

Workshop 34

Facing the Former Enemy: Memories of War and War Crimes

Convenors:

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The twentieth century has often been described as an age of extreme political violence on an unprecedented scale. Acts of brutality have left a host of horrifying and traumatic memories in Europe and other parts of the world. This workshop examines memories in the aftermath of war, e.g. recollections of massacres, forceful displacement, genocide, and crimes against humanity. Contributors to this workshop are invited to explore local face-to-face situations in which social or personal memories of political violence are confronted. The workshop aims at paying attention not only to the perspectives of former victims, but also to the points of view of former perpetrators. Under what circumstances is forgiveness and reconciliation possible? How is memory mobilised in identity politics that sustain animosity? To what extent are memories of war and war crimes intertwined with collective or personal sentiments of victimhood or guilt? How are memories reshaped in official acts of commemoration, and in what ways do local, national, and international memories interact and perhaps contradict each other? What are the effects of museums, memorials, historical writing, literature, works of art, including popular art forms such as popular theatre, in the perpetuation of war-time memories? Is there such a thing as an aesthetics of atrocity, and a tourism of terror? Other questions that participants might address are: What effect do judicial trials have on the local, nation-wide and international remembrance of war-time atrocities? What are the conflicts of memory that arise within local or national communities which have to come to terms with the presence of former collaborators in their midst?

Young People's Perspectives on Armed Conflict/ War and its Memory

'It's Like This Place Has a Serious, Serious Hangover ...': Attempting to Make Some Sense of Continuing 'Low' Level Violence as Experienced by Young People in Contemporary, Urban Northern Ireland

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Despite enduring efforts to maintain a devolved government, to remove state security installations and to improve community relations between Northern Ireland's co-religionist Nationalist

(Catholic) and Unionist (Protestant) communities, Northern Ireland continues to grapple with the legacy of the “Troubles” and persisting “low” level violence both within and between its communities. This paper seeks to explore the current view of male and female young people aged 16-21, Catholic and Protestant from the urban area of Londonderry, and to illustrate the density and complexity of contemporary violent interplay as experienced through the everyday, face-to-face, “known” experiences as related by them in the present. Involving peers, paramilitaries and state authorities, common situations are shown to infuse sectarian and political markers which are commonly recognised in the social memory of the ethno-political/ ethnoreligious communities, while they are simultaneously “known” by the young people to have little “pure” sectarian significance. Contrarily, other instances conjure feelings of mistrust and hatred and are “known” instinctively as sectarian “just because.” This paper attempts to untangle and explore tacit understanding and the active perceptive ability of young people in this environment, and what, for these young people, growing up in an environment of prolonged emergency and division has afforded their understanding of events within it.
(This paper is based on field research conducted in Northern Ireland from 1999-2001 and from 2002 through the present.)

Transmitting Memory of Collective Guilt and Personal Innocence: Contradictory Pictures of the Holocaust in German Post-War Teaching

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This paper deals with the transmission process of the memory of the Holocaust to the third post-war generation in Germany. The comparative analysis of semi-directive interviews with school teachers of the post-war generation (mostly belonging to the so-called “68-generation”) and their pupils as well as participant observation of history lessons on Nazism and the Holocaust reveal a discrepancy between official, educational discourse, purporting to transmit a “moralising” vision of the past focusing on the collective guilt of the German nation, and personal underlying representations of heroic family histories and morally irreproachable fathers and grandfathers. Subject matter and context determine the kind of memory discourse invoked and therefore the subjective positions assumed. The contradictory visions of the past – expressed in the discourse of all interviewees – and their alternating mobilization depending on the context can be better understood if linked to the sentiments of collective and individual guilt and the contradicting need for identification with a nation as well as with the ancestors on the one hand, and the wish to distance oneself from the horrifying past on the other.

Social Memories of Violence Committed During the Second

World War

Remembering Gurs

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During the Occupation, Gurs was one of the largest internment camps in southern France. Located on the Béarnais/ Basque border, Gurs was first a “welcome camp” for Spanish/ Basque Republicans. In October 1940, some eleven thousand German Jews were interned there. Nearly sixty thousand people were interned at Gurs between 1939 and 1943. Of these, nearly four thousand Jews were deported to Auschwitz; a further one thousand internees are buried in its cemetery.

After the Liberation, delegations from Germany and Spain met annually at Gurs on “the Day of Deportation”. Few French were in attendance until 1979, when a range of commemorative events were held. In 1980, an “Association for the Camp of Gurs” was formed by former internees.

This paper explores continuing efforts to “keep the memory [of Gurs] intact”, through educational programs, through testimony, through the internet, and official acts of commemoration. Specific attempts by German, Jewish, French, Spanish, and Basques to achieve forgiveness and reconciliation will be examined alongside ethnographic case studies of people who experienced deportation and torture.

Broken Bonds and Divided Memories: Long-term Effects of War Atrocities in a Greek Mountain Village

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In December 1943 SS soldiers massacred 118 men in the community of Drakeia, located on Mount Pelion (Thessaly). Before this event many villagers were organised in the left-wing Resistance movement, but after the massacre most villagers blamed the partisans for it. This produced mutual hostility, more internal violence during the ensuing Civil War and a deeply divided memory. In my contribution I will use oral narratives recorded from survivors to describe different patterns of group memories and analyse the processes by which these memories were shaped and reshaped at the community level over the last fifty years. Using comparative material from Italy and from other communities in Greece, I will reflect on the variety of responses such atrocities may provoke in different communities. Finally, I will discuss the ethnographer’s own role in the memory process.

Remembering Recent Conflicts

The Salvation of the City: Competing Visions of Belfast

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Within this presentation, I propose a discussion of the “tourism of terror”. Since the early 1990s, “living history” tours in Belfast, Northern Ireland, have been created by both the city and by entrepreneurs, such as taxi companies and youth hostels. This paper asks how Belfast’s history is being re-conceptualized through its presentation to visitors. These tours traverse West Belfast, the section most well-known for paramilitary and British military battles. Many tours pass by the “peace wall”, the huge mural to Bobby Sands, and Sinn Fein’s headquarters. Some tours even visit the Milltown Cemetery, the site of the infamous 1988 funeral of three Irish Republican Army members at which a loyalist, Michael Stone, killed three civilians. Subsequently, at the funeral of those civilians, two nearby British soldiers were captured and killed. The conceptualization of Belfast’s history as “living history” is a key component to this analysis. What does it mean to define history as an on-going process, unfinished and always changing? Furthermore, what is the significance of commodifying the “experience” of Belfast, of making the landscape and its history of violence commodities for visitors’ consumption? Finally, what are the linkages between interpretations of Belfast’s history and desires for its future?

The Fall of Srebrenica in Community Memory

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During the civil war in Former Yugoslavia (1992-1995), the Muslim enclave Srebrenica in Eastern Bosnia was seized by Bosnian Serb troops under command of General Ratko Mladic in July 1995. About 8000 Muslim men went missing. This event is better known as “the fall of Srebrenica”.

Women and children fled and were transported to the relatively safe city of Tuzla, 100 km northwest of Srebrenica. Emptied of its Muslim population, the town of Srebrenica was taken by Bosnian Serb citizens, most of them refugees of war themselves. A peace agreement was signed in Dayton, Ohio on November 21 1995. Since then, an international stabilization force, SFOR, has enforced peace through their presence. In February 2001, Muslims started to return to Srebrenica.

In October 2002, I went to Tuzla and Srebrenica to do fieldwork for a period of three months. I was interested to know how two ethnic groups, who fought, killed and raped each other during war, live together nowadays. How do they deal with memories of war atrocities and how do they rebuild their community after what happened? I studied verbal and non-verbal expressions of social memories, by conducting interviews and observing sites of memories, such as monuments. I found that, although the war has ended and efforts are made by the International Community to create a peaceful multi-ethnic nation, the struggle among ethnic groups continues and unity seems absent. The two groups hold each other responsible for what happened during the war. Clashes continue over claims on truth, history and territory

through the expression of conflicting memories.

What Now? Towards Better Inter-Ethnic Relations in Bosnia and Herzegovina: The Case of Brčko District

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This paper concentrates on the post-war situation in Brčko District, Bosnia and Herzegovina, where some of the fiercest fighting took place during the recent war. Personal and national memory of the experienced violence is present in almost all narratives and interactions but is rarely publicly verbalized. Even though a number of people show their good will to oppose ethnic stereotypes, mistrust bars the way towards a better relationship between individuals of the various ethnic groups.

To examine the topic of reconciliation, two places were studied: the Arizona Black-Market, the first place in the region where Bosniaks, Croats, and Serbs met again after the war, and Brčko Town where ethnic separation is still present and former war criminals are still at large.

The paper brings up prerequisites for reconciliation and deals with the question whether shared economic activities as practiced at the Arizona Market are an adequate way towards reconciliation. At the end the possibility of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission for Bosnia and Herzegovina will be discussed.