



## INTERGENERATIONAL MEMORY AND THE IRON GATES DISPLACEMENTS: A SHORT THEORETICAL INTERVENTION

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***Abstract:** Memory is an integral part of an individual's cognition. Collective memory implies certain social dimensions which are represented by the verbal and written transfer of the historical and social events within a human community, as well as other elements represented by objects and places that, due to historical and social events, suffered significant changes for the community in question over time. The aim of the present article is to shortly link the theories of collective memory and transgenerational memory to the Iron Gates displacements, events which happened during communism in a period of strong industrialization process.*

***Key words:** memory, intergenerational memory, postmemory, communism, collective trauma*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

With the desire to economically develop Romania, the state led by the Romanian Communist Party imposed economic progress on all the industrial branches at that time, but the development of the steel industry was the central point of economic development. Thus, in order to evolve, the steel industry needed large-scale energy sources capable of supporting the steel industry and allowing it to operate at full capacity. So, the only inexhaustible resource that offered the steel industry such support to develop was water. By capturing water in lakes and by building hydrotechnical dams, the Romanian Communist Party created an energy source that was used both for industry and for the electrification of the country. The theory of collective and intergenerational memory was used to recall the events that took place during the construction of the Iron Gates I hydroelectric complex between 1966-1972 (Varan & Crețan, 2018). During this period, the inhabitants of the Danube urban and rural communities, namely: the town of Orsova, the villages: Coramnic, Tufari, Jupalnic, Eselnita, Ogradena Noua and Veche, Dubova, Tisovita, Plavisevita and Svinita were relocated (Crețan & Vesalon, 2017). Development-



induced displacement processes was therefore a process significant not only in post-communist Romania (see Vesalon & Crețan, 2012) but also in communist Romania.

On applying the two previously mentioned theories, we identified the way the resettlement took place, the tragic events that took place during the relocation (the demolition of houses by the inhabitants, the bombardment of the churches and buildings, the relocation of the cemeteries) and the relocation of the population to the new settlements reconstructed for the relocated population. Also, by applying these two theories, it is remarked that the traumatic memories of the displacement remained in the memory of the inhabitants even after its completion, and these memories were and still are passed on to future generations through intergenerational memory.

## **2. LINKING COLLECTIVE MEMORY AND INTERGENERATIONAL MEMORY TO THE IRON GATES DISPLACEMENTS**

Memory is an integral part of an individual's cognition. Memory helps individuals reproduce past events from their lives and contributes to the formation of the past and the present. In terms of memory, we as individuals have a private individual past or a collective and public past, which defines us as persons. This concept has been taken from psychology and transposed into domains such as sociology and geography. It highlights social phenomena or natural and anthropogenic hazards that lead to the population being affected in various forms. The collective memory has several definitions, which are applied according to the specific of the research data where it is found (Till, 2003; Hirst & Manier, 2008 Alderman, 1995; Hallbwachs, 1992). Collective memory supports the identity of a community and can make the social life of the affected inhabitants continue in a social and cultural communion (Till, 2003).

The intergenerational nature of the memory is correlated with the social trauma. Within a human community with a common tragic history, a number of past violent events last forever in the minds of every individual who has experienced them. These events are retold as rituals to all those who are interested in that tragic history (Tyner, Inwood & Alderman, 2014). Furthermore, when the symbols and the visualization practices of the past are contextualized in new connotations, their space policy also changes (Till & Kuusisto-Arponen, 2015). These tragic events in the life of a community are transmitted to future generations with the clear intent that these stories are not lost, and that young generations are aware of the nature of the events, the older community have gone through at one point. The term intergenerational memory was introduced in the specialty literature by Mannheim Karl (1970). According to the theorist, the members of a generation share certain feelings, emotions, etc. precisely because of the common destiny they share. However, Mannheim (1970) points out that a generation is merely a social creation. That is why each generation is different, as their lives have taken place in a different economic, social, cultural and political way, and they have influenced their cultural, social values, their attitudes and mainly their ideals in life. The remembrance of various events in the past of some human communities causes that these facts are passed on to future generations, thus in a certain period of time they are never forgotten. Aldous & Hill (1965) state that only through a continuity of transfer of social, cultural and traditional information from a generation to another, a community can survive. As far as our study is concerned, the situations and the causes that contributed to population deployment were remembered, narrated and retold to the young generation by those who

were directly involved in this phenomenon of relocation, a form also found at the memory analysis realized by Svob and Brown (2012). The most important memories are transmitted to the family, each of its members being involved in this process of transfer and reception of knowledge. The information is transferred from the elderly to the young, thus inducing a desire to continue this process to future generations (Trommsdorff, 2009). Parents are directly involved in informing children about different phenomena, processes, events that have taken place in the past of their family or community. Trommsdorff (2009) calls this process a "*vertical transfer of information*" from parents to children, that is, children receive information in a direct way without being altered by others (p.126). Parents and grandparents too are the ones who stimulate the need of the child to pass on the information, and hence the desire to present the facts of the past to the human community and to highlight those facts. With the transfer of events in the past of the group, the cultural and traditional values that are important to each human community are transferred, as each individual identifies their traditional and cultural belonging within this group. Aldous and Hill (1965) stress that "*without the strong social bonds between parents and children, the younger generation will dispel its normative heritage and thus a loss of these values will occur*" (p. 473).

It is of utmost importance that collective trauma can have profound effects between generations through survivors who narrate the trauma. Marianne Hirsch (2008) refers to "postmemory", which may be particularly influential in intergenerational transfer of trauma. Hirsch (2008) emphasizes that "*postmemoria best describes the relationship of surviving children of a cultural or collective trauma, with their parents' experiences, stories and images with which the children have grown up*" (p. 16). The impact of a trauma will not only affect the generation that was victimized, but also the next generation. Danieli (1998) suggested that the trauma would be passed on as a family legacy, even if the survivors either spoke about or said nothing about the deeds experienced by them in a certain time and space. Theories focused on multigenerational transfer highlight two distinct processes: family development and family pattern; and the events and processes of the actual memory (Böszörményi-Nagy & Spark, 1973; Bowen, 1978; Williamson, 1982). Family patterns are developed through the projection process, both within the emotional system of the family and over generations. In a study prospectively related, Böszörményi-Nagy & Ulrich (1981) argued that emotional problems are developed and transferred through loyalty, especially due to family members.

The case of the relocation of certain populations requires adaptation to the new built location and the adoption of new social and economic values. By retelling the experiences of the displacement we have identified some critical moments the displaced inhabitants underwent: the announcement of the displacement, the destruction of the dwellings, the flooding of the settlements and the relocation of the population (for more details see Varan & Crețan, 2018). Undergoing these critical moments by the inhabitants was a painful experience that left a strong trauma on the human communities on the Danube embankment. By passing on the events through generations within the analyzed space, the young generation received information about the most important family events directly from their elders.

### 3. CONCLUSIONS

The desideratum of the Romanian Communist state at that time was to develop itself economically, based on economic megaprojects, and thus the Romanian state created processes of forced displacement of the population. Due to the internal economic policy of the Romanian Communist state, the population to be deployed was subjected to a forced migration process, and the reconstruction of the human settlements and the relocation of the population to the new sites was a long, difficult and painful process. Such processes have remained impregnated in the collective memory, in the form of local trauma.

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