**INTRODUCTION**

Beyond the History of Ethnic Cleansing in Europe

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

The idea of the project originated in our research group’s interest in the contemporary after-effects of the ‘ethnic cleansing’ (genocides and large-scale expulsions) of about ninety million people from around thirty different ethnic groups in Europe in the twentieth century. The history of these tragic events starts with the Armenian genocide of 1915–16 and the so-called ‘population exchange’ between Turkey and Greece in 1922–23, in the aftermath of the First World War. The Second World War brought a new, huge escalation of the policies of ethnic cleansing, the Holocaust of 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 others, 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 fourteen million Germans and more than three hundred thousand Italians from Central and Eastern Europe, as well as the Balkans. The drawing of new borders in Europe after 1945 also led to further massive, more or less forced transfers of peoples, euphemistically

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called ‘population exchanges’: Ukrainians were transferred 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; and 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 that they belonged 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 instances of ethnic cleansing in connection with the devastating wars 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 victims of ethnic cleansing were taken over by their former neighbours. At other times their property came into the hands of people without any previous connection to the life of the city or region. On a collective level, multi-ethnic regions were drawn into processes of national homogenization, in which the memory of the former inhabitants was often neither officially celebrated nor acknowledged. The material traces of the vanished populations were often erased or they became invisible to the new inhabitants, especially to new generations who were no longer capable of assessing them as once having belonged 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, has received increasing attention. In the enlarged European Union (EU) the memory of the Holocaust has been established as the moral foundation of a commonly held European history and identity (Judt 2005: 803). There are reasons 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 compensation from Croatia and Slovenia, 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 and the perpetrators were. Who is to blame and who should apologize? Questions arise as to whether, and how, the victims ought to be compensated, and
more generally, what to do 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 for a symbolic 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. One example is when in 2009 Vaclav Klaus, then the president of the Czech Republic, threatened to block the Lisbon Treaty of the EU 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. 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. While there are studies about how people remember their lost homeland, not much has been written about the other side: about how people who took over the places that belonged to the expelled and murdered relate to this experience. This volume contributes to filling this gap. The originality of the present volume also rests in its focus on a city as a place of remembrance. It is true that in the last two decades a rising research interest in ‘memory in the city’, resulting in a growing number of publications, may be observed. However, most of them dealt with cities in Western Europe and the USA. Huyssen’s ground-breaking book Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory (2003) is a good example thereof. Nevertheless, recently some academic books have been published that focus on memory in Central and Eastern European cities, such as the collective volume edited by Czaplicka, Gelazis and Ruble, Cities after the Fall of Communism: Reshaping Cultural Landscapes and European Identity (2009); the volume edited by Darieva, Kaschuba and Krebs, Melanie Urban Spaces after Socialism: Ethnographies of Public Spaces in Eurasian Cities (2011); and monographs on Wrocław (Breslau), L’viv, Chernivtsi and Kaliningrad. The present volume joins this new research stream, but differs in many respects from the previous publications in scope, time frame and approach. While the books on memory in Central and Eastern Europe mentioned above are written mostly by historians and are primarily historically focused, the present volume is a multidisciplinary cultural study of memory narratives and representations. It
addresses contemporary dilemmas of remembering ethnic cleansings and lost cultural diversity and presents not only the well-known cases, such as Chernivtsi, L’viv or Wrocław, but also much less well-known, smaller urbanities in the Czech Republic, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Moreover, in contrast to many studies, this book goes beyond the isolated cases and reveals common challenges and dilemmas that various communities with a multicultural past are facing today. The collection offers general comparisons between case studies and reflects on the long-term effect of expulsions, especially in the context of European integration. The book’s focus on local communities makes it possible to go beyond what has been pointed out by cosmopolitan sociology12 as methodological nationalism and allows the author of the concluding, comparative chapter to capture transnational dimensions of memory changes.

Structure of the Book

The volume begins with an introduction, in which the editor reminds the reader about the history of ethnic cleansing in Europe in the twentieth century and points to the need to study its long-term effects. She also offers a brief overview of the field of research on memory of ethnic cleansing as well as on ‘memory in the city’. Moreover, she gives an outline of the book and briefly presents sources, methods and concepts used in the volume.

The following six chapters (1 to 6) present case studies of memories in a number of Eastern European towns and cities, analysing how the present-day population relates to the memory of ethnic cleansing and to the cultural heritage of the people that vanished in the wake of these events. The cases selected come from main sub-regions of Europe: Centre, East and South, thereby demonstrating the scale of the problem and highlighting the importance of this study for the contemporary societies in these parts of Europe. Thus the first two chapters present cases from Central Europe. Chapter 1 deals with Wrocław in Poland and Chapter 2 with four Czech towns and cities – Pohořelice outside Brno, Postoloprty, Teplice nad Metují and Ústí nad Labem. They focus on the dissonant memory of Germans expelled after the Second World War and their legacy. The two chapters that follow address cases from Ukraine – the cities of L’viv (chapter 3) and Chernivtsi (chapter 4), focusing on the vanished Polish and Jewish communities, among other ethnic groups. The last two cases presented in the volume represent Southeastern Europe. Chapter 5 discusses the memory of expelled Italians from the city of Zadar in today’s Croatia, and chapter 6 gives an account of the difficult handling of memory regarding
the murder and expulsion of Bosniaks in the 1990s in Višegrad in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The authors of the respective chapters focus on different representations of collective memory: monuments and memorials, commemoration ceremonies, memory discourses and narratives in local media, as well as public speeches and documents. They also use different methods depending on their different disciplinary approaches. However, all of them, in one way or another, try to address the same set of questions: How are the vanished ethnic groups remembered, acknowledged or blamed? Who are memory agents in the studied localities, what motivates them and how do they shape and use memories of the lost others? What kind of changes in memory narratives and representations of the past can be observed since the fall of the Communist regimes in the region and the end of the Cold War? What are the forces that influence the transformation of collective memory in the places studied? Are there any efforts to develop more cosmopolitan and transnational approaches to the memory of the others and to replace or nuance the national narratives of victimhood? These questions can be researched with a focus on memory work at a number of levels: international and transnational, as well as at national, local and individual. However, in order to narrow down and deepen the focus of investigation, the authors have concentrated on the local level, while paying keen attention to interactions with other levels and the dynamic that is created in this process.

The case-oriented chapters are followed by the comparative and concluding chapter 7, which offers comparisons between the cases explored in the book. The diversity of methods and sources used by the authors of each chapter do not allow for systematic comparison. However, general comparisons are possible, not least since the studied cases 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 cleansing 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 at least two authoritarian regimes (Schlögel 2008; Snyder 2010): Nazism/fascism 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 deep-rooted resentments. These similarities make comparison meaningful, although there are significant, historical and structural dissimilarities between the places, which will become obvious to the reader of this book. The case of Višegrad in Bosnia
and Herzegovina especially stands out because its Bosniak population was expelled quite recently (in the 1990s), whereas the other urban communities underwent dramatic changes of their populations in connection to the Second World War. However, it is precisely these kinds of dissimilarities that make the comparison between the cases even more urgent and interesting. The differences provoke inquiry about the factors that influence collective memory formation in the context of the traumatic past and dramatic population changes. The seemingly odd case of Višegrad has, for example, been chosen to highlight how much time, distance and generational change matter for the shape of collective memory after ethnic cleansing. The places selected also differ in size, in geographical position, in the scale of demographic changes and in the extent of the material destruction they suffered in the twentieth century. Thus, a comparison between them can serve as a discussion about the role of the urban landscape and other material remnants of the vanished national and ethnic groups in the collective memory of the present residents. These matters are discussed in the concluding and comparative chapter together with other questions such as: How do cities function as repositories of the past? How can the changes that have occurred in memory politics with regard to the pre-war residents be explained? How can the local memory agents in the places analysed be described? What are their strategies? What impact do transnational memory agents and the forces of globalization and Europeanization have? Last but not least, the concluding chapter raises the important question about the relation between memory and identity: To what extent do the new politics of memory and changes in memory narratives in the Eastern European towns and cities under investigation contribute to the transformation of local communities, their identities and attitudes to the ‘others’?

**Sources, Methods and Concepts**

To try to answer these questions the authors have used a variety of sources, first and foremost in-depth interviews with a range of relevant local memory actors, media texts both in print and online, official documents, guidebooks, leaflets and local history writings, as well as different visual representations of the past, such as commemoration ceremonies, buildings, inscriptions, monuments and memorials. The authors have also applied a variety of methods, such as participant observation and other ethnographic methods, and various strands of textual analysis, such as content and narrative analysis, discourse and rhetoric analysis and, last but not least, elements of visual analysis. The authors draw from
approaches within cultural studies, cultural sociology, ethnology, history, urban studies and political studies. They have their academic background in these disciplines and have 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 to analyse all relevant representations of memory in a city in one chapter, the authors have had to select 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 of ‘collective memory’ in the study of remembrance in a city, while they are also aware that the concept is far from being uncontroversial. This notion was established by Halbwachs (1992) and later developed by Nora and Kritzman (1996; 1997; 1998). Since then, it has been sometimes questioned (for example, Connerton 1992; Irwin-Zarecka 1994) but also fruitfully theoretically developed. The authors of this volume share the understanding of the concept as it was defined by Misztal, who referred to collective memory 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: 25). The authors want to emphasize that ‘collective memory’ should not be seen as an essentializing or static category. It is not about a common memory shared by all members of the group, since, as has been pointed out by Young, ‘individuals cannot share another’s memory any more than they can share another’s cortex’ (1993: 11). Collective memory is not reducible to what is in people’s heads. As was highlighted by another scholar, 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) ways. Collective memory is plural, but at the same time it has the 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 emphasize the dynamics of collective memory, as something ‘we do, not something we have’ (Olick 2008: 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 much to the theoretical insights of J. Assmann (1988) and A. Assmann (1999), who made a useful
differentiation between cultural memory and communicative memory. Both concepts frequently appear 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 representations of the past that are expressed only orally, in everyday interaction, not leaving material traces. It has a limited time span, normally not exceeding three generations. It is not institutional, but still can bind together groups, families and generations.

In the volume the reader will encounter a number of other theoretical concepts, both those well established in the field of memory studies and those still widely discussed. One of them, highly relevant for the study of cities, is ‘memory scape’. The term denotes a real or symbolic place that is imbued with memory. The place contains traces of the past that are inscribed in its materiality (for example, buildings, names or inscriptions) and at the same time communicates the contemporary actors’ view of the past, their ideas and their 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 of the past (Kapralski 2010: 9–11). Cities and towns under investigation in this study are perfect examples of memory scapes. The urban tissue consists of layers of the past, it is a palimpsest (Huyssen 2003). However, whether these layers will be discovered and how they will be interpreted depends on the will of the contemporary inhabitants and especially those of them who have the capacity to influence others. Theirs is the power to make a memory scape into a ‘site of memory’.14 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’ (2000: 70).

Studies of processes of remembrance in a city also imply a need to think about the concept of ‘cultural heritage’. This term, frequently used in the last decades by politicians and researchers, is imbued with many meanings.15 The authors of this volume understand ‘heritage’ as a ‘construct, artefact, materialized 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: 32–33; 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 some of the authors of the chapters in this volume take a closer look on the actors that are involved in this process of creation of ‘cultural heritage’ in the cities and towns under investigation. The question is: What status has the cultural heritage of the lost (expelled or murdered) others? Is it rejected? Appropriated? Recognized?

Almost all contributors to this volume point to the fact that the cultural heritage in the towns and cities under investigation is becoming increasingly commercialized. It is not only a matter of cultural politics but also one of economy and consumption. Cultural heritage is for sale to the tourist industry and, in the case of the places analysed in this book, especially for so-called ‘Heimat tourism’, as well as for nostalgic tourism in general.16 ‘Heimat tourism’ refers to travels to places seen as those of one’s own origin or the origin of one’s ancestors. Nostalgic tourism includes this kind of travel but it is a broader term and refers to journeys of return to places which remind people of a past that is disintegrated and forever lost, thus feeding feelings of nostalgia. Cultural heritage has the potential to attract tourists as well as new settlers and therefore it has an impact on the city’s image, which has emerged as a principal stake in global competition.17 In order to describe this phenomenon analytically, some of the authors in the volume have found it suitable to refer to the concept of ‘city branding’ that rose to prominence two decades ago. City branding is about the way the city presents itself to the world and the way the world (including specific audiences) forms its view of the city, which is important to attract assets in form of investments, human capital and commodities.18 The book points out that in post-communist East-Central Europe the focus on a multicultural past and cultural heritage of both lost and existent ethnic minorities has proven to be a winning strategy for branding the towns and cities.

Another concept to have in mind while reading this volume is ‘prosthetic memory’, coined by Landsberg (2004). It refers to the manner in which mediated (not first-hand) 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 towns and cities under investigation in this volume, memories of ethnic cleansing, if they exist at all, have this prosthetic character. They are transmitted via different kinds of media and sometimes, but much less frequently, via the stories told by the older generation. This last instance has to do with intergenerational transmission of memories and here another term is useful, namely ‘postmemory’. It has been defined by
Hirsch (1997) as the horizon of experience created for the second generation via narratives of the dramatic or traumatic events experienced by the first generation. The memory of these events may be internalized via emotional and imaginative investment on the part of the second generation, thereby influencing their lives. In this volume postmemory is relevant in the context of phenomena such as Heimat tourism and nostalgic tourism. It facilitates understanding of why the children and grandchildren of the victims of ethnic cleansing undertake journeys of return to the places that were lost by their ancestors. Postmemory creates a connection between them and the lost places that become a part of their self-understanding and identity.

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 historians who write historical studies are unable to completely disconnect themselves from the present, no matter how hard they try to reach the academic ideal of objectivity. Many historians realize this, but most of them stubbornly resist to speak about memory and history as closely interconnected or overlapping phenomena (Stråth 2009). One way to avoid it is to describe the problem using other concepts. Thus, one of the contributors to the present volume (a 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, having had it in mind while investigating different uses of the past in the towns and cities studied. However, they have 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. This is evident in several
chapters of this book, especially those that build on interviews and participant observation. Memory has an intersubjective character (Misztal 2003: 74–80). The latter presupposes a view of memory not only as a social construction but also as 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 points to 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 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 on how Europe should remember its difficult past.

Notes

1. For an overview and examples of these debates, see Troebst (2006, 2009).
3. Among the first historians writing about these questions were Schechtman (1946; 1963) and Kulischer (1948). Later on, after a long silence during the Cold War, a new wave of books on the matter appeared. See for example Barkan (2000), Ther and Siljak (2001), Ahonen (2003), Chinnov (2004) and Clark (2006).
5. There are especially many publications which deal with Jewish or German memories. See for example Erased: Vanishing Traces of Jewish Galicia in Present-Day Ukraine (Bartov 2007) or The Lost German East: Forced Migration and the Politics of Memory, 1945–1970 (Demshuk 2012).
6. Other examples are: The City of Collective Memory: Its Historical and Architectural Entertainments (Boyer 1994); Imagining Cities: Scripts, Signs, Memory (Westwood and Williams 1997); and Urban Memory: History and Amnesia in the Modern City (Crimson 2005).
8. See The Ukrainian West: Culture and the Fate of Empire in Soviet Lviv (Risch 2011).
10. See Die Stadt im Westen: Wie Königsberg Kaliningrad wurde (Brodersen 2008).
11. See also ‘Living among the Ghosts of Others: Urban Postmemory in Eastern Europe’ (Blacker 2013: 1–22, 173–93). It is important to emphasize that besides the English-language publications mentioned above, there is a recently growing number of publications in this research field in Slavic and other Eastern European languages.

12. ‘Methodological nationalism’ means that the nation-state is seen as the primary unit for analysis and the most important container for social processes. For criticism of this phenomenon see Beck and Szoaider (2006: 1–23).

13. Here, the term ‘memory actors’, sometimes called ‘memory agents’, is used to designate individuals who try to influence how the past should be remembered, either in their capacity as representatives of different institutions, or exclusively on their own initiative.

14. According to Nora and Kritzman (1996: xvii), who coined this term, a lieu de mémoire is any significant entity, whether material or non-material in nature, which has become a symbolic element of the mnemonic heritage of a community.

15. For elaboration on the meanings of the concept, see Kowalski (2014) and Ashworth et al. (2007).


17. See Place Promotion: The Use of Publicity and Marketing to Sell Towns and Regions (Gold and Ward 1994); and The City as a Brand: Orchestrating a Unique Experience (Florian 2002).


Bibliography


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