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Memory Studies in Eastern Europe: Key Issues and Future Perspectives

Abstract: The paper addresses selected issues of the recent growth in Eastern European memory studies: It identifies the unconscious Western imperialism within the recently institutionalized interdisciplinary field of memory studies; Then, it offers arguments for historical sociology in memory studies, and proceeds to critically analyze the recent growth of transnational historical inquiries into European memory and the place within these studies of the research on Eastern Europe. Finally, it raises the theoretical issue of a region as one possible framework of memory and a terrain for legitimate sociological inquiry fuelled by historical data. As such, it serves as an introduction to the current PSR volume on theoretical traditions and propositions for Eastern European memory studies.

Keywords: memory studies, Eastern Europe, regional studies, historical sociology.

Introduction

Much has been written and said about memory in recent decades. Developing vigorously, studies on memory are keeping apace also in Eastern Europe. The abundance of research, not its deficiency, has indeed become a conceptual problem. In that light, the purpose of this issue of the *Polish Sociological Review* is twofold: The first purpose is to reflect on the methodology and the state of memory research in Eastern Europe with its different genealogies and trajectories from Western counterparts. The other objective is to search for “usable” research traditions applicable to studying regional memories, so as to do justice both to developments in present historical research, while also exploring sociological explanations.

In this introductory article, the authors sketch the necessary background for the volume by identifying the need for sociology and unconscious Western imperialism within the recently institutionalized interdisciplinary field of memory studies; providing arguments for historical sociology in memory studies; critically analyzing the recent growth of transnational inquiries into European memory and the place within these studies of the research on Eastern Europe; and finally, raising the theoretical issue of a region as one possible framework of memory and a terrain for legitimate sociological inquiry fuelled by historical data.

Several disclaimers are necessary before developing these aims in full. Above all, the East European region requires specification from the perspective of history and memory. Mnemonical regions can be defined in various ways (see the concept of “multiple geographies” by Michael G. Müller’s 2010). Here we use the political category of Eastern Europe to refer to the half of the continent that in the twentieth century experienced double totalitarianism, wars, and decades of communism (or real socialism) and Soviet dependency. Without the intention of bringing up the Cold War as the only defining historical experience, the Iron Curtain dividing European societies in the second half of the twentieth century still represents a valid reference point when discussing European memories in the ensuing two and half decades. (This is not to say that the region’s dealing with its pasts is homogenous; to the contrary, the different trajectories of histories and memories prompt conceptualizing it as consisting of several “meso-regions”—see Troebst 2010a, 2010b.) Among the East European historical experience with which post-Cold-War memories have struggled, these stand out: the direct adjacency with mass scale violence in the preceding century; the encounter of Nazism and Communism from victim and perpetrator perspectives; the region’s ethnic, linguistic, cultural and religious heterogeneity; the experience of semi-peripherality; and finally, the ruptured institutional continuity and dramatic and mass scale changes to geopolitical and social structures. We will look closer at some of the mnemonic consequences of these processes in the literature review on the following pages.

However, even when pointing out certain historical specificities of Eastern Europe, the authors neither intend to claim the region’s exceptionality nor to tailor an approach suitable only for this region. Instead, they hope that some consideration below might serve as a point of departure for regional memory research elsewhere, especially in those regions with long term experience with mass violence, fragmentations and diversity, such as Latin America, South Africa, the Middle East or East Asia. Finally, the review part of this article does not aim to exhaust all literature ever written on the topic of “memory” in the region. Instead, it relies on those major studies which have taken up the challenge of a comparative or transnational look at Eastern Europe. Although this review is framed for sociologists, it adopts a broader multidisciplinary perspective by attempting to place sociology within the vast field of current memory studies.

Memory Studies

“Memory studies” as a term has been a relatively recent addition to the humanities and social sciences as an area of inquiry in its own right. It was institutionalized in the English speaking world above all by an international journal under that very title (launched in 2008), by a number of readers (e.g. Olick et al 2011; Radstone and Schwarz 2010; Erll and Nünning 2010), by a book series, i.e., Palgrave Macmillan Memory Studies, as well as by networks, collaborative projects, centres and study programs (for a by no means exhaustive list of websites, see references). The often quoted characteristics as a “nonparadigmatic, transdisciplinary, centerless enterprise”

originate from a founding article by Olick and Robbins (1998: 106). However, it seems today that “memory studies” has functioned more as an umbrella term for disparate methods and means of inquiry, so far unable to formulate new groundbreaking trans-disciplinary theories, even though it is an arena of fruitful methodological encounters of a smaller scale (Brown et al. 2009). As Roediger and Wertsch (2008: 9) have put it, “memory studies is currently a multidisciplinary field; our hope for the future is that it will become interdisciplinary.” The understandings of the very concept of memory depend on traditions developed in given disciplines; these range from numerous definitions of memory in psychology, such as episodic, flashbulb, or semantic memory, to metaphorical uses of various memory–forgetting related terms including repression, trauma, or amnesia in literary studies.

Globally, the field is built on several traditions originating in nineteenth to twentieth century Western Europe and the US. History, literature, philosophy, psychology and education constitute its core disciplines (Roediger and Wertsch 2008: 14). Noteworthy in this regard is the surprisingly relative weakness of sociology not only as a discipline in a rigid sense, but also as an approach, despite its own long path of studying collective memory and commemoration (Conway 2010). According to our scrutiny, only 17 out of 191 authors who published in *Memory Studies* between 2008–2013 were affiliated with sociological departments. Most of them were psychologists (40), culture scholars (34), historians (30), and media and communication scholars (23), and these disciplines provided the perspectives of their papers.¹ The classical sociological questions such as, for instance, class related memories were virtually absent; other topics, such as transmission of memory within families, were discussed by authors with backgrounds other than sociology.

Although most researchers active in memory studies acknowledge Maurice Halbwachs as one of the founding fathers of the field, and many of them refer to his concepts of “collective memory” and “social frames of memory,” these citations are often more “totemic than substantive or engaged” (Olick 2008: 26). The French sociologist, Sarah Gensburger (2011: 413f) in her detailed scrutiny of the most frequently cited Anglo-Saxon publications shows that a respectful reading of Halbwachs is very rare. Reconceptualizations of his work (e.g. Hutton 1993; Olick 1999; Middleton and Brown 2011) occur, but do not seem to be widely acknowledged, or more importantly, followed. This holds similarly for recent French and to some extent German exegeses of his work (e.g. Becker 2003, Namer 2000, Egger 2002, Wetzell 2009). Authors who are in one way or another close to the sociological reflections on “collective memory” are mainly historians and cultural scholars. Therefore, it seems that in order to keep pace with memory studies sociology must still work on key concepts and in one way or another activate the discipline in the field. We argue later in the next section that this can be done by working on historical sociology.

¹ Other included: anthropology (18), political science, international politics & public policy (13), performance (8), philosophy (8). We have used the formal institutional affiliation as the main category of ordering MS’ authors. In the cases where this was unavailable we concentrated on the focus of the published or undergoing work. Even if these results are schematic and do not give justice to similarities between sociology, and for instance certain branches of social psychology and social anthropology, as well as to true interdisciplinarity, they show important trends in contemporary memory studies.

Another characteristic of current memory studies is that they have been largely shaped by a Western perspective. Put simply—in the domains of social psychology, sociology, history and cultural studies—this international English-language scholarship has referred to three main roots: (i) the French, with Maurice Halbwachs as the protagonist of the memory studies field as such, and Pierre Nora's concept of *lieux de memoire* as an innovative push in the 1970s and the 1980s towards its development; (ii) the German, with Aby Warburg and Hermann Ebbinghaus as important founders respectively in cultural studies and psychology, then Jan Assmann and Aleida Assmann (cultural theory), and Harald Welzer (social psychology) as the leading contemporaries; (iii) the Anglo-American writings: among the classics one finds the psychology of Frederic Bartlett on one hand and the sociology of George H. Mead, Charles H. Cooley, or W. Lloyd Warner on the other. Meanwhile, among contemporaries there is a wide range of concepts, such as Jay Winter's sites of memory, Marianne Hirsch's post-memory, Daniel Levy and Nathan Sznajder's cosmopolitan memory, plus others, as enumerated by Conway (2010).

In the respective languages there are of course more detailed and nuanced descriptions of the field(s). Those attempting to construct canons of knowledge in order to organize memory studies are well aware of the exclusions and inclusions imbedded in them. For instance, Jeffrey K. Olick explicitly states that he works within the scope of his linguistic competence and that he opens the field of inquiry rather than attempting to close it (2008: 27). Nonetheless, in numerous texts, there is a recurring statement that the memory boom in academia started when Halbwachs was “rediscovered” by Mary Douglas and presented to the English speaking world (Halbwachs 1980), while the background condition for the memory boom was the accumulation of changes within the leading concepts of humanities (the linguistic turn), and the generational and political turns with a new sensitivity towards the Holocaust, along with the post-colonial and post-dictatorial developments, as well as minority issues.

On the one hand, one can argue that “memory studies” is just a label which covers a variety of very different kinds of research and fields of interest. If some intellectual organization is proposed among them, this already assists students and others who then need not reinvent the wheel. On the other hand, however, some authors who refer to this literature treat these “canons” not as a tentative construction, but as confirmed knowledge on theoretical issues, as well as on historical and social developments related to memory research. Along with the globalization of humanities and social sciences these constructions tend to eclipse “non-Western” modes of studying memory, traditions, or historical consciousness. For instance, a Chinese author, in the introduction to the recent issue of the *Journal of Historical Sociology* refers to “regional disproportion of research: many regions especially the emerging economies lag behind their Western counterparts in social memory studies” (Junhua Zhang, 2012: 177). One is tempted to add that they lag behind in social memory studies performed in the Western manner, at least with regard to the particular case of Eastern Europe, which is of particular concern in the present volume.

Indeed, in the international field of memory studies, contributions by scholars from the region have until recently been mostly lacking. Does this imply that memory

issues have not been studied by Eastern European scholars? Quite the contrary, as is evident from bookshelves, special issues of journals and numerous conferences in these countries. The selected national cases have been recently examined by several researchers—see Olšáková (2012) on the Czech Republic, Kurhajcová (2012) on Slovakia, Laczó and Zombory (2012) on Hungary, Hackmann (2008, 2009) on the Baltic States, Filipkowski (2012), Kończal and Wawrzyniak (2011), as well as Traba (2011) on Poland. Such detailed overviews show that a respectable amount of work is being done in various disciplines: from laboratory psychology, micro-history, anthropology, political history, to the sociology of collective memory. Moreover, these efforts often share characteristics with their “western” memory studies counterparts. Yet this literature has remained largely unnoticed at the forefront of international memory studies.

The reason for the broader neglect of such regionally pursued Eastern European research seems apparent: local authors are not often cited internationally due to communication barriers: books and articles written in “minor” languages are hardly recognized beyond national borders; in addition they might fall victim to the Matthew’s effect (Merton 1968, 1988). Conversely, however, such locally produced scholarship has not always paid much attention to the counterpart literature in English, German and French, and only in rare instances to other authors from the region. Therefore, Laczó and Zombory (2012: 106) speak of the “notorious time lag between international and local references” and Kończal and Wawrzyniak (2011: 11–40) of the lack of mutual recognition and selectivity. However, on the basis of the above reviews of local literatures and traditions, it may be further argued that lack of “native” voice in the international debates on memory might not only be due to language or status problems, but also to a more complex evolution of different academic narratives with different path dependencies.

To illustrate the phenomenon, we may examine what may be the liveliest inter-generational “local” school of thought on tradition/historical, consciousness/collective memory in Eastern Europe, which is described in detail by Tarkowska and Kiliás in this volume. The intellectual path of this research tradition comes from the interwar period. It was then that Stefan Czarnowski (1879–1937), a second generation Durkheimian, and a student and collaborator of Marcel Mauss (1872–1950) and Henri Hubert (1872–1927), proceeded to establish his chair of culture and sociology at the University of Warsaw. He passed his interest of how the past works in the present on to his students; above all to Nina Assorodobraj-Kula (1908–1999), who in the late 1930s studied in Paris, inter alia under supervision of Maurice Halbwachs (1877–1945). In the 1960s, she published two theoretical articles on “historical consciousness” (1963; 1967) and was the founding figure of the idea of representative social surveys on the historical consciousness of various strata in Polish society. These surveys have been repeatedly conducted to the present by a second and third generation of scholars. They comprise an important source of knowledge on the representations of the past in Poland and have indeed also become a trademark of sociological research on memory in Poland (e.g., Kwiatkowski *et al.* 2010), although some practitioners within this lineage have been involved in researching different types of empirical data, as well as

in pursuing other theoretical interests (e.g. Szacki 1971; Szacka 1988, 2006; Szpociński 1989). Vocabularies have changed over time. In the 1980s and 1990s the previously used terms “historical consciousness” and “tradition” have been replaced with “social memory” and “collective memory.”

Two characteristics of this intellectual path are essential in the context of this issue. First, it shows that the claim integral to many works written from a “Western” perspective that the *memory boom* started in the 1970s and 1980s might have its local limitations. It does not hold in the Polish case, where extensive research took place at least a decade earlier; and in fact had long prewar roots. A second point has to do with the “nation” and “national culture” which have been the main analytical categories of this path until the present. That was feasible given the relative freedom of Polish humanities in comparison to other post-Soviet countries. Although in the case of Polish sociology this national imprint originated with Nina Assorodobraj’s broader comparative interest toward the role of historical consciousness in the nation building processes in Eastern Europe, Western Europe and Western Africa (including post-war Poland as an interesting case of a nation-state whose borders, population structure and governing ideology significantly changed after WWII), the comparative dimension was later lost in the course of repetitive surveys. Moreover, although authors working within this tradition have tried to account for various memory frameworks (e.g. regional, local, family), the question of “nation” always remained central. This is visible in the way the questions were asked and how the results have been presented (e.g. Kwiatkowski et al. 2010, Szacka 1983). This latter point leads to our hypothesis that the methods and focus of this school, which were its strengths during the communist period, have become a burden in the post-1989 environment. Still entrapped in national categories, the school was not particularly able to account for the transnational processes and comparisons which were put in the forefront of several branches of today’s memory studies.

The nationalization of the perspective on collective memory is obviously not only a Polish (sociology) specialty. In all Eastern European countries the fall of the Iron Curtain led to a re-nationalization of research agendas, particularly in history, which was in a way understandable after the period of Sovietization in the humanities. At the same time, however, some “Western” approaches formed a new stimulus for memory research for new generations of Eastern European scholars, who have actually become inspired by the international and interdisciplinary literature of the *memory boom*, as some references of their works show. Nonetheless, they usually have to orient toward “local” and “national” constellations of academic knowledge to make their argument communicative in this context. What is more, their studies have been scattered to such an extent that today a practitioner of memory studies in Eastern Europe is confronted with a non-transparent collage of approaches and perspectives. As a result, important work done by psychologists, cultural anthropologists, historians and sociologists from the region is often lost and invisible in the international field of memory studies. This volume attempts to take a step forward in bringing local Eastern European research into the memory of international memory studies.

A Plea for Historical Sociology

The other idea behind this volume comprises our plea for memory research in Eastern Europe that exhibits both sociological and historical sensitivity. We wish to emphasize the seemingly obvious, that historical experiences shape particular ensuing memory processes. Maurice Halbwachs discovered that the present determines the past. But the process is dialectic—and today, paradoxically, it seems worthwhile to remind ourselves that memories respond to historical processes, and that what happened in the past does matter for how it is remembered in the present. Moreover, memory processes are also dependent in path and in shape with reference to their earlier forms. Thus, the authors of this volume uphold a creative consensus derived from the two combined perspectives, i.e., historical research along with sociological and cultural research on the changing mnemonic practices. Besides proposing an integrative framework, this perspective directs us towards the historical contextualization of memory practices, and to the resulting contextualization of sociological and cultural theories describing them.

Importantly, it is the very perspective of historical sociology that, thanks to its processual approach, allows for the retention of meaning and some coherence of the term of “memory” when used in various contexts. Jeffrey Olick, inspired by Norbert Elias, Mikhail Bakhtin and Pierre Bourdieu, argued several times for this perspective, as not only the one which can help to avoid transcendentalism, but also the one which can be a remedy for the most serious epistemological challenge of memory studies, which is the discrepancy between those who study “individual” and “collective” memories (Olick 1999; Olick 2007: 9–11). In other words, between two different understandings of culture: the individualistic “collected memory,” as a category of meanings contained in human minds, versus the holistic “collective memory,” understood as patterns of publicly available symbols objectified in society (Olick 1999: 336). In the first approach, scholars work on individual or aggregated (individual) memories of group members (Ibid.: 338). The main danger of this approach is stepping into anecdotic knowledge (qualitative studies) or artefacts (quantitative studies). In the second approach, they study systems of mnemonic symbols that have a certain degree of autonomy from the subjective perceptions of individuals (Ibid.: 341). The main limitations of this approach are (i) an oversocialized view of memory that “tends to sidestep the question of whether collective images of the past map onto individual reminiscences and vice versa;” and (ii) a tendency to “underestimate the extent to which collective memory can be a container for a diversity of colliding and fragmented meanings of the past” (Conway 2010: 444).

Using the specific example of trauma, Olick proposed to bring the “two cultures” of memory studies together. Although psychological traumas “cannot be passed down through generations like bad genes” (1999: 345), he argued that some of the trauma is externalized and objectified as narratives at a family level (see e.g. Hirsch 2008) and also at wider societal levels. The schema presented by Olick by this example can be also treated as an illustration of more general patterns of the processes of externalization–objectification–internalization of knowledge as described by Berger and

Luckmann (1966)². The extension of Berger and Luckmann's perspective for the sole purpose of "memory studies" has actually been recently proposed by Mathias Berek, who also made some analytical distinctions between the general stock of knowledge (*Wissensvorrat*), which in a broad sense must be somehow "remembered," and memory in a narrower sense (*Gedächtnis*) as consisting only of that part of knowledge that relates to events in the past. In addition, Berek evokes the German word *Erinnern* (remembrance), in the sense of the process of recollection of these events (Berek 2009: 56–87). To be sure, there are also other ways of conceptualizing links between "individual" and "collective" memory from mainly psychological perspectives (Boyer and Wertsch 2009).

We have pointed to Olick's argumentation inspired by Elias, Bourdieu, Bachtin, and to the extensions of Berger and Luckmann's constructivist line of thought, because these are perspectives which can do justice to both the history and sociology of memory, which are the main concerns of this article. These theoretical traditions are plausible because they are processual in their very character and help to put agencies, practices and the institutionalization of memories in the forefront of the research agenda without denying that these are individuals who do the actual remembering. Ironically, agencies, practices and institutionalization in the Eastern European context are studied more often by historians than by sociologists, although rather without evoking sociological terminology and concerns; by a virtue of their disciplinary training, historians are "naturally" oriented toward making sense of the time passage necessary to grasp the consequences of the externalization of individual memories. Moreover, they do archival work, which is essential for understanding how institutionalization works in practice.

Therefore, by calling for historical sociology we pay attention to the obvious, i.e., that memory is a process and not a thing (Olick and Robbins 1998: 133–134). At the same time, however, we do not want to claim the impossible: that memory scholars should all from now on study long term processes of institutionalization (and forgetting) instead of what they want to do. Rather we modestly point to the necessity of conceptualizing what stage(s) of a process of remembering are covered by a given study, and how this study relates to other stages (and other studies) of a given process. This would help to yield more tangible, applicable results from the currently overgrown field of Eastern European memory studies.

In the following, we want to indicate possible directions of new research on memories in Eastern Europe. For this, the recent processes of Europeanization of memory

² This is indeed a useful scheme for relating "micro" and "macro" memories of various kinds, beyond trauma, as explicated by a noteworthy passage on sedimentation from the *Social Construction of Reality*: "Only a small part of the totality of human experiences is retained in consciousness. The experiences that are so retained become sedimented, that is, they congeal in recollection as recognizable and memorable entities. Unless such sedimentation took place the individual could not make sense of his biography. Intersubjective sedimentation also takes place when several individuals share a common biography. Intersubjective sedimentation can only be called truly social when it has been objectivated in a sign system of one kind or another, that is, when the possibility of reiterated objectification of the shared experiences arises. Only then is it likely that these experiences will be transmitted from one generation to the next, and from one collectivity to another" (Berger and Luckmann 1966: 63–64).

and the debate on the project of a shared European memory, developing in both the public realm and academia, constitutes a vital point of reference.

Constructing European Memories

Attempts at writing trans-national European history and questions about the form and content of a shared European memory have been explicitly formulated and critically discussed in recent English-language publications by Jan-Werner Müller (2002), Konrad H. Jarausch and Thomas Lindenberger (2007), Wulf Kansteiner et al. (2006), or Małgorzata Pakier and Bo Stråth (2012[2010]). Also, examples of German publications, by Aleida Assmann (2006, 2012) and Claus Leggewie (2011), as well as by French authors, Georges Mink and Laure Neumayer (2007) or Sarah Gensburger and Marie-Claire Lavabre (2012) should be mentioned in this context. In these works, the authors search for long term and trans-national patterns in dealing with the past in postwar Europe, indicating possibilities and challenges to a collective European historical narrative of the twentieth century.

Generally speaking, discussions around European memory develop simultaneously within two fields. There are those within the social and cultural studies on memory and there are the efforts of historians aimed at re-writing European pasts in a new transnational fashion. The incentive for the latter has especially been the experience of mass violence in the twentieth century. Thus, historian Philipp Ther (2001, 2011) proposes supranational and regional frameworks to research the forced migrations. It is worth mentioning here that the author willingly uses comparisons to analogous phenomena from beyond the European context. Another historian, Timothy Snyder (2010), has constructed his own category of “bloodlands” located in the east of Europe, in order to transgress the borders of traditional national historiographies when describing the phenomena of mass violence in the first half of the twentieth century. And in their recently edited book, Omer Bartov and Eric D. Weitz (2013), reach further back in time, searching for the roots of the violent twentieth century Europe in the imperial processes of the nineteenth century, characteristic of the continent. Next to these efforts, those that attempt to re-write national master narratives into a “European” history catch attention as well. Such endeavors, justified by current memory politics but still transparent and comprehensive, can be met for example in German historical writing (e.g. Frevert 2005).

The proposals of memory researchers from other disciplines, such as social, cultural and political science, often formulate their “European” project even more explicitly. Authors such as Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider (2006), Gesine Schwan (2007), Aleida Assmann (2002, 2012), or Claus Leggewie (2010) typically play double roles—as scholars of memory in their academic works, and as memory agents in their non-academic statements for the media, balancing between postulative-normative and analytical-descriptive tone and language. Common for their concepts of a shared European memory is the understanding of the importance of critical confrontations with shameful moments in the national past and a plea for a dialogue between formerly

opposing parts—conflicted nations, victims and perpetrators—towards an empathic acknowledgement of the other’s suffering, and of complex historical roles and various gray zones. It is easy to track the source for in this way conceptualized European memory in the historical process of coming to terms with World War II and the Holocaust, started by the West German reckonings with the Third Reich since the late 1960s. Some scholars assess these constructions skeptically, calling the new “European” memory in fact a product of the re-united German memory politics developing since the 1990s (Müller 2012).

Many examples of European commemorations on the official level, as well as a simple look at the cultural memory landscapes (museums and monuments) in Europe, show how the Holocaust has become the canon of European history and memory. Natan Sznajder and Daniel Levy (2006) describe a process in which the Holocaust has been transformed into a universal symbol of good and evil, helping to create a moral community of remembrance, that in a common effort of “Never again!” transgresses any national boundaries. In a similar vein, Tony Judt (2005) observed for Europe that Holocaust memory, institutionalized through museums and official memorial days, has become a culmination of the postwar period. Reflecting on the ongoing discussion about Europe and its memory, Charles S. Maier (2002) commented that the Holocaust and Nazism have constituted the “hot memory,” while the experience of the Soviet atrocities and communism do not arouse similar emotions on the international arena, remaining as Europe’s “cold memory.” In this context, Timothy Snyder’s concept of the “bloodlands” should be mentioned again, as it disrupts a vision of the past in which the Holocaust stands as the isolated historical event, and re-introduces the non-Jewish European victims of Hitler’s and Stalin’s genocidal policies into the debate on the European past.

Discussions on European memory are often led by normative assumptions of European post-war history as a narrative of progress. In this narrative, the Western processes of self-critical confrontation with the dark past, underway since the late 1960s, are seen as establishing direction for post-communist Eastern Europe, a model which then simplistically views that region as governed by reviving nationalist sentiments or uncritical patriotic narratives. Thinking about a shared memory from a European perspective provokes generalizations and often simply replaces the old grand narratives with new ones, as shown above. Those memories that do not fit into the self-critical and Holocaust-centered memory paradigm may be easily, and often are, marginalized as examples of “victimhood rivalry,” with neo-nationalist connotations. These labels, even if they at times do justice to the facts, do not bring us any closer toward understanding—in the very meaning of the Weberian *Verstehen*—the social and mental processes of making sense of the past in Eastern Europe.

Searching for Eastern European Memories

The enlargement of the European Union to include countries of the former eastern bloc made it apparent that so far the constructions of European memory and

identity reflected mainly the experience of the western countries. This impression was augmented by certain discrepancies that emerged in official commemorations and public discussions about European history. Against the conceptual backdrop of a shared European memory, which developed in the last few years, dissonant voices emphasized the incompatible character of the region's historical experience, which would not easily fit into a pan-European memory conceptualized from the western perspective. A new memory as a cultural and political project was not more urgent from the perspective of Eastern European societies as a coming to terms with a surfeit of memories which had not hitherto had a chance to be publicly articulated and acknowledged. The multiplicity of memories, often mutually conflicted, is what, according to Jerzy Jedlicki (1999) determines the specific character of Eastern Europe. It is, he states, historical memory that fuels animosities and conflicts in the present. It comprises the sanctification of certain historical events in the form of powerful symbols and myths, and the memory of collective wrongs and losses suffered in the past from other nations, together with an awareness of wrongdoings inflicted on the others. But instead of repeating Santayana's adage that those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it, Jedlicki agrees along with Claus Offe, that he "who remembers history is condemned to repeat it" (Ibid: 225–6). Another Polish scholar, Robert Traba, states to the contrary that fueling present conflicts is not excessive remembering but rather an institutionalized forgetting of the preceding communist era (Schwann et al. 2007). Despite these opposing views, both Jedlicki and Traba agree that memories of the twentieth century are still hot in Eastern Europe, to borrow Charles Maier's phrasing, and it is premature to expect them to cool off in the mould of a common European memory.

Thus it appears that Eastern European memories are willingly imagined by their construers, both researchers and practitioners of memory, as a "special" case, slipping easily into the role of an *enfant terrible* of European memory. It is fitting here to cite Sandra Kalniete, the former Foreign Minister of Latvia, who in 2004 found it necessary to admonish western public opinion that "the two totalitarian regimes—Nazism and Communism—were equally criminal" (Kalniete 2004). This statement aroused much controversy, especially in Germany, recalling the Historikerstreit from over two decades earlier, yet casting the forbidden comparison in a new light, with new memory actors behind it. Consequently, it led to rough formulation of differences in public memories between the West and the East such as Gulag contra Shoah (Droit 2007), or even volume titles such as, *Clashes in European Memory: The Case of Communist Repression and the Holocaust* (Blaive et al. 2011). Thus, the memory of Eastern Europe lashes out in polemics towards pan-European memory projects. In this process, Western Europe becomes an important incentive for identity building in the Eastern Europe; the perceived cohesive and conflictless West invites constructions of East European, self-indulging as they are, myths of uniqueness, based on convictions of a special kind of historical experience that is incomparable and of a fundamentally different character than that of the West.

It is useful in this regard to separate the actors and researchers of memory and to examine what historical events and phenomena of memory of this part of Europe have

drawn scholars' attention in the last few years. Comparative scholars, who distance themselves from normative claims on what the European project should look like, have turned more and more towards Eastern Europe, finding therein a suitable subject for studying relevant areas of memory studies, from general concern of cultures of memory, *Erinnerungskulturen*, (Cornelissen, Holec, Pešek 2005), to more specific aspects, such as international and domestic policies and political uses of the history of communism and WWII (Mink, Neumayer 2013; Miller and Lipman 2012; Malksoo 2009), historiography versus memory (Kopeček 2008); or sites of memory (Weber et al. 2011). Let us discuss in more detail the examples of leading transnational research. For instance, the German historian, Stefan Troebst (2005; 2013), works systematically on regional divisions of Europe in the tradition of Halecki (1950), Zernack (1977) and Szűcs (1983), asking about transnational patterns of post-communist cultures of remembrance in Eastern Europe versus also analytically distinguished Atlantic-Western European and German cultures of memory. In this respect, in Eastern Europe he identifies four clusters of countries: the first one encompassing societies with a strong anti-communist consensus (e.g. Baltic States); the second with societies characterized by an intense public debate on how history should be valued and commemorated (e.g. Hungary, Poland, Ukraine); the third comprises of countries where the public attempts to de-legitimize the communist past were relatively weak (e.g. Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia, Albania); the fourth cluster was formed of societies where communism has not suffered a loss of legitimacy (e.g. Belarus, Russia). Troebst (2010c) was also the *spiritus movens* of a project comparing the memory cultures of Europe's southern and eastern semi-peripheries with regard to them coming to terms with dictatorial pasts, extending in such a way Linz and Stepan's (1996) questions of the transitional politics and democratic consolidation in these regions.

The legacy of communist dictatorships was also a key topic of a book by a British scholar, James Mark (2010), who covered in his research Poland, Hungary, Romania, the Czech Republic, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. Significantly, Mark did not stop at examining the official memory of transitory politics in these countries, such as history commissions and institutes of national memory, as well as he did not finish analyzing the cultural memory of communism at terror sites and in museums. Although these parts of his work are already appealing for his stress on the contingency, nonlinearity and unpredictability of both commemorative narratives and aesthetics, the real breadth of his research lies in his analysis of oral history interviews with over one-hundred representatives of Hungarian, Czech Republic and Polish intelligentsia, including party members and former oppositionists. Using this example, Mark shows how individuals tend to "write" themselves into public (conflicting) post-1989 narratives, using them as resources to shape their own biographies.

A Polish sociologist, Karolina Wigura (2011) uses the paradigm of reconciliation and the politics of regret to compare German-Polish and Ukrainian-Polish relations since the 1990s with regards history. This paradigm refers to the international circulation of grammars of apologies and pleas for forgiveness. The circulation is made possible by modern technologies and the opening up of geopolitical space (Mink, Neumayer 2013: 1). Wigura shows how the politics of reconciliation have played well

in Poland's contacts with the western neighbor. With Ukraine, however, while similar political rituals were employed in the commemoration of atrocities during World War II as mutually inflicted by the people of the two countries, the author describes the latter rather in terms of a "reconciliation kitsch," stressing its inadequate character that has not had any real political or social impact; this example pointing to limits of the apology diplomacy.

An interesting conceptual innovation into memory studies was recently formulated by culture scholars working in the project, *Memory at War. Cultural Dynamics in Poland, Russia and Ukraine*. In a dialogue to Pierre Nora's concept of *lieux de memoire*, which means material and non-material symbols of a given community that "stop time," they propose a category of a "memory event," "deteritorialized and temporal phenomena that [...] 'start time' by endowing the past with new life in the future" (Etkind, Finnin et al. 2012: 10). This is not a language game, but a serious reconceptualization of a key memory concept in such a way that it can fit the transnational agenda and media society. The authors show how fruitful it can be by comparing and tracing the circulation of representations of the Katyń mass murder in Poland, Ukraine, Belorussia, Russia and Baltic States and show how this movement was fuelled by Andrzej Wajda's movie (2007) as well as by the presidential plane crash in Smolensk in 2010.

Against this background, sketched mainly by political questions, even if going so deeply into personal accounts, as in Mark's book, in the realms of ethics as in the book by Wigura or culture, as in the study by Etkind, Finnin *et al.*, it is worth noticing the work by scholars such as Maria Todorova (2010a; 2010b) who point rather to the varieties of genres of remembrance in post-communist societies than to their consistency, including various forms of post-communist nostalgia. Also distanced from the present context of contemporary politics is one of the largest bilateral Polish-German history projects of recent years, i.e. the Polish-German *lieux de memoire* (*Polsko-niemieckie miejsca pamieci*), led by Robert Traba and Hans Henning Hahn. The several volume bilingual project does not limit itself to the national, but points to the "open ended," trans-local symbols and patterns of meaning (Górny et al. 2012; see also Kończal 2012). In such works, the on-going dynamics and change, shifting categories, borderlands, changing borders and moving military fronts comprise the dominating rhetoric and the topoi recurring in the accounts of historical and mnemonic processes. Worth mentioning here are also the works devoted to local and borderland populations, that focus on the formation of memories and identities in the context of historical transformations, both postwar and postcommunist (see for example, Kurczewska 2004; 2007; Zhurzhenko 2010).

All in all, in this manner, conceptualized history aims to juxtapose the East European historical experience with the projects of a common European memory—whether founded by the single myth of the uniting Holocaust memory or by hierarchical constructions, like Claus Leggewie's "circles of memory." On the political level, East European memory assumes a polemical character regarding the West, yet still lacking counterweighing autonomous memory projects that would unify the East. This again pushes East European memory agents towards the peripheries of Europe,

showing how important it remains for the former to observe themselves in the mirror of the latter. The situation presents a challenge for memory scholars as well: How can they describe the memory processes taking place in Eastern Europe without neglecting their original, autonomous character by too easily referring to Western memory categories? How can they avoid the trap of constructing new myths of East European uniqueness? Finally, putting these two pleas together, how can they describe the meaning of memory phenomena in Eastern Europe so that the value of such studies is not purely anecdotal but preserves relevance for broader memory studies, and may be applied to other regions and contexts? In other words, can Eastern European memory research fruitfully draw upon global studies of memory, while at the same time avoiding a fall into an intellectually peripheral realm, and can it go on to fertilize broader theories and research with original findings and concepts? Before presenting the extrapolations of such possibilities by the authors of the present PSR issue, one partial answer is sketched below with an eye both on the traditional sociological inquiry, as well as on the just discussed results of the transnational historical research.

Making Sense of “Eastern Europe:” Regional Frameworks of Memory

In the light of our plea for historical sociology and the above summarized recent transnational research trends on Eastern Europe, it is worth thinking about how to escape the trap of the collective vs. collected memory in this area of study. A possible way to start is to extend Halbwachs' (1969/1925) concept of social frameworks of memory so as to include a political region as one of them. A framework “in essence, [...] is a series of images of the past and a set of relationships that specify how these images are to be ordered” (Middleton and Brown 2011: 35). By means of discursive mechanisms (naming and classifying) and “physiognomic” mechanisms (e.g., gestures, social practices, artefacts and sites), frameworks help to structure individual remembering. Individuals use them as resources and points of reference (models and examples) when they narrate their own experience or make sense of other information about the past. Therefore, referring to Olick's (1999) terminology discussed above, “collective memory,” in the sense of the images of the past that are externalized and in one way or another already codified within a society (Olick 1999), constitutes itself as an important element of the framework. In other words, it is possible to think of Halbwachs' legacy in such a way that “collective memory” also becomes an effective social frame for further recollections and actions (Gensburger 2011: 426). Importantly, individuals locate their own processes of remembering in various frameworks, ranging from face-to-face interactions in primary groups, such as family, through local and national images up to such representations of the past that have achieved global recognition, such as the Holocaust (see e.g. Levy and Sznajder 2006 or Rothberg 2009 cited above). Which framework(s) they actually use to recall or narrate particular events is an empirical question and depends on specific circumstances. What is more, it is possible to imagine that frameworks may interfere with one another without disrupting the actual processes of individual

remembrance. All in all, we do not intend to replace “family,” “occupational,” “national” or “global” with “regional” frameworks, but merely aim to indicate the latter’s existence.

In this proposition, a “regional” framework is not a predefined, essentialist, geographical category. But it is understood as a set of discursive and physiognomic mechanisms with their own history, beyond national frames, albeit of a limited, not of a global influence. That is, there are sets of representations which are only regionally intelligible and significant but are unlikely to attain global (or at least pan-European) importance. For instance, the French or Italians are not particularly interested in the Volyn massacre (1943), whereas it has become an important and conflicting transnational *lieu de mémoire* for Poles and Ukrainians by means of activities of various memory agents (politicians, journalist, historians, NGOs activities and victims’ associations); as well as a point of reference for further discussion on the past.

Moreover, it is important to stress that there is not one but rather multiple Eastern European frameworks of memory, depending on the historical event(s) which are remembered and the agents involved in commemoration. Still, making use of Eastern Europe as an umbrella concept makes sense since all of these national societies were once influenced by a Soviet type meta-narrative and also by some resistance to it. Working through communism is thus very often a filter for other representations, especially for Fascism and Nazism (Mark 2010: 93–125).

Therefore, we do not claim that individuals born and socialized in Eastern Europe remember in some “special” way in comparison with the rest of the world, but instead that there exist some specific sets of discursive practices related to particular historical events which happened in this part of Europe. (Other regions, such as Western Europe, East Asia, the Middle East or Latin America have their own historically specific regional frameworks). Research so far on the so-called European memory or Europeanization of memory has pointed rather to the limits of these two concepts as either too broad, or too normatively and politically oriented. We do not say that Europeanization as a frame does not have any impact on the actual content of Europeans’ memory, only that its relevance is less significant than it is sometimes argued—at least for time being. For instance, the processes of including the so-called Gulag victims into the EU “memory”—played out at the Brussels level—are hardly acknowledged in the Polish media. Much more visible coverage concerns the policy of history among Poland’s neighbours.

However, it is different with these branches of literature which refer to regions of Europe, including Eastern Europe. In this case, the combination of serious historical research with some theoretical underpinnings helps to unfold regional patterns of remembrance, such as discussed by Troebst (2013). Moreover, national studies of memory can be reread from this perspective, as they usually contain a breadth of knowledge on mutual national stereotypes and clichés, including the place of “the other” in “schematic narrative templates” (Wertsch 2002). For instance, the way Poles remember WWII has much to do with the national stereotypes of Russians, Ukrainians, Germans and Jews (Nijakowski 2010).

Thus, in such a light much can be extracted from the research up to now. There are mutual stereotypes, “memory agents” and “memory events” of regional importance, such as *Katyń*, as the discussed study by Alexander Etkind, Rory Finnin et al. (2012) has convincingly shown.

More generally, it is possible to fruitfully use the matrix of concepts proposed recently by transnational studies of cultural memory, such as “travelling memories” by Astrid Erll (2011: 12–13), characterized by five dimensions of movement: carriers (individuals), media (from orality to print, films and Internet), contents (shared images and narratives), practices (rituals and other commemorative activities), and mnemonic forms (symbols, icons, schemata). It is worth noting, however, that these regional *travels* and *borrowings* are both of a consensual and a conflictual nature, as studies on the politics of history show (Mink, Neumayer 2013; Miller and Lipman 2012). The growing awareness of neighbouring historical sensitivities sometimes helps to create new commemorative forms, but it might as well reinforce one’s own identity; or be directed only to copying some technical blueprints toward the making of (national) public memories. For instance, the European Network of Remembrance and Solidarity (with its office in Warsaw, involving so far Poles, Slovaks and Hungarians) was envisaged as an answer to the project of the Center Against Expulsion in Berlin by the German Federation of Expellees; on the long history of various transnational initiatives around the commemoration of displacements as a Central-Eastern European phenomenon, see e.g., Troebst 2008. There are visible and openly stated mutual inspirations between major public memory institutions in Eastern Europe, such as between the House of Terror and the Museum of the Warsaw Rising (Żychlińska 2009), or among the institutes of public memory in the region. For instance, the German Federal Commission for the Stasi Archives (BStU) has often been put forward as a blueprint for the Institute of National Remembrance in Poland; or the public disclosure of faces of former communist security apparatus’ employees by a set of open air exhibitions and educational programs, with similar aesthetics, was undertaken both by the Polish Institute of National Remembrance and the Czech Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes (see: *Twarze bezpieki, Příběhy bezpráví*). In the latter cases, such travels tend to codify the totalitarian interpretation of the communist experience in its form and content.

We may suppose that the content of public history created in such a way will have increasing influence over the collected memory when the communicative memory of the communist regimes fades away in the so-called floating gap. Although according to oral history experts it takes three generations, let us notice that already today the attitudes towards the Polish People’s Republic are to a large degree dependant on age. In the research conducted by the Public Opinion Research Center (CBOS) in 2009, individuals 35 years or older were more likely to positively evaluate the Polish People’s Republic (54%) than those under 34 (only 24%). The data shows the growing importance of the mediated image of the period which slowly displaces memories of personal experience.

Altogether, we would like to point out that much of the discussed comparative historical literature concentrates in fact not on memory per se, but on transnational

frameworks of memory; or even on frameworks *for* memory (to put it simply, on memory projects) and on the way they are made. This is a legitimate direction of research and one can only hope for more systematic endeavours and descriptions in future, at the same time however complemented by more feedback from the research on the content of individual memories, studied by both quantitative (e.g. Kwiatkowski et al. 2010) and qualitative methods (as by Mark 2010)—only with this background may the factual power of transnational concepts be examined.

The Overview of the Current Issue

The papers published in this volume were first presented at the conference *Genealogies of Memory in Central and Eastern Europe: Theories and Methods*, held in Warsaw in 2011.³ It was part of a broader project developed by the authors at the Warsaw based European Network of Remembrance and Solidarity. With a series of conferences and seminars the project aims at facilitating academic exchange among researchers working on memory in Central and Eastern Europe. The conference in 2011 focused on tracing local memory research traditions, typical of the region and suitable for its experience of history, as opposed to globalizing trends in memory studies. Papers selected for the present volume include discussions within the prevalent theoretical and methodological traditions on local memory studies, here particularly in Poland and the Czech Republic, as well as original proposals by contributors on theoretical approaches toward memory research in the region.

In the first section, the contributors offer overviews of memory studies in particular countries of the region, and trace their local genealogies. Elżbieta Tarkowska reviews the long memory research tradition in Poland, dating back earlier than the 1960s, as is often presented in discussions of memory issues in Polish sociology. She explores why this tradition failed to become part of the more global concepts which became currents in memory studies. She stresses that the works of Stefan Czarnowski were just as suitable to develop and fuel theoretical reflection on social time and the work on cultural representations of the past as were the concepts developed in the West which revived the memory boom in the late twentieth century. The work of Czarnowski remained in complete oblivion. Tarkowska observes that sadly this holds true also for the Polish scholars, who while willingly drawing on the sociological traditions of the 1960s, or on more current concepts developed by international memory studies, ignored the older, cultural tradition of Polish sociology that studied social constructions of time and collective representations of history.

Another author in this section, Jarosław Kiliński, searches for regional characteristics of theories of memory studies, focusing on past and present memory research

³ Warsaw, 23–25 November 2011. Organizers: European Network Remembrance and Solidarity; Institute of Sociology, Warsaw University; Institute of Sociology, Warsaw University of Social Sciences and Humanities; Osteuropa-Institut der Freien Universität Berlin; National Center for Culture, Warsaw; Bundesinstitut für Kultur und Geschichte der Deutschen im östlichen Europa.

in the Czech Republic and Poland. Polish and Czechoslovak sociologists became interested in the question of historical consciousness, or memory, in parallel and simultaneously during the first half of the twentieth century. It was later that the developing Polish school of social surveys provided some inspiration for the studies of social representations of the past in communist Czechoslovakia. After 1989, the need to reckon with the communist and pre-communist legacy became an incentive for a rekindled interest in history and memory issues in both countries. Kilias critically discusses and compares how the present memory research shapes within Polish and Czech sociology, inquiring whether the two share the same methodological roots.

Papers presented in the second section of the volume offer theoretical proposals to further develop the “centerless” disparate memory studies, by drawing on theories, which so far, are not broadly developed in this context. Marta Bucholc on the one hand, and Michał Łuczewski, Tomasz Maślanka and Paulina Bednarz-Łuczewska on the other, respectively present Norbert Elias’ symbol theory and Habermas’ theory of communicative action. They explore how these classic sociological concept theories might fruitfully elucidate certain vague and blurred notions in memory studies—like the Habermasian notion of rationality to explain the term “memory claims” (Łuczewski, Maślanka and Bednarz-Łuczewska), or in overcoming clichés dominating the field in the specific East European context, like Elias’s postulate to “stick to the experience” as a remedy for the “uniqueness” of Eastern Europe, which absolutizes partial perspectives in memory research. Inspired by Elias, Bucholc presents a proposal of historical sociology of the mnemonic practices in the region.

Jan Kajfosz in turn proposes ethnolinguistic categories such as “magic,” “connotation,” or “cognitive blending,” as useful sociological and cultural theoretical contributions to memory studies. He is interested in the cultures and historical identities of the Polish-Czech border area of Teschen Silesia, and traces how state institutions and official history writing have shaped and determined local identities and visions of the past since the early twentieth century up to now. Similarly, Marta Karkowska revisits Jan and Aleida Assmann’s theory of cultural memory and their typologies of its various functions and mechanisms, recognizing in them a heuristic tool to research the changing and multilayered pasts and memories in the local areas of Poland. In particular, she examines local memory agents within the multilayered history of the Polish region of Masuria, which until 1945 was inhabited by Germans.

Finally, Nicoletta Diasio’s paper contributes to the reflection on the collected vs. collective memory by opening the horizon of research on how national history is remembered by individuals and transmitted through generations, with anthropological sensitivity toward the meaning of body and the sensual. Her research discusses how Polish families have preserved not only “memories” of World War II and communism, but also events dating back to the nineteenth century. She examines familial knowledge of hereditary physical or character traces and also how smells and tastes have become modes of remembering. In this, the author shows that family, the private and the body may offer a factual counterweight, or alternatively lend support, to national historical narratives.

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- Genealogies of Memory in Central and Eastern Europe www.genealogies.enrs.eu
- Historical Justice and Memory Research Network www.historicaljusticeandmemorynetwork.net/
- Holocaust, Genocide, and Memory Studies (University of Illinois) www.jewishculture.illinois.edu/programs/holocaust/
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