

## SUMMARY

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### CULTURE OF REMEMBRANCE BETWEEN EMOTIONS AND INSTITUTIONS

Representing the Battle of Vukovar from 1991 to 2016

Culture of remembrance is one of the key concepts around which an interdisciplinary field known as memory studies developed. The reason behind this is the fact that memory studies represents a multidimensional concept that encompasses different ways of transmitting remembrance and suggests some mechanisms through which cultural content circulates in the social field.

In order to make it more systematic, the content of culture of remembrance in this book is divided into four groups: narrativizing, visualizing, materializing and performing the past. Also, culture of remembrance is thought to be actualised through communication and identification processes in society. In these processes, what captures the attention of the public and is subject to close analysis are key historic events, people who took part in these events and locations where they transpired. In this way, different groups use culture of remembrance to create cultural content. Through this content, such groups try to build up a symbolic supply in which, according to J. Assmann, societies recognise themselves. The period of modernity, along with many changes it has brought about, is particularly challenging in terms of studying how culture of remembrance is intertwined with social processes. Due to divisions, as well as fragmentation which sometimes happens in the social field, disagreements over the interpretation of history emerge. Such disagreements have most often appeared in the form of an opposition between demands for remembering and forgetting, or insisting on the authenticity or falsity of a certain interpretation of the past, and through the bureaucratization and spectacularization of remembrance, all of which represent debates over the relevance or irrelevance of remembrance in terms of identity.

Such a theoretical framework, which includes some structuralist and hermeneutic elements, is used to interpret the creation and recep-

tion of culture of remembrance related to the Battle of Vukovar in the period between 1991 and 2016. This shows how the Battle of Vukovar, which is commonly marked as a key event in the Croatian War of Independence, resulted in a rich culture of remembrance that includes numerous books, films, monuments and commemoration events. A consideration of key content that makes up culture of remembrance related to the Battle of Vukovar has led to the following conclusions.

In terms of interpreting the Battle of Vukovar there are three phases in which different dominant semantic oppositions were used to thematize the battle. In the first phase, which covers the period of displacement, the main theme of culture of remembrance was the struggle against forgetting. The battle and the city in which the battle was fought had to be remembered in order to preserve the collective and individual identities and to make possible, upon the return of the refugees, the renewal of the city to its pre-war appearance. Such intertwinement between the collective and individual identities came about in crisis circumstances where the opposition between »us« and »them« was clear-cut. Upon the refugees' return to the city, a different type of debate emerged, which also influenced culture of remembrance. Such debates were now based on distinguishing who the actors in the war had been, and on demanding the truth and justice which stem from this. Questioning the relation between us (the victim) and them (the aggressor) first appeared on the level of the Croatian War of Independence, but was then lowered onto the level of the Battle of Vukovar. The debate over the »relativisation of remembrance« included numerous actors on the national level, members of the Serbian ethnic community and some international actors. These debates led to the emergence of the third phase, in which the interpretation of the meaning of the battle took the pole position over the issue of the relevance or irrelevance of the event for the nation in terms of identity. Such debates are evident in the appearance of the issue of bilingualism and have been most profoundly manifested during the commemoration of the Vukovar Remembrance Day. The second conclusion is related to the people who took part in the city's defence. These people are designated as the victims within culture of remembrance. Such a designation is commonly used together with

describing the dead and the survivors as heroes, since there are many examples where the heroism of individual actors of the battle was in the foreground of culture of remembrance. However, mostly due to the progress of the battle, as well as to the circumstances in which culture of remembrance developed — such as displacement, trials and problems in the city's renovation — it is the notion of the victim that has become most prominent while discussing the importance of civilian and military actors involved in the city's defence.

The third conclusion is related to the location of the battle, which is claimed to have had a tremendous impact on Vukovar's identity by increasing its relevance in terms of mental topography and decreasing its relevance in terms of physical topography. For a long time, Vukovar was simultaneously perceived as the hero city and as a poor city, while it was only recently designated as a city where demographic and economic problems come to the fore.

By interpreting culture of remembrance, this book aims to contribute to studying the history of the city of Vukovar, but also to gain sociological insight into the positioning of different actors within debates on the historical truth, justice and the forming of symbolic frameworks of identity. In other words, the book's goal is to explain how culture and society develop around historical events and how they extract elements of these events again in order to form an idea of what they are.