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Front Matter

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Special Issue: Political Narratives

Political Narratives / Narrations of the Political: An Introduction

| STEFAN GROTH

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This introductory essay outlines a perspective on political narratives that moves beyond a narrow understanding and highlights the reception of political narratives in everyday contexts and conceptualizations of political spheres in everyday narratives of the political. It offers distinct perspectives of (1) narrative as practice and ontology, that is, the view that telling and receiving stories are universal modes of mediating (political) views; (2) narrative as strategy, that is, the intentional or automatic use of narrative to further relatively specific goals; and (3) narrative as method, that is, as an analytic approach to sociopolitical realities in academia. The essays in this issue show how political narratives are interpreted, modified, and coconstructed in everyday stories and as part of popular narratives, and how political processes and structures are framed in everyday narratives.

Narratives of “Welcome Culture”: The Cultural Politics of Voluntary Aid for Refugees | OVE SUTTER

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Drawing on an ethnographic and discourse-analytic study, this article examines the meaning and function of narrative in the civic engagement of volunteers who provided humanitarian aid to refugees during the migratory movements of 2015. I argue that a

group of self-organized volunteers in a German town used different kinds of narrative during their engagement to advance their own views on the migratory movements and on voluntary work with refugees. A collective narrative in terms of a cognitive structure evolved during the event that shaped the relationship between the volunteers and authorities.

Narrating Migration Politics in Veneto, Northern Italy | SABINA PERRINO 44

Once a country of emigrants, Italy has become a receiver of migrants. These reverse migratory flows have triggered strong reactions by Italians, such as nativist discourses about national culture and identity and the aggressive, exclusionary, anti-immigration politics promoted by the Lega Nord (Northern League) political party. This article explores how Veneto ordinary speakers' political narratives are sometimes performed in ways that totally or partially exclude certain groups, such as migrants, while creating collective and intimate spaces for speakers living in Veneto, northern Italy. In their stories, both storytellers and audience members participate in the coconstruction of their social, political, and cultural identities in interaction while their storytelling event unfolds.

Unity and Stability? Legacies and Remembrance of the Great Patriotic War in Russia's Exclave of Kaliningrad | RITA SANDERS 69

Statements by politicians on Russia's unity and stability are omnipresent. This article deals with people's daily narratives by focusing on the legacies of the Great Patriotic War in the city of Kaliningrad (previously Königsberg). In this endeavor, the article explores the immortal troop project, an alternative march to the official militaristic parade on May 9, which is devoted to the remembrance of people's fate during the war. However, the narratives' diversity and their potential as political counter narratives only becomes visible by taking into account people's personal relationship to the city's materiality. My arguments are based on long-term fieldwork, conducted between 2015 and 2017.

Resistance or Thuggery? Political Narratives of Urban Riots | FRANK GADINGER, CHRISTOPHER SMITH OCHOA, AND TAYLAN YILDIZ 88

Political scientists have discovered that most political categories (political authority, democratic legitimacy, identity building) are closely linked with the concept of narrative. We demonstrate the relevance of narrative analysis in politics by analyzing two cases of urban riots (Paris 2005, Baltimore 2015). We propose a micro-oriented perspective focusing on people's everyday life experiences and cultural practices of

storytelling. The analysis dissects state narratives, which discredit protests through the language of criminality. Our case examples show that sudden violence in urban riots is often a desperate expression of marginalized voices articulating moral claims of justice, particularly concerning everyday racism.