Digitization and (Trans-)National Memory
Workshop Program

10.00-10.15 Ellen Rutten, Introduction

10.15-11.15 Alexander Etkind (University of Cambridge), Keynote Lecture ‘The Memory Boom: A View from Eastern Europe’

11.15-11.40 Coffee break

11.40-12.20
*Transnationalizing memory studies*
Chiara de Cezari, ‘Thinking Memory Transnationally’
Luiza Bialasewicz, ‘Mapping Memory Across and Beyond Europe’

12.20-13.00
*Trans-European memory?*
Rob van der Laarse (VU/UvA), ‘Terrorscapes. Transnational Memory of Totalitarian Rule, Terror and Mass Violence in Postwar Europe’
Astrid van Weyenberg, ‘Repairing Europe’

13.00-14.30 Lunch break

14.30-15.10
*Post-Soviet digital memories*
Galina Zvereva (RSUH Moscow), ‘National Memory Technologies on Youtube: Construing the Soviet’
Mykola Makhortykh, ‘Different Shades of Neutrality: World-War-II Memories in Wikipedia’

15.10-15.30 Coffee break

15.30-16.30
*The digital, the transgenerational: family & postcolonial memory*
Paul Bijl, ‘Transnational Memories of Colonized Voices’
David Duindam, ‘Familial Traces: Digital Judaism in Minahasa’
Ihab Saloul, ‘Post-Memory & Oral History: Transgenerational Memory in Exile’

16.30-17.00 Concluding discussion

17.00. Festive closing at ‘De Zwart’ (http://www.yelp.nl/biz/cafe-de-zwart-amsterdam-2).
Session 1: Transnationalizing memory studies

Chiara Chezari

Thinking Memory Transnationally

In this presentation I will discuss my recent work in the field of memory studies, which can be broadly conceived as an attempt to rethink the ingrained methodological nationalism of this interdisciplinary field of research. I will first draw some preliminary conclusions from an edited volume on transnational memory that I am currently co-editing. Secondly, I will present my current research on two different though in a sense complementary cases of transnational memory, namely, the cosmopolitan politics of Palestinian heritage and the project of creating a new European memory by EU institutions.

Luiza Bialasiewicz

Mapping Memory Across and Beyond Europe

My presentation will explore some of the methodological and conceptual questions that I have been grappling with as part of the work on a new ERC funded research project entitled ‘Bodies across Borders: Oral and Visual Memory in Europe and Beyond’ (carried out in collaboration with oral history colleagues in Italy). Among other things, the project attempts to trace some of the new forms (and geographies) of trans-national ‘memory work’ of recent African migrants to Europe. One of the ways in which we hope to do this is by working with schoolchildren and young adults from migrant communities (from the Maghreb and the Horn of Africa) on participatory video-making and story-telling (textual, oral as well as video). The decision to use film and, in general, other visually-mediated forms of story-telling is part of an attempt both at de-colonizing migration narratives but also (and especially) at freeing these from cartographic limitations, moving beyond simple 'European'/’non-European’ categories of memory, identity and belonging. The key methodological question that I will try to highlight in the presentation, then, is: how can we narrate mobile subjects and mobile memories in a non-topographic, not-necessarily-bound-by-territorial-confines, fashion? Can new, digital forms of story-telling allow us to better capture and represent the multiple embodied and affective geographies that this research project seeks to render visible?

Session 2: Trans-European memory?

Astrid Van Weyenberg

“Repairing Europe”

The European Cultural Foundation’s overarching theme between 2010 and 2012 reads “Narratives for Europe.” The project’s corresponding website explains that the “disconnection between Europe and its citizens is being filled with new versions of old nation-based narratives,” generating the “urgent need to share our stories; to create new narratives for Europe – for today and tomorrow.” Previously existing narratives are to be adapted to fit within a transnational European context where they should help foster a pan-European identity. In my research I will focus on such “Europeanizing” processes in a number of
EU-initiated projects, such as museum exhibitions and touristic routes. I am interested first of all in the historical narratives that such practices construct and, secondly, in the processes through which these narratives are constructed. I consider these processes of adaptation, as existing narratives are re-interpreted to together construct the story of Europe.

Considering the relationship between these “new” Europeanising narratives and the existing regional, national, but also pre-national narratives on which they draw in terms of adaptation, allows us to pursue a number of important questions. For example, which (aspects of) previous narratives reappear and in which form? Which disappear and for what reason? What happens when the different histories that are drawn on conflict with one another? Who decides on the selection of the components that make up the story of Europe? And are there elements/texts/objects included in the transnational narrative constructions that possibly challenge a unifying history of Europe and that help to safeguard the plurality of stories and identities that the EU, with its “unity through diversity” motto, seems keen to protect. Questions like these help to examine the relationship between Europeanising narratives and the existing narratives with which they engage, thereby also furthering our understanding about how the national and the transnational relate to one another in constructions of “Europe”.

Rob van der Laarse

Terrorscapes. Transnational Memory of Totalitarian Rule, Terror and Mass Violence in Postwar Europe

Terrorscapes is a transdisciplinary, international network of scholars and professionals that will critically analyze how, where, when and/or if key places and times of twentieth-century terror and mass violence in Europe are presented, interpreted and represented. We use a range of perspectives and methodologies, as well as a comparative approach, to analyze how ‘memory discourses’ operate as vehicles of local, national, continental and global identity building in the present.

We seek to understand both what happened as well as how the space-times of memory have been collectively remembered, instrumentalized or forgotten. Rather than emphasize more ‘subjective’ or ‘objective’ approaches to memory, we aim to call attention to the complex interactions of materiality, texts and practices which may result in the re- and co-constitution of subject-object relations. For example:

• How are material remnants converted into traces and monumentalized (or forgotten)?
• How are witnesses included and created in archives and then used in historiography?
• What are the relations between fictional and historical narrations and how are they mediated through particular ‘discursive genres’ (movies, tv-series, other mass-media and new technologies of communications)?
• How do different types of memory places (memorials, museums, monuments, archaeological digs, artistic performances, ritual ceremonies, cemeteries, forgotten landscapes) and their afterlives manifest and mediate diverse memory-making policies?
• How is memory narrated through space?
• How is collective memory performed through “spatial practices” (tourism, commemorations, bodies)?

Through our collective comparative approach to Terrorscape, we pay attention to spatial narratives of memory, through geographical spaces and scales, material culture and landscapes, mediated ‘scapes’, national and regional heritage claims, and transcultural processes. We anticipate that the outcomes of our collaborative and comparative research may provide new models and conceptual maps that may help address and allow various parties to work through heritage dissonances, and contested and painful pasts. For this reason we work with a range of other international networks and institutions.

Session 3: Post-Soviet digital memories

Galina Zvereva

*National Memory Technologies on Youtube: Construing the Soviet*

The purpose of my paper is to discuss some technologies of production and consumption of national memory in new media. To address the issue, I have chosen youtube as a media platform.

Why youtube? Youtube is a convenient place where users talk about themselves and the others, express emotions, engage in controversies and come to conventions, demonstrate their own position or position of a group on behalf of which the user wishes to speak. At the same time it is the multifunction dynamic database that is constantly updated and changed. Youtube is an open communication space, flexible media environment in which different cultural meanings and values are produced, promoted and consumed. Users actively involved in the digitalization process play a major role in the formation of such a database and media environment.

Thus, the content of the mediatized national memory is produced by means of users’ contribution into the media environment and online communities. They apply advanced digital technologies; the mere possession of their algorithms allows users to fill information resources, transform information into different formats of knowledge, and create communicative spaces.

Important, that when users consume, domesticate, reconfigure digital technologies on youtube, they are defined and transformed by such technologies themselves.

My research interest is related to the question: how is the content of collective memory produced in users’ play with technologies, and how are the technologies of construing the national memory associated with the identification practices of users? In order to discuss this topic I would present the case-study of the “Soviet” component in the mediatized national memory, which is created and consumed by Russian users on youtube.

Mykola Makhortykh

*Different Shades of Neutrality: World-War-II Memories in Wikipedia*

In my presentation I examine the story of one episode of the Second World War – the seizure of Lviv by Germans on the 30th of June 1941 and the subsequent proclamation of the Act of Restoration of
the Ukrainian State. More specifically, I explore how this story is told in one particular media platform – the online encyclopedia Wikipedia – by users of different languages. I am especially interested in testing to what degree Wikipedia’s policies, which advocate for neutral and unbiased points of view, hold true when dealing with relatively distant – but traumatic – pasts. In my talk I also unravel how these policies influence the formation of different ‘shades of neutrality’ among different language versions (English, Polish, Russian and Ukrainian) of the same entry within Wikipedia.

**Session 4: Digital, transnational, transgenerational: family & postcolonial memory**

**Ihab Saloul**

*Post-Memory and Oral History: Transgenerational Memory in Exile*

This article contributes to contemporary discussions on the ways in which oral history can function as a social framework for transgenerational memory, especially the issue of what happens when the activity of remembering is fragmented in a case of historical disaster. Relying upon the discussion of one of the basic concepts in memory studies, “post-memory”, I will analyze Palestinian second and third generations’ oral narratives of al-Nakba (1948 Israeli independence, or ‘The Catastrophe’ as it is known in Palestine). In my analysis I will present an alternative mode of reading oral narratives not simply as historical witness accounts but as memories of life trajectories in the everyday. This alternative mode, I will argue, can help us both to refine disciplinary approaches beyond national frameworks of historical representation of past and present experiences of catastrophe, and to supply insights at the level of exilic narratives’ depiction of current affairs.

**Paul Bijl**

*Transnational Memories of Colonized Voices*

This paper investigates the transnational cultural memories of writers who were subjected to European colonization. Focusing on digitization and the specific case of the Javanese writer Raden Adjeng Kartini (1879-1904), it asks how her voice has been embedded on the internet in a wide variety of contexts.

**David Duindam**

*Familial Traces: Digital Judaism in Minahasa*

Last November I visited my ‘second cousin once removed’, Toar Palilingan/Yaakov Baruch. This Indonesian resident converted to Judaism upon discovering our shared great-great-grandfather Elias van Beugen was a Dutch Jew. Toar/Yaakov learned about his new religion through the internet and built a synagogue in the predominantly Christian region Minahasa, North Sulawesi. He now actively propagates his religious life through Facebook.

This paper discusses the different ways in which Yaakov Baruch has discovered, maintained and produced his Jewish heritage. Does the technology he uses have a crucial impact on this process, or is it
just a tool for a more or less intentional search for his roots (Helmond 2010; Ernst 2012)? And how are these digital practices connected to physical spaces, intergenerational and intercontinental family memories?