

# “DISPERSED WORLD, DISPERSED LEGACY” PHOTOGRAPHIC NARRATIVES OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR ON THE BASIS OF POLISH “ARCHIVES”

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*The article examines the subject of memory of the First World War in Poland (by the end of 2016), and deals with issue of presenting it by the Polish Army Museum, selected local regional museums and National Digital Archives (NAC). Author analysis, how different ways of commemorating or simply presenting events related to the First World war are shaped and constructed through localization of institution (central or regional), or using particular media (photo digital archive).*

Keywords: *First World War, Poland, memory, legacy and heritage, museum exhibitions, digital photo archives*

*Članek preučuje spomine na prvo svetovno vojno na Poljskem (do konca leta 2016) in se ukvarja z vprašanjem, kako so predstavljeni v Muzeju Poljske vojske, nekaterih lokalnih regionalnih muzejih in nacionalnih digitalnih arhivih (NAC). Avtor analizira, kako se oblikujejo in gradijo različni načini spominjanja in predstavitve dogodkov, povezanih s prvo svetovno vojno, bodisi z lokalizacijo institucije (centralne ali regionalne) bodisi z uporabo določenih medijev (foto digitalni arhiv).*

Ključne besede: *Prva svetovna vojna, Poljska, spomin, dediščina in dediščina, muzejske razstave, digitalni foto arhivi*

*As the Internet creates a framework for communication across wide distances in space, cultural memory creates a framework for communication across the abyss of time.*

(Assman 2008: 97)

As Aleida Assmann put it, culture is intrinsically related to memory and, according to Juri Lotman and Boris Uspenski's definition, culture is "the memory of a society that is not genetically transmitted" (Lotman, quoted by Assmann). However culture is transmitted by external symbols (Assmann 2008: 97). Following Assmann's idea, humans create links of relationship between the present, past, and future. Individuals take part in this process through "recalling, iterating, reading, commenting, criticizing and discussing" (Assmann 2008: 97) and also through selecting, forging, developing, and cutting off.

Individual memories have a limited range; when they die, there is no one left to preserve them in the way the particular individuals that lived through an event could. A large part of individual memories disperse, but acts of recalling continue in the minds and expressions of those that live on. Now the same facts and events are recalled from a different perspective. This process goes on, taking a growing number of recollections of accountings by individuals that were very close to, or sometimes far from, the first individual. It looks like a genealogical tree, in which, in addition to the direct descendants, there are a growing number of units filling the side branches. In both directions—vertical descendants and horizontal "relatives"—individuals continue recalling, and in this way create a span

of memories. Each time one touches the topic, one can start with the knowledge available. Nevertheless, those memories that for now keep the past present in the preferred image and form, and those stored as remains, can both be used and reused by contemporaries. Following Jakob Burckhardt Aleida Assmann distinguishes two categories of remains: "messages" as texts and monuments addressed to posterity, and simple "traces" as those with no message (2008: 98–99). In other words, the distinction is based on the intentions of those that leave these remains—if they are constructed to transmit certain information for posterity they are "messages," but if there is no such intention they are "traces."

The problem of the remains is crucial for the picture of the First World War. I would say that there are a lot of remains—but which of them, how many of them, were intended as messages, and which of them were left as traces? Who made the selections, when, and why? I do not try to give a complete answer, but rather to show some aspects of the problem in relation to the remains of the First World War.

In this article, I discuss the narratives and distinct ways of presenting the First World War in contemporary Poland (end of 2016) from two perspectives apart from the state's official narrative. The first perspective comprises narratives expressed through exhibits set up at several regional museums in Poland for the hundredth anniversary of the outbreak of the First World War, and the second perspective comprises representations of the Great War left in the photos collected in the database of the National Digital Archives (NAC).<sup>1</sup> I discuss the collection in the NAC, but I use the term *archives*. Do the images of the First World War look similar according to these different nonofficial sources—the regional museums and the digital archives? If there are differences, how did they come to be, and why do different spatial points of view and different tools used for expressing memories create distinct results? Comparing the two ways may highlight how this period of history is remembered today and may show how, through giving them a public audience, they have transformed common events into facts of a particular kind.

The images of war constructed at the regional level and the "archival" level (photos collected in the database of the NAC) may offer narratives that diverge from the current national narrative.

## THE STATE LEVEL: VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE

The main facts related to the First World War are known to an extent by the average Pole. The Polish Army Museum has published a calendar of the main events of the war. Providing a sketch of the situation at the beginning of the war makes it possible to grasp the main differences in the ways of presenting the First World War in Poland.

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<sup>1</sup> Narodowe Archiwum Cyfrowe: Każde zdjęcie ma swoją historię, niektóre historie mają swoje zdjęcia (available at <http://www.nac.gov.pl/>).

In official accounts of the First World War, the memories of the Polish Legions (*Polskie Legiony*) and the figures of Józef Piłsudski and General Józef Haller<sup>2</sup> prevail. During the course of military operations these troops, formed under the Austrian Empire, entered the areas inhabited by the Poles, and their actions were aimed at winning independence.<sup>3</sup>

The subject of the First World War can be studied on the basis of the material generally available, but for periods during which there was no Polish state data of this kind were often more or less the official publications of actual local authorities and, thus, presented the viewpoints of Germany, Austria, and Russia. How, then, can one study the Polish point of view if and when it appeared directly, and how can it be expressed when it was not the official Polish state version? Presenting the Polish military formations is one way, but the problem is that, when there was no Polish state, many Poles were citizens of the countries that participated in the war. As a result, these Poles served in foreign uniforms, but they often maintained a different language, mentality, and habits.

The Polish Army Museum devoted the most attention to the Polish formation, mainly the legions. Detailed information on their activities<sup>4</sup> from the outbreak of the First World War until its conclusion is presented to visitors. The First Cadre Company swore allegiance to Austria and then, from the end of September 1914, the First Brigade of the Polish Legions fought against the Russians. The calendar lists all of the battles in which the Polish Legions took part and also the battles fought later by the Second Brigade of the Polish Legions and the so-called Pulaski Legion. Among the other formations mentioned in the museum are the Polish volunteers—for example, the so-called Bayonnettes, a group in the Foreign Legion in France (1915). Another symbolic event was the entry of the Polish Legions into Warsaw on December 1st, 1916; ultimately, Poland regained its independence on November 11th, 1918.

As can be seen, Poland became a beneficiary of the war, regaining its independence. The state consisted of the lands belonging to three former empires, and as a newly established state Poland found itself in the complicated position of merging territories that had been separated for over a century. At the beginning of the war, there was no single coherent narrative among the Poles concerning the political boundaries of the state, and the idea of independence took a convincing dimension only in the course of the military

<sup>2</sup> Józef Piłsudski was the founder of the Polish Legions. When the First World War broke out, he and his legions fought under Austrian command against Russia. After the war, he was the head of state (1918–1922) and first marshal of Poland (from 1920). Józef Haller was a general in the Polish Army, a commander in the Polish Legions, commander of the Second Polish Auxiliary Corps with the Austrian Army, and deputy to the Polish Parliament after the war.

<sup>3</sup> The partitions were determined by the Russian Empire, the Kingdom of Prussia, and Habsburg Austria, which progressively divided up the Polish Commonwealth lands among themselves through a process of annexations beginning in 1772 and ending in 1918.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.muzeumwp.pl/kalendarium/12/>.

operations.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, after the war, the process of unification of three separate "histories" made it difficult for the Polish state to narrate any coherent story of the Great War. Thus, the First World War somehow remained a foreign occurrence, which from the internal national point of view became a story of several units whose activities led to the creation of the Republic of Poland.

The effect was that, after the First World War, this past was seen differently by various groups of Poles. As Cornwall<sup>6</sup> said, the most official commemorative rituals in interwar Poland, including veneration of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier (always a litmus test of the main discourse), could then concentrate on a clear Polish message and simply ignore the Habsburg war (2015: 9) or any other "foreign" war. The official message used the themes of independence and the soldiers that sacrificed their lives wearing Polish uniforms as soldiers of the Polish Legions.

Sources concerned with soldiers serving in foreign armies are scarce in the literature, but this motif appears in memoirs<sup>7</sup> and in later studies, and another source is journals or diaries kept by German soldiers.<sup>8</sup>

For the Poles, the hope of the First World War was that a Polish state in some form would arise from it. In Poland, soldiers in the German, Austrian, or Russian army, as a figure of memory, did not survive either as winners or as victims of war. They have been forgotten, despite the presence of countless more or less neglected cemeteries along the front line.

## THE HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE OUTBREAK OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR: THE VIEW FROM THE REGIONAL MUSEUMS

This section presents examples of selected regional museums and examines how they narrate the past of the First World War. This gives the reader an opportunity to determine whether each museum follows the state narrative or a different viewpoint. I chose museums located in three kinds of territories (post-Russian, post-Austrian, and post-Prussian) and in relatively small towns. Some of the museums lay on the path of the Polish Legions' engagement, whereas others are far from this route but are located close to other major First World War battles.

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<sup>5</sup> Ryszard Kaczmarek cites Robert Traba, who commented that "at the time the Germans were experiencing the drama of the battle of Verdun, the Poles had already engaged in building an independent structure of the state" (2014: 10–11).

<sup>6</sup> The chapter of the same book written by Christoph Mick is dedicated to memories of the First World War in Polish Galicia (2016).

<sup>7</sup> Memoires of the combatants of the battles in the Polish formations (Bagiński 1921) and the military units in which there was no coherent and singled out Polish contingent (Derejczyk & Olech 1988; Wroński 1934).

<sup>8</sup> A great work on this topic was compiled by Ryszard Kaczmarek (2014).

Lublin Museum and its branch of the Regional Museum in Kraśnik (a town that formerly belonged to the Russian Empire) presents a brief discussion of the war in 1914–1915, when the local area was at the center of the military conflict. It was the main theme of the exhibit. Kraśnik as a town survived the conflagration, and roughly forty military cemeteries dating from the period were created in the area. The museum also mentions the date July 30th, 1914, when the lancers of the Polish Legions marched into Lublin.

The Museum of Warmia and Masuria in Olsztyn (a town that formerly belonged to the Prussian Empire) presents an exhibit on the Trail of the First World War in Warmia and Masuria. The museum exhibits mostly show battlefields and maintain the cemeteries of the fallen soldiers. It has taken action to preserve the soldiers' graves. The museum collaborated with a museum from Kaliningrad (Russia), which was interested in commemorating the Russian soldiers killed in the battles of Olsztynek and at the Boyen Fortress (in Giżycko). The museum in Olsztyn, because of its location on regained territories of Poland, presents another concept and form of exhibiting the past.

The Regional Museum in Tarnów (a town that formerly belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Empire) devotes attention to the episodes of the First World War, when Tarnów lay on the trail to independence, the leitmotif of the narration.

The Regional Museum in Sieradz (a town that formerly belonged to the Russian Empire) shows the weapons used in the First World War. The exhibit acknowledges the hundredth anniversary of the battle, called the operation in Łódź, from 1914. Military operations were conducted over a larger area bounded by the town of Włocławek (to the north), the town of Koło and the Warta River (to the west), the Pilica River (to the south), and the town of Sochaczew and the Bzura River (to the east).

Similarly, the theme of warfare underpins the exhibits in the other regional museums of this huge area, which includes Łowicz and Sochaczew. These are located around the Bzura River, the area most affected by the activities of the First World War, because it lay on the eastern front line for a prolonged period of time.

The Regional Museum of Pinczów (a small town that formerly belonged to the Russian Empire) has devoted an exhibit to the two world wars and focuses on the local area and the days of the invasion by Austrian troops crossing the borders in the First World War.

From the wider perspective of the entire central and eastern European region, this mixed and complicated perspective looks like a kind of repetitive pattern of approaching this particular past. Speaking of the First World War in central Europe, Mark Cornwall noticed that the official discourse in the countries that formerly belonged to the Habsburg Empire reflected the basic division in interwar Europe<sup>9</sup>—an official dialectic between the victors and the vanquished, the main line of division.

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<sup>9</sup> They present how the Great War has been remembered and interpreted across the space formerly united under the Habsburg monarchy.

As they said, in the countries or regions where the Great War was usually discussed using a language of "defeat" it was difficult to find any justification for the mass sacrifice, and this kind of interpretation was a common feature of these otherwise completely different regions. At a minimum, it was felt that the dead should be honored by the living, but various discourses soon suggested that the wartime survivors were continuing to make sacrifices in a communal struggle that was not yet over. Austria and Hungary, on the one hand, were vanquished, and Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia (Cornwall: 2016: 2), on the other, were victors. The narration of the Poles, although they were beneficiaries of the First World War because they regained their independence, could not be classified as a narration of victors or defeat.

What made the difference? I agree with this general overview seen from the top (as all of central Europe). However, if one looks at the commemorating practices of this period from the bottom (viewed from a particular region), the picture emerges with more details, including tension between the countries and a variety of local regional perspectives.

Seeing it from the internal regional perspective, it seems that today, in general, the discourse presented through the written and photographic narration on the state and regional levels in Poland revolves around two themes: Poland's struggle for independence and preserving the memory of the fallen soldiers. The independence theme appears where the region or town figured in episodes from the past, when legions were present in the area, thus having reference points in the local history. After the battles were fought, the graves of the fallen remained.

Another theme is the military operation at Łódź and the actual military operations in the area of the Bzura River. These operations took the lives of thousands of soldiers, both Russian and German. At the level of local memory, the past is kept alive in maintaining the burial sites; finding new, previously unnoticed, graves; reconstructing lists of names of fallen soldiers; archaeological work (i.e., modern archeology) along the frontline trenches; and other efforts. With this type of work, a picture emerges from the bottom, from which people begin to understand that a large portion of the soldiers in uniform,<sup>10</sup> serving in the Prussian, Austrian, and Russian armies, were Poles. Thus, there are new forms of commemoration of this difficult past that are not connected with the struggle for independence. Preserved in the memory of the local people are family photos of grandfathers and great-grandfathers in Russian uniforms that died in this battle. This motif does not appear in the museums, not even at the regional level, although it exists at the level of family narration of the First World War. Most of the fathers or grandfathers served in the armies, and this fact was no secret and was written about in personal documents. However, it never found a place in the official or public narration. The example of Warmia and Masuria shows an extension of the practice of commemorating First World War battle sites and the fallen soldiers of

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<sup>10</sup> Privately, such ancestors that died as soldiers in foreign uniforms can be commemorated in a manner, but still not in the public space.

all armies. A museum is located on lands that belonged to Prussia. In this case, memory and commemoration focus on the First World War as the battlegrounds and cemeteries of the fallen soldiers, in general. If such a practice refers to Poles serving in foreign armies, it means that somehow the private permeates the public. The theme of service in a foreign army or in a foreign or even hostile uniform was instead present on the margins of the main discourse. The basic dilemma is whether to return to the memory of those painful or uncomfortable events, of the time wasted, and perhaps of the more or less shameful and forgotten youth at all levels. These themes appear at the collective local and family memory or at the individual level. Making sense of the war in this form is problematic. Henryk Bagiński, writing immediately after the First World War on Polish attempts to create the formation of a Russian army “to fight the most powerful enemies of Germany” (1921: 5), recalls the obstacles that the Russians erected before the task. However, the Puławy Legion was created as a result of this action. Regarding the uniforms, Bagiński wrote, “The Poles, forcibly dressed in the hated Russian uniforms, did not hesitate to overcome the difficulties facing them on the way to the goal” (1921: 44). However, the fact is that the Puławy Legion was fully clothed according to the Russian model. The kind of relationship that united the soldiers in the foreign armies is a topic that is rarely discussed,<sup>11</sup> mainly due to the fact that it goes beyond the accepted canon in these types of narratives about the origins of the Polish state in the twentieth century. A kind of lack of continuity and fragments of good biography do not allow people to reconcile these experiences, to create a coherent structure and continuity of identity, which, thus, has provoked a silencing or even different forms of oblivion.<sup>12</sup> In any case, service in the army and participation in the war became a lesson in life for the most bitter, and for a chosen few in the legions it created new and actual war heroes. The local regional exhibits draw on local sources; the narrations include references to the local past, to local people, or at least to things of local interest. The region of Lesser Poland (Małopolska), which belonged to the former Austro-Hungarian Empire, has the largest number of small military cemeteries,<sup>13</sup> established by the Austrian authorities at the end of the First World War. The cemeteries were dedicated to soldiers of all origins that served in the Austrian army. They appeared in the local landscape early before independence was gained and, thus, have been adapted by the local inhabitants. I employ the notion of “archives” in accordance with Ernst van Alphen’s idea of the contrast between the narrative and the archives. I focus on what is stored in material collections and digital databases, and on how the fabric of such accidental collections makes possible their use by future generations. There are no collections specifically devoted to such First World War photography, but one encounters the material or digital databases as parts of larger collections generally dedicated to the First World War.

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<sup>11</sup> As examples of exceptions, one can point at least to Wroński (1934) and Kaczmarek (2014).

<sup>12</sup> For more information, see Marc Augé (2009).

<sup>13</sup> The largest military cemetery is in Gorlice (in Galicia, formerly belonging to the Austro-Hungarian Empire).

The images are commonly known to be mediated in terms of the image itself and its framing through context. I present the ways in which this kind of First World War photography is stored, listed, classified, and exhibited (or ready to be accessible) in the Polish "archives." Thus the main questions may revolve around the issue of whether what one sees in the collections has documentary value or, rather, what value they have besides documentary value.

The past becomes the object today in the form of a digital image, but is not limited to this. This manner of thinking is presented in a book by Lev Manovich (2006). Following his idea, one can say that the digital images and representations are trying to recreate an existing physical object, historical information, the system of the categories used in the past, or social groups. Hence they inevitably become biased in a sense because they are seen from only one point of view. The images construct one view at the expense of others—one possible system from a variety of categories (Manovich 2006: 75).

Here I discuss data from the NAC.<sup>14</sup> If one clicks on "First World War," this returns 1,352 photos (most of them represent the Second World War and only around two hundred are from First World War), geographically dispersed, presenting all of the fronts, not only in Poland. For themes, one can find war landscapes, army officers and soldiers, civilians, the Polish Legionnaires, and also the Russian army, the Hungarian army, and the Prussian army. Some of the pictures present material artifacts, weapons, and armaments. The last category of First World War photos includes the cemeteries of the fallen soldiers, whether Austro-Hungarian, Prussian, Russian, or Polish Legionnaires.

The photos can be divided chronologically, mainly into two periods. The first are those taken between 1914 and 1918 that show war activities, ruin and devastation, the front line, and soldiers in service. The second are those made between 1926 and 1936, which present commemorations of the events related to recent local history of particular place.

The records have a title, sometimes a subtitle, or a very brief description, a date of production, and no narration. In this case, I understand the narration to be a result of subjective communication, including life experiences and biographical processes, enough so that it all creates a world of the past; it contains an overall view of the world, full of more or less elaborate opinion. The schematic narrative is well known from the relations with and stories about the legionnaires, and it is a kind of journey to independence—getting off at the station named Polish independence.

When one looks at the photos, there seems to be no link between them, no order, no ties—they do not speak together one by one. Each of them has its own story. On the other hand, a narrative can be seen as an existential response to the world and to the experience of that world, based on the temporal dimension of life; it assumes continuity between events, in the past or the present, but is usually future-oriented. Although future events still have

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<sup>14</sup> I also worked on other very interesting photographic collections with First World War objects in their possession: the collection of the Museum of Independence (Muzeum Niepodległości) in Warsaw, and the collection of photos in Sejny.



to happen, narrative frameworks often provide clear-cut expectations of them. Anthony Giddens wrote about this in relation to the individual, but I think it also relates to the larger community: “The existential question of self-identity is bound up with the fragile nature of the biography which the individual ‘supplies’ about herself. A person’s identity is not to be found in behavior, nor—important though this is—in the reactions of others, but in the capacity *to keep a particular narrative going*. The individual’s biography, if she is to maintain regular interaction with others in the day-to-day world, cannot be wholly active. It must continually integrate events which occur in the external world, and sort them into the ongoing ‘story’ about the self.” As Charles Taylor puts it, “In order to have a sense of who we are, we have to have a notion of how we have become, and of where we are going” (Giddens 1991: 55).

We do not have broad access to the narrative of ordinary people taken into the Russian army, the Prussian, and the Austrian, and beyond that is a topic for a separate study. How, then, do we view and interpret the image of the First World War that appears in the archive photos? Thematic diversity, the lack of a uniform line, multiple lines running in different directions? Does this kind of archival presentation give sense to the war?

According to van Alphen, a photo conveys information but no likeness. Especially old photos demonstrate that, over time, the photographic image becomes severed from its referent: “If photography is a function of the flow of time, then its substantive meaning will change depending on whether it belongs to the domain of the present or to some phase of the past” (2014: 28).

As a collection of the NAC, it belongs the domain of the twenty-first-century present. It emerges in a series of photos, a series of frames that tell a story mostly forgotten or only half recognized; however it offers a great number of glimpses into the various moments of this period. From this, the conclusion may be reached that the Poles were not involved, or at least not visible, or that the Poles had fought against each other, and so commemorative discourse was dispersed in a variety of forms, often contradictory. Seeing records as separate stories, one can understand that a peculiar way of transmitting memories is being approached. It seems more like a preview of an event or a moment in its temporal and spatial environment that could be found developed, depicted, memorized, recalled, and interpreted in a variety of ways in other sources of a more narrative nature.

## CONCLUSIONS: A NEW WAY OF STRUCTURING COLLECTIVE MEMORY

One encounters at least three levels of commemoration of the First World War. One is the state’s official way of remembering, represented by official political events and exhibited in the main museums including the Polish Army Museum in Warsaw; the second is the local regional museum’s exhibits triggered by the hundredth anniversary of the outbreak of the war; and the last is an archival collection of photos associated with the First World War.

The hundredth anniversary of the outbreak of the First World War provided an impulse for setting up the exhibits in a network of regional museums. The themes of those exhibits were generally related to the local past, thus creating a regional version of the state message and memory of First World War with local references. In the western part of Poland, where there were no Polish memories of the First World War, the narratives had a more general character or presented a local perspective closer to German because the spatial remains left are German.

All three levels of commemoration are public. What makes them different is the central versus regional/peripheral/local, on the one hand, and the traditional versus the new digital techniques of exposition and representation on the other hand. The NAC, as a governmental institution, is regarded as central. The archives' viewpoint differs from the official state viewpoint through its way of collecting and, thus, its way of reaching particular conclusions and of being open.

The theme of the national beginning (twentieth century), gaining independence, is common to all three levels, so one can say that they are subject to the same general laws producing the commemorative events. The NAC provides the latest way of preserving memory ordered in a digital manner and, thus, freely available to the general public.

In this new world, the databases have become metaphors for conceptualizing individual and collective cultural memory—collections of documents, objects, events, and experiences. The main purpose of these digital structures is to provide easy access to information. According to Manovich, this makes for a few general contradictions "along with surface versus depth, the opposition between information and 'immersion' can be thought of as particular expression of the more general opposition characteristic of new media: between action and representation" (2006: 192). It is nothing new; in the past, albums<sup>15</sup> have had a database structure.

There is no narration as with memoirs, novels, or movies; however, in the case of the databases, objects in the form of records can be sought, watched, and navigated. What experience comes from that in the case of the distant past that was the First World War? Is it other than the narrative? Each represents a different model of the structure of the world (symbolic or digital).

One encounters a new way of structuring collective memories. There is no narration; nevertheless, perhaps there exists a rudimentary form of it. As Manovich claims, the museum becomes a database of images in its collections, which can be viewed in different ways—chronologically, geographically, by country of origin, by author, by battle, and by army. In this way, the narrative is only one of many methods of accessing information.

The ideas of Manovich relate to the computer age in the form of a new computer art, the world of games and databases. He tells about the narrative core.<sup>16</sup> It is a different topic not related to war. The NAC seems to belong to the world, as a list of items ordered in a specific way.

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<sup>15</sup> Elizabeth Edwards (2004) analyzed photo albums as another kind of collection of photos.

<sup>16</sup> The algorithm is actually a discovery of the rules governing the created world game. Thus, the data structure and the algorithm are the two halves of the ontology of the world of computers and of computer games.

If it exists, the narrative core<sup>17</sup> of the archives is connected with the particular photography itself. It can be “read” at the level of categorization based on the functions of unification, consignment, and classification (van Alphen 2014: 56). Because the archives are a selective place, one can conclude that what is common to the collection of photography is the time (the period of being done), the place (geographically associated), the key motif of the war (the presentation of acts of war or its traces), the significant messages of the state narrator (the Polish Legions and the fight for independence), and the minor messages (commemoration of the fallen soldiers through cemeteries). We can start search photos using categories like First World war, particular place, cemetery, and so on, therefore unfold and go long a bit different ‘photographic’ story.

A kind of narrative can stem from the form of ordering records (or photos), using a set of keywords to search for particular data stored in the collection. The word one uses for searching each time influences the particular story. Because it is known that the function of a collection is not the restoration of the context of origin but the creation of a new context, this new context is the point. Van Alphen emphasizes that this new context stands in a metaphorical, rather than a contiguous, metonymical relation to the world outside the collection (2014: 56). Moreover, the collection replaces history with classification—with order beyond the realm of temporality.

The Polish Army Museum represents the state view, unlike the regional museums, which can be regarded as offering variants of the state view. Both the Polish Army Museum and the NAC can be seen as central. The notion of central can be seen in two ways: first, as close to the official state perspective and, second, as technical equipment that makes possible the openness of the archives, and access from all over the world. Comparing the official discourse and some regional presentations of the First World War, one can find photos of well-known events that belong to what Assmann refers to as “messages.” On the other hand, the archives are full of other representations—that is, “traces.” In this case of making a space in which the actual significant messages and the traces coexist, an opportunity arises to create new messages or updated versions of messages by descendants of the witnesses themselves.

When the witnesses of the event are no longer among the living, the picture of the event depends on the information that has been left. Drawing on the digital collection certainly shapes the events into entities that fit the categorizations and that are recordable. Van Alphen points out this process of reification when there are virtually no facts other than those that are contained in records and archives. The images are commonly known to be mediated in terms of the image itself and its framing through context. The photos from the NAC have no messages, but they create a space for collecting all the remains.

Whatever or whoever is not in the records does not really exist. However, the archives are open, and the number of the records is increasing. If the main idea is to collect all related images, regardless of the actual value of the picture, we not only reify information

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<sup>17</sup> The list of items and the algorithmic rules.

but also deliver the maximum amount of data for future processes of constructing messages of each generation for the next. In this way, the First World War can be interpreted over and over again.

## DIGITAL SOURCES

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## RAZPRŠENI SVET, RAZPRŠENA DEDIŠČINA: FOTOGRAFSKE PRIPOVEDI O PRVI SVETOVNI VOJNI NA PODLAGI POLJSKIH "ARHIVOV"

*Članek preučuje spomine na prvo svetovno vojno na Poljskem (do konca leta 2016) in se ukvarja z vprašanjem, na katere načine so predstavljeni v Muzeju Poljske vojske, nekaterih lokalnih regionalnih muzejih in nacionalnih digitalnih arhivih (NAC).*

*V okviru državnega, uradnega načina spominjanja so uradni politični dogodki razstavljeni v glavnih muzejih, vključno z Muzejem Poljske vojske v Varšavi; druga možnost so lokalni regionalni muzejski eksponati ob stoti obletnici izbruha vojne; zadnja oblika pa je arhivska zbirka fotografij, povezanih s prvo svetovno vojno.*

*Zbirke podatkov so postale metafore za konceptualizacijo posamičnih in kolektivnih kulturnih spominskih zbirk dokumentov, predmetov, dogodkov in izkušenj.*

*Eksponati so na splošno povezani z lokalno preteklostjo, pri čemer regionalno različico državne sporočila ustvarjajo lokalne referenčne točke, povezane s spominom na prvo svetovno vojno.*

*Omeniti velja nov način strukturiranja kolektivnih spominov. Pri tem lahko arhive dojemamo kot selektivno mesto, ki so mu skupne zbirke fotografij o nekem obdobju, krajih. Zanje je značilna izbira motiva vojne (predstavitev aktov vojna in njenih sledi), pomembnih sporočil predstavnikov države (npr. poljske legije in boja za neodvisnost) in drobnih sporočil (npr. spominov na padle vojake). Pri tem funkcija zbirke ni ponovna vzpostavitev konteksta izvora, temveč gre za ustvarjanje novega konteksta. Van Alphen (2014: 56) poudarja, da pomeni ta nov kontekst metaforično in ne več metonimično povezavo s svetom zunaj zbirke.*

*Če primerjamo uradni diskurz in nekatere regionalne predstavitve prve svetovne vojne, lahko najdemo fotografije znanih dogodkov, ki pripadajo temu, kar Assmann imenuje »sporočila«. Po drugi strani so arhivi polni drugih predstavitev, to je »sledi«. Oblikovanje prostora, v katerem obstajajo dejanska pomembna sporočila in sledi, tako omogoči priložnost za ustvarjanje novih sporočil ali posodobljenih različic sporočil, kakor jih dojemajo potomci nekdanjih prič dogodkov.*

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