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## CONSTRUCTING MEMORY IN URBAN SPACE: CASE OF THE BAŁUTY DISTRICT IN ŁÓDŹ<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract.** In my article, I focus on the issue of constructing memory in urban space, taking a selected fragment of Łódź as an example. I discuss the chosen perspectives of researchers dealing with memory and the city; both of these topics have been covered by numerous studies in the social sciences. I conducted my research according to the procedures of visual grounded theory. The result of the analysis is discussed by presenting the main categories of the theory developed and the hypotheses to which the research process led me. I propose to locate the process of constructing memory in urban space between the memoryscape, which consists of all material and symbolic representations related to the past of a given place, and the experience of an individual who, as an active subject, perceives and interprets what is around them and, on this basis, takes certain actions.

**Keywords:** memory, Łódź, urban studies, visual sociology, visual grounded theory.

## KONSTRUOWANIE PAMIĘCI W PRZESTRZENI MIEJSKIEJ: PRZYPADEK DZIELNICY BAŁUTY W ŁODZI

**Abstrakt.** W swoim artykule pochylam się nad tematem konstruowania pamięci w przestrzeni miasta, omówionego na przykładzie wybranego fragmentu Łodzi. Omawiam wybrane stanowiska badaczy zajmujących się pamięcią i miastem; oba z tych tematów doczekały się licznych opracowań w naukach społecznych. Własne badanie przeprowadziłem zgodnie z procedurami wizualnej teorii ugruntowanej.

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Rezultat analizy opisuję, prezentując główne kategorie opracowanej teorii oraz hipotezy, do których doprowadził mnie proces badawczy. Proponuję, by lokować proces konstruowania pamięci w przestrzeni miasta między krajobrazem pamięci, na który składa się ogół symbolicznych reprezentacji związanych z przeszłością danego miejsca oraz doświadczeniem jednostki, która jako czynny podmiot odbiera i interpretuje to, co znajduje się wokół niej oraz na tej podstawie podejmuje określone działania.

**Słowa kluczowe:** pamięć, Łódź, badania miejskie, socjologia wizualna, wizualna teoria ugruntowana.

## 1. Introduction: the memory phenomenon

The origins of the growing interest in the past, which brings together researchers reflecting on memory, date back to the 1970s and 1980s. This interest has led to many diagnoses and proposed terms to describe it. Many of these, as Sharon Macdonald (2013: 3–4) notes, stem from negatively charged and/or medical language (e.g. memory mania, the memory craze, commemorative fever). For this reason, the anthropologist leans towards the more neutral expression “memory phenomenon”. This phenomenon can be explained by the changes in the postmodern world and the accompanying sense of uprooting, confusion about constructed identities, the change in attitude towards time and the disruption of its linear perception, and the emergence of the memory of minority groups (Szacka 2006: 46–47). The turn to the past can also be explained by the presence of certain unprocessed social traumas. In Europe, the events of the Second World War constitute such a trauma. These experiences form the foundation for the memory of the entire continent. It is a diverse memory, full of controversies, unresolved issues, and points of contention, but it nevertheless constitutes the most general common frame of reference (Bednarek 2012: 6).

In this article, I am primarily interested in identifying the memory phenomenon at the local level. I focus my attention on Łódź – nowadays the fourth most populated Polish city, after Warszawa, Kraków, and Wrocław, which recently jumped into the third spot. Today’s position of Łódź results from relatively recent developments. The town was granted city rights in the 15th century, but its greatest growth occurred in the 19th and 20th centuries, primarily due to its role as a center of the textile industry. With its industrial history and later post-industrial trajectory, Łódź can be compared to such cities as Manchester, Detroit, or Tampere. The period of the Second World War was probably the most tragic in the history of Łódź. During that time the ghetto operated in Łódź, which was the second largest ghetto in the German-occupied areas. The area of the former ghetto belongs to the part of Łódź that is today called the Bałuty district.

When we look at historical or literary descriptions of Bałuty, war history seems to be omnipresent there. However, how is the memory of this and other fragments of history constructed in the space of Bałuty itself? What elements make

up the local landscape of memory and how is it experienced by the individual? These are the questions that I seek to answer in my study. Delving into the description of the method and results of the study first requires one to point out the main sources of inspiration from the fields of memory and urban studies.

## 2. Memory and the city in sociological reflection

Concepts of memory from the social sciences can be presented in reference to the individual-collective opposition. The individual perspective accompanies studies of memory from the field of cognitive psychology and psychoanalysis (Zerubavel 1996: 283–284), studies of memory as an individual's attitude toward the past (Malicki 2012; Gubała-Czyżewska 2018), and studies involving the biographical method (Kaźmierska 2008). The issue of the past in the life of an individual can also be considered from the perspective of symbolic interactionism. Herbert Blumer, one of the founders of this theory, sensitizes researchers to the historical connections of what becomes the object of analysis, since “[t]he designations and interpretations through which people form and maintain their organized relations are always in degree a carry-over from the past” (Blumer 1986: 60).

So, is there anything more individual than remembering, an activity performed through the individual's thoughts and actions, we might ask after Jeffrey K. Olick (2008: 152). The answer can be found in the classic “*Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire*” by Maurice Halbwachs (1969). The analysis of the titular framework is based on the assumption that the study of memory “is not a matter of reflecting philosophically on inherent properties of the subjective mind but of identifying its shifting social frames” (Olick 2008: 155). According to the French sociologist's concept, society provides the individual and their memories with a temporal and spatial framework. Halbwachs' work inspired later generations of researchers. One of the continuators of his thought was Georges Gurvitch, the author of the thesis on the multiplicity of social times. According to it, there is no single social time, nor is there a single collective memory. The multiplicity of memories is the multiplicity of values, attitudes, and interpretations. It is also the multiplicity of actors whose memories complement or come into conflict (Tarkowska 2016: 127).

There are plenty of inspirations for the study of tradition, historical awareness, and collective memory in the Polish social sciences. An important figure for this thought is Stefan Czarnowski. Although he does not usually use the term memory explicitly, he develops many valuable threads for its study. In an unfinished article, Czarnowski remarks that time in society is not an objective category and that understanding the past exclusively as an unambiguous, irreversible, and unrepeatable sequence of time is deceptive (Czarnowski 1956). Other Polish scholars focusing on the presence of the past in present life include Ludwik Krzywicki, Florian Znaniecki, and Stanisław Ossowski.

The meaning of the term “collective memory” and related categories depend on the approach of researchers representing various disciplines and scientific traditions, as well as the topic of research, which often focuses on a selected aspect of collective memory. Delving into terminological issues would require separate coverage. Among the concepts present in Polish sociology, I can mention collective memory (Szacka 2006: 19), social memory (Golka 2009: 15), or cultural and communicative memory (Assmann 2011: 5–10). I would also like to mention Eviatar Zerubavel’s (1996; 2003) concept of memory, which influenced me considerably.

Having concluded these brief reflections on memory, I would like to review selected perspectives on the sociology of the city. Of the most influential currents in urban sociology (Jałowiecki, Szczepański 2006: 13–41), I distinguish those most relevant to my work: the ecological and neo-ecological school, the culturalist school, and the humanistic schools.

The city in ecological perspective was one of the main objects of interest of the Chicago school, centered around Robert E. Park. Its members viewed the city as a laboratory of social life, assuming that the key problems of their contemporary society could be explained regarding urban life. Influenced by criticism and polemics, many of the assumptions of the Chicago school were reformulated, resulting in the formation of the neo-ecological school. Its origins date back to the proposals of Louis Wirth, Park’s seminarian. One of the Polish representatives of the neo-ecological school is Waław Piotrowski, author of the study of the sociospatial structure of Łódź (Piotrowski 1966).

The culturalist approach which rejected the naturalism of the Chicago school can be presented through the ideas of one of its founders, Florian Znaniecki. According to his proposal, individuals are not subject to spatial conditions involuntarily, but actively experience and evaluate numerous, changing, limited, and indivisible spaces. Znaniecki postulates using the concept of “spatial values” (*wartości przestrzenne*) to describe them. This category also includes the outside: surroundings, centers, borders, sides and directions, distances and proximities, roads and roadless areas (I believe one can see here the influence of Stefan Czarnowski’s thought, see Czarnowski 1939). Each of these values, as Znaniecki (1938: 91) states, is a component of some non-spatial system of values, in relation to which it has a particular substance and meaning. Florian Znaniecki’s continuators were, among others, Janusz Ziółkowski and Aleksander Wallis.

The humanistic schools in urban sociology are very diverse. They largely refer to the sociology of everyday life and the semiotic approaches. In the research on everyday life, the focus is on practices concerning the body, work, consumption, leisure, and customs, among others. These practices occur in specific spaces that we can call places of everyday life (one of which is the public space). As Marek Krajewski (2009: 182) notes, these are places to which the individual returns and which they treat as their own.

The city can be perceived either as a text or as a non-linguistic sign system, as scholars from the semiotic movement tend to do. For a long time, reading the city

was a widely used metaphor for the reception of urban space. However, the textualist paradigm in thinking about culture may be considered an oversimplification (Rewers 2005: 33). Given the above, it is possible to consider urban space in terms of the signs and traces that coexist within it. While the sign has a representational structure, the trace is surrounded by a mystery that is difficult to grasp. The trace can only be expressed by the movement of presence and absence, manifestation and mystery, representation and its absence (Rewers 2005: 26). According to such reasoning, the city would constitute a hybrid space, both semiotic (texts) and palimpsestic (traces). A palimpsest is a configuration of traces of human activity layered over time. In the city-palimpsest the new is superimposed on the old, the dust of today falls on the dust of yesterday (Karpińska 2004: 165).

The word “space” appears repeatedly in the concepts discussed, so it seems necessary to clarify it. For this reason, I would like to recall the definition developed by Martina Löw, inspired by Anthony Giddens’ structuration theory. According to the sociologist, spaces are “relational arrangements of people (living beings) and social goods” (Löw 2016: 141). The very expression “arrangement”, (*An*)*Ordnung*, is meant to simultaneously indicate the state of order, order (*Ordnung*), and its dynamic aspect (the prefix *-an*). The definition additionally takes into account various actors, including non-human organisms, and social goods, i.e., objects with their material and symbolic aspects. Spaces, according to Löw, are constituted, on the one hand, by processes of erection, construction, and positioning in physical space (spacing), and, on the other hand, by processes of perception, imagining, or recollection that integrate goods and people into a single space (synthesis).

### 3. Research method

The description of the study conducted should be preceded by an overview of the method used, in my case the grounded theory methodology. The chosen methodology poses a challenge to novice researchers, but also leaves them a fair amount of flexibility. It allows one to adopt a multifaceted approach to social phenomena and provides an opportunity to make discoveries in established research areas as much as in emerging fields (Corbin, Strauss 2015: 8–11). Due to the selected subject of the study, I decided to base my research on visual material analysis. Although many grounded theory researchers use different types of data, the visual ones were rather ignored for a long time (Konecki 2012: 14). On my research path, I mainly relied on the framework proposed by Krzysztof Konecki (2008; 2010; 2012). When analyzing visual materials, the main procedures of grounded theory apply. During the analysis, one seeks to reconstruct the four dimensions of imaging: the act of creating an image, the act of presenting it, the visual product itself and its content, and the reception of that image. Through this, the researcher tries to reconstruct its internal and external contexts (Konecki 2012). The comparative analysis of images

is also an indispensable tool. Visualizations in the form of diagrams help integrate the theory, making it easier to verify the relationships between data, categories, and notes, and linking them together (Strauss 2003: 170–214).

According to the initially defined topic, my study was to be devoted to the manifestations of history in the cityscape of Bałuty. I wanted to answer the question of how the past manifests itself in the contemporary landscape: what is evidenced by the elements present in it, which of them are distinct at first glance, and which are hidden, forgotten, or absent. I have outlined the area of interest based on the division used in the City Information System – it consists of Stare Bałuty, Marysin-Doły, Stare Miasto, and Helenów. These areas, located in the south of Bałuty, are placed next to each other and share a common history, but also show some important contrasts between them; therefore, they were to provide valuable insight into the history of Łódź. I intended to capture the landscape of the city in the photographs I took. Such a choice is related to the focus on the city's visual dimension; the inclusion of self-descriptive notes in the research process allowed me to capture the experience of being in the city space more fully. In my study, I focused on what is generally accessible and observable from the street level. For this reason, I did not delve, for instance, into the space of courtyards; they are the centers of separate worlds with gates as their boundaries (Karpieńska 2000: 128–183). I participated in organized group walks, which provided a good opportunity for observation but also allowed me to explore new routes and notice various places that I might have previously overlooked. The photographs I took are from August 2021 to February 2022. They were complemented by other existing visual materials: old city plans, archival photographs, and reconstructions of a section of the Old City. It should be noted that in visual grounded theory, data of this kind – seemingly only found by the researcher – can be treated as constructed. It is the specific decisions of the researcher that produce the data – there are no data independent of our perspective on the world (Konecki 2012: 21). The visual data, which are the main empirical data in the study, were supplemented with data from the literature of various disciplines. The literature review allows one to contextualize analysis; it helps to approach the data critically and generate theory. Some valuable information was also found in the press and online sources. As far as possible, I tried to familiarize myself with the described data in the second stage of the study, after analyzing the photographs taken. The latter were to have priority, and it was from them that I first wanted to saturate the theoretical categories.

One of the more serious problems arising from my study turned out to be the issue of subjectivity in the perception of urban space. The studied area of the city is familiar to me – it is impossible to fully distance myself from it. As Kathy Charmaz (2006: 15) points out: “We are not scientific observers who can dismiss scrutiny of our values by claiming scientific neutrality and authority. Neither observer nor observed come to a scene untouched by the world”. To enrich my perspective, I familiarized myself with materials related to the area under study; including different perspectives

in a more complete and nuanced way would require using additional methods in the study, such as walking interview. I also kept a research journal to keep track of research activities with the goal of self-reflection and increasing awareness of my own biases and assumptions that could potentially influence interpretations (Corbin, Strauss 2015: 119).

## 4. Results of the study

### 4.1. Constructing memory in urban space

The central category that emerged from the analysis is the construction of memory in urban space. The process under examination takes place between the individual and the memoryscape they experience in the city space. This approach to the discussed problem makes it possible to avoid opting for any of the radical proposals of memory as a purely personal or exclusively socially conditioned phenomenon (cf. Winter, Sivan 2000: 10). The memoryscape – like the non-memory landscape that functions in parallel – is shaped by social actors. For we are, notes Maurice Halbwachs (1969: 173), compelled to search through time and space, which our group has defined, for the moment and place where the given fact happened. The memoryscape understood in this way influences the individual's memory related to the direct or indirect experience of the city space. At the same time, individuals have their agency and can co-create the memoryscape through their actions. The relationship between the individual and the memoryscape is therefore reciprocal. Individual memory is categorized here based on Herbert Blumer's (1986) concept of the definition of a situation.

Memoryscapes, even those firmly rooted in the cityscape or the consciousness of citizens, never guarantee the closure of their related narratives; they are subject to constant interpretation and reinterpretation (Kappler 2017: 133). Hence, my decision to adopt the name “constructing memory”, which conveys the active and continuous nature of the described process, and can simultaneously draw our attention to purely material constructions, as well as those that are immaterial (contained in socio-cultural values, patterns, and practices). Moreover, grounded theory itself encourages us to analyze the data in terms of the processes that resonate through them. Other terms of similar nature are, for example, remembrance (Winter, Sivan 2000) or past presencing (Macdonald 2013).

The construction of memory proceeds under the influence of various social actors operating at different levels of social life, which can be referred to the conditional matrix. At the international level, first of all, it seems important to locate the European context and its typical memory phenomenon described in the introduction. Strongly connected with memory is historical policy, which is an institutionalized form of action by state authorities guided by a specific political

interest. Behind their actions is the desire to influence the consciousness and memory of the social community in order to shape its political identity, professed values, and individual attitudes (Kącka 2015: 66). We can look at these issues in the broader context of the transformation of Western societies described by Zygmunt Bauman as a return to tribalism, associated with the revival of strong ethnic, cultural, or religious identifications. “Once stripped of power to shape the future, politics tends to be transferred to the space of collective memory – a space immensely more amenable to manipulation and management, and for that reason promising a chance of blissful omnipotence long (and perhaps irretrievably) lost in the present and in the times yet to come” (Bauman 2017: 61). For the interests of the state, it is the national identity that will be more important than the local identity. The former, for example, dominates mainstream media or school curricula, in which little or no space is provided for issues of local history. As a result, the responsibility for the transmission of local history is distributed among multiple actors: local authorities, memory-related institutions (archives, museums, etc.), universities, local media, NGOs, artists, and the local community. Such diversification allows, on the one hand, a greater plurality of constructed memory, but on the other – it does not guarantee the same rootedness in the consciousness of citizens as Polish history. The group level, which includes vital for the transmission of memory family relations, the level of interaction and action are already closer to the individual and the formation of their consciousness of the past. A similar division into “subjects of memory” is made by Marek Ziółkowski (2001: 5–8).

## 4.2. Memoryscape

The memoryscape seems to be a useful category, although it is quite capacious and is used freely in texts from different fields. I lean towards the definition of a memoryscape, in which collective memory is commonly spatialized in material and symbolic dimensions (Muzaini, Yeoh 2005: 345). It can also be argued that the memoryscape encompasses temporal representations related to the city’s past located in its space and is thus part of the broader category of city image (cf. Strauss 2017). The image of Łódź is significantly influenced by its image as a “bad city”. Bałuty itself carries associations stemming from historical problems: overcrowding, poverty, and crime. It is therefore doubly disadvantaged, burdened with the reputation of a bad neighborhood located in a bad city. Much effort has been devoted to combating these negative stereotypes, and to this day they still seem to shape perceptions about Łódź and Bałuty – both among residents and outsiders.

Through the analysis, I was able to distinguish six main elements of the memoryscape that appeared in the studied area. The proposed division is flexible to some extent; there would be a possibility of different delimitation and designation of the categories. In the presented version, it includes administrative and urban layout, elements of nature, residential buildings, public institutions, inscriptions



and images, and sites of memory. Commemorating history involves not only dedicated efforts but also what we can call unintentional commemoration. This distinction can also be considered, following Andrew Szpociński (2014), in terms of intentional and unintentional memory carriers. In particular, the first four landscape elements highlighted here can be strongly linked to memory, although they are not usually the result of intentional commemoration practices. Given their ubiquity and embeddedness in everyday life, researchers can easily overlook them. It is impossible to present here all the manifestations of the construction of a landscape of memory, even from such a small part of the city. Below I present selected examples that seem important to me and provide good illustrative material.

One of the elements of the memoryscape is nature. A cursory look at the nature of Łódź, for example, may lead to the conclusion that the city has no rivers, even though there are, according to estimates, nearly 20 of them. The rivers that contributed to the development of the industrial city were polluted and then hidden underground. Their fate illustrates well the impact of human activity on nature. The well in Old Town Park (see Figure 1) allows passersby to stop, peek and listen to the course of the Łódka River. This allows for a direct, polysensory experience (being able to see the river, hear the sound of flowing water, and be aware of its distance). Elements of nature may seem like certain and inviolable evidence in terms of the city's history, but just as rivers can be brought underground, trees that are already rooted can be brought into an emerging park. This is what happened in the case of the Old Town Park, created in an area destroyed by the Germans during the war. Trees were transported to the area in the mid-1950s, which was explained by soil poverty and contamination (Leśniak 2010: 324). I would interpret this action symbolically as the erasure of past traces, creating the illusion that the trees had been growing there for a long time, that people had not lived there not so long before.



**Figure 1.** A well in Old Town Park showing the underground course of the Łódka River

Source: own work.

Some impression of the city's past is also provided by elements of older residential buildings. An example from Stare Bałuty (see Figure 2) shows well how successive layers of development overlap: from deteriorating remnants of wooden architecture to new residential buildings. The heterogeneous development of Bałuty was pointed out in the 1960s by Waclaw Piotrowski, who wrote about neighboring tenement houses intended for workers, old buildings located on narrow streets, and postwar residential blocks (Piotrowski 1966: 49–50). The wooden buildings or the layout of some courtyards are reminiscent of rural housing rather than urban and clash with the usual form of the urban landscape. They are among the few testimonies of the early stages of Bałuty's development.



**Figure 2.** Diverse architecture on Młynarska Street

Source: own work.

Another element of the memoryscape is public institutions. Usually viewed from a contemporary perspective, they bear witness to the historical development of the city. This category includes institutions of a religious nature. Historically, Łódź was a city of various religions, and signs of this past can be found in the space of Bałuty. A prominent feature in the landscape is the Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (*Kościół Wniebowzięcia Najświętszej Marii Panny*), whose towers are a distinctive landmark. Another building of this type is the Old Catholic Mariavite Church of St. Francis of Assisi (*Starokatolicki Kościół Mariawitów pw. św. Franciszka z Asyżu*), a testimony to the existence of a somewhat forgotten religious group in Łódź. After the outbreak of the Second World War, important sites of the Jewish community were erased from the landscape, including the Alte Szil Synagogue located on today's Wolborska Street or the Bałucka Synagogue located on Zgierska Street.

In the urban landscape, we are confronted with a multitude of inscriptions and images related to the past. One of these is the names of streets and other places in the city space. On the topic of urban naming in Łódź, it is worth referring to the work of linguists (Bieńkowska, Umińska-Tytoń 2013). The names of the streets reveal a lot about the historical development of the city and changes in historical policy. People who belong to older generations or simply lived in Bałuty for a long time sometimes still use names from before the changes in 1990. Examples include streets dedicated to communist activists: Róża Luksemburg, Włada Bytomska or Karol Liebknecht (today: Żłotnicza, Organizacji Wolność i Niezawisłość, por. Bronisława Skury-Skoczyńskiego “Robotnika”). This is how individual memory resists changes coming from the authorities. The process of “decommunization” of municipal names spared streets with more general names from the 1950s: Racjonalizatorów, Współzawodnicza, Kolektywina.

An interesting type of commemorative object is street art works. One project with such a focus is “zWnętrz” by Marta Łacka. The artist met with residents of Żytnia Street, listened to their stories, and then photographed representations of their most significant memories. She transferred the images thus obtained onto the walls of buildings on that street, creating a collective visual diary (Bieżyński 2021). In one of her works (see Figure 3), she captured the “Ż10” tattoo located on the wrist of a man who lives in a building on 10 Żytnia Street. This example shows very clearly how the site and the body can be inextricably linked.



**Figure 3.** Work on Żytnia Street showing the tattoo of one of the residents

Source: own work.

The last of the distinguished elements of the memory landscape are memorial sites. I propose to understand them as places with symbolic and topographical dimensions, linked to collective history, and usually organized with its commemoration in mind. The full experience of a memorial site requires being in its space and moving through it. Monuments can be considered the most important forms of commemoration: they act as modern totems, providing a visual sign of certain values (Kącka 2015: 71–72). Based on the analysis, I can distinguish the categories of traditional and modern memorials. Regarding the traditional ways of commemoration, I would include the historically older ones (but still used today): conventional monuments, commemorative plaques, and plaques with local names. The new form of memorial partly breaks with tradition; today, history is being commemorated using new forms or transforming conventional ones. Some of the forms of commemoration – exhibitions, information boards – are only temporary. If we pay attention to the content of the emerging works, we will notice that nowadays there is an increasing return to the history of the neglected and forgotten, the fate of people associated with history in different ways, belonging to persecuted or marginalized groups (e.g. Abram Cytryn and other children living in the ghetto during the war, the Roma and Sinti community, Halina Kłęb-Szwarc, Michalina Tatarówna-Majkowska).

Traditional objects associated with religion or history and the rituals taking place in their space induce a sense of solemnity, creating in the individual a sense of distance and the need to preserve it. Such objects in Bałuty are the Monument to the Glory of the Soldiers of the Łódź Army (*Pomnik Chwały Armii Łódź*) and the Children's Martyrdom Monument (*Pomnik Martyrologii Dzieci*). These sites are the center of attention during anniversary celebrations, sometimes flowers or candles are placed under them. Daily, however, these objects are taken out of the usual order; despite easy access to them, their surroundings remain empty. The space of everyday life (where traffic takes place or where adults and children spend their leisure time) is located near the monuments, yet still clearly separated from them. The new forms of monuments do not impose such distance, are created using non-classical means of expression, and even encourage an active experience. A good example is the Survivors' Park: a commemoration of the survivors of the Łódź ghetto and those who rescued Jewish citizens of Łódź during the war. The park contains various forms of commemoration but is also a place for daily walks for local residents.

In my study, the memoryscape became a more important category than the non-memoryscape. This is primarily due to the character of the collected material, that is, the photographs taken. It allowed me to discover the elements that are visible and recognized in the landscape while finding the elements that are hidden, forgotten, or absent – as stated in the original research question – was a more difficult challenge. To speak on the landscape of non-memory, it is necessary to refer to other sources (Rykała 2018: 124). The processes of remembering and forgetting take place under the influence of the needs of the present, including the search for meaning,

bonds, solidarity, identity, and a sense of belonging (Wolff-Powęska 2007: 8). Forgetting itself is realized through actions located between the poles of passivity and active action (Kwiatkowski 2009). I propose that the non-memoryscape is a category that binds non-memory sites or non-places of memory (Sendyka 2013; Rykała 2018). Its existence is associated with actions such as ignoring, hiding, or erasing elements of the memory landscape. In the study area, the construction of the landscape of memory and the landscape of non-memory seem to run in parallel. This would testify to the coexistence of parallel cycles of memory and non-memory in the collective consciousness described by Maria Hirszowicz and Elżbieta Neyman (2001: 43). Such a conclusion would also connect with the category of the city-palimpsest described earlier, which constitutes a space of losing and finding, of remembering and forgetting, of destroying and building, of meeting and parting, of birth and death (Karpńska 2004: 165).

Places in Bałuty that oscillate between memory and oblivion include the square at 14 Zachodnia Street (called Fireman's Square in the Łódź Ghetto – it was there that Chaim Mordechai Rumkowski, the superior of the Jewish Elders, made his speech heralding the Great Shpera), the old Jewish cemetery at Zachodnia Street (destroyed by the Germans during the war, and finally liquidated after the war, when the city authorities demarcated its area for the widening of Zachodnia Street and the construction of apartment blocks), and the Old Market Square (fulfilling the role of a city market before the war and a commemorative space after the war, it seems to have lost its own identity today). Examples of rivers flowing beneath the surface, cemeteries, or foundations buried in the ground show how literally the palimpsest structure of the city can sometimes manifest itself. On the occasion of various explorations, excavations, or restoration works, memory comes to light in a material and symbolic way at the same time. Rediscovered memories of the past then return, escaping the realm of non-memory.

The category of fighting for attention is related to the variety of symbolic representations in the city space. The literature often emphasizes the intensity of the experience of the space of larger cities. Overexposure forces the individual to cut themselves off to some extent from their surroundings and to become indifferent to the constantly incoming sensations. The modern city is overflowing with signs belonging to various discourses. The commemoration discourse is only one of them; others include, for example, the commercial or football fan discourse. The former is present on storefronts, advertisements, and billboards; advertising materials are a ubiquitous component of the landscape of Polish cities and are still insufficiently regulated. Fan activity in urban space manifests itself in various forms, but the most visible one is graffiti. The characteristic form of expression of club identity is seen and processed by artists, in works such as Barbara Olejarczyk's paintings from the series "*Wszędzie widzę Widzew*" (I See Widzew Everywhere) or a series of wall inscriptions created by an author nicknamed Janusz III Waza mocking the conflict between the local football clubs.

### 4.3. Individual experience

The issue of the individual's perspective relating to the memory landscape recurs constantly with the above descriptions of the memory landscape. The integration of categories that testify to an individual's experience was facilitated by Blumer's concept of situation definition. According to the sociologist's position of symbolic interactionism, "activity of human beings consists of meeting a flow of situations in which they have to act and that their action is built on the basis of what they note, how they assess and interpret what they note, and what kind of projected lines of action they map out" (Blumer 1986: 16).

Thus, I propose that the experience of an individual grappling with the objects contained in the landscape of memory should be considered a process that consists of stages: perception of the city space, interpretation and evaluation of meanings, and action in relation to the space.

The memoryscape is a many-sided phenomenon, susceptible to different interpretations, competing for attention with other symbols, and easily blending into everyday experience. These properties can negatively affect the viewer's attentiveness and reflectiveness. Urban spaces often contain traces of the past, but these can be difficult to pick up, especially in the everyday experience. Noticing them requires increased vigilance, and decoding them requires reference to the knowledge at hand. Commemorative objects, on the other hand, are easy to see and interpret, or at least they are usually created with this intention. What happens when the city space lacks a sign linking a place to the past? Finding one's way around such a place is a difficult task. The absence of any form of commemoration at a memorial site does not provide any basis for action; there is no place where one can stand and give reflection or a plaque to which one can approach and read about what once happened at a particular place.

Interpretation refers to the knowledge one possesses and their own memories. The same places can carry completely different meanings for different individuals, especially if their biographies are involved. To interpret a given object, it is sometimes necessary to turn to external sources. The role of the Internet is manifested here, which allows people to find their way around the space and learn more about it, both locals and people who are in a given place for the first time (perhaps the Internet should therefore be considered as a place of memory, or at least a carrier of important information for the shaping of knowledge about the past).

Certain symbols associated with collective memory will usually be easy to interpret and this reading will be shared by the city residents – differences may arise only in their evaluation. Thus, for example, abandoned buildings that testify to the passage of time usually arouse negative associations, and may bring up nostalgia and regret, but the proposed actions to change this situation can differ significantly. This is the case with the Helena Wolf Hospital (also known as the Kasa Chorych Hospital), standing on Łagiewnicka Street. Its renovation, which

began in the 1980s, never came to fruition (a new, unfinished wing of the hospital is still visible on the north side). The apparent deterioration of the building is met with opposition from local residents, demands for renovation, and ideas for utilizing the building (Rutkiewicz 2019). This example proves that the fate of old architecture is not indifferent to the residents of Bałuty, at least in the case of once significant places. The site must have once been full of life, especially since it also served as a birthing hospital. During one of the organized walks through Bałuty, its participants seemed interested in the fate of the building and interpreted it in various ways: commenting on the appearance of the building, locating it in their family histories, finding in the neglect of the building a conspiracy at higher levels of power, inquiring about its future.

Based on the example of the mentioned memory sites, I tried to show that each object sets users a framework for action, and induces them to behave in one way or another. How does one come into contact with forms of commemoration? Contemporary forms of commemoration often give the viewer a chance for an active experience; they become part of the dimension of everyday life, the function of commemoration being realized as if in passing, but remaining (maybe precisely because of this) fully present. From my own experience, I can say that staying near the traditional forms of commemoration does not fit into the nature of the modern city, which encourages movement and action. Stopping in a public place can make an individual feel uneasy – it is read by both sides of the interaction as inappropriate, potentially suspicious (see Konecki 2017). Activities such as stopping in a city space, talking about it, or photographing it become more “natural” when undertaken with another person or in a group. Other individuals provide a point of reference, a chance for a wider range of activities, and legitimize them. Besides, even during group walks, situations arise that disrupt the role of the aloof stroller, for example, when one enters the semiprivate space of backyards, or when one interacts with residents.

## 5. Conclusions

Based on the analysis, I would like to present the following hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1. Administrative and urban layout, elements of nature, residential buildings, urban institutions, inscriptions and images, and memorials constitute the urban landscape of memory.

The described elements of the memory landscape have various functions and are usually inscribed in the daily experience of the city. Activities aimed at commemorating the past are primarily associated with the categories of inscriptions, images, and memorials. The 21st century has seen the proliferation of a form of contemporary commemoration that reaches out to previously overlooked events and figures and offers audiences an engaging experience.

Hypothesis 2. Memory in urban space is formed between the individual and the memoryscape.

The construction of memory is not an exclusively social or individual phenomenon. Memory is culturally and socially conditioned, influenced by institutional and noninstitutional actors operating at different levels of social life. Awareness of the past is largely shaped by the transmission of individuals from the environment, especially the family – this is how communicative memory is maintained. Cultural memory, in turn, is transmitted institutionalized in schools or museums, in media messages, and also through public space.

Hypothesis 3. The urban memoryscape clashes with the non-memoryscape – individual memories and threads of the past move between the areas of memory and oblivion.

The space of the city is one of the fields where the coexisting processes of constructing memory and oblivion are manifested. Particularly difficult topics cause the greatest tensions between forgetting and remembering, between ignoring or erasing past events and restoring them to public consciousness.

Hypothesis 4. The landscape of memory competes for the attention of individuals with other symbolic representations in the city space.

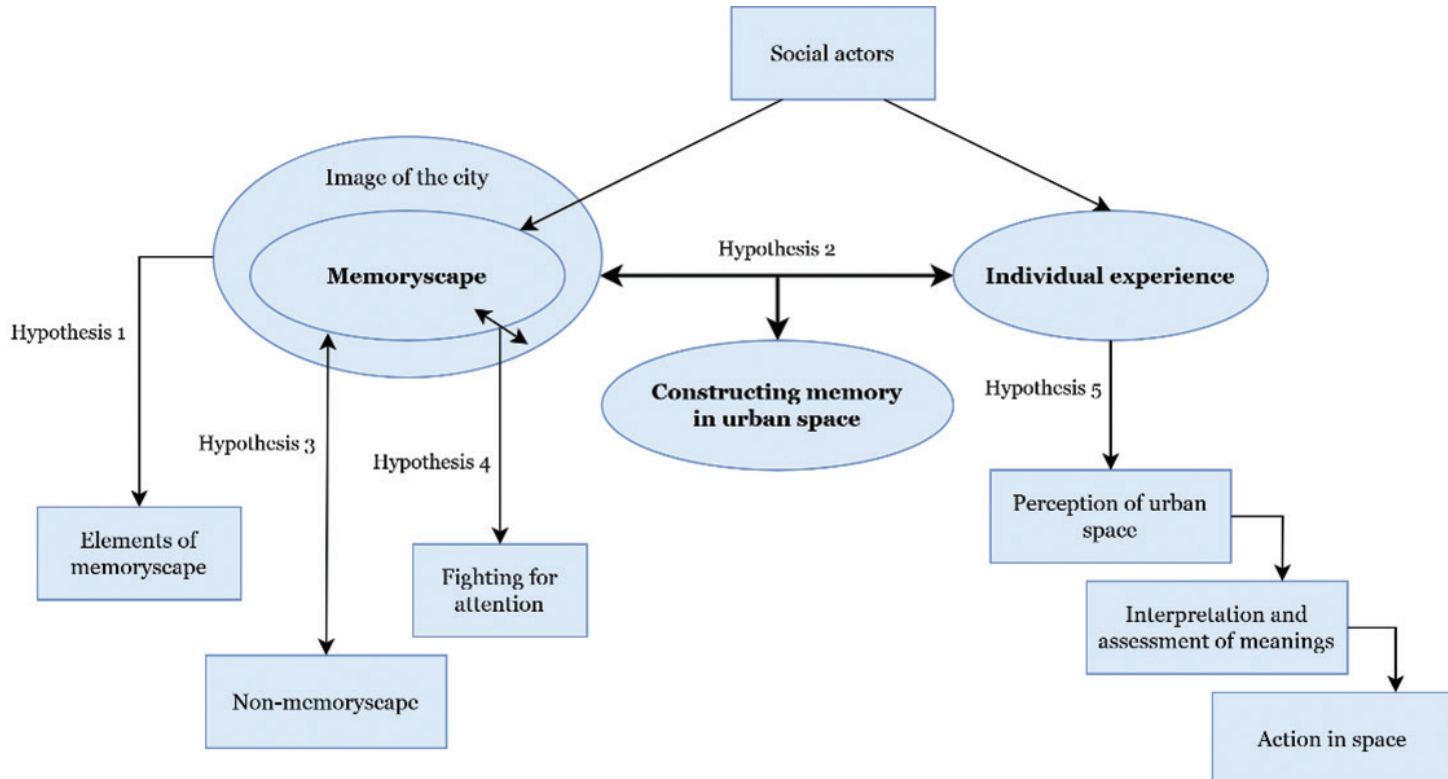
The city space is full of a variety of signs. Temporal representations are only one of many that occur in the city and make up its symbolism. The category I have called “fighting for attention” indicates the coexistence of these representations and their accumulation in the individual experience of everyday life.

Hypothesis 5. The individual perceiving the city space and interpreting the meanings found there takes actions that affect the landscape of memory.

The individual who experiences the city space interprets and evaluates the signs present in it, according to their knowledge and previous experience. On this basis, one draws a line of action and interacts with themselves and with others. One’s actions can shape the memory landscape and influence others’ actions.

Based on an analysis of the landscape of the selected part of the city and the available literature, I am ready to conclude that nothing heralds the twilight of the memory phenomenon for the time being. In the near future, further exploration and commemoration of topics hitherto overlooked should be expected, as should the continued focus of states on historical politics. It should be the task of sociologists and other researchers of social life to keep a close eye on which threads of the past are being erased or ignored, how these processes are taking place, who is responsible for them, and what their potential consequences may be. The area of the city that I explored is filled with all kinds of images of the past. Bałuty is at a stage of intense transformation; this is manifested in the city landscape itself, but it is also, I believe, realized by its residents. It is my dream that the old area of Bałuty will see a real revitalization, which would provide residents with decent living conditions, taking into account their local identity, and would also save the neglected parts of the city from degradation, respecting its historical fabric. In such an ideal vision, the future is not separated from the past but is enrooted in it.





**Diagram 1.** Constructing memory in urban space

Source: own work.

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