Negotiating, Contesting and Constructing Jewish Space in Postwar Muranów

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ABSTRACT

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One year after the Germans took control of Poland in September 1939 nearly 500,000 people of Jewish origin were forced to live in what was to become the largest Jewish ghetto in any German-occupied territory: the Warsaw ghetto. The Ghetto Uprising (April-May 1943), to which the Germans quickly put an end, led to the complete destruction of the former Jewish district. Beginning in the late 1940s and continuing throughout the 1950s, a massive new housing estate was built on the rubble of the ghetto, concealing almost every physical trace of the area's Jewish past. My thesis examines how Jewish memory has been negotiated and spatialized in Muranów, the area of Warsaw's former Jewish district, from 1945 until today. After underlining some of the key disputes related to the memory of the Jewish past in Poland, particularly in regards to wartime events, I explore how Jewishness has been re-negotiated and re-inscribed in Muranów through non traditional memorial initiatives in post-Communist Poland. By engaging people and involving them in the memorialization process, such initiatives might have the power to create a safe place of dialogue and civic engagement where the very principle of Polish ethno-national identity is called into question. Through the study of interviews I conducted in Muranów in the summer of 2010, I also investigate how current Polish residents relate to the Jewish past of their neighborhood.

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Introduction

The birth of the Polish nation dates back to the end of the 10th century. During the reign of Mieszko I, Poland's first recorded leader, Christianity was adopted and medieval monarchy was established.[1] The Polish state reached its apogee a few centuries later under the Jagiellonian dynasty. Its founder, Jogaila, then grand duke of Lithuania, married Queen Jadwigo of Poland in 1386. Following the union of the two countries, Poland enjoyed a golden age, culminating in the establishment of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1569. In the late 18th century, the dual state was by far one of the largest countries in Europe; it was inhabited by almost fourteen million people of different origins: Poles, Lithuanians, Ruthenians, Germans, and a small number of Tatars, Armenians and Scots. The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was also a multi-faith state, home to Roman Catholics, Protestants, Muslims and Jews.[2]

Jews had actually been living on Polish soil since the very early days of the Polish state. The earliest contacts between ethnic Poles and Jews probably occurred in the tenth century when the first Jewish travelers and merchants arrived on Polish soil.[3] Although tensions between the two groups existed, by the 16th century Poland had proven to be a particularly tolerant country compared to its European neighbors where religious wars

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[1] Jerzy Kłoczowski, *A history of Polish Christianity* (Cambridge University Press, 2000), 10.
[2] Joanna Michlic, *Poland's Threatening Other: The Image of the Jew from 1880 to the Present* (University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 39. Magda Teter, *Jews and Heretics in Catholic Poland: a Beleagured Church in the Post-Reformation Era* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), 4. Certain minorities, such as the Jews, even lived under their own rules. The Council of Four Lands was the central body of Jewish authority between the late 16th century and 1764 (Teter, *Jews and Heretics in Catholic Poland*, 147).
[3] Joseph Marcus, *Social and political history of the Jews in Poland, 1919-1939* (Walter de Gruyter, 1983), 3.

and persecutions were frequent.[4] Jewish immigration continued to increase, so much so that by the late 17th century, about 750,000 Jews lived in Poland.[5] The enduring presence of Jews on Polish lands came to be seen as a national problem following the disappearance of the Polish state at the end of the 18th century.

In the 18th century, the Russian Empire quickly expanded through conquests and annexations. Stretching from Poland to Alaska, it became the third largest empire in history. The kingdom of Prussia and the Habsburg Austrian Empire, threatened by the impressive growth in Russia's military effectiveness, wanted to avoid a war against their powerful neighbor. In an attempt to ease the relations with Russia, Prussia and Austria proposed to apportion the territory of the already weakened Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.[6] The Partition became effective in September 1773 after the Polish parliament ratified the treaty convened by the three powers, which deprived Poland of about 35 % of its population and one third of its land area.[7]

Despite the presence of powerful neighbors, the reduced state of Poland tried to strengthen itself. In 1791, it adopted a modern revolutionary constitution which led to the creation of a constitutional parliamentary monarchy. However, this internal reform was unacceptable not only to the Conservatives in Poland, but also to Prussia and Russia

[4] Arthur J. Wolak, *Forced Out: The Fate of Polish Jewry in Communist Poland* (Fenestra Books, 2004), x.
[5] Iwo Cyprian Pogonowski, *Jews in Poland: A Documentary History* (Hippocrene Books, Inc, 1993), 14.
[6] For more information, see: Chapter V ("The First Partition") in William F. Reddaway's *The Cambridge History of Poland* Volume 1 (Cambridge University Press, 1971): 88-112. In 1772, some lands of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth were already controlled by Russia.
[7] Reddaway, *The Cambridge History of Poland* Volume 1, 137. And, Bogdan Suchodolski, *A History of Polish Culture* (Interpress Publishers, 1986), 110.

which feared Poland might get stronger and reclaim its lost territories. In 1793, the two powers agreed upon the Second Partition of Poland.[8] A Polish national uprising followed. But the rebellion was quickly crushed and in 1795, Poland's remaining territory was divided between Russia and Austria, without regards to Prussia's claims.[9] Although the territorial divisions were altered when Napoleon created the Duchy of Warsaw in Prussian Poland in 1807, Poland remained deprived of its sovereignty and removed from the map of Europe until 1918. Yet, the disappearance of the Polish state did not mean the disappearance of the Polish nation.

Following the last partition of the country in 1795, a strong Polish ethno-nationalism quickly emerged in the territories once owned by Poland. Towards the end of the century, the National Democratic movement was created by the Polish League in Switzerland.[10] In 1893, a clandestine branch was operating in Warsaw. The movement rejected loyalty to the ruling governments and promoted national resistance. Polish nationalism advocated a struggle not only against Russia, Prussia and Austria but also against all the minorities which had been living on Polish soil, especially the Ukrainians and the Jews, whose interests were seen as opposed to those of the Poles.[11] In order to resist Russification and Germanization, and perpetrate Polishness, some dedicated Poles,

[8] Ibid., 134-136.
[9] Prussia's claims were ignored because a war between Prussia and Russia was expected to break out. Ibid., 173.
[10] Ibid., 395.
[11] Michlic, *Poland's Threatening Other*, 59.

mostly under the influence of the Roman Catholic Church, made strong efforts to circulate artistic and literary works promoting purely ethnical Polishness.[12]

While the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was a heterogeneous state in which Polishness was not restricted to ethnical considerations, the partitions of Poland led to a redefinition of what "being a Pole" meant. Under foreign rule, Polishness was no longer defined by what Poles were, but rather by what they were not. Poles were not Russians, nor were they Jews. While most of the Christian minorities (Ukrainians, Byelorussians) were Polonized, Jews remained Jews.[13] By the start of the 20th century the failed assimilation of most of the Jewish community weighed heavily on Polish society which often depicted the Jew as alien and hostile, as the "threatening other"[14] preventing the country from fully realizing its national ambitions. Political and economic problems following the newly recovered independence in 1918 led to the intensification of the myth of the Jewish enemy.[15] In *Poland's Threatening Other*, Joanna Michlic explores the negative representations of the Jew in interwar Poland. She emphasizes the role of the Catholic Church in shaping the image of the Jews as harmful aliens. "The anti-Jewish position," she writes, "was manifested in a variety of forms in almost the entire Roman Catholic press and among both the lower and upper ranks of Catholic clergy."[16]

On the eve of the Second World War, with three million Jews living within its borders, Poland was home to the largest Jewish community in Europe and one of the

[12] Ibid., 85. In his writings, the Polish author, Roman Dmowski, emphasized the need for Poland to create a modern ethnically homogeneous nation.
[13] Marcus, *Social and political history of the Jews in Poland, 1919-1939*, 317.
[14] This terminology is borrowed from Joanna B. Michlic's book, *Poland's Threatening Other*.
[15] Michlic, *Poland's Threatening Other*, 78.
[16] Ibid., 82.

largest in the world. Five years later, about 90% of the Polish Jews had disappeared. Soon after the invasion of Poland by Nazi Germany in September 1939, a program of systematic terror and enslavement of Poles was carried out while Jews were herded into urban ghettos, and later to exterminations camps. About six million of Europe's Jews perished during the Holocaust; half of whom were Polish. In addition, 1.8 to 1.9 million ethnic Poles died under German occupation.[17]

The loss of most of its prewar Jewish community did not mark the end of the "Jewish problem" in Poland. Actually, quite the opposite. The "Jewish question" became a political tool used by the Polish Communist government in the postwar years. By embracing the old anti-Jewish stereotypes, the government favored the re-emergence of a strong Polish ethnic nationalism. In the first few years following the Second World War, several hundred Jews were murdered by Poles. There were several factors that led to anti-Jewish violence in postwar Poland. First and foremost, Jewish participation in the institutions established by Poland's new occupiers, the Communists, was highly suspicious to Poles.[18] Some Poles also feared that Jews might reclaim stolen property and / or take revenge on people who had turned in members of their family.[19] Despite the

[17] USHMM Holocaust Encyclopedia, accessed 26 April 2011: http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005069

[18] It can seem contradictory that on the one hand, the Communist government conducted anti-Jewish policies and that on the other, a lot of high positions in governmental institutions were occupied by Jews. It is important to underline that these Jews were assimilated Jews who considered themselves Communists more than Jews. Yet, as I shall explain later, the (non-Jewish) Communists were well-aware of this contradiction which they perceived as detrimental to the legitimacy of the regime. In the late 1960s, most of the Jews working in Communist institutions were fired.

[19] Marek Jan Chodakiewicz, *After the Holocaust: Polish-Jewish Conflict in the Wake of World War II* (Columbia University Press, 2003), 131.

frequency of the aggressions against the Jews,[20] none of these anti-Semitic incidents – or the ones perpetrated by Poles during the war – were discussed publicly until the late 1980s.

Four decades under Soviet domination have had long-lasting consequences for the knowledge of basic historical facts regarding Jewish history in Poland. Very paradoxically, although the Polish communist regime conducted "blatant anti-Semitic policies," many Poles "continued to identify Jews with Communism and Communism with the occupation of their lands by the Soviets, who were seen as not much better than the Germans."[21] This complicated situation made coming to terms with the past extremely difficult. Only after the Soviet Union collapsed could Poland fully enter a new memorial era, during which the myth of "Poland, the Christ of nations, the eternal martyr,"[22] crumbled. For the sake of the new democracy (and to answer to international pressure), Poles started their introspective journey into a far less edifying past of anti-Semitic violence before, during and after the war.

* * * *

Raised in a quiet city of France, my curiosity about Poland's tormented history began a few years ago when I realized that the two countries had more in common than one might expect. Although France had never been a Communist country, it also

[20] It is estimated that between 1000 and 2000 were killed in Poland between 1945 and 1947. In *Fear: Anti-Semitism in Poland After Auschwitz. An Essay in Historical Interpretation*, Jan Gross cites the figures originating from Lucjan Dobroszycki's study in which he states that 1500 Jews lost their lives in this three year-period. ("Restoring Jewish Life in Postwar Poland," *Soviet Jewish Affairs* 3, 1973: 68-72)
[21] Omer Bartov, *Erased: Vanishing Traces of Jewish Galicia in Present-Day Ukraine* (Princeton University Press, 2007), 205.
[22] Ibid.

struggled with the memory of war, defeat and collaboration. In the 1990s, both Poland and France were faced with the delicate challenge of reconciling conflicting memories and victimhoods.

> In France, there had been a tendency in the early postwar years to incorporate the Jewish victims of the Holocaust within the general narrative of the "deportees" – who were understood as members of the Resistance and thus as representatives of the *Grande Nation*. In Poland, the Jewish victims were incorporated into the general narrative of Polish victimhood.[23]

I was still a child when Jacques Chirac, then *Président de la République*, officially recognized the role of France in the Holocaust.[24] I have no memories of those days. Yet, I clearly remember how I became aware of the shameful burden France had to carry.

About ten years ago, I invited a Swedish friend of mine to France. After spending some time in Paris, we went to my hometown, Vichy, *reine des villes d'eaux*, where Napoleon III and Eugénie liked to spend some quality time and where the French writer, Madame de Sévigné, had her rheumatism treated. Thanks to its glorious historical and literary past, Vichy is now a healthy and prestigious town. Anything else? Not much according to our guide (we were on a bus tour). "You know," I told my friend, "we also had Marshall Petain in Vichy…" But a visit to the spa town will not tell you much about the Vichy regime; if there is a taboo in this town, it is this one. The policy of silence adopted by the city since the end of the war is well reflected in the built environment. To my knowledge, only two small (and almost invisible) memorials remind people of the

[23] Ibid., 204-205.
[24] In 1995.

war years, one of which is a plaque in the Opera House where Petain was given full power over the administration of France:[25] *Dans cette salle, le 10 Juillet 1940, 80 Parlementaires ont par leur vote affirmé leur attachement à la République, leur amour de la liberté, et leur bonne foi dans la victoire. Ainsi s'acheva la IIIè République*. These words clearly demonstrate the degree of denial Vichy has adopted towards Petain's regime. Rather than highlighting the fact that more than 550 parlementarians voted in favor of Petain's abrogation of the constitution, Vichy chose to underline a glorious side to France's experience of the Second World War.

After watching *the Pianist*[26] in 2002, I wanted to broaden my knowledge of the Second World War in general, and the Holocaust in particular. While maintaining a deep interest in French history, I slowly moved the focus of my interest from France to Poland, from Vichy and the Vel' d'Hiv to the Warsaw ghetto. This is where this thesis starts.

* * * *

Seven months after invading Poland (September 1, 1939), the Germans started building walls around Warsaw's Jewish district. A few weeks later, nearly 500,000 people of Jewish origins were forced to sustain themselves in a space covering less than 3% of the city. Insufficient food allotments, the lack of hygiene, and deportations to the extermination camp of Treblinka[27] led to the death of more than 300,000 Jews between

[25] The Opera House is usually closed to people unless there is a theater, dance or music performance. The other memorial is a very small stele « hidden » behind the imposing World War I monument.
[26] *The Pianist* is a film by Roman Polanski retracing the life of Władysław Szpilman, a Jewish pianist in the Warsaw ghetto.
[27] The death camp of Treblinka was located in the northeastern region of Warsaw, on the Warsaw-Bialystok railway line. The camp became operational in the summer of 1942. The last

October 1940 and September 1942. In January 1943, Himmler decided to get rid of the remaining inhabitants of the ghetto. “The razing of the ghetto (…) [is] necessary, as otherwise we would probably never establish quiet in Warsaw, and the prevalence of crime cannot be stamped out as long as the [Jewish district] remains.”[28] Himmler ordered SS General Jürgen Stroop to supervise the liquidation and deportation of the ghetto, which officially began on April 19, 1943. The ghetto inhabitants offered organized resistance but their uprising was soon crushed by the German forces. On May 16, 1943, Stroop declared the Great “Aktion” over: "Es gibt keinen jüdischen Wohnbezirk in Warschau mehr!" (The Jewish Quarter of Warsaw is no more).[29]

A year later (August 1944), in a desperate attempt to liberate Warsaw, the Underground Polish Army launched an uprising, but once again, the revolt was crushed, and the city destroyed. When the Russian army liberated Warsaw in January 1945, they discovered a sea of ruins, an apocalyptic non-city covered with about 20 million cubic meters of rubble.[30] Beginning in the late 1940s and continuing throughout the 1950s, Poland’s Communist government built a massive drab socialist-realist housing estate on

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victims were gassed at the end of August 1943. Afterwards, the site was ploughed over and the camp area was turned into a farm in order to give the impression that nothing had happened. It is estimated that more than 800,000 Jews lost their lives in Treblinka.

[28] Letter from Himmler, Reichsführer SS Field Command, Journal n 38/33/43 g. February 16, 1943, Object: Secret! To: Higher SS and Police Leader (Hoher SS und Polizeiführer). East SS Obergruppenführer Kurger, Cracow. Cited in Rafael F. Scharf, *In the Warsaw Ghetto Summer 1941* (Aperture Foundation, 1993), 100.

[29] SS General Jürgen Stroop. The quote is from the Stroop Report, a seventy-five-page report of the operation, prepared for Himmler, including daily reports on the evolution of the operation and a series of fifty two photographs accompanied by captions. This report was later used as evidence during the Nuremberg Trials. Stroop was hanged in Warsaw on March 6, 1952.

[30] Barbara Engelking-Boni and Jacek Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto: A Guide to the Perished City* (Yale University Press, 2009), 6.

the rubble of the ghetto, erasing almost every trace of the former thriving Jewish neighborhood.

My thesis focuses on how Jewish space has been negotiated in Muranów by different social actors between 1945 and today. Key questions this thesis sets out to examine are: (how) can Jewish memory survive in a place deprived of its main actors and of any significant physical traces? While survivors and witnesses might be able to remember the past without any visual mnemonic aid, subsequent generations might, on the other hand, need physical landmarks. In other words, do memories need a visible and tangible framework to remain fixed in the consciousness of those who did not experience the event firsthand? To what extent have the Communist propaganda, the reconstruction of the district and the erection of war monuments in Muranów affected the historical memory of current residents? Are both Holocaust memory and Jewish memory inscribed in today's Muranów's landscape?

In *Jewish Topographies: Visions of Space, Tradition of Place*, Julia Brauch, Anna Lipphardt and Alexanda Nocke define *Jewish spaces* as "spatial environments in which Jewish things happen, where Jewish activities are performed." *Jewish places*, on the other hand, are only "bound to a specific location."[31] If we rely on these two definitions, Muranów is both a *Jewish place*, the historical location where most of Warsaw's prewar Jewish population lived, and a *Jewish space*, a site where Jewish activities are performed. While *Jewish places* are fixed (Muranów remains the historical Jewish district of Warsaw even if deprived of its Jewish inhabitants and Jewish architecture), *Jewish spaces* – and

[31] Julia Brauch, Anna Lipphardt and Alexandra Nocke, eds*, Jewish Topographies: Visions of Space, Traditions of Place – Heritage, Culture and Identity* (Ashgate Publishing, 2008), 4.

the meaning attached to them – evolve over time and their existence is always the result of various negotiations between different social groups at different times. In my thesis, I investigate how and why Muranów, despite the absence of its most significant actors, has become a *Jewish space,* a site where Jewish activities are performed mostly by and for non-Jews. While such initiatives might have the power to help Poles come to terms with the past, we will see that Muranów is also a contested site where tensions and conflicts happen. Beyond the scope of this study is the analysis of how Polish Jews and Jews from the Diaspora have experienced and engaged with this recreated *Jewish space*.

According to the editors of *Jewish Topographies, Jewish spaces* are an under researched area of study. "Time and history," they write, "play central roles in our understanding of Jewish civilization. Place and space, by contrast, seem to be secondary categories at best."[32] However, it is worth underlining that a spatial turn in the humanities and social sciences in general and in Jewish studies in particular, has recently surfaced. [33] My study fits well among this new trend of scholarship and can contribute to the current debates on *Jewish spaces*, post-Holocaust memory in Poland, as well as in the developing field of "difficult heritage"[34] more broadly.

As a consequence of the Holocaust, *Jewish spaces* in Poland are now almost always equated with spaces of death and remembrance (mainly through museums and memorials). Yet, in the past twenty years, another type of *Jewish spaces* has been

[32] Ibid., 1.
[33] Ibid. In the last ten years there has been a significant increase in research projects and conferences within Jewish studies that have focused on space and place.
[34] The term was coined by Sharon MacDonald.

produced, allowing both the remembrance of the Holocaust and the celebration of Jewish culture. In his book *The Production of Space*, Henri Lefebvre introduced the notion of *espace vécu*, a space that, although imagined, is "alive":

> Representational space is alive: it speaks. It has an affective kernel or center (…) It embraces the loci of passion, of action and of lived situations, and thus immediately implies time. Consequently it may be qualified in various ways: it may be directional, situational or relational, because it is essentially qualitative, fluid and dynamic.[35]

I consider Muranów an *espace vécu* and argue that although this *espace vécu* has undergone important mutations due to the destruction of the neighborhood and the disappearance of its inhabitants between 1940 and 1943, Muranów is not only Warsaw's Jewish historical district, it is also a dynamic site where residents and visitors can engage with Jewish history and culture.

Space and time are not contradictory; they are rather complementary and constantly overlap. One does not exclude the other, hence the chronological historical framework I provide in my thesis. Before focusing on how Jewishness has been spatialized in Muranów and examining the place of Jewish memory in contemporary Poland, it is important to understand the kinds of relationships Catholic Poles and Jewish Poles had when there was still a Jewish community residing in Poland. In this regard, a basic historical background on Jews in Poland between the 10th century and 1945 is provided in chapter 1.

[35] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Wiley-Blackwell, 1991), 42.

The question of the historical relationship between Poles and Jews[36] has always been controversial, especially since 1945. No subject has divided the two ethnic groups more deeply than the Nazi occupation of Poland and the Holocaust. While it is true that it continues to do so, the deepest divisions between historians studying the events that occurred in Poland during the war, were found between 1945 and the mid-1980s. The official narrative in postwar Poland framed by the Communist government emphasized shared Polish-Jewish suffering and the heroic role of Poles in rescuing their Jewish neighbors.[37] The Jewish Institutions in Poland, such as the Central Jewish Historical Commission, published monographs, memoirs and various studies on the Holocaust as early as 1945. Yet, under the yoke of the Communist Party, these institutions were "forced" to put emphasis on the universal character of the suffering during the Nazi occupation; "stressing the particular Jewish fate might have seemed politically risky."[38]

On the other hand, Jewish historians writing from abroad tended to focus their research on survivor testimonies "that often spoke of widespread Polish anti-Semitism and indifference to the fate of European Jewry during the Holocaust."[39] Although most of

[36] Although I use the terms "Poles" to refer to Catholic Poles, and "Jews" to refer to Jewish Poles, I am aware of the issue raised by such categories. Opposing "Poles" to "Jews" is in itself problematic since it questions the Polishness of Jews. While some Jewish Poles think themselves as Jews before being Poles, others consider themselves as Poles of Jewish faith or Jewish origins.
[37] See for example, Tatiana Berenstein and Adam Rutkowski, *Assistance to the Jews in Poland, 1939-1945* (Polonis Publishing House, 1963); Władysław Bartoszewski, *Righteous Among Nations: How Poles Helped the Jews, 1939-1945* (Earlscourt Publications Ltd, 1969).
[38] Natalia Aleksiun, "Polish Historiography of the Holocaust – Between Silence and Public Debate" *German History* 22 (2004): 418.
[39] Joshua D. Zimmerman, ed., *Contested Memories: Poles and Jews During the Holocaust and Its Aftermath* (Rutgers University Press, 2003), 1. See for example: Israel Gutman and Shmuel Krakowski, *Unequal Victims: Poles and Jews during the Second World War* (Holocaust Library, 1986); Elie Wiesel, "Eichmann's Victims and the Unheard Testimony," *Commentary* 32:6 (1961). Works denouncing Poles were not allowed during Communist Rule

the historians rejected the theory put forward by Helen Fein, namely that there is a direct correlation between the rise of anti-Semitism in Poland in the 1930s and the choice of Poland by Hitler to carry out his final solution,[40] "some Jewish historians argued that Polish responses were central to the success of Nazi genocidal policies."[41] In *Contested Memories*, Zimmerman cites an Israeli scholar who maintained that the attitude of Poles "decisively affected" the fate of Polish Jewry.[42]

Only in the 1980s do we see an attempt to reassess the existing conflicting historiography of Polish-Jewish relations. International scholarly conferences[43] led the historians from the "apologetics camp," who described Polish aid to Jews and defended Polish passivity during the war, and the ones from the "condemnatory camp," who accused the Poles of downplaying the impact of anti-Semitism on the attitudes and behaviors of Poles during the war, to reconsider their positions. Two scholarly journals devoted to Polish-Jewish studies also appeared in the 1980s (*Gal-Ed*, Tel Aviv; *Polin*, Oxford) and four research centers were founded in Jerusalem, Oxford, Cracow and Warsaw.[44] New works challenging commonly held assumptions about wartime Polish behavior were also published. Regarding the role of Poles in the rescue of Jews for example, we can cite Teresa Prekerowa, who, in 1987, engaged in a scientific study in order to determine the portion of the Polish population which was active in helping Jews.

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in Poland. Gutman's and Krakowski's, as wells as Wiesel's studies were published abroad (Zimmerman, *Contested Memories*, 13)

[40] Helen Fein, *Accounting For Genocide* (The Free Press, 1979).

[41] Zimmerman, *Contested Memories*, 3.

[42] Ibid.

[43] In particular, Oxford in 1984, Boston in 1986, Jerusalem in 1988.

[44] Zimmerman, *Contested Memories*, 4.

Her findings have shown that no more than 1 to 2.5 % of the Polish population helped Jews to flee Nazi persecutions.[45]

From the mid 1980s onwards, several scholars have called for a reevaluation of the understanding of Polish society and the Holocaust. In 1987, a significant text by Jan Błoński challenging the dominant Polish narrative of heroism and martyrdom was published; the first nationwide debate followed. In his essay entitled "The Poor Poles Look at the Ghetto," Błoński argues that as witness to the events, Poles shared responsibility by failing to do more to help the Jews: "our responsibility is for holding back, for insufficient effort to resist."[46] The author posits that Poles must "stop haggling, trying to defend and justify ourselves. (…) But to say first of all, yes, we are guilty."[47] The year 1989 marked a turning point in Polish historiography; new archival source material started to be used, and a rich body of scholarly studies on Jewish history in Poland in general, and the Holocaust in particular appeared. However, according to Zimmerman, despite the softening of the two camps (condemnatory and apologetics), "the majority of Polish society and scholars retained the old narrative of denial throughout the 1990s."[48]

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[45] Teresa Prekerowa, "'Sprawiedliwi' i 'bierni,'" Tygodnik Powszechny, 29 March 1987, reprinted in Antony Polonsky, *My Brother's Keeper? Recent Polish Debates on the Holocaust*, under the title: "The "Just" and the "Passive"" (Routledge, 2002), 72-80.
[46] Jan Błoński, "The Poor Poles Look at the Ghetto," in *My Brother's Keeper: Recent Polish Debates on the Holocaust*, Antony Polonsky ed. (Routledge, 1990), 46.
[47] Ibid., 11. This view has been echoed by several other Polish scholars. See for example: Antony Polonsky, 'Beyond Condemnation, Apologetics and Apologies: On the Complexity of Polish Behaviour towards the Jews during the Second World War,' *Studies in Contemporary Jewry* 13, Jonathan Frankel ed. (Oxford University Press, 1997) 190-224.
[48] Zimmerman, *Contested Memories*, 10.

In 2000, Poland entered a new era with the publication of Jan Gross's book, *Neighbors*. Based on testimonies conducted with Poles and Jews, court trials and archival documents, Gross chronicles the events that took place in the eastern town of Jedwabne in 1941. Gross posits that local Poles, encouraged but not forced by the Nazis, murdered an estimated 1,600 Jews. The book sparked a nationwide controversy. According to Father Stanisław Musiał, a longtime activist in Catholic-Jewish dialogue, Gross's book "created a shock in Polish public opinion like no other book in the last half-century."[49] Poles have believed "in the myth that they have been solely victims (…) for the last two hundred or so years and that they themselves never wronged anyone (…)," *Neighbors* "has shattered this myth."[50]

In my thesis I attempt to show how the spatialization of Jewish memory in the built environment of Muranow has followed the same pattern as the postwar historiography on Polish-Jewish relations, first, through memorials incorporating the memory of the Jewish victims into the general narrative of Polish victimhood (between the late 1940s and the early 1980s), and second, through memorials and preservation initiatives acknowledging the Jewish specificity of the Holocaust (since the 1980s). Finally, I investigate how Muranów's memorial landscape has recently been vested with a new mission: to help residents incorporate the memory of wartime events and to preserve Jewish memory in broader terms than the Holocaust. I argue that this evolution might signal that Poland has entered a new phase in which both the notion of Jewishness and Polishness are being rethought and redefined. According to Joanna B. Michlic, the

[49] Stanisław Musiał, "Jedwabne to nowe imie holokaustu" [Jedwabne is a new name for the Holocaust], *Rzeczpospolita*, July 10, 2001. Cited in Zimmerman, *Contested Memories*, 11.
[50] Ibid.

redefinition of Polish national identity no longer based on the previous principles of ethnic nationalism can be realized in "a more assertive domestic culture of civic and pluralistic nationalism and [under] the pressure of international Western opinion."[51] These two conditions, she argues, "can be found in post-Communist Poland and their effects on the mainstream political scene have been felt in the post-1995 period."[52]

In the first chapter, I provide some historical background. I start with a brief history of the Jews in Poland from the tenth century to 1939 showing that although until the late 18th century Poland had been relatively tolerant with its Jewish minority, the latter was never fully integrated within Polish society. I then give historical background concerning the Holocaust in general and the establishment and destruction of the Warsaw ghetto in particular. In the second section of this chapter I reflect on my methodological approach. Writing this thesis has involved drawing tools and insights from several disciplines, mostly history, anthropology and oral history. From an ethnographic point of view, I attempt to show how participant-observation in Muranów allowed me to bridge the gap between my own preconceived ideas and reality and thus reach a better understanding of how residents relate to the past of their neighborhood. In the last section of this chapter, I consider the pros and cons of my status of outsider in Poland in conducting oral interviews with residents.

In the second chapter, I investigate how Holocaust memory has been "built" and "rebuilt" in Muranów between 1945 and the 1990s. I start by providing the postwar national context: the end of the war, the reconstruction of the country and the "Jewish

[51] Michlic, *Poland's Threatening Other*, 11.
[52] Ibid.

question" in Communist Poland. I then reduce the scope of my study to Muranów. After examining the memorial function of space in general, I investigate to what extent the war monuments erected in Muranów after the war both preserve and limit the memory of the events they commemorate. I conclude this chapter with some ghost stories and argue that the presence of various Jewish ghosts in Muranów seems to suggest that memory sometimes exceeds traditional and representational forms.

The last chapter of my thesis examines how Jewishness has been re-inscribed in Muranów through non traditional memorial initiatives in post-Communist Poland. While war memorials exclusively commemorate the Holocaust and therefore reduce Jewish memory to the memory of the annihilation of the Jews, the recent creative memorial strategies (such as public art events, street festivals, etc) provide new avenues for rethinking Polish-Jewish history (or histories). By presenting the Holocaust as part of a continuum, rather than as an isolated event in Jewish history, they have the power to return Jewish memory (in broader terms than Holocaust memory) to the Polish landscape and create sites of dialogue between Poles and Jews. However, some resistance remains. On the one hand, some Poles are still reluctant to let Jewish history and memory resurface. On the other, several Jews question the legitimacy of Poles' philo-Semitic actions.

Chapter 1 – **Historical context and methodological approach**

I. The Jews of Poland: A brief history (10th century – 1945)

- A thriving community…

It is often argued that the first contacts between Poles and Jews took place around (or slightly before) the time of the establishment of the Polish state, in the late 10th century and intensified in the following centuries.[53] Faced with growing religious intolerance and expulsion during the crusades in Western Europe, many European Jews immigrated to Poland. In 1264, Boleslaus the Pious granted Polish Jews a privilege known as the Kalisz Statute. This Statute ensured their personal protection, their property, and religion. It also allowed Jews to organize their communities according to principles of self-government, and granted them the right to engage freely in trade and money-lending.[54]

The turn of the 13th and 14th centuries saw the end of feudal disintegration in Poland. In the reunited kingdom the role of towns and the burghers grew. The rulers, interested in the development of a commodity money economy, encouraged Jewish immigration. In 1334, Casimir the Great extended royal protection to the Jewish minority of Poland.[55] First mentions of Jewish settlements in Lvov and Kazimierz near Krakow

[53] Aleksander Gieysztor, " The Beginnings of Jewish Settlement in the Polish lands" in *The Jews in Poland*, Chimen Abramsky, eds. Maciej Jachimczyk and Antony Polonsky (Blackwell Publishers, 1986), 15.
[54] For an English translation of the text, see Pogonowski, *Jews in Poland*, 45-57.
[55] Wolak, *Forced Out*, 17.

and several other cities date from this period.[56] In the 14th and 15th centuries the main occupation of Jews in Poland was local and long distance trade: mostly between Poland, Hungary, Turkey and the Italian colonies on the Black Sea. Jews exported not only Polish agricultural produce and cattle but also ready-made products, particularly furs and clothing. In return they brought in many goods which were much sought after in Poland.[57] Although many Jews were wholesalers, most Jewish merchants were owners of small shops, stall keepers and vendors.[58]

In the 16th century, persecutions and expulsions of Jews from the territories belonging to the Habsburg monarchy (Germany, Bohemia, Hungary and Lower Silesia), Spain and Portugal led to a massive wave of Jewish immigration to Poland. In the middle of the 16th century, Jews lived in over half of all cities in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.[59] One century later, there were more than 500,000 Jews living in Poland, five per cent of the whole population.[60] The Polish nobility, which by law was forbidden to trade, relied largely on Jewish craftsmen and tradesmen residing on their estates. According to Władysław Bartoszewski, "between the 16th and 18th centuries, the Jews entered into what may be described as a marriage of convenience with the nobility."[61] In addition to crafts, trade, banking and leasing operations, agriculture had

[56] Pogonowski, *Jews in Poland*, 45-61.
[57] Marian Fuks, *Polish Jewry: History and Culture* (Interpress Publishers, 1982), 10.
[58] Ibid., 12.
[59] Pogonowski, *Jews in Poland*, 64.
[60] Ibid., 14.
[61] Władysław Bartoszewski, "Jewish-Polish Relation: an Historical Survey," accessed 24 April 2011: http://motlc.wiesenthal.com/site/pp.asp?c=ivKVLcMVIsG&b=476133

become an increasingly important source of income for the Jewish communities settled in the eastern regions of the Commonwealth.[62]

The second half of the 17th and the 18th century brought a significant deterioration in the Jewish situation. While some Jews continue to earn their living as craftsmen, salesmen or bankers, the wars fought in Poland led to the pauperization of towns and paralyzed foreign trade.[63] As a consequence, many Jews became kahal officials, musicians, traveling craftsmen or horse drivers; others were left without any means of subsistence.[64] The struggle of the populace against rich merchants and bankers started in the middle of the 16th century. Here, it is worth underlining that there are records of joint revolts by Jewish craftsmen and Christian "patchers" against the guild elders.[65]

In the second half of the 17th century Jews took an increasingly prominent role in the wars fought by the Commonwealth. For example, during wars against the Cossacks and the Tartars (1648-57), Sweden (1655-60), Russia (1654-67) and Turkey (1667-99), the Jewish population provided infantry and mounted troops, and participated in the defense of several Polish towns alongside the burghers.[66] During the Kosciuszko Insurrection and wars against Tsarist Russia in 1794 Jews supported the uprising either in auxiliary services or in arms. After the Russian army was repulsed from Warsaw the idea was born to create a regiment of Jewish volunteers. The commander in chief of the

[62] Fuks, *Polish Jewry*, 14.
[63] Antoni Podraza, "Jews and the Village in the Polish Commonwealth" in *The Jews in Old Poland, 1000-1795*, eds. Antony Polonsky, Jakub Basista and Andrzej Link-Lenczowski (Institute for Polish-Jewish Studies, 1993), 315.
[64] Fuks, *Polish Jewry*, 14.
[65] Ibid., 12.
[66] Ibid., 19.

Insurrection, Tadeusz Kościuszko, backed up the idea and wrote: "Nothing can convince more the far away nations about the holiness of our cause and the justness of the present revolution, than that, though separated from us by their religion and customs, they [the Jews] sacrifice their own lives of their own free will in order to support the uprising."[67]

- … Never fully integrated within Polish society.

The establishment of the Kalisz statute in 1264 and the development of Jewish economic activity resulted in hostile reactions against the Jews by the Catholic Poles. In 1267, the Council of Wroclaw created segregated Jewish quarters in cities and towns and ordered Jews to wear a special emblem.[68] Jews were banned from holding offices where Christians would be subordinated to them and were forbidden to build more than one prayer house in each town.[69] These resolutions, however, were generally not enforced due to the profits which the Jews' economic activity yielded to the princes. This situation led to anti-Jewish riots in several Polish cities.[70]

In the middle of the 15th century, the papal envoy, the Franciscan friar John of Capistrano, carried out a ruthless campaign against the Jews whom he accused of profaning the Christian religion.[71] As a consequence, other anti-Jewish riots occurred and

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[67] Written in a Statement on the Formation of a Regiment of Jews. Cited in Emanuel Ringelblum, *Zydzi Polscy W Insurekcji Kosciuszkowskiej* (The Yiddish Scientific Institute, Warszawa, 1937). In this book, Ringelblum examines the role of Polish Jews in the Kosciuszko Insurrection of 1794.
[68] Jerzy Wyrozumski, "Jews in Medieval Poland" in *The Jews in Old Poland, 1000-1795*, Antony Polonsky, eds. Jakub Basista and Andrzej Link-Lenczowski (Institute for Polish-Jewish Studies, 1993), 15.
[69] Fuks, *Polish Jewry*, 10.
[70] Alicja Deck-Partyka, *Poland, a Unique Country & Its People* (AuthorHouse, 2006), 313.
[71] Richard S. Levy, *Anti-Semitism: a Historical Encyclopedia of Prejudice and Persecution* Volume 1 (ABC-CLIO, 2005), 96.

Jews were banished from Lower Silesia. Half a century later, in 1496, Jews were ordered out of the center of Krakow and only allowed to settle in the "Jewish town" of Kazimierz.[72] In the late 16th and early 17th century, following the big wave of Jewish immigration to Poland, local burghers became more and more suspicious of the Jews. Through fear of Jewish competition they succeeded in obtaining privileges *de non tolerandis Judaeis* which forbade the Jews to reside in some towns (including Warsaw in 1527, and Vilna in 1551).[73] However, since the monarchs and nobility generally supported the Jews, this ban was inconsistently observed. In other towns, Jews were forced to live in separate quarters (in Luboml for example).[74]

In 1768, a peasant uprising against the Polish aristocratic serf holders occurred in Ukraine. Several thousand nobles and Jews were murdered. Following this event, the more enlightened section of Polish society started to think of a political reform that would solve both the peasant and the Jewish problems. While some reformers proposed further limitation of the Jews' economic activity, others demanded their expulsion from Poland. A third option was also considered: the assimilation of the Jews within Polish society.[75] The "Jewish question" became a major concern after the first partition of Poland.

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[72] Jerzy Wyrozumski, "Jews in Medieval Poland" in *The Jews in Old Poland, 1000-1795*, Antony Polonsky, eds. Jakub Basista and Andrzej Link-Lenczowski (Institute for Polish-Jewish Studies, 1993), 18.
[73] Bernard Dov Weinryb, *The Jews of Poland: a Social and Economic History of the Jewish Community in Poland from 1100 to 1800* (Jewish Publication Society, 1976), 125.
[74] Berl Kagan and Nathan Sobel, *Luboml: The Memorial Book of a Vanished Shtetl* (KTAV Publishing House Inc, 1997), 5.
[75] Michlic, *Poland's Threatening Other*, 41.

At the end of the 19th century, most of the Polish Jews lived in the area of Poland incorporated into Russia.[76] The anti-Jewish policies of Tsar Alexander III, largely continued by his successor Nicholas II prompted the emergence of Zionism and Jewish socialism, represented by the Bund.[77] The rise of Jewish nationalism was paralleled by the reinforcement of a new sort of Polish nationalism which started to develop in the late 18th century. Having lost their political independence, Poles felt the need

> for a relatively fluid, uniform, and "democratic" (non-estate based) Polish nation (…). Rather than being a primarily religious problem, the Jews now posed a national conundrum for Polish society.[78]

While at the end of the 19th century most educated Poles thought that complete assimilation was the solution to the Jewish question, by the start of the 20th century, the assimilationist project was dropped and relations between Poles and Jews became extremely strained.[79]

> In 1790, Jews and Christians in the Polish lands lived almost entirely separate lives, speaking different languages, eating different foods, and obeying different laws. By the early 20th century, Jews and Christians had come to resemble each other more. Tens of thousands of Jews spoke Polish, some even as a native tongue, and while traditional Jewish garb could still be seen on the street of Warsaw (…), the sight of Jewish men and women dressed in European styles was no longer unusual (…) And yet, relations between Jews and Christian Poles were far

[76] Ibid., 293. In 1795, the Russian Empire acquired one million (80%) of Polish Jews in its spoils from obliteration of Poland.
[77] Ibid., 244.
[78] Weeks, *From Assimilation to Antisemitism*, 4.
[79] Ibid., 6.

> more strained in 1914 than in 1790. How does one explain this paradox?[80]

In *From Assimilation to Anti-Semitism*, Weeks attempts to answer this question. First, the author underlines that when two groups live separately from each other, the risks of frictions are reduced. Then, he goes on to argue that the roots of anti-Semitism need to be sought at different levels. It is the economic and political mutations occurring in Poland mostly in the late 18th and 19th centuries that gave birth to anti-Jewish feelings (and actions).[81] In short, it is the transformation of the country from the feudal system of complementary estates to the modern world characterized by the growth of nationalism (both Jewish and Polish), and economic competition (due to the industrial development) which had put great strain on Polish-Jewish relations.[82]

- The Holocaust and the Warsaw Ghetto – general facts

The literature on the Holocaust is enormous and issues regarding its causes and the role of civilian populations in the fate of the Jews have often been the source of controversy. More than half of a century after the fall of Nazism, the Holocaust remains a matter of heated discussion among the public and energetic scholarship in the academy. The question of the uniqueness of the Holocaust is often tackled in Holocaust studies. Is this historical catastrophe too "abnormal" to be studied as part of a larger historical

[80] Ibid., 170.
[81] Ibid., 170-1.
[82] Władysław T. Bartoszewski, "Jewish-Polish Relation: an Historical Survey," accessed 24 April 2011: http://motlc.wiesenthal.com/site/pp.asp?c=ivKVLcMVIsG&b=476133

canon? Or do we need a broader context to seize its real dimension, its atrocity and its (potential) uniqueness? Can the Holocaust be compared to other historical events?

From these questions follow more specific issues directly related to Poland. Is the Holocaust part of a continuum in the country's history or is it an isolated event? Can Polish and Jewish sufferings be studied and remembered separately? To what extent are the two interwoven? The conflicting Polish / Jewish postwar historiography regarding the Nazi occupation in general and the Holocaust in particular suggests that the answers to these questions are complex and very much contingent on the political agenda of the government. Before exploring this theme in more detail, I start by giving general (and basic) information on the implementation of Hitler's annihilation process. I then concentrate on the case of Poland, and more specifically on the Warsaw ghetto.

The collapse of the Weimar Republic in 1933 gave Hitler the opportunity to take and enlarge his power in Germany. Three months after he was appointed Chancellor in a coalition government (30 January 1933), the Enabling Act allowed the powers of legislation to be taken away from the Reichstag and transferred to Hitler's cabinet. After the (legal) acquisition of dictatorial powers, Hitler and the Nazi Party started putting into practice their fanatical anti-Jewish obsession which would eventually lead to the extermination of most European Jews. Between 1933 and 1945, German authorities also targeted and persecuted all the groups seen as dangerous to the "Aryan race" and to the supremacy of the Reich: the disabled, the political / ideological opponents, the Roma, the Slavic people, etc. Violence and terror reached unimaginable dimensions, ultimately materializing in the deaths camps and gas chambers. While the first concentration

camps[83] were mainly established to detain political opponents, the invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939, marked a new phase in German policy toward the Jews. The Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact (signed on August 23, 1939) enabled Hitler to invade Poland without any military threat from the east.

According to the census of 1931, more than 3 million Polish people declared themselves to be of Jewish faith. In 1939, it is estimated that almost 3.5 million Jews lived in Poland.[84] After the invasion of the country (September 1939), in order to monitor the Jewish population the Nazis established urban ghettos where the Jews were forced to organize and sustain themselves. This forced ghettoization was actually a prelude to annihilation since these ghettos later facilitated deportation of the Jews to the extermination camps. Poland, which was the "very heartland of Jewry," was to become the "Nazi laboratory for annihilation."[85]

The German occupation of Poland was exceptionally brutal not only towards the Jews, but also towards the Poles who were considered to be racially inferior. A campaign of terror was established following the military defeat of Poland. Hundreds of thousands of Polish citizens (mainly from the Polish intelligentsia, clergy and leadership class) were shot, sent to prisons or concentration camps (Auschwitz in particular). Following the annexation of eastern Poland to Germany (1941), Hitler ordered the "Germanization" of

[83] The first concentration camps in Germany were established soon after Hitler's appointment as chancellor. Dachau concentration camp was established in March 1933.
[84] Leni Yahil, *The Holocaust: The Fate of European Jewry, 1932 – 1945* (Oxford University Press, 1990), 136-7.
[85] Nora Levin, *The Holocaust Years* (Robert E. Krieger Publishing Company, Inc., 1990), 40.

Polish territory. Hundreds of thousands of Poles living in the Generalgouvernement were expelled so that more than 500,000 ethnic Germans could settle in these areas.[86]

Before the war, the city of Warsaw was a major center of Jewish life and culture in Poland. Warsaw's prewar Jewish population constituted about 30 percent of the city's total population.[87] Warsaw's Jewish community was the largest Jewish community in Europe, and was the second largest in the world, second to New York City. Muranów's Jewish settlement can be traced back to the early 19th century, when Frederick Augustus, the King of Saxony and grand duke of Warsaw, issued a decree ordering Jews to leave the center of the city "because their overcrowding in this area was supposed to have brought a danger of fires and was a health hazard."[88] Although the Jews were precisely told where they were not allowed to live, the areas where they could settle were not precisely defined. Not far from the center was the district of Muranów, mostly constituted of empty and abandoned parcels.[89] This area soon attracted thousands of Jews, generally poor, mostly Yiddish speaking and Orthodox in religious belief. Muranów's population "produced an exceptionally rich intellectual, political, cultural, and religious life that made Warsaw one of the world's most vibrant Jewish cities."[90] Although in 1862 a tsarist

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[86] David Cesarani, *Becoming Eichmann: Rethinking the Life, Crimes, and Trial of a "Desk Murderer"* (Da Capo Press, 2006), 81
[87] Barabara Engelking-Boni, "Psychological Distance between Poles and Jews in Nazi-Occupied Warsaw," in Zimmerman, *Contested Memories*, 47
[88] Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, 9.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Michael Meng, *Shattered Spaces: Encountering Jewish Sites in Postwar Germany and Poland* (Forthcoming Harvard University Press, 2011), 106.

decree abolished residence restriction for Jews, up until the war, the geography of the Jewish settlement in Warsaw remained mostly in Muranów.[91]

Two months after the invasion of Poland, Himmler ordered that the Polish and Jewish population from the territories annexed to the Third Reich be resettled in the Generalgouvernment.[92] In those days, Warsaw counted more than 360,000 Jews. The creation of the General Government led to an important wave of immigration within Poland and in the last months of the year 1939, almost 100,000 additional Jews settled in the capital.[93] Restrictions applied to the Jews quickly intensified; all Jews over 12 years old had to wear a white armband with a blue Star of David. Jewish shops and enterprises also had to be marked.[94] In April 1940, the Judenrat began building walls around the Jewish district which was "threatened with an epidemic,"[95] according to the Germans. Jews living outside and Poles living within the ghetto boundaries were ordered to quickly change their place of residence.[96]

Three months later, the ghetto walls were finished, and on November 16th 1940, the Jewish area was sealed off. The ghetto was enclosed by a wall that was over 10 feet high, topped with barbed wire, and closely guarded to prevent movement between the

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[91] Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, 10. In 1983, Poland was home to more than 1,260,000 Jews, the largest Jewish community in Europe. Muranów was not the only area in Warsaw where Jews lived. Wealthier - and often, more assimilated - Jews had settled further south on Marszałkowska, Królewska, and Nowy Świat Streets (Meng, Shattered Spaces, 106).
[92] On October 23, 1939, Hitler established the General Government in the parts of occupied Poland that had not been incorporated into the Third Reich. Hans Frank was appointed Governor General.
[93] Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, 10 & 37.
[94] Ibid., 37.
[95] Ibid., 38.
[96] Ibid., 40.

ghetto and the rest of Warsaw.[97] On a surface of about 307 hectares, over 400,000 Jews were crammed into 1,483 houses, with an average of 7.2 persons per room.[98] The daily food rations allocated by the German authorities were far from sufficient to sustain life. Between the end of 1940 and May 1942, the average monthly mortality rate was 2535.[99] During the summer of 1942, German SS and police units, assisted by auxiliaries, carried out mass deportations from the Warsaw ghetto to the gas chambers of Treblinka. About 265,000 of the remaining Jews from Warsaw were exterminated in less than two months.[100]

On April 19, 1943, the SS came to the ghetto with the intention of liquidating it and deporting the remaining inhabitants to concentration or extermination camps. Although the ghetto inhabitants offered organized resistance in the first days of the operation, inflicting casualties on the German troops, four weeks later, the rebellion was crushed by the Germans. At least 7,000 Jews died fighting or in hiding in the ghetto, while the SS and police sent another 7,000 to the Treblinka killing center.[101] Following the uprising, the ghetto was destroyed.

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[97] Ibid.
[98] Ibid.
[99] Ibid., 49.
[100] Sharf, *In the Warsaw Ghetto Summer 1941*, 109.
[101] William L. Hosh, *World War II: People, Politics and Power* (The Rosen Publishing Group, 2009), 243.

Fig 1. Nowolipki Street, Muranów, 1935.[102]

Fig 2. Nowolipki Street after the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, 1943.[103]

[102] Photo credit: Jewish Historical Institute, Warsaw.
[103] Photo credit: Jewish Historical Institute, Warsaw.

On August 1, 1944, in a desperate effort to liberate Warsaw, the underground Polish Home Army (Armia Krajowa; AK) rose against the German troops. The catalyst for the uprising was the appearance of Soviet forces along the east bank of the Vistula River. Yet, the Soviets failed to intervene and the Germans eventually crushed the revolt and razed the city to the ground in October 1944. When Soviet troops resumed their offensive on January 17, 1945, they liberated a devastated Warsaw. According to Polish data, only about 174,000 people were still living in the Polish capital, less than six per cent of the prewar population. Approximately 11,500 of the survivors were Jews. It is estimated that in addition to the 3 million Jewish Poles who perished, 1.9 million non-Jewish Polish civilians died during World War II.[104]

II. Methodological approach

- Doing ethnography in Muranów: from observation to participation

June 03, 2010. I am walking around Muranów, the area of Warsaw's former Jewish quarter. The district had been completely reconstructed: it is quiet, with a lot of squares and parks. Most of the area is occupied by long, rectangular housing blocks which are incontrovertible evidence of the historical break and recreation of the street under Communism. On my left, a couple is holding hands, on my right, a mother is running after a four or five-year old who is about to cross the street on his own. Next to them, an old lady is walking her dog. Regular daily life is going on in Muranów. I take time, walk slowly, and make very long pauses at every major "point of interest"

[104] USHMM Holocaust Encyclopedia, accessed 26 April 2011: http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005069

suggested in my guide: the Umschlagplatz, the bunker at Miła Street, the Gestapo headquarters, etc. I take notes in my "Warsaw Diary – summer 2010," hoping that they will help me reconcile past and present.

I think of Isaac Singer's novel, *Le petit monde de la rue Krochmalna*, which I read on the plane. The author's descriptions help me picture prewar Muranów: the crowded Jewish markets, the busy Jewish streets, the little Jewish stores, the houses of prayer. But the images I have in my head do not fit with the reality before me. A whole world had been buried – or just covered up in some places. After the destruction of the ghetto, there was so much rubble that it could not all be removed, architects adapted to this constraint and created small hills (such as the one on figure 4) in order to be able to build the new housing estate. When walking on those hills, I had the impression of literally walking on the past. What would I have found if I had dug? How can this past be so close and so far at the same time?

Fig 3. Nowolipki Street, Muranów, 2010.[105]

Fig. 4. Small hill in Muranów, 2010.[106]

[105] Photo by author.

Each social science approaches research with human subjects differently. As its primary source of information, ethnographic methodology gives priority to observation involving the collection and examination of behaviors in a social setting. Through participant-observation, ethnographers take part in "the daily activities, rituals, interactions and events of a group of people as one of the means of learning the explicit and tacit aspects of their life routines and their culture."[107] Recently, many ethnographers have tended to emphasize participation over observation in their research.[108] Although I went to Poland with no background in anthropology or social science, in the following paragraphs, I attempt to reflect on my role as ethnographer in Muranów and explain how I combined participant-observation and active participation in order to better understand how the Jewish past of the district is remembered by residents.

By observing and getting involved in the participants' lives, it is expected that the understanding we have of the other will be challenged and redefined over the course of the research. I arrived in Poland with the assumption that what people remember about history is almost always determined by the presence of original past remnants, memorials and/or museums. I knew that there were a lot of war memorials commemorating the Holocaust in Muranów, but I wondered if these monuments were the only repositories of Jewish memory. If they are, I thought, it would mean that Jewish memory is equated to Holocaust memory. By doing fieldwork in Muranów, I wanted to validate, invalidate or

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[106] Photo by author.
[107] Kathleen M. DeWalt and Billie R. DeWalt, *Participant Observation: A guide for fieldworkers* (AltaMira Press, 2001), 1.
[108] See for example: Barbara Tedlock, "From Participant Observation to the Observation of Participation: The Emergence of Narrative Ethnography," *Journal of Anthropological Research* 47 (Spring 1991).

nuance this. If my assumption proved to be incorrect, I wanted to understand how the Jewish past was remembered.

Before discussing these issues with residents, I experienced the place myself. I often walked around Muranów observing people, both tourists who were usually gathered at Muranów's "major points of interest," (that is, the ones related to the war years), and residents who were usually found in places where none of these "points of interest" stand. And, as the following anecdote suggests, this division of space seems to be well-established in residents' minds.

Fig 5. Tourists taking pictures in front of the Monument to the Ghetto Heroes, 2010.[109]

[109] Photo by author.

Thursday, June 14, 2010, Nowolipki Street, Muranów. In order to figure out what historic buildings had stood where today's modern buildings are I set out to take pictures of each building on the street, which I planned to juxtapose with historical photographs of the same addresses. I tried to be discreet, as I wanted to avoid having to explain what I was doing – simply because of my inability to speak Polish. But my attempt at discretion clearly failed as I could see some residents staring at me. A man suddenly popped out from nowhere, walked up to me and told me – one third in Polish, one third in English, one third in a unidentifiable language! – that if I wanted to take pictures of the ghetto, I should rather go to the Monument to the Ghetto Heroes. I tried to tell him that I did not want to take pictures of the ghetto, that I was interested in the Jewish history of Muranów, not only the history of the ghetto. He smiled. I smiled back, hoping that our "discussion" would end there. It did not. The man literally took my arm and walked with me to the memorial. There, he said something in Polish which I could not understand but he seemed very happy to have "helped" me see "the ghetto." I thanked him very much for his time, took a couple of pictures – even though I already had some. I watched him leave the square, satisfied to have shown me – the lost tourist – where history stands!

* * * *

This experience is open to various interpretations. First, it is possible that this man does not want *his* Polish street to be associated with the Holocaust. Second, he may have been afraid that I was a Jew taking pictures of a property I wanted to reclaim. Third, he might

have sincerely wanted to help me "see" the Jewish history of the district, which in his mind, seemed to be restricted to the years 1939-1945, six years out of some one thousand.

After two weeks in Warsaw, I took part in a historical walk organized by the Jewish Historical Institute (ZIH – where I was an intern) for a group of Polish teachers. The eight stops selected by the guide were war memorials. At the end of the walk, I wondered what this group had learned from the walk. They sure would remember that Jews died there (although they probably knew it already). What else would they remember? All the touristic walks proposed in Muranów (by ZIH or by Warsaw's information center) are "ghetto walks" whose main stops are always the Monument to the Ghetto Heroes, the Umschlagplatz, and the ghetto wall. These walks are part of a broader (and very lucrative) trend in Poland: Holocaust tourism. The motivations behind what is often called "dark tourism" are various. Why people visit sites of death is beyond the scope of this study, but I would like to underline that despite the controversy surrounding Holocaust tourism, this might have beneficial effects. After Holocaust memory had been almost completely erased from Polish collective memory, such tourism might provide an opportunity for Poles to grapple with the past and better assimilate the memory of the war.

However, if we agree to say that history is a continuum rather than a succession of unrelated events, it seems essential to present it as such and remind people of what happened before and after the event in question. This goes back to the question of uniqueness of the Holocaust, briefly raised in the section on the Holocaust and the Warsaw ghetto (in the first part of this chapter). In Muranów, I was under the impression

that the presence of all these war memorials somehow isolated the Holocaust from Jewish history. This is when I started to reflect on alternative solutions. Are there any? How can people remember Jewish history in terms broader than the Holocaust? How can Jewish memory (in terms broader than Holocaust memory) be revived in Muranów? This is what I investigate in chapter 3.

Any decision about whether to use participant-observation alone or in combination with other sources of data must be made in the context of the purpose of one's research. Although a fieldwork can be limited to observation, most of the time, observing and interviewing are used as complementary ways of gathering data. As suggested by Barbara Tedlock, "since we can only enter into another person's world through communication, we depend upon ethnographic dialogue to create a world of shared intersubjectivity and to reach an understanding of the differences between two worlds."[110] When studying something as intangible as memory, one can not only rely on observation. In addition to taking part in the ghetto walk and interacting with random people on the streets, I also conducted formal interviews with some of Muranów residents.

- Using oral history: the pros and cons of my status of outsider.

Tuesday, May 29, 2010, Warsaw. I am at Warsaw Chopin airport. It is my first trip to Poland. I have read a lot of testimonies written by Jewish people born in Poland

[110] Barbara Tedlock, "From Participant Observation to the Observation of Participation: The Emergence of Narrative Ethnography," *Journal of Anthropological Research* 47 (Spring 1991), 70.

who, one day, decide to revisit their homeland. They often describe the landing at Chopin airport as a very disturbing and highly emotional moment. How much has the country changed since they left? What has become of their apartment? Will they recognize their former neighborhood? My arrival was different, for my expectations were different. I had intellectual expectations of course, but no personal attachment to Poland. As I would soon find out, this lack of personal attachment proved to be both an asset and a hindrance, especially in the process of interviewing.

* * * *

During this fieldwork, my biggest handicap was my inability to speak Polish. It significantly reduced the number of the people I was able to interview. Without the help of a translator, I had no choice but to conduct interviews with people who could speak either English or French, that is, mostly people under 40. To make up for this flaw, besides conducting oral interviews, I (with the help of a Polish friend) also distributed questionnaires in Polish to passersby in one of Muranów's streets, Nowolipki Street.[111] Our target was mostly elderly people. My friend asked random passersby if they lived in the street, and if they did, she explained to them what the questionnaire was about. While a few people simply ignored us, most of them were very cordial and willingly answered the ten questions I had carefully crafted. More than half of the residents who accepted to

[111] I have gathered fifteen questionnaires in total. For samples, see Appendix 1. I chose Nowolipki Street because the street used to be part of the core of the prewar Jewish district. According to the Census District of 1927, the core of the Jewish district lay between Swietojerska, Nowolipki, Zamenhofa, and Miła Streets, Muranowski Square, and Nowiniarska Street, where more than two thirds of the Jewish population of the capital lived.

fill in a questionnaire were more than fifty years old. Yet, I am aware that my inability to conduct oral interviews with elderly people remains problematic. Further research would be needed for the sample of participants to be more representative of the neighborhood. It would require conducting interviews with younger and older residents.

To the question "is Nowolipki Street connected to Jewish history?" 100% of the participants checked "yes." But walking down the street, I wondered what this "yes" meant. Did it mean that the people who answered the questionnaire knew that the street was included in the ghetto, or did they know more? This is what oral interviews allowed me to find out. In total, I conducted ten oral interviews with ten different people from Muranów (all of them are non Jewish). During the month I spent in Warsaw, I did an internship at the Jewish Historical Institute. The connections I had there were an essential stepping-stone in starting to build a network. Edyta Kurek, the deputy director of the Institute with whom I was working, agreed to publish a "call for Muranów's residents" for me to interview on the Facebook page of the Institute. From there, and mostly through my colleagues at the Institute, I found other residents willing to be interviewed.

As I was conducting the interviews, it became clear that all the participants had an extensive knowledge of and/or interest in Jewish history. The fact that my point of departure was ZIH has very certainly played a big part in the kind of people I ended up interviewing. If these people have a connection (even the slightest) with the Jewish Institute, they are more likely to have an interest in Jewish matters. That being said, one of my few contacts outside of the Institute happened to know someone from Muranów who was not connected to ZIH. I contacted this person and interviewed her a few days

later. Although her knowledge of Jewish history was more limited than that of the other participants, it was far from being nonexistent and she showed a real interest in the past of her neighborhood. I do not pretend my findings to be representative of the whole district. Yet, I believe that they show that some local knowledge and interest in Jewish matters exist among Muranów's residents.

I met Andrzej at ZIH, where he works. Andzrej is over 50 years old; he is the oldest resident I interviewed. Since Andrzej only speaks Polish, his nephew, Pawel, who speaks some English, proposed to translate the answers of his uncle. Pawel also lives in Muranów, I thus interviewed them together. Pawel acted as both an interviewee and a translator. It was the first time I conducted an interview with the help of a translator. Although Pawel's role was crucial, his involvement as translator had a deep impact on the interview. First, how can I be sure that he correctly translated what his uncle told me and did not give a skewed interpretation of his words? Second, being unable to speak directly to Andrzej affected my ability to really "connect" with him. Third, it really positioned me as "the other." In this setting, I found it particularly difficult to collaborate with the interviewees, and I do not believe I succeeded in establishing some kind of collaborative relationship with the two of them, as it is often suggested in the practice of oral history.[112] However, all the other interviews were conducted in English (or French), and thus offered me the opportunity to create a more intimate and collaborative relationship with the participants.

[112] See for example: Michael Frisch, *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1990); Alistair Thomson, "Sharing Authority: Oral History and the Collaborative Process," *Oral History Review* 30, no.1 (2003): 111-113; Steven High, "Sharing Authority: An Introduction," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 43, no.1 (2009): 12-34.

Prior to meeting the participants, one of my biggest concerns was linked to my status of outsider. I feared that people would be suspicious. Why would a French student who does not speak Polish be interested in Polish history in general and in their neighborhood in particular? I also feared that this high degree of strangeness would prevent me from creating a space of mutual exchange and establishing a relationship based on trust and collaboration. However, despite the challenges I think I managed to convince all the participants of my good will and sincere interest and also collaborate with most of them, rather than just interviewing them. Telling my interviewees that I grew up in Vichy and that I, too, had (have) to deal with "difficult heritage" related to collaboration and the Holocaust seemed to give me some credibility. Although France and Poland experienced the Nazi occupation in very different ways, growing up in a city which is remembered as the cradle of French collaboration and which is now struggling to come to terms with its past provided me a perfect entry point to introduce the subject of my research and explain where my interest for the Second World War in general and the Holocaust in particular comes from.

Recent literature on oral history has focused on the need to share authority with participants and to develop collaborative rapports outside the formal interview space. Although I was not able to build deep collaborative relationships with all of my interviewees, I always tried to narrow the gap between the participants and myself. I found it easy, even natural, to "share authority" with the residents I interviewed for two simple reasons: first, I have little experience in conducting interviews and second, I was younger than they were. Every time a participant mentioned the fact that I looked young, I was never sure if they really meant "young" or "inexperienced." Given these two

unchangeable variables, it would have been very pretentious of me to establish myself as *THE* interviewer – all the more since I did not speak Polish. With hindsight, I think I just tried to be perceived as a trustworthy student.

In anthropology and oral history, it has often been argued that the researcher should provide information about him or herself to those being studied. As argued by Alessandro Portelli,

> One party cannot really see the other unless the other can see him or her in turn. The two interacting subjects cannot act together unless some kind of mutuality is established. The field researcher, therefore, has an objective stake in equality, as a condition for a less distorted communication and a less biased collection of data.[113]

Before the recorded interview started, I always paid great attention to introduce myself and was always willing to share personal information and disclose past experiences. In doing so, I allowed the participants to better understand my motivations. I was never reluctant to answer any kind of personal questions they could have even if it meant postponing the "real" interview. I met Eliza in a pub at the end of the month of June. The Soccer World Cup was playing on TV and some supporters were sitting next to us. We started the conversation talking about soccer. She asked me if I liked soccer and if I sometimes watched games on TV. I told her that I hated soccer and that for nothing in the world would I watch a game! This radical answer led to other questions from Eliza: why do you hate it? What sports do you like? Etc. By reversing the roles (I, the interviewee; the participant, the interviewer), my objective was to create a safe zone and gave the

[113] Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (SUNY Press, 1991), 30.

interviewee some control and authority over the interview. Whenever the participant felt the need (or the urge), he/she could become the interviewer.

This collaborative approach was pushed to its "extreme" in the interview with Beata Chomątowska, a journalist at *Rzeczpospolita* and founder of the association *Stacja Muranów* whose goal is "to make Muranów an inspiring place, to engage people on the complicated history through various cultural activities."[114] Beata and I share the same interest, and work on the same subject: post-Holocaust memory in Muranów. We agreed to meet and discuss our respective projects (my thesis, her book). While I had in mind to interview her for my thesis, she probably had in mind to interview me for her book. As we were discussing our findings, challenges and doubts, the frontier between interviewer and interviewee completely disappeared and our roles (interviewer / interviewee) constantly switched. My relationship with Beata ended up being the most collaborative. After I left Poland, our discussions continued on to the digital space, mostly through e-mails. To this day, we have remained in regular contact. Her book will include some of my thoughts and impressions on Muranów. My thesis includes hers. Beyond that, our common interest might lead us to collaborate on some public scholarship projects in the near future.

James Clifford, a professor of history of consciousness who has written extensively on cultural anthropology, argues that since the ethnographer lacks the shared experience, he also lacks understanding and therefore his experience is as ephemeral as

[114] Beata Chomątowska Interview, 25 June 2010. The last chapter of my thesis presents and analyzes *Stacja Muranów*'s projects.

intuition.[115] However, while sharing a common facet of identity can help building rapport, difference can sometimes facilitate the interviewing process, rather than being a barrier. Because I did not grow up in a Communist country, most of the residents I interviewed felt compelled to explain to me what life was like in Poland in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. The fact that they usually did not take anything for granted and elaborated on the "why" and "how" of certain aspects of life under Communism made our discussions richer. Comparing our respective past experiences as a child in France or Poland for example allowed us to contextualize our experiences and place them within a framework facilitating mutual understanding. It also forced us to reconsider things from a different perspective, making the discussion truly dialogic and always challenging. Last but not least, it showed us that both Poland and France, despite their obvious differences, share many similarities regarding the ways the two countries have been dealing with the memories of wartime events.

Although I did not stay in Poland very long, I managed to create collaborative relationships with almost all of the people I interviewed. In the next two chapters, I rely on these oral interviews and on the analysis of primary and secondary sources to show the shifting relationship between space and memory in Muranów.

[115] Daniel Bradburd, *Being There: The Necessity of Fieldwork* (Smithsonian, 1998), 161.

Chap 2 – **Warsaw's Jewish district: the spatialization of Holocaust Memory**

I. The postwar national context: reconstruct the country and the nation: what to remember and what to forget?

- The end of the war and the establishment of a Communist regime in Poland

In the summer of 1944, while the Allied troops were breaking through the Normandy defenses and the Soviet Army was approaching the eastern suburbs of Warsaw, the Polish resistance movement (Armia Krajowa, AK) undertook a desperate uprising to liberate their capital. However, the much anticipated Russian help did not come, AK was defeated and the Varsovians harshly punished for having dared to rebel: "Warsaw has to be pacified, that is, razed to the ground."[116] Following Hitler's declaration, the Nazis decided that the Polish capital would "serve only as a transport station for the Wehrmacht. No stone can remain standing."[117] The defeat of Germany changed the course of the events and the country finally remained on the maps of Europe. Yet, its borders changed dramatically in 1945 as a result of negotiations between the United States, the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union during the Yalta and Potsdam Conferences (in February and July 1945).

[116] Hitler, 1944. Cited in Anthony M. Tung, *Preserving* the *World's* Great *Cities: The Destruction and Renewal of the Historic Metropolis* (Clarkson Potter, 2001), 73.
[117] Himmler, Conference of SS Officers, October 17, 1944. Cited in Irene Tomaszewski, *Inside a Gestapo Prison: The Letters of Krystyna Wituska, 1942-1944* (Wayne State University Press, 2006) xxii.

A series of forced migrations, transfers and repatriations of populations followed.[118] Between 1946 and 1947, 137,000 Polish Jews arrived in Poland from the Soviet Union.[119] At the same time, several thousand Jews from Poland immigrated to Palestine.[120] According to the historian Michael C. Steinlauf, "many of those who stayed had political reasons for doing so: their group profile ever more closely resembled the mythic *Żydokomuna* ("Judaeo-Commune", i.e. the alleged Jewish-Communist conspiracy")."[121] Before exploring the relationship between Jews and Communism and qualifying the above quote, I need to provide some historical and political background on how the Communist party took over Poland in 1944.

In the month of July 1944, two major political events that would shape Poland's destiny happened. On July 21, 1944 the Polish Committee of National Liberation (PKWN), established in Moscow, issued a manifesto to the Polish Nation constituting the Communist political, social and economic program for the reconstruction of postwar Poland. A few days later, the PKWN moved from the Soviet Union to the Polish city of Lublin which had just been liberated from the Nazis. [122] While the Polish government was still in exile in London, on 31 December 1944, the PKWN announced that it had become the provisional government of Poland. Through intimidation, arrests and political

[118] For more information, see : Krystina Kersten, « Forced Migration and the Transformation of Polish Society in the Postwar Period » in *Redrawing Nations : Ethnic Cleansing in East-Central Europe, 1944-1948*, eds. Phillip Ther and Ana Siljak (Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2001).
[119] Michlic, *Poland's Threatening Other*, 198.
[120] About 140,000 according to Michlic (*Poland's Threatening Other*, 198).
[121] Michael C. Steinlauf « Poland » in *The World Reacts to the Holocaust*, eds. David D. Wyman and Charles H. Rosenzveig (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 113.
[122] Michlic, *Poland's Threatening Other*, 198.

murders, the Polish Communist Party (PPR) began to consolidate power.[123] In 1948, the merging of the PPR with the Polish Socialist Party gave birth to the Polish United Worker's Party, the only Party authorized in Poland.

The Stalinization of Poland was accompanied by terror and fear. Polish historian Aleksander Gella qualified the period between 1944 and 1947 as "the dictatorship of treason," and "the extermination of the Second Republic."[124] Several scholars have conducted studies on torture and execution carried out by the Communists in Poland. It is estimated that between 1945 and 1948, about 250,000 so-called anti-Communist Poles were killed by the KGB, 150,000 were sent to various concentration camps and 50,000 were put into Siberia's camps.[125] In addition, some 518,000 Polish peasants were imprisoned for resisting collectivization.[126]

In the early postwar years, many local and national publications focused on the theme of Judeo-Communism. On a leaflet published in Poland just after the war, one could read: "Every Pole is fully aware that every Jew works for the NKVD (the Secret Soviet Police), belongs to the PPR, and plays a crucial role in enslaving our nation."[127] In this climate of high suspicion, the overrepresentation of Jews in executive positions only made things worse. In the years 1944-56, out of approximately fifty people who filled

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[123] Ibid.
[124] Aleksander Gella, *Zaglada Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej, 1945-1947* (Agencja Wydawnicza, 1998), cited in Chodakiewicz, *After the Holocaust*, 25.
[125] Hubert Poetschke, *Memoirs from the Turbulent Years and Beyond* (Xlibris Corporation, 2008), 85.
[126] See for example: Andrzej Paczkowski, « Poland, the « Enemy Nation » » in Stéphane Courtois et al, The *Black Book of Communism : Crimes, Terror, Repression* (Harvard University Press, 1999), 363-393; or Marek Tuszynski, « Soviet War Crimes Against Poland During the Second World War and Its Aftermath » *The Polish Review 2* (1999): 183-216.
[127] Yad Vashem Archive, Collection of Anti-Semitic Leaflets in Poland 1945-1946, no 06/91, WiN's publications, 2.

leadership positions in the Polish Ministry of Public Security, Jews made up 29%.[128] According to Isreali historians Yisrael Gutman and Shmuel Krakowski,

> it was certainly undeniable that Jews were to be found among the upper echelons of the regime and within the government bureaucracy. By and large Jews had responded favorably to the new regime, which, in contrast to the Polish government between the wars and the major groups in the wartime resistance, had treated them with understanding and, at times, even sympathy.[129]

Several leading party functionaries objected to this situation, so much so that in 1948, the first Secretary of the Polish Communist Party, Władysław Gomułka, wrote a letter to Stalin in which he expressed his concerns about the "Jewish question." Having too many Jews in the government, Gomułka thought, might hinder the Communists from gaining popular support and would propagate the stereotype of "Jewish Communism."[130] Despite a significant number of Jews in prominent positions, we need to underline that the number of Jews filling lowest positions, such as in district government offices, was very low. Between 1944 and 1947 for example, most secret policemen at the country and province level were ethnic Poles.[131] Still, in the minds of most Poles, the Jew and the Communist were the two "enemies" of the Polish nation, often embodied in the same mythic character.

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[128] Andrzej Paczkowski, "How Many Jews were Functionaries of the Security Service in the 1940s and 1950s?" in *Difficult Questions in Polish-Jewish Dialogue*, eds. Maciej Kozlowski, Andrzej Folwarczny and Michal Bilewicz (Jacek Santorski & Co Agencja Wydawnicza, 2006), 92.
[129] Yisrael Gutman and Shmuel Krakowski, *Unequal Victims: Poles and Jews During World War Two* (Holocaust Library, 1986), 367.
[130] Jan T. Gross, *Fear: Anti-Semitism in Poland after Auschwitz: An Essay in Historical Interpretation* (Princeton University Press, 2006), 213.
[131] Chodakiewicz, *After the Holocaust*, 43.

- The Jewish question in postwar Poland: remembering the war vs. silencing Jewish memory. Or, how six million Poles died during the Holocaust.

In *Imagined Communities* (1991), Benedict Anderson argues that a nation is an imagined cultural and political entity whose members share a common memory of their past. This collective memory creates a sense of belonging and maintains a consistent feeling of identity among the members of a given group who are strategically engaged in processes of remembering and forgetting, modeled according to the specific goals of the hegemonic body at the head of this group.[132] A century earlier, Ernest Renan already argued that

> Forgetting, I would even go so far as to say historical error, is a crucial factor in the creation of a nation, which is why progress in historical studies often constitutes a danger for the [principle of] nationality… The essence of a nation is that all individuals have many things in common and also that they have forgotten many things.[133]

Historical amnesia is an essential tool for social cohesiveness since it highlights commonalities among certain groups and "allows society to start afresh without inherited resentments and negative aspects of particularistic memories characterized by closure which does not allow for the accommodation of others."[134] The process of forgetting is

[132] Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge University Press, 1989).
[133] Extracted from "Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?", lecture by Ernest Renan, La Sorbonne, Paris, March 11, 1882. Cited in Aviel Roshwald, *The Endurance of Nationalism: Ancient Roots and Modern Dilemnas* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), 58.
[134] Barbara A. Misztal, "Collective Memory in a Global Age – Learning How and What to Remember," *Current Sociology* 58:1 (2010): 32.

all the more frequent after a traumatic event[135] and may be exacerbated when a nation is governed by a manipulative regime. These two conditions could be found in postwar Poland.

As mentioned earlier, the Russian invasion in the late 18th century led to the emergence of a new kind of Polish nationalism. Krystina Kersten argues that the experience of the war also had a very important impact on Polish national consciousness:

> Because threatened, the nation became the predominant category of thinking and the main subject of activity [during the war]. (…) National belonging [thus] assumed fundamental importance. One's life had depended on whether one was a Pole, a Jew, a Ukrainian, or a Lithuanian; however it was not he who decided (his national identity) but the authorities endowed with the power of deciding life and death. This common fate, imposed from the outside, cemented bonds and bred solidarity within groups.[136]

After the war, more than ever, Poles and Jews constituted two different communities which had experienced the war in two different ways. While Jewish narratives put emphasis on the annihilation of the Jewish people and the widespread anti-Semitism and indifference of Poles, Polish narratives glorified their nation's martyrdom and heroism. Acknowledging participation or even just approval of Nazi crimes did not fit into the "official" story because such acknowledgement would have "compromised both the

[135] For more information, see: LaCapra, *Writing History*, *Writing Trauma* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001).
[136] Krystina Kersten, *Miedzy wyzwoleniem a zniewoleniem: Polska 1944-1956* (Aneks, 1993), 11. Cited in Zimmerman, *Contested Memories*, 245.

Polish narrative of glorious resistance and the historical self-definition of Poland as "the Christ of nations, the eternal martyr."[137]

In the early postwar years, the attitude of the government towards the remaining Jews was somehow paradoxical. In order to present a good image abroad, the Polish government made its policies towards minorities more flexible. In conformity with Communism's so-called belief in equality, Articles 69 and 70 of Poland's new constitution of July 22, 1952, included a resolution granting equal rights to national minorities regarding culture and education in their native language.[138] During the congress of the Jewish Social and Cultural Association of Poland (TSKZ)[139] in December 1961, the vice-minister of international affaires, Mr. Sznek, even declared that "the Polish government protects the principles of equal rights of all citizens and will fight against any expression of discrimination and anti-Semitism."[140]

Despite this seeming religious tolerance, anti-Jewish actions frequently occurred and were rarely punished. In *Poland's Threatening Other*, Joanna Michlic explains that the social experience of Polish Jews returning home in 1945 was characterized by frequent assaults, harassment, robbery and fear for their lives.[141] Accounts of hostility

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[137] Bartov, *Erased*, 205
[138] Iwona Irwin-Zarecka, *Neutralizing Memory: the Jew in Contemporary Poland.* (Transaction Publishers, 1989), 160-161.
[139] Towarzystwo Społeczno-Kulturalne Żydów.
[140] Quoted in Berendt, "Emigracja Żydów," 300.
[141] Michlic, *Poland's Threatening Other*, 215. Here, we can also underline that since the Communist state was considered the owner of all properties in the country, the government resolved not to return Jewish property that had been confiscated by the Nazis. As far as other material goods were concerned, while evidence culled from Jewish memoirs shows that successful reclamation sometimes took place, several accounts show that many owners instead of repossessing their goods sold them and left the country. Most of the time, the owners received less than the market value (Chodakiewicz, *After the Holocaust*, 33). See also: William Kornbluth,

towards the Jews were often recorded. Anti-Semitic leaflets were distributed in some villages: "Jewish hordes, if you do not leave the city by 15 May, we will take appropriate action!"[142] "Appropriate action" was indeed sometimes taken. Although since the 1980s, the Kielce pogrom[143] has been widely discussed in Polish historiography, one needs to keep in mind that it was not an isolated event. The Kraków pogrom (August 11, 1945), for example, resulted in one dead and five injured Jews. Other anti-Jewish riots and disturbances between 1945 and 1946 happened in Bytom, Bielawa, Legnica, Szczecin, etc. Michlic argues that the ultimate objective of anti-Jewish violence was not necessarily to kill Jews, but to force them to leave. And it worked: one month after the Kielce pogrom about 33,000 Jews left Poland.[144]

The events which happened in 1967-68 marked the final blow in the deterioration of Polish-Jewish relations. During this period, the term "Jew" was commonly replaced by "Zionist." Popular slogans went from "Purge the Party of Zionists!" to "Zionists represent Israel, not Poland."[145] On June 5, 1967, Israel, under the threat of an imminent military offensive led by Egypt's president, Gamal A. Nasser, launched an attack that resulted in Israel controlling the entire Sinai Peninsula in Egypt, all Jordanian territory west of the Jordan River, and the Golan Heights of Syria. Israel's victory humiliated the Soviet Union which had been the chief military advisor and arms provider of Egypt and

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Sentenced to Remember: My Legacy of Life in Pre-1939 Poland and Sixty-Eight months of Nazi Occupation (Lehigh University Press, 1994)

[142] Cited in Blus-Wegrowska, "Atmosfera," 98.

[143] The pogrom occurred on July 4, 1946, following rumors of child kidnapping including allegations of blood libel. About forty Jews were killed.

[144] Michlic, *Poland's Threatening Other*, 217.

[145] Lucjan Blit, *The Anti-Jewish Campaign in Present-Day Poland: Facts, Documents, Press Reports* (Institue of Jewish Affairs, 1968), 21.

Syria.[146] As a consequence, the Soviet Union cut all diplomatic ties with Israel and launched an "anti-Zionism" campaign.

In Poland, the campaign intensified in the spring of 1968 after the outbreak of demonstrations against the Communist regime. Thousands of Polish Jews were dismissed from their positions and a lot of them emigrated. Irwin-Zarecka argues that 1968 marked the effective end of the Jewish presence in Poland. Out of the 25,000 remaining Jews, only 5,000 to 10,000 remained in Poland, most of whom were old people, often too sick or too old to begin a new life abroad.[147] Andrzej, a resident from Muranów, remembers those days:

> In 1968, a Jewish family from my building emigrated to the USA. They were very good friends of mine. They were good entertainers; they always invented all sorts of games. We spent very good times together. I would like to see them again, but I don't know how to contact them. But I hope that one day I will find them… They left Poland because of what happened in 1968. At the time, there was an anti-Zionist campaign and anti-Semitic propaganda everywhere, and some Poles started to believe it.[148]

At the same time, a reworking of the memory of the Holocaust was undertaken by the "Partisans," a faction within the Communist Party which by the late 1960s had managed "to obtain control of a large segment of the national mass media as well as

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[146] Wolak, *Forced Out*, 45-46

[147] Irwin-Zarecka, *Neutralizing Memory,* 63. Here, we can also underline that in the late 1960s, the activities of Warsaw's Jewish Historical Institute were reduced and the Joint, a worldwide Jewish relief organization headquartered in the USA, was forced to cease its activities in Poland. The Joint was established in 1914, and is active in more than 70 countries. During the war, it financed welfare programs and the purchase of arms for the Jewish underground. The Joint was made illegal in Poland in the early 1950s. In 1957, it was allowed to resume its activities before being banned again in 1967. It renewed its activities in Poland in 1981 (Irwin-Zarecka, *Neutralizing Memory,* 169)

[148] Andrzej Stasiak Interview 24 June 2010.

institutions of national heritage and education."[149] The Partisans saw the Holocaust "as a threat to their emphasis on Polish wartime martyrdom and suffering."[150] While in the 1950s and early 1960s the memory of the Holocaust had started to be deprived of its Jewish specificity and slowly became subsumed into the larger narrative of Polish victimhood, the events of 1967-68 marked a real turning point in Poland's collective historical memory of the war.

In the book *Neutralizing Memory*, Iwona Irwin-Zarecka argues that the Holocaust was no longer "Jewish property," and that the government literally rewrote the history. "The three million Polish Jews all became Poles, and when added to the three million Polish victims of the Nazis, made up the total of *6 million Poles* – victims of genocide."[151] The distinction between concentration camps and extermination camps was erased from historical accounts. The editors of the Polish Great Encyclopedia who had "overlooked" this new interpretation were subsequently fired, and a supplementary volume was issued to correct all the "mistakes."[152] In addition to erasing Jewishness of the victims, Irwin-Zarecka posits that the government also wanted the Jew to disappear from Polish history. In the first edition of Gieysztor et al., *History of Poland*, published in 1968, only two paragraphs out of six hundred pages were devoted to Poland's Jews.

When the residents from Muranów I interviewed told me about the history classes they attended in high school, they leave no doubt that this re-writing of history affected

[149] Antony Polonsky and Joanna B. Michlic eds., *The Neighbors respond: The Controversy over the Jedwabne Massacre in Poland* (Princeton University Press, 2003), 9.
[150] Ibid., 9.
[151] Irwin-Zarecka, *Neutralizing Memory,* 62.
[152] Ibid. The Encyclopedia was published in 1967.

society as a whole. Grzegorz, one of the interviewees, explained to me that his history classes were "all lies."[153] He added,

> When I was in high school, I still believed that it was [ethnic] Poles who died in Auschwitz; I didn't really know that it was this massive death factory for Jews from all over Europe. I knew that Jews died there, but you know, most of the Poles believed that most of the people who died there were Poles. And I even remember going to Auschwitz some time ago, and there wasn't a lot of Jewish signs… It is sad, but at school, we weren't taught about the Holocaust as a Jewish tragedy.[154]

While it is true that anti-Semitism was used as a political tool by the Communist government, the association "Communism" / "anti-Semitism" needs to be qualified. The anti-Jewish actions that happened between 1945 and the late 1980s in Poland must be understood in the context of accumulated historical, social and political events experienced by Poland since the 18th century, rather than the sole result of Communism.[155] Given the conflicting relations Jews and Poles had prior World War Two and the emergence of a Polish ethno nationalism in the 19th century, it seems fair to argue that Poles would be more likely to be receptive to propaganda identifying Jews as a domestic threat.

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[153] Grzegorz Poludniak Interview 17 June 2010.
[154] Grzegorz Poludniak Interview 17 June 2010. Here, I believe it is worth remembering than two million ethnic Poles also died during the Second World War, and that 150,000 ethnic Poles perished in Auschwitz.
[155] In *The Neighbors Respond*, Polonsky and Michlic argues that "it should be stressed that [the official narrative was] not constructed by the Polish United Workers' Party but appropriated from the anti-communist opposition. During the war (…) the Polish government-in-exile, embarrassed to learn of anti-Semitic views among Poles under Nazi occupation, attempted to protect the country's "good name" by promoting such conceptions" (Polonsky and Michlic, *The Neighbors Respond*, 7).

After giving the national political context in postwar Poland, I now reduce the scope of my study and focus on the reconstruction and monumentalization of Warsaw's former Jewish district. But first, I examine the memorial function of space and attempt to analyze the influence of the built environment (be it ruins, memorials or the absence of visual markers of the past) in the construction of a historical consciousness.

II. Place and Memory

- The memorial function of space

Places are always invested with significance "even in physical sites where all social ties or physical referents have been removed."[156] Pilar Riaño-Alcalá argues that "places constitute physical, social and sensorial realms, not only for our actions but for our memories and imaginations."[157] Drawing on the thesis of Maurice Halbwachs on collective memory,[158] Pierre Nora also underlines the role of space in the creation of collective memory. The French sociologist defines a *lieu de mémoire* as "any significant entity, whether material or non-material in nature, which by dint of human will or the work of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community."[159] In the following paragraphs, I demonstrate how space in Muranów has

[156] Ibid., 96
[157] Pilar Riaño-Alcalá, *Dwellers of Memory: Youth And Violence In Medellin, Colombia* (Transaction Publishers, 2006), 66.
[158] In the book, *On Collective Memory*, Maurice Halbwachs argues that in every society, a group memory exists beyond individual memories. This suggests that what individuals remember of the past is intimately tied to the collective memory of the group they belong to.
[159] Pierre Nora, *Les lieux de mémoires* (Gallimard, 1997), xvii.

been negotiated by the Communist Party and how the neighborhood has become a *lieu de mémoire*.[160]

By the time the Red Army liberated Warsaw in January 1945, more than 85% of the city had been destroyed. Contrary to many other European cities, which gave particular attention to preserving ruined buildings or empty spaces as historical evidence and "natural" memorials, [161] Warsaw chose to reconstruct its former Jewish district from scratch, ignoring or destroying almost every visual remnants of the former neighborhood. Before focusing on the reconstruction of Muranów, I start by a study case of the French martyred village, Oradour-sur-Glane, which, by preserving its site in a ruined state, has opted for a different memorial strategy than Warsaw.

In early June 1944, the Germans cruelly responded to the French resistance movement which had greatly intensified since the landing of the allies in Normandy. On June 10, some of the Germans stationed in the south of France sealed off the town of Oradour-sur-Glane and forced the women and children into a church, which they set on

[160] Henri Lefebvre argues that social space is constantly produced and reproduced; organizing space is used as a tool by the hegemonic group to reproduce its dominance (Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space,* Donald Nicholson-Smith Blackwell, 1991). For more information on space and memory, see Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (Beacon Press, 1994. First published in 1958).
[161] Examples of preserved buildings include concentration camps such as Auschwitz and Majdanek. Examples of "natural" memorials include the village of Lidice in Czechoslovakia. On June 10, 1942, in reprisal for the assassination of SS Leader Reinhard Heydrich, the city of Lidice was liquidated. While men were shot on the spot, women were taken to Ravensbrück concentration camp where most of them perished. The city was then completely destroyed by the Germans and removed from the official maps of the Reich. Unlike Oradour, the martyred village of Lidice, in Czech Republic, has become an open field, "new stones have been laid down to trace the old main road. A low wall, not more than a foot high, has been built to recreate a corner of the barn where the men of Lidice were shot. The foundations of the school and the town church have been uncovered. And that is all. The rest is for the visitor to fill in and imagine." Sarah B. Farmer, *Martyred Village: Commemorating the 1944 Massacre at Oradour-sur-Glane* (University of California Press, 1999), 131-132.

fire; the men were shot in nearby barns. Less than ten villagers survived. After the destruction of the city, a few local people mobilized to keep the ruins intact as evidence of the suffering of the village. National support soon followed and Oradour became a symbol for the suffering of the whole country.

The ruins testify to the desire to have a site that would speak for itself and provide unmediated testimony of the ordeal that the villagers went through. By freezing a moment in time and attempting to create an emotional impact on people, the city aimed to instruct future generations about the barbarous acts perpetrated by the Nazis and encourage them to act against fascist ideologies.[162] As argued by Pierre Masfrand, then head of the preservation team, the visitor will remember "all the more to the extent that he will have been moved." Masfrand also suggests that original objects such as a "pot on the hearth" will "often make the deepest impression."[163] Indeed, although I went there myself more than ten years ago, I still have very clear memories of the site as a whole, and more specifically of a wheelbarrow perforated by bullet holes and the shell of a car. It thus seems that ruins have an emotional impact that, we can assume, might lead to more awareness of the past.

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[162] For more information, see: http://www.oradour-souviens-toi.fr/

[163] Cited in Farmer, *Martyred village,* 70-72. Similarly, a French amateur historian, Jean-Claude Pressac, when asked about his position regarding the restoration of Auschwitz-Birkenau, said that Crematorium III should be reconstructed for visitors to "experience exactly what it meant to enter a gas chamber at Auschwitz." He continued, "I want them to walk down the stairs into the chamber, to stand before the ovens and see that this was insane and criminal. I want it to be a slap in the face. You can't create memory, but you can create an experience that is as powerful as memory" (cited in Timothy W. Ryback, "Evidence of Evil," *The New Yorker*, November 15, 1993). It is also often argued that physical remains are effective way to counter revisionists, especially as regard the Holocaust. In the early 1990s, "in order to counter claims in the West that the Holocaust did not take place," Auschwitz Museum officials re-analyzed samples of hair and parts of the walls of the gas chamber for evidence of Zyklon B use (Ryback, "Evidence of Evil," 70).

Fig 6. Oradour-sur-Glane today.[164]

In 1944, the Jewish-Polish poet, Julian Tuwim encouraged his country to keep some ruins of the ghettos:

> (…) And there shall be in Warsaw and in every other Polish city some fragment of the ghetto left standing and preserved in its present form in all its horror of ruin and destruction. We shall surround that monument to the ignominy of our foes and to the glory of our tortured heroes with chains wrought from captured Hitler's guns, and every day we shall twine fresh live flowers into its iron links, so that the memory of the massacred people shall remain forever fresh in the minds of the generations to come, and also as a sign of our undying sorrow for them (…).[165]

Yet, Tuwim's call was in vain. While the reconstruction of Warsaw's old town was in the hands of historic preservationists who lovingly recreated it, brick by brick, in its

[164] Photo credit: Benjamin Corbeau. http://www.oradour-souviens-toi.fr/ (Accessed 18 April 2011).
[165] Julian Tuwim, "We, Polish Jews," trans. Mrs. R. Langer, in *Free World* (July 1944).

precise prewar image, the area of the former Jewish district was "given" to Communist urban planners whose objectives were exclusively functional. "In selecting what was culturally valuable, [the Poles] were also making choices about what was not. In the 1950s and 1960s, Poles rarely perceived Jewish sites to be part of the national or local heritage worth maintaining."[166]

Fig 7. Warsaw's Old Town, 2010.[167]

In his forthcoming book, *Shattered Paces: Encountering Jewish Ruins in Postwar Germany and Poland*, Michael Meng gives insight into the reconstruction of Muranów. The first appointed designers, he explains, exclusively focused on the technical side of the future residential complex without the slightest consideration in the Jewish past of the

[166] Meng, "From Destruction to Preservation," 48. Here, it is worth underlining that in 1945, an exhibition called "Warsaw Accuses" was organized in the Polish capital. Only one photograph of Muranów was included in the exhibition. Meng, *Shattered Spaces: Encountering Jewish Ruins in Postwar Germany and Poland* (Forthcoming Harvard University Press, 2011).
[167] Photo by author.

neighborhood. In 1948, Bohdan Lachert, a young architect, who, during the war, hid political opponents and Jews who had managed to flee from the nearby ghetto, was chosen to take over the reconstruction of Muranów.[168] Lachert wanted the new housing district to incorporate the memory of the decimated Jewish community. "The ruins, in the largest possible amount, should remain in place, remembering the days of terror and resistance, constituting the ground on which a new city, a new life will be raised," Lachert explained. [169] The buildings were to be built with dark red bricks that would testify to the Jewish blood "poured out for the sake of social progress and national liberation."[170] As argued by Meng,

> Lachert's project was the boldest attempt in postwar Warsaw to bring Polish and Jewish suffering together into a single progressive, socialist memory. One suffering did not have to diminish the other, and one memory did not have to belong just to one particular ethnic group; they could flow in distinct, yet complimentary directions as a way to recall the past in the hope of constructing a better future. Lachert made Jewish suffering central to Warsaw's redemptive narrative of national recovery.[171]

However, the Stalinization of the country (which started in 1949-1950) was accompanied by new requirements regarding architecture. Communist countries were expected to renovate or rebuild their cities according to the new Socialist realist style which celebrated the victory of Communism over Capitalism. Lachert's plans were

[168] Michael Meng, *Shattered Spaces.*
[169] Bohdan Lachert, "Muranów — Dzielnica mieszkaniowa," Architektura 5 (1949): 129 and 132. Cited in Meng, *Shattered Spaces*.
[170] Ibid.
[171] Meng, *Shattered Spaces*.

dropped and Muranów's became a typical Socialist neighborhood for the working class of Warsaw.[172]

Fig 8. Muranów, 2010.[173]

The complete destruction of the ghetto was a great opportunity for Poland's Communist government to put into practice the principles of urban modernism which aimed at dividing cities into functional parts for housing, work, and recreation.[174] Grzegorz's aunt explained to him how part of the rubble was used and recycled. "In Stawki Street," she said, "there used to be a big mill that they used to crush the bricks from this area. And

[172] Ibid.
[173] Photo by author.
[174] Eric Mumford, *The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism, 1928-1960* (MIT Press, 2000), 144.

they used this powder to make new bricks for housing, so part of the bricks here comes from there."[175] Indeed, the amount of rubble was so thick that it could not all be removed. It thus had to be recycled. When it could not be recycled, rather than keeping part of it as historical evidence, as it was suggested by Lachert, the new architects constructed terraces and slopes so that the housing estate could be built on the rubble itself.

Most of the local residents I talked to believe that the city should have kept some ruins of the ghetto, first, out of respect for the people who died there, second, as historical evidence. According to Eliza,

> the city should have preserved some ruins. (…) I remember, in Żelazna Street, which is very close to my house, there are buildings which are very old and in bad condition. (…) When I walk in front of Żelazna, it is difficult to imagine that in this same building, during the war, thousands of people were murdered. I understand that people want to move on and destroy old buildings and build new ones. You know, in my courtyard, there are some ruins. They are very important for me. They remind me that something terrible happened here.[176]

[175] Grzegorz Poludniak Interview ,17 June 2010.
[176] Eliza Kujan Interview, 24 June 2010. These ruins are not considered as valuable heritage by the city. They are not preserved. No one I met knew what they are.

Fig 9. Ruins in Eliza's courtyard, 2010.[177]

When I asked Grzegorz if he though the reconstruction of the city was a barrier to memory, he answered very straightforwardly: "Of course! I read somewhere, someone who survived the ghetto, she sort of felt sorry that there was not even one little part of the ghetto left. Like they did in Berlin. They should have kept some of the ruins, they didn't." I told him how I felt when I found out that one of the only remnants of the ghetto wall was in a private courtyard[178] and that visitors had to ring and disturb residents to be allowed in. There, the wall, apart from a commemorative plaque, is used as a "normal" wall against which kids can play ball, "isn't it crazy?" I asked him, "Well," he responded, "it clearly shows Poland's position on this issue: it's not our history, and these are not our dead."[179]

Yet, according to a few other residents, keeping some ruins of the ghetto would have been a bad idea. When asked about his position on the subject, Andrzej told me that

[177] Photo Credit: Eliza Kujan.
[178] 55, Sienna Street.
[179] Grzegorz Poludniak Interview, 17 June 2010.

"should there be ruins, there would be no place for the modern world."[180] In the French village of Oradour-sur-Glane, in order to offer local residents the opportunity to move on, a new town of Oradour was built next to the historical site. Although most of the inhabitants consider the ruins as important vessels of memory, their presence poses several problems. One survivor (who lives in the new town) explains that she finds the remnants very burdensome because they remind her of the trauma she went through: "I'd like to be able to open my windows and not see the ruins," she explains.[181]

The example of Oradour shows us that although the ruins may provide a physical frame that makes the difficult past both more accessible and imposing, they also block the efforts of the community to mourn their deaths and have a "normal" daily life. Another predictable problem is that the community is now facing the natural decay of the ruins, mainly due to the passing of time and bad weather.

> Over time, rain has washed white the blackened remains of Oradour, and the jagged walls have crumbled under the impact of frost and thaw. Though workmen repair the ruins and cut back ivy and nettles, decay and new growth threaten to change Oradour from a scene of horror into a melancholy, even romantic vista. Just as memory is continually reworked and reorganized, memorial sites never stand still.[182]

By deteriorating past a certain point, ruins might lose their emotional impact and, in the long term, their educational and memorial function. Timothy W. Ryback concludes his article, "Evidence of Evil," with a description of his recent visit to Birkenau. He writes:

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[180] Andrzej Stasiak Interview, 24 June 2010.
[181] Farmer, *Martyred Village*, 124.
[182] Ibid., 10-11.

> Just beyond the site of Crematorium IV, hidden by a stand of tall, elegant birch trees, is a small pond. It is a tranquil place, where in late summer frogs loll in the green algae on the surface, and overhead the leaves of the birches rustle in the wind. A half century ago, before the destruction of Crematorium IV, this pond served as a depository for the ashes and unburned bone fragments from the crematoriums' twelve ovens. (…) I reach into the water and bring up a dense, sticky mass of clay, enough to cover two fingers. It contains three small white fragments, bits of bones of human beings who were incinerated in coke-fired crematory ovens, and whose ashes were dumped by the wheelbarrow-load into the still waters of the pond. I take a piece of bone the size of a matchstick between my fingers, and it crumbles. This is the truth of Birkenau, the ultimate challenge for those who work to "stabilize" the deterioration of brick and concrete, to retard the decay of wood and leather and paper, to check the advance of grass and weeds, to preserve memory by rebuilding a barrack or a selection ramp or a gas chamber, to reconstruct, both in our minds and before our eyes, this place of ultimate horror. The conservators and historians may well succeed in preserving both the evidence and the memory of the Holocaust, technology may check the corrosive effects of natural decay, vigilance and truth may hold the revisionists at bay, but nothing will arrest the process of deterioration in the Pond of Ashes. It may take another decade or another half century, but the time will come when this pond has erased all traces of these ashes, and then only the sign and the name and the memory will remain.[183]

Although historic sites are inevitably affected by the damages of time, Oradour and Auschwitz have attempted to preserve their sites in as authentic a way as possible, Poland's Communist government, on the other hand, decided that Muranów's fate would be different. As argued earlier, Warsaw's former Jewish neighborhood was turned into a modern district whose architecture testifies to the (then) very fashionable Socialist realist style. Monuments and tablets commemorating the war were soon added to the built environment.

[183] Ryback, "Evidence of Evil," 81.

- The monumentalization of the area of the former Warsaw ghetto

Commemorative monuments are, by themselves, "of little value, mere stones in the landscape. But as part of a nation's rites or the objects of a people's national pilgrimage, they are invested with national soul and memory."[184] Building monuments is a political act since what is selected to be preserved and thus remembered tells us about what is valued by a government or organization at a given moment in history. Right after the war, possibly due to the enduring presence of Jews in Poland, the tragic fate of the Jews figured predominantly within the general picture of the country's war memory. Three years after the liberation, the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising was commemorated, and Nathan Rapoport's Monument to the Ghetto Heroes, representing a group of heroic Jewish fighters on one side and a group of Jews marching ostensibly to their death on the other, was unveiled. Although the monument commemorates the courage of the Jewish fighters, it is important to note that the revolutionary aspect of the battle is particularly stressed. In *The Texture of Memory*, James Young notes that the uprising leader, Mordechaj Anielewicz, "in his bare chest, tattered clothes, and rolled-up sleeves, clutching his grenade almost as a hammer (...) is unmistakably proletarian, marching forth as both worker and partisan to lead his fighters."[185] In 1983, in an attempt to appease the West after Poland's imposition of Martial Law in 1981, the 40th anniversary of the Ghetto Uprising publicly recognized the Jewish specificity of the Holocaust.

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[184] James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (Yale University Press, 1994), 2.

[185] Ibid., 174. Similarly, the Jewish Historical Institute (ZIH), which was created right after the war, was under strict control of the Communists who wanted ZIH to demonstrate that the good Jews during the war were the proletarians and the Communist activists, and that the Communist underground Poles helped them in their struggle (Abraham Wein, "The Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw." *Yad Vashem Studies VIII* (1970): 203-215).

However, the only surviving leader of the uprising, Marek Edelman, refused to attend the official ceremony.

> Edelman staunchly refused to take part in or even lend his voice to the official commemoration of the anniversary. He also appealed to both Poles and Jews not to desecrate the memory of those who had fought for dignity and freedom, a desecration which was inevitable if the people participated in a propaganda display staged by those now oppressing these very values.[186]

Regarding the spatialization of Jewish memory in Muranów's built environment, it is worth underlining that very few Jewish memorials were erected between the early 1960s and the mid 1980s. The war continued to be commemorated but in such a way that the commemorative practices aimed more at celebrating the victory of Communism over Fascism than commemorating the Holocaust. In 1963, for the twentieth anniversary of the battle of Lenino, a new war memorial was erected in Muranów.[187] The monument represents a statue of a Polish soldier from the Armia Wojska Polskiego – the Polish army which fought together with the Soviet army from 1943 to 1945. This army – created by Stalin – was mostly constituted of Polish soldiers previously deported to the USRR and of Soviet officers.[188] The battle of Lenino (October 1943) aiming to clear the eastern bank of the Dnieper River of the German troops was the first battle the Polish army fought together with the Soviet troops. Although a failure, the Soviet propaganda presented the battle (and the alliance between the two armies) as a success. A few months

[186] Irwin-Zarecka, *Neutralizing Memory,* 107.
[187] It was realized by Xawery Dunikowski, a very well-know Polish artist who survived Auschwitz.
[188] Jeremy Black, John Harrington, Pat Morris, Ceri Peach and John R. Short, *World and Its People – Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland* (Marshall Cavendish Corporation 2009), 119.

later, on January 1945, the Armia Wojska Polskiego and the Russian troops liberated Warsaw. Needless to say, the Polish army played an essential part in imposing the communist system in Poland.

Fig 10. Memorial commemorating the twentieth anniversary of the battle of Lenino, 2010.[189]

In 1965, the Pawiak Prison Museum opened its doors. Built on the site of the former prison, the museum aimed to commemorate the 65,000 Poles imprisoned or executed there during the war.[190] Although the Pawiak prison was located in the Warsaw ghetto, most of the prisoners were Poles, several thousands were shot to death, others died of starvation and others were transferred to various concentration camps. The last

[189] Photo by author.
[190] Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, xv.

transports of prisoners left Pawiak on July 30, 1944.[191] A month later, the Nazis blew up the building. Both the Lenino memorial and the Pawiak Museum commemorate the heroism and martyrdom of Poles under Nazi occupation and ignore the Jewish tragedy.[192]

In this section on memorials and commemorations, it is important to underline the fact that the Warsaw Uprising was not commemorated until 1989.[193] While the Communists accepted and often supported the celebration of Polish martyrdom, the latter had to fit into Moscow's official storyline. The Warsaw Uprising did not. Although it was clear that throughout the summer of 1944 the Red Army was advancing westward, the Russians stopped when they reached the eastern bank of the Vistula even though the Home Army was being massively attacked by the Nazis. It is often argued that Stalin wanted the uprising to fail so that a Soviet occupation of Poland would come uncontested.[194]

As the regime grew more and more unpopular, the monuments erected became more "Jewish." All the memorials erected in Muranów since the mid-1980s

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[191] Israel Gutman, *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust* Volume 2 (Macmillan Library Reference USA, 1994), 1123.

[192] The death camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau offers the best example of how Jewish suffering was subsumed within the general Polish suffering. When museum opened in 1947, the Polish government dedicated it to "the martyrdom of the Polish nation and other peoples" (Ruth E. Gruber, *Virtually Jewish: Reinventing Jewish Culture in Europe*, University of California Press, 2002, 32). For years the death camp was considered the symbol of Polish suffering under German occupation. There was no specific mention of Jews in any of the official Museum guidebooks at that time. In 1979, after the visit of the Pope, a Christian cross was erected at the ruins of Bunker 2. Twenty years later, more than one hundred smaller crosses were put up to honor the Polish Catholic resistance fighters who had been executed at Auschwitz. Although in 1999 these small crosses had to be removed, the Pope's cross is still there.

[193] The Warsaw Uprising Monument was unveiled on August 1, 1989. The Warsaw Uprising Museum opened on August 1, 2004.

[194] Geoffrey Roberts, *Stalin's Wars: from World War to Cold War, 1939-1953* (Yale University Press, 2006), 215.

commemorate the Jewish tragedy of the Warsaw ghetto in terms broader than the programmatic Communist Socialism / Fascism dichotomy. I mentioned earlier the unprecedented recognition of the Jewish specificity of the Holocaust on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising (in 1983, which Edelman refused to attend). Although it cannot be denied that this acknowledgement was provoked by international pressure, it is worth underlining that this commemoration was accompanied by a call for Polish-Jewish reconciliation. On a document signed by the organizers, one could read:

> Poles consider themselves deeply wronged when they are held responsible for that mass murder of which they too were victims. Jews feel equally hurt when they are blamed of the crimes committed by the Polish Communist Security Police during the Stalinist era, when several high positions in the terror machine and in the party were held by Jews. (…) Poles and Jews are fellows in misfortunes in the Soviet Union.[195]

Five years after this anniversary, the Umschlagplatz memorial, which shows the site from where the Jews were transported to Treblinka, was unveiled. The Path of Remembrance, also known as the Road of Memory and Martyrdom, was created the same year. It consists of sixteen granite stones going from the Monument to the Ghetto Heroes to the Umschlagplatz Memorial and commemorates the 450,000 Jews who lost their lives in the Warsaw Ghetto or in the gas chambers of Treblinka.

[195] For the full text, see Pogonowski, *Jews in Poland*, 151-152.

Fig 11. The Umschlagplatz Memorial.[196]

Fig 12. Inside the Umschlagplatz Memorial.[197]

[196] Photo by author.
[197] Photo by author. While the Hebrew writing is clearly destined for a Jewish / Israeli audience, the English translation suggests awareness of international gaze.

In 2010, a new monument commemorating the last group of Jewish insurgents to escape from Warsaw's burning ghetto in 1943 was unveiled. Should this memorial have been erected under Communism, the official interpretation would have – very certainly – emphasized the courage of the Jewish – Communist – fighters ready to die in trying to destroy Fascism. While the heroic act of resistance is still honored, the Jewish specificity of the uprising is now fully acknowledged. During the opening ceremony, Foreign Minister, Radosław Sikorski, honored and commemorated the "heroic deed of one of Simha Rotem,[198] *a great Pole and a great Jew*"[199] (my italics). Sikorski's comments suggest that in Poland, there is now room for a more expansive memory that includes ethnically-based suffering, without denying the Polishness of Polish Jews.

Poles also started to react against the functional buildings that had been built on the very spots of former historical monuments. Poles became concerned about the very few remains left and awareness of the absence and loss of Jewish life and culture in Poland began to increase.[200] Poland started to want to preserve the very few Jewish sites still standing. The Citizens' Committee for the Protection of Jewish Cemeteries and Cultural Monuments in Poland was created in Warsaw in 1981. In the city of Warsaw, for example, the Jewish cemetery was cleaned up and the only remaining synagogue was restored.[201] "In a region with almost no Jews, a veritable renaissance of Jewish culture

[198] Simha Rotem was one of the leaders of the uprising, who, with a handful of other fighters, managed to escape through a sewage canal.
[199] Vanessa Gera, "Poland Unveils Memorial to Warsaw Ghetto Fighters," *The Associated Press*, 13 May 2010.
[200] Meng, "From Destruction to Preservation," 53-54.
[201] The last touches were put on Warsaw's synagogue in late 1982.

started to take place in the built environment."[202] In a sense, rediscovering and restoring the physical traces of the Jewish past created tangible bridges connecting the present to what is imaginatively idealized by many Poles to be the "good old days," when neither Nazism nor Communism – outside forces that can be blamed for all national flaws – had yet defiled Poland. These initiatives – restoration and construction of memorials commemorating the Jewish tragedy – also created a "permanent space for the Jew in Poland's collective memory, a space which can then be gradually furnished with items of interests and relevance to those engaged in the [memory work]."[203]

New monuments continue to be erected. While I was working at the Jewish Historical Institute (June 2010), Edyta Kurek, the deputy director of the Institute, received a letter signed by several housing cooperatives from Nowolipki Street asking for authorization to give the name of Emanuel Ringelblum[204] to the square where the precious documents were found.

> The inhabitants of Nowolipki Street kindly request the acceptance and approval of the project aimed at the commemoration of the place where the Ringelblum Archives were found. (...) The local community represented by the boards of our housing cooperatives wishes to retain the memory of this historical place and bring it to due prominence, which will prove beneficial for both the local neighbourhood and the whole city. The above-mentioned project has aroused interest and a positive response among the inhabitants of Nowolipki Street. (...) We

[202] Meng, "From Destruction to Preservation," 53-54.
[203] Irwin-Zarecka, *Neutralizing Memory,* 36.
[204] Emanuel Ringelblum was a Polish-Jewish historian. He was executed by the Gestapo on 7 March 1944. While in the Warsaw Ghetto Ringelblum collected all kinds of documents related to the life of Jews in occupied Poland and more specifically on the life of Jews in the Warsaw ghetto. His archive (the Ringleblum Archive) was hidden before the destruction of the ghetto. Although some documents are still missing, Ringleblum's collection is the most valuable source of information regarding the Warsaw Ghetto.

> therefore kindly request your support to and endorsement of our project.[205]

According to Grzegorz, this monument is a good thing.

> I am very excited about it. I guess what hurts me the most is the fact that all traces of Jewish life and culture have been completely removed from the district. I very well know that everything was burned down during the war but we made sure that everything that was going to be rebuilt would not remind people of the Jews. This monument would show people that Nowolipki Street has a wonderful history, even though very tragic. There is a tradition in Europe to place a plaque on a house commemorating a famous person who used to live there. (…) There were so many great people who used to live in my district - poets, musicians, film stars - all of them were Jews... Nowhere in Muranów can you learn where they lived… I hope that this monument is a sign that things are changing.[206]

In 2010, Adrian Wójcik, Michał Bilewicz and Maria Lewicka published preliminary results of a survey aiming to evaluate the importance of urban reminders such as street names and monuments in the construction of Muranów's collective memory.[207] To the question "what in Warsaw is worth showing to a visitor?" most respondents answered "the Old Town" first, and then cited "the Monument to the Ghetto Heroes." Other key places mentioned include some significant Jewish places of Warsaw: the Jewish cemetery, the Umschlagplatz, etc. My interviews confirm the importance of memorials.

[205] See appendix 2 for the original letter, and complete translation (by Adam Musial).
[206] Grzegorz Poludniak Interview 17 June 2010.
[207] Bilewicz, Michal, Maria Lewicka and Adrian Wojcik. "Living on the ashes: Collective representations of Polish–Jewish history among people living in the former Warsaw Ghetto area," *Cities* (2010): pp. 1-9.

All the residents I interviewed consider them essential since "they prevent people from forgetting."[208]

As suggested by Dolores Hayden (1997), in *The Power of Place*, the identity of a group is intimately tied to the built environment. In the absence of original past remains, monuments constitute something concrete and physical that provides a connection to (and a legitimization of?) the past. Yet, although these monuments – in a certain way – preserve memory, they also restrict it. The memorials in Muranów (and everywhere else) concretize particular historical interpretations and thus orient our historical consciousness. Furthermore, they provide such a narrow memorial frame that there is no room for marginal memories. And it seems that Jewish memory (beyond the Holocaust) has become marginal in Muranów since there is nothing to remind people of the prewar era. In the neighborhood, these marginal memories take non traditional and non representational forms as if to subvert the linearity and metanarrative of the official history. The presence of Jewish ghosts in Warsaw's former Jewish district suggests the existence of multiple voices and temporalities. It may also denote a sense of anxiety regarding what has yet to be assimilated and acknowledged.

- The old Jewish strangler and other ghost stories

According to Magdalena J. Zaborowska, Jewish Warsaw today is a "haunting invisible metropolis."[209] Discussions with my interviewees suggest that she might be onto

[208] Eliza Kujan Interview, 24 June 2010 and Andrzej Stasiak Interview, 24 June 2010.
[209] Magdalena J. Zaborowska, "Reading Transparent "Constructions of History;" or, Three Passages through (In)Visible Warsaw," in *Over the Wall / After the Fall – Post Communist Cultures Through an East-West Gaze*, ed Sibelan Forrester et al. (Indiana University Press, 2001), 100.

something more literally than she thinks. According to local lore, Jewish ghosts have been haunting Muranów since the end of the war. The question is not so much to know whether ghosts do exist, it is rather to understand why some people claim to see them. What are they symptomatic of? Can they raise questions about our prevalent modes of analysis and help us bridge the gap between the seen and the invisible, the known and the unknown? According to the sociologist, Gordon Avery,

> The ghost is not simply a dead or a missing person, but a social figure, and investigating it can lead to that dense site where history and subjectivity make social life. (…) Being haunted draws us affectively, sometimes against our will and always a bit magically, into the structure of feeling of a reality we come to experience, not as cold knowledge, but as a transformative recognition.[210]

A few days after the beginning of my internship at ZIH, I heard of an urban legend: the skyscraper opposite ZIH is haunted by the ghost of a rabbi. The ghost appeared in 1976, when the construction of a modern tower (also known as "the blue skyscraper") started on the site of Warsaw's former Great Synagogue. However, for plenty of reasons (not all scientific), the construction had to be stopped at several occasions. It took the builders fifteen years to finish the tower, and local superstition holds that the delay was due to a curse put by the former rabbi of the Synagogue. Someone from the Jewish Historical Institute, during an informal conversation, explained to me that guilt for building a skyscraper on the area of the Synagogue bore heavily on the property developers, and for this reason, two stories were given to the Institute,

[210] Avery F. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 8.

located next door. “And so the rabbi’s ghost left,” this person told me, “or that’s what people believe…”

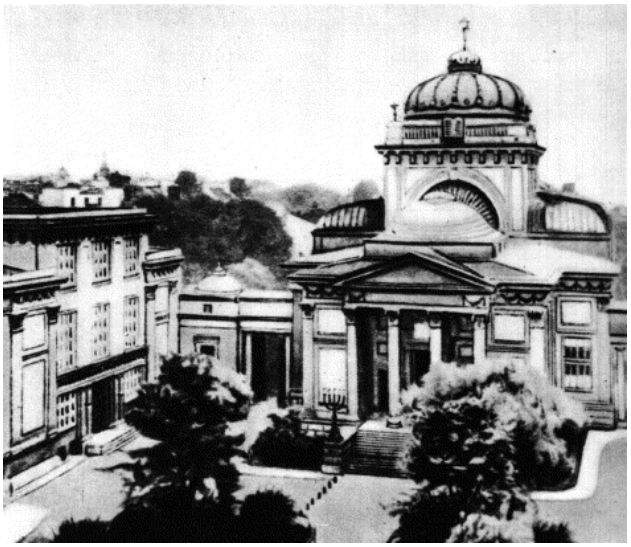

Fig 13. Warsaw’s Great Synagogue on Tłomackie Street, 1943.[211]

Fig 14. The site of the Great Synagogue today.[212]

[211] Photo credit: Meczenstwo Walka, “Zaglada Zydów Polsce 1939-1945,” no. 340.

Most of the people I talked to had a ghost story to tell me about. Grzegorz told me that a Jewish ghost used to live in the apartment next to his aunt's:

> You know, my neighbor, I don't know his name, it was in the late 1950s, he had breathing problems at night. And he didn't know what it was, and then one night, he just woke up and there was an old Jew strangling him, the ghost of an old Jew coming from the wall.[213]

The presence of ghosts might signal that the former Jewish inhabitants have not been fully acknowledged or mourned, or that material justice has not been done to them. Indeed, according to Freud,

> Mourning has a quite specific psychical task to perform: its function is to detach the survivors' memories and hopes from the dead. When this has been achieved, the pain grows less and with it the remorse and self- reproaches and consequently the fear of the demon [i.e., the spirits of the recently dead] as well.[214]

In postwar Poland, Poles did not openly talk about their former neighbors, maybe because of anti-Semitic propaganda, maybe because they had witnessed / knew / participated in actions that had led to the death of one or several Jews or maybe because of both. Part of Grzegorz's family comes from a small town in Ukraine, formerly Eastern Poland, where more than half of the population was Jewish. And yet, Gzregorz knows

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[212] Photo by author.
[213] Grzegorz Poludniak Interview, 17 June 2010.
[214] Sigmund Freud, "Totem and Taboo," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works*, ed. and trans. James Strachey (London, 1950): 65.

more about "[his] grandmother's mathematics teacher than about the Jews she grew up with."[215] He added:

> My grandma never talked about the Jews. It seems like old people consulted themselves and decided not to talk about this. The only thing my grandma told me is that before the war there were a lot of Jews, and after, there were no more…[216]

Similarly, Angelika Lasiewicz-Sych, a professor of architecture I met in Cracow, shared some of her personal memories with me. When talking about her grandparents, she told me that "old people don't easily talk about the war. My grand-mother, who is 94, talked about the Jewish friends she had before the war for the first time 5 years ago."[217]

Yet, repressing memories does not necessarily lead to their disappearance. As argued by Gordon, social complexities and tensions "do not just disappear or become silent or become settled into an asocial unconscious."[218] It thus seems that Jewish memory has remained in some Poles' unconscious without them being aware of it. Imprisoned, since the end of the war, in a "third space" where "the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity,"[219] Jewish memory has taken non representational and frightening forms.

> The intervention of the third space makes the structure of meaning and reference an ambivalent process and can avoid the trap of binary thinking and enable other positions to emerge. The third space, or "in-betweenness," opens up new possibilities to eschew oppositional thinking and offers a different strategy to defend

[215] Grzegorz Poludniak Interview, 17 June 2010.
[216] Ibid.
[217] Dr. Angelika Lasiewicz-Sych Interview, 28 June 2010.
[218] Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 199.
[219] Homi Bhabha. *The Location of Culture* (Routledge, 1994), 37.

> against the appropriation and interpellation of dominant cultural hegemony.[220]

What are these "new possibilities"? What is the power of ghosts? While ghosts may scare us, Gordon suggests that we need to learn to live with them for they might represent hope: "[the ghost] is pregnant with unfulfilled possibility, with something to be done that the wavering present is demanding. This something to be done is not a return to the past but a reckoning with its repression in the present."[221] Although this analysis would require more insight from sociology and psychoanalysis, it seems worth considering that these ghosts may signal an unconscious quest for redemption for Poles. Therefore, ghosts (or the belief in ghosts) might prompt Poles or have the power to help them work through the question of guilt and responsibility for anti-Semitic actions undertaken before, during and after the war. Yet, because "dead Jews have rather limited power over those living in willful denial,"[222] phantoms require the conscious participation of Poles in their undertaking of coming to terms with past. "Given [the] complex relationship between the personal psyche and the national imaginary," Jonathan Schorsch argues, "those who grow up in a specific national culture have no choice but to adopt or, better, to confront its neuroses, pathologies, crimes, and victims."[223] The question

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[220] Ken-fang Lee, "Cultural Translation and the Exorcist: A Reading of Kingston's and Tan's "Ghost Stories"" *MELUS* 29 (Summer 2004): 106.
[221] Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 183.
[222] Jonathan Schorsch, "Jewish Ghosts in Germany," *Jewish Social Studies* 9 (Spring-Summer 2003): 153.
[223] Ibid., 158.

remains whether Poles will accept releasing Jewish ghosts from Warsaw's "catacombs."[224]

In this chapter, I have tried to demonstrate how Jewish memory has been spatialized in Muranów since the end of the war. I first argued that, depending on the period and the political agenda of the government, the reconstruction and monumentalization of the neighborhood have either erased Jewish memory or reduced it to Holocaust memory. I then explored the potential reconciliatory power of Jewish ghosts. In chapter 3, I concentrate on other non traditional memorial forms (although more tangible than ghosts). Indeed, in the past ten years, Muranów (and Poland) has witnessed new genres of memorial initiatives aiming to return Jewish memory to the Polish landscape in terms broader than the Holocaust.

[224] Julian Tuwim, "We, Polish Jews," (1944). Julian Tuwim, in "We, Polish Jews," regretted that Jewish ghosts were trapped in Warsaw's catacombs, with only rats for companions. He wrote: "We, Polish Jews (…). [But] perhaps I should not say "We, Polish Jews," but "We, ghosts, We, shadows of our slaughtered brethren, the Polish Jews." (…) We, Polish Jews …We, ever living, who have perished in the ghettos and camps, and we ghosts who, from across seas and oceans, will some day return to the homeland and haunt the ruins in our unscarred bodies and our wretched, presumably spared souls. (…) We, once more in the catacombs, in the manholes under Warsaw pavements, splashing in the stink of sewers to the surprise of our companions – the rats."

Chap 3 – **(Re) Inscribing Jewishness in Muranów's landscape**

In the previous chapter, I showed how Holocaust memory had been negotiated in Muranów's built environment in the postwar years. Although I referred to some of the memorial practices conducted in the 1980s and after, my focus was mostly on the three decades which followed the end of the war. During these thirty years, the Jew became a political tool for the Polish Communist Party which was eager to legitimate its rule and create a sense of belonging to the Polish nation. In order to convince Poles that the enemy of Poland was not the Communist, but the Jew, the Party constructed a national Polish narrative based on the old anti-Jewish stereotypes. The fall of Communism and the birth of democracy have given Poland the opportunity to dig into its past. This chapter investigates whether Poles have managed to come to terms with their "difficult heritage," whether the country has finally incorporated the memory of the Holocaust within its national memory and whether there is room left for Jewish memory in today's Poland.

All the Poles I interviewed had some knowledge and/or interest not only in the Holocaust but also in Jewish history more generally. Grzegorz is one of the first participants I interviewed. We met through Facebook. A few days after arriving in Warsaw, I had written a small abstract of my research on the page of the Jewish Historical Institute; Grzegorz saw it and contacted me. When I asked him why he was friends with ZIH on Facebook, he told me that he had "asked them," because

> I'm very interested in Jewish history. I've not always been though. I've been for 3 years or so. Basically, I've been reading everything on Jewish matters; I buy books on Amazon UK, Amazon US. (…) I'm really interested in that, I just feel bad, I

> feel stupid and bad, and I feel guilty I didn't really know anything about it before. I knew the magical 6 million, but I didn't know that the 6 million lived next to us and they were doing business with us, and they were our friends, they were our teachers, our doctors, and they lived here.[225]

During our interview, Eliza, another resident from Nowolipki Street in Muranów, also expressed her interest in the prewar history of the neighborhood.

> I've read a book written by a Polish writer, Jóseph Hen, he is Jewish. He lived on Nowolipie[226] and in this book, he wrote his memories of Nowolipie before and after the war. He explains that today, it is impossible for him to live on Nowolipie. And I imagine Nowolipki before the war; it probably looked like Nowolipie... I've also read diaries, such as *The Pianist* by Szpilman. So I can see this district [Muranów] in a different way, through the eyes of those writers. It gives me the opportunity to imagine what Nowolipki looked like before the war.[227]

Similarly, Monika and her husband Karol moved to Muranów because they wanted to be "in the center of Warsaw," but also because they wanted to live in a "historical place." Indeed, "we are very interested in the history of Warsaw; we have many albums with photographs from Warsaw before the war."[228] Monika explained to me that although she does not come from a Jewish family, she admires Jewish culture and loves to learn about it.

As argued in chapter 1, I met almost all the participants thanks to the connections I had at the Jewish Historical Institute. My findings are thus representative only of a

[225] Grzegorz Poludniak Interview, 17 June 2010.
[226] Nowolipie Street is one street south of Nowolipki.
[227] Eliza Kujan Interview, 24 June 2010.
[228] Monika Utnik Interview, 30 June 2010.

restricted part of Muranów's population. Yet, they show that some local interest in Jewish history exists. In the following paragraphs I investigate where this interest in Jewish culture comes from and how it manifests itself. I start by underlining the influence the fall of Communism has had on the revival of interest in Jewish history in Poland. I then concentrate on some creative cultural events that recently took place in Muranów, and which aimed to re-inscribe Jewishness in the neighborhood. Finally, I show that although local efforts are made to reintegrate the Jewish component into Polish history and memory, resistance remains.

I. The fall of Communism: Poland enters a new memorial era

- Poland on the road to democracy

The revival of interest in Jewish history, although very often associated with the fall of Communism, was actually initiated a few years before the collapse of the Soviet bloc. In the early 1980s, Martial Law was enforced in Poland; by drastically restricting the rights of Polish citizens,[229] the Communists aimed to crush political opposition, especially the pro-democratic movement, Solidarność (Solidarity). But this was a lost battle for the Soviet government:[230] public discourse gradually became more liberal and Polish people started to talk about "things which had earlier been taboo."[231] It was "as if a dam had opened, as if a wall of silence had come down. (…) Poles could [now] publicly

[229] Among other restrictions: a curfew was imposed, telephone lines were disconnected, postal censorship was enforced, borders were sealed, public administration, health services and the most important factories of the country were placed under military management.
[230] In 1990, Solidarność's leader, Lech Wałęsa, was elected President of Poland.
[231] Irwin-Zarecka, *Neutralizing Memory,* 18.

discuss their real concerns and their real past."[232] And needless to say, Jews were an essential component of their past.

As earlier mentioned, in the mid 1980s a new historiography reexamining the role of Poles under Nazi occupation started to emerge. In 1987, Jan Błoński published a controversial article, "The Poor Poles Look at the Ghetto", in the newspaper *Tygodnik Powszechny*. In his article, Błoński addresses the moral responsibility Poles should take for the Holocaust. Although he argues that the Nazis are responsible for the genocide, he believes that Poland needs to acknowledge the fate of Jews and integrate it into its national memory. In 1988, Jarosław Rymkiewicz published *The Final Station: Umschlagplatz*, in which he investigates how the Poles blackmailed, betrayed, denounced and sometimes murdered Jews. Three years earlier, Polish television had broadcast a selection of episodes from Claude Lanzmann's nine-hour film, *Shoah*, and the Kielce pogrom[233] was finally publicly discussed in 1981 when the historian, Krystyna Kersten, published a long article in *Tygodnik Solidarność* in which she describes in great detail how the Jews from Kielce were murdered. By 1986, the 40th anniversary of the pogrom was publicly commemorated.[234]

Although the debate over the Jewish past of Poland and Polish-Jewish relations emerged before the fall of Communism, things very much accelerated in the 1990s. 1989 was a crucial year for the country as it marked the beginning of the democratization and

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[232] Ibid.
[233] On July 4, 1946, forty Jews, out of the two hundred Jewish survivors who had just returned to the town of Kielce, were massacred. By 1986, the fortieth anniversary of the pogrom was publicly commemorated
[234] Irwin-Zarecka, *Neutralizing Memory,* 160.

globalization of the political, social and cultural spheres. Globalization has changed the fundamental process of memory in Poland.[235] The role of remembering is now seen "in the context of its contribution to democracy and justice," with the notion of "cosmopolitan citizenship" implying a balance between the search for identity and the need to accept differences.[236] In Poland, where the burden of the past looms large, the challenge was not easy. Although years of silence and models of Polish nationalism inherited from the 19th century still weighed heavily upon the country, old files were opened and new historical facts and interpretations were brought to the public place. According to Michlic, "a new sense of an inclusive civic and pluralistic Poland was manifested in various initiatives."[237] For example, we can mention the creation of an annual "Day of Judaism" to the Church calendar. "Jewish Day" was also set up by students from Warsaw University.[238]

In 2000, the publication of Gross's *Neighbors* triggered a heated discussion about Polish Holocaust historiography and the role of Poles in the annihilation of their former neighbors. In his book, Gross argues that the massacre of the Polish Jews in Jedwabne (1941) was perpetrated by Poles and not by the German occupiers as it was previously assumed. In Poland, the book was greeted with great astonishment and controversy since the popular and official view so far had been that the Germans were completely responsible for the Holocaust and that the Poles were innocent victims. In *The Neighbors*

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[235] Erica Lehrer, "Can There Be a Conciliatory Heritage?" *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 16:4 (2010): 269-288.
[236] Barbara A. Misztal, "Collective Memory in a Global Age – Learning How and What to Remember," *Current Sociology* 58:1 (2010): 27-28.
[237] Michlic, *Poland's Threatening Other*, 271.
[238] Ibid.

Respond: the Controversy over the Jedwabne Massacre in Poland, Antony Polonsky and Joanna Michlic capture the moral and historical tensions raised by Gross's book. By giving voice to the residents of Jedwabne, journalists, politicians and scholars, they highlight the complexity of the issue related vis-à-vis Polish-Jewish relations, and more specifically, Polish collective responsibility for the anti-Semitic acts committed on Polish soil.

Today, the issue of Polish guilt continues to be tackled in scholarship and popular media. In Andrzej Wajda's film, *Katyn* (2007), in addition to blurring the line between purity and collaboration, the author also shows how people very quickly adjusted to the ideological Communist propaganda. The same year, in an attempt to settle the past Communist wrongdoings, the Law and Justice Party instigated a Lustration Law[239] requiring everyone in authority born before 1972 to declare to the Institute of National Remembrance whether they had collaborated with the Communists.[240] Although Poland has not finished settling accounts with the past, the fall of the Soviet bloc (as well as international pressure) has allowed the creation of a more civic and pluralist society in which "cultural and religious diversity would be respected and cherished"[241] and in which debates can take place and narratives of the past be reexamined.

[239] In post-Communist countries, Lustration Laws refer to government policies aiming to limit the participation of former Communists in the new government.
[240] Larry Ray, "At the End of the Post-Communist Transformation? Normalization or Imagining Utopia?" *European Journal of Social Theory* 12:3 (2009): 330-331.
[241] Michlic, 262.

- The revival of interest in Jewish history culture

Since 1989, interest in Jewish history has kept on growing; tens of thousands of tourists have been coming to Poland every year in search of their Jewish origins.[242] This flow of tourists has been accompanied by an explosion in scholarship and publications on Jewish topics.[243] In the early 1990s, Warsaw's Jewish Historical Institute undertook a massive project aiming to publish materials from the Ringelblum Archive[244] and launched a series of educational activities. Known under the name of "Summer School of History and Culture of Polish Jews," it was created for high school teachers from all over Poland to "acquaint a broader segment of society with the history and culture of the Polish Jews." The proposed activities broadened over the years; today, they go from traditional lectures, to educational walking tours or trips, to debates over the teaching of the Holocaust. The broader objective of these summer classes is to "analyze the genesis and manifestations of anti-Semitism as a problem in Poland today and also to suggest methods for teaching in this field."[245] The recent publication of many highly documented and easy to read studies on the life of Jews in the ghettos and the camps has also

[242] Meng, "From Destruction to Preservation," 57.
[243] The Holocaust has also become a mandated topic in Polish schools.
[244] In 1993, several primary sources materials for high school students and teachers were published. The series *Dzieje Zydów w Polsce: Wybór tekstów zródlowych* [*The History of the Jews in Poland: A Selection of Primary Sources Materials*], was recommended by the Polish Ministry of Education as supplementary material for history courses above the elementary school level. Another publication *Studia z dziejów Zydów w Polsce* [*Studies in the History of the Jews in Poland*] was published in 1995 (http://www.jewishinstitute.org.pl/en/edukacja/index/1.html, accessed 26 February 2011).
[245] http://www.jewishinstitute.org.pl/en/edukacja/index/1.html

contributed to the democratization of the knowledge of Poland's Jewish history in general and the Holocaust in particular.[246]

With globalization came a revolution in communication and transmission of information. Memorial practices have logically been altered by this phenomenon. In the last twenty years, the emergence of new media has provided new opportunities to make the past more relevant to individuals. Alexander Etkind, from the Cambridge *Memory at War* team,[247] talks about "memory events" to define what he sees as "a rediscovery of the past that creates a rupture with its accepted cultural meaning."[248] Memory events can take various forms: from traditional celebrations to creative memorial initiatives. According to Etkind, "cultural memory is dependent on the balance between sites and events, monuments and texts, traces of the pasts and stories about it."[249] In Muranów, since not all of these components are present, memorial practices need to adapt in order to try to render the past in all its complexities. Memory events are performative acts which "change how people remember, imagine and talk about the past."[250] Keeping in mind this notion of memorial performance, the end of this chapter explores how Jewishness has been re-inscribed in Muranów through creative and engaging means. I start by briefly looking at how this process has been realized in other Polish cities.

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[246] We can, for instance, cite *The Warsaw Ghetto - A Guide to the Perished City* by Engelking and Jacek Leociak, published in Poland in 2001 and translated into English in 2009.
[247] The *Memory at War* project includes scholars from the universities of Cambridge, Bergen, Helsinki, Tartu and Groningen. Their joint research focuses on the dynamics of cultural forms of memory in Poland, Ukraine, and Russia since the collapse of communism.
[248] Alexander Etkind, "Mapping Memory Events in the East European Space" (Op-ed presented to the *Memory at War* inaugural workshop, June 2010, King's College, Cambridge).
[249] Ibid.
[250] Ibid.

The annual Jewish Festival in Kazimierz, the Jewish district of Cracow, offers a good example of a nontraditional initiative aiming to return Jewish memory to the city. Originally founded in 1988, the festival which includes – among many other events – film screenings, book launches, guided walks, cooking lessons and klezmer concerts has created a place where Jewish Poles, Jews from the Diaspora and Catholic Poles can meet and enter into dialogue.[251] According to Bogdan Zdrojewski, Minister of Culture and National Heritage of the Republic of Poland, Kazimier's Jewish festival has become a "symbol of tolerance, receptiveness, and (…) respect." It is also "evidence that stereotypes, mutual prejudices and aversion can be broken, are worth being broken, and should be broken."[252]

Since 1990, the city of Lublin has also been engaged in fostering an awareness of Lublin's multicultural history and developing a deeper sense of local identity and tolerance for other cultures. Brama Grodzka (the Grodzka Gate) is a highly symbolic place in Lublin since this gate used to be the passage from the Christian to the Jewish district. The "Grodzka Gate – NN Theatre Centre" proposes social, cultural and educational activities related to Lublin's Jewish past. To revive the memory of Lublin's former Jewish inhabitants, the center organizes exhibitions, film screenings, book launches, concerts and all sorts of outdoor events.[253]

Warsaw's Jewish Festival, "Singer's Warsaw," is more recent and less popular than the one in Cracow, but it deserves attention. The first festival was held in 2004, on

[251] For more information, see: http://www.jewishfestival.pl/
[252] Cited in the program of the twentieth Jewish Culture Festival, 3.
[253] For more information, see: http://tnn.pl/The_Gate_of_Memory_-_English,3362.html

the 100th anniversary of Isaac Singer's birthday. Just like in Kazimierz and in Lublin, during a few days, through exhibitions, film screenings as well as music and theater performances, Warsaw (re) discovers the history and cultural heritage of its decimated Jewish community. On Próżna Street,[254] the atmosphere of interwar Jewish Warsaw is invoked thanks to kosher food stalls, live klezmer music and craft workshops.[255] To conclude this partial list of innovative projects aiming to revive Jewish culture in Poland, we can mention the Jewish monthly magazine, *Midrasz*, launched in 1997 for "Polish Jews, active in the existing communal organizations, non-Jewish Poles interested in things Jewish," and "Poles of Jewish origin, who have relatively recently become aware of their Jewishness, and are exploring it, or considering that possibility."[256]

By digging into what was previously taboo and/or ignored, by engaging their audiences and involving them in the memorialization process, the new heritage brokers are calling into question the former principle of Polish ethno-national identity. Although Poles need to grapple with the wartime history, they also need to remember Poland's Jewish history prior to World War II. In the next section, I put emphasis on this last point. By focusing on a few cultural events that took place in Muranów in the past two years, I aim to show the extent to which these events have created a new space for Jewish memory.

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[254] Próżna Street is the only Street from the former Warsaw ghetto not to have been destroyed. The tenement buildings were never restored. Today they are falling apart.
[255] For more information, see: http://www.festiwalsingera.pl/
[256] The last readership group mentioned ("Poles of Jewish origin, who have relatively recently become aware of their Jewishness, and are exploring it, or considering that possibility"), assessed at some twenty five thousand, is the one that *Midrasz* "wants to satisfy, with the goal of bringing them closer to the Jewish world and community." Words are from the publishers of *Midrasz*: http://www.midrasz.pl/en.php. (Accessed May 27, 2011).

II. (Re) Animating Jewish Warsaw

- *Stacja Muranów*

While in Warsaw, I had the opportunity to meet Beata Chomątowska, a journalist for *Rzeczpospolita* and founder of the Association *Stacja Muranów* (Muranów Station).[257] On a warm and sunny day, she invited me to join her in a café on Próżna Street, the only Jewish street from Western Warsaw to survive both the Second World War and Communism.[258] Before telling each other our respective stories, we talked about the various public memory projects related to Próżna Street.

Fig 15. Photographs on the walls of the tenement buildings on Próżna Street.[259]

[257] For more information, see: http://www.stacjamuranow.art.pl/
[258] Some Jewish heritage sites (for instance, a Jewish cemetery and ritual baths from the late 18th century) can still be found in Praga, east of the Vistula. In *Virtually Jewish*, Ruth Gruber states that "significantly, if ironically, it was the economic stagnation and overall neglect of buildings during the Communist period that left Jewish sites standing in easily identifiable, if ruined, condition" (Gruber, *Virtually Jewish*, 107)
[259] Photo by author.

Photographs of Jews from the prewar period cover the walls and windows of Próżna Street. On most of the photographs, Jews appear cheerful and peaceful; kids are playing on the street, street vendors are talking, men are praying. These images, from another time, intend to bring back the memory of the decimated community. I found the portraits particularly moving for they gave me the opportunity to empathize with those mischievous little girls and thoughtful teenagers – although, I am neither Polish nor Jewish. Marianne Hirsch, when referring to postmodern memory,[260] argues that photographs are important in the sense that they help people who did not experience the event that is being remembered to constitute memories in their own right. Looking at photographs, it is common to think "it could have been me." In the case of traumatic events such as the Holocaust, this unsettling and uneasy confrontation of personal and public memory involves the viewer in the memorialization process.

Although photographs are as constructed as any other documents or forms of memory, the emotional impact they can have on people, especially children, cannot be underestimated. In *On Photography*, Susan Sontag recalls her first encounter with photographs taken in concentration camps.

> For me, it was photographs of Bergen-Belsen and Dachau that I came across by chance in a bookstore in Santa Monica in July1945. Nothing I have seen – in photographs or in real life – ever cut me as sharply, deeply, instantaneously. Indeed, it seems plausible to me to divide my life into two parts, before I saw those photographs (I was twelve) and after, though it was several years before I understood fully what they were about.[261]

[260] Memories deriving from the stories and photographs of older generations. In other words, postmemory reflects the memory we have of events we did not witness oursleves.
[261] Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (Anchor Doubleday, 1989), 19-20.

Such photographs become even more powerful when the viewer is given the chance to look at images evoking life before the catastrophe (such as the ones on the walls of Próżna Street). Meeting the actors prior to their death – even if only on paper – gives us a sense of acquaintance. Seeing them dead brings about unsettlement and uneasiness, which might be useful, if not essential, for us not to forget them. Yet, we need to underline that the fact that the Holocaust is one of the most visually documented events in history creates an important limitation. By going mainstream and circulating along with thousands of other traumatic photographs (wars, natural disasters, etc) published in the media, the emotional impact of the material might be lost.

While looking at the photographs on Próżna Street Beata and I discussed the new project the city has for this microcosm of prewar Jewish Warsaw. The tenement houses at nos 7 and 9 will be restored under the supervision of heritage managers. Apart from the façades, parts of the interiors (including the mosaic and the decorative moulding) will be restored to their prewar condition. The building will also house a kosher restaurant and bakery, a café, a Jewish bookstore and a Judaica shop.[262]

Beata and I both agreed that similar projects could also be useful in Muranów, even though there are no "original" buildings left. I would even say that it is *because* there are no tangible "original" remnants that memorial initiatives to stimulate people's imagination are so important in Muranów. This is in this sense that the role played by *Stacja Muranów* is particularly interesting. When I asked Beata about her motivations to

[262] The cost of this project is estimated between $7 and 10 million. It is being realized by the private real-estate agency Jones Lang Lasalle. Its completion is planned for mid 2012.

create the association, she explained to me that when she moved to the Polish capital she did not have the slightest desire to set up an association:

> I'm a kind of anti-social, you know! I'm more like a cat walking its own paths, so I'm still surprised that I did create this association! I think that everything started when I still lived in Cracow. There, I volunteered at the Jewish Festival in Kazimierz, and then wrote my thesis in European Studies at the University of Economics about the international aspects of the festival. My tutor was Dr. Kazimierz Urban, a great man who specialized in religious minorities in Poland, he wrote a very interesting book about old synagogues in Poland: *Cmentarze żydowskie, Synagogi i domy modlitwy w Polsce we latach 1944 – 1966*[263].[264]

In 2005, Beata moved to Warsaw.

> The first flat I rented was on Elektoralna Street, in a building from the 1950s, close to where the bridge between the small and the big ghetto on Chłodna Street used to be. At first, I wasn't comfortable walking in Muranów. I knew the history of the ghetto of course, but I didn't know why all the buildings in the southern part of Muranów stood on some kinds of hills. I started looking up for information, but I could hardly find anything. But then, in some old newspapers I found something about the reconstruction of the district.[265] I thought it was fascinating, and a perfect topic for a book. But because I was very busy at work, I didn't have time to start the book[266] so I decided to start a website related to Muranów's history.[267]

From the very beginning, the website was a success; people started sending e-mails to tell Beata how much they loved it and to offer some help.[268] It then became clear

[263] Jewish Cemeteries, Synagogues and Prayer Houses in Poland between 1944 and 1966.
[264] Beata Chomątowska Interview, 25 June 2010.
[265] There was so much rubble in the area of the former ghetto that it could not all be removed and had to be integrated in the new landscape, hence the presence of hills.
[266] She is currently writing it.
[267] Beata Chomątowska Interview, 25 June 2010.
[268] According to Beata, most of the people who showed interest in the website were in their thirties.

to her that if she wanted to do something for Muranów, she would need money. Because she could only apply for a grant in the name of an association, Beata decided to start one. She thus held a meeting where everyone interested could come.

> To my great surprise, thirty people showed up, half of whom I had never met before. This is how *Stacja Muranów* started. The goal of the association is to make Muranów an inspiring place, to engage people on the complicated history through various activities.[269]

Before the association was officially registered in August 2010, *Stacja Muranów* had already held two major events. One of them was a picnic in Nalewki Street (northern part of Muranów) organized for people from Muranów to socialize and meet their neighbors. The other event, *Wake Up Muranów!*, took place in March 2010. A couple of months earlier, Beata had read the interview of Peter Richards, an American living in Warsaw, in *Gazeta Wyborcza Stołeczna*. Richards, in addition to being a marketing director is also a city activist.

> [One of the problems] concerning the various districts in Warsaw is their lack of specific character. OK, let's say it's gradually changing in Praga, which is slowly turning into some kind of bohemian district. But Wola? What's the point in travelling there? In London, everyone knows that Notting Hill is an antique market, and that Camden Town hosts gothic clothes and piercing studios. There's nothing like that in Warsaw. The real challenge for the city is to change that situation.[270]

Beata met Peter Richards, and together, they created the concept of *Wake Up* Muranów*!*

[269] Beata Chomątowska Interview, 25 June 2010.
[270] Peter Richards interviewed by Katarzyna Jakiewicz – translation, Beata Chomątowska.

- Wake Up Muranów!

The idea behind *Wake Up* Muranów*!* was simple: to engage people on the history of the neighborhood. The participants were asked to identify Muranów's strengths and weaknesses and come up with ideas to make the place more attractive and stimulating.

Fig 16. Poster advertising *Wake Up Muranów!*[271]

Twenty five people registered. In addition to brain storming together, the participants were offered the opportunity to take a historical walk in the district and attend a lecture by Dr. Lewicka from the Institute of Psychology at the University of Warsaw. During this lecture, Dr. Lewicka presented the results of the survey I referred to in the section "The monumentalization of the area of the former Warsaw Ghetto" (chapter 2). The various

[271] Photo Credit: Beata Chomątowska.

projects were then presented to an audience of about fifty people. Everybody who came to listen could vote. One of the projects, *Nalewki Festival*, proposed the creation of a one-day summer multi-cultural festival on Bohaterów Getta Street (Heroes of the Ghetto Street), originally Nalewki Street. While before the war Nalewki Street was at the heart of the Jewish district, more recently some Vietnamese and African immigrants have settled there. By including live music and food specialties, the festival would aim to encourage people to discover some aspects of the various cultures that had/have animated Muranów. Yet, this idea was not shortlisted.[272]

The winning project was the following: to organize a book festival on Nowolipki Street to remind people that before the war, the street was full of Jewish bookshops and book stalls. The objective was also to activate the local community through literature-related activities.[273] This event took place in September 2010; public readings were organized in backyards and temporary stalls proposed hundreds of second-hand books on sale. This one day festival attracted about two to three hundred people.

> There were moments when the street was quite full; many people came to exchange books with Teatr Nowy which was our partner (they have a special program for book exchange called Krwiobieg Książki). Furthermore, about 40-50 people came to listen to the talks by Dr. Jacek Leociak and Józef Hen.[274] It really was successful. The festival was only advertised on Facebook. We did it with almost no money. The only money we got was from the Mayor of the Śródmieście District - about 1500 zł to print posters, and pay Dr. Leociak as well as the people

[272] Beata Chomątowska Interview, 25 June 2010.
[273] Ibid.
[274] Dr. Jacek Leociak is head of the Research Team for Holocaust Literature Study at the Institute for Literary Research at Polish Academy of Sciences. Józef Hen is a famous novelist, essayist, screenwriter and film director.

from the "ę" Association who organized workshops for the children.[275]

Fig 17. Book festival on Nowolipki Street.[276]

By organizing events related to both the Holocaust (historical walk in the ghetto and the lecture by Dr. Lewicka) and the prewar era (the book festival), *Stacja Muranów* encouraged its audience not only to remember and celebrate the Jewish past of the neighborhood but also to confront its painful history. It is essential that these two aspects are presented to the public; if the Holocaust is obscured there is a risk that the consensus of silence is maintained. In an essay published in 1994, the Viennese Jewish author and

[275] Beata Chomątowska email Interview, 14 February 2011. Although both talks were about the Jewish history of Muranów, more specifically about Nowolipki Street before and during the war, the festival itself was not exclusively about Jewish literature. Any kind of second-hand books could be sold, bought or exchanged.
[276] Photo Credit: Beata Chomątowska.

filmmaker, Ruther Beckermann, underlined the dangers of a superficial interest in Jewish matters.

> The illusion that people have nothing against Jews is comforting. Most Jews find it incomprehensible that even flaming anti-Semites have a good time in a typically Viennese Jewish cabaret. They take this as the beginning of a dialogue and don't even notice that in doing so they accept the following conditions: to remain silent about the events during the Nazi period: to repress the humiliating experiences of postwar Austria; and to downplay the day-to-day anti-Semitism of the present.[277]

Although this essay was written more than ten years ago in Austria, it is still relevant to today's Poland and underlines the need to deal with all the aspects of Jewish history with a particular focus on the Holocaust.

Given the success of the book festival, *Stacja Muranów* plans to reiterate the event next year. Beata contacted one of Warsaw's professional companies organizing book fairs in the capital, Murator Expo. She invited its director, Jacek Oryl, to Muranów, and explained to him the motivations lying behind events such as Nowolipki's book festival. Mr.Oryl was very enthusiastic about the concept and proposed to organize weekly old book fairs in Muranów. He also mentioned the possibility of getting some funds from Instytut Książki (the institution promoting books and reading in Poland).[278]

At the end of 2010, *Stacja Muranów* took part in a competition organized by the mayor of the district of Śródmieście. The idea was to give the opportunity to

[277] Ruth Beckermann, "The Glory of Austrian Resistance and the Forgotten Jews," in *Insiders and Outsiders: Jewish and Gentile Culture in Germany and Austria*, ed. Dagmar C.G. Lorenz and Gabriele Weinberger (Wayne State University Press, 1994), 258.
[278] Beata Chomątowska email Interview, 14 February 2011.

nongovernmental organizations to rent unused premises in order to organize cultural activities and give a second life to these decaying places. *Stacja Muranów* won the competition[279] and will soon be "given" a premise at 13 Andersa Street in Muranów. Beata and the members of *Stacja Muranów* want this place to become

> a sort of crossroads where different communities and organizations that are rarely given the opportunity to meet could work together. We would like to invite young and old people from Muranów, tourists and local residents, Jewish and Catholic organizations, etc. In the long term, we might even set up a café![280]

Joanna Klimas is a member of *Stacja Muranów*. She is also a famous Polish designer who, after years of reflection, decided to open her clothing shop in Muranów.

> There is something very sad about this place because it was built on the ruins of the ghetto. The atmosphere is not very good even if it's beautiful. So I thought that maybe I could do something for this place. Well, I didn't think "Okay Joanna, you have to do something for this place," I mean, I have my own problems. But my idea with this shop was to create something between fashion and history, and so in the end, contribute to the well-being of the street, do something for all these people who live here and often look sad and aggressive. I would like to make this very tragic place… I don't know… a more human place, a place with good energy.[281]

Despite her tight schedule, she invited me to join her in her classy shop, which very much stands out in the district where the socialist style is still the dominant feature. The role of Joanna's shop in returning Jewish culture to the street is not obvious at first sight. But as we were talking, the designer told me about her "plan."

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[279] Thirty associations / organizations took part in the competition.
[280] Beata Chomątowska email Interview, 14 February 2011.
[281] Joanna Klimas Interview, 28 June 2010.

> I would like to meet some designers from Israel. I don't know anyone there, I've never been to Israel, but I'd like to work with some Israeli designers. We could design clothes together, and so, I would do something for this place, I would contribute to engage people on the Jewish history of the district. Plus, I would show people that there are more than the ghettos and the camps in Poland, and that Poland is not only about death. Millions of Jews died in Poland it is true, but Poland and Jews existed before the war…[282]

In 1989, Irwin-Zarecka already highlighted the importance of academic and artistic exchanges with Israel since the latter would give Poles the opportunity to "encounter, talk to, listen to and see real Jews for whom Jewishness is not a problem."[283]

One cannot study the new memorial strategies in Muranów without talking about the Museum of the History of Polish Jews which is scheduled to open in 2012. Although building a museum may seem as traditional as erecting monuments, the Museum of the History of Polish Jews goes beyond the usual one-voice narrative found in most museums. Rather than presenting showcased objects accompanied by recorded commentaries or text panels, the museum will – among many other things – feature multimedia exhibits on the Jewish history of Poland.[284] Such exhibitions will allow the visitor to choose his own route as well as the depth of information he wants to receive. By including multi-voice narratives – whether in the form of reminiscence, testimony,

[282] Ibid.
[283] Irwin-Zarecka, *Neutralizing Memory,* 177.
[284] For more information, see: http://www.jewishmuseum.org.pl/en/cms/home-page/

storytelling or song – the museum aims to create a safe place of dialogue and civic engagement for a diverse public, composed of Jews and non Jews alike.[285]

All the memorial practices I described above demonstrate that commemorative monuments and official ceremonies are far from being the only way to inscribe history in the landscape. By focusing on Jewish history in terms broader than the Holocaust, the post-Communist heritage brokers have added a new layer of public memory in Muranów quite different from that conveyed by the war memorials. By "staging" rather than "representing"[286] a particular past, such initiatives make people active participants in the memorialization process. By making room for marginal (hi)stories, these heritage brokers create cultural spaces where boundaries can be transgressed,[287] where strangers can meet and share their experiences, where being Polish can mean either being Catholic or Jewish, where difference is tolerated, even encouraged. In other words, they create spaces which have the power to become "sites of reconciliation between strangers who are wary of, but curious about, each other."[288] Yet, not every Pole seems to be delighted at this revival of interest in Jewish culture and history. Some Jews have also reproached Polish cultural brokers for claiming ownership of Jewish memory. These are the two issues I address in the last section of my thesis.

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[285] Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Theater of History: Creating the Museum of the History of Polish Jews," (lecture given at the National Museum in Warsaw, 22 June 2010). Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett is leading the Core Exhibition Planning Team at the Museum of the History of Polish Jews.
[286] Sharon MacDonald, *Difficult Heritage: Negotiating the Nazi Past in Nuremberg and Beyond* (Routledge 2008), 139.
[287] Erica Lehrer, "Can There Be a Conciliatory Heritage?" *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 16:4/5 (July-September 2010), 272.
[288] Elaine Gurian "Singing and Dancing at Night" *Stewards of the Sacred*, ed. Lawrence.E. Sullivan and Alison Edwards (American Association of Museums and Harvard University, 2004), 89.

III. Resistance

-The persistence of anti-Jewish sentiments in post-Communist Poland

While it is true that the political transformation of Poland after the fall of Communism has allowed the country to reexamine the old narratives of the past and to reconsider the place of the Jew in Poland's history, one cannot deny the existence of an opposing trend. According to Michlic, "an outburst of intense anti minority sentiment, particularly anti-Jewish beliefs and attitudes, emerged in public discourse at the same time as the crucial events of political transformation."[289] During the elections of 1990, right wing political parties disseminated references to Jews as alien to the Polish nation. Some on their slogans included "Poland has fallen into Jewish hands" or "the Jews have already ruled over and want to rule over Poland again."[290] The candidate Stan Tymiński (who won 25% of the votes) carried out an explicitly anti-Semitic campaign describing Jews as "enemies of Poland."[291] Another politician, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, who was often tagged as a Jew by his opponents issued an official document in which he stated that all his ancestors from the 15th century were all "pure" Poles.[292] The anti-Semitic comments during the elections were not marginal since the winner himself, Lech Walesa, often "courted popularity by making numerous anti-Semitic remarks."[293] The press also

[289] Michlic, *Poland's Threatening Other*, 262.
[290] Ibid., 262-3.
[291] Abraham Brumberg, "The treatment of the Holocaust in Poland" in *Anti-Semitism and the treatment of the Holocaust in Post Communist Eastern Europe*, Randolph L. Braham ed. (Rosenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies,1994), 153
[292] Ibid., 152.
[293] Ibid. At that time, Lech Walesa rejected such charges as figments of the imagination. Later on, while in Israel, he recognized the truth of the accusations and apologized for them.

frequently depicted Jews as the "harmful other," "the pernicious enemy of Poland and its people."[294]

This situation can seem quite paradoxical given the fact that very few Jews remained in Poland. Yet, it offers evidence that anti-Semitism does not need Jews to persist. "Anti-Semitism in Poland," Abraham Brumberg argues, "has its basis not in reality but in fears, myths and collective paranoia, transmitted from generation to generation."[295] For some of the very few Jews who still live in Poland, their Jewishness is problematic, even shameful, and they prefer to keep it a secret, as though saying that they are Jewish would convey a lot more than just trivial biographical data. Gosia, a Muranów resident, explained to me how she recently found out that one of her acquaintances was Jewish.

> You know, in Poland, people are afraid of saying that they're Jewish. My boyfriend has a friend, an old man who died three weeks ago. It was the first time, after years, that his wife said that he was Jewish, because the ceremony was at the Jewish cemetery.[296]

When I asked my interviewees their position on what Jewish history meant to them, and whether they somehow felt connected to the Holocaust, answers reflect the complexity of the question.

> I'm not physically connected to the Holocaust because I'm not Jewish, so for me the information is just information. But on the other hand, I think that yes, it is part of my history. Jews lived in Poland for many years, so they kind of share the same history as

[294] Michlic, *Poland's Threatening Other*, 263
[295] Brumberg, "The treatment of the Holocaust in Poland," 153
[296] Gosia Markowska Interview, 16 June 2010.

> we – non Jewish Poles – do. You know a lot of Jewish people lived here before the war. But not only, there were also Poles. In Isaac Singer's book, the author describes his neighbors, some were Jewish, and some were Poles.[297]

As for Grzegorz, he thinks that

> It's a difficult question… I do feel connected to the Holocaust because I'm Polish. And Polish people, well, they watched, they helped, and I mean, they were actually helping the Jews and the Germans. And we were the closest to it, to the Holocaust. I do feel connected, but I don't know if it's part of my history. I mean, I'm not saying it's not my history… But what I've learned is that… I don't know, because in a way it's not my history because I'm not Jewish. But in fact, I don't know what to do with it, I'm not particularly proud… proud of being Polish, because so many people died here and nobody would help them. I mean, it's not only about the passivity of some Poles during the war…. It's also about what happened after… I don't know. What I know is that *we* – Polish people – did everything to forget what happened here. (…) I don't really want to say "we" as a nation, but I mean… I don't know…[298]

The fact that Grzegorz uses "we" demonstrates that he – the Pole – is taking responsibility for some of the choices made during and after the war. Yet, while he feels thus connected to the Jewish tragedy, his use of "we, Polish people" suggests the existence of "they, Jewish people." A national community usually implies violence and exclusion towards the groups which do not fit into the norms and values of the hegemonic group. However, in *Inoperative Community*, Jean-Luc Nancy argues that should we rethink the notion of community in a non totalitarian way, we might succeed in

[297] Eliza Kujan Interview, 24 June 2010.
[298] Grzegorz Poludniak Interview, 17 June 2010.

creating a political and cultural space where "we" and "they" can coexist and overlap.[299] The question is to know whether Poles are willing to create such a political and cultural space.

Although all the Poles I interviewed were interested (if not involved) in activities aiming to revive Jewish memory in Muranów, not all the Poles from the neighborhood are willing to share their opinions. After Joanna told me that her shop was often the place where *Stacja Muranów* had their meetings, I asked her if she had already thought about organizing a round-table or some informal meeting with people from the street so that they, too, could contribute to the debates over the past of the neighborhood.

> Until now, we had meetings with the people only from the association. I plan to open it to more people but it's not easy. People seem to be afraid of this place... You know, here in Muranów, it is mostly old people who prefer to stay home, watch TV, rather than, for example, coming to my shop. Last Christmas, I prepared invitations for my neighbors; I invited them to come down to the shop and suggest that we have some tea together, maybe a class of wine. I had bought wine and cakes. And only two persons showed up. Yes… It's sad… Everybody got his/her invitation in his/her personal letter box. So you see, it's not easy…[300]

Grzegorz also had a revealing story to tell me. Next to his building, a man runs a small stall; Grzegorz always buys his fruits and vegetables there because "the products are really good. You have to pay a little of extra but it doesn't matter." One day, Grzegorz told the peddler that he should think of getting a real store: "you have really good stuff; you could do good business you know." The man replied that he had looked

[299] Jean-Luc Nancy, *Inoperative Community* (University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 35.
[300] Joanna Klimas Interview, 28 June 2010.

at a store nearby, but that it costs too much money, that he would need employees and that he certainly cannot afford it. He then started pointing behind him and said:

> You know, it's all because of the… you know because of what… what they are building there." And I [Grzegorz] was like: "what is he talking about?" "You know the Jewish thing." "Ahhh the museum!" I said. And he explained to me that it's all because of the museum that they are increasing rents, so he can't buy a store and he can no longer pay his rent.

Several old ladies, waiting behind Grzegorz, intervened: "Yes, it's because of the Jews, they will throw all of us out from here." Grzegorz then explained to me that although it is "the creepiest thing to say, some people react like that because there is this stereotype about Jews, you know, that they control the world." Telling me this story reminded him of another conversation he overheard: "the other day, I heard people complaining about the new museum: "They were saying: "why are they building the museum here? It used to be a park; they could have built it somewhere else." You know, always this magical ominous "they". Who are "they?" Who are "we"?"[301]

The presence of an anti-Jewishness in today's Poland might be explained by the persistence of the old nationalist myth of Polishness. After the publication of Jan Błoński's article, most of the two hundred people who took part in the debate accused the author of betraying the Polish nation.[302] In the 1990s, sociological studies revealed that Polish society "generally evaluated its ethno-cultural homogeneity as a positive feature."[303] The stories my interviewees told me let me think that this aspiration for a

[301] Grzegorz Poludniak Interview, 17 June 2010.
[302] Michlic, *Poland's Threatening Other*, 274.
[303] Ibid., 266.

homogeneous Roman Catholic Poland has not totally disappeared. It is also worth mentioning that some employees of state institutions also continue to adhere to the idea of a highly ethno-nationalist Poland. In 2003, the leaders of the Jewish community in Poland filed suit against a right wing nationalistic publishing house for selling anti-Jewish works. Yet, the prosecutor posited that the content of these works was not "anti-Semitic but patriotic."[304]

- In the absence of a significant Jewish community in Poland, who owns Jewish memory?

To close this thesis it seems important to make reference to some of the concerns related to the legitimacy of Polish cultural brokers in reviving Jewish culture in Poland. Indeed, the revival of interest in Jewish culture and history which have kept on increasing since the fall of Communism raises important questions: who owns Jewish memory in a country where almost no Jews live? Why are Poles so eager to recover, document and preserve Jewish heritage? Should they do so? How? To what extent can the festivals, concerts, book fairs, public debates, etc. that have mushroomed in the last decade fill the historical and memorial gap left by years of silence and manipulation? Are these Poles motivated by a sincere sense of loss or guilty conscience? How can we feel the difference?

[304] Ibid., 267.

While some Jews have warmly welcomed Poles' initiatives aiming to revive the Jewish past of the country,[305] many other Jews remain skeptical about and suspicious of Poles' philo-Semitic actions, which, they fear, might only be money-driven and might, therefore, turn Jewish sites into "Jewish Disneylands." According to Szymon Szurmiej, director of Warsaw's Jewish Theater, "one can open cafes, one can try to remind people that there were Jews here in the past, and it's not a bad idea, but the spirit is lacking; there are no Jews who would give it some meaning."[306] In other words, what Szurmiej seems to fear is that Jewish heritage might be reduced to some kind of trendy folklore with no deeper association.

Ruth Ellen Gruber, who has been investigating the ways in which contemporary non-Jews relate to Jewish culture in European countries, offers a different analysis. She coined the term "virtually Jewish" to describe how non-Jews have been creating "Jewishness" in formerly Jewish spaces.[307] In "Beyond Virtually Jewish: New Authenticities and Real Imaginary Spaces in Europe," she posits that the creation of virtual Jewishness creates "new authenticities."[308] This process, she adds, "which can be seen as ''creating'' something new in itself rather than ''re-creating'' something that once existed, has led to the formation of its own models, stereotypes, modes of behavior,

[305] Konstanty Gebert, editor of *Midrasz*, argues that "anything that helps to preserve the crumbling bits and pieces of what used to be Jewish Warsaw – and there aren't that many left – is blessed." Cited in Paul Geitner, "Warsaw's Jewish life being born again on Próżna Street," *The Associated Press*, 18 September 1997.
[306] Szymon Szurmiej, on Polish radio. Cited in Geitner, "Warsaw's Jewish life being born again on Próżna Street."
[307] See Ruth Ellen Gruber, *Virtually Jewish: Reinventing Jewish Culture in Europe* (University of California Press 2002).
[308] Ruth Ellen Gruber, "Beyond Virtually Jewish: New Authenticities and Real Imaginary Spaces in Europe," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 99 (Fall 2009): 490-1.

and even traditions."[309] By creating virtual Jewishness, Polish heritage brokers provide a space for non-Jewish Poles, Jewish Poles and non-Polish Jews (with Polish origins) alike, where new discourses and new identities can be created. As argued earlier, the activities organized by *Stacja Muranów* offer good examples of how Jewishness has been re-negotiated in the neighborhood. After being trapped in war memorials for almost a half decade, it seems that Muranów's Jewish memory has finally been liberated.

"Reconstructing and then entering Jewish worlds, however artificial or imaginary," Gruber posits, "can also help some people in personal searches for selfhood."[310] Indeed, she explains that in an epoch when "defining one's identity has assumed personal, ethnic, and national importance," the example of Jews who have succeeded in maintaining a strong identity during two millennia – despite persecution and exile – "exerts a powerful attraction."[311] Besides, because we cannot understand ourselves and build a secure and confident identity without acknowledging where we come from and how we got to where we are today, it seems that Poles need to come to terms with their history not only out of respect for the decimated Jewish community, but also because knowing who Poland's Jews were (and are) defines who they – the Poles – are.

In "Bearing False Witness? "Vicarious" Jewish Identity and the Politics of Affinity," Erica Lehrer argues that in Poland, the definition of "Jew" has an expansive logic that encompasses many non-normative forms of identity that attest to the

[309] Ibid.
[310] Gruber, *Virtually Jewish*, 48.
[311] Ibid.

complexity of Poland's recent history.[312] She gives the example of a Catholic priest, Romuald Waszkinel, who discovered his Jewish origins twelve years after his entrance into the priesthood, after his mother told him that she and her husband had adopted him just before his Jewish parents were sent to the Vilna Ghetto. Is this man Catholic? Jewish? Both? What does it mean to be Jewish in today's Poland? If the terms "Jew," "Jewish" and "Jewishness" are being redefined, it seems reasonable to argue that the notion of Polish identity is also opened to new interpretations. Therefore, although the risk of creating "Jewish Disneylands" exists, rediscovering the Jewish history of Poland might offer means of rethinking national and personal identities.

[312] See: Erica Lehrer, "Bearing False Witness? «Vicarious» Jewish Identity and the Politics of Affinity," in *Imaginary Neighbors: Mediating Polish-Jewish Relations after the Holocaust*, eds. Dorota Glowacka and Joanna Zylinska (University of Nebraska Press, 2007): 84-109.

Conclusion

Throughout my thesis, I have shown how Jewish memory has been negotiated and spatialized in Muranów, Warsaw's former Jewish district, since the end of World War Two. By focusing on the evolution of one formerly vibrant Jewish neighborhood, I was able to address the complicated relationship between space, mythology, history and memory and provide insight into the current debate on Jewish memory in postwar Poland. Through the analysis of primary and secondary historical sources, interviews and ethnography, I attempted to demonstrate how the memory of the war has woven the tapestry of Polish collective memory and shaped postwar social identity in Poland between 1945 and 1989. My work also explores the post-Communist era, its promises and challenges.

Polish-Jewish relations have been controversial for centuries. Yet, it is the third partition of Poland in 1795 which marked the real beginning of the "Jewish problem" in Poland. After losing its sovereignty Poland redefined its identity along ethnocultural lines instead of civic lines. The Jew became "the other," the enemy of the Polish nation. This ethno nationalism continued throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries. The loss of most of Poland's prewar Jewish population did not mark the end of the "Jewish question." On the contrary, this question was made more problematic by its silencing via making the suffering of Poles under German occupation "the exclusive focal point of official memory."[313] The general framework for collective memory in postwar Poland was based

[313] Annamaria Orla-Bukowska, "New Threads on an Old Loom: Social Memory and Social Identity in Postwar and Post-Communist Poland," in *The Politics of Memory in Postwar Europe* (Duke University Press, 2006), 177.

on the assumption that Poles were both war heroes (who helped their Jewish neighbors) and war martyrs (who died to save their country from Nazism).

In Poland, *lieux de mémoire* related to the war abound. Muranów is a good illustration: steles, plaques and monuments dot the physical landscape. By designating which events to remember and how, these memorials reflect how the government orientated Poles' historical memory and shaped their national identity. The construction of Polish identity in postwar Poland followed various stages; it seems to me that at least five phases can be identified.

The first period goes from 1945 until 1950 when the traumatic experience of the war was so fresh that "the uncombed memories" could not always be fully "rein[ed] or tame[d]" by the "official directives."[314] It is during this period that the emblematic Monument to the Ghetto Heroes was erected in Muranów. However, after five years, the Communist government managed to impose its official discourse emphasizing Polish martyrdom, the courage of the (Communist) resistance fighters and the ensuing victory of Socialism over Fascism. In Muranów, the monument commemorating the (so-called) success of the battle of Lenino (thanks to the Polish Communist army) well illustrates this second stage.

The third stage starts with the overt anti-Semitic campaign of 1967-68, Poland entered a new era during which a reworking of the memory of the Holocaust was undertaken. The Jewishness of the victims was erased and the three million Polish Jews

[314] Orla-Bukowska, "New Threads on an Old Loom," 183.

who perished during the war all became Poles.[315] In the built environment of Muranów, very few memorials related to the Holocaust were erected. This strategy of silence and denial lasted until the 1980s.

In the mid-1980s as the Communist Party was becoming more and more unpopular in Poland, alternative discourses (especially with regard to the role of Poles in the Holocaust) started to be heard. The growing disenchantment with the regime was accompanied by a feeling of nostalgia for the past for which the Jews were clear representatives. Nostalgia has often been denounced as a simplification of the past and a betrayal of history.[316] While it is true that nostalgia for the Jewish past of Poland might be restricted to a romanticized version of the "Jewish intellectual"[317] or the pious simple religious Jew rather than for "the highly nuanced and often highly contentious Jewish world that actually once existed (…) or for the complex, problematic, and far too often ugly relations between Jews and non-Jewish society,"[318] in "Back Through the Future: Nostalgic Memory and Critical Memory in a Refuge from Nazism," Leo Spitzer argues that the coexistence of "nostalgic memory" and "critical memory" can be empowering and productive.

> When despair and uncertainty about the future cast their shadow on the present, only a selective, debris-free, past remained as a potential anchor for personal and group stability and identity. But when the future [seems] less daunting, more open, more positive (…) dreams of change based on imagined alternatives again [becomes possible]. A "better future" [can] thus be

[315] Irwin-Zarecka, *Neutralizing Memory,* 62.
[316] See Christopher Lasch, "The Politics of Nostalgia," Harper's Magazine (November 1984): 65-70.
[317] Gruber, *Virtually Jewish*, 9.
[318] Ibid.

> conceived incorporating a more complete memory of a past in which both its negative and its positive aspects would be acknowledged and employed.[319]

With the liberalization of public discourse and the democratization of society in the late 1980s, Poland's future seemed "less daunting, more open" and "more positive." After decades of ignorance and denial, "the country found itself in desperate need of links with the past."[320] In Muranów, "Jewish" memorials were erected (the Umschlagplatz memorial and the Warsaw Ghetto Martyrdom Route) and the Jewish cemetery was restored.

The fifth and final phase started in the 1990s. Following the fall of Communism, the interest in Jewish history and culture continued to grow and has intensified since the 2000s. In the past two decades, several – Jewish and non-Jewish – Polish cultural activists have devoted their time to deconstruct the old anti-Jewish prejudices and return Jewish memory to where it belongs. Although my thesis focuses on Muranów, it is important to underline that new efforts are afoot in many locales nationwide.[321]

Muranów is not a well-packaged touristic site (as are Warsaw's Old Town and Auschwitz-Birkenau) or a place frozen in time (as are Oradour or Lidice). For this reason, it is a place both unsettling and challenging for "some visitors who may condemn the neglect or trivial uses of the site. But that very unsettlement also prompts them to

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[319] Leo Spitzer, "Back Through the Future: Nostalgic Memory and Critical Memory in a Refuge from Nazism," in *Acts of Memory – Cultural Recall in the Present*, eds. Mieke Bal, Jonathan Crewe, and Leo Spitzer (University Press of New England, 1999), 101.
[320] Iwona Irwin-Zarecka, *Neutralizing Memory*, 132.
[321] Erica Lehrer and Michael Meng, eds. *Construction Pluralism: Space, Nostalgia, and the Transnational Future of the Jewish Past in Poland*. Manuscript in preparation.

reflection, and to thinking not only about "the past" but also about how it has been variously negotiated over time."[322] Most of the time, when we think of places, we think of them mainly in spatial terms, but "they also stretch through time." Places are not just "areas on maps," they are also witnesses of the constant "shifting articulations of social relation through time."[323]

Although one cannot deny that original remnants make forgetting less likely to happen, MacDonald argues that "knowledge and memory are not, of course, necessarily anchored in physical presence, and physical absence does not inevitably equate with forgetting."[324] If, as suggested by Doreen Massey, the identities of places are very much "bound up with the histories which are told of them, how those histories are told, and which history turns out to be dominant,"[325] by situating the Holocaust along the continuum of Polish history and by reminding people of stories to which the built environment bears no witness, the new heritage workers provide another essential element of Poland's history jigsaw.

The activities organized by *Stacja Muranów* and the Museum of the History of the Polish Jews might have the power to turn Muranów into a site of cultural practices where Poles are encouraged to explore the Jewish traditions and culture, remember the economic and artistic contribution of Jews to Poland, and understand – or at least respect – the Jewish suffering during the Holocaust. Although beyond the scope of this study, we

[322] MacDonald, *Difficult Heritage*, 190.
[323] Ibid., 188.
[324] Ibid., 53.
[325] Doreen Massey, "Places and Their Pasts," in *History Workshop Journal* 39 (Spring 1995): 186.

might underline that because Jewish tourism has kept increasing in Poland in the last twenty years, Muranów has also the power to become a site of cultural practices where Jews are expected to recognize that "being Polish is not necessarily equivalent to being anti-Semitic, and that Poles also suffered greatly during the Nazi occupation."[326]

In March 2011, Jan Gross's new book, *Golden Harvest*, was published in Poland.[327] It recounts how some Poles gained materially from the Holocaust, and more specifically how some Polish peasants went to Treblinka hoping to find gold that Nazi executioners may have overlooked. Like *Neighbors* ten years ago, *Golden Harvest* is provoking controversy. While some Poles welcomed the book as opening up areas of discussion and debate, others accused Gross of slandering the Polish nation. The continuing public debate on the role of Poles during the war questions and deconstructs the nationalistic vision of Poland's postwar identity. It raises the question of what Polishness means in today's Poland. According to Michlic, two models of Polishness exist, the ethnic and the civic.[328]

> Indicators show that the balance between the ethnic model of Poland, which advocates the representation of the Jew as the harmful other, and the civic model of Poland, inclusive of Jews as Poles in a civic sense (past and present), has gradually shifted in favor of the latter.[329]

[326] Iwona Irwin-Zarecka, *Neutralizing Memory*, 145.
[327] *Golden Harvest* was released on March 10, 2011 in Poland, and is expected to be published by Oxford University Press in the USA either at the end of 2011 or at the beginning of 2012.
[328] Michlic, *Poland's Threatening Other*, 278.
[329] Ibid., 279.

While my interviews reveal mostly tales of good-will towards religious tolerance, cultural diversity and the inclusion of Jewish history into Polish history and identity, nothing should be taken for granted since "social constructions such as the myth of the Jew as the harmful other are persistent and long-lived phenomena, rooted in a prejudiced and non rational way of evaluating the world characteristic of the exclusivist ethno-nationalist perspective."[330]

The globalization of politics and the rapid economic and social changes since the late 1980s have created not only new conditions and opportunities, but also new challenges vis-à-vis Holocaust memory and Jewish heritage in Poland. Yet, the recent integration of Jewish history and memory into the understanding of Poland's national history, together with the growing interest in "Things Jewish"[331] (despite the risk of cheap commercialization), might become symbols of the country's democratic aspirations to the creation of a more civic and pluralistic model of society tolerant of religious and cultural diversity.

[330] Ibid., 278.
[331] The term was coined by Ruth E. Gruber.

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Beata Chomątowska, 25 June 2010.
Angelika Lasiewicz-Sych, 28 June 2010.
Joanna Klimas, 28 June 2010.
Monika Utnik, 30 June 2010.
Beata Chomątowska, 14 February 2011.

Appendix 1 – Samples of the questionnaires distributed on Nowolipki Street.

English translation:

This is to state that I agree to participate, anonymously, in a program of research being conducted by Audrey Mallet under the supervision of Dr. Erica Lehrer of the Department of History at Concordia University, in Montreal, Canada. The purpose of the research is to determine how Nowolipki Street has evolved from 1939 until today and examine how memory has been framed in the former Warsaw ghetto. These questionnaires, together with oral history interviews will then be combined with archival and textual research to produce a Master's thesis.

1. Place of birth?

2. Gender?

3. How old are you?

* Less than 25
* Between 25 and 35
* Between 35 and 50
* Between 50 and 70
* More than 70

4. How long have you been living / did you live on Nowolipki Street?

5. Is Nowolipki Street a source of personal memory?

* Yes
* No

6. Which event(s)/people(s) in the history of the street do you consider the most important? (max 2)

7. Is Nowolipki Street connected to Jewish history?

* Yes
* No

8. Is Nowolipki Street just a place like many others?

* Yes
* No

9. What is your favorite place in the street?

10. Did you know that the street was included in the Warsaw ghetto and was completely destroyed in 1943-1944?

* Yes
* No

Życie na ulicy Nowolipki: jak Holokaust ukształtował naszą pamięć

Celem niniejszej ankiety jest stwierdzenie, jak ulica Nowolipki zmieniła się od 1939 roku oraz dowiedzenie się, jak wpływa na obecnych i byłych mieszkańców tej ulicy fakt, że jest ona położona na obszarze dawnego getta warszawskiego. Zarówno ten kwestionariusz, jak i rozmowa z ankietowanym, są związane badaniami na potrzeby pracy magisterskiej.

Wyrażam zgodę na wzięcie udziału w ankiecie przeprowadzonej przez Audrey Mallet pod kierunkiem dr Erica Lehrer z Wydziału Historii na Uniwersytecie Concordia w Montrealu (Kanada).

1. Miejsce urodzenia: Warszawa
2. Płeć: Mężczyzna
3. Wiek:
   - Mniej niż 25
   - Pomiędzy 25 a 35
   - Pomiędzy 35 a 50
   - Pomiędzy 50 a 70
   - Więcej niż 70
4. Jak długo mieszkasz lub mieszkałaś/eś na ulicy Nowolipki? 30 lat
5. Czy historia Twojej rodziny jest związana z tą ulicą?
   - Tak
   - Nie
6. Które wydarzenie z historii tej ulicy uważasz za najważniejsze? (max. 2)
   - Zlikwidowanie ogromnego nasypu
   - Deportacja Żydów (Straciłem dwóch moich kolegów) 1968 r.
7. Czy ulica Nowolipki jest związana z historią Żydów?
   - Tak
   - Nie
8. Czy ulica Nowolipki jest dla Ciebie miejscem, jak każde inne?
   - Tak
   - Nie
9. Jakie jest Twoje ulubione miejsce na tej ulicy? Było „Ogródek Jordanowski"
10. Czy wiesz, że ulica Nowolipki jest na terenie dawnego getta i była zupełnie zniszczona w 1943 i 1944?
    - Tak
    - Nie

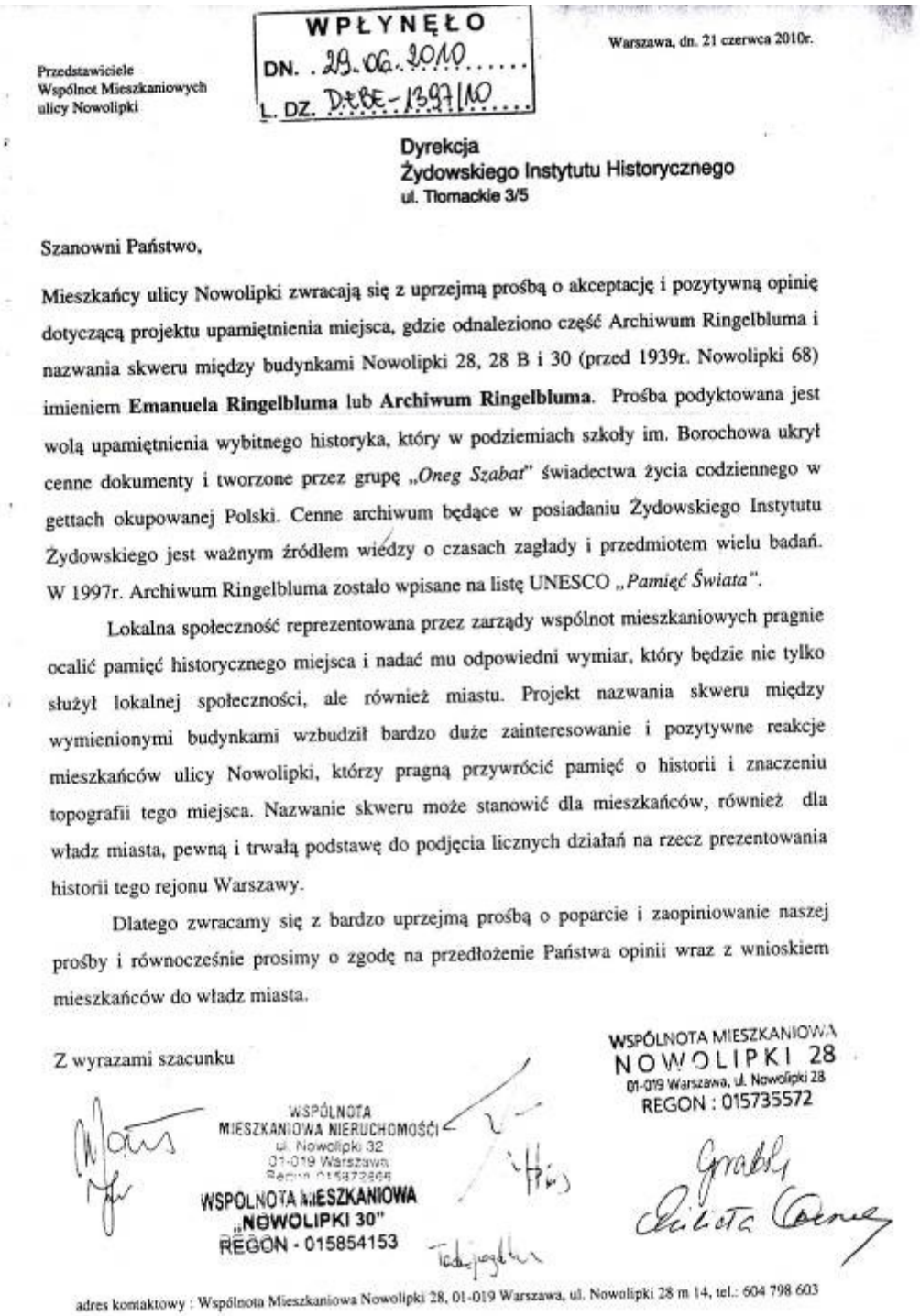
Życie na ulicy Nowolipki: jak Holokaust ukształtował naszą pamięć

Celem niniejszej ankiety jest stwierdzenie, jak ulica Nowolipki zmieniła się od 1939 roku oraz dowiedzenie się, jak wpływa na obecnych i byłych mieszkańców tej ulicy fakt, że jest ona położona na obszarze dawnego getta warszawskiego. Zarówno ten kwestionariusz, jak i rozmowa z ankietowanym, są związane badaniami na potrzeby pracy magisterskiej.

Wyrażam zgodę na wzięcie udziału w ankiecie przeprowadzonej przez Audrey Mallet pod kierunkiem dr Erica Lehrer z Wydziału Historii na Uniwersytecie Concordia w Montrealu (Kanada).

1. Miejsce urodzenia: TORUŃ
2. Płec: ♀
3. Wiek:
   - Mniej niż 25
   - (●) Pomiędzy 25 a 35
   - Pomiędzy 35 a 50
   - Pomiędzy 50 a 70
   - Więcej niż 70
4. Jak długo mieszkasz lub mieszkałaś/eś na ulicy Nowolipki? 3 years (Karmelicka 3 years)
5. Czy historia Twojej rodziny jest związana z tą ulicą?
   - Tak
   - (●) Nie
6. Które wydarzenie z historii tej ulicy uważasz za najważniejsze? (max. 2)
   - Pola Gojawiryńskie book + Dziewczęta z Nowolipek
   - The Getto Ruins
7. Czy ulica Nowolipki jest związana z historią Żydów?
   - (●) Tak
   - Nie
8. Czy ulica Nowolipki jest dla Ciebie miejscem, jak każde inne?
   - Tak
   - (●) Nie
9. Jakie jest Twoje ulubione miejsce na tej ulicy? Pizzeria, my flat
10. Czy wiesz, że ulica Nowolipki jest na terenie dawnego getta i była zupełnie zniszczona w 1943 i 1944?
    - (●) Tak
    - Nie

Appendix 2 – Letter signed by various housing cooperatives from Nowolipki Street asking for authorization to give the name of Emanuel Ringleblum to the square where his archive was found.



WPŁYNĘŁO
DN. 29.06.2010
L. DZ. DEBE-1397/10

Przedstawiciele
Wspólnot Mieszkaniowych
ulicy Nowolipki

Warszawa, dn. 21 czerwca 2010r.

Dyrekcja
Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego
ul. Tłomackie 3/5

Szanowni Państwo,

Mieszkańcy ulicy Nowolipki zwracają się z uprzejmą prośbą o akceptację i pozytywną opinię dotyczącą projektu upamiętnienia miejsca, gdzie odnaleziono część Archiwum Ringelbluma i nazwania skweru między budynkami Nowolipki 28, 28 B i 30 (przed 1939r. Nowolipki 68) imieniem **Emanuela Ringelbluma** lub **Archiwum Ringelbluma**. Prośba podyktowana jest wolą upamiętnienia wybitnego historyka, który w podziemiach szkoły im. Borochowa ukrył cenne dokumenty i tworzone przez grupę „*Oneg Szabat*" świadectwa życia codziennego w gettach okupowanej Polski. Cenne archiwum będące w posiadaniu Żydowskiego Instytutu Żydowskiego jest ważnym źródłem wiedzy o czasach zagłady i przedmiotem wielu badań. W 1997r. Archiwum Ringelbluma zostało wpisane na listę UNESCO „*Pamięć Świata*".

Lokalna społeczność reprezentowana przez zarządy wspólnot mieszkaniowych pragnie ocalić pamięć historycznego miejsca i nadać mu odpowiedni wymiar, który będzie nie tylko służył lokalnej społeczności, ale również miastu. Projekt nazwania skweru między wymienionymi budynkami wzbudził bardzo duże zainteresowanie i pozytywne reakcje mieszkańców ulicy Nowolipki, którzy pragną przywrócić pamięć o historii i znaczeniu topografii tego miejsca. Nazwanie skweru może stanowić dla mieszkańców, również dla władz miasta, pewną i trwałą podstawę do podjęcia licznych działań na rzecz prezentowania historii tego rejonu Warszawy.

Dlatego zwracamy się z bardzo uprzejmą prośbą o poparcie i zaopiniowanie naszej prośby i równocześnie prosimy o zgodę na przedłożenie Państwa opinii wraz z wnioskiem mieszkańców do władz miasta.

Z wyrazami szacunku

WSPÓLNOTA MIESZKANIOWA NIERUCHOMOŚCI
ul. Nowolipki 32
01-019 Warszawa
Regon 015873665

WSPÓLNOTA MIESZKANIOWA
„NOWOLIPKI 30"
REGON - 015854153

WSPÓLNOTA MIESZKANIOWA
NOWOLIPKI 28
01-019 Warszawa, ul. Nowolipki 28
REGON : 015735572

adres kontaktowy : Wspólnota Mieszkaniowa Nowolipki 28, 01-019 Warszawa, ul. Nowolipki 28 m 14, tel.: 604 798 603

English translation:

Ulica Nowolipki Housing Cooperatives

Warsaw, 21 June 2010

Head of the Jewish Historical Institute

Warsaw, ul. Tłomackie 3/5

Dear Sir/Madam,

The inhabitants of ulica Nowolipki kindly request the acceptance and approval of the project aimed at the commemoration of the place where the Ringelblum Archives were found to be achieved through imparting the name of Emanuel Ringelblum or the Ringelblum Archives to the green square confined by the buildings at 28, 28B and 30 ul. Nowolipki (68 Nowolipki before the war). The reason for the request is our will to pay tribute to the eminent historian, who, in the basement of the Borochow School, hid precious documents and testimonies, compiled by the *Oneg Shabbat* group, which bore witness to everyday life in the ghettos of occupied Poland. The invaluable archives in the possession of the Jewish Historical Institute are a significant source of knowledge about the times of the Holocaust and an object of ongoing research. They were put on the UNESCO *Memory of the World* International Register in 1997.

The local community represented by the boards of our housing cooperatives wishes to retain the memory of this historical place and bring it to due prominence, which will prove beneficial for both the local neighbourhood and the whole city. The above-mentioned project has aroused interest and a positive response among the inhabitants of ulica Nowolipki, who wish to restore the memory of the history and significance of the place. Granting the name of Ringelblum to the green square can become a solid and permanent foundation for numerous actions to be undertaken in the future, aimed at disseminating the history of this area of Warsaw.

We therefore kindly request your support to and endorsement of our project. We also hope you will not mind our presenting your expert opinion to the city authorities along with our application for the implementation of our project.

Yours sincerely,

[STAMPS AND SIGNATURES OF VARIOUS HOUSING COOPERATIVES AND THEIR REPRESENTATIVES]