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NECSUS

Preserving the now!: Mediating memories and archiving experiences in Ukraine

Bohdan Shumylovych, Oleksandr Makhanets, Taras Nazaruk, Natalia Otrishchenko, and Dagmar Brunow

Abstract

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine began on the morning of 24 February 2022. Everyone in the country experienced this and the afterward moments in their own way. All of us have learned what the shock of invasion is, mobilisation and how to resist it, and the steps to be followed during a bombing. We all had to take care of close ones, help strangers, evacuate, and volunteer with transfers, food, and medicine. All these experiences appear in various forms: taking pictures, noting reflections, discussing our feelings and emotions with others, following the news, warfare updates, and air raid alerts. The situation was so dynamic and those experiences were so ephemeral that as academics we found it important to capture the moment. We have developed our capacity and expertise to document such experience as historical and/or legal evidence, but also as a way to withstand the invasion.

See more: https://www.lvivcenter.org/en/updates/documenting-the-war-2/

This is a documentation of an online conversation organised by NECSUS on 9 March 2022 on the occasion of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which started the previous month. How do heritage organisations in Ukraine experience this moment of crisis? Archivists and scholars from the Center of Urban History in Lviv speak with Dagmar Brunow (Linnaeus University), leader of the NECS workgroup Cultural Memory and Media.

Dagmar Brunow: A warm welcome on behalf of the workgroup Cultural Memory and Media within NECS. Four archivists from the Center for Urban History in Lviv will each give a presentation before there will be time for questions. The speakers today will be in this order: Oleksandr Makhanets, the head of the Urban Media Archive for the Center of Urban History in Lviv. We also have Taras Nazaruk with us, the head of digital history projects, as well as Natalia Otrishchenko, the coordinator of oral history projects, and we have Bohdan Shumylovych, head of the center's educational programs. We are very happy that you could make it despite these horrible circumstances. This situation of emergency is also the reason why we want to give you this opportunity to present your amazing work to tell us a bit more about the projects that you are planning right now. How can the memory work that you're doing in your digital archive help to remember the experiences of different users right now in the Ukraine? So, with that I would like to immediately give the floor to Oleksandr Makhanets.

Oleksandr Makhanets: Thank you so much, thank you everyone for your support and for giving us this opportunity to talk in these difficult and hard times as this really brutal war is happening right now. It is even hard for us to talk at the moment, so I'm asking you to just take it into consideration. During this presentation I'm going to introduce our institution, what we are doing, talk about our archiving experience, and I want to emphasise some projects that I think are very relevant right now. Then my colleagues will also present some activities that have been initiated at our Centre.

We are from the Center for Urban History, an independent organisation and research center, which works in the field of urban history research, academic exchange, public history, digital history, and also digital archiving. One of our projects is called Urban Media Archive. It is a digital archive which aims to digitise and work with private and institutional collections of photographs, moving images, maps, and also oral history. We are building our identity around the concept of marginalised or neglected archives, or topics that are not researched or not preserved by governmental institutions. So, we are

working a lot with private collections and archiving private archives, but are also helping museums and other institutions to digitise their collections. For the last few years, we have actively been working with photographs mostly, with moving images, videos, home movies, and have also been collecting oral history interviews. The topics that are covered by our archives are mostly related to our research focuses, covering the period of the 19th and 20th centuries in East Central Europe. We are located in Lviv, but Lviv is not our main focus. Of course we have a lot of material from Lviv, since we're working here, but we are also trying to expand our geography in terms of collections. During the last years we have actively been working with collections in the Donetsk region, for instance. Right now, we are in Lviv, it's a relatively safe space at the moment in Ukraine, it's Western Ukraine. It is a city with a long and complicated history, but also the hometown of people of different nations. Now Lviv has become the place where a lot of refugees are moving from Eastern Ukraine, and also trying to cross the border to other countries in Europe. Also, our institution, a very nice secession building in the city center, has become a shelter for refugees. Approximately 60 people are living at our venue right now. It has also become a place to host some journalists who are arriving in Lviv and need some help and support. So, we now have abandoned our regular work and regular working routine, and are trying to help, as everyone in Lviv probably. Most of the people are involved in volunteering and helping refugees and helping with the transfers of different kinds of aid to the east.

So, what are we doing in terms of archiving? Our archival activity started maybe more than ten or twelve years ago, but I want to begin with the project which was organised by our Center nine years ago. Industrialisation and Urban Landscape of the Industrial South of the Russian Empire was led by our colleague, Volodymyr Kulikov. He was visiting different museums in Eastern and Southern Ukraine, especially in the Donetsk region, collecting materials from local archives; mostly images that represented the landscape of those cities. That was in 2013, right before the year when the war with Russia started and when a lot of places where we collected these images would be occupied. For instance, images from the collection of the Museum of Local History in

Horlivka, which was occupied in 2014. Actually, I heard the recent news last week that Horlivka was liberated, but still, we don't have some precise information and details of what's happening right now in Horlivka. But already eight years ago, we understood the importance of preserving and also of digitising these collections. They are endangered because of war, and we have many more collections from those cities which were invaded in 2014.

We have continued working with this region, especially my colleague Iryna Sklokina who is working as a researcher at our center. Two years ago, she initiated the project called Un/Archiving Post/Industry. During the last two years we have been collecting and digitising private archives from families in the Donetsk region that are related to the topics of post-industrial heritage of this region. But we have also been helping to digitise collections from the Pokrovsk Museum, from the Mariupol Museum, and other museums in the Donetsk region. Last summer we had a summer school in Pokrovsk. A few days ago, Pokrovsk was bombed with cluster munitions. Two months ago we actually opened the exhibition Ecology in Focus in the local museum, which was the result of that summer school. We were also working very closely with the Mariupol Local History Museum. Now Mariupol is surrounded by Russian troops. We don't have a connection with the people who are living there. We don't have a connection with our colleagues at the Mariupol Museum – they are out of electricity and also the green corridors for evacuation which our government is trying to organise were attacked. Just before this presentation I heard the news that there are already 1,300 victims among civilians in Mariupol. So those are the collections that we digitised from Mariupol, like 3,000 photographs by Pavlo Kashkel last year. Also from Pokrovsk we digitised probably more than 20,000 photographs. These images, mostly negatives, are still at our venue, the Center for Urban History, because we didn't manage to transfer them back to the museum. But this is probably a safer place for them at the moment. So, we already had the experience of war, which made us realise how important it is to preserve this heritage and these materials.

Two weeks ago, when the war started, the full-scale invasion by Russia, probably everyone woke up because of the sirens and read the news. The first

thing I did after collecting some of my stuff at home, was to go to the Center and try to gather all the materials that we have and move them to a safe place. Actually just a few days before the invasion, we received a lot of other materials and collections from local libraries and museums. We were about to digitise them within our current projects, which are postponed at the moment. Another matter is the backup of our server, which is in progress right now. We received a lot of offers from friendly institutions, who offered to back up our materials because it's probably the most precious thing for our institution, since we are not collecting the original materials. We are returning the originals to the private owners or to the collections of the museum after digitalisation. So, the backup is in progress, but because it's a huge amount of data we need some time to transfer it to another server. After that we will combine our activities of volunteering and helping here with the initiative to collect images of the war, mostly photographs. We had a similar experience during the pandemic year when we collected an archive of photographs representing our cities and personal experiences during the pandemic.

As we are trying to build our new strategy for how we can collect and digitise the photographs of the current war for the future, we face a lot of challenges. The first relates to the safety of photographers. We cannot simply encourage photographers to go out and take photos because at the moment even press photographers are not allowed to take photos in the city. So, we are starting a cooperation with a few photographers who have a license or access to some spaces, to take these photographs. Another approach is just to contact those photographers who are already doing their job and taking photographs – for instance for different media. We have compiled a list of such photographers and we are now trying to approach them about a future cooperation to collect their photographs. The third direction, because we want to collect diverse materials, is an open call which was announced today for people who are ready to share their photographs of their personal experience, maybe their personal life. We announced that we are trying to collect this crowdsourced archive, but of course the personal emotional condition of those people is very crucial at the moment. We also have to take into consideration that people have other priorities at the moment, so we don't want to put pressure on them. As our

media flow is now full of images, full of important information, we don't want
to produce much more informational garbage at the moment. So, we are trying
to find our attitude to collect images, but at the same time to not force this
process. This project is ongoing, and we have a lot of open questions which we
could discuss at the moment, because I see a lot of other initiatives that are
collecting photographs. We are also trying to cooperate with them, because in
the future we are facing issues of authorship, as we need a license to use the
photographs. Another question is what we want to archive: should we collect
conventional media photography, or should we look in other places, for
different images? And how to make it safe, and how will those materials be
used in the future? We are still thinking about how these photographs could
be used as images or as sources for researchers within visual history, cultural
studies, or in the other fields. So, we still have a lot of open questions and at
the same time we are trying to do some other work which relates to the actual
needs and current situation in our city and to combine it.

Brunow: Thank you so much, Oleksandr, for this overview on the importance
of the past image for the present moment, and for telling us about the
important work you're doing right now safeguarding the material that you've
already collected. You also mention the vulnerability of archives and
archivists, especially in a situation like now, and also how to deal with the
saturation, this overflow of images. We are always seeing these same images,
and why is it important to collect them? So that is obviously a very important
conceptual question that you need to address; would storytelling be a way to
frame some of the images? And I'm sure because you have this incredible
experience with storytelling and oral history, we can hear more about that. But
I would like to now introduce our next speaker, Taras Nazaruk, the head of
digital history projects.

Taras Nazaruk: Thank you so much, Oleksandr. Hello everyone, thank you for
organising this event and thank you for joining us. My name is Taras Nazaruk,
I work here at the Center. I am mostly involved in the project called Lviv
Interactive. It is, as we call it, a digital encyclopedia about the history of the city
of Lviv and the history of the 19th and 20th centuries. By mapping the history

of the city we try to tell the complexity and multiplicity of perspectives about the history of this city from a spatial perspective. I'm sure in the future there will be another layer on this map describing the current developments related to the city, especially regarding this refugee crisis in the city and in our venue. In our project we have described it from a historical perspective. In our description of this building we will eventually mention the shelter that we are running here, which is part of our activities from the moment the war started. Since then I have switched from the project Lviv Interactive to an activity that was not in the profile of the Center for Urban History before the war. I have started a web archiving initiative related to archiving the channels and the communication that has been happening over the last two weeks on the social media platform Telegram. It is part of our activities in preserving pieces of evidence of the current situation.

Since the war started two weeks ago I have seen a lot of information online and we just mentioned the rapid information overflow. I was wondering whether there are any academic initiatives worldwide working on archiving these events in Ukraine, archiving the war. So, I contacted a few web archiving initiatives in Europe, and I was introduced to several projects that have already started archiving. There is the Internet Archive project, which is making their own web archiving collection of the events happening in Ukraine. There is a Danish Royal Library working on an archive of the Danish web that somehow also deals with the topic of the war in Ukraine; the International Internet Preservation Consortium has its own activities. So, there are several activities and several institutions that have expertise in web archiving and are working more on that. It was good news that there is such an initiative, that there are several of them.

But at the same time, I realised that these archiving projects are mostly about websites; they try to archive the URLs of different websites online, and there was no initiative in archiving Telegram and what is happening there. From my personal perspective, from my point of view, Telegram at the moment and over the last two weeks largely facilitates communication on this war in Ukraine, and it is one of the main communication platforms at the moment in the

country. A lot of things are happening there, both in humanitarian and military
dimensions. It also soared rapidly just after the war started, so the number of
accounts, the number of Telegram channels and chats multiplied very rapidly.
It is a bit different from other social media platforms that are used for
communication at the moment. For instance, Twitter, one of the main sources
of communication about Ukraine for international audiences, is not the source
of communication for people in Ukraine at the moment. Twitter has a different
perspective at the moment. Also, news media websites do not show the
situation the same way as you can see it from Telegram chats. Obviously, any
official communication channels, any official statements in governmental
publications, also have a different perspective on the situation. Telegram, in
my opinion, is of great importance when it comes to communication in Ukraine
at the moment. Even the shelter at our institution is coordinated between
volunteers using Telegram. Also, drivers volunteer to help refugees, to
transport their goods or transport them through the border. They also
communicate with each other through Telegram. Different volunteer groups
and chats try to organise all the logistics with humanitarian aid using Telegram
as the main platform to coordinate and communicate with each other. Also
different official channels and official statements are disseminated from the
president, from the government, and from the Armed Forces. For me
personally, there is no need to read the news on any website, because I receive
all of the important information through Telegram channels, and a lot of them
are very good for immediate coordination and communication. We can see
some chats here on the shared screen just as an illustration.

Telegram has helped people to start coordinating their volunteering, helping
people very rapidly and quite efficiently. But, at the same time, warfare is
happening on Telegram as well. So, it is not only a military and volunteering
coordination, but also a space, cyberspace for warfare. People all over the front
line, all over the region that is currently affected by bombing and warfare
developments, are sending the Ukrainian Armed Forces details and
information about the positions of the enemy through Telegram bots. So
basically, this is also a channel of communication for the military as they
receive updated information about the position of the Russian forces from

people, from the resistance, from those who are in the occupied territories. It is also used as a communication channel for warfare and is actually quite effective because Ukrainian Armed Forces even make announcements that they are looking for very specific types of machinery, for example, in a specific region, and they make a call to send them information about that. It helps to locate and spot types of different portable missile systems. It is basically the most important information at the moment, because from those missile systems cities are bombed. So, we try to archive this kind of information at the moment. You can also learn about airstrikes in different parts of the country as the sirens we can hear in the cities are simultaneously transmitted through Telegram channels.

Another dimension of Telegram is cyber war, because there is a lot of communication between different groups of users. You can see here, for example, the chat of one of the groups, of those who are working on DDoS attacks on Russian websites. So there is the ongoing communication of blocking Russian websites, financial systems, and infrastructures. There are also a lot of activities of hacking military databases, and changing news announcements and TV broadcasts in Russia, for example, and a lot of this is coordinated through Telegram channels. Additionally, there are also ongoing disinformation and psychological campaigns happening on Telegram at the moment. Some are targeted to start panic amongst civilians, for example disseminating messages about specific bombings, or some panic messages that disorient people, or there are also campaigns imposing pressure on people in Russia, showing different pictures of the warfare in Ukraine to Russian citizens. So, this other dimension is also happening on Telegram.

I realised that this was not archived. No archiving initiative has been working with this material. From my perspective, it is both of great historical value and a very important source of information for future research. I initially started archiving cyber war activities in Telegram. So, I started archiving different channels somehow covering information about DDoS attacks, hacking databases, and everything. When I realised that so much more is happening there, and the flow of information is much larger, I just started archiving

channels that I had been following since the war started. I went through the
channels that I was subscribed to and started archiving them. Because the
situation in Lviv, as was mentioned before, is relatively calm or safer than for
instance in Kharkiv or Mariupol at the moment, which was bombed basically
an hour ago, I also decided to join channels of the cities that are heavily
bombed or occupied right now. I started archiving chats that cover
information from Mariupol, Kharkiv, Donetsk, and cities in the southern part
of the country – Mykolaiv, Kherson, Odessa – because those groups and local
channels also have a different perspective on what is happening than we have
here in Lviv. It also helps to see, to realise the scale of the war over there.

We started collecting these materials. Luckily Telegram as a platform helps to
save these materials and save the collections from the channels. There are
features within the platform itself that allow you to save those archives for
basically any channel. So, it's quite easy. You do not need any specific technical
skills or expertise to do so. I just started doing this. Here you can see, for
instance, the exported and archived channel of people who organised
themselves in a group posting information about those missing in different
regions of the country – looking for any kind of information about them from
other people. In those announcements there are a lot of details of the
circumstances of how those people went missing; what happened, under what
circumstances that happened, for instance, whether there was a bombing, an
attempt at evacuation or something else. So, it also gives a lot of information
on what is happening in different places across the country. We started
archiving this information as well. This is how it looks once you save it. Once
you save it to the local storage you basically have all the messages posted in
the chat collected into one file. You also have all the images or videos, there are
actually a lot of videos, user-generated videos; people just film what they see
and post it in different chats. A lot of different kinds of videos from all over the
country are also collected and stored in this archive. You have messages,
videos, different kinds of files, voice messages, and so on. Colleagues of mine
have joined me in doing this, so now we have a small group doing this
collection of different kinds of channels, archiving the material from Telegram.
We made a registry of what we have archived or what we plan to archive

shortly. We are also starting an initiative – similar to the crowd-sourced photo collection that Oleksandr mentioned. We posted a call: if people would like to share pictures with us, we can archive them. We were thinking of doing a similar thing with URLs, with websites. Maybe we will shortly post the announcement that we would like to collect and archive URL websites. The scope of that collection would be organised rather than sourced from our audience sending us URLs and links that they consider relevant and important to the archive with regards to the war in Ukraine, and then we will also publish it online.

To sum up, I just want to mention that we started this initiative, but at the same time we realise that there are a lot of ethical and legal issues related to the data that is archived through Telegram, and we still have a lot of concerns about that. At the moment this collection is only being stored on the local server. We will need a lot of advice and discussions, probably some seminars with the expertise from those who are working on these kinds of topics, how to make it proper from an ethical and legal point of view – what could be shared as a collection and what should not. So this is the initiative that I wanted to share with you.

Brunow: Thank you so much, Taras. That was really amazing to hear and, as you say, the ethical and legal issues related to this will be another topic. I would like to leave time for your colleagues also and will immediately hand it over to our next speaker, Natalia Otrishchenko, the coordinator of oral history projects.

Natalia Otrishchenko: Thank you, Dagmar, and thank you to all of the colleagues who organised this event during these very dark times in our country's history, but also in the history of Europe and the world, when we see how entangled everything is and how connected we are. We value the support we have received, both verbally and in action, from different people, professional communities, and institutions all around the globe. Thanks for it, and I hope we shall stand, and we shall remain, through these times. As an institution and people, we had to suspend many professional activities and

reorient ourselves to new circumstances. As my colleagues mentioned, the space of the Center for Urban History, which was a space for academic discussions and dialogue, was turned into a shelter. Around 60 people are living here now. Some of them have no plans for the future; others are on their way to safety, whatever safety could mean now – further to the West, other Ukrainian cities like Uzhgorod, or closer to the border with Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, etc. So, we are in constant flux; even though we did not hear the sirens in Lviv for a few days, we feel ourselves deeply connected to other places in Ukraine like Mariupol, Kharkiv, and regions that are under severe attacks, where the humanitarian corridors are constantly shot at by Russian forces. Therefore, we are facing a humanitarian catastrophe in the occupied regions. We are now speaking from Lviv – one could say a 'safe place', but I'm not sure what safety means now. It should be redefined. As academics, we understand that we have to take immediate action and help those in need. But we have to think about the future, and archiving is exactly about the future, even though it connects the past with the present. It is about deciding what is valuable and what has to be preserved for the sake of this future and answering general moral and ethical questions about what is necessary for us as a community, what defines us as a community, and what story shall we tell about ourselves. I am a sociologist and oral history archive curator at the Center. Before the war, our collections were mainly about people's relation to space and their institutional biographies, but we also worked with the past-in-making. It is not our first attempt to collect testimonies from the 'inside' of the event. Back in 2013-2014, when the Euromaidan and the Revolution of Dignity happened, we had been recording interviews with people in Kyiv, Lviv, and Kharkiv, who were on the streets actively protesting against Yanukovych's regime. We recorded two waves of interviews in December 2013 and February 2014, and we got this precise moment here-and-now, where the future was still open to different scenarios. As oral historians and memory scholars, we know that narratives quickly transform. How we look into our past and construct our history is defined by our position in the moment of delivering testimony, but also by stories circulating in various media and the specific 'memory culture' established afterward.

In 2013 and 2014, we created our Maidan collection, and now the excerpts of those interviews – more than 100 interviews were recorded during that time – are available online on our web page as part of the Urban Media Archive. Still, with the restriction that those interviews are only available after registration. We understand this data is very sensitive, and we cannot just put it online; we still need to create some access procedure to see who is interested in these materials. We are opening access to scholars and educators, filter bots that are sometimes registering, and it is at least possible to see what kind of resources people need when they work with our oral history materials. In this Maidan collection, we remove all personal information and do not provide access to full transcripts of interviews but to selections of quotes organised around topics like 'Motivation for participation in the protest', 'Perception of the space', or 'Attitudes towards Leninopad'.

Also, in 2020, we started a project about quarantine experiences when COVID-19 was a global experience, which is now almost forgotten in Ukraine as we are not counting people who have COVID anymore – we are counting people who were killed during the war. During the first months of the COVID pandemic, we announced a story competition about people's everydayness and received more than 200 letters. We planned to publish a book based on these materials this Spring. We already selected more than 50 stories and signed agreements with their authors, but as I mentioned, many activities were suspended or paused because of the war. I hope this book will be available to the public one day because it shows that Ukrainian society was capable of facing the global challenge before the full-scale Russian invasion. It is also a gesture of respect for those who shared their stories.

In 2022, we plan to record testimonies of people who left Ukraine or decided to remain. According to the UN Refugee Agency, about two million people left the country in early March, and the number of internally displaced people is even higher. We develop this initiative with support from our colleagues in various institutions in Poland, Great Britain, and Luxembourg. We hope to collect stories of people in Ukraine, Poland (one of the significant destinations for Ukrainians to seek shelter from the war), Romania, and Hungary, where we

have a network of other colleagues ready to collaborate with this initiative. At the same time, when engaging in conversations with refugees and internally displaced people, we have to be cautious about their safety and well-being, to not exploit their suffering for data extraction and the benefits of institutions. We want to speak with people in a safe position, whatever safety might mean now, who are not under a direct threat to their life, who are emotionally stable and do not feel obliged to speak. We also have to pay attention to researchers who are under the threat of secondary traumatisation because of the narratives they have to live through with the participants of this study. Together with our international colleagues, we are now discussing the design of this documentation, which will be respectful and supportive to all engaged people.

The other focus of this project is the constant nature of the war, so we decide to concentrate more on actions and deeds rather than emotions. However, we are fully aware that emotions are an inevitable part of every narrative, especially now, when these events are close in time. We will archive these testimonies here at the Center for Urban History as part of the Urban Media Archive, and the access procedure will be negotiated. Still, for security reasons, we would also have a backup in the European institution as it is essential to us now – to provide safety to these narratives and to protect personal data in the digital format. Together with our colleagues, we are also developing legal documents and informed consent that has to employ the GDPR, the legal recommendation of the European Union and Ukraine. It is vital to secure these testimonies and those who provided them. I believe that these materials would be really helpful for researchers in the future, as well as human rights activists. I am also sure about the therapeutic role of talking and sharing a story. I know the value of the first-person narrative, which would help us decentralise knowledge production and challenge some grand narratives that will emerge in the future.

Also, as an institution, we archive the data of other colleagues. One of the initiatives that would become part of our collections is UA: The Day That We Survived, an initiative by Ukrainian journalists who ask people to self-report

different stories from their lives during the war. They made a podcast based on these stories, which is available in English for an English-speaking audience. Here is the link:

https://urbanspaceradio.com/archives/series/the-day-that-we-survived.

If you are interested to learn more about the documentation work of the Center, we are available for email contacts and via Zoom – we still have electricity and internet access in Lviv now, and I hope we will have it in the future. Feel free to reach out to us, and thank you again for all of the international support; we will prevail together.

Brunow: Thank you so much Natalia. It was impressive to hear about these projects and the plans that you are making, about challenging grand narratives. This also leads to another question of what happens with all this material. How can you actually control how it will be used later? I think archives can't do this, but that's another discussion. The final speaker for this roundtable is Bohdan Shumylovych, the head of the center's educational programs.

Bohdan Shumylovych: Hello, thank you for coming, big audience, 90 people – I hope you spread the message among your colleagues and friends about what's going on now in Ukraine. I'm working at the Center for Urban History, but I'm also teaching at the Ukrainian Catholic University here in Lviv, at the Cultural Studies Department. I'm an associate professor of cultural studies. When the war started, studies were suspended for two weeks. In cities where schools were bombed and destroyed and for many universities, like in Kharkiv, it was impossible to relaunch educational processes. But today [early March 2022] we received a message from the Ministry of Education that they want us to continue teaching, and nobody knows how to do this. There is no kind of normal instruction on how to teach during the war, and teachers and professors are also not warriors, many of them have relocated families. Children are here in Lviv, students for instance, but their families are somewhere in eastern Ukraine, so it's a bit of chaos and uncertainty.

We decided that to keep students in a somewhat stable situation, we need to give them some work, but it's difficult – we did not want to re-traumatise people. They normally volunteer, prepare food for refugees, help to unpack and pack cars that come from the West; they bombard enemies' websites or write petitions, and do what they can. We have four courses in cultural studies with around 200 students, and I suggested that they write war diaries. Now we have a group of 60 students. I consulted with my colleagues at various universities in Canada, the United States, in Europe who dealt with the history of war and how people were conducting diaries. We developed a frame, so basically, they recommended not to describe their emotions but rather bodily experiences, to describe the change of the relations, the family situation. Then another aspect is media, how media changed their life and how they experience this, and the everyday practice or daily rituals, how normal home rituals have changed.

This group is led by me and my colleague who is a professor of philosophy at the Lviv National University and also practicing meditation. We also have a professional psychiatrist, as there is now a high demand for psychiatric help. So, besides writing diaries we have created a cloud folder. Thank God, technology allows us to have these clouds now which means we don't have to worry about the server and all the other stuff. We have a cloud with various folders, and the students write diaries, collect memes and images, video files, and so on. But it is also important that the students reflect on their situation. They give discursive descriptions of what they feel every day and how they experience these four aspects: media, body, relations, and daily rituals. Every few days we meet, and next Saturday we will be able to have another group meeting. We will discuss our group experience, not just personal experience but also how we together experience this horrific, problematic, traumatic situation. We talk about dreams, we meditate, and we try to shift from 'me' as a person to 'us' as a group. We also record these meetings. Because students can have strong reactions, we have psychiatrists who help us handle problematic situations.

So basically, this is the initiative. We created a Telegram chat. Every day I write them various stories, I recommend them meditation rituals, we work, I joke and give them various options, and they write. Some of them respond that it doesn't help, some say that it helps – but it's not therapy. I tell them every day: 'This is your work!' I want to make them understand that this is not just therapeutic treatment – we are working for the future. We create sources. I tell them that their war diaries will be analysed by future historians, and this helps them to understand that they do important work. This is what we do in terms of education. Otherwise, it's difficult to educate anybody these days. Tomorrow I will have a meeting with our chair to discuss how we will return to teaching. I have a course on aesthetics, and I don't know how people are going to study aesthetics these days, but we'll try. The important message we send them is about rituals, and having a routine is something that makes us human. I tell them that they need to fight for humanity. That they need to wash everyday, and clean their homes. Being involved in social work helps, and I think this is the message I try to spread.

Brunow: Exactly. Thank you so much, Bohdan. Natalia also mentioned this notion of well-being and it's very good that you have this attitude of care in your archival practice and in your memory work that you're conducting. We already have questions in the chat and maybe you can take a look and pick the questions you want to engage with.

Nazaruk: Well, here is a question that might somehow relate to the topic that I mentioned in my presentation.

> Q: What are principles and tips for data collection, selection, and archiving that you would like to suggest?

As I mentioned I don't have any previous expertise in web archiving or Telegram archiving. Actually, I wasn't able to find any initiative around archiving Telegram. So I'm not sure if there are any principles or concepts for structuring and collecting this very specific data. At the same time, I can see that Telegram as a platform loves to see these horizontal, grassroots

connections, networks of people that communicate with each other and coordinate their activities. From my perspective, this could be archived as opposed to official statements or news media announcements.

Q: At which moment should researchers who are collecting data start their analysis and write scientific texts on the basis of that data?

Well, I try to make some ongoing notes on what I've been archiving so that I can assess afterwards what was collected, and those concerns regarding tech ethical and legal issues are basically the outcome of these notes and preliminary assessments. But at the same time, I realised that this amount of data – at the moment the Telegram collection itself is around 200 gigabytes – is no longer human readable. It is basically machine-readable content that should be analysed through other forms, through specific scripts and algorithms that allow you to make the analysis and then draw conclusions. So, I think there's still a lot to do before we can start writing any text on that.

Q: While there are a lot of amateur videos shot by ordinary people, it's quite difficult to assemble them into a whole and understandable picture. A large number of videos sometimes doesn't help at all because these videos omit important plots. How do you see the ways to solve the problem of estimation and critical consideration of the videos about war?

Well, there are different investigative principles on how you can assess and verify those kinds of content and videos, for example 'Bellingcat', one of the most prominent investigators of online videos and online content. At the same time, all this content that is published online through Telegram is not about reality itself. It is rather about this informational dimension of what we can see, how we communicate with each other, and what we realise through this communication space. This is not about the war as it is, because Telegram – even though there are tons and tons of videos – still does not reflect its horror. It is only the communication space that basically creates some imagery

of what is happening, and this translates and communicates it to the audience here in Ukraine. And that can be the subject of investigation and research.

Makhanets: I'll just give a short comment about the access to the information and to the archives that we are collecting. We have a lot of archival initiatives that are in progress at the moment and a lot of materials that are digitised. What is very important for us is the metadata and the description of all the items and materials that we have in our archives. So, it's a very long process describing and publishing the materials, because the researchers need to navigate these archives and to be able to search them. We are mostly working with materials that are not described. If somebody wants to research some specific topic, there will be the chance to use our materials offline, or on demand. Also, in the future, we will be thinking about how to describe those materials as fully as possible and how to publish them.

About the private videos, which are not identified: for us it's very important to use only identified materials, and also to have the license to use them, and to have a connection with the author or owner of the specific images. There is a question regarding storage. At the moment we are backing up in 32 terabytes of materials. We got an offer from our colleagues who are receiving this information from our server, but the problem is the connection; because you cannot transfer those materials right away, or in one night. We need a few weeks to transfer it, while at the same time more than 100 people are using our internet connection at our venue. That's the challenge.

Otrishchenko: I could briefly reflect on the question of identity; even though, as a researcher, I do not work with this concept. It is a very 'heavy' concept with a particular tradition behind it. I am instead focused on narrative and performative aspects of identity, and I believe it is performed and enacted in everyday life. I could frame my answer around the concept of care that you, Dagmar, mentioned. Care in a broad sense, care about other people who are both your relatives and dear ones, but at the same time, those whom you never met, the ones who are strangers to you, but at the same time, they are people in need. Therefore, this experience, like the enormous experience of volunteering that we are facing now, is actually about enacting this care, about

making this care part of our human routines. It is also caring for animals, for your home in a very general sense, for heritage, for something valuable for us, something around which they can create our shared sense of identity. So, maybe, care would be the main answer for me now.

Shumylovych: I also want to come in on this. Identity now is a kind of – it's a floating thing. Right now we are mainly turning into a community of sentiment, a community of trauma, a community of the same experience. This will be a major ground for identity building in the future, but not at the moment. Now we're kind of horrified that cities which historically were centers of Russian culture in Ukraine are bombarded by Russians and this is unbelievable, that Okhtyrka or Izium, or Kharkiv, the city of Soviet glory, Melitopol ... they just destroyed them. The only thing we can share now is horrible experiences, and how it will develop in the future, I don't know.

Brunow: But you're not only sharing stories or images of horror. What you're doing is totally directed to the future and I was so touched in the beginning of our talk, before we let the audience in, how you talked about reconstructing cities because you're a center of urban history. The urban space is so important for you, and you already have this longitudinal view – that there will be a time after this and the cities will be reconstructed. It is incredible that you are able to think in such dimensions in these times. There are also tons of messages coming in to support you and to say how amazing you are and what an incredible experience it has been to be a part of this conversation.

Shumylovych: I can quickly comment on the question of gender and sexuality-based experience. We do indeed have a lot of gender scholars who monitor rape and violence and other horrible war crimes. But what was amazing for us, the ministry of defense, all the high-ranking military officials, and the president, they all use gender-correct language. They always talk about fighters, male and female fighters. Since we have a lot of female fighters in the army, they always emphasise that we are very thankful to all the female fighters. Then also there was kind of these controversies about the 8th of

March yesterday, but all the offices, the officials, they are still ... I mean they're trying to be correct. So it's not just the masculine projection, they try to emphasise that we care about males and females together. What I've seen on the 8th of March here in our shelter, at seven in the morning! At 7:00 in the morning a guy went to buy tulips for his girlfriend. They were sleeping on the floor as refugees in the shelter and he went to buy flowers. And yeah, some people say: '...this is a Soviet or socialist celebration', but I personally don't care. They want to remain humans!

Makhanets: I just want to add that we are experiencing trauma, and the trauma is what makes this community at the moment. But we are also experiencing the solidarity of the people and this is very important for us at the moment. Also, I see here in Zoom a few people whom I know in person from other countries, who already supported us and wrote us messages. So I just want to thank them, and this solidarity is very important, as we experience not only trauma but also something positive.

Otrishchenko: As for the question about us archiving the experiences of people who are living at the shelter now. The main idea is to talk only with those who have the resources to tell their stories. Some people in the shelter are here just for one night before leaving into an unknown future. I'm unsure if this is the best place and time for them to engage in a conversation. At the same time, others might be willing to speak, and in such cases we have to react to this need. Our colleagues who are more engaged in communicating with people from the shelter will monitor and ask really sensitively about their willingness to participate in this documentation while acknowledging the emotional weight of recalling and the consequences of archiving. But their psychological well-being and safety are our priority, and we don't want to re-traumatise people who live under very severe conditions now.

Shumylovych: I thank you all for the supporting words here. Unfortunately we cannot reply to all your comments, but we feel your support, which is important. We had a French journalist, Francois, from the newspaper Le Croix who did an interview the other day. I asked him how he might have felt in

1941 when France was divided by the Nazis. He was a bit shocked because I asked him, if there would have been no future for France in this period, for instance, if the allies had not defeated the Nazis. And he said that there was not much support, no possibility to win the war. And in our Ukrainian case, we receive a lot of support in this regard, at least we feel that we are not alone.

Makhanets: Actually, I was thinking about how to archive the chat in Zoom, so I just made a few screenshots, but I'm not sure if Zoom allows archiving the chat.

Brunow: At this point, I would like to end the official part of this conversation. Thank you so much for giving us these valuable insights into your activities and, as you have understood, we wish you all the best. So hang in there, stay safe hopefully, stay alive and hope to see you at some point in real life. Also, let us know how we can support you, publish it on your website, as you've seen people are willing to support. Some archives have already contacted you to help with providing server space or other means of support. So, I hope this conversation has generated a wider interest in your amazing work. Best wishes from here to you.

Shumylovych: Just as a final remark: we do record our activities at the Centre, and we also write diaries, so this will be our self-reflection section probably in the future. We have a lot of scholars who lost their work due to various circumstances and there are now a lot of Western institutions offering grants, but they [Ukrainian scholars] cannot leave the country. A lot of male scholars cannot leave the country because it's forbidden, and female scholars often travel with children, so they have limited possibilities to do research. So, what we would like to ask you is, in case you consider giving scholarships to Ukrainian scholars, if you could consider the possibilities that they receive these funds here, in Ukraine, not necessarily coming to Europe, because many of them cannot come according to law. And receiving funding here will be their possibility to stay on the front line and to do their job.

Brunow: Yes, that's a crucial point. Although many activities are going on right now to establish scholarships for researchers, male researchers are not allowed to leave the country and not all women have the possibility either, so that's an important message. Thank you.

Authors

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