



Remembering Activism Conference: Critical Perspectives on the Memory-Activism Nexus

Utrecht 29 March – 31 March 2023

Sweelinckzaal, Drift 21, Room 0.05, Utrecht

Agenda

What happens to social movements when their momentum ebbs away, the streets are emptied and campaigning ceases? They become memory. At the core of the Remembering Activism research project at Utrecht University is the claim that protests have afterlives in the stories that are later told about them with the help of texts, images, objects, places; and that the cultural memory of earlier activism informs later movements by shaping actions and expectations, though not necessarily in a linear way. Underlying the study of these dynamics is the fundamental question: how are protest repertoires, ideals, and mobilizing affects transmitted across movements and across generations with the help of media?

Four years ago we set out to study this question and, in focusing on the remembrance of active citizenship and civic resistance, tried to move memory studies away from its traditional interest in war and trauma. A guiding concept in our work has been the idea of a ‘memory-activism nexus’ understood in terms of a feedback loop between the memory of activism, memory in activism, and memory activism (Rigney 2018; see also Daphi and Zamponi 2019). Along the route, we have organized various events on specific subthemes: on images as carriers of protest memory; on the role of words in framing narratives of protest; on archiving as an activist mnemonic practice; on life writing as a medium of activist memory; for details see www.rememberingactivism.eu.

How is activism remembered and how do stories about civil resistance and activist campaigns make a difference to later movements? In the final conference, we want to revisit these core questions, take stock of the answers so far, and above all, enrich the discussion of the memory-activism nexus by bringing in new voices from across a range of disciplines and regions.

Among the issues we will be addressing:

- Are certain cultural forms and mnemonic practices especially important in the remembrance of civil resistance and in the transmission of hope and defiance?
- How are the dynamics of activist memory influenced by changing media ecologies, specifically digital ones?
- How is the memory of activism mobilized in new protest waves?
- How does 'memory activism' (movements about memory; Gutman and Wüstenberg 2023) relate to activism directed towards other causes?
- When does activist memory become commodification and mere spectacle? And in whose interest?
- What forms of forgetting operate in activist memory, and (a piece missing here? Or 'and' as transition to the final question?)
- Could it be that hope thrives on forgetting the failures of the past rather than on remembering its energies?

Organisation: Ann Rigney, Lisa van Straten

Information : React@uu.nl

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Programme

Wednesday 29 March

13.30-14.00: coffee and registration

14.00-14.15: **Welcome and introduction to the ReAct project** (Ann Rigney)

14.15- 16.00: **Panel 1: Opening perspectives** (chair: Astrid Erll)

Priska Daphi (Bielefeld), Mnemonic Adoption and Rejection: How Social Movements Remember and Forget Previous Mobilizations

Kylie Message-Jones (Canberra), Unfinished Business: Heritagization and the Aboriginal Tent Embassy Protest

Jenny Wüstenberg (Nottingham Trent), Grassroots Activism to Remember Family Separation Policies and Abusive Institutions

16.00-16.15: Break

16.15-17.45: **Panel 2: Memory in Activism** (chair: Reindert Dhont)

Manuela Badilla (Valparaíso), The Chilean Counter-monument Wave and its Temporal Resonances: Reimagining the Nation in Constituent times

Alexander Ulrich Thygesen (Aarhus), Contentious Activist Monumentalisation: The Emergence of the Matapacos Statue During the Social Outbreak in Chile

Nafiseh Mousavi (Växjö), #Against_forgetting: Activation and Contestation of Resistance-memories in *woman, life, freedom*

17.45-18.30: Drinks

Thursday 30 March

9.00-9.30: Registration

9.30-11.00: **Panel 3: Memory in Activism** (chair: Katharyne Mitchell)

Orli Fridman (Belgrade), In Search of Hope in Times of Political Crisis and Loss: The Emergence of a 'Memory of Activism' among the 2nd Generation of Memory Activists in Serbia

Eray Çaylı (Hamburg), The (Archi)tectonics of Antiracist Activism in Istanbul: Surviving Violence, Preparing for Disasters

Ann Rigney (Utrecht), Anticipatory Memory in the Self-Archiving of Anti-Austerity Movements

11.00-11.15: Break

11.15-12.45: **Panel 4: Digital Ecologies and the Memory-Activism Nexus** (chair: José van Dijck)

Samuel Merrill (Umeå), Remembering Like a State? Activist Traces, Surveillance Databases and Nefarious Mediated Prospective Memory

Rik Smit (Groningen), What the Platformization of Memory Means for Activism

Thomas Smits (Antwerp), Space and Place in Online Visual Memory: The Tank Man in Hong Kong, 2013–2020

12.45-13.45: Lunch (buffet served at Drift 21)

13.45- 15.00: **Panel 5: The Memory of Activism - Gender** (chair: Peyman Amiri)

Lucie Drechselová (EHESS, Paris), Women Activists in Turkey: Life Writing Beyond the Tropes of Victimhood, Heroism, and Empowerment

Dina Heshmat (Cairo/IAS, Nantes), Retrieving the Voices of Women Activists in Egypt 1919: Fikriyya Husni, Amina Thabit and Aziza Fawzi's Unpublished Letters

15.00 – 15.15: Break

15.15-16.30: **Panel 6: The Memory of Activism - Critical Engagements** (chair: Chiara de Cesari)

Ahmed Diaa Dardir (Cairo), After the Barricades, Beyond Paris: Recovering the Memory of the Non-European Other in the Afterlives of 1968 and the Commune

Gal Kirn (Ljubljana), Dialectics of Partisan Resistance and Memory: The Case of Women Protests in WW2 Yugoslavia

16.30: Close

Friday 31 March

9.00- 10.15: **Panel 7: The Memory of Activism - Performance** (chair: Clara Vlessing)

Daniele Salerno (Utrecht), Walks, Marches, Parades: Mobilising Memories in LGBT+ Activism

Judith Naeff (Leiden), The Queer Joy of Historical Drag: Re-enacting Revolutionary Pasts in Lebanon

10.15-10.30: Break

10.30- 12.00: **Panel 8: The Memory of Activism: Counter-currents** (chair: Marco de Waard)

Tashina Blom (Utrecht), My Body My Choice: The Appropriation of Cultural Memory in Anti-vaccine Movements

Duygu Erbil (Utrecht), A “Commodified” Revolutionary in the Circuit of Cultural Memory

Sophie van den Elzen (Utrecht), Rudi Dutschke Retold: European Liberal Newspapers and the Legacy of 1968

12.00-12.15: Break

12.15-12.45: Final session (chair: Ann Rigney)

Astrid Erll (Frankfurt), Closing Thoughts and Take-Aways
Followed by general discussion.

12.45: Closing

Notes on Speakers (in alphabetical order)

Manuela Badilla received her PhD (2019) and MA (2013) in Sociology from The New School for Social Research. She is currently a Postdoctoral Researcher in the Sociology Department at the University of Valparaíso where she is studying the actions and demands of memory activists who, in the context of social turmoil, have toppled or altered public monuments hoping to transform dominant national narratives and their representations. She is also an adjunct researcher at the Center for Social Conflict and Cohesion Studies. In her dissertation “Mnemonic Playgrounds for Mobilization, A Radical Turn in the Construction of Memory in Chile” (2019), she explores the role of new generations, aesthetic interventions and the urban space in remembering the difficult past. She has published her work in *Sociological Forum* (2019), *Mobilizations* (2019), *Space and Culture* (2020) and *Memory Studies* (2020, 2021).

Tashina Blom is a PhD candidate in the ERC-project *Remembering Activism: The Cultural Memory of Protest in Europe*. Her research investigates how protest slogans with long histories and contemporary afterlives can become a carrier of cultural memory. Specifically, it analyses how those memories can be mobilized for political purposes. Her project considers the importance of memory in activist claim-making through a series of case studies focusing on 19th and 20th Century anarchist and feminist slogans.

Eray Çaylı, PhD (UCL 2015), studies the spatial and visual politics of violence and disasters in ways that speak to the fields of anthropology, geography, architecture, and art. Alongside numerous journal articles on the subject, his major publications include the monographs *Victims of Commemoration: The Architecture and Violence of Confronting the Past in Turkey* and *Climate Aesthetics: Essays on Anthropocene Art and Architecture* (in Turkish), and the anthology *Architectures of Emergency in Turkey: Heritage, Displacement and Catastrophe* which he co-edited. He is Professor of Human Geography at University of Hamburg, and a member of the *Journal of Visual Culture's* editorial collective.

Ahmed Diaa Dardir is the co-founder of the Institute for De-Colonising Theory (IDCtheory). His research deals with questions of power and subjectivity, especially in (anti-)colonial and (counter)revolutionary contexts. He holds a PhD in Middle East Studies from Columbia University. His forthcoming book is tentatively titled *Licentious Topographies: Global Counterrevolution and Bad Subjectivity in Colonial and Postcolonial Egypt*.

Priska Daphi is Professor of Conflict Sociology at Bielefeld University, Germany, and Editor-in-Chief of Social Movement Studies. She is co-founder of the Institute for Protest and Social Movements Studies in Berlin. Her research explores conflicts about globalization, migration and climate change with a particular interest in social movements, civil society, collective memory, identity, transnational activism, and space. She is co-editor of *Social Movements, Cultural Memory and Digital Media: Mobilising Mediated Remembrance* (with Emily Keightley & Samuel Merrill; Palgrave Macmillan 2020); and co-edited a special issue on *Movements and Memories in Mobilization: an International Quarterly* (with Lorenzo Zamponi, 2019). Priska Daphi is author of *Becoming a Movement. Identity, Narrative and Memory in the European Global Justice Movement* (Rowman & Littlefield International, 2017).

Lucie Drechselová is Assistant Professor at the School for Advanced Studies in Social Sciences in Paris (EHESS). Her research is situated at the intersection of political sociology, gender studies and

memory studies. She explores women's political participation, local governance and the memory of social movements with a focus on Turkish and Kurdish studies.

Duygu Erbil is a PhD candidate in Comparative Literature at Utrecht University. Her doctoral research, which is part of the ERC-funded project *Remembering Activism* project, analyses the cultural afterlife of Turkish revolutionary Deniz Gezmiş using a cultural materialist approach. She explores the memory-activism nexus with a specific focus on relational life writing, cultural economy, and the relationship between law and memory.

Astrid Erll is Professor of Anglophone Literatures and Cultures at Goethe-University Frankfurt. In 2011, she founded the Frankfurt Memory Studies Platform, a vibrant forum for memory studies across the disciplines, connecting researchers both in Frankfurt and internationally. Astrid Erll is general editor of the book series *Media and Cultural Memory* (with A. Nünning, De Gruyter, since 2004) and co-editor of *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies* (with A. Nünning, 2010). With Ann Rigney, she published *Mediation, Remediation, and the Dynamics of Cultural Memory* (2009), *Audiovisual Memory and the (Re)Making of Europe* (Image & Narrative, 2017), and *Cultural Memory after the Transnational Turn* (Memory Studies, 2018). She is author of *Memory in Culture* (Palgrave 2011), an introduction to memory studies which is also available in German, Chinese, Spanish, Polish, and Japanese. Recent publications include "The Hidden Power of Implicit Collective Memory" (*Memory, Mind & Media*, 2022) and "Transnational Flashbulb Memories: An Interdisciplinary Research Program" (with W. Hirst, *Narrative Inquiry*, 2023).

Orli Fridman is an associate professor at the Belgrade based Faculty of Media and Communications (FMK), where she heads the Center for Comparative Conflict Studies (CFCCS). She also is the academic director of the School for International Training (SIT) learning center in Serbia. She is the author of *Memory Activism and Digital Practices after Conflict: Unwanted Memories* (Amsterdam University Press, 2022) and numerous peer reviewed articles and book chapters. Her research focuses on critical peace and conflict studies, memory politics and memory activism. Fridman's current research addresses the comparative analysis of alternative and disputed commemorative events in the Western Balkans, Israel-Palestine and beyond.

Dina Heshmat is Associate Professor of Arabic literature at the American University in Cairo and is currently a fellow at the Nantes Institute for Advanced Study (2022-2023). Her research deals with the relationship between urban and historical contexts and literary and cinematic narratives. Her ongoing work focuses of autobiographical narratives by women who were involved in the 1919 anticolonial revolution in Egypt. It is a follow-up project on her book, *Egypt 1919: The Revolution in Literature and Film* (Edinburgh University Press, 2020, translated into Arabic at Dar al-Shuruq, 2021). She is also the author of *Cairo in Modern and Contemporary Egyptian Literature* (Cairo, Supreme Council of Culture, 2007, in Arabic). She has contributed to a variety of publications, including *Arabica*, *Alif*, *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, *Jadaliyya*, *Orient XXI* and *Akhbar al-Adab*.

Gal Kirn is an assistant professor and research associate at the University of Ljubljana, where he leads research project »Protests, artistic practices and culture of memory in the post-Yugoslav context« (J6-3144, ARRS). He has been working for last 10 years in the German academic context (Institute of Cultural Inquiry - ICI Berlin, Humboldt University, TU Dresden, GWZO Leipzig). He is also affiliated to the project at Södertörn University (Sweden) and was a member of the international research group *Partisan Resistances* (University of Grenoble). Kirn's research has focused on the theme of transition in (post)socialist context, in particularly in the fields of art, politics and memory in the period of national liberation struggle and the socialist Yugoslavia. He published two monographs *Partisan*

Ruptures (Pluto Press, 2019) and *Partisan Counter-Archive* (De Gruyter, 2020), and recently co-edited (with Natasha Ginwala and Niloufar Tajeri) a volume *Nights of the Dispossessed. Riots Unbound* (Columbia Press, 2021), and with Marian Burchardt *Beyond Neoliberalism* (Palgrave, 2017).

Samuel Merrill is Associate Professor and Senior Lecturer at Umeå University's Centre for Digital Social Research (DIGSUM) and Department of Sociology. He conducts interdisciplinary research but specializes in cultural geography and digital sociology. His research interests partly center on the interfaces between social movements, cultural memory, and digital media. He has published academic articles on these themes in journals including *Memory Studies* (Richardson-Little et al forthcoming), *Information, Communication and Society* (Merrill & Lindgren 2021) *Social Movement Studies* (Merrill & Lindgren 2020), *Movement Antipode* (Merrill & Pries 2019) and *The Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* (Merrill & Åkerlund 2018). He also co-edited and contributed chapters to *Social Movements, Cultural Memory and Digital Media: Mobilising Mediated Remembrance* within Palgrave Macmillan's Memory Studies Book Series (Merrill et al 2020).

Kylie Message-Jones is Professor of Public Humanities at Australian National University. She researches the relationships between cultural organizations, citizenship, government, and political reform movements. Working with interdisciplinary methodologies drawn from History, Anthropology, Sociology and Cultural and Museum Studies, her work investigates the role that museums and other forms of public culture play as sites of political exchange. Kylie's books include *Collecting Activism, Archiving Occupy Wall Street* (Routledge 2019), *The Disobedient Museum: Writing at the Edge* (Routledge 2018), *Museums and Racism* (Routledge 2018), *Museums and Social Activism: Engaged Protest* (Routledge 2014), *New Museums and the Making of Culture* (Berg 2006), and *Museum Theory: An Expanded Field* (edited, with Andrea Witcomb, Wiley Blackwell 2015, reprinted 2020).

Nafiseh Mousavi holds a PhD in comparative literature and works as a lecturer at Linnaeus University in Växjö, Sweden. She is an affiliated member of the Linnaeus University Center for Intermedial and Multimodal studies where she has also co-founded the memory research cluster. Her research interests include intermediality in intercultural contexts; memory and media; and narratives of migration. She has co-edited *Truth Claims across Media* (Palgrave, forthcoming) and has published on drawn image in documentary; intermediality in comics and social media; and multimodality in migrant communication. She has also collaborated as a writer with documentary film projects *The Art of Living in Danger* (Mina Keshavarz, 2020- on Iranian women's rights activists) and *Night and Fog in Kurdistan* (Shilan Saadi, forthcoming- on Yazidi refugees).

Judith Naeff is University Lecturer in Cultures of the Middle East at Leiden University, the Netherlands, and co-editor of the magazine *ZemZem - tijdschrift voor het Midden-Oosten, Noord-Afrika en islam*. Her current research project explores cultural memories of the Arab left.

Ann Rigney is professor of Comparative Literature at Utrecht University and PI of the Remembering Activism project. She has published widely in the field of narrative, theories of cultural memory, and memory cultures since the early nineteenth century. Her publications include *The Afterlives of Walter Scott: Memory on the Move* (OUP, 2012), *Mediation, Remediation, and the Dynamics of Cultural Memory* (edited with A. Erll; De Gruyter, 2009) and *Transnational Memory: Circulation, Articulation, Scales* (edited with Ch. De Cesari; de Gruyter, 2014).

Daniele Salerno (PhD in Semiotic Studies, 2009) is a researcher at the Institute of Cultural Inquiry at Utrecht University. From 2019 to 2022 was Marie Skłodowska-Curie Global Fellow at Utrecht University for the project "MemoRights - Cultural Memory in LGBT Activism for Rights."

Rik Smit is an assistant professor at the Centre for Media and Journalism Studies at the University of Groningen. He works on the intersections of memory, app, critical data and platform studies, but his interests are too broad for his own good. His work appeared in a number of journals and books, ranging from *New Media & Society* and *Convergence* to *Social Movements, Cultural Memory and Digital Media*. Currently, he supervises two PhD projects: one on the history of the early web in The Netherlands (Nathalie Fridzema) and one on the use of e-government technologies by the Dutch government (Maud Rebergen). He is part of the international editorial board of *Memory, Mind, Media* and the program coordinator of the MA tracks in Media Studies of the UG.

Thomas Smits is a post-doc researcher at the University of Antwerp. A historian with an interest in visual culture and computer-assisted methodologies, he is author of the prize-winning *The European Illustrated Press and the Emergence of a Transnational Visual Culture of the News, 1842–1870* (Routledge, 2020). Between 2019-2021, he worked as a post-doc researcher for the *Remembering Activism: The Cultural Memory of Protest in Europe* (ReAct) project. Recent work has been published in *New Media and Society, Memory Studies, Visual Communication* and *Social Movement Studies*.

Alexander Ulrich Thygesen is currently a PhD candidate at the Department of German and Romance Languages at Aarhus University. His research focuses on the interconnections of memory and activism during the *Estallido Social* mass mobilisation in Chile in 2019/2020 and the subsequent constitutional process that it provoked. In 2021/2022 he spent 5 months as a visiting scholar at the research centre Núcleo Milenio Arte, Performatividad y Activismo (NMAPA) located at the Pontificia Universidad Católica in Santiago, Chile.

Sophie van den Elzen is a post-doctoral researcher in the ERC project *Remembering Activism: The Cultural Memory of Protest in Europe*. Her research project explores how activist memory is shaped and transmitted through language. She studies the discursive repertoire of social movements, particularly as it lives in newspapers and periodicals. In 2021, she defended her PhD dissertation on the cultural memory of slavery and abolition in the nineteenth-century transnational movement for women's rights.

Jenny Wüstenberg is Professor of History & Memory Studies at Nottingham Trent University and the Director of the Centre for Public History, Heritage and Memory there. She is the co-founder and past Co-President of the Memory Studies Association, as well as Chair of the COST Action on “Slow Memory: Transformative Practices in Times of Uneven and Accelerating Change” (2021-25). She is the author of *Civil Society and Memory in Postwar Germany* (Cambridge UP 2017, in German LIT Verlag/Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung 2020) and the co-editor, most recently, of *Agency in Transnational Memory Politics* (with Aline Sierp, Berghahn 2020), the *Routledge Handbook of Memory Activism* (with Yifat Gutman, 2023), and *De-Commemoration: Making Sense of Contemporary Calls to Remove Statues and Rename Places* (with Sarah Gensburger, in English with Berghahn and in French with Fayard in 2023). Her research interests concern the contentious politics of memory, memory and democracy, slow-moving change such as biodiversity loss, and the memory of family separation policies.

Chairs (in alphabetical order)

Peyman Amiri, PhD candidate in Cultural Analysis, University of Amsterdam

Chiara De Cesari, Professor of Memory and Heritage, University of Amsterdam

Reindert Dhondt, Assistant Professor of Spanish Language and Culture, Utrecht University

José van Dijck, Professor of Media and Digital Society, Utrecht University

Astrid Erll, Professor of Anglophone Literatures and Cultures, Goethe University, Frankfurt

Katharyne Mitchell, Professor of Sociology, University of California, Santa Cruz

Clara Vlessing, PhD candidate ReAct, Utrecht University

Marco de Waard, Associate Professor in Literary Studies and Cultural Analysis, Amsterdam University College

Abstracts

Manuela Badilla Rajevic (Valparaíso): The Chilean Counter-monument Wave and its Temporal Resonances: Reimagining the Nation in Constituent times

On October 18, 2019, a massive social mobilization began in Chile that for several months transformed the country's political life by triggering different social demands and also the questioning, intervention, creation and in some cases destruction of more than 64% of public monuments. These monumental interventions, set in the public space in an accelerated way, raise complex questions regarding the hegemonic, ubiquitous and homogeneous construction of the National event Whose memories are represented in public space? Who has decided and created these representations? These questions are even more urgent considering that Chilean society has engaged in a constitutional process as a result of the demands of the recent social outbreak, a process that implies thinking and assessing the principles behind the very idea of a nation. Based on a three-year qualitative research project that includes 48 interviews with people who participated in the 2019-2020 Chilean protests, and archival work that considers historical documents and press reports of the intervened monuments, this article argues that the wave of counter-monuments created a space of temporal resonances that have the power to bring feelings, images, and events from different temporalities into the mind of those who were participating or following the protests. As such, counter-monuments exposed some of the tensions and omissions of what today constitutes the Nation and mobilized different strands of the difficult national, colonial and patriarchal past. The article concludes with a reflection about the social and political potential of the wave of counter-monuments in creating a particular temporality to imagine an alternative and more plural society.

Orli Fridman (Singinudum, Belgrade), In search for hope in times of political crisis and loss: The emergence of ‘memory of activism’ among the 2nd generation of memory activists in Serbia

It was at the beginning of the War on Ukraine when social media users in the post-Yugoslav space began posting and discussing the resemblance and comparisons they saw between the wars of the break-up of Yugoslavia and the war on Ukraine. Among other themes was also Russia's role, as well as Russian citizens who dared to take a stand against it. Remembering or uncovering the existence of anti-war activism in Serbia during the 1990s, was one thread of the discussion, among others, as images were emerging of anti-war Russian citizens beaten in the street by their police, or en-masse leaving their country. Young people in Serbia and in the Balkans more broadly, most likely have hardly heard of the anti-regime (anti-Milosevic) and even less so, of the anti-war demonstrations and actions, as only three decades later, the legacies of those were either erased or utterly forgotten.

In my presentation I will trace the emergence of and present engagement with the memory of anti-war activism in Serbia. The discussion will scrutinize the mnemonic actions as can be traced on-site and online taken by the 2nd generation of activists from Serbia, as they unearth and disseminate the knowledge about the 1st generation of anti-war activists in their society. In the absence of street signs/street names, monuments, or reference in textbooks to any of these historical actions and figures, they have created their own digital platforms as well as street actions, to critically address these topics. In a current political environment that glorifies war criminals as war heroes in the entire post-Yugoslav region, they search for their own heroes, through their engagement with ‘memory of activism’, in their

pursue of hope, of the ability to continue and engage in memory activism, and in combating a general atmosphere of political defeat.

Tashina Blom (Utrecht), My Body My Choice: The Appropriation of Cultural Memory in Anti-vaccine Movements

The global Covid-19 pandemic has seen the rise of transnationally coordinated protest movements, characterised by nationalist values (Zhou 2021), against local lockdown restrictions and vaccine mandates. In order to politicise the contemporary Covid crisis, groups affiliated with the far right (Meeker 2020) have appropriated historically loaded terms and slogans from progressive social movements such as the slogan ‘my body my choice’, the Black Lives Matter slogan ‘I can’t breathe’, and the term ‘medical apartheid’. When political detractors appropriate elements of the repertoire of contention such as canonical historical protest slogans, cultural memory becomes a battleground for culture wars (Nagle 2017). Through a case study analysis of the protest slogan ‘My body my choice’, this paper traces the slogan’s historical trajectory of usage to analyse how cultural memory is mobilised politically in contemporary anti-vaccine movements. Drawing on insights from both social movement studies and cultural memory studies, the paper seeks to move beyond the dominant approach of analysing protest memories in light of their role in shaping collective identities (Zamponi 2018; Daphi 2017; Hajek 2013) by, instead, asking how protest memories are used politically as a form of claim-making (Alimi 2014) in the advancement of social movement causes as well as in the backlash against those causes.

Eray Çaylı (Hamburg), The (Archi)tectonics of Antiracist Activism in Istanbul: Surviving Violence, Preparing for Disasters

Urban resilience (e.g., disaster preparedness) is often understood as a future-oriented enterprise while debates on activism by survivors of political violence remain largely focused on conspicuously violent events like war and genocide. In this talk, I aim to contribute to the study of both these issues by thinking them together and through one another. Through the case of a racialized neighbourhood in late 2010s' Istanbul, I discuss how survivors of state-sponsored violence remember the violent history they have survived while also responding to the urban resilience imperative in an earthquake hotspot. The built and natural environment, I argue, serves here as a mnemonic medium that interweaves surviving violence and preparing for disaster, directing both these causes politically towards antiracism and materially towards architecture and geology.

Priska Daphi (Bielefeld), Mnemonic adoption and rejection: how social movements remember and forget previous mobilizations

For social movements, memories of past mobilizations represent both an asset and a burden. They can be enabling and empowering, for example by lending legitimacy and weight to current activism. But memories of past mobilizations may also constrain later movements by stigmatizing certain topics or forms of activism as e.g. outdated or dangerous. In this vein, both claims to novelty and continuity have their specific advantages. Movements may hence decide to either associate themselves with or disassociate from previous mobilizations. These processes of mnemonic adoption and rejection represent central points of orientation for movements and are closely interlinked. Accordingly, this paper will analyze them in their simultaneity and interaction. Based on activist interviews, I compare

processes of mnemonic adoption and rejection across different movements in Germany over the last 20 years: the global justice movement (1998-2007), the occupy movement (2012-2015) and the counter-movement against right-wing protests in the context of the ‘long summer of migration’ 2015 (2015-2017). I show how across these different movements similar patterns of mnemonic rejection and adoption emerge, recurrently rejecting certain elements of past progressive mobilizations while adopting others.

Ahmed Diaa Dardir (Cairo), After the Barricades, Beyond Paris: Recovering the Memory of the Non-European Other in the Afterlives of 1968 and the Commune

In March last year, Paris’ socialist mayor Anne Hidalgo decided to officially commemorate the sesquicentennial of the Paris Commune, marking a step towards the restoration of a memory that the French Republic has thus far repressed. It also marks a step towards appropriating the memory of insurrection into official memory. Two months later, Hidalgo endorsed the banning and brutal repression of the demonstrations that came out in support of Palestine, exemplifying how the appropriation of the Commune’s history into French officialdom obfuscates and effectively further represses the insurrectionary memory, significance, and afterlives of what transpired in Paris in the Spring of 1871; this appropriation further enacts an imperial amnesia that represses the place of the other in this rehabilitated and amnesic memory.

In the folds and cracks created by this interplay of memory and forgetfulness, I look for the presence of the non-European (especially but not exclusively the Arab), in these repressed insurrectionary memories.

The Paris Commune and the uprising of 1968 (itself part of the afterlife of the Commune) are sometimes remembered as markers of a distinctive Frenchness, and yet the Other of France has always been central to the conception and afterlives of these events. To recover this memory of the Other, I look at how these events were remembered in their immediate aftermath, both by their veterans and detractors, so that short term memory may counter long term amnesia. I also look at the political and intellectual trajectories of their veterans: those who were exiled with Arabs, those who went on to support Algerian independence and Egyptian anticolonialism, and those who sought refuge and inspiration in Palestinian training camps.

My presentation will thus consist of four snapshots: 1- the discourse surrounding the Paris Commune; 2- the lives of a number of surviving communards (e.g. Louise Michel, Prosper-Olivier-Lissagaray); 3- the discourse surrounding the events of 1968; 4- the lives of a number of 1968ers (most notably Jean-Luc Godard and Jean-Pierre Gorin). The presentation builds on my previous research and up to future projects. More than presenting final “research findings,” I want my presentation to extend an invitation for collaborative research, creative projects, and lines of solidarity.

Lucie Drechselová (EHESS, Paris), Women Activists in Turkey: Life writing beyond the tropes of victimhood, heroism, and empowerment

Women’s activist life writing has been on the rise in Turkey since 2010s. While veteran female activists remain underrepresented in the literary field and their autobiographic production peaks later than that of male activists, women’s life writing speaks strongly to the master narratives of both the political generations of the 1960s and 1970s as well as to the narrative of the post-1980s Turkish feminist movement. This paper first situates women’s memory within the 1960s-1970s activist autobiographies. In doing so it explores what gendered lenses bring to our understanding of the generational memory production as a whole. The paper then focuses in particular on the gendered experiences of violence.

They hold a privileged place because prison writing has enabled the multiplication of women's memory production at the early 2010s and continues to play structuring role within this production. In its close reading of women's activist life stories, the paper aims to go beyond the classical tropes of victimhood, heroism and empowerment which have marked not only the autobiographical production but also major academic works.

In academic research, women's writing about activism and violence has been object of competing interpretations. Are these writings essentially depicting alternative heroes to the male heroes of the socio-political movements? If so, what is their position with regards to the male-dominated hero/martyr trope? Female autobiographers rarely depict themselves as victims even when faced with extraordinary state-inflicted violence. Simultaneously though, their narratives are marked by silences (Abiral speaks about *the continuum of erasure*; 2016, 95). Looking into women's renditions of violent experiences allows to problematise the relationship between the taboos and the trope of female victimhood. Alternatively, some researchers insist on the emancipating elements of women's prison experience placing the main focus on the autobiographical novel by Sevgi Soysal (1976), a cornerstone of women's activist memory. While Soysal's novel is a pioneering story of women's subjectivity and agency during imprisonment, it risks eclipsing the remaining women's autobiographical production. By addressing dominant interpretations, the paper shows how women's life writing resists recurrent tropes.

Duygu Erbil (Utrecht), A “Commodified” Revolutionary in the Circuit of Cultural Memory

What happens when Marxist revolutionaries are remembered through commodities circulating in the capitalist marketplace? Can we still deem it revolutionary memory when cultural remembrance is facilitated by the profit drive in the media industry? Or do we submit to the pure irony of the “commodification” of the afterlives of revolutionaries? This paper poses these questions to the case study of the Turkish revolutionary Deniz Gezmiş, whose execution by hanging in 1972 marked the symbolic end of the 1968-1971 protest cycle in Turkey. Known as “Turkey's Ché Guevara”, Gezmiş has become a political icon whose celebrity status appears to be an ironic “commodification” according to some critics. Indeed, Gezmiş' cultural afterlife had radically been altered by the neoliberal restructuring of Turkey and its effects on the media industry following the 1980 Turkish coup d'état. This paper provides examples to the ways in which the cultural remembrance of Gezmiş was shaped by this historical conjuncture that saw the emergence of media conglomeration and the introduction of commercial TV. However, it does so only to map out the production site of cultural memory.

This paper does not conclude that the production of cultural memory under the conditions of neoliberalism has led to an absolute ‘commodification’ of Gezmiş' afterlife. While we have undoubtedly witnessed a quantitative expansion of the commodification of social life, I argue that cultural memory needs to be understood within the broader ‘cultural circuit’ of representation, identity, production, consumption, and regulation. In looking at this circuit of cultural memory, this paper zooms into the lack of equivalence between the production and consumption of mnemonic representations through Stuart Hall's encoding/decoding model of communication to examine the relative autonomy of cultural memory from economy.

Dina Heshmat (AU, Cairo/Nantes Institute for Advanced Study), Retrieving the Voices of Women Activists in Egypt 1919: Fikriyya Husni, Amina Thabit and Aziza Fawzi's Unpublished Letters

Women were active participants in the anti-colonial revolution of 1919 in Egypt, both as nationalist and feminist militants. Yet their voices are mostly forgotten in the dominant narrative about 1919. This contribution focuses on the figures of Fikriyya Husni, (dates unknown), Amina Thabit (dates unknown), and Aziza Fawzi (dates unknown), all three important figures of the anti-colonial and feminist movement. I analyze a collection of unpublished letters that they sent to their common friend and comrade, well-known activist Huda Sha'rawi (1879-1947). Building on the work of scholars who have argued that traces of autobiography can be found in other genres of writing, I argue that these letters, some of which were written regularly over a period of several years, can be read as autobiographical narratives attempting at writing the self in a hostile context. By reading these epistolary narratives together with occasional literary production these women authored, their multi-layered individual voices emerge, expressing, in addition to strong nationalist and feminist commitment, feelings of anger, fear and loneliness. Contextualized through a systematic reading of the contemporary press, these scattered narratives then fall together as a puzzle to articulate a collective voice, bond by strong feminine solidarities and friendships, while also haunted by class disparities and occasional political tensions. In parallel to reading these autobiographical narratives, I ask questions about mechanisms of forgetting and remembering. When and why was these women's participation marginalized in the historiography about 1919? And how are the rare instances of remembering of their participation articulated?

Gal Kirn (Ljubljana), Dialectics of Partisan Resistance and Memory: The Case of Women Protests in WW2 Yugoslavia

»Memory is resistance«: one of the critical responses to rightwing historical/memorial revisionism in the (post)Yugoslav and elsewhere can be found in this combative slogan. The phrase 'memory is resistance' resonates with another vital call to shift from traumata memory to the memory of resistance (hope, emancipation, revolution) as a resource for the future (Benjamin; Williams; Rigney). I would like to suggest an additional dialectical twist to this pairing of resistance/protest and memory. Haven't major resistance movements produced their own mnemonic practices / counter-archive of resistance while they were still resisting?

I would like to present you some such examples of partisan resistance, mnemonic practices and their afterlife from fascist occupied Yugoslavia of World War II. First, I would like to discuss the curious way in which one of the last public cultural protest songs was captured and preserved in the first partisan film; second, I would like to point out the continuing duration of women's protests in fascist Ljubljana and how its cultural memory was remediated after the war in various forms/media and how it became a site of new dissonance in more recent times; and, if time permits, to show two successful cases of films capturing resistance and memory from below, i.e.i.e., the resistance to the dominant narratives and the representation of the partisan liberation struggle (Želimir Žilnik and Marta Popivoda).

Samuel Merrill (Umeå), Remembering Like a State? Activist Traces, Surveillance Databases and Nefarious Mediated Prospective Memory

The idea for this paper stems largely from my recollection of two personal experiences of activism more than 10 years ago. The first relates to my memory of being ‘kettled’ and photographed by police surveillance units during the November 2010 London student tuition fee protests, and of hearing from a friend the next day that they thought they had seen me in one of the many photos of the protests featured in the mainstream printed press. The second relates to my participation in November 2012 in a commemorative demonstration in Berlin which marked the twentieth anniversary of the death of a left-wing activist called Silvio Meier. As in London two years earlier, the Berlin demonstration was captured by media and police cameras alike and on this occasion, I later found myself in the local news footage that had been broadcast even before I had left the demonstration and returned home.

Outside of exceptional cases like those protest photographs deemed to be iconic of specific struggles, the masses of relatively mundane mediated traces of individual activists have rarely been considered within the ‘*memory-activism nexus*’ (Rigney 2018). Using my experiences of street activism in London and Berlin as a departure point but also branching into intermingled forms of digital activism, in this paper I will start to consider the position of individual activist traces within that nexus by linking an array of examples, concepts and literatures including those rooted in the interdisciplinary fields of surveillance studies, social movement studies, digital activism studies, information studies, and memory studies.

Inspired by James C. Scott’s 1998 book *Seeing Like a State*, I will begin to explore how these activist traces – including those shared publicly on newspaper frontpages, television screens and social media platforms but in particular those that end up in the surveillance databases controlled by police authorities (and other state intelligence agencies) – may not only enhance the state’s ability to *see*, or make legible its subjects in the present, but also to *remember* them (and specifically those who engage in activism) in the future. To do this I enroll the concept of mediated prospective memory (Tenenboim-Weinblatt 2013). Scholars have considered how progressive activists curate their own mediated traces in order to create prospective memory that might help them pursue social justice goals in the future (see Smit et al 2017; 2018; Moroz 2020). However, in this paper - by returning to the conditions outlined by Scott that can lead even well-intentioned and relatively unremarkable efforts to increase the legibility of a state’s populace to result in fully-fledged disasters - I approach the subject from a more dystopic perspective and consider how shifting and intensifying politic currents might lead states to use mediated prospective memory of activism and activists in more nefarious ways. In doing this I hope to open space within the broader discussion of the nexus between memory and activism, that has tended to emphasize how activism is remembered within wider public and popular cultures or alternatively by activists themselves, to consider how activism is remembered by that which it has conventionally targeted: the state.

Kylie Message-Jones (ANU, Canberra), Unfinished Business: Heritagization and the Aboriginal Tent Embassy Protest

The Aboriginal Tent Embassy was established fifty years ago and takes its place as part of an extensive truth-telling campaign that is underway in Australia in 2023. In extension of the largely unanswered claims on land rights it made to the Australian government when it was erected in 1972, today the Tent Embassy demands the Australian public reckon with 200 years of colonial dispossession and injustice. It represents and witnesses a protest action that is far from over. As such, the Aboriginal Tent Embassy – unlike many protest and reform acts, demonstrations, encampments and occupations – does not have clear start and end dates. It is not possible to demarcate discrete phases of action (including

contemporary documentation) and commemoration. Further, in claiming a site of Aboriginal sovereignty, the Embassy suggests that historical acts of colonisation were a form of temporary protest.

Today, the Aboriginal Tent Embassy is considered a symbolic site that bears witness to fifty years of government inaction. This is partly because Australia's Parliament moved premises in 1988. The site it continues to occupy has been renamed 'Old Parliament House', indicating that the precinct is an historic artefact of an earlier time. The historicization process culminated in 2015 when the Tent Embassy was listed on the Commonwealth Heritage Register as part of the Australian parliamentary precinct. Notably, its application for a separate nomination to the ACT Heritage Council was denied. These historicising processes have impacted the political influence of the Tent Embassy.

This presentation will consider the Tent Embassy as a case study of the dangers in conflating the processes of activism and commemoration too closely.

Judith Naeff (Leiden), *The Queer Joy of Historical Drag: Re-enacting revolutionary pasts in Lebanon*

This paper takes the remarkable photo novel *Borrowed Faces* by the artist collective Fehras Publishing Practices as a starting point to think through the politics and poetics of reenactment in cultural memory practices that recall revolutionary pasts. The photo novel reanimates the politically turbulent and culturally vibrant world of publishing in 1960s Beirut. In a joyfully subversive photo series, the three male artists impersonate three fictional female characters, inserting themselves into the past, using historical images, documents and details derived from their longer term research project. The incongruity between the playful characters and the accuracy of historical detail creates a productive tension between the past and its mediation.

Drawing on Elizabeth Freeman's conceptualization of "temporal drag" and other examples of the Arab world, the paper argues that the concept of drag is suitable too to analyze forms of reenactment that are not as explicitly gendered. The joyful practice of role playing is particularly suitable for memory work that seeks to rekindle revolutionary futures past, while also keeping its critical distance. Queer theory helps us to understand it as an embodied interrogation of political history.

Nafiseh Mousavi (Linnaeus, Växjö), *#Against_forgetting: Activation and Contestation of Resistance-memories in Woman, Life, Freedom*

Woman, Life, Freedom or *Mahsa Amini protests* is the latest in a chain of anti-regime protests in Iran that have been happening during the last four decades with increasingly shorter intervals and vaster engagements. The current movement however stands out in many aspects in such a way that it has made possible for new modes of protest and resistance and unprecedented imaginaries of future to emerge.

Being both different and similar, the current movement, especially across its digital discursive domain, is constantly and actively connected to the previous phases of resistance and oppression, such as Bloody November (2019-2020), Green Movement (2009), and the ongoing justice-seeking activism of survivors of the mass executions and imprisonment of political activists (1988), just to name a few. These connections are however not uncomplicated ways of establishing historical continuation but turn into active negotiations and contestations of memories of resistance and collective political agency in diverse ways.

In my presentation, I will present an overview of these dynamics, with a specific focus on activism through memory-hashtags in Twitter. Hashtag activism has been an important tactic in these protests—the initial starting point being #MahsaAmini—and it has on a large scale been geared towards mnemonic acts. Getting Persian hashtags to trend that would translate to 'we don't forget', 'against

forgetting’, and ‘remember’, digital protesters create inventories of losses and resistances integrating remembering, mourning, seeking justice, and hope in their tweets. Hashtag activism creates a space of participation and activism for all citizen-netizens alongside those who identify and are known as activists, and it can demonstrate in which ways memories of previous protests and oppression have seeped through citizens’ everyday lives.

In this way, and with the help of the perceived liveness of the digital platform, remembering shapes the form and content of the activism. Such ephemeral but recurring mnemonic performances acquire further importance and complexity when looked at against the backdrop of the social history of protests and oppression in Iran which is affected by hyperactive mechanisms of forgetting. By mapping out the circulation of a sample of these trends and analyzing their thematic dynamics in a contextualized manner, my presentation will address the entanglement of resistance, oppression, and life in the context of Iranian memory activism.

Ann Rigney (Utrecht), Anticipatory Memory in the Self-Archiving of Protest: The Case of Nuit Debout (2016)

Memory is usually conceived of as something that emerges ‘after the fact’ as a post-hoc recollection at a later point in time. This paper will ponder the fact that recent movements have made concerted efforts, facilitated by access to digital technologies, to archive what was happening even as protests were ongoing. Not only the Occupy Wall Street movement (examined in Message 2019), but also other movements -- 15-M, Gezi Park, Tahrir Square, Nuit Debout – have made an effort to lay the basis for future remembrance by producing a democratically-produced ‘participatory’ archive. Building on Derrida’s claim that archives are future-oriented, this paper examines the self-archiving practices of the Nuit Debout movement of 2016 as an attempt to convert the movement’s momentum into a prospective testimony to the movement’s existence and to its achievements as a democratic experiment. It ends by reflecting on the implications of such prospective remembrance *in medias res* for our understanding of the memory-activism nexus.

Daniele Salerno (Utrecht), Walks, marches, parades: mobilising memories in LGBT+ activism

The expression “to mobilise memories” is a scholarly trope for exploring the memory-activism nexus. It is a metaphor that conceptualises memories as capable of moving through different contexts and spaces. To better clarify this concept, in this paper, I will take this metaphor literally to explore how LGBT+ activists use memories in three specific spatial practices: walks, parades, and tours. By drawing on my analysis of a walking tour in Amsterdam, a Pride parade in Bologna (Italy), and a protest march in Buenos Aires, I will answer these questions: What do activists mobilise and how? Who mobilises and for whom? Why do activists “mobilise memories”? In my analysis, I argue that what is at stake in the “mobilisation of memories” is the mutual transformation and articulation of communicative and cultural memories through activist narrative and performative remediations.

Rik Smit (Groningen), What the Platformization of Memory Means for Activism

This talk scrutinizes how activist memory work intersects and is entangled with the politics and mechanics of platforms. The success of activist media practices, in terms of visibility and reach, is increasingly contingent upon platforms and logics and literacies thereof. This has consequences for how

the past is activated; that is, how the past is constructed and appropriated for activist purposes within social movements and beyond. Prominent examples of such activist memory practices, which can serve as a form of connective action, I've described as "networked commemoration," "memetic resurrection," "digital archiving and curation," and "crowd reconstruction" (Smit, 2020). Applying and appropriating Nieborg and Poell's (2018) conceptualization of the platformization of the cultural industries, I revisit these activist memory practices and aim to open up the discussion on what platformization means for activist memory work. Although this talk is geared toward a theoretical discussion, I draw examples from very different social movements, from the (ongoing) Farmer's protests in The Netherlands to Extinction Rebellion, in order to show how platforms are the infrastructural, or, "logistical media" (Durham Peters, 2012) of activist memory work.

Thomas Smits (Antwerp/Utrecht), Space and Place in Online Visual Memory: The Tank Man in Hong Kong, 2013–2020

Following the rapid digitization of cultural heritage and the development of computational techniques, this paper discusses how distant reading methods can enrich the field of Memory Studies. As a case study, it applies several computational methods to chart the online circulation of the iconic Tank Man photograph. After retrieving 50735 online circulations (URLs) of this image between 2013 and mid-2020, it examines the relationship between the contextualization of this image and the (online) places where it is used to remember the Tiananmen protests. It specifically zooms in on the relationship between the digital circulation of the Tank Man, the memory of the Tiananmen protests, and the Hong Kong pro-democracy protests of 2014 and 2019–2020. It argues that this city has provided an (online) space where Western and Chinese interpretations of the image clash and mutually sustain each other.

Alexander Ulrich Thygesen (Aarhus), Contentious Activist Monumentalisation: The Emergence of the Matapacos Statue During the Social Outbreak in Chile

This paper revolves around how the Matapacos protest symbol was monumentalised by activists during the *Estallido Social* (Social Outbreak), an anti-neoliberal mobilisation in Chile that lasted from October 2019 to March 2020. Here a far-reaching and heterogeneous mass movement emerged that eluded the constraints of the formal political spectrum. One of the most popular protest symbols within this mass movement was the figure of Negro Matapacos (Black Copkiller), a black "riot dog" with a red bandana that had participated in student protests in Santiago in 2011.

This analysis focuses on the case of a large statue of Matapacos created by the artist-activist Marcel Solá that was put out on the streets of Santiago during the Social Outbreak. The statue intervention is interpreted as a redistribution of the sensible (Rancière 2013) in the broader context of a contested mnemonic regime change (Rigney 2022) during the mobilisation, where hundreds of monuments connected to Chile's colonial and early republican pasts were toppled or remodelled by activists (Badilla and Aguilera 2021).

In combination with an analysis of the materiality of the statue (Murphy 2021), its shifting locations in the urban space and the contention it produced, the protest symbol's connection to both earlier periods of social contention and the Chilean cultural phenomenon of the *quiltro* (a dog of mixed breed) (Sepúlveda Eriz 2022) is also examined and it is argued that the symbol represents various counter-hegemonic narratives of the past that fed into the formation of a chain of equivalence (Mouffe 2018) among the different demands of the mass movement.

Sophie van den Elzen (Utrecht), Rudi Dutschke Retold: European Liberal Newspapers and the Legacy of 1968

Journalism can be an important ally but equally formidable adversary of protest movements and their legacy. In the eventful decades of 1960-90, national newspapers disseminated student protestors' claims and activities further and more comprehensively than ever before. But the way in which they contextualized these in space and time differed substantially, and could make or break readers' sympathies and understanding. This paper compares the international reportage of the activities and commemorations of notorious student leader Rudi Dutschke in European liberal newspapers. Dutschke's provocative writing, his feuds with press concern Springer, his assassination attempt and his divisive commemoration (including the renaming of a street housing the Springer HQ in his honour 2007), give a fascinating glimpse into key aspects of the Liberal framing of 1968, including discussions of the legitimacy of student protest and the power of the press.

Jenny Wüstenberg (Nottingham Trent), Grassroots Activism to Remember Family Separation Policies and Abusive Institutions

States in different historical eras and with very different regimes – settler colonial, state-socialist, democratic-capitalist, dictatorial – have long targeted families and children in order to control or reshape inconvenient or racialised groups in society. While there has been quite a bit of research on redress policies in response to abuse of “Stolen Generations” and in “Indian Residential Schools” and other “care” systems, the role of memory activists in this process has not been systematically examined. I take a comparative approach to teasing out the memory-activism nexus in these cases, drawing especially on my field research in Australia, Canada and Germany. These are cases where suffering was inflicted over a long period of time, in many dispersed places, and in a way that was either invisible to or partially condoned by mainstream society. I ask how memory activists have addressed such “slow” physical, emotional and sexual violence and what kinds of responses have been trialled.

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