History Teaching as ‘Propaganda’? Teachers’ Communication Styles in Post-Transition Societies

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THE POLITICS OF HISTORY TEACHING

Based on studying history curricula in Germany, UK and the Netherlands in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Arie Wilschut concludes that

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Generally speaking, we can distinguish three factors influencing the content and form of history curricula: politics and society; pedagogical and psychological considerations; and academic history itself. [...] However sensible it seems to take pedagogical and psychological considerations and insights concerning the developing child into account, they cannot be decisive when it comes to the formulation of general aims of history teaching. The course history teaching should take can only be directed by politics and society, which will have to decide whether or not to respect the standards of scholarly history (Wilschut 2010, p. 717).

This statement sets the stage for this chapter. Wilschut points both to the dynamic nature of the contexts of history teaching and to the fact that the particular constellation of the factors is to some extent open to interpretations. The constellation can change quite quickly even in the same country, and history educators even in the same time and space can perceive the relative weights of contextual factors quite differently (see Kello 2016). Educators face a multiplicity of understandings and expectations from the different fields, and often they need to navigate between contradictory understandings and expectations. There is a continuous discussion and dialogue between the fields over aims, contents and functions of history teaching (Wilschut 2010).

In lay and political representations, serving national identity and patriotism is still perceived as the main function of history teaching in many countries. However, since its beginnings, the school subject has always served what Carretero and Bermudez (2012) call ‘enlightened’ approach aiming at the more general education of the students. The compatibility of the ‘patriotic’ and ‘enlightened’ tasks depends on how the latter are understood. ‘Educating students’, if conceived as transmitting information without much reflection, need not interfere with the patriotic aims. In contrast, ‘critical enlightened’ history teaching demands recognition of divergent experiences and perspectives, critical (self-)reflection and contesting celebratory myths and narratives (Carretero and Bermudez 2012).

The present chapter is set on the backdrop of such variety of understandings and expectations of history as a school subject. We take a look at different positions that history teachers take towards their subject and its contexts using material from in-depth interviews with Estonian and Latvian history teachers. Viewing the history classroom as a communicative space, we discuss how the three styles of communication—*diffusion*,

propagation and *propaganda*—as proposed in *Social Representation Theory* (Moscovici 2008) can be used to characterise styles of history teaching.

COMMUNICATION SPACES IN HISTORY TEACHING

Teacher's Action Space

There are many ways how a particular teacher can position themselves with regard to the aims and functions of history teaching. The curriculum is often not a sufficient landmark for the orientation of teachers, textbook authors and other educators because, as with any text, it needs interpretation based on some external framework. Even if the national curriculum has legal force, it is not usual for it to be thoroughly law-like. Neither are lawyers normally there to help users read it. Often, in order to gain a broader acceptance, either it is generic, or it contains 'something for everybody' (cf. Simpson and Halse 2006), presuming that the teacher or textbook author makes his or her own choices and sets his or her own emphases. Not to mention that from a quite practical point of view the teachers need to choose foci and decide on time allocations *here and now*.

Individual teacher's positioning is probably most obvious in the case of socially and politically sensitive and controversial issues that are connected to different social memories and political interests. In the case of such issues, it becomes particularly visible that history teachers are positioned as mediators between different fields or perspectives (academy, science, politics, different nations, different worldviews or ideologies, etc.), or between different group-bound social memories. Teacher positions are shaped by their location, both perceived and actual, on the landscape. Teachers' representations of their subject reflect both their social positions and their individual perceptions. On the one hand, the teacher's action space is made up of 'objective' or 'external' limitations such as national final examinations or the teacher's ethnolinguistic belonging. On the other hand, their action space is made up of more subjective, dynamic and situational things such as pedagogical repertoire, epistemological position, self-confidence and sense of professional autonomy and legitimacy that are connected to their image of the social, political and academic space that surrounds history teaching.

In Fig. 1, we distinguish relevant 'external' contexts from the perspective of history teaching. Teachers' positions towards the different

Fig. 1 Contextual dimensions of the history teacher's action space

kinds of contexts include their own positions on the social, mnemonic and political landscape, as well as their conceptions of those fields' influences on their students and classrooms. Of course, each of the three contexts merge influences from the other two. Curricula and textbooks, for instance, merge sociopolitical influences with considerations from pedagogical psychology and with inputs from academic research about the past; social and political representations of the past receive inputs from both school and academy, whereas academic scholars are obviously also influenced by beliefs and experiences from their primary and secondary socialisation. What is important in the present context is the interconnectedness of the fields and the absence of a stable hierarchy between them. If hierarchies appear, they are dynamic constellations, changing in time and space and perceived differently by different actors.

Communication Styles as Social Representations

For further analysis of orientations in teaching history, we draw on *Social Representation Theory*. By social representations, we understand coordinated patterns of thinking, communication and behaving that exist among actors in social groups relative to issues or imaginary or real objects, which become relevant in certain situations (e.g. Jovchelovitch 2007; Moscovici 2008; Wagner and Hayes 2005). A social representation

equally includes what individual members of a group think about an issue, how they communicate about it and how they behave towards others and towards the things related to an issue. In other words, representations are in action as much as they are in thinking (Wagner 2015).

In his study on psychoanalysis, Moscovici (2008) made the important point that representations are social not only due to in-group members sharing in their contents, but also by the very fact that different representational *contents* are contingent on *styles* of communication. To explicate this, he used three bodies of newspapers. Firstly, newspapers addressed to the French society as a whole, i.e. to a heterogeneous readership, followed a relatively neutral *diffusion*—or better: *dissemination*—of the new science of psychoanalysis in the fifties. This style did not evaluate what was communicated, but offered content irrespective of potential contradiction. Another style was used by the communist press. Moscovici called the communication style *propagandistic* as it flatly rejected psychoanalysis as harmful. It was a highly evaluative way of communication and assessed any news with regard to its implications for communist ideology and political progress. In fact, workers and members of the Communist Party took a critical and ideologically inspired stance that echoed their papers' propagandistic style and rejected psychoanalysis as a bourgeois ploy against dialectical materialism. Third, there was the *propagation* style of the catholic press that took a pragmatic approach by appropriating some and silencing other aspects of the new psychology to serve the church's moral message.

Moscovici's analysis demonstrates how styles of communication are not imposed on, or independent of, representations of psychoanalysis. Rather, they are an integral part of the latter. In his view, social representations not only exist *for* the purpose of communication, so to say *before* it, but are created, shaped and elaborated *by and through* communication in groups. The discourse related to a social object, that is the interests and motivations of group members and the affective and cognitive resources brought forward, jointly determines and characterises the content and form of the representation. We consider the integrative character of social representations to be pivotal in theorising. If we want to understand how local worlds, conflicts (Psaltis 2016), school textbooks (Sakki 2010) and other social objects take shape, the concrete form of communal communication must be part and parcel of the representation and the object that it addresses (Duveen 2008a, b; Wagner et al. forthcoming). In history teaching, the style of teaching not only conveys a

message about epistemology, i.e. about the ways how knowledge about the past comes about, but also constitutes the history narrative in terms of its content.

In 'traditional history teaching', teachers will represent the past in a way that is determined by some kind of ideology, usually of nationalist origin, but it could also be Marxist–Leninist as in the case of Soviet history teaching. Maintaining the image of a valuable in-group by way of a celebratory past from the perspective of a certain group does not allow presenting alternative narratives on an equal footing to the self-serving version. This style of teaching is clearly propagandistic: favouring a self-serving version of history at the expense of alternative views with the aims of influencing the students' future action.

In contrast, if involved in critical history teaching, the teacher will employ contents that contest national myths and deconstruct celebratory narratives. A critical and multiperspective approach to history motivates students to consider alternatives to their own views, which may have been or are currently dominant with an adversary or even inimical groups or countries. This approach proceeds by offering complementary historical interpretations, weighing their evidence and accepting them as possible alternatives to the students' 'indigenous' perspective. This involves critical self-reflection as well as learning to respect alternatives to one's own position. The goal of communication is raising an emancipatory and tolerant consciousness of others' life worlds, rights and values. Such communication style does not defend a specific historical interpretation, but offers several side by side. In some respects, this approach reminds of the term of 'diffusion'.¹

'Propaganda' and 'dissemination' can be seen as two opposite ends of a continuum. We conceive 'propagation' as the intermediate space between the two poles (Fig. 2).

Spanning a range of possible teaching approaches, 'propagation' can be seen both as a milder form of propaganda and as a more standpoint-based (or 'biased') version of dissemination. It can appear as critical identity work such as when offering support to the student identity building together with critical reflection on narratives traditionally used by the students' in-group. However, it can also appear in a form much closer to propaganda, if an in-group-serving selection is made from academically adequate knowledge. This kind of 'propagation' would not be pure 'propaganda', as the chosen accounts themselves would not be knowingly distorted. But it would be closer to 'propaganda' than to

Fig. 2 ‘Propagation’ as spanning a continuum between ‘propaganda’ and ‘dissemination’

‘dissemination’, since alternative views and critical reflection on the selection criteria would not be made available. ‘Propagation’ can also appear as teaching close to the ‘dissemination’ end when no in-group-serving concessions are made, but the account is modified to show consideration for the students’ assumed needs and feelings, for example, by leaving out some violent details. Not because the perpetrators were from the in-group—this would be a ‘propagandistic’ motivation—but because the teacher does not regard them age appropriate. That is to say, the unavoidable content selection can be more or less ‘propagandistic’. Anyway, no account of the past can include ‘everything’, and pedagogy precludes ‘pure dissemination’ (cf. Fig. 1).

Crucially for the present context, the distinction between communication styles focuses on the teachers’ intentions, motivations and the limits set by their action space. This is particularly relevant for the dissemination end of the scale, as it is clear that teachers can only ‘disseminate’ what they *perceive* as an appropriate scholarly representation, not some scholarly state of the art as such. Even if there may be teachers who knowingly teach ‘pure propaganda’, seeing themselves as state servants ‘just doing the job’, rather than serving ‘enlightenment’ (cf. Kello 2016), we assume that the two forms of communication, ‘propaganda’ and ‘dissemination’, rarely exist in present-day Europe.

History Classroom as Communicative Space

A history classroom can thus be imagined as a communicative space where the teacher can more or less consciously choose between communicative styles and teaching strategies. Viewing the classroom as such space highlights pedagogical restrictions *on* as well as *deriving from* teacher’s communication style choices. At the same time, depending on the teacher’s pedagogical preference, there are several ways how both ends of the scale, i.e. ‘propaganda’ and ‘dissemination’, can manifest themselves in terms of general approaches to history teaching (Fig. 3).

Fig. 3 Opposite styles of propaganda and dissemination cross-cut by two opposite approaches in history teaching

For example, a ‘dissemination’ approach can appear as a traditional, linear—but scholarship based—narrative as well as a critical and multi-perspective (polyphonic) way of history teaching. The polyphonic way, in turn, need not be necessarily scholarship based, i.e. a disciplinarily oriented multiperspectivity that includes weighing different accounts in the light of available evidence. It can also appear as a relativistic ‘anything goes’ approach according to which differences between accounts come down to little more than differences between subjective truths and the politics utilising them.

In the following, we first give a brief overview of the historical contexts from which our empirical examples come from. Then, we proceed to Estonian and Latvian history teachers positions viewed through the lens of the theoretical considerations just described.

HISTORICAL CONTEXTS: SOCIAL MEMORY AND TEACHING OF HISTORY IN ESTONIA AND LATVIA

Estonia and Latvia are two post-Soviet countries that have experienced several ruptures and historical transitions over the course of the twentieth century. The main highlights have been their declaration of national

independence in 1918, followed by respective Wars of Independence and an era of independent Estonian/Latvian Republics from 1920 to 1939; Soviet Occupation from 1939/1940 to 1941; German Occupation from 1941 to 1944/1945; and again Soviet era until re-establishment of the nation states in 1991. The latter era can be divided into Stalinist and post-Stalinist eras, separated by Stalin's death in 1953. The former period was marked by terror, arrests of intellectuals, civil servants, politicians, as well as mass deportations of civilians to Siberia in 1941 and 1949. The post-Stalinist era was marked by 'Khrushchev's thaw', 'Brezhnev's stagnation' and Gorbachev's glasnost and perestroika.

During the Soviet era, workforce immigration resulted in large Russian-speaking communities in Estonia and Latvia, often having a different perspective towards both past and present history and politics, as compared to the indigenous populations. Hence, it is not surprising that historical conflicts are perceived as providing the clearest social division lines in both countries, leading to them being utilised to legitimate both the more evident language based and the more implicit socio-economic (e.g. Kaprāns and Zelče 2011; Kus et al. 2013). In fact, a part of the Estonian and Latvian public suspect that the 'Russian schools' teach 'incorrect' or even hostile 'Russian' interpretations to their students. At the same time, previous research has found that history teachers of Russian-speaking students perceive their task as smoothing sharp edges and enhancing students' understanding of the existence of different conceptions and positions and the absence of one absolute truth (e.g. Lauristin et al. 2011).

These are important aspects of the local contexts of history teaching in both countries—teachers from different 'camps' perceive the public expectations clearly differently. On the one hand, more is 'allowed' for majority teachers as they are not suspected of lacking loyalty to the country in case they take a critical view towards a dominant national perspective (Kello 2016). On the other hand, teachers from a 'minority camp'—both in ethnic terms and those who personally disagree with a dominant narrative—perceive their 'state servant' role when being history teachers more emphatically (Kello and Wagner 2014). Those who disagree, either from ethnic majority or from ethnic minority, are more aware of their precarious position in between different conceptions, institutions and communities.

At the same time, several 'layers' of discourse (or more broadly: social representation) related to history teaching are present and alive

in Estonia and Latvia, stemming from different eras and world views. Between the two World Wars, history teaching there followed general trends of European history teaching, meaning that a, for that time, ‘normal’ combination of general education (horizon broadening) and patriotic teaching aims was applied. During the Soviet era, history teachers were also expected to transmit a pre-defined set of values as before WWII, just that the survival and battles of ‘working people’ replaced those of Estonian/Latvian people, and national values were replaced by Soviet ‘communist’ values (e.g. Ahonen 1992; Symcox and Wilschut 2009). From a general education perspective, history teaching was expected to educate students and to enhance their analytical thinking, ability to see causal connections and other skills like summation and narration. However, propaganda in history teaching was not retouched during the Soviet era. In the early 1990s, just after re-establishment of the independent Estonian and Latvian Republics (1991), a patriotic perspective more or less dominated in the countries’ history teaching (e.g. Kivimäe 1999). During the 1990s however, this trend was combined with increasing influences from the history teaching communities of Western Europe. Two organisations were of particular significance, the European Association of History Educators (*Euroclio*) and the Council of Europe, which both disseminated ideas about multiperspective and constructivist history teaching by learning and teaching materials, teacher training, national curricula and national final examinations (e.g. Oja 2004; Klišāns 2011). Besides promoting multiperspective and constructivist teaching approaches, such influences led to withdrawal of national identity- and patriotism-related aims of history teaching on which we will focus on in the following section.

BETWEEN ‘PROPAGANDA’ AND ‘DISSEMINATION’—DISCURSIVE REPRESENTATIONS OF HISTORY TEACHING

The ‘Public’ Level: How Teachers Represent What Is Expected, Appropriate and Possible

As we noted, since the 1990s, identity has been mentioned only fleetingly in national curricula and more constructivist influences have been added, with regard to both student learning and historical knowledge. The most explicit identity-related goals in the history curriculum have

since then been worded with reference to an undefined ‘students own’ community rather than any particular (e.g. Estonian ethnic national) one. For example, in Estonian history curriculum from 1996, the students’ identities were referred to in a generic manner, compatible with diverse nationalities: ‘the student [...] shall relate themselves to their home, native country, Europe, and the world’ (Estonian Government 1996). In 2002, the curriculum was a bit more explicit by replacing ‘native country’ with ‘Estonia’—the list of things the students were expected to relate was now ‘place of origin, Estonia, Europe and the world’. Also, a sentence saying that ‘the student [...] shall define themselves as a member of their nation[ality]’ was added (Estonian Government 2002). Since 2002, also ‘national and cultural identity’ have been mentioned as important aims in the context of history teaching (Estonian Government 2002, 2011a, b, 2014a, b).

Such wordings create an ‘illusion of consensus’ (Simpson and Halse 2006)—they can be agreed with from both multicultural and ethnic-nationalist positions. On the one hand, the curriculum could be presented to the West as promoting tolerance and multiperspectivity. On the other hand, in the curricular support materials ethnic and nationalist positions were found more explicitly (e.g. in Õispuu 2002).²

In fact, as elsewhere, there is some division between social and professional representations regarding the aims and essence of history teaching. Among the broader public, a traditional identity, patriotism and/or factual knowledge-oriented representation of history teaching prevails (Kello and Harro-Loit 2014), whereas in professional and official *explicit discourse*, the traditional identity- and patriotism-related representation seems to be pushed back, while lingering no less powerfully under the surface (Kello and Wagner 2014). For reasons that we will explain shortly, this division seems to be more pronounced in Estonia than in Latvia.

When Estonian history teachers talked about their aims and intentions when teaching the subject, they usually enacted either a ‘traditional enlightened’ or a ‘critical enlightened’ representation (knowing, understanding and being able to analyse the past and present events, sometimes also developing a more generally critical mind). Interestingly, identity-related aims were mentioned only in few cases: the analysis of the spontaneously mentioned main aims in 26 Estonian interviews revealed that only two Russian-speaking teachers, working at the same school and involved in organising local history and identity-related out-of-school activities, mentioned enhancing their students’ local or

Estonian identity among their main aims as history teachers (Kello 2010).³ Considering the long history and global resilience of identity and patriotism building aims of history teaching, the rarity of such aims and intentions in spontaneous discourse was quite conspicuous. All the more so, as these same aims were implied in teachers' comments on the importance of teaching national history (Kello and Masso 2012) and teachers agreed with the importance of these aims when asked explicitly (Kello and Wagner 2014).

Looking closer, it seems that these aims are important for the teachers—just that they are not explicitly acknowledged in so-to-say explicit professional discourse about the subject's *aims*. The explicitly acknowledged objectives are rather cognitive ones such as knowledge and thinking skills, plus interest in history. Identity and patriotism seem to belong to a separate bundle. Therefore, as long as one talks about the academic or more cognitive bundle and is not reminded about 'identity bundle', they just don't come into mind. They simply do not fit so well into the interlinked range of 'enlightened' aims that most Estonian teachers offered spontaneously (Kello 2010, 2014; Kello and Wagner 2014). Not just in Estonia but also elsewhere the enlightened and disciplinary discourses are stronger among history educators. Schüllerqvist (2015) points out how it is even inappropriate to talk about other than 'critical enlightened' aims of history teaching in certain circles: there seem to be separate conferences for those history educators interested in political- or citizenship-related aims of the school subject, and conferences attended by 'disciplinary' who don't acknowledge them. In a similar line, the interviewer's influence can be assumed: a representative of the academy may have encouraged more 'enlightened', rather than 'patriotic' representations, particularly at the beginning of the interview.

Secondly, outright indoctrination (which is connected to the notions of identities and patriotism) might have been perceived as a taboo, particularly against the backdrop of Soviet history teaching, which was perceived as overly ideological.

Thirdly, at least in Estonia, identity and patriotism are sensitive and possibly awkward topics not only among history educators, but more broadly as well. Positions related to (ethnic, national) identity are politically and socially laden, and there seems to be no really safe way to express relevant positions.

Notwithstanding, identity-related aspects of history teaching may be taken for granted as implicit aims, as part of teaching the local past naturally,

without explicit effort and without addressing any particular group. In fact, this is the way identity-related aims are addressed in Estonian national curriculum: ‘In the process of solving historical problems [...] [the students’] national and cultural identity, tolerance and positive attitude to the values of democracy develop’ (Estonian Government 2002, similarly 1996, 2011, 2014). As can be seen, the curriculum mentions these things rather in passing, cautiously, so there is a lot of space for individual interpretations by the teachers—more space than in the case of the more cognitively oriented aims.

This explanation is also supported by the teachers’ comments on the statement *The current teaching of history is too ‘self-centred’—concentrating on the Estonian and European past produces young people with narrow worldviews*. Although some of the teachers admitted that current history teaching in Estonia was too self-centred (ethno- or Euro-centric), most of them did not oppose the focus, either supporting Estonia- and Europe-centred history teaching with pedagogical or ideological arguments (thus negating excessive self-centredness), or considering such a state inevitable. The ‘self-centredness’ was justified by the necessarily limited teaching time and, thus, the inevitability of choosing some kind of a focus in history teaching, as well as with reference to the pedagogical principle that teaching should commence with what was closest to the student. Connected to this was the argument that history teaching is first and foremost about understanding oneself and learning about oneself and that in support of this goal Estonian and European history is the most important (see more in Kello and Masso 2012).

On what else should we concentrate? [...] if you don’t know about your own country’s history, then what sense does it make to talk about anything else. (Jaanika)

It is also interesting that those few teachers who agreed that there was too much teaching of Estonian history were never ethnic Estonians. In addition, the fact that minority teachers happened to be those who felt that Russia or other neighbouring countries were neglected in the curriculum shows how much the teachers own sociocultural and ethnic position influences how s/he perceives the curriculum (Kello and Masso 2012).

In Latvia, former history curricula seem to have followed similar trends as in Estonia. For example, the curricula for ‘Latvian and world history’ from 2006 state rather cautiously that history teaching should enhance students’ understanding of ‘family, place of origin, [and] Latvia

as significant values in their own and other people's lives' and 'the development of a European identity, and support the growth of a responsible and tolerant member of the democratic society of European Union' (Latvian Government 2006). However, since in Latvia school history teaching has long been the object of 'high politics' (e.g. Klišāns 2011) and 'Latvian history' has been mandated in a top-down way by the government and parliament as a separate subject (Latvian Government 2010, 2011), direct political influences are visible in the curricula. Referring to an alleged lack of factual knowledge among young people, nationalist politicians have supported mandating Latvian history as a separate subject, apart from European and world history. Thus, since 2010 Latvian lower secondary curriculum for 'Latvian history' mandates that among other things Latvian history teaching should enhance students 'sense of belonging to the Latvian state and patriotism' (Latvian Government 2010, 2011, 2014).⁴ In Estonian curriculum, the term 'patriotism' is present since 2011, but still only in the general section of social subjects curricula, not history as such, and as part of a longer list of 'universal values': 'freedom, human dignity, equality, honesty, caring, tolerance, responsibility, justice, patriotism and respect for themselves, others and the environment' (Estonian Government 2011a, b, similarly 2014a, b).

There are also other contextual differences that explain why in 2010, Latvian history teachers referred to their patriotic tasks more often and more explicitly than their Estonian peers. Above all, the different political situation is one reason why Latvian ethnic majority teachers perceived the political expectations more vividly than their Estonian majority colleagues: Latvia's political landscape is more fragmented and ethnically charged as compared to Estonia (Nakai 2014). This automatically gives somewhat more importance to history interpretations as issues of party politics in Latvia (e.g. Cheskin 2013). In addition, the economic crisis of 2008 hit Latvia harder, and the following workforce emigration wave was more visible in Latvia as compared to Estonia. This caused more attention to the country's future and might have turned the teachers' attention more to their task in convincing students to connect their future visions with their home country as an aspect of 'patriotism'.⁵ Thus, whereas ethnic minority teachers' context perception is always more vivid as they perceive their 'state servant' role more clearly, a similar difference due to different political contexts seems to hold when Latvian and Estonian majority teachers are compared.

While the following statement by Rahel might be representative of majority Estonian history teachers' position, Lija represents a general feeling that is left from the Latvian interviews.

[...] in my opinion, nobody demands anything of the history teacher. [...] Does the society or the parent or the headmaster demand anything? Well, who? [...] Rather, it's myself [...] I demand of myself as of a teacher. [...] No-one controls what they [the students – KK] get from me. [...] It's myself who demands and in better cases they also are able to demand, saying I want to know, well, I want to orientate myself [in the facts – KK] a bit. In fact, it's between me and them. Who controls it? Isn't it true? (Rahel)

I don't feel that one would demand of me as a teacher of history, yes, somehow at the present moment to teach a *wrong* history or somehow present the facts in a way that conforms to the state's ideology. That's not so. But of course, one can feel something, something a bit. [...] the first couple of years that I worked as history teacher, Latvia was a EU, NATO candidate, unequivocally we very much stressed exactly these questions, attempting to form a positive opinion of EU as well as NATO. So yes, there is something the teacher stresses [...]. But that's more depending on the initiative of the teacher. I wouldn't say that we are influenced ideologically *very* much. (Lija)

Such a difference doesn't mean that there is necessarily much less 'ideological bias' in the social and political contexts in Estonia as compared to Latvia. Rather it shows that such a bias might be less explicitly visible in everyday public discussions for reasons mentioned above.

It can thus be hypothesised that there is a difference between what kinds of representations allow themselves readily to be formulated in lay versus professional discourses in different political contexts and in different situations. In some situations, history teachers are more often and more explicitly reminded of their patriotic tasks than in other situations. In Estonia, as compared to the general public, a 'patriotic' representation of history teaching seems to be somewhat less readily available in the professional and official discourse where the central aims are defined in a 'critical enlightened'—i.e. 'dissemination'—vein, compatible with the orientation towards academic historiography of many history teachers. In Latvia where the situation has been similar in many regards—the historical background of the country, the development of history curricula

since the early twentieth century, the academic history-based education of most history teachers—some recent contextual differences seem to have made identity-related aims spontaneously more available in spontaneous professional discourse, too.

The 'Individual' Level: How Intended 'Dissemination' May Turn into 'Propaganda'

Consistently with the dominant professional and curricular rhetoric, most interviewees *agreed* with the idea that it is import to introduce multiple interpretations to students, rather than 'one truth'. In practice, however, they admitted that the core of their teaching was imparting some central grid of knowledge. Even teachers who valued discussions and interpretations could be afraid of them as challenging their lessons plans. Thus, many interviewees expressed the view that lower secondary school was rather the place where students should acquire some basic factual knowledge. Later this minimal repertoire—as far as the students remembered it—could be used for a more analytical approach. The following was a rather typical comment with which even most discussion- and interpretation-oriented teachers seemed to agree:

[...] an average student does indeed learn just generally acknowledged positions and evaluations. Those that are in the textbook – and that's that. [...] I would wish more, yes. But I have to work from the person's abilities. (Anne)

A polyphonic and critical history teaching was represented as depending on the teacher's ability to include those *in addition* to imparting the core facts and on the pressures of curricular time combined with the students' abilities.

Some interviewees expressed a frustration with the various stereotypes their students had adopted from the growing diversity of accessible sources—in these cases, students were represented as neither able to argue their views, nor able to recognise the lacunae in their arguments. However, developing students' thinking and argumentation in order to counter these flaws was not represented as always realistic considering the above-mentioned limitations.

In fact, several teachers were afraid that their students could learn 'wrong' lessons from a too 'polyphonic' teaching:

[...] the more able ones who have their own opinions about history, they take facts [...] to support their *own* view, and leave everything else aside. (Jaanika)

This did not always cause the teachers to drop their attempts of a critical and nuanced teaching. But still a multiperspective teaching was restrained by an image—or reality—of students who were not seen as able to deal with it. However, the alternative to such teaching style was not necessarily a neutral, academically dry narration. As we will see from the following example, a 'disseminative' ideal could easily turn into a 'propagandistic' practice.

According to a teacher whom we call Meeri, the teacher balances between all what she knows and her student's reception ability. For example, as a historian the teacher may be aware of different interpretations and facts connected to an event or a person, but shouldn't reveal them to the students, if they could understand it 'the wrong way'. Also, the students shouldn't be overtaxed with information. This is of course a generic pedagogical task—maths and biology teachers face the same problem. But in the case of history teaching the 'patriotic aspect' is added.

Referring to a communicative counter-memory that was kept alive during the Soviet era among ethnic Estonians in spite of Soviet history distortions, but which included distortions and idealisations of the pre-WWII era of its own, she noted that

[...] during the Soviet era, people viewed Konstantin Päts, Laidoner, other statesmen [from the pre-WWII Estonian Republic – KK] as something holy and untouchable [...] But if we look at later research [since 1990s – KK], if we read studies [...] [they don't seem so infallible any more – KK]. Of course, I don't tell all of it to the students. There needs to be some small reservation or limit. But for myself... [she doesn't think of history as something dogmatic – KK]. (Meeri)

Meeri's statement can be interpreted as referring to a necessity to avoid that students understand something 'in the wrong way' politically. She herself had come from the Soviet-era counter-memory tradition which had shaped her values and world view. So perhaps she regarded those Soviet-time idealistic representations as difficult to unchain from a love for the country and patriotic feelings which she also wanted to pass on

to her students. She may have felt that she should spare her students of the disappointment she herself had experienced when learning of newer studies about the statesmen. Or perhaps she was simply afraid that de-idealising pre-war-era statesmen would enhance a common disaffection with politics and politicians among her students, which would be detrimental from a citizenship education perspective.

Indeed, Meeri added that she was not in the position ‘to present the information in another light, because the critical mind of the students hasn’t developed sufficiently yet’. However, at the same time among her main aims as history teacher she also had the aim to teach students to approach things critically, not taking everything at face value. In fact, she noticed a contradiction between her critical thinking aims and the position reflected in the quotation above, and looked for a way to reconcile the positions in the interview.

Her solution was to represent history teacher as balancing between what we could call ‘truth’ and ‘pragmatism’. On the one hand, she said, students should get the opportunity to decide on their own positions. But on the other hand it is a question of the teacher’s gut feeling where to draw the line.

Meeri said she would sometimes bring examples of different perspectives towards an event, but she would also say, which version should be memorised. Thus, Meeri’s position wasn’t a univocally ‘propagandistic’ one in Moscovici’s terms. But according to her representation of her teaching she often did resort to such practice and had no real problem with this fact.

Why, however, did a patriotic approach seem like such an evident alternative to a more critical one even to an academically informed teacher? One explanation was offered already above—‘propagandistic’ values and practices may lurk under ‘enlightened’ ideals and discourses. Another explanation resides in an uneasy answer to the essential question: what is the scholarly accepted knowledge that should be ‘diffused’ in the first place?

The Essential Question—What to Disseminate

According to a teacher we call Andrus, it was important that the students develop an appreciation of academic research as the most trustworthy source of historical knowledge—as opposed to, for example, journalistic

or political sources. For him, teaching trust in professional historians and their objectivity was related to teaching 'relativity of relativism'.

I value the historian's profession very much [...] I'm very disdainful of politicization. [...] That's constant work: first to shake them so-to-say, so that they would take the blinders off their eyes and take on a critical attitude. And then at some point they need to be shaken to realise that, come on, there are limits to criticism somewhere; there are some things one doesn't need to argue about. Somewhere trust enters the play also.

Question: Trust for historians? *Answer:* Yes. And trust for methods as well as for people. And for professionalism. (Andrus)

However, in the real world, historians' work is of varied quality, particularly when it comes to history textbooks (in case authored by academic historians in the first place). In concise overviews like the school textbook format demands, even academic historians easily slip out of their professional distanced observer roles, writing more like representatives of their social memory community. This is especially evident in the case of issues that don't belong to their professional research topics, and that are important, acute, sensitive from the perspective of their social memory community. So it's not the case that a history teacher can trust a historians' representation without hesitation.

[...] they say: 'What to believe?' I say: 'Believe documentary sources: photos, films, numbers of losses, etc.' But already, let's say, a journalist – there's also a fact, but there's also a journalistic opinion. The same often applies for a historian – there's a fact, but there's also her/his opinion. (Eliana)

In the interviews, some of the teachers focused on historians' position-boundedness, painting a rather individualistic picture of textbook production:

These are two out of 6 billion people who have announced their point of view there. [...] Yes, they have worked on this issue for a long time, but they are common people. (Viktoria)

Presenting historians as normal people with their own subjective predispositions was useful in order to distinguish between an 'official' stance versus historians' personal views as represented in the textbook, as well

as to ‘reconcile’ Russian students with the ‘ethnic Estonian’ position reflected in the texts. However, aside of the fact that textbook authors often do represent some broader groups (or, indeed, the ‘powerful’) and that textbooks are co-production of the authors named on the cover *and* various structures from the curriculum to the concrete publisher’s practices, one could ask whether such view does not bear the danger of encouraging students’ relativism towards historical knowledge, reducing historical knowledge to a matter of individual opinion. With no clear division line between academic knowledge (production), on the one hand, and individual, social or political representations, on the other, it was more difficult to answer students’ questions about whom or what to trust:

Yes they do say ‘you are lying, how do you know’. And well, if I lie, then let it be so. [...] we have different positions about different events and now it’s your task [...] to form your own opinion about it. What do *you* believe? [...] I say for example that I think this way, but this is my opinion and it doesn’t have to be your opinion and it isn’t the opinion of many other historians. (Jaanika)

In fact, teachers who were more tolerant of openness maintained that they attempted to leave as much open to the students as possible—discussion itself and the ability to listen to different opinions is what is important. It may be useful if a student learns textbook facts, but s/he does not need to be dissuaded, and the ‘truth’—the decision to which perspective to stick—can be left open (Kello 2016).

Of course, teachers need more help in offering difficult epistemological explanations in simple, age and ability appropriate ways. Another relevant point here is that there are different ‘payers’ of the ‘pipers’ who compete in ‘calling the tune’ in the field of history teaching. In case the curriculum provides no clear answer—which it often does not in a democratic society—whom the teacher perceives as the main ‘payer’ becomes decisive. Whose expectations—academy? society? parent? politics?—are perceived as posing the most legitimate demands to the general education school history teaching? Recent issues like the ones mentioned in an above quotation by the Latvian teacher Lija (accession to EU and NATO), in particular, are treated in academically deep and neutral ways neither in schoolbooks, academic history nor in even scientific publications broadly available to teachers. Rather, these are current and

politicised topics mentioned only fleetingly on last pages of history textbooks. Teachers are quite alone when deciding on what would be the neutral information to 'disseminate'—even if they really want to 'disseminate' rather than 'propagate'.

A teacher's ideal could be that there was some 'concrete stance'—or helpful guidance to the teacher—which would be an academically sound one and not a political prescription. This, as elucidated by Wilschut (2010) whom we quoted in the beginning of this chapter, is, however, difficult to achieve. So in case of inherently biased and politicised issues there is perhaps indeed no better solution than leaving them to the 'lonely' teacher to decide (groping alone in the darkness, as one teacher put it), rather than risking that biased prescriptions would be produced as a result of some public negotiations (for example, see the volume by Nakou and Barca 2010).

CONCLUSION: DILEMMATA OF 'ENLIGHTENED' TEACHING

We started this chapter with the observation that societies that experienced a recent transition from a Soviet style to a Western democratic style government provide a fruitful ground for observing the dilemmata of history teaching. Every new country and its government needs to justify and emphasise its newly found political orientation and foundational myth (Liu and Hilton 2005; Wagner et al., forthcoming) as well as observe the tolerant 'enlightened' perspective that accepts that other regions in the world have a right to their own evaluation of historical events, persons and notions in inter-generational transmission of identity and loyalty. This is particularly dilemmatic if, as in the Baltic states, there exists a considerable minority of Russian pre-transition immigrants who have their own historical values and perspectives. This institutional frame, together with the teachers' interests, motivations and memories, makes navigating the 'sea of history' in teaching fraught with risky cliffs.

Under any preconditions, a really neutral dissemination of a relevant variety of facts and perspectives can only be achieved for a limited number of issues. Even if being modest and attempting to present some more relevant and well-known perspectives to the students, the twin problems of 'location' and 'sufficiency' remain: finding a tentative balance and 'location of openness' between the positions presented. Each student's perception of what is taught is idiosyncratic to a certain extent. A point at which a class has dealt 'sufficiently' with a topic, that is at which point

there has been ‘sufficient polyphony’ or ‘sufficient investigation’, cannot be determined once and for all. What has been exhaustive processing for one student may well leave another feeling confronted with different perspectives, without having an appropriate ‘apparatus’ with which to handle the difficult issues (cf. Lee 2010, p. xii). Thus, the choice between making a structure of facts clear to *most* students, and discussing interpretations with some brighter ones, can be felt as a dilemma by the teacher. Both, in cases of sensitive and less ‘hot’ topics it rather seems to be a matter of either the teacher’s gut feeling or of some societal/collective consensus at that particular point in time.

The teachers often seem to regard ‘different perspectives’ as different *evaluations* of the same facts, rather than as the more substantive *meaning* of the facts, i.e. the different contextualisations of, and relations among, the facts. In the interviews, only a few teachers represented the choice of facts to be studied as possibly problematic. Disregarding the perspective dependence of the selection process, however, may render invisible the inherent bias in some entrenched interpretations and master narratives. There may be a similar problem with the position that we can escape today’s evaluations and interests in dealing with the past.

To be sure, we don’t advocate for ‘pure dissemination’ in history lessons. Besides the state’s interest in emphasising its own political perspective, also teachers showing and not hiding a moral stance seems inevitable in many cases, for example even the very obvious pursuit of enhancing ethnic tolerance in students and supporting understanding of some certain other perspective (as opposed to a more ‘technical’ and distanced dealing with different perspectives). What we would like to warn against is that such a stance could turn into teaching pre-defined ‘lessons from past’, i.e. propagating a certain narrow, perhaps even a propagandistically pre-defined set of ‘lessons’.

As studies by McCully, Barton, Reilly and their colleagues have shown, for the reason that Northern Irish history teachers often attempt to refrain from contentious contemporary issues Northern Irish students do not always relate what they have learnt at school to their personal identity-based positions. Students from both communities are aware of the *existence* of an academic, neutral and balanced approach to the past that is different from their own (e.g. Barton 2012; Reilly and McCully 2011). However, school history teaching neither challenges their existing in-group narratives nor provides an alternative to the divided identifications: ‘schools are so concerned not to challenge diverse identifications that they fail to provide—or even to enable—the kind of shared identity

that might contribute to overcoming the region's conflict' (Barton 2012, p. 99). One could push even further, asking whether there is not some need for patriotic narratives in the students, be it a nation or a religion or something third towards which this patriotism is directed. So even if on academic grounds we would leave out a number of still too 'hot' issues, wouldn't they find these narratives elsewhere—then, however probably in a much less analytical and critical context that even the most traditional school history teaching.

This chapter presents an integrated view on an educational issue—history teaching—in the theoretical context of a social psychological theory. It takes an empirical—not normative—position towards history teaching as practice. The Theory of Social Representations is particularly useful when applied to real-life societal contexts where individual behaviours become a collective pattern as is the case with communication styles in teaching.

In the field of social representation research, there have been several proposals to re-apply Moscovici's model to communicative situations other than mass media—for example, as characteristic to different group and affiliation types (Duveen 2008b), or as various ways of dealing with knowledge and conflict (Psaltis 2005). The main difference compared to our approach is that in the other proposals—as indeed in Moscovici (2008)—'propagation' is seen as a style in its own right rather than as a continuum between the two poles of 'dissemination' and 'propaganda'. For the present purpose, we do not go into a more thorough discussion of this issue. On the other hand, the pedagogic practice is so much constrained by various commitments and convictions on different levels that it is indeed characterised by at least one crucial feature of propagation as defined by Moscovici, namely by a constant consideration of what would be the appropriate account for a particular audience. True, in a democracy, in history teaching that follows a disciplinary ideal this is usually not done based on a pre-defined set of beliefs as in the case of the catholic press studied by Moscovici: pedagogic convictions vary from educator to educator. But constraints deriving from societal values, moral convictions and beliefs about the student needs will always shape the content selection and teaching style. A teacher is in our view crucially interested in what message is received, in terms of avoiding confusion as well as of the world view. The model of communication styles used in the present chapter helps to grasp the fluctuation of teaching between communication styles, interrelations between teaching ideals and practice, and teacher dilemmata between various expectations, aims and ideals.

NOTES

1. When analysing diffusion as media communication style, Moscovici (2008) mentions characteristics—such as the need to entertain an inherently indeterminate, heterogeneous audience—that do not translate into history teaching in the present context. We do not delve into these details here. What applies here is one crucial aspect of Moscovici's concept of diffusion, namely the communicator's disinterest in what kind of 'aggregate representation' of an object is received by the audience.
2. Of course, the implicit importance of patriotism can also be seen from thematic choices such as the relative importance of own country's history, as compared to other regions, which is the case with most history curricula in the world.
3. Here and henceforth, we refer to the first author's interviews with 39 Estonian and 14 Latvian history teachers between 2007 and 2011 (see sample and method description in Kello 2014 or Kello 2016). Other analyses of the same data have been published in Kello 2010, Kello and Harro-Loit 2012, Kello and Masso 2012, Kello and Wagner 2014 and Kello 2016. We use the same pseudonyms as in previous publications to refer to the interviewees.
4. In contrast, Latvian upper secondary history curriculum which wasn't in focus of the political debates is written in a very disciplinary style, and includes only one identity related aim "to promote a multifaceted development of the student as a member of democratic and civic society via studying Latvian, European and world history processes" besides various disciplinary aims (Latvian Government 2013).
5. Yet another explanation is the timing of the interviews. Several of the Latvian interviews were conducted during or soon after a week in November which included celebrations of several important anniversaries relating to the founding of the Latvian state: *Lāčplēsis* Day on November 11th, commemorating the defeat of the West Russian Volunteer Army in the Latvian War of Independence in 1919, and Latvian Independence Day (1918) on November 18th. Several interviewees discussed their position on, or role as history teachers in, the celebrations.

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