

Abstract of doctoral dissertation:

Title: (Re)constructing the memory of Jewish residents in selected local communities.
A sociological and historical analysis.

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The dissertation aims to analyse the process of (re)construction of the memory about the Jewish community, and more specifically of the tragic events of World War II, by local social actors in the context of the (un)preserved traces of Jewish existence in selected cities of the former Wartheland. Considering the research subject, I employed the following research techniques: free-form interview, analysis of archival documentation with historical source criticism. The analysis also covered historical publications recording Jewish history, social media, as well as contemporary methods of interpreting local memory created by local authorities, NGOs, and local community activists.

In view of the analysis of the material collected against the context of the present state of awareness of local communities, characterised to a large extent by ignorance and/or the use of supra-local framework to shape the memory, I proposed to apply the asymmetrical liaison work technique to the process of memory (re)construction at the local level. It is a method characteristic of a situation where communication stands in a stalemate. The asymmetrical liaison work seems to be of particular relevance in those phases of the process of communication about suffering where, by other means, the delineated communication tracks cannot be transcended, or where the process cannot be initiated at all. The grass-root cultural and historical initiatives analysed in the dissertation, as well as a research without media publicity, conducted locally, can contribute to clearing “obscurities” and ignorance.

To sum up, I propose to view social actors working in their local environments as liaison work initiators. As I have already pointed out, the work of these people is above all the work on the remembering subject. This shows that the interviewees are not only engaged in liaison work, but also that such work is the only means for working through and integrating the memory of

the Jews into Polish memory. The interviews demonstrate the potential of the present-day initiators. Through their own activities, as well as cooperation with institutions, the individual researchers and popularisers of local history, traditions, and culture are those who achieve influence on the narratives about the past and, consequently, on the shape of local identity.

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