

2025 MSA Annual Conference *Beyond Crises: Resilience and (In)stability*

WHEN: 14 - 18 July 2025

WHERE: Prague, Czech Republic

CALL: The **Memory Studies Association** invites proposals for its ninth annual conference, to be held from 14 to 18 July 2025 at Charles University and the Czech Academy of Sciences in the historic city of Prague. This **on-site** conference aims to carry over from earlier conferences a transdisciplinary conversation on memory and its social, cultural and public relevance. It welcomes scholars, practitioners, and activists from diverse fields to contribute to this vibrant exchange of ideas.

In 2025, we will globally commemorate many significant anniversaries, such as the end of World War II (1945) and the end of the Vietnam War (1975). We will mourn the victims of the Srebrenica genocide in Bosnia (1995) and the massacres in Sudan (2005). Additionally, we will be half a decade removed from the onset of the COVID-19 lockdowns. With the theme *Beyond Crises: Resilience and (In)stability*, the conference seeks to explore how the memory of these events and other critical turning points has led to new tensions but also generated new possibilities. What patterns of decisive change can we observe? What is the role of memory in these processes, and how have they been commemorated? How have such critical turning points and their actors been collectively remembered and commemorated? And what can memory teach us amid the ongoing polycrisis?

Organized in the shadow of the conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza, the rise of populist and authoritarian tendencies all over the world, imminent climate collapse and humanitarian crises including ones in public health, *Beyond Crises* invites a multifaceted discussion on what memory scholars can learn from the memory of earlier crises and how that knowledge might be used to deal with ongoing political and social standoffs. Looking at shared and divided memoryscapes and the voices of marginalized communities, the conference will make a major contribution to the understanding of how societies remember and learn from crises.

The conference seeks to study, across different cultures and regions, the complex dynamics between remembering and forgetting, and between inclusion and exclusion, that take place in the aftermath of crisis. We will address instances where such memory constellations have led to dead-ends or backlashes; but also cases where they feed into an ongoing quest for justice, peace, and societal well-being. By focusing on themes such as hope, resilience, and reconciliation, we aim to understand how, and in which circumstances, communities and individuals can recover and rebuild after turmoil. The conference will investigate how the memory of earlier crises has inspired movements for change and social justice.

THEME: Gender, Belonging, Embodiment: Examining how memory intersects with issues of gender, identity, and embodied experiences.

Title: The Pronouns of Industrial Crises: Coal mining memorials and women representation in the South Wales Valleys.

Author's details: Dimitra Ntzani is a senior lecturer at the Welsh School of Architecture, at Cardiff University. Her research focuses on the design management of difficult commemoration, histories and heritages. Dimitra brings theories and methods from the field of cognitive linguistics and distributed cognition into design studies. Over the past decades, she collaborated with various cultural institutions in Greece, Scotland and Wales, for the design/study of public exhibitions and workshops (AOC Group, Northlight Heritage, Museum of Asian Arts Corfu, LFA, BET, Amgueddfa Cymru, etc).

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Abstract: 20th century architectures and rituals of crisis' commemoration are neither inclusive nor neutral. They are often silent arenas where ethnic/gender/class considerations are competing for historical representation and power (Edkins 2003, Winter 2006). This paper looks at the inclusion and representation of women in memorials of mining disasters in the South Wales Valleys from 20th century to early 2000, to discuss how the trauma-memories of industrial crisis are interweaved with narratives of national pride in Welsh industrial landscape. It also interrogates their location, spatial form, gender and class biases to problematise not the obvious and re-occurring absence of women but their distorted and limited presence and understated contribution in Welsh mining industry. In this geographical and scholarly context, mining crisis memorials and rituals are analysed as deeply political actions, actions of clash or negotiation of the multiple narratives of agents at play (Gillis, 1994).

The paper weaves in the records of empirical study of coal mining memorials that spread across the South Welsh Valleys, and attempts a formal analysis of their design features in their historical and geographical context. To do so, it theoretically redefines mining disasters as *crisis of ordinariness* with references to the cultural theorist Lauren Berlant's to discuss how gender and nation politics are portrayed in their design. Lauren Berlant turns the spotlight on power structures of traumatization and argues that the precarity brought about by trauma is cunningly common in post-World War II geopolitical realms. Berlant defines systematic traumas as crises of ordinariness, instances where our exposure to systemic violence and exploitation is acknowledged with delay. Inhabiting the registered locations of industrial crisis' commemoration, the paper refrains from treating their study as integrally oppositional, dual and dividing. The vague and volatile nature of industrial crises creates room for constructive analysis of gender contributions and representations to the Welsh industrial heritage and history.