



International Workshop

Translatability of Genocidal and Mass Violence: Evidentiary Practices, Narratives of Remembrance, and Future Making

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Organized jointly by: *Research Group “Law, Organization, Science and Technology,” Research Cluster “Society and Culture in Motion”* at University of Halle-Wittenberg, and *SPP 1448, Adaptation and Creativity in Africa.*

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Workshop Outline

The global mediatization of events dealing with the aftermath of exterminatory mass violence has – at least in some parts of the world and mainly since Adolf Eichmann’s trial in Jerusalem in 1961 – taken on an unprecedented pace. New media technologies play a prominent role in this process. This observation aligns with an ongoing trend, which has many different causes and motives, making the horrors of past and present state violence subject to various political, legal, scientific, and aesthetic articulations and interventions. A huge number of emerging institutionalized practices constitute a powerful response to past genocidal and mass violence and, at the same time, produce new kinds of evidence. Among these reactions the most important ones are the following: the International Criminal Court, other forms of prosecution, initiatives of restorative justice, new scientific methods in

forensics like genetics, exhibitions and artworks, the systematic archiving of survivors' memoirs, the display of mass graves as sites of evidence, the production of monuments as sites of remembrance, the role of media, and finally an increased attention to all these processes by scholars of various disciplines. In producing and bringing the multiple narratives of atrocities before worldwide public audiences, these transformative interventions have rendered readers, listeners, viewers, and visitors into second-order witnesses and have led to significant changes in our notions and practices of evidence when it comes to gross human right violations and exterminatory violence.

In the practical field of dealing with mass atrocities as well as in contemporary genocide studies several kinds of experts (lawyers, psychiatrists, psychologists, criminologists, information scientists, specially trained forensic teams, as well as social scientists, historians, philosophers and artists) have elaborated protocols for different forms of evidence such as survivor witness, expert witness, narrative testimony, documentary and visual testimony, forensic evidence, and mass grave analyses in order to establish and produce increasingly more robust evidence. Evidence produced on the basis of these protocols has become so ubiquitous that it shapes the historical consciousness of different populations. While practices and notions of evidence are bound to specific local and circumstantial parameters, objectivist claims of this evidence are nevertheless perceived as the most reliable defense against the denial of past atrocities. Although aesthetic representations like images or literature are powerful tools in coming to terms with the past, solid evidence is often perceived as the strongest device to pave the way for better futures, where different modes of interpretation of political and social constellations are respected while the protection of universal human rights and individual human dignity are guaranteed at the same time.

The workshop seeks to investigate how evidences are produced, used and communicated in different settings. The role of technologies and mediatizations are of particular interest here. At the same time, the workshop examines how original sites are represented and contextualized, and how narratives merge with different forms of evidence, political and legal claims, historical interpretations, art history and visions for the future. In this way, the workshop aims at exploring how these practices and technologies constitute acts of translation that transform the meanings of past violence and, thus, become productive for the design of futures. We consider the presenting of evidence to be inseparable from

developing a narrative plot, as vice-versa narratives of the past always implicate the generation of evidence. This, in turn, necessarily leads to the making of specific futures. Thus, we claim that evidentiary practices are located in techno-scientific infrastructures, storytelling and legal and political parameters.

On a general level, the workshop deals with the question of how the production of evidence of genocidal and mass violence as well as the hope for a better future relate to each other. It attempts to analyze the strategies utilized to transform testimonies, forensic findings and historiography into strong narratives and, subsequently, into strategies of future making. These strategies mostly pursue the protection of human dignity and human rights, and the identification of effective reconciliatory practices (e.g., coining slogans like "Never again", "Nunca más", "Reconciliation through truth", curating museums and memorial sites, organizing youth exchange programs, etc.).

We invite contributions that engage with the production and communication of evidence and narratives associated with genocidal and mass violence. The contributors are invited to deal with some of the following questions:

- How is evidence produced in forensic and juridical procedures?
- What counts as criteria (and why) for distinguishing between evidence and polemic?
- How are works of art translated into and disseminated as evidence?
- What kind of infrastructures are established and used in these procedures?
- How do political and historiographical protagonists apply and integrate this evidence?
- In which way does this evidence trigger discussions about the reinterpretation of history and thus the demand for new evidence?
- How does the (techno-scientific) production of evidence relate to aesthetic forms?
- How is the relation between memory and evidence of concrete instances of genocidal and mass violence established and how is this related to the global circulation of models for dealing with atrocities?
- What are the analytical frameworks and/or approaches that underpin and inform the assumption that strong evidence of past atrocities prevents future atrocities?

Confirmed Participants

1. Kjell Anderson (*Institute of War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies in Amsterdam*)
2. Memory Biwa (*Archive and Public Culture, Research Initiative, Cape Town*)
3. Ralph Buchenhorst (*University of Halle-Wittenberg*)
4. Jo-Marie Burt (*George Mason University*)
5. Youk Chhang (*Documentation Center of Cambodia & Rutgers University-Newark*)
6. Anne Fleckstein (*Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology*)
7. Wendelmoet Hamelink (*Leiden University*)
8. Aurélia Kalisky (*Center for Literary and Cultural Research Berlin*)
9. Achille Mbembe (*University of Witwatersrand*)
10. Fazil Moradi (*Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology & University of Halle-Wittenberg*)
11. Nicky Rousseau (*History Department, University of the Western Cape*)
12. Victoria Sanford (*Department of Anthropology, Lehman College*)
13. Shela Sheikh (*Goldsmiths, University of London*)
14. Victor Toom (*NUCFS Research Associate*)
15. Jenifer Trowbridge (*Department of Anthropology, New York University*)