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Lars Breuer:

German and Polish 'memory from below'

About the author:

Lars Breuer is a Ph.D. fellow at the Institute of Advanced Study in the Humanities (Kulturwissenschaftliches Institut) in Essen, Germany. Since 2007 he has been working on his dissertation with the working title 'Auto- and hetero-stereotypes in the context of European memory cultures'. He holds an MA in Cultural Science from Humboldt University (Berlin). His main research areas are memory cultures, national identity, anti-Semitism and German contemporary history.

e-mail: lars.breuer@web.de

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Forschungsstelle Osteuropa an der Universität Bremen
Research Centre for East European Studies at the University of Bremen
Klagenfurter Straße 3
28359 Bremen
Germany
e-mail: fsopr@uni-bremen.de

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Abstract

The concept of a common European memory is currently a very prominent topic. In the social sciences, European memory is often conceived as a normative concept. Most empirical studies on European memory primarily employ deductive approaches and focus on publicly available records of memory (mass media, parliamentary debates, etc.). However, recent research has shown significant disparities between different levels of memory, both in terms of content and structure. Therefore, in this article three levels of memory will be considered: *official*, *public* and *vernacular* memory. The latter could also be called ‘memory from below’, i.e. memories which are casually passed on via daily face-to-face communications, often unintentionally and in smaller memory communities (like families, peer groups, etc.). The paper starts with a clarification of the concept of memory, followed by a description of the data and methodology. After a brief account of the public memory in Germany and Poland concerning the subject of World War II, I will present some preliminary results from my ongoing Ph.D. research. My empirical work concentrates on the aforementioned ‘memory from below’. Based on forty group discussions about World War II and its consequences, conducted with members of different social groups (e.g. pensioners, students, NGOs, teachers) in Germany and Poland, my research focuses on the link between recollections of the past and collective forms of self-understanding in a comparative perspective. Exploring ‘memory from below’, I first take a look at the memory narratives that took shape in the group discussions. I then try to determine how the recollections of the past are linked to the articulation of collective identities. To that end, I will emphasize the participants’ ascription of certain roles to themselves and to the other nationality, with the role of *victim* emerging as the most common one. For me, the interesting question is to what extent these attributions relate to individuals, to national collectives or to universal categories. In Germany, for example, respondents commonly used abstract terms like ‘suffering’ and Universalist generalizations, which tend to be quite vague. However, when speaking in concrete terms, the German respondents predominantly spoke about *Germans as victims*, but were much less likely to depict members of other nations as *victims of Germans.* In the Polish group discussions, however, Poland’s relationship to its neighbours, Germany and Russia, was the dominant topic, and the various ascriptions assigned on the individual, national and universal levels elicited quite a bit of controversy. This outcome made for an interesting contrast to the German case: On the one hand, in Poland, Universalist attributions were more likely to be rejected in favour of national ones. On the other hand, the Polish respondents were also much more likely to refer to the other nationality (i.e. the Germans) on a tangible level. With respect to Europe, I am mainly analysing *Europeanization*, understood as the process in which national identity is indeed challenged, but not altogether replaced; rather, it is reconfigured through the European prism. In conclusion, I argue that similarities in terms of a collective European memory is not likely to be found on the content level (i.e. memory narratives), but rather in certain modes of memory, such as the *memory imperative*, a concept that will be defined later on.

1. Introduction

European identity and European memory are currently a prominent topic in the social sciences and beyond. The idea of a common European memory (as part of a common European set of values) is often presented as a normative category, described as a necessary complement to the already existing political and economic integration into the European Union and its top-down bias. However, this so-called scientific ‘search for the European’ sometimes has a top-down bias itself. This especially applies to stud-

ies on European memory, where even empirical research is mostly focused on official or at least publicly available records of memory (like mass media, parliamentary debates, etc.). I would like to argue that it is crucial to include other 'domains' of memory. As recent empirical studies on family memory in different European countries[1] have shown, there are significant disparities between public memory and family memory, both in terms of content and structure. As a way to distinguish between different levels of memory, I would like to introduce the categories of *official*, *public* and *vernacular* memory. Of course, this division is purely analytical and has to be understood as a working definition, not as an elaborated theoretical concept. By *public memory* I mean publicly available recollections of past events that are mainly circulated via mass media (TV, newspapers, books, movies, etc.). *Official memory* describes the institutionalization of public memory in practices of commemoration by the state and similar agents (memorials, commemoration days, speeches and the like), whereas *vernacular memory* describes the adoption and reproduction of public memory narratives by ordinary people (within families, among friends, in everyday communication).

By analysing forty group discussions with members of different social groups in Germany and Poland (see data and methods), I have chosen to focus my empirical research on the vernacular level, which could also be called 'memory from below'. This refers to memories that are casually passed on via daily face-to-face communications within small memory communities. Of course, these memories are deeply informed by public memory narratives, but they are adapted and modified in a unique way by every single individual.

The concept of *memory* is used in a very broad sense in this paper. It is by no means limited to personal experiences (e.g. of contemporary witnesses), but includes any representation, image or recollection of past events. In accordance with the general assumptions of sociological memory studies,[2] I do not view memories as 'authentic' representations of the past, but rather as narratives that primarily serve present-day needs and interests (and as such are strongly connected to the (re-)construction of collective identities). Unlike a historian, I am neither interested in the question of what 'really' happened, nor in the relationship between memories and the actual past events to which they refer. Rather, I want to find out why and how people conceive of certain past events and what this means to them in terms of their self-understanding.

In my dissertation, I pursue the key question of how self-images and images of 'the other' (nation and/or memory community) are shaped in everyday communications about memory by different social groups. This leads to the following research questions:

How are the narratives and tropes of the official or public memory in Germany and Poland being reflected upon, reproduced and adapted by the respondents? Are there any detectable patterns within certain memory agents or communities? How and to what extent are memories of 'the other' being dealt with or even integrated?

How do certain recollections of the past relate to the respective forms of collective self-conceptions? Which kinds of roles (like perpetrator or victim) are being ascribed to one's own group and to the other

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1 Welzer, Harald / Moller, Sabine / Tschuggnall, Karoline: ‚Opa war kein Nazi'. Nationalsozialismus und Holocaust im Familiengedächtnis, Frankfurt/Main: Fischer, 2002; Welzer, Harald (ed.): Der Krieg der Erinnerung. Holocaust, Kollaboration und Widerstand im europäischen Gedächtnis. Frankfurt/Main: Fischer, 2007.

2 Halbwachs, Maurice: On collective memory, Chicago/IL: University of Chicago Press, 1992.

nationality? To what extent are these ascriptions bound to national frameworks and how are they related to individual ascriptions and universal categories?

How do respondents correlate national and non-national (i.e. global, European, regional, local) memories? What role does the concept of a (common) European memory play for the respondents when they speak about memory?

2. Data and methodology

The empirical basis of my work consists of forty stimulated group discussions in Germany and Poland conducted between 2006–8. Group discussions were chosen as a method that offers a suitable analysis of the social construction of opinions and attitudes[3] and thus allows insights into the negotiation of what I call 'memory from below'.

Presupposing that recollections of National Socialism, World War II and its consequences are still crucial points of reference for collective self-understandings in many European nations, Germany and Poland were chosen because of their extremely different wartime experiences (Germany as an occupying force and perpetrator of war crimes and the Holocaust; Poland as an occupied country, battlefield and main site of the Holocaust, with an enormous number of victims) as well as for their strikingly divergent ways of dealing with this past (for their respective memory narratives, see below).

In order to explore the broad spectrum of memory communities between public and vernacular memory, group discussions with members of various groups were conducted, ranging from age cohorts (pupils, students, pensioners) to people who in one way or another deal with memories in their everyday lives (history teachers, politicians, journalists, staff of memorial sites). The groups, consisting of 3–8 individuals each, were formed according to the snowball method.

The respondents were given a short introduction about the aims of the project and then presented with five photographs of various war and post-war scenes. The pictures were meant to stimulate discussion and reflect the importance of World War II and its aftermath. The interviewees were then asked to talk about their impressions and comment upon the photographs and the events depicted in them. After forty-five minutes, a sixth picture symbolizing the European Union was presented, accompanied by some questions about the possibility, necessity, and potential pillars of a common European memory.

The groups' discussions were analysed using a well-tested set of methods based on the assumptions of grounded theory and qualitative content analysis.[4] The entire body of material has been coded with the help of special software[5] that allows large amounts of data to be processed (the transcripts of the group discussions consist of almost 900 pages). After the coding, several in-depth analyses of particular sequences were made, with some still remaining to be done.

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3 Bohnsack, Ralf / Przyborski, Aglaja / Schäffer, Burkhard (eds): Das Gruppendiskussionsverfahren in der Forschungspraxis, Opladen: Budrich, 2006; Lamnek, Siegfried: Gruppendiskussion. Theorie und Praxis, Basel: Beltz, 2005.

4 Jensen, Olaf: Induktive Kategorienbildung als Basis Qualitativer Inhaltsanalyse, in: Mayring, Philipp / Gläser-Zikuda, Michaela (eds): Die Praxis der qualitativen Inhaltsanalyse, Weinheim et al.: Beltz, 2005, pp. 255–275.

5 Kuckartz, Udo (ed.): Einführung in die computergestützte Analyse qualitativer Daten, Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2007; Kuckartz, Udo / Grunenberg, Heiko / Dresing, Thorsten: Qualitative Datenanalyse. Computergestützt. methodische Hintergründe und Beispiele aus der Forschungspraxis, Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2007.

3. Background. Public and official memory in Germany and Poland

Before I present some of my empirical results, I will briefly sketch the recent development of public memory in Germany and Poland as a basis of comparison.

Germany

Before 1989, there were two distinctive memory cultures in Germany: In East Germany (GDR), the state ideology of anti-fascism prevailed and served to avoid any further inquiry into questions of guilt or responsibility with respect to Germany's role in World War II. In West Germany (FRG), from the 1960s onwards there was a fierce debate between two opposing political camps about the commemoration of World War II. While advocates of '*Vergangenheitsbewältigung*' ('coming to terms with the past') demanded an admission of German guilt and a critical investigation of the National Socialist past, supporters of the '*Schlussstrich'* ('bottom line') criticized the reduction of German history to National Socialism and demanded its 'normalization'. But in the GDR as well as in both political camps in the FRG, there was a major gap between the official and the vernacular memory, primarily in terms of acknowledging Germany's role as perpetrator and expressing empathy for victims of National Socialism.

After 1990, unified Germany had to redefine its political and cultural identity, including its relationship to its negative past. The 1990s were characterized by various public memory debates. The emotional disputes about both Daniel Goldhagen's book *Hitler's Willing Executioners*[6] and the exhibition *War of Destruction. Crimes of the Wehrmacht*[7] were, among other things, sparked by the vivid depiction of the atrocities perpetrated by ordinary Germans. While this portrayal encountered strong resistance, especially from older Germans, members of the younger generation seemed to appreciate this critical examination of the past. The debates about compensation for former Nazi slave-labourers[8] and the construction of the Berlin Holocaust Memorial[9] raised the question of how important the remembrance of National Socialism should be for today's Germans, including how much money should be spent on commemorative efforts.

To sum up, the memory debates that took place in the 1990s were no longer about conflicting interpretations of the past, but rather about how to deal with this past and evaluate its consequences for the present. At least on the level of official and public memory, the discourse of '*Vergangenheitsbewältigung'* eventually prevailed and a kind of memory consensus developed. At this juncture, the main question was whether the ubiquitous sceptical view of national history should be considered a hindrance to German national identity or perhaps the basis of it. The discourse of 'normalization' was adapted by the red-green coalition government. German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder stressed German responsibility for World War II and the Holocaust, but emphasized that Germany, which is now a 'self-confident' nation, no longer feels stigmatized by references to its past. Relying on this confidence, German memory has recently turned towards German wartime suffering. Previously, any mention of German suffering as a result of flight, expulsion and Allied air raids towards the end of WWII was taboo, but it has now be-

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6 Goldhagen, Daniel J.: Hitler`s willing executioners. Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust, London: Little, Brown and Company, 1996.

7 Hamburger Institut für Sozialforschung (ed.): Vernichtungskrieg. Verbrechen der Wehrmacht 1941 bis 1944. Ausstellungskatalog, Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 1995.

8 Gruppe offene Rechnungen (ed.): The Final Insult. Das Diktat gegen die Überlebenden. Deutsche Erinnerungsabwehr und Nichtentschädigung der NS-Sklavenarbeit, Münster: Unrast-Verlag, 2003.

9 Leggewie, Claus / Meyer, Erik: ‚Ein Ort, an den man gerne geht'. Das Holocaust-Mahnmal und die deutsche Geschichtspolitik nach 1989, München: Carl Hanser Verlag 2005.

come an inherent feature of this discourse. (Actually, this taboo never really existed either in the vernacular or official public memory.) Another aspect of this discourse is its emotionality: While the commemoration of Nazi crimes and their victims has always been somewhat pedagogical and superficial (i.e. coming from the head rather than from the heart), many Germans express much more empathy when speaking about their own suffering.

Despite this, the distancing from the National Socialist past has become a decisive part of German national identity. Being German today means the absolute opposite of what it did during the 'Third Reich': Many Germans now consider themselves devoted Europeans and identify with universal values. Germany has even made moral capital out of being the 'inventor and world champion of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*'.[10] On the international level, Germany's way of critically dealing with the past has become a benchmark. Germans even occasionally tend to exhibit a moral arrogance when criticizing other nations' alleged insufficiency in confronting their pasts.

Poland

Up to now, Polish national identity has been strongly influenced by the historical experience of fragile statehood and the fear of powerful neighbours Germany (Prussia) and Russia (USSR). The dual occupation of Poland by the Germans and Soviets in 1939 still resonates as a national trauma. The People's Republic of Poland (1952–89) was characterized by a huge gap between the vernacular memory and the state-controlled official/public memory (most visible in the conflicts about the commemoration of the Home Army and the Warsaw Rising).[11] According to the state, Poland was an ally of the Soviet Union, which had liberated the country from the Nazis. In vernacular memory, however, the Soviets were considered an occupational force that had committed serious crimes against Poles. The only point upon which both sides agreed was the enmity with Germany.

After 1989, many issues unexplored by Communist memory politics had to be examined. This sometimes led to highly controversial debates, some of which seriously challenged the historical self-image of the Poles as a nation of victims (especially the debates about Polish anti-Semitism and the Jedwabne massacre).[12] Unlike in Germany, where memory conflicts are mainly centred on the Holocaust, in Polish memory debates, quite a number of relationships are at stake (Polish-Russian, Polish-German, Polish-Jewish, Polish-Ukrainian). Aside from the German occupation, the Soviet occupation is now also being dealt with extensively, with the 1940 Katyń massacre and the 1944 Warsaw Rising (not to be confused with the 1943 Warsaw Ghetto uprising) becoming national symbols for Stalinist crimes. Another topic that was first openly discussed after 1989 was the expulsion of Poles from the former Polish eastern territories (Kresy). In dealing with this terrible fate, many Poles actually developed empathy even with German refugees and expellees after World War II, stressing the similarity of their traumatic experiences rather than reiterating the perception of Germans as collective perpetrators or 'bad guys'.

The common political aim of all Polish parties in the Third Republic (after 1989) was joining the EU and NATO, which was understood as Poland's 'return to Europe'. When this goal was achieved in 2004, a real memory boom ensued, with questions of identity becoming increasingly important. Many Poles felt

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[10] Frei, Norbert: 1945 und wir. Das Dritte Reich im Bewußtsein der Deutschen, München: C.H. Beck, 2005, here p. 7.

[11] Davies, Norman: Rising '44. The Battle for Warsaw, New York/NY: Viking, 2004; Chiari, Bernhard (ed.): Die polnische Heimatarmee, München: Oldenbourg, 2003.

[12] See the debate about Gross, Jan T.: Neighbors. The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Princeton/NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001.

a need to catch up with the self-confident and somewhat nationalist memory discourses taking place in both Germany and Russia. Consequently, the politics of memory gathered steam in Polish politics. The right-wing party *Law and Justice* (*PiS*) in particular fanned fear about the 'falsification of history' by foreign countries and demanded the defence of the 'historical truth'. PiS politicians revived the image of Polish martyrdom during the war. The Museum of the Warsaw Rising, erected in 2004, can be seen in this light. This view was fiercely criticized by Polish liberals, who demanded a more multi-perspective, dialogue-based approach to memory. Irrespective of this dispute, both camps share the notion of a 'century of two totalitarian regimes' which is common wisdom in Poland and elsewhere. Since 2004, many museums and other commemorative institutions have emerged or are in the planning phase.[13]

The memory boom that began in 2004 has not been limited to the official version of events. In public culture, many movies, theatre plays and novels have started to take up memory issues. Numerous private initiatives investigating certain aspects of history have also appeared. Recently, a debate about the political changes ushered in by the Solidarity trade union in 1989 has burgeoned. The transformational elites (including the symbolic figure Lech Wałęsa) now stand accused of having cooperated with the Communist regime. This debate has polarized advocates and critics alike of the events that took place after 1989.

4. 'Memory from below' in Germany and Poland

Having given an account of the public memory in Germany and Poland, I will now present some of my findings about the vernacular memory in both countries. First, I would like to make some preliminary remarks about the material. Due to the open design of the group discussions, the material is extremely heterogeneous. There are huge differences not only in terms of *how* people spoke, but *what* they actually spoke *about*. While some groups more or less clung to a narrow description of the photographic stimuli, others told stories about personal experiences, and still others commented more generally on the European Union. In other words, the discussions took shape spontaneously and did not necessarily touch upon all topics of significance to the respondents. Because I am presenting an explorative study here, I will focus on describing the narrative content and rhetoric topics rather than giving an account of frequencies and quantities.

The first aspect concerns the **historical events** cited by the respondents. Prompted by the photographs, the participants gravitated towards the topics of World War II, the Holocaust, and flight and expulsion. Since there is unfortunately not enough space in this article to present in detail *how* these events were described or to discuss the significant patterns that emerged, I will restrict myself to naming a few trends: First, there was a striking imbalance between the Poles and Germans with respect to the emphasis they placed on the other nationality in their narratives. In the Polish group discussions, the relationship to Germans (and Russians) was by far the most vividly discussed topic, while the German respondents hardly talked about the Poles at all. For example, the Warsaw Rising, one of *the* most important events in Polish history is rarely mentioned in Germany. However, this disparity is by no means unique to this material; it clearly supports corresponding findings in other studies. Second, the complex subject of flight and expulsion is a particularly interesting topic in that it is framed very differently in the public memory of the two countries under study. In pure numbers, the topic had roughly equal coverage

[13] Currently in planning are the Museum of Polish History and the Museum of the History of the Polish Jews in Warsaw, as well as the Museum of the Second World War and the European Solidarity Centre in Gdansk.

in the German and Polish group discussions. Even more remarkably, the German expellees were mentioned more often than the Polish ones, even in the Polish group discussions. Again, it is worth looking at how the events are perceived. Many Polish respondents spoke about the different circumstances in which Germans and Poles were forced to leave their hometowns, and many were able to detect that the expellees on one of the stimuli photographs were actually Germans. In the German case, very few respondents mentioned that there had been groups of expellees other than ethnic Germans at all.

Links between certain memory narratives and forms of collective self-understanding are mostly forged by attributions, i.e. the ascription of certain roles, images and sometimes stereotypes to specified groups (or even individuals). In the analysis of the group discussions, I found the attributions to have two dimensions: implicit vs. explicit role ascriptions as well as attributions assigned by one's own group to itself vs. those it assigned to other groups. The main objective of the analysis was to determine which roles were assigned most often and how the corresponding groups viewed each other (e.g. in national or universal categories).

The role of the 'victim' was by far the most frequently assigned among the groups. The *victim* has seemingly become the new hero of history, whereas *heroes*, the protagonists of traditional historiography, were virtually absent in the group discussions. Perhaps the role of the victim seems so appealing because it is associated with a high moral status. Thus, 'victim' was also the role most frequently used in self-ascriptions. In stark contrast, the participants very seldom labelled members of their own nation as 'perpetrators'.

This is especially applicable to the German material. Although German perpetratorship for World War II and the Holocaust is commonly acknowledged in Germany, the perpetrators are rarely named explicitly. In many cases, Hitler alone is held accountable for all of the evil that was wrought. The perpetrators are often referred to as *Nazis*/'them', whereas the victims are depicted as *Germans*/'we'. In many of the group discussions in this study, events were portrayed in such abstract and vague terms that the question of perpetratorship or responsibility did not even arise – people simply became victims of 'the times' or 'the war'.

In Poland, the perpetrators of World War II are named much more explicitly. There are many more references to actual historical events and to culpable individuals in the Polish material than in the German data. Of course, there are also wholesale ascriptions tantamount to stereotypes. But even when targeting Germans or Soviets/Russians, those attributions were not always universally accepted by the Polish discussants. Many respondents raised the issue of (false) generalizations, i.e. whether group-wise role-ascriptions are fair or if one ought to differentiate on an individual level. Curiously enough, in the Polish discussions, 'the Russians' were in many cases considered even worse than the Germans.

Regarding the Germans, there were quite a number of vigorous debates among Polish respondents about different judgements of German suffering (which, by the way, was not called into question). While some argued that this suffering was deserved because the Germans started the war, others claimed that there cannot be any hierarchy among sufferers (e.g. along national lines), since suffering is always experienced by single individuals and thus has to be acknowledged on an individual level. Thus, a dispute emerged over ascriptions made on the national level vs. those made on the individual and universal levels. In Germany, this dispute is lacking. Basically, the German respondents tended to universalize both victimhood (which they decoupled from actual responsibility) and perpetratorship (by referring

to crimes committed by other nations, or, as one German respondent put it: 'Every country has its Holocaust').

In conclusion, in Germany, the use of abstract and blurry terms, which promote the generalization of both perpetratorship and victimhood, is the prevailing pattern. A possible explanation for this practice might be the immediate function for Germans' self-understanding: The desire to be a victim just like anyone else and the relativization of one's own perpetratorship serve as an escape from what many German respondents described as the 'burden of the past'. In Poland, those generalizations are often challenged by means of referring to disparate, conflicting historical experiences. Quite a number of Polish respondents made an effort to include these different experiences into a more universal perspective. However, in contrast to Germany's case, this Universalist view is not necessarily beneficial to Poland in terms of forging a national identity, and thus this perspective was far more subject to (vivid) discussion among respondents.

5. Europeanization of memory?

The last paragraph has shown that national identity does not play the only significant role in the respondents' memories and self-conceptions but is constantly interacting with other forms of identity. But what does this imply for the possible 'Europeanization' of memory? First, I would like to clarify my understanding of the term 'European memory'. As indicated earlier, I do not use Europe as a normative concept, i.e. as something that has to be achieved. Nor do I see Europe as something unifying or unified. Europe instead describes a pluralism, which is why it only makes sense to talk about European memories in plural; there can be no monolithic 'European memory'.

Still, the Europeanization of memory as a process is extremely interesting to me. And while I do not perceive Europe to be a unifying force, I also do not see Europe as something opposed to or even mutually exclusive with the national. Rather, along with Ulrich Beck and Edgar Grande,[14] I think of Europeanization as a reciprocal process, in which the concept of national is indeed challenged and loses its privileged status as a natural and unquestioned category. However, the national is not being abandoned or losing its significance at all, but is rather being reconfigured. In this ongoing process, European (or sometimes universal) tropes become a part of the national fabric.

Applying Daniel Levy's and Nathan Sznaider's concept of the *cosmopolitization* of memory[15] to my empirical work, two issues come to the surface: First, the Europeanization of memory does not primarily mean rooting out similarities in terms of content, i.e. commonalities in the events remembered and the narratives under analysis. Yet the mere existence of others forces us to acknowledge their experiences and narratives (whether we include or repudiate them). Second, resemblances are more likely to appear on a structural level, i.e. in terms of the way in which individuals remember the past and in the mnemonic practices[16] they employ in the process.

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[14] Beck, Ulrich / Grande, Edgar: Cosmopolitan Europe, Oxford, Cambridge: Blackwell, 2007.

[15] Levy, Daniel / Sznaider, Natan: Memory Unbound. The Holocaust and the Formation of Cosmopolitan Memory, in: European Journal of Social Theory, 2002 (Vol. 5), No. 1, pp. 87–106; Levy, Daniel / Sznaider, Natan: The Holocaust and Memory in a Global Age, Philadelphia/PA: Temple University Press, 2005.

[16] Olick, Jeffrey K. / Robbins, Joyce: Social memory studies. From collective memory to the historical sociology of mnemonic practices, in: Annual Review Sociology, 1998 (Vol. 24), pp. 105–140.

One example of a common pattern of linking memory and self-understanding is what I would call the *memory imperative,* in which dissociating from one’s ‘dark past’ and ‘learning from history’ become normative values in themselves. Learning in this context means avoiding repeating the wrongdoings of the past (war, nationalist hatred and so forth) and is considered a precondition for living in a democratic, united, peaceful Europe. Although this memory imperative phenomenon did not occur in every single group discussion, it was still prevalent in all groups, regardless of nationality, age group or level of education.

Accordingly, ‘peace’, ‘democracy’, ‘mobility’ and ‘wealth’ were the attributes most commonly ascribed to Europe by the respondents. This is not to reiterate a normative notion of Europe, but to show that the so-called ‘moral guideline’ of memory in many cases is European (or universal) rather than national. This view is illustrated by the disparity between the possibility and the necessity of a common European memory articulated in the material. When asked directly about the concept of a common European memory, quite a number of respondents expressed doubt that a unified memory could ever be established. However, many of those who were sceptical nevertheless highlighted how important a common memory is for a common Europe.

6. Conclusion

Of course, these positive stances towards Europe represent only one side of the coin. As I have shown in the previous section, the actual acknowledgement of ‘the other’ (nation, memory community) did not always live up to the respondents’ high moral aspirations. However, the crucial point is that the national narratives and memory tropes can no longer remain unquestioned. In this view, even the rejection of the other party can be seen as an expression of *Europeanization*.

An analytical concept of Europeanization, as I have tried to outline it, acknowledges the increasing pluralization of both memory agents and memory narratives *within* national frameworks as well as between nations. There is no longer just one dominant mnemonic narrative and the nation state is no longer the most influential memory agent. However, memory narratives, be they official, public or vernacular, will continue to closely follow national narratives (path dependencies). But, as I have shown, these narratives are increasingly permeated with European tropes. And it is precisely because of the variety and often contradictory character of different (national) memory narratives that it will be difficult to define anything resembling a common ‘European memory’ in the near future.