

## Erasmus School of History, Culture and Communication

### CENTER FOR HISTORICAL CULTURE

#### ORGANIZATION AND MISSION

© Maria Grever, 16-12-2012

## 1. Objectives

### **Mission**

May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2006, the Center for Historical Culture (CHC) was established at Erasmus University Rotterdam. The Center initiates, coordinates and produces academic research on historical culture. The term *historical culture* refers to various forms of historical understanding and relationships to the past, articulated by individuals, groups, institutes and large communities in a broad array of narratives, media, ideologies and attitudes. The Center also collaborates with museums, memorial centers, heritage institutes and educational institutes, by providing advice and stimulating reflection on practices of professional, disciplinary and public uses of the past.

### **Objectives**

1. The CHC functions as an intellectual forum for scholars in the field of historical culture by means of:
  - organizing research meetings, lectures, master classes, workshops and (inter) national conferences
  - publishing scholarly results in books and journals
  - promoting national and international exchange in the field of historical culture
  - hosting national and international PhD-students and post-docs
2. The CHC initiates, maintains and extends an international research network to bridge the gap between academic and public sectors through cooperative relationships with institutions such as:
  - Center for the Study of Historical Consciousness (Canada)
  - EUROCLIO, the European Association of History Educators (The Hague)
  - Georg-Eckert-Institute for International Textbook Research (Germany)
  - International Auto/Biography Association (IABA)
  - International Society for History Didactics
  - Landelijk Expertisecentrum Mens- en Maatschappijvakken (Amsterdam)
  - The International Commission for the History and Theory of Historiography
  - The Netherlands Expertise Center for Arts and Cultural Education / LKCA
  - The Royal Netherlands Historical Society (KNHG)
  - NIOD: KNAW Netherlands Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies (Amsterdam)

See also Links <http://www.eshcc.eur.nl/english/chc/resources/links/>

## 2. The Concept of Historical Culture

The Center has adopted an inclusive notion of *historical culture* by incorporating academic and popular uses of the past, studying material and immaterial culture. The concept encompasses both the production and reproduction of historical narratives, perspectives and knowledge (internal level), as well as the social infrastructure of the field of history, such as the organization of school history, museums, national holidays and other memorial observances (external level) – all of which provide the conditions that are necessary for people to deal with the past (Grever 2008; 2009).<sup>1</sup>

"Dealing with the past" encompasses several processes: building and maintaining social memory, commemorating and remembering as ways to articulate personal and collective identities, and acknowledging different types of historical interests (aesthetical, academic, political, commercial and popular). Hence, historical culture embraces sub-disciplines such as the history of historiography, the study of historical consciousness, the role of the media, and the study of history and heritage education. In this way the concept also covers modes of discourse and socio-ideological contexts. Furthermore, the concept reveals the interaction between material and immaterial culture, and the connections between 'high' and 'popular' historical culture.

The scholarly and social relevance are mainly related to:

- the importance of the past for giving meaning, orientation and identity
- the political use and abuse of the past
- commercial exploitation of the past (historical tourism, theme parks)
- the function of social memory in society (education, government, business)

Concrete interaction with the past in the historical field is carried out by means of:

- material bearers such as buildings, statues, coins, postage stamps, (comic) books, audiovisual media, digital sources
- (codified) behavior such as rituals, traditions, stage play and dance
- transmitted knowledge and conceptions in oral tales and texts
- mediators such as office holders, writers, scientists, journalists, teachers, curators
- organizations of preserving (museums, archives, documentation centers), of transmission (schools, heritage houses) and of processing (memorial centers)

Our concept of historical culture has been inspired by the publications of various philosophers of history, including classic works. Maurice Mandelbaum introduced the concept of "continuing entities", meaning: "A society (...) (that) consists of individuals living in a organized community that controls a particular territory; the organization of such a community is provided by institutions that serve to define the status occupied by different individuals and ascribe to them the roles they are expected to play in perpetuating the continuing existence of the community" (Mandelbaum 1977, 11). In his work *Time and Narrative* Paul Ricoeur adds to Mandelbaums concept – which he labels as a first order entity – the element 'participatory belonging', or, what historian Harry Jansen has called: collective participation (Jansen 2001, 148). Collective participation refers to the actions and reflections of individuals within communities or societies, according to its aims, roles, and institutional rules. Yet, the implicit and explicit refusal of these aims and rules belong to this collective participation as well (Ricoeur 1984, 198-

---

<sup>1</sup> For this division, see Schönemann (2003, 17-19). He considers historical culture and historical consciousness as part of the umbrella concept 'historical consciousness in society'.

199). With his concept of continuing entities Mandelbaum mainly points to states and cities. Ricoeur, however, also includes cultures, classes and social movements. This becomes clear from the fact that he not only considers nationalism, patriotism, or love for the fatherland as a form of collective participation, but also class consciousness. In this way Ricoeur enlarges Mandelbaum's definition of continuing entity by excluding the control of territory as a characteristic element. Yet, we have to understand that the entities of both Mandelbaum and Ricoeur are mediated constructions, referring to real phenomena but *without* an ontological status. They have a holistic character as they connect demographic, economic, political and cultural aspects of a society or a culture.

Building further on the work of Mandelbaum and Ricoeur, we consider historical culture as a continuing entity. The concept points to a culture – or imagined community – with a specific infrastructure (museums, schools, history chairs, national calendars), in which individuals, groups and institutions participate, articulating different although recognizable relationships with the past in various media and narratives. Important is the dynamic character of historical cultures: in course of time infrastructures and the use of media change with people and communities assigning different meanings to the past (Grever 2009). This approach refers to the *participatory* historical culture as formulated by Theelen in 1998. It resembles the idea of historical culture as a social system or a new field of investigation (Schönemann 2003). Within and across historical cultures, specific memory cultures participate. These mnemonic communities (Zerubavel 2003) – such as families, religious communities, sport groups, alumni or other groups – articulate shared experiences in reunions, rituals and commemorations. Typical for memory cultures is the emphasis on identity formation, emotion and a sense of belonging. Finally, the concept historical culture also refers to a meta-perspective: the study of the cultural and historical praxis as a whole. It provides a holistic view on the pursuit of history, clarifying the interactions between different actors in the field and the differences between national, transnational and global contexts of historical cultures.

### 3. Activities, products and team

The main activities of the CHC are the exchange of research in the CHC research group with national and foreign scholars, the publication of books and articles, the organization of national and international workshops and conferences, and the cultivation of elaborate contacts with public history and educational institutes.

Products are scholarly publications (dissertations; monographs; articles); the CHC website and electronic newsletter; CHC research meetings, workshops, master classes and conferences; consultancy to museums and educational institutions

#### ***Historic Didactic Collection***

On November 23, 2007 the well known Dutch history teacher trainer and textbook author Leo Dalhuisen of Leiden University donated his large international collection of history textbooks, literature, audio-visual materials and documentation on the learning and teaching of history to the CHC. The Erasmus University Library has integrated the Dalhuisen collection with existing collections in the field of history teaching and history didactics. Since then several persons and institutes have donated their books, documents and audio-visual materials on history didactics to the Center for Historical Culture and Erasmus University Library. The combined 'History Didactics Collection' (HDC) is almost fully indexed and searchable through the Library Catalogue. More than 4000 titles are available. The Library has created a special reading room where the HDC is available for research on site.

### **Staff and research associates CHC**

1. Prof.dr. Maria Grever (director CHC)
2. Dr. Maarten Van Dijck (tenure assistant professor)
3. Dr. Bregje Van Eekelen (tenure track assistant professor)
4. Prof.dr. Kees Ribbens (EUR / NIOD) endowed chair
5. Prof.dr. Carla Van Boxtel (EUR / UvA) endowed chair
6. Dr. Marijke Huisman (Postdoc)
7. Dr. Stephan Klein (Postdoc)
8. Robbert-Jan Adriaansen MA (PhD student)
9. Pieter De Bruijn MA (PhD student)
10. Geerte Savenije MA (PhD student)
11. Tina Van der Vlies (PhD student)
12. Drs. Marc Van Berkel (PhD student EUR / HAN)
13. Stephanie Benzaquen (external PhD student)
14. Drs. Jan Jüngen (librarian of the Historic Didactic Collection EUR)

### **Cooperating scholars from foreign universities and research institutes with CHC**

Prof.dr. Keith Barton (Indiana University, USA)  
Prof.dr. Stefan Berger (Ruhr-Universität Bochum, Germany)  
Prof.dr. Mario Carretero (Universidad Autonoma de Madrid, Spain)  
Prof.dr. Terry Haydn (University of East Anglia, UK)  
Prof.dr. Simone Lässig (GEI Braunschweig, Germany)  
Dr. Andrew Mycock (University of Huddersfield, UK)  
Prof.dr. Sylvia Paletschek (Germany)  
Prof.dr. Peter Seixas (British University of Columbia, Canada)  
Prof.dr. Nicole Tutiaux-Guillon (IUFM Nord Pas de Calais-université d'Artois, France)  
Prof.dr. Kaat Wils (University of Leuven, Belgium)

See also the international advisory board [www.eshcc.eur.nl/english/chc/research/](http://www.eshcc.eur.nl/english/chc/research/)

### **Related literature**

- Assmann, Aleida (1999). *Erinnerungsräume. Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses* (München: C.H. Beck).
- Berger, Peter L. und Thomas Luckmann (1966). *Die gesellschaftliche Konstruktion der Wirklichkeit. Eine Theorie der Wissenssoziologie* (Fischer Taschenbuecher; 6623) 18. Auflage (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer 2001; 1966: The social construction of reality 1969).
- Cornelissen, C. u.a. ed. (2003). *Erinnerungskulturen. Deutschland, Italien, und Japan seit 1945* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer).
- Demantowsky, Marko (2005), 'Geschichtskultur und Erinnerungskultur - zwei Konzeptionen des einen Gegenstandes. Historischer Hintergrund und exemplarischer Vergleich', *Geschichte, Politik und ihre Didaktik* 33 ,11-20.
- Geyer, Michael (2007), 'The subject(s) of Europe'. In Konrad H. Jarausch and Thomas Lindenberger eds., *Conflicted memories. Europeanizing contemporary histories*, 254-280 (New York & Oxford: Berghahn Books).
- Grever, Maria and Siep Stuurman eds. (2007), *Beyond the canon. History for the twenty-first century* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan).
- Grever, Maria (2008), 'The gender of patrimonial pride. Changes in historical culture and the revitalization of canons in the West'. In Saskia Wieringa ed., *Traveling heritages. Collecting, preserving and sharing women's history*, 285-302 (Amsterdam: Aksant).

- Grever, Maria (2009), 'Fear of plurality. Historical culture and historiographical canonization in Western Europe', in Angelika Epple and Angelika Schaser eds., *Gendering historiography: beyond national canons* ((Frankfurt/New York, Campus Verlag) 45-62.
- Grever, Maria, Ben Pelzer, Terry Haydn (2011), 'High school students' views on history', *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 43, nr. 2, 207-229.
- Grever, Maria (2012), 'Dilemma's of common and plural history. Reflections on history education and heritage in a globalizing world,' in M. Carretero et al eds., *History education and the construction of national identities* (Charlotte NC, Information Age Publishing) 75-91.
- Jansen, Harry (2001), 'Gestolde tijd. Historische entiteiten en de geschiedschrijving van de Gouden eeuw'. In Maria Grever en Harry Jansen eds., *De ongrijpbare tijd. Temporaliteit en de constructie van het verleden* (Hilversum: Verloren) 145-164.
- Jansen, Harry (2010), *Triptiek van de tijd. Geschiedtheorie in drievoud* (Nijmegen, Vantilt).
- Jonker, Ed (2008), *Ordentelijke geschiedenis. Herinnering, ethiek en geschiedwetenschap* (Universiteit Utrecht).
- Lechner, Frank (2007), 'Redefining national identity: Dutch evidence on global patterns', *International journal of comparative sociology*, 48, 355-368.
- Lowenthal, David (1985), *The past is a foreign country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Luckmann, Thomas, Jochen Dreher (2007), *Lebenswelt, Identität und Gesellschaft. Schriften zur Wissens- und Protozoziologie* (Erfahrung - Wissen - Imagination; 13). Konstanz: UVK.
- Mandelbaum, Maurice (1977), *The anatomy of knowledge* (Baltimore / London).
- Pandel, Hans-Jürgen (1996), 'Legenden – Mythen – Lügen. Wieviel Fiktion verträgt unser Geschichtsbewusstsein?' *Geschichte lernen* 9 (1996) 52, 15-19.
- Ribbens, Kees (2002), *Een eigentijds verleden. Alledaagse historische cultuur in Nederland 1945-2000* (Hilversum: Verloren).
- Ribbens, Kees (2007), 'A narrative that encompasses our history: historical culture and history teaching'. In Grever and Stuurman eds., *Beyond the canon*, 63-76.
- Ricoeur, Paul (1984), *Time and narrative I* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press).
- Ricoeur, Paul (2004), *Memory, history, forgetting* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press).
- Rigney, Ann (2001), *Imperfect histories. The elusive past and the legacy of Romantic historicism* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press).
- Roy Rosenzweig and Dave Theelen, *The presence of the past. Popular uses of history in American life* (New York 1998).
- Rüsen, Jörn (1994), 'Was ist Geschichtskultur? Überlegungen zu einer Art, über Geschichte nachzudenken'. In Klauss Füßmann et al (eds), *Historische Faszination. Geschichtskultur heute*, 3-26 (Keulen, Weimar and Wenen: Böhlau).
- Rüsen, Jörn (1991), 'Geschichtsdidaktik heute – Was ist und zu welchem Zwecke betreiben wie sie (noch)?' In Ernst Hinrichs/Wolfgang Jacobmeyer (Hrsg.): *Bildungsgeschichte und historisches Lernen. Symposium aus Anlaß des 65. Geburtstages von Prof. Dr. Karl-Ernst Jeismann*. (Frankfurt a. Main) 9-23.
- Schönemann, Bernd (2003), 'Geschichtsdidaktik, Geschichtskultur, Geschichtswissenschaft'. In Hilke Günther-Arndt (ed.), *Geschichtsdidaktik. Praxishandbuch für die Sekundarstufe I und II* (Berlin: Cornelsen) 11-22.
- Schönemann, Bernd (2006), 'Geschichtskultur als Wiederholungsstruktur'. *Geschichte, Politik und ihre Didaktik, Beiträge und Nachrichten für die Unterrichtspraxis* 3/4, 182-191.
- Schörken, Rolf (1995), *Begegnungen mit Geschichte. Vom außerwissenschaftlichen Umgang mit der Historie in Literatur und Medien* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta).
- Schörken, Rolf (1997), 'Geschichte als Lebenswelt'. in Klaus Bergmann u.a. (Hrsg.), *Handbuch der Geschichtsdidaktik* 5 (Seelze-Velber: Kallmeyer) 3-9.
- Schütz, Alfred und Thomas Luckmann (2003), *Strukturen der Lebenswelt* (Konstanz: UVK).
- Seixas, Peter ed. (2004). *Theorizing historical consciousness* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press).
- Stuurman, Siep (2000), 'The canon of the history of political thought. Its critique and a proposed alternative', *History and Theory*, 39, 147-166.

- Tollebeek, Jo, Frank Ankersmit en Wessel Krul eds. (1996). *Romantiek en historische cultuur* (Groningen: Historische uitgeverij).
- Van Boxtel, Carla and Maria Grever (2011), 'Between disenchantment and high expectations. History education in the Netherlands, 1968-2008', in E. Erdmann & W. Hasberg ed., *Facing, mapping, bridging diversity. Foundation of a European discourse on history education* (Schwalbach: Wochenschau Verlag) vol. 2, 83-116.
- Vree, Frank van (1998), *De scherven van de geschiedenis. Over crisisverschijnselen in de hedendaagse historische cultuur* (Amsterdam).
- Wood, David ed. (1991), *On Paul Ricoeur. Narrative and interpretation* (New York: Routledge).
- Zerubavel, Eviatar (2003), *Time maps. Collective memory and the social shape of the past* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press).