

Conference on

# History Education and Political Conflicts: Dealing with the Past and Facing the Future

September 12<sup>th</sup>, 2015

Split, Croatia



It is widely recognized that history teaching, particularly in the context of post-conflict and divided societies, can play a critical role in the process of rebuilding intergroup relations. History teaching, which accentuates group differences, boundaries and exclusive understandings of intergroup relations fuels fermentations of societies and paves roads towards further conflicts. On the other hand, history education can facilitate political, social and psychological processes important for reconstruction and sustainable intergroup reconciliation. In this conference, we shall discuss important questions: First, we will critically discuss the underlying processes and mechanisms of textbook narratives in various European countries and particularly the impact such narratives have on identity building. Then we will focus on theoretical aspects in researching teaching sensitive issues in history and finally we look at the relationship between history teaching and intergroup relationships and ways of dealing with conflict.

The conference is part of COST Action IS1205.

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September 12<sup>th</sup>, 2015

**History Education and Political Conflicts:  
Dealing with the Past and Facing the Future**

Venue:

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences  
University of Split  
Poljana kraljice Jelene 1/III (Peristil Square)  
Split, Croatia

Schedule

9:30 – 12:15 Textbooks and Historical Narratives  
12:15 – 13:00, 14:30 – 15:15 Theoretical Frames  
15:15 – 18:00 History Teaching and Hot Conflicts

Registration: <http://costis1205.wix.com/home#!conference/cbns>

## **Textbooks and historical narratives:**

**09:30-10:15**

### **Textbook writing in post-conflict societies: an international perspective**

Denise Bentrovato

Georg Eckert Institute

School textbooks, widely recognised as key sources of historical consciousness, have time and again played a detrimental role in and between societies by nurturing prejudice, stereotypes and enemy images. In such contexts, textbook revision has often been considered an important confidence-building and peace building strategy able to contribute to the de-construction of negative perceptions and the promotion of dialogue, mutual understanding and social cohesion.

The talk offers a state-of-the-art review of work around history textbook writing in divided societies from an international perspective. It offers a systematic and comparative analysis of approaches to (re-) writing textbooks in the context and in the aftermath of conflict and mass violence, thus contributing to a better comprehension of the role of history education in efforts to promote national reconciliation and international understanding. It draws from worldwide experiences (in Europe, the Americas, Africa, Asia and the Middle East) to shed light on opportunities, challenges, dilemmas, and perspectives related to textbook work after inter-state and intra-state conflict, and to identify actors and conditions – political, social, and cultural – that have influenced related processes and outcomes. More specifically, the talk reviews local, bilateral and multilateral textbook initiatives established to date by,

and with the support of, governmental institutions, civil society, and/or international and supranational organisations, identifying trends and patterns, and similarities and differences in timing and scope, aims and expectations, format and procedures, processes and dynamics, and where possible, the societal reception and impact of such projects. It thereby reflects upon the value and potential, and the accomplishments, shortfalls and limitations of different models, methods and concepts (e.g. entangled history or dual narratives) and their “cultural translation” as applied in a variety of contexts, ranging from fragile settings characterised by latent or ongoing conflict, by a more or less recent transition to peace, or by political stability and democracy following historical conflict. Ultimately, the talk seeks to map current knowledge on textbook work in divided and post-conflict societies and to distil lessons learned for the purpose of enhancing the role of such initiatives in processes of peacebuilding and reconciliation.

**10:15-11:00**

**Textbook Narratives and Patriotism in Belarus**

Anna Zadora

Maison Interuniversitaire de Sciences de l'Homme-Alsace, Strasbourg, France

The talk analyzes history textbooks narratives in a specific context: Belarus - a post-totalitarian and authoritarian state. School history teaching has always been a powerful instrument for identity and patriotism building. Political authorities tend to control the school textbook writing and sentiment of loyalty to the motherland. The talk will provide a chronological analysis of the evolution history

textbooks writing in Belarus and the transmission of patriotism discourse through the textbooks. The first periods will be Perestroika, which marked the beginning of the Belarusian history writing. First school textbooks on Belarusian history were published affirming an independent national Belarusian history, independent from Soviet and Russian influence, claiming the right for a new state to be considered as a part of world heritage and searching for European roots in Belarusian history. New independent country required new allegiance, new patriotism. From the mid-1990s, however, a return to a Soviet interpretation of Belarusian history occurred, and school history writing was subjected to a strict control by the state. The history textbook writing aims at legitimizing the links with Russia and a very special sociopolitical system, rather different from European democratic model. New re-Sovietized patriotism model appeared. History textbooks narratives and patriotism model in Belarus are constantly changing and balancing between openness to global tendencies, European heritage, democracy and isolation, identity tension, links with Russia and totalitarian tendencies.

### **11:30-12:15**

#### **De-nacification and the Cold War in Textbook Narratives and in Teacher Narrations**

Barbara Christophe

Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research, Braunschweig, Germany

In Germany narrations on the Cold War traditionally have to navigate between three partly competing tasks. They have to tie in with narrations about Nazi times, they have to explain how Germany, the former enemy of the allied powers switched roles and became a much

wanted ally itself and last not least they have to deal with the partition of Germany which alternatively can be perceived as a bitter but justifiable consequence of national socialism or as the first crime committed during the Cold War. With the end of the Cold War, the stories developed in response to these challenges were drawn into question. As the American historian Charles Maier has observed, in 1989 the now completed history of the GDR and of the old FRG barged in between our present and the Nazi past. Moreover, re-unification has changed the perspective on partition.

Against the backdrop of these observations the presentation raises the question how the story of de-nacification that occupies the liminal space between Nazi times and the times of the Cold War is represented in current German history textbooks and in narrations of German history teachers. History textbooks are analysed as a media of cultural memory that allows us to reconstruct hegemonic discourses as well as social controversies. Teachers are looked at in their double role as members of an elite specialized on conveying state approved patterns of sense-making into society on the one hand and individuals whose perspectives on contemporary history is shaped by their biographical experience and their generational affiliation on the other hand.

## Theoretical frames:

**12:15-13:00**

### **When history teaching turns into parrhesia: The case of Italian colonial crimes**

Luigi Cajani & Giovanna Leone, University of Rome La Sapienza, Italy

We propose that awareness of perpetrators' descendants about past in-group misdeeds – seen as a basic socio-psychological drive eventually leading to reconciliation (Nadler & Shabel, 2008; Bilewicz & Jaworska, 2013) –, originates from social acts of *parrhesia*. We speak of parrhesia when generative adults (Erikson, 1950; Slater, 2003) accomplish their moral duty of truth-speaking to younger generations (Leone & Sarrica, 2012a; 2012b) in spite of risks linked to these difficult communicative acts. *Parrhesia* in fact “chooses frankness instead of persuasion, truth instead of falseness or silence, (...) the *moral duty* instead of self-interest or moral apathy” (Foucault, 2001, p.19), telling without fear a truth that could threaten the social or moral image of receivers (Allpress et al, 2014), yet could also empower them. In our talk, we will review recent changes in historical teaching on Italian crimes committed during past colonial wars, in order to define when and how history teaching turns into a *parrhesiastic* communicative act (Leone & Sarrica, 2014). Interestingly, these crimes were kept silent for a long time, and were only recently clearly stated in Italian history manuals (Cajani, 2013; Leone & Mastrovito, 2010). We describe effects of these new historical texts overtly narrating formerly silenced colonial crimes on young Italian students. More specifically, the role of negative emotions of receivers



will be explored in depth. This case study will help us to better differentiate *parrhesiastic* teaching on in-group misdeeds from other kinds of difficult history teaching.

**14:30-15:15**

**Teaching sensitive issues in history: Negotiating political, educational and scholarly representations**

Katrin Kello & Wolfgang Wagner

University of Tartu, Estonia, and Johannes Kepler University, Linz, Austria

History teaching and teachers mediate between different fields and perspectives – academia, education, politics; different nations, worldviews and ideologies; different group-bound memories. Based on curriculum and newspaper analysis as well as individual interviews with Estonian and Latvian history teachers, we focus on how history teachers construct aims and functions of history teaching such as issues of national identification and patriotism in a post-Soviet and post-authoritarian setting. In doing so, the teachers' have to negotiate the demands of scientific history writing, educational frames and institutional givens, as well as the explicit or implicit requests of the political sphere. We analyse this process within the framework of social representation theory.

## History teaching and hot conflicts:

**15:15-16:00**

### **The official, the affirmative and the critical: three approaches in history teaching and their effect on reconciliation in Israel**

Tsafrir Goldberg

University of Haifa, Israel

The seemingly intractable Jewish-Arab conflict impacts both Israeli history and the way history of the conflict is taught. While the Israeli Ministry of education, under the rule of right wing coalitions, opted for an exam oriented, official account of events stressing Israeli righteousness, peace education theorists called for mutual affirmation of the Jewish and Palestinian collective narratives, and history education experts called for critical disciplinary analysis of competing sources from both parties to the conflict.

200 Jewish and Arab Israeli adolescents who were randomly allocated to learn in the three competing approaches served as the basis for a comparative study of the effects of history teaching approaches on learners' intergroup attitudes and behavior. Participants studied the history of the 1948 war and the birth of the Palestinian refugee problem according to one of the three approaches. Later, Jewish and Arab participants were matched by teaching approach into small groups to discuss the causes of the refugee problem and its possible solution.

Findings point to the impact of ethnicity and teaching approach on openness to out-group perspective and perceived in-group responsibility, as well as on intergroup domination and agreement on causes and solution of the refugee problem in intergroup discussions. Openness and responsibility predicted discussion atmosphere. It appears one sided history teaching leads to lower motivation to engage with outgroup perspective, less egalitarian intergroup interaction and fewer reconciliatory decisions. Openness to out-group perspective and acknowledgement of responsibility predicted reconciliatory interaction and discussion outcome in line with the needs based reconciliation model.

**16:30-17:15**

### **History Teaching and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland**

Alan McCully & Jackie Reilly

University of Ulster

Since the outbreak of violence in Northern Ireland in 1968 educators have responded in three ways to bring about a more peaceful society: those who have sought to break down a segregated education system by creating common schools; those who, accepting segregation as a reality, have fostered meaningful contact between institutions to break down barriers; and those who, whatever the school structures, have pursued societal change through curriculum innovation. History teaching has featured significantly in the latter. Approaches have evolved, and overlapped, as the political situation has moved towards post-conflict but essentially all three strategies continue to be visible.

Education addressing community relations in Northern Ireland has been extensively researched yet, interestingly, individual disciplines have concentrated on different areas. Educationalists have focused on curriculum issues, associated resources and pedagogy while social psychologists have explored the dynamics, effects and implications of cross cultural contact on young peoples' attitudes and behaviour. Thus, a potentially fertile area for interdisciplinary collaboration has often been neglected. Two recent curricular innovations, *Facing History, Shaping the Future* and *Teaching Divided Histories* have explicitly targeted group 'reconciliation' as a central aim, thus signposting possibilities for dialogue between educators and psychologists. Using the rationales of these projects as examples this talk offers an exchange of professional understanding between a history educator who is convinced of his subject's contribution to wider societal transformation from conflict, but also of the vital need to preserve its disciplinary integrity, and a social psychologist with experience of examining inter-group attitudinal change.

**17:15-18:00**

**Sensitive issues in History Teaching in Cyprus: The perspective of teachers and the Ministry of Education**

Michalinos Zembylas

Open University of Cyprus

The purpose of this presentation is twofold. First, it will provide a brief review of a research study I conducted on Greek-Cypriot teachers' perceptions of sensitive issues in conjunction with research on

history teaching in Cyprus more generally. This review will set the context of history teaching in this divided society, identifying the challenges of teaching sensitive issues and highlighting teachers' pedagogical responses. The second part of my talk will put in conversation teachers' perspectives of sensitive issues in history teaching (micro-level) with on ongoing efforts for educational reform of history teaching in Cyprus (macro-level). The discussion leans on my own personal involvement in Ministry of Education's Committees for *Reforming the National Curricula of Cyprus* (2008-2010) and *Evaluating the National Curricula of Cyprus* (2013-14) as well as on theories of school reform. My goal is to make a political and pedagogical intervention into the terrain of history teaching, by offering insights on the curricular and pedagogical tensions and possibilities involved in history teaching within a divided society.

**18:00-18:30**

### **General Discussion**

The aerial view of Split is in the public domain  
[<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:City-of-Split.jpg#filelinks>]  
Retrieved: June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2015, 22h