popular traditions (Edensor 2002) do not reinforce the state's narrative. These various sites of counter-memory thus function to 'rebut the memory schema of a dominant class' (Legg 2005a: 181).

## Conclusion

As Alderman (2010: 90) notes, places of memory narrate history through selective processes of remembering and forgetting, leaving 'what is defined as memorable as...open to social control, contest and renegotiation'. In this chapter we have explored how different elites and publics have engaged in the 'work' of memory in quite different ways which demand an understanding based on interrogating the entanglement of material landscapes and objects, embodied performances and rituals, atmospheres and emotional and affective responses. In the Romanian case these entanglements were shaped by the contingencies of local and national events and social and political changes.

Post-socialist memory formation is shaped by people's experience of national variants of state-socialism and one legacy is a mistrust of the 'public' sphere and politics (Nadkarni, 2012; Gille, 2012). Decades of state-sponsored attempts to shape memory in support of political projects have produced post-socialist societies which may feel little affiliation with elite visions of the nation and this feeling maybe stronger in societies with more traumatic experiences of Communism. Furthermore, post-socialist societies may question attempts by new regimes to suggest a 'clean break' with the past if they perceive elements of continuity rather than change in political power structures (Forest and Johnson, 2002; Gille, 2012). In the Romanian context Popescu-Sandu (2012) suggests that such a situation provokes a 'paralysis' in politicizing memory and follows Boia's (2002) notion of a 'mythological blockage' of proper consideration of Romania's past.

Romania's exit from state-socialism in 1989 was highly complex politically and – unusually for the former Eastern Europe – was marked by violent conflict. Memories of these events have been shaped by strong political continuities from the Communist period, combined with the rapid adoption among Romanian citizens of the 'stolen revolution' version of events, reinforced by the subsequent violence of the *Mineriadă*. In this context memories of the revolution have developed in a very particular way, with popular memories being associated with an alternative and separate geography of sites and landscapes, a rejection of official narratives and landscapes, and a subsequent formation of memory in a variety of different places beyond the reach of the disciplining state. Rather than seeing these as two opposing sets of memories, however, it is important to see them as alternative strategies of memory which exist because of how they work against each other.

There is little doubt that the Romanian state and allied institutions (such as the Orthodox Church) will continue to commemorate the revolution, which in turn will retain its importance as the fundamental element of the official foundation myth of the post-Communist Romanian nation. Events such as the fiftieth anniversary of the revolution will be extensively celebrated. However, there are other drivers of post-Communist Romanian identity, not least integration with Europe. As far as the alternative and counter-memories sustained among the general population, these will be

sustained by an increasingly older generation and may not be taken up by younger generations, though young people (students in particular) still maintain recognition and pride in those events, and whenever there is a protest young people head to *Piata Universităţii*, which is becoming a site of protest more than a site of memory. The interaction of the affective qualities of public space and memory is a constantly evolving process.

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