

Place and the spatial politics of intergenerational remembrance of the Iron Gates displacements in Romania, 1966–1972

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Post-socialist memories recalling the communist past in Central and Eastern Europe have risen to importance in recent decades, but there is still a scarcity of literature dealing with the post-socialist “post-memory”. By adapting a social-spatial narrative methodology to memory studies and by promoting the current theories on the spatial politics of (intergenerational) memory in general and more specifically on the post-socialist memory formation, this paper aims to highlight the nature of memory, how intergenerational shaping of memory happens and the implications of these memories for understanding post-socialist memory creation through an understanding of how people’s personal connections (attachment) to place serve as the basis of intergenerational memory transmission. To set the scene, between 1966 and 1972, in alignment with the Stalinist principles of Soviet electrification, Romania and Yugoslavia completed the construction of one of the largest hydroelectric plants in Europe – the Iron Gates – on the Danube. Although the flooding of the settlements that were in the way of this project involved the destruction of property representing local cultural heritage, the dominant place-based memories are those related to trauma and personal attachment to (materially gone) places. The shaping of memories for the post-socialist generation is the foundation of people’s difficulty in adapting to a market economy and the capitalist state. However, while the home becomes a locus for memory transmission between generations, post-memories are “summarised” through certain key traumatic events. The implications of the creation of these memories are significant for understanding post-socialist memory formation because post-socialist remembrance of communism is bottom-up, rooted in local events and grounded in place. Finally, in the context of claiming retroactive justice in contemporary Romanian politics, tensions between those manifesting counter-memories (i.e., memories that challenge state-led actions) and those with memories that reveal people’s pride for the engineering achievements bring out the complex nature of these memories.

KEYWORDS

Iron Gates, place and intergenerational memory, post-socialist “post-memory”, Romania, sense of place, social-spatial narrative (SSN) method

1 | INTRODUCTION

The collective memory of violence and trauma has risen to significance in recent decades (Tumarkin, 2005; Tyner et al., 2014). Memories appear to emerge in response to specific events, such as social and economic processes (Legg, 2007), but recent work has pointed to the importance of recognising the role of inter/transgenerational memory and unexpected images facilitating the transmission of such dramatic events to the next generations (Till & Kuusisto-Arponen, 2015). Moreover, by placing intergenerational memories in the context of post-socialist memories, recalling key events of state-led virulent actions against communities in the Communist era, the violence of place, body and spirit become a critical “traumascape” arena (Philo, 2005; Tumarkin, 2005).

There have recently been calls for a better understanding of the post-socialist memory of the communist past through “letting citizens” voices and “memories speak” (Light & Young, 2015, p. 241; see also Young & Light, 2016) and this work tries to respond to these calls and to promote current theories and thus contribute not only to the less developed issue of intergenerational memories in general (Till & Kuusisto-Arponen, 2015), but more specifically to unravelling the nature of communist memories under state-led actions (see Stan, 2013; Tismaneanu, 2008), how they were shaped in the post-socialist context and a thorough consideration of post-socialist memory formation (Light & Young, 2015). Following this theoretical framework, this paper considers the spatial politics of intergenerational memory that followed the Iron Gates population displacement, placing the context in Romania. The paper pursues two specific aims: (1) to examine the nature of memory formation through traumatic population displacement, how intergenerational shaping of memory happens and what are the implications of this memory for understanding post-socialist memory formation and (2) to identify how people’s personal connection (attachment) with and recollections of place serve as the basis of memory and intergenerational memory transmission to post-socialism.

To understand setting this memory study in Romania, several issues are important. During the Communist era (1947–1989), Romania went through a process of forced industrialisation to jumpstart the economic development of the country, with an emphasis on the big industries such as iron and steel processing, mineral extraction and machine construction (Crețan & Vesalon, forthcoming). During Nicolae Ceaușescu’s communist regime (1967–1989), the industrial sector became the main area of economic activity in the country (Verdery, 1991). Therefore, following the Stalinist principles of Soviet electrification, the rich hydrographic network of the country was prepared for the construction of hydropower plants. The construction of the Iron Gates hydropower system led to the forced displacement of the population from numerous settlements along the Danube. This is why, from 1966 to 1972, more than 13,000 people from the Danube Gorges on the Romanian side and 10,000 from the Yugoslavian side were compelled to move from their native areas and to forfeit their way of life to support the forced industrialisation in Romania (Crețan & Vesalon, forthcoming, p. 11).

2 | “MEMORY IN PLACE”, INTERGENERATIONAL MEMORY AND POST-SOCIALIST “POST-MEMORY”

“Memory in place” or place-based memory implies certain social constructs that are represented by the verbal or written transfer of historical and social events that a certain human community lived through and by other elements, consisting of things and places (Alderman & Dwyer, 2004; Jones & Garde-Hansen, 2012; Legg, 2007; Till, 2005) which, due to historical and social circumstances, undertook rather significant modifications over time (Halbwachs, 1992; Nora, 1989). Hence, place-based memory is a way to recollect the past of a group of people who experienced some shared history in a certain place during a period of time (Jones & Garde-Hansen, 2012; McDowell, 2008). Thus, the geographies of memory politics are transcultural signifiers – neither static nor fixed in space – but communicated across spaces through shared affects and emotions (Till & Kuusisto-Arponen, 2015). Within a community with a shared tragic history, some violent events of the past are retold as rites of memorials to all those who are interested in that history (Tyner et al., 2014).

As far as the psychological and cognitive mechanisms involved in the transfer of place-based events between generations are concerned, family represents a vital point, since the telling and retelling of some stories and events helps imprint them in the minds of the younger generation and simultaneously transmits the feelings which were experienced at those important moments in the past (Mitchell & Elwood, 2012).

People’s personal recollections of place and connection or attachment to place serve as the basis of memory and intergenerational memory transmission. It happens even when the place in question is destroyed. Consequently, the power of place is not always pleasant to remember. The politics and processes of how we recall and continue to remember the

place-based wounding of lives, communities and spirits is very important in geography (Philo, 2005) because “places transformed physically and psychically by suffering” are traumascapes (Tumarkin, 2005).

The post-socialist remembering of the Communist era is a topic which has emerged in recent decades (Forest et al., 2004; Light & Young, 2015; Tismaneanu, 2008). Studies of memories of the Communist era are relatively few; they are usually presented broadly, without a detailed focus on specific events (Forest et al., 2004; Stan, 2013). Whether focused on Germany and Russia (Forest et al., 2004), Romania (Ciobanu, 2011; Light & Young, 2015) or other countries from the former communist bloc, much of that literature is interested in the phenomenon of nostalgia, or considers the existence of positive counter-memories of the Communist era. Counter-memories are challenges to official or state-led shaping of memories (Legg, 2007; Light & Young, 2015). On the other hand, there is a growing body of literature connected to an outright rejection and denigration of the communist past, or even a refusal to remember (Ciobanu, 2011; Tismaneanu, 2008).

The concept of “post-memory” (“re-memory”) is relevant when talking about memory transmission in the former communist countries of Eastern Europe. By this concept, we understand ways of thinking about memory formation among those who did not actually experience the events that are “remembered”. It helps us better understand how post-socialist informants of communist memories acquired the information from those who experienced it through “encounters with memories, stimulated through scents sounds and textures” (Tolia-Kelly, 2004, p. 314).

The issue of intergenerational memory has not been developed in geography (see Till & Kuusisto-Arponen, 2015), but the Iron Gates displacement memories obviously had a strong impact down the generations. While the production of post-socialist memory formation is relatively neglected (Light & Young, 2015), this paper develops original points in this field and the field of the geographies of memory more broadly (Legg, 2007). Similarly, what this memory means for the second and third generation today in the context of contemporary Romania is important with regard to how these memories work in their post-socialist lives and how they resonate (or do not) with the actions of the post-socialist state.

3 | METHODOLOGY

The paper is based on the social-spatial narrative (SSN) methodology (Verloo, 2015). We adapted the SSN framework for presenting and discussing intergenerational memories in place. In comparison to traditional human geography methodology, the SSN framework helps provide a structure to better describe the process of spatial politics of intergenerational memory in place and better analyse the meaning of (re)action through critical moments as they unfold recalling significant past events. Defining SSN for memory geographies comes from analysing memory-based storylines (collected from both lay people and policy-makers) and policy papers, then selecting major critical moments of their place-based stories and reviewing how their memories of place have been transmitted to the next generations (Figure 1).

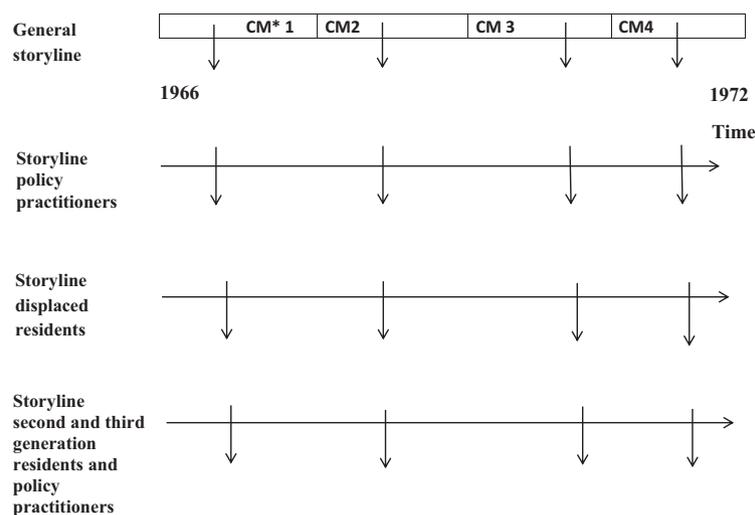


FIGURE 1 Defining the social-spatial narrative approach of intergenerational memory in the case of the Iron Gates displacements. CM* = critical moment.

We used four storylines: stories assembled from people interviewed who lived in four villages (Eselnita, Ogradena, Plavisevita, and Svinita) from the Romanian side of the Danube. Each village had a unique memory-based storyline inventory from both interviewees and policy practitioners. While storylines were presented as case actors' memories, policy papers were necessary to reveal the positions of those in power or the stakeholders' opinions. The latter were selected from the Mehedinti County Archives (2017). We then identified major critical moments related to the displacement process. In doing so, we were interested in creating a relational understanding of place, following Doreen Massey's idea that we should think about "articulated moments in networks of social relations" rather than analysing static, simple framing (Massey, 1991, p. 29).

We applied snow-balling to our interviewees, which helped us obtain data from key individuals who were relocated. Then we created a sample, which was split in two categories. The first category includes the displaced or first generation, who were directly involved in the event; in the second category, we included people from the second and the third generations, who were informed about displacements by their families. For the first cohort, in August 2015, we interviewed 80 people aged 61 to 90 years old who had been directly removed from their native settlements. Among the interviewed persons, there were 20 stakeholders/policy practitioners who, under the communist regime, had important roles, such as mayors and vice-mayors, engineers and construction managers. As for the second cohort, from April to May 2016, we interviewed 80 people aged 18 to 60 years old.

To be able to understand the phenomena of displacement and population removal, interviewees could express long stories about what they experienced during the displacement, including a mental mapping of the settlement they were relocated to (Figure 2), so the average interview lasted between one and two hours. The interviews for each generation were recorded on a mobile phone and subsequently transcribed.

After analysing the storylines, we created two tables of values comprising interviewees characteristics (Table 1) and coded the assembled storyline themes for each critical moments and cohorts of generations (see S1...S4 versus S1'...S4') to highlight how the shaping of the memories happened to the next generations and how it unfolded on the post-socialist memory (Table 2).

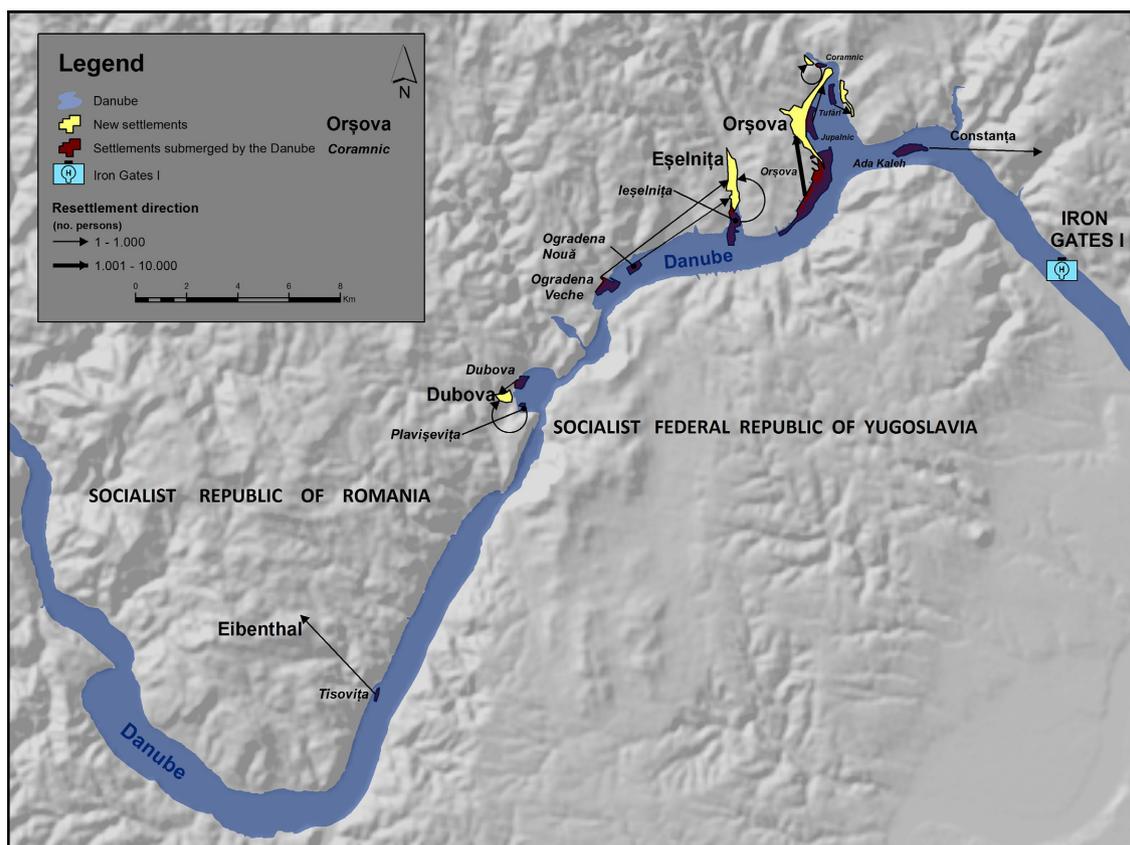


FIGURE 2 Memory mapping of the relocation process for the first generation of interviewees on the Romanian side of the Iron Gates (1966–1972).

TABLE 1 Interviewee characteristics: gender, age, occupation

The first displaced generation (Cohort 1)				The second and third generations (Cohort 2)			
Number of interviewees	Gender	Age	Occupation	Number of interviewees	Gender	Age	Occupation
40	Male	61–90	Retired (20 former factory workers; 20 policy practitioners)	40	Male	18–60	12 Students; 2 teachers; 5 engineers; 19 factory workers; 2 unemployed
40	Female	61–90	Retired and housewives (5 intellectuals; 30 former factory workers; 5 housewives)	40	Female	18–60	15 Students; 1 teacher; 20 factory workers; 4 unemployed

4 | MEMORIES, CRITICAL MOMENTS AND THE ERASING OF PUBLIC SPACES

We proceeded with our analysis by following two steps: (1) presenting the nature of memories formed through critical moments depicted from storylines of the first generation and (2) the intergenerational shaping of memories in the post-socialist context.

4.1 | Step 1: The nature of memories for the first generation

Four critical moments have been selected from the storylines: the official announcement of displacement; destroying the village(s); the flooding; and the relocation.

4.2 | Critical moment 1: Official announcement of displacement

The first critical moment selected from the memory-based storylines was how interviewees found out that they had to relocate. On 11 November 1966, each mayor of the Iron Gates area received a Romanian Government decree entitled “A command on the displacement” in which it was stipulated that “the rules of Communist Party have to be followed and people in the area need to be informed about the displacement process due to the Iron Gates building” (Mehedinti County Archives, 2017). Mayors publicly addressed the villagers that Ogradena and Plavisevita would be flooded, while people living in lower areas of other villages would have to relocate to other villages or to higher areas of the village. A 65-year-old woman who lived in Ogradena recalled:

The mayor, the prefect of the county and an official from the central government in Bucharest gathered us in the centre of the village to let us know of the marvellous communist construction. I was young and it was a shock for me to hear that we had to destroy our house and to move elsewhere . . . Each house was inscribed with a black number.

As Light and Young mentioned, communism was the political context which structured everyday activities at that time and “this context creates circumstances where popular and local memories (or counter-memories) of socialism can collide with state-sponsored projects” (2015, p. 233).

4.3 | Critical moment 2: Destroying the village(s)

The second storyline developed around feelings related to the time of destroying the village(s): 1966–1971. For people, the erasure of their village meant the total loss of home, of their social and cultural lives and the events marked them in a negative manner. Seeing their houses demolished was painful, destroying their sense of place. For instance, TM, an 82-year-old woman from Eselnita, stated that:

TABLE 2 Nature of memory, intergenerational shaping of memories and their impact for understanding post-socialist memory formation

Critical moments	Storyline themes based on the first generation memories	Nature of memory	Storyline themes based on the next generation's memories	Intergenerational shaping of memories	Implications of the memory for understanding post-socialist memory formation
1 Official announcement of displacement	S1 Memories of how the people found out that they had to relocate and what their reaction was.	Condemnatory memories/counter-memories (memories challenging state-led actions).	S1' Who were the persons who told them about the period before the displacement; if they had heard of any official announcements regarding the displacement.	Summarised condemnatory memories/counter-memories (contesting communist state-led actions). Post-socialist counter-memories (memories which challenge the actions of the post-socialist state).	No official or state-led recognition of the displacement events and their impacts on citizens. No recognition by the local state (e.g., Mehedinti and Caras-Severin counties, Orsova Town Hall).
2 Destroying the village(s)	S2 Memories of how they felt at the time of the displacement and in the period that immediately followed; what happened to the public institutions in their displaced settlement.	Transmission of traumatic/apocalyptic memories (church exploding, graveyard relocation). Memories of the mundane or the everyday (about the meadows, forests, street friends).	S2' What they found out about this relocation event (the destroying of the village) and how they think their grandparents and their parents experienced the displacement.	Summarised memories of key traumatic/apocalyptic events (blowing up churches, moving bones from cemeteries). Summarised memories of sorrow for destroying their forefathers' households/home as a locus for intergenerational memory transmission.	Displaced people's (inter-generational) memories are powerful counter-memories working against contemporary state-led narratives.
3 The flooding	S3 Memories concerning the flooding (if any)/what was their reaction to the period of flooding.	Traumatic/shocking memories with dead animals and snakes floating in their gardens. Memories of anger against official actions on flooding the settlements.	S3' What memories that the relocated generation created for them, as related to their life during the flooding.	Reception of summarised memories of traumatic/shocking events with dead animals and snakes.	
4 The relocation	S4 Memories about the relocation process and the new relocated environment. After the relocation, what place-based aspects of their former settlement they managed to transmit to their children and grandchildren.	Memories of physical suffering (living in barracks, suffering illness). Memories based on local traditions and customs specific to the former village. Memories of satisfaction with the relocation and the hydropower works.	S4' What information they got about the relocation process of their forefathers and how they preserved traditions of their forefathers in post-socialism; how place-based memories and traditions transferred to them by the members of their families in the relocated space and how post-socialist socioeconomic life influenced them.	Reception of memories of pride for their forefathers' passing through sufferings during the relocation process. Condemnatory memories on the post-socialist politics for not commemorating the relocation events and people's suffering. Memories of a loss of local traditional and cultural values due to their migration to other areas and to post-socialist economic transformations. Reception of summarised memories connected to the engineering achievements.	The highly contested and complex nature of the memories in the context of contemporary Romanian politics and society.

It was so bad to see bulldozers destroying everything my forefathers had worked on ... We would go with food to the workers who were building our new houses. And all the way there and back I was crying, because I had to leave the place of my childhood, I had to leave my world, the only one that I knew.

People kept the harsh memories connected to demolishing their own houses; they were forced to leave the idyllic landscapes of their childhood, the sense of place they loved. For them that meant a traumascapes, a loss of place which turned into a psychological trauma (Tumarkin, 2005).

Memories were also constructed on what happened to the public institutions – in paragraph one of the Ogradena church relocation document, we found that: “the Communist Party needs to pay a particular attention to the resettlement of the church not to cause local riots” (Mehedinti County Archives, 2017). Thus, it was total control from “the centre” to the local officials and policy-makers.

It was one of the most sorrowful moments for the community – which led to deepening memories of powerlessness, insecurity and fear. For instance, the most tragic part of this destruction of the public institutions was when the Orthodox church was dynamited in Ogradena. The church represents for any community the central pillar of life: the baptism of a child, the marriage of a couple and the burial ritual (Sidaway & Madrell, 2016). MC, a 75-year-old woman, told us about one horrific image:

Our church was dynamited by the army. We asked its tower to be preserved and they placed it at Eselnita’s church as a remembrance. Before that the bell tolled for a few hours ceaselessly ... our cemetery was also removed and my forefathers’ bones carried in sacks by communists to the cemetery of Eselnita.

It is profane to remove cemeteries, but one of the stakeholders told us that “they were covered by laws and normatives for the wellbeing of the country”. Although the entire village was controlled by communist rules and regulations, including the removal of artefacts of public mourning, the memories and narratives of marginalisation remained as voices of the lost rural public sphere.

4.4 | Critical moment 3: The flooding

In April 1972, the hydropower lake was ready to be filled with water from the Danube. Many interviewees were affected by seeing animals, e.g., many frogs and snakes, coming with the floods. Others found their households invaded by waters before the expected time of relocation. The experience of a local person from Plavisevita is relevant for the period of flooding:

Now I can almost see the image of the nearly deserted village, with only some standing houses here and there ... I saw bodies of dead animals floating in my flooded garden.

Again, shocking memories for the interviewees, but the opinion of a former mayor on this issue was that they “had to fulfil a purpose for Romania’s energy” and “such examples were unexpected security damages”. From negotiating the conflict of communist rural memory space comes the normal question, paraphrasing Karen Till (2012): where was “a place-based ethics of care” for the wounded village?

4.5 | Critical moment 4: The relocation

In terms of delineating the time of critical moment 4, we noticed a blurred line of timing from 1967 to 1972, depending on the decision-making process of relocation at a local level. A former engineer (85 years old) informed us that “people had the ability to choose where to relocate: in the rebuilt town Orsova, in another non-affected village or in the same village but only if that village was not to be totally invaded by the Danube”. Moreover, a former local chief engineer stated that “the mayoralty had the obligation to supply bricks and construction materials for the relocated people”. During the summer and autumn of 1970 and 1971, they had to live in improvised wooden barracks, with all their belongings in plastic bags. An 82-year-old woman from Plavisevita stated that “we endured periods of hard rain and got sick ... little medicine and few doctors were in the village in those periods”.

It is relevant that most of the displaced interviewees' memories are around the feelings of anger toward authorities due to a lack of proper living conditions until they moved into the new houses. Interviewees also complained that they were promised, among other things, free energy for life and this never happened. The anger of the families of displaced people is normal because the nature of political action is not always strategic. Political action could be tactical (de Certeau, 1984) and such tactics (e.g., the promise of free energy) utilise different circumstances. Besides those who praised the masterpiece of engineering, very few interviewees – those who had generally had poor housing conditions before the relocation – were contented with moving to a new house.

Summing up, the nature of memory around the Iron Gates displacement unfolded in many ways: traumatic (apocalyptic); nostalgic (for materially gone places); condemnatory (contesting the one-way-street orders of socialist system's leaders); compliant with state-led orders and tactics; celebratory of the hydroelectrical works and the new homes; and about the everyday or the mundane (shortages in health system; street life). Thus, the nature of memory is nuanced and not well-defined, although traumatic memories remain vivid.

4.6 | Step 2 – The intergenerational shaping of memories

Related to the storylines of the second and third generation subjects interviewed, we were interested to learn how intergenerational shaping of memories happens and what it tells us about the process of displacement. MC, a 32-year-old woman from Eselnita, stated:

I know from my family that Ceaușescu, local Securitate and communist authorities forced them to leave and see their homes destroyed, to leave their village and go live in other places, to build new houses and adapt to new lives.

As Tismaneanu (2008) and Stan (2013) revealed, the Securitate (communist Romania's secret police) and Ceausescu are in the memory of the younger generation as those in power who must be blamed for the lack of a democratic system under communism. State-led actions were sometimes done in coercive ways, affecting wide groups of people.

The next storyline is related to the harshest place-based images that the relocated generation created for them. Many of the respondents specified that the transmission of apocalyptic images such as dynamited churches and graveyard relocations were very strong. For instance, an 18-year-old male student mentioned that he was struck by the images of the “church implosion, forefathers’ bones carried in bags and snakes coming with the floods”, while a 25-year-old woman declared, “I know from my grandparents that Ogradena looked an empty village, the church was bombed and the graves in the cemetery were devastated for relocation”. From such recollections, we may note that the strongest images remained the most uncommon connected to their sense of place. In contrast, a few interviewees – mainly those whose forefathers were part of the local elite – considered the effort of the hydropower construction useful. The nephew of a former local engineer who worked on the Iron Gates construction has kept his family memory that “there was a need of sacrifice for such a beautiful piece of engineering and for more energy for the country”.

The last storyline is about the relocation process and the preserving of customs and traditions. Most of the subjects interviewed indicated that cultural and traditional values have begun to be lost because many displaced families had to migrate to other parts of the country.

In the context of memory related to the Romanian 1989 Revolution, Young and Light argued that the post-socialist generation “does not have any direct memories but nevertheless are able to narrate postmemories or re-memories (see Hirsch, 1996; Tolia-Kelly, 2004), which illustrate the trans-generational shaping of memory” (2016, p. 75). Therefore, the mechanics of story transmission became topical. Post-socialist memories of displacement and trauma were vividly transmitted. Re-memories, including feelings connected to forefathers' household objects (Tolia-Kelly, 2004), were also active in remembering the past. All second and third generation interviewees informed us that drawers with old photos were shown frequently to them by their elders, with the elderly repeatedly pointing to pictures on the walls. Others told us about different household artefacts which were bonded to their elders' experiences. Such objects included obsolete irons, carpets and old wardrobes.

Even if there are no monuments representing the trauma of displacement, except for the Museum of the Iron Gates (which highlights the grandeur of the hydropower works), “the Ballad of Displaced Settlements” still resonates in the hearts of the younger generation. This song is read by an elderly displaced lady from Eselnita in the centre of the village each year for St Mary's Day (15 August). The tower of former Ogradena's church is also remembered to the next generations at local ceremonies in Eselnita. Such stories, artefacts and events are key in the social and spatial dynamics and politics of remembering displacement. They also provide a special flavour to the sense of place they belonged.

All young interviewees who shared their post-socialist memories were to be found in areas distant from their forefathers' places. Most of them are students and workers in the most developed city of south-west Romania – Timisoara. Others tried to find ways to survive in the economically disadvantaged towns of Turnu Severin and Orsova. The local and national post-socialist authorities' long-promised development of a tourism sector in the area is still awaited. The ruination and partial restructuring of former local communist enterprises as well as the plight of monoindustrialism in post-socialist times (see also Vesalon & Cretan, 2013) forced the youth to find seasonal jobs abroad, while local traditions are not maintained because in such economic circumstances even memories about local traditions are forgotten.

In this economic situation, the memories transmitted from their forefathers are expressed with pride for their (grand)parents' courage to pass through displacement trauma, but they generally resonate with contemporary Romanian politics in feelings of anger and disgust concerning the actions of the post-socialist state: there are no memorials or state-led recognised actions remembering the trauma of their ancestors. Also, few books and multimedia articles have been written about the Iron Gates displacement and those that do exist focus on the hydropower integration into local tourism developments. Moreover, most of the post-socialist generation send petitions to central and local government trying to unravel the truth of Iron Gates history for their forefathers. As Ciobanu (2011) mentioned, the new historical narratives of the Communist era are in the wake of declassification of the files of the Securitate and the Communist Party, but there is still much to be done so that "the truth-telling" from communist times can be disclosed.

5 | UNRAVELLING THE IRON GATES DISPLACEMENT TENSIONS THROUGH PLACE AND INTERGENERATIONAL MEMORIES

The process of recollecting a (painful) communist past in a post-socialist milieu is highly relevant, as it brings out certain anxieties connected to sense of place which were formed and developed during and after the forefathers' experiences. Therefore, by communicating and sharing their feelings about sense of places with one another even when the place in question is destroyed, the data offered by the Iron Gates study in Romania reflects a nuanced nature of memory, with the place-based trauma experienced by those displaced and how this memory is reshaped by later generations given prominence.

As Halbwachs (1992) postulated, what unites these people is their common history, the events and the occurrences that they experienced together. The mutual rendition of past memory (Alderman & Dwyer, 2004; Hoelscher & Alderman, 2004; Legg, 2007; Till, 2005) is crucial for understanding how intergenerational memory works. The intergenerational memory of the Iron Gates displacement generally points to an outright rejection and denigration of the communist past (Stan, 2013; Tismaneanu, 2008). Moreover, the memories show that vulnerabilities endured by the people and places in the Iron Gates area were usually caused and transmitted as such to the post-socialist generation by the acts of (malign) unthinking (political) elites. By recollecting such occurrences, it came out that people were confronted with the shock of having to destroy their intimate sense of place, their households, and that they needed to envision through a memory they perceived as apocalyptic. Similarly, there will always be "significance of the cemetery, crash site or war memorial . . . speaking to us of loss and consolation" (Sidaway & Madrell, 2016, p. 2) as deathscapes and traumascapes (Tumarkin, 2005).

The affected people's memories carry the sense of belonging to the place of their childhood, while the post-socialist generation tries to preserve what is left from this sense of place in a totally different and difficult socioeconomic environment of transition away from communism. We found tensions between the views of those who had to implement the developments of the communist state, whose memories were more along the lines of "it was necessary for the national interest" and those displaced. We also found conflict between the memories of those displaced and the memories of those who had to implement the policy and how they acted as "local" officials and policy-makers related to "the centre". Thus, central decisions of communist states were implemented locally through total control, even of local officials who received the orders. Even the elites' memories were transmitted as such to their families. This is why post-socialist memory formation has a complex and nuanced background.

6 | CONCLUSIONS

The ways in which communist regimes undertook major projects that were for the greater benefit of the nation-state often had traumatic consequences at the local level. One such case is the construction of the Iron Gates hydroelectric power station, which resulted in the coercive relocation of the local population and the destruction and loss of

their homes and communities. The memories of these events were preserved in the local area as a form of counter-memory to the heroic and triumphal project of the state. There are many dimensions to these memories: some are nostalgic for what was lost; some are condemnatory of the top-down actions of the communist state, which had little regard for the consequences for local people; and others are respectful of what the communist state achieved through the construction of the power station. Although these local memories are complex and nuanced, they are deeply rooted in place.

This paper contributes to the debate on the geography of memory formation in a post-socialist context (Ciobanu, 2011; Light & Young, 2015; Stan, 2013; Tismaneanu, 2008; Young & Light, 2016) in two ways: the intergenerational shaping of memory and implications for post-socialist memory formation.

Our findings suggest several critical issues about intergenerational shaping of memory. First, memories of a traumatic past are not confined just to the people who experienced them. Post-memory manifests in at least two forms: many of these memories are informal with parents talking directly to their children and much of this memory passage takes place in the context of the home. Therefore, the home is a locus for memory transmission between generations.

Second, memories of trauma for the generation who did not directly experience it are “summarised” in certain key (traumatic) iconic images or stories: for example, blowing up churches, moving bones from cemeteries, snakes floating during the flooding of the Danube.

Third, the history of the Iron Gates displacement is not institutionalised at a local level and people are not taught in local schools about this process. Thus, these memories are entirely unofficial; they exist mainly as counter-memories. There are only several books locally which document the Iron Gates displacement, but they are published in Romanian and highlight the integration of the hydropower for tourism developments. Memories are also preserved in documentary form, which could be followed on YouTube or other media services. Consequently, memories of the displacement are primarily transmitted orally and secondarily through written and online publications.

Fourth, these memories have been transmitted to current generations in the wider context of post-socialist upheaval and change, which in the case of the Iron Gates means economic marginalisation and decline. This is important because they remain as a form of contestation against the state passing strong capitalist reforms.

Fifth, there were several studies of post-memory in a post-socialist Romanian context (Light & Young, 2015; Young & Light, 2016). The originality of our contribution rests in the reality that post-memories are local and undocumented, unofficial but strongly rooted in place.

Our second key contribution to the geography of memory is the understanding of memory formation in the post-socialist context. It seems that the trauma of the Iron Gates displacement received no official recognition by the state at the national level. Nor has the trauma of the Iron Gates displacement received any recognition by the local state (e.g., Mehedinți county, Orsova Town Hall). As no monuments are put up the memory remains also a form of counter-memory of the people. This indicates that post-socialist remembrance of communism is bottom-up, rooted in local events and grounded in place.

In this context, post-socialist “retroactive justice” (Ciobanu, 2011) are still elements which need consideration in terms of recognition of the communist past in Romania. Displaced people’s (intergenerational) memories are powerful counter-memories working against contemporary state-led narratives which either emphasise the role of hydroelectric power or ignore the history of the displacements. Interestingly, some of these memories can be positive or involve elements of pride for the engineering achievements. These points bring out the highly contested and complex nature of these memories in the context of contemporary Romanian politics. Further research must be also conducted in the field of intergenerational memory through engagement with the concepts of wounding of places and “traumascaples” and more specifically in the narrow area of a better understanding post-socialist memory formation.

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