



MUSEO
SITIO DE MEMORIA

ESMA

EX CENTRO CLANDESTINO
DE DETENCIÓN, TORTURA Y EXTERMINIO

RECOMENDACIONES

Por el contenido sensible del Museo,
la visita no es apta para menores de
12 años, sin excepción. Entre 12 y 15
años deben estar acompañados por
un adulto mayor responsable.

Global Diplomacy Lab 2022

Memory in Presence:

Memorial Sites as Places for Peacebuilding

Hosted by GDL members

Julie August and Banu Pekol

June–November 2022



For more information on the Global Diplomacy Lab please visit:
www.global-diplomacy-lab.org

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Diplomacy up close: Lab participants at the Argentine Foreign Office (Cancilleria) in Buenos Aires, November 2022

Introduction

The Lab and its Origin

Many societies are dealing with the aftermath of violent and state-organised conflicts like wars, dictatorship, genocide, apartheid, colonialism and slavery. Unresolved issues from such pasts continue to burden the efforts of the 'post' societies for a more peaceful, human-rights-respecting and more democratic order, often creating or prolonging existing social crises.

Understanding the past and creating an open dialogue around it in order to resolve the issues is therefore an essential undertaking towards a more equal and peaceful society. Efforts to address the conflicts of the past must acknowledge their relationship to the present in order to achieve the long-term goal of repairing the broken social bonds. For diplomats and officials, it is essential to have the capacity to deal with such traumas as it supports their diplomatic mission.

With this in mind, Julie August and Banu Pekol, members of the Global Diplomacy Lab (GDL), proposed to develop a training course for a specialist audience from the diplomatic sphere. This led to the lab "Memory in Presence", carried out in Argentina in 2022 in conjunction with the Museo Sitio de Memoria ESMA, the Museo de la Memoria, the Parque de la Memoria and the Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial. It builds on the ideas of the GDL's 2017 Curriculum "Memory, Truth and Justice" on mass atrocity prevention at the local level and a training course given by GDL members Banu Pekol, Julie August and Vesna Terselic during the 21st European Diplomatic Programme hosted by the Federal Foreign Office in 2020.

The 2022 lab started with online preparatory sessions in June and July 2022, followed by an online *incubation phase* from August to October 2022. The first part consisted of a series of kick-off meetings, site exchanges and online cine-debates, virtual exchanges on relevant fiction and documentary films, through

which participants were able to familiarise themselves with the Argentinian dictatorship from 1976 to 1983 – the case study – and other cinematic works addressing past atrocities. In a series of additional online meetings with experts from diplomacy, academia and memorial sites during the *incubation phase*, participants examined the scope of the topic and explored tools for analysing different educational practices. Participants contributed their own reflections and ideas and helped develop innovative and experimental approaches while establishing a productive exchange with the institutions involved.

The *impact phase*, an on-site event in Argentina, that included diplomats, museum staff, civil society actors and GDL members, took place from 7 to 12 November 2022. Various methodologies were applied, such as guided visits, discussions, workshops and meetings with stakeholders from a number of institutions and human rights organisations. These activities culminated in a training session at the Argentine Foreign Ministry that drew on the results from the local encounters and online workshops. Lab participants explained the rationale, content and methodology of the training they proposed for early-career diplomats, and invited comments and feedback. The idea of introducing methods and tools for approaching different stakeholders and positively transforming potential conflict into dialogue and peace to early-career diplomats was received with encouragement. Lab participants also shared their idea of a "Memory Charter", to be signed by as many countries and international institutions as possible.



Teamwork: Banu Pekol, Lea Schindler, Julie August, Kyra Ritter

About the Global Diplomacy Lab (GDL)

The nature of diplomacy is evolving. It is no longer the strict purview of national governments and international organisations. The Global Diplomacy Lab is a platform for exploring a new and more inclusive diplomacy that goes beyond traditional politics. Against this backdrop, creative professionals from diverse fields are needed to explore new communication tools based on mutual trust and to reformulate an agenda for collective action.

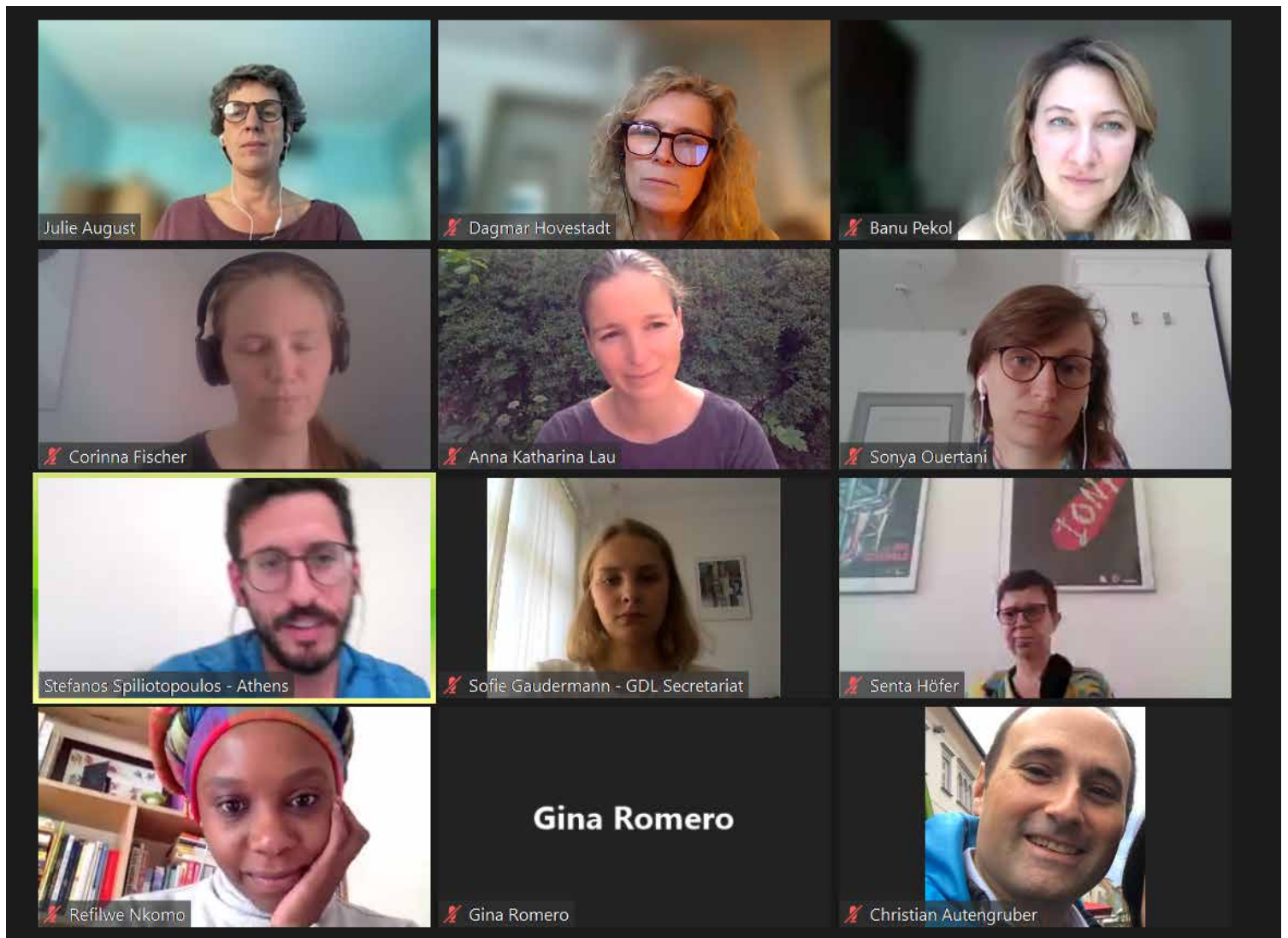
Host members

Dr Banu Pekol's work focuses on peacebuilding and conflict transformation in relation to contested cultural heritage. Her work spans cultural heritage research on difficult pasts and projects that produce creative and research-based results, specialising in cultural diplomacy, contested heritage interpretation and management. Currently responsible for the work of the BMW Foundation Herbert Quandt in the WANA region, she previously worked on intercultural and inter-religious conflict transformation and peace education at the Berghof Foundation. She was a Historical Dialogue and Accountability fellow at the Institute for the Study of Human Rights at Columbia University. Banu is a co-founder of the Association for the Protection of Cultural Heritage, a trainer for the 21st European Diplomatic Programme, a former elected member of the GDL Advisory Council and a BMW Responsible Leader.

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Julie August, born in Germany, is a graphic designer for several publishing houses and a curator of contemporary art. Since 2013, she has lived in Buenos Aires with her wife Liliana Furió, who is co-founder of the collective *Historias Desobedientes* (relatives of genocides for memory, truth and justice). Julie participated in the GDL's 2017 Curriculum "Memory, Truth and Justice" on mass atrocity prevention at the local level and, together with Banu Pekol and Vesna Terselic, developed a training course for young European diplomats for the 21st European Diplomatic Programme. She currently plays an active role in *Asamblea Desobediente* and takes part in exchange events with *desobedientes* from other countries, such as Chile, Germany and Spain. She will represent *Asamblea Desobediente* within the context of a project at the Berghof Foundation in 2023.

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Incubation: Meeting online and sharing stories about what drew members to the lab. June 2022.

1. Online Incubation Phase

What is being remembered and by whom? How is a post-conflict narrative created and how does it change over time? And what does that all mean for diplomacy? In a series of web encounters, the *incubation phase* of the lab wanted to stimulate debate over the many layers of the memory field. Academics, practitioners and diplomats were invited to share their knowledge, but the lab participants' own memory encounters were also tapped.

Cine-Debate and Sites

As an introductory step, the participants watched and debated two quintessential films about the Argentine dictatorship from 1976 to 1983. In the (cine-)debates participants raised questions about the strength of storytelling by those who actually witnessed the events (documentary "Santiago, Italia", 2018) over the fictional narration and actors playing historical roles (film "La Historia Oficial", 1985). Engaging in discussions about trauma with witnesses, however, was considered a challenging task. Understanding and being aware of the power dynamics over the "right" and "wrong" way to remember the conflict plays a crucial role in the memory discourse, as do the voices who are heard or ignored.

In a second session, each lab participant shared personally significant memory sites through photos or websites. It looked at abandoned Turkish ghost towns from the expulsion of the Greek minority, Johannesburg's Constitution Hill, the Dublin site of the Magdalene Laundries, the Stasi Headquarters in Berlin, the Bucharest Palace of the dictator Ceausescu, a Pristina private home offering shelter and schooling during the war of the 1990s, an abandoned guerrillero site in the mountains of El Salvador and a cemetery in Bogotá. The variety of conflicts and the emotions attached to the sites brought a deep understanding of the power of places to connect to the wrongs of the past and their long shadows and presence in the now. During these sessions, Banu Pekol and Julie August shared their learnings from their visit to the Neuen-gamme Concentration Camp Memorial and the Munich Documentation Centre for the History of National Socialism, where they met with the staff of these institutions.

INSIGHTS

Starting with one's own relationship to memory, be it personal or national, is a powerful connection to the subject. Participants felt it: memory starts also with the self.

- What do I remember? How and why?
- How does that make me relate to the memory of others?

In relation to the diplomatic profession, those questions translate into possible starting points for engagement:

- How does the memory culture of my own nation intersect with the memory culture of my host nation?
- Does my own country's history make me more empathetic about the host country's issues?



Movie poster for "Argentina 1985", a fictional version of the first junta trial. Buenos Aires November 2022.

Academics and Site Managers

In the **academics session**, research from Argentina, Russia and England as well as from a global, multidisciplinary project was shared. Core lessons from the researchers' own interaction with memory were:

- > There can be a biological link to victimhood through the experience of loss over generations (Argentina).
- > Repression of memory over long periods of time in a continuously repressive society leads to little civic engagement so that a version of "memory" can be instrumentalised for contemporary political gains with little protest and no actual memory of the repetitive offences of the (hence blameless) state (Russia).
- > Memory is embedded in the present, not the past, i.e. what we see happened, we always look from today; language is an essential element in the shaping of the narrative (cross-national observation).

International efforts to support dealing with the past have come under scrutiny, as they often overlook regional or local perspectives. Creating peaceful coexistence or even reconciliation between parties to a conflict is complex.

"There is no IKEA approach to post-conflict situations."

Cecilia Sosa, Researcher

Reconciliation means different things in different cultures: there is no acceptance of reconciliation when the perpetrators do not accept responsibility for their deeds. The pillars of transitional justice – truth, justice and memory – go together. There needs to be truth and justice first for memory to do its healing.

INSIGHTS

When diplomats work in the area of memory and past state-driven violence, they must be particularly sensitive. They can be caught between internal and external dialogues, between official state narratives and historic facts and victims' experiences, making it difficult to stay within the diplomatic rules.

- Memory dialogue is constantly evolving. So diplomats need to be sensitive to new perspectives and voices in the dialogue about memory, like feminist voices or de-colonisation efforts.
- Special strategies are needed when the host state has created a limited narrative about the past repressing any fact criticising its actions and persecuting any civic actor questioning the state narrative.
- Listening is an important part of the dialogue. Voices in exile can be a great way to support civic society, while this interaction can also lead to criticism and backlash in the host country.



World-wide symbol:
The white head-scarfs of the
Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo.

The academics desired more communication between the fields of diplomacy and research for a mutually beneficial knowledge exchange that is currently lacking. In their view, diplomats could fulfil two great roles: they could be instigators of dialogue about the past when it needs to be renewed and messengers for the idea of dialogue and listening to the many perspectives on history.





Florencia Battiti, chief curator at Parque de la Memoria in Buenos Aires.

The **session with site managers** brought together experiences from Argentina (Museo Sitio de Memoria ESMA in Buenos Aires and Museo de la Memoria in Rosario) and Germany (Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial near Hamburg). Even though the historic events are of very different kinds, the work at the sites is connected through similar ideas and principles guiding their processes, as the Rosario museum listed:

- > memory of atrocity is seen as a public policy goal
- > past and present are linked
- > broad support for the museum/site and its goals is necessary
- > use of storytelling to connect to the audience
- > interactivity and openness to new generations and their communication
- > take the long-term historical background into consideration (what led to the atrocity?)
- > use visual arts to understand the history/enabling of empathy
- > descendants of the victims are a driving force
- > connection to the surrounding community and their voices

INSIGHTS

Given the emotional power of historic sites and the three different kinds of sites and approaches the lab participants were introduced to, the question of the role of diplomacy and the role of diplomats in this context arose.

- They can provide help from the outside during the time of terror, including the complications that that entails.
- They could influence the reputation of a country and its past as well as its relationship with this past today.
- They should be aware that many of the conflicts of today are connected wars (international as well as civil) and derive from the colonial history of centuries before – history is never finished.
- Diplomats should look at their own family history to find a way into the history discussions of the host country as a way towards understanding it better/more empathetically.

In 2022 the ESMA museum in Buenos Aires applied to become a UNESCO World Heritage site. The application process is meant to showcase the universal values tied to the site as well as to give the Argentine experience greater visibility in the Latin American context. The goal of this process is two-fold: to showcase the universal values tied to the site as well as to give the Argentine experience greater visibility in the Latin American context. Diplomats were not specifically involved in the process, even though it could have been a possible way to interact with Argentine memory culture. In September 2023, the Museum was declared UNESCO World Heritage.

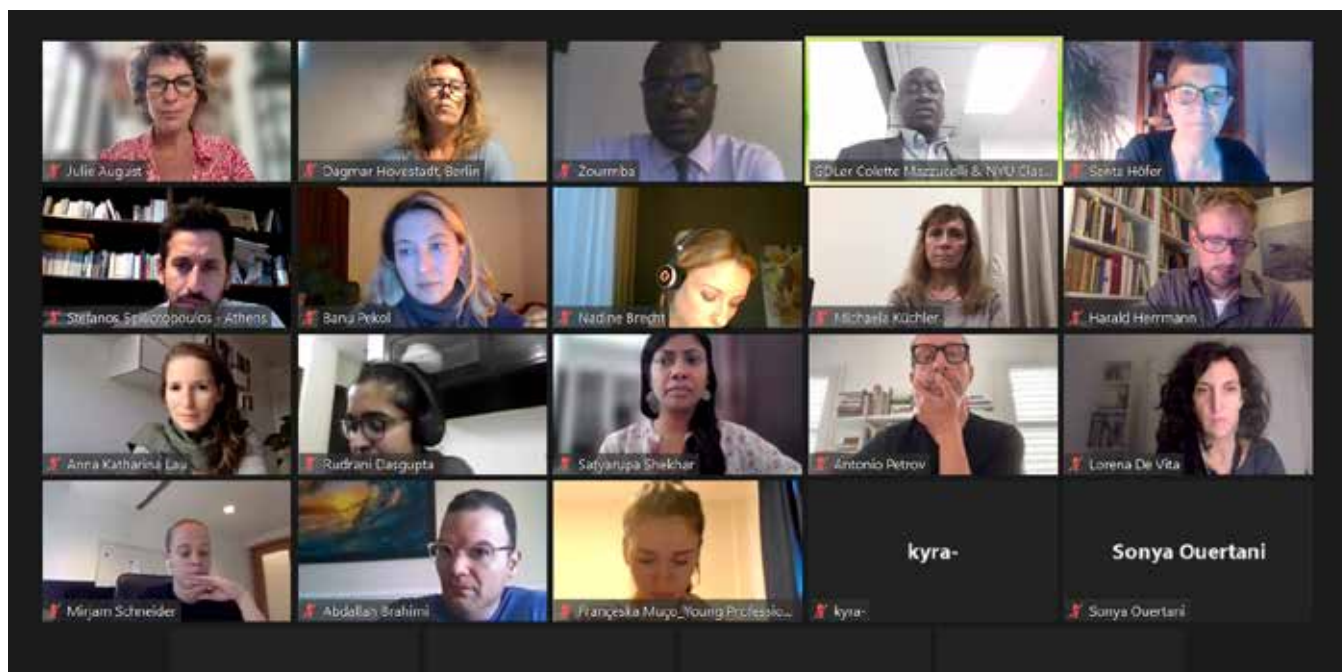
The Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial site added a vivid example of interaction with victims' families to the discussion. As the Nazis destroyed much of the documentation of the prisoners, many of their descendants became a driving force to give them back their names. They wanted their relatives to be remembered at the site of their suffering. 2015 saw the inauguration of a space to remember, where descendants commemorate each relative in their own way. There is again room for diplomatic engagement here, as many of the descendants now live all over the world. Even though this involves state-to-state interaction, no diplomats were involved.



Faces. At the ESMA site the windows of a grand hall are covered with photos of those that disappeared during the military rule.

Diplomats' Input

The final incubation step was a discussion with three active diplomats (two from Germany, one from Cameroon) about their interaction with memory in their work. For this online session, the diplomats were asked to answer three questions:



Incubation. Online exchange of lab members with diplomats about their experience with memory spaces. July 2022

1. Was political memory part of your training?
If so, how were you trained?
2. Please share a story from work on memory and personal life.
3. Which skills did you receive on peacebuilding and dealing with the past?

1. One of the diplomats (Cameroon) found knowledge of history so invaluable for his work that he began studying it and received a PhD in history. During his diplomatic training, the focus was much more on international relations. For the German diplomats, political memory is a central training subject. As Germany was a perpetrator nation in WWII and before, this history requires diplomats to have an awareness and a knowledge of the time. It also helps them to explain why Germany turned into a human rights activist on the international stage and why it stands up against any form of hate.

The politics of remembrance are now part of the German DNA. There is an established language and ritual on how to talk about the Nazi past and the corresponding dates, but that also feels a bit ritualised. Since this political memory is, however, mostly centred around the Nazi era, how Germany dealt with its colonial and its communist past is not so well known. Currently, these different levels of oppressive pasts make dealing with the past in Germany complicated. There is an element of competition between the different forms of repression and injustice and their prominence in the memory dialogue. German diplomats will have to learn how to manoeuvre this.

2. Examples of special ideas included the commemoration of a WWII massacre in Lidice where a diplomatic initiative led to an effort to commemorate the victims by writing out their names in a public forum, a much-lauded initiative that led to better relations. Change also happened in diplomatic training, e.g., in the field of sensitivity to LGBTQ issues.

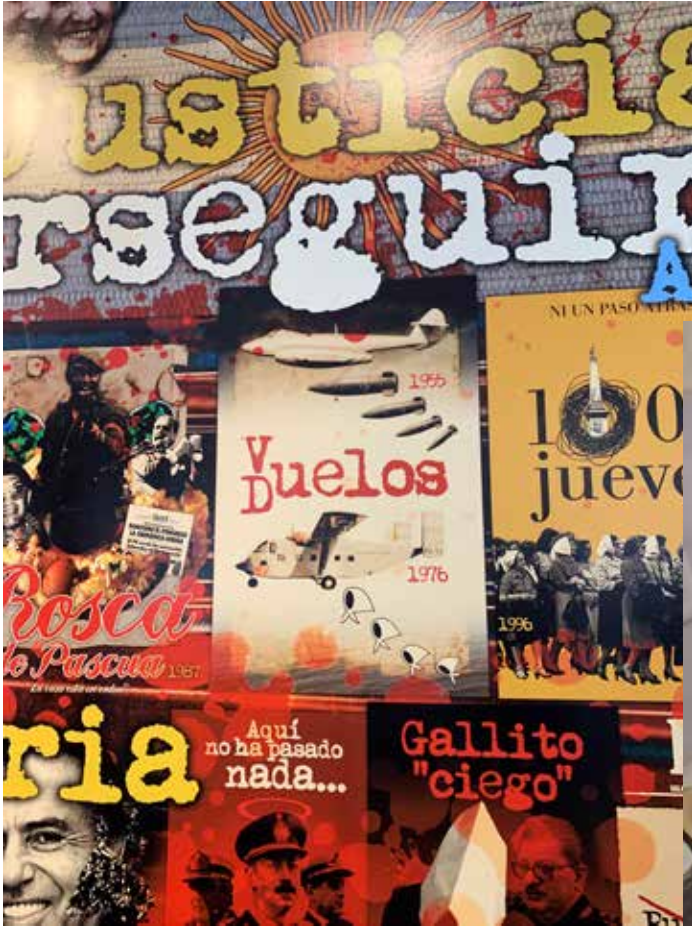
In Cameroon, the centenary of WWI remembrance started a memory dialogue of a different kind, as it took a long time to figure out how to describe Cameroon's role in that war. Germany was at the time its colonial power, and some Cameroonians were acting on its behalf, within the Schutztruppe of the German police. Ultimately it was decided that Cameroon was not an independent stakeholder in that war and thus was not counted among the aggressors. However, the debate led to a new narrative of Cameroon's national history. An additional Cameroonian initiative was an attempt to use a colonial postal building as a memorial site. The initiative failed and the site is now a commercial space, reminding only those involved in the process of what could have been and is now lost there.

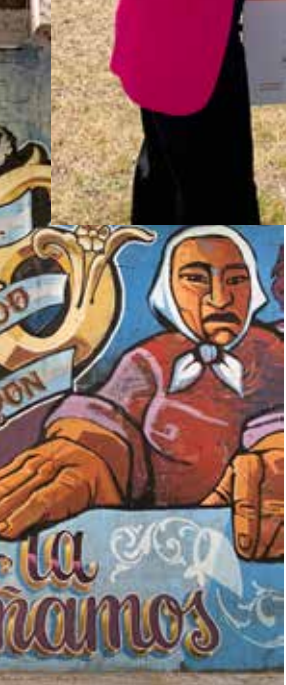
Another example of a failed memory initiative was also shared: the presentation of a Stasi exhibition in a regional town in Argentina, with an invited witness, did not find an audience and led to a disappointing event. Argentines had expected something very different, possibly also because their ideas about communism were different. The need to prepare in a different cultural context for the memory narrative from one country became painfully obvious with many questions for future memory exchanges.

3. Skills on dealing with the past and peacebuilding were related to international law. The example given was the UN resolution on Holocaust denial. Decades after the end of World War II it was organised at the UN level and adopted by consensus in the General Assembly in January 2022 with 78 nations on the draft resolution. To rally many nations to a mutually acceptable definition of antisemitism needed a lot of knowledge about the past and information distribution. In the diplomatic field, agreeing on codified law is an accepted way to deal with memory issues, giving individual diplomats something to orient themselves to.



Impressions from Buenos Aires and Rosario







2. The Impact Phase in Argentina

Discovering Memory Activities in Argentina

Argentina's LAST brutal civic-military dictatorship continues to have an impact on society to this day. Between 1976 and 1983 30,000 people¹ were abducted, tortured to death, executed or sometimes drugged and thrown out of planes into the sea with their hands tied. In Argentina, the term *dictadura cívico-militar-eclesiástica* (civil-military-church dictatorship) is also used to indicate that all sectors of society collaborated.

The South American country is also one of the states in the world that has most consistently dealt with state crimes. Today's democracy is characterised by a very active civil society. Many movements grew directly out of resistance to the military dictatorship.

During the Global Diplomacy Lab in Buenos Aires in November 2022, the GDL members explored memory activities and social movements in Argentina's capital, Buenos Aires, and the city of Rosario, and had the opportunity to discuss memory activities and challenges with experts and diplomats as well as contemporary witnesses and activists, such as Argentines from military families who denounce the crimes of their own relatives, or grandmothers who are still searching for their disappeared grandchildren.

The Military Dictatorship

According to Amnesty International, the Argentine military dictatorship tried to eliminate subversion "however and wherever it appeared" – "Congress was dissolved, the state of siege which had been imposed by the previous government was extended, judicial guarantees were abandoned, kidnapping took the place of formal arrest and the number of disappeared reached monstrous proportions." More than 800 military barracks and various buildings belonging to the security forces, as well as some hospitals, factories, private residences, and schools throughout the country, were converted into clandestine centres of disappearance, torture and extrajudicial execution; kidnappings became an everyday practice of military and police forces – not only members and sympathisers of subversive organisations were disappeared, but also their family members or acquaintances, as well as other voices critical of the military dictatorship.

As part of the so-called "National Reorganisation Process" (*Proceso de Reorganización Nacional*), military officers kidnapped children and unlawfully raised infants born in torture centers themselves. Children were placed with families loyal to the regime to "reeducate" them, to eradicate the "subversive" culture and beliefs of their parents in the following generations.

¹ The number is an ongoing topic of discussion. According to human rights groups, between 10,000 and 30,000 people were disappeared during the last civil-military dictatorship – many of them without a trace. Some activists prefer to say 30,400 in order to visualise the LGBTQI+ victims who were silenced before.



Break with tradition. At the ESMA site a photo display remembers the moment on March 24, 2004 when two portraits of junta generals were taken down at the National Military College. It was the 28th anniversary of the coup in which those two were heavily involved.

Argentina's Journey from Dictatorship to Democracy

The perpetrators remain silent to this day. The extent of the state violence only gradually became apparent, due to the reports of former detainees, other eyewitnesses, and the relentless efforts of relatives who tirelessly searched for the disappeared. After the transition to democracy in 1983, the National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons (*Comisión Nacional sobre la Desaparición de Personas*, CONADEP) was created by President Raúl Alfonsín in order to investigate the fate of the disappeared persons. In its *Nunca Más* report (1984), the Commission recorded 8,960 cases of disappearances. The junta trials of 1985 marked the first public step toward accountability, with nine generals standing trial. Nevertheless, the Full Stop Law (1986) and the Due Obedience Law (1987) were used to obstruct the investigation of thousands of cases of disappearances, torture and extrajudicial execution, according to Amnesty International.¹

The election of Néstor Kirchner as president finally cleared the way for a more extensive prosecution of the crimes: in 2003, the amnesty laws were repealed; in 2005, the Supreme Court confirmed the repeal of the two laws. More than 1,100 perpetrators and accomplices have since been convicted of crimes like kidnapping, torture, murder, or the appropriation of babies, as the monitoring database *Juicios de lesa humanidad en tiempo real* reveals.² Nevertheless, prosecution is a race against time, since victims, relatives, witnesses and perpetrators have mostly reached an advanced age. Contemporary witnesses, historians and activists are still trying to come to terms with the crimes of the past, to document their extent and to make them tangible for future generations – through physical memory sites, but also through social debates.

¹ Amnesty International (2003): The Full Stop and Due Obedience Laws and International Law

² Secretaría de Derechos Humanos de la Nación (2023)

Living Memory

A Torture Camp as Museum

In the basement, political prisoners were tortured; in the attic, they slept chained and with a hood covering their heads: the Higher School of Mechanics of the Navy (*Escuela Superior de Mecánica de la Armada, ESMA*) in Buenos Aires was the largest torture centre in Argentina during the military dictatorship. Around 5,000 people were imprisoned here; only a few hundred survived. Babies were born in the torture camp; their mothers were often murdered shortly after giving birth. Some of the children grew up in the families of the murderers of their real parents. Today, visitors walk the paths of the torturers and the victims of the military regime, listen to audio recordings of survivors, and feel the depressing atmosphere of the building, where brutal torture, murder, and the everyday life of the soldiers and students of the naval school took place simultaneously. While other cultural institutions also open up artistic, more creative spaces for memory activities, ESMA presents the past strictly on the basis of substantiated testimonies and judicial documents and verdicts – in order to preserve an incontestable version of the historical events, to make it accessible to the public and to create a basis for collective remembering. Some artistic interventions took place, but the museum’s advisory board (human rights organisations, survivors and relatives of the disappeared) eventually voted against mixing commemoration and cultural events.



Last traces: Display at ESMA site of political prisoners photographed by Victor Basterra, prisoner himself, who was forced to work for the military and smuggled out negatives under great risk. In the reopened trials, his photos gave evidency / were used as proofs in the trials.



A wall of thousands of names commemorates year by year those that disappeared.

A Memorial Park for the Disappeared

The plaques with the names of the disappeared and murdered victims of Argentine state terrorism seem to stretch out endlessly in the Parque de la Memoria. The park nestles directly on the Río de la Plata; only a few hundred metres away is a military airport from which so-called “death flights” (*Los vuelos de la muerte*) took off – they carried sedated and tied up victims of the military dictatorship who were thrown into the water and left for dead. On the large green area of the Parque de la Memoria, the present and the past meet: visitors walk their dogs and take selfies with the sculptures that recall the horrors of the military dictatorship, and relatives search for their family members on the wall bearing the names of the dead.

“I had always wanted to visit the Parque de la Memoria, but going alone was not an option. When Julie August invited me to participate, I was enthusiastic about the idea of going with a group interested in what had happened. When I realised that on the walls were the names of the disappeared, I ran looking for the name of my aunt, María Ilda Delgadillo, and there she was! Knowing that she was there, that oblivion had not reached her, was a great relief for me. That is the importance of these monuments: they perpetuate history, preserve it as silent testimonies of the horror of which human beings are capable. It comforts me to know that many will read her name and she will continue to live in the collective memory of a country that does not forget, that continues to seek justice and truth.”

Laura Delgadillo, Founding Member of the Collective Historias Desobedientes

The Power of Family

Some of the silver-haired women are pushed across the central Plaza de Mayo in wheelchairs, but they continue to DEMAND JUSTICE in a loud and clear voice. In 1977, the mothers of the disappeared persons – united in the social movement *Madres de Plaza de Mayo* – circled the site for the first time to denounce the disappearance of their children and grandchildren during the military dictatorship and to demand justice. Today, they also call out current social grievances. Another movement – the grandmothers (*Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo*) – focused on tracking down and EVENTUALLY returning children who were kidnapped or given up for forced adoption during the military dictatorship to their families of origin. Since the military dictatorship, the mothers and grandmothers have been tirelessly searching for the kidnapped children and missing grandchildren like detectives, and to this day they continue to try to bring perpetrators, accomplices and families who illegally appropriated their grandchildren to justice.

The organisation *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo* estimates that 500 children were kidnapped during the military regime. 130 children who grew up under false identities have been identified so far, but a new story could emerge any day. Some grandmothers have already died, the rest have already reached old age. The documents and evidence they collected in files are currently being digitised – to preserve them for future generations. Children whose mother, father or parents disappeared and who grew up with the rest of the family, sometimes also abducted children, have also founded organisations such as HIJOS (*Hijos por la Identidad y la Justicia contra el Olvido y el Silencio*; Sons and Daughters for Identity and Justice Against Forgetfulness and Silence) or H.I.J.O.S. to fight for justice for the crimes committed against their families.

GDL members joining the “Ronda”: Mothers of Plaza de Mayo walk in circles and read names of the disappeared, every thursday at 3pm, since 40 years. Nora Cortiñas is fighting for human rights worldwide



The Disobedient Children

Liliana Furió had suspected that her father was involved in crimes for a long time, but her suspicion was confirmed only when he had to stand trial in 2009; Paulino Furió was sentenced to life imprisonment for the disappearance of at least 20 people. “I felt very alone with this horror and went from therapist to therapist,” Liliana Furió says. It was not until 2017 that she found others who had similar stories through social media and co-founded the collective *Historias Desobedientes*. For the first time in a lifetime, the children of police and military officers had a safe space where they could share their stories and address their shame about what their parents had done. “It was very emotional, we also cried together,” Furió remembers. The collective has driven the claim for truth and justice by reaffirming that their parents and grandparents are perpetrators who have never repented of what they have done; some of the children have also tried to collect evidence of their parents’ crimes in order to bring them to justice.

Pablo Verna, son of military doctor Julio Alejandro Verna, learned about his father’s crimes from his sister in 2013 – his mother had revealed them to her when she was angry with his father. “He was the doctor who injected the prisoners with narcotics before they were thrown off the planes,” Pablo says. His father also helped to disguise the murder of four opponents as a camping accident – they drowned in a car that was sunk in a river. In a three-hour conversation, the father at first evaded, eventually admitting to being involved: “He felt that his actions were justified, that he was going against enemies of the government. And he has gone unpunished to this day.” Pablo Verna and his sister had recorded the conversation. They passed the evidence on to a human rights lawyer, wanted to testify against their father – but legislation prohibited family members from making themselves available as witnesses. Pablo joined the *Historias Desobedientes* collective to work with them to change the law. In the meantime, he has testified against his father in two trials and presented evidence such as emails.

In 2020, the collective *Historias Desobedientes* split into two branches because of differences in organisation and leading. Today, Liliana and Pablo are members of *Asamblea Desobediente*.



Regional Memory

A day trip to Rosario further expanded our understanding of the memory culture in Argentina. The local Museo de la Memoria not only brings into focus the regional stories of the disappeared and those responsible but also fosters artistic exchange over the period of the military dictatorship. The documentation of the disappeared includes artistic interventions and museum design spaces. It was insightful to learn that as a regional cultural institution, the Museo de la Memoria Rosario, struggles even more for resources and recognition as the sites in Buenos Aires, with almost no support from foreign entities. Therefore, visiting these local initiatives outside of urban centers could be an excellent idea for diplomatic engagement and can help to bring attention to and deepen the understanding of the many layers of the conflict.



Museum, art and historic voices. Lab members and Argentinian activists in Rosario.

Corporate Support

The Argentine dictatorship had support in many places, among them business interests. At least 25 global companies operated in Argentina during the time of the junta, actively supporting the dictatorship when they believed it served their business interests. Historian Victoria Basualdo presented the case against the Ford Motor Company during the dictatorship. Despite claims of researchers and labor unions since the end of dictatorship that factory and company managers had been complicit in the persecution and disappearance of individuals, prosecution wasn't legally possible until 2002. In those companies, labour leaders and outspoken workers were targeted and military officials were aided in their repression against them.

It took fifteen long years to bring two Ford managers in Argentina and one military general to justice in the case of 24 disappeared workers from one Ford factory in the district of Buenos Aires. Again, it was the tireless demands of the families of the disappeared that gave this pursuit a voice, a face and public attention. In December 2018, 35 years after the end of the military dictatorship, the Ford managers Pedro Müller and Héctor Francisco Jesús Sibilla as well as military general Santiago Omar Riveros were sentenced to 10, 12 and 15 years in prison respectively for having given lists of names to the military, for providing space for torture at the company site and for aiding in the disappearance of 24 people. It was particularly important to win the case as the Ford managers are now legally tied to the crime while the corporation had maintained that only the military can be held accountable. It seems particularly fitting that the Ford company was held accountable as their car model "Falcon" was the car of the clandestine operations.

Insights

- Terms and words have different meanings in different local contexts, which can be particularly challenging when discussing memory and memory activities. While the concept of “reconciliation” is often seen as an important step on the road to peaceful societies, in Argentina, for example, it is met with fierce opposition because perpetrators adhere to the military code of silence, remain silent about their crimes instead of helping to clarify them, and often remain unrepentant to this day, insisting that they committed their crimes for the good of society. So reconciliation is seen as letting those responsible off the hook. Also, experiences of how to deal with the past can never just be transferred, as it depends on local history, customs and traditions. Dealing with memory requires sensitivity and much listening.
 - A large part of the work of diplomatic missions is the organisation of open trade and mutual economic exchange. This is particularly complex when the host country is currently engaged or was engaged in gross human rights violations. (War is a different matter altogether.) Diplomats can add a human rights and memory dimension to the field of trade and also encourage their home companies to look at their past involvement. Ever since the establishment of the Foundation “Memory, Responsibility and Future” in Germany in 2000, this is a model to refer to. Actively addressing one’s own misconduct in relation to the host country is a starting point for the memory dialogue.
- Diplomats and foreign representatives can promote and support engagement with places of remembrance in foreign countries; they can organise delegations to memory places, meet with civil society organisations related to memory activities, or highlight their work with events or prizes, for example. In Argentina, it was not until the visit of French President François Hollande in 2016 that Argentina’s President, Mauricio Macri, met with the mothers and grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo and visited the ESMA torture camp. Before that, Mauricio Macri had refused to meet with the movements, which play a key role in coming to terms with the military dictatorship.
 - Civic society is a vital actor/resource in memory. In fact, Argentine society is exemplary in how the processes of dealing with a violent past can be pushed to the fore by civic society actors who form a strong public presence. Diplomats, however, seem to have limited capacity to interact, so they are missing from diplomacy.

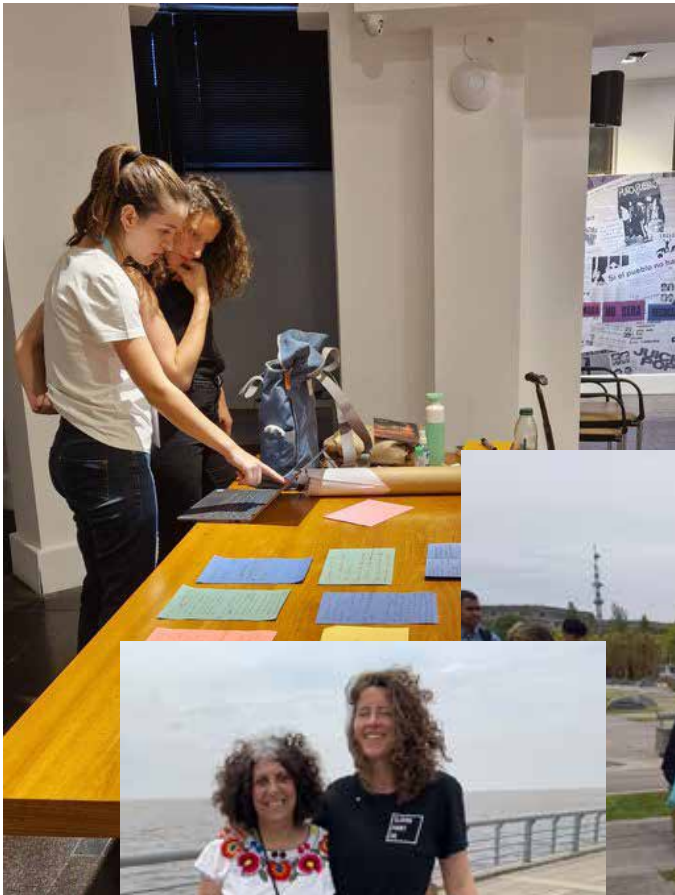


- Many diplomats are not specifically trained to deal with traumatised people or to address trauma in a way that does not re-traumatise victims or their families. In countries where human rights crimes are committed, embassies could also play a key role in collecting evidence, for example – but staff would need the relevant skills to do this.
- Diplomats can also encourage exiled citizens to reclaim justice from abroad, when the host country started initiatives in kind. For example, Argentina is currently urging its embassies in foreign countries to search for children who were abducted during the civil-military dictatorship and who grew up abroad or moved there later. The “Right to Identity” international campaign¹ provides information about the child appropriations, and potentially affected children – now adults between 40 and 45 – can take DNA tests at local embassies.² Such efforts can also be supported by other embassies. In order to sensitise diplomats to the leeway they could have, an exchange about strategies, tactics and successes related to memory activities and processes could be helpful.

¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Argentina: Right to Identity International Campaign <https://www.cancilleria.gob.ar/en/find-you>

² Sonja Peteranderl, Der Spiegel (2021): Die Suche nach dem Ich <https://www.spiegel.de/ausland/argentinien-der-staat-sucht-waehrend-der-diktatur-entfuehrte-kinder-a-957bc7c1-3a9e-479f-857f-f6c4eb8ecc16>







3. Results

Towards a General Framework for Memory in Diplomacy

Memory Charter: A Universal Framework

The idea of a “charter on memory” emerged during workshop sessions in Buenos Aires. It was deepened and fleshed out in two additional sessions with lab participants online and in-person in Buenos Aires in February and March 2023.

A charter could foster engagement of diplomats, civil society, official memory actors and other stakeholders with memory processes and activities and enable inclusive reflection on memory processes. The form of a “charter” could give it the necessary weight to accept compliance with it.

The creation of the framework could be organised by the GDL as agent and catalyst, cooperating with strong partners to enlarge capacity for a sustainable path to a successful implementation of a charter. A collaborative, open design process of the charter can strengthen the capacity of civic society AND diplomacy and could advance diplomacy 4.0 – making “the table bigger”.



Given the target audience (diplomats), the original idea of calling it a “manifesto” was seen as implying activism and thus as counterproductive. Also, given the complications and the need for a multi-stakeholder process, with serious support from the diplomatic community, the draft should be a very inviting document and thus be called “(preliminary) framework for a charter”. For now, “charter” can serve as the working title – although alternatives like “guidelines”, “covenant”, “document”, “pact” or “code” are not off the table.

There was a general consensus that it is vital to include the target group diplomats in the process, but there were no clear roads on how to achieve this (as yet). All the resources within the GDL network should be activated, i.e., all members who are diplomats, as well as the two foreign ministries that support the GDL. The BLED Strategic Forum might be a good “showcase” for the discussion of a draft framework for a charter on memory in diplomacy. Also, a proven process could be to partner with an experienced academic or other entity in the field of launching a global governance mechanism, after a first drafting process with the essential stakeholders.

Pathway to Launch / Questions of Strategy, Shareholders, Timing

What do we want for the process?

- We want to challenge diplomacy and not play it safe.
- We want to start a conversation, not force agreement.
- We want diplomacy to be more inclusive and to use memory actively.

Do we aim to have as many signatories as possible, or start small? Given the tenuous relationship between history, memory and politics, we need to develop a strategy that will encourage foreign ministries to explore our charter rather than discourage them from doing so. At the same time, the need for support and a great number of signatories will have to be balanced with the goals of the charter. Open access to fact-based memory is the basis for all memory processes. One method might be to approach a select number of foreign ministries and solicit responses/input on what they see as palatable vs potentially unacceptable or problematic.

Is the main goal of the charter to connect civic society and activists in the memory field to diplomacy? It was agreed that this should be one important piece of the charter as it is an undervalued and underused asset; it is also an important part of a more inclusive approach to diplomacy.

How do we manifest, launch and implement the idea of a charter in order to establish memory as a tool in diplomacy?

The group listed a number of conundrums for the charter to address:

- Any discussion of memory is necessarily challenging as current debates (e.g. over slavery, colonialism.) as well as historical feuds (e.g. over land or religion) deliver ample proof of the potential for such discussion to become politicised. Recognising the transhistorical ways in which memory has been contested is therefore crucial, but raises questions as to how the charter can reflect this while also being as inclusive as possible.
- Memory is a construct, as are all narratives about the past. They are always changing. How can that be reflected in a charter?
- At the heart of the memory dialogue is the dynamic between democracy and autocracy, fact and distortion. Every nation is engaged in various forms of memorialisation, but there is a distinct difference between reckoning with the abuses/dark chapters of the past and the process of bolstering false or revisionist narratives through disinformation and misinformation campaigns (in schools, through propagandist mechanisms, etc.).
 - > If you (ab)use the past to support your present hold on power, open dialogue about it is not possible, leading to complications in its diplomatic use.
 - > If you use the past to illuminate the present, open and diverse dialogue is possible and leads to a better understanding of contemporary issues.



Presentation of outcomes with representatives of Cancillería and invited diplomats?

Given all the complications and possible abuses and uses of memory, one issue is a common (and possibly uniting aspect): memory plays a role for all nations and so the charter may be able to find an umbrella structure in which foundational pillars serve as an entry point for discussions.

There is a need for three larger steps in the process to a charter. All three steps can be described and envisioned by the GDL MiP lab, but they need outside stakeholders to be successfully launched:

- Define the charter/manifesto contours, purpose, goals.
- Find stakeholders and advocates that contribute to its wording and as a test-bed.
- Devise a strategy for its launch and implementation.

Parallel to the charter/manifesto process, the group suggests the start of an on-line resource: a large collection and overview of memory events/sites/efforts from all over the world as a knowledge base to reference the power of memory. Examples could include contested and contentious, changing memory dialogues like the Balkans, the contemporary US and its dialogue about slavery and racism, the French dialogue about its colonial past, etc., while also highlighting recent government initiatives as a way of illustrating how other governments might adopt analogous measures.

Memory in Action: A Training Programme for Diplomats

Memory-related training programmes with varying durations and elements can prepare diplomats better for future or current postings. In cooperation with various stakeholders, the GDL could develop core as well as optional training elements that can be put together on a modular basis and, depending on local needs and training schedules, can be integrated into existing training courses for diplomats worldwide or function as additional advanced training modules to raise diplomats' awareness of memory activities. The activities could include, but are not limited to:

Unconscious bias training: Unconscious biases are unconscious distortions of perception or perceptual errors that can lead to false reasoning, discrimination and exclusion and can block understanding and communication, especially in intercultural settings. Unconscious bias training programmes help people become aware of their implicit biases and equip them with appropriate tools to act objectively without being clouded by their implicit biases.

Biography tandem: In partner exercises, participants explore how their personal biographies and experiences have been shaped by historical events. The intimate exchange creates space to discuss personal and emotional experiences of history in a protected setting.



Living library: Guests are invited to the training sessions who, as contemporary witnesses, provide personal insights in discussions with the participants – for example, people who were persecuted by military dictatorships such as in Argentina and who can tell of repression, imprisonment and their perspective on justice and memory processes.

Site visits: Places of remembrance are visited together, possibly in the company of experts, civil society representatives or contemporary witnesses. In addition, the participants can share experiences with remembrance sites in their home countries. In this way, the diplomats can be made aware of the importance and historical role of remembrance sites and can pass on their knowledge to visitors and delegations in the future.

Memory ABC: To create a basis for communication about memory processes, academics or practitioners could create a training session clarifying basic concepts related to memory processes.

Bullsh* bingo:** This is a humorous version of the bingo game that satirises the often meaningless use of numerous keywords in lectures, presentations or meetings. Participants can record such memory-related terms (also parallel to the training) on cards and then discuss their contents and different perspectives together – this is to avoid the use in the discussions of empty phrases or terms that, depending on the cultural context, have a completely different meaning (e. g. “reconciliation”).

Context sensitivity games: “Choose Your Own Adventure” storygames, in which participants can choose from different options, show participants different ways of dealing with challenging situations and make them aware of the consequences of their actions. Alternatively: role-playing games, in which the participants can play through different memory-related situations and take on controversial positions, can be used to play through alternative courses of action. The conflictive situations can also stem from real experiences of the participants, who can then resolve at the end of the game how they acted and what the consequences of this were.

Crowdsourced database on memory activities: The challenges/case studies could be collected, anonymised, in a database showing how diplomats actively engaged in dealing with past actions, as examples of good memory diplomacy; such a database could be an accompanying knowledge base to invite the diplomatic community to join.

Collective memorial: As a team-building activity, participants should either bring an object that represents an important memory for them or select an object/motif from a selection of objects or postcards/pictures – leading to the creation of a collective memorial.

Memory checklist: Recommendation sheets with tips related to memory activities could support the onboarding process for diplomats in foreign countries, e. g. 10 people to meet, 10 places to visit, 10 books to read, 10 movies to watch, 10 social media accounts to follow.

Trauma training: Diplomats should receive psychological training that enables them to deal more sensitively with those affected by violent events and experiences, their relatives or traumatised societies and learn skills that enable them to deal with trauma in a respectful manner. They should also learn skills that will enable them to deal with their own potential traumatising or similar psychological challenges.

Rest & reflection: Dealing with memory processes and traumatic events can be challenging. Additional elements like a reflections & comments board, selfcare sessions or harvesting sessions can open up space for reflection.

Timeline

- 1) presentation to German FFO in November 2023 at Impact Lab on the Future of the Department “Training for International Diplomats”
- 2) external panel of experts reviews programme and provides feedback
- 3) piloting with German and Slovenian foreign ministries
- 4) upscaling to global level

Budget: German and Slovenian FFO as well as foundations

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