

Call for Papers

PoSoCoMeS panels at the Memory Studies Association 2022 online conference

This year, in addition to the onsite convention in Seoul, the MSA conference will have an online edition organized by Working and Regional groups, which will take place on July 11-12. The PoSoCoMeS is planning a double panel with the topic of

Dialogic Memories of the 1970-90s ‘Transitions’ Across the World: Current Practices and Possible Solidarities

Organizers: Ksenia Robbe (University of Groningen), Andrei Zavadski (Humboldt University of Berlin) and Agnieszka Mrozik (Polish Academy of Sciences)

The political and socio-economic transformations of the 1970-early 1990s – once labelled ‘transitions’ and imagined as a ‘wave of democratization’ that rolled across the world, from Latin America to Eastern Europe and from Southern Africa to East Asia – have become an object of active instrumentalization and contestation during the past decade. As a new generation has grown up and more long-term perspectives on the processes and consequences of the transformations have become possible, the last decades of the 20th century came to be regarded as a more intriguing but also increasingly ‘usable’ past. In the political sphere, memories of the transitions are being successfully ‘used’ in discourses of discontent, on different sides of the political spectrum (Mark et al. 2015). We can think of right-wing populist denunciations of ‘selling out’ Eastern European nations to ‘the West’ as well as left-wing critiques of establishing neoliberal hegemony across the post-Cold War world. Some of the movements supported by revisionist perspectives on the transitions have recently succeeded in gaining popular support and state power. Such is the case of Gabriel Boric’s overwhelming victory in the Chilean presidential elections, facilitating the writing of a progressive Constitution and revising neoliberal economic foundations that were untouched by the 1990s transition (Prashad and Silva 2021). At the same time, the Russian state has been solidifying its repressive power structures, gaining legitimation, increasingly, via the discourses of debunking the perestroika and early post-Soviet transformations (Malinova 2021).

Against this background of direct instrumentalizations of memories, we would like to shift the analytical lens to aspects of dialogism in practices of looking back at the transitions and making sense of this time as formative for one’s individual and collective selves. How do diverging perspectives on this past interact, and what are the ‘sites’ of convergence within and between different memories? This focus on existing and emerging mnemonic convergence is underpinned not just by the necessity of overcoming polarization that manifests itself in the ‘fractured’ or ‘pillarized’ regimes of remembering transitions in Eastern Europe (Bernhard and Kubik 2014). We propose to explore the contradictions and connections within the practices of remembering transitions – vernacular and mediated, local or transnational – as a ground for potential social and political solidarities.

By ‘dialogic’, we refer to the Bakhtinian concept of dialogue as denoting interactions between irreducibly different perspectives and experiences which may take the form of contestation as well as partial agreement or mutual change which nevertheless involve structures of ‘dissensus’ (Rancière). ‘Dialogic memories’, thus, can serve as a broad term encompassing ‘multidirectional’ (Rothberg 2009), ‘agonistic’ (Bull and Hansen 2016), or other memory practices that involve interaction between different situated perspectives and are *open-endedly*, rather than *consensually*, dialogic (Bull and Hansen 2016). We also draw on Aleida Assmann’s

conceptualization of ‘dialogic memory’ as a mnemonic practice “integrating two or more perspectives on the common legacy of traumatic violence” (2015, 208); however, we consider a wider range of memories, involving not only violence or trauma, and located beyond the register of official politics. Furthermore, we approach the dialogic as describing *processes* and often involving conflict and ambiguity, rather than as an ideal framework. At the same time, ‘dialogic’, within our approach, denotes an *interplay* of perspectives beyond the situation when different voices speak past each other.

We welcome paper proposals analyzing dialogic memories from perspectives of cultural studies, history, sociology, anthropology, political science, media studies, literary and film studies, and other (inter-)disciplines within the humanities and social sciences. Possible directions may include studies of dialogic practices in discourses of politicians and in social movements; in vernacular and digital memory practices; and in cultural productions (writing, visual art and culture, museums, performance). We welcome research based on case studies as well as theoretical and methodological reflections. Finally, we are interested in research focusing on regional and transregional entanglements and comparisons.

Topics and issues may include but are not limited to:

- Analysis of internally dialogic memories as well as situations of interaction between different memories;
- Who initiates and participates in these dialogues? Who are the intended addressees? Who is included/excluded from these practices?
- The role of class, gender, race, generation, and other paradigms of difference in shaping dialogic memories;
- What are the limits of dialogue? When do attempts of dialogic memory fail? How can conceptions of dialogue be revised?
- What is the status of dialogic memories in a given (national, transnational) context? Do dialogic memories ‘travel’?
- Do aspects of ambivalence and ambiguity in memories facilitate dialogue or reinforce fragmentation?
- How to study dialogic memories?

To submit a paper proposal, please email a 300-word abstract and a biographical note to k.robbe@rug.nl and andrei.zavadski@hu-berlin.de by **February 15** at the latest. The selection will be made by March 1. We are planning a publication (special issue) which will include contributions based on a selection of papers from the panels. This CfP is not limited to members of the PoSoCoMeS WG.

The panels are organized in the framework of the research project “[Reconstituting Publics through Remembering Transitions](#)” (NETIAS, 2021-24).

References

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