

Internationale Konferenz vom 20.11.-22.11.2008 in Nürnberg

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Vortrag: Politische und symbolische Kämpfe über die Vergangenheit und die Zukunft. Menschenrechtsbewegungen in Südamerika

Abstract

The presentation looks at the historical transformations of the struggles around the meaning of a conflictual political past, focusing on the experience of the countries in the Southern Cone of South America –Uruguay, Chile, and particularly Argentina. There are multiple levels and layers at which these processes take place: from personal processes of healing and/or the maintenance of open wounds among survivors, through symbolic representations and cultural performances, to institutional practices such as trials, investigative commissions, economic reparations, monuments and territorial markers, or commemorations. State actors and societal ones –particularly the various groups identified as part of the human rights movements—participate in these processes.

At any moment, different actors express their will to present ONE narrative of the past, trying to make their own interpretation the hegemonic, legitimate, “official” or normal one, with the hope that it will become part of “common sense”, accepted by all. Yet struggles develop among conflicting and competing interpretations and memories of the past, and about the location of these understandings and memories in the democratization process.

The basic message is that the passage of time does not imply closure or a societal sense of having settled accounts with the past. The time dimension in histories of political confrontation and violence, of repression and suffering, is not linear –thus, the common sense saying “as time passes one forgets” is not true. What has to be recognized, then, is that looking at a conflictual and painful past, and searching for its meaning, is a never-ending undertaking, involving at the same time the memories of the past and the building of the future.

Zur Person:

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Forschungsgebiete: Menschenrechte, Staatsbürgerschaft, soziale Bewegungen, Gender, Familie, Erinnerung von Repression.

Ausgewählte Publikationen:

- Victims, Relatives, and Citizens in Argentina: Whose Voice Is Legitimate Enough? In Richard A. Wilson and Richard D. Brown, eds., *Humanitarianism and Suffering: The Mobilization of Empathy*. Cambridge University Press, in press
- Public memorialization in perspective: Truth, justice and memory of past repression in the Southern Cone of South America. *International Journal of Transitional Justice*, Vol. 1, Issue 1, March 2007
- Human Rights and the memory of political violence and repression: constructing a new field in social science. In Wood, Charles y Roberts, Bryan, eds., *Rethinking Development in Latin America*. University Park: Penn State University Press, 2005
- *Los trabajos de la memoria (State Repression and the Labors of Memory)*, Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2003)
- (editor) "Memories of Repression" (published in Spanish), Volumes 1-12