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Literature Review

The role of cultural practitioners in managing memories of disputed territories

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Part 2 of 4: The Relationship between Memory, Territoriality and Cultural Practice
- David Clarke

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Contents

Abstract

The Relationship between Memory, Territoriality and Cultural Practice - David Clarke

Memory and Cultural Heritage: From Reconciliation and Peace Building to Pilgrimage and Tourism- Weronika
Czyżewska-Poncyłjusz, Umber bin Ibad, Joanna Wawrzyniak

Bibliography

The Relationship between Memory, Territoriality and Cultural Practice -

David Clarke

In this first contribution concerning the role of cultural practitioners in managing memories of disputed territories, David Clarke explores the social nature of the production of space through the 'spatial turn' and the interaction between territoriality, memory and conflict. Building on the work of geographers and cultural theorists, David highlights the need to go beyond research focusing on the narratives of memory and to explore the lived experience of place, embodiment and performance in order to examine the potential of artistic practices in promoting co-existence and cultural exchange.

Memory, Territory and the Spatial Turn

The post-Cold War period has seen the rise of parallel theoretical pre-occupations in the arts and humanities: the increased prominence of the study of 'memory' and what has been called the 'spatial turn' (Wegner 2002). Both trends characterize broad fields of enquiry. However, generally speaking, we can state that memory studies, as it has come to be known, is above all concerned with how human societies construct their understanding of the past in the present, drawing on symbols, discourses, narratives and cultural practices. The spatial turn, which has been driven primarily by the work of cultural and political geographers, seeks to understand the social nature of the production of space. The social construction of these two categories (shared history and shared space) is understood as providing 'the context for modern identities – and the often-rigorous contestation of those identities' (Hoelscher and Alderman 2004, 348).

Across a range of disciplines that concern themselves with conflict, there is a recognition that there is a close relationship between constructions of space (particularly in terms of territory), shared understandings of the past, and the potential for conflict and violence between groups. As political scientists such as Manekin, Grossman and Mitts (2018, 1) have observed, for example, the link between territory and political violence is well established, as is the relationship between such conflict and the mobilization of symbolic claims to territory, including historical claims (Cf. Alexander B Murphy 1990). Where ownership and control of territory is in dispute between different groups, as McDowell and Braniff note (2014, 15),

‘[c]ontrolling perceptions of what happened and what did not happen within that place is of the utmost importance to groups vying for power and territory.’

In order to understand the potential contribution of cultural practitioners to managing such conflicts, it will be helpful to establish the relationship between memory and territory in theoretical terms, paying particular attention to that branch of memory studies that concerns itself with ‘cultural memory’, understood as ‘that body of reusable texts, images, and rituals specific to each society in each epoch, whose “cultivation” serves to stabilize and convey that society’s self-image’ (Assmann 1995, 132). In surveying this literature, we will also note intersections between the literature emerging from the discipline of memory studies and the work of cultural geographers, philosophers and others who concern themselves with the social production of space, particularly in relation to the construction of territory.

A first question concerns the nature of territory itself and the relationship of territory to memory. Cultural geographers, political geographers and political scientists understand modern territoriality in terms of an intersection between space, power and meaning. Whereas a shift in conceptions of the state in the late middle ages in Europe increasingly identified the state as a territorial unit, as opposed to relying on the authority of the prince to denote the geographical limits of state power (Sassen 2006, 80), the ethno-national states that emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries sought to align clearly delineated and territorial units with ethnically, linguistically and culturally homogenous populations. However, such (supposed) national homogeneity and territorial integrity also had to be discursively and symbolically produced. As scholars such as Delaney (Delaney 2005) and Newman observe, for example, this process involved an ‘interaction and feedback between the concrete and symbolic dimensions of the territorial discourse’ (Newman 1999, 26), mediated by institutions of power (Paasi 2000, 8). The articulation of the relationship between bounded territories, with their particular geographical features, and myths of origin, homeland and shared history led to forms of ‘geopeity’ (Newman 1999, 14). In other words, as Berenskoetter argues, the ‘national biographical narratives’ of modern states were increasingly understood as playing out at ‘sites which matter’ (2014, 276) to the national collective in question, and which allowed that national collective to experience a stable sense of self lived out in a distinct and historically grounded territory.

Theoretical work in memory studies recognized the relationship between cultural memory and territory early on, although this question has not always stood at the centre of researchers' concerns. Maurice Halbwachs (1877–1945), considered by many to be the founding father of memory studies, is best known for his introduction of the notion of competing 'frames' of collective memory, which characterize the various memory communities that an individual may adhere to. However, Halbwachs was also interested in the relationship between such collective frames of memory and the landscapes inhabited by those groups (Middleton and Brown 2011). In his essay 'The Legendary Topography of the Gospels in the Holy Land', Halbwachs points out the ways in which the 'truths' of groups become anchored in concrete forms, such as key events, key personalities, or key localities (Halbwachs 1992, 200). 'A society', Halbwachs argues, 'first of all needs to find landmarks' (1992, 222): in other words, in order for the memory of the past to be retained and organized, it needs to find symbolic expression in spatial terms. This chimes both with Berenskoetter's observations, noted above, and also with Zerubavel's assertion of the importance of continuity of place for the rhetoric of historical identity (Zerubavel 2003, 40–43). Smith, a key scholar of ethno-nationalism and memory, has described such processes in terms of a 'territorialization of memory' (Smith 1999, 151). In a more recent phenomenological account of the relationship between place, memory and collective identity, Trigg points out that such territorialisation also emerges from the development of shared spatial practices (e.g. forms of commemoration), instituting a sense of shared 'worldhood', 'the result of which is the assimilated sense of a collection of people having an identity' (Trigg 2012, 157–58).

However, far from presenting a straightforward account of how one (national) group is able to impose its own memory on a particular territory in order to assert a sense of continuity and identity, memory studies has also demonstrated that territories (and the symbolically charged places within those territories) are subject to ongoing contestation and evolution, in which different forces struggle over the meaning of the past and the meaning of territory as an expression of that past. Drawing on the insights of the spatial turn in the arts and humanities, Schlögel has noted that all spaces remain fundamentally plural, bearing the material and cultural traces of successive collectivities (2009, 68–69). At the same time, as Jordan shows, even within a single nation or culture, the selection of the particular material traces of the past

in the landscape that will be constructed as significant, preserved and incorporated into the discourse of cultural memory are subject to a process of negotiation between institutions and citizens, resulting in an 'uneven' landscape of remembrance of remembering and forgetting (2006, 173).

Geographer Doreen Massey challenges the notion that particular locations or territories need to be understood as either founded on a reactionary and exclusionary sense of identity, or as losing any sense of coherent identity due to competing understandings of them. Rather, she argues that 'locations are *constructions* out of intersections and interactions of concrete social relations and social processes in a situation of co-presence' (Massey 1994b, 135). Noting that "'place" and "community" have rarely been coterminous' (1994b, 147), Massey nevertheless asks how 'to hold on to that notion of geographical difference, of uniqueness, even of rootedness if people want that, without it being reactionary' (1994b, 152). Rather than seeing places (or, one might argue, territories) as the source of identity for one community, Massey argues that it is more productive to think of them as 'constructed out of a particular constellation of social relations, meeting and weaving together at a particular locus' (1994b, 154). Considering the role of history in the construction of place, Massey points out how the struggle to define the past of a place (a term she uses broadly to encompasses both localities and territories up to the national level) is part of the struggle to define its present and future, and should therefore be considered in the light of power relations (1994a, 190). Massey observes how competing actors struggle to define place as an 'envelope of space-time' that fixes a single meaning based on a particular understanding of the past (1994a, 188). In contrast, Massey suggests that it is necessary for us to find alternative conceptions of the relationship between place and the past that recognise 'that what has come together, in this place, now, is a conjunction of many histories and many spaces' (1994a, 191). Rather than the identity of place dissolving into many competing memories, Massey is arguing that coherence can be maintained through acknowledgement of the particular relationship of different pasts at a specific location.

Such a conception of the relationship between memory and territory clearly challenges ethno-nationalist conceptions. In situations of disputed territory, the polyvalence of any space can be perceived as a threat to the supposed homogeneity of the territory claimed by one group or

another. Under such situations of conflict, competing groups seek to emphasise the expression of their own history and identity in spatial terms, while presenting the history of others' presence in the landscape as a threat to the integrity of the territory in question. Here cultural practitioners, intellectuals, academics and officials may generate practices that seek to establish the territory in question as always having been part of the nation. These practices will be either 'deconstructive' or 'reconstructive' (Polak Springer 2015, 221) in nature, i.e. they either seek to dismantle the traces of the 'alien' culture, or to 'rediscover' traces of the appropriate national culture in the territory. As Paasi argues, cultural forms such as literature can play a role in the embedding of 'hegemonic narrative accounts of the territory in question', contributing to the 'symbolic narratives and material iconographies of the nation' (Paasi 2000, 9–10).

If cultural practices typical of ethno-nationalism tend to focus on the integrity of territory, an inherently exclusionary focus on ethnic, cultural and linguistic homogeneity, and the construction of historical continuity, what theoretical positions are there available to us that allow us to think about the role of cultural practice in challenging such understandings, particularly in relation to disputed territories and the populations who live in or long for them?

Yuri Lotman's theory of the semiosphere offers one approach to thinking about the relationship between cultural practice and space. Lotman argues that cultures create their own spaces, constructing borders with other cultures (Lotman 1992, 131), which are nevertheless permeable. Lotman's notion of culture as semiosphere by no means indicates a homogenous lifeworld either side of such borders, but rather insists that each semiosphere is itself striated by different levels of culture. Nevertheless, he maintains that 'the life of culture [...] demands a special space-time structure, for culture organizes itself in the form of a special space-time and cannot exist without it. This organization is realized in the form of the semiosphere and at the same time comes into being with the help of the semiosphere' (Lotman 1992, 133). Despite this dividing function, the border is presented by Lotman as a particularly productive location for the creation of new meaning:

the hottest spots for semioticizing processes are the boundaries of the semiosphere. The notion of boundary is an ambivalent one: it both separates and unites. It is always the boundary of something and so belongs to both frontier cultures, to both contiguous

semiospheres. The boundary is bilingual and polylingual. The boundary is a mechanism for translating texts of an alien semiotics into 'our' language, it is the place where what is 'external' is transformed into what is 'internal', it is a filtering membrane which so transforms foreign texts that they become part of the semiosphere's internal semiotics while still retaining their own characteristics. (Lotman 1992, 137)

Such a conception appears to acknowledge the necessity of cultural spaces, which may or may not be coterminous with geographical territories, while also celebrating the border as a site of creative engagement.

In Lotman's writing, the artistic work also takes on a special significance in terms of the creation of its own internal semiosphere, which is a reflection of, although non-identical with the space of the real world. According to Lotman, 'the structure of the space of a text [or a work of art, DC] becomes a model of the structure of the space of the universe, and the internal syntagmatics of the elements within a text becomes the language of spatial modelling' (Lotman 1977, 217). While the artistic work is always understood in relation to dominant spatial models in the culture's semiosphere (Lotman 1977, 218), a given work nevertheless constructs its own spatial model that comments on or conflicts with that which predominates in the cultural semiosphere (Lotman 1977, 224).

According to Nöth, Lotman's theory leads us to a view of cultures and artistic works as separate semiospheres, which are nevertheless 'in reciprocal inter-change' (Nöth 2015, 17). The notion that each artistic work could be a model of space, which is in dialogue with more dominant models in the broader culture, points to a particular role for art in challenging and critiquing the analogy of territory, culture and identity, especially given the fact that Lotman identifies borders between semiospheres as privileged sites for the creation of new meaning.

Lotman's approach bears comparison with the writing of French sociologist Henri Lefebvre, who is nevertheless more explicit about the potentially subversive effects of artistic practice in relation to culturally dominate spatial models. Lefebvre introduces three analytical categories: spatial practice, representations of space and representational spaces. The first category equates to the daily movement through and use of space by individuals, but in a context determined by the power of institutions and engrained spatial habits and routines (Lefebvre 1991, 38). The second category concerns what we might call the ideological conceptualization of space by those with particular kinds of power (e.g. planners, scientists). However, the third

category encompasses a relatively autonomous sphere of imagination, in which space is 'directly *lived* through its associated images and symbols' by its inhabitants and users, but also by artists and philosophers, who have the capacity to imagine space differently (Lefebvre 1991, 39).

Lefebvre stresses the ways in which such representational spaces, either as they emerge from the imaginations of those who live in a particular space, or in artistic practice, are freed from the instrumental sense-making and ideologically-driven coherence of official representations of space (Lefebvre 1991, 41). Emphasising the often unique nature of representational spaces (Lefebvre 1991, 42), Lefebvre comes to regard artistic practice as containing 'potentialities' for resistance to ideological representations of space (1991, 349), but also links these very closely to 'sensory-sensual', bodily or lived experiences of space (1991, 363). In this way, Lefebvre's work calls on us not simply to see the artistic work as a site of resistant meanings, which challenge predominant conceptions of space, but also of resistant (affective, bodily) experiences that call into question dominant ideologies. Although Lefebvre arguably fails to offer a fully worked-through theorization of the role of the body in representations of space its relationship the creative power of everyday experience (Simonsen 2005, 9), and remains vague on the commonalities between such experience and artistic production, his work is nevertheless provocative in terms of its emphasis on the potential of everyday experience and its reflection through artistic practice to challenge ideological constructions of space.

US geographer Edward Soja takes up Lefebvre's ideas, emphasising a 'trialectic' relationship between what he calls Firstspace, Secondspace and Thirdspace. Soja modifies Lefebvre's category of spatial practice, which he regards as that space which is subject to empirical measurement or quantification. This he contrasts with the Secondspace of (ideological) representations of space, and the resistant representational space of Lefebvre's 'lived space'. Key to Soja's project is the attempt to draw parallels between Lefebvre's approach and that of a range of poststructuralist and postmodern thinkers, including feminist geographers and postcolonial cultural scholars. He proposes that their attempts to imagine other kinds of space, be they socially marginal or interculturally hybrid, as well as new forms of resistant spatial practice, can be understood as a challenge to 'closed spatial epistemologies' (Soja 1996, 82). In his desire to incorporate a range of thinkers and practices under the heading of Thirdspace,

Soja pleads for a 'radically open' (Soja 1996, 82) definition of the term, which he prefers to regard as 'intentionally ambiguous' (Soja 1996, 162). Ultimately, what unites these different kinds of Thirdspace in Soja's view is simply '*an alternative envisioning of spatiality [that] directly challenges [...] all conventional modes of spatial thinking*' (Soja 1996, 163; emphasis in original). While such a definition is so broadly drawn that its analytical power is arguably limited, like Lefebvre Soja does focus our attention on the possibility of cultural practices that offer alternative accounts of particular spaces that are open to difference and resist ideological closure, while at the same time refusing to draw distinctions between such practices where they are the work of artists and intellectuals and everyday experiences of 'lived space', suggesting a potential continuum between artistic and social practice. Nevertheless, his exploration of Thirdspace places less of a theoretical emphasis on embodied experience than does Lefebvre's account.

Memory, Territory and the Affective Turn

This emphasis on 'lived' space also raises the question of what is at stake in the memory of disputed territories. As Misztal (2010) notes, memory studies has shown a marked tendency to focus on narratives, investigating the relationship between the construction of personal life-stories and socially constructed narratives, for example of the nation. Consequently, memory conflicts are often presented as primarily driven by competing narratives, even if, as Cento Bull and Hansen (2016) argue, commitment to specific narratives has a significant affective element, in that they construct different kinds of emotional relationship to other groups. In artistic practice, however, it is clear that it is not (just) narrative that is at stake. To give one illustrative anecdote, we can think about the experience of attending a performance in the synagogue in Sejny, Poland, to hear members of the local Polish and Lithuanian communities play hybrid forms of klezmer and eastern European folk music, while the audience can also see the names of Sejny's murdered Jewish community around the walls of this repurposed building. The experience of participating in this multi-generational orchestra, which has been playing for over 20 years, or the experience of sitting in an audience to listen to them play, can certainly be

interpreted as a kind of memory work, but the question remains as to how it is lived as memory work. What kind of habits, feelings and dispositions does such experience help to elicit and form, which cannot perhaps be reduced to interpretations of the site of the cultural work or the formulation of memory narratives? If we are paying attention to the role of cultural practice in memory work, then it seems important that we must also pay attention to the fact that participation in such practice is also embodied, associative, affective and part of a continuum of becoming that is bound up with everyday experiences of place.

One starting point for thinking about this dimension of cultural practice is the work of geographers and cultural theorists whose approaches have been identified with another 'turn' in arts and humanities research, namely the 'affective turn' (Glough 2007; Hemmings 2005). Among cultural geographers, such theorizing draws attention to the complexities of the lived experience of place, paying attention in particular to affect, embodiment and performance. Rather than seeing meanings and values as imposed upon situated bodies, such theory understands these meanings and values as 'emerging *from* practices and events in the world' (Anderson and Harrison 2010, 6). In addition, rather than seeing human beings as the source of all meaning, such theorizing envisions humans as 'in contact relations of modification and reciprocity with their environs', proposing that 'all action is interaction' (Anderson and Harrison 2010, 7). In this sense, it sees bodies (both human and non-human) as enactments, and not only as expressions of certain cultural meanings (Anderson and Harrison 2010, 9). This 'associative understanding of the social' breaks with constructivism's 'focus on collective symbolic orders' (Anderson and Harrison 2010, 16) and discursivity (Hemmings 2005, 549), which are regarded as fundamentally volatile orderings that are open to the possibility of change emerging through social practice (Anderson and Harrison 2010, 22).

As Jones (2011) points out, the affective turn's account of the ongoing becoming of the self in space can also pay attention to the role of individual and collective memory in shaping the relational experience of the present moment. As he and Garde-Hansen argue elsewhere, what are sometimes called 'non-representational' approaches encourage us to see memory not '(simply) as a burden of the past', but rather as 'fundamental to "becoming", and a key wellspring of agency, practice/habit, creativity and imagination' (2012, 8). By emphasising individual, processual and open-ended engagements with place and memory, scholars working

with affective and non-representational approaches answer Massey's call to understand place as multiple and becoming, which works against dominant accounts of geographical location that seek to define and delimit both geographically and temporally by insisting on historical fixity and an exclusionary spatial ordering.

Campbell's account of 'affective critical regionality' provides one version of such an approach to the relationship between individuals and specific geographies, although the role he gives to memory is relatively understated. In his analysis of the American West as imagined region, he counterposes the myths and entrenched cultural meanings of this space (what we might call the cultural memory of the West) with the disruptive affective and embodied processes experienced by individuals in contact with the geography of the region and its other inhabitants, as represented in poetry, prose and 'fictocriticism' by a number of regional authors. The exploration of such experiences, Campbell argues, undermines 'damaging notions of "invariance" and "endurance", providing comforting reassurance about place as stable, unchanging, and essentialized in the face of society's shifting processes' (Campbell 2016, 18). It also challenges the assumption that a region is 'the precise container of a "presupposed" people' (Campbell 2016, 13).

Karen Till's examination of place-based artistic activism that engages with questions of memory echoes some of the concerns outlined above. She critiques memory studies for what she regards as its tendency to regard place as a palimpsest of multiple symbolic orders that can be un- or recovered in the present and argues instead for a recognition that artistic practice at sites that have been marked by past violence can create 'a socially engaged form of memory-work through site-specific (re)makings of a traumatized region [...], establishing active places of memory that are more than locations of past events or nodes of national topographies' (Till 2008, 103). Such work, Till claims, treats places as 'embodied contexts of experience, but also porous and mobile, connected to other places, times and peoples' (Till 2008, 105). In doing so, Till argues, place-based artistic practice can 'communicate non-linguistic, bodily forms of knowing and feeling' and 'complex interface between bodies, subjectivities and social life' (Till 2008, 106).

Nevertheless, it should also be pointed out that non-representational and affect-oriented approaches to some of the issues we are dealing with here have been subject to critique for their apparently outright rejection of the importance of the narrative and the discursive. This can be seen, for example, in Brian Massumi's critique of constructivist cultural studies, against whose discursive focus he sets an emphasis on affect as a the body sphere of chaotic potentiality (affect) that is limited and reduced by its emergence into representation (understood broadly as any kind of mediated consciousness) (Massumi 2002). According to Massumi, the subversive potential of this sphere of affect lies in its un-assimilability to representation, which always leaves a remainder that, in its virtuality, points to the possibility of change. Critics of such approaches have accused theorists like Massumi of creating an artificial divide between the affective and the discursive that is tenable neither from a neuroscientific (Leys 2011), nor from a pragmatic point of view, with Wetherell (Wetherell 2012, 2013) in particular observing that in any given situated co-presence of human beings, there is a constant shifting back and forth between the felt and the discursively expressed. Wetherell describes this phenomenon in terms of 'affective-discursive practice'.

Ben Anderson's study of how 'affects relate to and become part of spatio-social relations' (2014, 1) also cautions against two key, interconnected assumptions of non-representational versions of affect theory, namely that affect exists before and in excess of the sphere of representation, and that its excessive nature is inherently subversive of such orders. He asserts instead, quoting Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (2003, 19; Anderson 2014, 6) that '[a]ffects can be, and are, attached to things, people, ideas, sensations, relations, activities, ambitions, institutions, and any number of other things, including other affects', adding on his own account that

[a]ffects are constantly infusing embodied practices, resonating with discourses, coalescing around images, becoming part of institutions, animating political violences, catalysing political communities, and being known and intervened in, amongst much else. (2014, 6)

Rather than assuming that affect is something pre-existing representations (e.g. images, discourses, ideas of political community), Anderson therefore sees affect as something attached to such representations, but not unalterably so. Instead, he suggests that we need instead 'to pay attention to how representations function affectively and how affective life is imbued with representations' (2014, 14):

Affect is not some kind of ungraspable exteriority that representation can only fail in relation to. Instead representations are themselves active interventions in the world that may carry with them or result in changes in bodily capacity or affective conditions. (2014, 60)

Furthermore, in stressing the relationship between affect institutions, collective identities and violence, Anderson also questions the claim that affect is an inherent challenge to (oppressive) social order. Rather, he notes, ‘individual or collective affects become object-targets for action’ (2014, 24) on the part of ‘apparatuses’ of various forms of power, which are understood not simply in discursive terms, but which rather consist of

a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory discourses, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions – in short, the said as much as the unsaid. [...] The apparatus itself is the system of relations that are established between these elements. (2014, 34)

Anderson’s basic point here is that affect attaches itself through a range of interconnected social practices, in ways that may reinforce the dominant order just as much as they have the potential to challenge it. In the case of the disputed territories that are central to this project, one could point out that discourses of ethno-nationalism and the institutions that propagate them produce strong affective attachments, and that cultural practices can contribute to the attachment of certain kinds of affect (fear of the other, pride, mourning of loss, desire for revenge) that perpetuate conflict and an exclusionary understanding of territory.

Equally, however, Anderson does not see the function of affect only in relation to such apparatuses. While he argues that it ‘is important to trace [...] whether and how knowledges of affective life are inscribed in specific power relation or sets of power relations’ (2014, 75), he also argues that everyday life is not reducible to such power relations and ‘may involve other forms of organisation and processes of mediation’ (2014, 76). Anderson suggests that we pay attention to the ways in which ‘capacities to affect and be affected may be formed through a geo-historicity of encounters, or the way in which space provides a setting and support for encounters’ (2014, 92–93). While there is more to say about the detail of Anderson’s argument, he asks us to pay attention to the situatedness of embodied human subjects, both historically and geographically, and to consider how their experience of that situation is mediated by

affectively charged relations with other embodied human subjects, forms of social organization and practice, forms of representation, and the physical environment.

Anderson's view of the affective nature of encounters characterized by their 'geo-historicity' is broadly compatible with Murphy's recent analysis of the relationship between place, memory and artistic practice. Although writing in another context (that of traumatic memories of violence in Latin America), Murphy argues that artistic interventions can take the form of 'memory mapping', understood as

the aesthetic process of representing the affective, sensorial, polyvocal, and temporally layered relationship between past and present, anchored within the specificities of place. Memory mapping works to develop affective, visual maps of the relations between bodies, memories, lived experience, and the mnemonic potency of physical objects and spaces. (Murphy 2019, 21)

Although Murphy's focus, as the quotation above demonstrates, is primarily on the visual, she also notes that such 'mapping' could incorporate other forms of the sensory (2019, 189). Also, like Anderson, she sees no contradiction between the narrative or discursive, on the one hand, and the affective on the other, pointing to the potential of artistic practice to 'weav[e] affective, narrative webs' (2019, 188) at particular places:

How memory is mapped onto and through bodies, images, and specific places matters, as does how a story is recuperated, the efficacy of its transmission, and what connections are drawn to the present. (2019, 188)

It would be tempting to see cultural practice that engages with disputed territories simply in terms of the attempt to challenge a potentially dangerous representation of particular spaces as ethnically homogenous regions that have 'always been' the rightful location of one group or another. Representing other pasts, for example of co-existence and cultural exchange, undoubtedly has a value in challenging ethno-nationalist ideology, but affective approaches to place and memory show us that we need to consider what role the lived experience of cultural practice (whether as participant or recipient) has in the process of creating new understandings of disputed territory. The literature on reconciliation after conflict emphasises the construction of shared understandings and new conceptualisations of situated relationship. Asserting that conflicting groups are 'living in different "worlds" because they have attributed different meanings to "things"' (Jakubowska-Branicka 2014, 48), the literature on reconciliation focuses on the need to establish 'common referential ground' that will allow for a new 'envisioning of

our past-present-future' (Lebaron and Pilay 2006, 149 and 179). This process, which can be understood as a process as 'restorying' (Lederach 2005), does not, however, take place merely at the level of discursive interaction. Alongside storytelling, the use of ritual as a means of generating experiences of 'powerful emotions' and the 'emotional resonance' of metaphor have been credited with a productive potential in the process of dialogue (Lebaron and Pilay 2006, 123–27). Here there is clearly a potential for further exploration of the specifically experiential qualities of engagement in cultural practice, whether as participant/producer or recipient/audience member. Without rejecting the importance of narratives and sense making, paying attention to 'affective-discursive practice', to use Wetherell's term, would allow us to consider the relationship between making meaning about disputed territories and the experience of cultural practice that took fuller account of the affective, embodied and situated dimensions of that practice. It would also allow us to consider the extent to which cultural practice creates the conditions for new kinds of understandings of disputed territory to emerge, not only by discursive, but also by embodied, affective processes. Connections could also be made here to contemporary ritual studies, which, rather than working with a rigid definition of what ritual can be, prefers a contextual or practice-based approach that seeks to 'address how a particular community or culture ritualizes [...] and then address when and why ritualization is deemed to be the effective thing to do' (Bell 2009, 81; cf. Grimes 2014).

In this respect, Eckersley's analysis of a Silesian museum that caters both to local populations and expellee communities provides a helpful, if arguably negative, example. In the museum context, Eckersley is interested to examine

the complex relationship between the roles of memory, of re-encounter with things (tangible objects, intangible culture and concepts) and the re-framing of place as a concept (rather than merely as physical or cultural geography). (Eckersley 2017, 8)

However, she discovers that the museum's different publics (local Polish and expellee German) find in the same museum space the conditions for identification with the region of Silesia in two quite different ways. For the latter, the displaced community, their affective-discursive practice focuses on 'emotive and sensory attachments to place, such as through food, music, traditions, language or dialect' (2017, 11), whereas the resident Polish community, some of whose families were relocated to the area from Poland's eastern borderlands (*Kresy*) at the end

of World War Two, chiefly focus on the space commemorated in the museum in terms of their own memories of personal life-events, which took place in that region (2017, 23). While Eckersley argues that this represents an example of ‘agonistic’ memory in action (Cento Bull and Hansen 2016), there seems to be limited possibility of dialogue here. While the two distinct experiences of memory and place are facilitated in the museum space, they apparently exist in parallel, not in dialogue.

On the other hand, Pfeiffer and Weiglhofer’s analysis of German-Czech cross-border theatre work with young people makes the case that such projects ‘can contribute to a (re-)definition of what and where *Heimat* is – and who is part of it’ (Pfeiffer and Weiglhofer 2019, 184) by virtue of their staging of encounters between young people of different backgrounds in the shared (geographical and theatrical) space created by the preparation of a performance that draws on the multiple histories of the region. Pfeiffer and Weiglhofer note that by ‘interweaving the historical and the imaginary, the performance requires all to engage with the constructed side of our relation to the past as much as with the individual, embodied and lived’ (2019, 184).

What these two contrasting examples suggest is that, by paying attention not simply to the discursive construction of disputed territory in cultural practice, but also to its lived, embodied and affective aspects, we cannot assume that the mobilization of these aspects leads to a re-experiencing and re-interpretation of territory that is conducive to the more effective management of potentially polarising memories. However, in their very different outcomes they also allow us to pose the question of what *kind* of artistic interventions, or cultural interventions of other kinds (such as museums), might be capable of creating beneficial forms of affective-discursive practice.

Eckersley’s case study also points to the potential divergence between populations’ affective and embodied responses to cultural practice depending on their location within or outside the territory in question. This divergence also needs to be considered when addressing diasporic populations. While such populations can both exacerbate conflict and help to bring about reconciliation, their affective and attitudinal relationship to disputed territory in their homeland is fundamentally different from that of populations confronted with the realities of

conflict on a day-to-day basis (Demmers 2002, 94–95). A diasporic community's sense of belonging and of connection to homeland is underpinned by strong emotions, which can be associated with religious worship, the maintenance of tradition, or the consumption of traditional foods, for example (Brown 2011). Equally, consuming media from the homeland, such as films or traditional music, can provide such a sense of cohesion and cultural identity, with significant affective components (Smets et al. 2013; Volgsten and Pripp 2016). As yet, the potential for engagement with cultural and artistic practice among diasporas in relation to conflicts in the homeland does not appear to have been central to the existing research. This could represent a further fruitful avenue of investigation for the project.