

# Memory, imagination, and belonging across generations: Perspectives from postsocialist Europe and beyond

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*Abstract:* The last two decades have witnessed a phenomenal expansion of scholarly work on collective memory. Simultaneously, increasing anthropological attention is being paid to collective visions of the future, albeit through a range of disparate literatures on topics including development, modernity and risk, the imagination, and, perhaps ironically, nostalgia. In this introduction to this special section, we bring together analyses of postsocialist visions of pasts and futures to shed light upon the cultural scripts and social processes through which different temporal visions are ascribed collective meaning, employed in the creation of shared and personal identities, and used to galvanize social and political action.

*Keywords:* futures, generations, imagination, memory, postsocialism, temporality

While much has been written about the past and present of postsocialist societies, comparatively less attention has been devoted to the interconnections between people's past experiences and future expectations in these sites. Indeed, looking more widely, we note that despite the wealth of anthropological studies of perceptions of the past and of culturally specific understandings of history, anthropological examinations of how people relate imagined futures to the past are not nearly as abundant. This theme section is devoted to examining the interplays between understandings of pasts, presents, and futures in postsocialist Europe, with the aim of showing how contemporary circumstances influence not only the dynamic interplay between what is remembered and what is forgotten, but also which visions of the future are allowed to blossom.

Spanning four nations (Bosnia and Herzegovina; former East Germany; Poland; and the Czech Republic) and more than six decades of remembrance, these articles analyze how people create temporally contingent narratives of incorporation and alienation, resistance and participation with respect to society at large, and simultaneously how these narratives are shaped and restricted by historical experiences and current sociopolitical conditions. Although all the cases examined here derive from areas that once belonged to the "Eastern Bloc", their recent histories and current realities differ, ranging from war-ridden and economically destitute Mostar via a shrinking East German town and a former "model socialist town" in Poland to more prosperous Czech cities and villages. In order to examine these situations, our contributors engage with a range of theoretical litera-



tures that include not only the anthropological literature on memory and temporality *per se*, but also scholarly works on modernity, the imagination, and generations.

### **Memory, nostalgia, and the future**

The recent upsurge of anthropological interest in memory is a result of many factors, including decolonization and attempts to rewrite history from the perspectives of “people without history” (Wolf 1982), increased engagement with psychoanalysis, particularly with respect to the trauma of the Holocaust (Berliner 2005; Pine et al. 2004), postmodernism and its emphasis on multiple voices and multiple memories (Berliner 2005), and the inspiration of seminal works by social historians promoting the concept of collective/social memory (Connerton 1989; Halbwachs [1950] 1980; Nora 1989). The fall of communism itself is part of the reason for the “memory boom” as the withdrawal of totalitarian regimes, who had meticulously guarded history writing, led to a public blossoming of “preserved” and private memories that caught the attention of anthropologists and oral historians (Berliner 2005; see also Haukanes 2004, 2006; Passerini 1992; Watson 1994). As the Soviet empire fell apart, and other states split up (Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia) or reunited (Germany), the need for new (“national”) beginnings or the revitalization of old traditions was strongly felt, creating a well of contradictory narratives of spatial belonging and a flourishing of interest in our discipline (Berdahl 1997; Heitlinger and Trnka 1998; Holy 1995; Jansen 2007; Trnka 2012; Wanner 1998).

Remembrance and forgetting have thus been at the core of anthropological analyses of post-socialism. Research on these themes has frequently centred on official vs. private memory (Haukanes 2006; Lass 1994; Richardson 2004), memory and national/ethnic identity (Wanner 1998), and autobiographical memory (Skultans 1998). One of the key ways in which postsocialist pasts have been approached and that also

draws attention to the relation between the past, present, and future is the concept of nostalgia.

Nostalgia has been analyzed as the mourning for the more predictable and stable conditions prevailing under communism, particularly in relation to work and various forms of sociality (Haukanes 2004; Pine 2002). But, as numerous scholars have shown, in many instances the memory of what is missed and longed for is substantially different from what actually existed in the past. Daphne Berdahl (1997, 2009) was among the first to suggest that nostalgia should be seen as a commentary on contemporary politics and market forces and as a form of resistance to Western hegemonies, rather than as a mournful longing for the past. Dominic Boyer similarly proposes that Eastern and Central European nostalgia should rightly be viewed as a “politics of the future,” as tropes that idealize the past “make a claim upon the right of future self-determination” (2010: 26). In a similar spirit, Gerald Creed argues that nostalgia is not a desire for the return of the past, but rather operates to relegate the past into the realm of the impossible and “further the consolidation” of new political-economic forms, such as neoliberal capitalism (2010: 42). As each of these authors emphasizes, collective nostalgia is often imbued with a political dimension; surpassing its conventional understanding as a “longing for the past”, the sentiment of nostalgia often couples affect with political critique, resulting in emotionally laden commentaries of pasts, presents, and futures.

More recently, David Berliner (2012) has argued that we should distinguish between different kinds of nostalgia, depending on the depth and range of people’s involvement in the object, event, or way of life that is missed. Berliner’s conceptual distinctions are developed in relation to nostalgia as part of tourism and the preservation of cultural monuments in Laos, but his general point applies to other contexts. One of our contributors, Kinga Pozniak, for example, discusses how the construction of the model socialist town of Nowa Huta in the wake of WWII is remembered in public commemo-

rations and by three generations of Polish residents. While the builders themselves—*independent of their standing in relation to socialism*—talk in detail about the immense achievement in constructing Nowa Huta, some of the young are inspired by Nowa Huta for its retro aesthetics and engage in artistic and other projects where references to the socialist past are at the core. Taken together, the discourses of Nowa Huta's older and younger generation thus suggest two different kinds of nostalgias at work.

In differentiating between nostalgias, not only are generational differences important, but so too are political standpoints, as demonstrated in Felix Ringel's work (this issue) on temporal complexity and generational clashes in the East German town of Hoyerswerda. Hoyerswerda is one of the places that has felt the uneven distribution of resources and wealth across Germany the most; since unification the town's population has drastically shrunk, making for a bleak future. Ringel shows how various groups relate differently to history based, in part, on their political affiliations. While some groups foster youth-directed commemorative projects "against forgetting", right-wing youth link up with the Nazi past in order to claim a future "without democracy".

The extent to which nostalgia is an effective or preferred means of linking the past with the future is also highly dependent on variations in what constitutes the "present". Many of the young Nowa Huta residents analyzed in Pozniak's contribution show little interest in the socialist past, as they are fully engaged in the demanding effort of building their presents and futures in an era of neoliberalism. The same applies to the young Czechs in Haldis Haukanes's article on the differing biographical narratives voiced by two generations of Czechs. Not only do the memories transmitted to young Czechs by their parents and grandparents tend to focus on the negative aspects of life such as lack of mobility and queuing, but this generation also seems very uninterested in the socialist past. The particularly "un-nostalgic" attitude of

young Czechs and Poles may be connected to the relative economic prosperity (including real wage growth and relatively low levels of unemployment) that the two countries have experienced during the last decade, Poland in particular since 2005 (Eurostat 2013). The fact that youth do not turn nostalgically to the past for future visions may also be a sign that they are "tired of the contestations about socialism in public space" (Pozniak, this issue), and/or that hegemonic accounts of the bleakness of life under socialism are widely embraced.

While nostalgia has a place in the television dramas and personal remembrances of middle age and older Czechs documented by Susanna Trnka in her contribution on past-future relations in remembrances of the communist past, other emotions are also salient. Trnka describes how in the run-up to the twentieth anniversary of the end of state socialism in 2009, there was increasing state and public anxiety over the possibilities of "forgetting" the communist past. Emphasizing the need to protect society against the possibilities of communism's return, such fears and anxieties, Trnka argues, not only shape how the past is remembered but also support a sense of national unity.

A very different situation is faced by the Last Yugoslavs analyzed by Monika Palmberger in her article on life narratives in postwar Mostar. The violent breakup of Yugoslavia casts the issue of past-present relations into a unique framework; people's invocations of "before" and "after" as points of contrast do not refer to the fall of communism, but to the war. While ethnonational pride and boundaries are of concern to Mostar's Bosniaks and Croats, Palmberger argues that harshly experienced economic shortages are a more predominant theme around which their losses center. "Before the war" is remembered as the period prior to disruptive violence, marked by "normality" in terms of employment and everyday life activities. Nostalgia in the Mostar case thus involves both a recognition of the fact that what is gone will not return, and a realization of the bleakness of the future.

As the examinations of memory and nostalgia discussed above suggest, our ideas of the past are often intimately linked with not only our sense of what may, or may not, lie ahead in the future, but also our attempts to shape those futures. To further elucidate these dynamics, we turn now to the anthropological literatures on temporality and modernity.

### **Changing perceptions of time and personhood: Modernity and its aftermaths**

A key reference for conceptualization of past-future relations is Reinhart Koselleck's *Futures Past* ([1979] 2004), in which Koselleck introduces the concepts of "space of experience" and "horizons of expectation." For Koselleck, the "space of experience" refers to the "present past, whose events have been incorporated and can be remembered," while the "horizon of expectation" is "the future made present," directing itself "to the not-yet ... to that which is to be revealed" (ibid.: 259, 159). Analyzing the interrelation between these two concepts, Koselleck argues that a gradual and profound change took place from early modernity onward, shifting the balance between the two in their capacity to determine the present. As the expected future increasingly came to be seen as "progressive," experience lost its capacity to predict the future, something which made the future more unpredictable but also subject to "progressive policies" intended to facilitate "development". At the same time, the past became in need of constant reinterpretation, as the new "presents" materializing from progressive development demand new historical explanations. Along with Koselleck, many other scholars have documented how the shift in future-past relations penetrated social life in the Western world from Enlightenment on, whereby "rational modernization" and the elimination of what was seen to be old-fashioned and/or uncivilized became a driving force (Bauman 1994; Herzfeld 1992) and a project to be exported to other parts of the world (Comaroff and Comaroff 1985).

Like Western colonial powers, twentieth-century socialist states were embedded in their own understandings of progress. The future was depicted as both certain and resolutely positive, being the site in which the socialist project would finally be realized. Progress was carefully measured in material terms such as the distribution of washing machines and telephones and more general industrial and technological development (Haukanes 2004; Holy 1996). "Official" narratives of the past were, moreover, carefully constructed to make empirical realities fit the law-bound march toward communism (Havel 1989; Verdery 1996; Watson 1994).

How are these attempts to build socialism through industrial progress remembered today? Several of our contributors discuss this issue, revealing the complexity of contemporary perspectives. Pozniak's work on memories of the building of Nowa Huta depicts the existence of public and private ambivalence toward the town's legacy of being a socialist model, revealing Nowa Huta as both a subject of pride and a site of repression and political contestation. In Haukanes's article, which is based mainly on biographical narratives of rural Czechs, the building of socialism is remembered through accounts of the collectivization of agriculture. In contrast to the Polish case, socialism's achievements are not dwelled upon, but nor are past repressions. The pain experienced from loss of land and property is absorbed by most informants through the narrative of a "normal life".

Over the past two decades, scholarly theorization of late modernity has focused less on overarching visions of society marching toward increasing levels of "progress" and "development", and become more preoccupied with documenting the uncertainties associated with the future on the levels of both society and the individual. One way this has been articulated is through notions of risk or the "risk society" (Beck 1992)—that is, a society in which people are increasingly exposed to and dependent upon "abstract systems" (Giddens 1991) to understand and protect themselves against danger. In the risk society, the tendency to disconnect the present from the past and make the future

the cause of current actions and experience becomes even more pronounced than during progressive modernity. As Beck puts it, "In the risk society, the past loses the power to determine the present. Its place is taken by the future, thus, something non-existent, invented, fictive" (1992: 34).

Even more relevant to our discussion of past-future relations than theories of risk are recent conceptualizations of time, personhood, and the life course. A number of sociologists have shown how the typical life course in Western societies appears increasingly muddled, as employment is becoming more precarious and transitions into adulthood increasingly complicated (Katz 2004; Wise 2008). The choice biography—a concept introduced in the sociology of modernity to describe the "disembedding of individual lives from the structural fabric of social institutions and age-specific norms" (Nilsen and Brennen 2003: 1) seems to be developing in the direction of a biography of uncertainty, where anxieties over the future coexist with and partly replace the flexibility of "choice" (Leccardi 2006; Haukanes, this issue).

In her provocative analysis of neoliberal "event-driven temporal frames" such as international debt schedules, Jane Guyer argues that these frames have come to restructure our perspective of time so that we increasingly embrace "very short and very long sightedness, with a symmetrical evacuation of the near past and the near future" (2007: 410). "Time" has gone from being represented as a linear past-present-future continuum to being seen as punctuated and fragmented, oscillating between "fantasy futurism" and "enforced presentism" (ibid.: 410). Thomas Hylland Eriksen (2001) similarly proposes that increasing fragmentation, acceleration, and "stacking" coincide with more "flexible" neoliberal forms of consumption and labor. While the aim may be to increase individuals' abilities to manage their time, the result, Eriksen suggests, is often a sense of powerlessness in an increasingly speedy world. The optimism of high modernity seems to have disappeared. So too have the promises of progress inherent in socialist visions of the world, raising questions

such as: What are the dominant temporal structures through which people in postsocialist societies frame their experiences today? To what extent do biographical uncertainties and a notion of punctuated, incoherent time influence how people structure their own narratives of pasts and futures?

Palmberger's contribution to this section addresses the issue of incoherence and punctuation of time in her analysis of the life narratives of Mostar inhabitants, showing how the life course disruptions the Mostaris have experienced hinder them in narrating their local pasts in meaningful ways. Ringel's contribution from "the city of no futures", Hoyerswerda, speaks to similar issues but in a slightly different way. Adopting Guyer's concept of "temporal reasoning" (2007: 409), Ringel adds to this the notion of "temporal flexibility" to highlight how in some contexts people can actively reposition themselves with respect to various temporal orientations, suggesting not only collective but also individual agency in the variety of conceptualizations of time adopted. Ringel's analysis thus resonates with other anthropologists' findings that people do not always relate to a singular temporal framework, but can hold several simultaneously (Das 2007; Friedman 2007).

There is also, however, widespread scholarly agreement that the way time is experienced is significantly determined by sociopolitical contexts (Friedman 2007; Trnka 2008). Furthermore, while they may be contested, hegemonic state narratives implicitly (or explicitly) invoke specific modes of reckoning time that join together states and citizens (Borneman 1992; Herzfeld [1997] 2005; Verdery 1996). Trnka's contribution to this section describes how despite a wide range of ways of remembering and valuing the communist past, a hegemonic narrative emphasizing how society must protect itself against possible future communist threats permeates public, activist, and citizens' remembrances. Similarly, dominant cultural life scripts play a crucial role in people's interpretations of their past and envisioning of what is to come. In her comparison of retrospective and future-oriented narratives among two generations of

Czechs, Haukanes reveals how both sets of narratives remain dominated by modernist notions of “normality” in spite of experiences of upheavals and future uncertainties.

At a very general level, then, while we can find traces of incoherence and uncertainty running through the contributions, as well as great diversity in temporal orientations, the articles also underscore the enduring power of deeply entrenched narratives of individual and collective expectations of the future (whether realizable or not), and the role of political and socioeconomic conditions in shaping what kinds of futures can be anticipated, embraced, or eschewed.

### Imagination and its limits

While scholarly understandings of the past are continually being revised, depending in part on the ever-shifting configurations of not only what qualifies as “good scholarship” but also funding regimes and the political agendas shaping historiography at any given time (Watson 1994; Verdery 1996), so too are our anticipations of possible, much less probable, futures. Two areas of academic inquiry that we find particularly useful for shedding light on how contemporary social dynamics shape our perspectives of time are examinations of imagination and of generations.

The imagination is a mode of thought that in Western philosophy is often held up as the paradigmatic site of freedom. Crucial to any notion of imagination is its creative potential, opening up the possibility for individuals or collectivities to reimagine themselves and their societies in a multiplicity of ways (Crapanzano 2004). Recently, a number of anthropologists have investigated both the possibilities, and limits, of our imaginations by examining how they are shaped by new forms of media (TV, film, recorded music), new technologies such as email and the Internet, and increased migration—all factors that Sneath, Holbraad, and Peterson refer to as “technologies of the imagination” (2009).

One of the first to explore these issues was Arjun Appadurai, who suggests that due to new

technologies, “the imagination has now acquired a singular new power in social life” (1996: 53). Along with Sneath, Holbraad, and Peterson, Appadurai describes a particular liberatory edge to new modes of envisioning pasts, presents, and futures. Indeed, imagination itself, according to Sneath, Holbraad, and Peterson, cannot be defined outside of its capacity to lead to unforeseen outcomes; the key characteristic of “*imaginative technologies*,” they argue, is that “the imaginative effects that these technologies bring about are *indeterminate*” (2009: 19, emphasis in the original).

That said, our imaginations are also always permeated by shared values and cultural scripts, some replicating hegemonic forms and others more idiosyncratic in nature. Acts of imagination, in particular of our collective or social imaginations, are crucial to the constitution of a range of collective forms, including the nation-state. The foundational text in making this argument was Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities* ([1983] 1995), in which Anderson proposed that one of the defining features of a modern nation is its citizens’ ability to envision themselves as part of a large but intangible sovereign, horizontal collectivity (ibid.: 7). Expanding upon Anderson, a number of scholars have underscored the range of collectivities that extend beyond face-to-face relations and thus require acts of imagination to sustain them. Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar, for example, employs the “social imaginary” to describe a variety of large-scale collectives, including ethnic groups, the “mainstream”, the “general public”, or humanity at large (2002: 5). Others have focused on how such imaginative acts often involve stark political and economic inequalities that determine how we imagine both ourselves and others, a point underscored by Pieterse and Parkeh’s (1995) examination of the ongoing legacy of colonial hegemonies in shaping contemporary imaginations of both the former colonizers and the colonized. Melchior and Visser (2011), in their analysis of anti-Russian discourses evolving around a Soviet WWII memorial in Estonia, similarly show how state discourse and ethnopolitics influence how per-

sonal stories are narrated both in terms of their content and the emotions they express.

The contributions to this section grapple with similar issues, examining the imagination in terms of hegemonic tropes, personal narratives, and collective forms of political engagement. Some stress moments of rupture as a key to understanding the way that past and present are imagined and linked to the imagery of the future. Palmberger, for instance, focuses on how the periods before and after the 1992–1995 war are conceptualized differently by distinct generations of Mostaris and what this means for their abilities to imagine liveable futures. Trnka examines how hegemonic narratives have come to both dominate Czechs' memories of the communist period and are simultaneously expressed through collective concerns over how to ensure a future without communism. Others examine the variety of historical and contemporary sources for imagination and the multiple ways they are interpreted by people to form the basis for complex visions of the future. Ringel, for example, documents the range of historical and political inspirations drawn upon by young Germans to not only imagine but also politically contest possible futures both among themselves and with older generations. Still others stress the restrictions put on the imagination by ideas about "normality", such as the "normal" biography described by Haukanes as a structuring element of the actual and projected life accounts of Czechs, young and old, or by the "enforced presentism" of a difficult everyday life that makes imagining the future appear to be a seemingly futile exercise, as described by Palmberger.

One thing that unites the contributions in this section is their attention to the variable and nuanced ways that the imagination comes into play in moments of social transition. While the power of imagination has been the focus of a wealth of work on the upheavals associated with political violence (e.g., Das 2007; Trnka 2011), thus far, discussions of imagination have been less prominent in examinations of other moments of massive, unexpected social and political change, though clearly such events similarly

trigger a radical rethinking of one's place in the world, as well as of the nature of the world itself.

Postsocialist nations are a particularly fertile site for examining such questions, as both sets of "transitions" (to and from state socialism) demonstrate the historical variability of the imaginative space of the future, the various "technologies" used to envision it, and the power dynamics that underpin whose imaginations get foregrounded and whose are deemed illegitimate. Moreover, while the transition from socialism may have been popularly depicted as throwing open these nations' futures, in many cases the visions of the future that were articulated during the early days of revolution converged on the twin images of democracy and capitalism. More recently, these broad visions have had to contend with a multitude of smaller, competing visions and trajectories, though attempts to promote unified national futures still remain. As our contributors show, in such sites of transition and/or crisis, the imagination can become both a resource for envisioning hopeful futures and a means of instilling fear, and even paralysis, when such futures appear nonexistent. It can, moreover, become a site of political contestation when competing visions vie for social recognition, or act as a mode of comfort, seemingly ensuring a promising future that lies ahead.

### **Generations as lived and reflected upon**

Regardless of the specific affective tone of the future, one popular way it is imagined is through the rubric of generations. Indeed, one of the most prevalent concepts through which our contributors' interlocutors expressed their sense of future changes and continuities was that of generations. The notion of a "generation gap" was often popularly used to explain shifts in political-economic positioning (Palmberger; Pozniak), imagined life trajectories (Haukanes; Palmberger; Trnka), and changes in political outlooks (Ringel; Trnka). This corresponds to scholarship on other postsocialist societies. Alexei Yurchak (2005), for example, writes of

the generation popularly referred to as “sixtiers” in Russia, who are thought to be set apart from others due to their experience of the 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia during their formative years.

“Generation” is not only a common local term for expressing continuity and change, but also a long-standing category of anthropological analysis. Much of the anthropological scholarship on generations has been inspired by Karl Mannheim’s classic essay “The Problem of Generations” ([1928] 1963), in which Mannheim asserted that a generation is not determined by biological criteria (i.e., year of birth) alone, but is a sociological category. Comparing generation to class, Mannheim argued that generational positioning structures one’s thoughts, feelings, and general outlook on life because these are largely determined by the major political, economic, and social events that one experiences in adolescence. Our contributors, however, question the extent of this observation. While each of the case studies involve societies in which generation is a key facet in distinguishing between groups, collectively the analyses demonstrate that there also exist deep-seated commonalities between those who were born in the midst of communism and those born after 1989. In addition to this, in many cases, our contributors found that generational identities often do not override other modes of differentiation, such as political orientation, class, gender, education, ethnic identity, or religion.

Jürgen Reulecke makes a significant addition to Mannheim’s work through his use of the concept of “generationality” to refer to both “characteristics resulting from shared experiences that either individuals or larger ‘generational units’ claim for themselves [and] ... the bundle of characteristics resulting from shared experiences that are ascribed to such units from the outside” (2008: 119). Such characteristics, however, and the “forms” that convey them (such as narratives, institutions, places, etc.), Reulecke argues, are not necessarily the unique properties of a single generation, but can be passed down from one generation to the next. Conversely, generations can (consciously or uncon-

sciously) reject the distinctive characteristics of previous generations.

Our contributors approach these issues by examining similarities and distinctions in outlooks, values, and perspectives across different generations, but from a series of different vantage points that lead them to interrogate whether or not “generations” are analytically useful for understanding these phenomena. Some begin with a particular point in time—such as the dismantling of socialism or the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina—and trace how such events reverberate across generational groups (Trnka) or shape the particular experiences of a single generation (Palmberger). Others look across generational groups to examine discrepancies between publicly ascribed characteristics and actual experiences of people of different ages (Pozniak) or changes and continuities in life scripts and generational tropes (Haukanes). A third approach is to link generations explicitly with a discussion of temporality and temporal reasoning, examining inter- and intragenerational clashes over imagined pasts and futures (Ringel).

Our contributors’ findings on the salience of intergenerational distinctions in how people position themselves with respect to the past and future reveal that while certain sociopolitical contexts encourage multiple perspectives both inbetween and among members of the different generations, others are more restrictive. Pozniak notes that members of both the older and younger generations in Nowa Huta remember a history of resistance to socialism, but also acknowledge some of its material benefits, particularly given the current cuts in government funding for education and health care. Haukanes similarly compares intergenerational narratives and reveals the complexities of how contemporary Czech youth give voice to different sets of concerns and experiences than their parents, but for the most part frame their accounts according to similar life scripts. Trnka’s article on remembrances of Czechoslovak communism explores how expressions of longing for a new state-citizen relation unite members of different generations in distancing themselves from the

communist past and lend implicit support to the present regime as an alternative to communism. Ringel similarly focuses on how generations are crosscut by politicized perspectives of where the nation has been and where it should be heading, revealing a rich range of political stances that shape how temporality is perceived. No such options exist for Palmberger's Last Yugoslavs, who are hard-pressed to envision any futures, much less divided by the visions they embrace.

## Conclusion

There is a well-known joke that under communism the future was certain, but the past was constantly being rewritten. Perhaps a more apt expression for contemporary postsocialist societies might be that both pasts and futures are being continually revised. As our contributions show, the past is subject to contestation in terms of both understandings of what "really happened" and as a source of models for the future.

The case studies presented here raise serious questions about the "openness" of future visions, suggesting how the popular Western notion of the future as a site of unlimited possibility is anchored to a specific mode of Western modernity and class-based conceptions of individualism that do not appear to have much influence in the societies under consideration. The futures that are described here are neither open nor infinite but governed by hegemonic scripts and normative values. The state and corporate capital clearly have a central role in shaping and delimiting visions of the future, be they particularly programmatic or more open-ended. As our contributions show, there are also more subtle and/or local processes at play in determining which future visions are deemed valuable and which are not, and which surface in local (ethno)political dynamics, in intergenerational exchanges of values and ideas, and in public acts of commemoration. Hegemonic assumptions about where the nation or particular social groups or individuals might be heading are, moreover, continually contested by competing models, narratives, visions, and affects.

Visions of pasts and futures can thus never be entirely open-ended, nor predetermined, but are dependent upon the efforts of various actors to grasp—or shape—the nature of their society, their place in it, and those of the generations who came before and are still to come. Drawing upon the resources of popular or marginalized perspectives of the past and anchored in the sociopolitical economic realities of the present day, competing visions of the future attract, repel, or leave indifferent various segments of the populace. By examining these visions and the social relations that underpin them, our aim here is to shed light upon the cultural scripts and social processes through which not only pasts and presents but also possible futures are ascribed collective meaning, employed in the creation of shared and personal identities, and used to galvanize social and political (in)action.

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*Knowledge* (Berghahn Books 2013, coedited with Cris Shore); *State of Suffering: Political Violence and Community Survival in Fiji* (Cornell University Press 2008), *Young Women of Prague* (MacMillan 1998, coauthored with Alena Heitlinger), and the edited volume *Bodies of Bread and Butter: Reconfiguring Women's Lives in the Post-communist Czech Republic* (Prague Gender Studies Centre 1993).

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