

## Summary

### **Displacement and memory. The study of (lack of) collective memory on the basis of the Ukrainian Galicia and the Polish “recovered territories”**

The book is a *case study* of social memory in two small towns, which due to war damages and post-war mass displacements, ethnic cleansings and migrations lost a substantial part of their inhabitants and were populated by newcomers. Żółkiew, which was a multi-ethnic (populated by the Jews, the Poles and the Ukrainians) town in Lvov voivodship of the Second Polish Republic, after the war became a part of the Ukrainian Soviet Republic. During the war almost all Jews from Żółkiew were killed, with many inhabitants of other nationalities falling prey to the German and Soviet terror, and most of the Poles and the Jews that survived leaving the town in the course of after-war “repatriations”. Krzyż – which before the war was the German town of Kreuz (Ostbahn) – after 1945 became part of the Polish “recovered territories”. Some of the German inhabitants left the town as early as in 1945, with the rest being dislocated by the Polish authorities after the war. In both towns, the place of those who had left, perished or escaped was taken by new inhabitants. In the case of Żółkiew they were the Ukrainians from the surrounding villages or deported from Poland, as well as Ukrainians and Russians from the Soviet part of Ukraine. In Krzyż, the newcomers were the Poles from Eastern Borderlands, Greater Poland and the Central Poland. Both towns not only lost most of their inhabitants and a substantial part of their urban tissue, but were also deprived of their identity and history. The same happened to those who came to Żółkiew and Krzyż: regardless of whether they had been forced to migrate, or had done so of their own accord, they had to start a new life and adjust to completely new conditions. They also had to – in physical and symbolic terms – take the place of those who had already left the towns.

The book tells about the collective memory of those who live in Krzyż and Żółkiew at present. In the course of the four-year research, which brought about almost 200 biographic and biographic-topical interviews, recorded within families, with representatives of different generations, I was trying to answer the question of what aspects of the local history

are remembered, and which are forgotten or fail to be mentioned by the representatives of the studied communities, as well as whether the shape of this memory is influenced by the origins of the representatives of the oldest generation and their war experience. I was interested in the memory of displacements/migrations, the memory of those absent Others – the Poles, the Jews, the Germans, but also of the local heroes and traitors. What was crucial was the dynamics of the processes rooted in different generations and, to which extent the inhabitants consider the pre-war past of the town as “their own”. The axis around which the research questions were formulated was also the transfer – I wanted to check how collective memory changes in subsequent generations, what influences and shapes it, what relations there are between individual (biographic) and social (collective) memory.

The analysis conducted has shown that the collective memory in the places of mass displacements has – despite the varying historical, social and cultural context – a number of common factors. It seems that what is the most prominent common factor for both towns is the memory of the displacement and the following process of social adaptation and integration, which was more or less difficult, depending on the scale of differences between the old and the new place of settlement.

The topoi present in the narrations of both groups of migrants are, for instance, the journey, the fear of strangers, the feeling of temporality, poverty. The emotional identity of the reported events is, in some cases, striking: if as an experiment some names and facts were removed from quotations, which in turn would be substituted with each other, their message would remain equally authentic. Similarities can also be found in the narrations concerning mutual prejudices between various groups of settlers, the longing for home, the feeling of temporality and the difficulty with reconstructing the post-migration identity of the displaced. The common features of the narrations in question allow to make the conclusion that the displacement and its consequences were a universal experience, which resulted in comparable memory.

At the same time, the biographical context of given individuals interviewed, as well as the culture of the memory they lived in or – in case of younger ones, were socialized – results in the topoi being embedded in different narrative structures, have different cultural “cases” and function in different ways. An thus, in the accounts provided by the Poles, the topos of longing and journey appears as the most prominent, in the Ukrainian ones the factor more deeply-rooted is the memory of the fear of strangers (especially of the authority), and poverty. There are also issues which appear only in the narrations of one of the groups – like the belief in a bilateral nature of

the displacement shared by the Ukrainian interviewees and the fear of the return of the Germans among the Poles.

Both in the Polish and Ukrainian narrations some patterns can be noticed concerning the transmission of the memories of displacement within one's family. In the narrations of each subsequent generation the contents of memory become more general, lose their details, depth and emotional impact. The younger the interviewees, the more frequent the ones whose memory of their family's past is non-historical or simply faint. I associate this fact rather with the nature of the message as such, than with the interference of transmission due to ideological pressure of a more or less repressive political system.

Although the fear accompanying the life in an undemocratic political system obviously influenced the shaping of family memory, it seems that its part which concerns the displacement was "blocked" to a relatively low extent (in comparison, for example, with the memory of Żółkiew's and Krzyż's former inhabitants). Those elements of the memory which are more firmly embedded than other, more thoroughly supplemented with a given community's cultural context (at the local and national level), acquire greater resistance to blurring and falling into oblivion. By becoming *topoi*, they can be shaped not only by within-family transmission, but also by other, external forms of socializing (such as school, cinema or historical literature). By acquiring the resistance to being forgotten, however, they lose a part of their individuality, gaining repetitive features of narration from the order of the so called greater history, in the narrations of younger individuals.

The analysis of the gathered narrative material demonstrated the existence of both similarities and differences in the structure of the memory concerning the "absent Others" in Krzyż and Żółkiew. In both communities it is the public memory, as the Poles, the Jews and the Germans have received some forms of commemoration, and their historical presence is partly used as an element of the towns' image – but this memory is not used as the basis for creating group identity. The memory of the Others is gradually vanishing, yet with different nature, as well as the scale of the process itself. In both towns the oblivion concerns not the whole memory of the Others, but only the most sensitive elements – the ones most difficult for the present inhabitants, which is mainly how the Others from Krzyż and Żółkiew had disappeared. The disappearance is a typical case of *anamnesis*, a memory which is difficult, yet still recurring. What is of special significance here is the status of the memory of Holocaust, as unlike the memory of the displacement of the Germans or the Poles, the new inhabitants of Żółkiew

did not even witness it – they could only hear about it. The lack of collective memory in this case can be explained with the fact that it lacked the substance to be formed from, namely the biographic memory. However, were this explanation to be true, its logic is distorted by the extent to which the memory of other victims, whose fate had also only been told about, not experienced, prevails in the Żółkiew's collective memory (like the Ukrainian prisoners murdered by NKWD in 1941). Thus, apart from experience itself, in order to exist in the collective memory, a given event has to be considered as referring to our own group. The mechanisms of collective memory are merciless: the Ukrainian victims of NKWD are remembered, as they are considered "ours"; the Holocaust of Jews and the disappearance of the Poles from Żółkiew are forgotten, as the ethnic groups are considered to be Others.

What appears common in the structure of memory of the Others is the defensive strategies, namely the structures and actions aimed at making it easier for the interviewees to face the memories which are difficult for them as a given community members. In both cases, it concerns a situation when the community they feel a part of had its inglorious share in the post-war displacements or/and used violence towards the dislocated. The strategies take the form of mechanisms functioning at different moments in time: at the moment of experiencing the difficult events, in the post-war period, or even at the moment of creating biographic narration. What is different, however, is the "material" which drives those common mechanisms – in each community the defensive strategies relate to a different, the most painful aspect of the displacement.

What the oldest inhabitants of Krzyż and Żółkiew significantly differ in is the extent of emotionality characterizing the stories about displacement: the empathy or at least understanding shown by Krzyż inhabitants is in sharp contrast with the indifference or coldness of the narrations from Żółkiew. The differences, as I tried to show in the book, stem from both different biographic experience of the interviewees and the different cultures of memory they were living within after the war.

In both towns, the memory of the younger people is characterized by the omission of the elements potentially threatening their own group's identity, which is much more visible than in the case of older interviewees. The memory of younger generations is dominated by "easy" motives, which are predominantly positive and concern the cultural heritage and the examples of good, regardless the historical circumstances, the relations between their own group and the Others – the town's former inhabitants. It is also in the youngest group of respondents that one most frequently encounters

the individuals for whom the presence of Others, or the fact of their town's former belonging to another country is of little or no significance at all. What is crucial that it was only in Żółkiew that one can notice the cases of total lack of knowledge – both concerning the Jews and the Poles, as well as Żółkiew's former belonging to the Second Polish Republic. It demonstrates the greater impact of the ideological pressure in the Soviet Union's Żółkiew, than in Krzyż in the People's Republic of Poland – and how much crippled and traumatized the local memory there is.

The most diverse conclusions are formulated on the basis of the analysis of the local heroes. Whereas in Krzyż the inhabitants' memory can be describes as "cold", Żółkiew is obsessive about commemoration. In Krzyż, there is in fact no collective local hero. The local anti-hero are the Soviets, responsible for destroying the city in 1945, and the terror exercised there shortly after the war, but it is not a subject of any conflict, the issue appears to be non-controversial and creates no divisions among the inhabitants in terms of creating competing memory communities. The situation in Żółkiew differs dramatically, with two mutually hostile memory groups existing, organized around different canons. For one of them, which I refer to as the "post-Soviet" memory group, the local hero is the Red Army, and the traitor – the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA). For the "independence" group it is the contrary – the UPA members are heroes, with the Soviets considered to be war criminals and occupants. In the oldest generation, the dividing line runs along the borders of different groups of settlers, but in younger generations the origins cease to be the determining factor. What is important is that most young people should rather be included into the second group, which shows the scale of the memory's influence, as well as its attractiveness in constructing collective identity.