Workshop 2
Anthropological Perspectives on Social Memory

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There is a renewed interest among anthropologists in social memory as culture. Suggesting that social forms of culture shape experience, power and identity we welcome papers on how social memory becomes enacted and perceived. What does it imply for individuals or various social groups? How is memory experienced and dealt with on a personal level? Who has the "copyright" to memory and what role does embodied experience play? What is the relationship between memory and emotion?

This session will also explore how social memory provides a platform on which understandings of personal identities, history and knowledge are contested whether they are, for example, reinvented, rejected or accepted. Which are the processes of social memory in specific contexts? Is it possible to silence or reconcile memory? As a phenomenon social memory thus points to a complex relationship between embodied memory, history, time, and space. This supports the idea that any (cultural) identity is constructed by multiple agents in varying contexts. Anthropological studies have shown that social practices through which persons enact their memories combine elements between history and memory as communication between the past, present and future. In what ways do these elements of history and memory interact? Anthropology has argued for a long time that the main sites of historical consciousness are rituals, oral history and place. What other sites are there?

One of the missions of this workshop is to explore what is distinctive about anthropological perspectives on memory. Methodological and conceptual issues are central in this respect.

The Abuses of Memory
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Under the influence of the memory/history debate in the humanities, a considerable corpus of studies has taken into account the social and cognitive processes involved in the construction of human memory. But these days, when commemorations and the duty of memory are omnipresent, the concept of "memory" is itself abused. In the field of social sciences, "memory" has become such a catch-all that it is

sometimes difficult to understand what this concept is meant to pinpoint. A haphazard mix of Halbwachs, Bergson, Freud, and Connerton, its uses are so conceptually imprecise that they border on sloppy: when does it refer to the psychological process of remembering, to "autobiographical memory"? When does it describe the transmission and persistence of cultural items through time? What are the conceptual limits between the notions of memory and tradition? Is tradition the "persistence of something from the past into the present" — or is that memory? What are the affinities between memory, culture and identity? In brief, is the use of the concept of memory epistemologically grounded in anthropology? In this paper, I am trying to delineate the genealogy and the uses of the concept of memory in our discipline.

The Creation and Maintenance of a Social Memory of Violent Antagonism among Basque Radical Nationalists

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My paper will address questions of how a social memory of violent antagonism is created and recreated among radical Basque nationalists and how it influences social categorisation and processes of identity formation, within the realm of the Basque conflict. Building on fieldwork material from the Basque region in Spain (July 2000- August 2001) I will explore questions of how ritualised action and local narrative practices interact with personal experience and 'macro' level historical accounts, political rhetoric and mass media accounts in the continuous process of creating social memory. I will argue that 'macro' level discourses, personal experience and local discourse are anchored in local practices by the way they all influence and are influenced by this practice. Ritualised and narrative practices are ways of ordering chaotic and ambivalent realities and experiences. Through these processes of ordering reality by producing a coherent social memory, certain moral codes emerge.

By participating in ritualised practices the subject publicly and thus morally accepts the enacted social memory inherent in these and thereby defines himself or herself as a Basque radical nationalist. Similar to ritual practices, participation in the social construction of narratives according to certain moral codes, form a basis for identity formation.

The moral codes I address here evolve from the notion of victimisation, which emerges from a perceived pattern across narratives and ritualised action. Certain contents that support this notion of victimisation are socially expected as content in narratives and ritualised action, and it is from this expectation the moral codes become visible. In this way, social memory through its communal creation and maintenance forms a moral community which expresses what are proper and improper behaviour and narrative representations.

A Group of Gambian Elderly and their Friendly Recollections about Late Colonial Times

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The political imagination of late 20th and early 21st-century Africa re-appropriates the colonial past in a fragmented and somehow contradictory proliferation of approaches. Colonial times can be either re-evoked with nostalgic feelings or distanced as a painful experience to be definitively forgotten. Personal and public memories are manipulated in the national arena and even become a source of legitimacy for postcolonial leaders aware of their own fragile political agenda. To address this emerging field of enquiry, I will take cue from my ethnographic experience in the Gambia. In 2002, I participated in a process of memory recollection with a group of elderly men, who were retired from important positions in the civil service and in the public administration. Their narratives focused on late colonial times and on the political changes promoted by the colonial administration during the 1950s. There were humorous stories in which the local chiefs proved able to make fun of colonialism and its agents at the grassroots level. Other stories offered a detailed portrait of British officers with their habits and little idiosyncrasies, one which broke the self-confidence and the assertive attitude, which characterised instead the official notes and reports written by the British themselves. Significantly, the memory group, which I will narrate about, pursued its own politics and poetics of remembering and forgetting. The elderly participants felt seriously marginalised by the 1990s national rhetoric, which systematically questioned the contribution of their generation to the progress of the Gambia. The memory group, moreover, believed in conviviality and conversation as a privileged source of knowledge transmission. As I will show, the active sharing of their past experiences offered to these elderly men an intersubjective ground to amicably discuss and revoke their role in the political developments of late colonial and postindependence Gambia.

Memory as Moral Vision. Syrian Christians in Turkey and Germany

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The proposed paper is based on fieldwork among Syrian Christians from Turkey.
This community is one of the many indigenous Middle Eastern Christian groups and has had a long-standing minority experience in Turkey, which has also provided 'push-factors' to emigrate. My fieldwork was 'multi-sited', including a 'home' community in south eastern Turkey and an emigrant community in Berlin. My discussion of memory will address the role of memory as it unfolds for people who go through experiences of rupture and

social disconnection caused by large-scale emigration, and I will include both research sites in my discussion. Memory and various forms of enacting memory emerge as moral visions and moral practices through which people negotiate the experience of migration, but also the commitment to 'community' and cohesion. The paper will explore the relationship between remembering the past and visions of morality that give shape to both a sense of cultural survival and structures of power and social control. I will discuss these questions in relation to their implications for individuals in different settings.

I also wish to explore the role of the anthropologist as cultural learner and his/her immersion in local forms of remembering while doing fieldwork – which was certainly an experience for me. Writing ethnographically on people's memory is also an act of post-fieldwork remembering in itself that has implications for how we produce knowledge. This might be an interesting conceptual/methodological issue to include in the workshop discussion on anthropological perspectives of memory.

The Art of Remembering and Forgetting in the Social Make-up of a Greek Island

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Memory is an important agent in the production and reproduction of identities. Individuals choose places, objects and past events that help them to construct their personal memory. Emotions and emotional attachment with places and objects are actively implicated in the construction of memory and forgetting. In this essay I attribute an active role to mnemonic processes as agents of negotiation of past events, reconstructions of past experiences and of one's self. Following Kuechler (1987) and Eves (1996), I am interested in the way individuals manipulate memory to reinforce the position in the social whole, to shape their conduct, to negotiate their role either as part of a kinship network or class, and/or to reinforce their local and personal identity.

The aim of the paper is twofold, first to examine the faculty of memory, its material terms and social conditions and secondly, to explore the way places and artefacts are incorporated in people's mind to mould perceptions, personal experiences and past memories. The focus of my research is on a Greek island, the island of Kythera, and on the way the emigrants, who after a long period of absence have returned to the island, negotiate their social position.

Migration has received a lot of attention in the past decades, but mostly from the point of view of economic and social integration of the migrants in their hosting countries. The repatriation of emigrants and the integration in their homeland has not attracted equal attention. Hence, this essay is concerned with the emigrants' efforts to repair the rupture that was created when they left their villages years ago. Due to the large-scale migration that the island of Kythera suffered from, kinship ties became

loose and classification according to kinship became ineffective. The depopulation of the island created a sense of interruption on both a collective and personal level. The disintegration of social life could be somehow remedied with the construction and reproduction of personal histories that connect emigrants with the island's past and provide them nominal continuity. We should view the preservation of monuments and traditional villages, refurbishment of patriarchal houses, resurrection of customs, genealogical trees, historiographies and folklore art production as material representations of memory. Memory is employed by individuals or collectivities to construct their identity.

The Perception and Preservation of Historic Monuments as a Reflection of Social Memory

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Historic monuments may be perceived as bearers of social memory of major importance. Values and attitudes of various social groups, projected on them, are indicators of this memory. In my paper I wish to present how, since World War II up to the present, the perception of historic buildings has evolved. I will refer to the example of three cities: Gda_sk (Danzing), Gdynia, Sopot (Zoppot), which nowadays make one agglomeration. I interpret the change of attitudes towards their monuments as a sign of the evolution of collective memory, and the shift of its role in creating local identities in contemporary times. The architectural image of the three cities has been shaped in strictly defined though different historic periods, under the rule of three various states of different socio-political systems, which have visibly impressed their characters. Their complex history makes the cultural landscape of each of them a subject of various symbolic disputes and activities. After 1989, an intensified activity of local communities and authorities to re-define ties of their inhabitants with the history of the land is visible. It is fascinating to observe how the evaluation of German origin architecture has been changing and becoming included in the local identity of Gda_sk and Sopot inhabitants.

Bol_cin. The Myth and the Body

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The history that happened during the socio-economic change of the 1990s concerns the multi-textual and variable sphere of culture. During the '90s new social phenomena and new practices occurred. This also very much influenced the way of life, social commentary and forms of expression of inhabitants of Bol_cin village in southern Poland (Bol_cin is a particular polish village placed on the edge of industrial zone of _l_sk). One of the main practices of the inhabitants that I observed was being sick. On the one hand, my research found that sickness practice

brought an individual degree of social welfare and a certain level of prestige. On the other hand, this particular practice and way of chatting, talking or taking day-to-day orders is referenced to a 'bad' or 'poor' state of bodies. The body, as revealed in the comments, is understood as weak and sick. For this reason, it serves as a particular means of communication. The body is understood to be sick because of an inconceivable lack of work after the economical transformation (also bodily work), and because of industrial contamination and something that is locally called "nervousness". This and some other metaphors reveal the mythical history of Bol_cin. In the past the body was strong and equipped with an ideal metabolism, whereas at present the body or the world ails in general. The story about an old perfect world (unlike now-a-days when everyone is sick) is set in the context of theorising on myth by Ernst Cassirer and Kirsten Hastrup and on bodily inter-subjectivity by Maurice Merleau-Ponty. The particular experience of socio-economic transformation is thus revealed.

Ethnography, Art and Death

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'The Field' does not exist in the present-tense but is overlaid with memories that are at once cultural and idiosyncratic. However within western epistemologies these remain inaccessible as there is no independent access to people's consciousness or the past. This paper therefore uses art/performance to bring the 'invisible depths' of the past into being through a series of 'staged' encounters. Persons were asked to walk round their neighbourhoods narrating events from their past into a taperecorder in the presence of other informants who were asked to interact with and photograph the performance. As memories emerged, dramas unfolded and habitual roles were recast the field was 'made-strange' for anthropologist and informants alike, thus opening up the potential for different kinds of interaction and understanding. Moreover these fieldwork-performances can be repeated amongst people living in radically different contexts and circumstances. For me this means people living with HIV/AIDS in the cities of New York and Kampala. The four 'pieces' that comprise this paper can be seen as an attempt to create a suitable ethnographic-mnemonic context that would uncover the layers of memory and emotion that have been sedimented into the city's streets, shops, buildings and bits of old ground. By accompanying people on their journeys we actually gain a 'sense', if not an understanding, of how a particular type of past connects people to prior events and mediates their experiences of their neighbourhood.