

## V4 Net Visegrád Anthropologists' Network Workshop

Call for Papers

# Nation-Building and the Dynamics of Silences, Memory and Forgetting

15-16 October 2020

**Convenor:** Elena Soler (Charles University)

Silence, from the early beginning has been a theme in Anthropological studies. David Le Breton, in his book *Du silence* (1997), among other scholars such as Roland Barthes (1953), Edward. T. Hall, (1959), Keith Basso (1970), Maurice Bloch (1992) or Maria-Luisa –Loeb (2005) have proved that the meanings and uses attributed to silence (individual or collective) are neither self-evident nor stable across, or even within different cultural and historical locations and contexts. Silence, the same as verbal language, as any other corporal manifestation, is another way of human communication. It can be conscious and unconscious forced, depending on the dynamic of the social, political, economic and even religious contexts or circumstances, or voluntary.

It is not the same to study silences under a totalitarian regime, like the ones experienced in Europe in the twentieth century, when millions of people were forced into silence or, at least, where what they said had to be self- controlled and not too loud, in this sense silence indicated a structural political oppression. These are different from studying silences in post-war conflict and/or periods of ethnic cleansing, when terrible memories can leave people mute, without words, which does not mean that people forget as John Borneman (2011) has pointed out. Or, to study silences in contemporary post 1989 Central and Eastern European nation- states, and as members of the EU, which will be the socio- cultural political and economic historical context this workshop will be mainly based on, but not exclusively.

The goal of this two day intensive workshop is to bring a group of scholars from different branches of Anthropology (Cognitive, linguistics, political, psychological etc.) whose aim is to define and address anthropological theory while producing the first comparative study and intensive debate on to what extent long-term silences or deep silences, the same as memory and forgetting, due to their interconnections- and which are generally dynamic and processual, can be used as a useful analytical category of knowledge to understand nation building. A complex process which can only be understood and analyzed within the context of Europeization and Globalization.

**Among some of the topics and questions that this workshop expects to address are:**

- Different meanings, idioms, dynamics, uses and cultural and social processes of silences and their relationship to social minority constructions (ethnic, linguistic, religious...), this “matter out of place” (Mary Douglas 1966) and nation-building?
- To what extent are memory and even silence frameworks (Maurice Halbwachs 1952) related to inclusion and exclusion; truth and lies; pure and impure; continuity and change; stability and threat; acknowledgements and indifference...?
- What role can emotions play in silence and memory practices? What do people experience: happiness, sadness, shame, sorrow, relief, nostalgia...?
- Silences and the imagined community (Benedict Anderson 1983). Long-term shared silences can bring a community together, therefore they could be considered an essential aspect of the functioning of society, however, what happens when those shared silences are broken and contested, can they tear a community apart? Examples.
- In the interest of legitimizing an image of a national unified community, who have mainly historically been the carriers of those silences (and the new ones), and based on what? In other words, can we talk about keeping the nation protected from any contradiction through silence/ing “others”?
- Why and how were silences used and, even abused. The political instrumentalization of silence and its relation to official heritage, commemorations, memorials, national myths and rituals.
- Can silence, despite its abstraction, be discussed from its materiality, the materiality of silences. In other words, how those silenced-scapes (ruins, mass graves as “landscapes of terror” (Ferrándiz 2015) speak for themselves, light the context they produce and define them?
- Finally, following the work of Kendall R. Phillips and G. Mitchell (2011) when talking about “global memoryscapes”. What happens when shared silences, or public silences, are no longer grounded within the confines of traditional nation-states and they reach different European or globalized frameworks and temporalities?

**Please, submit your titles and abstracts (250 words) by March 20 2020 to Elena Soler-[elena.soler@cerge-ei.cz](mailto:elena.soler@cerge-ei.cz). The Conference Committee will make its selection of papers by April 1. The travel and accommodation costs of all presenters will be covered by the organizers (arrival day; October 14; departure October 17). Information about V4Net can be found under the following address: [https://www.eth.mpg.de/4638411/Visegrad\\_Network](https://www.eth.mpg.de/4638411/Visegrad_Network)**