

# INTRODUCTION

## Agency and Practice in the Making of Transnational Memory Spaces

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The field of memory studies is experiencing an impressive growth spurt. Scholars from across diverse disciplines are joining the field, convening regularly, building institutions, and making concerted efforts to push toward more theoretical and methodological sophistication (Dutceac-Segesten and Wüstenberg 2017). In the “third phase” of memory studies, greater attention is now devoted to understanding the complex, multiple, and mobile character of remembrance (Erlil 2011). New research is taking into account global dynamics without discounting the continued salience of local and national categories. This volume seeks to build on and expand this scholarship by focusing on the role of agency in transnational memory politics. It assembles a diverse set of innovative studies that follow a common framework for analyzing transnational agency in memory politics. Collectively, we make the case that memory studies in the third wave is becoming and needs to be *relational and processual* in approach, rather than “merely” stressing its interdisciplinary and dynamic character. The authors highlight the agents and practices that make transnational remembrance happen, as well as the ways in which these reproduce or transform the multilevel structures that confine and enable them in turn. Thus, we seek to contribute to the difficult task of understanding and rethinking what memory means under conditions of globalization and technological change.

Our focus on agency as a guiding theme is particularly productive. Curiously, despite the fact that memory research talks a great deal about *actors*—human rights activists, politicians, historians, supranational organizations, nonprofits, and more—very little has been done to systematically consider the role of *agency* in the making, reproduction, and transformation of memory. Agency, in contrast to the concept of actors, implies the power (either latent or exercised) to create or prevent change. This definition enables us to shift attention from merely identifying actions of commemoration that cross borders in some manner to inquiring about their social and political drivers and outcomes. In other words, the contributions here think explicitly about how the interplay of local, national, regional, international, and global dynamics—and the agents that shape them—result in the emergence of transnational memory spaces. In this sense, the book offers something truly new—an empirical exploration of transnational spaces through the lens of memory studies. As I will show below, our collective focus on agency not only builds on recent existing (albeit unsystematic) work in the field but also examines how different types of agency create and maintain transnational mnemonic spaces. I want to stress that by “transnational remembering,” I mean more than references to global connectedness in any given realm of memory. Transnational memory spaces are certainly grounded in concrete locations, but they are made meaningful through cross-border linkage and through the practices of transnational agents. Through this linkage a new space is created that straddles various kinds of borders and that is highly significant in terms of the political stakes of the memory action at hand—with real effects on outcomes of recognition, justice, democratization, and more. Drawing on social theorists such as Norbert Elias, Anthony Giddens, and William Sewell, we seek to contribute to the third wave of memory studies by underpinning the relationality of transnational remembering.

My starting point in this introduction is to situate this book project in recent developments in memory studies. While various concepts have been employed in productive ways to “capture flows and interactions at a level that is not contained within the nation or the national” (Kennedy and Nugent 2016: 63), this book adopts the term “transnational” to problematize “container-thinking” (de Cesari and Rigney 2014: 1). That is, we add to the project of questioning the explicit and implicit epistemological organization of the field around *national* remembrance. I also discuss our understanding of the transnational in relation to the importance of notions of place and space in memory studies. I then consider the problem of structure and agency as it pertains to transnational memory politics, suggesting the need for a relational approach. I argue that our interest in agency necessitates a careful examination of the practices that mediate between agents and structures and that shape, maintain, or create transnational memory spaces. This approach

is grounded in the “practice-centered” perspective in cultural studies, as well as in insights from relational sociology.

The final portion of this introduction explains the organizational logic and provides an overview of the volume. Based on the recognition that memory agency is shaped by inequalities in resources and power, I argue that mnemonic agency tends to exhibit a dominant logic. By this I mean that agents often operate (and identify) explicitly in terms of bottom-up, top-down, or horizontal activities. The chapters are consequently organized according to these dominant organizational logics, despite the fact that many cases actually contain multiple, even countervailing kinds of agency. As is the case with most, if not all, edited volumes, not all chapters fit equally well into this matrix. But although the contributions vary widely in terms of the kinds of remembrance processes, geographies, and contexts they study and the methodologies they employ, each of them examines agents, practices, and structures, as well as the—highly variable—outcomes. This overarching framework, which was developed in the collaborative process that made this book possible, enables us to make comparisons and conclusions about the politics of transnational memory spaces without disregarding the cultural and historical distinctiveness of each case.

## Transnational Memory Spaces

During the first two phases of memory studies, remembrance had been understood primarily as contained in and shaped by local and national settings (Feindt et al. 2014). One of Halbwachs’s most important contributions was to state that even though individuals do the remembering, this happens necessarily within a *social* framework and that collective memories change based on their immersion in groups “delimited in space and time” (2011: 145). The space Halbwachs discussed was inhabited by relatively distinct social categories situated within national borders. Memory studies is still very much in Halbwachs’s debt, as it follows logically that when our social reality changes through technological upheaval and globalization, so must the foundation for collective memory—which is essentially what more recent memory scholars have sought to achieve. Building on Halbwachs’s work, more recent theorists such as Jan Assmann and Pierre Nora have sought to understand the practice and transformation of collective memory over time. Assmann clarified Halbwachs’s notion of “collective memory” by arguing that it was “communicative”: “non-institutional; . . . it is not formalized and stabilized by any forms of material symbolization; it lives in everyday interaction and communication and, for this very reason, has only a limited time depth which normally reaches no farther back than eighty years, the time span of three

interacting generations” (Assmann 2008: 111). By contrast, “cultural memory” is institutionalized and no longer depends on the direct communication and passing down of traditions of community members. It relies on “external objects” as material symbols of the past (Assmann 2008: 110). All of the contributions in this book examine instances of “cultural” memory. Pierre Nora (1996) also considers the ways in which memory changes over time, arguing that the proliferation of “lieux de mémoire”—symbolic representations of the past, both material and nonmaterial—can be explained by the decline of more directly transmitted and cultivated “milieux de mémoire.” Thus, for Nora, the emergence of such sites is inextricably bound up with the development of the modern nation-state and has helped us understand the centrality of memory to national identity formation.

As Erll points out, the approach of examining *lieux de mémoire* has already spawned a rich array of studies and could keep memory researchers busy indefinitely (2011: 4)—it has even produced work on bi- and multilateral *lieux* (den Boer et al. 2011; Hahn and Traba 2013). But it has not been equally successful when it comes to moving beyond epistemological blinders that, among other things, make it difficult to grasp the role of agency—whether it operates within or beyond national borders. The first prominent recognition of this limitation was the research program pursued by Daniel Levy and Nathan Sznajder, who argue that through processes of globalization, the Holocaust has become a global “memory imperative” and cosmopolitan moral reference point (Levy and Sznajder 2001; Levy 2010). In contrast to this idea of a universalized discourse of remembrance, more recent work on transnational memory emphasizes the diverse and sometimes conflictual ways in which memory moves beyond borders. From traveling (Erll 2011), to multidirectional (Rothberg 2009), to multivocal (de Cesari and Rigney 2014), and entangled (Feindt et al. 2014) memory, scholars have done much to begin to elucidate the complex processes by which transnational commemoration takes place. As Bond et al. contend, “Memory . . . does not stay put but circulates, migrates, travels; it is more and more perceived as a process, as work that is continually in progress, rather than as a reified object” (2016: 1). A key contribution of this discussion has been to problematize the ordering concepts in memory theory and to think carefully about how to avoid reproducing similar boundaries at higher (or lower) levels of analysis. Perhaps unsurprisingly, there has also been a significant amount of research on the politics of memory as they operate in supranational settings and on “regions of memory” (Sierp 2014; Sierp 2017; Kübler 2012; Sierp and Wüstenberg 2015b; Kroh 2008; Schwelling 2012; Mink and Neumeyer 2013; Troebst 2014). These works tap into a broader debate about European and transnational identity that responds to rapid empirical development and policy demands on the ground.

The different terms and concepts used to capture the new theories of border-crossing memory often depend on which challenge their progenitors regard as most pressing—and I will not attempt to review them all here. To note just one example, Erll uses the concept of the “transcultural” in order to move away from the idea of “tying culture—and by extension cultural memory—to clear-cut territories and social formations” (2011: 6). Barbara Törnquist-Plewa distinguishes between transnational memories as those shared across borders, while transcultural memories are those hybrid memories that not only cross borders but also enable “the imagining of new communities and new types of belonging” (2018: 302). In this volume, we define “transnational memory” as practices or narratives of remembrance that extend across or beyond borders, are shaped by agents located at various levels of analysis, or are produced in global or supranational forums. We use the term “transnational,” not to discount the national or other levels of analysis but to stress the tensions and potentials for productivity between them. Thus, consistent with Törnquist-Plewa’s usage, the term “transnational memory” does not necessitate a particular result in terms of identity-building. Transnational memory should also not be misconceived as having an automatically “progressive” effect on reconciliation, democratization, or the possibility of confronting the past “honestly,” though much empirical research does demonstrate such an effect. However, there is also evidence that transnational remembrance can have detrimental impacts on local memory politics, for example by superimposing narratives that resonate with touristic demand but not with local processes of reckoning (Björkdahl and Kappler 2019; see also Glucksam in this volume). What we do claim in this volume is that transnational processes of remembering have recognizable outcomes in the sense of “transnational spaces of memory.” The concept of transnational memory addresses head on the most serious limitation of earlier work in memory studies: its confinement to the nation-state as the most important structure determining memory politics (Feindt et al. 2014: 34). This kind of approach addresses the shortcomings of theories of memory in which commemoration is often studied in static terms, revolving around manifestations of material culture and narratives abstracted from an explanation of the origins of remembrance and potential challenges to its dominant forms. In sum, recent moves to “transnationalize” memory studies have not only opened up the field to novel research agendas but also called into question existing conceptual limitations. As Aline Sierp and I have argued elsewhere, it is important not to let our habit of studying the *national* “structure our interpretation of *transnational* memory politics” (Sierp and Wüstenberg 2015a: 322, emphasis in original).

In addition to rethinking central ordering concepts in the field and challenging the primacy of the nation in many explanations of remembrance, the transnational turn in memory studies is also about recognizing that we are

living in an era increasingly shaped by globalization. While transnational politics are not completely new or unprecedented, more and different kinds of transnational memory-making are happening today than a few decades ago. The revolution in communication, digitalization, the easing of global travel, and increased mobility of people, narratives, norms, and cultural products have changed the quality and quantity of transnational remembrance. Consequently, there is no singular or straightforward way of conceptualizing the transnational in relation to memory. In fact, David Inglis lists seven different ways in which recent scholarship has addressed this link (2016: 144). Rather than privileging one of these approaches, I argue that a focus on agency can provide a useful handle on how memory is made transnational, how transnational remembrance processes are transformed (or reproduced), and how transnational memory spaces are created (or not).

Notions of place, sites, and space all play an important role in memory studies—and they remain so with the transnational turn. Remembrance is inextricably linked to concrete locations—whether real or imagined. As Julia Creet writes,

The link between memory and place has historically attended the study of memory in every sense: in its contents (our attachment to memories of home); in its practices (place as an aid to rote memorization); in its externalizations (monuments and museums); in its linguistic expressions (“I can’t quite place you”); and in its psychological and physiological theorizations (the conscious and unconscious brain as the loci of memory, firing across well- or little-used synaptic gaps). (2011: 3)

Certainly, work in the tradition of *lieux de mémoire* reinforced this link between memory and place, despite the fact that Pierre Nora’s original concept did not focus only on physical memorial sites. Even more recent scholarship emphasizing mobility, migration, and the transnational has stressed that movement across borders does not undo this connection between memory and place (Radstone 2011). It is clear, however, that when we study transnational processes, the notion of place or space becomes more difficult to pin down. What does it mean to speak about the creation of transnational spaces of commemoration? I argue elsewhere that, whether a site of memory is understood (and by whom it is understood) to be “locally authentic” or “transnational” in character (or note), either understanding must be evoked through agency—memory work—that stabilizes this particular reading (Wüstenberg 2019). In other words, a site’s meaning and its linkage to different scales of organization must be actively created or maintained (and it can be subject to challenge).

Sarah Mahler and Patricia Pessar define transnational social spaces as “spaces that are anchored in but extend beyond the borders of any one nation-state”

(2001: 441). In this book, we similarly conceive of transnational memory spaces as instances or processes of remembrance that are anchored—through agency—in concrete locations (though sometimes these exist in an imaginary rather than material sense), but that extend beyond national borders. Such places link to locations on the other side of or transcending borders, so that the memory of/at these places does not make sense without that linkage. *Together, the practices and relevant places form transnational mnemonic spaces that are inherently relational in nature.* Such spaces may evoke memories or experiences of transnational action or meaning, of transnational norms, of mobility and movement, of longing for places “elsewhere,” and more. In other cases, transnational memory spaces may be outcomes of the impossibility or inadequacy of (safely) remembering locally, as in the case in numerous examples discussed in this book. These spaces are created through concrete practices and action and in the context of dynamic structures. In other words, transnational mnemonic spaces are the outcome of mnemonic agency, operating within structural constraints. Each of the contributions to this volume thus examines *agents, structures, practices, and outcomes* in terms of transnational memory spaces. Importantly, the memory-making that is analyzed here through this framework is potentially highly political and consequential. The agents invest labor, expertise, strategy, and emotions in the construction of these spaces because it allows them to pursue concrete goals. While of course there are instances of transnational remembering that are not the result of strategic action, all the cases in this volume follow this pattern.

In sum, moving beyond the first two phases of memory studies has allowed for an epistemological shift—away from a kind of “container thinking” that privileges structures as a basis for explaining social and political processes. However, as I discuss in the next section, when we think through the notion of agency in memory politics, the concept of structure inevitably moves back into the equation. To understand the character and influence of agency in memory requires examining its relationship to a variety of structures—from narrative “blueprints” to media systems, normative regimes, standards of the global memorialization and tourism sectors, fields of organized struggle, and broader political opportunity structures—to name just a few. The question, then, is not one of getting rid of structure altogether but how to understand it in a *relational sense*, as shaped by agency and as shaping agency in turn.

## **Agency in Transnational Memory Politics**

Memory studies until recently have not developed a comprehensive account of the role of agents in commemorative processes. This cannot be attributed to a lack of empirical evidence concerning memory actors. There have been

countless studies in which the role of a variety of actors—historians, politicians, artists, educators, civic activists, entrepreneurs, state bureaucrats and so forth—are analyzed in specific cases. However, most of these studies concentrate on the case(s) at hand without drawing out implications for agency in memory politics writ large. More theoretical writings on memory have likewise mostly confined themselves to stating the centrality of actors, without theorizing agency as such: their power and efficacy to bring about change and their position in a constellation of other actors and within structural contexts. For example, Jan-Werner Müller points out that remembrance is always a product of ongoing intellectual and political negotiations between the social “carriers of memory” (Müller 2002). Michael Kohlstruck similarly argues that in order to become “memory,” history must be interpreted and represented by concrete actors (2004: 176). The term “carrier” is somewhat of a misnomer as these actors are not merely passive transmitters of history; rather, they reshape images of the past in the course of struggling for their acceptance. “Remembering . . . is a form of action,” as Müller puts it (2002: 30). Alon Confino has similarly proposed “writing the history of memory’s construction as comingling with that of memory’s contestation” (1997: 1398). But how do we actually go about systematically studying the construction and contestation of memory by a variety of agents, across various times, geographic spaces, and levels of analysis? How can we compare different instances of transnational memory-making and its outcomes?

The most sophisticated effort at developing a comparative, actor-centered account of memory politics is Michael Bernhard and Jan Kubik’s *Twenty Years after Communism*, which presents a typology of memory actors in postcommunist states, as well as concomitant memory regimes (i.e., structures of commemoration). To my knowledge, the volume was the first attempt to provide generalizations about mnemonic actors’ motivations, goals, and outcomes, and it served as an important model for our own volume as we debated a joint analytical framework to study mnemonic agency in a comparative manner. As it pertains to the study of *transnational mnemonic agency*, however, Kubik and Bernhard’s framework requires further development. First, because the volume is focused on the comparison of national case studies, the concepts put forward (understandably) rely heavily on their “national container.” But how do competitors in memory politics determine their claims to legitimacy, their audiences and rivals, and, for that matter, the pasts that they reference when their practices are not bounded by the nation-state? What are the structures that shape how actors operate in transnational realms? Second, Kubik and Bernhard advocate an unapologetically instrumentalist approach. However, in this book, we contend that politics is not always about manipulation and that memory agency is not exclusively aimed at strategies “to make others remember in certain, specific ways” (Kubik and Bernhard 2014: 7). How do



we conceive of the building of transnational memory networks, for example? This is an activity that is political in the sense of having implications for the exercise of power but is not narrowly focused on the manipulation of narratives about the past. Third, Kubik and Bernhard's account is mostly unidirectional. The authors argue that the cultural choices of mnemonic actors, as well as the cultural and structural constraints within which they must operate, determine the type of memory regime that develops in a given country. However, how do mnemonic regimes in turn influence the actions of memory actors? Furthermore, what are the mnemonic structures at the transnational level? These theoretical concerns are not new, of course: they amount to the sticky "problem of structure and agency," which political and social theorists have long debated.

### **The Structure-Agency Dilemma in Memory Politics**

To put it simply, the dilemma of structure and agency is that of how to relate different units of analysis to each other and what to regard as having primary explanatory power. In the field of international relations, the problem was raised in connection with disagreements about whether individual actors (usually states) or the inter-state system best explain outcomes in international affairs. Applying these concepts to memory studies requires significant adaptation because it is not clear how to define the different types of structures in which memory agents operate. Though the framework for this volume focuses on agency, it is necessary to consider the relevant—but highly variegated—structures in order to examine the relationship between them and agents. The way forward, following Norbert Elias's process-sociological approach, is not to begin either with individual agents or with structures but with "figurations" that are just as real as individual actors (Morrow 2009). Following Elias's groundwork, theorists such as Bourdieu and Giddens have argued that the goal is not to identify whether agents or structures are more influential but rather to understand "recurrent social practices and their transformations . . . , how actors are at the same time the creators of social systems yet created by them" (Scholte 1993: 127; see also Bourdieu 1977; Giddens 1984). Without delving deeper into this debate, it is crucial to identify ways of understanding the mutual constitution of the agency of individuals, groups, and organizations engaged in making, (re)producing, and dismantling narratives about the past and the mnemonic regimes and structures that both result from and shape these actions. This book shows that the tension between structure and agency is productive of new memory spaces which result from dynamic practices that deserve to be studied as such. The authors of this volume closely examine the evolution of

and power dynamics underpinning *the practice of interaction, or the relationships, between agents and structures.*

I therefore advocate beginning our inquiry into transnational memory politics with a focus on agency and practice. A focus on agency does not mean reverting to the methodological individualism of the behavioral era (when the study of “political culture” first became popular). In many ways, memory studies of the modern era can be seen as a reaction to attitudinal and individual studies of culture. Students of memory often endorsed a basically structural approach that was akin to Clifford Geertz’s notion of culture as a system of meaning within which political action must be understood. Geertz argued that “man is an animal suspended in the webs of significance he himself has spun. I take culture to be those webs” (1973: 5; see also Geertz 1999). The implication of this view of culture as structure is that different social groups have unique cultures (and memories) that are distinct and comparatively stable (and possibly not very interactive). This understanding of culture insists on coherence—on a system of meanings in which individuals maneuver (Wedeen 2002). A similar approach has long been dominant in social scientific research on memory. Both Maurice Halbwachs and Pierre Nora argued that there are as many memories as groups in society, that the individual can understand her past only as a group member, and that memory only makes sense in the larger system of group meaning (Halbwachs 1992; Nora and Kritzman 1996b; Nora 1996; see also the preface to the English-language edition in Nora and Kritzman 1996a and Winter and Sivan’s critique of structural approaches to memory in sociology in Winter and Sivan 1999). Eviatar Zerubavel adopts an even more explicitly structural model. He writes, “I believe that the social meaning of past events is essentially a function of the way they are structurally positioned in our minds vis-à-vis other events. I am therefore ultimately interested in examining the *structure* of social memory” (Zerubavel 2003: 7, emphasis in original). Consequently, it makes sense that during the first phases of memory studies, the structures that framed remembrance activity were unproblematically assumed to be the state, the local community, and the national culture—Erl’s “clear-cut territories and social formations.”

While it is important to understand the social context through which individuals comprehend their world and which helps them make sense of their past, a focus on coherence would entail serious limitations for this volume: we are interested in highly dynamic and contested memory processes and thus need an approach that can help us understand this dynamism. Moreover, an assumption of coherence ignores the possibility of resistance to or alternative forms of practice. Such an approach has trouble explaining how and why memory changes (or not).

The “practice” perspective on culture offers a way to deal with the structure-agency dilemma in the realm of memory politics, without privileging

one explanatory variable. This approach insists that “culture is a sphere of practical activity shot through by willful action, power relations, struggle, contradictions, and change” (Sewell 1999: 44). William Sewell argues that while human action is always structured by social and institutional context and power relations, culture does not exist apart from a succession of practices that reproduce or transform that structure. In other words, culture does indeed display a certain coherence, but it is constantly subject to resistance, and its boundaries do not neatly correspond with those of social groups. Sewell (1999) contends further that, though no single actor alone controls culture, cultural practice clusters around powerful institutional “nodes,” especially those with large resource endowments. This is especially relevant for our purposes because the actors seeking to influence (transnational) memory must take into account existing “cultural maps” and directly address existing institutions (at multiple scales) if they want to be successful. Memory officials, activists, entrepreneurs, and others interact with the position of their interlocutors in mind, as well as prevailing cultural norms and historical contexts. Sewell writes that “even when they attempt to overcome or undermine each other, they are mutually shaped by their dialectical dance. Struggle and resistance, far from demonstrating that cultures lack coherence, may paradoxically have the effect of simplifying and clarifying the cultural field” (1999: 57). Thus, Noga Glucksam’s critical account in this volume of the operation of human rights norms in the Liberian context suggests that it is precisely the interaction between local and transnational memory agents and the powerful structure of the human rights regime that produces a coherence of commemorative testimonies that are not “natural” but the result of transnational agency.

Social movement scholars have recently taken up this understanding of the interplay between actors and institutions and their roles of mutually shaping one another. Indeed, Ann Swidler argues that many movements are explicitly focused on effecting “cultural recordings” in the absence of more conventional tools of power (2000: 277). As we can see in multiple examples in this book, particularly agents that are conventionally thought of as “powerless” have been highly effective in tapping into transnational narratives and networks to push for changes in local or national memory politics. This is a dynamic identified by international relations scholars Margaret Keck and Katherine Sikkink (1998) in what they term the “boomerang effect,” through which local activists ally with transnational networks in order to exert pressure on domestic politics because they cannot achieve their objectives through domestic action alone. This dynamic is most clearly demonstrated by Mary McCarthy’s chapter on transnational memory activism on sexual slavery in Asia and Andrea Hepworth’s on Spanish and Argentinian efforts to address the impunity after the end of dictatorships.

Drawing on Sewell's conceptualization, Sharon Hays provides a helpful distinction for our purposes: one notion of agency relies strongly on the idea of everyday practice and amounts to what Hays calls "structurally reproductive agency" (1994: 63). It is an approach that assumes the durability and coherence of structure while acknowledging the role played by humans in the process of reproduction. When thinking about the notions of agency implicitly present in the literature on memory, one might cite as examples scholarship that foregrounds tradition and heritage as relatively immutable cultural regimes that are lived and reworked through everyday practices of commemoration.

By contrast, a second understanding of agency hones in on agents' power to alter cultural systems. Hays calls this "structurally transformative agency" and argues that it is crucial to examine under which historical circumstances such agency becomes possible (1994: 64). Given that many of us are interested precisely in those moments when previously underrepresented versions of the past achieve prominence, this concept of agency is just as important. Whether memory is regarded primarily as exhibiting longevity or being subject to challenge, what is crucial is to develop systematic avenues for investigating memory's structural aspects, the agents that maintain or challenge them, and the practices by which they are linked. Relational sociology holds much promise in this respect. Founded on the writings of Elias, Bourdieu, and others, this approach does not privilege either agents or structures but rather argues that it is the relationships, or the networks, between actors that make up social life. Unlike more classical social network analysis, relational sociology since the "cultural turn" has explicitly sought to think through culture in terms of practice (Breiger 2010; Bourdieu 1977).

For Ann Mische, "relational thinking is a way to overcome stale antinomies between structure and agency through a focus on the dynamics of social interactions in different kinds of social settings" (2011: 80). She argues that networks can be regarded as "cultural forms" where "the meaning of one concept can be deciphered only in terms of its 'place' in relation to the other concepts in its web. . . . Network techniques help to show the robust and interlocking nature of cultural structures, as well as the social locations and historical periods in which these can be challenged and reformulated." This approach seems to be compatible with the notion of "structurally reproductive agency," as it lays emphasis on relatively durable networks of meaning within which (memory) cultures must make sense to agents. In an alternative conceptualization, Mische sees networks themselves as composed of cultural processes of communicative interaction. This approach allows us to examine "how actors actively construct relations of solidarity or alliance through the communicative activation (or deactivation) of network ties (Mische 2011: 88). This approach, then, appears especially fruitful when we seek to understand

types and practices of “structurally transformative agency.” More generally, relational sociology, according to Sophie Mützel, operates at the “meso-level,” trying to maintain a clear link between theory and empirical research (Mützel and Fuhse 2010; see also Tilly 2001). An approach that highlights agency and practice—and that can also account for the maintenance and transformation of structure—is therefore best suited for this volume. We hope to contribute to a better understanding of the dynamics of memory politics at various scales and the resultant transnational memorial spaces.

The chapters in this book, while following the distinct logics of their research questions and empirical findings, were all guided by common questions that emerge from this theoretical foundation and were developed in a collaborative process. They were:

- Who are the agents that participate in transnational memory processes?
- What kinds of practices do these agents use?
- What were the structures that shaped, delimited, or enabled agency in these cases?
- What were the outcomes in terms of the creation of transnational memory spaces and otherwise?

## **Organization of the Volume**

Central to the existing work on transnational memory is the ordering concept of scale. As Chiara de Cesari and Ann Rigney argue, “transnationalism allows us to grasp the multi-scalarity of socio-cultural processes and the fundamental ‘mutual construction of the local, national and global’ (Glick and Schiller 2012, 23)” (de Cesari and Rigney 2014, 3). In other words, the assumption that mnemonic action is potentially constituted simultaneously at various levels of analysis in the global system allows us to investigate how and where memory “happens” rather than taking for granted that memory is located in or shifted from one place to another without being altered in the process. However, the idea of the mutual construction of memory at various scales can, as Rosanne Kennedy and Maria Nugent have noted, also suggest “a kind of equality—a certain give and take, or influence, that runs in both directions” (2016: 64)—and thus lead to a neglect of power imbalances in transnational memory politics. What becomes abundantly clear with the chapters in this volume, however, is that those agents who come to shape transnational memory spaces are characterized by differential resources, media access, institutional clout, reputational power, and more. As a result, transnational memory practice is not often one of equal give-and-take, and the relevant fault lines are not only those of scale. While many of the cases in this book

show multiple simultaneous dynamics and relevant scales, more often than not the practices under scrutiny exhibit a dominant power dynamic. For this reason, we have organized the case studies according to their *dominant logics*, that is, we distinguish between top-down, bottom-up, and horizontal practices of mnemonic space-making in order to emphasize the power dynamics involved and to stress the stakes invested in transnational memory politics. We, as editors, settled on this organizational logic, knowing full well that in every contribution there may also be dynamics that push in other, sometimes countervailing directions.

The next chapter in this foundational section, Zoltan Dujisin's "A Field-Theoretical Approach to Collective Memory," provides an in-depth consideration of transnational memory spaces and practices exemplified in this book through a relational and sociological lens. Building on Pierre Bourdieu's field theory, Dujisin argues that transnational memory politics are best understood as a regime made up of overlapping and intertwined fields of struggle. He highlights the critical process of transforming fluid modes of remembering into seemingly "hard" identities that suggest homogeneity and sameness over time. Especially powerful identity and memory makers, according to Dujisin, are those actors that inhabit hybrid spaces in which they are able to connect a variety of relational fields.

The contributions in part II of this volume are case studies of bottom-up agency. The chapters discuss agents and practices that link local memory action or conventionally weaker actors to transnational norms or institutions, or build transnational linkages in order to circumvent barriers to remembrance locally or nationally. In her contribution "Transnational Memories and the Practices of Global Justice in the Ayotzinapa Case," Silvana Mandolessi investigates the case of the highly publicized disappearance in 2014 of forty-three students in Mexico. At the outset, she makes the argument that transnational memory politics should be analyzed as part of the larger project of global justice. Mandolessi then discusses three concrete initiatives through which a variety of agents—international organizations, research centers, activists, and artists—seek to dismantle the system of impunity in Mexico. Thus, local activists connect "from the bottom up" with transnational actors and networks and tap into the global discourse of human rights and justice in order to influence national memory politics in turn. Orli Fridman and Katarina Ristić's chapter "Online Transnational Memory Activism and Commemoration: The Case of the White Armband Day" also examines a case in which those who wanted to remember atrocities committed during the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina were barred from doing so locally. Specifically, they discuss the use of social media to commemorate online and transnationally what could not be remembered onsite. They contend that the online memory activism surrounding #whitearmbandday not only enabled memory but

also allowed a de-ethnicized form of remembrance that challenged the fault lines that were reinforced by the dominant state-sponsored memory politics. In this case, online activism began as a bottom-up dynamic but ended up transforming memory on the ground as well. While the mechanism of local activists teaming up with transnational ones in order to effect change “on the ground” is clearly operative in the Mexican and Bosnian cases, the next two contributions highlight it even more explicitly by drawing on social movement scholarship, especially Keck and Sikkink’s “boomerang effect.” Andrea Hepworth, in “Memory Activism across Borders: The Transformative Influence of the Argentinean Franco Court Case and Activist Protest Movements on Spain’s Recovery of Historical Memory,” offers a comparative analysis of the ways in which memory activists in Argentina and Spain effectively constructed a transnational memory space, particularly through the diffusion of the notion of “desaparecidos.” She focuses in particular on the activities of the Argentinean Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, the Spanish Association for the Recovery of Historical Memory, and activist lawyers, as well as their interlinkage in order to explain how these “memory entrepreneurs” worked—with mixed results—to create transnational remembering as well as to transform national memory politics. Mary M. McCarthy examines the creation of transnational spaces for the remembrance of sexual violence during World War II in Asia. In “The Creation and Utilization of Opportunity Structures for Transnational Activism on World War II Sexual Slavery in Asia,” the author argues that these spaces are the outcome of transnational activism that emerged due to domestic barriers to critical commemoration and—from the 1990s onward—transnational opportunities. She argues that this bottom-up memory activism has been able to disrupt the power of states to determine the character of public memory about the “comfort women.”

Devin Finn’s chapter, “The Political Agency of Victims through Transnational Processes of Forensic Anthropology and Memory Construction in Latin America,” discusses the agency of activists in cooperation with forensic anthropology organizations to understand how the process of searching for and identifying victims of violence impacts the formation of transnational memory spaces. Forensic anthropology organizations collaborate with one another on technical analysis and in efforts to facilitate memory construction and activism in conflict-affected communities, cultivating a transnational network of practice and a space for political demand-making—therefore, Finn’s work showcases both a bottom-up agency of challenging states’ narratives and a horizontal one through networks of expertise and cooperation. Gruiă Bădescu, in “Transnational Place-Making after Political Violence: Agencies and Practices of Site Memorialization in the Latin American Southern Cone,” in a sense straddles the bottom-up and top-down categories. He explores sites of memory in the Southern Cone of Latin America, specifically in Argentina

and Chile, distinguishing between processes of transnational space-making and those of transnational place-making. While the former corresponds to dynamics that we see repeated throughout this volume, the latter denotes sites that engage notions of transnationalism as a mnemonic outcome. The reason Bădescu's contribution inhabits a hybrid position is that he studies both agents that challenge dominant memory politics and norms that shape memorial sites from above.

Due to the fact that scholars of memory are often interested precisely in those contentious moments when dominant mnemonic narratives are shaken up, there may be a tendency to assume that transnational memory tends to benefit progressive or "countermnemonic" actors. Indeed, state actors and elites usually do seek to defend the status quo, and that often means counteracting transnational norms based on human rights and the global "politics of regret" (Olick 2007). However, even when they pursue reproductive rather than transformative strategies, states are powerful transnational memory agents, as are various international organizations and agencies, and elites. Top-down agency, in part III, does not necessarily refer to a directionality across scales but rather to a power differential: a dynamic of imposition of particular mnemonic norms or resources from a dominant position. Noga Glucksam's chapter "My Grief, Our Grievance: Universal Human Rights and Memory Standardization in Liberia's Truth Commission" analyzes the hearings of the Liberia Truth and Reconciliation Commission, showing how individual witnesses were gradually led to adapt their testimony to universal human rights discourses. A forum that might have functioned as a place to empower the agency of victims instead became a venue of top-down mnemonic standardization. A similar dynamic is at play in "Transitional Justice in Public: Communicating Transnational Memories of Mass Violence" by Courtney E. Cole, who studies the discourse and documentation of postconflict transitional justice processes in post-World War II Germany, in Liberia, and in Sierra Leone. She argues that transitional justice institutions function as instruments to create both local and transnational public memory. Their engagement with everyday and "grassroots" recollections helps transform these from individual stories into official memory narratives that are shaped—as Glucksam also notes—by a globalized memory culture and the universal human rights regime. Taking a different vantage point, Amy Sodaro assesses the process of creating the 9/11 Memorial and Museum in New York City. In "Transnational Memory Movements in the 9/11 Museum," she provides a discussion of the museum's mission in the broader context of the "memorial museum" as a cosmopolitan framework for the work of memory. Despite the availability of this persuasive—and arguably more critical—transnational approach to commemoration, Sodaro argues that, ultimately, the national narrative has been powerfully imposed through a top-down mechanism.



Part IV collects case studies in which agency operates horizontally, that is, where no dominant power dynamic is evident (though of course power is not absent by any means). Till Hilmar's chapter "Links to the Past, Bridges for the Present? Recognition among Memory Organizations in a European Network" most squarely fits into this category, as he employs social network analysis to study connections among memory organizations in Europe. He argues that while this network is genuinely transnational, it also exhibits notable gaps in recognition, with groups devoted to the commemoration of Nazism less connected to those remembering Communism. Hilmar draws on analysis of hyperlinks between the organizations, as well as a survey. Thus, here we cannot point to a dynamic of imposition or challenge of memory narratives, but the power dynamics are present in Hilmar's identification of powerful nodes and structural "holes" within the transnational network. Mihaela Precup and Dragoș Manea in "Life Was a Precarious Dance': Graphic Narration and the Construction of a Transcultural Memory Space in the PositiveNegatives Project," present another case of horizontal memory agency: that of the nonprofit project PositiveNegatives, which is supported by a variety of human rights and media organizations and which, the authors argue, constructs a transcultural forum for commemoration and testimony. The project transmits the testimonies of refugees into graphic narration and makes them accessible online and through educational material. Here, the objective is not to challenge a national discourse (as in bottom-up initiatives) or to adapt individual commemoration to universal discourses (as in top-down dynamics) but to create a shared mnemonic space. Taking an altogether different approach, Balázs Majtényi and György Majtényi argue that local places of memory link dispersed Roma communities and that they together form the foundation of "A Transnational Nation: Roma National Identity in the Making." The authors provide a historical account of the process of nation-building and show the role of commemoration in creating a common political language for the purpose of expressing joint demands. Again, despite the absence of top-down/bottom-up dynamics, Majtényi and Majtényi demonstrate the high political stakes of transnational memory politics. Ricardo A. Velasco Trujillo's study "Border-Crossing Cultural Initiatives of Memory and Reconciliation across the Colombia-Panama Border" presents three memory projects in the border region between Panama and Columbia that are entangled in the complex assemblage of initiatives that have emerged as a result of Colombia's national reconciliation process. He argues that this horizontal memory agency has created a transnational memory space that straddles a range of sociocultural spheres, including forcibly displaced communities in rural areas at the limits of national sovereignty. Velasco Trujillo highlights the relevance of cross-border commemoration for communities that have migrated under different conditions as a result of the dynamics of the conflict.

Aline Sierp concludes the volume by distilling the types of agents, structures, practices, and mechanisms that we the contributors to this volume have brought together into one analytical framework. Cutting across our organizational logic of bottom-up, top-down, and horizontal memory agency, she highlights not only the theoretical innovations made by the authors but also the empirical contributions to understanding the creation of transnational memory space. Sierp also offers a summary table of common agents, structures, and practices that should serve as a useful tool for future research in the field of transnational memory politics.

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