

Abstract

For late-modern societies, amnesic and fragmented in their character, a compact presence of the past in the present is of crucial importance. The search for collective memory as a precondition of collective belonging is especially urgent in the light of societal insecurity, which deconstructs the firm systems of significations. Churches, governed by the imperative of continuity constitute the reservoir of memory and provide a very effective response to such an insecurity. Religious institutions, therefore, often employ their mnemonic potential to constantly reaffirm their public relevance in the realities of late modernity. In my dissertation, I explore the motivations, forms, strategies, and outcomes of the mnemonic engagement of the Serbian Orthodox Church (SPC) in post-2000 Serbia. Analyzing primary sources collected by using methods of multi-sited ethnography, I illuminate the SPC's mnemonic activities related to the memory of Serbian heroic victimhood in World War II, and I embed them in a wider picture of memory-making, framed by the socially memorable and configured by specific features of mnemonic interaction. As a historical disjuncture, World War II has been an object of multidimensional mnemonic interplay, involving diverse mnemonic actors from local to transnational and from vernacular to official levels of memory production, thus exposing the SPC's mnemonic engagement in its multilayered complexity. Drawing general patterns of the SPC's positioning in the public sphere, the research may be applied more universally, and serve to situate similarly complex public actors in various processes of social reproduction beyond the study of Serbia and the SPC.