

Historical ontologies

Historical ontologies, affective realms, multiple temporalities: on transforming historical factuality through ethnographic studies

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Historical ontologies, affective realms, multiple temporalities: on transforming historical factuality through ethnographic studies

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ABSTRACT
In this article, I establish a connection between affective pasts and historical sources. The concept arises from the notion that despite history's receptiveness to various disciplines and sources, it may tend to omit the amorphous but profound social experiences. Consequently, I introduce three modes of historical ontology focusing finally on mode 3. While mode 1 is historical research built on analysis of written sources, and mode 2 is research centered on memory studies, mode 3 explicitly relates to affective pasts and historical facts usually based on ethnographic accounts. I argue that this last kind of material can convey not only the knowledge we may call experiential but also the knowledge that is factual. I present my analysis in the following sections. First, my case study is related to the rapid deindustrialization in post-socialist Poland and to the experiences of loss among impoverished workers. Second, I describe the affective labor performed for the state imagined as a community, such as building of schools and community centers in Polish villages during the late socialist decades. In conclusion, I argue that these case studies may offer a fresh perspective on historical understanding, allowing us to reconstruct significant socioaffective processes in history.

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KEYWORDS Historicity; factuality; ontology; deindustrialization; affect; labor; temporality

This essay seeks to establish connections between affective pasts and historical sources and to examine and reestablish relationships between ethnography and historical knowledge. The development of this approach stems from the realization that history, despite being open to other disciplines and

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