

### **Genealogies of Memory in East Central Europe: Theories and Methods**

**Veranstalter:** European Network Remembrance and Solidarity, Institute of Sociology, University of Warsaw; Warsaw School of Social Sciences and Humanities (SWPS); Osteuropa-Institut der Freien Universität Berlin; National Center for Culture, Warsaw; Bundesinstitut für Kultur und Geschichte der Deutschen im Östlichen Europa

**Datum, Ort:** 23.11.2011–25.11.2011, Warsaw

**Bericht von:** Lidia Jurek, European University Institute, Florence

The Genealogies of Memory Conference provided a forum for scholars exploring perspectives on memory in Central and Eastern Europe. The idea that this European region may share a distinctive repertory of memories came primarily from its shift two decades ago from silence to expression. However, the conference organizers were far from promoting a thesis of East European exceptionalism. Instead, as indicated in the introduction to the conference, they encouraged a comparative perspective (Pakier) and a search for a common language for dispersed narratives as well as the transgression of self-referential discourse by memory scholars (Wawrzyniak).

Growing interest in memory studies was evidenced by the overwhelming response to the call for papers, out of which the conference ultimately saw the participation of nearly 100 speakers from Poland, Germany, Great Britain, Ukraine, Romania, France, Lithuania, Hungary, Belgium, Austria, Russia, Australia, and the United States. They presented work on a remarkable variety of subjects, including lieux de mémoire, theories and concepts, dynamics of memory, and media of remembrance (space, place, museum, film, digital and social media).

Introductory speeches revolved around the nature of Central and Eastern European history and memory, and its relation to West European memory in particular. HARALD WYDRA (Cambridge) posed the question of the 'western' lenses through which the Eastern European memory has been customarily conceptualized. SŁAWOMIR KAPRALSKI (Warsaw) challenged the thesis of a specifi-

ty of Eastern European memory, arguing that the erasure of inconvenient memories was a phenomenon common to both halves of the Continent. In a similar vein, ANDRZEJ NOWAK (Cracow) shared his critical view on constructed memories as elements of political correctness. JOANNA B. MICHLIC (Waltham) compared the evolution of Holocaust memory in Western and Eastern Europe whereas DARIUSZ STOLA (Warsaw) pointed to an unprecedented scale of violence as one factor accounting for a delayed coming to terms with the region's past. Finally, MATTHIAS WEBER (Oldenburg) explored the asymmetry of memories in Germany and Poland, arguing that it has contributed potential to the instrumentalization of memory.

Similar observations on asymmetries in memory became a point of departure for ALEIDA ASSMANN (Konstanz) during her keynote lecture, where she advocated the move from monologic to dialogic memory policies. In her view, a dialogue on a small and simple scale can make possible the interaction of memories, and – by stimulating empathy and understanding – make national memories more pluralistic and integrative.

Contemplating the memory in Eastern Europe requires consideration of its main reference points. Therefore, the first two parallel sessions were dedicated to lieux de mémoire. MACIEJ GÓRNY (Warsaw, Jena) and KORNELIA KOŃCZAL (Berlin) presented the project on Polish-German realms of memory, realized by the Polish Academy of Science in Berlin which will soon bear fruit with a four-volume publication. Polish-German places of memory were also the focus of FILIP PAZDERSKI's (Warsaw) paper on the complicated memory realms of the borderlands (Polish-German and Polish-Belarusian). A similar thread was pursued by ANNA ZALEWSKA (Lublin) who described the memory issues affecting Polish-Russian relations (case study: Olszynka Grochowska). MARCIN NAPIÓRKOWSKI (Warsaw) chose a larger focus: the forms of commemoration of the Warsaw Uprising throughout a longer time span, 1945–2005 (the uprising as a 'generator of sense'). PIOTR TROJAŃSKI (Cracow) reflected on symbolism and commemoration of Auschwitz and Katyń by Polish society. LIDIA JU-

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REK (Florence) analysed recent attempts emanating from Eastern European countries to put the Gulag on the European agenda via Brussels, while JAMES MARK (Exeter) looked at the commemoration of the year 1989 in various states of Central-Eastern Europe.

An important methodological dimension was added by two panels that considered theories and concepts. The first revolved around 'traditions' and included a paper by ALEXEY VASILYEV (Moscow) examining the development of collective memory studies in Russia. The Polish tradition in memory studies, associated with a Durkheimian legacy, was presented by ELŻBIETA TARKOWSKA (Warsaw). JAROSŁAW KILIAS (Warsaw) compared Polish and Czech sociological traditions of memory research. Another comparative paper, authored jointly by GEORGIY KASIANOV (Kyiv) and KAROLINA WIGURA (Warsaw), sought to determine the extent of the 'westernization' of cultures of remembrance studies in Eastern Europe.

The second panel on the topic of theories, entitled 'proposals', began with GREGOR FEINDT (Bonn) and FELIX KRAWATZEK's (Oxford) presentation of the new conceptual approach that has been developed in Bielefeld emphasizing the transnational entanglements of memory. MARTA BUCHOLC (Warsaw) explained how fruitful Norbert Elias's interdisciplinary theory may prove in the research on collective memory. BARTOSZ KORZENIEWSKI (Poznań) investigated the dynamics between the theory and practice of empirical research of memories under transformation. Finally, MAGDALENA SARYUSZ-WOLSKA (Lodz, Berlin) concluded by discussing problems of terminology in memory research.

Six panels were devoted to the dynamics of memory, with the focus on biographies (1), generations (2), borderlands (3), silence and articulation (4), private/vernacular – public/official (5), and struggles for power and legitimacy (6).

In the first panel KAJA KAŹMIERSKA (Lodz) explored the relationship between biographical and collective memory, while MARTINA STAATS (Edemissen) compared the culture of memory of POWs and Jewish concentration camp survivors. MACH-

TELD VENKEN (Lueven) and JAROSŁAW PAŁKA (Warsaw) presented results of their project comparing the war memory of soldiers later divided by the Iron Curtain. MICHAŁ KIERZKOWSKI (Poznań) inquired into the divided European collective memory, analyzing interviews with Czechoslovak female political prisoners under Stalinism. Another panel, on generations, opened with LUTZ NIETHAMMER's (Jena) report on the conference held in Jena which discussed characteristic features of postmodernist thought originating in Eastern Europe with the generation of Zygmunt Bauman and Agnes Heller. WULF KANSTEINER (Binghampton) captivately and critically reflected on the concept of political generation, popular among historians albeit often yet another invented tradition. KATARZYNA WANIEK (Lodz) looked at the third generation Poles and the witness generation of Germans speaking about WWII, while ALEKSANDRA RYCHLICKA (London) explored the memory struggle of the Polish post-1989 generation through literary works. Several speakers examined post-1989 memory in the borderlands: TATIANA ZHURZHENKO's (Vienna) paper focused on the Ukrainian-Russian and Ukrainian-Polish borderlands. TANYA ZAHARCHENKO (Cambridge) argued that the key to understanding Ukrainian cultural memory is a regional approach. MAŁGORZATA GŁOWACKA-GRAJPER (Warsaw) investigated the post-communist 'explosion' of memory related to the former Polish Eastern Borderlands (Kresy). JAN KAJFOSZ (Cieszyn) considered the example of Teschen Silesia, noting tensions between remembering, forgetting, and the amalgamation of memories.

Four speakers concentrated particularly on difficulties in the articulation of traumatic memories. The disruption of local communities was often accompanied by silence about the past, such as in the case of the thorny history of Belarus, presented by SIMON M. LEWIS (Cambridge) or that of the Katyn massacre, explained by UILLEAM BLACKER (London). Similar problem referred to the Holocaust, as shown in KRISZTINA NEMETH's (Budapest) paper on lifeworld reconstructions of Jewish communities, and to the extermination of Hungarian Roma, discussed by AN-

NA LJUZA SZÁSZ (Budapest). The relationship between private and public/official memories was the subject matter of the fifth panel on the dynamics of memory. KAREN AUERBACH (Melbourne) introduced her micro-history project exploring the memory of post-war Polish Jews. NICOLETTA DIASIO (Strasbourg) gave a riveting presentation on the bodily dimension of remembering, and PIOTR KWIAKOWSKI (Warsaw) discussed the results of the project examining the memory of contemporary Poles on WWII. Finally, the last panel on the dynamics of memory dealt with struggles for power and legitimacy. Here DALIA BÁTHORY (Cluj-Napoca) described the manipulative nature of Hungarian and Romanian leaders' references to history. STANISŁAW TYSZKA (Warsaw) reflected on the politics of memory in the light of post-1989 Czech and Polish debates on property restitution. ZUZANNA BOGUMIŁ (Warsaw) explored the relationship between memory and religion in her study on the Orthodox phenomenon of the new martyrdom in Russia. Finally, ROBERT WYSZYŃSKI (Warsaw) added the memory perspective of those nations in the Russian Federation who still cannot write their own history books.

Media of remembrance have a crucial meaning for collective memories. Not surprisingly, many presentations (22) explored Central and Eastern European genealogies of memory through the analysis of channels of remembrance. Four papers were devoted to the spatial dimensions of memory. MÁTÉ ZOMBORY (Budapest) illustrated a gradual process of globalization of memory whereas the remaining three papers concentrated on three Eastern cities: AGNIESZKA KUDELKA (Potsdam) presented the role of monuments in the construction of memories in L'viv before WWII. KATJA GRUPP (Cologne, Bielefeld) compared Russian and German perspectives on Kaliningrad, and JUDITH BROWN (Cambridge) described the 'walking memory' methodological approach via the example of Sevastopol.

Another set of presentations analyzed museums and films, which since their inception have powerfully shaped visions of the past. SIMINA BADICA (Bucharest) discussed a puzzling continuity in pre- and post-

communist Romanian museum practice. MONIKA HEINEMANN (Munich) concentrated on the museum as a medium of remembrance, looking at Polish commemorations of WWII after 1989. GINTARE MALINAUSKAITĖ (Berlin) shed light on Lithuanian cinematic representations of the Nazi and Soviet occupations. Similarly, MAŁGORZATA PAKIER (Warsaw) looked at German and Polish Holocaust film and identified ways whereby both construct a European vision of the past.

Memory transmitted through digital channels, although a recent phenomenon, was carefully scrutinized by three speakers. GERTRUD PICKHAN (Berlin) reflected on how Internet databases influence perceptions of history. ALEXANDER VON PLATO (Hagen) explored the difficulties of interpreting audio and video recordings in oral history, and MARCIN WILKOWSKI (Warsaw) offered a critical view on Facebook as a sphere of commemoration. Another medium of remembrance, literature was analyzed at the next panel. HEINRICH OLSCHOWSKY (Berlin) discussed how the specificity of the Eastern European region is constructed and sustained by literature. In the same panel, STANISŁAW OBIREK (Lodz) analyzed religious and cultural memory in the works of Stanisław Vincenz, and JOANNA JEZIORSKA-HAŁADYJ (Warsaw) compared the literary creations of Danilo Kiš and Aleksander Jurewicz.

The various roles of historians in memory studies constituted the topic of three presentations. MICHAŁ ŁUCZEWSKI (Warsaw) and TOMASZ ZARYCKI (Warsaw) presented a comparative study of the reception of Jan T. Gross's and Andrey Zubov's historical works in, respectively, Poland and Russia. AGNIESZKA NOWAKOWSKA (Warsaw) investigated how historical narration is created by history teachers in Poland and Lithuania. Finally, IZABELA SKÓRZYŃSKA (Poznań) considered the status of the historian, situated between the roles of observers and performers.

The last panel was devoted to history in the public domain. MARCIN JARZĄBEK (Cracow) looked at the politics of memories, as provoked by a historical exhibition on the Silesian Uprisings (1919-21). FLORIAN PETERS (Berlin, Potsdam) scrutinized the 'blurred in-

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between's' of discourses on WWII in late socialist Poland. GÁBOR GYÁNI (Budapest) explained the notion of 'public history' in the post-1989 context of Hungary, while CRISTINA and DRAGOS PETRESCU (Bucharest) elaborated on post-1989 cultural memory in Romania.

The conference closed with an address by JEFFREY OLICK (Charlottesville) who noted that his was largely the perspective of an outsider, i.e., a scholar representing Western traditions in memory studies. In his stimulating comprehensive summary of the insights (and the gaps) of memory research in Central and Eastern Europe from a Westerner's perspective, Olick emphasized the need to maintain the difference between memory research and politics. Memory scholars' discourse should be responsive not just to memory booms but also to memory busts. An outside perspective facilitates the detecting of various silent assumptions behind memory studies. Religion constituted one such factor, not duly elaborated at a conference intended as a self-reflexive treatment of theories and methodologies.

In planning this event the conference organizers endeavored to maintain a disciplined rigor. Inviting so many scholars to a gathering on research theories and methods carried some risk. Yet the level of theoretical discussion proved high nonetheless. The commentaries at the end of each panel, in many cases by established specialists in the field, helped sustain the theoretical focus and make the conference a worthy intellectual enterprise. Carrying the momentum forward, the conference organizers intend to develop this initiative into a larger memory research and network project.

#### **Conference overview:**

Rafał Rogulski: Welcome

Jan Rydel: European Network Remembrance and Solidarity

Małgorzata Pakier, Joanna Wawrzyniak: Introduction to the conference

*History and memory in Central and Eastern Europe: How special?*

Chair: Jeffrey Olick

Harald Wydra: Dynamics of memory in East

and West: Elements of a comparative framework

Sławomir Kapralski: Ain't nothing special

Andrzej Nowak: Constructed memories as elements of a political correctness

Joanna B. Michlic: The trajectories of bringing the dark to light: Memory of the Holocaust in post-Communist Europe

Dariusz Stola: On the peculiarities of memory of the 20th century in Poland: A delayed coming to terms with troubled pasts

Matthias Weber: The Germans : an East-European lieu de mémoire. Asymmetry of memories in Germany and Poland

*Lieux de mémoire (1)*

Chair: Burkhard Olschowsky

Maciej Górny, Kornelia Kończal: Polish-German realms of memory. The theory and practice of an interdisciplinary project

Filip Pazderski: Local realms of memory in the borderland areas in Central and Eastern Europe as indicators of processes of regional collective remembering

Anna Zalewska: Bullets, buttons, stones and bones as the carriers of memory – the Olszynka Grochowska case

Marcin Napiórkowski: The Warsaw Uprising as a generator of sense

Commentator: Włodzimierz Borodziej

*Lieux de mémoire (2)*

Chair Wulf Kansteiner

Jacek Chrobaczyński, Piotr Trojański: Auschwitz and Katyń: the lenses of memory

Lidia Jurek: Drawing up the boundaries of the endless empty steppe – the recuperation of memory of the Gulag in Eastern Europe

James Mark: Where can the collapse of communism be celebrated? The problems of commemorating 1989 in Central-Eastern Europe

Commentator: Piotr Kwiatkowski

*Keynote*

Aleida Assmann: The transformative power of memory

Chair: Jan Rydel

*Theories and concepts (1): Traditions*

Chair: Andrzej Szpociński

Alexey Vasilyev: Russian memory studies in the context of actual world trends

Elżbieta Tarkowska: Collective memory, social time and culture: The Polish tradition in memory studies

Jarosław Kiliński: Is there any sociological tradition of social memory research? The Polish and the Czech cases

Georgiy Kasianov, Karolina Wigura: Between nation-building and westernization. Studies of cultures of remembrance in Contemporary Central Eastern Europe

Commentator: Barbara Szacka

*Dynamics of memory (1): Biographies*

Chair: Alexander von Plato

Kaja Kaźmierska: Biographical and collective memory – mutual influences in the Central and Eastern European context

Machteld Venken, Jarosław Pałka: Similar or different? Polish soldiers' war memories in Poland and Belgium

Martina Staats: Memories of Bergen-Belsen

Michał Kierzkowski: Divided European memory: A perspective of women's memory of Stalinism in Czechoslovakia

Commentator: Lutz Niethammer

*Theories and concepts (2): Proposals*

Chair: Gertrud Pickhan

Gregor Feindt, Félix Krawatzek: Entangled memories: A new conceptual approach to memory in Eastern Europe

Marta Bucholc: On the potential of Norbert Elias's approach in social memory research in Central and Eastern Europe

Amelia Korzeniewska and Bartosz Korzeniewski: Transformation of memory. Theoretical modeling and the practice of empirical research

Magdalena Saryusz-Wolska: Modi memorandi. An interdisciplinary lexicon of collective

memory terms

Commentator: Jeffrey Olick

*Dynamics of memory (2): Generations*

Chair: Harald Wydra

Lutz Niethammer: Eastern roots of postmodern ethics? The generation of Zygmunt Bauman and Agnes Heller

Wulf Kansteiner: Historicizing memory studies: Holocaust interpretation and the concept of political generation

Katarzyna Waniek: Third generation Poles and the witness generation of Germans in conversation about World War II

Aleksandra Rychlicka: Who owns the past? The literature of the post-1989 generation and its struggle with memory

Commentator: Kaja Kaźmierska

*Media of remembrance (1): Space/Place*

Chair: Andrzej Nowak

Máté Zombory: Memory as spatial localization

Agnieszka Kudelka: Monuments and memory constructs in L'viv between 1867 and 1939

Katja Grupp: Kaliningrad minus Königsberg, culture minus memory: 'foreign' city in German and Russian perspective.

Judy Brown: Walking memory through city space in Sevastopol, Crimea

Commentator: Sławomir Kaprański

*Media of remembrance (2): Museum and Film*

Chair: Lidia Jurek

Simina Bădică: Regimes of memory in Communist and Post-Communist Romanian museums

Monika Heinemann: The historical museum as a medium of remembrance – A case study on the memory of the Second World War in Poland after 1989

Gintare Malinauskaitė: Cinematic memory of the Lithuanian double occupation: The development of partisan and Holocaust cinema and its interrelation

Małgorzata Pakier: German and Polish Holo-

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caust cinema: The national factories of the European dream

Commentator: Nicoletta Diasio

*(New) media of remembrance (3)*

Chair: Elżbieta Tarkowska

Gertrud Pickhan: History turns digital

Alexander von Plato: Media and memory: The presentation and 'use' of witnesses in sound and image

Marcin Wilkowski: Facebook as a sphere of commemoration: A critical view

Commentator: Piotr Toczyski

*Dynamics of memory (3): Borderlands*

Chair: Joanna Kurczewska

Tatiana Zhurzhenko: Politics of memory and national identity in the post-Soviet borderlands: Ukraine/Russia and Ukraine/Poland

Tanya Zaharchenko: How memory becomes identity: The curious case of East Ukraine

Małgorzata Głowacka-Grajper Anthropology of social memory of Kresy: territorial identity seen through the categories of tradition and politics of memory

Jan Kajfosz: Contemporary social memories and the theory of magic How do we construct our past and how do we instrumentalize it?

Commentator: Ewa Nowicka

*Media of remembrance (4): Literature*

Chair: Joanna B. Michlic

Heinrich Olschowsky: Literature as a means of cultural memory on the specificity of the East-European region

Stanisław Obirek: Religious memory versus cultural memory in the works of Stanisław Vincenz

Joanna Jeziorska-Haładyj Memory of loss: Danilo Kiš and Aleksander Jurewicz. A comparative perspective

Commentator: Jacek Leociak

*Dynamics of memory (4): Silence and articulation*

Chair: Tadeusz Szawiel

Simon M. Lewis: The legacy of catastrophe:

approaches and methods on the example of Belarus

Uilleam Blacker: Unknowable and unspeakable? Traumatic memory and cultural representations of the Katyń massacre

Krisztina Németh: Facts and narratives, contradictions and traumas: Can past lifeworlds be reconstructed?

Anna Lujza Szász: Art, oblivion and memory: The case of Hungarian Roma

Commentator: Maciej Bugajewski

*Media of remembrance (5): The various roles of historians*

Chair: Cristina Petrescu

Larysa Buryak: Memory studies in Ukrainian historiography: Tendencies and perspectives

Michał Łuczewski, Tomasz Zarycki: Scholarly debates and moral ontologies in Poland and Russia

Agnieszka Nowakowska: Teaching Polish-Lithuanian history

Izabela Skórzyńska: Historian amidst the past as performance: an observer or a performer?

Commentator: Wulf Kansteiner

*Dynamics of memory (5): Private/vernacular – public/official*

Chair: Joanna Wawrzyniak

Karen Auerbach: Memory, identity and the writing of history: a case study of Jewish life in Poland after the Holocaust

Nicoletta Diasio: Remembrance as embodiment in Polish contemporary memories

Piotr Kwiatkowski: World War II in the memory of today's Polish society

Commentator: : Olga Shevchenko

*Media of remembrance (6): History in the public domain*

Chair: Karen Auerbach

Marcin Jarzabek: What kind of memory orders you to demolish a historical exhibition? – a case study of the Silesian Uprisings' history-memory quid-pro-quo

Florian Peters: : 'Memory' vs. 'History'? Dis-

courses on World War II in Late Socialist Poland

Gábor Gyáni: History in public use in today's Hungary

Cristina Petrescu, Dragos Petrescu Cultural memory in the making: Communism remembered in post-1989 Romania

Commentator: Georgiy Kasianov

*Dynamics of memory (6): Struggles for power and legitimacy*

Chair: James Mark

Dalia Agata Báthory: Memory traps: Uses and abuses of collective memory in politics

Stanisław Tyszka: Legal means of remembrance. Property restitution in Czech and Polish public debates after 1989

Zuzanna Bogumił: Politics and religion. New martyrs and the interpretations of the Soviet past

Robert Wyszyński: Young nations imagining the past. The indigeneous societies of the former Soviet Union

Commentator: Marek Cichocki

*Final discussion: What memory for what past – what theory for what memory?*

Introduction: Jeffrey Olick

Chair: Sławomir Kaprański

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