

Scholars of history and social studies who study the most recent history often turn to the so-called memory testimonies – reminiscences and conversations with those who were witnesses of historical events, which generally include political events that occurred in the last decades. Contrary to these cases of “political history” analyses, the aim of our project is to reconstruct the image of popular culture from the period of the People’s Republic of Poland as it is remembered by its participants. That what is remembered, and how it is remembered, can show us the individual hierarchy of importance attributed to events and problems, and translates into the relation between culture, values, and common experience.

We will be therefore reconstructing the memory about culture and everyday life in the People’s Republic and confronting it with other source materials such as media, art, information on the offer and functioning of cultural institutions, as well as documents illustrating how cultural policies were implemented by the government. We will be using research methods typical for ethnography, sociology and cultural studies. The basic methodological tool will be a partially-structured ethnographic interview combined with participatory observation and documentation.

Interviews will be conducted in 14 Polish cities: Białystok, Lublin, Rzeszów, Kraków, Katowice, Wrocław, Warszawa, Gdańsk, Poznań, Szczecin, Łódź – cultural centers of particular regions, as well as in Opole, Sopot and Zielona Góra – cities that in the period of the People’s Republic organized the biggest and most popular festivals of popular music. In total, we intend to conduct 140 interviews, 10 in each of the selected cities.

The main reason for conducting research in the field presented in this project is to expand existing achievements in the study of the culture of the People’s Republic with previously neglected issues of how culture was remembered, understood and experienced by its users.