

From Motivation to Interaction: Perpetrators

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In the study of perpetrators of genocides over the last 25 years, microanalytical and individualizing perspectives have challenged demonizing depictions of perpetrators; revealed the fluidity of seemingly stable categories such as perpetrator, bystander, or victim; pointed to the social, biographical and mental 'ordinariness' of perpetrators; highlighted the choices perpetrators had almost any time; and illuminated the complexity of dispositions and situations that 'normal' people turn into mass murders.

This research has certainly benefitted from a predominantly judicial view of its subjects. This view is shaped and inspired by the search for justice after injustice that paradigmatically materializes in trials. Trials aim at assessing guilt and responsibility of individual defendants by exploring the mindsets, motivations and dispositions that made them take the choices they took.

My paper will argue that the individualizing judicial approach needs to be supplemented if not replaced by a sociologically and anthropologically informed analysis of various types of *interaction* of diverse groups of perpetrators and bystanders in order to better grasp on the violent dynamics of genocides, the causal complexity that drive them, and the fluidity of categories that are used to characterize the personnel that is involved.

Drawing on empirical inquiries into the Holocaust, the Rwandan genocide, the genocide in Cambodia as well as on insights into the social fabric of military units in war, criminal gangs, mob violence, and subcultural groups, my paper will probe into

- the integrative effects of *job share* (technical, emotional, morally) perpetrator groups observe;
- the role of formal and informal hierarchies and *leadership* styles that govern them;
- their quality of emotional *communities*, i.e. their adherence to similar valuations of emotions and their expression, especially in gendered terms (male bonding).