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COLLECTIVE MEMORY OR COLLECTIVE OBLIVION? THE CASE OF HOLOCAUST MEMORY IN THREE POLISH LOCALITIES

The aim of this article is to show the scope and content of the memory of Jewish deportations and the Holocaust today through a study conducted in three Polish towns of varying sizes with a rich Jewish past (Kraków, Nowy Sącz, Muszyna) which I surveyed in 2023. Additionally, I wanted to identify the channels in which the memory of the Holocaust and deportations circulates in the surveyed localities. The research was conducted with representatives of three generations, so it is also important to show how age differentiates the memory of Jewish deportation and the Holocaust. Both age and the size of the locality turn out to be important in differentiating the extent of this memory. Moreover, an important conclusion of the study is that the memory of those events is limited and subject to repression, at risk of falling into oblivion. Relatively speaking, most of the memory of those events is preserved in larger cities among representatives of the middle generation, which is related to the existence of material memory infrastructures there facilitating the formation of local communities of memory of Jews and the Holocaust. Based on the three focus group interviews I conducted, it can be concluded that the dominant channel of memory transfer about local Jewish history and the Holocaust is communicative memory. Conversations about Jews and the Holocaust, if they do occur, generally happen with family members or acquaintances, but relatively rarely at school. Generally, conversations are initiated by people already interested in the topic and here the role of communities of memory, such as the Sądecki Shtetl, is very important.

Keywords: Holocaust memory in Poland, communicative memory, community of memory, Sądecki Shtetl

The Polish dimension of Holocaust memory is quite a specific case. On the one hand, we are beneficiaries of "time of remembrance," that is, the period of democratization and the unlocking of social memory that began in Poland with the political transformation of the 1990s. It was a time when "all countries, all social, ethnic, and family groups experienced a profound transformation of the relationships they traditionally had with the past" (Nora, 2022). On the other hand, the specter of the 1939–1956 "sleepwalking revolution" described

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by Andrzej Leder, i.e., the process of displacing the knowledge of the post-war seizure of Jewish property from the symbolic imaginarium and the displacement of guilt associated with this fact, still hangs over us, especially the oldest generations (Leder, 2014).

Although World War II ended almost 80 years ago, the topic of the Jewish presence in Poland still runs through debates by historians, sociologists, journalists, and politicians. It is not a topic that is taken up readily, but it does not let itself be forgotten for various reasons. There are also manifestations of the remembrance of Jews in discussions outside the circle of experts. Perhaps these threads are even more important, for only grassroots memory is capable of preserving the presence of three million Jews in pre-war Poland from oblivion.

It is precisely the study of this grassroots memory concerning Jews and the Holocaust that was the goal of the project "Research on Transgenerational Holocaust-memory in Central Europe," conducted between 2022 and 2023 by researchers from four European universities in the countries of the Visegrad Group: Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE) in Budapest (Hungary), AGH University of Kraków (Poland), Comenius University in Bratislava (Slovakia), Charles University in Prague (Czech Republic). The project was initiated by the Hungarian side, in particular Richard Papp. The aim of our research was to gain an in-depth empirical understanding and interpretation of the contemporary meanings of Holocaust memory. The research project had funding for 2022–2023 from the Visegrad Fund. An additional goal of the project was to gather visual documentation, leading to the decision to record the interviews. The visually recorded interviews were used as sources of further analysis as well as exhibition products. Thus, the visual documentation can be used in museum exhibitions related to the Holocaust memory (film recordings, interviews) or in a repertoire of programmes planned in addition to exhibitions (organisation of socio-drama events using research results and experiences; discussions related to the visual documentation of the research and other sensitising films; organisation of clubs). In addition to the above, the visual documentation will contribute to the studies of social memory in the social science courses and research programmes of Central European universities.

The aim of our research is to gain an in-depth empirical understanding and interpretation of the contemporary meanings of Holocaust memory. The objective formulated in this way is very general in nature. In the course of the study, questions were asked about various issues and dimensions of memory. Respondents were asked about attitudes toward Jews, about the memory of places, people, and events, and finally about the moral evaluation of Holocaust memorialization practices. It is difficult to report on all this in a single article, so I have narrowed the research problem accordingly. Here, I am interested in answering two interrelated questions:

1) What is the scope and content of the memory of the Holocaust and deportations in the surveyed localities among representatives of each generation;
2) through what channels does the memory of the Holocaust and deportations circulate today in the surveyed localities?

In addition, we were interested in exploring the content of conversations on such topics, as well as what facilitates and hinders them. In other words, with whom, when, where, and

in what situations are these topics discussed. Finally, we sought to understand how communication on these topics depends on the age and size of the respondents' places of residence.

The study was conducted in three localities and across three generations in four Central and Eastern European countries – Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia. Thus, it can be said that the study is intersectional as the aim was to indicate the relationship between non-memory/memory and the variables of age and place of residence.

The age ranges of each generation were defined as follows in the project: 18–30 years, 31–70 years, and 70+ years. Representatives of the first generation are the youngest people, whose adolescence in the case of each of the countries studied fell in the years after the already-made political transformations of the late 1980s and early 1990s. The middle generation are those whose adolescence fell during the post-war years: the period of socialism and satellite status to the Soviet Union. The oldest generation are those who often remember the years of World War II and sometimes the period before it. They are the only ones who are likely to remember a time when a Jewish presence in Poland was the norm. They also remember times when that presence was dramatically interrupted.

The second key variable is the place of residence. The initial idea was to select three locations in each country where the research would take place: a large city (preferably the capital), a smaller town, and a village. Originally, in the case of Poland, these were to be Warsaw, Tarnów, and Wąsosz. Warsaw is the capital and has a rich Jewish history. Tarnów is a city with a population of over 100,000 whose population before World War II was 45% Jewish. Wąsosz is a village in Podlaskie province where one of the pogroms of the Jewish population took place in 1941 (similar to the one in nearby Jedwabne described by Jan Gross). Ultimately, however, a combination of convenience sampling and the author's own network of contacts conditioned the selection of sites, with research conducted in Kraków, Nowy Sącz, and Muszyna.

METHODOLOGY

As part of the research, I conducted three two-hour focus group interviews on consecutive days. On July 3, 2023, an interview was held in Nowy Sącz; on July 4, 2023, an interview was held in Muszyna; and on July 5, 2024, an interview was held in Kraków. All of the interviews were recorded by a film crew from Hungary.

The prerequisites for taking part in an interview were Polish nationality and having a connection to the place where the interview took place. The study was aimed at diagnosing the state of memory of Polish nationals, hence the mentioned requirement. The sampling was mixed, employing purposive selection and snowballing. Purposive selection depended on the availability of local gatekeepers. An acquaintance put me in touch with a group of people who run the Sądecki Shtetl association in Nowy Sącz. It was they who organized the group for the interview in Nowy Sącz and then introduced me to the person who helped me in Muszyna. The situation in Kraków was quite different where I had to rely on my own contacts. I made targeted contacts with people who were interested in the issues covered by

the study and also asked them to contact their friends, employing the snowball method. In the end, I managed to mobilize 21 people:

- 8 people in Nowy Sącz: 6 women and 2 men. 18–30 years old: 2 people; 31–70 years: 4 people; over 70 years old: 2 people;
- 8 people in Muszyna: 6 women and 2 men. 18–30 years: 2 persons; 31–70 years: 5 persons; over 70 years: 1 person;
- 5 people in Kraków: 2 women and 3 men. 18–30 years old: 1 person; 31–70 years: 4 people.

From the outset, it is necessary to point out the significant methodological limitations of a survey designed in this way. The study sample is small and obviously unrepresentative, with the largest problem proving to be the implementation of the survey in Kraków. Although we are dealing with the largest city here, unfortunately, 2 people dropped out at the last minute, so in the end only 5 people took part in the interview. It was not possible to invite people from the oldest generation, so the generational representation for this interview was incomplete.

During each of the interviews, I stuck to the ready-made script provided to me in advance by Richard Papp. However, due to the limited time of the interviews, it was not always possible to ask all the questions. For some questions I slightly modified the script, choosing to test local knowledge with map sketching, for example. The questions comprehensively examine the historical and current processes, changes, and socio-cultural contexts of memory. The interview questions start the conversation with general topics that might reveal the interviewees' more general attitudes towards Judaism and the stereotypes and prejudices related to Judaism. The second set of questions focuses specifically on local memory. The questions cover the spatial representations of memory as well as the details of local historical memory. The third set of questions approaches the culture of memory. Interview partners are asked about how Holocaust memory was communicated in their socio-cultural context. The questions also cover other aspects of the interviewees' knowledge of the Holocaust and/or the motives for forgetting and silence. Following questions focus on the present from the perspective of recent reports of antisemitism. The answers to these questions may allow us to analyse the links between Holocaust memory and contemporary anti-Semitic narratives. The final questions of the focus group interview ask about the current state and significance of Holocaust remembrance.

It should also be mentioned that the survey was conducted before the October 7, 2023 Hamas attack on Israel, which may be significant in the context that the dynamics of attitudes toward Jews and the actions of the state of Israel changed strongly after the attack. The initial solidarity and sympathy were replaced by resentment and outbursts of antisemitism in many countries around the world. It can be assumed that such a large change in context could have affected the responses of the subjects and the course of the interviews (Kapralski et al., 2019). However, it is impossible to determine this without revisiting it.

The primary ethical problem concerned obtaining informed consent for the use of the subjects' images. The problem concerned ambiguities related to when and under what circumstances their images would be used. The information on this subject contained in the survey

design is quite sparse and vague, in addition to being more concerned with future planned activities, and as a result I was unable to explain to the subjects exactly when, where, and in what situations their images would be used. Despite this, I was able to obtain written consent from all those who participated in the interviews.

SOCIAL MEMORY – A CONCEPTUAL TOOLBOX

As Marian Golka writes, "Memory has many types, for it is an overly indefinite, multiform phenomenon, taking various social forms and performing various functions in different societies" (2009, p. 25). Immediately afterwards, he lists a number of its types: witnessed and transmitted memory; actual and potential; dormant and active; remembering and unremembering; archival and selective; coherent and heterogeneous; universal and local; dominant and dominated; exceptional and trivial matters; instrumental and autonomous; created and spontaneous; staged and authentic; institutional and cultural; official and private; recorded and celebrated; memory of facts and memory of values; and fortuitous and unfortunate. It is therefore difficult to speak of a single form of social memory. Since the publication of the pioneering writings of Maurice Halbwachs (2008), studies on the subject of social memory (or collective memory) have gained momentum. This has been fostered, for example, by the climate of "time of remembrance" that characterized the last decades of the 20th century. The toolbox of social memory studies has been systematically expanded and I will try to use several of these conceptual tools in an attempt to answer the research questions posed. The following theoretical categories will be key for me: communicative memory, post-memory, communities of memory, and memory infrastructures/implants.

Jan Assmann (2015), distinguishes various types of memory in his works, including communicative memory. This term refers to the type of social memory that is transmitted through human interaction and face-to-face communication in everyday conversations. In Assmann's view, communicative memory is characterized by several important features. First, it has a short temporal span: it usually covers a period of up to three generations (about 80–100 years). It is a memory concerning events whose participants and witnesses are still alive or have directly transmitted their experiences to the next generation. Second, it is a spontaneous and informal memory: it is transmitted in an unforced manner, in everyday conversations, and family or social relations. Third, it has no formal media: unlike cultural memory, which is stored in written forms (e.g., books, museums, monuments), communicative memory is ephemeral and depends on direct human interaction. Fourth, it is linked to living witnesses: it is based on direct reports from people who experienced the events described or heard about them directly from others.

This type of social memory is often cultivated within so-called communities of memory. In Maurice Halbwachs' terms, a community of memory (*la communauté de souvenir*) is a real, living social group that has been brought together as a result of a shared experience of the past, and thus possesses and cultivates its own images of it, valued in its own way (Halbwachs, 2008, p. 225).

Post-memory is a term that appeared in Marianne Hirsch's autobiographical book (Hirsch, 1997), which is a combination of the reconstruction of a family's past and theoretical reflection on the cognitive value of narratives about the past, and photography as a document of the past. Hirsch is interested in the cognitive value of memory. She calls post-memory a certain type of individual memory that shapes the self of the subject. Post-memory accumulates content remembered and stuck in consciousness, not from our own experience, but from the experience of our relatives, who, by recounting it, relive it with us. Fundamental to this type of memory are empathy and the intertwining of the subject's narratives about his own experience with those of those close to him (Kaniowska, 2014).

Hirsch recognizes post-memory as an important type of memory also because it unifies intergenerational ties, and removes generational distance; moreover, it provides a basis for deep personal reference to the past. Post-memory is, in her opinion, "a strong and very special form of memory precisely because its reference, object, or source is mediated not by recollection, but by imagination and creation […]. Post-memory characterises the experience of those who grew up dominated by the narratives that preceded their birth and whose own later histories have been displaced by those of a previous generation marked by traumatic experiences that can neither be understood nor reconstructed" (Hirsch, 1997, p. 22).

A key role in the process of memory transmission – in addition to symbolic communication taking place between significant others – is also played by material infrastructures of memory. Marian Golka writes in this context about the so-called memory implants, i.e. "secondarily and post factum created carriers of collective memory: buildings, records, images or films, as well as the content of knowledge, which are supposed to fill in the gaps of memory, reconstruct its presumed content or even create it in a new form, which would be in accordance with the current politics of the collective or the current arrangement of interests, values and goals" (Golka, 2009, p. 161). Memory implants make it possible to sustain the fragile structure of collective perceptions on a given topic, allowing to keep past events from being forgotten.

Golka notes the diverse nature of the determinants of the implantation process (Golka, 2009, p. 165). Its type is influenced by political (politics of memory), cultural (documentation of monuments of the past threatened with destruction), urban-communicative (the need to arrange an empty place in space), or tourist-economic (attracting tourists' attention and money) factors. In the case of Holocaust remembrance, both universally and locally, all of these considerations overlap.

It is also worth distinguishing between several key dimensions of Holocaust discourse. Their coexistence, overlapping, or disconnectedness, is relevant to the issue of memory transfer discussed here. At least four dimensions of Holocaust discourse can be identified.

Global, cosmopolitan discourse. This is the narrative that portrays Jews as victims of the Holocaust globally. It can be seen as a cornerstone of the founding myth of the European Union (Kapralski, 2016). Over the past few decades, it has been institutionalized through various means not only on a European scale, but also in much of the world. These processes are referred to as the formation of a cosmopolitan Holocaust memory (Levy and Sznaider, 2002) or the Europeanization of Holocaust memory (Kucia, 2016). It has been operating in Poland since the 1990s, serving as the basis for the reorganization of the axiological consensus in Europe after the elimination of the Iron Curtain. It is presented by the countries of "old"

European Union as a normative standard to countries seeking accession to the European Union, making it a politically charged topic. The transmission of this model of memory is carried out through, amongst others, various types of activist cultural texts (films: "Schindler's List", 'The Pianist', series: "Unorthodox", 'Shtisel', 'Fauda').

Domestic discourse, oriented towards Jews as victims of World War II. This is a reflection of the cosmopolitan discourse in the Polish dimension. The role of Poles as co-conspirators in the Holocaust is emphasized here (the pogroms in Podlasie during World War II, post-war pogroms). It is supported by political forces with a more liberal and left-wing profile. An important factor in activating this level of discourse was the publication of Jan Gross's book *Neighbors. The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne* in 2000. Amongst others, one way in which this discourse is implanted is through such cultural venues and events as museums (Auschwitz, Polin, Galicia) and festivals (the Jewish Culture Festival in Kraków).

The national discourse, oriented toward Poles as victims of World War II and glorifying the role of Poles as a nation supporting Jews during the Holocaust. This is strongly supported by right-wing circles and nationalist organizations. The contemporary driver of this discourse was the historical policy promoted in the 21st century by historians from the environs of the Law and Justice party. Andrzej Nowak can be considered its promoter, who in his famous article "Westerplatte or Jedwabne" (2001) contrasted the "community of pride" with the "community of shame." He argued that even a mythologized message (Westerplatte) creates a national community, while a "message of shame" (Jedwabne) kills it. The case of Barbara Engelking, director of the Holocaust Research Centre at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences, was an example of the political campaign against supporters of this discourse. Her April 2023 commentary on TVN24 about the difficult Polish-Jewish relations during World War II was strongly criticized by the then Minister of Education and Science, Przemysław Czarnek, who threatened to stop the public funding their research because, in his opinion, the employees of the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences were vilifying Poles. The clash of these two national discourses with opposing vectors is clearly present in scientific, journalistic, and political discussions of recent years, laying the groundwork for an "unwanted debate" (Nowicka-Franczak, 2017).

Local memory discourses. They can coexist with both cosmopolitan discourse and national anti-Jewish-oriented discourse, depending on local conditions. In the case of the local memory of the residents of Nowy Sącz, Kraków, and Muszyna, discussed further below, we are generally dealing with the former case.

HOLOCAUST MEMORY IN THREE LOCATIONS

Nowy Sącz, Muszyna, and Kraków are three Polish localities I visited in early July 2023 to investigate, with a small sample of people, the memory of the Holocaust and the deportation of Jews. I was interested in both the local and more universal dimensions of this memory. It is important to note the differences between the three locations, especially between Kraków and Muszyna. Kraków is the second-largest city in Poland, visited by millions of tourists each year with an extremely rich Jewish history. Muszyna, on the other hand, is a small town with

a much poorer and less exposed history of inhabitation by the Jewish minority. Nowy Sącz is a separate case. Its peculiarity is determined by the thriving Sądecki Shtetl association, whose role I will write more about.

NOWY SĄCZ

Nowy Sącz is a town in Małopolska province with a population of about 80,000. Before World War II, Jews made up roughly one-third of the town's population. The Jewish community was extremely active in the socio-cultural and political fields but the German occupation put an end to Jewish life in Nowy Sącz. In the spring of 1940, the Judenrat was established and Jews displaced from neighbouring spa-towns found their way to the city: Muszyna, Krynica, and Piwniczna. On August 12, 1940, a ghetto was established consisting of two parts: in the center and in the Piekło district. It also received Jews from other parts of Poland, including Łódź, Sieradz, Lviv, and Bielsko, as well as smaller towns around Nowy Sącz. A total of about 12,000 people were housed there and the district was extremely overcrowded. The first execution of a group of Jews and Poles took place in May 1940 but gradually the terror intensified and the final liquidation of the ghetto took place on August 23, 1942. All Jews destined for deportation were gathered at the Dunajec River, instructed to appear with a certain amount of food and luggage and with marked keys to their apartments. They were told that they would be deported to Ukraine for labor. After a selection was made and about 800–900 young men were chosen for this purpose, the rest of the Jews were deported in three transports to the death camp in Bełżec.[2]

Today in Nowy Sącz there is material infrastructure for the memory of former Jewish residents (two Jewish cemeteries, a synagogue). Thanks to the efforts of activists from the Sądecki Shtetl, the official opening of the Holocaust Victims Memorial Square, dedicated to Jewish victims of the Holocaust, was held on August 28, 2022. Among other things, there is a plaque commemorating the victims of the 1942 deportation (about 12,000 names). The originator of the idea to open the Square was Dariusz Popiela, a mountain kayaker, Olympian and social activist, and creator of the "People, Not Numbers" project, working with the Sądecki Shtetl. The city authorities are positively disposed to such initiatives.

In the case of Nowy Sącz, an extremely important institution that restores the memory of the city's Jews, their deportations, and the Holocaust is the Sądecki Shtetl. I have already mentioned the assistance I received from people from this association in finding subjects for the interviews. The beginning of the Sądecki Shtetl dates back to 2010 when the idea of taking an interest in the fate of the Jews of Sącz began to germinate among the people who run the Nomina Rosae Foundation, which operates locally and is dedicated to popularizing historical knowledge. Łukasz Połomski, Artur Franczak and Maria Molenda, independently interested in the subject, at that time met Jakub Müller, a Sącz Jew who survived the Holocaust. He became a bridge between the past and the present, providing knowledge about the local history

[2] Source of information is Wirtualny Sztetl, the portal of the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw (https://sztetl.org.pl/pl/miejscowosci/n/538-nowy-sacz/99-historia-spolecznosci/137763-historia-spolecznosci).

of Nowy Sącz and activating others to learn more about it. Since 2021, the Shtetl has been a separate association, extremely active in the field of restoring local Jewish memory. Not only in Nowy Sącz, but in Limanowa, Grybów, and Gorlice as well. My interview in Nowy Sącz took place at 12/14 Lwowska Street, where the grand opening of the "Jacob's House" Educational and Museum Centre took place two days later. Members of the Shtetl publish widely and are involved in local educational initiatives. It is through their efforts, in cooperation with Dariusz Popiela, that the Holocaust Victims Memorial Square was created. One of their initiatives is the organization of the anniversary of the deportation on the Dunajec River.

The level of knowledge about the local history of the Holocaust and the deportation of Jews among the participants of the group interview in Nowy Sącz was relatively high, but it was not evenly distributed among the interviewees. Those with direct ties to the Sądecki Shtetl or their relatives were clearly dominant in this regard. They all emphasized the role of the Shtetl in promoting knowledge of the subject. One participant (man, 78) used the metaphor of "shtetl yeast" ("*drożdże sztetlowe*") in this context, the addition of which pays off with an increase in memory, and not only in Nowy Sącz itself, but also in nearby towns.

Importantly, people from the middle generation had the most to say on the subject. A person associated with the Shtetl (woman, 46) assesses that in recent years one can certainly observe an increase in local knowledge in this area, but "this is such Sisyphean work, because all the time there are young people, new people, new people, but systemically we are not very much supported." She stresses, however, that while she is now very familiar with the subject, before her encounter with the Sądecki Shtetl five years earlier she had no knowledge of the subject. Neither her school nor her family was an environment for her to discuss the subject. It was only a chance meeting with Łukasz Połomski, who had a lecture on the subject for the students of the school where she served as principal that triggered in her the need to engage with the subject. Most of the four interviewees from this generation were able to accurately reconstruct the course of the deportation of Jews in Nowy Sącz, especially the days of the deportation on the Dunajec River. Also, the awareness of the existence of places related to Jews in Nowy Sącz for these people was the highest. I was able to assess this awareness thanks to the fact that I asked my interviewees to draw sketch maps of Nowy Sącz, marking such places. Almost all of them showed the Dunajec River, the site of the ghetto, a synagogue and two Jewish cemeteries.

The accounts were somewhat differently distributed between those of the oldest and youngest generations. The oldest generation was represented by two interviewees and their level of knowledge varied. One of the interviewees (woman, 70) had a basic understanding of local Jewish history, but mainly because her daughter is involved in Shtetl activities and they happen to talk about the topic, which has made her "more interested in the subject in recent years than she ever was in her life." She has tried to bring up the subject with her grandson and with neighbors who are of a similar age to her, but has received no interest. She summarized her statement on the subject as follows: "I certainly miss the fact that in the course of my education I didn't hear so many words and interesting facts about Jewish life." Quite a different case was the second representative of the oldest generation (man, 78). His level of knowledge about Jews in Nowy Sącz, Poland and the world is above average, but even he said that this topic did not exist in his consciousness at all before 2000, despite the

fact that he received a "solid Kraków education" in his youth. The topic thus appeared in his life relatively late. Since then, it has been a topic of conversation in his case, but with a limited circle of people (selected family members, a doctor friend, and people from the Shtetl with whom he is in regular contact). Although he sees a "growing trend" when it comes to the subject of Polish Jewish history, he poignantly diagnosed the state of knowledge on the subject among representatives of his generation: "It's a little late, a little late… My entire generation is lost, unfortunately." The accounts of people from this generation harmonize well with Andrzej Leder's thesis of the "sleepwalking revolution," for the time of their adolescence and adulthood fell during the decades when the memory of Jews in Poland was effectively erased. Only the "time of remembrance" that came with the political transformation enabled them to activate these resources through communicative memory (Leder, 2014).

The opinions were similarly distributed among two representatives of the youngest generation. One of them (male 18) clearly knew more about the history of Polish Jews. This was not only, in his opinion, the result of conversations with his mother, who is involved in the activities of Sądecki Shtetl, but also of the fact that this topic is present in his school. However, this is not the result of the school's systemic efforts, but the initiative of a single history teacher interested in the subject. The second interviewee (woman, 18) said that in her school this topic is not discussed in lessons at all, and that any supplementation of this knowledge lies in one's own hands. However, she herself does not do this.

All interviewees emphasized the systemic lack of knowledge transfer on this topic in schools. This state of affairs has not changed even with the political transformation and the eruption of memory of various minority groups. There are exceptions, such as the aforementioned school of one of my youngest interlocutors, but the norm is the omission of the memory of Jews at school, both locally and universally. Trips to Auschwitz, organized by many schools in the eighth grade, do not change much here. For the most part, they do not have a long-term impact on students' awareness, as my youngest interviewees from Muszyna also confirmed.

MUSZYNA

Muszyna is a town in Małopolska province, in southern Poland, close to the border with Slovakia. It is a very small town by Polish standards, with a population of less than 5,000. The choice of Muszyna as a research site was dictated by the fact that people from the Sądecki Shtetl put me in touch with a local activist who is active there in restoring local memory of the Jews. Thanks to her help and involvement, it was possible to arrange an interview. She also took part in the interview herself.

Before World War II, a large Jewish minority (about 800 people) lived in Muszyna. Among other things, they ran hotels and restaurants, actively contributing to the development of the resort. Until the mid-1930s, Polish-Jewish relations remained good. With the rise of nationalists after the death of Marshal Piłsudski in 1935, antisemitic tendencies also increased. In September 1939, German troops occupied Muszyna. At the end of December 1940, the Jewish community in Muszyna was liquidated. At that time, the Jews of Muszyna were deported to Grybów and Bobowa, and then to the ghetto in Nowy Sącz. After the liquidation of the Nowy Sącz ghetto in 1942, they were transported to German Nazi death camps (mainly) in

Bełżec and Auschwitz. Of all the Jews of Muszyna, only two survived the war. At the turn of 1941–1942, a labor camp was set up in Muszyna for several months for about 150 Jews brought from the Nowy Sącz ghetto.[3]

Currently, there is a lack of any material infrastructure to remember the Jews who lived there before the war. The only such place is the Jewish cemetery, located in the southeastern part of the town. Established in the 19th century, the necropolis, covering an area of 0.3 hectares, houses about 80 matzevot (matzevot is a Jewish tombstone). After World War II, the cemetery fell into oblivion. In 1995, restoration work financed by the Eternal Remembrance Foundation was carried out, while in 2016 the Nissenbaum Family Foundation built a new fence around the cemetery.

Compared to Nowy Sącz, local knowledge about the Jews is much less. There is no association operating on the scale of the Sądecki Shtetl there. Nor is there a comparable number of local memorial infrastructures. Apart from one person, a representative of the middle generation (woman, 43), no one else knew much about Jews, deportations, and local Holocaust history. However, two of the interviewees (woman, 66 and a woman 68, i.e., at the intersection of generations) knew a lot about the subject, but in only relation to other localities (Krynica Zdrój and Białystok). This was confirmed by the maps they drew of Muszyna to illustrate their private topographies of Jewish places. Only in the two cases already mentioned (woman, 43 and a woman, 66) were these maps rich in detail. In the case of the others, the only place drawn was the Jewish cemetery.

The aforementioned woman, aged 43, is the local activist who organized the interview in Muszyna. One could say that she is a local leader in nurturing the memory and knowledge of the pre-war Jewish minority. As she said, the impetus for her interest in the subject came from her conversations with her two grandmothers, who were eager to share their knowledge on the subject with her. Not only the stories of the people themselves, but also the Jewish topography of Muszyna. However, she herself admits that little is known about the deportation of Jews from Muszyna. The memory of this fact is noticeably weaker here than in the case of Nowy Sącz, where the deportation on the Dunajec River has become quite embedded in local memory. Even the aforementioned grandmother of the local activist, when telling her about the details of the life and residence of pre-war Jews in Muszyna, "doesn't remember that moment when they were deported, doesn't know how it happened." The activist also talks a lot about the subject with others. The importance of these conversations was emphasized by her colleague, another of the interviewees from the middle generation (woman, 50). As she stated, this is a frequent topic of their conversations, very inspiring to her. In turn, a 66 year old woman noted that there are quite a few people with whom she can talk about these topics, including her children, who are open and "comfortable in the world." It was different in her family home, where conversations on the subject were much more difficult, as "Jews didn't have good PR." She noted that a few decades ago, being raised in such a spirit was the norm.

[3] Source of information is Wirtualny Sztetl, the portal of the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw (https://sztetl.org.pl/pl/miejscowosci/m/1209-muszyna/99-historia-spolecznosci/137715-historia-spolecznosci).

The only representative of the oldest generation in the group (woman, 75) said that "it's hard to talk about Jews." She tries to broach the subject with other people, but does so rather infrequently, because it is a sensitive topic. It should also be noted that while only this one person in the surveyed group was over 70, three other women were of similar age (66, 69 and 69), making them closer to the oldest generation rather than the middle generation.

Representatives of the youngest generation in this group (two men of 16 years each) spoke the least. The topic is not very important to them, although it occasionally comes up at school. Both have a school trip to Auschwitz behind them but had little to say about it. One of them is the son of the local activist I wrote about earlier. The topic comes up during their conversations but is generally initiated by his mother and she tends not to bring it up with anyone else. It is difficult to accurately assess their silence. It is possible that the group interview situation, where they were by far the youngest participants, simply intimidated them. Perhaps in an interview situation with people of a similar age they would have spoken more.

KRAKÓW

Kraków replaced Poland's capital, Warsaw, in my study due to time pressure and accessibility (I live and work in Kraków). Kraków has an extremely rich Jewish past, with Jews probably living here from as early as the 11th century. Initially, the Jewish community lived in the vicinity of present-day St. Anne's Street, while in the 15th century they were resettled in nearby Kazimierz (now a well-known tourist district of Kraków). In 1939 they made up about 25% of Kraków's population. The persecution of Jews in Kraków began immediately after the German army occupied the city on September 6, 1939. Between 1939 and 1940, Jews were displaced from Kraków en masse. In March 1941, a ghetto was established, one of the largest in Poland, and was then liquidated in March 1943, housing about 15,000 people. The Płaszów labor camp, operating from October 1942 to January 1945 (during which transformed into a concentration camp), was also located in Kraków. Of the approximately 70,000-strong Jewish community in Kraków, about a thousand people survived the war. During the communist period after the war, following successive waves of removals, this number gradually declined. It was not until the 1990s that the atmosphere changed. The Jewish Social and Cultural Society was reactivated and the Jewish Community of Kraków became active. New educational and cultural initiatives, as well as those related to the preservation of cultural heritage, were supported by the R. Lauder and Nissenbaum foundations. The resurgence of Jewish culture in Kraków is fostered by the Jewish Community Centre of Kraków and the Jewish Culture Festival in Kazimierz. Since 1997, the city is again the seat of the rabbinate.[4]

Kraków is also a city with an extremely rich infrastructure for the remembrance of Polish Jews, with numerous synagogues and Jewish cemeteries. There is the Galicia Jewish Museum and branches of the Historical Museum of the City of Kraków dedicated to Jewish memory (Old Synagogue, Oskar Schindler's Emalia Factory, and Eagle Pharmacy). Steven Spielberg's

[4] Source of information is Wirtualny Sztetl, the portal of the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw (https://sztetl.org.pl/pl/miejscowosci/k/512-krakow/99-historia-spolecznosci/137527-historia-spolecznosci).

film "Schindler's List" was also shot in Kraków. This fact caused the memory of the Jews in Kraków and their Holocaust to transcend the local dimension, becoming part of the global and universal memory.

The people I had the opportunity to interview in Kraków, without exception, were very interested in the topic and had considerable knowledge in this area. This was also the most age-homogeneous group among those interviewed in the three towns. Four of them were representatives of the middle generation, being of similar age (range 39–47). They are also characterized by a high level of cultural capital. Interestingly, also because of this, this interview was the most difficult for me to conduct in terms of keeping discipline. My interviewees were extremely talkative, often interrupting each other and even arguing among themselves. Two of them are also related to this topic in a professional sense. One of them (man, 39) is employed by the Jewish Community Centre of Kraków, while the other (woman, 47) is the co-author of a book that has interviews with Poles who rescued Jews during World War II. If only because of this, Jews in Poland are a frequent topic of their conversations with others.

The interviewees knew a lot about deportations, the Holocaust, and the living conditions of Jews in Kraków (and elsewhere) during World War II. Their statements were dominated by themes related to the ghetto and its liquidation; the Płaszów camp; and Oskar Schindler's rescue of Jews. They themselves noted that the reason for pointing out such associations could be Spielberg's "Schindler's List." There was also the theme of the deportation of Kraków's Jews. The question about their knowledge of deportations and the Holocaust not only provoked much discussion on the main topic, but also on numerous side topics. Also, the maps of Jewish Kraków they drew are rich in detail, generally related precisely to the ghetto, KL Płaszów camp, Schindler's factory, and Kazimierz with its synagogues and cemeteries. Historical knowledge, as well as the availability of local memory infrastructures, on this subject is extremely rich and easily accessible, as can be seen from the level of awareness of my interviewees. Here we are dealing with a situation diametrically opposed to that in Muszyna, where this knowledge is available mainly in niche local publications and oral transmissions.

Perhaps unique here is the case of a representative of the youngest generation (a 22 year old man, a university graduate). Although he is about twenty years younger than the rest of the interview participants, his level of knowledge on the topics of interest, and his level of involvement in the discussion was the same as the rest. This distinguishes him from the youngest generation representatives from the interviews conducted earlier in Nowy Sącz and Muszyna. While those there spoke little and only when asked, the youngest participant in the Kraków interview was a full participant and initiator of both discussions and disputes.

Unfortunately, I was not able to successfully invite anyone to represent the oldest generation. Two people close to that age did not arrive for reasons beyond their control, informing me of this on the day of the interview, which did not allow me to find a replacement for them.

For most of my Kraków interviewees, the Jewish theme is a topic of everyday conversation, primarily with acquaintances. At the same time, it should be noted that it is a very broad topic and, as one of them (man, 39) states, they tend to discuss present rather than past topics in this context. He talks mainly about "what's going on now? – where is the kosher store, where are some synagogues, what's going on in bubble one, bubble two, gossip from Warsaw, gossip from Kraków, the preparation of some holiday, or what event? This is the

Jewish bubble. But the Holocaust is not in it. It's more a question of how to approach Israel. This is such a difficult topic." Two of the interviewees (a woman, 43, and a man, 44) also said that they visit Israel once or twice a year, "just to be there, to hook a Friday, a Saturday, a Shabbat, to feel that atmosphere as well. Because that God lives there." Given that they are married, this is the subject of their conversations. Interestingly, as many as three interviewees noted that this is not a topic of conversation for them with their parents (people aged 60–70), due to their parent's negative attitudes towards Jews. If such topics do come up in their conversations, it generally leads to arguments and disputes.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the three group interviews I conducted, it can be concluded that the dominant channel of memory transfer about local Jewish history and the Holocaust is communicative memory. Conversations about Jews and the Holocaust, if they do occur, generally happen with family members or acquaintances, relatively rarely at school. Generally, conversations are initiated by people already interested in the topic. Here the important role of the Sądecki Shtetl as a community of memory within which and thanks to which the topic is still alive, can be seen quite clearly. In general, however, this is not the topic of conversation. Even if the topic is brought up with family members or acquaintances, it is only with some and relatively rarely. Lack of conversation and oblivion prevail.

It is also worth mentioning an interesting example of how the post-memory mechanism works. I am referring to the case of Jakub Müller, a direct witness of the Holocaust in Nowy Sącz, who instilled the memory of the Jews of Nowy Sącz in Łukasz Połomski, later founder and president of the Sądecki Shtetl. It was Müller who became the transmission belt for the transgenerational transfer of memory, creating the basis for a deep, personal reference to the past for members of the Sądecki Shtetl and their community.

The survey was conducted in three types of localities and with representatives of three different generations, so it is also important to show how age and size of place of residence differentiate the memory of Jewish deportation and the Holocaust. Both of these variables are important in differentiating the extent of this memory, although it should be noted that the memory of those events is small and subject to repression.

Relatively the greatest memory of those events is preserved among representatives of the middle generation and they were the most active during the interviews. People from this generation are the beneficiaries of the "time of remembrance," i.e. the unlocking of minority groups' memorials in the wave of the era of political transformation. They have much better access to knowledge and to the material infrastructures of memory than representatives of the post-war generation, and they are the ones who engage in activism in this field. The oldest generation, against this background, turns out to be the "lost" or "sleepwalking" generation. Due to their lack of access to knowledge, the validity of taboo subjects during the communist era, they often make up for their deficiencies in this area only now, through contact with the middle generation or from the media. They had access to witnesses of the Holocaust, but these too were often silent on the subject. The youngest generation, on the other hand, is in

a rather paradoxical situation. On the one hand, they have open access to knowledge and material infrastructures, but on the other hand, the competition of other interesting topics in today's "culture of overflow" (Szlendak, 2013) is so great that this topic rarely has a chance to be in their field of attention. As a result, the younger generation forgets in a trivial way (Kapralski et al., 2019, p. 63). Some of them dutifully go to Auschwitz in the eighth grade of elementary school, but this experience does not leave them with deeper emotions. These only appear occasionally, as a result of conversations with parents or a teacher. Because of their age distance, they also have infrequent contact with Jews or witnesses of the Holocaust, which is not conducive to activating memory.

The size of the city also matters. The smaller the locality and the less developed the local memory infrastructures/implants, the less memory, regardless of generation. The larger the locality, the greater the opportunity for memory cultivation, which is related to the existence of material memory infrastructures that facilitate the formation of local communities of memory about Jews and the Holocaust there. A good example of this is Kraków, where the local memory of Jews is nurtured, while access to it is relatively easy. In addition, there is more room for activists to operate in larger centers and this facilitates the formation of memory communities centered on the memory of Jews and the Holocaust (JCC in Kraków, Sądecki Shtetl in Nowy Sącz). There is also a noticeably greater tendency to refer to a globalized, cosmopolitan discourse of the Holocaust in the case of those surveyed from larger centers. As a result, it is easier in larger urban centers to engage local government authorities in Holocaust commemoration initiatives, as exemplified by both Kraków and Nowy Sącz. Authorities in such localities, which are often more liberally oriented, are more likely to subscribe to the cosmopolitan discourse of the Holocaust and more prone to support the activities of activists in the field of remembrance, making the task easier for communities of memory such as the Sądecki Shtetl.

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