



Memory in Action: Mediatised Public Memory and the Symbolic Construction of Conflict in Student Movements

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Abstract

Cultural factors shape the symbolic environment in which contentious politics take place. Among these factors, collective memories are particularly relevant: they can help collective action by providing symbolic material from the past, but at the same time they can constrain people's ability to mobilise by imposing proscriptions and prescriptions.

In my research I analyse the relationship between social movements and collective memories: how do social movements participate in the building of public memory? And how does public memory, and in particular the media representation of a contentious past, influence the social construction of identity in the contemporary movements?

To answer these questions I focus on the student movements in Italy and Spain, analysing the content and format of media sources in order to draw a map of the different narrative representations of a contentious past, while I use qualitative interviews to investigate their influence on contemporary mobilisations.

In particular, I focus on the evolution of the representation of specific events in the Italian and Spanish student movements of the 1960s and 1970s in the different public fields, identifying the role of terrorism and political transitions in shaping in the present the publicly discussed image of the past. The thesis draws on a qualitative content analysis of media material, tracing the phases of the commemoration, putting it in historical context, and attempting to reconstruct the different mechanisms of contentious remembrance. Furthermore, I refer to interviews conducted with contemporary student activists in order to assess the relationship between the public memory of a contentious past and the strategic choices of contemporary movements.

Jury:



Prof Ronald Eyerman (Yale University), Prof Donatella della Porta (EUI), Lorenzo Zamponi (candidate), Prof Hanspeter Kriesi (EUI), Prof William Gamson (Boston College – by videolink)

Bio

Lorenzo Zamponi graduated in 2008 at the University of Padova and in 2009 entered the doctoral programme in political and social sciences of the EUI, working on the relationship between social movement and collective memories. His research interests include collective memory, contentious politics, student movements, anti-austerity activism and media analysis. On such topics, he has published articles and book chapters in international publications.