Memorial entrepreneurs and resistance in the urban margin

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Abstract

In this workshop, we propose to address the connection often observed in the field between ‘resilience’ and ‘resistance’ and examine how memory can operate as a form of resistance. Drawing on case studies in the United States and Colombia, this paper suggests that certain memorial practices that have emerged from the violence plaguing these neighborhoods can be considered as forms of resistance. The creation of murals, the spontaneous establishment of shrines, or the organization of commemorative ceremonies can contribute to the recuperation of public spaces or participate in challenging hegemonic narratives and representations. Memorial entrepreneurs in the margins of cities, through creative means, such as visual, performative, narrated and bodily remembrance of violence, resist the loss of their territories, counter the descent of victims into collective oblivion and propose alternative visions of violence prevention.

Reference

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Memorial entrepreneurs and resistance in the urban margin

This contribution is based on preliminary results of a four years study looking at the links between memory and resilience in peripheral urban areas characterized by contexts of violence. The aim of this research project is to examine the way ‘memorial entrepreneurs’ use the notion of ‘resilience’ in their practices and discourses, as well as how memorial practices and sites (memorials, museums, commemoration, oral tradition, art, memorial tourism, etc.) are integrated into projects and programs dealing with resilience and urban violence (e.g. Rockefeller’s ‘100 resilient cities’ network, UNDDR’s campaign ‘Making Cities Resilient’).

In this workshop, we propose to address the connection often observed in the field between ‘resilience’ and ‘resistance’ and examine how memory can operate as a form of resistance. Drawing on case studies in the United States and Colombia, this paper suggests that certain memorial practices that have emerged from the violence plaguing these neighborhoods can be considered as forms of resistance. The creation of murals, the spontaneous establishment of shrines, or the organization of commemorative ceremonies can contribute to the recuperation of public spaces or participate in challenging hegemonic narratives and representations. Memorial entrepreneurs in the margins of cities, through creative means, such as visual, performative, narrated and bodily remembrance of violence, resist the loss of their territories, counter the descent of victims into collective oblivion and propose alternative visions of violence prevention.

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As a cultural geographer, Patrick Naef is conducting research on memory and violence, the transformation of cities and the critical approaches to ‘resilience’. He explored these topics principally in Colombia, the United States, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia. He is also collaborating with several community organizations active in cultural and urban development. Patrick Naef obtained a PhD in geography at the University of Geneva in 2014. He was a visiting scholar at the Department of Anthropology of UC-Berkeley from 2014 to 2016.