

## TOWNS ARE MADE OF MEMORY PLACES – TOWNS AS MEMORY PLACES OF URBAN LIFE IN THE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY

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**Period:** Modern

We keep to the key concept 'lieux de mémoire' of French historian Pierre Nora, in whose opinion is a memory place firmly set in the collective cultural memory. While Nora focused on embracing the topic of French nation's memory places, we would like to initiate an interdisciplinary discussion about the topic of 'towns are made of urban society's life memory places in the 19th and 20th century.' We keep to the hypothesis that towns of the given period were, on one hand, a cultural 'melting pot' and on the other hand, they were 'a salad bowl' as well, i.e. places of ethnic, religious and social interactions which took place in the public space of a town. Individual social groups created their own memory places in this public space – mental maps. A lot of towns are lively places of cultural memory of the townspeople up to the present, in other towns the cultural memory of certain social groups was drowned by the wartime events or by totalitarian regimes' ideologies presented in the public space; eventually by dealing with past only from a limited point of view (from the point of view of the national history). Therefore, the town is not a preserved memory place but it is the public space in which the collective and cultural memory of a town society is being formed, and this process gains ground in the current discursus of lay and expert public on several levels: from the currently discussed multi culturalness of European towns to preserving of the material cultural heritage of the urban life of the last two centuries. We would like to set this session open for the period of the 19th and 20th century and hold an interdisciplinary discussion about the questions and issues below, namely across the European space.

We suggest that during the session we focus on the following questions:

- Theoretical and methodological concept of towns as memory places of ethnic, social and cultural development.
- Specific attributes and phenomena which the comparative researches of European towns as places of multicultural memory of the townspeople have to face.
  - From the traditional memory places in the town space (monuments, memorials, festivals) to modern means of preserving of the collective cultural memory.
  - Town culture and town patriotism and examples of creation of a memory place.
  - Forms of repression of totalitarian regimes towards the remembrance culture of 'the others' (ethnic, religious and social groups).
  - How to preserve and present cultural memory from the town space of 'lost' social groups (holocaust, the transfer of Germans, marginalized social groups)
  - Contemporary multicultural memory of towns: theoretical and methodological problem.
- Town social groups create memory places in the public space, but does it refer to all groups? How to embrace cultural memory of a town of social groups excluded from the participation in the public life?