

NITMES-symposium 'Memory With(out) Borders' (Utrecht, June 2013):

Central Issues and Discussions Points

What are the emerging alternatives to the nation as a framework for collective memory and identity? Are there new practices of transnational remembrance emerging in an age of advanced globalisation, widescale migration, and new media technologies? Is there a new 'global' transnational memory culture and if so, how does it interact multidirectionally with local concerns? Which borders still operate in the circulation of narratives and are borders always to be conceived in negative terms?

These questions figured centrally during the NITMES-symposium 'Memory With(out) Borders' which took place from 17 – 19 June 2013. The event brought together prominent scholars and researchers within memory studies and adjacent disciplines. The aim was to sharpen the conceptual tools for the study of transnational memory and to identify key issues that should be prioritized in research.

The following consists of a brief overview of the key issues, concepts and approaches emerging from the discussions during the three days of the symposium. The aim is to take these discussion points and key insights as a starting point in the upcoming workshops and conferences of the NITMES-network and thus to continue the development and formulation of new theoretical frameworks in the research of transnational memory.

An important theme underlying many of the presentations was the multidirectionality and transnational manifestations of the remembrance of the Holocaust. The case studies ranged from a close-reading of the testimonial project of Marceline Loridan-Ivens as an example of politicized Holocaust internationalism (Michael Rothberg) and an analysis of memory practices in a Former Shtetl in Poland (Barbara Törnquist-Plewa) to the emergence of genocide discourse in Argentina (Ton Robben). Others focused on the relation between the remembrance of the Rwandan genocide and the Holocaust (Anne-Maria Brandstetter), the media technologies involved in the transnational remembrance of the Holocaust (Judith Keilbach) and the complex dynamics at work in the (trans)national construction of perpetratorship in Italy (Suzanne Knittel).

Next to the focus on the manner in which (the metaphors and discourses structuring) Holocaust memory influence the manner in which collective trauma is remembered in European and non-European contexts, other presentations during this symposium were concerned with the medial production of migrant memory and the position of migrant (or 'indigenous') memory within national memory politics: Aleida Assmann presented a comparative analysis of the ex-/inclusion of migrants in the national discourses of guilt in countries such as Germany, Canada and Australia; Astrid Erll discussed the (re)production of migrant memory in two British films, *East is East* and *West is West* and Nadia Butt gave an analysis of the transcultural forms of remembrance in South Asian Anglophone literatures. Furthermore, Rosanne Kennedy considered the directional flows and vectors of transnational and cosmopolitan memory represented in the Australian film *The Sapphires*.

Two presentations were concerned with memory politics in the Netherlands, including a discussion of the transnational dimensions of the post-colonial legacy in the Netherlands (Paul Bijl) and an analysis of Dutch compensation policies with regard to the former colonies (Nicole Immler).

Where Birgit Meyer's contribution dealt with the dynamics of Ghanaian, state-driven, heritage formation to highlight more general patterns in practices of commemoration and heritage, Chiara de Cesari discussed the manner in which Museum of European and Mediterranean Civilization in Marseille

('European capital of the year') reproduces national memory rather than the expected 'European identity'. Laura Basu was concerned with the structural amnesia informing the production and circulation of global news by the news media.

Though case studies and approaches presented during the sessions varied widely, several themes and issues can be identified which seem to be of relevance for all these diverse research projects:

A. 'Travelling Memory' and multidirectionality:

- The need to closely analyze the processes of transfer occurring between different forms and contexts of remembrance, and distinguish between connectedness and different forms of correspondence. In other words, one must carefully investigate what exactly has 'travelled' in the analysis of correspondences between the memory of the Holocaust and other discourses of genocide and guilt: is it a metaphor, a certain framework or a mode of representation? What other influences may one identify in the target memory culture which cannot be linked back to the Holocaust memory-complex?
- Linked to this observation is the realization that not all transnationalism in memory can or should be linked back to the remembrance of the Holocaust. This being said, comparative studies of different memory cultures are of crucial importance for identification of more widely shared patterns in practices of commemoration and heritage formation.

B. Media and materiality:

- Transfer is always mediated. What are the implications of the media technologies involved in the production and circulation of transnational memory?
- At this moment researchers are confronted with the emergence of vast digital archives and the question arises how to access these quantities of information. Also the issue of how to avoid reproducing that which we already know. The necessity of asking the right questions and working together with digital archive specialists.
- The importance of material side of remembrance. Not only in the concrete manifestations of memory cultures/cultural heritage but also in the *affective* dimension involved in the authentication of practices and objects.

C. Scales and scapes:

An important observation was made concerning the structural entanglement of the local, the national and the global. Where researchers of memory are inclined to think of scale in terms of containment (the local and intimate are contained by the national, the national by the global), it is crucial to recognize that these categories are discursively constituted by each other. Memory, in other words, is always in a certain sense a 'bordering practice' and the entanglements between these different levels of engagement need to be studied.

D. Negative side of memory: forgetting/antagonism:

Transnational memory can also be investigated for its negative side: the processes of forgetting and instances of antagonism to which it is subjected; does cosmopolitanism necessarily entail a loss of specificity and hence of affective engagement?

E. Concepts:

The issue of conceptual frameworks and the insights they make possible (or mask) was also an important topic of discussion. What is the relation of the 'transnational' to the 'transcultural'? Should the transnational be understood in spatial terms, or are there other metaphors/images that open up new perspectives on the correspondences and dynamics between memory cultures? One must carefully examine the terminology used to indicate those groups which are supposedly 'outside' national memory, such as 'migrant' or 'indigenous'. Often these terms are themselves caught up in complex 'bordering' practices.

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