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**WHAT IS TO REMEMBER:
CONSTRUCTION OF CULTURAL MEMORY
AT THE RAVENSBRÜCK MEMORIAL**

Mgr. Šárka Kadlecová

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Mgr. Šárka Kadlecová

Školitel:

Mgr. Tomáš Hirt, Ph.D.

(Západočeská univerzita, Fakulta filozofická, Katedra antropologie)

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Čestné prohlášení

Prohlašuji, že jsem disertační práci *What Is To Remember: Construction of Cultural Memory at the Ravensbrück Memorial* zpracovala sama a že jsem všechny použité zdroje v práci uvedla.

V Praze, dne 3. 5. 2019

Mgr. Šárka Kadlecová

Věnováno babičce.

To Grandmother

Poděkování

Děkuji školiteli Mgr. Tomáši Hirtovi, Ph.D. za odborná doporučení, připomínky a vstřícný přístup, Katedře antropologie FF, ZČU za zázemí při studiu a výzkumu, informantkám a informantům a všem, co se mnou v době bádání spolupracovali, Mgr. Míše Konárkové za korektury textu, rodině a svým blízkým za podporu.

Abstrakt

Disertační práce se věnuje tématu politiky paměti, která se vztahuje k druhé světové válce a nacistickému násilí. Případovou studii tvoří konstrukce kulturní paměti v památníku Ravensbrück, který stojí v místě bývalého ženského koncentračního tábora a proměna této paměti v čase. Za použití metody diskursivní analýzy vizuálního a textového materiálu ze dvou výstav jsou identifikovány tři reprodukováné diskursy: diskurs nacionalismu, individualismu a zápasu o uznání. Dále jsou zkoumány proces vytváření sdíleného utrpení a struktura činitelů zapojených do vytváření narativů o minulosti.

Klíčová slova: kulturní paměť, Památník Ravensbrück, diskursivní analýza, vizuální metody, nacionalismus, individualismus, zápas o uznání, identita, kolektivní trauma

Abstract

The dissertation deals with the politics of memory related to the Nazi violence during the Second World War. The subject of study is the construction of the cultural memory at the Ravensbrück Memorial, situated on the site of a former women's concentration camp, and the change of this memory over time. Deploying the method of discourse analysis of visual and textual materials from two exhibitions, three reproduced discourses are identified: the discourse of nationalism, individualism and the struggle for recognition. Also, the framing of collective suffering is discussed and the participatory structure engaged in creating narratives about the past examined.

Key words: cultural memory, Ravensbrück Memorial, discourse analysis, visual methods, nationalism, individualism, struggle for recognition, identity, collective trauma

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Introduction

The dissertation deals with the politics of memory related to the Nazi violence during the Second World War. The subject of study is the construction of memory in the site of memory of a former concentration camp as it is presented by the official institution of the memorial and the change of this memory over time.

Jan Assmann defines *cultural memory* as “a form of collective memory, in the sense that it is shared by a number of people and that it conveys to these people a collective, that is cultural identity” (Assmann cited in Erll, 2008, p. 110). Cultural memory is fabricated, objectified and stored in symbolic forms. It is rather stable and lies outside of the situational context. Institutions such as museums, libraries or archives transmit cultural memory, since artefacts on display and texts available encourage the process of remembering on social level and have an impact on it. Collective memory, i. e. social and shared, is connected with past, whose image and meaning it constructs, and with the identity of the group which it reinforces. “Collective memory requires actors, both individual and institutional, to construct, transmit and support particular narratives about the past” (Jones cited in Andersen and Törnquist-Plewa, 2017, p. 28). The actors of memory may be, for example, politicians, scholars, directors of museums or curators, who influence public interpretation of the past and its meaning by their executive power, influence or their dedication to the cause. The research presented in the dissertation deals with the narratives which have been available for the audience and presented to the visitors of the site of memory, and which discourse they reproduce.

The case study for investigation of the politics of memory is the Ravensbrück Memorial, a public institution on the site of the former concentration camp, and two official expositions installed in different periods of time. This *lieu de mémoire* is a site in three aspects – “material, functional and symbolic” (Nora, 2010, p. 56). Firstly, it archives objects related to the past.

Secondly, it encourages visitors of the museum to remember via the collections displayed. Thirdly, it is a place of suffering, symbolically. The emergence of numerous memorial museums is a manifestation of the ongoing *memory boom*, an increased interest in memory in Europe revealed by the establishment of The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe inaugurated in two thousand and five in Berlin, for example, and elsewhere in the world demonstrated by the construction of the Kigali Genocide Memorial in two thousand and four in Rwanda, for instance. These museums have “firmly established” themselves “as a cultural form par excellence for remembering and teaching about past political violence”, their main function being “to address the past, contain its memory and learn from it“, moreover, “to teach the horrors of the past conflicts, violence, and genocide, to ensure that that which society might most like to forget is never forgotten” (Sodaro, 2018, p. 13).

In the notion of memory as a social construct, three variables interact. They are the past, memory and identity. Maurice Halbwachs (2009) writes that if we change the collective, the stories will change, too, and if we change the stories, the identity of the group will change. “The events of the past cannot be changed. But our perception, our narratives, our memory construct of these events can, as can the identity of a state, a society and a person“, add Assman and Shortt (2012, pp. 13–14). The institution of the Memorial is an agent of memory in the sense that it selects and presents artefacts from the past, texts which refer to the past and certain visual materials associated with the past. The selection serves for the construction of a particular discourse about the past and impacts the processes of remembering and relating to the past in visitors. On the other hand, it is influenced by various discourses. Remembering is a political activity. It is “connected to the public arena; it is in tension with it and is publically and spatially manifested” (Grygar, 2004, p. 31, translated by the author). Cultural memory is bound to a certain social group. Its content thus rather reflects the practical demands stemming from the present and the contemporary context in which the group finds itself. Memory is a means of self-knowledge and self-acknowledgement of the group. Memory is in relation to the past, however, it

does not provide access to the past as it really happened. It is always a mere reconstruction of the past. In summary, “it is never the past itself that acts upon a present society but the representations of the past events”, which are “created, circulated and received within a specific cultural frame and political constellation” (Assman and Shortt, 2012, p. 3).

Fundamental questions about the politics of memory investigated in the case study of the Ravensbrück Memorial arise from the connection of memory, identity and the past described above. Mediated representations of the past which “involve selecting, rearranging, re-describing, simplifying, deliberate or unintentional inclusion and exclusion of information” (ibid.) produce memories shared within a social group. The institution fabricates a narrative about the past, reproduces a certain discourse and thus influences the action of remembering in a particular group of people. The politics of memory will be examined as it has been manifested since the nineteen eighties until today. Major political changes have occurred in this period of time, such as the unification of Germany and the subsequent transition to democracy or the execution of the project of the European Union. Those changes have been in concurrence with the alternation of ideologies and the formation of new identities in society. The plurality of the post-war world is indicated in the politics of memory. The questions for which an answer is being sought in the research are the following. How is the past of the site represented? Is this past represented universally or is there any particular division and differentiation of the experience of some from the experience of others? Which identities are relevant to be represented? What discourse of memory do they reproduce? Who are the agents of memory? What collective identity should this memory form? For whom is it intended?

Methodologically, we focus on the visual materials and textual materials presented in two exhibitions in the Memorial. This methodical choice allows for uncovering the politics of memory at the site. To justify the perspective I would like to paraphrase Arjun Appadurai’s approach to the politics of value through the focus on commodities themselves. Cultural memory is embodied in the objects – images, texts, artefacts – on display. Focusing on the things available

for the remembering subject, rather than the process of remembering makes it possible to claim that the link between cultural memory and remembering is politics (Appadurai, 1986, p. 3, paraphrased)¹. There is much more to be discovered when focusing on the museum's collection. James Clifford writes of "collecting and display" as "crucial processes of Western identity formation" (Clifford, 1988, p. 220). A collection is as a result of gathering things "tastefully" and "appropriately". "The inclusions in all collections reflect wider cultural rules – of rational taxonomy, of gender, of aesthetics" (ibid., p. 218). The social labour behind the making of collection is covert, in other words "an illusion of a relation between things takes the place of a social relation" (ibid., p. 165). "The making of meaning in museum classification and display is mystified as adequate representation." (ibid., p. 220). The time and arrangement of the exposition delete the specific social labour behind its composition.

The first exposition examined is that of the so-called national memorials. Individual sub-expositions were compounded by memory organisations from a number of European countries, whose citizens were incarcerated, in order to address remembering in national contexts. The exhibitory rooms have been conserved since the nineteen nineties as a result of a decision made by the statutory body of the Memorial. The other subject of study is the newest temporary exposition opened in twenty thirteen. It is a complex exhibition created by the Memorial with a clear curatorial concept and financed from the public funds of the European Union. The subject of investigation is the collection on display – the artefacts, the visual material, the commentary texts, the legends providing information about individual pieces, and also the spatial layout of the installation, for example, the way individual artefacts are ordered and located. Both exhibitions have had an international character since their creations, in regard to their content as well as the audience. Also, the fact that the first museum on the site was founded in collaboration of various associations

¹ Appadurai introduces this perspective regarding commodities in social life. The paraphrased idea is the following: "Economic exchange creates value. Value is embodied in commodities that are exchanged. Focusing on the things that are exchanged, rather than simply on the forms or functions of exchange, makes it possible to argue that what creates the link between exchange and value is politics, construed broadly" (Appadurai, 1986, p. 3).

representing survivors from different countries and probably the nature of the past events which happened in Ravensbrück and which exceed national boundaries contribute to the international aspect of the site of memory. The distinct time frames and changes in expositions, which are to represent this *lieu de mémoire* to the public, permit for the examination of the manifestations of the politics of memory.

In Chapter 1 the theoretical scaffolding of the research is presented. The type of memory which was investigated is that defined by Jan Assmann as cultural memory. However, the change in understanding memory as a social phenomenon represented by the ideas of Maurice Halbwachs is summarized in the beginning. The distinction between memory and history is described and the Pierre Nora's term of the site of memory introduced. Also, the relation among the past, memory and identity is discussed and the latter is defined. Finally, the social theory of trauma by Jeffrey Alexander is outlined. Chapter 2 deals with the museum as the holder of cultural memory. First, the anthropological approach to museums is defined. Then the perception of the museum as a site of memory but also a site of ritual is presented. Later the relation between objects and remembering is described. Finally, the particular position of the memorial museum is delineated. Chapter 3 presents the objectives of the research and the research questions. Chapter 4 is dedicated to the methodological framework of the investigation. The locality, the Ravensbrück Memorial, is introduced and its two official exhibitions briefly depicted. The type of data created is described and the methods of discourse analyses defined according to Gillian Rose. The additional method of interviewing agents of memory is explained at the end of the unit. Chapter 5 presents the findings of the study which are concluded in Chapter 6. It is divided into sections according to the main themes identified in research. They illustrate the changes in the narratives about the past constructed in the exhibitions before and after the turn of the millennium. They concern the identities represented – the diversification of the former monolithic victim, the inclusion of various identities or the female experience becoming visible; also the

involvement of different agents of memory in the constitution of the cultural memory and finally the process of construction of the narrative of suffering.

1 Theoretical Background: Approaching Memory as a Societal Phenomenon

“Memory is the faculty that enables us to form an awareness of selfhood (identity), both on the personal and on the collective level.”

(Assmann, 2008, p. 109)

Memory has been a subject of scholarly thought since antiquity as cultural remembering appears to be an aspect of “human’s fundamental anthropological make-up” (Erl, 2011, p. 13). The examination of memory in the scope of social sciences, however, can be traced from the second half of the twentieth century as a result of various changes in modern and postmodern societies, issues brought about by the Second World War and coming to terms with them in national states. In the last decades, approximately since the end of the nineteen eighties and significantly at the turn of the millennium, we have been witnessing a memory boom, an intense increase in attention dedicated to memory and remembering. Consequently, new areas of research were revealed and new concepts, theories and terminology have emerged. The so-called heritage industry, a form of tourism concentrated on visiting historical sights, monuments and museums, has been flourishing world-wide. New institutions concerned with memory, remembering and commemoration have been founded, such as the Imperial War Museum in London, the DDR Museum in Berlin or the International Holocaust Remembrance Day acknowledged in 2005 by a resolution of the United Nations General Assembly. Also, new academic platforms, such as The Frankfurt Memory Studies Platform, and study programmes in memory studies have been established.

According to Astrid Erl (2005), the topicality of the focus on memory lies in three aspects. First, they are the processes of historical changes, such as the recognition of the Shoa, the Cold War or decolonization. Second, it is the

development of technology which allows recoding and archiving. Third, they are shifts in the scientific dimension, for instance postmodern philosophy with the ideas of the end of history and the end of the grand narratives. The sociologist Dušan Lužný (2014) mentions multiculturalism and conflict theories as other influential factors, for memory functions as an expression of power and a means of it in social reality. “Who controls memory, controls society; who has charge of the past, has charge of the present” (Lužný, 2014, p. 8, translated by the author).

1.1 Social Frameworks of Memory

The current interdisciplinary memory-focused research areas draw on the theory of social determination of memory introduced by the French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs. He invented the concept of collective memory in its two significant dimensions, as a) organic memory of an individual which is structured by socio-cultural schemes and as b) creation of shared versions of the past resulting from interaction, communication and media within social groups (Erll, 2011, p. 15).

Investigating memory from the perspective of social constructivism, Halbwachs perceived remembering as a social and therefore collective act and claimed that the memory of an individual always reflects the collective. The mind contains isolated, fragmentary images and feelings which are related to past experience. These perceptions are individual because they are attached to the body proper to the particular person. However, remembering, that is selecting specific perceptions and their storing in memory, is a coordinated action. We never remember alone. Halbwachs writes that “it is in society that people normally acquire their memories” and where “they recall, recognize and localize their memories” (Halbwachs cited in Erll, p. 38). Without others people would be detained from revealing their memories. Moreover, recollecting occurs in language, a collective, culturally determined tool. In the course of remembering

an individual withdraws fragments from her mind and orders them to create a coherent recollection. In this process she opts for what will be integrated in the recollection and therefore remembered and what will be omitted and therefore forgotten. An individual selects, composes and interprets past events based on the frameworks shared by her member group. Halbwachs (2009) termed them the social frameworks of memory. A group in which an individual is integrated forms these frameworks in agreement with what is communicated, what is given importance and what is thought and reflected upon. They comprise the horizon in which the members of the group place their memories. They are “precisely the instruments used by the collective memory to reconstruct the image of the past which is in accord, in each epoch, with the predominant thoughts of the society” (Halbwachs, 1992, p. 40). Thus, individual’s memory is never absolutely individual as it is dependent on phenomena and processes external to the individual. Memories are rather “a part of totality of thoughts common to a group” an individual is in relation with at the moment. In order to recall one puts himself “in the perspective of this group, adopts its interests and follows “the slant of its reflections” (ibid., p. 52). As people are members of many different groups, “the memory of the same fact can be placed within many frameworks” (ibid., p. 52). The particularity of the memory of each individual, that is the memories of distinct individual people, lies in the specific combination of forms and contents of a memory compounded by one’s memberships to different groups (Erlil, 2005).

Having explained the significant influence of society on individual’s memory, Halbwachs claims that a group has “a capacity to remember” (Halbwachs, 1992, p. 54) and therefore something as for instance family memory exists. Family memory is constituted by the family group and also constitutes it as a cohesive family group. Halbwachs also writes of religious collective memory as the shared relation to the past within a religious community. It contributes to forming a cohesive group by either including remembrances of past events important for the group or by creating new rites, dogmas and practices, however, in response to the past ones.

The understanding of collective memory as both manifested and constructed in individual acts of remembering implies that the researcher is provided the opportunity to examine shared memory and study broader socio-cultural phenomena while investigating a recollecting individual.

In the concept of memory as a socially constructed phenomenon three variables are in interaction – the past, memory and identity. Another crucial point made by Halbwachs is that (religious) collective memory “does not preserve the past but reconstructs it with the aid of the material traces, rites, texts, and traditions” and “with the present” (ibid., 119).

Group membership plays a vital role the constitution of collective memory. If we change our in-group, our stories (of the past) will also change, writes Halbwachs (2009). Aleida Assmann and Linda Shortt add that what happened in the past cannot be changed, however, “our perception, our narratives, our memory constructs of these events can, as can the identity of a state, a society and/or a person” (Assmann and Shortt, 2012, pp. 13-14). The contents of memory thus reflect the practical demands resulting from the present state of the group and therefore they are not the criteria of the truth about the past. Memory is a means of self-knowledge and self-recognition of the group. Memory is organic, dynamic, ever-changing, for the bearers of it are living groups. Memory is in relation to the past, however, it is not a vehicle to approach the past as it really occurred. Memory is always a reconstruction of the past.

1.2 Two Cultures of Collective Memory

Although Halbwachs is perceived as the founding father of research on memory in social sciences, there have been suggestions for elaboration of his seminal work on collective memory for methodological purposes. For the sociologist Jeffrey K. Olick the inadequacy lies in Halbwachs’s perception of “individual- and collective- level problems as problems of different orders”

(Olick, 1999, p. 336), which is a feature typical of nineteenth-century grand theorists. Moreover, although the diversity of disciplines and areas in which research on memory had been conducted was productive, “social memory studies is nevertheless, or perhaps as a result, a nonparadigmatic, transdisciplinary, centerless enterprise” (Olick and Robbins, 2013, p. 106). Therefore, he distinguishes between two memory cultures which exist within the notion of collective memory. For the *collected memory* approach the individual is the central medium (Olick, 1999). Only individuals remember and therefore they may be the subject of research and “any publicly available commemorative symbols are interpretable only to the degree to which they elicit a reaction in some group of individuals” (Olick 1999, p. 338). On the other hand, the term *collective memory* refers to “public discourses about the past as wholes or to narratives and images of the past that speak in the name of collectivities” (ibid., p. 345). This notion is based on the findings of scholarship that there is a difference between symbols and their systems and the way they are perceived by individuals, as in the de Saussurean categories of *langue* and *parole* (Olick 1999). The subjects to approach collective memory may be for example institutions, discourses, records or photographs.

However, Olick argues that these two cultures are in interaction. As there are many properties which influence the production of remembering (power relations, social centre or periphery) in an individual or the construction of a narrative about the past (official and unofficial versions), we cannot speak of “*the collective memory*“, neither “of a presocial individual memory” (ibid., p. 346).

1.3 Communicative and Cultural Memory

The Egyptologist and religionist Jan Assmann elaborated the concept of social determination of memory introduced by Halbwachs by presenting the binary quality of collective memory – the communicative memory and the

cultural memory (Assmann, 2008). This distinction reveals two modes of remembering and uses of the past. According to Assmann, collective memory is bimodal consisting of a mode of biographical remembering related to the recent past and erudite remembering related to the distant past (Assmann, 2007, p. 51-52). Assmann's, and later the Assmanns', as Jan collaborated with Aleida, contribution to the interdisciplinary study of memory, lies in the development of the concept of cultural memory which appears to be the most widely used approach of the field in the German-speaking world (Erll, 2011). Cultural memory is "a collective concept for all knowledge that directs behaviour and experience in the interactive framework of a society and one that obtains through generations in repeated societal practice and initiation" (Assmann, 1995, p. 126) which serves the group as a means to maintain its nature over throughout time.

Communicative memory corresponds to what Halbwachs called collective memory. It is determined by social frameworks of the member group, it is expressed through the body, its content being transmitted in language, rather vernacular, and nonverbal communication. It occurs in everyday interaction among people and constitutes the identity of the social self as a bearer of social roles. It is limited to one generation, approximately eighty years, as communicative memory disappears at the moment when its carriers cease to be alive.

For Halbwachs the disappearance of living communication and the subsequent objectification of cultural knowledge signified the end of memory and its transformation into history. He also dedicated attention to various aspects which influence recollection such as (political) power and institutions. However, he separated them from the notion of collective memory as he wrote of tradition in that context. Assmann (2008), by contrast, insists on including the cultural domain in the concept of collective memory. He defines *cultural memory* as "a form of collective memory, in the sense that it is shared by a number of people and that it conveys to these people a collective, that is, cultural, identity" (Assmann, 2008, p. 110). It is a type of "institution, exteriorized, objectified, stored away in symbolic forms" (ibid.). It relates to mythical, cultural time. It is

materialized in artefacts, texts, rituals, landscapes, museums and other sites of memory. Its content is shaped by cultural frames. In order to be transmitted, cultural memory exists in a disembodied form. There it is preserved and re-embodied again in the interaction between the reminding object and the remembering mind. Cultural memory is bound to fixed points in the past which are assigned importance by the group. It reaches as far to the past as the group can claim it as theirs. It is the purpose of cultural memory to serve the self-image of the group which distinguishes it from history, for example, or science in general.

In the essay ‘Collective Memory and Cultural Identity’ Assmann (1995) characterises cultural memory as follows. Cultural memory enables a group to establish their identity. It functions as a store of knowledge from which “a group derives an awareness of its unity and peculiarity” (Assmann, 1995, p. 130). Cultural memory reconstructs the past in regard to the present conditions. It exists in the mode of potentiality, as the total content, the archive of the accumulated texts, images and other carriers of knowledge, and in the mode of actuality provided by the contemporary perspective and subsequent additional meaning-making. Cultural memory is a vital stage in the process of the formation of the “culturally institutionalized heritage of a society” (ibid.). It is organized as it depends on cultivation and specialized practice. It draws on a system of values common to the group and has a formative and normative function for its members. It is reflexive in three areas – of practice as it “interprets common practice through proverbs, maxims or rituals,” of itself in its own expansion, and of its own image as “it reflects the self-image of the group” (ibid). Cultural memory is produced in a dynamic interaction of the following three dimensions - material, social and mental (Erll, 2011). “Mnemonic artefacts, media and technologies of memory” compound the material dimension (Erll, 2011, p. 103). “Mnemonic practices and the carriers of memory” compose the social dimension (ibid.). “The shared schemata, concepts, and codes which enable and shape collective remembering” constitute the mental dimension (ibid.).

There is a boundary between remembering the near past, the content of communicative memory, and remembering the distant formalized past, the content of cultural memory. Jan Vansina termed this vacuum-like space *the floating gap*. It is on those two levels - of relating to the near and the distant past - where historical consciousness is formed (Assmann, 2008). As for its carriers, cultural memory is typically associated with a high level of specialization. There is usually a trained mind, such as the poet, the priest, the rabbi, which participates in the transmission of cultural memory. “The participation structure of cultural memory has an inherent tendency to elitism” (Assmann, 2008, p. 116).

The characteristics of both parts of collective memory, communicative and cultural memories according to Jan Assmann are listed in Table 1 below.

	Communicative Memory	Cultural Memory
Content	History in the frame of autobiographical memory, recent past	Mythical history, events in absolute past
Form	Informal traditions and genres of everyday communication	High degree of formalization, ceremonial communication
Medium	Living, embodied memory, communication in vernacular language	Mediated through texts, icons, dance, rituals and performances of various kinds; “classical” or otherwise formalized language, other language variants transmitted by cultural media (e. g. film, television, the radio)
Time Structure	80 – 100 years, a moving horizon of 3-4 interacting generations	The absolute past, mythical time, 3, 000 years
Participation Structure	Diffuse – anyone with the eye-witness experience	Special carriers of memory (the trained mind), hierarchically structured

Table 1: The Characteristics of Communicative and Cultural Memories, adapted from Assmann (2008, p. 117).

The concept of cultural memory enables the researcher to learn more about the fabric and the tendencies of a society by examining its cultural heritage. The clear-cut distinction between the communicative and the cultural memories might be applicable to investigating myths or the heritage of ancient societies. However, it becomes rather problematic if the subject of study is situated in the modern, postmodern or contemporary era. As Erll (2011) points out the Second World War and the Holocaust were the case of both types of memory. Also, the distinguishing criteria outlined by Assmann appear to be interchangeable. Life experience (the content of communicative memory) is nowadays communicated through texts, images and other media, including the new media. The Internet with its open shared tools to create knowledge such as Wikipedia weakens the role of the specialist (the prototypical carrier of cultural memory). The distant past (the time frame of cultural memory) of events like 9/11 might be located not so far from the present. Therefore, the central criteria for differentiating between the two areas of collective memory are a) if the memory is categorized as reconstructing the biographical or the foundational past, b) “the consciousness of time” and c) “the usage of the media” (Erll, 2011, p. 31-33).

1.4 History and Memory: Sites of Memory

Due to their connection to the past, memory is often compared to history. They both provide information via an interpretation of the past. The difference lies in the properties of the actual knowing² about past events, its purpose and

² Here I deliberately choose to write knowing, meaning to be congnizant or aware of, instead of knowledge in the sense of the body of knowledge as something shared and universal.

ownership. The objective of history is to create a representation of the past which does not belong to anyone, yet is valid for everyone. There is an attempt for universality of interpretation of the past. However disputable and problematic it may be, historians should aim for it (Barša, 2011). They investigate events to provide knowledge about the whole past. Memory, on the other hand, relates to the past as far as it is recognized as common. History endeavours to discover everything about the past, while it is a significant characteristic of memory to allow something to remain uncovered and therefore forgotten. “Whereas knowledge has a universalist perspective, a tendency towards generalization and standardization, memory [...] is local, egocentric, and specific to a group and its values” (Assmann, 2008, p. 113). Memory is described as “subjective, fallible, based on individual recollections rather than proper evidence verified through institutional practices and persons” (Macdonald, 2013, p. 13). Moreover, history and memory are subject to different temporalities. History interprets the past through progressive revealing of events and their linear arrangement. On the contrary, the temporality of memory may be characterized by non-linearity, cyclicity and timelessness.

1.4.1 Lieux de Mémoire

The historian Pierre Nora coined the term *les lieux de mémoire*, the sites of memory. In his concept resulting from an investigation of the omnipresent preoccupations with memory in France, Nora points out the ever increasing role of history and the absence of living memory. According to Nora, *lieux de mémoire* are specific places where “memory crystallizes and secretes itself” (Nora, 1989, p. 7). They are intended bastions of memories, however, emerging from the surroundings where history is prevalent. Deriving from the case study of France, Nora explains the occurrence of numerous realms of memory by the fact that spontaneous memory is disappearing. “There are *lieux de mémoire*, sites of memory, because there are no longer *milieux de mémoire*, real environments of

memory” (ibid.). He argues that memory, or more specifically true memory, typical of primitive, archaic societies was replaced by history in modern societies. It is the struggle for the maintenance of memorial consciousness on the one hand and the inability to live in memory on the other hand which perpetuates the foundation and glorification of the sites of memory. The exhaustion of memory in France was caused by “the movement towards democratization, independence and decolonization” (ibid.).

Social groups establish *lieux de mémoire* because the memories which they intend to safeguard there would not survive naturally. Sites of memory, which may be monuments, archives, museums, festivals as well as famous people, anniversaries and commemorative ceremonies, are responses to the memory which is no longer experienced. Sites of memory express society’s longing for commemorative consciousness. However, they only maintain such consciousness through history. *Lieux de mémoire* “make their appearance by virtue of the deritualization of our world-producing, manifesting, establishing, constructing, decreeing, and maintaining by artifice and by will a society deeply absorbed in its own transformation and renewal, one that inherently values the new over the ancient, the young over the old, the future over the past” (ibid., p. 12).

In his influential study, Nora attempts to clarify the inaccuracy in the usage of the term memory. He argues that memory formerly designated an immediate collective phenomenon, embodied self-knowledge, vital and spontaneous, expressed in speech, texts or gestures. However, in modern societies the meaning of memory has shifted rather to history, an indirect phenomenon, individual and subjective.

For Nora memory and history stand in an opposition. He describes memory as life, for it is lived and experienced by individuals. It is in permanent evolution. Moreover, memory brings the past to the present and thus creates “the eternal present” (ibid., p. 8). True memory occurs rather unintentionally and uncritically. It is affective, magical and absolute and cannot be captured precisely as it is vulnerable to deformations, manipulation and appropriations, however,

always founded in the concrete. It is “blind to all but the group it binds” (ibid), therefore it is both collective and individual. On the contrary, history is static or dead as it reconstructs something which “is no longer there” (ibid.). It is a product of critical intellectual analysis and therefore invites revisiting. It is secular and universal, which in effect means that it is owned by no one. It derives from the abstract – the temporal continuities, progression and relations between things. Finally, it is “suspicious of memory” (ibid.), its true purpose being the decomposition and elimination of memory.

An overview of the comparison of memory and history by Pierre Nora is presented in Table 2 below.

	Memory	History
Relation to the Past	Vital connection to the past creating the eternal present	Representation of the past Reconstruction of what is no longer there
Production and Dynamic	Spontaneous: unconscious of deformations, vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation Dialectic of remembering and forgetting	Conscious: intellectual, result of critical gaze, secular
Expression	In social practice Body-related: verbal and non-verbal language	External Institutions, e. g. archives, museums, monuments, minutes of silence
Origin	The concrete: spaces, gestures, images, objects	Temporal continuities: progression, relations between things
Ownership	A particular group: collective and individual	Everyone and no one

Table 2: Comparison of Memory and History (adapted from Nora, 1989, p. 8- 9)

Nora characterizes the currently prevalent notion of memory by the three following features. They are “archive”, “duty” and “distance” (ibid., p. 16). Firstly, society compensates for the feeling of anticipated absence by archiving.

In modern societies driven by change, “fear of a rapid and final disappearance combines with anxiety about the meaning of the present and uncertainty about the future to give even the most humble testimony, the most modest vestige, the potential dignity of the memorable” (p. 13). According to Nora, modern memory “relies entirely on the materiality of the trace, the immediacy of the recording, the visibility of the image” (p. 13) Modern memory is first created by someone and then offered to individuals, who adopt and interiorize it. Secondly, the new order of memory establishes the imperative to remember. Individuals responding to the duty to remember consume pre-fabricated memory which subsequently contributes to the forming of their identity. The new memory is thus psychologized. Thirdly, if memory should be the vehicle to the past, it was necessary for modern societies to separate it from the present. While true memory served as the means of continuity, the new memory has changed into history. This discontinuity causes that “we speak no longer of ‘origins’ but of ‘births’” (ibid., p. 15). The idea illustrates the detachment of modern societies from the past and also their role of creators when relating to it.

Lieux de mémoire are manifestations of the attempt to prevent a society from forgetting. They emerge from the interplay of vanishing true memory and predominating history. Every site of memory possesses a material, functional and symbolic quality. The prerequisite for the existence of lieux de mémoire is the will to remember in order to attract the recollecting subject; otherwise they would remain places of history. Lieux de mémoire encourage groups to perform a public act of remembering, sharing the knowledge about the past which fosters the feeling of belonging and strengthens group identity (Winter in Radstone and Schwarz, 2010).

Nora has significantly contributed to the investigation of memory in social sciences by introducing the term and concept of *les lieux de mémoire*, which is widely used by scholarship in various disciplines. However, the notion and Nora’s work also marks a point of reference which opens scientific criticism and further discussions. For example, the criteria for identifying a site of memory may be unclear. If the following items such as the French language, Bastille Day,

gastronomy and the left and right are listed as sites of memory, “the question of what is not a lieu de mémoire” arises (Olick, 1999, p. 336). Another aspect of the criticism lies in the perception of Nora’s findings as judgemental. Sharon Macdonald traces elements of evaluation and moralisation in Nora’s romanticising of memory as “an organic part of life, and therefore ‘real’” and denouncing history “as a sterile and doomed attempt to capture a past that has been lost” (Macdonald, 2003, p. 13). She remarks that it “is part of a relentless discourse that seeks to identify and even rescue authentic forms of life, and that is more usefully seen as part of the memory phenomenon that he discusses rather than analysis of it” (ibid., p. 13). Other comments are concerned with the nation-centredness of Nora’s study as the idea was explored strictly bound to the national memory of France and the lack of postcolonial, multicultural and transnational perspective (Hue Ham Ho Tai, 2001a; Judt, 1998; Hyssen, 2003 in Erll, 2011). Also, the stability of the sites of memory seems to be overestimated by Nora. Remembrance is performative, nevertheless, dynamic and thus “collective memory is constantly ‘in the works’” and trying to bring it “to a conclusion is de facto already to forget” (Rigney cited in Erll, 2011, pp. 26-27). Nora popularised the distinction between memory and history, which had been outlined by Halbwachs. Yet, this opposition has been widely re-evaluated (Le Goff, 1992; Habermas, 1998; counter memory - Foucault, 1977 cited in Erll). The historian Dominick LaCapra, for instance, apprehends memory as “a crucial source for history” (LaCapra, 1998, p. 19) as carries information “not in terms of an accurate empirical representation of its object but in terms of that object’ often anxiety-ridden reception and assimilation by both participants in events and those born later” (ibid). While it is frequently unclear which aspects are compared when memory and history are contrasted (appropriation versus totality, immediacy versus mediation, methodological unregulatedness versus methodological approachability, private versus official versions of the past, counter memory and marginal versions versus the grand narratives and victors’ versions), Erll suggests the use of the cultural memory as “broad cover term” which includes “historical reference to the past as one mode of cultural

remembering” (Erlil, 2011, p. 45). “History is thus one symbolic form of reference to the past”, which as “other symbolic forms, such as religion, myth or literature contributes to the production of cultural memory” (ibid.)

The contemporary study of memory strongly evinces the dimensions of internationality, transcendence of the borders of national states, and even globalisation, be it in regard to the researchers or the subject of study. In Europe as the European Union the cultural memory reflects the image of a shared past as well as the institutional guidelines of what should be remembered and how. Various agents, the *entepreneurs of memory* (Jelin, 2003), collaborate in constructing, transmitting and supporting specific narratives about the past. Sarah Jones, who investigates social and cultural processes of remembering the dictatorship in Germany, writes about the *collaborative memory* that it “incorporates acts of memory that are constructed through cooperative action between partners in different national contexts” (Jones, 2017, p. 52). This approach shifts the attention from the steadiness of the places of memory to the dynamic actions of agents of memory.

1.5 Memory and Identity

Memory is an open system susceptible to change. However, it is always framed by a certain horizon of time and identity on the individual and social level. The sociologist Peter L. Berger draws the definition of identity on the theory of roles. Society ascribes roles to individuals and each of them is connected with some identity. Identity in the perspective of sociology is “socially situated, socially maintained and socially transformed” (Berger, 2003, p. 104, translated by the author).

Identity is not given, but it is bestowed in acts of social acceptance. Also, it is necessary that society preserves it as it is impossible for an individual to possess an identity. “Identities are socially fabricated and they must be constantly

socially retained. A person cannot be completely human on their own and obviously cannot hold a specific identity” (ibid., p. 106). The anthropologist Jakub Grygar remarks that “coherence and integrity of the self, which we understand as identity, is sustained by the thin link of memory” (Grygar, 2004, p. 31, translated by the author). Therefore, we may understand identity through investigating private and public relating to the past.

There is a connection between memory and the past. However, the former does not provide access to the latter in its reality. Memory does not reveal the past as it truly happened, but it is a reconstruction of the past. It is lively, dynamic, ever changing as the carriers are living groups. The contents of memory reflect rather practical demands stemming from the present in which a group encounters itself and are not criteria of the truth about the past. The objective of remembering is self-knowledge and self-assurance of a certain group. The past is the main source of collective affirmation and struggle for political legitimacy. However, it is impossible to grasp it as an enumeration of events. It is accessible only in communication based on memory. Barša (2011) describes remembering as processes of production and reproduction of collective identities - local, ethnic, or national.

If sites of memory manifest the identity of a group and influence their sense of belonging, the question to what extent they are means of political powers dominating in society arises. Winter (in Radstone and Schwarz, 2010) views sites of memory in two perspectives - materialized national, imperial or political identity and places of struggle for visibility of the groups which are marginalized and an opportunity for protest. Fabrication and preservation of cultural memory includes a number of levels and variables, for example national and international authorities, standards of taste and piety, professional interests, local needs. Politics of memory is related to supremacy and “reinterpretation of social situation in a changing world” and so it has an impact on “the moral and value systems of society” (Maslowski, 2014, p. 80, translated by the author). After the Second World War, more agents than the national state have been involved in the politics of memory. As a result of the moral imperative to

remember (and not to forget) legitimate cultural memories have been emerging, because “various sorts of legitimacies of non-state agents meet” (Maslowski, 2014, p. 81, translated by the author) in a dynamic process of memory construction.

1.6 Collective Suffering as a Social Construct

The violent and genocidal events committed on various groups of people under the reign of German National Socialism and the ways societies come to terms with this past lie in the centre of approaches to investigating memory. Scholarship (Alexander, 2012; Barša, 2011; Sznajder, 2011) have taken the Holocaust as an example to illustrate different influences among the interpretation(s) of the past on the formation of memories and identities. It serves as a distinctive case of the shift in understanding from a historical event which had not been denoted by a special name to an extraordinary event concerning one group, a shared place of memory (Nora, 1996), shared trauma (Alexander 2012), transnational commemorative culture (Assmann, 2011), iconic trauma (Sznajder, 2011) or cosmopolitan memory culture (Levy and Sznajder, 2002).

The Holocaust is represented mainly by images of suffering and described as a trauma transgressing borders. However, such perception is not natural or self-evident. Moreover, the event was understood differently immediately after the affairs related to what we nowadays call the Holocaust had occurred. The American sociologist Jeffrey Alexander invented a social theory of trauma which is based on the tradition of social constructivism. He writes that “cultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways” (Alexander, 2012, p. 6) It is “an empirical, scientific concept, suggesting new meaningful and causal relationships between previously unrelated events, structures, perceptions, and actions,” which “also illuminates an

emerging domain of social responsibility and political action” (ibid.). For it is by the process of construction of cultural trauma that societies recognize the source of suffering and may take moral responsibility for it. Also, this suffering may or may not be shared with others, which impacts group identities as it may extend the understanding of “we” or create a separating line between ‘us’ and ‘them’.

Taking the Holocaust as an example, Alexander illustrates how shared trauma is symbolically constructed. It is observable exactly in the process of change in understanding of the holocaust, denoting a type of event generally, to the Holocaust, a proper name given to the event. There is no natural element in an event causing individual (or group) suffering which would secure the fact that the suffering will be recognized as such by society. The reality that people have lost their lives in a war, for instance, does not necessarily mean that a collectively shared trauma will occur. The experience of suffering by individual members of a society is not significant. It is rather insufficient for a past event to be understood as a shared trauma. Wars become traumatic if a society regards their victims as worthless. If, on the other hand, a society relates to the war through a narrative of victory, one does not speak about victims but about those who sacrificed their lives for a noble cause. The social dimensions of “religion, nation, race, ethnicity, gender, class can be a medium for inflicting social pain” (ibid., p. 1). A cultural trauma is nevertheless created in a collective process of meaning-making, which forms collective suffering based on the interaction between the experienced pain and collective identity. Alexander writes of “symbolic-cum-emotional representation as a collective process centering on meaning making” (ibid., p. 2). Although individual suffering charges the process, it is the menace to collective identity which construes the suffering. A social trauma is constructed in intensive cultural and political efforts which include public gatherings, speeches, narratives, rituals, performances or films. “Intellectuals, political leaders, and symbol creators of all kinds make competing claims“, as “they identify protagonists and antagonists” (ibid.) and create (accusatory) narratives which are presented to audiences. For “suffering collectivities [...] must be imagined into being” (ibid).

Alexander identifies “four critical representations” (ibid., pp. 17-19) which emerge in the process of creation of a new master narrative of social suffering about a particular event. For each dimension, a question must be answered in order for the group to successfully proceed in the meaning making. The four representations are the following, 1) the nature of the pain – investigating events (What happened to a particular group?), 2) the nature of the victim – identifying the ones who suffered (What group of persons are affected by the traumatizing pain?), 3) relation of the trauma victim to the wider audience – exploring social response (To what extent do the members of the audience for trauma representations experience identification with the immediately victimized group?), and 4) attribution of responsibility – establishing the antagonist (Who caused the trauma?).

The new master narrative of shared trauma unfolds in various social arenas such as “religious, aesthetic, legal, scientific”, the one of “mass media” or “state bureaucracy” (ibid., pp. 20-23).

The process of constructing a shared trauma according to Alexander is summarized in Graph 1 below.



Graph 1: The Construction of Collective Trauma (based on Alexander 2012: 1-2)³

³ This section on the social theory of trauma is part of the article published in a special issue of the journal of contemporary history *Hispania Nova*. Kadlecová, Š. (2019). *Nunca más, Nie Wieder: Ethical Aspects of Remembering in the Narratives of Ravensbrück Survivors, Their Descendants and Other Persons Engaged in the Memory Work*. *Hispania Nova*, n°1 extraordinario, pp. 175-194.

2 The Museum as the Carrier of Cultural Memory

“The taste for isolating this kind of attentive looking at crafted objects is as peculiar to our culture as is the museum as the space or institution where the activity takes place.”

(Alpers cited in Karp and Lavin, 1991, p. 26)

The selected space in which collective cultural memory of a Nazi concentration camp manifests is the Ravensbrück Memorial. One of the architectural structures of the former camp was converted into a museum a in the next decade after the liberation. The subject of analysis are the visual and textual materials as well as objects on display in the exhibition in the Cell Building, which was finalized in the early ninety nineties and as such conserved, and the most recent exposition inaugurated in twenty thirteen. The contents of the collections accessible for the public are regarded with the focus on the image itself, the text itself and the objects as such. The assemblage, however, is presented within the function of a cultural institution of the memorial-museum. This chapter deals with the anthropological approaches to museums first, then with the material culture and objects in the centre of investigation; and finally introduces the particularity of the institution of the memorial-museum.

2.1 Anthropological Approaches to Museums

Museums have become a subject of interdisciplinary study. They are powerful institutions of public culture well-established in Europe and widely spread around the world. They occupy impressive architectural spaces; function as storages of artefacts and generators of knowledge. By members of developed societies who possess the “museum set”, the museum is understood as a “treasure house, an “educational instrument” or a “secular temple” (Baxandall cited in

Karp and Levine, 1991, p. 33). Moreover, they are the arenas of cultural fabrications and transmissions. They convert “cultural materials into art objects” (Alpers cited in Karp and Levine, 1991, p. 31), artefacts, objects on display and thus worth seeing. They “provide a place where our eyes are exercised and where we are invited to find both expected as well as unexpected crafted objects to be of visual interest to us” (ibid, p. 32). The way of seeing encouraged in the museum is compounded of a “mixture of distance, on the one hand, with a sense of human affinity and common capacities on the other” (ibid.). However, it is not only the space that museums provide, but also the guidelines which shape the individual ways of seeing. In the context of this study, as we refer to cultural memory, we may remark that the museum influences the way of seeing and thus impacts on the way of remembering.

Bouquet argues that “anthropology has a particular contribution to make” (Bouquet, 2012, p. 3) in museum studies as anthropologists go beyond the first glance of the visitor’s experience and they investigate “how the displays of objects transform them into cultural valuables, illuminating the social and political processes taking place behind the scenes” (Macdonald, 2002 cited in Bouquet, 2012, p. 3). Ethnographic methods such as the typical participant observation and also methods of visual anthropology permit for deciphering the complex processes of creating meaning in a museum’s exhibition.

2.2 Museum as a Site of Ritual

According to the sociologist Tony Benett, museums are “involved in the practice of ‘showing and telling’: that is, of exhibiting artefacts and/or persons in a manner calculated to embody and communicate specific cultural meanings and values” (Benett, 1995, p. 6). They do so by „regulating the conduct of their visitors“, as they are places “for ‘organized walking’ in which an intended message is communicated in the form of a (more or less) directed itinerary”

(ibid). Although they are secular institutions and are located in architecture which is generally not understood so, Carol Duncan perceives art museums as “environments structured around specific ritual scenarios” (ibid. 2) when she describes the totality of the museum as “a stage setting that prompts visitors to enact a performance of some kind” (ibid, p. 1-2). The visitors who perform the ritual most successfully – “those who are most able to respond to its various cues – are also those whose identities (social, sexual, racial) etc. the museum ritual most fully confirms” (ibid, p. 8). The performative nature of a ritual permits public reflexivity. It is an attempt of a community to portray itself, comprehends itself and act upon that (Turner, 1979 cited in Bendová and Strnad, 2014). During a ritual, the performers and also the whole community are in a liminal phase, which allows for their transformation. Similarly the museum marks a “liminal zone of time and space in which visitors, removed from the concerns of their daily, practical lives, open themselves to a different quality of experience” (Duncan, 1995, p. 20). Another significant transformative aspect of the museum rests on the epistemological authority it holds in modern society. The museum is a powerful institution which claims the truth and objective knowledge. Therefore, in the case study presented, the Memorial as an institution which is likely to be understood as the provider of true and objective narrative about the past of the Ravensbrück concentration camp. Moreover, its potential reaches even further, as “to control a museum means precisely to control the representation of a community and its highest values and truths” (ibid., p. 8).

2.3 Three Active Terms in an Exhibition

Seeing an exhibition and making a meaning of it is a dynamic process in which various actors interplay. The problematic position of the viewer in the museum looking at “an artifact from another culture – whether the other culture is distant geographically or chronologically” has been the subject of scholarly

discussions since the eighteenth century (Boxandall cited in Karp and Levine, 1991, p. 34). The following three influential aspects interact. “First, there are the ideas, values, and purposes of the culture from which the object comes. Second, there are the ideas, values, and, certainly, purposes of the arrangers of the exhibition. These are likely to be laden with theory and otherwise contaminated [...]. Third, there is the viewer himself, with all his own cultural baggage of unsystematic ideas, values and, yet again, highly specific purposes” (ibid.). The art historian Michael Boxandall (1991) writes of three agents contributing to the meaning making which happens at an exhibition - the maker(s) of the object, the creator(s) of the exhibition, and the viewers. They are all active forces, yet their directions may be incompatible. The first two agents are both cultural operators, but with different intentions and purposes. The exhibitor appropriates interesting things about other people with various objectives such as “putting on a good show and instructing the audience” (ibid., p. 37). The aim to guide visitors precisely through the collection involves labelling and describing the artefacts on display. However, there is an intellectual gap between the label and the object. Ultimately, “the activity the exhibition exists for is between viewer and maker” and the role of the exhibitor is to impose “non-misleading and stimulating conditions between the exhibitor’s own activity (selection and label making) and the maker’s object”, as “the rest is up to the viewer” (ibid, p. 41).

2.4 Material Culture: Objects and Remembering

The museums’ collections are one of the main sources of studies of ‘material culture’. “The term [...] emphasises how apparently inanimate things within the environment act on people, and are acted upon by people, for the purposes of carrying out social functions, regulating social relations and giving symbolic meaning to human activity” (Woodward, 2007, p. 3). The central assumption in studying material culture is that things themselves convey and enact meanings and as the means of them illuminate social practices and

relations. “Furthermore, objects become incorporated into, and represent, wider social discourses related to extensively held norms and values enshrined in norms and social institutions” (ibid., p. 4). The primary focus of investigating material culture is on the “mutual relations between people and objects”, more precisely on “what uses people put objects to and what objects do for, and to, people” in order to discover the ways in which culture is “produced”, “transmitted”, and “received” (ibid, p. 14).

Equally as in material culture studies, objects matter in memory studies. If we think of memory as “a performance of the past in the present, it is essential to account for the material world as a medium through which performances of memory take place” (Munteán, Plate and Smelik, 2017, p. 4). Moreover, the cultural memory is “maintained through cultural formation (texts, rites, monuments) and institutional communication (recitation, practice, observance)” (Assmann, 1995, p. 129). According to the Scottish cultural historian Marius Kwent (1999) the relation between objects and memory is threefold. Firstly, they furnish recollection; they constitute our picture of the past ... Secondly, objects stimulate remembering ... Thirdly, objects form records: analogues to living memory, storing information beyond individual experience” (cited in Munteán, Plate and Smelik, 2017, p. 13). Memorials carry out the first function. However, their meaning and significance may change over time as a result of a change of a political regime, for example. The history of a memorial and of objects in general is always a history of its own, which happens differently from that of people (Hahn and Weis, 2013).

2.5 Memorial Museums as Particular Sites of Memory

The concepts of investigating cultural memory mentioned in Chapter 1 mainly use duality to be defined. It is, for instance, spontaneity versus formalisation, recent past versus mythical past, the carrier of memory is anyone who happens to be on spot versus the carrier of memory is someone specially trained for that purpose (Assmann); living memory versus history, small communities versus the nation (Nora). However, these distinctions might not be suitable for studying the sites of memory founded in the last decades (after the turn of the millennium), for cultural memory transcends the borders of national consciousness and becomes transnational or even cosmopolitan (Levy and Sznajder, 2002) and its carriers are not exclusively specialized interpreters such as the priest or the rabbi but it is widely transmitted by the visual media.

The motivations for establishing sites of memory also vary. The places of memory created in the nineteenth and at the beginning of the twentieth century were closely connected with the ideology of nationalism, reminded of national heroes, the nation's glorious past and in accordance with the modern idea of progress the even brighter future. The American sociologist Amy Sodaro (2018) points out the peculiarity of memorial museum, which are being founded worldwide. They are typically shrines of a new form of remembering, being focused on the negative violent past predominantly, and manifestations the *politics of regret*, "a historically specific constellation of ideas about collective justice" (Olick 1999, p. 333) or social processes of coming to terms with the past. They order to remember, or more precisely not to forget, is their founding stone. The moral imperative to remember results from the discourse of human rights, which expanded after the Second World War.

It is grounded in the double perception of the relation between memory and human rights, which serves as the essence and the *raison d'être* of memorial museums. The first is "the idea that acknowledging human rights abuses and recognizing victims through memory is morally the correct and necessary response to violence, regardless of the outcome of this remembering" (Sodaro,

2018, p. 16). Memory here possesses a healing function for the oppressed and a restorative function for broader society. The second perspective holds memory as a tool of constructing consequences influential to the future. In other words, if the violence occurring in the past is remembered, a future without wrong doings will be safeguard. Memorial museums are founded on the assumption of the positive function of memory, i. e. remembering is good and enhances a culture which abides human rights. On the other hand, memorial museums might serve as means of symbolic remedy in places, where an execution of social justice in regard of the past is weak. The reason for creating such institutions is society's belief that a memorial reconstructs the past insufficiently and therefore it is necessary to combine it with a place which will provide knowledge, a museum. Museums have traditionally held a privileged status in society. Sharon Macdonald quotes the German philosopher Joachim Richter, who writes in his text on musealisation (Musealisierung) that from the nineteenth century "the humanities and organisations such as historical societies and museums increasingly take over roles of cultural memory in a functional compensation for the erosion of tradition" (Macdonald, 2013, p. 138). In addition to their archival and educative roles, memorial museums are places where "the ritual of citizenship is played out where individuals learn what it means to a group or nation" (Duncan, 1991 cited in Sodaro, 2018, p. 23). They provide a "self-regulatory function" for society (Sodaro, 2018, p. 23). They are spaces where group identities are created and reinforced and they also possess "legitimizing function" as they are considered a reliable source of information (ibid.). Bennett suggests that the modern museum is responsive to two main political demands; the demand that there should be parity of representation for all groups and cultures within the collecting, exhibition and conservation activities of museums, and the demand that the members of all social groups should have equal practical as well theoretical rights of access to museums" (Bennett, 1995, p. 9). Museums are powerful agents of cultural memory. They are "intersections where political, public and academic narratives meet" (Farbol cited in Andersen and Törquist-Plewa, 2017, p. 151).

3 Research Questions and Objectives

“The transformations wrought by museums on the objects, images, texts and people brought within their frame raise questions about agency and structure, process and change, which make this institution so central to global cultural dynamics.”

(Bouquet, 2012, p. 8)

The subject of this study is the politics of memory manifested in the Ravensbrück Memorial. Through examining the construction of cultural memory related to the former Nazi concentration camp and its alternation in time I seek the answer to the main research question of which narratives about the past are available in the institution and which discourses they produce and reproduce. The Memorial serves as the indicator of the politics of memory. It may be defined as a *lieu de mémoire*. There are various architectural structures creating the memorial including some of the land on which the former camp was installed, which is the material aspect of the site of memory. It also comprises the archives storing textual, visual and material sources of information and also the expositions presented to the visitors, which illustrates the functional side. Finally, the symbolic facet of the place as the site of remembering and mourning is observable during organized commemoration events or in the purposes of certain visits.

The aforementioned theoretical concepts and relevant empirical findings and approaches (Chapters 1 and 2) scaffold the investigation. Cultural memory is created by agents of memory in order to interpret events in the distant past; hence a shared memory can be created. Such memory is firmly bound to the group identity, which it constitutes and enhances, on the one hand, and by which it is formed, on the other hand. Cultural memory may be mediated in texts, rituals or audio-visual recordings and this way provided to a remembering subject. The Ravensbrück Memorial as a carrier of cultural memory provides the sources for remembering on the potential level and also on the actual level, as it creates

certain narratives about the past and makes them available. The meaning making takes place there by “forging links between three different orders of things – the world of things, people, events and experiences; the conceptual word [...] and the languages which ‘stand for’ or communicate those concepts” (Hall, 1997, p. 61).

The selected methodological approaches focus mainly on the visual and textual contents of two exhibitions with the objective to reveal the produced and reproduced discourses. I draw upon the theoretical view that there are certain visual meanings of the image itself (Rose, 2016) which reflect social reality. Here we may again draw a parallel to Arjun Appadurai’s reasoning of the focus on things themselves and the social lives of things, in which he claims that although we may be convinced that merely humans assign meanings to things through “transactions, attributions and motivations,” we can only interpret the significance of things by following their routes, as “from a methodological point of view it is the things-in-motion that illuminate their human and social context” (Appadurai, 1986, p. 5). Similarly, the visual and textual contents of the exhibition illustrate the social circumstances.

Using discourse analysis, the specific language which forms cultural memory will be examined. The source for investigation is the institution, the Memorial, in particular the exhibitions presented there as the media of cultural memory. These exhibitions were compiled by individuals (historians, curators or members of memory groups) and authorized by the institution, yet their contents are in relation to some currently circulating discourses. Therefore the exposition participates in the production and reproduction of a certain discourse. It results from social reality, but it also influences it. The Memorial fabricates what it represents. The museum facilitates the transition from the invisible world, of the past, to the visible world. It does it through providing the visitor with a narrative of what is no longer there manifested in the images, texts and artefacts on display.

While investigating cultural memory constructed in the specific site of memory, the Ravensbrück Memorial, in a delimited time span, the following questions are central. Which identities are represented and thus considered to be relevant? What narrative about the past is presented to the audience? Is it the one of universal history, the past shared by all, or are there certain groups which are separated and whose experience is differentiated from others? What kind of collective identity is constructed and for whom is it intended? The complexity of the answers to those questions is rooted, among other aspects, in the fact that this place of memory is located on the territory of a nation state and is also administered and publically financed by the Federal Republic of Germany and is in fact a national museum. However, the past events which occurred there extend beyond national borders, as there were prisoners from numerous countries and social groups. Moreover, the past and contemporary visitorship is also nationally diverse. Therefore, the institution's dealing with the national base and its international outreach in regard to the cultural memory is of our interest. Other relevant questions are related to the actors of memory and the construction of the *lieu de mémoire* as such. Who is the actor of memory of this particular place? To what extent, and how, is expert knowledge involved in the process? The content of memory sets apart what will be remembered and what will not. Since "remembering always interacts with forgetting" (Assmann and Shortt, 2012, p. 3), that which is not shown likewise deserves our attention. How are themes and identities which are available for the audience to encourage remembering selected? What is not on display? What thematic units are presented? Furthermore, the production and reproduction of the narrative of suffering and shared trauma is examined.

4 Methodological Framework: Analysing What Is on Display

“Visual imagery is never innocent it is always constructed through various practices, technologies and knowledges.”

(Rose, 2016, p. 23)

The objective of this chapter is to present the methodological approaches employed in the research. The focus of the study is on visual materials. However, images are rarely on display separately. They are at least accompanied with a label or a short text. The collocation of images and texts is emphasised in the term “image/text” coined by W. J. T. Mitchell (Rose, 2016, p. 22). Therefore, the visual methods of analysis concern both, the visual and the textual. At the beginning of this unit, the locality of fieldwork is introduced. It is the Ravensbrück Memorial and the two official permanent exhibitions. Subsequently, the type of data is characterized and the methods of discourse analysis described, including the process of coding. Finally, the additional method of semi-structured interviews is mentioned.

4.1 Introducing the Locality: Ravensbrück Memorial as the Subject of Investigation

The examined realm of collective cultural memory is the memorial located directly on the site of the former Nazi concentration camp Ravensbrück. The institution designated particularly for women, Frauenskonzentrationslager Ravensbrück was opened in 1939 and liberated in April 1945. According to the information about the history of the place published on the website of the Memorial, approximately 132,000 women, 20,000 men and 1,000 adolescent or

young women were registered there. The function of the institution had been a labour camp first. In 1944 it was changed into an extermination camp⁴.

The site is located eighty kilometres to the north of Berlin and during the period of divided Germany it was situated in the eastern part of the country. The national memorial was founded in 1959, first as a museum displaying artefacts donated by former prisoners. It was one of the three national memorials established then in the German Democratic Republic. Simultaneously to being a memorial, the former camp was practically utilized. Its facilities were used by the Soviet army between the years 1945 and 1999.

The official name in German Mahn- und Gedenkstätte Ravensbrück clearly illustrates the intended function of the institution during the existence of the GDR. The word *mahn-*, from *mahnen* meaning to remind or to caution, was added to the German word for memorial. Only memorials in East Germany were titled so. The name encourages activity in the audience. The visitors were demanded not to forget in order to recognize the current better times, under a different political regime, and behave in compliance with the “nie wieder”, “never again” slogan. Nowadays the title is perceived by some, for example, within the memorial’s directory, rather as a reminder of the ideology of East Germany, as too commanding, representing a lifted index finger of the non-democratic socialist regime. Nowadays, the memorial is administrated by the Brandenburg Memorial Foundation, founded in the early nineteen nineties under the German Ministry of Culture.

Despite its unique features, concerning the groups of prisoners for example or the post-war developments on the site, Ravensbrück has not drawn much scholarly attention. The current director of the memorial referred to the first scholarly research in the nineteen eighties conducted by students from Berlin as part of a diploma thesis on Jewish women in Ravensbrück. She believes that the specificity of the site lies in its characteristic of being a women’s place.

⁴ Stiftung Brandenburgische Gedenkstätten. (2019) *Mahn und Gedenskätte Ravensbrück*. [Online]. Available at: <http://www.ravensbrueck-sbg.de/> (Accessed: 30 May 2016), translated by the author.

Normally, concentration camps are for men. One speaks of concentration camps... Ravensbrück is called WCL - women's concentration camp (FKL, Frauenkonzentrationslager). When people speak about concentration camps, they always see men. We must remember that there were also a lot of women. The popular memory sees a concentration camp prisoner as a male. We must correct that.

(Interview, 2016, translated by the author)

Janet Jacobs, who chose the site for her fieldwork, adds in the same line that “German collective memory is impressive and offers insight into the complex nature of public forms of commemoration, a review of the research reveals the extent to which questions of gender have remained somewhat obscured in this broad field of memory studies. Perhaps the most glaring omission is the absence of an extensive body of scholarship on Ravensbrück” (Jacobs, 2010, p. 51).⁵

The historian Sarah Helm writes in a similar vein when she refers to the public presence and absence of the Ravensbrück concentration camp as a place of history and of memory. “Out of view of the West, the site became a shrine to the camp's communist heroines, and all over East Germany streets and schools were named after them. Meanwhile, in the West, Ravensbrück literally disappeared from view. Western survivors, historians, journalists couldn't even get near the site. In their own countries the former prisoners struggled to get their stories published. Evidence was hard to access. Transcripts of the Hamburg trials were classified ‘secret’ and closed for thirty years” (Helm, 2015, p. xiv).

⁵ This section of the text was published in the online anthropological journal *Antropowebsin*. Here it was slightly modified. Kadlecová, Š. (2018). Abandoning the Monolithic Victim: Changes in Representations of Memory of Ravensbrück Concentration Camp. *AntropoWebzin*. 1-2, pp. 37-44.

4.2 The Exhibitions

4.2.1 National Memorials in the Cell Building

The first exhibition at the site, the “camp museum”, was opened on September 12, 1959 on one floor in the former camp prison, the so-called cell building, also referred to as the bunker by former prisoners. This date marks the establishment of the Ravensbrück National Memorial. Until 1956 the structure had been occupied by the Soviet army, but following governmental resolutions the National Memorial was to be built in the cleared spaces of the of the former cells. The motto for the first museum agreed on by an international prisoner committee was “War – Never Again! Fascism – Never again!” (Beßmann in Eschebach, 2008, p. 49).

Eventually, individual cells “which originally measured 3.40 x 2.25 metres” (Eschebach in Eschebach, 2008, p. 81) were converted into spaces for national installations. Mainly national survivor associations, such as the Czechoslovak Association of Freedom Fighters or the Austrian Ravensbrück-Camp Association, were responsible for equipping the exhibition rooms. Some of them commissioned professional artists. The exhibitory curatorial approach resembled the “galleries of tradition (*Traditionskabinette*, small displays in rooms consisting of objects, photographs, and other materials) that were customary for documenting the history and overall development of a school, factory or other institution in the German Democratic Republic” (ibid., p. 76-77).

In 1984, a “functional diagram” was formulated to provide guidelines for designing the rooms. The main motifs institutionally selected for the memorials were the following: “national flags and plinths at the rear wall; the main focus of museum is women’s resistance, alternatively artistic interpretations of this struggle” (ibid., p. 83). Although the layout of them was assigned, there was no unifying foundation of the expositions and the national approaches varied considerably. Their order in the cell building illustrated the chronological spread of fascism across European countries. Drawing on this perspective, the Spanish national exhibition was situated in the first room, Austrian in the second and the

one of Czechoslovakia in the third hall from the entrance. Eschebach points out the didactic principle of the museum to guide the visitors “through the chronological aspects of National Socialism’s practice of conquest” (ibid.). She also shares a remarkable observation of a certain irony of such decision “that the visitor following the guided tour involuntarily slips into the role of German Wehrmacht by entering each national space” (ibid.). Although assigned to individual countries which the prisoners represented, the exhibitions “also supported and promoted the development of the public memory of the Ravensbrück concentration camp” (ibid., p.13).

After an extensive reconstruction, the memorial was re-opened in 1986 inaugurating nineteen rooms. After the reunification of Germany in the nineteen nineties, three rooms were added, “dedicated to groups of prisoners who had not previously been represented in Ravensbrück: the members of the ‘20 July 1944’ resistance group (1991), Jewish prisoners (1992) and Sinti and Roma (1994)” (ibid).

In 2003, the administering organization – the Brandenburg Memorial Foundation – decided that the national memorials should be conserved (ibid). Therefore, they provide an opportunity for visitors as well as scholars to examine the construction of the collective cultural memory of Ravensbrück.⁶ Although the last version of the exhibition was opened in 2006, it is not currently accessible. The cell building has been closed since March 2017 due to renovation.

4.2.2 The New Exhibition

The former SS headquarters hosts the main contemporary exhibition. The building was restored to become a museum. The visitor is invited by the sign Women in Ravensbrück: History and Memory on the façade. The last renovation

⁶ This part of the text was published in the online anthropological journal *Antropowebsin*. Kadlecová, Š. (2018). Abandoning the Monolithic Victim: Changes in Representations of Memory of Ravensbrück Concentration Camp. *AntropoWebzin*. 1-2, pp. 37-44.

of the structure aimed at providing safe conditions for displaying the collections and also at revealing the original structures where possible. Thus, for example, when the visitor enters the ground floor, they notice a spot of a distinct shape on the opposite wall. The absence of the eagle atop swastika is present in its outline. In the preface to the volume on the memorials established in the cell building in Ravensbrück published in 2008, the current director of the Memorial Insa Eschebach expresses the need of a more contemporary approach to the museum as she writes that “a new place of commemoration should be created outside of the cell building which meets the demands of a pluralistically oriented culture of commemoration” (Eschebach 2008, p. 15). In April 2013 a new main exhibition⁷ was inaugurated on the occasion of the annual commemoration of the liberation of the camp. The exhibition rooms spread over two floors and unlike the national memorials in the cell building, they evince a linking curators’ idea. Obviously, this is a complex exhibition designed by the Memorial, which contains textual and visual media, photographs, documents, biographies and material objects employed to provide an insight in the topography, history and function of the concentration camp, the life in it and the practices of commemoration. The Memorial presents it on the website as including “media points with accounts from 54 survivors as well as 152 biographies of former prisoners, 13 main introductory texts”, accompanied with “35 thematic texts, 160 texts on individual topics, 80 folders, 17 video points, and 22 audio points to provide a more in-depth look at the history of the site, around 1,000 photos and documents and roughly 500 objects [...] on display, some of them for the first time”⁸. According to the official exhibition catalogue, three methodological approaches were deployed in the concept. They are contextualizing, historicizing and multiperspectivity (Beßmann and Eschebach, 2013). By contextualizing the authors understand the approach “not to state a date or a thing alone” (Eschebach

⁷ The main exposition is referred to as the new exhibition in the text. It is the most recent permanent exhibition. I have also heard this expression from interviewees, the people engaged in the memory work at the Memorial.

⁸ Stiftung Brandenburgische Gedenkstätten. (2019) *Mahn und Gedenskätte Ravensbrück*. [Online]. Available at: <http://www.ravensbrueck-sbg.de/> (Accessed: 30 March 2019)

in Beßmann and Eschebach, 2013, p. 15, translated by the author) and to explain why there was a women's concentration camp established in 1938. Historicizing allows the understanding of a story as past. Concerning the new exhibition, multiperspectivity relates to the differences among the groups of prisoners, their experiences and remembering. In this view, memories of Ravensbrück are not coherent and therefore they will not be deliberately presented so. The project was funded by the Federal Commissioner for Culture and the Media and the European Regional Development Fund and supported by a large number of archives and institutions as indicated in the text about contributors and acknowledgements.

4.3 The Type of Data

The collections displayed in two exhibitions of the Ravensbrück Memorial in different time periods after the Second World War serve as the material for creating research data. The visual content, such as photographs, sculptures or drawings, the textual content, such as the legends to the artefacts and accompanying texts in various parts of the exhibition, and also the fashion in which the exhibitions are designed, for example the layout of individual thematic units and artefacts and their location in the exhibitory space, are examined. The main research method is discourse analysis. It is employed to analyse both, visual and textual materials as well as ordering of artefacts and their spatial arrangement. The visual culture scholar Gillian Rose (2014) defines them for the field of visual anthropology and labels the approach to the former discourse analysis I and to the latter discourse analysis II. In the following text this distinction was adopted in order to distinguish between the focus on the media of cultural memory, the image/text and the institutional practices.

4.4 Discourse Analysis

The above mentioned methodological approaches draw upon the philosopher Michel Foucault's concept and method and examine the construction of discourse. The term discourse denotes certain knowledge of the world and influences how one will understand the world and the way things are done in the world. Discourse is created by sets of utterances which construct the way one will think about a certain thing, phenomenon, person or milieu and how this knowledge will influence one's behaviour towards it. The cultural theorist Stuart Hall explains that "by discourse, Foucault meant a group of statements which provide a language for talking about – a way of representing the knowledge about – a particular topic at a particular historical moment ... Discourse is about the production of knowledge through language. But ... since all social practices entail meaning, and meanings shape and influence what we do – our conduct – all practices have a discursive aspect" (Hall, 1997, p. 44). Foucault writes of a "gradation among discourses" in societies. There are "those which are said in the ordinary course of days and exchanges, and which vanish as soon as they have been pronounced; and [...] those discourses which, over and above their formulation, are said indefinitely, remain said, and are to be said again" (Foucault in Young, 1981, p. 56-57). The latter are the ritualized and institutionalized texts. The discourses represented in the Memorial are such example. The knowledge produced in discourse is not universal, according to Foucault, for it is always embedded in a certain historical and cultural context. There is an analogy between discourse and cultural memory. Remembering happens in language. It reproduces a certain discourse which structures the memory of a past event. The variables such as power, control, selection, organisation and redistribution are involved in the construction of both, discourse and cultural memory. Foucault also describes "the will to truth" (ibid., p. 54), which is employed in the construction of knowledge. It operates when aiming at a true discourse and "rests on an institutional support" (ibid.). Cultural memory likewise strives to present the true narrative about the past for a certain group.

Discourse analysis I “tends to pay rather more attention to the notion of discourse as articulated through various kinds of visual images and verbal texts” and not necessarily to “practices entailed by specific discourses” (Rose, 2016, p. 192). In the field of social sciences, discourse and memory are perceived as social rather than individual formations. Discourse analysis I is employed to investigate how discourses are constituted in order to claim the truth, attempt for reality and their own convincingness.

In social reality, the claims of the truth and convincingness are observable features also of cultural memory. Museums’ objective is to constitute the knowledge of the past, through their collections on display and employment of other strategies, and to instigate remembering of the past in visitors as it is represented. Discourse analysis I deals with visual materials and focuses on “the social modality of the image site” (ibid., p. 193). In this case, “visuality is viewed as the topic of research” and we are interested in “how images” and texts on display “construct accounts of the social world” (ibid., p. 192). “In particular, discourse analysis explores how those specific view and accounts are constructed as real or truthful or natural through particular regimes of truth” (ibid., p. 193).

A crucial condition of discourse analysis is a careful choice of sources for investigation. In this research, those are the contents of the collections exhibited in the Ravensbrück Memorial, which, in fact, have been pre-selected by various agents, the authors of the installations and other contributing individuals and groups. This case study deals with the contents of the exposition – photography, illustrations, objects and texts. When conducting discourse analysis, it is vital to approach inspected texts and images with *fresh eyes*, writes Rose (2016), avoiding prejudices and former knowledge of the topic. Also, it is crucial to “take images seriously”, which means to “look at images very carefully”, “because they are not entirely reducible to their context” and it is essential to acknowledge that “visual images have their own effects” (ibid., p. 22). This criterion is one of the three key ones for critical visual methodology listed by Rose.

In the primary phase of the research, I executed six visits to the site, walked through the whole area of the memorial and through the exhibitions, making fieldnotes and taking photos and video records of the items on display. Subsequently, I scrutinized the visual material, focusing on its composition and content in order to identify what it is saying. Following my familiarization with the material, I used coding to identify key themes and to examine the relations among them. In this process the following questions were attended to. “How are particular words or images given specific meanings? Are there meaningful clusters of words and images? What associations are established within such clusters? (Andersen cited in Rose, 2016, p. 206). Besides investigating the visible, it is a part of discourse analysis to search for the invisible. The invisible, the not-on-display, corresponds with the not-meant-to-be-remembered or, in other words, the to-be-forgotten in the area of cultural memory.

Having recognised the complexity of the subject of study, I employed the approach of discourse analysis II (Rose 2016), which focuses on the practice of institutions such as art galleries or museums in articulating discourses. If the previously mentioned method is centred on the image or text itself, this one investigates the site of production, as it “used to look at the ways in which various dominant institutions have put images to work” (ibid., p. 251). It deals with the practices of the institution as such, the architecture presenting visual material, technologies employed in the installations and the spatial layout of artefacts. The researcher is concerned with the ways the items of the collection on display are arranged, laid out and ordered. This method involves, for example, the focus on the spatial properties of the exposition – the building of the museum and the halls, the “technologies of display” (ibid., p. 234-244) – the presence or absence of display cases and their type, reconstructions, simulacra or immersive displays; “textual and visual technologies of interpretation” (ibid., p. 237-238) – labels and captions, panels and catalogues. As the expositions at the Memorial are the places where the knowledge of the Ravensbrück concentration camp is produced and as the institution holds power, the focus on the apparatuses of the exhibitions contributes to revealing the politics of memory.

When obtaining visual material presented in the official exhibitions at the Memorial, I had to make a use of the rich archives of the institution, as only the new exhibition was open to public in the time of my fieldwork. The building where the national memorials are located was under rehabilitation. However, I managed to be provided with a time-limited access to it⁹. Additionally, two catalogues accompanying the exhibitions published by the Memorial were the sources for data creation.

4.5 The Coding

When coding the visual and textual materials, I followed the physical division of the exhibitions. It means that each exhibitory room creates a complex visual/textual element, which was further decomposed and analysed. I investigated twenty sets of visual/textual materials from the national memorials and thirty-four sets from the new exhibition. That appeared more practical in regard to the comparison of a strictly divided exhibition in the cell building with the new one, more thematically overlapping. Having followed the required characteristics of codes to be “exhaustive, exclusive and enlightening” (Rose, 2016, p. 92), I created the categories listed below. I coded the set of images and texts manually for:

1. Nationality depicted/described
2. Ethnicity depicted/described
3. Social status depicted/described
4. Woman - exclusivity of female experience depicted/described
5. Suffering depicted/described
6. Indicators of expert knowledge
7. First-hand past experience/testimony
8. Shared past experience versus distinct past experience
9. Central position in the image

⁹ In general, the director and the staff of the Ravensbrück Memorial were supportive of the research.

The first code was assigned when nationality, for instance the words French, Spanish, Italian or national attributes, was detected in the image or the text. The second code was assigned mainly when the words or depictions of Jewish and Roma/Sinti were used. The third category relates to the depictions and descriptions of the so-called asocial and other social classes. The invention of the fourth code was rather problematic. If it had been ‘woman’, it would have been concerned with most of the material, as the past represented at the Ravensbrück Memorial is that of women prisoners mainly. Therefore, the category labels women and the exclusivity of the female experience, related to the body, the social roles or activities regarded as female. The fifth code indicated the depiction or description of suffering – mental or physical, killing and death. The categories six and seven distinguish the engagement of expert knowledge represented by the curators, historians, etc. and the inclusion of the prisoners/survivors and their testimonies. The eighth code was used when the experience of a certain group was highlighted. The ninth category relates to the composition of the image/text and indicated the focus on some individual or group.

4.6 Interviews with Agents of Memory

The method of discourse analyses is complemented with the method of semi-structured interviews with the agents of memory. They were the authors, for example the director of the Memorial and other individuals and members of groups engaged in the project of the current exhibition. I have also interviewed those whose voices and images contributed to the creation of the cultural memory available in the Ravensbrück Memorial. In fact, they are the foundation of such memory – the witnesses. Since the nineteen eighties, when survivors of the Holocaust and other events of the Second World War began to speak about their experiences in public, their testimonies have been perceived as crucial

components of the narrative about that particular past. Survivors have been depicted in documentary and feature films. They have been part of educational programmes and have attended public discussions. In this context, Aleida Assmann writes of witness memory which “includes public commemoration and an appeal to future generations” (Assmann, 2012, p. 177). Witnesses gave voice to the ones that perished in the genocide and took part in “the social recognition of historical traumas” (ibid.).¹⁰

Furthermore, the video or audio recordings of their storytelling constitute the collections of memorial museums such as Yad Vashem or the Jewish Museum in Berlin. Also in the main exhibition in the Ravensbrück Memorial, the voices, images and talking heads of witnesses are the artefacts on display. They are the media of communicative memory (Assmann) which should provide authenticity as they are understood as the ones who ‘were there’, those who enable the connection of the audience with the past. However, “the historical witness is a liminal figure” and when their word disappears, the community will rely “exclusively on mediated representation of the past” (Assmann and Shortt, 2012, p. 6). The inclusion of the witnesses might be an attempt to preserve the voice of a “relative past” and incorporate it into an “absolute past” (Koselleck cited in Assmann and Shortt, 2012, p. 6). At this point the two participation structures of memories, the diffuse one and the specialized one, categorized by Jan Assmann and mentioned in Chapter 1 combine. As this integration was done within certain curatorial and project idea, I chose to seize the opportunity to interview selected individuals who are portrayed in the exhibition, the survivors and their descendants, and include extracts of the interviews in the analysis.

¹⁰ This part of the text was published in an article in the ethnological journal *Český lid*. Kadlecová, Š. (2017). Relating to the Distant Past: Routes of Memory of Women Concentration-Camp Survivors. *Český lid*. 104, pp. 473–494.

5 Findings

Who Is on Display: Representation of Identities and Reproduction of the Discourses of Nationalism, Individualism and Struggle for Recognition

I prefer speaking about history rather than personal matters. For it's such a coincidence what happened. So, I don't speak very personally. You know, I spent those three years there. I didn't even have to go to the nursery room. I was just working at the sewing machine. I mean I survived it without any bigger harm, so (...) I want people not to forget the history, because it was just terrible in the time of Hitler. Your life could change so much.

(Interview, 2015, translated by the author)¹¹

This chapter presents the results of the discourse analysis of the visual and textual materials from two exhibitions installed in the Ravensbrück Memorial in different time periods in order to reveal the politics of memory of the site and the production and reproduction of certain discourses. It is divided into eleven units. The first two sections introduce the reader to the field and the discourses identified. In the beginning, the entering of the field is illustrated by an excerpt from fieldnotes. Subsequently three discourses are identified and defined, namely that of nationalism, individualism and the struggle for recognition. The presentation of the results of the analysis begins with the focus on the structure of both exhibitions. Then the replication of the discourse of nationalism is discussed in regard to the narrative about the distinct or shared past. The next section refers to the shift from nationalism to individualism and multiperspectivity, which means the turning away from the monolithic victims of numerous nations and

¹¹ This is an excerpt of an interview I conducted with a Czech survivor who spent three years in Ravensbrück at the age of nineteen to twenty one. Her biography is presented in the binder on Czech prisoners in the new exhibition at the Ravensbrück Memorial. Kadlecová, Š. (2017). Relating to the Distant Past: Routes of Memory of Women Concentration-Camp Survivors. *Český lid*. 104, pp. 473–494.

replacing it by the victimized individuals, however of different nationalities. The following part of the text deals with the inclusion or exclusion of ethnic, religious and social groups. The next three thematic sections centre on the victim and illuminate the aspects interacting in the fabrication of shared suffering via personalisation and humanization of the narrative, in contrast with the previous one(s). The final section focuses on the making the female experience visible and the reinforcement of the identity of the woman through revealing the moments of particular oppression. Throughout all sections, the agents of memory are mentioned in order to reveal to what extent expert knowledge and testimonial knowledge and other agents are engaged in the construction of the cultural memory. The politics of memory is observed via the changes in the narratives offered in two official exhibitions on the site which occurred throughout time. Regarding the structure of this text, I proceed from the collection staged earlier (in mid nineteen-eighties) to the so-called new exhibition (opened in twenty thirteen).

5.1 Entering the Field

The memorial is approximately a twenty-five-minute walk from the train station in Fürstenberg/Havel. As I get off the train and start walking through the small town, I cannot but remember that most prisoners arrived by the same route. Besides, there is a reminder of the transports, a mural covering the façade of one side of the building of the train station. It depicts a steam engine which has just arrived in front of a large sign Fürstenberg. A crowd of anonymous grey silhouettes is flowing out of the train guarded by armed soldiers with dogs painted in black. As my eyes follow the mass to the background, a pile of suitcases, which I realize to have become a characteristic image of the Holocaust, appears. Behind it there are factory buildings and a few filled carts illustrating their operation. Looking at the mural, I think of the words importation, de-

individualization, personal-property loss, power, surveillance, industry, Fürstenberg. In the lower left corner, there's an inscription saying: 'Create your history'. The command along with the choice of colours used instigates restlessness in the viewer and implies that the history portrayed is likely to be what is called a dark chapter.



*Picture 1: The Mural on the Facade of the Train Station in Fürstenberg/Havel.
(Photo by the author, 2016)*

I keep walking and pass by a café, a bed-and-breakfast and a sign which advertises horse-riding. Other memorial signs appear when I take the right from the main road following the arrow indicating Mahn- und Gedenkstätte Ravensbrück. There are small paintings on the sidewalk. One square is filled out with a striped blue-and-white pattern, as if there was a patch from the prisoner uniform, the other with barbed-wire. A bronze statue along the way marks the proximity of the Memorial. It is located between the street and the road out of

town. It is called 'Mothers' and was unveiled in 1965. The author Fritz Cremer sculpted the three women with shaven heads carrying a stretcher with a child on it. Another child is holding tight on the mother's skirt. Suffering is expressed through bodily features of the women, the hunched shoulders, the absence of hair, and the lamenting posture of one of them. Also, the child's grip on the fabric of the mother's clothes and both their faces symbolize fear and hardship. Although the Memorial is rather isolated by a forest and a lake, the merging of the ordinary and the extraordinary, of life and death, of what had been on that ground and how it functions now is significant for the location. When one emerges from the forest, there are rows of two-floor houses on the left side. Some of these former residences of the SS guards nowadays function as accommodation for visitors and tourists. Some provide rooms for exhibitions and events organized by the Memorial. The visitor is welcome by the information centre, a small booth on which the name Ravensbrück and the words Gedenkstätte and memorial are painted in capital letters. I go past the former headquarters and see the sign inviting to the main permanent exhibition 'The Ravensbrück Women's Concentration Camp - History and Memory'. On the right side, there is Lake Schwedt, a place for a holiday sail from its banks in Fürstenberg and at the same time the urn for the ashes of those who were killed and cremated in the camp. I look towards the town and see the anchored boats and I remember the memories of arrival of one survivor.

Finally we arrived, after one day and two nights. It was in June and when I saw the lake, I thought that this might be a nice place to stay after all.

(Interview, 2015, translated by the author)

I pass the offices of the staff working at the Memorial and stop in the area where the barracks for prisoners once stood. I can see their outlines in the land. There is a grey concrete building in the left corner of the rectangular space. That is the former prison, the so-called cell building, where the other permanent exhibition is located.

(Fieldnotes, 2017)

5.2 The Discourses Reproduced

The objective of the analysis was to identify what organisation of thinking and understanding of the world are reproduced in cultural memory constructed at the Ravensbrück Memorial through the narratives available in the exhibitions. In this passage of the chapter, three discourses in effect will be characterised. They are the discourse of *nationalism*, the discourse of *individualism* and the discourse of the *struggle for recognition*.

Firstly, by the discourse of nationalism, I simply refer to the type of thinking in which the nation is central, however problematic the definitions of both terms are. The political scientist Benedict Anderson defines the nation as “an imagined political community”, which is “limited and sovereign” (Anderson, 1991, p. 6). It is imagined as any other community which expands beyond the village-like, face-to-face relations among people. Obviously, it is political, as it is concerned with governance. It is imagined as limited, because its size is finite and, inevitably, it borders on other nations. Finally it is imagined as sovereign as a result of the ideological, cultural and territorial conditions under which the nation emerged. In regard to cultural memory, the main theme of this text, nationalism will construct the narrative of the past in order to reinforce national identity. “Nationalism has become the most readily available motor of patriotism” (Taylor in Hall, 1998, p. 202). That means that “when leaders want to unite a country, and lift people out of their warring partial allegiances, they appeal to a broader national identity, telling a story which makes this central to the history of their society, rather than the partial identities they are trying to supersede” (ibid.). Basing on how the identities other than citizenship are dealt with, the political scientist David Brown distinguishes the following three types of nationalism. “Civic nationalism offers a vision of a community of equal citizens; ethnocultural nationalism offers a vision of a community united by a belief in common ancestry and ethnocultural sameness; and multicultural nationalism offers a vision of a community which respects and promotes the cultural autonomy and status equality of its component ethnic groups” (Brown,

2000, p. 122). In the context of this study, the nation predominantly means the nation state and we deal with nationalism as mainly ethnocultural or civic.

Secondly, by the discourse of individualism, I mean the way of thinking and understanding of the world which highlights the individual. Philosophically, individualism may be understood as the “tendency to underline individual liberty, as against external authority, and individual activity, as against associated activity. In all forms of individualism, the emphasis is on the importance of the self, and especially the notion of self-development with no restraint or help from without” (Conceição Soares, 2018, p. 16). In the research findings, individualism is put in contrast with nationalism. The narrative about the past shaped by the discourse of individualism would therefore focus on the stories of particular persons rather than of the collectivity. This ideological background is connected with the principle of multiple perspectives, one of the three conceptual foundations which the creators of the new exhibition stated. In the official catalogue *multiperspectivity* in the context of the collection is explained as twofold. “Firstly, in the camp itself, there were considerable differences among individual prisoner groups and members of various nations that found themselves together in the war. The prisoners came from different national, social and political milieux and in Ravensbrück they were confronted with extremely divergent chances for survival. The high quantity of various memories is an expression of the transformations the concentration camp Ravensbrück has undergone since its foundation. [...] Correspondingly, the exhibition locates the contrary memories next to each other wherever it is possible in order to mediate the sense of diversity of the existential conditions and the experiences of the prisoners in the camp” (Eschebach in Beßmann and Eschebach, 2013, p. 20, translated by the author). The current director of the Ravensbrück Memorial and chief member of the team which created the new main exhibition explained the roots for the curatorial choice to employ multiple perspectives. She referred to the complexity of the story of Ravensbrück as the main objective of the new exhibition in order to present a narrative which corresponds with the factual information available, so that the site could overcome the ideological load from

the first four decades of its existence. An excerpt of the interview is presented below.

The story of Ravensbrück had always been told very ideologically here at the Ravensbrück Memorial. There had been certain groups, such as the communists, which had been emphasized. And the main exhibition which had been here in the times of the GDR was designed to serve the class conflict and also say that all SS perpetrators were situated in West Germany and that capitalism and fascism belong together. Thus, hatred towards West Germany was to be produced. This is obvious in the concept of the old exposition; it was an exhibition which was to create hatred.

There had been little research into this field for many years. In the nineteen eighties, three scientific books about Ravensbrück were published. One, a large volume written by Vanda Kicinska came out in Polish, two, an early publication in French by Germaine Tillion; and there was one more academic text in Germany. That was all for the scientific literature.

My impression is that it was after the unification and also the opening of the archives in Europe when the research on Ravensbrück began. And women and gender studies in Germany concentrated on Ravensbrück, because it was women's concentration camp. And we had a lot of ... it was a fantastic opportunity, because a lot of academic qualification theses were created in the nineties and afterwards, at the turn of the millennium, so that the knowledge of Ravensbrück grew so much in those two decades. Ms Jacobeit, my predecessor, who herself was involved with the university supported that very much as well.

So we can say that our objective with the new exhibition in 2013 was to tell the whole story of Ravensbrück for the first time, in its great complexity. I mean those were only six years, from nineteen thirty-nine to nineteen forty-five, but every year was different. There was no Ravensbrück. But since the beginning every year, there had been

different Ravensbrücks. The Italian group sees Ravensbrück totally differently than the Soviet women, the members of the Red Army, or the French, who were so educated, and the Czech group is also quite outstanding, also a lot of educated women among them ... and naturally the Germans, the communists, and the big ideological conflict between the communist and the social democrat...

The cosmos is immense.

(Interview, 2016, translated by the author)

Thirdly, by the discourse of the struggle for recognition, I mean the thinking and knowledge essential for the strife of formerly marginalized groups to become visible and accepted by the dominant one(s), the one(s) in power. The philosopher Charles Taylor claims that recognition is crucial for identity formation. “The importance of recognition is now universally acknowledged in one form or another; on an intimate plane, we are all aware of how identity can be formed or malformed through the course of our contact with significant others. On the social plane, we have a continuing politics of equal recognition” (Taylor cited in Gutman, 1994, p. 36). The existence of the struggle for recognition frequently emanates from the emphasis on the moments of suffering of the oppressed in the narratives about them.

5.3 The Structures of the Two Exhibitions

Both exhibitions are located in architectural structures built in the era of National Socialism in Germany, yet in different areas of the Memorial, in distinct styles and for dissimilar purposes. The exhibition inaugurated earlier occupies former cells for punished prisoners. The cell building was built according to the Prussian prison standards and was a common facility in other Nazi institutions

for prisoners. Nevertheless, the “two-story design of the cell building, with its open ceiling, skylight and side windows, sets it apart from the detention buildings in other concentration camps” (Ehresmann in Eschebach, 2008, p. 63). The building is situated in the area of the original camp where the prisoners lived. Visitors find it next to the open empty space with a land-art piece indicating the barracks. The exhibitory rooms are the former cells, dedicated to national state memorials, after modification. There are concrete walls and small windows. The space itself triggers the feeling of desolation, as its original function is recognisable for most visitors from the arrangement of the structure, and as the interior is rather obscure, because of the prevailing grey colour and the limited light source. Apparently, that was an intention of the redesign the cell building underwent in mid nineteen eighties. The concept drafted by the directory of the Memorial which suggests that “the austerity and coldness of the cell building along with the echo of their footsteps will affect the visitors emotionally” (archival document quoted in Eschebach, 2008, p. 49). Generally, the cell building is known as a place of suffering among survivors. Many of them saw it or were there during the time of their incarceration. The visitors are invited to remember the evil and commemorate the victims at the place where the perpetrators made them suffer.

On the other hand, the new exhibition is situated outside the area of the former camp where most prisoners did not happen to find themselves, the SS headquarters. The interior is well-lit with wide corridors and staircases and ample rooms with wooden floors. However renovated, the absent furnishing, decorations and the original purpose are present, physically in the structure or in archival photos on display. For example, there is a patch of darker plaster on the wall opposite from the main entrance. With a closer look, the visitor recognises the outline of the Nazi-eagle symbol (see Picture 3). There is another image of the symbol from the ornamental window above the flight of wooden stairs to the first floor (see Picture 4). It was photographed and placed in the so-called SS album. Nowadays it is on display facing its original placement. The same strategy of introducing archival photos of the space, for example that of the then

carpeted (now wooden) corridor, or displaying material objects from the past, such as a wing of the door leading to the former conference room, in comparison to the current state is employed in other parts of the exhibition. Moreover, the visitor is informed about the history of the place immediately after entering the building.

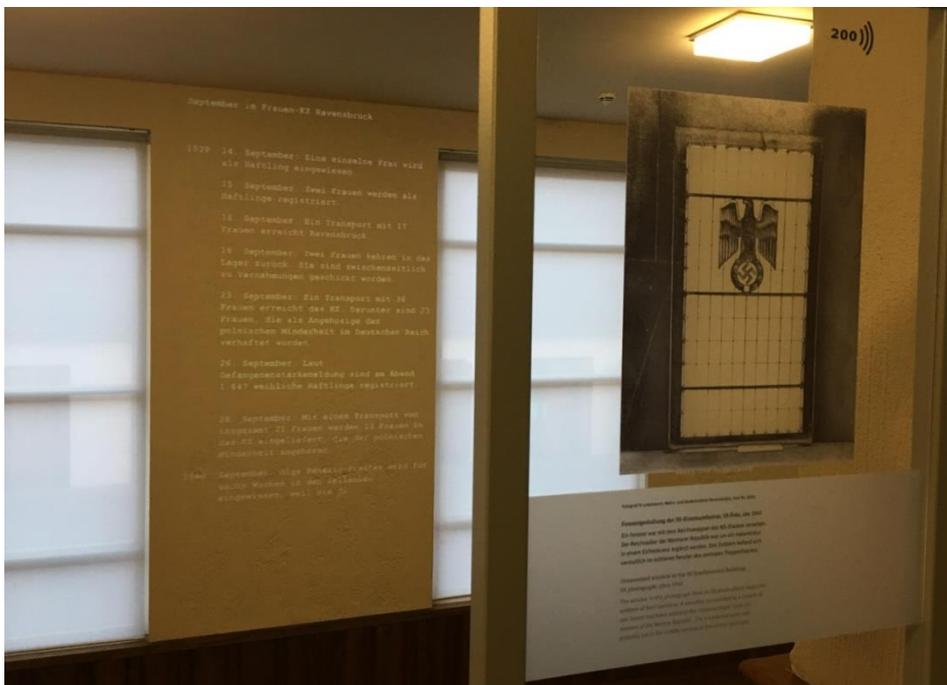
This is where the crimes committed at Ravensbrück were planned and the orders for their execution were given.

(Text on the exhibitory panel, ground floor, the new exhibition)

This approach probably aims at establishing a connection between the current visitors and the past through the space itself. Their bodies move through the space which was once part of the institution they are learning about. It is not a newly built museum where the exhibition is located and the original purpose of the building should not be forgotten. The back-then-versus-now perspective may contribute to the immersion of visitors in the theme of the exhibition. However, the perpetrator of the evil committed in Ravensbrück is still present. The visitors walk the stairs as the officers once did and enter well-organized exposition rooms in the former workplace of the SS. If the cell building was a place of the loss of physical power on the side of the prisoner and execution of power on the side of the officers, the headquarters was a place where power was concentrated in its full potential.



Picture 3: The Entrance to the New Exhibition. On the left the outline of the formerly mounted Nazi symbol is visible. The title of the exhibition in German and English is on the wall in the background. (Photo by the author, 2019)



Picture 4: View of the Window above the Staircase in the New Exhibition. The installation combines the physical features of the present with archival images and documents. (Photo by the author, 2019)

The thematic sections of this exhibition are delimited by the architectural layout of the interior as in the cell building. There are thirty-four exhibition rooms located on two floors. There are thirteen themes, which are numbered and titled as listed below. They consist of sub-themes and thus spread over more rooms.

1. The establishment and development of the Ravensbrück camp
2. The prisoners
3. Everyday life at the camp: Conditions of imprisonment
4. Everyday life at the camp: Solidarity and self-preservation
5. The SS and its 'retinue'
6. Slave labour and the satellite camps
7. The Uckermark 'juvenile protective custody camp'
8. The camp's infirmary
9. Murder and mass deaths at Ravensbrück
10. The dissolution and liberation of the camp
11. Life after the liberation
12. Ravensbrück as a site of commemoration
13. Commemoration of Ravensbrück in Europe

Merely from the list of topics it is apparent that the new exhibition locates the place itself in the centre of visitors' attention. In comparison, the older exhibition highlights the states whose citizens were imprisoned and their narratives whatever they may be. Also, the time period covered in the expositions differs. The new exhibition reflects upon a higher number of decades after the Second World War and even on the ways of commemoration related to the site. It presents information about what was happening there, before, during and after the war. Moreover, the installation of the new exhibition includes features not only of the original function of the building, but also from the 'Museum of Antifascist Resistance' established there in nineteen eighty-four. Scenes cut out from a relief by an artist Friedrich Porsdorf depicting the life at the camp, which

was commissioned for the former museum's collection, are on display in various rooms of the current exposition.

5.4 Employment of Nationality for Separation or Inclusion: From National Narratives to Creating a Diverse Ravensbrück Community

Nationality is a significant category in both expositions. Obviously, it results from the fact that members of various nationalities were deported to the concentration camp. However, it is dealt with differently in terms of spatial and artefact arrangements, narrative construction or agency and participation structure. Nationality marks separation by space, language and experience in the exhibition in the cell building, whereas in the new exhibition it is presented as one of the aspects of the heterogeneous story of the Ravensbrück concentration camp.

“The idea of honouring the different groups of prisoners according to their nationality became a custom in the period just after the war at various sites where concentration camps had been located” (Eschebach in Eschebach, 2008, p. 75). It may express “the desire to reconstruct national states that was prevalent in Europe after the Second World War” (Perz cited in Eschebach, 2008, p. 75). The exhibition in the cell building had consisted of eighteen halls dedicated to national commemorations of eighteen states. Eventually, a non-state commemoration of all those who were murdered and the one recognizing the Roma and Sinti prisoners were added and one installation was decomposed following a political change in the country. The exhibitions in the cell building do not represent all nations citizens were imprisoned in the camp. The current director of the Ravensbrück Memorial remarks to the selection that “the fact that the prisoners in the Ravensbrück concentration camp came over 40 countries raises the question why only 18 national associations of former prisoners have memorial rooms in the cell building, and also why those 18 in particular”

(Eschebach, 2008, p. 83). The countries which established their own commemoration room are the following: Spain, Austria, the Czech Republic (formerly Czechoslovakia), Poland, Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands and Belgium on the left side form the entrance, and Italy, Bulgaria, Rumania, The Soviet Union, Albania, Slovenia, Yugoslavia, Greece, France and Luxemburg on the right side from the entrance. Apparently, the various degrees of initiative and the “political commitment of a number of Ravensbrück survivors” and “the nature of the GDR’s international relations” (ibid) were influential factors. The story of the German nation is present as the background of the suffering of the other nations. German prisoners had been non-existent in the narrative available in the cell building. Later their commemoration became part of the international memorial room established in 1986, after the controversial plan to introduce a German cell as abandoned¹². The visitor moving through the space of the exhibition cannot but experience the division of national memories, as she physically enters and leaves the areas where the various narratives are manifested. The architectural layout itself bears meanings, as for example in the Polish national memorial which spreads over three former cells making “a reference to the large proportion of Polish prisoners at Ravensbrück concentration camp” (ibid., p. 159).

Every country, precisely its responsible organisation, attempted to draw attention to the major themes related not only to Ravensbrück, but mainly to the Second World War. That will be presented using the examples of the first three exhibition rooms – the Spanish, Austrian and Czech ones.

¹² In the nineteen eighties, the establishment of the German memorial room was a matter of conflict among the German former-prisoner association, the Ministry of Culture of East Germany and the Memorial itself regarding the groups which should have been commemorated, whether those persecuted for racial reasons or those who were engaged in the resistance. Eschebach cites parts from the concept proposed by the National Memorial (the Ravensbrück Memorial): “The ‘German cell’ is dedicated to all persons from the territory of the former German Reich who were imprisoned in the Ravensbrück women’s concentration camp for political, religious or racial reasons. [...] This would also be a suitable place to emphasize the prosecution of Jews and Gipsies. Whether or not the Jehova’s Witness will be mentioned needs to be examined” (in Eschebach, 2008, p. 187). The Jehova Witnesses were an illegal community in East Germany.

The Czech exhibition room emphasizes the political struggles between the occupiers and the resistance.

The wall on the left from the entrance displays the map of Czechoslovakia with marked borders of Sudetenland and a part of Slovakia covered by other images. There are two enlarged black and white photographs depicting the Nazi entering Prague and copies of public regulations from that time. This collage referring to the loss of land and political sovereignty is visually interconnected by the Czech flag in the background.

(Fieldnotes, 2017)

The story of Lidice, a Czech village razed to the ground as a revenge for resistance actions, is highlighted in the installation. There is a memorial book containing the names of the women and children victims. Also, a black and white photograph from the first commemoration of the tragedy is on display.

The Czech national memorial had been a Czechoslovak one until the year nineteen ninety-five. The close relation between politics and memory and the modification of memory by the demands of the present moment can be illustrated by the redesign of this particular national memorial room. Eschebach describes it as follows, “one day, representatives from the Czech memorial at Theresienstadt came to Ravensbrück and started rearranging the Czechoslovakian commemorative cell. By the end of the day the official separation of the Czech Republic from Slovakia had been completed in the Ravensbrück memorial room as well” (in Eschebach, 2008, p. 87). Here, nationality is the category which demarcates not only the oppressed (the Czech Republic) and the oppressive (Germany), but which excludes the story of those who no longer politically belong to the group (Slovakia). Interestingly, the collection compounded by Slovakia became a permanent part of the cell building not earlier than in twenty fifteen. Before that, but also not earlier than after the turn of the millennium, it had been exposed at the Museum of Jewish Culture in Bratislava and afterwards temporarily at the Ravensbrück Memorial.

The Spanish national memorial presents a different narrative. It is not the one of an inter-national conflict, but one of an intra-national conflict.

There is a flag on the left wall of the exhibition hall. However, it is not the national flag of Spain, it is the red, yellow and blue striped flag of the Republicans who fought in the Spanish Civil War. The same colours appear on the painting displayed on the right from it; red and yellow flames burn behind a barb-wired fence outlined by blue background. Above the painting, there is a streamer with red and yellow stripes and ‘Amical Mauthausen Barcelona, M. Carme Jordi Figueres – 1994’.

(Fieldnotes, 2017)



Picture 5: The Left Wall of the Spanish National Memorial. (Photo by the author, 2017)

The colour and pattern scheme is symbolic of Catalonia. The text reveals the organisation responsible for the design, which was created by “a freelance graphic designer from Potsdam specializing in exhibition design” in collaboration with “Ravensbrück survivor Neus Català i Pallejà” and inaugurated in 1989 (Eschebach in Eschebach, 2008, p. 173). Although Català i Pallejà was incarcerated in Ravensbrück, no Spanish organization related particularly to that concentration camp had existed. By contrast, the Austrian Ravensbrück association was established in 1947. The Spanish deportees to Nazi concentration camps were invisible in their country due to the dictatorship in reign decades after the Second World War. Most of them had sought refuge in neighbouring France where they were active in survivor associations. The following excerpt of an interview illustrates the past invisibility of the deported, especially the female ones. A member of the ‘Amical Ravensbrück’, an association established by Català not earlier than in 2005, tells a story of a writer and journalist who learned about Spanish women survivors in France by coincidence.

I told a story of how the invisibility of women is sometimes surfaced by coincidence. Monserrat Roig used to meet the deported men and they all told her their experiences. However, they never told her that there had been women who had been deported. So, as she interviewed them one after another, they told her: Listen! Next week, there’s a reunion of the exiled and deported from Spain in France. Why don’t you go? You will be able to speak with more at a time (...) you will be able to speak with fifty or sixty. Monserrat Roig went. The moderator of the reunion was Neus Català, whose name is Neus and whose name is Català. Moreover, she speaks French with a noticeable Catalan accent.

During a break, Monserrat Roig addressed Neus and asked: Listen! Are you Catalan?

And Neus told her: Yes.

Oh! And were you in a concentration camp?

And Neus told her: Yes, I was. But can you see all those (women) there? They were, too.

So, in such manner of coincidence and informality, it was revealed that there had been women from the resistance deported to Nazi concentration camps.

(Interview, 2016, translated by the author)¹³

Despite numerous references to provincial and political division of the country, made for example by colours or place names in Catalonia, the word Spain appears in the informative text next to the black and white images depicting the civil war – those of resistance (women) fighters, women marching with weapons, of refugees resting on their way to French exile or that of destroyed buildings, and the expressive one of members of the resistance standing straight with clenched fists or of the persona of the communist Dolores Ibárruri accompanied with the emblematic slogan ‘No pasarán!’, whose author she is. Here Spain refers mainly to the territory when the text says:

With the help of our nation, on the sunny, blooming land of Spain with its splendid fields, wonderful mountains, with its hot plains and green valleys, with its men and women, who deeply love freedom and independence, who want to see all nations free and happy, Fascism will be shattered.

(A text from 1938 by a Spanish communist accompanying archival photos, Spanish memorial, the cell building, translated by the author)

The Austrian narrative of the past emphasizes support and solidarity of the Austrian women united against the time of Nazi evil. There is a display case on the wall showing small handmade objects such a handcrafted cross, a dog or a four-leaf clover made from toothbrushes, a rosary, rings, poems or musical notes. The text above it says:

¹³ This interview is part of the article published in a special issue of the historical journal *Hispania Nova*. Kadlecová, Š. (2009) *Hispania Nova*, n°1 extraordinario, pp. 175 – 195.

Each of these poems and gifts, every thought of the good and beautiful, every gesture of affection gave the women, the gifted and the giving, strength to endure the brutal humiliation and to believe in life. They were expressions of solidarity and comradeship of the resistance against the inhumanity.

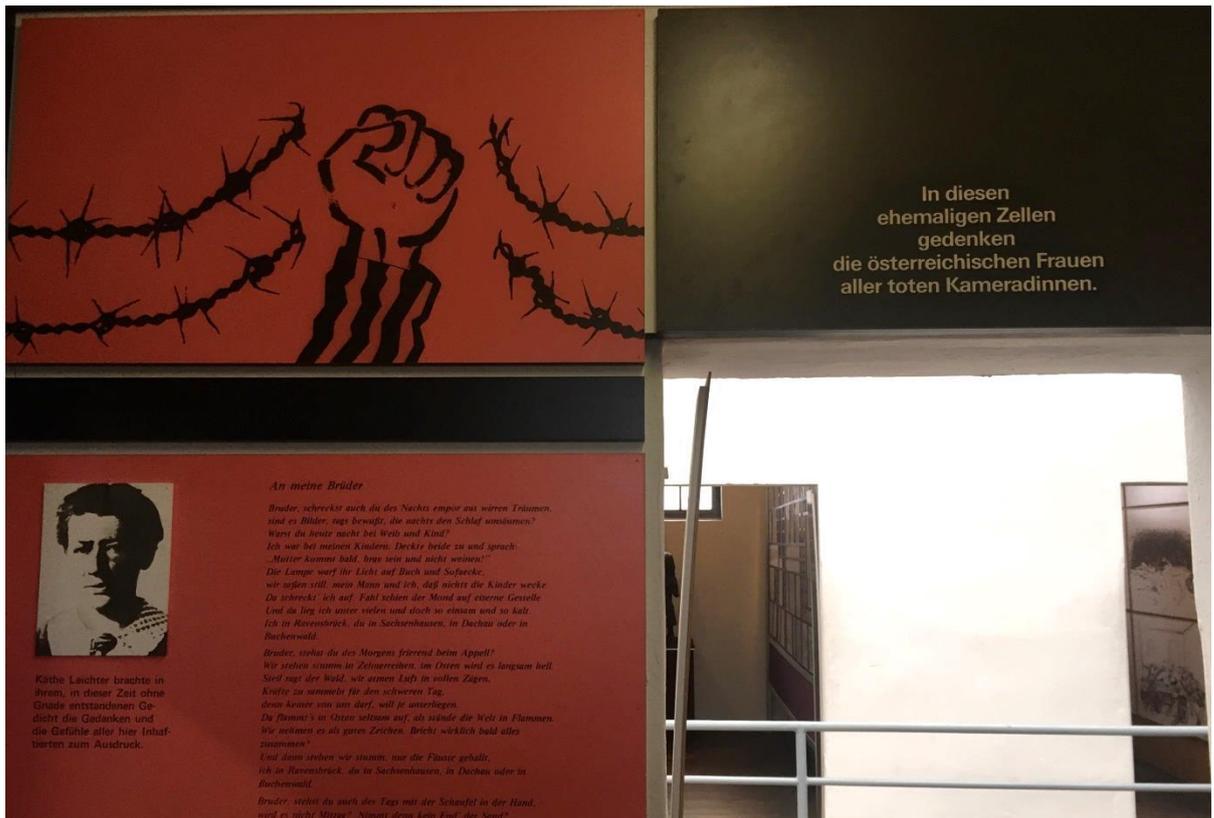
(Text on a panel in the Austrian Memorial, the cell building, translated by the author)

The Austrian flag on a black background is a dominant symbol of the national memorial. The exposition is installed in two cells and adopts the colour scheme of the flag – red and white – combined with black. Above the entrance there's an inscription:

In these former cells Austrian women remember all their dead (female) comrades.

(Text in the Austrian exhibition, the cell building, translated by the author)

Next to it, there is a black drawing of a fist punching through a barbed-wire fence on a red background. Besides images and small objects, the room is heavy in text. It provides information about the historical development of events and milestones of the Second World War, the conditions in the camp and it also presents prisoners and their identities, political and religious. This narrative implies diversity within the nation whose members underwent the horror. “The idea of shared suffering in the Nazi concentration camps is an important factor in the construction of [...] national reconciliation” after 1945, as “the official version stresses a supposed solidarity between prisoners from various political factions in the struggle against Nazi barbarism” (Eschebach in Eschebach, 2008, p. 155).



Picture 6: The Austrian National Memorial: View from the Inside. (Photo by the author, 2017)

The new exhibition employs nationality as a feature in the spatial arrangement. Three rooms of the Section 2 named Prisoners are structured according to nationality. Two are labelled 2. 2 ‘Prisoners from all over Europe’ and the third one ‘From Countries around the World’. The images and texts on display are divided into chunks relating to a particular country. These thematic blocks are located in different areas of the room, usually according to the following pattern: display boxes with images, keepsakes and other objects; a desk with a binder with a map on the cover, labelled with the name of the country which contains copies of various texts and photos, for example archival documents of deportation or poems written in the camp; a desk with a screen which presents three stories of selected prisoners from the nationality. If national flags are demonstrated here, they appear on small handicrafts and gifts made by the prisoners. This exhibition also uses a logic deriving from the chronology of past events as the one in the cell building. However, here the order of national

thematic sections is rooted in the chronology concerning the past events in the concentration camp as indicated in the text numbered 2.2.

Twelve national groups of prisoners are introduced here in the order in which they arrived at Ravensbrück. The names of the countries are those that were in use at the time of the German invasion.

(Excerpt from the text 2.2, the new exhibition)

Therefore the first room presents prisoners from Poland, Czechoslovakia, the Netherlands and Yugoslavia; the next from France, Luxembourg, Belgium, the Soviet Union, Italy, Norway and Denmark (displayed in one chunk probably due to the fact that the territories were both occupied by Nazi Germany), Spain and Hungary. The last room of the Section 2 bears the heading 'From countries around the world'. On the right wall from the entrance, there is a list of thirty countries in alphabetical order in German and English whose citizens were imprisoned in Ravensbrück. They include Egypt, Argentina, Turkey or the USA. This approach emphasizes the inclusion of all countries whose citizens were incarcerated in Ravensbrück, nevertheless, in their national varieties.

Nationality outlines the specifics of the stories of particular groups of prisoners. Polish women are described as the most numerous national group which accounted for thirty-six thousand victims. The narrative in the section dedicated to Yugoslavia accentuates the partisan activities and the mass killings conducted as a revenge for the actions of the resistance. A testimony introduced with the utterance "As super-Germans we were allowed to keep our hair" featured in the Norwegian and Danish unit points out the privileged status of those prisoners. Although Germany as a country does not appear as a separate subsection in the exhibition rooms focused on prisoners, the narrative of its past is presented. The German nationality is diffused among the other categories used to identify victims or in the historiography of the topos, description of the Nazi system or in biographies of individual officers and guards who worked in Ravensbrück.

To sum up this part of the text, the series of national memorials constructs a set of separate narratives about the past intended for certain groups, which are the national collectivities. The narrative about the past constructed in the new exhibition, in which the lieu is the protagonist, intends to inclusively address a broader community of the groups whose member encountered themselves on the spot.

Regarding the participation structure, nationality is a notable characteristic as well. Members of different nationalities were involved in the production of both exhibitions. Nevertheless, the approaches were different. Representatives of a number of European countries participated in creating the exhibition halls in the cell building. As it was mentioned in Chapter 4, there were universal guidelines for the design; otherwise the creators were rather free in their choices regarding the content making and not dependent on the designs of other national memorials. Therefore, the exhibition in the cell building is thematically incoherent. Throughout its existence, parts of the expositions had altered. Finally, when it was re-opened in 2006, the Memorial decided to install a panel with an explanatory text to add integrity.

The memorial rooms document diverse forms of commemoration from several decades and different political systems. While some of the rooms offer information on the group of prisoners from the respective country, others rather serve to represent the country's projected self-image. The design of individual memorial rooms is shaped by the differing views of history and interpretations of the era of National Socialism. The rooms have thus themselves become testimonials to the history of commemoration and historiography, and they invite visitors to reflect on the different practices and also the aims of commemoration.

(Commentary text to the exhibition in the cell building)

On the other hand, the international participation involved in the new exhibition occurred under the project coordination and execution bound to the

German institution. A Czech historian who contributed to the collection with the materials related to Czechoslovakia recalls the process so.

I began collaborating with the Ravensbrück Memorial, I don't remember the year, on an exhibition about Czechoslovak elites. I did research on Jožka Jabůrková and Milena Jesenská. Based on that collaboration, they contacted me from Ravensbrück when they were preparing a new permanent exposition and were looking for colleague from the Czech Republic who would do research on the topic of Czechoslovak women here in archives and other institutions and with witnesses. I agreed and started working for them, but it was commissioned so that I was supposed to select some women who would represent certain groups of victims incarcerated in Ravensbrück. (...)

I'm not sure who made the exhibition then. Was it the Theresienstadt Memorial? Usually, it was them who would make such exhibitions. It was on the national base that every nation or every state created its own exhibition which it presented there. And this was the new approach which is dominant in German memorials that the memorial directs it and hires researchers, but the concept is prepared by the memorial.

(Interview, 2018, translated by the author)

A survivor from Slovakia who participated in the creation of the new exhibition recalls her involvement in the process of the exposition-making. Her name is on the list of collaborators presented in the introductory text at the beginning of the exhibition.

The curator of the exhibition and the director of the memorial imposed the idea that it's necessary to collaborate with former prisoners. We were, I don't know if shortlisted, but simply we got to the collaboration. Mrs. Anette Chalut, the then president of the International Ravensbrück Committee, and I. And so we helped to organize it ideologically and somehow thematically, so that it would make sense and it would have its historical and chronological order. We had viewed certain artefacts which

are exposed there. Anyways, we didn't work on it regularly as the curator did, but we tried to direct it in concord with what we felt; what we had experienced and what we knew.

(Interview, 2019, translated by the author)

A member of the German association Lagergemeinschaft Ravensbrück describes their role in the preparation of the exhibition. She is also a descendant of a survivor.

While the new main exhibition was being conceptualized, a working group was established. They showed us selected texts, they were quite short, six hundred characters. I took part in the construction. We met and they asked about the texts and sought what was important for us or for the association ... and we could make suggestions for changes and they were made, not all, but ...

(Interview, 2018, translated by the author)

Apparently, the negotiations about the design of the exhibitions which took place within national organisations or between a national association and the Memorial in the past were replaced with a more centralized approach of professional project coordination and expert knowledge engagement on the side of the Memorial, with supervised collaboration with national institutions and individuals.

5.5 The Shift from Nationalism to Individualism: The Monolithic Victim Becomes Diversified

The previous section of this chapter suggested that the reference to nationality functions as a strategy of forming boundaries among various narratives about the past in the exhibition in the cell building, while in the new

exhibition it is one of the distinguishing characteristics of victims united in one place – the concentration camp – and also highlighting the shared experience of suffering caused by National Socialism in Europe and beyond. This part of the dissertation focuses on the depiction of victims in the two exhibitions. The discourse reproduced in the exhibitions in the cell building is that of nationalism. The table below illustrates what is described in the subsequent parts of the text.

Exhibition	Discourse	Indicators
National memorials in the cell building	Nationalism	Exhibition spaces arranged by states Names of nation states as the titles of the exhibition rooms (Polska, Italia, SU) Dense appearance of adjectives referring to nationality (die österreichischen Frauen) National flags on display in every room Texts providing factual information about past political events concerning the state (the assassination of Heydrich, the Spanish Civil War) or images depicting them National heroes or public personas represented

Table 3: The Discourse Represented and its Indicators

As written above, typically, the national memorial rooms contain authentic visual and textual materials explaining the political context of subsequent imprisonment of their citizens, such as the documents of repressive measures taken by the Nazis after the assassination of Heydrich in the Czech (previously Czechoslovak) memorial room or photographic illustrations of the Spanish Civil War in the Spanish memorial room or the archival photographs and explanatory text regarding the resistance operation in the Norwegian memorial.

Frequently an art work, a sculpture or painting, depicting the pain and hardship is installed. The culturally recognizable symbols of suffering include aspects of the sculpted figures, such as folded arms, hunched up shoulders, lamenting hands or bony bodies (standing a roll call) in the Yugoslavian memorial room, or postures referencing to the pieta in the Polish installation or an angular figure with flames in the background in the Hungarian national memorial. For instance, in the Romanian memorial room there is a plaster sculpture of a kneeling woman with her arms folded on her naked body, her face

turned up towards the small cell window. She is positioned in front of prison bars. The simple design of the memorial with artistic expression prevailing over information delivery is a result of a remake of the room in the nineteen eighties. The Memorial invented the concept and commissioned a freelance artist who had experience with working on other national memorials. The “official institutions in Romania did not support the redesign”, nor was there “any contact between the Ravensbrück National Memorial and the Romanian veterans’ association” at that time (Eschebach in Eschebach, 2008, p. 163). There are other symbols of torture in other rooms such as the barbed wire around a heart made of glass in the Greek national memorial.

The identification and individualization of the women incarcerated in Ravensbrück is carried out by displaying portraits of selected prisoners or lists of names of victims on the walls of individual cell rooms. For example, the main wall of the Polish national memorial interestingly combines representations of individual suffering with those of mass harm on the body of Polish prisoners. It employs the strategy of personalisation of the high numbers of victims of medical experiments conducted especially on Polish women by revealing their identities through presenting three panels with their names below the inscription ‘Polska’. By contrast, there are enlarged images of scarred legs on the lower part of the same wall. They are documentary photographs which served as the evidence of the surgeries, also in the Nurnberg trials. The overall composition on the wall constructs the narrative of suffering through presenting the intention of the oppressor, a part of Hitler’s speech declaring that “the destruction of Poland is the next goal” (text in German on the panel, translated by the author), revealing the individual victims and exposing images of harmed bodies. Also, in interaction with the sculpture of two female hands attached to a solid brown block reaching up towards a white block, which was added to the memorial in the nineteen nineties, the installation depicts Polska having survived, standing on the wounded legs, however, with the strength, resurrected and remembering.



Picture 7: A Wall in the Polish National Memorial. It features a list of names of victims subjected to medical experiments with enlarged documentary photos of scarred lower limbs. (Photo by the author, 2017)

In the French national memorial special homage is paid to two prominent deportees. There is a black memorial plaque with two small crossed French flags and a white text in French and its translation in German: “In the memory of Geneviève de Gaulle, of Germaine Tillion and all their friends deported from France to Ravensbrück and its satellites between 1941 and 1945”. The tablet bears the name of the organization, Society of Families and Friends of Former Deportees and Prisoners of Ravensbrück, which installed it on April 17, 2010.

(Fieldnotes 2017)

De Gaulle was a French activist involved in the resistance during the war, who later became the president of the Association of Deportées and Internées of the Résistance and also testified in a law suit against a Nazi officer. Tillion was a French ethnologist, active in the resistance, a Ravensbrück survivor a member of

a French survivor association who was engaged in testimonial activities. Both de Gaulle and Tillion were decorated with national awards. The emphasis on the identity of survivors as resistance fighters rather than other identities, especially ethnic or religious, is prevalent in Europe after the Second World War (Judt, 2007), in France considerably (Barša, 2011), as all victims were ‘mort pour la France’. The previous version of the French memorial room is a proof of the phenomena and also the power of the national associations of former (political) prisoners¹⁴ in shaping the narrative of French citizens in the concentration camp. The exhibition room was called ‘the cell for remembrance of the French resistance fighters’, established on the twentieth anniversary of the liberation of the concentration camp Ravensbrück. The sabotages of forced labour by French prisoners the satellite camps and factories are commemorated in both exhibition.

A display case in the Spanish memorial presents the book ‘De La Resistencia Y La Deportacion’ which features fifty testimonies of Spanish survivors collected by Neus Català. Her black and white portrait is placed under the book cover.

On the right side from it there is a short biography, which besides other life events informs about the fact that she “is a member of the International Ravensbrück Committee and actively participates in the political struggle in today’s Spain.” Below the page is an excerpt from her book in German. It is a dialogue between Català and a French catholic woman in which Català says: “I am a communist. It complies with my soul, because my father instilled it in me, because the Fascist declared war on Spain and because I personally experienced the injustice of the world, on myself and my fatherland.”

(Fieldnotes, 2017, excerpt from Català’s book on display, the cell building, translated by the author)

¹⁴ Interestingly, out of the four presidents of the International Ravensbrück Committee, an association uniting representatives of prisoners from different European countries, the first two were French. Only several years ago a Slovak Jewish survivor became the president. She was later replaced by a second-generation Italian due to her health conditions.

As aforementioned, Català herself was the main ideological creator of the memorial room for Spain. She was a renowned survivor in Spain until today. Her obituary of 2019 was published in national press and she was referred to as “a Catalan survivor and antifascist activist, a republican and feminist dedicated to the memory of survivors of Nazi extermination camps.”¹⁵ On the wall above the display case introducing Català’s life and memory work, there are black and white photographs of three women who died in the camp. The style of the images is that of civil portraits, taken before the imprisonment. Their stillness does not correspond with the depiction of other women in action. Eschebach remarks that “the juxtaposition of the photographs of passionate female fighters from the Spanish Civil War with the portrait photographs of Spanish women who lost their lives in Ravensbrück concentration camp creates a strange tension”, as only the latter in fact “represent the Spanish victims of the Ravensbrück concentration camp” (Eschebach, 2008, p. 177).

In the curating approach to the design of the cell-building memorials, the national aspect prevails over the individual or personal. Consequently, the victims are the whole nations affected by evil fascism. The impression of a seamless national victim is created by the main focus on the country’s antifascist resistance leading to the citizens merging “with the women deported to Ravensbrück to form the monolithic figure of a single victim” (ibid, p. 85). Suffering seems to be the salient theme of all the national memorial rooms. This impression is reinforced by the architectural structure of concrete walls, metal staircases and a lack of daylight as well as the knowledge of the original function of the space as a place of punishment in the concentration camp. However, suffering is often put in contrast with victorious fighting against the regime and oppression.¹⁶

¹⁵ Rosell, L., R. (2019) ‘Muere Neus Catalá, superviviente catalana y activista antifascista’, *El Mundo* [online]. Available at: <https://www.elmundo.es/cataluna/2019/04/13/5cb2190721efa0f2538b45c4.html>
Translated by the author.

¹⁶ This section of the text was published in the online anthropological journal *Antropowebsin*. Here it is slightly modified. Kadlecová, Š. (2018). Abandoning the Monolithic Victim: Changes in Representations of Memory of Ravensbrück Concentration Camp. *AntropoWebzin*, 1-2, pp. 37-44.

Anderson writes of “the need” of nations “for the narrative of ‘identity’” (Anderson, 2006, p. 205) resulting from the modern understanding of time as linear, which implies continuity, yet this continuity is forgotten. In order to create their integrity, nations write their biographies. Since it is impossible to find their actual “Originator”, the story cannot “be written evangelically, ‘down time’, through a long procreative chain of begettings” (ibid.). It can only be fabricated “up time” (ibid.). However, this construction “is marked by deaths, which in a curious inversion of conventional genealogy, start from an originary present”. (ibid.) Indifferently to the fact the very origin is obscure, national identities are dealt with as something which was dormant and thus needs to be rightfully awoken. When prisoners of various European nations were deported to the Ravensbrück concentration camp the national identity had already been strengthened by the First World War and the political division of Europe. Therefore, the suffering is predominantly presented as meaningful in the narratives offered by the national memorials. The violent intervention in the peaceful lives of the nations, metaphorically put, marks a rupture which if told as an opportunity for a unification of the nation against the Nazi evil, allows for its strengthening. Also, this milestone supports the ideology which calls for a new world order.

The discourse of the national phoenix-like raising from the ashes of horror of Fascism to the brightly-lit future can be read in the text next to a photograph portraying one of the prisoners.

From the black hell night of Ravensbrück shone the clearest conscience of the best daughter of all nations. Today, it shows us the way to freedom.

(Text from the former Bulgarian memorial, the cell building,
translated by the author)

A similar tactic of drawing attention to new governmental projects is traceable in the Czechoslovak memorial room, the older version of the Czech one. The major motif is the innocent victim of the village of Lidice with its inhabitants.

The exhibition room features documentary photographs of the village before and after its destruction accompanied with photographs of commemoration events in the USA and Mexico. On another wall of the room there are enlarged photos of the new village and a memorial erected on the ground of the former village.

(Fieldnotes, 2017)

The victimhood of Lidice, as a place and as a destroyed home of the female survivors, was appropriated by the communist regime in Czechoslovakia to demonstrate its own opposition to Nazism. It climaxed in the material construction of a new village financed partially from public funds.

The instrumentalisation of the cultural memory of Ravensbrück in order to support the accession of the socialist political regime, which replaced National Socialism in Eastern Germany, was also emphatic in the collection on display in the Museum of the Anti-Fascist Resistance, founded in nineteen eighty-four in the same building where the new exhibition is presented nowadays. It emphasized the focus towards the future, the desire to live in peace and solidarity with others, which socialism can guarantee. For example the first room was titled ‘Women from All the World Want Peace’. The central artefact was a model of the concentration camp with an enlarged photo of three women professionals engaged in a conversation. Each of them is of a different skin colour, brown black and white. Next to the image, there is a text saying, ‘Without peace, there is no bread for their children, no home, no families, now happiness and no future.’ The next exhibition room featured a textual installation with the word peace in different languages, such as Polish, Russian, English, Spanish, German, Czech and French¹⁷.

¹⁷ Author’s Note. Since this museum collection is no longer available for the regular visitor to the Ravensbrück Memorial, I decided not to include it in the analysis. However, I mention it here, for it is a strong example of the interaction between memory and identity, in particular the service of memory in order to create a new identity.

5.6 Levelling of Identities: Representations of Jews and the Roma

In the new exhibition one thematic section is dedicated to the victims, the people who were subjected to the imprisonment in the system of the concentration camp. It is the second topic presented in the exhibition tour labelled '2. Prisoners' and occupies five exhibitory rooms. It introduces different prisoner groups categorized by the reason of punishment applied by the Nazi, such as political activism or simply nationality, religion, ethnicity, social status or actions classified as criminal by the regime. The order of the presentation is based on two principles – the chronology of arrival and the significance based on the representation of the group. The latter is manifested by the fact that the less numerous national groups and the group of male prisoners are presented in the ultimate room of the section. The collection on display is a combination of explanatory texts, short biographies of individual prisoners, portraits and other photographs, archived objects and documents or drawings and other artworks made by prisoners.

The first room focused on prisoners presents two groups of prisoners who had been incarcerated in the early years of the operation of the camp. They are categorized as 'Jehova's Witnesses' and 'Political Prisoners'. There is a small frame with a portrait of Antonie Kleinerová from Czechoslovakia with a brief text about her life in Czech and German. It informs the visitor about her work at the governmental institution before the war, her engagement in activities of the resistance, her subsequent arrest and deportation and also about her falling victim to a political trial in the nineteen fifties. Below it, there is a similar frame without a portrait informing about the life of Elisabeth Krug who was "branded as an 'anti-social element'." The text begins as follows: "Very little is known about Elisabeth Krug, a prostitute from Düsseldorf," and continues that "[she] was spoken of highly by her fellow prisoners as she emphatically refused an order by the SS to beat other prisoners as a punishment in the cell building."

(Fieldnotes, 2019, text from Section 2, the new exhibition)

A political activist is presented next to a non-activist. This inclusive approach of presenting all types of victims equally differs significantly from that applied in most of the national memorials. Although there is no depiction of the latter prisoner, it is by description that she is made visible. The same strategy is used in the next room. A portrait of a renowned German prisoner Erika Buchmann, a communist, later a member of parliament, who collected a great amount of information about former prisoners and was a curator of the first exhibition at the Memorial, is on display next to Marie P., described as a woman who had earned her living by prostitution and petty theft and who was later accused of ‘moral inferiority’. However, her portrait is missing, she is made visible. In the earlier ways of constructing the cultural memory at the Memorial and even remembering the story of Ravensbrück, the anti-social category, concerning mainly German and Austrian citizens, was officially rather subdued. This newer concept of representing a diverse range of prisoners, without considering their political deeds, reflects the turn in the perception of victims in Western Europe (Barša, 2011). The first to decades after the Second World War the victim of war was a source of shame for the family or community, as the narrative of heroic resistance members was prevalent. Yet, in the nineteen sixties the moral status of the innocent victim increased and outgrew that of the fighters. Although the victims classified as antisocial have been publicized and researched on, a certain degree of taboo related to being classified so remains until today. The following example from an interview with an Austrian descendant, a granddaughter of a Ravensbrück prisoner whose story and photographs are on display in the new exhibition, illustrates it. She had embraced the identity of the third generation, is a member of the International Ravensbrück Committee and actively engages in commemoration activities. Yet, when she attends conferences on the topic of Nazi genocide, she refrains from saying that the grandmother was labelled as ‘Assozial’, asocial prisoner, because she would feel ashamed by it; she explained.

The religious and ethnic identities of prisoners labelled as ‘Jews’ and ‘Roma and Sinti’ are presented in the same room.

There is a panel with a text informing about the deportations of Roma and Sinti, which reveals that they were referred to as ‘Gypsies’. The word ‘Gypsy’ appears repeatedly, always in quotation marks. As in other sections about various groups of prisoners, there is a binder presenting authentic documentation, such as a record of arrest of a German woman, with the category ‘asocial’ filled out and a red stamp ‘Zigeuner’, ‘Gipsy’, in German on it. Her last name and the day of birth are blackened. The form includes three black and white photos taken in the prisoner-like, interrogation-ready style. The document reveals the final imprisonment of this woman in Ravensbrück.

One page in the binder also shows a colour photograph of a Roman woman under racial examination conducted by Nazi institutions. Below is a black and white image depicting Roma children from a children’s home on a trip. The text on the side informs about a doctoral research conducted on the children from deported Sinti families. It reveals the researcher’s name and says: “After she finished her dissertation, the children were deported to Auschwitz” and “only four of them survived.” There is a set of framed family photographs and portraits of couples and one individual on the wall. They are numbered and accompanied with information about the people depicted. The section on ‘Roma and Sinti’ features images of and texts about men, which is not common for other prisoner groups.

(Fieldnotes, 2019, text from Section 2, the new exhibition)

This particular group of prisoners occupies the same amount of the exhibition space as the national groups, for example. Its members are referred to in the politically correct way and when the word gypsy, nowadays considered pejorative, appears it is in quotation marks. A similar euphemism is used in the

textual representation of the so-called asocial prisoners, referred to as ‘those classified as anti-social elements’ or ‘criminals’. The punctuation indicates that nowadays it is considered inappropriate to denote the victims with those words. However they are presented in archival texts and also in relation to material objects on display, for example in the collection of the triangles by which prisoners in Ravensbrück were categorized and marked, whenever expert knowledge is employed these expressions are cited. In the earlier exhibition in the cell building, prisoners from the group of Roma and Sinti are commemorated in two areas of the exhibition – firstly, in the Hungarian memorial and secondly, in a special section dedicated to this group.

In the Hungarian national memorial there is a display case titled ‘Objects of everyday use and documents from Hungarian deportees from the Ravensbrück concentration camp’. It shows a striped blue and white prisoner’s dress on the right side and a checked blue and white summer blouse made for the SS guards on the left side, the red triangle, marking political prisoners, a pair of broken glasses, a porcelain mug and small pieces of text. All objects are accompanied with a legend informing about the donor of the object or the author as that of the drawing installed in the middle of the case. There is a woman with short curly hair, thick eyebrows and rugged features sitting amidst the outlines of lying bodies of sleeping women. The legend presents this art work, a part of a series about the camp secretly sketched by a Dutch prisoner, as a depiction of “a huge tent where the Jewish women and Gypsy women (adults and children) were dragged at the end of 1994 and packed.”

(Fieldnotes, 2017, legend in the Hungarian exposition, the cell building, translated by the author)

It was unusual for the national memorials at the time of their foundation to recognize the Roma and Jewish prisoners. Thus it is “indeed remarkable that this historical account, originating as it does from mid-1980s Eastern Europe, explicitly mentions Jewish and Roma women” (Eschebach in Eschebach, 2008,

p. 185). The Czech memorial, for example, has added information about the Jewish prisoners after its redesign in the nineteen nineties.

The other area of representation of this group of prisoners is marked by a commemoration plaque in English.

“We, the people of the Sinti and Roma, remember with reverence and sorrow our mothers, wives and children who were murdered by the SS in the concentration camp of Ravensbrück.”

(Commemoration plaque, the Roma and Sinti section, the cell building)

The use of the English language reveals later installation of the plaque, as all other national memorials had employed their national languages in combination with German when they were established. Eventually, additions of texts in English were made in some cases.

The display case in this section shows four black and white photographs of children sitting on the grass, in front of a forest, swinging on a swing. The text below informs the visitor that these children were taken to Auschwitz where they were murdered. Next to it, there is a coloured photograph of a teddy bear, whose meaning for the installation is explained in a text in German by a daughter of German prisoner. She tells the story of her mother having seen a small boy from the ‘Zigeunertransport’ dropping his teddy bear. She had picked it up and kept it for him throughout the whole time in the camp including the death march. In the text, the author uses the word ‘gypsy’ when referring to the transport otherwise the word Sinto (boy) or Roma are used.

(Fieldnotes, 2017)

Archival photographs of children or families are typical features of the representation of the Roma prisoners in both exhibitions. In addition, the new exhibition introduces evidence, photographic or textual, of racial categorisation, and racial examinations. Therefore the narrative of the Roma is that of peculiar

stigmatization. It speaks of labelling by the word ‘anti-social’ in the distant past and the word ‘Gypsy’ in both the distant and not-so-distant past (in the exposition of the nineteen eighties). Nevertheless, it reveals emancipation throughout time, for this group became visible later than the other ones. Also, the prisoners are commemorated in a space of a similar size as other national groups, as a separate group rather than citizens of different states. Moreover, they are referred to in non-pejorative language. This indicates the reproduction of the discourse of nationalism also in case of commemorating the Roma victims.

Exhibition	Discourse	Indicators
National memorials in the cell building	Nationalism	Separate exhibition space for the Roma Self-addressing ‘We, the people of the Sinti and Roma’ The representative of the group Ceija Stojka is depicted in this section, although she was an Austrian citizen

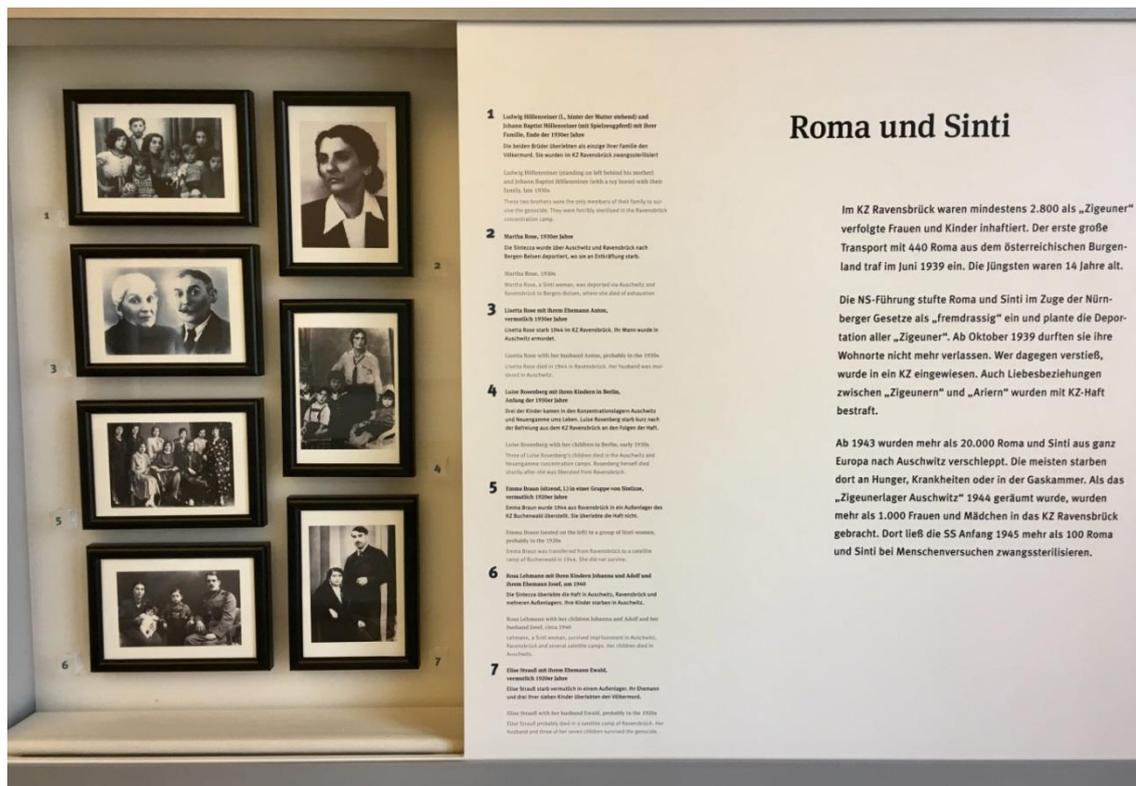
Table 4: The Roma Represented as a Nation

The results of the politics of recognition are apparent in the development of the narrative of the Roma prisoners of Ravensbrück. The assumption is that people’s “identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the misrecognition of others, and so a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves” (Taylor, 1994, p. 25). Such ignorance or fallacy in perception “can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being” (ibid). The narrative about the Roma in Ravensbrück available at the Memorial had commenced with absolute invisibility in the period of time when the first memorials and museums were established. It continued with very limited references made by the out-groups. Subsequently, it underwent a transformation when people who identified as Roma and Sinti installed their own commemorative plaque in the cell building. Finally, the winning of the struggle for recognition could be illustrated by conquering a space in the main exhibition, however, not earlier than around the year twenty thirteen.

On the other hand, the narrative presented is of a mass of innocent victims who suffered severely, as the visitor sees images of children in play or family gatherings juxtaposed with the texts about murder or forced sterilization committed on these and other individuals. A more individualized story is the one of Ceija Stojka, an Austrian survivor, visual artist and author of texts reflecting on her experience. A short text about her saying: “For more than ten years Ceija Stojka has been working through her fate, in which she writes, paints, writes poetry and sings” (text in Roma and Sinti section in the cell building, translated by the author) is displayed. Photographs of her are featured in the binder in the new exhibition. However, those depict her through the lens of the perpetrator as a seven-year-old subject of racial biological examination.

Exhibition	Discourse	Indicators
New exhibition	Struggle for recognition	Exhibition space dedicated to Roma and Sinti as a particular group of prisoners Images of children victims or whole families victimized Particular severance of suffering: early internment, murder, sterilization Use of the word ‘Gipsy’ or the German ‘Zigeuner’ in the context of victimization (as a reference to a Nazi category) Use of the word ‘Roma and Sinti’ by the authors of the exhibition in accompanying texts

Table 5: The Roma and the Discourse of the Struggle for Recognition



Picture 8: Informational Text with a Set of Pre-War Family Photographs of Sinti and Roma Victims. (Photo by the author, 2019)

The increased visibility of the Jewish victim, similar to that concerning the Roma, as is observable on the spatial expansion of the narrative of Jews in Ravensbrück. Jewish prisoners are represented as a particular group of prisoners next to the Roma in the new exhibition. Also, their distinct label is featured in the set of prisoner badges in the display case of the second room of the thematic section. Following the general structure of display, there is an informational text, a binder and a display case.

The binder contains a map with the numbers of Jewish prisoners with a text explaining that “all numbers are rough approximations. Because the SS destroyed all of the records when the camp was evacuated, names of prisoners are still being researched.” Also, there is general information about the persecution of Jews, featuring SS documentation or an archival photograph of the Kristallnacht events in Vienna, the badge with the yellow star or departures to Palestine. The other part of the file is titled ‘In

the Ravensbrück Concentration Camp’ and exposes official SS forms and documents.

(Fieldnotes, 2019)

The Jewish identity is also revealed in some prisoners presented in the national section, such as the Spanish and Hungarian ones. Similarly, it is partly represented in some national memorials in the cell building such as the Czech or Hungarian ones. By contrast, Jewish prisoners are the main theme of the rather newly installed Slovak exposition. In the context of the national memorials in the cell building, the narrative about the past related to the state of the Slovak Republic is that which is told via the perspective of the Jewish community, the only group particularly represented, and also that of the loss of territory, both in real and metaphorically in regard to the exhibition space.

There are panels with various texts involving historical knowledge, presenting milestones in the process of deportations of Slovak Jews, photographs of Jewish transports or a Jew being shaven by an SS officer, and also excerpts from testimonies. The headings of individual panels are expressive and imply lamentation and also the will to survive. Clearly the position of the exhibitor is that of an insider, as we can read the phrases such as ‘Days of Horror’ or ‘We, the Survivors’.

(Fieldnotes, 2017)

Exhibition	Discourse	Indicators
Both	Nationalism	Jews represented in exhibition texts in the framing of citizenship (the Slovak section of the national memorials focused on Jews, a binder titled German and Austrian Jews) Images of oppression of the Jewish community in different states (documentation of the destruction of a synagogue in Vienna) References to Palestine in texts

Table 6: Representation of Jewish Prisoners in the Nationalist Framing

In regard to the outside areas of the Memorial, Jacobs writes of the “invisibility of Jewish prisoners” (Jacobs, 2010, p. 74). She demonstrates her observations on the following examples – first, the way a Belgian Jewish prisoner is memorialized and second, the symbolic of the distinguishable sculpture ‘The Burdened Woman’ located on the bank of Lake Schwedt marking the space of commemoration. Jacobs writes of the monument to the Jewish prisoner who died shortly after the arrival in the camp:

“In memory of her death, a marble stone with her name and photograph has been set into the remaining outside wall near the crematorium. Her photograph, which is superimposed onto the stone’s surface, pre-dates her arrest and shows a young woman with thick hair cascading down her shoulders. Although powerful in its simplicity, the memorial tells nothing of Rosa Kugelman’s background or prisoner history. The plaque bears only her name and the date of her birth and death. Because this memorial has been placed at the crematorium, the absence of a Jewish narrative is all the more striking and highlights the as yet unresolved issues of Jewish invisibility in German memory” (ibid.).

Having analysed the appearance and the cultural framing of ‘Die Tragende’ created in 1959 by the artist Will Lammert, she claims that although the scene is based on a true story of a Jewish prisoner, the Jewishness is suppressed by Christian imagery of “a grieving mother holding a sacrificed child” (ibid). Thus the model for the scene “Benario-Prestes, while memorialized for her heroism in the Jewish room, is never identified at the Lake Schwedt statue and thus her Jewishness remains unknown to the thousands of visitors who visit the shrine each year and for whom the Burdened Woman has become associated with an ideal of Christian Maternity” (ibid). Even though the representation of Jewish victims has increased in number of images, artefacts and material objects after the turn of the past three decades due to the alterations in the expositions in the cell building and the opening of the new exhibition, Jacobs perceives the location of the Jewish narrative as insufficient. She concludes that “Ravensbrück relegates the history of Jewish genocide to “ethnic only” spaces, in effect removing the memory of Jewish annihilation from the more public and well-

traveled areas of the memorial setting. The overall effect of the Ravensbrück site is thus the marginalization of Jewish memory within a motif of national remembrance that Christianizes images of women's suffering in visual narratives of remembrance and martyrdom" (ibid., 75).



Picture 9: 'The Burdened Woman' (Photo by the author, 2017)



Picture 10: The Photograph of Olga Benario Whose Personal Story Was a Model for the Sculpture. (Photo by the author, 2017)

5. 7 The Suffering Is Personalised: Featuring Life Stories of Individuals

As mentioned in the previous parts of the text, the section of the new exhibition entitled 'Prisoners' deploys a national perspective as the prisoners are grouped according to their nationalities. However, there is a clear shift to individualization and personalisation of the suffering. The victim represented is no longer the whole nation fighting against Nazism. It is rather a particular woman with her own life story before, during and after the incarceration. More precisely, they are various women from different countries and with distinct

stories. The table below summarizes the reproduction of the discourse of individualism and multiple perspectives in regard to commemoration.

Exhibition	Discourse	Indicators
New Exhibition	Individualism Multiple perspectives	Images and texts about individual prisoners presented in the same format (frames with photographs and short biographies, binders, screens with portraits of selected persons) Images and texts about prisoners from various groups and of various backgrounds presented in proximity, mingling on the walls of the exhibition space Names of prisoner revealed Focus also on (personal) life before and after incarceration Authorship and ownership of artefacts on display presented The complexity of the experience of life in the camp revealed (relationships, solidarity, conflicts)

Table 7: Representation of Prisoners and the Discourse of Individualism/Multiple Perspectives

There is a binder with photographs and brief information about the lives of three prisoners from Czechoslovakia on display. One of them is a survivor from Lidice. The selection of personal photographs depicts her with her family before the war, a group of Czechoslovak prisoners settling in a forest during the so-called death march after the liberation of the camp, Czechoslovak prisoners lined up in a group photo in Neu Brandenburg where they gathered after the death march and before the transportation to their home country, her with her sister in Prague after the war, and finally her surrounded by young Japanese singers during a commemoration ceremony in Lidice.

(Fieldnotes, 2017)

The series creates a more complex image of a life of an individual survivor including her engagement in the memory work after the war. Also, her biography is featured next to the one of a publicly known prisoner Milena Jesenská, the writer and journalist, who died in the camp. This strategy of

mingling identities, of presenting images of personas, active witnesses, previously unknown survivors or women whose photographs are unavailable is omnipresent in the section dedicated to prisoners. The life after imprisonment is reflected upon in the biographies, as well as the ways of remembering and commemorating this past experience. In certain legends and informational texts, family members of the women-prisoners, the second and third generations are mentioned. The intention to provide continuity of the memory of Ravensbrück manifests.

Two portraits of German prisoners accompanied with brief information about their lives hang on the wall of one of the rooms labelled 'Prisoners'. They are in the same format as other biographies on display – small magenta frames with magenta texts in German and English and a black and white portrait. On top of the frames there are snapshots showing woman posing with these pictures while visiting the exhibition. One of them is the granddaughter of the survivor, a member of the German Ravensbrück Association. The other one is the survivor herself showing a thumbs-up gesture in front of her biography. Currently she resides in Israel. These small photographs, the double portraits, are loosely placed above the originals. Both women in the pictures are smiling.

(Fieldnotes, 2017)

These extra elements have become a part of the installation. This indicates that the exhibition encourages personal relation to what, or more precisely, who is featured. It provides an access for family members to connecting with their ancestors. On the contrary, the national memorials offered a way of commemoration which was to a greater or lesser extent comprehensible for the citizens of the particular state. It was communicated in the national language and German, with subsequent English additions, and also framed the story told predominantly within national history or with references to the national cultural

heritage¹⁸. If a survivor was featured, she was usually a person engaged in politics or a person who was not sufficiently depicted, one of many who suffered or whose testimony, artwork or keepsakes the visitor could see.

Alexander (2012) identifies personalizing trauma as one of the phases in the process of the meaning making, in the struggle for its recognition as a socially shared phenomenon. Subsequently to personalizing, everyone can identify with the victims. In the case of Ravensbrück Memorial the objective of the designers of the exhibition seems to be the shift in the construction of cultural memory from the national and therefore limited, through the personal, to the universal and therefore democratic and accessible to wider public.¹⁹

5.7.1 The Survivor Emerges

The previous part of Chapter 5 discusses the shift in representation of prisoners and survivors of Ravensbrück. It is the move in the portrayal of the survivor, a prototypical one – a woman engaged in the resistance, to diversified individual survivors, from different nationalities, ethnic or social groups. In the new exhibition, the attempt to draw attention to the prisoners' life stories is apparent. However, a significant number of witnesses whose photos, testimonies or belongings are featured in the exhibition had not participated in the formation of the cultural memory of the site for decades. Moreover, the construction of the communicative memory of the site varies over time from absent or silent memory, over limited voiced memory to publicly accessible memory. This subsection is incorporated in the text with the objective to illuminate the

¹⁸ Nonetheless, this manner of commemoration has been encouraged since the establishment of the Memorial and is still highly observed by visitors. On the occasion of the annual celebrations of the liberation of the camp in April, visitors gather by the co-called wall of nations, the former camp wall bearing the inscriptions of European states (or their former names) whose citizens were incarcerated in the women's concentration camp. For instance, Polish groups gather next to the inscription 'Polen', Spanish delegations lay wreaths under the title 'Spanien', and the Ukrainian victims are remembered with a shot of vodka in the gathering next to the name of their country.

¹⁹ This section of the text was published in the online anthropological journal *Antropowebzin*. Here it is slightly modified. Kadlecová, Š. (2018). Abandoning the Monolithic Victim: Changes in Representations of Memory of Ravensbrück Concentration Camp. *AntropoWebzin*. 1-2, pp. 37-44.

emergence of the survivor as a constituent element of the cultural memory of the Ravensbrück concentration camp. The ideas and examples presented here are a result of ethnographic research among survivors and their descendants who are members of national associations of former prisoners of war. Furthermore, the majority of informants are featured in the new exhibition at the Ravensbrück Memorial²⁰.

In a high number of cases of active witnesses, the public transmission of the memory related to the past imprisonment at the Ravensbrück women's concentration camp commenced several decades after the event. The former prisoners joined the “*conspiracy of silence* between Holocaust survivors and society” (Peck, 1997, p. 59) which characterized also the lives of Holocaust survivors who emigrated from Europe. All interviewees agreed that for a long time they had not spoken about their past experiences from Ravensbrück with other people, including their family members. They explain the silent period by having focused on other occupations such as work or family. It appears that there had probably been no incentive for a thorough reflection for the women on what they had experienced, which they account for existential reasons. Obviously the concerns with care for victims of traumatic events had not occurred subsequently after the war. For example, one of the interviewed survivors began to work one week after her return to Czechoslovakia, having spent three years in the concentration camp and two months on the so-called ‘death march’, the forced foot march of the deportees after the liberation of the camps. Another reason the survivors mention to explain their silence is the lack of public attention to the matter, a simple not being asked about the event. As one of the Italian survivors puts it:

I wanted to talk about it but faced no overt interest, so I preferred to be quiet. (Interview 2015, translated by the author)

²⁰ This section is a part of a previously published article. Here, it is modified. Kadlecová, Š. (2017). Relating to the Distant Past: Routes of Memory of Women Concentration-Camp Survivors. *Český lid*. 104, pp. 473–494.

Some survivors believe that the silence of people around them had served as protection. A survivor from the Czech Republic remembers her colleagues at work trying to prevent her from re-experiencing the trauma. She says:

When I was working in the health insurance company, my colleagues didn't dare to ask what it had been like in the camp, because they thought they'd bring about some sad memory. No one ever asked me how it was. They were not curious about it, so ... They wanted me to rather forget about it and not re-live it in my mind.

(Interview 2015, translated by the author)

Eventually, the silence was interrupted. It seems that generally the impulse came from the outside, from the public, as a request for an engagement in political memory work rather than from the inner motivations of the survivors. The informants claim that it was an institution, an association of survivors, a school, a political organisation, which encouraged the deliberate recollection of the deportation.

Two sisters refer to the invitation from German schools to speak about their stories related to Nazi-concentration camp as the triggering moment of their public verbal remembering. Such regular meetings took place in Germany in the nineteen nineties after the change of political regime and the beginning of the establishment of more open international connections, in Europe. Below is an excerpt of a conversation about remembering between the two informants.

M: Everybody says that. No one wanted to speak about it before, even in the family.

J: I didn't want to. Because it was so... You know our Mila didn't want to, in Hradec when she'd come to visit them, they hadn't learned anything from her. Only when I arrived I said something, but not much. You know, people didn't ask. And when they did, like they asked me at work... They noticed that I had a painted cross on the back of my sweater.

M: The first time it was in Germany, really.

J: For sure.

(Interview, 2015, translated by the author)

Although, as one of the witnesses says, they did not articulate the memory of their experiences from the concentration camp, the connection with the death-world was carried on materialized in a cross painted on the back of the sweater which she was wearing at work. It was the sweater which accompanied the survivor on the death march after the liberation of Ravensbrück. The Nazi painted crosses on the backs of civilian clothes²¹ for the prisoners who worked outside the camp in order to distinguish them from civilians. However, the meaning of the cross changed for the informant, it normalized in the after-camp life. For the survivor, the sweater functioned as a piece of clothing, a mundane garment²², which she wore to the office. An Italian deportee confirms the appeal to become a survivor from outside by saying:

It was around the 2000's on the insistence of the Association²³ that I began to tell my experiences at schools.

(Interview 2015, translated by the author)

She referred to something that other Italian informants named *the Italian anomaly*. They explained it as the hardships surrounding public reflection on the era of fascism in Italy, which is postponed in comparison to other countries. For example, the museum of fascism is non-existent, feelings of nostalgia as well as

²¹ Such piece of clothing with a cross painted on the back is on display in the new exhibition.

²² The anthropologist Carol Kidron, who conducted research among Holocaust survivors and their family members, identified the lived memory of the traumatic past as “the dynamic, normative, and self-imposed silent presence of the Holocaust death world interwoven in everyday life” (Kidron, 2009, p. 15). She revealed the presence of objects from the death world in everyday lives in an illustrative story of a survivor who fed her daughter with a spoon she had brought from Auschwitz (ibid.).

²³ By Association she means ‘Associazione nazionale ex deportati politici nei campi nazisti’ founded in 1968, the Italian national group which unites survivors of Nazi concentration camps and their family members.

apologetic strategies occur. They believe that the focus on the Second World War is stronger and more information available in other European countries. Obviously, power – of political elites, ethnic groups or mass media – is a significant variable in negotiating what will be remembered and how and what will be forgotten.

Also, the survivors from Spain had been invisible in their country of origin. Most of them had not returned after the liberation of the camp but stayed in exile in France. Paula Simón refers to “more than three decades of dictatorship” which “played a distinctive role” in acquiring knowledge of “the exile from 1939” as the regime had deployed censorship and blockage of the sources, silenced them and was reticent about the existence of the exile, and also manipulated their accounts (Simón, 2012, p. 34). The niece of a Spanish survivor reveals the difference between the reconstruction of the past experience of Nazism in after-war France and Spain.

At that time, at the end of the sixties, my aunt was in the committee of the deported. They did a lot of things... and I experienced it when I was in France. But when I was here in Spain, nothing. There was nothing. One didn't speak about this topic. It was not allowed. I did experience it in the family, but I didn't speak about it with anyone.

(Interview, 2016, translated by the author)

The long-lasting absence of social recognition of the traumatic past related to the effects of Nazism in Spain illustrates a more general process of meaning making in which the following three questions need to be answered, what actually happened to the particular collective, what groups were affected by this traumatizing pain, and to what extent the members of the audience for trauma representations experience identification with the immediately victimized group (Thompson in Alexander, 2012).

Knowing that memory does not provide a direct access to the past, yet is rather reflective of the current state of mind of the person who remembers, we may ask about the relationship between the individual rememberer and the institution in

whose political framework and in whose orchestrated scenario the personal memories are pronounced. It could be a public school, as mentioned above, a memorial, a national or local museum which enlists the witnesses to participate in its program. The socio-political reading of collective memory, which highlights the instrumentalization of war memories in service to statecraft, would imply that such educational sessions hegemonically constitute master narratives which are in accordance with the values of current political leadership (Kidron 2015). On the other hand, “the more “psychocultural” perspective might focus on the individual motivations to establish one’s identity, relate to the familial past, re-live emotions and cope with the trauma.

All informants have at some point in their lives articulated their memories of the concentration camp, in public commemorative events, audio and video records or in written accounts. The remembering was conducted under the conditions given by some national or international institution. “Public reflexivity takes the form of a performance” (Turner, 1979, p. 465). Interestingly, it is the public performance of witnessing and commemoration which generates individual reflection in survivors as well as their family members. Such reflection is separated from the past experience by approximately five decades. The silence separating the experience from its verbal reconstruction is perceived as a distance between the witnesses and the audience. Despite it, there had been other channels which allowed for memory transmission. There is a prevalence of non-narrated or ‘silent’ memory transmission in the family, which occurred in interactions with persons, objects or as lived in habitual practice. Also, the survivors tend to relate to their past experience in a more structured manner than their family members. As they have adopted the witness identity, they carefully fabricate and even censure their remembering.

5. 8 Humanization of the Experience: Introducing Everyday Themes

The narratives available at the exhibition in the cell building pointed out heroism, solidarity and suffering. Heroic actions are those conducted in the resistance and also in the time of imprisonment. For example, the Austrian room displays a panel titled ‘International Solidarity Saves Three Austrian Women’ placed next to a drawing labelled ‘drawing by a former prisoner’, which depicts a woman in the striped dress carrying another one on her back, situated in front of bunk beds. This text in this unit refers to the anti-Fascist engagement of three Austrian citizens on the one hand and the aid provided to them in the concentration camp by citizens of other countries.

It is a large panel combining text with portraits of three Austrian prisoners and a graphic scheme of the international help they received. It introduces the three women by describing their actions. ‘After the occupation of their Austrian fatherland by Hitler’s army, Toni Lehr, Gerti Schindel and Edith Rosenblüth fled to France. There they fought in the lines of the French resistance against the German invaders.’ (Text on the panel, the Austrian memorial, translated by the author) The story continues by revealing the fact that finally they had been sentenced to death and therefore sent to Ravensbrück. However, they were saved by brave and canny actions performed by other prisoners. This is illustrated by a picture of three female figures labelled ‘three saved Austrians’ in a white frame in the centre. The frame is connected with nine flags of various countries and figures with the names of the women involved in the actions and their countries of origin.

(Fieldnotes, 2017)

Suffering in the camp is presented in drawings of former prisoners made in the camp or after their return. For instance, the walls of the Italian memorial are covered chiefly with enlarged black and white drawings depicting scenes

from the life in the camp, scrawny figures at roll calls, guards observing prisoners doing hard work or the overcrowded inside of the barracks.



Picture 11: Italian Memorial (Photograph by the author, 2017)

The new exhibition presents a variety of psychological topics in relation to the life in the camp. They are solidarity and self-preservation on the one hand and also conflicts among the prisoners on the other hand. The occurrence of rivalrous relationships in the camp is mediated in drawings by former prisoners which are framed, labelled with the name of the author and her brief life story and put on display.

A drawing by Nina Jirsíková, a Czech prisoner. After her return home, she drew numerous coloured drawings depicting scenes from the camp. A slightly sarcastic tone is typical of her art works. There are two women in the centre of the picture seated at a long table. They are dressed in striped

clothes, depicted during eating time. There is a part of the body of another woman on the right side, which indicates a row of eaters. One of the women is bending over towards the other one, staring into her pot. The other one is covering it with one hand and grasping it by the other in a gesture of protection. The title of the coloured drawing inscribed below the figures by the author is ‘You’ve got a potato there, girl!’

A drawing by Georgia Peet-Tanewa, a Bulgarian prisoner: There are three women in striped dresses with red triangles for political prisoners on their arms. The woman in the middle is caught by the other two, her face turned red with anger. One woman grasps her hand, the other is pulling off her shoe. The drawing is titled ‘Wouldn’t you like to sell us your shoes?’ in German, the question is mockingly polite (‘Möchten Sie uns vielleicht Ihre Schuhe verkaufen?’).

(Fieldnotes, 2017)

The nature of the social tensions within the camp is explained to the visitor on one of the textual panels titled ‘Social Relationships’ in the following way.

In both the women’s and the men’s camp at Ravensbrück, prisoners from many different countries and social backgrounds were crammed together in close quarters. Their different political, religious and cultural affiliations were often sources of conflict, but equally they often served as starting points for forming friendships.

(Text in Section 4, the new exhibition)

The selection of the drawings for the main exhibition contradicts the historically more common narrative of mere solidarity and comradeship among incarcerated women. In most of the expositions in the cell building women are addressed as sisters, daughters, comrades and friends, whereas the relationships among the prisoners are portrayed as more diverse and individualized. The

experience of everyday life is presented with a more humanized tint, although in conditions that are usually referred to as inhuman.

5.9 The Female Experience Recognized

In this part of the text the focus is on the representation of the woman. The visual and textual content presented at the Ravensbrück Memorial reflects the historical fact that the site was a women's concentration camp where the majority of prisoners were females.²⁴ Therefore the code 'woman' or 'female experience' was used not in the cases of a mere depiction of women or their mentioning in the text, in which it could be easily replaced by a person, but when those presences were identified as those which may refer to a specific female experience. The comparison of the representation of women in the national memorials in the cell building and the new exhibition has revealed that the female experience is distinguished mainly in relation to the body. It is through the narrative of distinct type of suffering that the woman is recognized. Apparently, the discourse of the struggle for recognition is being reproduced in the new exhibition. As this is a salient feature, the excerpts from fieldnotes related to the new exhibition will prevail in the following lines.

²⁴ Ravensbrück was officially classified as a concentration camp for women (and named so) during the era of National Socialism. However, the fact that there were also men and children and youngsters is presented in the new exhibition and certain memorials in the cell building as well as in publicly accessible information about the site.

Exhibition	Discourse	Indicators
New Exhibition	The struggle for recognition	(Naked) female body in the conditions given by the concentration camp depicted in drawings of prisoners exposed Loss of hair thematized Material objects related to the female body on display Keepsakes and art/craft works referred to as feminine on display Specifics of female health and hygiene presented in relation to the life in the camp Sexuality thematised One exhibition space dedicated to the type of forced labour which only women conducted, forced prostitution

Table 7: The Female Experience Represented and the Discourse of the Struggle for Recognition.

Women are featured in most of the national memorials in the cell building. They are the figures in drawings depicting the life in the camp as in the Italian or Polish memorials. They appear in images from the time periods before imprisonment and after it as in the Czechoslovak, Spanish, Soviet or Bulgarian memorials. The female body or its parts are the models for sculptures expressing suffering and lamentation as in the Rumanian, Polish or Yugoslavian memorials. They are creative makers of small crafted objects which express affection towards friends found in the camp or artists using their creative expressions to cope with the life experiences rooted in Ravensbrück. The meanings conveyed by the depiction of women in the national memorials range from a weak, dejected victim, through a good helpful friend and comrade, to a brave and courageous political activist. However, I have identified an aspect which is common to a majority of the memorials and which is given extended space among those representations. As written in the previous parts of the chapter, the narrative of national suffering on the one hand and heroic deeds against the oppressor on the other hand are offered there. The strategy of the representation of women is what may be perceived as acquiring visibility through equalization. Women in the national memorials are portrayed in the contexts which had previously been delimited for men and occupied by men. Those were very often

public and political arenas. Women are depicted as public speakers, contributors to the creation of the new states after the war, resistance fighters or armed partisans. Also, the depiction of a female prisoner, in general, may be understood as an act of equalization.

On the other hand, the depiction of women in the new exhibition tends to define the female experience as a specific one, including a particular type of oppression and suffering. Through those moments being thematised, the identity of the woman becomes visible and her identity comes out as recognized.

The new exhibition presents the topic of the everyday life in the camp, which includes not only texts, images and objects related to forced labour prisoner were subjected to, but it is also concerned with the issues of hygiene, clothes, nourishment or power and punishment. In the four rooms of Section 3, there are various references to the specificity of the female experience, for instance the display of a glass case with hygienic utilities, for example a hair clipper found in the nineteen eighties during archaeological excavations. The loss of feminine attributes upon arrival in the camp is pointed out when the text informs the visitor that “women especially found the loss of hair extremely humiliating” (informational texts, Section 3, the new exhibition).

Also, the severity of the circumstances regarding the female body is remarked on in the text as follows “for those women who continued to menstruate despite the undernourishment, or for those who suffered from diarrhoea, a very common ailment in the camp, the conditions were unbearable” (informational texts, Section 3, the new exhibition).

One of the thematic sections in the new exhibition is titled ‘Love and sex’. It informs the visitor that:

Love affairs and sexual relations between prisoners in Ravensbrück are not frequently discussed in survivor accounts and memoirs.

(Informational text, Section 4, the new exhibition)

Apparently, although survivors do not thematise that, romantic relationships and sexuality were identified as relevant topic for display in the collection. The text then points out the scarce opportunities for love and sexual relationships between male and female prisoners, as those two camps were separated. On the other hand, it informs about homosexual relationships between men, which served for a specific categorisation and punishment by the Nazis. Nevertheless, they are proven to have occurred in the male part of the Ravensbrück concentration camp. The text then continues:

Homosexual relationships between women were not prosecuted as a crime in Germany, but according to the Ravensbrück camp regulations, ‘anyone who approaches other prisoners with lesbian intentions or who engages in or fails to report lesbian depravities’ was to be punished. However, love affairs also took place between women in Ravensbrück.

(Informational text, Section 4, the new exhibition)

In proximity to this text, there are a number of reproductions of drawings exposed to illustrate what is pronounced through the words involving expert knowledge. All the drawings are reproductions of the originals created by the prisoners. They are mounted onto panels and covered with glass. They are accompanied with legends indicating the names of the authors, the size of the artwork and the media employed. Also, these texts reveal the institution in which the original is archived. In the following two cases the archives are The University of Lunds, Poland and the Ravensbrück Memorial

A drawing from M. J., pencil on paper. It is called ‘Peter in Smokers’ Alley’. There is a couple on a date, her holding his arm, in the centre of the drawing. The female figure is dressed up, in a collared dress showing the curves of the breasts, with locked hair. The other figure has short hair, is dressed in an overall, wearing boots and is depicted smoking. One would expect such scene on the street or in the park. However, a barbed-wired fence is in the background. The legend under the drawing says that ‘the picture probably shows a lesbian couple’. It is a drawing from a

booklet which one prisoner received as a gift. The legend under the drawing says that “the picture probably shows a lesbian couple.” This assumption is supported by claiming that former prisoners reported that some lesbians in Ravensbrück inclined to adopting male looks and behaviour.

Another drawing on display is coloured, titled ‘Camp on Sunday’. It is dated to nineteen forty-four and signed by Nina Jirsíková²⁵. However, the Czech artist created numerous drawings depicting her memories of the life in the concentration camp after her return. This particular drawing depicts a group of seated women in the foreground and pairs of other women in the background. The ‘lager’ setting can be understood from the women’s clothes, the striped blue and white dresses with red triangles on the sleeves, both of which one could see on display in other parts of the exhibition, and mainly from the high wall with a barb-wired fence in the background. Otherwise the scene creates a very Sunday-like impression of spending free time with friends as the women perform activities which we associate with Sunday afternoons, they simply hang out as one would say it today. They are engaged in chatting, reading or moments of affection, they lie next to each other or embrace each other, one of them is holding a mug. They are depicted with various hair styles, some with long hair and even made up, some with short hair and some with a headscarf. The legend below interprets the act of one woman holding her arm around the waste of the other as a record of a possible lesbian relationship.

(Fieldnotes, 2017)

When being interviewed, survivors often speak of good and close friendships in the camp, sympathy and acts of solidarity and helping one another.

²⁵ Jirsíková was able to report the condition of everyday life in the camp vividly and with certain sarcasm when she, for example, in her drawings and the notes in it referred to the prisoner clothes as if she was moderating a fashion show.

Although there is no explicit record, such as a love letter, or a recording of a former prisoner referring to romantic relationships, the tendency of the new exhibition is to make possible homosexuality among prisoners visible.

In order to illustrate the introduction of particular identities and including them in the cultural memory of Ravensbrück, I will share an observation related to the recognition of the female homosexual victim. When I was conducting fieldwork at the Memorial in 2017, I noticed a small monument installed inside the office and lecture-room building. It was a light brown ceramic ball on a white pedestal with a drawing of two hands touching so that they form a triangle and an inscription in German on it. It said: “In memory of the persecuted and murdered lesbian women and girls. You are not forgotten” (text on the monument, translated by the author). The placement of the monument outside the commemoration area of the camp was an evidence of the liminal phase in which the narrative of the Ravensbrück concentration camp in regard to the victims and homosexuality encountered itself. Until the turn of the century, homosexuality was not an aspect in the cultural memory of Ravensbrück. As aforementioned, it is part of the collection displayed in the new exhibition. The placement of the small monument to the lesbian victims was an effort made by a so-called Project Group Ravensbrück (Projektgruppe Ravensbrück), an association which is part of the German Association of Former Prisoners from Ravensbrück (Lagergemeinschaft Ravensbrück). In order to receive permission from the administration body of the Memorial, the members of the group sought support of the idea in the International Ravensbrück Committee and other groups. Nowadays, the monument found a place among other sculptures and plaques commemorating particular groups of prisoners. This are is located next but separated from the wall of nations, the space of public remembrance.



Picture 12: A Drawing of a Scene from the Concentration Camp with an Interpretation Suggesting that It Depicts Lesbian Relationships. (Photo by the author, 2016)

The new exhibition also introduces a topic which had previously been suppressed in acts of remembering and commemoration, if not strictly taboo. It is the existence and operation of the so-called lager brothels.

The thematic section number six is titled ‘Slave labour and satellite camps’ and it provides detailed information about the system of forced labour and German war economy. The subsection 6.3 is dedicated to the topic of ‘Slave labour in the camp brothels’. Besides the general texts which inform about the establishment of such institution outside the walls of the prisoner area of the camp and its function as a place where rewards given to male prisoners could be enjoyed or the recruitment processes, the exhibition displays a vast amount of the official Nazi documentation of the operation of the institution, such as the accounting book or a book of medical examinations of the prisoner sex workers. Also, there is a video station in the corner. It presents interviews with survivors conducted in the nineteen nineties on forced sex work. Some of them confirm knowing

about the existence of such place and some of them remember some prisoners having gotten pregnant and therefore returning to the camp. There is also a binder titled memories of forced sex labour. However, the lack of attention dedicated to this topic among witnesses is illustrated by the commentary from the exhibitors “very few accounts of brothel work have become down to us, because the topic was considered taboo for decades.”

(Fieldnotes, 2019, text in Section 6.3)

On the selection of presenting the topic of sex work and in the system of Nazi concentration camps in the exhibition reveals the circulation of the discourse of the struggle for recognition. The depiction of the distinct type of oppression directed towards the female prisoners uniquely contributes to the emergence of the identity of the woman, which it reinforces. Also, it is an apparent result of the prevalence of expert knowledge employed in the process of composing the collection and also of its influence on shaping the narratives about the past. Despite the occurrence of brief references to the existence of camp brothels in the testimonies of individual male survivors from other concentration camps or in autobiographical fiction in the first decades after nineteen forty five (Reich, 2018), this specific way of victimisation and using power had been absent in the cultural memory related to the concentration camps, including Ravensbrück. The early research in Germany on the topic in the nineteen nineties is perceived rather as a political act of “making the existence of the prisoners’ brothels visible” (Reich, 2018, p. 56, translated by the author), as the silence was perceived as the “expression of ignorance of sexual violence on women and the traditional moral prejudices about prostitution” (Paul cited in Reich, 2018, p. 55). The first scholarly analysis was conducted not earlier than in two thousand and nine.²⁶

²⁶ Sommer, R. (2009). *Das KZ-Bordell. Sexuelle Zwangsarbeit in nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslagern*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

6 Conclusion

“We can say, as is often said, that identity depends on memory, whether we mean by that a core self that remembers its earlier states or, poststructurally, the narratives that construct (and deconstruct) identities by comparing “once upon a time” and “here and now.” The identity- defining functions of memory are real enough, but can we separate contents from functions? For that matter, if memory is shaped by mythologies, ideologies, and narrative strategies why should we even try to remember what actually happened in the past? And yet if we give up trying, where does this leave history except as a special category of fiction?”

(Davis and Starn, 1989, p. 4)

The dissertation discusses the politics of memory manifested at the Ravensbrück Memorial, a lieux de mémoire located at the site of a former Nazi concentration camp in Germany. The objective was to analyse the construction of the cultural memory in two Memorial’s museums in order to reveal the discourses engaged in the process. The investigation was conducted via focus on visual and textual materials on display and their arrangement in two exhibitions, employing the method of discourse analysis. This method of visual anthropology was combined with the method of interviewing. The opening chapters presented the theoretical scaffolding of the research and the results of the analysis of data created in five years of fieldwork.

The approach of the central chapter(s) was to compare the two exhibitions, which were compounded in different times, to unveil the changes in the selection of what is to be remembered and what type of narratives are available. The earlier exhibition is referred to as the national memorials or the cell building based on the original function of the structure in which it is located. Its collection had been developed over four decades and nowadays it is conserved and accessible. The other exhibition, referred to as the new one, was opened a decade after the turn of the millennium, under a different political regime and different

leadership of the institution and also in a different building. The exhibitions vary in size, the new one being more extensive. Therefore I finally included only the sections of the new exhibition which focus on the time in which the camp functioned. The research questions concerned four areas – the narrative about the past as particular or universal, the representation of various identities and their experience, the construction of suffering and agency in the memory work. The discourses identified were the following: the discourse of nationalism, the discourse of individualism, or else the discourse of multiple perspectives, and the discourse of the struggle for recognition.

In the older exhibition the discourse of nationalism is omnipresent, which is apparent from the way the collection is titled – the national memorials. It tells the story of separated pasts, which were marked by the event of Ravensbrück or rather fascism. The centredness on the citizens of the particular state in the cost of excluding others is apparent also in the use of language. The most common combination is the native language and German. In most of the narratives, the landmark of mere existence of concentration camps or the outbreak of fascism served as the dark point from which and against which the nation will rise. The protagonist in the story about the past is the nation. The Ravensbrück concentration camp was the only existing Nazi lager particularly for women. Therefore, women are portrayed in the exhibitions. The identities represented are predominantly those of women engaged in political work, serving the old, pre-war or the new, after-war state. The collective identity is dominant. Ethnic and religious identities, of Jews and the Roma, are represented. However, they were included significantly later after the establishment of the original memorials. Also, their depiction is done in the national framing.

In the new exhibition, the tendency towards individualisation is salient. There are a greater number of texts, images or legends referring to individual prisoners. They are depicted, interviewed, mentioned as receivers of small handcrafted gifts or visible through their artworks. These individuals, however, represent particular prisoner groups. After the opening of the exhibition, some of those identities were included for the first time in the narrative of Ravensbrück,

such as those labelled as criminals or antisocial. Also, the representation of ethnic and religious groups is comparable to that of members of different nationalities. The discourse of the struggle for recognition is reproduced in regard to the identity of the woman. Here, it is not the national collectivity which is significant. It is womanhood in all its aspects, related to the body, to the biological role of a mother, to the social roles and to psychological aspects such as friendships and romantic relationships. The woman here is also depicted as a subject of particular type of suffering resulting from undeliberate nakedness in front of strangers or medical examinations, poor hygienic conditions, loss of feminine attributes, violence and even forced sexual labour.

The new exhibition presents a narrative about a particular past in which the site is the protagonist, the unifying element.

Obviously, Ravensbrück has been recognized as a place of suffering by some collectivities and therefore is attributed with some cultural value. The fact that there has been a memorial, at least a partial one, for sixty years is a proof. Both exhibitions represent suffering, nevertheless, in different ways. The exhibition in the cell building uses expressivity and culturally recognized symbols to convey moments of suffering. The visitor may see images of flames, thorns, clasped hands or weak bodies. Also, some national memorials feature flower decorations which can be culturally associated with funeral adornments. Also, the language used is emotionally loaded. By contrast, suffering is noticeably mediated through knowledge in the new exhibition. It draws on scientific research on the concentration camp and presents large amounts of factual information and archival documentation in order to make suffering acknowledged. The viewer learns about the hard labour in the camp, about the punishments by guards, about deaths in the camp or details on how the operations on Polish prisoners were conducted and may flick through the accounting book from the lager brothel. In fact, National Socialism is highly present in the new exhibition, not only as the subdued past evil and a common enemy as in the cell building, but as a source of information, and evidence, because there are numerous authentic materials on display, such as a photo album

which belonged to the SS or various forms and records about the prisoners. This may imply that in regard to Ravensbrück, the new exhibition reveals the decrease of communicative, embodied memory and the increase of cultural memory, mediated and fabricated, refers to a more past and above all is intended for those without the first-hand experience. In other words, it was impossible to display authentic objects from the camp authored by the Nazi in the early decades of the formation of the site of memory.

The agents of memory vary in both exhibitions. The national memorials occurred quite dynamically and involved prisoners' associations in most cases. Expert knowledge was employed more significantly nowadays when these rooms are introduced in a text in German and English stating that they also serve as records of historical commemoration practices. The new exhibition was created under a European project setting, with a professional team of coordinators and researchers. The participation of expert knowledge is apparent in the explanatory texts, which elaborately interpret the artefacts on display. With its numbering, clarifying texts and explanations, the new exhibition in fact resembles a textbook. On the other hand, the witnesses also participate in the collection. They donated personal objects or photographs and also were present during some of the decision making. It seems that the approach to the new exhibition was more inclusive, which may reflect the political setting of unified Germany. The perceived value of the whole project can be described by the following short excerpt from an interview with a survivor.

Personally, it is very important to me that the exhibition is there. Because we are slowly departing, you know, the former witnesses, but the things remain there. And even if they are set aside somewhere in the archives or if they create a travelling exposition from it, it will always be something which is there forever.

(Interview, 2019, translated by the author)

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