

Sniatyn Dis/Continued:

Memory Of Place And Displaced Memories In Official Representations And Individual Experiences

In the last two decades the reciprocal relationship between cultural memory and place identity as well as their connections to the present discourses emerged as an area of interest in Central and Eastern Europe. Previously, as the Second World War had created a legacy of conflict and contestation, there were strong political reasons why such research into the urban- and the landscape was not encouraged. In the post-1989/91 years research has been focused on larger cities, mainly in borderland regions. The turn in understanding of place and treating neglected or repressed layers of meaning has continually provoked interest and discussion, producing literature on memory and identity in urban environments (Schlögel 2009, *Tożsamość miejsca* 2003, *Wspólne dziedzictwo* 2000). At present, also small towns are gradually becoming an object of research for different disciplines, either in attempts to study their history over longer periods or insights into brief moments of change and violence (Bartov 2005, Bartov 2007a, Bartov 2007b, Lehmann 2001, Redlich 2002).

The approach that formed the methodological basis for our project works towards overcoming narrow perspectives in research. Firstly, we emphasize diversity of narratives that can adequately represent ethnic and cultural heritage of the place we are looking at. Therefore, we critically read different sources – memoirs and interviews, memorial books, websites and guidebooks as well as sites: museums and elements of local town/landscape (e.g. cemeteries, monuments), assessing their contemporary dynamics. To gather, analyze and interpret narratives reflecting memory of Sniatyn we turned to tools and methodologies of history, cultural anthropology and qualitative sociology to apply and integrate them into the framework of the project. Our international team joins several areas of study, such as architecture, cultural studies, ethnography and cultural anthropology, social history, sociology. Their research experience is used for better understanding of perception of the past and memory dimensions we are dealing with.

Reading sources critically means not only adapting comparative perspective, contextualizing, revealing conventions and patterns they depict, strategies their authors used or circumstances they were determined by. Seeking for better understanding of richness and complexity of memory representations and past experience issues, we explore symbolical meanings of items, space, words, gestures and behaviours. The aim of the workshop that introduces the whole project is, above all, to look at origins of images of the past, certain signs and practices of memory and

identity, their symbolical significances and relations to the present (for more see our syllabus and blog).

By analyzing museums, their content as well as form of presentation, we will find out about official representation of Sniatyn and how it treats memory of former inhabitants (Armenians, Jews, Poles, Ukrainians). We will examine local museums acting as points of reference and key institutions providing with a generalized story of Sniatyn and creating a meaning booth for receivers. While looking at the museums' display practices we shall also consider their role in whole Sniatyn townscape. Critical analysis of the sites compared with historical discourse will allow us to see how spaces of museum are coded and read in the context of contemporary Sniatyn (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2005, Williams 2007).

Fieldwork based on a screenplay including in-depth interviews and observation will address the question of individual and non-institutionalized memory traces – being off the beaten path. Interviews with Sniatyn inhabitants will lend us a perspective to individual memory and its impact on identity and making local culture. The important part of searching for autobiographical data will be placing stories around pictures and family albums (here we are inspired by the project of the NGO *Centropa Jewish Witness to a European Century* www.centropa.org). Conducting interviews allows us to observe how inhabitants' narratives correspond with institutional memory. This should also take into account external factors such as pilgrimage, tourism and international initiatives.

Presented approach and its methods aim at the issue of continuity and discontinuity of memory – ways how one particular place is remembered, how memory is constituted and displayed: an interesting example of revealing cultural diversity of the past and variety of European remembrance..

Participants

Selected Literature

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www.centropa.org

This Project is realized in the call on „Paths of Remembrance“ of Geschichtswerkstatt Europa. It is one of 24 European projects that is funded by the foundation „Remembrance, Responsibility and Future“.

Geschichtswerkstatt Europa is a programme of the foundation „Remembrance, Responsibility and Future“ addressing the issue of European remembrance. The Institute for Applied History coordinates the funding of projects in cooperation with the European University Viadrina. The International Forum is organised by the Global and European Studies Institute at the University of Leipzig.

Quoting form:

Berezowski, Marek M. / Boyko, Khrystyna: Sniatyn dis/continued: Memory of place and displaced memories in official representations and individual experiences, in: *Geschichtswerkstatt Europa*, 01.06.2010,
http://www.geschichtswerkstatt-europa.org/media/projekte/Methodenpapier/Pfade_Sniatyn_discontinued.pdf

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