Remembering Ethnic Cleansing and Lost Cultural Diversity in Seven European Cities

An outline of a book project

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During and after Second World War Europe became a scene for ethnic cleansing – genocide, mass expulsions and forced migrations. The Holocaust on Europe’s Jews was a central part of these events. As the war unfolded ethnic cleansing affected also other populations in large parts of the continent in the shadow of German, Soviet, Italian and Romanian occupations. Nazi Germany and the USSR pursued policies of ethnic cleansing, during which Poles, Balts, Karelians, Ukrainians, Belarusians, Russians, Gypsies, Chechens and Crimean Tatars, among other groups, were deported by force, often to slave labour. Moreover, the end of the war did not spell the end of mass expulsions. The war’s end entailed the forced migration of around 14 million Germans and more than 300 000 Italians from Central and Eastern Europe. The drawing of new borders in Europe after 1945 led to further massive transfers of peoples, euphemistically called ‘population exchanges’: Ukrainians within Poland and from Poland to the Soviet Union; Poles from the Polish territories annexed by the Soviet Union to the former German territories allotted to post-war Poland; Hungarians from Czechoslovakia to Hungary; Romanians from Bukovina and Bessarabia to Romania, and so on. Many of these transfers were accompanied by violence and cruelty, as people were collectively punished either for crimes perpetrated earlier by their countrymen or for a sheer fact of belonging to 'antagonistic classes' and 'unreliable' ethnic groups. However, this was not the end of the story of expulsions in Europe: in 1974 a 'population exchange' accompanied the conflict over Cyprus between Greece and Turkey, and the 1990s saw new expulsions in connection with the devastating wars and ethnic cleansing operations in the wake of the dissolution of Yugoslavia.

As a result of all these events in post-war Europe the ethnic composition of cities, regions and whole countries changed fundamentally. The pre-war cultural diversity of many regions and cities vanished. Sometimes the homes and property of the deported, expelled or murdered were taken over by their former neighbours from the remaining groups, at other times they came into the hands of people without any previous connection to the life of the city or region. On a collective level, multiethnic regions were drawn into processes of national homogenisation in which the memory of the former inhabitants was often neither officially celebrated nor even acknowledged. The material traces of the vanished populations were often erased or became illegible to the new inhabitants, especially new generations who were no longer capable to assess them as belonging to the vanished people.

However after the end of the Cold War, the memory of the former inhabitants and the memory of the expulsions have received increasing attention. One can even claim that while the memory of the Holocaust has been established as the moral foundation of the common European history and identity, the next step in creating a common European historical narrative may become the acknowledgement of the guilt for mass expulsions and ethnic cleansings in post-war Europe.

This is indicated for example by the demands put forward by France on Turkey to acknowledge the Armenian genocide before being allowed to join the EU, or Italian claims for damages from Croats and Slovenes, as well as German initiative to create The Centre Against Expulsions in Berlin. Memories of ethnic cleansing lives on and influences today’s political and social life. Since the 1990s there is an intensive debate in the countries concerned about what really happened, who were the victims and who were the perpetrators, who is to blame and who has to apologize, whether and how the victims ought to be compensated, and more generally, what is to be done with this memory. The issue became all the more topical as European integration gained momentum at the turn of the twenty-first century, especially with the EU enlargement eastwards.
The Central and Eastern European countries' successful efforts to gain EU membership have opened up possibilities for the expelled and their descendants to make claims to a symbolical return to their homelands, for instance by making claims on lost real estate, or actively upholding the memory of their ethnic group’s presence in the region, or requesting some kind of apology or compensation for their suffering. This provokes controversies and conflicts; e.g. the Czech president Klaus’ threat to block the European Union’s Lisbon Treaty in fear of the Sudeten Germans’ restitution claims for property lost during their forced exile after 1945.

The revival of memories of ethnic cleansings and of the lost cultural diversity caused by them also interconnects with influential Western European discourses of cultural diversity and multiculturalism. While some local or regional memory actors welcome such discourses and use them to promote memory revival, others contest them as foreign or elite impositions. Local uses of multiculturalism also interact with previous notions on cultural diversity rooted in the local communities, and can be a strategic resource for political and commercial actors involved in local politics of memory.

Conflicts over memory thus do not only involve conflicts between nations of victims and perpetrators, but also conflicts within one and the same society over memory issues. It thus offers a perfect opportunity to study the dynamics of collective memory.

The history of ethnic cleansings has already been studied by many historians. However, what remains largely understudied is how the present-day populations of the former homelands of the ethnically cleansed groups deal with that memory and with the material legacy left by those expelled or murdered. Our book project aims to fill this gap.

The focus on the remaining majorities, some of whom descend from the expellers, is particularly interesting for many reasons. One is the fact that the limelight has frequently been on the expelled, on their coping with their plight, and on their construction of narratives depicting the homeland while living in exile and diaspora. If extensive and excellent research has been undertaken here the stories of the expelling majorities and present-day populations have been studied to a much lesser degree. How have the actions of expulsions been justified and explained? How has the expropriation of real estate been accounted for? How are the expelled being remembered, vilified, acknowledged or blamed and what happened with the material heritage (buildings, cemeteries etc) that they left behind? How a kind of 'cultural blindness' has been fostered in respect to the still existing tokens of the vanished cultural diversity (for example, in architecture, toponyms, folklore etc.)?

These questions can be researched with focus of memory treatment at a number of levels: international and transnational, as well as at national, local and individual. However in order to narrow down and deepen our focus of investigation the proposed book project will concentrate on the local level while paying keen attention to interactions with national and transnational levels.

Thus our book project looks at how local actors in places where ethnic cleansing occurred in the 20th century relate themselves to the memory of these events and of the people that vanished in their wake. The book will be case-focused. Its central part will consist of six chapters, each dealing with case studies of cities and towns in countries affected by ethnic cleansing. The cases will involve two former, mainly German-speaking towns in the Czech Republic, Wroclaw (former German Breslau) in Poland, Lviv (former Lemberg and Lwow) in Ukraine, Chernivtsi (former Czernowitz) in Ukraine, Chisinau in Moldova and two cities (Jajce and Visegrad) in Bosnia.

However the ambition with the book project is to go beyond the parallel presentation of the cases and pursue comparison. This will be done in two chapters. One chapter will be specifically devoted to the material traces left by the vanished populations on urban environments, while in the last chapter a systematic comparison will be made along the conceptual lines presented in the book’s introductory chapter. This first chapter will contain not only the necessary historical background to the cases but also the conceptual frames for all chapters as well as the main research questions that authors of each chapter have to deal with.
The main research objectives in all the case studies include:

1) the identification of grassroots and elite actors at local levels that use and shape memories of ethnic cleansings and the vanished populations

2) examining local discourses and strategies of dealing with memory conflicts related to the multiethnic heritage in their locality and memory of ethnic cleansings

3) analysing how local memory actors interact with national and transnational actors and what kind of dynamic this creates

4) scrutinizing how material traces of the former inhabitants are interpreted and transformed in the present cityscapes by the current populations.

5) theoretical conceptualization of a spectrum of attitudes to cultural diversity and its representations in various local socio-political and cultural contexts of the post-1989 East-Central Europe.

In order to explore this field a large number of additional pertinent questions will be raised and answered:

To what extent has there been a policy aiming at active forgetting of ethnic cleansings and the multiethnic past, and to what extent have there been attempts to rework and redefine the memories? Can we speak today about reconstruction of the previously silenced memories? Are these memories politicised or have there been efforts to neutralise them, i.e. disarm their politically explosive force? Has the issue of guilt been debated, and if so, how? What is the responsibility of the present inhabitants for the cultural heritage left by the vanished groups? Have there been negotiations of memories between the present inhabitants and representatives of the vanished populations, and if so where have reconciliation and understanding been achieved and where have there been failures?

The general aim with the study is to compare strategies of dealing with memories connected to ethnic cleansing with theoretical ambition that is twofold:

1) to contribute to rethinking social memory paradigms by showing the complex dynamics of collective memory, especially how the memory actors and their audiences on different levels (local, national and transnational as well as grassroots and elites) influence each other

2) to contribute to deepen discussion about the concept of “reconciliation” by showing what it can mean in practice on the grass root level. It is important to emphasise that we do not view reconciliation only in terms of relations between groups, e.g. between the former and the present inhabitants of a city, but also as a concept for understanding how the current populations of former multiethnic cities come to terms with their cities’ multiethnic past and the legacies and traces of the former inhabitants. Such reconciliation might take shape in transformations of social capital through complex interactions between various political, preservationist, educational, commercial etc. agendas.

Theoretical concepts, sources and methods of investigation

The theoretical key-concepts that will be used in the book and that all contributors to the book have to relate to are: collective memory; postmemory (memories personally transmitted but not personally experienced), prosthetic memories (memories transmitted by media and other cultural products), memory actors/agents, audiences of memory discourses and practices, uses of history (or
rather of the past) and reconciliation as practice. As for the concept of collective memory we defined it as ‘a group’s representation of its past, both the past that is commonly shared and the past that is collectively commemorated, that enacts and gives substance to that group’s identity, its present conditions, and its vision of the future. However, we are keen to emphasise that we do not see collective memory as a psycho-social reality but an imaginative construction that still can have real hold over people’s lives because people believe that they share memory as a group like they believe that they share common identity (as a group, nation etc.).

Inspired by Klas-Göran Karlsson’s theory of different uses of history we will discuss different uses of history of ethnic cleansings and the vanished populations: moral, existential, ideological, political, scientific and even commercial use. These aspects are relevant but the strictly functional focus of this theory needs to be supplemented with theories concerning actors and power structures involved in memory work. We therefore also apply ‘the dynamics of memory approach’ in order to demonstrate that collective memory is a perpetual process of negotiation between different actors and between these actors and their audiences. We will thus analyse memory as a process that involves conflict, contest and controversy, as well as attempts to achieve consensus. The actors as well as audiences are influenced by power structures which need to be identified.

As primary sources for our investigation we will use local archival materials, especially documents connected to decisions concerning preservation of buildings, cemeteries, etc or decisions concerning matters like erecting or not erecting monuments and commemoration plagues, their shape and meaning, changes of street names, organisation of commemoration ceremonies and rituals etc.. All this can involve questions about the present population’s attitude towards the vanished people. Other important sources will be local historiography, guides and other official presentations of the places under our investigation and first and foremost media, both local and nation-wide. A special attention will be paid to internet sources as an arena where memories about the specific locality can be expressed and negotiated. This specific arena is still understudied in the field of memory studies in general. A source type that can also be considered by us in relevant cases is literature – first and foremost biographic and autobiographic (memoirs and diaries) but in some cases even fiction (books about the specific place under investigation), provided that it will be analysed as source delivering special kind of information. Last but not least our research group will conduct participant observation and semi-structured interviews with informants from the local population. The main aim will be to reach representatives of different generations and conclude what memories of the vanished people have been transmitted; what are the common patterns recurrent in individual recollections and how can they be explained? It is also important to analyse “commonplace” stories from everyday life about the vanished people who are today seen as “the others”, i.e. stories about neighbourhood relations. What are the ethical and emotional frames of these stories? Are they influenced by official and medial discourses?

The book project outlined above needs to be of a multi- and transdisciplinary nature. Thus the methodological frame of it is drawn by approaches within cultural studies, urban studies, cultural sociology, ethnology, history and political studies. Hence, the collected material is to be interpreted using the techniques of narrative analysis, discourse analysis, content analysis of media texts, hermeneutical analysis of documents and literature, as well as semiotically inspired analysis of visual representations.

The book will consist of following chapters:

1) Introduction (Barbara Törnquist-Plewa)
2) Case study of Lviv (Eleonora Narvselius)
3) Case study of Chernivtsi (Niklas Bernsand)
4) Case study of Chișinău (Annamaria Dutceac Segesten)
5) Case study of Brno and Ústí nad Labem (Tomas Sniegon)
6) Case study of Jajce/Visegrad (Dragan Nikolic eller Tea Sindbaek)
7) Case study of Wroclaw (Mattias Nowak)
8) Urban planning and Memory of the Vanished Populations. Cases of L’viv Tjernivtsi, (Ukraine) and Chișinău (Moldova) (Bo Larsson)
9) Comparison and conclusions (Barbara Törnquist-Plewa)
Barbara Törnquist-Plewa

Introduction

This book is not a compilation of loose essays but the result of a minor, multi- and interdisciplinary research project conducted by a research group at Lund University in Sweden during the years 2011-2013. The project, entitled “Remembering Ethnic Cleansing and Lost Cultural Diversity in Central and Eastern European Cities”, was financed by the Center for European Studies at Lund University.

The idea of the project originated in our research group’s interest for the contemporary after-effects of ethnic cleansings (genocides and large-scale expulsions) in Europe in the twentieth century of about 90 million people from around 30 different ethnic groups. The history of these tragic events starts with the Armenian genocide of 1915–1916 and the so-called “population exchange” between Turkey and Greece in the aftermath of the First World War in 1922–23. The Second World War brought a new huge escalation of the policies of ethnic cleansing, the Holocaust against Europe’s Jews being the most horrific example. As the war unfolded, ethnic cleansing also affected other populations in large parts of the continent in the shadow of German, Soviet, Italian and Romanian occupations. Nazi Germany and the USSR pursued systematic policies of ethnic cleansing, during which Poles, Balts, Karelians, Ukrainians, Belarusians, Russians, Gypsies, Chechens and Crimean Tatars, among other groups, were deported by force, often to serve as slave labour. Moreover, the end of the war did not spell the end of mass expulsions. Instead it entailed the forced migration of around 14 million Germans and more than 300,000 Italians from Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkans. The drawing of new borders in Europe after 1945 also led to further massive more or less forced transfers of peoples, euphemistically called ‘population exchanges’: Ukrainians within Poland and from Poland to the Soviet Union; Poles from the Polish territories annexed by the Soviet Union to the former German territories allotted to post-war Poland; Hungarians from Czechoslovakia to Hungary; Romanians from Bukovina and Bessarabia to Romania, to name but a few. Many of these transfers were accompanied by violence and cruelty, as people were collectively punished either for crimes perpetrated earlier by their countrymen or for the mere fact of belonging to ‘antagonistic classes’ and ‘unreliable’ ethnic groups. However, this was not the end of the story of expulsions in Europe; in 1974 a ‘population exchange’ accompanied the conflict over Cyprus between Greece and Turkey, and the 1990s saw new expulsions in connection with the devastating wars and ethnic cleansing operations in the wake of the dissolution of Yugoslavia.

As a result of all these events in post-war Europe, the ethnic composition of cities, regions and whole countries changed fundamentally. The pre-war cultural diversity of many regions and cities vanished. Sometimes the homes and property of the deported, expelled or murdered were taken over by their former neighbours among the groups that remained in place. At other times property came into the hands of people without any previous connection to the life of the city or region. On a collective level, multiethnic regions were drawn into processes of national homogenisation in which the memory of the former inhabitants was often neither officially celebrated nor even acknowledged. The material traces of the vanished populations were often erased or became invisible to the new inhabitants, especially new generations who were no longer capable of assessing them as once belonging to the vanished people. However, since the end of the Cold War in the 1990s, the memory of the former inhabitants and of the expulsions have received increasing attention. In the enlarged European Union the memory of the Holocaust has been established as the moral foundation of a commonly-held European history and identity (Judd 2005, p.803). There are reason to argue that the next step in creating a shared European historical narrative may be the acknowledgement of guilt for other genocides and mass expulsions in Europe. This is indicated for example by France’s demands that Turkey acknowledges the Armenian genocide before being allowed to join the EU. Other examples are the Italian claims for compensations from
Croats and Slovenes, as well as the German initiative to create The Centre Against Expulsions in Berlin.

Memories of ethnic cleansing live on and influence today’s political and social life. Since the 1990s there has been an intense debate in the countries concerned about what really happened, who the victims were and who were the perpetrators, who is to blame and who should apologize, whether and how the victims ought to be compensated, and more generally, what is to be done with this memory.\(^1\) The issue became all the more topical as European integration gained momentum at the turn of the twenty-first century, especially with the EU enlargement eastwards.\(^2\) The Central and Eastern European countries' successful efforts to gain EU membership have opened up possibilities for the expelled and their descendants to make claims for a symbolical return to their homelands, for instance by making claims on lost real estate, actively upholding the memory of their ethnic group’s presence in the region, or requesting some kind of apology or compensation for their suffering. This provokes controversies and conflicts, for example, the Czech President Klaus’ threat in 2009 to block the European Union’s Lisbon Treaty in fear of the Sudeten Germans’ restitution claims for property lost during their forced exile after 1945.

This volume takes a new approach to the subject of ethnic cleansing. It is not about its history and not about the memories of the victims, which have already been documented in a number of studies.\(^3\) It focuses instead on the present and investigates how the contemporary populations of the former homelands of the ethnically cleansed groups deal with that memory. This aspect has remained largely uninvestigated, even if a couple of scholars have broken some ground.\(^4\) The originality of the present volume also rests in its focus on a city as a place of remembrance.\(^5\) The authors of the chapters analyse how the present-day population in a number of Eastern European cities relate to the memory of the ethnic cleansings that took place there in the twentieth century and to the cultural heritage of the people that vanished in the wake of these events. The book is case-focused. Its central part consists of seven chapters dealing with case studies of memories in the following cities and towns affected by the ethnic cleansing: Lviv and Chernivtsi in Ukraine, Wrocław (Breslau) in Poland, Zadar in Croatia, Visegrad in Bosnia and Herzegovina and as well as few Czech towns – Pohořelice outside Brno, Postoloprty, Teplice nad Metují and Ústí nad Labem

\(^{1}\) For an overview and examples of these debates see Troebst 2006 and 2009.


\(^{3}\) Among the first historians writing about these questions were Joseph B Schechtm (1946; 1963) and Eugene M. Kulischer (1948). Later on, after a long silence during the Cold war, there appeared new wave of books on the matter, see for example Barkan 2000, Ahonen 2003, Clark 2006, Chinnov 2004

\(^{4}\) see for example works by Troebst 2005, 2006, Kruke 2006, Hryciuk et al 2008

\(^{5}\) Similar focus can be found in few other works such as GregorThum’s Uprooted: How Breslau became Wroclaw, Princeton University Press, 2011; Marianne Hirsch and Leo Spitzer Ghosts of Home. The Afterlife of Czernowitz in Jewish Memory, University of California Press, Berkeley 2010 or Darieva, Tsypylma, Kaschuba, Wolfgang and Krebs, Melanie (eds) Urban Spaces after Socialism. Ethnographies of Public Spaces in Eurasian Cities. Camous, Frankfurt, New York 2011. However, these books have a different time frame and scope than the present volume.
and. After the case-oriented chapters follows a concluding chapter that offers some comparisons between the cities explored in the book. The goal is to emphasize the complex dynamics of collective memory in places that have to deal with a difficult past. Yet another objective of the comparison is to discuss what the study of collective remembrance in these localities says about transformation of local and national identities in contemporary Eastern European societies.

Thus the focus of the book is not on the expellees, but on those who took their place coming from neighbourhood or afar, sometimes even the descendants of the expellers. The questions that arise in this context are: Are the actions of expulsions accounted for and how? How are the expelled being remembered, vilified, acknowledged or blamed and what happened with the material heritage (buildings, cemeteries etc) that they left behind? How has a kind of 'cultural blindness' been fostered in respect to the still existing tokens of the vanished cultural diversity (for example, in architecture, toponyms, folklore etc.)? These questions can be researched with focus on memory treatment at a number of levels: international and transnational, as well as at national, local and individual. However, in order to narrow down and deepen our focus of investigation the present volume concentrates on the local level while paying keen attention to interactions with national and transnational levels and the dynamic that is created in this process.

Thus the authors of the chapters look at how local actors in places where ethnic cleansing occurred in the 20th century relate themselves to the memory of these events and of the people that vanished in their wake. While analysing the cities and towns mentioned above all the authors tried to focus on three following objectives:

1. To identify actors at local levels that use and shape the memories about ethnic cleansings and the vanished populations.
2. To examine local discourses and strategies for dealing with the past.
3. To analyse how material traces of the former inhabitants are interpreted and transformed in the present cityscapes by the current populations.

Trying to answer these questions the authors used a variety of sources (for instance media texts, official documents, interviews) and methods (participated observation, content and narrative analysis, visual analysis etc) drawing from approaches within cultural studies, cultural sociology, ethnology, history, urban studies and political studies. The authors have their academic background in these disciplines and used their specific skills and methods to approach the research material. Thus the volume is a result of a truly multi- and interdisciplinary effort. Since it is an impossible task in one chapter to analyse all relevant representations of memory in a city the authors had to make choices selecting those that could best highlight the problems and serve as a legitimate base for more generalizing conclusions. The authors were given considerable freedom to make these choices. While the book demonstrates a variety of approaches, it is at the same time firmly anchored in the authors’ common theoretical framework and common understandings of key concepts used in the interdisciplinary field of memory studies.

Thus, all the contributors to the volume agree upon the usefulness of the notion ‘collective memory’ in the study of remembrance in a city, while at the same time they are aware that the concept is far from being uncontroversial. This notion was established by Maurice Halbwachs ([1926] 1992) and later developed by Pierre Nora (1996). Since then, it has been sometimes questioned (e.g. Paul Connerton 1992, Iwona Zarecka 1994) but also fruitfully theoretically developed. The authors of this volume share the understanding of the concept as it was defined by Barbara Misztal as ‘a group’s representation of its past, both the past that is commonly shared and the past that is collectively commemorated, that enacts and gives substance to that group’s identity, its present conditions, and its vision of the future’ (Misztal 2003, p.25). The authors want at the same time to emphasise over and over again that “collective memory” should not be seen as an essentialising or static category. It is not about a common memory shared by all members of the
group, since as it was pointed out by J.N Young “individuals cannot share another’s memory any
more than they can share another’s cortex”. (Young, 1993, p.11). Collective memory is not
reducible to what is in people’s heads. As it was highlighted by another scholar, J. Olick, collective
memory is about production of representations that make it more likely that members of a group
will remember the same events in similar (but never identical) way. Collective memory is plural,
but at the same time it has capacity to unite a social group (be it a family or a nation) and become an
effective marker of social differentiation. Following Olick’s theoretical insights the authors of this
volume want to emphasise the dynamics of collective memory, as something “...we do, not
something we have” (Olick 2008, p. 159). At the same time what “we do” is to produce powerful
representations and structures of meaning that are tenacious and sometimes impervious to the
efforts of individuals to escape them.

The authors of the present volume owe as well much to the theoretical insights of Jan Assman,
(1986) and Aleida Assman (1999), who made a useful differentiation between cultural memory and
communicative memory. Both concepts appear frequently in the volume. Cultural memory is about
transferring the memory of the past to an object and its preservation by cultural formations and
institutional patterns of communication. Communicative memory is about daily memory,
representations of the past that are expressed just orally, not leaving material traits). It has limited
time depth and it is not institutional, but still can bind together groups, families and generations.

In the volume the reader will encounter yet a number of other theoretical concepts, both those
well established in the field of memory studies and those still widely discussed. One of these, very
relevant for the studies of cities is “memory scape”. The term denotes a real or symbolic place that
is imbued with memory. The place contains traits of the past that is inscribed in its materiality (e.g.
buildings, names, inscriptions) and at the same time it communicates the contemporary actors’ view
on the past, their ideas and power. It expresses a society’s frames of remembrance. Thus memory
scape is both a “mnemotechnic model” (a reminder, something that helps us to remember) and an
instrument that can be used to form a society’s view on the past (Kapralski 2010, p-9-11). Cities and
towns under investigation in this study are perfect example of memory scapes. The urban tissue
consists of layers of the past, it as a palimpsest (see Huyssen 2003). However, if these layers will be
discovered and how they will be interpreted depends on the will of the contemporary inhabitants
and specially on those of them who have capacity to influence others. Their is the power to make a
memory scape to a “site of memory”6. In the words of Young ”Memory of a site’s past does not
emanate from within the place...Without the historical consciousness of visitors, these sites remain
(…) altogether amnesiac, they (…) “remember only what we “remember”(Young 2000, p.70).

Studies of processes of remembrance in a city also cause a need to think about the concept of
“cultural heritage”.This term is imbued with many meanings. The authors of this volume
understand “heritage” as “construct, artefact, materialised image of the past created by the process
of attributing the status of heritage in which the creators may express their ties with the past, their
identity and achieve their own goals in the present” (Ashworth 2007: p. 32-33. See also Ashworth,
Graham and Tunbridge 2007). Heritage manifests itself wherever the present tries to protect, adapt
and exploit the material and immaterial remnants of the past. Heritage is a tool to construct common
imagination. It has a processual and discursive character. For cultural goods to become heritage,
they have to be selected and given recognition as necessary in order for responsibility to be taken
for their preservation and transmission to future generations. Thus the authors of the chapters in his
book take a closer look on the actors that are involved in this process of creation of “cultural
heritage” in the cities under investigation.

Another concept that appears in the volume is “prosthetic memory” coined by Alison

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6 According to Nora (1996: XVII) who coined this termalieu de mémoire is any significant entity, whether material or
non-material in nature, which has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of a community.
Landsberg (2004). It refers to the manner in which mediated (not firsthand) original events may be considered as experienced due to their social significance and emotional load. Such memories, according to Landsberg, are similar to “prosthesis” – an artificial extension of ourselves and our world experience. Among the youngest generations in the cities under investigation in this volume, memories of the ethnic cleansing, if they exist at all, have this “prosthetic character”. They are transmitted via different kinds of media or sometimes via the stories told by the older generation. In this last instance we have to do with intergenerational transmission of memories and here yet another term is useful, namely “postmemory”. It has been defined by Marianne Hirsch (1997) as the horizon of experience created for the second generation via narratives of the dramatic or traumatic memories experienced by the first generation. The memory that marks the second generation is not personally experienced as memory since what is conveyed consists of something external. However, it may be internalised.

Memory in general is about uses of the past in the present. Seen from this perspective history is also a kind of memory work, since no historian writing the historical study is able to disconnect him/herself totally from the present while, no matter how much he tries to accomplish the academic ideal of objectivity. Many historians realize it but still most of them stubbornly resist to speak about memory and history as closely interconnected or overlapping phenomena (for discussion see for example Stråth 2009). One way to evade it is to describe the problem using other concepts. Thus, one of the authors of the present volume (historian by profession) chooses to use concepts such as “historical consciousness” and “historical culture”, developed by Rüsen (1990) and Karlsson (2005). “Historical consciousness” may be defined as a mental process by which people orient themselves in their existence by linking memories of the past with their present and their expectations of their future (Karlsson 2005). In order to understand one’s present, the past is ascribed a sense. Since historical consciousness is a cognitive process, it is difficult to study it empirically, but it is possible to study its material traces in culture, i.e. historical culture. Instead of speaking about memory Karlsson speaks about “uses of history” and identifies a number of such uses that correspond to people’s needs: scientific, moral, existential, ideological, political, pedagogical and sometimes even commercial use. This functional approach has been useful to the authors of the present volume that had it in mind while investigating different uses of the past in the cities under study. However, they supplemented this functional approach with theoretical insights concerning actors and power structures involved in memory work. In line with (Misztal 2003) and Zerubavel (1997), they see collective memory as a perpetual process of negotiation between different actors. The memory actors are influenced by power structures which the contributors to the volume try to identify. Last but not least, the authors also take into consideration the fact that the memory actors are also influenced by their emotional experiences which have an effect on how they negotiate memory. It is clear in several chapters of this book, especially those that build on interviews and participated observation. Memory has the intersubjective character (Misztal 2003, p.74-80). The latter presupposes the view of memory not only as a social construction but also a subjective mental act. While considering it the authors are at the same time careful with applying individually oriented psychological and psychoanalytical models to whole communities, let alone nations, because it is far from certain that individual experience can be translated into the collective one. This insight calls upon the need to deepen the discussion on the link between collective and individual memory. By presenting their concrete case studies the authors of the present volume aspire to stimulate such a discussion. A deeper understanding of this link is not only of scholarly value but may also be helpful for people who endeavour to elaborate reconciliation strategies in communities that deal with difficult memories. The latter point is important since it indicates the last remark that we want to make in this introduction: The humble hope of the authors is that this book besides being an interesting and informative reading can in some way contribute to more ethical approaches in discussions of how Europe should remember its difficult past.
References


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Some comparative remarks and conclusions

The cases analysed in this book have been selected on the basis of some common features. All of them deal with cities and towns that are situated in post-communist Europe and that during the twentieth century – “the century of extremes” radically changed their ethnic composition as a consequence of ethnic cleansings undertaken in connection with wars, and thus lost more or less all of their former inhabitants, or at least their majority. Moreover, all the urban communities under scrutiny in this book experienced and were influenced by two authoritarian regimes (See Snyder; Schlögel) – Nazism and Communism. Under their rule they became the arenas of violent ethnic conflicts. All these places today face the challenge of dealing with their difficult past and overcoming deeply rooted resentment. Despite all these obvious similarities, the reader that takes the pain to read through all the cases in the book may get the impression that they are very different. One reason for that is that there are obvious historical and structural differences between the cities. There differ in size, in the scale of demographic changes as well as in the extent of the material destruction they suffered in the twentieth century. While Wroclaw and Zadar were largely destroyed during the Second World War, the material damages in Chernivtsi and Lviv were limited. This applies also to the case of the examined Czech towns and Visegrad in Bosnia-Herzegovina. As to the scale of demographic changes after the ethnic cleansings, Wroclaw is the most extreme case with a nearly total population change and almost no former inhabitants left. While almost all Germans disappeared from Wroclaw and from the Czech towns, as well almost all Bosnian Muslims from Visegrad, small parts of the prewar populations remained in Lviv, Chernivtsi and Zadar, including small groups of the previously dominating populations, now reduced to the status of minorities. One could think that these differences should lead to differences in collective remembering, presuming that the urban landscape and the remnants of the previous population might serve as a reminder of the past. However, the studies presented in this book do not confirm such a common sense presumption. Quite the opposite, they show that these structural differences (scale of material and human destruction) do not play a crucial role in the construction of memory discourses and memory practices. There is no obvious linkage between the preserved urban landscape and the intensity of memory about the former inhabitants of the city. As James E. Young has pointed out, the historical, architectural sites as such lack “the will to remember”, that is (…) without a deliberate act of remembrance, buildings, streets or ruins remain little more than inert pieces of the cityscape” (Young 2000, p.70 At Memory's Edge). The material traces of the expelled groups can easily be neglected, no matter how many there are. However, when the will to remember finally appears, the urban landscape, if preserved or reconstructed, can aid the remembrance process and contribute to its strength. The same applies to the role of the minorities, consisting of the remnants of the expelled populations. The cases studied in this book show that the voices of these minorities can easily be ignored if there is no will to remember among the city’s ruling and/or opinion forming elites. The Polish minorities in Lviv and Chernivtsi or the Italian minority in Zadar are culturally marginalized and disadvantaged. They do not play any mayor part in the politics of memory in the cities. However, if empowered, they could rise to become an important local memory actor. Thus, these observations may lead to a conclusion that the cities’ history, demographic structure and material substrate matter as potential resources or constraints for the construction of local collective memory. Nevertheless, the decisive factors are the present needs and interests on the part of the inhabitants as well as their ability to act as memory actors. The historical and structural factors play a role first at the second stage, when the actors choose certain strategies for remembrance.

Another reason why the reader may at first glance perceive strong differences between the
cases studied is that the authors of the respective chapters focus on different representations of collective memory: monuments, commemoration ceremonies, memory discourses in local media, public speeches and documents. This diversity of methods and sources does not make here systematic comparison between cases possible. However, the analysed cases allow for general comparisons. Therefore, while not denying the differences between the cities, I would like to turn the attention of the reader to some common general trends in the development of the collective local memories in the cities examined.

**Liberalisation and pluralisation**

In all the cases presented in the book, the fall of Communism constituted a radical change in the local politics of memory. The public space while controlled by the state during the Communist era, became liberalized, which also meant the liberalization of discourses about the past. The field of collective memory became inhabited by a range of memory actors with their own agendas about what should remembered, how and why. The memory actors identified in the cases examined belong most often to the political, medial or intellectual elites in the cities, but sometimes (such as for example in Visegrad and the Czech towns) they also include representatives of non-governmental organisations.

The case studied show that it is the representatives of the elites that play the most visible role in the activities that aim to change the collective memories of their local societies. Moreover, an interesting observation is that sometimes a single individual may significantly influence the politics of memory in a city, providing that this person has access to power (e.g. the mayor of Usti nad Labem) or can mobilise support through access to the media or close contacts with grass root organisations. Thus initiatives, even by a single but persistent individual, can make a difference. The memory actors in the cities examined often act in an environment of quite widespread indifference on the part of the wider public. The memory actors are mostly active in scholarly, medial, aesthetic, educational and political arenas. They include politicians, officials at local cultural or administrative institutions, journalists, writers, artists, engaged public intellectuals and activists of non-governmental organisations. Their actions are most often the result of a web of motives: ideological visions, existential longings, moral convictions as well as political and often also economic interests. The balance between these driving forces is changing and difficult to establish. The collective memory is a perpetual process of negotiation among the actors and between the actors and the wider public. This process involves conflict, contest and controversy, as well as attempts to achieve consensus. Generally, the most noticeable conflict line is between those who in the local politics of memory give primacy to a national perspective, and those who focus on the local interests and are open to transnational influences. The first are not prone to see the material substrate left in the cities by the previous inhabitants in terms of a legacy that obliges them to remember. They view this kind of memory politics as undermining the national narrative about their rightful ownership of the city. Thus they try to oppose the celebration of the historic ethnic diversity of the cities, undertaken by the actors who see it as beneficial for the city.

In their systematic studies of politics of memory in post-Communist countries (2014), the researches Kubik and Bernhard discern some ideal-types of memory actors. Three of these types are relevant for the discussion of our cases: mnemonic warriors, mnemonic pluralists and mnemonic abnegators. Mnemonic warriors, according to the definition by Kubik and Bernhard (p.19), tend to draw a sharp line between themselves and other actors who in their view cultivate “false” vision of the past. They see themselves as the guardians of “the truth” that is largely non-negotiable. They struggle to make others accept their vision of the past. When they enter debates about the past, they create fractured “memory regimes” - understood as an organised way of remembering a specific
issue, (Kubik and Bernhard, p.15). It means the radicalisation and polarisation of collective memories. A clear example of a fractured memory regime in this volume is the memory regarding the violence perpetrated against Bosnian Muslims in Visegrad. However, it is important to point out that the fracture is revealed only when the Serbian inhabitants face the commemoration ceremony of the victims performed by the Bosnian Muslims coming to the city for this specific act. If not confronted, mnemonic warriors in Visegrad join in their daily life other local actors who act rather as “mnemonic abnegators”. This means that they avoid to remember the war and practice purposive forgetting. By doing so, they create within their own community a unified memory regime. It is created by three main factors. The first one is a high degree of consensus about the vision of the past according to which the Serbian population is the primary victim of the conflict in the 1990s. The second one is a refusal to discuss one’s own responsibility in the war crimes and the violence, and the third one is an awareness of the potential danger of politicizing the past. The last is a costly lesson from the Yugoslavian wars in the 1990s. Maybe it is also the reason why memory actors in Zadar in Croatia are mostly mnemonic abnegators, even in relation to much older memories such as the ethnic cleansing of Italians after the Second World War. In this respect, they create a unified memory regime based on a strategy of avoiding confrontation. The Italian legacy in Zadar, is acknowledged but very tacitly, since narratives about the past violence against Italians are marginalised. The strategy of dissociation is applied (the violence against Italians presented exclusively as the work of Communist partisans) and the focus is put on the more recent past (the wars in the 1990s) or the future. Consequently, it is possible to state that in Zadar the memory of Italians is today to a high extent outside the politics of memory. However, since this difficult, conflicting past has not been worked through there is a risk that this memory equilibrium might be challenged in the future by some memory entrepreneur.

The case dealing with the memory of the expulsion of Germans in today’s Czech Republic demonstrates the beginnings of a process of dismantling a unified memory regime. A high consensus around this memory (as justice done to the perpetrators) lies behind the position of mnemonic abnegators taken by most memory actors in the Czech Republic in relation to this past. However, Chapter 6 shows that there appear locally mnemonic actors who undermine this unified regime and introduce new narratives about Germans as victims. Thus, we can observe in the Czech context the emergence of mnemonic pluralists. According to Kubik and Bernhard (2014, p.12) pluralists accept that the others are entitled to their own visions of the past. They want to accommodate competing visions and provide a platform for dialogue among them. They privilege the kind of memory regime, defined as pillarized (Kubik and Bernhard 2014, p.12) in which competing visions of the past coexist without fighting each other.

Mnemonic pluralists as well as some mnemonic warriors are clearly visible among memory actors in Wroclaw and Lviv. In these cities it is possible to follow negotiations and struggles between these types of actors over the memory of the legacy of the expelled people. However, the balance between them is different in these two cities. In Wroclaw the mnemonic warriors who are against the commemoration of the German legacy are marginalised and have a limited access to the media and to public institutions. In Lviv on the other hand the warriors, sceptical to the celebration of the Polish past are strong, while the pluralists have to defend their positions. Thus although the memory regimes in both cities are fractured, Wroclaw is closer to becoming the pillarized kind of regime.

The situation in Chernivtsi is the most difficult one to define. The mnemonic warriors promoting the national Ukrainian agenda are visible but seemed to be rather marginalised. The field is dominated by mnemonic pluralists and mnemonic abnegators, and the balance between them is unclear. Memory actors readily acknowledge and even emphasise the great ethnic diversity that
characterised the city up to the end of the Second World War. They reinvoke constantly the Bukovinian tolerance as an idea inherited from that time. However, it is not followed by efforts to conceptualise and discuss its contemporary meaning. There is a general tendency to avoid painful and conflctual elements of the past. Consequently, the histories of the many ethnic groups in Chernivtsi are compartmentalised. This means that they are presented in museums, monuments, or the urban landscape as if they followed separate historical tracks and never overlapped and collided with each other. The past conflicts are glossed over and the multicultural past is presented just as genuine, exotic and fascinating. Thus avoidance of confrontation of the complex and difficult past is a general strategy adopted by the local memory actors.

A general picture that emerges from the chapters in this book is that the liberalisation of the memory field that followed the fall of Communism led to an awakening of the interest for the traces left by the ethnic groups that previously lived in the cities. The memory of their former presence in the city’s life is no longer suppressed and their contribution to the urban development acknowledged. However, the striking feature of dealing with this memory in today’s Zadar, Wroclaw, Lviv and Chernivtsi is how it is decontextualised, i.e. decoupled from the historical events (including national and ethnic conflicts) of which it has been an integral part. The acknowledgement of the legacy left by the previous inhabitants is largely not followed by the discussion about the circumstances in which they vanished from the cities. There is a general unwillingness to speak about the events in terms of ethnic cleansing or expulsions. The vanished population are largely not seen as victims, with the exception of Jews, whose victimhood is not denied, but not emphasised either. As for the other ethnic groups, their disappearance is almost never constructed in terms of traumatic experience or loss, neither regarding the expelled themselves or for those who took their place. Except for some artistic creations and intellectual ideas, there is a lack of a deeper reflection on the nature of these dramatic events and on what can be done with the knowledge derived from them. With very few exceptions, we cannot see any traces of mourning or recognition of any responsibility (even a moral one), not to mention feelings of guilt. Dissociation is a common strategy applied here. The morally problematic decisions are described as taken and administered by “others” (Soviet, German or Romanian Nazis etc). The suffering of the victims, if confronted at all is often marginalised and presented as deserved collective punishment (in the case of Germans and Romanians) or as a kind of historical justice done to the former economic or political oppressors (Poles, Jews, Bosnian Muslims).

While the subject of ethnic cleansings is handled by strategies of avoidance, dissociation and marginalisation, the situation is different regarding the material legacy left by the vanished population. In this respect we can speak about the gradual restoration after the fall of Communism of the legacy of the vanished groups in the urban landscapes we scrutinised. This remains in contrast to the decades following the Second World War when the people that took the place of the vanished populations did not mind expunging the spatial traces of the previous inhabitants. The sites reminding of those inhabitants were often transformed and appropriated (for example, inscriptions in foreign languages were erased, symbols of the new ruling nation added etc), neglected and sometimes even demolished. The new ethnic homogeneity shaped the urban landscape, especially in places like Wroclaw and Zadar that were considerably destroyed during the war and had to be rebuilt from the ruins. What was ruined could easily be treated as worthless rubble, cleared away and forgotten. In Chernivtsi and Lviv where the war damages to the material tissue of the cities was limited, the acts of demolition hit mostly Jewish sites situated on the areas of the former Jewish ghettos. The other sites were met with neglect or appropriated and vernacularised. Since the 1990s these attitudes have changed and the interest for preserving and restoring the sites witnessing about the cities’ multicultural past is growing. The question is, what lies behind this change?
Transnational memory travels: entanglements of the local, national, European and global

As the chapter about Wroclaw well illustrates, one important factor is generational change. People belonging to generations born in the cities after the war and the expulsions generally do not feel uneasy about the traces of the vanished populations. Very few of them associate these sites with violence or complicity and indifference on the part of their national community. Thus the younger generations may be fascinated by the former Jewish, German, Polish (etc) sites out of pure curiosity about an exotic past, of longings for an imagined colourful world of different cultures so unlike their ethnically homogenous present. Restoring these historical sites allows them also to emphasise their uniqueness, to make their cities to stand out among the grey, post-communist cities full of the decaying apartment blocks build under Socialism. By remembering and celebrating the pre-war vanished world they can reconnect to Europe and the outside world that for decades of life behind the Iron Curtain was mostly out of their reach, an object of longing.

However, this awoken local interest among the younger generations is far from sufficient to explain the changes. To understand the process it is also necessary to see how the local memory actors have been influenced by the memory actors on national, international and transnational levels. The beginning of this development can be traced back to the 1980s when the upsurging memory of the Holocaust led, among others, to the transnational interest in the Jewish sites in Eastern Europe (Meng 261, Gruber, Levy and Sznaider 2002). This increased after the fall of Communism. The opening of the borders resulted in the huge expansion of tourism and other kinds of transnational contacts. Moreover, in the 1990s, visitors came not only in search for the Jewish past but also for the German (Wroclaw, Chernivitsi), Polish (Lviv and Chernivtsi) or the Romanian (Chernivtsi) past. The previously relatively closed and isolated Eastern Europe attracted especially so-called *Heimattourism*, people coming too look for the homes and other traces of their ancestors’ life. Tourists, writers, architects, photographers and journalists from abroad pouring to the cities stimulated and strengthened the inhabitants’ interest for rediscovering the past and their will to preserve the previously neglected sites. In this way the transnational memory enabled the local one and the local memory enabled the transnational one by providing restored memory places. The growing number of visitors made the inhabitants aware of the fact that the historical legacy left in these cities by the vanished population was an asset that could be used. The primary use for the wider population of these changes was a commercial one. The legacy of the vanished populations became a commodity to sell for tourist industry and an instrument for city branding.

Nevertheless, city branding is not just about attracting tourists, but very much also about competition for investments, grants and subsidies as well as about status and recognition on the national, European and global arena (Kavaratzis, M. and Ashworth G.J. 2005: 506-514). Consequently the local elites in the cities are keenly alive to the politics of memory pursued by the organisations and institutions that can give access to this kind of resources and recognition - the European Union, the Council of Europe and UNESCO (on behalf of UN) belonging to the most powerful ones. The analysis of cultural policies and politics of memory of these organisations (see Eder 2005, Waehrens 2013, Mink 2013, Sierp 2014,) point to the fact that they have transformative goals: to play down national identities (seen as being a potential for conflicts) and to favour cosmopolitan attitudes and identification with larger entities such as Europe or the world. The UNESCO list of World Heritage sites or the EU competition for Europe’s Capital of Culture (Patel 2013) are examples of the activities with this aim. The EU programme “Europe for Citizens” (2007-2013)\(^7\) or many cultural initiatives undertaken by the Council of Europe show that these

organisations view politics of memory as a potentially democratic resource. During the last two
decades they have been very much oriented towards using remembrance as a tool in human rights
education and prevention of ethnic conflicts and genocide, (for example the Task Force for
International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research (ITF), see
Waehrens 2013). The activities, promoted and often funded by these organisations are directed to
fight nationalism, racism, xenophobia and anti-semitism. (see Sierp, p.19). There has been special
focus on promoting reconciliation and looking for models of tolerance and peaceful multicultural
co-existence. Moreover, as a part of “intensive reconciliationism” (Mink 2013) “the politics of
regret” have been encouraged, meaning a variety of practices (such as apology, reparation etc)
which contemporary societies are called upon to use in order to confront “toxic legacies of the past”
(Olick 2007, p.122)

It is important to emphasise yet another important characteristic trait of the EU memory
policy. It is targeting mainly a level that lies below the official state level - mobilizing local elites
and grass root actions by local organisations and institutions (Sierp, 2013 16). Consequently,
competing for resources and recognition, the local elites in the cities examined in this book have
been encouraged to emphasise the multicultural legacy in their localities, to show that they care
about it and to display how they work towards reconciliation. Our cases show how the local elites
conform with the European politics of memory. Chernivtsi is branded as the embodiment of
“Bukovinan tolerance,” Wroclaw as “the city of encounters”, the mayor of Usti nad Labem has
raised monuments to the city’s victims of violence in connection with the war, including the
expelled Germans. When the Polish organisations took initiatives to erect a monument to the
murdered Polish professors in Lviv and the Austrian-German organisations wanted to honour the
German victims of ethnic cleansing with a memorial plaque in Pohořelice, the local elites complied
though they knew that these actions could awake controversy sparked by nationalistic memory
warriors. However, they understood that to resist was to go against the European norms and risk
their image as “European” modern leaders. This is an example of how the EU, as an international
memory actor, can empower transnational actors such as activists in non-governmental
organisations from one country to influence memory actors on subnational level in another country.

The local memory politics interact as well with the memory politics pursued by foreign
states. Thus the Polish and the German governments have financially supported, in Lviv and in
Wroclaw respectively, various programmes aimed at improving the urban environment and the
restoration of historical sites. Struggling with poor municipal finances, the local authorities tend to
readily accept this kind of funding which is met by opposition on the part of the nationally minded memory warriors, who view it as a sacrifice of national interest and a submission to the
more powerful neighbour. In their rhetoric, the local and national interests are discursively set
against each other.

Nevertheless, the politics of memory on the national level are not without their importance,
since signals received from the state level influence the local actors. They broad or tighten the
manoeuvre space. Thus, for example, the local Wroclaw elites’ rediscovery of the German legacy in
the city and their striving for closer cooperation with Germany after 1989 gained support by the
Polish state. It was namely very much in tune with the Polish state’s interest to seek Germany’s
support for Poland’s EU and NATO membership. Wroclaw was made into a symbol of Polish-
German reconciliation. The influence of the actors on the state level is also visible in Lviv. The
Polish-Ukrainian controversy over the preservation of the Polish military cemetery (“the Eaglet
Available at: http://europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/education_culture/activecitizenship/events_en.htm (accessed 29 April 2013)
Cemetery”) in Lviv and the inscription on the commemorative monument at this place was solved first by the intervention on the presidential level of both states. The pressure brought on the local community from both the state and international actors is also evident in the case of Visegrad. Given the degree of hostility, without this pressure the locals would never have allowed the Bosnian Muslims to commemorate their victims on the bridge over Drina.

The existing links between national and local memory actors becomes perceptible in times of changes of the ruling government in a country, when the new ruling party comes to power and forms its own politics of memory. Thus, when the rightist nationalist parties were in government in Poland in the years 2005-2007, they encouraged the opponents of the local memory policy in Wroclaw to raise their voices and criticise it as serving the German interest. At this time the ministry of culture also sponsored the creation of a new institution in Wroclaw called “Memory and Future Centre” with the aim to balance the allegedly pro-German view of local history. The local memory politics in Lviv became also much more nationally oriented during the presidential rule of Juschtschenko, which was reflected in the erection of the monumental statue of Stepan Bandera in the city’s center, insulting in this way the feelings of the Poles and Jews, as members of those ethnic groups had been among the victims of Bandera’s guerrilla.

In spite of the above examples of interaction between memory actors on national and local level, the general insight after the examination of the cities is that the state level is no longer decisive in the forming of the local politics of memory. The centralistic rule ended with the fall of Communism, and the local memory actors have a much larger room for manoeuvre. It is the local political constellation in the city’s local government that play a much more important role. The local leadership seeks legitimacy on the local level (in order to be re-elected) and on the national, international and transnational level (in order to compete for resources). In the age of global economy and European integration, the international and transnational level becomes more important than the national one. This is evident in the cities examined. The politics of memory in these cities are very much influenced by transnational flows: tourism and other commercial interests, but also international and transnational stakeholders which cooperate with civil society organisations and other groups of influence in the localities. The question is to what extent the new, transnationally influenced politics of memory that celebrate the multiethnic past contribute to the transformation of the local communities, their identities and attitudes to the “others”. Do they promote new forms of identification, tolerance, better understanding of human rights and reconciliation between former antagonists, as it is hoped for by a number of transnational or international memory actors?

Ambivalence and reconciliation

As pointed out above, the memory of the vanished cultural and ethnic diversity in the most cities examined is widely used today in the city branding that means adjustment and conformity with what is internationally recognized as valuable and attractive. Since Europe (meaning European institutions and the leading elites of EU Member States) celebrates democracy, cultural diversity, pluralism and tolerance the local elites try to conform. They try to display these European values by the commemoration of the lost diversity and the restoration of its remnants. In some cases, Chernivitsi being the best example, they also mythologise the past as a harmonious period of ethnic tolerance and use it as an optimistic scenario for the future. The term “multiculturalism” is widely used in public discourses, but mostly conveying the idea of essentialising the approach to ethnic diversity and seldom the transformative, ideological vision of societal order. How much is it really about a ritualistic, political and commercial performance and how much about internalization of the values celebrated through the commemoration of the past diversity?
The cases analysed disclose a profound tension in the collective memory of the societies studied. The tension is between the acknowledgement of the previous populations’ contribution to the development of the cities on the one hand, and on the other, a lack of compassion for their plight and a denial of any responsibility for what happened to them. The attitudes to the “others”, who dominated in the city’s in the past are marked by hostility in case of Visegrad and ambivalence in all other cases. Behind the ambivalence there are historically and culturally solidified stereotypes of the vanished nationalities as “eternal” enemies and oppressors who should be looked upon with distrust. The nations to which they belonged are still often seen as determined to dominate and control (e.x. Germans over Poles, Poles over Ukrainians, Italians over Croatians). Considering these attitudes and having in mind that we have to do here with post-conflict societies (after war and ethnic cleansings) we have to ask the question about the status of the reconciliation processes in the cases examined.

Reconciliation is a very complex phenomenon, that has been analyzed by researchers within many disciplines such as social scientists, historians, philosophers, theologians etc. Since the concept has been used with many meanings it is necessary to explain what is understood here by this term. I define “reconciliation” as a long term process of building peaceful relations between former enemies, that goes beyond conflict resolution. It transforms the nature of relationship between the parties by changing attitudes and creating trust and empathy. A quick look at the cases examined here suggests that the reconciliation processes in the societies described are not very much advanced. In the Visegrad case it is difficult to speak about reconciliation at all, since the process has not moved beyond conflict resolution. There is still a profound enmity between the parties. It is not an exaggeration to state that the memory of ethnic cleansing in Visegrad still is an open wound. The time that has passed since the Dayton peace treaty in 1995 is too short to allow any distance to what happened. Memories of violence are still a part of communicative memory in families and societies that experienced them. The memory actors that influence commemorative practices in Visegrad have firsthand experience of these violent events and many of them are traumatised by them. The generational turnover among the memory actors has not taken place. In this respect the case of Visegrad is very much different from the other cases analysed here.

In Wroclaw, Lviv, Chernivtsi, Zadar and the Czech towns examined here the reconciliation processes have moved much further forward, and attitudes have changed. The hostility towards the former national enemies has practically disappeared, and their material legacy in the cities is much more respected and paid attention to. Judging from the intensity of cooperation between the nations the level of trust is increasing although it still leaves a lot to be desired, especially in relations between Poles and Ukrainians. But even in the Polish-German relations that are often presented as an example of successful reconciliation, the distrustful attitudes are from time to time clearly expressed. While the trust building is not yet a fully accomplished process, the most striking element is a lack of the recognition of the sufferings on the part of the others and a lack of empathy, not to mention the mourning of the population that had been forced to leave their homes in the cities. The victims of ethnic cleansings are not primarily seen as human beings exposed to violence and hence deserving empathy, but as representatives of the more or less guilty nations that deserved their fate in one way or another. Thus what is still required to accomplish the process of reconciliation is to stimulate in these societies a deeper reflection about the nature of what happened, a reflection that goes beyond simple national divisions and involves a critical reformulation of ones own national identity to one more inclusive and not centered around the idea of its own victimhood. What would be desirable here on the part of the inhabitants in the cities is a

For a very good overview of research on this concept see Feldman 2012, p.1-17.
dose of magnanimity and cosmopolitan thinking. The last means to be able to move focus from one’s own ethnic or national community and instead consider primarily the need to show respect to all human lives and possibility of feeling compassion with all human suffering. This would maybe open for empathy with the victims of ethnic cleansings, no matter their national belonging.

There are not many signs of this kind of thinking in the cases examined. However, it is important to point out that they do exist. In Lviv for example, this line of thought can be identified from time to time in essays and articles published in the independent magazine for cultural studies Ji which gathers a number of Ukrainian intellectuals. In Wroclaw, the best example of cosmopolitan thinking and ideas of reconciliation is the artistic installation “The Bundle”. Moreover, some evidences of empathy with German victims of expulsions are discernible in statements and writings by some representatives of Wroclaw’s elites. The traces of a new kind of thinking are also discernible in the Czech Republic. Here the best example of a deeper reflection and empathy is the monument in Teplice nad Metuji called “Cross of Reconciliation” commemorating the German civilians killed during the expulsions. Though even a more impressive evidence of a cosmopolitan attitude is to be found in the case where it is the least expected, in a city where the process of reconciliation is just embryonic – in Visegrad in Bosnia Herzegovina. What I have in mind here is the civil organization of Women in Black, mentioned in the chapter about Visegrad. Serbian members of that organization are ostracized by their co-nationals, since they mourn and show empathy with the victims of the former enemy. This is a very interesting example of how individuals are able to transgress the collective patterns in force of remembering in their communities and have the courage to challenge even most unified memory regimes. These efforts may be just a drop in the ocean of forgetting and indifference, but in the longer term they may be the first step towards more profound changes in the social memory.

The cases examined in this book demonstrate that uses of memories of the vanished population are not wholly confined to the process of comodification and political instrumentalisation. They also show the potential to become a resource for transformation of the existing national identities. The consideration given to the material legacy left by the former inhabitants have already in some cases provoked discussions about the relations between today’s core nations in the cities (ex Poles in Wroclaw, Ukrainians in Lviv) and the nations that vanished from them (Germans, Poles). It has lead to questions such as what it means today to be Pole or Ukrainian or Czech, or what kind of obligations do we have to those who do not belong to “our nation”. Should we care about the legacy of the others and who are the others? Is it not all about our common European legacy that we should value and protect in our localites? These emerging discussions should be seen as an important step in problematising belonging, even if the majority of voices raised in them represents still rather excluding, ethnic views of national identity.

As the cases described in this book show, considerable changes have already occurred since the 1990s under influence of liberalization, globalization and Europeanisation. A new kind of thinking is emerging in the local societies examined, even if it has not yet lead to any wider transformations of the existing national identities. The rediscovery of the legacy of the multiethnic past, even sometimes mythologized, seems to constitute a resource that can be used to transform social imagination. For that it should, however, be historically contextualised and not decoupled from the history of the ethnic cleansings and war. These two stories have to be told together and reflected upon. More intellectual, educational and maybe even political work is needed to make it

For reflections on the understanding of the concept of cosmopolitanism see Kwame Anthony Appiah, Butler

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happen.

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Kubik and Bernard
Kwame Anthony Appiah


Olick
Meng
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