

# WORKSHOP

## Breaking down the Siloes:

### Connecting cultural, social, psychological, and biological aspects of memory

(Frankfurt, 16-18 March)

#### 1. Workshop Themes

We plan at this point to build the workshop around four themes.

##### 1. REPRESENTATION (external, internal)

This term has different meaning for those in Cultural Studies and those in Cognitive Science. From a Cultural Studies perspective, *representation* captures the way in which the past is “encoded” in media. From Cognitive Science perspective, it is manner in which the past is “encoded” in the head. Hence, the terms *external* and *internal*, though the latter might also be referred to as *mental*. From a Cultural Studies perspective, studying how the past is encoded in media is usually only the first step. Only when these mediated representations circulate and are received (theme 2) can collective memory emerge. The same holds for Cognitive Science. However in Cognitive Science, as well as in some areas of Sociology, one can ask about social representations. Here one is exploring not the mental representations of the individuals, but the shared individual representations of members of a community — not, for instance, how a Russian mentally represents WWII, but how Russians as a group represent WWII. The Cultural Studies approach would be to look at Russian media products (from newspapers to history books to videogames) and analyse their representations of WWII through their selections, narrative structures, metaphors etc. Although transmission, circulation, and reception are critical in any discussion of representation, the question of WHAT and HOW the past is represented is an essential starting point.

##### 2. Processes of TRANSMISSION

From both the Cultural Studies Perspective and the Cognitive Science perspective, the transmission of mediated memory can occur in diverse channels (oral speech, writing, television, internet). It may be hindered by censorship or by lack of attention of media users. Active reception (which will usually imply highly differing understandings) by individual users (and interpretive communities) is the condition for collective memory to emerge. This active reception has been a central concern of Cognitive Science. How is the “message” altered as it is communicated across a social network? Under what circumstances might one expect the network to converge a “shared representation of the past”? What individual cognitive mechanisms might account for these “cross-network” changes? How do these communicative effects depend on the nature of the communication, both in terms of the type of media (oral speech, writing, etc.) and the social relationships among communicators (e.g., their power relationship)? According to Cultural Studies, different types of media have different affordances and limitations. Some media lend themselves to the transmission of memories across space (esp. mass media, the internet) or across time (storage media such as stone carvings or the book). Long-term transmission across thousands of years seems to depend on certain forms of institutionalisation (such as canon-formation) and on specific medial practices (such as ongoing remediation).

### 3. COMMUNICATIVE versus CULTURAL MEMORY

This conceptual dyad was introduced by Jan and Aleida Assmann and is widely used across the disciplines. What it suggests is that with changing temporal horizons occur also changes in the carrier groups, media, and forms of institutionalisation of memory. While critics have pointed out that cultural and communicative memory will also always permeate each other (and that they may not be the only two modes of collective memory), the question remains whether there is a qualitative difference between memories on ‘this side’ and ‘that side’ of the ‘experience threshold’ (German: *Erfahrungsschwelle*), or between what Hirst and Manier have called “lived” and “distant collective memory”. And where is the threshold to be located (after witnesses have died? or after 3-4 generations? or as long as a memory ‘feels lived’?). Is a dyadic model for the changes in collective memory as events recede into the past appropriate? Or should it be a scalar one? And how can we account for the interpenetrations between very old and very recent memories?

### 4. Relation between MEMORY and IDENTITY (individual, collective)

One reason scholars study memory is that the way an individual or community remembers the past bears on individual or community identity. Although this is a given for most scholars working in the area of Memory Studies, the exact way this relation unfolds is often under-explored and under-theorized. How do those in Cultural Studies and Cognitive Science understand the relation between memory and identity, both at the individual and collective level?

Collective identity in particular is a relatively recent concept that comes with the danger of unduly homogenizing social groups. What possible forms are there of thinking beyond ‘containered’ collective identities (e.g. ‘implicated subjects’, sensu Rothberg; or ‘transcultural identities’). And while no definition of collective memory, it seems, can do without pointing out its link to collective identity, is it really the case that all collective memory must be identity-relevant? Are there collective memories which do not bear on collective identity at all – and that we still should address?

\*\*\*

Two more fundamental questions are not on the list, but we expect that they will weave through all the discussion:

1. In what domains can we find ‘memory’ (*as potentiality*)? In neuronal networks? in minds? in social interaction? in archives? in monuments? How is memory *in actuality* created? Who (or what?) can perform a recall, the activation of memory? Only individual minds? Groups in common performance? Automatised algorithms? Do even objects have the ‘agency’ to recall?

2. Is collective memory a metaphor or a real-world process? Do we think the relation of the individual and the social in terms of analogy (i.e. as two separate levels on which processes work in similar ways)? Or as integral components in *one* process (e.g. of the extended mind)?

## 2. Structure of the Workshop

We have preliminarily assigned each of you to address one of these themes. See below. As to how we envision the workshop unfolding, each of you will give a brief presentation relevant to the theme with the idea of

- Informing us about how you believe your area of research or discipline has addressed this theme, that is, what are the important questions your area of research or discipline are or hope to address
- Outlining the various methodologies used to explore this questions
- And, BRIEFLY, reviewing (some of the) basic results, in particular, results from your own work (i.e. bring some examples)

The presentation should last no more than 10 – max. 15 minutes, which will clearly be a challenge given the wide scope we hope you will cover. Depending on the number of people assigned to each topic, there should be ca. 30 minutes of discussion to follow each presentation. The aims here are to further unpack what is being done with respect to the theme under discussion and to build bridges across disciplines. Hopefully, at coffee breaks, lunch, and dinner we will have further opportunity for bridge building.

On the final day of the workshop, we will try to draw out some of the connections arising in the previous two days, as well as some of the challenges, with the aim of writing a white paper on what the field of Memory Studies can offer above and beyond what is offered by Cultural Studies, Cognitive Science, or any other discipline addressing the issue of memory. Ideally, an outline of what this white paper might contain will emerge. We (Astrid and Bill) will then supply a draft that can be worked on by the group through Google Documents, after the workshop.

Let us know if this basic way of proceeding strikes you as reasonable, as well as any suggested changes you might offer. Also, let us know if your “assignment” seems reasonable, and if not, what theme you might prefer addressing.

## 3. Pre-workshop Preparation

In preparation for the workshop, we ask:

- (1) Please send us a short biography that we can distribute to others. Not everyone knows each other or even what each other does. It would be good if we get “acquainted” prior to the workshop.
- (2) Also please send one or two papers that will let others know what is going on in your field. It can either be a review paper or a paper reporting some of your most recent work. Astrid and Bill will put these together into a zip file and distribute them.
- (3) Finally, please make sure you contact the hotel and tell them when you are arriving and leaving.

As we get closer to the workshop date, we will send you details about meeting rooms, etc.

#### 4. Possible Schedule

Time	16. March	17. March	18. March
9.30 -11.00	<b>REPRESENTATION</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wertsch</li> <li>• Rigney</li> </ul>	<b>CULTURAL/ COMMUNICATIVE MEMORY</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Olick</li> <li>• Candia</li> </ul>	<b>PUBLICATION</b> Open-ended discussion of a possible position paper on Memory Studies
11.00-11.30	Coffee	Coffee	Coffee
11.30-13.00	<b>REPRESENTATION</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Abel</li> <li>• Schiff</li> </ul>	<b>CULTURAL/ COMMUNICATIVE MEMORY</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peschanski</li> <li>• Erll</li> </ul>	<b>PUBLICATION</b>
13.00 – 14.30	lunch	lunch	lunch & end
14.30 -16.00	<b>TRANSMISSION</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hirst</li> <li>• Barnier &amp; Hoskins</li> </ul>	<b>IDENTITY</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fivush</li> <li>• Rothberg</li> </ul>	
16.00-16.30	Coffee	Coffee	
16.30-18.00	<b>TRANSMISSION</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kansteiner</li> <li>• Echterhoff</li> </ul>	<b>IDENTITY</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Habermas</li> <li>• Rosoux</li> <li>• Gensburger</li> </ul>	
	Dinner		