

Migration recollections - memory lines at the border

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Abstract

Memory implies both continuity and change, the stable frame of location, but also the process of change and dislocation. Such transition is particularly relevant for approaches in migration memory - they require understanding of context and meaning for identity in bearing the distance between locations (origin and host societies) and in securing purpose of destination in order to achieve continuity, in two dimensions, identity of origin and identity of becoming (or new belonging) which need to be simultaneously accommodated and integrated. By agency of migrants and conditions and regulations of access into receiving societies, these dimensions are markedly connected at the border. Borders are found along the path of displacement, transition and orientation. Whether reception policies include cultural awareness or civic education approaches, strict vetting or a whole range inbetween, the transition needs to be documented and governed also from the perspective of the migrant. A memory which is uprooted from its initial location or migrating to a new environment needs aids to support coherence for identity. The way in which migration and its transition process are realized and managed leaves a defining imprint on the mode the migrants represent and commit the change to memory; both the image of the transition and the idea of a future destination (aspirations, ideals) are mapped into memory next to the embedded initial location. Society of origin and host society are both locations of memory; at the moment of transition, the former lies with self experience, the latter with a projected dimension of self. Borders are sites of memory, but of memories divided: polity memory and migrant memory. The role of any integration policy is to allow and make them meet purposefully, and not to widen the gap between them.

Keywords: *International migration; borders; memory; change of displacement.*

1. Migration and Memory - association in the transition from dislocation to integration

Migration, inasmuch as memory also adjoins such references, is linked to placement, change and displacement. “Memory is where we have arrived rather than where we have left” (Creet 2010: p. 6); memory and migration together bring to the fore borders, cultural values and practices, experiences of sharing and belonging, difference in particularism and universalism, and strategies of resistance in the negotiation and reinterpretation of the past. Memory is in a perpetual dynamic of construction and reconstruction, of past and present, of inclusion and exclusion providing “continuity to the dislocations of individual and social identity” (Creet 2010: p. 3). Collective memories, and especially migrant memory, require milestones and orientation to navigate distances.

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The contents of memory are measured by distance and fixity, its meaning by movement, transition itself, in conditions of the (recent) present rather than distant past. The point of origin is not forgotten, but it is just one end of the time covered by memory and becoming secondary in actuality, due to current orientation. Places can be stable geographies and sites of memory, symbols constancy, but also temporally and spatially relational for the phenomena of memory, generating “one *here*” and “many *there*” in relation (Ricoeur 2004: p. 40). The collective memory body, individuals and communities, bear memory of relation to place. In terms of its mechanisms, memory is triggered by change, by movement across distance between places or between two seemingly stable referential, ‘anchoring’ states, retrospect to actuality, selective to defining.

Social environment (context and structure) can be considered as precondition of collective memory by which the deictics of time-space relationship are governed (Halbwachs 1992). Nevertheless, place and collective memory are co-constitutive and mutually (re-)producing, overlapping imagined and actual, foci with loci and topos, as place imprints community identity, and community, in order to preserve itself, recalls place and bears it with, living in this space of memory and delivering its meaning. Individual memory, in seeking belonging-identity bonds is fed by historical culture which disseminates into consciousness as patterned guidelines for orientation between various milieus which vie for priority in one’s actuality reference (Rüsen 2005). Belonging is implicit at the same time for all dimensions of identity and anchors of memory, yet consciousness operates with all from the present perspective only, which allows to select and deselect as if with options, paths which connect *there-here-there*, past to future, spatially and community-wise. This process of awareness renders a difference between affection-evocation (recollection) and representation-search (recall) dimensions of memory, and change the logical order between memory and location - it is not only location that makes an impact on memory (memory-making/shaping location), but also memory making an impact on location (location-representing/shaping memory), defining relations of *lieux de mémoire* (Nora 1989). This may be an argument for historical consciousness which involves an individual competence to orientate oneself in space and time, by aiming to understand change in order to preserve continuity of identity and by saving the distinctiveness of prior-post states in order not to overwrite memory into a state of incoherence which would remove continuity and the sense of time and space; continuity cannot supersede change either, they should be treated rather as co-constitutive, than mutually exclusive (Rüsen 2004: p. 72). The moral imperative felt to be imposed by the past adds to a meaningful interdependence between past, present, and future which allows individuals to contextualize their identity – a way to translate the past into the present for the future, for the construction of meaning, social reproduction or transformation and negotiation of personal and collective identities, temporal orientation and agency (Seixas 2006). Representing the past and the evaluation of the present commitments justify a normative coordinate for action and indicate a direction of change or a sense of continuity. Perspectives are influenced by context and express social conditions and relationships that exercise moral obligations on the individual in making decisions, in that the values reflect the logic of their situation in the social order. The reciprocity of values and actuality is realized through historical consciousness, in order to understand what contexts are related: the future is connected to the past from the perspective of the present; history causes moral values to be integrated into a past-present-future continuum, and historical consciousness assures their validity over time making it possible for the present realities, ‘what is’, to be meaning-bearing in relation to values, with ‘what ought to be’ and this is how historical

consciousness relates the values to the actuality and situation, and the morality to the action (Rüsen 2004: pp. 64-85).

Connections in interpretations of the past, understanding of the present, and perspective on the future, are thus encoded in historical culture. Historical culture describes how historical meaning is constructed and maintained on a societal level; it is dynamic and it shapes individuals' historical consciousnesses through socialisation of historical knowledge. Historical culture is always a matter of negotiation between competing historical cultures and ways of interpreting history (Bruner 2005). Historical culture tends to steer historical consciousness to function in a rather traditional template, by which there is unquestionable moral obligation toward the institutions of the polity, since identity is derived from their narrative and authority. Memory itself displays a condition of migration, shifting and shaping, since it is institutionalised and thus grounded into a social environment in order to be perpetually passed on and re-enacted. Memories of migration actively build frames for the relation between dislocation and orientation.

Several scenarios may apply depending on the motive that triggers migration (forced, aspirational, asylum) in defining a particular type of relation between migration and orientation. A rather general framework can be briefly described here. The change that is displacement marks a breakaway, in migrant perception and orientation, from the repetitiveness ordered in a recognized and legitimized value system at the origin. Commitment toward it and proof of its actuality undergo a challenge in testing the validity of the meanings of past practices which were permanent benchmarks, as pre-established consent and founding acts for social collectivities and their cohesion in the face of alterity. Historical identity of the individual does not completely fade out with displacement, nor does it remain quite the same afterwards. Historical identity is defined by the assertion of cultural models of self-understanding established previously - the construction of the identity originates in a process of assuming roles and active orientation. The stability and reasons of the order of morality itself and its values are no longer undeniable since the transition to a new social environment has that permanence removed. Guidance by cultural tradition is faced with new rules, while past events and abstract ideas that carried significance and correspondence for behaviour are met with new, different social contexts and instances. Rules may show what needs to happen but only rarely how that can be applied from the point of view of the migrant and for the actual state and situation of the migrant, who is expected to navigate differences and bridge the significance shifts until the morality of a culturally integrated value system in a new social life is revealed, while embodying their entanglement in orderly and principled conduct. Conversely, migrant attitudes toward distant and recent past as well as society of origin may be those of rejection; obligations are no longer recognized, because the relevance of past commitments is no longer present and there is aim for new forms and significances of practice, with focus on alternatives, deviations from the past, in problematizing social relations and present value systems. In this case, linking the past to the present and the future is deconstructed in the sense of a detachment from the past, a disruption of continuity, as it decouples the future orientation from the past environment. There is delimitation to pre-established course and an opposition to it, by taking a distinct historical position, a rejection of predetermined roles and previous referential modes of self-understanding - predefined roles are no longer assumed, but new roles are built together with the identity and in contrast to conventions valid in the past. Different conditions and contexts prompt other types of behaviors and seem to justify cultural relativism when confronted with the particularities of otherness and specificity in social relations; a rationale of intentional

forgetting toward a particular social past may seem convenient for integration, yet its *tabula rasa* approach is arguably as imbalanced in sense-making processes and identity-building as is radicalisation on the foundations of an exclusive past of reference. This is precisely why understanding and interpreting the past are paramount and at the center of change itself, with application for migration as well. Historical narratives are accepted, but transposed into a different framework of interpretation in which commitments to past events may change and also take the form of a new morality, lost validities are replaced with new ones, behaviors change, and change gives meaning to history. The past is not disputed, the historical narrative becomes part of the past, and the future takes another course. Historical memory is centered on the representation of the perception of the past through transformations, changes that generate new forms of social life. The emerging model is that of development, in which all forms of social life change in order to survive, and become dynamic. Different historical positions are mutually acceptable and recognized and can be reconciled, beyond host-origin and citizen-migrant distinctions. The individual represents a crossroads of temporalities, in continuous identity construction and labour in the organization of memory, as a prerequisite for association with collective identities, struggling against ambiguity and relational uncertainty.

2. Borders meet Memory - new sites of orientation

Place is given meaning by memory, memory recollects it and thus place feeds all memories connecting to the meaning of the place. There is a process of sense-making and purpose involved in the memory - place relation. Yet there is no singularity of a memory in relation to a place, but rather multiplicity, diversity. A divisive event marking a place, such as a battlefield in a war, the outcome of which carries different effects for the parties involved and for the memory and identity of their national collectives, bears reference as powerful as fact into the future; also, if the border is such a place, it is feeding two different collective memories, with inward and outward purpose.

As collective representations, borders can play an essential role in the process of creating fixed moral values: they mark the area with a permanent foundation and durable trace, shaping collective memory, deriving sense of belonging as well as substantial identity. For within borders polity members, the border is reminiscent of a protective barrier for shared specific values, protection of an achievement; for migrants, it is an obstacle to their destination, precluding achievement. The memory of the place meets the purpose of remembering the place. The point of origin is a place committed to memory in the migration process and it remains so well after a new place supersedes its priority in actuality by orientation. But the relation between places endures because there is purpose to the transition. Memory is fluid, and history is produced by distance but also existing conditions, events and facts, both indicating attachment to static/stable as well as dynamic frames. Stability of place is resonant with the long memories and histories of nations, especially those replacing integration with assimilation, thus 'freezing' a particular evolution frame of identity. Polity commitment in defining borders lies with the community and its historical culture, which is a self-reflection in the absence of moral ties or obligations outward of it, toward migrants. Historical culture is guided by collective memory, yet it is rarely connected through policy to migration memory - this can be addressed in answering if migration policy is guided by pluralistic narratives of migration. Border enforcing control policies vary, with a level of access which ranges from open to closed entry: unrestricted (free movement); promotional; permissive; selective; and prohibited (Fielding 1993: p. 44). The diversity of approaches reveals multiple logics and

strategies in defining border and entry conditions, which indicates that migration, nowadays, is acknowledged in many forms, yet attention to and recognition of memories and identity of migrants seems to play a lesser part for the historical culture of receiving polities.

Not only the space delineated by borders, but borders themselves and the distance between them are *lieux de mémoire* of symbolic constancy. They correspond to the borders of migration memory and they can be co-created as markers of change in the way of continuity. What is remembered with migration memory? Dislocation, distance itself and the experience of the border. How is it remembered? Cultural memory or new socialisation and political institutionalisation, by shift between origin and destination. By whom is migration remembered? Migrants remember as carriers, but also host community, either through shared practices or through policy, in the way their society changes with migrant incorporation. Should migration memory be accommodated? A simple reason for a positive answer is that it feeds into polity cultural history, memory and institutions. Memory in relation to history is not only the political and institutional framing of the past, organizing referential practices that give meaning to the polity “way of life”, given a fixation to place. Memory is projective/constructive (not limited to retrospect and narratives of commemorative sites) since it carries building blocks of sense-making and orientation. The moving away from an original place of memory does not only produce history, and certainly does not erase the memory of that place. The memory of the individual may be in agency of the place memory, yet it can easily manage distance from it and also autonomy.

The interpretation and institutionalization of the past compete in the discursive nature of the interactions of social groups and in the formation of the political culture of a community. Memory and historical consciousness reveal ways we connect with, commemorate and contest the past (Wertsch 2004; Olick 2003; Halbwachs 1992; Rüsen 2012; Ahonen 2012; Megill 1994). Migration memory plays an important part in the cultural heritage of any polity. In the varied context of ‘politics of incorporation’, memory migration is institutionalised to project the possibility of experienced conjunction of different histories and constitutive realities into a shared social place. The challenge therein lies with the ‘negotiation’ of various identities and ideologies, converging or diverging as they travel along self-referential temporal lines, back to the past and forth into the future of the communities and polity. Cultures and identities are dynamic sets, they change over time and adapt to circumstances. They are also complex wholes, encompassing heterogeneous components, knowledge and information accumulated by collective experience. They have cohesion, adaptability, and evolutionary features, based on internal organization, the identification of members with the whole community, and attitudes that shape or define a community against other communities. As a result, the collective memory of the polity bears an aggregate function since it is continuously informed by additional elements and new experiences - it stabilizes a perspective on polity identity with its temporal linkages and underlying moral structure which guides polity members resort in their orientation and action toward change. The polity is a relational space in which communities develop belonging, adaptability is mutual in processes of representation and reconstruction, by means of the identity - collective memory nexus of orientation and historical consciousness. Migration memory provides resources for the polity to record its own adaptation to change, in relation to other polities, allowing communities to influence it by shaping their own images, perceptions, norms, and attitudes thus creating a sense of belonging (Bitsani 2016). Therefore, migration memory

institutionalisation is a framework for collecting, conveying and reflecting meanings of change, in a significant connection between migration memory and identitarian collective memory of the polity.

At the border, migrants' past and relationship with past is evaluated; the evaluation itself also reflects polity relation to past, commitments, engagement and orientation, a dimension of which are its borders. Migration governance today shall be re-interpreted in the future based on different past frames and informed by developments up to that time when border practices no longer treat migration as a contested process in which it appears to be at odds with identity security. Vetting procedures enstated by immigration laws include testimonials of migration in terms of place and identity; based on one's narrative ability to make these `key` logical connections, border administration determine if a migrant is showing `good faith` or needs to be deported - the accounts deemed credible are evaluated *against* national identity memory wherein borders are embedded and enforced to control mobility and prevent immigration. It can be claimed that the national community is itself redefined in the vetting process since belonging is negotiated between memory and migration, while narrative coherence is established on a particular set of moral and political values which justify the decision. Collective memory, which is highly contested, and historical culture, which is highly institutionalised to serve national ends, in this case, can dictate an outbound course of individual memory. However, exclusion need not be the only outcome - vetting is just one of the processes defining border sites, and a zero-sum game at that; memory making is also at stake, presenting a genuine opportunity that memories partaking of distinct narratives become relational. The process can involve mutual learning and incorporation, reciprocity and accommodation. A variety of strategies of memory sharing can be employed, from access to other testimonials to narrative inclusion in border museums of migration as memory-structured and shaped spaces (especially helpful for those driven into forced migration, refugees who experience disorientation with change). This preliminary step is still located at the site of the border and part of the border experience, and an example of memory making which is not necessarily inclusive and still highly representative of the historical and political memory of the national identity with a defining meta-narrative of normative character. There is a border-produced community of memory and it is polity decision to open it toward migrants and their memory, and choice on what is remembered in this interaction of memories of displacement and solidarity, as an antechamber (rather than void or negative space) for the potential incorporation of migrants. This, in turn, shall define the receiving society as bearing an ethics of caring made up of a two-fold responsibility, to protect/shelter and to record its changes of recent history and its orientation in relation to such changes, an "ethics of memory" (Margalit 2002). Historical consciousness is a process by which distinct narratives connect to make up a larger framework of reference (border purpose meets migration experience to create border memory) - migrant memory is not to be upheld as a mere counter narrative to the border narrative.

The present condition of migration waves is symbolic of a collective memory in progress within which, while distinct and maintaining particularism of experience interpretation, one memory cannot define and fix the process without the others. The border, with its own memory community, acts as a threshold between memories rather than as an obstruction, a gateway state of liminality between communities and identities facilitating learning and orientation rather than forgetting, and a beacon for historical consciousness bridging distances of place, time and narrative. The border can work in a different way than that of conveying a cultural and political device of pre-emptive

memory, disabling others and their meanings - it too can accommodate collective memory creation, outward of its community of origin yet inward of its orientation ethic. This marks the transition from self-reproducing to self-updating memory community, where change is acknowledged and relational considerations are central for its own development. All pasts are present at the border and collectively shape border value, meaning for a shared memory; counter to border memory is forgetting as reason for or consequence of migration. Border memory is also a site of re-construction, not a mere repository, in the sense that recall is an ethical action in developing values - it travels through communities and their temporalities. Shared memory mitigates uncertainty in border communities, polity and migrants.

3. In lieu of conclusions

Memory and identity migrate, glocalize, transform and multiply over temporal and spatial dimensions. Memory and migration form a continuum of flows of people and ideas reshape the sense of belonging. Migration is inextricably linked to the presence or absence of borders and belonging to a community or departing from it. Borders are polity delimitations, contours of community projected identity, constructs emanating from a collective, cultural memory of shared value systems and practices. In this sense, borders are protective of authentic, unique forms of life, an institutionalized and thus political form of memory which encodes key meanings associated to principles in ordering the society, while migration presents a perceived challenge to the preservation of their historical culture. These meanings helped shape borders; nevertheless, borders can be redefined as the polity becomes a memory hub involved in shared meaning-making. Borders are sites of memory where individual, communicative (group) and cultural memories interact, if borders are sites of facilitation through solidarity.

Migrants certainly hold cultural values, carry a memory of social environment as context for their identity, and the experience of a national narrative of institutionalised forms of life, which may or not be characterized as agency in relation to destination deployed practices, and there is awareness of change. However, they may or may not have developed historical consciousness prior to or during dislocation, their values (deriving from collective memory) may or may not be perceived as agency functions since migration may be caused by a breakaway from their legacy, and their identity is subjected to the circumstances of change which are open-ended toward receiving polity decision-making. Borders are already sites of memory, of memories divided. Yet borders can be redefined as milieux, and memories, both of migrants and receiving polity, can be institutionalized in a shared framework, centred on change (while change is memorialized and placed by orientation) a process which is essentially political. Border policies (as policies of control) establish procedural rule and principle of moral reasoning and govern its effects on the relationship between polity and migrants, setting up an environment of obligations and duties to be upheld (the contents of which can be responsible, context-sensitive practice in migration governance). Solidarity borders apply to both moral worth of gaining a new memory dimension for polities within borders and facilitating migrant competence in historical consciousness, with the shared result of a mutually constructed memory out of the exchange of their contingencies.

Migration policies involve interpretations of change and challenges in the environment and at its borders, of actuality in terms of moral obligation validity and social values practice continuation, and are based on interpretations of past experience, present understanding of conditions, and orientation toward purposes. If the historical culture of

the polity is rather closed to change, policies are not converging in the site of memory - borders are a confusing experience for migrants and this is the reason why they should be facility rather than obstruction to memory.

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