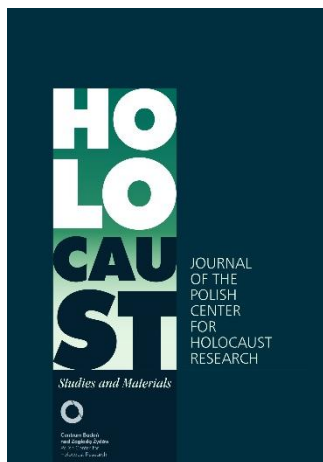




Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały

Holocaust Studies and Materials

VOL. 14 (2018)

ISSN: 1895-247X

eISSN: 2657-3571

DOI: 10.32927

WWW: www.zagladazydow.pl

Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów IFiS PAN
Polish Center for Holocaust Research

The Post-Holocaust City: Memorializing Lublin's Podzamcze District

Miasto po Zagładzie. Dzielnica żydowska w Lublinie i jej upamiętnienia

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32927/zzsim.1091>



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The Post-Holocaust City: Memorializing Lublin’s Podzamcze District¹

Abstract

In 1941 the traditional Jewish neighborhood of Podzamcze, which had developed as one of the city’s many districts since the 16th century, became a part of the Lublin ghetto. In the spring of 1942, after about 43,000 ghetto inhabitants were sent to the Bełżec death camp, to other camps in the area, or relocated to the residual ghetto on Majdan Tatarski, German occupation authorities ordered the destruction of the entire urban footprint of this historic quarter. As in numerous other Polish and Eastern European cities, Jewish residential areas and synagogues met a similar fate as they were completely or partly demolished. After 1989, as a result of the democratic changes in this part of Europe, the process of restoring the tangible (and intangible) heritage of the Jews began. Local authorities rebuilt or restored former Jewish districts in Cracow, Prague, Berlin, Budapest, and numerous smaller cities to serve as tourist attractions. In Lublin, however, the restoration of the Jewish quarter was not possible, since the Podzamcze area was covered with a new urban structure in the mid-1950s. As a consequence, local memory activists from the “Grodzka Gate – NN Theater” Center developed unique memorializing strategies to cope with the physical absence of the architectural fabric of historic Podzamcze. In the article we argue that in the case of Lublin, the lack of the visible tangible traces of the former Jewish district encourages memory activists to symbolically represent the district in the forms of public narratives and performances. Analyzing a memory performance

¹ The article is extended and largely rewritten version of the text: Marta Kubiszyn, Joanna Zętar, “Miasto po Zagładzie. Dzielnica żydowska w Lublinie i jej upamiętnienia,” *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały* 2018, vol. 14, pp. 387–418 which was translated to English by Elżbieta Olender-Dmowska in 2018. This translation served as the basis for the presented author’s English-language version of the article.

(*Mystery of the Light and Darkness*), an on-site permanent intervention (Memory Trail: *Lublin. Memory of the Holocaust*) with a commemorative installation), an interactive historical exhibition (*Lublin: Memory of the Place*), and an installation that includes archival data regarding individual streets and buildings as well as the personal data of Podzamcze's Jewish inhabitants (*Lublin: 43 Thousand*), the article investigates these narratives and critically analyzes memory activists' strategies of using visual and textual archival materials in each project.

Keywords

Lublin, Podzamcze Jewish district, tangible heritage, Holocaust, memorialization of the Holocaust

Introduction: Jewish spaces in a post-Holocaust landscape

The vivid pre-war Lublins' Jewish community of over 34,000² made about 30% of the city's population. A significant portion of the community inhabited the Podzamcze district, which had been developing around the Castle Hill (Wzgórze Zamkowe) since the 16th century. Throughout the following centuries, the district expanded along a traffic artery leading to the northeast (which was later called the "Jewish Street" (Żydowska), and then renamed Szeroka), as wetlands around the Castle Hill were methodically drained over time. Due to its degree of autonomy, Podzamcze was sometimes referred to in historical records as the "Jewish town." From the second half of the 19th century, due to equal-rights reforms implemented under Aleksander Wielopolski in 1862 that lifted earlier restrictions on Jewish settlement, a portion of the Podzamcze inhabitants moved to other parts of the city. During the interwar period Jews were living in all parts of town, while Podzamcze – still home to Jewish communal institutions – was inhabited mostly by the least assimilated segment of the population.

In 1941 Podzamcze became a part of the Lublin ghetto. In the spring of 1942, after about 43,000 ghetto inhabitants were sent to the Bełżec death camp, to other camps in the area, or relocated to the residual ghetto on Majdan Tatarski,³ German occupation authorities ordered the destruction of the entire urban footprint of this historic quarter. In immediate post-war Poland in Lublin, as well as in other cities and towns of Poland, the communist authorities took over urban spaces occupied earlier by the Jews along with the buildings that survived the war. The transformation of these spaces was spurred by new legislation

² Archiwum Państwowe w Lublinie [State Archive in Lublin] (hereafter: AP Lublin), Urząd Okręgu Lubelskiego 1939–1944 [Lublin District Office 1939–1944], 892, pp. 313–315.

³ Dariusz Libionka, *Zagłada Żydów w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie* (Lublin: Państwowe Muzeum na Majdanku, 2017), p. 107ff. English edition: *Holocaust in the General Government of Nazi-Occupied Poland*, trans. Jerzy Giebułtowski (Lublin: Państwowe Muzeum na Majdanku, 2024).



Lublin's Jewish district, aerial view c. 1935 (unknown photographer, Iconographic Archive of the "Grodzka Gate – NN Theater" Center)

regarding abandoned and neglected properties.⁴ Allowing the expropriation of extant buildings and the redevelopment of what had been Jewish neighborhoods, it also encouraged the replacement of old place names with new ones to conceal the original ethnic character of these areas.

Along these lines, Podzamcze was redeveloped in the mid-1950s. The new urban structure covered the remnants of the demolished buildings and no efforts were made to recreate the course of Szeroka Street or rebuild original tenement houses, of which only the outlines of foundations and basements remained. Thus, the site of the historically Jewish neighborhood became a palimpsest – a multi-layered structure where, beneath new development, hidden architectural remains represent past events and reflect relationships of power.

During the same period numerous Jewish areas in other Polish and Eastern European cities met a similar fate as they were completely or partly demolished. Residential buildings, objects of historical value and having symbolic significance

⁴ Decree of March 2, 1945 on abandoned and neglected properties, and Decree of March 8, 1946 on abandoned and post-German properties, quoted in: Konrad Matyjaszek, "Przestrzeń pożydowska [Post-Jewish Space]," *Studia Litteraria et Historica* 2 (2013): 130; see also: Stanisław Tyszką, "Restitution of Communal Property and the Preservation of Jewish Heritage in Poland", in *Jewish Space in Contemporary Poland*, eds Erica Lehrer and Michael Meng (Bloomington–Indianapolis: Indiana University Press 2015), pp. 46–70.

to Judaism were razed or vandalized. These measures, coupled with post-war memory politics that prioritized a false monoethnic narrative and with education programs downplaying topics related to Jews, facilitated a dissociation with the past whose traces – although not always accessible in a physical sense – were engraved in urban spaces.⁵ Thus, due to the deliberate acts of urban planning, redeveloping and remodeling the urban spaces, as well as to narratives regarding the history of the city space, former Jewish residential areas were gradually made “invisible” – to use David Clark’s notion.⁶

Despite individual initiatives to memorialize the annihilated communities and to mark sites of great importance for Jewish culture and history, the “invisibility” of the former Jewish neighborhoods affected numerous cities and towns of post-Holocaust Eastern Europe. However, starting in the 1970s, and later on – and on a much larger scale in the 1990s after the collapse of Communism – the process of restoring the heritage of the Jews began, a result of the democratic changes. As Erica T. Lehrer notes, local authorities (in some cases – cooperating with cultural institutions and private investors) rebuilt or restored former Jewish districts to make these spaces serve as tourist attractions and provide space for cultural activities that would include elements of Jewish culture.⁷ Discussing these initiatives Jacek Purchla notes: “attempts to revitalize former centers of Jewish culture [...] have been confronted with many fundamental problems, [such as] the legacy of the Holocaust, the absence of active Jewish communities, the burden of communism, and oblivion.”⁸ Purchla lists in this citation key problems and obstacles that local authorities and memory activists had to face while aiming at rebuilding what was left from the tangible heritage of local Jewish communities and restoring the memory of those communities by organizing cultural events focusing on the intangible elements of the heritage of Polish Jews.

However, while the renovation of the historically Jewish districts in such cities as Cracow, Prague, Berlin or Budapest – although difficult – was possible to carry out, in numerous locations any initiatives aiming at reconstruction were

⁵ Lucian Hölscher, “Pamiętać czy zapomnieć? [To remember or to forget?],” trans. LIDEX, in *(Kon)teksty pamięci. Antologia [(Con)texts of memory. An anthology]*, ed. Kornelia Kończal (Warsaw: Narodowe Centrum Kultury, 2014), pp. 89–90 [oryg.: “Geschichte und vergessen,” *Historische Zeitschrift* 249, 1 (1989)].

⁶ David Clark, “Creating Jewish Spaces in European Cities. Amnesia and Collective Memory,” in *Jewish Studies at the Turn of the Twentieth Century*, vol. 2, eds Judit Targarona Borrás and Angel Sáenz-Badillos (Leiden–Boston–Köln: Brill, 1999), p. 275.

⁷ Erica T. Lehrer, *Jewish Poland Revisited: Heritage Tourism in Unquiet Places* (Bloomington–Indianapolis: Indiana University Press 2013), pp. 1–2, 14–15.

⁸ Jacek Purchla, “Świat po katastrofie – w poszukiwaniu utraconej pamięci [The world after the catastrophe – in search of lost memory],” in *Przywracanie pamięci. Rewitalizacja zabytkowych dzielnic żydowskich w miastach Europy Środkowej* [Restoring memory. Revitalising historic Jewish neighbourhoods in Central European cities], eds Monika Murzyn-Kupisz and Jacek Purchla (Cracow: Międzynarodowe Centrum Kultury, 2008), p. 7.

impossible to implement because no material objects or other visible traces of “once-Jewish sites” – to use Lehrer’s words – were left to mediate the former Jewish presence.⁹ This absence – we argue – might shape the character of what Lehrer calls the “heritage custodianship,” in the case of Lublin’s Podzamcze, where local non-Jewish memory activists, starting in 1990s, developed unique forms and implemented means of expression to symbolically “replace,” “stand for” and “mediate” for the absent spatial and architectural texture of the former Jewish neighborhood as well as its inhabitants. Thus the case Podzamcze illustrates the complexity of the issues related not only to the tangible heritage of the Jewish communities in the post-Holocaust Eastern Europe, but most of all – to memorialization activism carried out by non-Jewish actors aiming at retaining the visibility of the former Jewish presence. Memorialization in this case includes not only traditional monuments but also alternative forms of memorializing objects or interventions as well as performative site-oriented activities, that – using James E. Young’s term – can be referred to as counter-monuments.¹⁰

As Lehrer notes, issues regarding the once vivid Jewish neighborhoods in the Eastern Europe became a topic of academic research on a larger scale only in the late 1980s and early 1990s.¹¹ Apart from scholars like Diana Pinto and Barbara Mann, who question the very concept of “Jewish space”¹² most researchers focus on specific sites of local Jewish community to link theoretical reflection with in-depth historical work. Using historical, socio-political, geographical or ethnographical methods, scholars have explored shifts in the memory politics, the impact these shifts have had on local cultural practices involving sites of historically Jewish districts, Jewish cemeteries, ruins of devastated synagogues, Holocaust sites or even “non-memory Jewish sites,” i.e. places in which a violent events occurred but no visual commemoration exists.¹³

Ruth Helen Gruber, for instance, analyzes non-Jewish actors’ interest and participation in processes of restoring Jewish heritage, often for commercial purposes. Gruber discusses instances in which Jewish culture is “performed” or “enacted” by non-Jewish actors, creating what she calls “virtual Jewishness.”¹⁴

⁹ Erica T. Lehrer, “Materiality and Holocaust Memory: Activating and Theorizing Poland’s Unquiet Places,” *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 112, 2 (2022): 239–244; 240.

¹⁰ James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorial and Meaning* (New Haven–London: Yale University Press, 1993).

¹¹ Lehrer, “Materiality and Holocaust Memory,” pp. 239–244; p. 240.

¹² Diana Pinto, “Epilogue: Jewish Spaces and Their Future,” in *Jewish Space in Contemporary Poland*, pp. 280–286; Barbara E. Mann, *Space and Place in Jewish Studies* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2012).

¹³ Roma Sendyka, “Prism: Understanding non-sites of memory,” in *EUTROPEs. The Paradox of European Empire*, eds John W. Boyder and Berthold Modler (Paris–Chicago: University of Chicago, 2014), pp. 183–201.

¹⁴ Ruth E. Gruber, *Virtually Jewish: Reinventing Jewish Culture in Europe* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2002), p. 11; see also: Ruth E. Gruber, “Virtual Judaism,” *Jewish Quarterly* 56, 2 (2009): 22–25.

Gruber focuses on the historically Jewish quarter of Kazimierz in Cracow, where original buildings survived the war, and whose renovation in the 1990s started an international debate on the interpretation and restoration of the Jewish tangible heritage in Poland and Eastern Europe. Lehrer, who also studied Kazimierz uses an ethnographic perspective to further explore the concept of “virtual Jewishness.” Highlighting the involvement of Poles in heritage and memorializing projects as well as in tourism activities, Lehrer analyzes national memory narratives centered on Jewish heritage sites as processes of “resignification” after Holocaust trauma.¹⁵

Omer Bartov and Michael Meng conceptualize historically Jewish neighborhoods in Eastern Europe as “shattered spaces.” While Bartov focuses on the territories of present-day Western Ukraine (known also as Eastern Galicia), showing the scale of physical erasure of the remains of the Jewish life in the region,¹⁶ Meng explores degraded Jewish districts in Germany and Poland.¹⁷ Discussing residential sites but also remains of devastated synagogues and cemeteries, Meng reveals how social and political shifts (and in particular the transformation of the 1990s) changed how local communities interacted with these places, gradually appreciating their value. A number of authors use site-oriented approaches in their research, with some focused on tracking links between renovation of the historically Jewish sites, memorializing initiatives, growing international interest in the Holocaust and the rise of heritage tourism in large cities such as Berlin, Brno, Budapest, Cracow, Łódź, Prague, Vilna, Warsaw, Wien, and Wrocław,¹⁸ while other scholars focus on smaller, provincial towns.¹⁹

¹⁵ Lehrer, *Jewish Poland Revisited*.

¹⁶ Omer Bartov, *Erased: Vanishing Traces of Jewish Galicia in Present-Day Ukraine* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

¹⁷ Michael Meng, *Shattered Spaces: Encountering Jewish Ruins in Postwar Germany and Poland* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011).

¹⁸ Sandra Lustig, “Alternatywy dla ‘żydowskiego Disneylandu’ – przykłady możliwego podejścia do przeszłości żydowskiej w europejskich miastach [Alternatives to the ‘Jewish Disneyland’ – approaches to the Jewish past in European cities],” in *Przywracanie pamięci*, pp. 81–98; Magdalena Waligórska, “Reflektorem w ‘zapomniane’: odkrywanie małych Jerozolim [Spotlight into the ‘forgotten’: discovering little Jerusalems],” in *ibidem*, pp. 99–115; Krisztina Keresztely, “Zaprzepaszczonej pamięć – gentryfikacja a wartości urbanistyczne historycznej dzielnicy żydowskiej Budapesztu [Squandered memory – gentrification and urban values in Budapest’s historic Jewish quarter],” in *ibidem*, pp. 163–180; Arno Parik, “Walka o ochronę zabytków żydowskiego miasta w Pradze [A fight to protect monuments of the Jewish town in Prague],” in *ibidem*, pp. 181–214; Sarunas Liekis, “Rewitalizacja dziedzictwa żydowskiego w Wilnie [Revitalizing Jewish heritage in Vilnius],” in *ibidem*, pp. 247–258; see also: Jean-Yves Potel, *Koniec niewinności. Polska wobec swojej żydowskiej przeszłości* [The end of innocence. Poland in the face of its Jewish past], trans. Julia Chimiak (Cracow: Znak, 2010); original edition: *La fin de l’innocence. La Pologne face à son passé juif* (Paris: Autrement, 2009).

¹⁹ Yechiel Weizman, *Unsettled Heritage: Living Next to Poland’s Material Jewish Traces after the Holocaust* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2022); Adam Bartosz, “Tu był tarnowski

Additionally, recent scholarship has addressed the phenomenon of artistic memorializations. Scholars have studied individual initiatives that aim to maintain the visibility of former Jewish sites by launching visual documentation projects, organizing public performances, creating murals and installations or other site-oriented artistic interventions.²⁰ Apart from Young's studies on counter-monuments, i.e. Holocaust memorial projects created in the 1980s by German artists such as Jochen and Esther Gerz,²¹ a number of studies focus on various artistic interventions carried out in Eastern European countries in the 1990s and 2000s. As Tomasz Łysak points out, artistic projects exploring the historical Jewish presence in Poland include Mirosław Bałka, Wojciech Wilczyk, Łukasz Baksik, Joanna Rajkowska, Rafał Betlejewski and Yael Bartana.²² These interventions also include sites of former death and concentration camps as well as former ghettos.

Among these works are a number of studies regarding memorialization projects implemented by Lublin's "Grodzka Gate – NN Theater" Center. While some of them present projects in a descriptive manner without including a critical discussion and broader theoretical background, a few texts offer more complex insights into the memorial practices implemented in the post-Holocaust space of Podzamcze. For instance, in a 2003 study Teresa Pękala examines how the memories of the Jewish survivors and non-Jewish rescuers are included in the Center's Holocaust remembrance projects;²³ while texts by Izabela Skórzyńska from 2007, 2010, and 2014 critically and thoroughly discuss a series of performative events named "Memory Mysteries" (*Misteria pamięci*).²⁴

sztetl [This is where the Tarnów shtetl was]," in *Przywracanie pamięci*, pp. 343–362; Szymgin Bogusław, "Czy można chronić świat, który przestał istnieć? Dzielnica żydowska w Lublinie [Is it possible to protect a world that no longer exists? The Jewish quarter of Lublin]," in *ibidem*, pp. 263–286.

²⁰ Lehrer, "Materiality and Holocaust Memory," pp. 239–244; p. 243.

²¹ James E. Young, "The counter-monument: Memory against itself in Germany today," *Critical Inquiry* 18, 2 (1992): 271ff.

²² Tomasz Łysak, "Artistic interventions: from commemorating post-Holocaust losses to carving a space for Jewish life in Poland," in *EutROPEs. The Paradox...*, pp. 162–182; Uilleam Blacker, "Spatial dialogues and Holocaust memory in contemporary Polish art: Yael Bartana, Rafał Betlejewski and Joanna Rajkowska," *Open Arts Journal* 11 (2014): 173–186; Helena Chmielewska-Szlaifer, "The plastic palm and memories in the making: Conceptual artwork on Warsaw's Jerusalem Avenue," *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* 23, 4 (2010): 201ff; Geneviève Zubrzycki, "Narrative Shock and Polish Memory Remaking in the Twenty-first Century," in *Memory and Postwar Memorials: Confronting the Violence of the Past*, eds Marc Silberman and Florence Vatan (New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2013), pp. 95–115.

²³ Teresa Pękala, "The Survivors and the Rescuers: How the Memory of Shoah functions in the Artistic Realizations of the Grodzka Gate Center in Lublin," *Kultura Współczesna* 38, 4 (2003): 105–117.

²⁴ Izabela Skórzyńska, "Performans Lublin [Lublin performance]," in *Widowiska przeszłości. Alternatywne polityki pamięci (1989–2009)* [Spectacles of the past. Alternative politics of

Building on this scholarship, his article argues that the lack of the visible tangible traces of the original architectural structure of Podzamcze encouraged memory activists to create symbolic representations of the district in the form of public narratives and performances. Since the narratives and performances we analyze are constructed with the use of archival source materials and since they are based on creating opportunities for active public participation, we argue that instead of physically revitalizing the district, the Grodzka Gate activists proposed a strategy based on restoring the memory of the Podzamcze district and its inhabitants among the contemporary citizens of Lublin.

The article consists of two complementary sections. In the first section we reconstruct the phases of the demolition of the Podzamcze area conducted by the Nazi occupying forces in 1942–1943 and its remodeling in the mid-1950s, implemented by the communist authorities. In this section we refer to historical research and study such sources as: the wartime archival documents prepared by the organs of local administration; archival photographs dated 1942, 1943, 1944 and later; video footage from 1944; *Nowy Głos Lubelski* – daily newspaper materials from 1942 and testimonies of the wartime inhabitants of Lublin recorded in 1998–2018 by the “Grodzka Gate – NN Theater” Center in 1998–2018. In presenting these phases we use the concept of a “palimpsest”. This concept – used by a number of authors who study city spaces by tracing memories of what was built, demolished, and later redeveloped²⁵ – seems to be an apt metaphor to describe changes in Podzamcze’s urban structure which involved overlapping layers of urban development.

In the second section we critically analyze four individual initiatives of the “Grodzka Gate – NN Theater” Center: a memory performance (*Mystery of the Light and Darkness*); a permanent on-site intervention (*Memory Trail Lublin. Memory of the Holocaust with Mis/Remembrance of the Place* – art installation); an interactive historical exhibition (*Lublin: Memory of the Place*); which includes archival data on individual streets and buildings as well as the personal data on

memory (1989–2009)] (Poznań: Instytut Historii Uniwersytetu Adama Mickiewicza, 2010), pp. 242–283; eadem, “Commemorating the Past through Performance: Ośrodek Brama Grodzka – Teatr NN,” in *Performing the Past: Post-Communist Poland and Romania*, eds Izabela Skórzyńska and Christine Lavrence (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Adama Mickiewicza, 2014), pp. 171–189; eadem, “Inscenizacje pamięci: misteria nieobecności w Lublinie [Staging remembrance: mysteries of absence in Lublin],” in *Inscenizacje pamięci* [Staging remembrance], eds Izabela Skórzyńska, Christine Lavrence and Carl Pépin (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 2007).

²⁵ Elżbieta Rybicka, “Pamięć i miasto. Palimpsest vs pole walki [Memory and the city: palimpsest vs. battlefield],” *Teksty Drugie* 5 (2011): 201–211; Krystian Węgrzynek, “Odczytując palimpsest miejski. Na przykładzie Katowic [Reading the urban palimpsest. The example of Katowice],” *Z Teorii i Praktyki Dydaktycznej Języka Polskiego* 29 (2020): 41–55; Rafał Koschany, “Miasto-palimpsest. Semiotyczna interpretacja Czerniowiec [Palimpsest city. Semiotic interpretation of Czerniowce],” *Polonistyka. Innowacje* 9 (2019): 65–82.

the pre-war inhabitants of Podzamcze (*Lublin: 43 Thousand*). Taken together, these four cases illustrate the range of strategies used to symbolically recreate Podzamcze through texts, images and sounds. Our analysis is based on the documentation provided by the "Grodzka Gate – NN Theater" Center archive; interviews given by the Center's head director Tomasz Pietrasiewicz; texts written by Pietrasiewicz himself; and participant observation conducted during the implementation of the discussed projects which included photographic documentation.

Podzamcze: Topography of a Palimpsest

Lublin played a unique role in the German plan for the so-called 'final solution of the Jewish question.' The headquarters of Operation Reinhardt were located in the city center; about 60,000 Jews from Poland and other European countries were killed in the nearby Konzentrationslager Lublin (or Majdanek concentration camp).²⁶

On March 24, 1941, by order of the governor of the Lublin District, Ernst Emil Zörner, the German authorities established a ghetto. It was labeled a "closed Jewish residential district," and was located between Kowalska, Krawiecka, Kalinowszczyzna, Franciszkańska, Unicka, and Lubartowska streets. It included Podzamcze and large areas north of it, which prior to the Second World War were also inhabited mostly by the Jews. Soon, all the Jewish citizens of the city were forcibly relocated to the ghetto.

The "liquidation" of the ghetto began on the night of March 16–17, 1942. This act marked the launch of Operation Reinhardt in the General Government. By April 14, nearly 28,000 ghetto residents had been deported to the Bełżec death camp. The remaining Podzamcze Jews were transferred to the residual ghetto established in the second half of April in the Majdan Tatarski district, in an area already cleared of Poles for this purpose. During the liquidation actions that followed, most of the residents of the residual ghetto were either sent to the Majdanek concentration camp, shot dead in the Krępiecki Forest, or resettled to the Piaski ghetto from where they were probably deported to the death camp in Sobibór. On November 9, 1942, the German police authorities commenced the "final liquidation" of the Majdan Tatarski ghetto. They sent 3,000 Jews to Majdanek and several dozen to the labor camp at Lipowa Street and to the prison at the Lublin Castle. About 260 people, including members of the Judenrat and the Jewish police, were shot on the spot.²⁷

On May 21, 1942, after the resettlements had been completed, the city's governor (*starosta grodzki*) ordered the demolition of approximately 260

²⁶ Libionka, *Zagłada Żydów w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie*, p. 95ff.

²⁷ Ibidem, pp. 61, 110–111, 170ff.

houses in the Podzamcze area.²⁸ The July issue of *Nowy Głos Lubelski* – a Nazi-controlled newspaper that was circulated in the Lublin district – published an article entitled “Clearing of the Former Jewish Quarter in Lublin,” reporting on the dynamiting and demolition of Podzamcze buildings of poor technical quality. The article portrayed the former Jewish quarter as an “embodiment of filth and all kinds of vermin” and a “hotbed of dangerous typhoid outbreaks.” For these reasons, the anonymous author argued, the partial clearing of its buildings was necessary. Readers were informed that after a special “labor unit” had “collected rags and salvage,” a “clearing unit” set about demolishing selected buildings while disinfecting others to be repaired for their historical value. Once renovated, these were to be handed over to “Aryan tenants” in order to “eliminate the housing shortage in Lublin.” In the future, green spaces and flower beds were to be created in the place of the “hideous Jewish hovels” to give the space “a Western European look.”²⁹ The author of the article published in the *Nowy Głos Lubelski* used the anti-semitic language specific typical to Nazi propaganda and presented the destruction of the historic district as an act of a modernization of the city center as well as an operation aimed at improving the quality of life for other residents.

In the second half of 1942, successive demolitions removed buildings along Ruska, Św. Mikołaja, Furmańska, Nadstawna, Krawiecka, Podzamcze, and Sienna streets.³⁰ The German occupation authorities utilized Jewish and Polish forced laborers for this work. As Józef Kasperek notes, serious accidents occurred during the demolition of the district: collapsing walls and ceilings killed several workers and injured others.³¹ In 1943, the buildings on Szeroka Street, spared initially due to their historical value and potential usefulness in plans for resettlement programs, eventually were ordered to be dismantled because of their deteriorating condition. An unknown photographer took images, probably in this period, that show facades of the Szeroka Street tenement houses listed in an inventory of buildings either already or in the process of being dismantled. The list was probably collated by municipal employees and is dated May 1943.³²

²⁸ Józef Kasperek, *Kronika wydarzeń w Lublinie w okresie okupacji hitlerowskiej* [Chronicle of events in Lublin during the Nazi occupation] (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Lubelskie, 1983), p. 150.

²⁹ *Nowy Głos Lubelski*, 156 (July 8, 1942): 3.

³⁰ AP Lublin, Akta Miasta Lublina, Biuro Kontroli MRN – protokoły z kontroli dotyczące Wydziału Budownictwa 1944–1948 [Records of the City of Lublin, MRN (Town Council) Control Office – Inspection reports concerning the Building Department 1944–1948], 40, Zniszczenia wojenne w budynkach [War damage to buildings].

³¹ Kasperek, *Kronika wydarzeń w Lublinie...*, pp. 158, 180, 183.

³² Ibidem, p. 180; AP Lublin, Akta Miasta Lublina. Wydział Kwaterunkowy i Świadczeń Wojennych [Records of the City of Lublin. Department of accommodation and war related benefits], 387, Wykaz budynków rozebranych przez Władze Niemieckie względnie będących w stanie rozbiórki sprawdzony w terenie w dniu 9 marca 1943 roku przez pp. Głębikowskiego

By the end of 1943, 336 buildings had been demolished, including the Marharshal (or Great) Synagogue at 13 Jateczna Street.³³ Although the available archival photographic material is difficult to date, these pictures, together with eyewitness testimonies, make it possible to assume that the synagogue was gradually dismantled, probably in the late spring and early summer of 1943. Krzysztof Mucha, the author of a monograph on the synagogue, argues that in the summer of 1942 the roofing was removed, metal and wooden elements were disassembled, and the walls were blown up.³⁴ One of the former residents of Podzamcze, Bogdan Stanisław Pazur, recalls the episode:

I remember how the Germans demolished the Great Synagogue. We watched it from the Czwartek Hill. They demolished the synagogue walls with dynamite. It took one day. The bugle blew, in the morning; they planted explosives, the bugle blew [again], the soldiers withdrew. The first, second, third explosion – a pile of rubble.³⁵

However, in a photograph showing Lublin under the Red Army assault, dated July 25, 1944, the synagogue's south wall still stood. Mucha suggests that it hadn't been dynamited due to its proximity to the castle, where the Nazi prison was situated.³⁶

According to eyewitness accounts, the Germans had the former Jewish district rubble cleared away to be used to pave roads. A railway can be seen in numerous archival photographs of the district in 1942 and 1943; some of which show small freight cars. The local residents also participated in the demolition of Podzamcze for bricks, timber, and woodwork.³⁷

By July 1944, when the Soviet Army entered Lublin, only ruins of buildings remained. Photographs from that period show only rubble heaps in the area. One of the witnesses who lived in the neighborhood before the war recalls:

i Koszałkę [List of buildings demolished by the German authorities or in the process of being demolished, verified in the field on March 9, 1943 by Mr Głębiowski and Mr Koszałka].

³³ AP Lublin, Akta Miasta Lublina, Biuro Kontroli MRN – protokoły z kontroli dotyczące Wydziału Budownictwa 1944–1948 [Records of the City of Lublin City, MRN Control Office – Inspection reports concerning the Building Department 1944–1948], 40, Zniszczenia wojenne w budynkach [War damage to buildings].

³⁴ Krzysztof Mucha, "Wielka synagoga – Lublin [The Great Synagogue – Lublin," part 1, *Spotkanie z Zabytkiem. Monografia* 5, 1 (2011): 30–33.

³⁵ Relacja Bogdana Stanisława Pazura [The testimony of Bogdan Stanisław Pazur], <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/show-content/publication/edition/33256?id=33256&dirids=1> (accessed August 8, 2018).

³⁶ Mucha, "Wielka synagoga – Lublin," p. 33.

³⁷ Relacja Witolda Karpińskiego [The testimony of Witold Karpiński], <http://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/dlibra/doccontent?id=104815&dirids=1>; Relacja Stanisława Sobczyka [The testimony of Stanisław Sobczyk], <http://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/dlibra/doccontent?id=93314&dirids=1> <http://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/dlibra/doccontent?id=93314&dirids=1> (accessed August 8, 2018).

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The rubble was [there]. There weren't any houses at all; there was only one wall [of the Maharshal Synagogue]. I was looking for where our house had been, where we had lived. A fire hydrant was there, so I knew which house [it belonged to]. That was how I knew where our house [had been], where we had lived. But there was nothing there, just rubble. So I walked around. I cried.³⁸



Ruins of the Jewish quarter: Maharshal Synagogue, partially dismantled; remains of Szeroka Street at the foot of Castle Hill, 1943 (unknown photographer, Marek Gromaszek collection)



Ruins of Jateczna Street, Maharshal Synagogue on the right, c. 1943 (unknown photographer, Marek Gromaszek collection)

³⁸ Relacja Ewy Eisenkeit [The testimony of Ewa Eisenkeit], <http://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/dlibra/doccontent?id=96175&dirids=1>; see also: Relacja Kazimierza Podbielskiego [The testimony of Kazimierz Podbielski], <http://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/dlibra/doccontent?id=39249&dirids=1>; Relacja Mariana Milsztajna [The testimony of Marian Milsztajn], <http://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/dlibra/doccontent?id=96870&dirids=1> (accessed August 8, 2018).



Ruins along Krawiecka and Podzamcze streets, c. 1943 (unknown photographer, Marek Gromaszek collection)

A short 1944 British documentary entitled *The Tragic City of Lublin* reveals the scale of the destruction of the Podzamcze area. It was edited from footage presumably taken by Soviet and Polish camera operators in July 1944. The 3 minute 37 second long documentary depicts the liberation of the city by Red Army forces. The narration describes the fight for the city, the seizure of the castle prison, and the residents of Lublin welcoming the Red Army.³⁹ The documentary begins with a shot of the cityscape, followed by a sequence showing a tank moving down Cyrulicza Street towards the empty area where Szeroka Street used to run. The next scene scans the vast ruins where the Jewish quarter once stood. The following sequence captures the open-air mass organized by the local post-war Polish authorities at the castle's south facade to honor the memory of the castle's prisoners who were murdered by German soldiers just before the Soviet army arrived. It clearly shows that no buildings remain on what had been historically Jewish Podzamcze.

For several years after the war, no major clean-up work was carried out in Podzamcze. Local residents continued to dismantle the ruins. In September 1948, the remaining rubble was removed and the area was partially leveled. The reconstruction of the area did not begin until the mid-1950s when the authorities implemented a plan for a comprehensive redevelopment of Podzamcze. It followed a resolution by the Polish People's Republic government on January 13, 1954, selecting Lublin as the site for the grand celebration of the tenth anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of Poland.

³⁹ Documentary: *The Tragic City of Lublin*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tBgW-znGxOe8> (accessed August 8, 2018).

The new architectural design of the Podzamcze area was created by the “Miastoprojekt Warszawa” bureau supervised by the architect Mieczysław Kuźma. The project did not involve reconstructing any of the original buildings or preserving the spatial layout of historically Jewish Podzamcze. In the area of the former Szeroka Street (that is, alongside the western slope of the Castle Hill), an impressive plaza in the shape of an ellipse was created,⁴⁰ the form and design of which – as Dariusz Kopciowski argues – was supposed to “meet the conditions of the new political system,” i.e. to serve as a ceremonial plaza for public ceremonies and mass political events. The area along Castle Hill’s northeast side (where Krawiecka Street and Krawiecki Square used to be), was designated for the Central Agricultural Exhibition. Opened on July 21, 1954, it displayed agricultural tools and machinery, as well as models of communal gardens. The project of re-designing Podzamcze also included remodeling the castle since the building – which was used as a communist prison after the war – was to be transformed into a place for holding cultural events.⁴¹

In the mid-1950s, north of Castle Hill, construction started on an east-west thoroughfare (Aleja Tysiąclecia). Built over the next two decades, it cut through the northern part of the historical Podzamcze area. A north-south highway (Aleja Unii Lubelskiej) was built in the 1980s, running across the eastern part of the district. In the years 1965–1968, a bus station, designed by Wiesław Żochowski, was built along the east-west thoroughfare. The bus station area hosts a small brick building that used to cover an old public water-pumping station located on the intersection of Szeroka and Ruska Streets. This small building of historical value, has become a stand-alone commemoration in the Podzamcze quarter. It is one of the few surviving structures of the original architecture of Jewish Podzamcze, apart from the remnants of other buildings, that is, their cellars and wall foundations, buried beneath the contemporary urban fabric.⁴²

⁴⁰ Originally named as People’s Meeting Square (Plac Zebrań Ludowych), in 1989, it was renamed Plac Zamkowy (Castle Square).

⁴¹ Dariusz Kopciowski, “Ochrona zabytków Lublina 1919–2000. Wybrane fakty i zdarzenia [Protection of monuments in Lublin 1919–2000: Selected facts and events],” in *Życie artystyczne Lublina 1901–2001* [The artistic life of Lublin 1901–2001], ed. Lechosław Lameński (Lublin: Stowarzyszenie Historyków Sztuki Oddział w Lublinie, 2001), p. 71; see also Joanna Zętar, “Jak budowano plac Zamkowy... [How the Castle Square was built...],” *Gazeta Wyborcza. Magazyn Lubelski*, August 18, 2017: 6; eadem, “Narracje (nie)pamięci: Plac Zamkowy. Topografia palimpsestu [Narratives of (not)Remembrance: Castle Square. Topography of a Palimpsest]” (parts 1 and 2), <https://blog.teatrnn.pl/laboratorium-nn/narracje-niepamieci-1-plac-zamkowy-topografia-palimpsestu/> (accessed December 31, 2017).

⁴² Some remnants of the Szeroka Street buildings, which were incorporated into a post-war embankment at the foot of the Castle Hill, were partially exposed during the construction of a monument to the AK-WiN soldiers of Major Hieronim ‘Zapora’ Dekutowski’s group. Despite the objections of artistic and intellectual circles, these buildings have been destroyed by the construction workers of the memorial; see relevant passages in *Gazeta Wyborcza* articles of October 11–12 and 13, 2003, reprinted in “Krajobraz niewidzialny. Rozmowa z Markiem



Ruins of Szeroka Street, c. 1943 (unknown photographer, Photographic Collection of Municipal Preservation Projects / Municipal Historic Preservation Office)



People's Meeting Square, Opening ceremony, July 22, 1954 (Edward Hartwig, Ewa Hartwig-Fijałkowska collection)

Original 19th and early 20th century buildings on Nowa and Lubartowska Streets also survived the war, as did several others on Kowalska, Cyrulicza, and Ruska Streets. Although these tenements were mostly occupied by Jewish residents during the interwar period, they were located outside the historic

Stasiakiem, specjalistą w dziedzinie krajobrazu kulturowego [Invisible landscape. Interview with Marek Stasiak, a specialist in cultural landscapes],” *Scriptores* 29, 3 (2005): 90.

center of Podzamcze Jewish district.⁴³ Several buildings of particular historical significance to the Jewish community survived in the Old Town, another area largely populated by Jews during the Second Polish Republic period.⁴⁴ Thus, Podzamcze underwent a series of events, beginning with the destruction of the Jewish quarter and its gradual decay from 1942 to 1954, then ending with the complete post-war transformation of the area to adapt it to new functions. When viewed in its historical context, the site can be aptly described by the term “palimpsest-city”. Polish researchers including Ewa Rewers⁴⁵ and Robert Traba⁴⁶ employ the term ‘palimpsest’ to discuss urban spaces and cityscapes in the context of complex processes associated with ‘erasing’, ‘rewriting’ and ‘overlapping’ of differentiated material layers over time, processes through which remnants become eclipsed by ensuing historical events.

In viewing contemporary Podzamcze through the concept of “palimpsest city,” we can notice its character as layered and that each layer obscures the layer below it. The first, deepest layer is invisible. Buried underground, it is made up of the foundations and basements of buildings of the former Jewish neighborhood. The second layer constitutes the celebration plaza – created in 1954 and turned into a parking space in the 1990s. Upon that layer there is another one that consists of public commemorations and occasional memorialization activities that refer to that first, hidden layer. Thus, in order to understand and interpret this space along with its multiple layers of meanings, it needs to be examined as a whole. “We do not choose from it [...] what suits us at the moment,” as Traba writes, “but we accept that [layers] form a continuity, and that they tell us the true story of this place only if they are taken as a whole.”⁴⁷

⁴³ Among the extant buildings on Lubartowska Street and the adjacent streets are: the former Jewish Hospital (38 Lubartowska Street, now a gynecological hospital); the former I.L. Perec People’s House (18 Szkolna St., now the Lublin headquarters of the National Health Fund); the Chevra Nosim Synagogue (10 Lubartowska St., now the Lublin Jewish Memorial Hall), and the building of the former yeshiva, which was converted by the Germans into a military hospital during the war. After the war, the building served as the Collegium Maius of the Medical University. Returned to the Jewish community in 2003, it was restored and turned into a hotel. Its synagogue and mikveh, located inside the building, were renovated in 2007.

⁴⁴ For example: the building at 11 Grodzka Street, which served as an orphanage for Jewish children and a home for the elderly and disabled; the building at 3 Noworybna Street that housed the Central Committee of Polish Jews in 1944–1945, and later the District Committee of Polish Jews in Lublin.

⁴⁵ Ewa Rewers, *Post-polis. Wstęp do filozofii ponowoczesnego miasta* [Post-Polis. An Introduction to the philosophy of the postmodern city] (Cracow: Universitas, 2005), p. 22.

⁴⁶ Robert Traba, “Pamięć zapisana w kamieniu, czyli krajobraz kulturowy jako palimpsest [Memory written in stone, or the cultural landscape as palimpsest],” in idem, *Historia – przestrzeń dialogu* [History – a space for dialog] (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo ISP PAN, 2006), p. 103.

⁴⁷ Quoted in ibidem, p. 103.



Former Jewish district, aerial view 2012 (Rafał Michałowski/wniebowzieta.pl, Iconographic Archive of the "Grodzka Gate – NN Theater" Center)

Memorializing the Holocaust in Podzamcze's Space

Since Podzamcze's original buildings have been demolished and the new spatial arrangement of post-war development has obscured its original spatial layout, commemorative activities referring to the former Jewish character of the district are not embedded in the original architectural and urban structure. Jewish neighborhoods in numerous other European cities that were affected by the Holocaust were only partly destroyed or even remained intact. In these cases reconstruction or revitalization of the original architecture is possible. As can be seen in Cracow, Prague, Budapest, and Berlin, spaces formerly inhabited by Jews developed into a spaces of vital tourist and commercial activities. In Lublin, on the contrary, most of the projects implemented over the last three decades which refer to the former character of Podzamcze as a Jewish area, had no commercial character and served primarily educational purposes. Scrutinizing these commemorative activities including both material objects introduced into the urban space in the late 1940s, then in the 1960s, 1980s, and 1990s, along with contemporary performative projects inspired by the history of Lublin Jews, reveals a variety of coexisting forms and means of commemoration.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ In addition to the projects discussed in the article, there are other memorials to Lublin Jews, including three objects located in the Jewish cemetery on Walecznych Street: the

Regarding the material aspect of these projects, there are two notable noteworthy trends in the Podzamcze area. The traditional one is represented by material forms of commemoration such as buildings, steles, and memorial plaques. The more recent one is represented by artistic interventions of a non-monumental character including objects that have been permanently incorporated into the urban space, such as murals and formations indicating the ghetto boundaries, all of which constitute elements of the Memory Trail: *Lublin. Memory of the Holocaust*. Some artistic interventions are semi-permanent, such as on-site exhibitions at the “Grodzka Gate – NN Theater” Center, and some are intended to be temporary art installations. One-off or periodic performances such as the *Mysteries of Memory*, constitute a separate group.

Efforts to memorialize the Jews of the Podzamcze area Jews were initiated by Symcha Wajs, a driving force behind numerous commemorative projects. In 1987, two free-standing steles were erected. Both were made of white sandstone, each with a black granite plaque. The plaque on the stele at the foot of the stairs to the castle features a sketch map carved into the granite showing the spatial structure of the former “Jewish town,” with its main streets captioned in both Polish and Yiddish. This visual representation provides passers-by with a better idea of the district’s original layout and allows them to juxtapose it with the contemporary spatial organization. The map reveals, for example, that a two-lane road now running along Castle Hill’s north slope has been built over the site of the Maharshal or Great Synagogue, and that Krawiecka and Podzamcze Streets have been replaced by an expanse of green space. The map also reveals that Szeroka Street which once cut through the square at the foot of the hill, has been turned into a parking lot. The street used to exit the square area to where the bus terminal is now. Inscriptions in Yiddish – the language of the Podzamcze’s pre-war residents – add an additional dimension to this project, with the vanished neighborhood evoked not only through its map, but also through the agency of the very language that once co-shaped the cultural landscape of this place.

Memorial to the Jews Murdered in 1939–1944, erected in 1947; the Memorial to the Victims of the Ghetto and the Victory over Fascism, unveiled in 1987; and the Memorial to the 190 Jews Murdered in 1942 during the Liquidation of the Majdan Tatarski Ghetto, erected in 1992. These memorials, together with the Monument to the Victims of the Extermination of the Jewish Population (*Pomnik Ofiar Eksterminacji Ludności Żydowskiej*), erected in 1963 on the Ghetto Victims Square (plac Ofiar Getta), fit into the traditional martyrological model of remembering the past. Some researchers consider the Monument to Struggle and Martyrdom, erected on the site of the former Majdanek camp in 1969, to be a Holocaust memorial. However, considering the original guidelines of the project, this classification seems questionable, see: Kazimierz Ożóg, *Pomniki Lublina* [Memorials of Lublin] (Lublin: Ośrodek “Brama Grodzka – Teatr NN,” 2014); Marta Kubiszyn, “Upamiętnianie lubelskich Żydów oraz ich zagłady: pomniki i kontr-pomniki [Commemorating of the Jews of Lublin and their extermination: monuments and counter-monuments],” *Teka Komisji Historycznej* 14 (2017): 238–265.

The second stele erected on the Wajs's initiative, with inscriptions in Polish, Yiddish, and Hebrew, is similar in form and made of the same material. It stands at the north side of Castle Hill, marking the site of the Maharshal's Synagogue.⁴⁹ In May 2001 another commemorative object was placed next to this stele: a bronze plaque designed by Leszek Rymczuk depicting the outline of the synagogue. Between 1984 and 1987, also on the initiative of Wajs, several black granite plaques with inscriptions in Polish and Yiddish were erected, memorializing sites and objects that served essential functions in the interwar period, during the German occupation, and after the war.

For years, these two modest steles and a number of small plaques were the only memorialization marking the area of Jewish Podzamcze. In 2004, the "Grodzka Gate – NN Theater" Center launched another commemorative



Commemorative plaque to the Jewish district with Podzamcze map, 2016 (Joanna Zętar, author's personal collection)

initiative. Its goal was to restore the visibility of sites places and objects related to the culture and history of Lublin Jews in the space of the contemporary city. Rather than a concrete material object, it was an artistic intervention positioned within the former boundaries of historical Podzamcze. The initiative included a street lamp that was permanently turned on, named "Latarnia Pamięci" (The Lamp of Memory). The lamp is part of the city's infrastructure and appears outwardly as a typical street lamp, and is located on today's Podwale Street, where Krawiecka Streets used to cross until 1943. It is an unremarkable, an otherwise neutral object that was selected by the Grodzka Gate activists to function symbolically as an alternative memorialization of the vanished district and the Jewish community of Lublin that perished in the Holocaust.

The installation was developed in the spring of 2017 when a concrete slab inscribed with an interpretative text was installed next to the lamp, and both

⁴⁹ Państwowa Służba Ochrony Zabytków Oddział Wojewódzki w Lublinie (obecnie Lubelski Wojewódzki Konserwator Zabytków) [Lublin Branch of the National Heritage Conservation Service (now the Lublin Regional Heritage Conservation Officer)], Katarzyna Gerłowska, *Karta miejsca pamięci narodowej* [The card of the national memorial] no. 69, November 1994; ibidem, Katarzyna Gerłowska, *Karta miejsca pamięci narodowej* no. 107, November 1994; see also Ożóg, *Pomniki Lublina*, p. 34; Kubiszyn, "Upamiętnianie lubelskich Żydów...", p. 247.



Lamp of Memory, 2017 (Joanna Zętar, author's personal collection)

became a part of the Memory Trail *Lublin. Memory of the Holocaust*⁵⁰ which commemorates the historical presence and wartime destruction of the local Jewish community. The trail – created on the initiative of the “Grodzka Gate – NN Theater” Center, with the support of the Ministry of Culture, and in cooperation with a number of institutions, introduces visual signs into the urban space, marking the key sites related to the history of Lublin Jews and to the Holocaust.

The trail consists of several objects placed in different parts of the city. For instance, activists from the “Grodzka Gate – NN Theater” Center installed a series of small concrete flagstones to mark the ghetto's borders and large concrete slabs with inscriptions trace the route by which Jews were marched from the Podzamcze ghetto out to the Umschlagplatz. An important element of the trail is also a commemorating installation erected in 2017 near the railway ramp at the municipal slaughterhouse, from where trains transported Jews from the Lublin's ghetto to the death camp in Bełżec. The trail also includes murals and several other large concrete slabs with inscriptions marking individual sites within the Podzamcze area as well as several sites outside the city center, including the area of the Majdan Tatarski residual ghetto, the execution site of children from a Jewish orphanage, and the Jewish quarter in the Wieniawa district destroyed by the German occupiers in 1940–1943. Another vital element of the trail

⁵⁰ Tomasz Pietrasiewicz, *Kręgi pamięci* [Circles of Memory] (Lublin: Ośrodek “Brama Grodzka – Teatr NN,” 2013), p. 52.



Mis/Remembrance of the Place, commemorative installation on Zimna Street, Lublin, 2017 (Joanna Zętar, author's personal collection)

is an archive: *Lublin 43 tysięcy* (*Lublin 43 Thousand*), which includes files of biographical material on the inhabitants of the Podzamcze ghetto, displayed at the seat of the Grodzka Gate Center.⁵¹

One of the most interesting artistic interventions in the space of the former Podzamcze neighborhood is a mural unveiled in March 2017 in recognition of the 75th anniversary of the ghetto's liquidation. As a relatively permanent form of commemoration, murals may be seen (as Andrzej Szpociński noted) as a "new pop-culture alternative" to traditional objects such as monuments, steles, and commemorative plaques.⁵² The Podzamcze mural was conceived by Tomasz Pietrasiewicz (director of the "Grodzka Gate – NN Theater" Center) and designed by Jacek Rudzki (a local graphic artist). Installed on a concrete embankment of the Czechówka River which once flowed through the Jewish quarter, the mural is a collage composed of painted selections from pre-war photographs. Black-and-white images of buildings and local residents taken in the 1930s by Stefan

⁵¹ Izabela Skórzyńska, "Wyjścia nie ma... Rzecz o Szlaku Pamięci Zagłady Żydów Lubelskich. 'Lublin. Pamięć Zagłady' [There is no way out... About the Holocaust Memorial Trail of Lublin Jews. 'Lublin. Memory of the Holocaust'], *Misterium Bramy. Antropologia pamięci* [The Mystery of the Gate. The Anthropology of Memory], the monographic issue of the journal *Konteksty* 14, 3 (2017): 113–128.

⁵² Andrzej Szpociński, "Upamiętnienia [Commemorations]," in *Stare i nowe tendencje w obszarze pamięci społecznej* [Old and new trends in the field of the social memory], eds Zuzanna Bogumił and Andrzej Szpociński (Warsaw: Akademia Pedagogiki Specjalnej im. M. Grzegorzewskiej, ISP PAN, and Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, 2018), p. 26.



Czechówka River mural, 2017 (Joanna Zętar, author's personal collection)

Kiełsznia, Henryk Poddębski, and a third – unknown photographer make up this depiction of old Podzamcze as seen through the poetry of Jacob Glatstein (Jakub Glatstzejn) in his elegiac post-war work “Lublin, My Holy City.” While the large scale of the artwork contributes to its monumental character, the mural neither dominates the space visually nor interferes in its surroundings, due to its muted color scheme and the placement below street level.

This commemoration – with its images, words, and graphic signs – has been literally and symbolically written into a subjacent layer of the city palimpsest. Realistic reproductions from the pre-war photographs are a key visual quality of the mural. These documentary-style photographs depict a row of buildings with ground-floor storefronts bearing signs for stores, workshops, and eateries. In Polish, Yiddish, and Hebrew, often accompanied by elaborate drawings, the signs indicate what businesses are located there. The photographs include residents who happened to be in the frame, as well as scenes from daily life. Although the selections from archival photographs have been realistically reproduced, the work as a whole is not an accurate representation of pre-war Podzamcze, due to its collage-like composition as well as the inclusion of figures not found in the original materials. In this case, historical source material is used to create a work of art that represents an “imagined city,” which functions as both an illustration and memorialization.

A second element of the mural's narrative is the elegy in Yiddish by Jacob Glatstein. Its Polish translation is printed in white block letters against a black background, arranged in two columns separated by a map showing Podzamcze's

layout in 1928. The poet, a Lublin native, offers a heartbreaking portrayal of Jewish Lublin. He underscores the importance of the city to the history of Polish Jews and, at the same time, depicts Lublin as both a “holy city” and “this holy cemetery” that should “become one holy tomb [...] for the Jewish people,” a symbol of a perished world that “will never be rebuilt.”⁵³

The visual representation of the spatial structure of pre-war Podzamcze is the third element of the mural's narrative. The map, drawn from a 1928 plan of Lublin, reproduces outlines of streets and shapes of buildings to present the spatial structure of the former Jewish quarter's. The map is oriented so that the viewer can juxtapose it with the present day surrounding cityscape and determine their position on the historical map. As with the map of Podzamcze carved on the commemorative stele from 1987, the mural's depiction also enhances one's understanding of the spatial layout of old Lublin's center. In terms of form and content, this mural – and three others located in within the boundaries of the former Lublin ghetto⁵⁴ – can be regarded as a response to a trend in contemporary public art; it seems that the growing popularity of projects of this type is associated with the increasing significance of the realm of visual culture and the expanding role of visual forms of representation⁵⁵.

Pre-war Podzamcze as depicted in the complex, multilayered narrative of the riverside mural differs markedly from how this site was actually experienced by its present day residents and tourists. What separates them – and is, at the same time, a source of the artwork's expressiveness – is the context of the Holocaust evoked by Glatstein's moving elegy. The map of historical Podzamcze overlaid in the viewer's mind onto the topography of contemporary Lublin, together with the painted houses and figures, becomes a visual representation of the void left by the nonexistent district. The specific location of the mural in the former Jewish quarter, with its placement below street level, creates a memorializing site where the urban space tells its own story. There is an apparent attempt to reveal, through artistic intervention in the existing urban infrastructure, those

⁵³ Jakub Glatstejn, “Lublinie moje święte miasto [Lublin, my holy Jewish city],” trans. from Yiddish by Monika Adamczyk-Garbowska, *Scriptores* 1 (2003): 187.

⁵⁴ These three other murals – painted on the side elevations of tenement houses at 47 Lubartowska Street, 3 Kowalska Street, and 70 Lubartowska Street – make use of literary texts and personal documents, including an excerpt from a novel by Anna Langfus describing barbed wire surrounding the ghetto, a poem by Julia Hartwig where the poet refers to a meeting with her Jewish friends at the ghetto border in 1941, and an excerpt from a letter sent from the Lublin ghetto to an unknown recipient in the Warsaw ghetto, describing the situation of Lublin's Jews at the end of March 1942.

⁵⁵ Dorota Skotarczak, *Historia wizualna* [Visual history] (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Adama Mickiewicza, 2012), pp. 7ff, 98ff; eadem, “Historia wizualna. Założenia teoretyczne i zakres badawczy [Visual history. Theoretical assumptions and research scope],” in *Historia w kulturze współczesnej. Niekonwencjonalne podejścia do przeszłości* [History in contemporary culture. Unconventional approaches to the past], eds Piotr Witek, Mariusz Mazur, Ewa Solska (Lublin: Edytor.org, 2011), pp. 87–94.

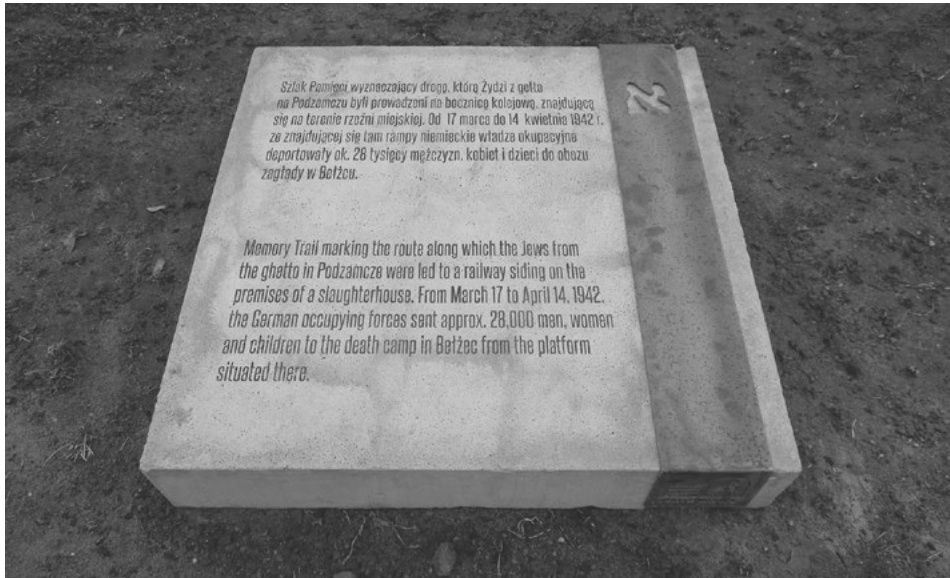


A concrete flagstone on the former ghetto perimeter, Memory Trail: Lublin. Memory of the Holocaust, 2017 (Joanna Zętar, author's personal collection)

deeper layers of the palimpsest effaced by wartime activities then further obliterated in the post-war restoration of the city.

Pietrasiewicz emphasizes that the mural's placement on the river channel's concrete wall is crucial in understanding its meaning. In his conceptualization, the Czechówka River, having long flowed through the Jewish part of Lublin, is cast in the role of "witness," "medium," and "carrier of memory." Reminiscences of the destroyed quarter, which – to quote Pietrasiewicz – were "washed out [by the river] and deposited on the wall," are here (re)materialized as art.⁵⁶ To see the 'invisible city,' one must pause and look beneath the pavement surface, which literally and metaphorically covers the space of the former Podzamcze.

Large concrete slabs and 43 flagstones which are part of the Memory Trail represent another form of remembrance inscribed in the space of the historic Jewish town. The slabs commemorate selected sites in the Podzamcze area: Jacob Glatstein's family house and the intersection of Podwale Street with now-vanished Krawiecka Street, next to the Lamp of Memory. The flagstones demarcate the ghetto, their number symbolizing the nearly 43,000 pre-war Jewish residents of Lublin. Yellow, with metal bands, and matching the surrounding pavement in shape and size, they are visually modest commemorative interventions that are not monuments *per se*.



Commemorative plaque on the Lublin Umschlagplatz route, Memory Trail: Lublin. Memory of the Holocaust, 2017 (Joanna Żętar, author's personal collection)

⁵⁶ Quoted in Skórzyńska, "Wyjścia nie ma...", p. 124.

The idea of marking the boundaries of the former ghetto in the city space was inspired by an earlier project prepared by the “Grodzka Gate – NN Theater” Center in March 2012 on the 70th anniversary of the liquidation of the Lublin ghetto. At that time, black squares were painted on flagstones as a symbolic reference to the topography of the ghetto. The project, ephemeral by design, created visual elements referring to Lublin’s past losses and traumas and introduced them into the city’s contemporary space. The squares served as a commentary on the processes of remembering and forgetting – washed away by rain and worn down by the feet of passersby, they gradually disappeared from the sidewalks over the following months, pointing to the impermanence and discontinuity of memory and the necessity of taking conscious action to sustain it.

These projects memorializing the history of Lublin’s Jews, located within the boundaries of the old district, along with others that were implemented earlier in the former ghetto areas in Warsaw, Łódź, and Cracow, represent a trend toward commemorating historical events *in situ*.⁵⁷ This type of intervention is open and egalitarian in character. Memorials such as the Lamp of Memory, the flagstones marking out the ghetto boundary, and murals depicting past events – modest and devoid of pathos yet continuously present – are intended to recall the Holocaust by making it a permanent element of the city space and part of the everyday experience of its inhabitants.

The idea of “performing” Jewish Podzamcze in its obscured space was also expressed in exhibitions held at the Grodzka Gate – a building that for several hundred years had defined the border between the Jewish and Christian parts of Lublin. Three consecutive displays were launched: *Wielka Księga Miasta* [The Great Book of the City]; *Portret Miejsca. Makieta Lubelskiego Zespołu Staromiejskiego z 1939 roku* [Portrait of the Place: Model of Lublin’s Old Town in 1939]; and *Lublin. Pamięć Miejsca* [Lublin: Memory of the Place], which has become a permanent exhibition. These exhibitions symbolically represent the space of the district through photographs, literary works, archival materials, and even testimonies given by residents of pre-war Lublin made available in the audible form. The spatial organization of each of these exhibitions places the visitors inside of a structure that has a form of an art installation, where they are exposed to a variety of synchronized visual and auditory stimuli. Although these three successive exhibitions shared some common elements and displayed similar source material, each had a different character. While the first two exhibits focused on pre-war Polish-Jewish Lublin, referring only in a symbolic way to the context of events during the Second World War, the third one was focused on the Holocaust to a much greater extent. The *Lublin* 43

⁵⁷ Lustig, “Alternatywy dla ‘żydowskiego Disneylandu’...,” p. 9ff; Joanna Gubała-Czyżewska, “Upamiętnianie Holocaustu w Łodzi. Stare i nowe tendencje [Commemorating the Holocaust in Łódź. Old and new tendencies],” in *Stare i nowe tendencje w obszarze pamięci społecznej*, p. 77ff.

thousand archive, incorporated into the 2011 exhibition *Lublin: Memory of the Place*, refers directly to the fate of Lublin's Jews during the occupation.

Lublin 43 thousand was designed to evoke a storage space for an archive collecting materials related to the Jewish inhabitants of Lublin. Metal racks and shelves constitute an integral part of the installation, containing file boxes with documentation of buildings as well as folders with records of their pre-war inhabitants. The installation was created in relation to an ongoing project to document names and other information about the fate of all of Lublin Jews. As its originator, Pietrasiewicz points out that the collection project is a symbolic gesture of protest against the destruction of this Lublin community, founded on empathy and the sense of connection with these former fellow residents.⁵⁸ Pietrasiewicz repeatedly emphasizes that, having been moved by "this whole [Jewish] past [of Lublin],"⁵⁹ he has taken on a kind of mission with the organization he leads. In this context, he describes the "Grodzka Gate – NN Theater" Center as a "columbarium of memory," an "ark of memory," and an "orphanage of memory." In his view Grodzka Gate is a place where archival materials and remnants of the Jewish past of the city brought by Lublin residents – pieces of matzevot, books in Yiddish and Hebrew, Torah fragments, and more – are collected and preserved for generations to come.⁶⁰

Along with the installations and exhibitions the idea of a "symbolic reconstruction" of Podzamcze took the form of performative art practices including the *Mysteries of Memory*, produced by the Grodzka Gate Center since 2000. The production of each of the *Mysteries* required that a layer of technical infrastructure (including spotlights, projectors for displaying slides of archival photographs of Podzamcze and loudspeakers for displaying oral testimonies) be superimposed on the actual urban spatial structure of Podzamcze to help construct a narrative using stagecraft techniques. Each *Mystery* consists of a visual and audio installation intended to facilitate encounters in which the urban space is transformed into a 'stage' on which images and sounds are displayed, allowing the Podzamcze to 'tell' its own story while revealing its palimpsest-like quality.

Most of the *Mysteries* produced by the Grodzka Gate Center were staged in the Podzamcze area (*Jedna Ziemia Dwie Świątynie* [One land, two temples],

⁵⁸ Tomasz Pietrasiewicz, *Szlak Pamięci. Lublin. Pamięć Zagłady* [Route of Remembrance. Lublin. Memory of the Holocaust] (Lublin: Ośrodek "Brama Grodzka – Teatr NN", 2017), p. 61; Paweł Próchniak, "Teatr nocy (rozmowa z Tomaszem Pietrasiewiczem) [Theater of the Night (Interview with Tomasz Pietrasiewicz)]," the monographic issue of the journal *Konteksty* 14, 3 (2017): 58–59.

⁵⁹ Marcin Skrzypek, "Przypadek zamierzony (rozmowa z Tomaszem Pietrasiewiczem) [An Intentional Chance (Interview with Tomasz Pietrasiewicz)]," *ibidem*, pp. 37–51; Tomasz Cyz, "Performance z pamięci (rozmowa z Tomaszem Pietrasiewiczem) [Performance from memory (Interview with Tomasz Pietrasiewicz)]," *ibidem*, pp. 52–55.

⁶⁰ Cyz, "Performance z pamięci...", pp. 53–54; Próchniak, "Teatr nocy...", pp. 57–58.



One Land, Two Temples, Mystery of Memory, 2000 (Marta Kubiszyn, author's personal collection)

Misterium Światła i Ciemności [Mystery of light and darkness], *Poemat o Miejscu* [Poem on the place]) and referred directly to the space of the former Jewish district and the Holocaust. By combining the projection of images and sounds with the active participation of the audience, these Mysteries' projects might be referred to as counter-monuments, to use Young's concept. These are alternative forms of memorialization, performative site-oriented activities providing the public with the opportunity to learn about the past through active participation and emotional engagement, which may help to overcome suppressed guilt, shame and pain provoked by traumatic historical events.⁶¹

Lublin's Commemorations of the Holocaust: Theory and Practice

As has been shown above, these commemorations of the former Podzamcze quarter share a common trait, whether they take the form of modest objects, installations, or performative actions. All of them have been placed in a distinctive topographical setting and used to mark places, objects, and events that although relevant to this space, had not been included in the realm of local memory culture for years. Notable, as far as these projects' narratives and topics are concerned,

⁶¹ Young, *The Texture of Memory*, pp. 2–13ff; Meng, *Shattered Spaces*.

their focus on local issues, figures, and histories, along with the inclusion of individual biographies and personal accounts. Simple, non-monumental works and activities predominate, tending to use the language of personal writing and often taking theatrical (or quasi-theatrical) forms. This way of communicating meaning seems to result from the fact that most of the Lublin commemorations discussed here were designed by Pietrasiewicz, who comes from the alternative theater tradition and freely employs means of expression typical of stage productions.

Pietrasiewicz, while disclosing the personal component in his work of commemorating the Jews of Lublin, emphasizes that biographical sources play an essential role in this work. As a theater artist, he sees them as components that facilitate the construction of a language that combines the aesthetics of alternative theater and source documents that make it possible to talk about the Holocaust in terms of individual experience. This approach is exemplified in the *Mysteries of Memory* and the exhibitions organized by the Grodzka Gate Center. Engaging with the public spaces of Lublin where the absence of the local Jewish community is an explicit theme, allowing members of the local community to participate, and crossing the boundaries between theater and the civic activism – all these characterize – as Lehrer and Waligórska point out, the new and innovative approach toward memorialization. As these scholars note, what distinguishes these artists and memory activists is the creation of “spaces that encourage dialogue and self-reflection,” that enhance citizens to actively participate in historically specific forms of remembering”.⁶²

An important aspect of the artistic language of discussed commemorations – expressed in the symbolism of particular objects and actions – is that it emphasizes the discontinuity of historical narrative while addressing the inability to fully understand and comprehend the past. It also emphasizes the obligation to remember events of the Holocaust and include them in the scope of local narratives about the memory of the Second World War. By recalling and reintroducing the memory of the former Jewish district and its inhabitants, these objects and performative activities introduce new elements into the local memory discourse.

However, the actual reception of the Podzamcze and Holocaust commemorations among present day Lublin inhabitants of non-Jewish descent reveals a public ambivalence toward these projects. Data collected by the staff of the “Grodzka Gate – NN Theater” Center show that the on-site exhibition attracted approximately 11,000 visitors in 2015–2017, with public interest in the exhibition growing over time. However Holocaust commemoration efforts have been met with a lack of interest, even reluctance, on the part of Lublin residents. For

⁶² Erica T. Lehrer and Magdalena Waligórska, “Cur(at)ing history: New genre art interventions and the Polish-Jewish past,” *East European Politics and Societies and Cultures* 27, 3 (2013): 510–544.

example, Grodzka Gate Center's proposal for a memorial installation at the site of Lublin Umschlagplatz, did not gain public support despite widespread appreciation in artistic circles and favorable coverage in the local press⁶³. In 2014, Magdalena Stefańska examined forum comments posted online by Lublin residents responding to press coverage of the project in 2005, 2006, 2009, and 2012. In addition to numerous anti-Semitic posts and others promoting conspiracy theories, these comments opposed any form of commemoration at the site. Among the reasons cited, were the high cost and the large number of other memorials already existing in the city space. Only a small number of comments supported the plan, arguing that the murdered Jews were Polish citizens and members of the local community.⁶⁴ Currently, only Stefańska's study addresses the issue of the social reception of Holocaust commemoration projects in Lublin. Without a broader context and a more developed methodology, the acceptance of these research findings as exemplary remains an open question.

Eventually, in 2017 the idea of an Umschlagplatz memorial was materialized in the form of an installation and became a part of the Memory Trail. The Umschlagplatz is a site of particular importance for the history of Lublin's Jews. This installation, along with other memory initiatives discussed in the article, reveals the variety of strategies implemented by memory activists from the Grodzka Gate Center to cope with the physical absence of visible traces of the former Jewish presence as well as the traces of its destruction. Nonetheless, the question of how Lublin residents perceive this and other commemorations, as well as how Polish and foreign visitors do, deserves more attention, and should become the subject of in-depth qualitative research.

⁶³ See Jan Pleszczyński, "Lubelski Umschlagplatz [Lublin Umschlagplatz]," *Gazeta Wyborcza. Gazeta w Lublinie*, June 29, 2000; Grzegorz Józefczuk, "Zapomniany Umschlagplatz [The Forgotten Umschlagplatz]," *Gazeta Wyborcza. Gazeta w Lublinie*, March 15, 2005; Paweł P. Reszka, "Plac śmierci będzie wreszcie uporządkowany [The Death Square will finally be tidied up]," *Gazeta Wyborcza. Gazeta w Lublinie*, November 16, 2007; Grzegorz Józefczuk, "Konkurs na pomnik dla lubelskiego 'placu śmierci' [Competition for a Monument to Lublin's 'Death Square']," *Gazeta Wyborcza. Gazeta w Lublinie*, November 4, 2009; idem, "Menora nad torami [Menorah over the track]," *Gazeta Wyborcza. Gazeta w Lublinie*, November 10, 2009.

⁶⁴ Magdalena Stefańska, "Problem pomnika na Umschlagplatzu w Lublinie w świetle współczesnych koncepcji i teorii upamiętniania przeszłości [The Problem of the Umschlagplatz monument in Lublin in the light of contemporary concepts and theories of commemorating the past]," Bachelor's thesis written in Zakład Kultury i Historii Żydów UMCS [Department of Culture and History of the Jews of the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University], Lublin 2014, typescript, pp. 29–33.

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