

THE
HOLOCAUST
AND
MEMORY
IN THE
GLOBAL
AGE

DANIEL LEVY AND NATAN SZNAIDER
TRANSLATED BY ASSENKA OKSILOFF

The Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age

Daniel Levy and
Natan Sznaider



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DANIEL LEVY is an Assistant Professor of Sociology at the State University of New York, Stony Brook.

NATAN SZNAIDER is an Associate Professor of Sociology at the Academic College of Tel-Aviv-Yaffo, Israel.

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Contents

1	Revised Introduction to the English Edition	1
Part I		
2	Cosmopolitan Memory	23
3	Holocaust and Diaspora	39
Part II		
4	The Postwar Years	57
5	Debates and Reflections	96
Part III		
6	The Holocaust between Representation and Institutionalization	131
7	The Consequences of Cosmopolitan Memory	191
	Bibliography	208
	Index	222

1

Revised Introduction to the English Edition

THE MAIN REASON GLOBALIZATION causes so much anxiety is that it is steadily dissolving the coordinates we have been using to make sense of experience. This anxiety is by nature almost impossible to articulate and instead is expressed as a series of inter-related fears. People fear a worldwide homogenization of cultures, which will inexorably entail the loss of their own. They fear that without these cultural buffers, individuals will be set adrift, without any anchors, bonds, or values. In short, they fear that because all human attachments are particular, globalization will standardize and destroy everything in our collective life that is worth having. From this perspective, globalization presents itself as a huge trap. Collective memories persist as a bulwark against encroaching globalization. They serve as a foundation for stabilizing group and national memories that are linked to a particular place and time. After all, is the concept of collective memory not an integral component of the fixed national and ethnic sense of identity that people have of themselves?

From all this, it seems axiomatic that global collective memory and global society are impossible. But is this theoretically and empirically true? That is the subject of this book. Aside from the fact that this view of the global transformations of the past two decades is simplistic, it also tends to overlook the changing modes of temporality and memory associated with globalization. The study of collective memory usually regards these memory structures as being

bound by tight social and political groups such as the “nation” or “ethnos” (Halbwachs 1980; Smith 1995). But what happens when an increasing number of people, primarily in consumer societies, no longer define themselves (exclusively) through the nation or their ethnic belonging? Can we imagine collective memories that transcend national and ethnic boundaries? If so, we must ask, how do these transnational memory forms come about, and of what do they consist?

This book examines the distinctive forms that collective memories take in the age of globalization. The conventional concept of “collective memory” is firmly embedded within what we call the “container of the nation-state.” We argue that this container is in the process of slowly being cracked. It is commonly assumed that memories, community, and geographical proximity belong together. We direct our attention to global processes that are characterized by the de-territorialization of politics and culture. We observe a process in which issues of global concern are able to become part and parcel of everyday local experiences and moral life worlds. Does this open up new “memoriscapes”? Can solidarities and mutual responsibilities transcend territorial boundaries? Rather than restricting the conceptualization of collective memory to a national context, we argue, it is possible, and necessary, to uncover memoriscapes that correspond to emerging modes of identification in the global age.

We pursue these questions by studying the transition from national to cosmopolitan memory cultures. Cosmopolitanism refers to a process of “internal globalization” through which global concerns become part of local experiences of an increasing number of people (Beck 2004). To avoid later misunderstandings, we should emphasize that our conception of cosmopolitanization differs from the Kantian concept of cosmopolitanism and other philosophical variants that entail a universalistic notion and envision a polis extending around the globe. The Enlightenment understanding of cosmopolitanism was a universal project limited to elites and insufficiently responsive to the underlying power relations that have shaped the diversity, particularity, and history of humanity (Hollinger 2001). The Kantian outlook and the universalism that sustains it predicate equality on sameness.

Such normative concepts are of little use for sociologists looking for global social processes. "To be useful for our purposes," according to Ulrich Beck (2004: 183 ff), "the Enlightenment concept of cosmopolitanism has to be freed from its origins in imperial universalism, such as we find in Kant and many others. It has to be opened up to the recognition of multiplicity. . . . To do this, cosmopolitanism has to lose its fixation on the purely global and be redirected to the interconnection between the global and the local."

Cosmopolitanization relates to processes that take place within national societies. The internalization of globalization takes roots as global concerns provide a political and moral frame of reference for local experiences (Beck 2002: 17–19). In a global context, "cosmopolitanism means first of all rooted cosmopolitanism," Beck writes. "There are several things to be learned from this. One is that it presents the clearest historical example of what actually happens when universalistic philosophy and particularistic local cultures exist side by side: they mix and produce new forms of both. They produce new forms of rooted cosmopolitanism, and they produce new forms of localism that are open to the world. By rooted cosmopolitanism, we mean universal values that are emotionally engaging, that descend from the level of pure abstract philosophy and into the emotions of people's everyday lives. It is by becoming symbols of people's personal identities that cosmopolitan philosophy becomes a political force. Cosmopolitanism thus disregards the prevailing opposition between cosmopolitans and locals: Cosmopolitanism does not exist without local particularities" (Beck 2000: 98–99). Conceptually, the notion of cosmopolitanization thus provides an analytic prism that captures a key dynamic in the global age—namely, the relationship between the global and the local (or, for our purposes, the national). Accordingly, we suggest that national and ethnic memories are transformed in the age of globalization rather than erased. They continue to exist, of course, but globalization processes also imply that different national memories are subjected to a common patterning. They begin to develop in accord with common rhythms and periodizations. But in each case, the common elements combine with preexisting elements to form something new. In each case, the new global narrative has to be

reconciled with the old national narratives, and the result is always distinctive.

This book traces the theoretical and empirical foundations for the emergence of “cosmopolitan memories” through an examination of how the Holocaust has been remembered in Germany, Israel, and the United States in the past fifty years. We suggest that shared memories of the Holocaust, the term used to describe the destruction of European Jewry by Nazi Germany and a formative event of the twentieth century, provide the foundations for a new cosmopolitan memory. It is a memory that harbors the possibility of transcending ethnic and national boundaries. Can an event defined by many people as a watershed in European history (Bartov 1996; Diner 1999) be remembered outside the ethnic and national boundaries of the Jewish victims and the German perpetrators? Can this event be memorialized by people who do not have a direct connection to it? At the beginning of the third millennium, memories of the Holocaust facilitate the formation of transnational memory cultures, which in turn have the potential to become the cultural foundation for global human-rights politics (Levy and Sznaider 2004). This nation-transcending dynamic stands at the center of our sociological analysis. We are studying not the historical event called the Holocaust but how changing representations of this event have become a central political and cultural symbol facilitating the emergence of cosmopolitan memories.

The choice of the Holocaust is not arbitrary. The Holocaust—or, rather, the representations that produce shared memories—is a paradigmatic case for the relationship of memory and modernity. Modernity, until recently one of the primary analytic and normative frameworks for intellectual self-understanding, is itself questioned through memories of the Holocaust. In this view, the mass murder of European Jews by the Nazis is regarded not as a German–Jewish tragedy but as a tragedy of reason or of modernity itself (Adorno and Horkheimer 1999 [1944]; Arendt 1992 [1963]; Bauman 1989). We go beyond the critique of modernity and argue that, in an age of ideological uncertainty, these memories have become a measure for humanist and universal identifications. Hence, it is precisely the abstract nature of “good and evil” that symbolizes the Holocaust, which contributes to the extraterritorial quality of cosmopolitan memory.

Initially, revulsion about the Holocaust was prominent in Europe, as shown by Europeans' continuously negative attitudes toward nationalism and their corresponding willingness to let a set of transnational ideas and institutions take over certain aspects that had been under the firm sovereignty of the nation-state. However, as our findings show, by the 1990s the Holocaust had been reconfigured as a decontextualized event oriented toward nation-transcending symbols and meaning systems such as the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948. Memories of the Holocaust helped shape the articulation of a new rights culture. Once that culture was in place, however, it no longer needed to rely on its original articulation to take on strong normative powers. Jeffrey Alexander (2002) has referred to the Holocaust as the dominant symbolic representation of evil in the late twentieth century and as a foundation for a supranational moral universalism. Holocaust memory and the new rights culture have been mutually constitutive. The Holocaust is now a concept that has been dislocated from space and time, resulting in its inscription into other acts of injustice and other traumatic national memories across the globe.

References to the Holocaust abound in debates about slavery and colonialism. Many African intellectuals borrow from a Holocaust vocabulary to advance their own claims about European guilt and reparations (Soyinka 2000). Black Americans' demands for reparations for slavery frequently invoke references to the way Jewish organizations negotiated reparations with Germany (Torpey 2001). In China, "study of the Holocaust is linked to memory of the Japanese invasion and the Nanking massacre, as well as to the emerging consciousness of human rights" (Miles 2001: 511). To name but a few other examples that show the Holocaust's global reach: the United Nations' war-crimes tribunal for Rwanda referred to the Holocaust explicitly in a media trial when it accused three men of inciting Hutus to murder Tutsis and moderate Hutus; debates about the "stolen generation" in Australia have repeatedly drawn on the comparison (Moses 2003); and the major document on human-rights abuses in Argentina is titled "Nunca Mas (Never Again)." It is the universal nature of evil associated with the Holocaust that fuels its metaphorical power and allows it to be appropriated in referring

to human-rights abuses that bear little resemblance to the original event.

Representations of the Holocaust have thus become a major point of reference for debates about memory in the 1990s. Memories of the Holocaust have been invoked to justify military interventions, provided a model for various measures of restitution, and contributed significantly to the formation of an international human-rights regime (Levy and Sznajder 2004). In what follows, we study the circulation of Holocaust memories beyond the conventional references to particular groups (such as nations) in an attempt to theorize collective memory in relation to globalization processes. In doing so, we hope to contribute not only to the study of memory but also to a broader debate about the cultural effects of globalization in general.

THE SOCIOLOGICAL RELEVANCE of Holocaust remembrance lies, among other things, in the fact that it is situated at a crucial juncture in the transition from First Modernity to Second Modernity. This distinction provides a useful heuristic device to address the methodological and empirical implications of global processes. Following Beck, the difference between First and Second Modernity is that modernity has begun to modernize its own foundations—it has become reflexive, directed at itself. This causes huge new problems both in reality and in theory. First, modernity depended tacitly but crucially on many non-modern structures for its clarity and stability. When modernization begins to transform those structures and make them modern, they cease to be useable foundations. To be sure, this process should not be construed as an evolutionary periodization; nor do those epochal distinctions imply that they are mutually exclusive.

A spatially fixed understanding of culture so thoroughly pervades classic works in sociology that it is rarely remarked on (Tomlinson 1999). It is a conception that goes back to sociology's birth amid the nineteenth-century formation of nation-states. Ironically, the territorial conception of culture—the idea of culture as “rooted”—was itself a reaction to the enormous changes that were occurring as the nineteenth century turned into the twentieth. It was a conscious attempt to provide a solution to the “uprooting” of local cultures that the formation of nation-states necessarily involved. Sociology

understood the new symbols and common values above all as means of integration into a new unity.

The triumph of this perspective can be seen in the way the nation-state has ceased to appear as a project and a construct and, instead, has become widely regarded as something natural, something that has always existed. The nation-state has been accepted as the normal (and normative) state of affairs, abstracted into a conceptual language that frequently obscures the historical malleability of sovereignty. According to this view, the nation-state reflects a “spatial understanding of the possibility of political community, an understanding that necessarily gives priority to the fixing of processes of historical change in space. Not only does the principle of state sovereignty reflect a historically specific resolution of questions about the universality and particularity of political community, but it also fixes that resolution within categories that have absorbed a metaphysical claim to timelessness. . . . Time and change are perceived as dangers to be contained” (Walker 1990: 172–73).

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, globalization is posing a challenge to the idea that binding history and borders tightly together is the only possible means of social and symbolic integration. This revised idea of space is part of a long-standing historical process. It is for this reason, says Charles Maier (2000: 87), that the twentieth century is characterized most accurately by the emergence, rise, and subsequent crisis of so-called territoriality. Accordingly, the cosmopolitanization of collective memories serves as an example of how the concepts of nationhood and statehood are uncoupled.

Memories of the Holocaust revolve around the dichotomy of “particularism” and “universalism.” Was the Holocaust a Jewish catastrophe with German perpetrators, or was it a universal catastrophe, a breakdown of civilization in modernity? These two forms of interpretation and their respective cultures of remembrance grew out of two historical events in the aftermath of the Holocaust that, at first glance, have nothing in common: the founding of the State of Israel and the issuing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Both occurred in 1948 and refer to the particular as well as the universal interpretations that until recently have determined the image of the Holocaust. Both interpretations “make sense.” Although they are

not mutually exclusive, one is usually emphasized at the expense of the other.

Within the context of global Second Modernity, the meanings of universalism and particularism are transformed, as is the relationship of the two terms to each other. When we talk about Holocaust memories becoming more cosmopolitan in this book, we are not suggesting that they are now “universal” in the sense that one unified interpretation exists. The Holocaust will certainly not become a “totalizing” referent that means the same thing to everyone. Just as globalization leads to regional transformations and cosmopolitanism cannot do without the local in second modernity, meanings of the Holocaust emerge through encounters between the global and the local. In the process, the nation-state no longer maintains its hegemony over the interpretation of memories. The Holocaust becomes everyone’s common property and allows people from different places to deal with it in the most diverse ways. Globalization and cosmopolitanization refer to concrete social spaces that are determined by an increasing degree of reflexivity and the everyday intermingling of different cultures. Here, the particular and universal are not opposing forces. Instead, they act together to determine a horizon of experiences that is fraught with discontinuities and uncertainties.

We replace the either–or perspective that dominated in First Modernity with a view of the relationship between universalism and particularism as a series of “as well as” options that extend over the second half of the twentieth century. In contrast to the earlier, Enlightenment universalism, one can now justify cultural and religious distinctions through a universal insistence on difference. During first modernity, particularities were relegated to the private sphere, and members of society were expected to acknowledge a generally valid (national) universalism. A “contextual universalism” (Beck 1997) that increasingly accepts transnational connections (such as dual citizenship and bilingualism) prevails in Second Modernity.

Analyzing Holocaust remembrance in the age of globalization serves as a means for examining the relationship between the universal and the particular. A dynamic relationship between the local and the global increasingly has become determined by cosmopolitan memory. The majority of studies insist that Holocaust memories are

shaped by national imperatives, a view expressed in the proliferation of works on national memorial sites (Young 1997). While this focus on national sites of commemoration is important, it remains confined to territorial conceptions of memory. It does not sufficiently take into account how global *topoi* are inscribed into local and national discourse. Many scholars who acknowledge the influence of international politics and other external factors interpret them in terms of an instrumentalization of the Holocaust. They criticize the effects of globalization by equating them with the Holocaust's Americanization. (For examples of this tendency, see Cole 1999; Junker 2000; Loshitzky 1997; Rosenfeld 1997; Shandler 1999.)

The characterization of global culture as ostensibly timeless and without memory is based on a limited understanding of globalization, in which culture falls prey to worldwide homogenization. Such unification exists, however, primarily in the minds of the critics, whose bogeyman is "McDonaldization," or the reign of the Big Mac as the symbol of cultural homogenization (Ritzer 1993). Real, existing global culture is anything but homogeneous. Empirical studies show that global culture does not replace the local but engages with it through a process of hybridization (Friedman 1990; Nederveen Pietersee 2003). The same symbols have different meanings in different countries. Even the Big Mac is often mixed into national culture and politics and is adapted to local tastes. Our goal, of course, is not to redefine the Big Mac as a symbol of national aspirations. Rather, we will demonstrate that even this symbol of standardization is not in reality standardized. If national and global cultures intermingle even in this case, the idea of one homogeneous, global culture is hardly tenable. A far more meaningful approach would involve acknowledging that we are dealing with hybrid formations composed of both global and national elements.

Thus, we analyze globalization as an endogenous factor in current political culture. We are displacing the concept of collective memory from its former, purely national context and linking it to the process of cosmopolitanization. As mentioned, cosmopolitanization is a process of "internalized globalization" (Beck and Willms 2004). This means that it is a nonlinear, dialectical process in which the global and local exist not as cultural opposites but, rather, as

mutually binding and interdependent principles. The process not only entails connections that break down old boundaries but also extends to the quality of the social and the political within national communities (Beck and Willms 2004). The cosmopolitanization of collective memory influences the self-image of various groups, whose identity is no longer dominated solely by the nation-state. Globalization leads to the “intensification of the self-awareness of the world as a whole entity” (Robertson 1995). Drawing on the work of Roland Robertson, we call the dialectical relationship that forms the basis of cosmopolitan memory “glocalization.” Glocalization creates new connections that situate our political, economic, and social experiences in a new type of supranational context. As we will show, however, this process through which the global becomes internalized does not lead to a convergence and homogenization of Holocaust memories.

A central feature of this process of cosmopolitanization relates to the rise of rapid, electronically based communication, which has led to an interlocked system without national borders. This brings events that are far away from us close to home, which substantially influences the way people perceive their locality. The immediate speed and imagery of the new global communications facilitate a shared consciousness and cosmopolitan memories that span territorial and linguistic borders. A moral proposal is made to the viewer—a proposal that can be accepted or rejected but can hardly be ignored. In global times the media also becomes a mediator of moral affairs. (For a discussion of the moral consequentiality of the media, see Tester 1999.)

Here the global becomes a cultural horizon by which we measure our (local) existence. As mentioned, this de-territorialization (and, hence, de-nationalization) of memory does not entail abandoning the national perspective. Instead, it points to a transformation of the national through a more complex relationship between the global and the local, a relationship in which different groups react to globalization in different ways. While “national memory” is determined by identity that is produced within clearly defined borders, “cosmopolitan memory” is characterized by shifting boundaries and a process of de-territorialization.

The United States, Germany, and Israel as Empirical Examples

Both the historiography and the commemoration of the Holocaust have exploded in the past two decades. At the same time, we must emphasize that the central meaning of the Holocaust has been different in every country. Even the term "Holocaust" is surrounded by different taboos in different countries. The fact that the word has become sacred in this way is a sign that it has a central place in each country's set of central beliefs. Yet it is no accident that the same word is used in all of them. These different national meanings evolved at the same time. With the growth of cosmopolitanism and the circulation of activists, scholars, and media images, cross-fertilization has been increasing.

We examine three countries in which the Holocaust has played a foundational role in their self-images: Germany, Israel, and the United States. We will show how collective memories in those countries have undergone significant changes that warrant an analysis that transcends the nation-state. In the political cultures of Germany, Israel, and the United States, memories of the Holocaust are a prominent theme (Novick 1999; Olick and Levy 1997; Segev 1993). They are expressed in a reciprocal relationship of particular and universal forms of memory (Levy 1999). As noted earlier, in the past memories of the Holocaust were organized around a dichotomy of universalism and particularism (Young 1993). Instead of reducing these terms to their ideological assumptions, we treat them as important objects in our investigation. We historicize ideas of particularism and universalism, thereby de-moralizing them while retaining them as valuable sociological tools. As noted earlier, our primary objective is to disentangle these terms from their conventional "either-or" perspective and understand them in terms of "as well as" options.

Consequently, speaking about the cosmopolitization of Holocaust memory does not imply progressive universalism that is subject to a unified interpretation. The Holocaust does not become one totalizing signifier containing the same meanings for everyone. Rather, its meanings evolve from the encounter of global interpretations and local sensibilities. The cosmopolitization of Holocaust memories thus

involves the formation of nation-specific and nation-transcending commonalities. These cosmopolitanized memories refer to concrete social spaces that are characterized by a high degree of reflexivity and the ongoing encounter with different cultures. According to this view, it is no longer the dichotomy but the mutual constitution of particular and universal conceptions that determine the ways in which the Holocaust can be remembered. The cosmopolitization of memory does not mean the end of national perspectives so much as their transformation into more complex entities where different social groups have different relationships to globalization. The inscription of Holocaust memories into local contexts thus produces processes not only of de-territorialization but also of re-territorialization. Hence, one of the central questions relates to the “right” or “appropriate” way to commemorate the event. Who does the Holocaust “belong” to in the global age? Can it belong only to the Jewish victims of the German perpetrators? How, for example, do immigrants to Germany remember the Holocaust? Or does the Holocaust belong to all who want to define themselves as victims?

The very principles of the United States correspond to the time-honored universalization of Holocaust memories: America is a land of immigrants. In contrast to Israel, the United States is the very *embodiment of universalism* in the sense that (ideally) anyone who legally resides in the United States or is born there can become an American citizen. Of course, in reality there are many restrictions; nevertheless, in the American conception of “good” and “evil,” as inscribed in U.S. law and self-perception, it is always considered “wrong” to discriminate against an individual on the basis of his or her origins. The specifically American treatment of the Holocaust as a great crime—as the most horrific of all crimes—against humanity that has had a worldwide impact has its foundations in this principle. It is here that the general as well as the universal meanings of the Holocaust intersect, constituting the roots both of universal human rights and of cosmopolitan memory. But there is more to it. To prevent another Holocaust, human rights can be invoked, thereby restricting the autonomy of individual states. Thus, the “Americanization” of the Holocaust, notwithstanding debates within the United States, is also its universalization. The way in which a state treats its citizens

is now a matter of general public interest, and the conflict between international law, which guarantees the sovereignty of the state, and human rights, which can undermine this sovereignty, is reflected in the latest developments in world politics. To whom the Holocaust “belongs” is the key issue in this conflict over memory.

In contrast to the heterogeneous United States, Israel is a Jewish state. It is the *embodiment of particularism* in that ethnic heritage is the decisive factor in determining citizenship. For this reason, particularism is the dominant form of remembrance in Israel. Germany lies between these two extremes. Its laws on citizenship and ethnic-identity politics move between universalism and particularism. In all three countries, the interpretation of the Holocaust is part of the political culture. This becomes quite apparent when one takes a quick look at museums and memorials. In Israel’s central memorial, Yad Washem, the particular meaning of the Holocaust dominates, and the only relevant victims who are remembered are the Jewish ones. In Germany, the so-called perpetrator nation—a country that is ambivalent about its own national identity—the meaning of the Holocaust is a point of contention in debates on national history that keep resurfacing. In both Israel and Germany, Jews remain Jews (victims) and Germans remain Germans (perpetrators). At the U.S. Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C., the Holocaust experience of the Jewish victims serves as a symbol for victims in general.

In sum, the Holocaust has been confronted by various forces that have attempted to universalize it, to particularize it, and to nationalize it. Recently this memory has persisted on a global level. Its strength as a global collective memory has been powered and maintained precisely through the fiery interaction between the local and the global. We argue that this dual process of particularization and universalization has produced a transnational symbol that is based on a cosmopolitanized memory—one that does not replace national collective memories but exists as their horizon.

THIS BOOK SITUATES our theoretical project within a comparative historical context. Part I is a theoretical analysis of memory and the nation-state and the dissolution of the connection between the two. We propose a new conceptual vocabulary for studying collective