

International Conference
13 - 16 September 2011

Memory & CITY

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Memory and City Programme

- **Conference Description :**

With a few exceptions (for example some cities on the Swahili coast, see Abungu 1998), the issue of heritage in Africa remains, in academic literature as well as among institutions in charge of the economic valorisation of heritage, very much attached to rural areas and societies. African cities, still widely considered alien in the landscape of a continent essentialized as rural ever since colonisation (Coquery-Vidrovitch 1993, Freund 2007), are nonetheless important spaces for the construction of memory and heritage (which are not necessarily interchangeable terms). The topic of urban memory and its meaning in the making of neighbourhood identities and development strategies (linked to tangible and intangible heritage) produced by local and municipal governments and international donors, has only recently come under investigation by researchers in Africa. What image of these neighbourhoods is promoted and for what purpose? What selections and processes operate, as far as representations of these neighbourhoods are concerned, so that they acquire, in the long run, distinctive traits and stereotypes? In cities experiencing rapid transformation, often connected to new patterns of migration and mobility, what is the role of memory and nostalgia in the making of local identities? To what extent does this nostalgia serve the purpose of regeneration/gentrification policies – a phenomenon that has been particularly prevalent in Johannesburg?

In South Africa, memorial efforts since the democratic transition have mainly focused on the evocation of the (mostly urban) battlegrounds of the struggle : emblematic areas and neighbourhoods wiped out during the forced removals and resettlement policies led by the Apartheid regime (such as Red Location, Sophiatown, District 6), are today the object of memory enterprises which are, arguably, intended to contribute to the construction of a national identity rooted in memories of violent abuses committed under Apartheid (Saunders & Kros 2004, Didier et al. 2007). The question of the link between these memorialised neighbourhoods and the population currently living in them has, however, not yet been explored in depth. Above all, not only do these evocations of memory tend to occlude contradictory voices (Nieftagodien 2009) but little space is left for “ordinary” memories (as described by Hayden 1995). What space do ordinary, everyday or unspectacular memories have in the making of territorial identities? How do they articulate with grand memorial narratives promoted for the sake of national identity?

SESSION 1 - The resilience of memory in the city: memory conflicts and issues of the post-colonial

This first section will address a number of crucial issues regarding the negotiation of memory in the city: how do processes of power and politics impact on the construction of memory in cities? Whose voices and which narratives are heard, and how are they represented? Who holds ownership of urban memory and what does this tell us about balances of political power, both on large and small scales? The session will pay particular attention to post-colonial contexts and the negotiation of memories in these cities.

SESSION 2 - Migration, mobility, memory: place making and networks

The acceleration in patterns of economic migration, forced migration and the rapid growth of cities and urban populations over the past 20 years has made African cities important transit spaces with major implications for identities and the construction of urban imaginaries; elsewhere, the patterns of migration from other continents have profoundly impacted cities; this second session will reflect on the role of memory and life histories in the integration process of migrants in the city, with a particular focus on migrant neighbourhoods or enclaves, as well as the place of city-located memories in the imaginaries of the diasporas in general. The panel will pay particular attention to the ordinary and hidden spaces of these migrant memories, in African cities and elsewhere.

SESSION 3 - Memory in urban policies/politics: between global consumption and community projects

The themes approached in this session concern the status of urban memory as heritage in Africa. The notion of urban history and memory is often used as an instrumental tool of socio-economic development strategies, initiated both by international donors and local governments. This use of heritage raises several questions about the kinds of narratives that are chosen as representative of memory, and which are occluded or seen as less useful; as well as questions regarding who has the power to use memory and for what purposes. The issue of nostalgia (of what, of whom?) in regeneration processes for instance will be under specific scrutiny in this panel: nostalgia appears nowadays to be a global construct (Appadurai 1996), participating in the worldwide circulation of urban models, and it is put to use in various urban development strategies, from gentrification to the setting up of cultural precincts.

SESSION 4 - Remembering as a practice: literature, photography, performance and city memory

This session will address issues around the practices of remembering in the city, whether linked to the built environment or linked to intangible heritage. The role of various art forms in this processes of remembering will be at the core of the panel, whether connected to projects aiming at “discovering” hidden forms of memory in the city or reflecting on particular events such as carnivals and festivals. The panel will further reflect on the articulation between grand narratives and national or collective memories, and what could be termed “ordinary”, neighbourhood or local memory, including private archives, localised oral histories, and their use in major art projects.

- **Conference Programme**

TUESDAY 13TH SEPTEMBER – Wits University (John Moffat Building – Wits University)

- **18h00 – 20h00** : Opening cocktail and Yeoville Studio exhibition

WEDNESDAY 14TH SEPTEMBER – John Moffat Building (Wits University)

SESSION 1 - The resilience of memory in the city: memory conflicts and issues of the post-colonial

Chair: Nastasha Erlank – Head of Department of Historical Studies (University of Johannesburg)

- **08h00 – 09h10** : Registration
- **09h00 – 09h25** : Opening speeches
- **09h25 – 10h00** : Keynote speech by **Pr. Donatien Dibwe** (Urban historian, running the History of Lubumbashi project) on Memories of Lubumbashi (DRC)
- **10h00 – 10h45** :
 - **Quentin Mercuro** (University of Paris Ouest Nanterre La Défense - IFRA Nairobi) - *“Colonial urban memory and periurban memories: reproduction of the colonial spatial dichotomies in Kisumu, Kenya”*
 - **Leonard Rosenberg** (Physical Planning Department - Durban University of Technology) - *“A City within a city: The Casbah, Dutchene and Currie’s Fountain”*
- **10h45 – 11h05** : Tea break
- **11h05 – 12h15** :
 - **Eric Makombe** (University of the Witwatersrand)- *“Place attachment, operational memory, and symbols of home ‘Mumusha Wembare’ “,*
 - **Chaya Hurnath** (Faculty of Geography and Planning - University Toulouse le Mirail, France) - *“Articulation between Urban Memory and the Process of Heritagization: Case study of multicultural Port-Louis (Mauritius)”*
 - **Anna Madoeuf** (Université François-Rabelais de Tours, France / UMR CITERES) - *“From the depth of the old city to a redeeming panoramic view, building a place of memory in Cairo”*

- 12h15 – 13h00 : Discussion
- 13h00 – 14h00 : LUNCH

SESSION 2 - Migration, mobility, memory: place making and networks

Chair: Ingrid Palmay - Acting director of ACMS (African Centre for Migration and Society - Wits University)

- 14h00 – 15h30 :
 - **Celine Barrère** (Ecole Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture et de Paysage, Lille, France) - *"Immigration - furnished hotels of North & East of Paris as places of memory"*
 - **Kizito Muchemwa** (University of Stellenbosch)- *"Dumb/dump sites, migrants, and nomadic memory in Southern African cities"*
 - **Rasheed Olaniyi** (University of Ibadan, Nigeria) on *"Yoruba Migrants, Memory and Politics of Identity in Urban Kano, 1953-2003"*
 - **Ludovic Gandelot** (University of Paris 7 Diderot) on *"Africa and the city-ports of Gujarat, 19th -20th century"*
- 15h30 – 15h50 : Tea break
- 15h50 – 16h25 : Discussion
- 16h25 – 17h00 : Keynote speech by **Pr. Philippe Gervais-Lambony** (Geographer, University of Nanterre, France) on city nostalgia

Evening

- 19h00 : Screening of *"My Uncle"* from **Jacques Tati** at Arts on Main(with dinner cocktail)

SESSION 3 - Memory in urban policies/politics: between global consumption and community projects

Chair: Noor Nieftagodien, researcher in the History Workshop (Wits University)

- 09h00 – 09h15 : Opening speeches
- 09h15 – 09h50 : Keynote speech by **Pr. Annie Fourcaut** (Urban historian, University of Paris I Sorbonne) on the resurgence of history in recent political discussions regarding the Greater Paris project
- 09h50 – 10h35 :
 - **Marie-Hélène Bacqué & Frédéric Dufaux** (UMR Lavue, Laboratoire Mosaiques, University of Paris Ouest Nanterre La Défense) – *“Selected memories of the working class in Nanterre and Saint-Denis (France), former communist suburbs”*
 - **Marie Bridonneau** (Laboratoire Gecko EA375 - Université Paris Ouest Nanterre La Défense) - *“Lalibela, Ethiopia : building a sacred and rural memory for the development of a small touristic city”*
- 10h35 – 10h55 : Tea break
- 10h55 – 11h45 :
 - **Alan Mabin** (University of the Witwaterstrand) – *“Mobilisation of history and city futures”*
 - **Pauline Guinard** (University of Paris Ouest Nanterre La Défense) - *“What room for ordinary memories in redevelopment projects, the case of Vilakazi St and the Johannesburg Development Agency”*
 - **(Silent Paper) : Joël Ninon** (Université de La Réunion, France) – *“Memory issues with regard to a slum eradication programme in Reunion Island cities”*
- 11h40– 12h15 : Discussion
- 12h15 – 13h15 : **LUNCH**

SESSION 4 - Remembering as a practice: literature, photography, performance and city memory

Chair: TBC

- 13h15 – 14h45 :
 - **Tazneem Wentzel** (University of Stellenbosch) – *“Minstrel Mappings of Memory”*
 - **Anne Putter** (University of Johannesburg) - *“Movement, transition and transformation in the city”*
 - **Olivier Marcel** (Bordeaux 3 University - IFRA Nairobi) – *“Making the city historical – contemporary art in the definition of memorial narratives in Nairobi, Kenya”*
 - **Sophie Feyder** (Leiden University) – *“Photography, memory and urban space : The Ngilima collection and the commemoration of Benoni Old Location”*
 - **(Silent Paper) : Danson Kahyana** (University of Stellenbosch) - *“ Imagining the City in Ugandan Fiction: the Portrayal of Kampala as an Unhomely and Unhoming Place”*
- 14h45– 15h05: Tea break
- 15h05 – 15h50 : Discussion
- 15h50 – 16h30 : Closing speech by **Pr. Cynthia Kros** (University of the Witwatersrand) and members of the **Organizing Committee**

Evening

- 17h00 – 18h30 : Visit of Vilakazi Street in Soweto by **Pauline Guinard** and **Mdu**
- 18h30 : Dinner at Sakhumzi restaurant in Soweto

• **FRIDAY 16TH SEPTEMBER** – *Site visits in Yeoville and Sophiatown*

Yeoville

- **09h30 – 10h00:** Presentation of the Yeoville Stories project by **Sophie Didier** (French Institute of South Africa) and **Naomi Roux** (School of Arts, University of the Witwatersrand)
- **10h00 - 12h30 :** Guided visits of the Yeoville neighbourhood by residents
- **12h30 – 14h00 :** Lunch at L’Ambassade restaurant in Yeoville

Sophiatown

- **14h30 – 16h30 :** Guided visits of the Sophiatown neighbourhood
- **16h30 – 19h00 :** Participatory discussion with ex and current residents of Sophiatown & film screening (**tbc**)



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