

MEMORY AND CHANGE IN EASTERN EUROPE

How Special?



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In his seminal essay 'The Past is Another Country', the late Tony Judt (1992: 105) saw the East of Europe in the following way:

The communist era ... left a vacuum into which ethnic particularism, nationalism, nostalgia, xenophobia, and ancient quarrels could flow; not only were these older forms of political discourse legitimated again by virtue of communism's very denial of them, but they were the only real terms of political communication that anyone could recall, with roots in the history of the region. Together with religious affiliation, which in pre-1939 Eastern Europe was often itself the hallmark of nationality, they and the past they describe and represent have returned to haunt and distort postcommunist politics and memory.

This is the kind of archetypal statement that one comes across in literature. It treats Eastern European processes of remembering normatively and in terms of mnemonic pathologies, in which East European postcommunist societies have to catch up with the West European models of remembering the past. What was also typical until recently was to treat Eastern Europe as a marginal, supplementary, or in the best case scenario, an exceptional issue in the discussions of Europeanization of memory. The situation has changed in the last decade with flourishing political projects, cultural programmes and academic networks. Not only have European projects and globalization stirred identity debates and influenced changes in the perception of the past in the societies of the former Eastern Bloc, but the process is mutual. While previously the East Europeans found it difficult to draw the attention of their Western counterparts with regard to questions of their history and memory, the official commemorations and public controversies of the last few years show that Eastern Europe has



FIGURE 0.1 Warsaw. A prewar building at the United Nations Circle. Photo: M. Pakier.

become an important trigger for discussions about the content and form of a European narrative. Facing this important shift, which itself is part of a larger process of increasing awareness by the elite and the common people of both the flexibility and politicization of memory (Lebow 2008: 26), it is appropriate to ask then: are we at the climax of memory research, or are we entering the twilight? Or maybe rather still at the beginning, given the still unfulfilled demand for clarifications, memory textbooks, encyclopedias and other codifications of theory.

Everyday examples seem to confirm that the subject is still not *passé*. The mere space of the European city of Warsaw, and the layers of paint or graffiti on its prewar buildings and walls testify to that.

The image above shows one of the very few buildings in Warsaw to survive the war, now located at the United Nations Circle (*Rondo ONZ*). Prewar illustrations show it as part of a vibrant Jewish district, and during the war it belonged to the Jewish ghetto. In 2011 graffiti appeared on its wall, saying 'Immigration is not a crime' (*Imigracja to nie zbrodnia*). Today this part of Warsaw is also symbolic of the Polish systemic transformation since 1989; because the land was cheap in the 1990s and in a good location close to the city centre, it has been gradually evolving into a business district, and recently the United Nations Circle has also become a site for demonstrations defending immigration and multicultural society, the writing on the wall being one of the traces of such activities. It is significant that of all buildings in the neighborhood it was

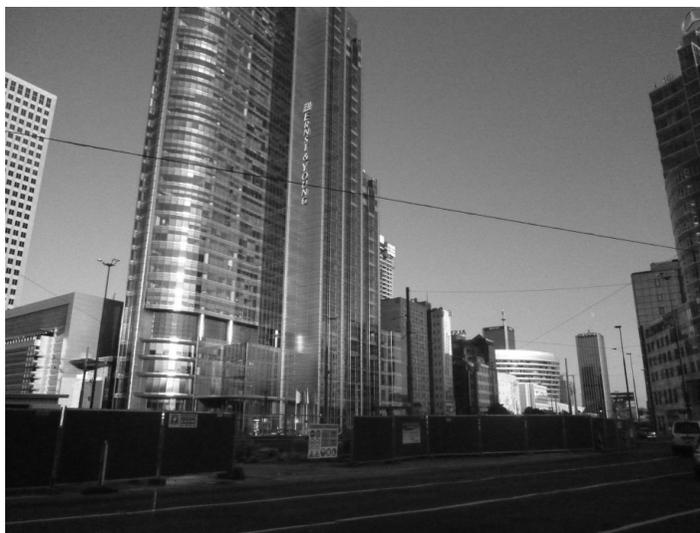


FIGURE 0.2 A view from the other side of the United Nations Circle. Photo: M. Pakier.

this historical wall, once part of Warsaw's Jewish neighbourhood, which beckoned to the protesters to leave their remarks.

Paint on a wall is only the visible projection of a mental process. But what process? It could be argued that these are traces of activities that are merely recycling the already existing memory boom, confident of the audience they are going to receive. Or, alternatively, they might differ in quality from what we have already seen and known, and therefore merit a closer look. This example might guide us through questions about the use of history by non-state agents in the postcommunist context of the former Eastern Bloc countries. The painting on the wall is a sign of a free public space, liberated from the influence of the state that used to maintain a monopoly on interpretations of history. There is also the question of the coexistence of various layers of the past in a society going through dynamic social and cultural transformations. That carries implicit issues of forgetting, and of a rivalry of memories represented by various groups. Or, quite differently, it may be an example of a conscious use of the established global memory code, such as the Holocaust – with its strong moral connotations – in the new, post-transformation, multicultural context of a Poland that has already 'returned' to Europe. The political, social and cultural transformations after 1989 have changed the Polish ethnic and cultural landscape, wherein the prewar multiculturalism and the wartime fate of the Polish Jews has become a symbol to refer to when defending the 'others' of today.

The city space of Warsaw provides only a sample trace of social memory processes in Eastern Europe after 1989. Micro-histories like that of the Warsaw wall will provoke broader interpretative horizons and frameworks – local, national, regional, European and global. For memory scholars questions then arise as to whether we can inscribe such Eastern European puzzles amid the already existing matrix of concepts and theories – or do they deserve new categories to properly identify the social processes they are undergoing? To put it another way: do Eastern European data have the impetus for interrogating the paradigm of ‘memory studies’, as Blacker and Etkind (2013) recently suggested?

This book comments on two issues related to this marriage of ‘memory studies’ with the European identity debate. The first is on the memory studies aspect, and is connected to its immanent question on how collective memory changes or endures (Schwartz 1991, Olick 1999). In theoretical literature we find various views and discussions of factors such as time, trauma, generations, politics or media behind these processes (Assmann and Short 2012: 6–8). The quarter of a century that has just passed since the political breakthrough of 1989 and a decade of integration with the European Union, provide rich empirical material from Eastern Europe on the issue of collective memory change. This will be examined by the authors in this volume using various normative and theoretical approaches. The other central question is on the European identity aspect, and more particularly, it deals with alleged Eastern European specificity anchored in its history. This question, long discussed in the literature (e.g., Halecki 1980, Jedlicki 1999), will be scrutinized by the use of the interpretative tools of memory studies. The authors have different opinions on the matter. Some of them walk the path of Larry Wolff (1994) on the invented nature of Eastern Europe, while others see the differences in the content and the ways in which the past has been shaped in this region.

Unlike other volumes on Eastern European memories, this has been completed mainly (but not exclusively) by insiders, by multidisciplinary scholars from Eastern Europe. This offers the opportunity to see the sensitivity and identity of their research: how they use, understand, reinterpret or contest some of the memory concepts, but equally importantly it gives us access to rich data, often absent from the international agenda.

In the following introduction, we shall first discuss the present state of the European memory debate, mostly as represented in scholarship, and situate Eastern Europe within it both as an agent in the Europeanization processes as well as a subject of the debate on European memory. Next, we shall present the new wave of memory research, on and in Eastern Europe, which benefits from a broad use of comparative national and

transnational cases, and propose some conclusions stemming from this research as an alternative to the more global framework of a pan-European memory.

Writing European Memory

European memory has become a popular subject of academic debate, vitally fuelling the discipline of memory studies. Usually supplied with a question mark – presented either as an impossibility, or as a desirable direction – European memory takes its impetus from the fundamental dilemmas defining Europe after 1945: Where are its borders? Can European societies be united – and if so, around what traditions and values? Is there a specifically European culture and tradition? How is it possible to shape a peaceful European future and to cultivate its pasts at the same time? Which pasts and which traditions should be cultivated, and which should be condemned? How is it possible to create unity and preserve the diversity of various heritages in Europe at the same time? The questions of European history and identity have necessarily involved the need to face both the internal and external others, and definitions of who the others are. This volume will provide a view on Europeanization from the perspective of East Europeans, and of their transformation from a peripheral status to one of the central subjects in the current debate on European history and memory.

Framing of the European narrative develops simultaneously within two academic fields. There are the efforts of historians aimed at rewriting European pasts in a new transnational fashion; the particular incentive for doing so has been the experience of mass violence in the twentieth century. Thus the historian Philipp Ther (2011, see also Ther and Siljak 2001) proposes supranational and regional frameworks to research forced migrations. 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. In their recently edited book, Omer Bartov and Eric D. Weitz (2013) reach further back in time, searching for the roots of the violence in twentieth-century Europe within the imperial processes of the nineteenth century characteristic of the continent. Following on from this, there have been some attention grabbing attempts to rewrite national master narratives into a ‘European’ history. Such endeavours, justified by current memory politics yet still transparent and comprehensive, are found in German historical writing (e.g. Frevert 2005).

Then there are those within the social and cultural studies on memory. Questions about the form and content of a shared European memory have been explicitly formulated and critically discussed in several recent English-language publications, such as by Jan-Werner Müller (2002), Konrad H. Jarausch and Thomas Lindenberger (2007b), Wulf Kansteiner et al. (2006), or Małgorzata Pakier and Bo Stråth (2010). Certain German publications, by Aleida Assmann (2006, 2012) and Claus Leggewie (2011), as well as those by French authors Georges Mink and Laure Neumayer (2007) or Sarah Gensburger and Marie-Claire Lavabre (2012) should also be mentioned in this context. Their authors seek to identify long-term and transnational patterns in dealing with the past in postwar Europe, indicating possibilities and challenges to a collective European historical narrative of the twentieth century.

Authors such as Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider (2006), Gesine Schwan (1997), Aleida Assmann (2012), or Claus Leggewie (2010) typically play double roles – as scholars of memory and as memory agents, balancing between postulative-normative and analytical-descriptive tone and language. Common to their concepts of a shared European memory is an 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 – moving 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 such a conceptualized European memory in the historical process of coming to terms with the Second World War and the Holocaust, begun by West Germany's reckonings with the Third Reich from the late 1960s. Some scholars assess these constructions skeptically, calling the new 'European' memory a product of the reunited German memory politics that has been developing since the 1990s (Müller 2010).

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 memory (Karlsson 2010). Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider (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, which 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 other experiences, like

the Soviet atrocities and communism suffered by East Europeans, do not arouse similar emotions on the international arena, remaining Europe's 'cold memory'.

The enlargement of the European Union to include countries of the former Eastern Bloc made it apparent that the constructions of European memory and identity thus far 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 that 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. More urgent from the perspective of Eastern European societies was not a new memory as a cultural and political project, but rather a coming to terms with a surfeit of memories which had not hitherto been publicly articulated or acknowledged.

The multiplicity of memories, often mutually conflicted, is what, according to Polish intellectual historian 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 argues, with Claus Offe, that he 'who remembers history is condemned to repeat it' (ibid. 225–226). Another Polish scholar, Robert Traba, states to the contrary that what fuels present conflicts is not excessive remembering but rather an institutionalized forgetting of the preceding communist era (Traba 2007). He evokes the example of the inter-ethnic conflicts in the former Yugoslavia: '[a]ll those decades of attempts to deceive memory, to supplant it with the imposed ideology of brotherhood and to push it into the taboo sphere – if during those years there had been attempts to face the memory, to find a vent for it, even if it would have divided people, then maybe it would not have returned in such a violent and destructive way?' Despite these opposing views, both Jedlicki and Traba agree that memories of the twentieth century are still hot in Eastern Europe, to borrow Charles S. Maier's phrasing, and it is premature to expect them to cool off in the mould of a common European memory.

East Europeans with their experience of communism are, however, not the only European other. To be fair, there are more than two competitive pasts, Nazism and communism, on the market of European memories.

Pakier and Stråth (2010) name at least one more dark past that Europe has yet to reckon with – this being colonialism, both external and internal, regarding native minorities. Claus Leggewie (2010) sees the landscape of European memory as consisting of seven ever further horizons that he calls circles of memory: the Holocaust as Europe's negative foundation myth, the memory of Soviet communism, pan-European narratives of mass expulsions in the twentieth century, memories of two world wars, the experience of colonialism, Europe as the continent of immigration and finally Europe's postwar story of democratization, economic growth and integration.

Increasingly there are calls to develop institutional frames in Europe for such a culture of memory wherein these various narratives of the past can be rightfully articulated. The memory culture that has developed around commemorations of the Holocaust has been too monolithic, focused on victims but representing the perspective of the witnesses and perpetrators – since, unlike in the United States (see, for example, Diner 2010), there were few Jews in Europe who could play the role of postwar memory agents. This 'negative' European memory (Knigge and Frei 2002) has in its ethical dimension been based on the questions of guilt and moral responsibility for the fate of European Jewry. Aleida Assmann (2013, and in this volume) observes that the positive aspect of this model of memory is that it is more sensitive to the perspective of the other: the heirs of, or groups representing historical witnesses and perpetrators express their sorrow for the fate of the victims, as in the symbolic kneeling by Willy Brandt in Warsaw in 1970. According to Assmann, it is such a 'dialogic' memory model that is open to alternative narratives of the past to build a common culture of remembrance in Europe. This model draws on the postwar German memory culture that has emphasized the dark and shameful chapters in national history and called for a critical coming to terms with them. Other authors, however, see a void of a different kind in the ongoing Europeanization of memory: missing are not just narratives that disrupt traditionally heroic national views of history but also those representing the native voice of the multitude of historical victim groups in Europe, including the multitude of minority groups that have not been given proper attention. On the following pages, Sławomir Kaprański will discuss the problem from the perspective of Roma, giving one example of how minority memories may shape, or be ignored by, public memories. Robert Traba's (2007) concept of a 'polyphonic' memory shows how important it is to open the public space for the various voices of historical victims who were only allowed to articulate their claims with the fall of communism. Victims, or groups representing them, also speak for themselves in Michael Rothberg's (2009) concept of 'multidirectional' memory. The

concept, similar in some respect to the earlier 'global' memory by Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider (2002; 2006; see also Sznaider 2013) shows how the Holocaust may become a moral symbol to be endowed with multiple meanings by other groups and minorities who endured their own suffering in the past. In these two concepts, the Holocaust provides the frame of European public memories as a moral reference to invoke while articulating new narratives of victimhood.

In light of the rise of the many competitive claims to mark 'their' past in the European canon of history, what does a 'hot' memory really mean? Is the Holocaust indeed the hot memory of Europe, as Charles S. Maier wrote? With the EU enlargement and growing immigration to Europe from other continents, the proportions of and relations between various symbolic interests supported by particular historical narratives have changed significantly. Dominated by the 'negative' Holocaust memory, Europe is gradually becoming a hotpot of new rival historical narratives brought in by new agents of memory to include: memories of the Holodomor (the Ukrainian man-made famine), memories of the Balkan conflict in the 1990s, or memories of the Armenian genocide contested by the Turkish minority living in the EU, to name a few. These will not be easily melded into one. The conflict or tension between them, however, is what prevents those memories from becoming ritualized in the established and acknowledged public forms of commemoration, keeping their temperature at high level. Comparing public memories of the Holocaust in the Czech Republic and Poland after 1989 Stanisław Tyszka (2010) observed that, paradoxically, the accelerated process of acknowledgement of the Holocaust victims' status in the Czech public memory through a large-scale property restitution and compensation programme did not provoke any thorough historical debates in this country. In Poland, on the contrary, there was no legal solution to the problem of Jewish restitution, and it is this lack of symbolic closure, Tyszka argues, visible not just in the lack of restitution laws but in the public debate more generally, which is the guarantee that the Holocaust, and the broader context of Polish-Jewish historical relations, will continue for many years to shape historical debates in Poland, thus remaining the Polish 'hot' memory. Sławomir Kaprański in this volume observes quite similarly, referring to present Polish-Jewish encounters in Poland, that melancholic remembrance and 'un-mastered' past may well be a sign of a less visible, yet serious memory work.

What still fuels the debate on European memory is in fact the recognition of its internal divisions and exclusions. Gradually the landscape of memories in Europe is taking on more colours and shades. By discussing the particularities of the 'others' – East Europeans, immigrants, older minorities and non-European wannabes, and their status within

a projected European memory – the process of Europeanization has not halted, but goes on. It is conflicts, controversy, discussion and the multitude of competitive memories that keep the debate on European history and memory alive and give it ongoing appeal.

Yet there is always the temptation of exceptionalism in the case of particular memory groups. It is a fact that East European memories are too willingly imagined by their construers and agents – scholars, politicians and other practitioners of memory – as a ‘special’ European case, slipping easily into the role of an *enfant terrible* of European memory. Sandra Kalniete’s speech from 2004 has almost become paradigmatic, leading to rough formulations of differences in public memories between West and 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). As a new regional construct, the memory of Eastern Europe, based on the experience of two totalitarianisms, a more painful experience of the Second World War and decades of communism, often lashes out in polemics towards pan-European memory projects. In this process, Western Europe becomes an important incentive for identity building in Eastern Europe. The perceived cohesive and conflictless West invites constructions of self-indulging East European myths of uniqueness, based on convictions of a special kind of historical experience that is incomparable and of a fundamentally different character to that of the West. In this manner conceptualized history aims to juxtapose the East European historical experience with projects of a common European memory. 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? And at the same time, 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 avoid falling into an intellectually peripheral realm, and go on to fertilize broader theories and research with original findings and concepts? Below we propose to look at these questions in the context of the discipline development – the state of memory research in Eastern Europe and its position within global studies on memory.

Framing Eastern Europe – The New Wave of Research

A dominant current in memory studies is the fact that they have been largely shaped by a Western perspective. Put simply – in the domains of history, sociology, social psychology and cultural studies – this international English-language scholarship has referred to three main roots: French, German and Anglo-American writings,¹ and as we have argued elsewhere (Wawrzyniak and Pakier 2013), in the international field of memory studies, contributions by scholars from Eastern Europe have, until recently, mostly been lacking. Does this imply that memory issues have not been studied there? Quite the contrary, as is evident from bookshelves, special issues of journals and numerous conferences in these countries. The selected national states of research have been examined recently by several scholars, such as Doubravka Olšáková (2012) on the Czech Republic, Alina Kurhajcová (2012) on Slovakia, Ferenc Laczó and Máté Zombory (2012) on Hungary, Jörg Hackmann (2008, 2009) on the Baltic States, Piotr Filipkowski (2012), as well as Robert Traba (2011) on Poland. Such detailed overviews show that a respectable amount of work is being done in various disciplines: from micro-history, anthropology, political history, to the sociology of collective memory. Moreover, these efforts often share characteristics with their ‘Western’ memory studies counterparts as well as have long research traditions (Kończal and Wawrzyniak 2012; Kiliás 2013; Tarkowska 2013). 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. 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 a ‘notorious time lag between international and local references’ and Kończal and Wawrzyniak (2011: 11–40) of the lack of mutual recognition and selectivity.

Recently, however, new publications have appeared that allow us to speak of a new wave in memory research on Eastern Europe, represented both by East European and non-East European scholars. Characteristic of the new studies is that they treat Eastern Europe as their proper subject of research, using a broad range of methodological tools to describe the variety of narratives of the past, their functions and the historical contexts in which they were sustained or emerged in the public life of communist

and postcommunist societies. Specific to the new wave is that scholars are better trained theoretically and employ tools that used to be only postulates, like the category of memory agents, the relations between biographical and collective memories, local memories, etc. In this new research Eastern Europe is not merely a supplement to discussions about European memory but becomes the very subject of comparative and transnational studies. Certainly the new opening was made possible by the earlier works on European memory named in the above section, as well as their growing reception and that of memory studies more generally by scholars in Eastern Europe. The new interest in the East European region has been also paralleled by the appearance of various multidisciplinary platforms (international projects, conferences, web pages) that facilitate exchanges of experience.²

Comparative scholars representing the new wave have found in Eastern Europe 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 the political use of the histories of communism and the Second World War (Mink and Neumayer 2013; Miller and Lipman 2012; Mälksoo 2009), historiography versus memory (Kopeček 2008a), or sites of memory (Weber et al. 2011). Here are some leading examples of transnational research: the German historian Stefan Troebst (2005; 2013) works systematically on regional divisions of Europe in the tradition of Halecki (1950), Zernack (1977) and Szücs (1983), asking about transnational patterns of postcommunist cultures of remembrance in Eastern Europe versus similarly analytically distinguished Atlantic-Western European and German cultures of memory. In this respect, in Eastern Europe he identifies four clusters of countries: the first encompasses societies with a strong anticommunist consensus (e.g. Baltic States); the second includes societies characterized by an intense public debate on how history should be valued and commemorated (e.g. Hungary, Poland, Ukraine); the third comprises countries where public attempts to delegitimize the communist past were relatively weak (e.g. Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia, Albania); and the fourth cluster includes societies where communism has not suffered a loss of legitimacy (e.g. Belarus, Russia). Troebst (2010c) was also the leading scholar of a project comparing the memory cultures of Europe's southern and eastern semi-peripheries with regard to their coming to terms with dictatorial pasts, thereby extending 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 British scholar James Mark (2010), whose research covered 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, nor did he omit analysing the cultural memory of communism at terror sites and in museums. Although these parts of his work are already appealing for their stress on the contingency, non-linearity and unpredictability of both commemorative narratives and aesthetics, the real breadth of his research lies in his analysis of oral history interviews with over a hundred representatives of Hungarian, Czech Republic and Polish intelligentsia, including party members and former oppositionists. With 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 regard to history. This paradigm refers to the international circulation of grammars of apologies and pleas for forgiveness (Mink and Neumayer 2013: 1). Wigura shows how the politics of reconciliation have played well in Poland's contacts with its Western neighbour. With Ukraine, however, while similar political rituals were employed in the commemoration of atrocities during the Second World War as mutually inflicted by the people of the two countries, the author describes the latter in terms of a 'reconciliation kitsch', stressing its inadequate character that has lacked any real political or social impact, in this example pointing to limits of the apology diplomacy.

In another comparative work, Małgorzata Pakier (2013) analyses German and Polish cinematic discourses on the Holocaust and the Second World War in the broad context of public debates in the two countries, including historical works, media and politics. In each country the social, cultural and political processes of Holocaust reckoning were subordinated to the commemoration of national pasts, being framed by categories such as heroism, defeat, victimhood and resistance. Yet also in both countries, newer narratives have been developed, especially in films, towards more universal interpretations. These are framed in terms of 'ordinary people' rather than nations, and they have presented a more critical challenge to national reflection.

An interesting conceptual innovation in memory studies was recently formulated by culture scholars working on the project 'Memory at War: Cultural Dynamics in Poland, Russia and Ukraine'. In a dialogue with Pierre Nora's concept of *lieux de mémoire*, 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 studies concept in such a way that it can fit transnational agenda and the media society. The authors show how fruitful it can be by comparing and tracing the postwar circulation of representations of the Katyn mass murder (1940) in Poland, Ukraine, Belorussia, Russia and the Baltic States and show how this movement was fuelled by Andrzej Wajda’s movie *Katyn* (2007) on the subject as well as by the Polish presidential plane crash in Smoleńsk in 2010.

This background is sketched mainly by political questions, whether going deeply into personal accounts as in Mark’s book, or into the realms of ethics as in the book by Wigura, or of culture as in the study by Pakier, or Etkind, Finnin et al. Noteworthy too is work by scholars such as Maria Todorova, who point to the variety of genres of remembrance in postcommunist societies rather than to their consistency, including various forms of postcommunist nostalgia (e.g. Todorova and Gille 2010). 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 mémoire*’ (*Polsko-niemieckie miejsca pamięci*), led by Robert Traba and Hans Henning Hahn. The multi-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 ongoing 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.

This new wave of transnational research on Eastern Europe with its focus on regional memory travels, borrowings and conflicts invites us to look for some integration, as we have argued elsewhere, and proposed to consider the East European region as one of the frameworks of memory (Wawrzyniak and Pakier 2013). In other words, to extend Halbwachs’ (1925) concept of social frameworks of memory so as to include a 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). 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. Which framework(s) they actually use to recall or narrate particular events 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. In this context, we do not intend to replace 'family', 'occupational', 'national', 'European' or 'global' with 'regional' frameworks, but merely to indicate the latter's existence.

In this proposition, a 'regional' framework is not a predefined, essentialist, or purely geographical category. But it is understood as a set of discursive and physiognomic mechanisms beyond national frames, albeit of a limited, not 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 the activities of various memory agents (politicians, journalists, historians, NGO activities, victims' associations), as well as a point of reference for further discussion of 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 its societies were once influenced by a Soviet-type metanarrative 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, it is not claimed here that individuals born and socialized in Eastern Europe remember in some 'special' ways in comparison to the rest of the world, but instead that there exists some specific set of discursive practices related to particular historical events that happened in this part of Europe.

Volume Overview – Meeting the Challenge of Regional Specificity and Socio-Political Changes

The subject of this volume is memories, and reflection on memories, of historical violence, in particular of the Second World War and communism in Eastern Europe, in the context of broader debate on European history, memory and identity. Rather than presenting a full and systemic overview of East European memory processes, we chose to emphasize those aspects that employ or question the regional specificity vis á vis the imagined Western European, or European, memory.³ We use 'Eastern Europe' as an umbrella term to refer to the countries of the former Eastern Bloc, which in the twentieth century experienced double totalitarianism, wars and decades of communism (or real socialism) and Soviet dependency. Although the intention was not to bring 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-a-half decades. We do not examine memory processes in Russia, although Russia remains one of the major points of reference for discussions in many of the following chapters. The authors in this volume will refer to the geopolitical area of their research in various ways, sometimes as Eastern Europe, and in other places as Central and Eastern Europe, or Central-Eastern Europe. The choice of term depends not only on the subject of research itself, but also on the authors' position, which may be more global, thus inviting writing more generally about Eastern Europe, or more regional, inviting more nuanced phrasing.

The volume brings together scholars of various disciplines – historians, sociologists and anthropologists – to reflect on questions related to the specificities of research on memories in Eastern Europe, considered in its regional, broader European and global contexts. Contributors to the volume seek to establish the relevance of memory transformation in Eastern Europe for the overall debate on European memory, as well as to read the East European historical experience anew through the European debate.

Memory Dialogues and Monologues

The volume begins with Aleida Assmann and Andrzej Nowak's ideas on how European memory has been considered, and how it may yet be viewed. The two scholars represent two different perspectives. Aleida Assmann's subject is the development of traditional national narratives about the past towards inclusive memories, open to alternative perspectives represented by minority groups or other nations. She calls these 'dialogic' memories, while the processes that prepared the ground for them were the self-critical reckonings with national pasts that have taken place in various European countries, including in Eastern Europe, during the last two decades. Such dialogic memories allow for the development of a shared international memory culture, i.e., a European one. Andrzej Nowak detects an opposite trend, however, in which it is an already existing European consensus that is producing and imposing memory canons, that the author critically terms political correctness. This, according to the author, will not result in a shared historical awareness but instead equals a distortion of authentic memories of national communities. While providing different answers, both authors ask the same questions: What should the memory of Europeans look like? How should the differing, often conflicted, memories be organized? Can they co-exist? What memories have

been overshadowed in the process so far of coming to terms with the twentieth-century past, both on national and international levels? These normative considerations provide a background for the following sections.

Eastern Europe as a (Unique) Mnemonic Framework?

The chapters in this section deal with the question of Eastern Europe as a potentially separate mnemonic region. They explore whether East European history has been unique, and whether the resulting mnemonic processes have developed along autonomic paths not comparable to the mnemonic processes of West Europeans. Kornelia Kończal and Maciej Górny open the section with a discussion of what challenges the region presents for memory scholarship, especially as regards the concept of *lieu de mémoire*, and how its premises have been formulated and may be further reformulated when applied to the region. Initially, scholars in this part of Europe did not see the need for its appropriation in their attempts at rewriting the national history, because this was done by means of other categories; however, contemporary scholarship from the region contributes to the reconceptualization of the notion beyond national frameworks, by acknowledging the internal diversity as inherently characteristic of the region. Another author in this section, Sławomir Kapralski, deals with the question of Eastern Europe's alleged uniqueness based on the example of the commemoration of the Jewish Holocaust and the Roma extermination. The author argues that these processes have not differed in Western and Eastern Europe, merely that their temporal situating was not synchronized. Both West and East have gone through periods of forgetting, as well as the opposite process of ritualization of memory. Despite this fact, myths were formulated about the special nature of memory in Eastern Europe which resulted from, and in turn contributed to an 'othering' of Eastern Europe. Next, Kaja Kaźmierska analyses the question of East European 'otherness' from the perspective of the relation between individual and collective memories. They mutually shape each other, national history becoming a frame for changes in perception of individual biographies, and vice versa, individual experience becoming a filter for the comprehension of national pasts. The individual and the collective are in constant communication, whereby the collective is dynamically reworked by the individual. In this way the author opposes another myth in scholarship on Eastern Europe which projects a one-way direction of influences in this process (individual-collective), as if based solely on power relationships.

The region's special condition, as reflected upon by the authors, is its dynamically changing history, resulting in shifting borders, the changed composition of local populations, ruptured institutional continuity and

changing power centres. The question of change and transformation as framing memories in Eastern Europe, and how the latter face the change, is continued in the next part of the book.

East European Memories Facing Historical and Cultural Transformations

In this section the authors analyse processes of remembrance in various countries of Eastern Europe placed in the context of disruption of traditional cultural, political and institutional forms as a result of processes such as the collapse of communism, democratic transformation, globalization, growing multiculturalization, accession to the EU and growing integration of the European continent. In this part, cultural, political and social changes provide frameworks for memory processes that are subject of analysis. Joanna Michlic discusses how democratization after 1989 has influenced the shape of memory of the Holocaust, towards acknowledging the latter as the East European 'dark past'. Next, we find Lidia Zessin-Jurek's analysis of the reformulation of Gulag memories in the new context of Europe enlarging to the east. Subsequently, Stanisław Tyszka compares the Czech and Polish postcommunist public memories, and within this two different paths the two countries chose with regard to compensating the victims of property violations under previous regimes. In the next chapter, Tatiana Zhurzhenko studies the post-Soviet memory politics in the Ukrainian-Russian borderland region, including simultaneous processes of pluralization and nationalization of memories of the Second World War. Following this, Georgiy Kasianov discusses processes of formation of new Ukrainian memories and identities against the dynamically changing politics in the country between the 1990s and 2000s. The section closes with Judy Brown's analysis from the perspective of a Western ethnographer, and a tourist, of how the traditional historical narratives inscribed in the city space of Sevastopol can be read anew in the new context of globalization.

Foci of Memories in Eastern Europe

The last section of the volume deals with memories of selected events and phenomena in twentieth-century history and earlier that have provided the most studied topics of regional research, thereby defining Eastern Europe within memory studies. The contributors analyse these both in public realms and on the individual level. In this section are chapters by Piotr Kwiatkowski on the history of Polish memories of the Second World War; by Jacek Chrobaczyński and Piotr Trojański on Auschwitz and

Katyn as similar and competitive memory sites in Polish memory; then by Matthias Weber on memories of the German presence in Eastern Europe; next, by Yana Yancheva on memories of collectivization in Bulgaria; and finally, a comparative discussion by Claudia-Florentina Dobre of public memories of communism in Bulgaria and Romania.

Notes

1. With Maurice Halbwachs as the protagonist of the memory studies field as such, and Pierre Nora's concept of *lieux de mémoire* as an innovative push in the 1970s and 1980s towards its development. Among German authors Aby Warburg and Hermann Ebbinghaus are canonized as important founders in cultural studies and psychology respectively, then Jan Assmann and Aleida Assmann (cultural theory) and Harald Welzer (social psychology) as the leading contemporaries. Among the classics of Anglo-American writings one finds the psychology of Frederic Bartlett on the 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 postmemory, Daniel Levy and Nathan Sznajder's cosmopolitan memory, plus others, as enumerated by Conway (2010) and in readers by Olick et al. (2011), Erll and Nünning (2010), Boyer and Werstch (2009) and Radstone and Schwarz (2010).
2. Examples: 'Geschichtswerkstatt Europa' at the Remembrance, Responsibility and Future Foundation (www.geschichtswerkstatt-europa.org); 'Memory at War: Cultural Dynamics in Poland, Russia and Ukraine' – Cambridge, Bergen, Helsinki, Tartu, Groningen (www.memoryatwar.org); 'Genealogies of Memory in Central Eastern Europe' project at European Network of Remembrance and Solidarity (www.genealogies.enrs.eu); 'Colloquium Vilnense' (www.ehu.lt/en/events/show/colloquium-vilnense-2013-discussion-series-on-memory); 'Forum Geschichtskulturen' at Imre Kertész Kolleg Jena (www.imre-kertesz-kolleg.uni-jena.de/index.php?id=212).
3. The volume does not focus, for example, on museums, democratic opposition, or religion and churches. Those issues were recently examined by other authors. For an analysis of the role of museums and memorials in the East European memory processes, see Silberman and Vatan 2013, François et al. 2013, and Bogumil, Wawrzyniak et al. 2015. For democratic opposition, see Watson 1994, Mark 2010, and Von Plato et al. 2013. For religion and churches, see Buzalka 2007 and Ramet 2014. For the memory of 1989–1991 systemic transformation in particular, see Bernhard and Kubik 2014.

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