

Book Reviews

On media memory. Collective memory in a new media age

Oren Meyers, Motti Neiger, Eyal Zandberg, Andrew Hoskins, & John Sutton (Eds.)

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Over the last years, memory studies have developed as an interdisciplinary field. Debates identify processes of collective memories, for example, vis-à-vis cultural, political, historical, and—in the broadest sense—“mediated” forms. Reviewing these debates reveals two “paradigms” that seem to signify the politics of memory formation: the role of memory in the context of national collective experience and the memory of collective trauma (war, conflict, and genocide).

It is quite surprising that although media have a crucial role in these interdisciplinary memory studies, collective memory research is still a somewhat peripheral field in media and journalism studies. However, in the context of the new relevance of social “networked” communication and the need for a deeper understanding of collective ontological frameworks of, in particular, transnational public discourse structures, a debate of processes of remembering provides important insight into the epistemological formations of networked public life. These constructions of collective memory as a social practice *within* societies as the communicative sharing and negotiation of memory politics have

been in particular relevant for the formation and maintenance of national community. Whereas in the times of national “mass” media, the politics of memory served as a powerful ritual and collective negotiation, networked communication transforms the epistemological space of “mediated” forms of memory as a crucial new public ritual in the *transnational* public arena, unsettling the “linear” communicative space of mediation and constituting multiperspective forms. It seems that the concept of mediation is deeply challenged by new transnational discursive rituals in the context of conflicts and crises—often disputing mediated images through subjective life-world narratives. In the paradigm of a transnational networked public sphere, previous conceptions of social or collective memory as a distinct form of national public life are transformed into discursive terrains of supra- and subnational public communication, sometimes resurfacing in national public debates and—in a dialectical “resonance”—affecting notions of national legitimacy.

The book *On Media Memory. Collective Memory in a New Media Age* attempts to address these much needed conceptual pathways of collective memory formations in a transnational context. The book brings together 20 international key scholars who discuss new areas of collective “mediated” memory studies in contexts of journalism, public communication, activism, popular culture, and new media spheres.

The five chapters cover very distinct thematic areas: The book opens with a debate of media memory in contexts of methodologies—a much needed debate. For example, Barbie Zelizer's article identifies collective memory in contexts of journalism studies. Zelizer identifies the dialectic of local "lived" experience and global news flows which, as she argues, "cannibalizes" local-mediated memories. Bourdon argues to further develop the biographical "life-story" approach to "understand the relation between media consumption and the elusive notion of the everyday" (p. 70). Other chapters focus on the role of collective memory and the politics of "witnessing" and "journalism practice." The fifth chapter identifies the practice of

collective memory in new media spheres where, as Pinchewski points out that remembering through mediated, that is, online archived resources creates new forms of "participatory social practice." A memory practice which in contexts of "personal memorabilia now serve, perhaps more than any time before, as basis for . . . ephemeral social ties, as numerous users of Facebook, MySpace and YouTube experience every day" (p. 256).

This book serves as an excellent introduction to the field. However, it also lays out a much-needed research agenda of collective memory studies in new important areas of mediated communication.

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