

What influences our perception of reality? What is crucial for constructing our collective identities: memories of the past, preconceptions regarding the present or imaginations about the future? Or maybe there is a **connection between how we remember the past, imagine the future and value the present**? Can the future (and past imagination regarding the once possible futures) be remembered? Why do we often remember “what might have been” more clearly than what actually happened? Can we use dystopian or utopian imaginations regarding the possible futures as an impulse to build a better, collective future? All these questions are crucial to this project, which focuses on how future can be remembered and poses a thesis that – despite many theories stating otherwise – we are now more focused on the future than we would like to admit.

**The starting point** of this project is an observation that the future constitutes a crucial, though previously neglected, aspect of memory studies. The study of the future in the framework of memory studies was previously limited to two contexts – the first was the future of memory research, the second was the duty of organizing memory in relation to the future. The proposed project recognizes the importance of these ideas, nevertheless, very different assumptions lay at its center:

a) Certain visions of previously anticipated future, also those visions that were never fulfilled, form a crucial component of our memory of the past.

b) Future, as it is currently imagined and anticipated, determines our attitude towards the present and past, being not merely the horizon of our imagination (Koselleck, 2004), but also the frame that shapes our memory. Addressing the issue of how imaginations of the future can shape memory of the past and contribute to our understanding of the present and the future are – alongside the development of a theory of how the future is remembered and how future is now part of our temporal environment – of **paramount importance** for several reasons. First, the thesis about the “end of history/future” was widely accepted as a universal description of the time after the fall of communism in Europe, though it never fairly represented any of the experiences typical for the societies that actually underwent political change, even within Europe (Jarausch, Lindenberg, 2011). Secondly, future in memory studies is almost solely interpreted as a positive project or a common goal, not as a highly affective, unstable factor that can either change our preconceptions about the past or present, or reshape memory of certain events by comparing what actually happened with what might or should have happened.

**The aim of this project** is therefore to show that the future, especially in Poland (treated here as an example of Central-Eastern European country), never ceased to shape both politics of memory and politics of affect (Massumi, 2015), which is affirmed by the great expansion of the political, historical, and literary discussions about the possible future, as well as by the expansion of utopias and of alternative histories (Rosenfeld, 2002; Schneider-Mayerson, 2009). Therefore, the proposed project not only tries to fill some obvious gaps in memory research by introducing or expanding two different categories – **poetics of memory** and **remembering future** – but also to critically connect the theoretical toolbox of memory studies and affect studies to analyze **visions of politically and ecologically oriented futures** – how they are created, mediated and remediated through various types of cultural texts (primarily – literature, esp. Alternate histories, utopias and dystopias, and films) and how they shape our understanding of both temporal relations between past, present and the future and our understanding of the notion of environment.

The proposed research project has the potential of **innovativeness on a global scale** by proposing a new methodology and by discovering a new area of memory research, at the same time being a **highly relevant contribution on the local scale**, as the research will focus on Polish memory. Expected outcome of the project will consist three special issues of scientific journals and numerous conference presentations.

### **Basic literature**

Ahmed S., 2010: *The Promise of Happiness*, Duke UP.

Berlant L., 2011: *Cruel Optimism*, Duke UP.

Koselleck R., 2004: *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. Keith Tribe, New York.

Massumi B., 2015: *Ontopower. War, Powers, and the State of Perception*, Duke UP.

Rosenfeld G., 2002: *Why Do We Ask “What If?”*, “History and Theory” 41.

Schneider-Mayerson M., 2009: *What Almost Was*, “American Studies” 50:3/4.

Grusin R., 2010: *Premediation. Affect and Mediality after 9/11*, Palgrave Macmillan.

Jarausch K.H., Lindenberg T. (eds.), 2011: *Conflicted Memories*, Berghahn Books.