

**CALL FOR PAPERS: TRACEMAKING  
BORDER DEATHS BETWEEN ERASURE  
AND CO-MEMORATION**

Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research  
Zagreb, 20–21/9/2024



TRACTS

**WHEN & WHERE**

Institute of Ethnology and  
Folklore Research  
Zagreb, Croatia  
20–21/9/2024

Organizers:

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**TRACEMAKING BORDER  
DEATHS BETWEEN ERASURE  
AND CO-MEMORATION**

Building on the questions about the relationship between violence and traces on one hand, and affects, knowledge, art, and social justice on the other, this seminar focuses on tracemaking, border deaths and co-memoration. It aims to facilitate the exchange of knowledge, practices, and experiences, as well as to provide a space for reflection on alternative imaginaries and possible future direct actions.

## **TRACEMAKING BORDER DEATHS BETWEEN ERASURE AND CO-MEMORATION**

Searching for traces of deceased and disappeared people at borders is essential for clarifying circumstances, establishing responsibilities, or even determining the identities of the deceased. It, therefore, has and should have a privileged position in the understanding of border deaths and struggles related to them. However, searching for traces also implies making traces, since traces are not simply found, but are outcomes of analytical processes that interpret specific marks as traces of something or somebody missing. From that perspective, even an absence of a trace can be a trace: a trace of a non-event but also of an erasure. Finally, searching for traces related to border deaths and disappearances is usually followed by the production of new traces and practices, such as taking care of a burial site or repatriation, documentation, making memorial objects and sites, protesting, reconstructing, narrating, visualizing, mapping, reporting, list making etc.

From a critical and historical perspective – focusing on Europe – border deaths, or as they are also called, migrant deaths and deaths in migration, are seen as an integral element of contemporary bordering practices based on racialized forms of violence accompanied by the advancement of technological tools. This imposes various questions and contradictions in the struggle to identify, address and challenge present and past violence and deaths related to the European border regime. Diverse social agents engaging with different experiences, histories, methods, and practices in this struggle have produced a significant body of knowledge related to tracemaking and co-memorating, which we wish to acknowledge and discuss through this seminar.

With the concept of tracemaking, we aim to grasp both the material (trace) and epistemological (making) aspects of the production of traces. We want to ask how and which traces of people deceased at borders are made by families, friends, local communities, civil groups, state services, researchers, journalists, activists, artists, and others. Furthermore, we would like to ask when and how tracemaking is related to those who deceased and disappeared at the borders framed within broader calls for social justice and transformation or, in the opposite direction, how it contributes to sustaining established exclusionary frameworks, hierarchies and injustices. Finally, we would like to ask how new forms of co-memoration – with and through tracemaking – help to address active engagement through multivocality and counter-memory, as well as “critical imagination and strategic contemplation and rhetorical feminist tactics, including resistance to hegemonic narratives, re-centering of dialogue over monologue, and reaffirming the value of experience and emotion” (Nancy Small 2020).

This two-day seminar aims to explore abundant tracemaking practices related to border deaths, as well as to expand current discussions about co-memoration, by addressing some of the following questions and beyond:

- How are postmortem traces of the deceased at the European borders produced, erased, and remembered? How are border deaths and disappearances reported, documented, co-memorated, grieved, mourned, and remembered across time and space by different actors and different technologies? How do these different actors take care of the deceased or disappeared, and what type of traces do they produce in that? How are they related to broader social and political contexts or ecosystems?
- How do tracemaking practices and traces of those deceased and disappeared at borders counter or sustain existing hierarchies, invisibilities, discriminations, and marginalizations? Which politics of naming, counting, and grieving do they reproduce or challenge? Which affects, values, knowledge, technologies, traditions, as well as spaces and materials do these practices imply, include, develop, or trigger?

- How do divergent experiences and histories of violence and oppression, as well as counter-practices, intertwine with the contemporary tracemakings related to border deaths and disappearances? How are they connected to the experiences of the communities dealing with the legacies of recent or repeated conflicts? How are they connected to multidirectionality, multivocality and counter-memory or different memory cultures and traditions of, for example, cenotaphs, memorials for unknown soldiers, pauper graves, asylum cemeteries, and conflict textiles related to desaparecidos?
- How are notions of care, belonging, responsibility, and justice brought and (re)defined in the framework of burials and graves of people deceased at the border, or exhumations, grief activist mobilizations, artistic interventions, archival practices and practices of counter-mapping, counter-narratives, or list-making? Which epistemological and methodological questions are related to issues of traces and tracemaking? Which ethical questions emerge from “collecting” traces and “translating” the dead and disappeared at the borders into research focal points, statistical outputs, stories, documentaries, reports, actions, or memorials?

### HOW TO APPLY?

Please submit your abstract (max. 300 words), including name, affiliation and contact details by **May 15, 2024** via submission form: <https://forms.gle/sG8ErCfr72wXQgz3A>

Notification of Acceptance: **May 31, 2024**

### FUNDING:

The seminar is organized within the framework of [TRACTS COST Action](#).

Participation in the seminar is free of charge and reimbursement of travel costs will be provided to members of the working groups of TRACTS COST Action.

More about TRACTS and an application to working groups can be found at: <https://www.cost.eu/actions/CA20134/#tabs+Name:Working%20GrCoups%20and%20Membership>

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