Connecting Memories. The Power of the Past and the Future of Europe

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Connecting the HERstory approach

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I. Gendering Memory

1.What is collective memory and what is it's political and social significance?

Memory as a long-lasting project currently occupies male and female researchers in various academic areas: philosophers, neuroscientists, cultural critics, psychologists, sociologists, political scientists, and even quantum theoreticians.

The subject of memory was taken up intensively in the humanities and social sciences from the 1960s. In the 80s and 90s of the twentieth century, interest in it grew even more and the subject began to be taught at universities – Memory Studies

Key works appeared at that time, including David Lowenthal's *The Past is a Foreign Country* (1985), *History and Memory* by Jacques Le Goff (1984), *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past* by Pierre Nora (1998 and subsequent volumes)

It is difficult to define the concept of memory. It can be an effect of the human ability to consolidate experience and contribute to building knowledge about oneself and the world. It is also a kind of activity related to the process of remembering (and forgetting). We deal either with the memory in the objective or functional sense. Both of these aspects can not really be separated from each other. Therefore, instead of an exhaustive definition, there are classifications of memory (Kaniowska, 2003).

The concept of collective memory for social sciences was introduced by Maurice Halbwachs (Social Memory Framework, 2008), who believed that <u>individual memory always functions in the context of collective memory</u>.

Perceiving one's own past influences how we see ourselves today and who we are. Memory is strongly associated with the identity of individuals and societies, and the past in our memory is adapted to our identity and results from ethnicity, social class or power relations.

These elements decide what we remember and what we forget. Its relationship with the authorities (the power) is also important. Collective memory refers to the legitimization of the existence of community, its structures and forms of political power. The relationship of society to time is the source of power and at the same time the way it is exercised.

Political power determines what is to be remembered and how (Szacka, 2006). Therefore, the issue of women's commemoration and raising the topic of their participation in history has a political meaning. How do we write and talk about the women's participation in the public sphere?

2. Politisation of memory

Politisation is a multi-aspect process of adding a political character to the phenomena that were not political in their sources, such as spiritual culture or artistic creativity. It is an influence of the politics on the functioning of the administration, media, everyday and private life, which manifests itself in the tendency to infiltrate politics into all areas of life and to subordinate the social phenomena and transformations to the rules of the politics (Karwat, 2010).

Politics of memory is shaping the historical consciousness and provoking a public discourse on the memory of the past. These concepts are derived from Germany, where they were created after the reunification of Germany in 1989 (Saryusz-Wolska, 2009). Historical politics itself means the state funding for the scientific research and institutions dealing with the memory and supporting educational activities in this area by organizing public holidays, defining attitudes and values, as well as labelling the heroes or using polyphony in the narrative in order to gain some benefits connected with the development of the national identity (Wawrzyński, 2014).

Historical politics is often perceived as an element used to manipulate the public opinion and throw a particular light on the history, which suits the ruling political elites.

The politics of memory is a less politically marked term and the focus here is placed on the collective memory rather than on its politicisation.

3. What is Gendering memory?

The concept of gendering memory belongs to the same category of concepts as body gendering, care gendering etc.
Gendering of memory provides one of the points of view when analysing the contemporary politics of memory, understood both as an official and leading narrative and as grassroots narratives, alternative or inherent, specific, connected

with various social movements, minorities or, among other things, with women's movements.

Herstory is history emphasizing the role of women, or told from a woman's point of view.

It is a neologism coined as a pun with the word "history", as part of a feminist critique of conventional historiography, which in their opinion is traditionally written as "his story", from the masculine point of view.

(The word "history"—from the Ancient Greek ἱστορία, or historia, meaning "knowledge obtained by inquiry"—is etymologically unrelated to the possessive pronoun *his*.

Gender in textbooks. Diagnosis of equality and anti-discrimination school education implemented by the Interdisciplinary Centre for Gender Research of the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, 2015

http://gender-podreczniki.amu.edu.pl/

The critical analysis of the content of Polish textbooks and the content of the core curricula in terms of the models and ideas concerning femininity and masculinity presented and promoted in them.

It includes quantitative and qualitative analyses of 176 textbooks approved for school useby the Ministry of Education.

4. Case studies

This transnational project involved 4 European partners from Ireland, Spain, Germany and Poland and marks the 70th anniversary of the ending of WWII by using creative processes and on-line resources to promote a remembrance of European history with a focus on women's experiences of WWII and their journey within Europe from 1945 to today.

Using theatre, film and political activism, this project raised awareness of the EU history and diversity and its role today in promoting peace, gender equality, cultural diversity and the well being of all its citizens equally.

We wanted to ask what contemporary Europeans, can learn from grandmothers and great-grandmothers.

https://vimeo.com/173496517

http://www.epageflip.net/i/748584-women-war-and-peace

Radicalisation of European socio-political life is gaining strength last years.

It is manifest not only in the increased success of radical, mostly nationalistic, political parties and movements, but primarily in xenophobia, racism, islamophobia and violence.

European identity is shaped in opposition to 'other'.

The process of othering.

- **PatRIOTki** - the exhibition by Anka Leśniak is part of her artistic interpretations of the biography of women "not located in history".
- The project is part of the contemporary debate about the concept of patriotism and sovereignty, nation, fight. It also asks a question: what is Polish patriotism against the background of unrest and changes in contemporary Europe, and how do women perceive themselves in this narrative?
- Anka Leśniak, through the prism of figures and events from the past, asks questions about contemporary mechanisms of power and social relations.

Lodz Trial od Women is an initiative of saving the memory of women connected with the city of Lódź.

Foundation shows the history, heritage and identity of Łódź from a less obvious perspective, which is hard to find in traditional tourist guides.

We organize discussions, lectures and artistic actions. Thanks to our efforts, since 2017 some of the city squares has had a female patronesses.

https://www.facebook.com/pg/LodzkiSzlakKobiet/photos/?ref=page_internal

- July 25 1981 – 50000 of Lodz women protested because of hunger

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II. Methodology used in the project

1. Methodology is a branch of epistemology (theory of knowledge) dealing with the specificity of scientific cognition.

PARADIGM	- > THEORY	-> METHOD
A set of concepts and theories forming the basis of a given science / general pattern, categories of thinking, creation and explanation of concepts.	An interlinked, structured and coherent set of scientific rules, statements, definitions and hypotheses concerning the field of phenomena.	R e p e a t a b l e a n d o r d e procedure/solution of a rese problem.
Humanities & Social Science		Qualitative methods
	Memory Studies	
Anthropology, History, Cultural Studies, Political Science	Interpretiveism	Herstory
		Drama
Postmodernism?		
Post-postmodernism?		Work with the object

1. Herstory Methodology

The principal aim of herstory is to bring women out of obscurity from the historical record
1) story emphasizing the role of women, or told from a woman's point of view.
2) to celebrate less known persons otherwise marginalized, who helped shape the world his/her/story

In the work on the recovery of women's story, it's important the whole interdisciplinary perspective, non only historical background;To create a text about women it is necessary following a few rules and answering a few questions:
Who has the right to tell her story and how to do it?
How to select topics?

The story is always "filtered" by narrators. The one who presents its version can be read in a different way by different individuals.
Herstory consists not only of the information about the heroine contained in the text, but also how we tell about it.
You should always have a sense of responsibility for:
- passing on concrete facts and their interpretation,
- present your position to readers,
- disclose yourself as a person speaking on behalf on someone else.

Traditional way of thinking on the past

Traditional historiography:
- places events on the timeline,
- establishes causal links,
- focuses on stories about a dominant character or group (ex. leaders, rulers, colonizers of the New World, men etc.),
- believes in the transparency of sources.

In this way is created a "big narrative" = a history claiming the status of truth and universality
A new methodological base for the HERSTORY:
- resignation from the "objective truth",
- concentration on subjective experience,
- revealing the "I" in the texts = the personal perspective of the author.
- the stories are always described as the "own" language of an author, the concepts used to describe the story are ahistorical, i.e. generally foreign and far away to the studied context, however current to an author - close to her/his reality.

Three methodological models of HERSTORY (3 possible goals)
Compensation current *('and yet...')* - it consists in filling the "blank spots" of history (eg. the history of women, colonized groups, marginalized ones etc.) while maintaining the features of a "big narratives":
We search the big persons, strong individuals, though from the marginalized side, who however repeated the same way than a classical heros.

Recovered current *('yes, but...')* – it presents history from a different perspective than traditional point of view using of the words of 'muted' = 'not important' social & cultural group (eg. children, ethnic, religious etc. groups, women, elderly people, people with disabilities, poor etc.):

This current doesn't negate the dominant historical narrative, but shows events from the completely strange and foreign perspective.

Alternative trend *('write your story')* - so-called <u>unconventional historiography</u> to re-write history:

WARNING! The writers may marginalize or even exclude other groups.
Pratical indications how make a HERSTORY:
Following the lives of women, the researcher should remember the specific features of women's biographies. For example:

LANGUAGE: the women change their names after the marriage in many cultures; frequantly their names are created from the names of their male ancestor. The linguistic material emphasizes rather women's belonging to the family and their social status as dependent on somebody else not their own individual way. With the change of the name, a woman often disappeared.

SOURCES:
During the inquiries it's important remember no only about the traditional official sources
(such as: legal acts, documents, registers, chronicles, church documents, phone books, articles, documentaries etc.), but also about <u>the everyday artifacts</u> <u>close to the ordinary life</u>
(such as: magazines, newspapers; letters, memories, journals, diaries, travel reports; photographs, feature films, paintings, art; leaflets, advertisements; maps, living space, architectural elements, utilitarian items, souvenirs; cemeteries, tombstones, epitaphs and porcelains, internet).

You can also discover the history of women by:
 • local vision;
 • interview "from door to door";
 • talking with selected people;

The easiest way to reach women by other women.
Interviwing – a technic

One of the most direct forms of learning /her/story
is the interview:

The interlocutor should be treated with respect as an autonomic body.
The hierarchical structure of the classical interview (question – response) could be replaced with a horizontal (partner) structure, when both parties have an equal status.
It's better make an interview in the form of a conversation, exchange of relations, not in the form of interrogation.

The questions should be open – giving the possibilities to the woman to a free style response.

Personal memory
The content of the memory often consists in the stories of other people, the media etc.

All of that may affect personal (autobiographical) memory. So why they are distinguished three types of memory:
- personal -> regarding what the one experienced;
- cultural -> is created thanks of the symbolic representations;
- collective -> a common narrative, characteristic for/and share by/ a large social group;

WARNING!
The memory gap or a "gap in memory" - when the witnesses die, in result a personal memory ends, while the cultural memory about the event has not yet been created.
Subjectivity of female representation. The matter of subjectivity of female representation in the text is the main ethic rule of herstory.

The subcjective approche consists in:
- using an active side;
- giving a voice to women - quoting their speech (reflection if it's necessary a mediation of women's stories by male characters, or description women through their husbands or sons achievements, or if we need to emphasize the role of woman as a wife, mother, daughter etc. of men, eg. 'Anna Nowak – the daughter of a well-known lawyer Edward Nowak').
- using of the gender-specific forms;
- referring to the heroine's achievements.
appropriateness of beauty descriptions, personal relationships etc. as far women;
- the authors should try to preserve gender sensitivity (cultural and social gender determinants);
- social sensitivity (multiculturalism, class, socio-economic status etc.);
- an interdisciplinary perspective;
- presentation of the author's attitude towards the issues - research position;
- critical attitude to sources.

Adavantages of HERSTORY:
- to tell a story from a different perspective;
- because women can be a rule model, inspiration;
- to give voice to the invisible;
- to save from oblivion;
- to strengthen an identity;
- to create alternative description and understanding of the society
- because of historical justice completing a story;

HERSTORY is strictly linked with the other marginalized group: elderly people, children, different minorities, disabled people, groups socially excluded (for many reasons).
The task
The work in national group
-Make a plan/scenario of event in your city/town/district /community/…:
about herstory or about another alternative story of excluded groups – so, not only women:
+ the topic of event
+ the goal and need of the event
+ who will be the heros and why
+ how to reach this people
+ how to save their subjectivity

+ how to link their stories with the mainstream discourse
+ how to prove the reste of community and that group – hero of event, that this type of event is important and why

2. Visual ethnography - method m.in. containing photography and video. Saved materials gained popularity at the end of the twentieth century, although they were used earlier. Materials themselves are not an ethnographic document, according to which ethnographic photography determines discourse and content [14]. In itself the material is just an ordinary photo or film, only a look through the ethnographic prism makes it possible to see in it something needed in research. A very important feature is the objectivity of such research. Such materials may also be used as additional materials in interviews

3. Participatory Action Research
This specific method requires a community commitment to change. It occurs in five steps:
1. **Education on the Process or Creating a Dialogue**
2. **Collective Investigation**
3. **Collective Interpretation**
4. **Collective Action**
5. **Transformation: Self-Determination and Empowerment**

Because of the intrinsic qualities of this type of research (ideally being conducted by people with close ties or membership of a community), it is usually very applicable to situations in the community. The research is an analysis of the community's behaviour by the community's members. Not only are they by necessity, motivated to work on the problem, but they will already have significant rapport with other community members which allows them to better address and analyse it. The dynamic attributes of the process allow constant revaluation and change. These cyclic or regularly repeated tendencies can develop into healthy adaptation patterns in the community without outside contributions or aid.

III. MEMORY OF THE PLACE – WORKSHOP

The aim of workshop:

- understanding what supports the awareness of the place, which element can move on to the collective memory, common knowledge and private memories
- what tangible and intangible elements (as values, feelings, attitudes, individual choices) influence the perception of the cultural environment?
- understanding what and why we accept it as our own knowledge (for the most people, part it is own experience or experience of close people, similar to ours)
- understanding how the sense of the place is shared
- understanding the group process important for a negotiation

The structure of the workshop:

1. Explanation what is the genius loci

2. Inspiration and introduction to the workshop:
In Search for the Lost Quarter in Lodz
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pFP5EkZqS7o

3.Participants are divided into groups and choose one place known to them all.

Participants specify:
- what they know about the place chosen together?
- decide what are the roots and ground of this knowledge, from who / where it comes from; it is objective, subjective, private, official, another knowledge?
- classify the types of sources and contents
- make a selection of the element describing the place and decide which of them is the most important and least important; they determine why
- decide if due to the choice of the above two factors, this place should be changed (a change could be understand as a total change, or reversal of orders, values, or as a slight modifications, improvements, corrections, adding something, subtracting something etc.)
- looking for one symbol for this chosen place

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