

Final report

# Memory Practices: Enacting and Contesting the Curriculum in Contemporary Classrooms

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# Memory Practices: Enacting and Contesting the Curriculum in Contemporary Classrooms

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# **Research group**

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#### **0** EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Drawing on the practice turn in cultural theory, media studies and curriculum research, the Memory Practices research group developed a mixed method, extended case method approach which opened up "memory practices" as a substantive field of inquiry. The project aimed to contribute to ongoing international debates on the shaping of collective memory, and on media practices in contemporary schools. By combining ethnographic, interview and survey methods, the research team explored (i) relationships among policy curricula (e.g. federal curricula), programmatic curricula (e.g. textbooks) and enacted curricula (e.g. classroom practice), and (ii) interactions among 'official' forms of remembering and other mediations of memory (e.g. through social media).

This final report summarizes the research design, work packages and key findings, presenting illustrative 'data stories' from project publications. First, it details theoretical advances made through specific elaborations of 'memory practices', 'effectfulness' and 'lines of flight'. Second, it illustrates how a practice approach, looking at the tangled webs, junctures, flows, doings and general 'messiness' of social life, and attending to the richness and complexity of what students and teachers are doing, has identified three sets of memory practices in schools: (i) printed textbooks are enacted as authoritative media, in distinction to other media used in classes, e.g. interactive apps, films, websites); (ii) media practices range among three engagements with these authoritative texts: reproducing, remixing, and resisting their epistemic power; (iii) students enact "tactics" or "lines of flight" which point away from expected uses of the textbook, and highlight minoritarian practices, playfulness and provocations. Third, the research group identified links across policy, programmatic and enacted curricula, including (i) students' 'hyperstating' of hegemonic collective memory, e.g. a (neo-)colonial rationality of global hierarchies; (ii) an 'inadvertent nationalism', in which all actors explicitly aim to critique and question nationalism and yet reproduce the idea of Germany as always already a strong, superior nation; (iii) the role of the material agency of textbooks and other media in reproducing and interrupting predominant forms of cultural memory; but also (iv) moments in which consensus memory was interrupted, e.g. through students' integration of social media into classroom practice. Finally, the project identified insights which could be disseminated among institutional stakeholders, contributing to policy papers, educational events and social media debates, as well as generating recommendations for educational publishers.

Overall, the research group demonstrated that, despite burgeoning academic interest in fractured memory, contested memory and multiple divergent forms of remembrance, formal education strongly replicates predominant ways of remembering the past, which shape an 'inadvertent nationalism'. Creating national and community cohesion, far from being in question, continues to be a core function of schooling. The words used in policy documents have a surprisingly loud echo, not only in classrooms, but also in the accounts of young people on 'which' (or 'whose') versions of the past seem the most legitimate.

This report lists publications and follow-up research projects which further develop the methods and focus of the *Memory Practices* project.

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#### **1 PROJECT OBJECTIVES**

The *Memory Practices* research project set out to explore the practices of engaging with 'institutionalised collective memory objects' (Beim 2007), such as textbooks, in heterogeneous classrooms. In terms of political relevance, it contributed to the debate on memory and the nation: Analyses of the materials used for teaching history, politics or social studies in schools around the world, have found astonishing consistency since the institution of mass schooling during the industrialisation of the nineteenth century (see Fuchs & Bock 2018; Macgilchrist 2018b): In what is now called the 'first industrial revolution', schools aimed to foster students' national identity. The question today, in the 'fourth industrial revolution' ('industry 4.0') is whether – given young people's thoroughly networked, connected, trans-national lives – schools are still creating national identities by shaping collective memory.

In terms of its novel contribution to scholarship, the project drew on two lacunae: First, recent decades had witnessed a dramatic increase in public and scholarly fascination with memory. Yet, despite the large number of studies across a broad range of disciplines, there were, at the project outset, still surprisingly few empirical investigations into *how people make use of and creatively appropriate* mediated collective memories or interpretations of the past. Very little was known about what we call 'memory practices': how people engage with officially legitimised versions of history. Second, since official curricula have explicitly stipulated that one reason for learning about history is to 'enable students to participate in their community's cultural memory' (Niedersächsisches Kultusministerium 2008: 7), *schooling* is a core site to investigate memory practices. It is in classrooms that young individuals explicitly engage with what counts as cultural memory, yet schools remained under-researched sites for cultural studies approaches to mediated memory.

By addressing these issues, the *Memory Practices* research project developed an innovative approach to media practices in schools, contributed to establishing memory practices as a substantive field of inquiry, and provided empirically rich insights for ongoing international debates on memory, curriculum and media, which seem particularly pressing in times of increasing populism and 'fake news'.

Located at the intersection of recent innovations in memory studies, curriculum research and media theory, the project paid sustained attention to young people's media practices in formal educational spaces. The *Memory Practices* project was the first large-scale project to bring these perspectives into dialogue with one another. It focused on one particularly controversial area: teaching and learning about twentieth century history in the final two years of compulsory schooling in Germany (Grades 9 and 10). The research team, consisting of one principal investigator (PI) and three doctoral researchers aimed to explore questions on four specific issues:

- 1. How do teachers and students enact the curriculum on twentieth century history in their everyday media practices in the classroom? How are collective memories performed and stabilized/destabilized? (descriptive questions)
- 2. Which linkages can be traced between policy curricula (e.g. national standards, federal curricula), programmatic curricula (e.g. textbooks) and enacted curricula

(e.g. classroom practice)? Do, for instance, students or teachers contest official knowledge and memory practices? If so, how? (analytical questions)

- 3. What forms of interaction can be identified? How are new/mobile/popular media and private/family memories used in the enacted curriculum to shape, extend or dispute officially mediated forms of collective remembering and knowing such as textbooks? (analytical questions)
- 4. What insights can be disseminated among institutional stakeholders such as curriculum designers and the producers of textbooks and other educational media? (policy question)

#### 2 WORK PACKAGES

To explore these research questions, the project adopted an extended case study approach. Since we still know very little about how people engage with memory objects such as textbooks, explorative qualitative approaches were most appropriate at this stage: (i) Openended interviews and observations raised the team's awareness of what was important to participants (teachers, students, school leaders, textbook authors, etc.). By observing carefully, writing 'thick descriptions' of their experiences in the field, and intensively analysing particular cases, 'emergent knowledge' of the participants' own priorities and practices was able to develop (cf. Small 2009). (ii) By tracing one set of actors over a relatively long period (two years), an extended case study emphasised processes and the interdependence of diverse elements. It enabled the research team to trace how events were linked to one another through time. (iii) Case studies enabled the team to extrapolate from these processes to make not statistical but *logical* inferences, i.e. to use a 'diagnostic' method akin to medical practice to make general statements based on the particular instance (Geertz 1973: 26). (iv) A structured survey complemented the extended case studies.

In addition, this mixed methods approach facilitated our aim of exploring if/how a broad range of contexts interacted with official interpretations of the past mediated by policy curricula and textbooks. It enabled the research team to *hold constant*, in the sense of the *ceteris paribus* clause, as many elements as possible (the same federal state, the same school type, the same policy curriculum, the same textbook) in order to concentrate on the *multiple, diverse and situated ways* in which students and teachers appropriate, negotiate or contest the same textual set of interpretations. We were able to pay particular attention to the role of, for instance, (i) other media, such as television documentary films, multilingual news, YouTube, Facebook and open educational resources (OER), (ii) family memories, such as documents their grandparents had from the early twentieth century, (iii) peer interactions, such as stories they have heard from minority friends about life in Russia or Syria, and (iv) political engagement, such as reading Marx's *Capital*.

The five work packages unfolded as planned:

#### WP 1: Semi-structured interviews with 30 history teachers

The PI, Felicitas Macgilchrist, led the research group in collaboratively designing a semistructured interview to be held with history teachers in Lower Saxony. The collaborative design laid the foundation for a 'shared research repertoire' (Wenger 1998) among the research team, ensuring consistency in focus, particularly important for interdisciplinary teams (Brown, Deletic & Wong 2015).

Using a snowball sampling method, the team contacted 13 schools and interviewed 30 teachers in Lower Saxony who worked with the textbook we will call *History 9/10* (pseudonym). These interviews (of between 45 mins and 2 hours, i.e. 7,000–17,000 words) had three aims:

1. To ask broad questions about the use of textbooks, other educational media and policy curricula or guidelines.

- 2. To ask specific questions about aspects of twentieth century history which have led to controversies and debates in class.
- 3. To identify two (maximally different) schools for two-year in-depth ethnographic studies.

# WP 2: Ethnography I and II

Two doctoral researchers, Johanna Ahlrichs and Patrick Mielke, each conducted ethnographic studies across two school years, Grades 9 and 10:

- 1. Ahlrichs observed in an urban school with a student cohort which is marked in German society as particularly ethnically/culturally heterogeneous. Students had experience of migration, with either themselves or their parents/grandparents moving to Germany from countries including Lebanon, Russia and Turkey.
- 2. Mielke observed in a rural school with a student cohort almost entirely marked as white with no recent family experience of migration.

The ethnographic fieldwork entailed at each school (i) six weeks of intensive participant observation of the full school day with one class, in the first stage of fieldwork; (ii) participant observation in one history class (2 hours/week) for two school years; (iii) building rapport and trust with teachers and students; (iv) audio-supported observations for selected cases; (v) informal chats with staff in staff room, lunch, evenings; (vi) informal chats with students in break times, lunch, and other peer-group contexts; (vii) audio-recorded individual interviews with teachers and students; (viii) audio-recorded individual discourse-based interviews with teachers and students on particularly controversial curricular moments; (ix) group discussions with students (random class members); (x) friendship group discussions with students to the history class; and (xii) analysis of further media and documentation (for selected cases).

The ethnographic fieldwork enabled us to identify 'data stories', i.e. narratives generated through thick description and thick analysis of the empirical data. Selected data stories which illustrate key findings are included below.

#### WP 3: Structured survey

One doctoral researcher, Roman Richtera, provided a structured perspective, focusing on teachers. Richtera analysed the 30 semi-structured interviews (WP1) and identified patterns of textbook use and 'types' of controversial aspects of remembering the past. A structured survey was designed with closed and open-ended questions, including questions on (i) the use of policy curricula and textbooks (programmatic curricula), (ii) aspects of twentieth century history, (iii) psychological dimensions. Pre-tests were conducted, and all history teachers (Gymnasium) in Lower Saxony were contacted with a paper-and-pen survey. Given the unique structure of the German educational system, WP3 was able to survey the entire teacher population qualified to teach history in this federal state (N = 3.381; Niedersächsisches Kultusministerium 2009: 54). Drawing on descriptive statistics and multivariate statistical analysis (factor, cluster and discriminant analysis), Richtera investigated the media used in history education, the issues defined as central to cultural memory, and the theories and functions of history education.

#### WP 4: Discourse-based interviews

The PI conducted 'discourse-based interviews' with textbook editors and authors, extending the original work package to include interviews with the designers of digital educational media, not only in Germany, but also – to enable a comparative approach – with educational technology providers in the USA. The approach to discourse-based interviews developed Odell et al's (1983) method in order to elicit (i) general biographical information, (ii) reflections on how specific discourse items (e.g. sections of textbook texts or elements of digital media) were designed and/or used, and (iii) information on which other media (documentaries, policy

texts, news, social media, etc.) were utilized, and how the authors/designers imagined the user of their discourse item. At each stage, the interviewee was invited to elaborate, in collaboration with the interviewer (see Dyson & Todd 2010), their theories of change about curriculum making, classroom-based media practices and collective remembering. The selection of discourse items was based on initial findings from WP2 and WP3.

#### WP 5: Knowledge exchange activities

The research team presented findings on mediated memory practices, and generated debate at a series of events. Alongside presentations in Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Norway, Switzerland, the UK and the USA, the team hosted an international conference *The Politics of Memory Practices: Making the Past Present in Contemporary Education* at the Georg Eckert Institute from 21-24 February 2016.

Findings from the *Memory Practices* project were central to Macgilchrist's invitation to comment on the public *erinnern.kontrovers* event in Berlin from 9-10 July 2015, and to design a workshop on communism at the German Historical Museum in Berlin on 11 November 2016.

The project was also central in two keynote lectures at international conferences: *School x Memory*, organised by the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes in Prague, from 10-11 October 2014, and *New Discourses of Populism and Nationalism* at Edinburgh Napier University, from 21-22 June 2018.

Of the 26 academic publications emerging from the project (published, in press or under review at the time of writing), several are available online as open access. Further online publications make key findings available in accessible language to a broader audience (see below for details on publications).

## 3 FINDINGS

As noted above, at the outset of the project, very little was known about how people engage with institutionalized memory objects which have a strongly codified and normalising nature, such as textbooks. The focus of memory studies lay primarily on narratives and texts. This project responded to the numerous demands for more empirical research intro practices (Confino 1997; Hirst & Manier 2008). Similarly, in the field of curriculum studies and media studies, studies were beginning to translate the theoretical 'practice turn' into empirical projects (e.g. Bird 2003; Breidenstein 2008; Couldry 2004; Göttlich 2007; Kolbe et al. 2008). Combined with the PI's previous research on textbook production, the *Memory Practices* project aimed to finally provide substantial insights from a "long-term, politically and theoretically grounded ethnographic investigation that follows a textbook from its writing to its selling and then to its use" which Apple (1986) called for many years ago.

Against a broad background of post-foundational cultural theories, the project operated at the intersection of memory studies, curriculum research and media theory to investigate the four questions noted above. After briefly describing the theoretical advances generated through the research, this section will outline key findings to each of the four core questions addressed by the project.

#### **3.1 THEORETICAL INTERVENTIONS**

#### Memory practices

To explore memory practices, i.e., the 'doing' of memory, we draw on two overlapping approaches to memory. First, memory is today generally conceptualised as (i) *distributed* among social agents and artefacts rather than solely an internal mental process, (ii) a dynamic *performance* of remembering rather than a relatively static site of memory, and (iii) the result

of controversy as much as of canonization (see Erll 2005; Roediger & Wertsch 2008). Memory is seen as an active process, as socially/culturally/collectively constituted, and as 'essentially contested' (Olick & Robbins 1998: 126). To emphasise its dynamics, scholars have referred to 'collective remembering' (Middleton & Edwards 1990) or 'remembrance' (Rigney 2008, 2018) rather than 'memory'. Renewed attention is being paid to the mediality of collective memory (Erll & Nünning 2004; Sturken 2008); remembering is impossible without mediation. Nevertheless, as Beim (2007) notes, memory research still tends to analyse 'institutionalised collective memory objects' (e.g. print media, memorials, museums) rather than to observe situated practices. It thus tends to underemphasise the variability in the ways individuals interact with, and co-produce, collective forms of remembering. Drawing on practice theory, "memory practices" can be understood as "a temporally unfolding and spatially dispersed nexus of doings and sayings" akin to other practices such as cooking practices, voting practices or correctional practices (Schatzki 1996: 89, see Bräuchler & Postill 2010; Spitulnik 2002). As memory studies has become institutionalized, however, there is a danger that the centrality of power relations to practices will take a back seat for scholars of memory and remembrance (see Sturken 2008: 74). Overall, the Memory Practices publications have elaborated a view of remembering as constructed, contested, and thoroughly entwined with the (micro-)power relations that shape societies and communities.

Second, and more specifically, recent studies stress the role of *materiality* in remembrance. Buikema (2012), for instance, engages with the materiality of art in the becoming postapartheid of South Africa, foregrounding how the materials (e.g. refuse materials) relate to the artwork's political effect. In his work on mediated memory in 'post-scarcity culture', Hoskins (2011a, 2011b) argues that digital culture's networked connectivity has transformed how memory unfolds. As our engagement with the past is increasingly mediated by databases, code, protocological control and algorithmic accountability, scholars have debated how 'agentic' the digital data themselves are (Sluis 2010; van Dijck 2011). Ethnographers have explored how memory is enacted as users engage with material artefacts (Kontopodis 2009; Murakami 2014). The Memory Practices project synthesized this emerging body of work to elaborate the crucial insight that although language and verbal communication play an unavoidable role in human remembering, it is important to attend empirically to other, nonlinguistic mechanisms, for instance sociotechnical assemblages, materialdiscursive relations, materialisms, and medialities, to trace more delicately how memory practices unfold in contemporary schooling. This in turn led to theoretical reflections on 'media practices', 'mediality' and 'materiality' (see, e.g., Ahlrichs et al. 2015; Ahlrichs & Macgilchrist 2017; Macgilchrist 2013, 2018a, 2018c, 2018/i.E.; Macgilchrist, Christophe & Binnenkade 2015a, 2015b and Binnenkade & Macgilchrist under review; Macgilchrist & Richtera under review).

#### "Effectfulness" of educational media

School is a unique space to engage with media discourse and media use. In few other spaces in today's media-saturated world are media producers *required* to entextualize specific national/federal policy discourse. Similarly, in few other spaces in today's media-saturated world are people *required* to engage with particular media (textbooks, films, designated websites). It is generally accepted today that media reception is not a linear process. However, although the notion that specific media input can lead to specific causal media "effects" has been thoroughly debunked (see, e.g. Couldry 2004), media do arguably radiate what has been called "effectfulness" (*Wirkkraft*), i.e. expected and unexpected ways of folding into everyday opinions and practices (Krämer 1998: 14). Thus, in this project we assume that users will creatively appropriate media texts (Brauer & Lücke 2013; Ito et al. 2010; Radway 1988). The interesting empirical question is *what kinds of effectfulness* can be traced among these media texts, producers and users in specific settings, such as history education (see, e.g., Ahlrichs & Macgilchrist 2017; Macgilchrist 2018a; Macgilchrist et al. 2017). Overall, for instance, the memory practices enacted by pupils, curricula, teachers, authors, and the material affordances of textbooks tend to repeat entrenched (neo-)colonial hierarchies and, but also

exceed any overly simple understanding of how colonial rationality plays out in contemporary discourse (see below).

# Trajectories and lines of flight

The Memory Practices project began with the intention of investigating "text trajectories", a concept which has proven fruitful in the interdisciplinary field of discourse studies. Analyses have traced the path of a particular text as it is recontextualized in/by a series of organisations, people and media (Blommaert & Slembrouck 2000; Lillis 2013). The metaphor of the "trajectory" emphasises the dynamic process of text production, entextualisation or literacy practices across sites rather than focusing on texts-as-products (NewsTalk&Text Research Group 2011).

However, the metaphors which guide our research *matter*. Despite sophisticated reflections on the dynamics of trajectories (Fabrício 2014), the trajectory metaphor entails a calculable and determinate path which depends on predictable forces working on the object. Its specifically political purchase lies in its relative fixedness: Precisely because the "sequence [of an asylum application] is fixed: the text trajectory is a uniform administrative procedure" (Blommaert 2005: 63) are predictable "translocal, globalized trajectories of education and mobility" reproduced, i.e. exclusions and inclusions (Blommaert 2010: 74). Because the "trajectories of many texts are in fact strongly prescripted, powerfully anchored" to institutions such as schooling, they "regulate activities" and orient people as they/we construct "their/our imaginary of what counts as 'appropriate"" (Lillis 2013: 113).

During the data analysis, it became clear that the guiding metaphor of the text trajectory was constraining the kinds of findings which could emerge. Far less can be mapped out across determinable space-time than previous related research had suggested. We were reminded that the metaphors which guide our research matter epistemologically and ontologically. Thus, we searched for a new orientation.

Rather than "trace the trajectory" we began to "unravel the lines", to "make lines intersect", to observe "foldings" and "unfoldings" (cf. Deleuze 1997: 161). As Deleuze suggests, instead of focusing on the "beginning" and the "end", we shifted our attention to the middle; to the foldings and inflections among the major issues we have been describing (ibid.). The "AND is neither a union nor a juxtaposition, but the birth of a stammering, the outline of a broken line which always sets of at right angles, a sort of active and creative line of flight" (Deleuze 2002: 7f.). Drawing on the metaphor of "lines of flight" moves us away from the notion that the path can be calculated in advance. A line of flight can take off from anywhere in the middle and go in unexpected and indeterminate directions, including folding back in on itself. Deleuze suggests that we "think the past against the present and resist the latter, not in favour of a return but [...] so that something new will finally come about" (Deleuze 1988: 119).

With this theoretical intervention, the *Memory Practices* project picked up Kansteiner's (2002: 179) plea to acknowledge "the persistence of cultural traditions as well as the ingenuity of memory makers and the subversive interests of memory consumers". However, rather than Kansteiner's focus on how memory makers and consumers act according to identifiable interests (2002: 180), drawing on Deleuze enabled us to deconstruct the notion of "interests", and instead highlight unexpected and unplanned molecular connections and practices (see Macgilchrist et al. 2017).

#### **3.2 ENACTING THE CURRICULUM**

Research question 1 asked: How do teachers and students enact the curriculum on twentieth century history in their everyday media practices in the classroom? How are collective memories performed and stabilized/destabilized?

Overall, the project illustrated how history education is a media-saturated cultural site in which particular social orderings and categorizations emerge as commonsensical and others are contested. We observed how today's students in Germany are living "in" media within multiple, myriad, complex, mediatized, socio-political contexts (Couldry & Hepp 2016; Deuze, Blank & Speers 2012; Livingston 2009).

There is currently still very little research on educational media, or educational technology, which takes a practice approach, looking at the tangled webs, junctures, flows, doings and general 'messiness' of social life, and attending to the richness and complexity of what students and teachers are doing (Lather 2010; Law 2004). However, alongside the *Memory Practices* project, a number of further substantial ethnographically oriented empirical studies have emerged (for an overview, see Macgilchrist 2018/in press; Macgilchrist, Christophe & Binnenkade 2015b). Together, these form a body of research which has highlighted similar patterns of enacting the curriculum as textbooks and other educational media are used in multiple ways across different settings:

First, *printed textbooks are enacted as authoritative media*. Among the many media used in class (interactive digital apps, television, websites, audio materials, etc.), students attribute authority primarily to the printed textbooks: their accreditation process, their physical materiality, their semiotics create an aura of authoritative knowledge which students pick up (Ahlrichs 2017). This authoritative knowledge leads to the unquestioning acceptance of certain common-sense understandings of how the world works, e.g. the theory of history which sees past-present-future as a segmented, linear, causal chronology, embedded in a progress narrative. This commonsensicalness hinders a questioning of 'western', 'modernist' epistemologies, making it difficult to visualise entangled histories and mutual global dependencies (Ahlrichs & Macgilchrist 2017). These epistemologies, in turn, exclude forms of structural nationalism and racism more likely (Mielke forthcoming). And in turn, this structural and symbolic embedding of exclusions shapes the ways of living which are deemed valuable, thus helping some students to thrive, and blocking pathways to success for minority students (Ahlrichs 2017).

Second, *media practices range among three engagements with these authoritative texts*: (1) Reproducing dominant discourses by adhering to the authority of the textbook or of the teacher's interpretation of the text. (2) Remixing, inventing or recreating ways of engaging with the textbook, thus destabilizing predominant meaning-making with their own situated practices. (3) Resisting and interrupting the meanings on offer by explicitly contesting the meanings on offer (Ahlrichs et al. 2015; Ahlrichs & Macgilchrist 2017; Macgilchrist 2015c, 2016, 2018a, 2018c; see also Hillman et al. 2016; Romero 2016).

Third, students enact "tactics" or "lines of flight" which point away from expected uses of the textbook (Ahlrichs & Macgilchrist 2017; Macgilchrist et al. 2017; Mohn & Amann 2006; Romero 2016). Students demonstrate a keen awareness of how to use textbooks to get good grades, while simultaneously being playful, such as when a boy reads "Timbuktu" and calls "TIM-buktu" to his classmate, Tim (Macgilchrist et al. 2017: 353; see also Ahlrichs 2017); when a group of boys tease the ethnographer by saying Germany behaved terribly during colonial times, not because of Herero and Nama genocide, but because the German Empire did not have enough colonies (Macgilchrist et al. 2017; Mielke forthcoming); and when young people use the printed textbook as a wall behind which to exchange private messages or a weapon to kill a wasp (Ahlrichs 2017: 71).

Overall, the findings on the first research question identify the purchase of exploring the enacting of the curriculum by focusing not only on cognitive learning, student engagement or good history teaching, but on how students' mediated practices enable them to enact youth culture in the classroom, to perform identities, to be provocative or playful. Findings highlight the materiality and mediality of classroom practices, and heighten our awareness of, first, the persistent strength of dominant (nationalist and exclusionary) cultural memory and western

epistemologies, which has not waned in the face of today's digitally networked world; second, the elegant choreography of things, people, knowledges and cultural memory in the classroom; and third, the creative lines of flight away from official knowledge.

By attending to how authoritative educational media invite young people to adopt and reproduce dominant cultural memory, the *Memory Practices* team also showed the generative productivity of students' apparently "off-task" media practices, which interrupt and redefine cultural memory, as well as enact quite different forms of knowledge. Rather than understanding the latter as time-wasting activities, we instead read them as small, guileful, minoritarian practices; as tactics that "play on and with a terrain imposed [...] and organized by the law of a foreign power"; as tactical mobilities that "seize on the wing the possibilities that offer themselves at any given moment" and "make use of the cracks that particular conjunctions open in the surveillance of the proprietary powers" (de Certeau 1984: 37; see also Mohn & Amann 2006). Exploring mediated memory practices has thus identified an array of (often unintended) ways of making the past present.

#### 3.3 LINKS ACROSS POLICY, PROGRAMMATIC AND ENACTED CURRICULA

Research question 2 asked: Which linkages can be traced between policy curricula (e.g. national standards, federal curricula), programmatic curricula (e.g. textbooks) and enacted curricula (e.g. classroom practice)? Do, for instance, students or teachers contest official knowledge and memory practices? If so, how?

Research question 3 asked: What forms of interaction can be identified? How are new/mobile/popular media and private/family memories used in the enacted curriculum to shape, extend or dispute officially mediated forms of collective remembering and knowing such as textbooks?

During the research, it became clear that these two issues are intimately interwoven and can only be answered together. One central finding is the surprisingly strong link between policy curriculum and enacted curriculum. To highlight key findings, this report draws attention to (i) the surprisingly strong 'effectfulness' of the specific words of the policy curriculum in shaping the enacted curriculum and young people's 'hyperstating' of implicit public discourse, (ii) the 'inadvertent nationalism' enacted in contemporary classroom practices, (iii) the role of mediality and materiality in the cultural politics of memory practices, and (iv) the interruptions to dominant discourse enacted with digital technology.

# Hyperstating

German imperialism was terrible, a group of 15-year old boys tells Patrick, one of the PhD ethnographers on the Memory Practices team. "In what way?" he asks them, expecting a critique of the genocide of the Herero and Nama people in German South-West Africa (modern-day Namibia) or perhaps a post-colonial reflection on imperialist racism and colonialism more generally. One of the students, Oli (all names are pseudonyms) responds by saying, "England was a great power". Pascal says, "Yeah, Germany had nothing, like began relatively late [...] and that's why all the good bits were already taken". Max adds, "Yes, they only had little bits and pieces, a bit scattered".

This data story stems from one multi-sited case study in which we set out to trace a particular discursive trajectory through educational spaces. It is illustrative of the broad pattern of how policy, programmatic and enacted curricula are interconnected. Our core question for this specific case was: How do educational policies and media practices invite particular understandings of colonialism to be enacted? We followed this topic (colonialism) from its entextualization in a state history curriculum (policy curriculum) through its transformation into a textbook text (programmatic curriculum), its appearance in teachers' survey responses and in classroom practice (enacted curriculum) to these students' reflections.

The curriculum for this federal state specifies a very small number of concepts which students must learn about, including "British empire". The case identifies a range of attempts to critically appraise colonialism, imperialism and the competitive policies of the time. Nevertheless, this key concept from the policy curriculum – which arguably reproduces a 'great power' politics view of history – is refracted through teachers' priorities, textbook texts, classroom discussions and then, finally, 'hyperstated' in this group of students' statements. We use 'hyperstate' to mean a discursive position which appears shocking when the boys state it explicitly, but which is already subtly entextualized in curricular and media discourse. The students are, we argue, very acute analysts of the discourse to which they have been exposed in the school and in popular media. This hyperstating could also be identified in several other cases (see Macgilchrist et al. 2017; Mielke forthcoming).

#### Inadvertent nationalism

Looking in more detail at the stages 'between' the policy curriculum and the students' hyperstating, we posit an 'inadvertent nationalism' in German schools today.

Among social and political theorists, it has generally been agreed that the 'nation' and 'national sovereignty' have been 'consigned to the dustbin of history' (Mitchell & Fazi 2017). Global capital, post-national powers, the deficits of political legitimacy, the fusion of state and non-state violence, and the emergence of transnationally networked publics had made the 'strong nation' a relic of the past (boyd 2014; Brown 2010, 2011; Fraser 2005). At the time of writing, Brexit, Trump and the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) have led many observers to conclude that there is a renewed hankering for a strong nation, especially in what are thought of as 'established' liberal democracies.

A swathe of recent publications aims to explain the upsurge of what is variously called the far right, the alt-right, xenophobic populism or 'English nationalism' (Black 2018; Faulkner & Dathi 2017; Winlow, Hall & Treadwell 2017). Social media are often implicated in the rise of new nationalisms and populisms, since tweets, likes, shares and memes bring political positions directly to ordinary citizens, circumventing any traditional central authorities or gate-keepers (Cunningham 2018; Rolfe 2016).

Other publications have responded with tactics to contest these right-wing movements, arguing for a left populism (Mouffe 2018), encouraging the left to reclaim the nation state (Mitchell & Fazi 2017), or describing a new localism to help cities thrive through local connections and activities which bypass both right and left populisms (Katz & Nowak 2018). The proposed solution to 'digital populism' is often to teach more 'critical thinking skills' (Cunningham 2018; Ranieri 2016).

A third set of studies observes that pervasive symbolic constructions of national sovereignty and nationalism never disappeared at all, despite theories and empirical observations of waning sovereignty and post-national power flows. Most importantly here is Billig's (1995) classic *Banal Nationalism*, demonstrating how the nation is flagged in unmarked, quotidian ways every day, becoming the unquestioned common-sense backdrop, even for commentators who explicitly critique extremist nationalisms.

Expanding the notion of 'banal nationalism' for this specific context, several case studies from the *Memory Practices* project have pointed to what we have called 'inadvertent nationalism'. This is an unmarked, quotidian flagging of the nation. However, it differs to the phenomenon described by Billig in one key way: Although by no means an 'extreme' nationalism, the post office which hangs the flag outside its front door still *intends* to hang the flag outside and mark the nation. Our observations of the actors involved in formal schooling is that most explicitly *intend* to foster students' critique and questioning of nationalism. Yet, 'inadvertently', their practices foster a sense of Germany as a strong, superior nation.

In addition to the hyperstating noted above, a further 'data story' illustrates this process.

In an interview, a history teacher (pseudonym Birgit Rehling), was asked to describe a recent topic she had taught that 'went well'. She recalled with enthusiasm a sequence of lessons on the industrial revolution that she had taught in lower secondary school. She guided the class to think about labour practices in the eighteenth century, and the students noticed child labour. Responding to her students' interest in this topic, Birgit provided learning experiences for her students to adopt the perspective of children in the eighteenth century, e.g. writing personal letters.

Birgit recounted her positive feeling that putting themselves in the shoes of these had helped her students to avoid seeing the past as 'negative', and instead to begin to understand the reasons life was like that back then. Then she said:

```
01
      BR:
           ehm (-) and (.) in addition we then covered
 02
           why is it not like that anymore today (.)
 03
           ehm (-) and ehm (.) right at the end in the
  04
           last hour we then dealt with ehm (--)
->05
           where is it still like that today
 06 T: aha
->07 BR: so you see the two strands then=we (.)
->08
           went through s[omething got to a point ((punkt))
 09
      I:
                          [hm
->10 BR: other countries ohh (.) haven't yet reached
 11
           that point (.)
 12
      I: hm
  (Interview with history teacher, Germany, 2013)<sup>1</sup>
```

From the perspective of contemporary history education, Birgit is a competent teacher. She follows the students' interest, letting them take up a focus on child labour during industrialisation. She designs social interactions so that they empathize with children from the eighteenth century. She guides her students to see how different life was then, rather than letting them evaluate it from today's perspective. And she attends to the students' emerging sociality: she doesn't want them to see the past as 'negative' in contrast to their 'good' life today.

Yet at the end of the sequence, they talk about "where is it still like that today?" (line 5). And they reflect that "we went through something, got to a point, other countries haven't yet reached that point" (line 7-10). The banal, unmarked "we" (line 7) clearly refers to "this country" (Germany) in contrast to "other countries" (line 10). And there is a clear forward motion being articulated here: These are classic linear motion metaphors of the progress narrative, in which these young people (here, in Birgit's class) are addressed as 'subjects of privilege', subjects sitting at the end of history, subjects with whom 'the rest' of the world has yet to catch up. (An additional aspect is that the interviewer co-constructs this progress narrative with the "aha's" and "hm's" [lines 6, 12], standard procedure in liberal qualitative interviewing, which in this case colludes in reproducing the hierarchical discourse.)

These students are arguably living networked, connected, transnational lives. Research on young people shows how connected most of them are to affinity groups around the world, reading Manga, playing games with South Koreans, chatting to relatives around the world, following transnational digital nomads on Instagram. Yet here, in their everyday lives in schools, they meet the classic banal tropes of a progress narrative tied up in national supremacy. "Thank goodness 'we' live here, 'in this country', and not 'there', in one of 'those countries'".

Birgit, a young teacher at the start of her career and admirably enthusiastic about her chosen profession, agreed with a colleague earlier in the interview that a core goal of history education is to foster critical thinking, a critical approach to history, and a critical attitude towards everything that appears common sense. In this sense, this data story (presented in more detail

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> On the politics of different forms of transcription, see Ochs (1979).

in Macgilchrist [2017a]) illustrates the 'inadvertent' nationalism reproduced by mundane classroom practices today: Despite overt intentions and an explicitly critical orientation, 'inadvertently' the predominant cultural memory supports a linear, teleological development narrative, which posits the students' 'here' as the superior spacetime.

# Materiality and mediality

Hyperstating and inadvertent nationalism, as described above, focus on language. However, not only language enacts memory practices. The materiality and mediality of textbooks and other educational media also construct the contours of what is considered worth remembering about the past. Materiality is understood as the physicality of media: the pages, the hardcover, the tables on which they rest, the shiny surface of the tablet. Also, the material dimensions of digital data, the data centres, fibre optic cables and hardware, and the material economic relations of media production and distribution. Mediality refers to the recent shift in academic attention from 'what' a medium is, to a focus on the 'how' of mediation; on how we live 'in' media; on how socio-political-cultural orders are not only shaped by a textbook's 'text', but also by the ways in which words, images and materiality are choreographed into instances of 'mediation'.

The project identified how materiality was entangled in the enacting of memory practices in classrooms. The focus lay on how materiality co-constituted a past and simultaneously co-constituted exclusions, boundary-drawing and hierarchisations in the present, with a potential impact on the future. Ahrlichs (2017) identifies three sets of practices which construct (i) reality, (ii) order and (iii) connections. These include reification and abstraction, believing and critiquing, singularising and multiplying; categorizing and complexifying, tidying and messing up; chronologising and segmenting; linearising and fragmenting; connecting and disconnecting. Each of these complex, ambivalent pairs of practices involve socio-material assemblages with the potential for (inadvertent) essentialising, boundary-drawing and discrimination. In this sense, the materiality of a student flicking through pages to find a causal link between events in the past, or the materiality of a student using his finger to identify the 'facts' in his textbook, or the materiality of the glossy hardcover performing the authority of textbook knowledge, each illustrate the cultural politics of the textbook as material book (see also Ahlrichs & Macgilchrist 2017).

Considering the material contexts of producing textbooks and other media for schools highlights contemporary transformations in educational governance. Macgilchrist (2015a) traces the reduction of procedural authorization, the process of corporate consolidation and the increasing decentralization of educational media production in Germany. Each of these changes decreases state control over the programmatic curriculum, increasing the multivocality of materials in schools, and strengthening the role of an economic rationality in mediating memory practices in classrooms (see also Macgilchrist 2017b).

# Interrupting consensus memory

The foregoing could imply a linear impact of policy and programmatic curricula on classrooms and students, with the situated memory practices invariably enacting the consensus discourse. Although the findings show surprisingly strong links among the three curricula dimensions, the research also identified memory practices which 'interrupt' (Apple 2010; Lather 1991; Parkes 2011) the policy curricula. One 'data story' serves to illustrate this.<sup>2</sup>

In WP1, we asked teachers to recall instances in which students contested mediated representations of the past. One teacher told us the following about a Grade 9 history class.

"One student was supposed to give a presentation on rosa luxemburg and liebknecht and brought a video with her. ok, I said, why not, there are a lot of nice documentaries from zdf and that on youtube, and then she came with the most leftwing thing I have ever seen. it was historically inaccurate, it was, it was, it was really propaganda, dreadful, and I thought, this

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> This data story is replicated in parts from Ahlrichs et al (2015).

just can't be happening. and then the other students, they even noticed that something wasn't right. and so from that perspective it was quite interesting really." (Interview with history teacher, Germany, 2013, author's translation)

The teacher's account of her own reaction to the video clip the student brings to class uses several extreme-case formulations: it was "the most leftwing" thing she had "ever" seen; it was "dreadful" (*furchtbar*); she thought to herself, "this just can't be happening" (*es darf nicht wahr sein*). It was clearly not the sort of video she had been expecting, not the sort of extract one would find on mainstream German television (ZDF is the equivalent of the British BBC1 or BBC2). Indeed, the first hit in Google's video search for "Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht" was an eleven-minute clip produced by the "Anti-Imperialist Action" which matches the teacher's account.<sup>3</sup>

But the teacher reports that a student-led discussion arose on the politics of Luxemburg and Liebknecht, and on propaganda, politics and media representations. The video brings in a radically different perspective than textbook representations. Since at least the 1950s in (West) Germany, the politics of Luxemburg and Liebknecht have primarily been described under the heading of "anti-democratic thinking" and "anti-democratic tendencies" (Macgilchrist 2015b).

The video interrupts the predominant cultural memory: seen against a backdrop of previous curricular materials about this issue, the video brings into class an unusual political perspective for the history classroom, and for society at large. Although students have long been able to bring paper-based materials to class to contest dominant histories, we suggest that a new dimension to conflicts over what counts as worth remembering arises in the digital (or post-digital) world. It is now far easier to search for globally available digital text through YouTube, Google, and so on. And there is sufficient evidence that a majority of young people – the new *Homo Irretitus*, netted individuals – now discover new texts through recommender systems, through their connections on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, and other social networks (Saulauskas 2000).

What does this mean for memory practices? We know from other observations that students almost always visit pages that are among the first hits on Google. They rarely click to the second page of links. We also know that Facebook, for instance, is a strongly curated site. A complex set of algorithms determine which websites appear at the top of an individual user's Google search, and which links a Facebook user will see on their news feed. Algorithms, in the sense of straightforward recursive computational procedures, are now playing a strong role in what counts as worth remembering for whom. "Connective memory" (Hoskins 2011b) takes on an explicitly political dimension. Whereas programmers argue strongly that algorithms are objective and apolitical procedures, critical observers argue that when the algorithms of the major social networks increasingly take over the selection work which lay previously in the hands of editors, we are heading for "algorithmic censorship" or algocracy, the rule of algorithms, in which the algorithm decides what is worth knowing or remembering (Danaher 2014; Morozov 2013; Tufekci 2014).

School, of course, is far less in the public eye than Facebook in terms of debates on algorithmic censorship or algocracy. This apparently banal data story illustrates, however, how the circulation of a digital text, whether the student found it through a search engine, saw it on social media or was sent it directly by a friend, can bring unusual perspectives on concrete historical events into the classroom, interrupting the consensus and sparking a debate.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> The video is available here: <u>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hso4uSbgZ4A</u>

### **3.4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

The fourth and final question guiding the Memory Practices project asked: What insights can be disseminated among institutional stakeholders such as curriculum designers and the producers of textbooks and other educational media?

Concise versions of the findings above, selected for the specific audience, were shared with stakeholders:

- 1) Publishers: Actionable findings from the interview study (WP1) were presented in a short report to the educational media publishing house. The focus lay on findings with specific relevance to the revision of the history textbook used in the project schools. These findings resonated with the publisher's intentions to adapt the textbook and are visible in the new publication.
- Policy-makers: As digital media become more ubiquitous, observations from the enacted curriculum (WP2) have played a signal role in discussions with politicians and policy makers involved in 'digital education' at, e.g. *Leibniz im Bundestag* (2016, 2017, 2018), *Leibniz im Landtag* (2016, 2018) and the *Bildungspolitisches Forum* on digital education (2017).
- 3) Policy: In 2014, the Georg Eckert Institute was invited to participate in the consultation process for the Kultusministerkonferenz' recommendations on the role of "memory culture" (Erinnerungskultur) in political and historical education. Findings from the *Memory Practices* project impacted the GEI's input to this strategy, and were taken up in the final paper "Erinnern für die Zukunft" (KMK 2014).
- 4) Educators: At several events for historical/political education, the challenges of enacting memory practices in formal education were discussed, including controversies over multiple perspectives, migration, normativity, state control and digitality.
- 5) Public: The @discoursology Twitter handle was actively involved in debates about memory and practices for the duration of the project.
- 6) The project website is structured along stakeholder groups. It aims to make findings accessible 'for history educators', 'for curriculum designers', 'for textbook authors', and 'for scholars' (<u>http://memorypractices.macgilchrist.org</u>).

# **5 FURTHER RESEARCH**

Drawing on the methods developed and trialled in the *Memory Practices* research group, several follow-up projects have been designed. These extend the in-depth approach to the enacted curriculum in specific local, national and transnational settings, focussing on how classroom practice is changing as new textbooks or other new digital technologies are being used in schools:

- 1. *digDAS: Digitale Medien und Deutsche Auslandsschulen.* 07/2016 12/2016 (Lead F. Macgilchrist, funded by the German Federal Foreign Office, 57,300 EUR)
- globalDAS: Global Citizenship Education an Deutschen Auslandsschulen. 01/2017 – 12/2017 (Leads F. Macgilchrist, R. Spielhaus, funded by the German Federal Foreign Office, 109,700 EUR)
- 3. Reimagining Literacy Education: Being Literate in the Twenty-First Century. 10/2017 – 09/2020 (Lead L. Laidlaw, funded by Canada's Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, 192,285 CAD; ca. 128,000 EUR)
- 4. Playful Literacy Education across the Stages of Educational Development (PLEASED) 08/2018 07/2021 (Lead F. Macgilchrist, funded by Lower Saxony Ministry of Science and Culture; 63,700 EUR)

 Islamischer Religionsunterricht – Aushandlung, Vermittlung, Aneignung (IRU-AVA) 11/2018 – 10/2021 (Leads R. Spielhaus, F. Macgilchrist, funded by Lower Saxony Ministry of Science and Culture; 250,000 EUR)

The project had originally envisaged a stronger role for the 'theory of change' approach, which it employed as a theoretical approach and empirical method for data generation and analysis. Rowan et al (2002) contend the enacted curriculum is undertheorised. Theory of change approaches offer an exciting and novel way of addressing these issues (Church & Shouldice 2002; Church & Shouldice 2003; Cummings et al. 2007). Instead of assessing whether externally imposed criteria have been met, researchers in this tradition adopt an observer position, observing the criteria invoked by curriculum makers on all levels (i.e. including students). By doing so, this research identifies 'outcomes and beneficiaries that might have slipped below the radar of more conventional evaluation design' (Dyson & Todd 2010: 129). This approach offers a unique mode of generating and triangulating insights from a range of stakeholders on their assumptions about (i) what the problem is in the given context, (ii) the action to be taken to address the problem, and (iii) the goals/outcomes to be attained. A project on Islamic Religious Instruction (IRU-AVA), due to begin in 2018 draws on the experiences of the Memory Practices project to substantially develop this approach to the role of textbooks and other media in educational reform projects. Theory of change is also centrally embedded into the research design of a further collaborative research proposal with the University of Göttingen on the cultural politics of technology integration (submission 2018).

#### 6 POTENTIAL FOR COMMERCIAL APPLICATION OF FINDINGS

A commercial application of the research findings was not planned, and profitability is expressly not intended. The data was gathered under the strongest ethical considerations, including data privacy regulations.

#### **7 NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS**

The three doctoral theses were supervised by Prof. Dr. Regina Bendix, Georg-August-University of Goettingen; Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Bergem, University Siegen; and Prof. Dr. Herbert Kalthoff, Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz. Felicitas Macgilchrist was *habilitated* at the Technical University of Braunschweig.

In January 2016, Roman Richtera, Patrick Mielke and Felicitas Macgilchrist were invited to the University of Birmingham's Institute for German Studies (IGS) as Visiting Research Fellows within the DAAD-funded project "(Not) Made in Germany". Hosted by Dr. Sara Jones at the IGS, the team also worked closely with Dr. Debbie Pinfold at Bristol University.

#### 8 PROJECT-RELATED QUALIFICATIONS

- 1. Ahlrichs, Johanna. PhD, Johannes Gutenberg University of Mainz, submitted 2017; successfully defended 2018.
- 2. Macgilchrist, Felicitas. Habilitation, Technical University Braunschweig, successfully completed 2016.
- 3. Mielke, Patrick. PhD, University of Goettingen, submission expected 2018.
- 4. Richtera, Roman. PhD, University of Siegen, submission expected 2019.

In addition to completing her *habilitation*, the PI became Deputy Head of Department at the Georg Eckert Institute (GEI) in 2013. She was accepted as a mentee in the Leibniz Mentoring Programme from 2013-2014, became Acting Head of Department (GEI) in 2015, and was

appointed joint Professor of Media Research at the University of Goettingen and Head of Department (GEI) in 2016. In this sense, the project successfully fulfilled the strategic goals of the funding line "Women in Academic Leadership Positions".

#### 9 PROJECT-RELATED PUBLICATIONS

#### Edited volumes

- 1. Macgilchrist, F., & Richtera, R. (Eds.). (under review). *The Limits of Memory: What follows?* New York: Punctum.
- 2. Tribukait, M., Richtera, R & Macgilchrist, F. (Eds.) (under review). Media and Memory. *Historical Encounters (Special Issue)* (Vol 2018).
- 3. Macgilchrist, F., Christophe, B., & Binnenkade, A. (Eds.). (2015). Memory Practices and History Education. *Journal of Memory, Media and Society (Special Issue)* (Vol. 7(2)).

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- 4. Macgilchrist, F. (2018/in press). From texts to implementation and practice: Contributions to research on how students use educational media. In T. M. B. Garcia at al (Ed.), *Contributions to Educational Media Research*. IARTEM.
- 5. Ahlrichs, J., & Macgilchrist, F. (2017). Medialität im Geschichtsunterricht: Die Rolle des Schulbuchs beim Vollzug von 'Geschichte'. *Zeitschrift für interpretative Schul- und Unterrichtsforschung 2017*(6), 14-27.
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- 11. Macgilchrist, F. (2019/under review). Collaborative language work in the publishing industry. In C. Thurlow (Ed.), *The Business of Words: Wordsmiths, Linguists, and Other Language Workers*. London: Routledge.
- 12. Macgilchrist, F. (2017). Psychologie. In K. Roth, M. Wengeler & A. Ziem (Eds.), Handbuch Sprache in Politik und Gesellschaft (pp. 568-587). Berlin: de Gruyter.
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- 15. Macgilchrist, F. (2015). Bildungsmedienverlage: Zur Ökonomisierung in der Schulbuchproduktion. *Die Deutsche Schule, 2015*(1), 49-61.
- 16. Macgilchrist, F. (2015). Geschichte und Dissens: Diskursives Ringen um Demokratie in der Schulbuchproduktion. In S. Fegter, F. Kessl, A. Langer, M. Ott, D. Rothe & D. Wrana (Eds.), Erziehungswissenschaftliche Diskursforschung: Empirische Analysen zu Bildungs- und Erziehungsverhältnissen (pp. 193-209). Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.
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