

Thematic issue proposal: A dialogic approach to collective memory

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Abstract:

Memory as a subjective neurocognitive process phenomenon is undoubtedly its most prosaic conception. However, at least since Plato's dialogue Phaedrus, the recognition of its exteriorization through and in writing has highlighted its social dimension as well.

In the 20th century, the Bakhtin-Medvedev-Voloshinov Circle and Maurice Halbwachs, unrelated thinkers from different intellectual backgrounds, shed light on the social nature of memory, identifying several of its cultural configurations. On the one hand, Mikhail Bakhtin, Pavel Medvedev and Valentin Voloshinov sustained a semiological theory in which sign and ideology constitute an undetachable pair and historicization is produced by a discursive repertoire. From this perspective, the process of making sense and meaning emerges from intersubjective cooperation necessarily relativized by cultural background. On the other hand, Maurice Halbwachs recognized that societies build collective structures of memory, which do not actually preserve the past, but permanently rebuild it. Because the past is empirically unattainable, it is invariably accessed through symbolic processes of making sense and meaning. In this manner, these collective memory structures function as systematic and dynamic resources of symbolic devices for challenging or validating collectiveness and a sense of belonging.

This thematic issue aims to gather researchers interested in exploring, from a discursive point of view, the diverse ways the past can be understood as a dialogical construction to serve different aims in society. This includes the study of collective and cultural memory, the study of historical consciousness and critical thinking, and other various and varied configurations of collectiveness from a discursive approach. What are the collective structures of memory that build the contemporary (re)arrangement of social groups? Are there textual forms other than narrative that realize collective memory? How do new technologies influence the way people interact with the past? How does grand time alter the collective resources and devices of building memory? These are some of the questions this thematic issue aims to answer.