

4.2

Borders change, memory stays

**PROJECT**

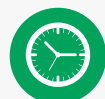
“Borders of memory”

**PARTICIPANTS**

4-16 (age: 16 years and older)

**AUTHORS**

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**DURATION**

4 hours without breaks

**KEYWORDS**

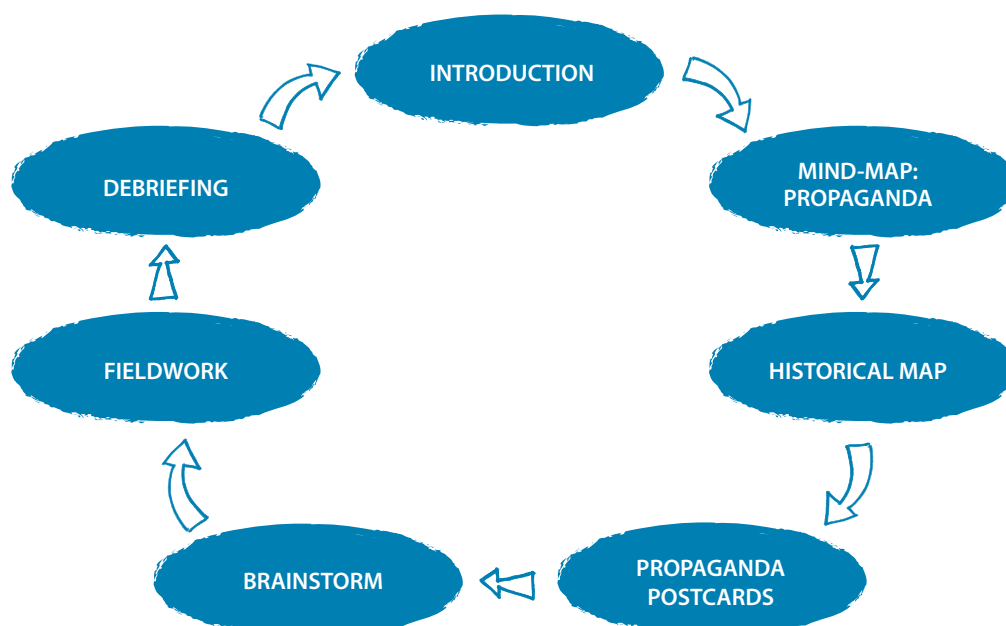
history, propaganda, taboo, dealing with the past, dominant narrative, marginalized narrative, space, various perspectives, dialogue, state borders, forced movement of populations, migration, interculturalism

Objectives

- Deconstruct post-war propaganda related to forced transfers of populations and shifts of Polish borders; identify present meaning of those events
- Provide skills allowing critical analysis of propaganda and its influence on collective memory
- Raise awareness about missing narratives and gain access to marginalized ones
- Facilitate dialogue and inspire exchange of points of view in the group related to space (city, town, village, neighbourhood)

Overview

The method has been designed specifically to deal with shifts of borders of Poland in the aftermath of WWII, to challenge taboos and analyse various narratives related to this topic. The full cycle of the workshop **“Borders change, memory stays”** and internal logic is as follows:



Introduction:

participants understand the topic of the workshop and agenda

Mind-map:

they understand notion of propaganda, dominant and marginalized narratives

Historical map:

they are aware of Polish border changes after the Second World War and forced migrations

Postcards:

they understand the content of the dominant narrative related to shift of borders and forced transfers of populations in the aftermath of the Second World War

Brainstorm:

various perspectives to look at the space (town, city, neighbourhood) are identified

Fieldwork:

participants observe space through the lenses of an assigned perspective (through photos and making notes)

Debriefing:

they learn new perspectives and acknowledge the change in their initial one

Background

After the Second World War, based on decisions made during the Yalta and Potsdam conferences (1945), Poland's borders were changed significantly both in the East (territories annexed by the Soviet Union) and in the West (territories acquired from Germany, "regained territories"). The forced transfer of populations in the region were part of this process (Poles and Germans and other national groups). Whereas flight, expulsions and resettlements of Germans are present in the collective memory of Germany (especially in the Western part), they were a taboo in Poland. And it was the propaganda of communist times that influenced the collective memory of Poles in relation to border shifts.

Preparation

The trainer prepares basic facts related to the Potsdam and Yalta conferences, information about the shift of borders and forced transfers of populations in the aftermath of WWII (visit the online exhibition prepared by the Polish History Museum: www.google.com/culturalinstitute/exhibit/shifting-poland/QR9NfYt!?hl=en)

- The trainer needs to look at propaganda postcards from the '40s and '50s and examine their message related to the shift of borders and forced migrations
- The trainer should develop possible support questions for the group s/he works with, taking under consideration the level of knowledge of the group and participants' relation to the historical events in question

The materials needed are

- Polish propaganda postcards from '40s and '50s related to shifts of borders and forced migrations
- Flipchart and markers
- Paper and pencils for participants
- Map of pre-war Poland
- Cameras or participants' phones to take photos
- Computer and projector to show pictures taken by participants

Course of the workshop**Phase 1:****Mind-map⁹ (20 minutes)**

Participants form subgroups of 3-4 people each. They are given a coloured paperboard and have to form a mind map using the word "propaganda", adding their association with the notion (e.g. mass media, control, terror, lies).

Each subgroup presents their mind map to the rest of the group and discusses the words they chose to connect with the word "propaganda". All participants reflect on the selected words and discuss the rationale supporting their choices.

The trainer creates an inclusive mind map on "propaganda" on a flipchart. The mind map contains all the words brainstormed by the subgroups, organized in distinct categories.

The trainer asks representatives of each group to provide examples of propaganda or dominant narratives in any field they encountered in their own lives, and write those fields down on a flipchart.

Phase 2:**Introduction to the historical contexts and map (20 minutes)**

The trainer shows a pre-war map of Poland and explains the shift of Poland in the aftermath of WWII, and movements of populations. S/he indicates territories in the East acquired by the Soviet Union and explains which parts of present-day Poland were part of Germany before WWII.

Participants look at the map and try to locate their hometowns or other significant places related to their family history (e.g. grandparents' houses) in the pre-war map of Poland. Some of them might find out that those places now belong to a different country than before WWII.

The trainer asks participants for voluntary comments (Would you like to share your comments with the others? What has been new to you? Has anything surprised you?)

The participants form subgroups of 3-4 people each. They receive postcards used in the late '40s and '50s, under communist rule in Poland, to justify and explain the shift of borders in the aftermath of WWII. They also get paper and markers.

⁹ Mind maps usually refer to the dominant narrative (its elements, features and ways to be delivered to the public), the notion of „marginalized“ narrative usually is not mentioned on the mind map. Thus the trainer stresses that the propaganda phenomenon is about a dominant narrative being imposed on society and equally so it is about censorship and marginalized narratives that exist but do not reach the audience.

Phase 3:**Postcards (30 minutes)**

Participants discuss in subgroups the content of the postcards (they discuss each visual element and try to deconstruct their meaning) and write down their findings. If needed, the trainer provides groups with additional supporting questions or tips:

- How „East“ and „West“ are presented (What elements are being used to symbolize them)?
- What elements (visual, inscriptions, numbers) are used to describe and symbolize Germany, Poland and the Soviet Union after WWII and why?
- What emotions do the individual elements and their message as a whole impose on the audience and how?
- Does anything seem to be missing in the pictures?

The trainer sums up the group findings, provides additional explanations related to the visual representation of the dominant narrative of the '40s and '50s, if needed.

Phase 4:**Brainstorming (10 minutes)**

Based on previous materials (mind map, list of fields participants encountered propaganda in their lives, historical map, postcard analysis), the group brainstorms possible ways to look at space (city, neighbourhood, town). The trainer writes on the flipchart perspectives and agendas that might determine one's way of looking. Examples of fields/perspectives: perspective of Poles, perspective of Germans, local development, tourism, etc. (See example of the method implementation below).

Phase 5:**Field work (120 minutes or longer depending on the destination to be reached)**

Preparation: In the conference hall, participants divide the tasks they need to work on during the field trip, namely each participant is assigned to take photos and make notes related to the perspective / field brainstormed in the previous exercise. Participants are encouraged to write down suggestions for further development/ of the space (city, neighbourhood, town) in the field they observe. The trainer makes sure that every participant or every subgroup (depending on the number of participants) has a different perspective to follow during field work.

Production: Participants go for a walk and follow their agenda. Firstly, they look at the space through the perspective assigned to them and detect signs relevant to this perspective. Secondly, they make suggestions for change in the space that is needed in the framework of their perspective (improvement as they see it).

Presentation: Participants present their findings, they explain the perspective they were assigned to and present photos that illustrate it (projector needed).

Phase 6:**Debriefing (40 minutes)**

The group discusses the results of the fieldwork and the possible changes in the initial way of looking at the space (city, town, village, neighbourhood). They share what surprised them, what was new, if the workshop made them reject some of their outdated beliefs and how that happened. This part is meant to be an open forum with supporting questions from the trainer.

The group comes back to the notion of “propaganda” and looks again at the mind maps created in the beginning of the workshop. Participants then discuss the following issues:

1. Why might people, groups and societies want to counteract propaganda from the past?
2. Who can be active in this field?
3. How can individuals protect themselves from propaganda?

Depending on the group and relation of the group to the topic, participants might work on final questions in an open forum, in groups or in pairs. If needed, the trainer might point out (in relation to the above mentioned questions): 1 - advantages and difficulties; 2 - responsibilities of state, media, private institutions, individuals and others; 3 - attitudes, behaviour, specific actions.

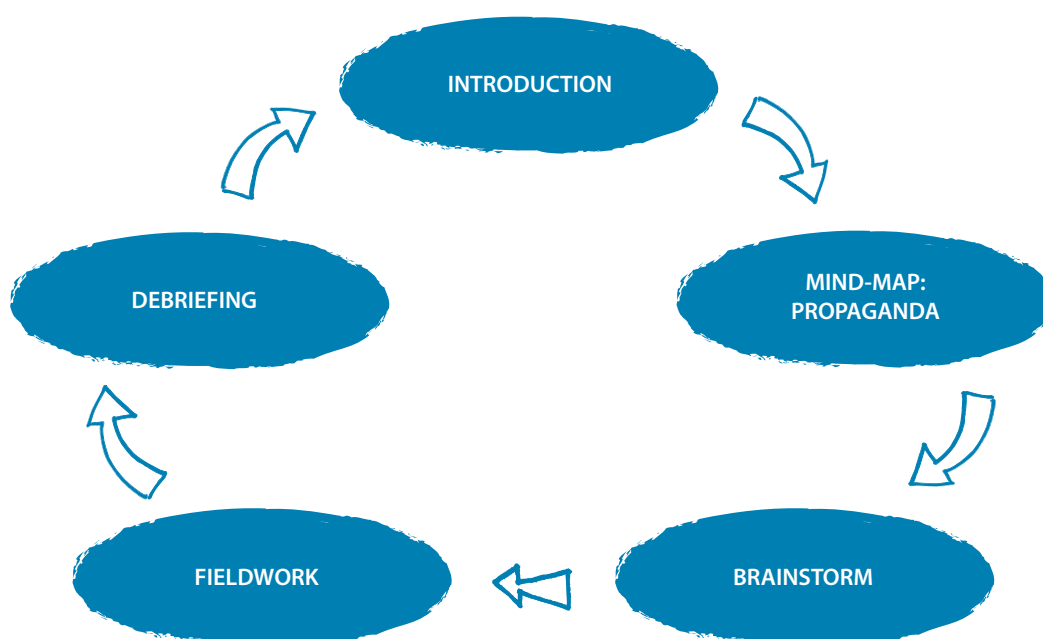
In the evaluation form, additional question might be added: “What can I do to protect myself from propaganda in my life?”

Variations

It is possible to apply the method in other contexts. The workshop can be adapted to facilitate dialogue and points of view sharing in the group; it can allow the expression of various narratives - dominant and marginalized ones - related to a space a group lives in (e.g. neighbourhood); it can be used to explain different experiences of local population and migrants, allowing marginalized narratives to be expressed and acknowledged. In this case, the trainer focuses on possible angles from which the neighbourhood can be seen.

Key words: group communication, dialogue, sharing perspectives, space, neighbourhood, migration, multiculturalism, migrants, refugees, neighborhood, community.

Workshop cycle and internal logic:



Introduction:

participants understand the theme of the workshop and the agenda

Mind-map:

they understand the notion of propaganda, dominant and marginalized narratives

Brainstorm:

various perspectives to look at space (town, city, neighbourhood) are identified

Fieldwork:

participants observe space through the lenses of assigned perspective (photos, notes)

Debriefing:

they learn new perspectives and acknowledge the change in their own

EXAMPLE OF THE WORKSHOP IMPLEMENTATION OF “BORDERS CHANGE, MEMORY STAYS” WITH A POLISH-GERMAN-GREEK GROUP OF ADULT PARTICIPANTS POLAND, KRZYŻOWA (KREISAU), OCTOBER 2015

Please, note: The collection of personal observations and opinions presented below do not reflect the full complexity of Krzyżowa, its history or present. This has never been the aim of the workshop. The material is neither an official statement of the Polish-German-Greek group, nor of the Krzyżowa Foundation for Mutual Understanding in Europe. This material aims to examine diversity of narratives and is an invitation for discussion.

Participants went for a walk in Krzyżowa, took pictures and made observations through the lenses of specific perspectives, namely: touristic view, development and economic growth, attitudes towards German heritage. They were also free to make comments on improvements in the given field of observation.

Perspective 1:

Touristic view (observed by a participant from Greece)



Walking in the village of Krzyżowa our team has found that there are a lot of interesting points with great historical significance such as the former residence of the von Moltke family, the so called house on the hill (nowadays owned by the Krzyżowa Foundation), the cemetery, the train station and some old houses. In the streets a visitor can find a lot of panels with information.

The International Youth Meeting Centre - Krzyżowa Foundation is very well preserved and does a great job. All the other historical sites are abandoned and there is a great need for renovation. A part of this the village is situated in

a picturesque valley with farms, a small river passing through, many different kinds of trees, plants and seeds.

Suggestions for improvement:

Our proposal is that the place should be used for environmental education providing walks, field visits and information about animals, plants and agriculture.

A leaflet or a small guide in the English language is a necessity.

Perspective 2:

Development and economic growth (Observed by a participant from Greece)



- The renovated building complex that belonged to the von Moltke's, that currently houses the Krzyżowa Foundation and the International Youth Centre.
- The House on the Hill, which is fully functional and open to visitors.
- The exhibition "Courage and Reconciliation".
- Recently constructed pedestrian streets and streetlights, at least in the central roads of the village.
- Multilingual signs directing to main points of interest around the area.
- Recently constructed short bridge and clearly marked road signs.
- Modern, renovated houses and new cars, at least in the central area.

Suggestions for further development:

- Restoration of the functional railway station.
- Denser lighting in the streets.

- Preservation of the von Moltke cemetery and the church close by.
- A mini-market and a food-bar facility, outside the von Moltke estate.
- Portable audio-guide devices, provided to tourists for a walk-through around the main historical sites of the area.

Perspective 3:

Poles suppressing German past (Observed by a participant from Poland)



Old, pre-war building in Krzyżowa.

After the Second World War, when Polish people have been transferred to Lower Silesia, there were many situations of fighting with German heritage. During our workshop I was wondering if Krzyżowa is an example of such phenomenon. As we were walking through Krzyżowa, it was clear to me that the Polish community didn't fight German heritage, although I noticed negligence. There was a building for sale and while it was not devastated on purpose it looked like there were no renovation works done since 1945. The same is true of the railway station in Krzyżowa. The station is still working but buildings around it look post-apocalyptic. My conclusion is that Poles don't fight German heritage, they just don't care about it.



Train station in Krzyżowa.



Perspective 4:

Poles trying to preserve German heritage (Observed by a participant from Poland)



The Krzyżowa foundation for mutual understanding in Europe (welcome sign in three languages: Polish, English and German).

Palace - part of former von Moltke family estate.



Pictures of Germans – members of anti-Nazi resistance group in the House on the Hill in Krzyżowa.



Tribute to Freya von Moltke – member of The Kreisau Circle, anti-Nazi resistance group, wife of Helmuth James von Moltke. Part of the “Courage and Reconciliation” exhibition prepared by the Polish History Museum in collaboration with the Krzyżowa Foundation for Mutual Understanding in Europe.



Old, well preserved building, close to the train station in Krzyżowa.



Signs showing the way to the cemetery hill in Krzyżowa in Polish, German and English.

Perspective 5:

Signs of German past - “German glasses” (Observed by a participant from Germany)

I tried to look at the village through “German glasses”, trying to detect German traces from the past which are still left or have been preserved. Unfortunately, there is not a lot to detect. We saw an old mill which still had a German sign. It seems as if the mill has not been in use for a long time so it is probable that people don't consider it worthwhile to renovate. Private houses didn't have any signs of German ancestry. The old German graveyard of the former nobility is still preserved though we haven't examined who is keeping it - whether it is the people of the village or the employees of the Kreisau estate. There were several street signs in Polish and German language guiding the way to the cemetery.

The train station has been built in German times, but it was not possible to detect any German traces. There were several run-down buildings around it, but no German signs to detect. At least a sign pointed out the history and historical sights of the area.

It is possible that knowing more about architecture allows one to see more traces, but I was more or less limited to look for language.



Old German mill. It is still possible to see the old German signs. Unfortunately, the building is depleted and has not been used a long time.



Red Cross' Container to collect clothes informing only about last 70 years of Red Cross assistance.



Modern signs in Polish and German language leading to the old cemetery



German grave of the old nobility which lived in Kreisau.



Sign at the train station in Polish, English and German explaining the sights and history of Kreisau.

Debriefing

The filed work has been followed by debriefing. Participants shared their findings (photos and observations) and discussed the way preconceptions define what people notice.