



## CHILDREN OF EMPIRES AND EUROPEAN POSTMEMORIES

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**MEMOIRS** will offer a radical, alternative and innovative vision of contemporary European history, drawing on the colonial legacies. These legacies are a common factor in the identities of individual nation states across the continent. There were different colonial models, including Russian, Turkish, Nordic and Central European variants, as well as an overseas model, propagated by Portugal and Castile, in the first wave of modernity, and later by Britain, France, Belgium, and the Netherlands. **MEMOIRS** focuses on the legacies of the overseas expansion model of European colonialism as fundamental to understanding the modern-day continent.

The innovative character of the project arises from its fundamental research question: what is the impact on the continent today of transferred memories of the twilight that accompanied the demise of European colonialism?

Its primary aim is to show how the decolonization process affected and continues to affect Europe as a conglomerate of former colonial powers through memories transferred to subsequent generations by both the former colonized and the former colonizer. The multicultural structure of contemporary European societies is the residue of decolonization and can only be understood through a postcolonial lens. **MEMOIRS** takes for granted that colonial experience is the defining feature of several European national identities and aims to interrogate its incorporation into different national narratives through the processes of inherited memory.



**MEMOIRS** will break new ground by focusing on the inherited memories of the children and grandchildren of the generation that lived through the dying days of colonialism, the struggles for independence and the decolonization process of the following former colonies of Belgium, France and Portugal - Democratic Republic of Congo (RDC), Algeria, Angola, Mozambique, Guiné-Bissau, Cap Vert and São Tomé e Príncipe. Through this focus, **MEMOIRS** aims to demonstrate that colonialism never ends with those who enforced or suffered it. Traces of a colonial mindset impregnate generations to come and understanding those traces are what motivates this project. Key concepts underpinning the project are memory; intergenerational memory transfer and postmemory. The latter helps us to comprehend the specific structure of the formers. It points to a relation to the past mediated by both historical knowledge and a strong subjective investment manifest in family narratives in which the imagination of a non-experienced past becomes the privileged ground for identity construction and intercultural role-playing both within Europe and on North South axis.

By conducting interviews of the children of both those who came from the colonies and those who fought to retain them in three European countries, and by studying the public and artistic displays of intergenerational memory, **MEMOIRS** aim to offer new insights into the European postcolonial collective memory.

**MEMOIRS** will study the French, Portuguese and Belgian cases, offering a comparative analysis. It will address an important topic related to current European post-imperial self-awareness and the continent's historical position in the world. Research into the patterns of representation of the violence of past encounters will provide a suitable framework for understanding the web of intercultural relationships undergirding European identity today. On interrogating the concepts of transgenerational memory and postmemory – established in Holocaust-studies and on Latin American studies on the dictatorship regimes – **MEMOIRS** will be adapting them to postcolonial studies and contexts.



This is a comparative project that will illuminate how inter-generational memories still structure the identities of the three nations under analysis and it is expected that it will provide a framework for further studies in other national contexts. The output is planned on different levels, with an impact beyond the academic, particularly in the political realm. **MEMOIRS** results will demonstrate the importance of the social sciences and humanities in the study of human relationships and in the search for solutions to the impediments on political success and social cohesion in European societies marked by both respect for difference as well as individual liberty—core values at the heart of the European ideal.

To deal with the full complexity of its central question, the scope of the project is interdisciplinary, bringing together specialists in literary and cultural studies, history, sociology, anthropology, arts and international relations.

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## HOST INSTITUTION

The **Centre for Social Studies (CES)** is a research and advanced studies institution in social sciences and humanities of the University of Coimbra. **CES** offers a stimulating research and intellectual environment where interdisciplinarity is daily practice. Its research staff include sociologists, economists, legal scholars, anthropologists, educators, literary and cultural studies scholars, architects, engineers, geographers, historians and medical doctors. At present, **CES** hosts 6 **European Research Council (ERC)** Grants, and approximately 60 other projects or consultancies, with national or international funding. **CES** is currently co-responsible for 12 PhD programmes, hosting around 450 students. These programmes are thematically oriented and stand out for their interdisciplinary perspective and close articulation with advanced research carried out at **CES**.



## MEMOIRS

Centro de Estudos Sociais | Universidade de Coimbra  
Colégio da Graça | Rua da Sofia, nº136 | Apartado 3087  
3000-995 Coimbra - Portugal  
+351 239 855 570 | +351 239 853 649  
memoirs@ces.uc.pt | <https://memoirs.ces.uc.pt>

## INVESTIGADORA PRINCIPAL

Margarida Calafate Ribeiro  
margaridacr@ces.uc.pt

## PROGRAMADOR CULTURAL | INVESTIGADOR

António Pinto Ribeiro  
apribeiro@ces.uc.pt

## COMUNICAÇÃO E IMAGEM

Mónica V. Silva  
monicasilva@ces.uc.pt

## GESTORA DE PROJETO

Hélia Santos  
helias@ces.uc.pt

