



*Third workshop of the Interdisciplinary Network for the Study of Memory in Latin America.* Interdisciplinary Network for the Study of Memory in Latin America, 28.07.2016—29.07.2016.

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### Third workshop of the Interdisciplinary Network for the Study of Memory in Latin America

The third workshop of the *Interdisciplinary Network for the Study of Memory in Latin America* took place on July 28 and 29, 2016 at the University of Constance, Germany. Under the headline “Thinking the Latin American Memory Complex”, network members came together to discuss aspects of their current research projects in relation to the group’s general focus. The panels were organized into possible facets of the Latin American Memory Complex, comprising topics ranging from historical consciousness and memory media to relations between individual and collective realms of memory and the challenges for public policies surrounding questions of repatriation and representation.

The first panel focused on the concept of historical consciousness and its Latin American specifics. LEONARDO PASCUTI (Eichstätt-Ingolstadt) discussed the linkages between the report of the unofficial Truth Commission *Nunca Mais* and discourses about the Holocaust in Brazil. In his presentation, he highlighted similarities between Holocaust discourses in Germany during the 1960s and narratives evolving around the military dictatorship in Brazil during the 1980s. A question that arose after his presentation was about society’s perception of these semantic connections. Do “normal” people create discursive links between the Holocaust and the military dictatorship in Brazil? Or is this a concern limited to professional historians? As Pascuti explained, Brazilian society normally links the Holocaust with violence more in general, and not specifically with the past military dictatorship.

MĂNIKA CONTRERAS SAIZ (Berlin) began by defining the concept of historical consciousness in the Latin American context as the result of the relationship a person establishes between her own life and an acquired knowledge of the past. In relation to her current field of study, history-based soap operas from Chile and Colombia, she posed questions about the relationship between individual and collective historical consciousness, and how much of the collective is represented within the individual one. Furthermore, she raised questions about the relationship between extensive historical knowledge on the one side and the development of historical consciousness on the other. In the discussion, the question arose how conscious historical consciousness had to be. It was pointed out that the differentiation between awareness and consciousness should be taken into account.

TATJANA LOUIS (Bogot ) reflected about schoolbooks in Colombia and their potential to build up historical consciousness. She argued that schoolbooks create links between past interpretations and future expectations. With regard to the current situation, Louis argued that challenging traditional perspectives of the past offers various possibilities for the construction of identity concepts through history. In order to illustrate this, she presented some examples. She underlined that the Colombian educational system claimed to be democratic by presenting different visions of the past rather than trying to impose a uniform narrative. After questions surrounding the educational system and educational policies in Colombia, which revealed that it is not the state, but

the publishing houses themselves who are in charge of the edition of schoolbooks, it became clear that this field of investigation is still a new one. The connection between identity, historical consciousness and schoolbooks is an issue to further investigate.

HENDRIKJE GRUNOW's (Constance) presentation had a more theoretical focus. After outlining eurocentric biases in conceptualizing historical consciousness, she developed a framework to think about affective connections to the past as forms of being conscious of history. To do so, she connected anthropological works investigating shamanism with approaches from affect theory. Furthermore, she raised questions about the investigation of affects when these are considered unspoken and sensual phenomena. Two main questions from the audience accompanied the discussion. First, the perception of time and temporality in the affective conception of the past was discussed. The second questions assessed the role of neuroscience in studies about affect, considering that the presented talk theorized the issue from the perspective of the humanities only.

In the second panel, Lena Voigtländer and Andrés Montoya presented two case studies related to the topic of memory and its representation. LENA VOIGTLÄNDER (Bonn) reflected on visual representations of postmemory by the Post-generation (those born during or after the violent event). Focusing on the ruptures and continuities of form and content in documentary films, she reexamined the concept of postmemory, hinting at the challenges faced by the second generation when trying to resume the first generation's social or political projects. In the conclusion, she raised the question of the authority of memory.

ANDRÉS MONTOYA's (Bogotá) presentation explored the role of memorials that commemorate the victims of the internal armed conflict in small localities in Colombia, and the problems evolving around these sites, considering that violence is still faced on a daily basis. On the one hand, Montoya stressed the importance of memorials for the families: Since they still didn't know the whereabouts of their loved ones, they appropriated the memorials as sites of sorrow and mourning. On the other hand, these sites were places in which violence and retaliative actions continued to take place. In order to maintain peace, the organizers also promote cultural activities to divert attention from more politically sensitive events. The audience discussed how different memories live together and interact in these spaces in reference to both presentations. Considering that perpetra-

tors cannot be mentioned in some of these sites, the question arose to what degree victims actually think of them to be symbolic reparations in terms of truth and justice.

The third panel united two perspectives on the relations between individual memory and memory communities. ADRIANA VERA (Bogotá) presented some aspects of her ongoing ethnographic fieldwork in the Western Amazonian locality of La Macarena, Colombia. She reflected on the fact that a lot of communities get attention (positive and negative) in the national narration only as long as they have implications with the political violence. As she underlined, localities like La Macarena expose the necessity to find a place for different memories; otherwise the parallel local memories that coexisted during the violence could be displaced or besieged by the greater narrative.

CAROLINA PIZARRO (Constance) described her research project in which she analyzes the genre of *testimonio* in the Southern Cone and its role not only in the literary, but also in the historical sciences. After giving an overview of the genesis and categories of the genre *testimonio*, she strongly emphasized its importance in the fabrication of history. Her perspective was based mostly on cases of imprisonment and torture in Chile, Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay during the respective military dictatorships. The discussion of these two presentations focused on questions of feasibility in endeavors of representation. While in the Colombian case, the concrete locations still have to deal with insurgent and institutional violence, the debate surrounding *testimonio* as a medium to construct historical narratives is often faced with the problem of supersaturation on the receiving side.

In the final panel, four presentations on public policies related to memory and forgetting were united. ANDREA CAGUA (Eichstätt-Ingolstadt) addressed the "Forgetting Paradox": How can one erase something from collective memory without at the same time actively thinking about it? Under the premise that memories are first and foremost ephemeral phenomena, how can one conceive oblivion as a traceable social phenomenon? And how can one investigate this, when it is something that isn't there, or has been rendered invisible in the present? Cagua proposed approaches to the sources with examples such as documentary film, amnesties, and oral tradition.

ANTJE GUNSENHEIMER (Bonn) analyzed processes of negotiation and integration of ethnic minority histories within a national master narrative. Her case study about the Yaqui museum in Sonora, Mexico, revealed

conflicts not only about sovereignty in representation but also about the conditions of acceptance of citizenship and belonging within the Mexican state. While the museum organizers tried to include Yaqui history in accordance to national historical events and interpret their work in integrative terms, Yaqui authorities see it as an effort of appropriation, paternalism and abuse, and are thinking about elaborating their own museum with the help of international donors.

Memorial Museums are symbolic means for reparation in the context of transitional justice in post-conflict societies, as FABIOLA ARELLANO (Munich) pointed out in her talk. Their main goal, then, is to recognize, dignify and commemorate the victims. Arellano illustrated the different ways of representation of victims in memorial museums, especially in Santiago (Chile) and Lima (Peru). A comparative approach allowed her a deeper analysis of what might be the intentions behind the respective exhibition conceptions, and whether or not these intentions correspond with the postulated goals.

NINEL PLEITEZ (San Salvador) finalized the workshop with a practical perspective. As curator of the Museum of Anthropology in El Salvador, she reflected on her next curatorial project about a theme which, despite of its relevancy, is only tackled tangentially at the museum: the Salvadoran civil war. Methodologically she proposed a bottom-up approach in which testimonies play an important role. Since the museum is very object-oriented, she is currently trying to figure out how to represent oral testimonies, how to materialize them, or how to exhibit them without recurrence to objects. The audience debated the importance of participative methods in this kind of projects in order to avoid the exoticization of an ethnic group or a lack of legitimation among the represented. Also, the difficulty of representation in cases without material object was discussed, for example in relation to women that had been sexually violated during the conflicts.

During the final discussion Hendrikje Grunow gave a brief summary of the topics discussed during the day. She pointed out core questions of the research network: What is historical consciousness, and what are its Latin American specifics? How does memory work through media, and what are the connections between these workings and the development of historical consciousness? How do individual and collective realms relate to each other in Latin American memories? What are the political challenges of memory work in Latin America?

Tatjana Louis and M<sup>3</sup>nika Contreras pointed out

the necessity to discuss different concepts of *Memoria Hist<sup>3</sup>rica* on that occasion, to which Lena Voigtl<sup>3</sup>nder added that different levels had to be taken into account, such as state-based or community-based work, and the relationship with donors and supporters. A brief discussion about the newness of these actors between Arellano, Grunow, Contreras, Voigtl<sup>3</sup>nder and Louis made clear the importance of precise categories: rather than representing new actors, the analysis of the work of these communities is of a new urgency. Voigtl<sup>3</sup>nder furthermore proposed to label the actors as visible and invisible, rather than in terms of a new-old dichotomy.

Another aspect that surged in the discussion was the question of change. Contreras argued for an individual and therefore changing conception of historical consciousness, while Grunow pointed out the historicity of the unchanging. Voigtl<sup>3</sup>nder remarked on the distinct levels of consciousness as on the one side located within the individual body, and on the other hand sparking a need to act, or change a situation. She also hinted to the differences in the conception of consciousness when adding a *âpoliticalâ*, *âsocialâ*, or *âhistoricalâ* to it, leaving room for further differentiations.

Louis took up on this distinction to underline the difference between consciousness and awareness, to which Voigtl<sup>3</sup>nder added the differentiation between consciousness as a product and conscientization as a process. She furthermore underlined the importance of the individual's readiness to receive any form of consciousness. Grunow criticized this, explaining that an individual didn't have to be ready for a memory sparked by affect, as with a smell that reminded one of something. She wondered why this would not count as historical consciousness. Louis reconciled these perspectives by indicating the possibility of being conscious without reaching a state of consciousness.

Finally, Arellano and Montoya raised the question of how different cognitive and emotional processes interpolate in the creation of knowledge. It became clear that there are still many challenges and potentials in researching memory in Latin America, despite it being such a prominent topic. The group agreed to tackle these in future projects and meetings.

#### Conference Overview:

Welcome Address (Hendrikje Grunow, M<sup>3</sup>nika Contreras)

*Panel 1: Historical Consciousness (Part 1)*

Chair: Andrea Cagua

Leonardo Pascuti (KU Eichstätt-Ingolstadt):  
Brasil Nunca Mais: Holocaust Remembrance and Historical Consciousness in Brazilian Democratization Discourses (1979-1985)

Mónica Contreras Saiz (LAI, FU Berlin):  
Historical Consciousness and Mass Media in Latin America: Methodological and Theoretical Challenges

Tatjana Louis: (Universidad de los Andes, Bogotá):  
Memory between Duty and Need. Some Comments on Colombian Historical Consciousness

Hendrikje Grunow (Universität Konstanz):  
Exploring an Affective Historical Consciousness: Some Approaches to Feeling the Past

*Panel 2: Memory and its Media*

Chair: Fabiola Arellano

Lena Voigtländer (IAE, Universität Bonn):  
Reflections of a Time Past â Visual Media and the Post-Generation in Latin America

Andrés Montoya (Universidad de los Andes):  
Giving Body to the Wound: The Making of Physical Sites of Remembrance amidst Colombia's Armed Conflict

*Panel 3: Relations Between Individual Memory and Memory Communities*

Chair: Leonardo Pascuti

Adriana Vera (Universidad de los Andes):  
Negotiations, Forgetfulness, and Narrations of the Past: Memories of Conflict and Parallel Local Memories

Carolina Pizarro (Universität Konstanz):  
Testimonio as Omnivorous Genre

*Panel 4: Public Policies on Memory and Forgetting*

Chair: Lena Voigtländer

Andrea Cagua (KU Eichstätt-Ingolstadt):  
Tracing Oblivion: Some Reflections on the Study of Forgetting in Colombia

Antje Gunsenheimer (IAE, Universität Bonn):  
âWhose History is it?â - The Mexican Dilemma between National Master Narrative and Regional Ethnic Autonomy

Fabiola Arellano (LMU, München):  
Museale (Re)Präsentationen von Opfern in Südamerika. Eine vergleichende Perspektive

Ariana Ninel Pleitez (Museo de Antropología, San Salvador):

Silence Stories versus Memory Stories at the National Museum of Anthropology, El Salvador

*Closing Remarks*

Chairs: Hendrikje Grunow / Mónica Contreras

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at:

<http://hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de/>

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