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**Living Together and Apart in Lubartów: a Microhistory of a Small Town in Poland,
1921–1944**

My doctoral research deals with the issue of the Jewish and non-Jewish relations in interwar Lubartów - a county town near Lublin in Poland with a population of over 6000 in 1921, where Jews and Catholics were the dominant groups - and its impact on the fate and behaviour of the town's inhabitants during the Second World War and the Shoah. Such a study will provide a better understanding of the patterns of actions in diverse communities confronted with events that undermines the social order. Although the microhistorical approach has been gaining popularity in Holocaust studies in the recent years, there are still few works that analyse the events of the Second World War and the Shoah from the perspective of the pre-war social structure of local communities.¹ A pre-war perspective makes it possible to identify continuities and discontinuities in interpersonal and intergroup relations, in administrative practices as well as in the socio-spatial order of the town, and thus to better understand the social dynamics in Lubartów during the war. The established chronological framework, 1921–1944, indicates the moment of returning to stabilisation after World War I and the Polish Soviet War, at one end, and the liberation of Lubartów in World War II, at the other end.

¹ The most recent are Agnieszka's Wierzcholska, *Nur Erinnerungen und Steine sind geblieben Leben und Sterben einer polnisch-jüdischen Stadt: Tarnów 1918–1945* (Brill Schönningh, 2022) and Omer's Bartov, *Anatomy of a Genocide: The Life and Death of a Town Called Buczacș* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2018).

SOURCES AND METHODOLOGY

Due to the variety of sources my research requires different approaches in the social sciences. I combine local administration records, police reports, testimonies, court files, photographs and maps using both quantitative and qualitative methods. In my practice I rely heavily on nominal sources, such as residents' registers transformed into datasets. Created databases enable to freely shift the scale of the analysis from groups to individuals and vice versa. They make it possible to recognise the social position of actors by embedding them in familial, professional or neighbourhood settings, and therefore to study interpersonal and intergroup relations. I study the divisions between social groups in Lubartów by using the method of prosopography. On what basis did groups form in Lubartów? How fundamental was the distinction between Jews and Catholics? What were the interdependencies and intersections between social categories in Lubartów? Also, the construction of groups, ethnic and confessional among others, needs to be considered. Were they coherent? What were the boundaries between Jews and non-Jews?

While I pay much attention to the categorisations and classifications from the period, the religious and national distinctions commonly used in the sources are often limiting and thus not always relevant to my analysis. I consider that ethnicity, a category widely used in Jewish studies, might be helpful in understanding how groups were formed in Lubartów. I advocate a contextualised approach to ethnicity, as well as to other forms of grouping.² Ethnic, national and religious affiliations were mobilised, internalized or imposed in a particular situation by specific actors in Lubartów (individuals, groups, institutions or the state). Therefore, I intend to use categories in a flexible manner that reflects my understanding of how they were used. Although, I focus on Jewish and non-Jewish contacts, in addition to ethnicity or religion, there

² Frederick Barth, "Introduction," in *Ethnic groups and boundaries. The social organization of culture difference*, ed. Frederick Barth (Bergen, 1969), p. 9–38; Rogers Brubaker, "Ethnicity without Groups," *European Journal of Sociology*, vol. 43, 2002, p. 163–189; "Beyond ethnicity," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 37, 2014, p. 804–808; Jonathan Okamura, "Situational Ethnicity," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 4, 1981, p. 452–465.

are other affiliations that should be taken into consideration, such as gender, class or profession, which broaden our understanding of how Lubartowians grouped.

Basic operations of quantitative analysis, like crossing the variables, crossing different databases and matching the individuals between the databases, make it possible to study spatial separation of Jews and non-Jews living in Lubartów or the ownership structure on the Market Square. Quantitative analysis also emphasizes and contextualizes cases that do not fit the general social patterns; in Lubartów, these are often cases that break the image of ethnic or confessional separation; like criminal collaboration or cases of Jews and Catholics sharing the same apartment. I believe these cases, as situated at the margins of the general social order, stretch our understanding of what is possible in Lubartów, and more broadly, in interwar Polish towns' communities. Although the scale of my observations is limited to Lubartów, a town in the central Poland, my research contributes in the broader historical debate about the Jewish non-Jewish relations in Poland and beyond, before and during the war. In order to achieve my goals, I adopt microhistorical approach that allows to place a close observation in the broader, national and transnational, contexts.

The microhistorical social approach has been used to study the occupied local societies, and also to integrate the non-Jewish local population into the investigation of the Shoah.³ Microscale perspective enables to bring closer the diversity of the motivations and actions of Jews and non-Jews. I consider the pre-war social structure as a critical factor for the response to the Shoah. My approach emphasises how pre-war multi-ethnic relations played their part in installing and maintaining the Nazi order and largely shaped the local social dynamics of the Shoah and the trajectory of the persecuted group. With regard to the study of the Market Square

³ Frank Bajohr, Andrea Löw (ed.), *The Holocaust and European Societies. Social Processes and Social Dynamics* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016) ; Claire Zalc, Tal Bruttmann (ed.), *Microhistories of the Holocaust* (New York: Berghann Books, 2017); Barbara Engelking, Jan Grabowski (ed.), *Dalej jest noc. Losy Żydów w wybranych powiatach okupowanej Polski*, vol. 1 and 2, (Warszawa: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, 2018).

spatial order, social topography offers a description of the mechanisms of persecutions and extermination in terms of the analysis of the space submitted by the perpetrators, showing that the segregation and persecution took place both in and through space.⁴ It also demonstrates the importance of residential trajectories and residential relations for understanding the persecutions.⁵

PART 1. LOCAL AUTHORITY

My research focuses on two specific areas, the local government and the Lubartów Market Square. With regard to the local government, I examine the electoral processes for the Town Council in interwar Lubartów and the administrative efforts to restrict the voting rights of Jews and to maintain the “Christian majority” in power. My research argues that preserving the Christian dominance in local government was at the core of the political agenda of much of the town’s Christian elite, and the thread of handing authority over to Jews, who outnumbered Christians in Lubartów until the late 1920s, served as a tool of an electoral mobilisation. In the interwar period the inhabitants of Lubartów voted only ones for the local authority, in 1927. In other cases, due to administrative measures and political pressure, only one list of candidates was accepted for the election. Therefore, only the election of 1927 can serve as a laboratory of how the citizens of Lubartów grouped themselves in the process of drawing up electoral lists and voting. By comparing electoral lists of candidates with other nominal sources, such as the register of residents or the register of organisations operating in Lubartów, one can understand how alliances were formed in Lubartów.

This comparison demonstrates the weakness of the party system in Lubartów. Instead of political parties, professional and interest groups, with varying degrees of party affiliation,

⁴ Tim Cole, *Holocaust City: The Making of a Jewish Ghetto* (New York/London, 2003).

⁵ Backouche Isabelle, Sarah Gensburger and Eric Le Bourhis, “Spoliation et voisinage. Le logement à Paris, 1943-1944,” *Histoire urbaine*, vol. 62, no. 1, 2022, p. 79–102.

played a decisive role. Without exception, all these groups operated along the ethno-religious lines. At the same time, the 1927 local elections in Lubartów showed that both Jews and Christians were internally divided. Despite the dispersion, resentments and conflicting ideologies within these two groups, no list emerged that crossed ethno-religious boundaries.

The way in which the local authority in Lubartów was appointed could be seen as an illustration of how a nationalising state operates at the local level. A nationalising state, according to Rogers Brubaker, is based on the belief in the existence of a “core nation”, defined in ethno-religious terms, which has an inherent exclusive right to the state.⁶ In Lubartów, these beliefs were shared by the local government institutions and officials, who mobilised the resources available to implement them. At no point can the electoral system in Lubartów be considered as equal and just. As a result, the distribution of power did not correspond to the ethno-religious composition of the population of Lubartów. Even in 1927, when all citizens of town were allowed to vote and lists of candidates were submitted without restriction, the election results were manipulated by administrative measures that increased the number of Christian voters shortly before the election. A study of the electoral process also sheds light on the attitude of the pro-government camp towards Jewish citizens after the 1926 coup d'état. Anti-Semitism and the emphasis on threat posed by Jews had already been the basis of the political strategies of this camp in Lubartów since 1927, and not, as is often claimed, since the first half of the 1930s. After gaining complete control over the institutions of power in Lubartów in the 1930s, the pro-government camp pushed for the complete political marginalisation of the Jews.

In order to learn whether municipal policies and the magistrate actions were shaped according to the distribution of power between Jews and Christians, I mobilise minutes of the meetings of the town council and the town board, as well as the records of the magistrate. The case study

⁶ Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (Cambridge, 1996).

concerns the social care, one of the basic areas of public resource management in Lubartów. I conclude that religious and ethnic divisions played a particular role in shaping the social care system and in aid distribution in interwar Lubartów, and that the financial and material benefits for the poorest residents as well as municipal subsidies to charities depended heavily on the balance of power in the local government. Jews who had little or no influence on the management of public resources, were discriminated against by exclusion from social care. My research demonstrates not only the role of religious and ethnic divisions as a persistent factor in shaping local policies, but also that religion and ethnicity determined the position of Lubartów's residents against the administrative apparatus.

The pre-war magistrate was retained during the war, the mayor and officials kept their position, however, in a strict dependence on the German supreme authorities. The study of the wartime magistrate focuses on the continuation – the links between the pre-war marginalisation of Jews in the local authorities as well as administrative discrimination, and the role of the local authorities in implementing segregationist policies and anti-Semitic measures during the war. In this regard, I examine the activities of the wartime magistrate that affected or even determined the fate of Jews in the period leading up to deportations to the death camps, such as the keeping of records of Jews and their property, the processing of applications from Jews who were forcibly expelled at the end of 1939, and the magistrate's measures against the typhus epidemic in the town in 1941 and 1942. Did the pre-war exclusion of Jews from the civic community make the local administration feel no responsibility for the Jewish inhabitants of Lubartów and facilitate the implementation of the anti-Semitic measures?

My research reveals the crucial role of the magistrate and the mayor in the communication between the superior authorities and the Lubartów Judenrat, as well as individual Jewish inhabitants: petitions from Jews flowed through the magistrate, the Judenrat submitted reports, lists, etc. to the magistrate. At the same time, the magistrate enforced orders from higher

authorities, and there is no doubt that it was involved in the introduction of anti-Semitic policies. Even if we assume that the magistrate had little room for manoeuvre, the question of the extent of its involvement in the persecution of the Jews remains open. I address this question by examining how top-down regulations were introduced in Lubartów and how the interests of Jewish town's residents were represented to higher authorities.

PART 2. LUBARTÓW MARKET SQUARE

The second part of my thesis is devoted to the Lubartów Market Square, the central area of Lubartów. I mobilise population and business registers in order to examine the residential and ownership structure of the Lubartów Market Square, as well as the distribution of commercial premises. My initial conclusion is that that the Market Square was internally divided and that spatial divisions overlap with social divisions. In terms of ethno-religious composition Rynek I Street turned out to be a place where Jews and Catholics lived and run business, Rynek II Street was a place where Jews lived but Jews and non-Jews run business, while Klitki I and II Streets created an exclusively Jewish enclave.

In order to study residential contacts between Jews and non-Jews, I pay particular attention to the Rynek I Street. Thanks to the complex characteristics of the residents provided by the registers, it is possible to address the question of the importance of ethnoreligious divisions for the residential contacts, as well as to see the internal differentiation of groups in which ethnic and religious identities intersect with other characteristics. My research argues that the patterns of segregation differed depending on the scale of analysis: from the level of the street and neighbouring buildings, through shared buildings to cases in which residential contacts were as close as sharing the same flat. In these three perspectives, the question of the forms of direct contact and the characteristics of the people who lived in close contact comes to the fore.

No less important for understanding the nature of social contacts in the Market Square is the reconstruction of the ownership structure, based on the records of the municipal administration records. The ownership of houses in the Market Square was fragmented and shared only within ethnoreligious groups. The majority of the flats were occupied by homeowners and their families, which severely limited the availability of flats for rent and thus the opportunities for contact between Catholic and Jewish tenants.

In addition, I perceive the pre-war Market Square as a place of trade and public gatherings for all inhabitants of Lubartów and people that living in the surrounding area. In the Market Square political and social activism centred and commercial interests mixed. It was a place that fostered all kinds of contacts, most importantly intrethnic and interreligious. In the case of trade, I am interested in the points of contact between Jews and non-Jews, both the contacts between shopkeepers and customers, as well as commercial cooperation and rivalry. The construction of the market halls on Rynek II Street, one of the biggest investments of the 1920s, had a major impact on a local trade. This large building, a sign of the modernising aspirations of Lubartów's elite, was opened in 1930 and served as the town's commercial centre. The market hall threatened the traditional forms of trade carried out by Jews and at the same time favoured the presence of Christian merchants in the Market Square. At the end of the 1930s. Lubartów's Market Square was becoming an increasingly conflictual space, with the growing interethnic tensions, where the nationalist rallies were held and the acts of physical violence against Jews took place.

Pre-war tensions are an important point of reference for the research on the wartime reorganisation of ownership and trade in the Market Square. The wartime registers record the implementation of anti-Semitic measures in the Market Square: expulsions, resettlements, deportations, takeovers. I mobilise nominal sources in order to better understand the nature of the changes in the residential, property and commercial structure of the Market Square. The

business register follows the process of replacing businesses run by Jews with enterprises owned by Christians. Similarly, the residents register traces the process of changing the tenants and eventually taking over apartments formerly occupied by Jews by Christians. With databases covering the prewar period it is possible, in most cases, to define the social position and life trajectory of those who participated in it. In this context, I also address the question of whether the Market Square still retained its pre-war functions despite the enormous social transformations and persecutions of its inhabitants? My research thus contributes to the discussion on the role of the Shoah in the process of economic and social advancement of local non-Jewish communities.⁷

My research also demonstrates the durability of the pre-war socio-spatial divisions of the Market Square and the role they played in the implementation of discriminatory policies and the ghettoization of Jews in Lubartów. During the first two and a half years of the war, the trajectories of the residents of the four streets of Market Square differed noticeably, depending on the pre-war models on segregation. The Jewish residents of the only mixed street, Rynek I, were more likely to flee at the beginning of the war and later to be forcibly displaced and relocated within the town. In contrast, the residents of the completely ethnoreligiously segregated Klitki streets, were less likely to be persecuted, which resulted in more than 50% of them staying in the same house at least until 1941. In examining the group and individual trajectories of Market Square residents, I consider the importance of certain characteristics, such as occupation or kinship, the prewar migration patterns and interethnic contacts.

⁷ Götz Aly, *Europe Against the Jews: 1880–1945* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2020); Leder Andrzej, *Prześlona rewolucja. Ćwiczenia z logiki historycznej* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, 2013).

PART 3. INDIVIDUAL TRAJECTORIES OF JEWS IN HIDING - THE ROLE OF CONTACTS IN ATTEMPTS TO SURVIVE

The final part of my dissertation examines the trajectories of Jews who went into hiding in Lubartów and its surroundings after the deportations. I mobilise post-war testimonies from the Lubartów Memorial Book, the Jewish Historical Commission, the USC Shoah Foundation and Yad Vashem as well as case files from post-war trials. Databases covering the interwar population of Lubartów, such as the residents register or business register, enable to address the question of the relationship between Jews in hiding in Lubartów and the non-Jews, and the role of prewar contacts in survival, as well as to identify common characteristics of Jews and non-Jews who maintained contacts during the war. Can one distinguish social patterns resulting from the pre-war experiences and positions of selected actors and groups? Or should the social history of the Shoah in Lubartów be seen as a collection of case studies?

I pay particular attention to the trajectories of Jewish converts from mixed marriages, which are particularly well documented. The nominal sources used by the wartime municipality shed light on administrative practices towards those who did not fit into simple ethnoreligious divisions. How did administrative categorisations affect the trajectories of Jewish converts? Could they help them avoid persecution in a reality where Jewish conversions and intermarriages were few? My research explores the entanglements between fluid administrative categorisations and public perceptions. In order to better understanding of war trajectories of Jewish converts and their families, I study them over a longer time horizon. In the confessionally segregated population of Lubartów, conversion and intermarriage were essential for integration into the Catholic environment. Whether and to what extent the pre-war social position and social contacts of Jewish converts played a role during the war?