

Memory on Trial

Media, Citizenship and Social Justice



ØRECOMM – CENTRE FOR COMMUNICATION AND GLOBAL CHANGE – invites researchers, students and practitioners to the upcoming ØRECOMM FESTIVAL. The ØRECOMM FESTIVAL aims at identifying and analysing the roles of different stake-holders and actors in the changing public spheres at global and local level; the media professional (journalist/editor), the communication for development practitioner, the activist, the artist, the intellectual, the media mogul.

Dates and venues:

13-16 September 2013: Roskilde (Denmark), Malmö (Sweden), Copenhagen (Denmark)

Concept note

Living memory is a process by which citizens create meaning of the present and near past. *Living memory* confirms, explores or challenges dominant understandings of societal development. The media are dominating agents of memory, producing as well as silencing tensions between living memories and established history. This conflict between official history and its alternative or silenced voices has become a central concern of media, communication and cultural studies.

The third ØRECOMM FESTIVAL puts the *memory turn* under scrutiny, addressing *living memories* in relation to two other central components of public sphere engagement: *citizenship* and *social justice*.

As citizens we (can) actualize or make a public – and in this making we inevitably engage with *social justice*. Citizenship and social justice are of primary importance in societal debates concerning *what, how* and for *whom* we should remember – not least in transitional processes of attempted healing and conciliation. Memory work may be decisive for a society's ability to live and develop in peace.

Kendall Phillips (2004) interprets the notion of *living memory* as, firstly, a *memory of publics* providing an arena where citizens come together and act. The rhetorical, and possibly agonistic, struggle of public memory can be related to Hannah Arendt's notion of *action* which emphasizes the collective nature of a citizenry, disclosing and expressing itself with others – to perform *actions* not possible on one's own. The meeting of agency and action coupled with memory poses a new sub-field of interest to communication research around social change. An added factor, of particular concern in media studies, is the representations



of memory, or *the publicness of memory*. They may both lead to dispute and contestation, especially in situations of conflict and political violence. Memories of victims, survivors and/or testimonies/confessions of perpetrators play crucial roles in Truth Commissions and other forms of truth-telling and transitional justice.

The overarching notion of living memory which Kendall Phillips (2004) also names *public memory* is divided into three different forms by Edward Casey (2004). In addition to the first level, *individual memory*, there is *social memory* held by a group affiliated as family, neighbourhood, community or those in a common project. The third level, Casey introduces is *collective memory*, memories distributed over a population that does not necessarily know each other but who may recall or retell the same event in a roughly similar manner – due to media representations and media as memory agent.

Key questions

How do citizens create meaning of the present and near past? How do citizens confirm, explore and challenge dominant agents of memory? How can we raise awareness of the conflicts between official history and its alternative, or silenced voices? What role do the *memory turn* of recent decades play in the field of communication for development?

Proposed themes include, but are not limited to:

- Social Justice and Development
- Memory and Media Ethnography
- Imagining the City
- Storytelling and Mediatized Public Spheres
- Fiction, Truth and Transitional Justice
- Movements and Memory
- Remembering Revolution
- Art and Activism
- Archives, Heritage and Intervention
- Memories of Modernity
- Coping with Conflict
- Remembering Public Space
- Global Citizenship
- Deliberation and Voice
- Cosmopolitanism and Communalism

Malmö and Roskilde, 31 May 2013

Visit the festival website: <http://orecomm.net/festival-2013/>

