



Disputes on cultural memory and human rights

Discussion on the existence of “pacts of silence” within the Armed Forces regarding cases of disappeared prisoners during the Military Regime in Chile intensified during mid-2015. It was during this period that the testimony of a key witness sparked the reopening of the emblematic “Burned Case.” Once more, the country looked back on another episode in a still open chapter of Chile’s history.

Dr. Mauro Basaure, researcher for the School of Sociology of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the Universidad Andrés Bello, is one of the investigators looking for a relationship between cultural memory and politics in Chile and how discourses on this are constructed. The Fondecyt project, entitled “The Forms and Disputes of Cultural Memory. A Sociological Analysis on the Controversy Surrounding the Museum of Cultural Memory and Human Rights,” analyzes the rhetoric of discussions on cultural memory and, particularly, related to the debate resulting from the announcement and opening of the aforementioned museum.

“To clearly and impartially study the conflict of cultural memory is to treat the ways in which society confronts itself with the possibility and impossibility of arriving at a story that would allow for societal integration,” explains Dr. Basaure.

“This work deals with conflicts on the cultural memory of Chile, the relation of these conflicts to different positions, and the assumptions that support each position, in addition to assessing disputes regarding the appropriation of collective history by projects constructing the future of society. Based on all of this, it is possible to determine the limit of consensus that can be reached on the recent cultural memory of Chile or if the conflict will remain open,” continues Dr. Basaure.

“The diversity of the immeasurable positions within the existing controversy can be reconstructed within the conceptual, novel, and empirically useful framework proposed in this investigation. Moreover, this project will allow us to demonstrate the roles played by different institutions involved in cultural memory that go beyond those officially stated,” explains Dr. Basaure.

As part of this Fondecyt project, the collaborating investigators meet once a month in a research meeting room provided by the Museum of Cultural Memory and Human Rights. Moreover, Dr. Basaure and his team have been invited to participate in discussions oriented towards redesigning some key permanent expositions at the museum.

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