

## Impact case study (REF3)

<b>Institution:</b> Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU)		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> UoA 34 (Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management)		
<b>Title of case study:</b> ICS34.01 _Unearthing silenced voices of the Spanish Civil War		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2013-2017		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
Dr Ruth Sanz Sabido	Reader in Media and Social Inequality	01/09/2013 - present
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 2016-2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> N		
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p>There are still more than 144,000 disappeared victims of Franco's repression, second only to Cambodia according to the UN. However, due to the pervading 'pact of silence' agreed in Spain, they are virtually ignored by the Spanish state, and there is no official support for processes of repair and reparation. Dr Ruth Sanz Sabido's research on cultural memory and the Spanish Civil War has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Given victims and their families across Spain a platform to express their experiences and present and preserve their narratives;</li> <li>• Raised awareness of the victims' experiences, bringing their narratives to audiences in Spain, Mexico and the UK, challenging state-sponsored versions of history;</li> <li>• Established a local movement in Arroyomolinos de León (Andalucía), dedicated to exploring the past, including locating and exhuming a mass grave highlighted by the research.</li> </ul>		
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p>Following the Spanish Civil War (1936-39), the repressive measures imposed during Franco's dictatorship immersed Spain in a spiral of fear and silence that continued long after the dictator's death in 1975. The 'pact of silence' that was observed during the transition to democracy through the 1977 Amnesty Law (still in force today) committed everyone to 'forgive and forget', advancing the idea that 'the three-year conflict was an unavoidable fratricidal struggle in which both sides committed all types of aberrations, equally and on the same level' [3.1]. Sanz Sabido's research argues that this transitional strategy became integral to the official state-sponsored stance and to dominant cultural discourse, which normalised the reference to the 'Civil War' as a war that was waged across the country, omitting the fact that this was, to begin with, a fascist military coup. In turn, this simplistic view promotes 'the suggestion that nobody in particular should be made responsible for the consequences' [3.1]. As a result, perpetrators of extrajudicial killings, torture, expropriations, forced labour and the theft of babies walked free to live side-by-side with their victims, who remained silent and in fear for decades.</p> <p>Drawing from Memory Studies, Orality and Critical Ethnography, Sanz Sabido developed and applied a theoretical and methodological framework, 'Critical Ethnography of Memory', to break this silence by recovering the subjugated, 'local memories' of the conflict, as remembered by those who experienced it. Comparing these suppressed narratives to dominant discourses, the framework offers a counter-mechanism to the 'perpetual erasure of the memory of the defeated' by articulating the experiences of people who would otherwise remain inarticulate [3.1] [3.2]. Sanz Sabido applied this framework to one rural Spanish community, Arroyomolinos de León (Andalucía). The research draws insights from the collection and analysis of longitudinal ethnographic data with 22 participants involving multiple interviews during eight fieldwork trips over a three-year period (2013-2016). Access was also gained to a local archive to examine thousands of historical files documenting over 40 years of local practices and culture. The analysis unearthed previously marginalised voices and events that took place in this community in the 1930s and early 1940s, and evidenced that the expression of memory was an important site of socio-political struggle. Through investigating the interplay between local and national levels of memory, Sanz Sabido found that the lived experiences in this community did not correspond with</p>		

those promoted by the official 'Civil War' discourse, highlighting the importance of the local context. A key finding was that, in fact, 'there was no war' in this village, only fascist repression. The local context was also shown to be pivotal in the levels of these repressive practices, which varied between communities. For example, while thousands of women were killed across the country, in this community the eight women who had been sentenced to death were eventually pardoned. Nevertheless, local women were subjected to other forms of repressive practices that remained silenced for decades. The research also found that, while the anti-fascist side did not kill anyone, the fascists executed more than 40 men, 18 of whom are still buried in a mass grave in a neighbouring village (Cala) [3.1] [3.2].

Following this detailed critical ethnographic study, Sanz Sabido developed a more in-depth understanding of the multiplicity of local experiences by extending her approach to localities across Spain, revealing a wider range of hidden narratives and silenced voices. This resulted in the development of an online archive and documentary film, both known as *Herencias del 36* (Legacies of 1936) [3.3] [3.4]. To develop the documentary, 60 interviews were conducted with victims, victims' relatives and volunteers in A Coruña, A Fonsagrada, Ponferrada, Astorga, Valderas, Salamanca, Madrid, Barcelona and Seville. Collectively, the publications, archive and film include contributions from nearly 70 Spanish villages, towns and cities. Underpinned by 'Critical Ethnography of Memory', these outputs demonstrate that the Spanish Civil War was not a monolithic event characterised by a simplistic 'Civil War' narrative and provide a counter-mechanism to resist the imposition of the victors' history. A development of this research is 'Remembering what we have not lived: Postmemory Analysis of Franco's violence in Spain' (Sanz Sabido), supported by a British Academy/Leverhulme Small Grant. This project analyses how we remember trauma and conflict when we have not directly experienced it, and the role of the media in the representation and dissemination of contentious pasts.

### 3. References to the research

**3.1** Sanz Sabido, R. (2016, paperback 2018) *Memories of the Spanish Civil War: Conflict and Community in Rural Spain*. London: Rowman and Littlefield. ISBN: 9781783483686 [Authored book]. Submitted in REF 2. Evidence of the quality is provided by academic reviews including: *European Journal of Communication* (2017):

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0267323117711752b> and

*LSE Review of Books* (original English review has also been translated into Spanish)

<https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/lsereviewofbooks/2016/12/14/book-review-memories-of-the-spanish-civil-war-conflict-and-community-in-rural-spain-by-ruth-sanz-sabido/>

**3.2** Sanz Sabido, R. (2016) 'Local Memories: Conflict and Lived Experience in the Spanish Civil War'. *Catalan Journal of Communication and Cultural Studies*, 8(1): 11-30. [Journal article]. In: Sanz Sabido, R., Price, S. and Quílez, L. (eds.) (2016) Special Issue: 'The Spanish Civil War 80 years on: discourse, memory and the media'. *Catalan Journal of Communication and Cultural Studies*, 8(1). [Edited journal]. <https://repository.canterbury.ac.uk/item/88602/local-memories-conflict-and-lived-experience-in-the-spanish-civil-war>

**3.3** Sanz Sabido, R. (2017) *Herencias del 36*. [Documentary film]. First shown in final form at *Jornadas de Memoria Histórica de Arroyomolinos de León*, 10-11 April 2017. Trailer and full version (both with English subtitles), available <http://www.herencias1936.com/documental/> (46'35"). Selected for the Human Rights section of the 2020 Hispanic-American film festival *Contra El Silencio Todas las Voces* (Mexico City) and broadcast on Mexican national public network Channel 14. Also selected for the international FICNOVA Film Festival, an initiative commemorating the International Day of Nonviolence declared by the United Nations, and the *Espello International Festival of Ethnographic Documentary* (Huesca, Spain).

**3.4** Sanz Sabido, R. (2016) *Herencias del 36* [Website Archive]. Available at <https://www.herencias1936.com/>

### 4. Details of the impact

Sanz Sabido's application of her Critical Ethnography of Memory to the lived experiences of the Spanish Civil War has benefitted the victims of Francoist repression and their families, giving them a platform to express previously repressed memories and preserving and presenting these narratives. It has brought these memories to audiences in Spain, Mexico and the UK, allowing

individuals to add their voice to counter-narratives of state-sponsored versions of events. It resulted in significant changes in the way the community and local administration of Arroyomolinos de León, Andalucía (population c.1,000) addressed the legacies of the conflict, galvanising them into collective action to explore and address the past. This included the establishment of a movement dedicated to the location and exhumation of a mass grave, which featured in all narratives uncovered in the village [3.1]. Sanz Sabido's research has resulted in this community recovering the 'memory of our village' and allowed them to 'repair the damage, recover the dignity and do justice' [Translated from Spanish] [5.1]. Impact was realised through individual participation in the research, engagement with the media, and dissemination of *Herencias del 36*.

**Victims have been given a platform to express their previously silenced stories and to preserve and present their experiences, and contribute to narratives of the Spanish Civil War.** The archive created by Sanz Sabido includes 142 contributions from across 68 villages/towns/cities and 5 war battles, including text-based submission, photographs, videos, and letters, alongside clips from the 60 interviews undertaken for the documentary. The preservation of these stories is time critical, with many who lived through the conflict now being deceased. *Herencias del 36* has given victims an opportunity to express themselves in ways that they had not previously been able to, and had not known how to. In many cases, this was the first time individuals had talked to anyone about their experiences of the war and subsequent repression. Sol Gómez Arteaga, who contributed to the archive and whose father's story was told in the documentary, writes: 'Every act of Memory is always an act of reparation, and the possibility of providing details in a documentary such as *Herencias del 36* is undoubtedly one such act. [...] I have the firm belief that it is essential that everyone can get to know what happened, because this will open the road to the justice and reparation that have been denied for so long.' [Translated from Spanish] [5.2]. Paqui Maqueda, President of the Memory Association 'Nuestra Memoria', writes in relation to impact on individuals contributing to the archive: 'This work gives them the opportunity to describe, out loud, the extent of the horror they suffered after they lost their loved ones, but it also gives them the opportunity to make them present, to make them visible, to declare that they have not forgotten them, that their memory is still present' [Translated from Spanish] [5.3].

Memory Associations exist across Spain in response to the state's failure to address the consequences of Franco's repression, campaigning for official state recognition and support for programmes of exhumation and identification. These associations have been an integral part of *Herencias del 36*, arranging screenings of the documentary, putting victims and relatives in contact with Sanz Sabido, and communicating information about the project. Associations involved in the development of the film and archive include the national association ARMH (Association for the Recovery of Historical Memory), ARMH-C in Barcelona, Asociación Salamanca Memoria y Justicia, Todos los Nombres, Nuestra Memoria (Andalucía) and Memoria Democrática de Andalucía in Seville. Additionally, the International Brigades Memorial Trust has also contributed to the archive. Commenting on the wider significance of *Herencias del 36*, Paqui Maqueda, President of the Memory Association Nuestra Memoria, writes: 'This documentary is a beautiful and resounding narrative [...] to support the struggle of relatives and memory associations. [...] At times like the ones we are currently living in Europe, where fascism is once again advancing fast [...] documentaries like *Herencias del 36* are necessary, essential tools in the anti-fascist struggle.' [Translated from Spanish] [5.3]

**Raising awareness of the victims' experiences and challenging state-sponsored versions of the history of the Spanish Civil War.** The project has received coverage in the Spanish media in articles highlighting victims' stories and discussing the consequences of the 1977 Amnesty Law and the lack of state support for repair and reparation. There has been coverage in *La Marea* (18 Jul 2016 – monthly circulation c.18,000); *El Español* (18 Jul 2016 – c.11,000 paying subscribers); *La Opinión A Coruña* (17 Jul 2016 – c.580,000 unique user per month); and *Andaluces Diario* (1 Jun and 19 Jul 2019). *El Español* published the story of Miguel Galán, the first testimony added to the archive and suggested to the journalist by Sanz Sabido [5.4]. Ongoing interest is demonstrated by an article published in *Astorga Redacción* (30 Aug 2019), which references the documentary and quotes one of the participants [5.4]. The documentary has been screened 7

times (between 2017 and 2019), in 5 locations in Spain (often hosted by Memory Associations) and in London at the Human Rights Action Centre (2019), to total audiences estimated to be in the region of 300. Significantly extending its reach, in 2020 it was selected for the Human Rights section of the Hispanic-American film festival *Contra El Silencio Todas las Voces* (Mexico City). Originally scheduled for May 2020, and postponed until Sept 2020 due to COVID 19, *Herencias del 36* was broadcast on Mexican national public network Channel 14 (20 Sept 2020) which has an average monthly net reach of over 16,000,000. In 2020 it was also selected for the international FICNOVA Film Festival, an initiative commemorating the United Nation's International Day of Nonviolence, and shown at the Espiello International Festival of Ethnographic Documentary (Huesca, Spain) as part of their Historic Memory cycle [5.5].

Feedback collated at screenings demonstrates enhanced awareness of the history and the victims' experiences and recognition of the need to support processes of justice and reparation. The importance of the narratives to wider society is also recognised, with feedback including references to learning from this past. Comments include:

'Cathartic for the participants [...] important that people can establish what happened'.

'It was a very powerful film, especially because of the direct testimony. I didn't realise that there is a lack of central government funding'.

'It showed that by discovering memories of the horrors of the Spanish Civil War, people can find some form of closure. Such films help remind people that fascism can easily rise again in a seemingly static democracy'.

'I was unaware of much of this history before seeing the film. It is so important to hear this story as we all need to learn from this appalling and tragic history, so as not to repeat it.'

'I consider it therapy. For them and for all of us'.

'It is important to make this known by everyone. Associations need to work together to reach objectives and put pressure on institutions and politicians, so this is taught in schools'. [5.6]

**Significant changes in the way the community and local administration of Arroyomolinos de León addressed the legacies of the conflict.** Coverage of Sanz Sabido's research in the Spanish media brought it to the attention of the local administration in the village. Ensuing interest resulted in the local council organising *Jornadas de Memoria Histórica* in Arroyomolinos de León, a two-day public event on Historical Memory. These events have been held every year since 2017, with the exception of 2020 due to COVID-19 [5.7a], with Sanz Sabido attending in 2017 and 2018. Attended by around 50 people annually, they bring together victims and their families with local and regional politicians and representatives from memory associations. They include sessions replicating the ethos of *Herencias del 36*, where attendees can share their life stories in a public safe space, coming together for individual and collective healing. The local administration commented after the first event: 'If you had to look for words to define what was lived yesterday, it would be those of emotion, feelings, relief, freedom, rest, gratitude' [Translated from Spanish] [5.7b]. A further indication of the significance of these events in the region is the coverage received in the local press, with the second event being reported on in *Huelva Red* (10 Aug 2018); *Huelvahoy.com* (9 Aug 2018); *Diario de Huelva* (9 Aug 2018); *Onub Actual* (9 Aug 2018); and *La Vanguardia, Andalusia* (9 Aug 2018) [5.7c].

These events prompted the local administration, in cooperation with the provincial and regional governments, to explore the possibility of locating and exhuming one of the mass graves Sanz Sabido's research highlighted (Cala's 18), [3.1] [3.2] which resulted in a dedicated movement to this end. On the UN International Day of Enforced Disappearance (30 Aug 2017) the President of Huelva Provincial Council met with the families of the victims to give the Council's support for the exhumation and formal identification of Cala's 18 victims. At this meeting, the Mayor of Arroyomolinos said it was time 'to give voice to all who suffered' and that they owed it to their 'ancestors and to the history of the village.' [5.8a] In October 2018, the Junta de Andalucía (regional government) issued the legal instructions to commence the process of locating, exhuming and identifying the victims of the Cala's 18 grave [5.9] with work formally beginning in November 2018 [5.8b]. Arroyomolinos de León's Councillor for Culture writes that Sanz Sabido's research 'was key in the creation of the first Jornadas de Memoria Histórica in Arroyomolinos de León, which became the starting point for the ensuing Jornadas and all the work that has been

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conducted to locate the mass grave in the cemetery of Cala [...] The first public event attracted the attention of Andalusian authorities, and this made their commitment to help the relatives stronger, leading to the beginning of the process to find and exhume the mass grave [...] We want to thank Ruth Sanz Sabido for her interest and work, without which it would not have been possible to do what we have done to recover the memory of our village, repair the damage, recover the dignity and do justice.' [5.1] [Translated from Spanish]

### 5. Sources to corroborate the impact

5.1 Testimonial from Arroyomolinos de León Councillor of Culture.

5.2 Testimonial from contributor to *Herencias del 36*.

5.3 Testimonial from President of the Memory Association Nuestra Memoria.

5.4 Collated Spanish media coverage related to *Herencias del 36* and Sanz Sabido's research.

5.5 Collated evidence relating to *Herencias del 36* inclusion in film festivals.

5.6 Collated feedback from screenings.

5.7 (a) Publicity material related to historical memory events held in Arroyomolinos de León (b) Social media post by Ayuntamiento de Arroyomolinos de León (c) Media coverage of *Jornadas de Memoria Histórica* (historical memory days) de Arroyomolinos de León

5.8 (a) Media coverage of the movement for exhumation and support of provincial administration <https://huelvaya.es/2017/08/30/exhumacion-de-victimas-del-franquismo-en-arroyomolinos-de-leon/> (b) Commencement of work for exhumation of Cala's 18 <https://www.canalsur.es/comienzo-la-exhumacion-de-al-menos-18-cadaveres-de-la-guerra-civil-en-cala/1363742.html>

5.9 Official documentation from Junta de Andalucía in relation to the location, exhumation and identification of Cala's 18 victims: [https://www.juntadeandalucia.es/export/drupaljda/INFORME\\_SEGUIMIENTO\\_actuaciones\\_MD\\_2017-2018-.pdf](https://www.juntadeandalucia.es/export/drupaljda/INFORME_SEGUIMIENTO_actuaciones_MD_2017-2018-.pdf) (page 20 and 41-42) and [https://www.juntadeandalucia.es/boja/2018/208/BOJA18-208-00002-17421-01\\_00144681.pdf](https://www.juntadeandalucia.es/boja/2018/208/BOJA18-208-00002-17421-01_00144681.pdf)

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