



---

### **Excerpt: Wagner-Pacifci & Schwartz: Vietnam Veterans Memorial**

The article addresses a) the problem of building an memorial of a painful event like the military defeated Vietnam war and b) in general the process of production of cultural meaning by tracing the "social, political and cultural trajectories of the negotiation process" in building such an memorial without public/national consensus.

On pp. 379 the authors state that commemoration without consensus cannot be analysed as »shared significance embodied in form« (Griswold 1987) and can thus be not interpreted as »integrating the glory of society's past«. By analyzing the stages and processes of selecting and modifying the 'right' forms and shapes of the memorial they conclude that the controversies in these processes are mainly 'genre' or 'framing' problems of the interpretation of the past - whereas genre is meant as »a kind of schema that organized perception«. One can only decipher/decode what (and how) the memorial symbolic structure expresses by looking at it's cultural development over time. Through the usage of a) thick decription, b) discourse analysis and c) comparative methodology the authors try to interpret these context. They further present and analyze different cases of genres, such as the militaristic genre honouring the fallen/veterans, the social and moral conflicts of the categorization by naming the event a 'war' or the problem of the ambiguous characterization of the veterans.

After finding a appropriate frame/genre and selecting and building a 'vertical non-heroic' monument, reframing and rebuilding of some elements - and thus meaning - took place, such as the addition of flags and a statue of three (unheroic) soldiers, people used and use the memorial not to passively contemplate but as an object of emotion. Visitors thus reframe the monument again.