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LOCAL MEMORY AND URBAN SPACE

Abstract

The paper ponders over the issue of memory and urban space. It shows how these categories have been discussed in the literature and how they are connected to the problem of place identity. The paper also highlights the need to appreciate and assess the physical aspect of objects, which act as memory markers in the urban space. The author argues that what is being memorialised and conveyed as meaning is the past lived experience. As a case in point, two memory acts are analysed in the paper, clearly showing the interdependence of various temporalities in the anniversary celebrations. In the festivities celebrating the 100th (in 1881) and 150th (in 1931/2) anniversaries of the consecration of the Lutheran church in Warsaw, the capital of the Kingdom of Poland in the Russian partition and later the capital of a resurrected independent Polish state after 1918, the different present-oriented needs were mirrored in the narratives and commemorations of the past. Idiosyncratic visions of the past help make the small and vulnerable community of Lutherans in an otherwise primarily Roman Catholic environment more coherent, as its members may lay claim to history and construct and stabilise their identification process as descendants of past generations. Moreover, the material fabric of the church seems to be an indispensable factor. The parishioners' lived experience appears to be a crucial component of commemorations in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Keywords: memory, urban space, lived experience, materiality, Warsaw Lutherans, Lutheran Church

I
MEMORY AND SPACE

Nowadays, memory is everywhere. Time does not 'consume' the past anymore; public memory assures the presence of all in history that is crucial, but also all that is painful and conflictual. The vision that forgetting may plunge the past, or large parts of it, into shadow is no

more valid. History is constantly re-enacted and reflected. Different groups use the victimisation tool in today's world, which adds to this phenomenon: painful memories are also nursed and recalled.[1] In sum, memory is an issue that is no more valid than in the 1990s, when memory studies originated. It is, therefore, still crucial to analyse it and research its different aspects in detail.

The current issue of *Acta Poloniae Historica* collects various reflections on memory in towns and cities: not so much on the living memory, or 'communicative memory' in reference to the prevailing categorisation of scholars such as Aleida Assmann,[2] but on the memory transmitted through generations, by means of social intermediaries and public sphere, i.e. memory cultures, or cast in stone as material objects in space. Memory reflects itself and is often embodied in different ways among human groups, and within the confines of the space, they are localised in. My suggestion here will be to emphasise the materiality of memory and its place in towns and cities, and the question of how these traces of memory may or may not be mirrored in public discourse on place identity. The first part of the paper is a theoretical reflection. It is followed by a case study in which a certain group's memory, conceived of in confessional terms, is reflected in public commemorations connected to a physical object in space, an eighteenth-century classicist church. Warsaw Lutherans, the group in question, a minority community, felt the need to safeguard their common identity, and their church building acted as the embodiment of the idea of Lutheran distinctiveness, constantly affecting the process of self-identification of the group members. Through this example, I hope to illustrate the intricate relations between memory, history, heritage and groupness in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; I will also argue that physical objects from the past serve as 'harbingers of memory', or as agents in their own right.

The boom of memory studies took place a few decades ago, in the 1990s and 2000s; as noted above, it is not a new phenomenon. It started in Germany with the rising desire to give expression

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[1] Henry Laurens, *Le passé imposé* (Paris, 2022), 581 ff.
[2] See Aleida Assmann, 'Speichergedächtnis und Funktionsgedächtnis in Geschichte und Gegenwart', in Peter Rusterholz and Rupert Moser (eds), *Wir sind Erinnerung* (Bern, 2003), 181–96. Cf. also probably the most popular companion to memory studies: Astrid Erll, *Memory in Culture*, transl. Sara B. Young (New York, 2011).

to the memory of the Second World War and the Holocaust, events which slowly were ceasing to be the subject of living memory of their witnesses. One of the conclusions that emerged from this multitude of research papers which have seemingly inundated the humanities, was the concept and category of memory as such, or a specific perspective of historical research which examines how people remember and commemorate past events and how the narratives of the past shape(d) each present. In our context, the concept of collective memory, drawn from the often-cited writings of Maurice Halbwachs from the interwar period, will be important. By comparing the reminiscences of people's dreams and their real life, Halbwachs argued that memory functions mainly in the social context and that certain social groups engaged in 'social' activity (rather than a 'technical' one, as Halbwachs put it) develop ways to build their own group consciousness by referring to a common group past. Such social memory is intricately tangled within all social activity, and the current group's needs constantly change the image of the past.[3] Memory as a social category may thus be freed from its natural individual character with its inevitable discontinuity in the long run (what may be termed the 'external gaze' in contrast to the 'internal gaze'[4]), and it may be conceived of as ordinary and intersubjective, and thus transmissible through a larger population.

These insights have opened the door to the memory's objectivisation and broader analysis. To be sure, such memory may not have much in common with the biological phenomenon; it is instead a metaphor which can capture the social agency of the instances of actualisation of the past. Collective memory, put into use in the studies of Antiquity, resulted in the forging of the concept of 'cultural memory' (Jan Assmann[5]), or the way the cultural message was transmitted through centuries in a bid (unconscious, as it may have been) to unify and strengthen the idea of groupness among people and to help solidify body politic, making it resilient through time. Therefore, the term 'collective memory' proved helpful in various ways and for different

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[3] Maurice Halbwachs, *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire* (Paris, 1925).

[4] Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, transl. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago–London, 2004), 120–32.

[5] See Jan Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination* (Cambridge, 2011).

purposes, as it helped show the interaction between the present and the past in general.[6] The present volume aims at going a step further: showing how memory affects place identity.

Place identity is used most often in urban planning and heritage studies. It describes the connectedness of people and physical places, and their meaningful entanglement with specific space, or historical monuments. It is akin to the notion of *genius loci*,[7] or the spirit of a place. As Cliff Hague has argued, the capacity to unravel meanings in space is not a spontaneous process but rather a socially learned and mediated one.[8] This socialisation aspect leads us back to memory as a social phenomenon with potential to affect human identification through places. And not just purely local identification; place identity can strengthen the identification with regimes and jurisdictions in various spatial scales, as the authors of *Pluralising Pasts* assert.[9] Heritage studies deal with more specific places marked by remnants of a meaningful past and their potential to affect the local observers. To be sure, heritage studies are, to a large extent, intended to operationalise (and practically manage) the space, as well as the material and immaterial traces of the meaningful past; therefore, the image construction of certain places for the needs of the market, e.g. as tourist destinations, is also taken into account in defining place identity.

In this issue of the journal, the category of place identity is used for the purpose of historical studies, coupled with the local category in analysing the material embodiments and discursive development of memory in towns and cities. Thus, papers confront one aspect of place identity, the *local memory* and its role in shaping the identities of people and the whole urban centres as such. Surely, cultural memory, most often than not, is viewed through a more general, higher-scale perspective of state or inter-regional entities rather than, as in the aforementioned examples, through local communities. This is

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[6] Mieke Bal, 'Introduction', in Mieke Bal, Jonathan V. Crewe, and Leo Spitzer (eds), *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present* (Hanover–London, 1999), VII.

[7] Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture* (London, 1980).

[8] Cliff Hague, 'Planning and Place Identity', in *id*. and Paul Jenkins (eds), *Place Identity, Planning and Participation* (New York, 2004), 2–14.

[9] Gregory J. Ashworth, Brian Graham, and John E. Turnbridge, 'Introduction', in *eid*. (eds), *Pluralising Pasts. Heritage, Identity and Place in Multicultural Societies* (London–Ann Arbor, MI, 2007), 5.

the context in which the uses and abuses of memory are discussed, for instance, by Paul Ricoeur. In his extensive treatise on remembering, forgetting and history writing, the author pointed at such abuses of memory as a 'blocked' memory, 'manipulated' memory – which will be further elaborated below – and 'obligated' memory.[10] While mourning and melancholy of the blocked memory may have an individual subject, as may be the case for the obligation to memory, the memory manipulated by ideological narratives has explicit higher-scale references. State-oriented aims of memory are crucial in almost all works discussed, from Assmanns to Pierre Nora. Acts of memory, or acts of bringing new meanings to the past and inscribing it into the present, for Moritz Csáky (to reference a book on the region in question), serve as prime examples of national manipulation of memory.[11] The same perspective may be seen in the celebrations and bodily practices of memorialisation described by Paul Connerton.[12]

In the present volume, the national dimension of collective memory is shown as only one extreme. The other, discussed at greater length here, is the local one, closer to developing the place identity through memory. The physical closeness of material remnants of the past is much more crucial in this local milieu, as I argue using the example cited in the second part of the paper.

II
THE VOICE OF MATERIAL OBJECTS

In two ways, memory may be reflected in physical objects, be it urban structures, architectural works, objects of art, or any other artefacts. The things in question may be conceived of as a remnant of the past and, in this way, imbued with meaning by various social actors – with the caveat that the meaning is always negotiated anew by subsequent generations and may change or be lost – or may be formed and constructed purposefully with the mnemotechnical sense by specific acts

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[10] Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, 68–92.

[11] Moritz Csáky, 'Geschichte und Gedächtnis. Erinnerung und Erinnerungsstrategien im narrativen historischen Verfahren', in Alojz Ivanišević (ed.), *Klio ohne Fesseln? Historiographie im östlichen Europa nach dem Zusammenbruch des Kommunismus* (Wien *et al.*, 2003), 61–80.

[12] Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge, 1989).

of memory: memorialising past events or ideas, by means of sculptures and monuments, mounds, plaques, or other objects.[13] These objects will be of importance here, as well as their sheer physical presence. But why is the latter so important? The answer may be found in the studies of material culture, where the reciprocal entanglement of the perceiving self and physical objects is analysed. Objects are not neutral, nor do they lie outside the social world, on the contrary, they are part of it and may have deep connections to human beings, their value systems, the social construction of meanings and eventually, social identification.[14] The presence of physical objects in the inhabited space has its salience for the perceiving self even when we put aside the issue of meaning. In contrast to the imaginary world of ideas and visions, the materiality of the environment, in this case, the built environment, has a constant, though often unconscious, impact on the self and its perception of the world (including the sphere of ideas), as will be demonstrated by the example of the Warsaw Lutheran church.

Objects obviously have no intentions and do not act consciously, but it has been widely agreed in academia that they cannot be treated as the completely passive or lacking agency. The relation between people and objects is much more complicated; not only are objects often the results of human productivity and thus reflect the reality of the time of their construction and – according to Marxist scholars – the social relations of economic dominance, but they are also imbued with meaning by their users, who, according to Daniel Miller, carry out the 'cultural work' no less important than their creators.[15] Thus, consumption studies show that people are not passive; they actively seek relations with objects. For this reason, it is legitimate to assert that objects play an active role in connection with human needs and predispositions. Objects of memory may act in the same way, fulfilling

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[13] A useful volume on various acts of memory, conceived of as not only the objects themselves, but rather as cultural practice: Maria Bucur and Nancy Merriwether Wingfield (eds), *Staging the Past. The Politics of Commemoration in Habsburg Central Europe, 1848 to the Present* (West Lafayette, IN, 2001).

[14] The issue of identity as conceived, practised and eventually shaped by the interaction between human and material objects (from the point of view of history of consumerism) is described in Ian Woodward, *Understanding Material Culture* (Los Angeles, 2007).

[15] Daniel Miller, *Material Culture and Mass Consumption* (Oxford, 1987), cited after: Ian Woodward, *Understanding Material Culture*, 98–9.

the human need for rootedness and giving individuals the ingredients upon which social identity may be built.[16]

Space and place play a significant role here as well. Objects exist in space. They also create places, or, according to Yi-Fu Tuan, 'articulated geography', or 'tamed space' familiar to a human; a space which is otherwise amorphous and hard to perceive.[17] Objects of memory play the role of space markers, which not only bring meaning to the perceiving self, as argued above, but also define places, intricately interconnecting the minds of passers-by with their physical environment. Here references to the past are localised and bound with specific locations, helping to imbue places, as much as persons, with identity. The spatial dimension is all the more important when one considers the psychological effect that material objects may have on people, which is connected to the sphere of the senses. But the everyday experience of objects in space, even the most meaningful ones, may change the identity, albeit at a slow pace. History, however, sometimes speeds up.

III
THE IMPACT OF CRISES

It is an established truth that the process of personal identification sometimes needs a disaster to be sped up or stabilised, at least temporarily. "Identity comes to life only in the tumult of battle; it falls asleep and silent the moment the noise of the battle dies down", as Zygmunt Bauman has shortly put it.[18] This conflictive nature of identity-forging is further strengthened in the insight by Paul Ricoeur, who stressed that each founding act of a social or political group might be a simultaneous defeat of another group.[19] All this is obviously the result of the relational feature of each process of identification and probably of the memory cultures on the whole, as they

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[16] Cf. a study of public monuments, their materiality and meaning: Małgorzata Praczyk, *Reading Monuments. A Comparative Study of Monuments in Poznań and Strasbourg from the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Berlin, 2020).

[17] Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspectives of Experience* (Minneapolis–London, 2001) [orig. 1977], 17, 36–7, 73, 83.

[18] Zygmunt Bauman, *Identity. Conversations with Benedetto Vecchi* (Cambridge–Malden, MA, 2004), 77. See also Thomas Hylland Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism. Anthropological Perspectives* (London–New York, 2010), 81.

[19] Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, 82.

are all built on the foundation of social difference. Collective memory, a crucial component of identity, is often constructed in the same way, thus it is hardly surprising that memory cultures of neighbouring groups often depend on opposing views of the otherwise common past.

Conflicting views sometimes lead to crises like wars, but these are not the only conflicts that matter in the realm of memory. There are other types of crises that may affect the continuity of remembering. Some memories may be eradicated by historical developments like regime changes, modernisation and the disappearance of old traditions, or decisive social upheavals that may lead to changes in social consciousness. All this points to social forgetting as a phenomenon that accompanies each memory. Each discontinuity of remembering has paradoxically the ability of becoming a cornerstone of new memory cultures. Such ruptures have probably always been an important ingredient of memory cultures.[20] The sheer realisation of the fact that something has been forgotten, or that some histories are threatened to be discontinued, or that new emerging memories seem to be about to serve as an alternative to an existing memory culture, all have such cultural potential. That is why longer time scales are used in the research papers collected in the present volume. Longer periods, including moments of rupture, can more easily and convincingly demonstrate the rules that guide the processes of building and stabilising meanings in collective memory. In the case study in this paper, the longer perspective involves a fifty-year period between the end of the nineteenth century, and the new post-Great-War times of the 1930s.

IV

'URBAN PALIMPSEST' AND URBAN EXPERIENCE

The papers featured here attempt to connect the categories of memory, identity and space in the urban context of localness. To grasp this interconnectedness, it is instructive to turn to the metaphor of an 'urban palimpsest'. It is a reasonably commonplace comparison. Palimpsest is an old text which has been complemented several times by scribes and is full of traces of subsequent erasures and additions across decades or centuries. Palimpsest, in its urban context, refers to space; it attests not only to consecutive additions but also to acts

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[20] Assmann, *Cultural Memory*, 85.

of erasure and partial re-writing, along with extensions of its content. The metaphor has been used when describing towns and cities with a history of overwhelming destructions and rebuildings rather than mere additions. Andreas Huyssen used it to describe the phenomenon of Berlin of the 1990s, 'marked as much, if not more, by absences as by the visible presence of its past'.[21] More recently, Felix Ackermann has alluded to this metaphor in his book on the Polish/Jewish/Soviet Grodno to describe a town tormented by demographic and physical annihilations and re-writing (modernisation) during the twentieth century.[22] In the present paper, 'urban palimpsest' refers rather to partial re-writing and more numerous additions, instead of erasures, making previous layers of history still visible, even without detailed research. By this token urban space is full of objects (walls, houses, larger edifices and their sections, streets and lanes, monuments, greeneries) built in different times, testifying to stylistic changes in tastes, urban planning initiatives, half-executed plans, and embarrassingly hidden, or proudly exposed, effects of destruction due to natural disasters, wars and human hubris. They remind conscious observers about the passing of time, urban resilience, different modes of production, and various scales and time horizons of urban planning. Just like in Reinhard Koselleck's famous metaphor about time layers which can visualise, in analogy to geological layers, different speed and perspectives of action of various times and epochs,[23] 'urban palimpsest' is analogous to a complicated time map. The comparison to a written text allows for, and facilitates, an interpretation of urban space. Paul Ricoeur once compared memory to a literary text, inspiring scholars to conduct its hermeneutic analysis. The idea of a palimpsest opens pathways to more analytical work to be carried out on places of remembrance, 'harbingers of memory', in the physical space of towns and cities.

In other words, urban memory may be analysed as an experience cast in stone and petrified in space,[24] as all that the things that have

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[21] Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory* (Stanford, CA, 2003), 52.

[22] Felix Ackermann, *Palimpsest Grodno: Nationalisierung, Nivellierung und Sowjetisierung einer mitteleuropäischen Stadt 1919–1991* (Wiesbaden, 2010), 10–12.

[23] Cf. the English version: Reinhard Koselleck, *Sediments of Time. On the Condition of Possible Histories*, transl. Sean Franzel and Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann (Stanford, CA, 2018).

[24] Huyssen, *Present Pasts*, 101.

been experienced in the urban space, but also experienced by that space. Experience is a crucial category thematised in anthropology, which brings to the fore all that is lived through by humans; it thus leads to the appreciation of the narrations about lived facts by those who experienced rather than those who analyse them (i.e. scholars), which makes it a part of the trend to give voice to indigenous actors and local knowledge.[25] Here, human experience is confined to physical remnants of human actions. As Edward M. Bruner assures, 'We create the units of experience and meaning from the continuity of life';[26] one may add that we are the ones who carve objects and give them meaning from the continuity of space. The experience was (and still is) shaped by current events and ongoing processes; it, however, practically cannot be 'passed on' to next generations. The past in its original form is a 'foreign country' and may be transferred into the future only as a message, i.e. cannot be experienced and perceived in an unmediated way, instead always remaining a subject of interpretation.[27] It is mediated by narratives (see below) and symbols employed for that purpose. Plus, as in the case of the transfer of private memory (or memory of a family as a new emancipated unit, as in the theory of Halbwachs), there is nothing obvious in public (collective) memory: it always depends on the meanings attributed to the past, which has to be re-read anew by those who did not experience it. In that view, memory may be a sort of knowledge, or element of socialisation of new generations. As such, it remains one of the pillars of identity-building. Here we are concerned with the way this memory affects urban space, but also how the spatial traces of the past experiences are localised in and re-read from space. These elements that have been inserted into the space through time exist in various spatial and temporal planes, and this (often literally) petrified past experience may be the crux of urban memory.

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[25] As attested by the authors of the volume: Victor W. Turner and Edward M. Bruner, *The Anthropology of Experience* (Urbana–Chicago, 1986). See the papers by Renato Rosaldo and Edward M. Bruner.

[26] Edward M. Bruner, 'Experience and Its Expressions', *ibid.*, 3–30 (here 7).

[27] Marie-Claire Lavabre, 'Entre mémoire et histoire: à la recherche d'une méthode', in Jean-Clément Martin (ed.), *La guerre civile entre histoire et mémoire* (Nantes, [1995]), 39–48.

V
NARRATIVES OF MEMORY AND SPACE

The analyses presented in this issue are generally informed by cultural history. They speak of the meanings people imbue and inscribe into objects and the general image of urban space, showing the entanglement of local memory and local (place) identity, mediated by space and objects located therein. Memory and the identification process is not straightforward; it is conditioned socially and mediated by narratives about the past shared by certain groups. In other words, memory has the potential to transform the auto-perception of a self, but only through its social, cultural, and interpersonal perspective, as demonstrated by Halbwachs. The narratives in question serve as the basic tool of providing an intersubjective message about the past, tools which discursively explain past events or the lived experience connected to certain spaces within – in our case – the urban environment. They are, therefore, the means of surpassing the close interpersonal relations in the identity-building process because they reach broader audiences without the mediation of oral culture. The impact of these narratives cannot be analysed only in terms of scale, number and range of recipients (be it by their class or ethnic affiliation, or other factors) but also regarding their strength in terms of defining the essence and boundaries of human collectivities.[28] In this view, narratives about local attachment and the local dimension of social identification were no less significant than the nationally-oriented discourses of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, transcribing local memory into local identity. And as the national message was greatly strengthened by the fact that literacy ceased to be the privilege of elites, as many theoreticians of nationalism have highlighted,[29] the message of local identity and local memory was also facilitated by that process. Thus, local narratives, one of the dominating forms of reproduction of meaning, should not be confined to previous premodern periods.

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[28] Richard Jenkins, 'Different Societies? Different Cultures? What *are* Human Collectivities?', in Mark Haugaard and Siniša Malešević (eds), *Making Sense of Collectivity: Ethnicity, Nationalism, and Globalisation* (London, 2002), 12–32.

[29] Since the time of the famous book *Imagined Communities* by Benedict Anderson.

VI
SINGLE CHURCH BUILDING: A CASE STUDY

An example of a single object in a city may serve as a case in point, as it can converge many aspects of the memory of the past, both set in stone and de-coded by means of narratives of the present. Naturally, each city harbours plenty of such monuments, old enough to have identity-building potential, as well as physically and aesthetically impressive to attract the attention of subsequent generations. These are the seats of former authorities, castle ruins, traces of old town foundations in form of urban layouts of the streets, or old town halls reminding of the lost (and regained) municipal rights; churches and sanctuaries, which were important for past generations; monuments and sculptures, which had direct political aims and can today be termed 'markers of identity', or any single object or its remnants which could have been important to the identity of any group of urban inhabitants. Here I will focus on a church, namely: the edifice of the Holy Trinity church in Warsaw, the seat of the city's Lutherans, erected in 1781, and the Lutheran parish connected to this church. This will be a case study of a minority group whose presence has never been obvious in this cultural context, and which sometimes had to make great effort to continue the construction of the immaterial edifice of its social and religious identification. This process was entangled not only with the confessional ideals, but also with the physical object, the building, as I hope to explain below. To be able to conceptualise the agency of this building, I will analyse the ways it was enmeshed into the identity-forming anniversary celebrations at two instances, in two different eras of Warsaw history, in 1881 and 1931.

First of all, the issue of the confessional community must be explained in more detail. Lutherans in the capital of the arch-catholic eighteenth-century Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth were definitely not an obvious minority group. To be sure, the Commonwealth experienced a stormy period of religious debates during the Reformation, and since no religious denomination boasted hegemony – Roman Catholics, divided themselves and close to establishing a sort of separate national Polish Church in the mid-sixteenth century, could not oppose too fiercely to the inroads made by Calvinists, Unity of the (Czech) Brethren, Lutherans, and the Polish Brethrens (or Arians, expelled in 1658) – the country did not suffer religious violence and wars, as was

the case e.g. in France. It was only over a century later that the state organs went down the path of confessionalisation, which resulted in religious repressions against non-Catholics. Protestant nobility, which had served as a harbinger of Reformation, now legally handicapped, began to reconvert to Roman Catholicism, steadily weakening the Calvinist denomination. Lutherans, to the contrary, as a denomination always connected mainly to the burghers of towns and cities of Germany and, to a lesser extent, Eastern-Central Europe, could count on incoming waves of German immigrants, accepted in Poland as a crucial force of economic modernisation since the seventeenth century through the nineteenth century.[30] Such communities thus stemmed from the migrations, and thrived above all in the Prussian provinces of the Commonwealth, as well as in Warsaw. The capital was the destination of generations of immigrants, coming with the Saxon court of the Wettins since the turn of the eighteenth century, and later invited by, among others, the last Polish king. They settled in the capital, forming a German-speaking community, many of whose members became Polonised in terms of language, though much less often in terms of confession. The religious climate changed during the Enlightenment, and the legal situation of the Protestants improved due to the Russian policy of interference in the internal Polish affairs. Forced to accept formal toleration of non-Catholics, the Parliament allowed Protestants to build new churches (1767/68), the privilege they had been denied for over a century. This mainly German-speaking group made the decision to mark its presence in Warsaw by erecting an impressive classicist church just off the former Saxon royal seat, where the leaders of the Lutheran community, the Tepper family owned their pieces of land.

The community established itself in the form of a parish after the toleration acts, but crucially it also took a more tangible shape with the construction of the church and adjacent buildings, the pastor's house and a school, which marked the presence of the group not only in social, but also spatial terms. The physical object in question was imbued with deep meaning stemming from its architectural form, and the religious language of the confession visible in the layout

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[30] 'Luteranizm w Koronie od 1517 do 1795 r.', in Jarosław Kłaczkow (ed.), *Kościoły luterańskie na ziemiach polskich (XVI–XX w.)*, i: *W czasach Rzeczypospolitej Obojga Narodów* (Toruń, 2012), 13–88.

of the interior. The nascent Lutheran community included mainly artisans of German origin and culture, along with wealthy merchants, who boasted long-distance networks of contacts which may have been responsible for the unconventional form of the church. Today, it is not apparent where this layout might have come from, but one important example is the Amsterdam Lutheran church, with an imposing dome, designed by Adriaan Dorstman. The initial version of the church was designed by Ephraim Schroeger, and the final one by Simon Gottlieb Zug, both architects engaged in the 'puristic', austere version of classicist architecture, breaking off the ties with the more rococo-ish so-called 'king Stanislaus' style' [Pol. *styl stanisławowski*]. Zug, along with the initiators from the parish, envisioned a vast domed structure with an inner diameter of around 30 m. It consisted of several basic geometric figures juxtaposed with one another. The main features of the design were its purity and monumentality, while the interior design stressed the need for transparency between the parishioners' benches and the altar.[31] The entire structure bore traces of an artistic manifesto. A giant building, inspired in its outer and inner form by the Pantheon in Rome, oriented not by the East-West axis, but by the local context: the front of the oval building faced the city centre, welcoming the gaze of the Catholics and displaying its stylistic-cum-religious distinctiveness.

The parish was run by a joint leadership of the elders and more democratic committees, including the Warsaw Lutheran burghers who began to socially emancipate at that time. The burghers succeeded in serving as patrons of the confessional community, presiding over the Church College, a body from which the pastors were excluded (an exceptional solution among the Lutherans in the region).[32] The community consisted of wealthy bankers, the strict financial elite of the waning Commonwealth, as well as artisans, including the printers-cum-publicists Michael Gröll and Lorenz Ch. Mitzler de

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[31] On the church's architecture, see Jerzy K. Kos, 'Kościół Świętej Trójcy – projekt i jego realizacja', in Karol Guttmejer (ed.), *Ewangelicki kościół Świętej Trójcy w Warszawie* (Warszawa, 2017), 29–54; Maria I. Kwiatkowska, *Kościół Ewangelicko-Augsburski* (Warszawa, 1982); Marek Kwiatkowski, *Szymon Bogumił Zug, architekt polskiego oświecenia* (Warszawa, 1971), 159–62.

[32] Marta Kuc-Czerep, *Niemieckojęzyczni mieszkańcy Warszawy: droga do obywatelstwa w osiemnastowiecznej Rzeczypospolitej* (Warszawa, 2021), 217–18, 221.

Koloff, who spoke Polish (the parish communicated with the authorities in this language) and whose identification could probably be termed as mainly confessional (Lutheran), rather than national. The new Church faced conflicts over the confessional identity: it was divided between those who wanted to continue the tradition of a union with the Calvinists and those who opposed it on cultural grounds (local Calvinists had Polish roots).

The fall of the Commonwealth in 1795 brought about new vectors of loyalty for the Lutherans, though from 1807 (the end of a brief Prussian period) until the 1830s–40s, the administration was still run mainly by the Poles. The nineteenth century saw a rise in the number of Lutherans in Warsaw, new German immigrants from Saxony and other regions of Prussia joined the community defined confessionally and consisting of many partly acculturated Lutheran families (the exact numbers are not available). The presence of co-religionists loyal to the political idea of Polishness became visible in the fact that many Lutherans joined anti-Russian uprisings, or helped the irredentists in one way or another. The policy of the Russian authorities towards the group in question in the second half of the century fluctuated between isolating it and strengthening its cultural Germanness on the one end of the spectrum, or Russifying it and thus treating it as Poles on the other. Lutherans in Warsaw were susceptible to the trend of acculturation, sometimes leading to religious conversions; yet, their range remained limited. Although Catholic conversions to Protestantism ceased to be illegal, resulting in pastors gaining the right to legally bind marriages, and confessionally mixed couples being able to raise their children in both confessions (with the sons usually brought up in their fathers' confession while the daughters were brought up in their mothers' one), it seems that the majority of marriages remained within the same denomination. On the other hand, Warsaw Lutherans did not shy away from contacts outside their community, not least because of the professional ties to their customers; it was mostly the Lutherans who initiated new capitalistic enterprises and factories in the city. The confessional elite remained culturally German, but it also displayed an increased sensitivity towards Polish culture. It seems, however, that one of the leading journalists in the Kingdom of Poland, Ludwig Jenike, exaggerated a bit when he wrote in his *Tygodnik Illustrowany* [Illustrated Weekly] that '[…] almost all of the Lutheran parish's intelligentsia in Warsaw consists of Poles

who, bar the names, have nothing German in themselves […] not neglecting wider duties towards the country with whose pursuits and needs they fully sympathise'.[33] In the meantime, the Church authorities evolved politically. Strong ties with the Polish culture were forged among the members of the clergy who had more contacts with the Poles (as was the case in Warsaw), and those who the Tsar forced to study in Dorpat (today's Tartu in Estonia); the university – unlike the schools in Prussia, Saxony and later Germany – boasted a larger number of Polish students who were colleagues with their compatriots from the Kingdom of Poland, regardless of the language they spoke.[34] The spiritual leader, who later served as a template for proponents of a patriotically inclined church service practice, was Leopold Otto. He actively participated in the anti-Russian manifestations of 1861, later exiled in the Teschen Silesia until 1875; his fervent sermons inspired many. He established the first Warsaw Lutheran periodical, *Zwiastun Ewangeliczny* [Evangelical Herald], published in Polish. One of his followers was another priest, Julius (Juliusz) Bursche, a Polonised German, who assumed authority over the Kingdom's Lutherans in 1904/05, and who fought for the Polonisation of the Church authorities.

The regaining of Polish independence changed the landscape. The influx of migrants had weakened drastically since the 1840s, and the acculturation process waned much since the last decades of that century, as national consciousness among social groups in such a large city as Warsaw became widespread even before the First World War. The events of 1918 further strengthened this process. Every person virtually had to decide if they were a Polish citizen or a member of the group now defined as the German national minority. Lutherans with a low degree of acculturation to the Polish culture, while not predominant (many of them left nascent Poland), but still very visible within the Warsaw parish,[35] tended to protect their confessional and cultural distinctiveness and also often were under the cultural and political influence of Germany. Such Lutherans were against the process

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[33] Untitled, *Tygodnik Illustrowany*, xiii, 315 (7 Jan. 1882), 10. Jenike's authorship remains only a hypothesis.

[34] Tadeusz Stegner, *Pastorzy Królestwa Polskiego na studiach teologicznych w Dorpacie w XIX wieku* (Warszawa, 1993).

[35] Unlike in other provincial parishes, where German-oriented members remained the majority.

of Polonisation of the clergy (which took off since the times of Leopold Otto), and the clergy's patriotic stance towards the new Polish state, which they perceived as not entirely their own. They accused Juliusz Bursche of taking insufficient care of the German churchgoers.[36] Bursche led the patriotic fraction in the Church, which remained loyal to the Polish state and supported it on many occasions. The General Superintendent (as was his official title) could rely on the strong support of acculturated parishioners: in a census carried out in 1897 in Russia, almost a half of Warsaw Lutherans declared Polish as their everyday language,[37] and later, in the interwar period, Poles made up three-quarters of the 19,000-odd parish.[38] At times, as we shall see, the state knew how to reciprocate this support, at least symbolically.

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VII
ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS IN 1881 AND 1931/2

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Both anniversary celebrations of the Lutheran parish served as occasions to strengthen the group's cohesiveness and its sense of meaning and purpose. Both acts of memory in fact masked (to employ the term from Roy Wagner[39]) the heterogeneity of the group and the complexity of its past. The hundredth anniversary of the consecration of the church in 1781 was meant by the Church College (the main body within the parish, led by aforementioned Ludwik Jenike) to have an inner-parochial character, and the festivities were centred on the church itself, the material substance that bound the members. A thorough renovation of the building was planned and the collection of the funds began in 1878.[40] Some elements and new church furnishings were donated by Lutheran companies (Warsaw building industry was dominated by

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[36] Eduard Kneifel, *Geschichte der Evangelisch-Augsburgischen Kirche in Polen* (Roth bei Nürnberg, 1964), 206–13.

[37] There is virtually only one book on the history of Lutherans in Warsaw: Tadeusz Stegner, *Ewangelicy warszawscy 1815–1918* (Warszawa, 1993).

[38] Jarosław Kłaczkow, *Kościół Ewangelicko-Augsburski w Polsce w latach 1918–1939* (Toruń, 2017), 31.

[39] Roy Wagner, *The Invention of Culture* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1975).

[40] Cf. the letters and bills issued by the parish: Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych (hereinafter: AGAD), Akta Kollegium Kościelnego Zboru Ewangelicko-Augsburskiego w Warszawie (hereinafter: AKKZEA), Wydział Kasowy (hereinafter: WKo), ref. no. 921.

them at that time), and the architect Jan (Johann) Heurich the Elder
agreed to provide designs; but it was the parish which managed
to bear the bulk of renovation costs of that huge building.[41] Besides
the renovation (mainly of the interior, including a reconstruction
of the altarpiece[42]) the anniversary was celebrated by publishing
the first historical treaty about the parish, written by Leopold Otto.[43]
This narration gave the parishioners a sense of belonging, tracing
the group's origins to the Reformation times, and describing the roots
of the Lutheran community in Warsaw (when even their presence in
the town was illegal).[44] By narrating the history of the parish
(in the book and in his pieces in *Zwiastun* and sermons), Otto achieved
something even more important. He endowed the nineteenth-century
Lutherans, many of them descendants of a more recent influx from
German states, with a sense of a mission among the Catholic Poles,
binding their origins as a group with the Polish, mainly Calvinist,
Reformation. For him and his followers, the long-gone past could be
enlivened and continued, and the Lutherans could change the fate
of the nation under partitions by bringing it the true Scripture and
work ethics[45] and transforming the society, just as it could have been
done back in the mid-sixteenth century.

The realities, however, were somewhat different. The parish spoke
mainly German, and the festive service in December 1881 was a clear
expression of this (peaceful, to be sure) division among the parish
members. The main sermon was preached in German, and the second
one, by Leopold Otto, in Polish. Interestingly, the new parish choir
sang a Beethoven cantata in Polish and the closing hymns in German.[46]
Otto's sermon stressed the religious mission, i.e. the importance
of maintaining the social distinctiveness of the parishioners, but

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[41] [Leopold Otto], 'Stuletnia rocznica poświęcenia kościoła pod wezwaniem
Trójcy świętej w Warszawie', *Zwiastun Ewangeliczny*, xx, 4, 75–8 (here 76).

[42] *Ibid.*, 77.

[43] Leopold Otto, *Przyczynek do historyi zboru ewangelicko-augsburskiego warszawskiego
1650–1781* (Warszawa, 1881).

[44] The Duchy of Mazovia was situated outside the Crown of Poland until 1526,
and from 1525 there was a ban on non-Catholics in Warsaw, which remained
in force, though later unlawfully, for the following centuries.

[45] On the ideas of Otto see Tadeusz Stegner, *Bóg, protestantyzm, Polska: biografia
pastora Leopolda Marcina Otto, 1819–1882* (Gdańsk, 2000).

[46] [Otto], 'Stuletnia rocznica', 78.

also emphasised the present needs fulfilled by each commemoration ('in each past also lies the future'). The text was later published as a booklet and distributed by two large printing houses-cum--bookstores, owned by Lutherans.[47] The service was in itself a testimony of the changing language relations; in fact, Polish was introduced on a par with German as the language of services and sermons in that same jubilee year, 1881. The elite of the parish had a chance to prove its commitment to the religious credentials versus the Warsaw community on the very day of the anniversary: it took place just a few days after an anti-Jewish pogrom which had swept across the centre of Warsaw. Because of this, the festive dinner at the Citizens' Club was abandoned, and the funds were agreed to be dispensed to support the victims of the pogrom.[48]

The second, 150th-anniversary celebrations, took place in 1931 and 1932. The Church was then led by Juliusz Bursche, and the parish by August Loth, both supporters of a general pro-Polish policy. Bursche's loyalty to the Polish state stemmed from the ideas of Otto, and his own dreams of a strong, Polish-Lutheran Church in Poland, uniting the other Lutheran Churches from the former German and Austrian partitions. His efforts to back the state in a bid to gain as large territory as possible in 1919–20, including participation in the Paris peace conference and an active engagement in the Masurian plebiscite, were known to the high-ranking Polish officials.[49] The plans did not pay off as desired, Lutherans remained divided (five different post-partition separate churches!), but the Bursche's Lutheran Church, with the seat in Warsaw, the most Polonised among the five, gained parishes in Austrian Silesia, Cracow, and the Eastern Lands, and managed to establish new Polish-speaking parishes in Greater Poland, Pomerania and Lesser Poland.

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[47] Leopold Otto, *Kazanie w dniu pamiątki obchodu stuletniej rocznicy poświęcenia kościoła Trójcy Świętej* (Warszawa, 1882).

[48] AGAD, AKKZEA, WKo, ref. no. 453, 42–3. On the pogrom: Alina Cała, *Asymilacja Żydów w Królestwie Polskim (1864–1897)* (Warszawa, 1989), 151–72. For a new interpretation, see Artur Markowski, 'Pogrom warszawski 1881', in Kamil Kijek, Artur Markowski, and Konrad Zieliński (eds), *Pogromy Żydów na ziemiach polskich w XIX i XX wieku*, ii: *Studia przypadków do 1939 r.* (Warszawa, 2019), 67–86.

[49] On Bursche see e.g. Woldemar Gastpary, *Biskup Bursche i sprawa polska* (Warszawa, 1972); Elżbieta Alabrudzińska, *Juliusz Bursche (1862–1942) – zwierzchnik Kościoła Ewangelicko-Augsburskiego w Polsce: biografia* (Toruń, 2010).

The main celebrations were planned for May of the following year (1932). It was the time of the Great Depression, and the festivities had to be scaled down. The idea to mount a marble plaque inside the church with the busts of two important Lutheran figures, Gottlieb Ringeltaube (the parish priest in 1781) and Leopold Otto, was rejected.[50] An album was published, which featured the material contribution of the parish to Warsaw's urban fabric and public institutions. This included a few dozen images of the seats of Warsaw Lutheran charitable institutions, along with the Protestant Hospital (one of the city's most modern healthcare facilities), parish schools located in different parts of the city, and images of the most outstanding historic leaders of the Church College, including the author of the first Polish dictionary, Samuel Bogumił Linde. The main focus was, however, on the church building, its interior and exterior, and the parish buildings surrounding it. The images were later published separately as postcards.[51]

The main celebrations in May 1932 were the testimony of the relationship between the Lutheran Church and the state. While the Polish state after 1926 became more open to Protestants (not least because of the personal acquaintance of Bursche with Józef Piłsudski, himself a former Protestant, if only *de iure*), and because of the merits of the general superintendent (later to become a bishop formally in 1937), the 150th anniversary had a large official entourage. The church was full: more than 5,000 people sat or stood in the interiors. The state representation included: the education minister (the ministry regulated the functioning of churches and denominations), accompanied by his vice-minister and the head of the Denominations Department; chiefs of similar departments charged with non-Catholic affairs from the Ministry of the Military Issues and the President's Office; the Warsaw voivode and vice--president, along with the head of the Police and the colonel from the General Staff. Moreover, the spiritual heads of the Orthodox Church in Poland, the Reformed Church and the Methodist Church, not counting the Lutheran Consistory and at least 40 Lutheran priests from around the country, were also present. The most important guest was, however, the president of Poland, Ignacy Mościcki, who was greeted by rows of Lutheran youth and pupils from the parish

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[50] AGAD, AKKZEA, WKo, ref. no. 453, 97.
[51] 'Upominek jubileuszowy', *Zwiastun Ewangeliczny*, xii, 18, 144.

schools outside the building and by the head of the Church College, senator Józef Evert, August Loth and one of the college members. The president was seated near the altar, where he was able to listen to the sermon given by Juliusz Bursche.

The sermon was – again, just as the one in 1881 – of utmost importance. Bursche reiterated the historical ideals of the Polish Reformation and confirmed that the Lutheran mission in the country was still valid. He did not hesitate to condemn, in front of the president, the 'dark' forces in Polish history – the activity of the Jesuits and the self-complacency of the nobility. Both threads were present in mainstream historiography. Still, when expressed by a Protestant, these sentiments could sound like a harsh criticism and as an argument in the narrative about the Lutheran mission. For a moment, it could seem that Protestants were an important part of Polish society, and the celebrations were a triumph of the vision of Bursche and his acolytes.

The anniversary was also an opportunity for more radical Polish Lutherans to voice their claims and demands. The leader of the young clergy, Zygmunt Michelis, the then editor-in-chief of *Zwiastun*, published a long article about the actual situation of the denomination.[52] He divided the history of the Lutherans into stages, the past ones connected to the struggle for independence, which was now obsolete. The current needs forced the Lutheran elite to stop integrating too much into society (participation in uprisings often led to conversions later in life) and to rethink its confessional identity. According to Michelis, parishioners should strengthen their Lutheran commitments to oppose views espoused by the National Democratic right with its vision of a fully Roman-Catholic Poland. To be sure, no one would be able to steer society towards Protestantism, as Otto had imagined before, but a strong and unambiguous Lutheran voice had the potential to bring plurality and open-mindedness to the Poles. This stance was similar to that of Bursche, but was deemed by many young Protestants as more dynamic, and Michelis was seen as a person ready to face the challenges of the 1930s.

As one may see, a heterogenous and internally divided religious group, could be bound together not only by the fact of belonging to one confession. It was the place in Warsaw that the group 'occupied'

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52 Zygmunt Michelis, 'W obliczu jubileuszu', *Zwiastun Ewangeliczny*, xii, 19, 145–6.

and the physical monument that originated in a certain moment in history, which had the potential to bring cohesion to the community. The anniversaries mentioned above would not have this potential of uniting minds had they not been connected, as I tried to argue here, to a common monumental heritage of the place of worship and its history within Warsaw. The church, which in itself spoke stylistically of the proud self-esteem of the parish and its religious *raison d'être*. To be sure, memory discourse in the press and sermons by Leopold Otto and other priests attempted to make history plain and simple. In these texts, no religious debates and conflicts were mentioned (although in 1781, the parish was on the brink of tearing itself apart), and the parish founders were presented almost as heroes. The parish elite must have had the knowledge about these 'meanders' of history. However, unlike the social world, in the form of the group's history, which could be problematic as a springboard to confessional unity in 1881 and 1931/32, the silent material world of the church edifice, experienced on a week-to-week basis by the parishioners, marvelled and inspired them, could be imbued with a uniting and homogenising meaning more readily than the conflicting and dynamic threads of history.

VIII
CONCLUSIONS

To sum up these reflections, it should be stressed that memory resides not only in words and imagination, but also in physical objects, which have to, indeed, be compelled to speak, but which have the potential to affect the human mind by their sheer presence.[53] If explained in an apt and inspiring way, they can become 'harbingers of memory' in their own right, shaping an individual's self-identification process, especially if this person does not fully and unconditionally belong in their environment, as was the case with the Protestants in the otherwise Roman Catholic Poland. The history of both Lutheran anniversaries demonstrates many features of the memory. First of all, the constant need for (re)adjustments of each history, or making it fit the present needs, as was the case with the church building and its commemorations

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[53] As was argued by Mircea Eliade in the religious context in Mircea Eliade, *Images et symboles. Essai sur le symbolisme magico-religieux* (Paris: Gallimard, 1952).

in 1881 and 1931/2, when the history was explained each time by the parish and Church clergy and officials, the organisers of those acts of memory, and placed in a longer narration about the presence and aims of the Lutheran community in Warsaw and the Polish state. Secondly, the need of each memory to be embodied in the physical world, which is expressed by monuments, plaques and history handbooks. Here the embodiment was the religious object, with its stylistic language and confessional symbols, which had its distinct meaning within the Warsaw cityscape, but also acted more comprehensively by providing a space for the weekly gatherings of the parish during the Sunday services and other meetings (e.g. of the Church College). The 'social work' done by the building was, therefore, even more appealing to the human actors than in the case of sculptures or plaques. Thirdly, as in this case, the memory of distant past, i.e. the sixteenth-century Reformation, was also at play in forging the identification of the Lutherans and their sense of rootedness in Polish society. The church was built in a later period, but it acted as a milestone in the long history of Lutherans in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Russian partition and finally in the independent Polish Republic after 1918.

proofreading Krzysztof Heymer

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