Local Memory of Tragedy amidst a War of Memories:

A Case Study of the 2nd of May Events in Odesa, Ukraine

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How do individual and collective memory regarding the 2nd of May events in Odesa interact?

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Summary

The present thesis addresses the local memory of the 2nd of May events in Odesa, Ukraine, a culmination of fights between supporters and opponents of the Maidan government that obtained power in February 2014. The respective street clashes in Odesa killed six individuals, while 42 lost their lives in a fire in the Trade Union Building. At the surface, these clashes were a contraposition between groupings favoring a Ukrainian nationalistic vector and their opponents desiring pro-Russian policies. However, the local element of these clashes seems to transcend this binary approach. Situated in memory theory, the present thesis addresses the way the memory of these events among Odesans fits into the spectrum spanned by a pro-Ukrainian and a pro-Russian frame of interpreting history. Through a month of field work, during which 41 semi-structured interviews were conducted with Odesans, the thesis answers the central research question: "How do individual and collective memory regarding the 2nd of May events in Odesa interact?".

The thesis identifies four narratives regarding the 2nd of May events: a pro-Ukrainian, an 'old-Odesan', an apolitical, and a pro-Russian narrative. Analysis of these narratives provides the following conclusions. Firstly, the use of history as an argument to explain for the present varied widely. Some built their perception of the present events on analogies to events dating to World War II, while others situate their memory more in relation to contemporary events. Secondly, the absence of an authoritative source of information regarding the 2nd of May events is identified, leading to a construction of the interviewees' memory on personal accounts and hearsays from others. This has resulted in wildly divergent accounts and theories of what happened on the respective day. Thirdly, the specific character of the 2nd of May events, which consisted of two largely disjunct sets of events, is argued to facilitate the inclusion of narratives regarding these events into coherent storylines for both conflicting sides. Fourthly, the different layers of identification that are expressed through the different narratives are analyzed. It is argued that shared belief systems account for shared memories in a more overarching way than membership of specific social groups does. The negotiation of the city of Odesa throughout the different narratives is analyzed in a closing argument.

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Introduction

The 2nd of May 2014 brought to the attention of the world a city classically known as the bathing city of the former Soviet Union: Odesa. Namely, as opponents and supporters of the government that resulted from the protests in Kyiv earlier that year clashed in the city center, six people died and hundreds received injuries. However, the worst was yet to come. A group of opponents of the new government sought refuge in the Trade Union Building, which lit fire during an exchange of Molotov cocktails thrown by both sides. 42 officially died as a result of this fire.

In the years following the tragedy, the view on this Trade Union Building was blocked by a wall of iron sheets. As opposed to the state-authorized commemoration of the *Nebesna Sotnya* that had died during the clashes with governmental forces in Kyiv, here the deceased had to do with provisional commemoration signs, poems, and pictures. This contrast in the official processing of the memory of two events with high numbers of casualties, within the same country and within the same year, leads one to wonder how personal and local memory is affected by developments at the level of collectives and the state.

The current conflict in Ukraine contains a clear element in which the history of the country is actively negotiated. Supporters of the Maidan protests generally promote a view of the country's history that distances it from the years of what is perceived as Russian and Soviet occupation. This is countered by individuals viewing the years under Russian rule more favorably and denouncing Ukrainian nationalism. It is of great interest to see how the memories of more recent decisive moments in Ukrainian history fit into this '"war of memories" (Kappeler, 2014, p. 115). The events in 2013-2014 in Kyiv are an obvious example, viewed positively and qualified as a revolution by its supporters, but considered a coup d'état by its opponents. The events in Odesa provide a more interesting case, as these events seem at first sight difficult to fit into a mobilizing anthem for the Ukrainian nation.

The present thesis concerns this case of the 2nd of May events in Odesa. Situated in a spectrum spanned by a pro-Ukrainian and a pro-Russian frame of interpreting history, it seeks to address the memory of this tragedy among individuals in Odesa. Is the juxtaposition of two dominant and contradictory frames of interpretation a valid framework of studying the local memory of this tragedy, or are other factors specific to the local context of dire relevance? Through a month of field work conducted in the summer of 2019, consisting of semi-structured interviews with Odesans, I have sought to address the way the memory of these individuals is shaped by, fits into or falls outside of memories held by wider groups, so-called collective memory. Accordingly, the central research question addressed by this thesis is "How do individual and collective memory regarding the 2nd of May events in Odesa interact?".

In order to answer this question, the remainder of this thesis consists of the following parts. Firstly, a review of relevant literature relating to the interaction between individual and collective memory is presented. Secondly, a description of the developments in Ukraine and Odesa in 2013-2014 is provided, culminating in the 2nd of May events in Odesa. In the same chapter, two possibly dominant sources of information regarding these events are discussed: the official criminal investigation and the investigative work of journalists united in the '2nd of May Group'. Chapter 3 introduces the pro-Ukrainian and pro-Russian frames and some examples of the discussion of the 2nd of May events in media and statements by politicians through these frames.

Then, the thesis proceeds to discuss the novel empirical work conducted in Odesa, the methodology of which is discussed in chapter 4. Subsequently, the contents of 41 interviews are condensed into four narratives regarding the events that prevailed. In chapter 6, these narratives are analyzed along the literature discussed in chapter 1, under continuous reference to the information provided in chapters 2 and 3. This leads to five points of analysis, which are elaborated in chapter 7, followed by a conclusion to the present thesis.

1. Literature Review

In the present chapter, a selection of literature regarding memory that is found relevant to this thesis is discussed. Firstly, basic definitions and understandings regarding memory are summarized, differentiating between individual and collective memory. Then, theory relating to the interaction between individual and collective memory, which is central to the research question of the present thesis, is presented. In this context, politics of memory, or the organization and manipulation of collective memory to serve political ends, are introduced. Finally, the chapter considers the interaction between individual and collective memory from a different stance, as more agency is attributed to the individual in the conscious or subconscious selection of narratives and frames.

Individual and collective memory

"Memory, the capacity for conserving certain information, refers first of all to a group of psychic functions that allow us to actualize past impressions or information that we represent to ourselves as past" (Le Goff, 1996, p. 51). In this definition, the interpretation of memory is that of a capacity of an individual. Psychic functions, which are inherently individual, are posed as the main instruments for the conservation and manipulation of impressions and information from the past. Moreover, the reference to "what we *represent to ourselves* as the past" permits space for recollections of the past to diverge from the set of events as they actually occurred. In this interpretation, individual memory serves as a factor distinguishing different members of a society and is a defining factor for the position individuals assume in this same society (Hodgkin & Redstone, 2003). As the autobiographic memory held by an individual is one of the constituting elements of one's identity, the *self* and memory are inherently linked (Conway, 2005).

Part of contemporary literature, however, argues that individual memory is largely dependent on the social environment one lives in. This thesis has been popularized in the works of Maurice Halbwachs (1992). The author argues that the social groups one is part of and the surroundings one lives in shape the content and form the frames of reference for one's memory. This logically implies that part of individual memory is shared with other members of a social group, suggesting the existence of a *collective memory*.

Assmann and Czaplicka further elaborate the term collective memory by differentiating between communicative and cultural memory (1995). *Communicative memory* is the memory shaped and transferred through everyday communication between group members and is argued to be the main mechanism of memory development and consolidation on the short term. Here, the transfer of memory occurs through means as storytelling by eyewitnesses, conversations, and news media. *Cultural memory*, which is engrained in the cultural practices and traditions of a social group, is distinct from communicative memory. Such cultural memory of elements that are quintessential to the formation of a social group is "maintained through cultural formation and institutional communication" (Assmann & Czaplicka, 1995, p. 129). This conception of cultural memory forms the basis of *des lieux de mémoire* ('sites of memory'), both physical and intangible objects through which collective memory transcends generations, a term coined by Pierre Nora (1989).

Regarding the concept of collective memory, disagreement exists as to what extent we can speak of a memory *of* the group, or that we should speak rather of memory *in* the group (Bartlett & Kintsch, 1995). In the former case, a social group, such as a nation, is often treated in analogy to a large organism that, like the individual, builds its perception of itself largely on a shared memory of the past. This view tends to pay attention to attempted manipulations of memory through political institutions and media, and how shared representations of the past guide developments of social groups in the present (Huyssen, 2000; Le Goff, 1996). On the other hand, memory *in* the group admits individuals as members of social groups. In accordance, such individuals

share characteristics, interests, and belief systems (Bartlett & Kintsch, 1995). This allows for the overlap of memory between members of a same social group. However, this view denies the existence of one collective memory as such.

Politics of memory - from collective to individual memory

In the following section, the political value and application of memory is considered. Firstly, different positions in academia on memory with respect to the field of history are discussed. Hereafter, literature relating to the use of memory as a political instrument is summarized. The inclusion of this section into the present literature review builds on the argument that *politics of memory* can be interpreted as the attempted manipulation of individual memory through the organization of a collective memory. Thus, it is an integral part to the research question of the present thesis.

The concept of memory is often proposed as an alternative, or even opposite, to history (Nora, 1989). According to Nora, history is the "reconstruction [..] of what is no longer" (1989, p. 8). History, while subject to analysis and criticism, tends to make claims to universal authority. On the other hand, memory is presented as fluid, actual; the justification of the now through that what is remembered of the past. Hodgkin and Radstone argue that memory floats in a spectrum between fantasy and history (2003). Accordingly, memory is subject to manipulation by both the *other*, through past events that are or are not presented and highlighted to individuals, as well as by the *beholder*. Let us refer to the conscious manipulation of memory by the *other* as politics of memory, the topic of the present section. Manipulation by the *beholder* is the topic of the subsequent section.

While critics of the academic field of history, such as Nora, share an appeal to memory over history on the basis of memory's lower tendency to a single truth, this is met with opposition. Hodgkin and Radstone, for example, argue that substituting memory for history implies "the displacing of analysis by empathy, of politics by sentiment" (2003, p. 6). Accordingly, we are at risk of discounting the influence of politics on the formation of memory in favor of sentimental, personal interpretations. The political influences on memory formation actually might be equally important.

The respective evaluation of memory as a politicized concept resonates with part of the literature. Wertsch argues that social groups presuppose memory (2008), which is a reversal of Halbwach's classical argument that collective memory is shaped by the characteristics of a societal group, and collective memory thus presupposes a social group (1992). Collective memory, a representation of the past shared by a social group through narratives, both spoken and written, is in this argument essential to the association and maintenance of communities (Wertsch, 2008). The selection and subsequent framing of certain events subject to narration provide a tool for members of a group to unify the group and differentiate the group from other social groups. The creation and promotion of official narratives through politics of memory is therefore in the interest of national governments (Wertsch, 2008).

According to Poole, the respective manipulation of collective memory is not an attempt to "represent the past, but a process in which a certain past is constructed" (2008, p. 157). Social groups that are in disagreement with this reconstructed past can use alternative narratives to consolidate and conserve the collective (Hodgkin and Radstone, 2003). In the absence of political access, memory can be transferred and conserved through communal practices, storytelling and other intangible means (Halbwachs, 1992; Assman & Caplicka, 1995). Groups with high levels of political access, on the other hand, can use this access as an instrument to shape public memory, for example by shaping the content of school textbooks, through media, and advocating or opposing the erection of monuments (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000; Nora, 1989). Such aspirations can clash with the ambitions of authorities to create a single, official narrative regarding disputed

events. In line with the above disposition, the plurality of dominant narratives regarding an event can be expected to correlate with the plurality of a nation's political and media landscape.

Narrative and frame selection - from individual to collective memory

The dichotomy between collective and individual memory is a persistent one within the interdisciplinary field of memory studies (Olick, 1999). Partly dependent on an author's background, the two forms of memory are appointed different weights. For example, when emphasizing the role of politicians, institutions, and cultural media in the shaping of collective memory, individual memory can appear to follow as a mere product of the conscious framing by politicians and media (Huyssen, 2000; Poole, 2008). The workings of such mechanisms were outlined in the above section. On the other hand, one can adopt an approach centered on the individual's mind, which consciously or unconsciously prefers one narrative over the other (Mahr & Csibra, 2018; Conway, 2005). Accordingly, it is of interest to consider if we can find explanations for the correspondence or divergence between narratives regarding the same event by different individuals.

A useful distinction to explain the selectivity of memory is that between *coherence* and *correspondence* (Conway, 2005). Coherence in this context concerns the encoding of chains of events in order to "make memory consistent with an individual's current goals, self-images, and self-beliefs" (Conway, 2005, p. 595). Thus, in order to increase the perceived coherence of memory regarding a specific event, or the mutual coherence of memories regarding several events, facts that violate this coherence can be purposefully or subconsciously left out of the space of active memory. This description is similar to the concept of *confirmation bias*, the tendency of an individual to interpret and filter information in order to confirm one's world view and prior beliefs (Plouse, 1993). Thus, the tendency to pursue coherent storylines can go at the cost of correspondence of a memory to the actual set of events (Conway, 2005). Accordingly, there is competition between the coherence and correspondence of memory.

Furthering this notion of coherence, Van Vree theorizes the functioning of frames in relation to memory (2013). A frame is understood as "a social, discursive place, in an open narrative structure, that gives [memories] shape and meaning" (Van Vree, 2013, p. 7). Fitting a narrative into a certain frame thus implies increasing the coherence of the respective narrative with regard to a wider perception of the world around us. Such frames are likely to be developed and fed by the public discourse, as produced through political institutions and mass media (Smith, 2006).

As Van Vree explains, "frames create meaning, by ordering and excluding information and experiences" (2013, p. 7). In doing so, they influence both perception and communication, acting as mental filters (Van Vree, 2013). In line with this idea of filtering, dominant public discourses tend to validate a certain set of practices and performances, while undermining other, alternative ideas (Smith, 2006). The memory of an individual can be seen as linking into a given set of frames, or narrative structures, that follow from public discourse. If no appropriate frame exists, for example when an event clashes with the perceptions of a benevolent in-group and a malevolent out-group, the respective event can be part of an *absent memory,* defined as a memory that has no place in the public discourse at a specific moment in time (Van Vree, 2013).

In line with the above disposition, let us provide two definitions that will be central to the rest of this work. Namely, a specific narrative, in short *narrative*, is a storyline with a clear beginning and end relating to an isolated event (Wertsch, 2008). Such specific narratives are argued to be shaped by *frames*, or schematic narrative templates, which correspond to "abstract forms of narrative representation [that] typically shape several specific narratives" (Wertsch, 2008, p. 120). A frame, in this interpretation, fixes the distribution of roles over the relevant parties and can be freely interpreted as a grid that colors separate events subject to

memory. Moreover, the act of framing is here considered as the fitting of a specific narrative to an existing frame.

To summarize the literature presented in this last section, we can interpret the step from individual to collective memory as one in which the selection of elements and manners of narration result from the urge of an individual to maintain and reinforce a certain perception of reality. In this perspective, memory serves as an instrument for an individual to make sense of the present through the past (Poole, 2008). Accordingly, individuals are expected to, consciously or subconsciously, choose to believe one storyline of an event over others. This instrumentality of memory as a sense-making mechanism to the individual is opposed to the literature presented in the preceding section, in which mechanisms were described through which individual memory is manipulated by the organization of collective memory. It is of interest to consider how these different approaches compete with or complement each other in the case study presented in the present thesis.

2. Maidan and the 2nd of May Events

In the above overview of literature relating to individual and collective memory, the relevant theoretical concepts for the remainder of this thesis have been introduced. I seek to apply the presented concepts on the interaction between individual and collective memory to a case study of the 2nd of May events in Odesa. In the present chapter, an overview is presented of the general political context in Ukraine and Odesa in the years 2013-2014 and the place of the 2nd of May events in this context. Hereafter, the chapter describes two investigations into the 2nd of May events, namely the official criminal investigation and an investigation initiated by a group of journalists united under the name '2nd of May Group'. One of the interests taken into the empirical part of this research is to evaluate the competition between various sources of information. It has been argued that the step from individual to collective memory can be interpreted as the linking into general narrative schemes, possibly violating the correspondence to information an individual is presented with. In the empirical part of the present research, it will thus be considered how the official criminal investigations and works of the 2nd of May group compete with other sources of information regarding the events.

Maidan and its consequences: the context of conflict in Ukraine

On February 22nd, 2014, the world observed the culmination of protests in Kyiv in the ousting of Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych. Over the span of three months, protests on the city's central square, *Maidan Nezalezhnosti* ('Independence Square'), had grown in size to several hundreds of thousands of protesters (Onuch, 2014). In other cities, smaller though sizeable protests occurred as well. Nominally in response to Yanukovych' postponing to sign an Association Agreement with the European Union in November 2013, the protests were an expression of, amongst other factors, dissatisfaction with high levels of corruption, Ukraine's pro-Russian vector, as well as nationalist sentiments (Onuch, 2014; Ishchenko, 2016). Accordingly, the mix of protesters ranged from common citizens tired by decades of corruption, to cosmopolitans desiring integration into Europe, to right-wing nationalists. In the week leading up to February 22nd, clashes between protesters and government forces had resulted in the deaths of over 100 protesters, as well as of members of the security forces (Onuch, 2014). As a result, Yanukovych fled the country and what remained of Ukraine's national parliament voted in favor of holding presidential elections on May 25th (Shveda & Park, 2016).

The interim-government was met with resistance mostly in the Southern and Eastern parts of Ukraine, historically more prone to support Russia and the ousted government (Way, 2014). Whereas supporters of the turnover referred to the change of power as a 'Revolution of Dignity' or 'Euromaidan', its opponents considered it an ousting of a democratically elected president through a coup d'état (Onuch, 2014; Voronin et al., 2015). Calls from these regions for federalization of Ukraine were amplified by the national parliament's move to cancel a law that had granted the right to use minority languages in schools, governmental institutions, and courts in areas of which more than 10 % of the population was constituted by a respective national minority (Saluschev, 2014). This decision by the parliament would later be vetoed by interim president Turchynov. Exploiting this context of turmoil, Russia annexed the Crimea, the peninsula to which it argued to hold a historical claim, in the beginning of March (Mankoff, 2014).

A March 16 referendum on entrance of the peninsula into the body of the Russian Federation formed a premise for separatists in the Eastern regions of Ukraine to claim the right to self-determination and demand a referendum on the independence of their respective regions (Giuliano, 2015). Governmental buildings in the cities of Donetsk, Luhansk, and Sloviansk were occupied in the beginning of April, and in each of the respective places a 'People's Republic' (*Narodnaya Respublika)* was proclaimed. As an ultimatum for the respective groupings to leave the governmental buildings was not met, the Ukrainian military was deployed on 15 April,

2014, the start of military actions that have not ended more than five years later, as the present thesis is written (Giuliano, 2015).

Figure 1: A Google Earth view of the city center of Odesa with places mentioned in the course of events indicated (by the author). From Soborna Plosha to Kulikove Pole is about 3 km, a 30-40 minutes' walk.

Maidan in Odesa

As the protests on Kyiv's *Maidan Nezalezhnosti* started, sympathizers gathered in Odesa. The Maidan-movement in Odesa was met with resistance by the local administration, for example through the removal of a small camp pitched up in parallel to the start of protests in Kyiv by the end of November 2013 (Dibrov, 2019). Over the following weeks, protests continued in the form of meetings near the monument to Duke Richelieu, at the top of Odesa's famous Potemkin's stairs (see figure 1), with participant numbers never exceeding some hundreds (Dibrov, 2019).

As the protests in Kyiv intensified in February 2014, rising numbers of Maidan-supporters ('pro-Maidanists') attended meetings near the monument to Duke Richelieu, while opposition to the Maidan movement ('anti-Maidanists') organized its own manifestations. These manifestations remained mostly non-violent, although attacks by masked men on pro-Maidanists have been registered (2nd of May Group, 2016A). Logically, the ousting of Yanukovych on February 22, a definitive shift of the balance of power towards the Maidan-supporters at a national level, implicated the start of a new phase in the local conflict in Odesa.

The respective 'Russian spring' led to the seizure of governmental buildings by anti-Maidan protesters and violent confrontations with pro-Maidanists in other southern and eastern cities. However, in Odesa the actions of both sides were at times mutually coordinated and lines of communication were present (Dibrov, 2019). For example, by the end of February both sides issued a joint call for the local administrations to organize a re-election of the city executive committee (2nd of May Group, 2016A). In the beginning of March, a permanent encampment of opponents of the Maidan movement was pitched up on *Kulykove Pole*, a large open place next to Odesa's central train station with the Trade Union Building (*Dom Profsojuzov)* facing it. Here, opposition to an 'unconstitutional' change of government was expressed and calls for the federalization of Ukraine were made, often against a backdrop of Russian flags and Soviet symbols (Council of Europe, 2015).

On the 3rd of March, anti-Maidanists gathered at the Odesa Regional Council and demanded a referendum concerning the special status for Odesa region to be organized (2nd of May Group, 2016A). At the subsequent session, the deputies dismissed such a referendum (Dibrov, 2019). These deputies, mostly local businessmen likely to take political decisions serving their financial interests, rejected a scenario as was simultaneously developing in the East of Ukraine (Richardson, 2019).

Over the following weeks, daily meetings in support of Maidan near the Duke-monument and the permanent encampment at Kulykove Pole continued, while marches organized by both sides drew thousands of participants (2nd of May Group, 2016A). Towards the end of April, pro-Maidanists had erected block posts around Odesa to check transportation, claiming to want to block the advent of individuals that could agitate the situation in the city. Moreover, the encampment at Kulykove Pole grew shy in finance, drawing lower numbers of participants and donors, and the local authorities desired to clear the square for the celebrations of Victory Day on the 9th of May (Dibrov, 2019).

The 2nd of May events

Against this backdrop, on the 2nd of May Odesa's football team Chernomorets played against Kharkiv. Before this match supporters from both sides organized a march 'for the Unity of Ukraine' (2nd of May Group, 2016A). In this march, football supporters from Odesa and Kharkiv were joined by pro-Maidanists that had participated in meetings at the Duke-monument, as well as by other Odesans and Maidan-veterans from Kyiv (2nd of May Group, 2016B). As during other marches and manifestations, a group called *Samooborona* ('Self-defense') and the local branch of the far-right organization *Prawi Sektor* ('Right Sector') were armed, claiming to provide protection to the march (Dibrov, 2019). Gathering at a central square in Odesa's touristic center, *Soborna Plosha* ('Cathedral Square'), the march was supposed to head towards the football stadium of Chernomorets at the other side of the city.

Given the shifting balance of power in the city and finances falling short to maintain the Kulykove Pole encampment, a deal had reportedly been struck between part of the anti-Maidanists and local administrators (2nd of May Group, 2016B). Namely, the anti-Maidanists would move their encampment to a memorial field some 10 kilometers out of the city center, for which they would receive a sum of money (reportedly the then equivalent of 50000 USD) (Dibrov, 2019). Accordingly, part of the encampment was moved to this field in the days leading up to the 2nd of May. On the night of the 2nd of May, the remainders of the encampment on Kulykove Pole were supposed to be removed by unidentified nationalists, providing the anti-Maidanists with a favorable picture in which they were the victims of violent nationalists (Council of Europe, 2015). However, this willingness to strike a deal with the local authorities was met with resistance from part of the anti-Maidanists (2nd of May Group, 2016B)

In this context, a call was made on social media to prevent the passing of the march of nationalists through the city center (Dibrov, 2019). Notwithstanding being outnumbered by participants in the pro-Ukrainian march with about 2000 against no more than 300, part of the anti-Maidanists moved into the city in a stated attempt to block the march. This reportedly came as a surprise to the police, which anticipated the course of events as agreed upon in the deal struck with the other anti-Maidanists (Dibrov, 2019). Accordingly, the police force was understaffed in the city center and mostly deployed to the football stadium. This police force did not succeed in redirecting the route of the anti-Maidanists away from the march, resulting in the first violent clashes of the 2nd of May.

Imagery of these clashes shows that, from both sides, there was both organized and spontaneous involvement (2nd of May Group, 2016B). Organized in the sense that there was an abundance of body armor, spontaneous in the sense that most of the artillery used consisted of cobble stones that were taken from the pavement and

broken into throwable pieces. However, at some point there is the recorded appearance of a figure, identified under the nickname Botsman, that appears to shoot with a Kalashnikov from amongst the anti-Maidanists (2nd of May Group, 2016B). Here, the first death of the 2nd of May clashes is reported, among the ranks of the pro-Maidanists, reportedly due to one of the bullets shot by this Botsman.

After this first casualty among the pro-Maidan protesters the fights escalated, bringing in Molotov cocktails and fire arms from the pro-Maidan side (Dibrov, 2019). Accordingly, four anti-Maidanists were killed by fire arms during the street clashes, as well as another pro-Maidanist. Hundreds received injuries. As the anti-Maidanists retreated, many of the pro-Maidan supporters headed into the direction of the Kulykove Pole (see figure 2). Here, anti-Maidanists who had not been involved in the clashes in the city center were present as well. While others made their way of the square, part of the anti-Maidanists sought to use materials of the encampment to barricade themselves into the Trade Union Building. Following the arrival of the pro-Maidanists at the square, remainders of the camp were lit on fire. Moreover, video material shows Molotov cocktails being thrown and fire arms being used both towards the Trade Union Building and from the top floors of the building the building onto the square (2nd of May Group, 2016B). Both sides accuse each other in having thrown the Molotovs that caused the fire inside the building.

Figure 2: A view of the wide and open Kulykove Pole, overseen by the Trade Union Building, in July 2019, shot by author

Video material of the spreading fire shows various actions by pro-Maidanists (2nd of May Group, 2016B). Some continued to throw Molotovs and shoot with rifles, while others started using leftovers of the encampment to build their way towards anti-Maidanists that were stuck on higher floors in the building. In the meantime, while the city's fire department received several calls to send firetrucks and its station was located nearby the building, it took well over 40 minutes for the first trucks to arrive (2nd of May Group, 2016B). This was enough time for 32 anti-Maidanists to die directly from harm inflicted by the fire, whereas 10 others died in desperate attempts to jump from the burning building. These are the causes of death as officially reported (Council of Europe, 2015). As the fire had ceased, pro-Maidanists entered the building in the search for survivors. Some survivors were reportedly hit and molested, although none would die as the direct result of this inflicted harm.

Criminal investigation

In the days following the 2nd of May, the streets around Soborna Plosha and the Trade Union Building at the Kulykove Pole were crucial crime scenes of the respective events. However, as opposed to preserving the possible evidence around Soborna Plosha, the scene was cleaned and rid of this evidence (Council of Europe, 2015). On the other side of the city, the Trade Union Building was open to public for weeks following the tragedy. This provides grounds to doubt any piece of evidence that was provided. Moreover, there was very limited time and staff to study the corpses in the physical context in which the tragedies occurred, the Trade Union Building (Dibrov, 2019; 2nd of May Group, 2016B). Only in the morgue, proper autopsies were reportedly performed.

During the clashes in the city center, a group of 21 was taken into refuge by the police into the Afin shopping mall (Council of Europe, 2015). After they had been identified, they were released from the building. A second group of 63 anti-Maidanists was arrested after having been evacuated from the Trade Union building during and following the fire. After having spent two days in detention, a mob stormed the police station in which this group was detained and demanded its release from detention. The Head of the Regional Public Order Police, Dmytro Fuchedzhi, did so. For this reason, and the fact that many videos show him cooperating rather intensively with the anti-Maidanists during the clashes, Fuchedzhi subsequently fled to Transnistria (Dibrov, 2019).

The 21 anti-Maidanists that were detained in the shopping mall have been charged in a criminal case, an appeal of which was ongoing in the summer of 2019. One of these men has collaborated as a crown witness with the prosecutor and given testimonies against the others, in exchange for which his charges were reduced in severity. In an interview I conducted with the lawyer of one of the defendants, he described how the case had been transferred from court to court, in seeming attempts to stretch the case as long as possible (Maksim, 2019). The defendants considered the testimonies by the crown witness vague and inconsistent, which was confirmed in a verdict by the judge rejecting the respective pieces of evidence. The lawyer described how in the early stage of the lawsuit, extreme right formations had pressured the courts hearing the case in order to prevent the release of the defendants on bail. This pressure had diminished as the respective groups “did not find this case interesting any longer” (Maksim, 2019).

Meanwhile, some of the defendants had spent years in jail on the basis of vague charges, whereas more high-profile subjects from both sides remained of the radar. For example, Botsman, the anti-Maidanist suspected of shooting and having caused the first death of a *Prawi Sektor* member, has fled Ukraine the day after the events (Dumskaya, 2015). On the other hand, Sergiy Khodiiak, who is suspected of having killed at least one anti-Maidanist and wounded several others with a hunting rifle, has been freed of charges (Council of Europe, 2015). Moreover, no pro-Maidanists have been charged for the clashes around the Trade Union Building.

The judicial process regarding these events has been criticized by the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine for being “biased, ineffective, [and] politically motivated” (2019, p.1). Critiques address the fact that the only lasting investigation was focused on the group of 21 anti-Maidanists under a general indictment, without direct evidence of individuals in this group being responsible for injuries or casualties inflicted on the other side. Moreover, there has been no accountability for the death of five in the city center and the 42 in the Trade Union Building (UN, 2019, p3). In the lightest qualification, we can suggest that this incomplete and stretched investigation is the result of subversion to pressure exerted by nationalist groupings like the *Prawi Sektor* (Dumskaya, 2016; Maksim, 2019). However, the one-sided focus in the indictments of the Ukrainian Prosecutor General regarding the 2nd of May events also provide reason to suspect the process of being politically motivated (UN, 2019).

Investigation panel '2nd of May Group'

Shortly after the 2nd of May events, following some early signs that the official criminal investigation into the events was unlikely to be satisfactory, a group of Odesans with varying political backgrounds gathered in an investigative panel, the 2nd of May Group (2nd of May Group, n.d.). A core of journalists, that presents its work as apolitical, non-ideological, and independent, was joined by a fire arm specialist, a fire specialist, and others with technical expertise required to investigate the respective events. Photographic and video material of the events, which was abundantly present, could be sent in through their website.

The main product of this group is a timeline of the events leading up to and during the 2nd of May (2nd of May Group, 2016A; 2nd of May Group, 2016B). Through this timeline the group seeks to provide a narrative not only of the developments on the day itself, but also to sketch the local context in which these occurred. This timeline is extensively presented in written form, accompanied by video material, on their website, as well as in a documentary of about one hour made available through various channels. Added to this work is a report of various lawsuits, official investigations into the events, which evaluates the inactivity of the judiciary rather negatively.

The aggregate of these materials, as presented on the group's website, is impressive in its minute coverage of the events. In an interview I conducted with one of the group's leading journalists, Sergiy Dibrov (2019), the journalist described how he attended all meetings and marches organized by both camps and he provided a livestream throughout all stages of the clashes of the 2nd of May. Accordingly, he, as well as his colleagues, had highly detailed information regarding the involved figureheads of both sides and their actions on this day. However, when his colleague was invited for a hearing by detectives that were part of the criminal investigation into the 2nd of May events some half year after the events, all questions he was asked implied to be dealing with a participant of Kulykove Pole and addressed his supposed participation at the encampment there. An offer to share with the detectives the information and insights into the events that the journalist did possess was declined.

Dibrov provided this as an example of the limited effort of the official investigation to interact with the efforts of the 2nd of May Group. Moreover, when the group published its extensive timeline of the events, the Prosecutor General did not adopt this information in order to further its investigations, neither denounced its contents, but it merely posted a link on its official media outlets (Dibrov, 2019). This ambiguous dealing with information that directly challenges the official investigations into the matters is likely to add to confusion regarding the events and provides space for alternative narratives to develop.

While the investigation conducted by the 2nd of May group has thus had little influence on the judicial process into the matter, the thorough and balanced provision of information by this group is excellent for individuals who look to base their view on the respective events on an extensive collection of information from a relatively unbiased perspective. For example, it served as one of my main references to compose the timeline of the 2nd of May events presented above. Moreover, international organizations and academic authors often build a large part of their reporting on the case on materials provided by the group or individual members of the group, e.g. (Council of Europe, 2015; UN, 2019; Richardson, 2019). In the empirical part of the present thesis, it will be of interest if the materials presented by the 2nd of May Group are an important source of information in the formation of memory among the interviewees, or if other sources prevail.

3. Dominant Frames: pro-Ukrainian and pro-Russian

The (re)negotiation of Ukraine's past has formed an important element of the development of a Ukrainian nation to fit the state that was established in 1991 (Wolczuk, 2000). However, this has been far from a monotonous process and often events and persons that are initially proposed in favor of the Ukrainian nation are adopted by its opponents and used to delegitimize the respective nation. The central role played by conflicting memories in the recent conflict in Ukraine have led some to refer to a "war of memories" (Kappeler, 2014, p. 115).

The present thesis situates the local memory of the 2nd of May events in Odesa in this supposed war of memories, a spectrum spanned by a pro-Ukrainian and a pro-Russian frame. Memory theory argues that the availability of frames can greatly shape what is remembered and how so, while the conscious or subconscious urge towards coherence in memory can lead to the manipulation of information subject to memory (Van Vree, 2013; Conway, 2005). Frames, basic cognitive structures that guide our perception and interpretation of the world around us, "create meaning, by ordering and excluding information and experience" (Van Vree, 2013, p. 7). Such frames tend to confirm certain belief systems and values, generally serving to present to oneself the past as a coherent chain of events.

Accordingly, it will be of interest to see how the pro-Ukrainian and pro-Russian frames reflect on the Odesan local scale, as well as if there are different frames to be identified. Thus, the two frames will now be discussed. Moreover, exemplary media reports and statements from Ukrainian and Russian politicians and public figures regarding the 2nd of May events in Odesa are presented in order to sketch how the two frames serve to give divergent interpretations of the same events.

Pro-Ukrainian frame

The intensified projection of a Ukrainian nation that has occurred since 1991 has involved a renegotiating of the past as a central element. Dormant under more pro-Russian presidents, memory politics took a flight under the 'Orange Presidents' Yushenko and Poroshenko. For example, a museum and monument were established in Kyiv under Yushenko's auspices in light of the 75th anniversary of the Holodomor, the 1932-'33 famine in Ukraine believed to be orchestrated by the Soviets (Portnov, 2013). Poroshenko enacted legislative efforts under the denominator of *decommunization laws,* effectuating the removal of communist monuments and the change of street and place names, which were passed in 2015 (Liubarets, 2016). Moreover, the use of Soviet symbolism, such as the ribbon of Saint George of or the USSR emblem, has been prohibited.

The pro-Ukrainian frame alludes to Ukraine as a nation that has long aspired to establish its respective state. In this frame, the Russians, as well as other nations such as the Poles, are projected as persistently denying the Ukrainian nation in this aspiration, Accordingly, periods and persons in history that gave rise to hope for the formation of a Ukrainian state are glorified and actively commemorated. The most notable of these persons is arguably Stepan Bandera (Portnov, 2013). He was engaged in guerrilla warfare against the Nazi's, Poles, and Soviets with the Ukraine Insurgent Army (UIA) (Marples, 2016). The UIA has been accused of collaboration with the Nazi's, in efforts that can in the most favorable case be interpreted as the opportunistic selection of allies to pursue their objective of an independent Ukrainian state. Moreover, the UIA has been held responsible for the ethnic cleansing of Poles living on the territory of their aspired Ukrainian state. These issues have been reason for opponents of Ukrainian nationalists to associate the glorification of Bandera with fascism and use the term *banderovets* as a synonym for (Ukrainian) fascist (Portnov, 2013).

As a more recent landmark in the history of Ukraine, the Maidan events have themselves been propagated as a *lieu de memoire* by the political elites that they brought to power (Liubarets, 2016). The commemoration of

the *Nebesna Sotnya,* the 'heavenly battalion' of about 100 that died during the clashes in Kyiv, has become a tool to underline the official narrative regarding the events. In this narrative, the former government, led by Yanukovych, assumes the role of the perennial villain, an agent of Moscow suppressing the aspirations of the Ukrainian nation. Commemoration projects are numerous (Liubarets, 2016). 43 streets in 28 different Ukrainian towns had been renamed in honor of the *Nebesna Sotnya* by 2015. State-sanctioned memorials to the victims have sprung up across the country, the 20th of February has become an official anniversary of the Euromaidan, and the construction of a museum complex dedicated to the 'Revolution of Dignity' is underway in Kyiv.

2nd of May in a pro-Ukrainian frame

Although at times, dependent on the audience and context, pro-Ukrainian politicians have been reluctant to recall the 2nd of May events, there are plenty of statements to identify a pro-Ukrainian frame regarding these events. Generally, such statements tend to frame activities of the anti-Maidanists as separatist and aimed at pursuing a scenario similar to the Donbass and/or Crimea, for Odesa to break away from the Ukrainian state. Accordingly, the 2nd of May is framed as putting a stop to these Russia-backed aspirations and retaining Odesa in the Ukrainian state.

Former President of Ukraine, Petro Poroshenko, for example, stated the following in a speech in Odesa (News Front, 2018):

> "Ukraine and Odesa payed a high price for peace. Everything would have been different if we did not stop the separatists on the 2nd of May in Odesa [….] In Russian mass media, Odesa is called a city of *banderovtsi*. For me, there could be no bigger compliment."

In this statement, Poroshenko links into the disputed frame of *banderovtsi* as defendants of the Ukrainian nation. This in its turn has provoked critiques in Russia-favored media, proposing this statement as evidence that the fire was a government-initiated war crime (News Front, 2018).

Part of Ukrainian media reports of the 2nd of May events exploited rumors aimed at indicating a Russian hand in orchestration of the events. For example, pictures of Russian and Transnistrian passports with rumors that 15 Russians and 5 Transnistrians had died in the Trade Union building surfaced on the web (TSN, 2014). These pictures were quickly revealed as stemming from a completely different news article. In reality, only two of the lethal victims have been identified to be from Transnistria, so non-Ukrainian. Other articles propose quotes confirming the perception of the 2nd of May as a "victory over the Russian spring" as it had developed in other separatist regions (Opinionua, 2019). Some go as far as controversially branding the 2nd of May "victory day". The yearly memorial at Kulykove Pole, at which black balloons are let in the air as a sign of morn, is countered by provocateurs releasing red balloons, the color of victory (Opinionua, 2019; 5 Kanal, 2019).

A scan of more mainstream media suggests that these do not adhere to as extreme a narrative. For example, an article by 5 Kanal, owned by Poroshenko, describes the event as "mass disorders in Odesa" when "pro-Russian activists attacked a peaceful march for a united Ukraine" (5 Kanal, 2019). An article on the news site run by Dmitry Gordon, a famous and influential media personality in Ukraine, refers to clashes "between patriotically minded citizens and pro-Russian separatists" (Gordon, 2019). Here, as well as in the article by 5 Kanal, emphasis is put on the anti-Maidanists being heavily armed and the first casualties falling among the ranks of the pro-Maidanists during clashes provoked by the anti-Maidanists.

Pro-Russian frame

The histories of Ukraine and Russia are undeniably linked (Kappeler, 2014; Grebennik, 2013). The western regions of Ukraine have a history, until they became part of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic during and in the aftermath of World War II, as part of (predecessors of) Poland, Hungary, Romania, and the Ottoman Empire. On the other hand, the central, southern, and eastern regions of the country became part of the Russian Empire no later than the end of the 18th century. Accelerated by active policies of relocation, this shared history led to a high percentage of ethnic Russians living in the country, predominantly in cities of the Central and Eastern part of Ukraine, as well as the Russian language being the first language to even higher numbers of citizens of the newly independent country by 1991 (Grenoble, 2003).

The fact that a large minority of Ukraine's population is ethnically Russian and an even bigger part is Russian-speaking feeds allusions to very significant parts of Ukraine as part of the so-called *Russkiy Mir* ('Russian World'), a frame claiming a cultural and ethnical unity of 'the Russians' transcending the borders of today's Russian Federation (Radin & Reach, 2017). Naturally, allusions to a *Russkiy Mir* fare well under the exploitation of certain views on Ukraine and Russia's shared history (Kappeler, 2014). One can think of the presentation of the Russian Orthodox Church as the only official heir of Kyiv Rus', a loose congregation of East-Slavic and Finnish people in the 9th to 13th centuries that was baptized in 988 (Ponomariov, 2019). This is quite contrary to recent developments towards an independent Ukrainian Orthodox Church as promoted by Poroshenko (Shestopalets, 2019). Moreover, the Soviet army is depicted as Ukraine's savior from fascism during the Second World War (Kappeler, 2014). Accordingly, recent moves to ban the use of Soviet symbols are handily interpreted as an expression of sympathy for the fascists. The idealization of controversial figures like Stepan Bandera only adds to this narrative disposing of Ukrainian nationalists as fascists (Marples, 2006).

It is rather easy to frame Odesa as a Russian city (Richardson, 2005). Founded in 1794 by a decree of Russian empress Catherine the Great, the city grew through trade as a part of the Russian Empire, benefiting from its favorable position at the Black See (Skvirskaya & Hemfry, 2007). To its mythical status of a free, multicultural city was added when the city received the status of 'Heroic City' (*Gorod Geroj*) after its occupation by the Germans in World War II. One of the Soviets favorite holiday destinations, Odesa did not cease to attract visitors from Russia and other parts of the former Soviet Union after it became part of an independent Ukraine (Skvirskaya & Hemfry, 2007). As in most parts of Ukraine, the fact that most people speak Russian on a daily basis, whereas only a minority self-identifies as Russian, leaves a situation sufficiently opaque to ground claims to Odesa from both the Ukrainian and Russian side.

2nd of May in a pro-Russian frame

In Russian media coverage of the 2nd of May events, collective memory regarding World War II was exploited to engender an emotional response to the events in Odesa. A recurrent qualification of the events was that of a *Odeska Khatyn* ('Odesan Khatyn') (Bondar, 2015). This refers to an event in 1943 in the Belarussian village Khatyn, during which 149 of its inhabitants were either burnt or shot by a battalion commanded by Germans, as a reprisal for a trap erected by partisans in close proximity to the village (Rudling, 2012). The level of involvement of Ukrainians, who undisputedly formed part of this battalion, is subject of debate. In the Soviet narrative of the event, Ukrainians are allotted a central role in the massacre as they are described as having blindly followed their German masters (Rudling, 2012). Although similar atrocities were committed in 600 Belarussian towns and villages, the erection of a grand memorial complex in the place where Khatyn was located and regular memorial ceremonies arguably contributed to this being a well-known event in most former Soviet countries' collective memory of World War II (Rudling, 2012).

The acclaimed parallel to the 2nd of May events in Odesa when using the term *Odeska Khatyn* is evident: Ukrainian nationalists, through the brute-force of fire, annihilate dozens of harmless people that resisted a fascist invasion of their habitat. The respective frame is extremely persistent in Russian media and news articles (Bondar, 2015; Balinskiy, 2016). The comparison was made by Lukashenko, President of Belarus, where Khatyn is located, as he stated "we remember Khatyn, when several villages in Belarus were burnt by fascists for the same reason [as in Odesa]" (RIA, 2014). Whole tv-episodes, under titles such as "investigation into Odeska Khatyn" were dedicated to 'independent' investigations of the events, for example (Vremja Pokazhet, 2018; PolitRussia, 2015).

The framing of *Odeska Khatyn* builds on a collective memory that is likely to be held in countries such as Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine, and is relatively absent in for example 'the West'. Inspection of news articles published by Russia Today, a news outlet financed by the Russian government and mostly aimed at a non-Russian speaking audience, provides a narrative that is less reliant on a collective memory. For example, an article is headed "Odessa massacre probe drags on 3 years after over 40 anti-coup activists burnt alive in Ukrainian city" (Russia Today, 2017). In English publications, the term Odessa Massacre has substituted for *Odeska Khatyn*. In this narrative, "pro-Kiev radicals" or "nationalists" are stated to have committed the "worst act of violence against civilians in the Ukrainian port city since the massacres of World War II" (Russia Today, 2017). No mention is made of victims on the side of pro-Maidanists and the attack on the camp is isolated from the clashes that occurred in the city center before.

4. Interview Methodology

The central research question of the present thesis is as follows: "How do individual and collective memory regarding the 2nd of May events in Odesa interact?" This work builds on existing literature, as presented in chapter 1, relating individual and collective memory. Here, it has been argued that we can consider the respective interaction as a bidirectional mechanism, as schematically presented in figure 3. Firstly, politics of memory were qualified as the (attempted) manipulation of individual memory through the organization of collective memory. Media, the academic field of history, and political institutions can serve as intermediates to develop and feed certain frames of memory considered favorable for the social group they seek to foster. In accordance with this argument, chapter 3 presents two dominant frames, a pro-Ukrainian and a pro-Russian frame, and provides examples of media reports and statements by politicians regarding the 2nd of May events that link into the respective two frames.

Secondly, the arrow from individual to collective memory is described as the conscious or subconscious selection of specific narratives and frames. Here, an interesting distinction is that between *coherence* and *correspondence* (Conway, 2005). The former relates to the perceived coherence within a narrative of an event and between a narrative and a broader frame. The expected manipulation of one's memory to pursue such coherence is argued to compete with the correspondence of individual memory to the available information regarding this event. In line with this argument, chapter 2 provided two sources of information, although possibly erroneous, regarding the 2nd of May events.

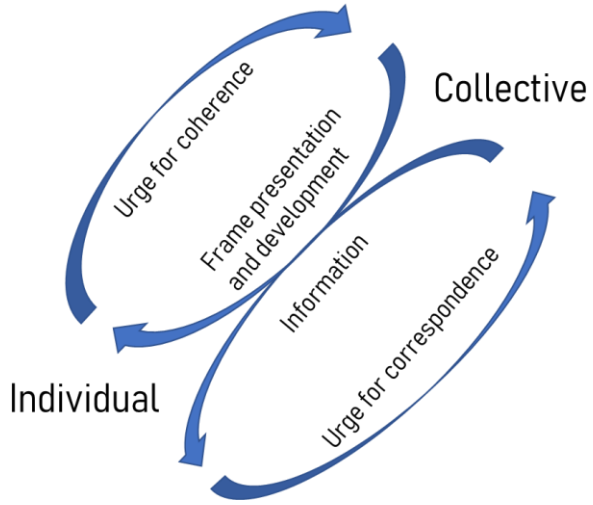

Figure 3: Schema of the interaction between individual and collective memory as discussed in the text above (author's creation).

As the building blocks that were *a priori* regarded most relevant to the formation of memory regarding the 2nd of May events in Odesa have been presented, it is now time to proceed with the empirical section of the present thesis. This empirical section investigates how the respective building blocks come together at a local scale and if there are any elements typical to the local environment that have been left out from this initial consideration.

The novel empirical research presented in this thesis consists of 41 conversations conducted during a month-long stay in Odesa in the summer of 2019. For a log of the interviews, see Appendix A1. The vast majority of these conversations exceeded the length of half an hour. The length of this part of the interviews enabled me to depart from, while not being limited by, a set of questions addressing the following factors. Firstly, questions related to the 2nd of May events, the involved parties, their motivations, and the responsibility for

these events. Secondly, factual questions were asked, relating to the numbers and causes of casualties, perceived identities of the participants, and the like. Lastly, a set of attitude questions addressing the current political situation in Ukraine, the Maidan-events, and the history of Odesa and Ukraine served to situate the interviewees' narrative of the 2nd of May events in a wider context of beliefs. A list of questions that formed the basis of these interviews is presented in Appendix A2. It should be emphasized that not all of these questions were asked to all interviewees and often the interviews naturally departed from this list of questions.

A smaller fraction of the conversations (P1,P6,P8,P11,P12,P23,P24,P29,P31,P33,P39) occurred on a more casual basis and accordingly were less extensive and structured than the interviews described above. These included interactions with passers-by on the street, employees in stores etc. Here, the main question aimed at deriving a description of the 2nd of May events. This part of the interviews served to see if the respective narrative would fit the set of narratives that were outlined on the basis of the more extensive interviews and served less to identify relations between supporting a narrative and wider belief systems held by these interviewees.

The purpose of the conducted interviews was to reveal the local narratives regarding the 2nd of May events in Odesa and situate these narratives in the spectrum spanned by the two dominant narratives, a pro-Ukrainian and a pro-Russian, as outlined in chapter 3. This objective does not include a quantitative element, i.e. approximating which part of the population supports which narrative. Accordingly, I strived to achieve *topic saturation*, a point after which the addition of new data does not provide the interviewer with new insights regarding the topic (Blee & Taylor, 2002). In the context of my research, I considered this to be the point at which I could safely say that each new interview largely fit one of the general narratives that I had identified on the basis of earlier interviews. This qualitative approach could form the basis of future quantitative endeavors, for example by basing the content of questions in a questionnaire on the outcomes of these interviews.

The sampling adopted in this work is a combination of deliberate sampling, serving to establish the general narratives, and non-deliberate sampling, serving to check if the narrative in the respective interview fits these earlier established narratives. The deliberate sampling targeted individuals who were involved in the events, as well as individuals which I expected to adhere to a certain narrative on for example the basis of some demographic factor (P9,P10,P14,P15,P16,P18,P19,P20,P27,P32,P34,P37,P38). In the non-deliberate sampling, despite the small sample size, I sought to target people diverse in demographical factors such as age and social class (as superficially perceived from their appearance).

This non-deliberate sampling occurred mostly in public places, most notably the Starobazarny Garden Square, and in the likes of contacts made in everyday life. Accordingly, I want in no way to create the illusion that my sampling in this part of the research was random, as the locus of selection of interviewees was biased to public places in the city center. In this setting, my approach would simply be to ask people if they could tell me something about the 2nd of May events. Some were willing or even eager to talk, while others rejected a conversation. Of course, this willingness to talk is a limiting variable of the method assumed in this work. Namely, those unwilling to talk might actually hold the most interesting memories. However, these memories are impossible to access without the investment of amounts of time that would expand the scope of the present research. A telling encounter to illustrate this is the following. As I approached a woman at the Starobazarnyi Garden Square and asked about the 2nd of May events, she answered that she did not want to talk about that topic, but that she "believed it was a right decision". What decision? Why did she think so? This seemed impossible to find out without investment in a personal relationship with the respective interviewee.

In retrospect I can say that after 25 out of the total of 41 interactions, the general narratives as presented below had been established. The remainder of the interviews enriched the description of these narratives and provided more material on the basis of which to situate these narratives. In chapter 5, the respective

narratives regarding the 2nd of May events are described. In chapter 6, these narratives are analyzed and compared on the basis of other information acquired during the interviews and the literature relating individual and collective memory through narrative and frame selection as discussed in the literature review of this thesis.

5. Narrative Formulation

Narrative 1 (pro-Ukrainian): Russian attack on peaceful march

The first narrative of the 2nd of May events in Odesa describes these events as an escalation due to an attack from the anti-Maidanists, 'pro-Russians', on a peaceful march for the unity of Ukraine. This narrative was omnipresent amongst those who directly participated on the pro-Maidan side (P18,P19,P20,P32,P34,P37,P38), as well as among some interviewees in the non-deliberately selected part of my sample (P17,P26,P28).

Storytelling by the respective interviewees generally departed from the events in Kyiv, in what they referred to as the Revolution of Dignity or Maidan. The acts of support in Odesa are described as small scale, improvised actions based on a revolutionary spirit, which met with a lot of resistance from the local administration and little to none media attention in a local media spectrum dominated by Russia-favored politicians and businessman. The fact that their counterparts were allowed a permanent encampment at the Kulykove Pole by the authorities motivated further actions in Odesa after the central government in Kyiv switched sides.

When asked about the motivations and demands of their opponents on the Kulykove Pole, which officially concerned the status of Russian as an official regional language and the federalization of Ukraine, interviewees generally dismissed these as cover-ups for desires to violate Ukraine's territorial and constitutional integrity. Here, reference to the developments in Crimea and the Eastern parts of the country often served to justify this interpretation. Moreover, the appearance of Russian flags in the respective rallies, as well as slogans explicitly mentioning Putin and Russia, added to these beliefs.

The encampment at Kulykove Pole was by the respective interviewees described with a lot of disdain towards the participants yonder. Descriptions ranged from "hypnotized grandmothers wiggling to Russian music" (P20) to homeless and drunks, which came to the square enticed by nostalgia for the Soviet Union, warm food and drinks, and shelter. As victims of Russian propaganda that lacked the intellect to critically evaluate the omnipresent Russian propaganda, the Russia-favored part of the Odesan population was described in a way as to delegitimize their political demands. Moreover, the organization of this Russia-favored majority into a camp as was observed on the Kulykove Pole required external influences, such as finance from Moscow. Namely, as one of the interviewees put it, the respective people lacked the required organizational will and capacity and "were satisfied when they had beer and a television to watch" (P26).

On the other hand, those supporting the Maidan movement received a favorable qualification. Small scaled, but acting from a revolutionary spirit, this movement was joined by football supporters from Kharkiv and 'Maidan-veterans' from Kyiv for a peaceful march for the unity of Ukraine on the 2nd of May. However, according to these interviewees, the vast majority of the participants in this march were Odesans. The armed and organized part of this march, in the likes of *Samooborona* and the *Prawi Sektor*, were qualified as self-defense.

The fact that violence occurred on the respective day was anticipated by some but came as a surprise to other participants. For example, interviewee Ivan (P19), who at the time of the events was the head of the *Prawi Sektor* in Odesa, described how a fight was widely anticipated by both sides, but that the first use of fire arms by the anti-Maidanists escalated the fights in a way he never desired. When asked for his relations and communication with the anti-Maidanists in the days preceding the 2nd of May, he described a situation on the evening of the evening of the 1st of May. Celebrating Ivan's 18th birthday, his group entered a bar where some leaders of the anti-Maidanists where seated. In an atmosphere of suspense, "since we could tear down this place", the leader of the anti-Maidanists approached Ivan and congratulated him with his birthday. Telling him to enjoy his evening, he made it clear that they would fight the following day.

This anecdote contrasts sharply with what interviewee Natalia (P20), an artist, described to me. As she neared Soborna Plosha with her friend, two other women asked them if they came prepared. In answer to Natalia's question as to what they should be prepared for, one of the women showed a rolling pin hidden in her purse, while the other pulled out a little hammer. Natalia described how she followed the escalation of the fights in the city center, due to a deliberate attack by the anti-Maidanists, thinking that the march would continue towards the football stadium after these fights stopped. Joining the procession, she only later realized that they were headed for Kulykove Pole. When I asked her if she never felt like leaving the place of the clashes, she rejected this idea. Imagine coming home, she said, and finding out Odesa was now part of Russia.

Although the anticipation of violence differed per interviewee, all shared the opinion that the escalation of violence was due to the use of disproportionate violence by the anti-Maidanists. In their accounts of the events, the focus was put on the events in the city center, often departing from a wider justification of the Maidan movement in Odesa in the political context of the time. On the other hand, the move to the Kulykove Pole resulted from a desire to avenge the attack on their side by tearing down the encampment there. The fire in the Trade Union Building was, implicitly or explicitly, described as the undesired result of an unfortunate chain of coincidences. Moreover, none of the interviewees referred to the deal struck with the authorities and the anti-Maidanists for the Ukrainian nationalists to tear down the encampment.

Some of the respective interviewees suspected the 2nd of May events as being the result of a planned provocation by Russia (P17,P34,P37). Here, the argument was that an escalation of events in Odesa could serve as a pretext for Putin to intervene. Rumors were of anti-Maidanists saying "we need blood in Odesa" (P37). These interviewees did usually not provide concrete evidence for such direct Russian involvement. However, when asked for the events in the Trade Union Building, one of them claimed that here a lethal gas had been placed by the FSB, the Russian secret service (P17). To support this claim, she referred to rumors on the use of a lethal gas in the Nord-Ost hostage drama in Moscow in 2002. Such claims were refuted by other participants (P18,P19), who stated they had no reason or base of evidence to believe such rumors.

In description of their understanding of the history of Odesa and its place in current day Ukraine, interviewees provided explanations for the apparent 'Russian-ness' of the city as the result of deliberate and non-deliberate policies under the Russian empire and the Soviet Union. For example, references are made to the import of Russians into the area and the relocation of the original (Ukrainian) population (P17). Moreover, the status of the Ukrainian language was perceived to be low and the status of Russian as the official language of both subsequent political empires was presented as an explanation of the current dominance of Russian in the city (P26). In line with this argument, policies of Ukrainization as pursued by Maidan politicians, notably the Ukrainian language law, are evaluated positively and a necessary reaction to decades of perceived Russification.

Narrative 2 ('old-Odesan'): West-Ukrainian attack on 'our' Odesa

The next narrative interprets the 2nd of May events in Odesa as a planned escalation to serve the interests of Ukrainian nationalists that seized power through a coup d'ètat (P1,P3,P4,P5,P9,P10, P14,P15,P22,P27). This new regime consisted of a group of Western Ukrainian politicians which pursues a type of nationalism that the respective interviewees often classified as fascist. The qualification of the toppled regime, headed by Viktor Yanukovych, was not univocally positive. However, the fact that he was democratically elected was used as an argument to support the event's qualification as a coup. Accordingly, interviewees stated or implied that their position was more one of being against the new regime than one in support of the toppled regime.

This qualification of the new regime as a foreign element in Odesa came forward well in an argumentation provided by a salesman on the touristic market at Soborna Plosha (P10). Asked for the use of the Odesan flag, next to the Ukrainian flag, at a small memorial to the two killed pro-Maidanists, he said that this was an abuse of the Odesan flag. Then, after finding out that I am from the Netherlands, he asked me what I would feel like when a German would come into my house and told me only to speak German from then one. From this argumentation, it was clear that he considered the new government an element for which there was no place in the city of Odesa. Such negotiation of the identity of Odesa was something that persisted in this narrative.

The Maidan political elites, in this narrative, pursued a type of Ukrainian nationalism that these interviewees did not support. However, they often continued to express their appreciation for Ukraine and state that they did not desire Odesa to become part of Russia. A taxi driver, whom I asked about the events, stated that he was also a patriot, loved Ukraine, but not in the way "those Western Ukrainians" did (P1). A woman (P9) selling paintings, also at the Soborna Plosha, gave a telling interpretation of the concept *Russkiy Mir* when this came up in an animated conversation. Whereas the term is generally understood as Russian World, a reference to the sociocultural entity supposedly formed by ethnic Russians around the world, she interpreted the word *Mir* in its alternative meaning, as 'peace'. This led her to respond: "Russian peace, American peace, I do not care where it comes from, as long as we have peace". Accordingly, if existent at all, preferences for Russia were generally not explicitly articulated.

The anti-Maidanists, in line with this interpretation of the events, were often referred to as defendants of the city, regular Odesans who resisted the take-over of power by an extremist clan, but did not pursue a Crimea-like scenario in Odesa. To serve this thought, the context of the respective protests, at the time of the annexation of Crimea, was generally left out of consideration by the interviewees. Moreover, the appearance of Russian flags and slogans involving Russia during rallies at the Kulykove Pole was downplayed. Three librarians, a colleague of which I found out had died in the Trade Union Building, stated that this colleague had been at the Kulykove Pole as she "wanted a better future for her child" (P3,P4,P5). One of the defendants in the case against the anti-Maidanists complained that anything that is not in line with "Ukrainian Integral Nationalism", an ideology he argued is best summarized by the slogan "Ukraine for the Ukrainians", is disposed of as pro-Russian in the current political context (P27).

Maidan-supporters were frequently classified as paid non-Odesans organized to serve the interests of the new central government. But, as several interviewees stated, there were also Odesans amongst them, since also "Odesa has its share of idiots" (P14). The events in the city center were in this narrative the result of a manipulated effort by Western-Ukrainian nationalists to escalate the situation. Without much specification or evidence, this argument often included the name of Andriy Parubiy, a former Maidan combatant who would later serve as speaker of the Verkhovna Rada under Poroshenko, as an organizer (P14,P22).

The use of violence from the side of the anti-Maidanists was downplayed, neglected, or talks about shooting by the anti-Maidanists were dismissed as being staged by the other side (P14). The casualties in the Trade Union Building in this narrative were the result of a fire, whereas the interviewees did generally not give the impression that they thought the respective casualties were premeditated by those involved.

In this narrative, a lot of skepticism regarding the central and local administration pertained. For example, when asked about the number of casualties, the interviewees would often be able to reproduce the official number of 48 deaths, under the side note that "that is the official number" (P22), or "they say it's 48, but I believe it is more" (P3,P4,P5,P9). Figure 4 illustrates this distrust. Skepticism towards the legal investigation into the events was high, since interviewees thought it unlikely for those who organized these clashes themselves to pursue a trial into these clashes.

Figure 4: A list of lethal victims on the fence along the Trade Union Building, capped by the sentence "The true number of killed on 2 May 2014 remains unknown to this moment". July 2019, photographed by author

Situating Odesa in the wider context of Ukraine and the 2nd of May events in the local context of Odesa, interviewees often emphasized the multi-ethnic nature of the city. From summing up all the different nationalities the Soborna Plosha saleswoman had in her blood (P9), to extensive accounts of the history of the city after its foundation by tsarina Catherine the Great (P10), of German descent, such descriptions were often used to argue that Odesa is anything but a true Ukrainian city. In fact, as the Soborna Plosha salesman said, Ukrainian is the only language you would not hear on the streets of Odesa (P10).

The interviewees, often people of age who lived their full youth under the Soviet Union, would frequently state that at the time of the Soviet Union, the Ukrainian language enjoyed complete freedom in use (P5,P9). It was widely used in theatre and music and taught, next to Russian, in school. Now, one of the respondents said, after more than 25 years of neglect of the language, the sudden promotion of Ukrainian occurs in an environment with insufficient numbers of Ukrainian teachers (P9).

Narrative 3 (apolitical): it's all big politics

The third narrative to be identified here was overrepresented in the part of my sample that was selected non-deliberately (P2,P8,P12,P21,P23,P24,P25,P35,P36,P39,P40). The respective interviewees were often, at least initially, rather reluctant to talk about the 2ndof May events (P2,P23,P24,P39). Their initial response when asked about the events varied from "Oh, you mean when all these people decided to burn each other" (P24), to "Did you know that they burned my car on that day" (P2), while in a rare case a conversation was rejected under the statement "I am not involved in politics" (P23). The respective interviewees, although divergent in the content and focus of their storytelling, generally described the events as the result of manipulations by

politicians of the poor, the lower classes of the society, who participated in return for monetary compensation or as they were aroused by propaganda.

In identifying who was then behind these manipulations, the levels of specificity were different. For example, Yulia (P2), my landlord during my stay in Odesa, was very specific. Namely, she referred to rumors that Yulia Timoshenko, a nationalistic politician, financed the pro-Maidanists, without providing any further evidence. On the other hand, she proposed an informed speculation regarding the financers of the other side. Boris Kaufman, an Odesan oligarch with ties to Yanukovych and the father of a boy from Yulia's son's class, was the owner of the Passage hotel in the city center of Odesa. Another acquaintance, who lived in a penthouse with a view on the Passage hotel, had told Yulia to have observed the gathering of men in this building in the days leading up to the 2nd of May. This strengthened Yulia's belief that the anti-Maidanists were also organized and financed by an oligarch.

Other interviewees remained unspecific as to who was behind these political manipulations. For example, Yuri (P21), who I approached in a second hand book store he runs, based his beliefs on perceptions of historical events distant in either time or space from current-day Ukraine. He drew parallels with the presence of the terrorist group Islamic State in the Middle East, which fought over oil and not ideals. Also, he compared the *Nebesna Sotnya* of Kyiv to the martyrs shot during the October Revolution in 1917, an example of the political value of victims during conflict. At the same time, he admitted that he was not informed enough to provide specific details regarding his claims. Many interviewees referred to the country's former President Poroshenko supposedly having gained financially from the conflict in the east of the country to add to support their cynical view of the conflict.

Often, interviewees emphasized that they did not know anyone involved in either of the sides of the conflict, in seeming attempts to distance themselves from the involved groups. Yulia, for example, first stressed the use of payments, which in times of economic hardship could bring people to act in extreme and violent ways. At a later point in this conversation, she lost this nuanced stance and referred to the protesters as "parasites of our society", which "we do not interact with". Yuri stressed the effect of propaganda, fostering and exploiting differences in a society for political objectives, and suspected the need for a guiding hand in organizing such clashes, as people would not move to fight from their own initiative. Then, he proposed a hearsay about the second casualty on the Maidan-side, who was supposedly known as a pickpocket and had been in the crowd doing his job. This added to his view downplaying the role of genuine political motives during the events, while distancing the participants from himself based on the perception that they were thieves and thugs.

Maybe the most illustrative interaction for this attitude was the following (P12). Namely, posted at the decorated fence lining the Trade Union Building, I overheard a woman of age responding to a woman with a suitcase "How can you not know that? They burned people alive here!". After this, the tourist approached the fence and asked me what this building was: "some kind of university?". After I explained to her what had happened there, she answered that she had no idea about this. The woman was from Kyiv, and stated that she was not involved in the Maidan events, referring to the respective protesters in Kyiv as being paid for their participation. Although completely unaware of the events in Odesa, she suggested that they were most likely the result of some oligarchs wanting their way. This seems to confirm the idea that for many, the basic attitude regarding social unrest or crisis in Ukraine is that behind it, there is one or several oligarchs or politicians that manipulate a situation to serve their personal political and economic interests.

An argument proposed by most of the respective interviewees was that they were not involved in politics, and thus had no specific relation towards the 2nd of May events. They perceived Ukrainian politics as the interaction between a privileged elite and a manipulated lower class. However, the reason for this imposed distance between themselves and the participants in the events varied. Some explicitly motivated their position on the basis of religious beliefs (P25,P41). Others, implicitly or explicitly, blamed the participants from

both sides in having a lack of intelligence and being susceptible to propaganda, thus implying to stand above the respective political games themselves (P2,P21). A single individual based his beliefs on an antisemitic view of the Ukrainian society as being under full control of Jews, arguing that nothing would improve as long as this would not change (P39).

Narrative 4 (pro-Russian): The massacre/ Odeska Khatyn

The last distinct narrative to come up recurrently describes the casualties in the Trade Union Building as a premeditated massacre and substitutes a higher number of 200-300 deaths for the official number of 48 (P7,P13,P16,P30,P33). Some elements of this narrative occurred in combination with elements from the second narrative. However, I included it as a distinct narrative since the implications of the storyline are a lot more severe, and the interviewees who pursued this narrative tended to ground the narrative in a historical picture more heavily than those tending to the second narrative.

This narrative classifies Maidan as a coup d'ètat, like the second narrative. However, the interviewees would generally go further in this classification of the respective moment as orchestrated by the USA. The newly installed regime, univocally considered fascists by these interviewees, moved swiftly to pose an example to those parts of the country holding unfavorable attitudes towards their form of Ukrainian nationalism. Here, Odesa was selected to teach those who did not follow suit a "lesson", as Valeriy (P13), a retired entrepreneur, put it.

In justification of such claims, the interviewees often positioned their story in a chain of historical events. The most typical example of this was my interaction with Valeriy. Seated on a bench at a far end of the Kulykove Pole, I asked him if he could explain what had happened there. After having clarified my intentions, I was summoned to move on closer. Valeriy proceeded with an extensive history of the city of Odesa, starting with its foundation by Catherine the Great and describing its development as an international, but most specifically "non-Ukrainian" port city. Moving his story to the west of Ukraine, he described the "work-loving" population there to be distinct from that of Odesa and the rest of Ukraine and for that reason more prone to collaborate with the Germans during World War II. Maybe, he argued, that is why they experienced being part of the Soviet Union more as an occupation than others.

Thus, he argued, when Maidan brought these Western Ukrainians to power, they finally saw their moment and felt the need to forcefully direct the whole country along their desired nationalistic vector. When Odesa seemed to resist this idea, the 2nd of May served as a moment to punish such behavior. The SBU, Ukraine's secret service, had planted a lethal gas in the Trade Union Building prior on the eve of the 2nd of May, while the riots in the city served as a pretext to scare simple Odesans into the building. Then why did the official number of 48 deaths underscore the actual number of casualties, which was 200-300 deaths? A recurrent argument here is that only massacres with more than 50 victims can, according to the UN definition, qualify as a genocide (P13,P16).

To support their claims for this higher death toll, the interviewees often proposed an eye-witness account. Namely, Valeriy referred to a friend in the police, who told stories about bodies in the basement of the building that counted several hundreds. During a gathering at Kulykove Pole in one of the days following the 2nd of May, Valeriy and his wife stated, they had seen a police man crying. With complete certainty they told me that this must have been because he had been in the basements and witnessed the number of deaths there. Another interviewee (P16) said she had an acquaintance who possessed incriminating material that would prove the claim of a higher death toll. The SBU had raided his house and confiscated this material, she said, a clear signal that the SBU had something to hide.

Another interviewee (P7), a woman of age working in the archives of a library, presented me with the library's materials on the 2nd of May events. Next to a print version of the works of the 2nd of May group, she handed me several scraps of paper containing references to materials addressing the case published in newspapers and other publications. The title of this section in the archive was "Odeska Khatyn", a historical parallel that has been discussed in chapter 3. When asked about the meaning of this title, she explained to me what it referred to, namely the burning of Belarussian villages by fascists. She stated that she found this an appropriate name, since also on the 2nd of May innocent people were burnt premeditatedly.

In her explanation of the events, she departed from a description of the 2nd of May as a holiday (the day after Labour Day) on which many people were out on the streets. Thus, grandmothers and children who were walking near the central station sought their refuge in the safety of the proper Trade Union Building. When I asked her how many of those grandmothers and children had died, she answered that she did not know the exact count, but she was sure that at least one minor died. The latter is true, namely one 17-year old is included in the official list of casualties and was reported to be an active participant at Kulykove Pole (see figure 5) (Dumskaya, 2014). The complete emission of the events preceding the fire in the Trade Union Building supported her narrative of innocence of those who died during the fire.

Figure 5: A provisional memorial sign headed "Odesa remembers" to Vadim Papura, a participant on Kulykove Pole who died at 17 years old. A poem in a plastic cover has been ripped from the fence, something that appears to happen regularly and is met with renewed items of remembrance. July 2019, photographed by author

As the new regime is directly accused in this narrative, the official investigation of these events is logically not trusted. On the contrary, a parallel to the investigation into the shootings that occurred during the escalation of violence in Kyiv in 2014 is proposed (P13,P30,P33). Namely, there are theories of Ukrainian nationalists shooting into the crowd to escalate the protests. This narrative is actively fed through for example a documentary interviewing three Georgian men who were supposedly part of this group of snipers (Stefan, 2018). The trees around Maidan, which contained bullet holes from these shootings, have been cut, which Valeriy presented as a clear sign of a cover up of this operation. In parallel to this, the Trade Union Building had been open to public in the days following the 2nd of May, which the interviewees claim to have enabled the removal and manipulation of incriminating evidence.

As came forward in the description of the narrative framing the 2nd of May events as a massacre, or *Odeska Khatyn*, in chapter 3, is one that fits a pro-Russian historical narrative well. Due to the implicated consistency in historical events over the past century, in which Ukrainian nationalists are perceived as fascists, it provides for

a simplified storyline fit for export. By coincidence, I met a 22-year-old woman (P16) whose father had started an organization, euphemistically called "Global Rights of Peaceful People", shortly after the 2nd of May events. Initially, its main purpose was to bring the 'massacre' under the attention of the international community. Over the past year, she had gotten more involved in the organization, visiting an assembly of the UN in Geneva, and, as she told me with great delight, seventeen other countries.

The main material exported by this organization is an exhibition of photographs of the 2nd of May events, whereas it collaborates closely with others involved in the same field. For example, Oleg Muzyka, a man who was in the Trade Union Building and presents himself as one of the leaders of the encampment at Kulykove Pole, published a book with his eyewitness account presented in the form of an interview (see figure 6). This book is full of accounts of, among others, supposed employees of the SBU arriving to the Kulykove Pole on the morning of the 2nd of May. Such accounts, sufficiently vague, serve for a willing reader to support the massacre narrative.

Figure 6: Suggestive stickers on top of an eyewitness account by Oleg Muzyka, who claims to have only been at Kulykove Pole during the 2nd of May events, and is living in Germany as a political refugee (personal photograph)

The photographs presented in the travelling exhibition were given rather suggestive captions. When I asked the woman to explain some of them, she refrained from doing so by stating "I don't know why they wrote that". Then, when she proceeded to support the narrative of 200-300 casualties, hidden in the basement of the Trade Union Building, I asked her if there were any corresponding lists of missing persons. Logically, if this narrative about the actual death toll exceeding the official count were true, there would be stories of people gone missing. She answered by saying "well, I do not know, I am not so good with numbers". However, she said, I should remember the suspicious fact that the official death toll was just below the magic number of 50 that would make possible the event's classification as a genocide. It surprised me how little argumentation someone professionally involved in exporting this narrative could provide.

6. Narrative Analysis

In the preceding section, the contents of the interviews conducted during a month-long stay in Odesa have been condensed into four narratives. Here, it was the objective to see if there were any narratives that fell outside of the dichotomy of a pro-Ukrainian and a pro-Russian narrative as presented on the base of examples from the media and political statements in chapter 3. Such narratives were revealed. Namely the second narrative had a highly local factor in it, building on the presumed specific identity of Odesa as a multiethnic, but non-Ukrainian city. The third narrative builds mostly on a cynical perception of the current political and socioeconomic situation in Ukraine, in which crises are perceived to occur at the will of a group of oligarchs.

In the following part, the interviews and respective narratives are further analyzed and compared. Here, no prior points of analysis were explicitly imposed before the start of the field work. In this approach, based on the views generated in the literature review of the present thesis, points that struck my attention throughout the process of conducting the respective interviews are presented. Firstly, the role of historical frames is discussed. Secondly, the sources of information addressed by interviewees in their recollections are compared. Thirdly, the specificity of the 2nd of May events, which I argue to be a *multifaceted lieu de memoire* facilitating divergent narratives, is discussed. Lastly, the different levels of identification expressed in the identified narratives are considered.

The role of historical frames

In the literature review of the present thesis, it was argued that the link between collective and individual memory can be perceived as one engendered by an existing set of frames. Here, memory theory argues that an individual's account of an event is expected to fit a logical set of (historical) events in the pursuit of *coherence* of the individual's memory. Considering the conducted interviews for the present research, this can be interpreted as the influence of varying interpretations of a shared history in their use as an argument to support divergent interpretations of the same event in the present, namely the 2nd of May events. The present section furthers this notion.

For supporters of one of the two conflicting sides, their storytelling of the 2nd of May events often seemed to correlate with highly divergent, if not irreconcilable, perceptions of both the past and more recent developments in Ukraine. Often, they would reach into the past to support their argument regarding the present. On the other hand, adherents to the third narrative generally situated their narrative more in an account of the current situation in Ukraine.

The events on Kyiv's Maidan in 2013-2014 came up most frequently as a reference for interviewees to justify their interpretation of the events in Odesa. Accordingly, I argue that this pair of events serve as a mutually confirmative set of events. This mutual confirmation of the two events started from the classification of the events in Kyiv as either a revolution or a coup d'état. Pro-Ukrainians logically qualified the events as a revolution, justifying the manifestation of the Maidan movement in Odesa and contributing to their critique of the local authorities in suppressing this movement. On the other hand, qualifying the change of regime in Kyiv as a coup d'état, other interviewees on forehand disqualified the objectives of pro-Maidanists. This interpretation of Maidan then paved the way for further classifications of the events in Odesa as the result of violent provocations by groups striving to consolidate their illegally obtained power. Often, this narrative would refer to a popular theory relating to the deaths of Kyiv's *Nebesna Sotnya* not being the result of the actions of Yanukovych' forces, but a set-up by the politicians that financed the Maidan protests. In the line of this argument, Maidan politicians would not be shy of provoking lethal violence to serve their political interests.

The descriptions of the events in Kyiv thus paved the way for divergent interpretations of the developments in Odesa. Adherents of the first narrative interpreted the pro-Maidan movement as a democratic popular movement and the logical consequence of the actions of Yanukovych' government. The movement's opponents, on the other hand, had a negative perception of the events in Kyiv and furthered this perception in their description of the events in Odesa. Whereas this observation might seem trivial, the complete disjunction between interpretations of the recent past by different groups in the Odesan society suggests the absence of a common ground for debate, which can have a severe implications towards processes of reconciliation.

In chapter 3 of the present thesis, the competing interpretations of the history of Ukraine at a national level through a pro-Ukrainian and a pro-Russian frame were discussed. Many of the aspects presented in these frames came forward during the conducted interviews. They were however often enriched with a local element, negotiating the identity of Odesa. Frequently, this negotiation addressed the period under Soviet rule. Pro-Ukrainian interviewees sketched pictures of suppression of a Ukrainian nation that was always present in the city and even more so in rural areas around Odesa, but not given space to develop by active policies of Russian imperialists. Examples were provided here of the imperialists' language policies and relocations of ethnic Ukrainians to other parts of the Soviet Union. Such a narrative justifies Ukrainian nationalism and adds to the perception of 'the Russians' as pertinent villains, malevolent imperialists likely to siege the city of Odesa. This view of Russia, or more specifically Putin, standing ready to march into Kyiv, was popular under those adhering to the first narrative. In the other camp, interviewees often argued that during Soviet times, the Ukrainian language and culture had actually been permitted a lot more space to develop than under the first decades of independence. Such statements served to discredit claims of a Ukrainian nation long being suppressed by the Russians. Accordingly, talks of a 'Russian threat' were often rejected by the respective interviewees.

The use of Ukraine and Odesa's history as an argument in one's story of the 2nd of May events was thus most present in those adhering to the first, second, and fourth narrative. Accordingly, many elements from the juxtaposition of a pro-Ukrainian and pro-Russian frame presented in chapter 3 came forward in these narratives. Those adhering to the third narrative were more reluctant to reach into history to justify their storytelling. They considered the 2nd of May events as a typical marker of today's Ukraine, which they perceived as being the playing ball of a set of oligarchs. Accordingly, this perception reached more into the country's contemporary history under independence than to far away events like World War II and the Soviet era. A second factor that was more typical to this group was that the use of history as an argumentative tool was not necessarily confined to the history of Ukraine and the states it had been a constituent of. For example, Yuri (P21) referred to oil money as the real topic of conflict in the Middle East to justify his skepticism towards genuine ideological motives in conflicts, a view that he extrapolated towards the 2nd of May events in Odesa. Another interviewee (P36) even departed from our real world to describe current-day Ukraine, telling me a story of Pinnochio and the "country of idiots" (*strana durakov)*, in which a character is fooled into believing he possesses the seeds of a tree that grows money as leaves. His message was that the current-day Ukraine was this country of idiots.

The tendency of interviewees to address the past to construct their recollection of the 2nd of May event varied widely. While conducting semi-structured interviews, one should of course be aware of nudging the interviewee towards including certain elements into their narration. In my general approach, I first allowed interviewees to freely develop a storyline, trying to refrain from questions pushing them to address the past. Only then would I continue to ask questions specifically aimed to picture their perception of the past. Those interviewees supporting narratives two and four appeared most inclined to address the past in their interpretation of the present, in manners that I will now illustrate.

The respective interviewees tended to include classifications or analogies that directly related to the country's Soviet past. The most frequently used historical analogy came forward in the reference to Ukranian nationalists as *fascists* or *banderovtsi.* The respective framing of Ukrainian nationalists is actively fed by Russian or Russia-favored media and by decades of Soviet narration of World War II (Marples, 2006). The use of these terms by the interviewees often went without further explanation, seemingly under the implication that the analogy should be obvious to the listener. The active use of the term *banderovtsi* can be argued to partly result from glorification of Stepan Bandera by Ukrainian nationalists and is negative only in an implicit, arguably context-dependent, manner. However, the qualification of fascists is undoubtedly charged in an incriminating way and the ease with which this term was used to disqualify opponents did not cease to surprise me. The assumption seemed to be that innocent people were killed on the basis of their political preferences, an act the respective interviewees associated with fascism. However, such an argument for the use of the term was rarely articulated explicitly.

This opaque usage of the term fascists often paved the way for the inclusion of further analogies to World War II to support the argumentation of the respective interviewees. In this frame, the qualification of one of the sides in a conflict as fascists imposes such a moral distinction between the respective sides that room for negotiation of the facts seemed to be annihilated. For example, a woman (P30) stated that the fire in the Trade Union Building was a premeditated attack stated and that those involved should have a trial similar to the Nuremberg trials that dealt with members of the German regime after World War II. "They [the Germans] killed strangers, and these [pro-Maidanists] their own people", she states. The equation of the 2nd of May events to war crimes committed during World War II was left without further argumentation.

This mechanism, in which the use of historical analogies colors the perception of the event that is actually under consideration, is exploited through the use of the term of Odeska Khatyn. Departing from a classification of Ukrainian nationalists as fascists and drawing on a collective memory of the war crimes committed in Khatyn, the parallel to the 2nd of May events is drawn. Here, the resemblance in the form of a fire with casualties is enough to feed a perception of a premeditated massacre of innocent people. Often, storytelling by such interviewees was set to accommodate for this perception. Accordingly, no mention was made of the preceding events and casualties in the city center. In some cases, interviewees would explicitly refer to those in the building as innocent people, mostly women and children, who ended up there in search for a safe refuge.

The equation of the 2nd of May events to Khatyn can be considered as the very extreme of framing. The associations arising from the allusion to this event are evident. For those who invest their belief into the parallel to events in World War II, any narrative of the 2nd of May events diverging from this analogy is not only perceived as wrong, but as equivalent to justifying war crimes committed in World War II. Accordingly, the analogy reduces space for critical look into the part that the 'victims' had in the events in Odesa. The use of such historical analogies can safely be argued to serve political goals well. In the case of Russia, reverting to the contraposition between fascists ('the bad') and the Soviets ('the good') simultaneously serves to delegitimize and demonize Ukrainian nationalists and justify Russia's own actions, for example with regard to Crimea. This came forward in an interview with a woman from Lugansk (P11), who stated that the slogan "remember Odesa" serves as a mobilizing anthem for those fighting against the Ukrainian army in her home town.

Selection of information

The competition between *coherence* and *correspondence* in individual memory is one that can be argued to be inherent to the human mind (Conway, 2005). On the one hand, limited storage capacity of the human mind urges individuals to pursue simplified storylines and the coherence between their memories of separate events. On the other hand, a sane individual is expected to establish at least some degree of correspondence

between the information regarding an event he/she is presented with and the narrative of the respective event that is supported. This is not to say that the latter will necessarily push an individual towards a truthful narrative, as the information in which trust is invested can be false. Accordingly, the following section considers the sources of information on which the interviewees based their narratives, and how the selection of information sources expressed the competition between coherence and correspondence in their memories.

The memory of the 2nd of May events for Odesans results from a mix of different sources. Namely, most interviewees had direct access to follow the events either through direct participation, direct translations or retrospective coverage of the events in media. On the other hand, communication with others can lead to the spread of eyewitness accounts or other narrative elements, truthful or not. Lastly, investigations, either by the state or by initiatives such as the 2nd of May Group, are possible sources of information. A weighed aggregate of these sources can be expected to form the foundation of the interviewees' memory of the events.

Reliance on information as provided in official narratives, most notably through the judicial system, and information provided by the 2nd of May Group was generally low in the conducted interviewees. Explicit reference to such sources occurred rarely. Firstly, the trust in an independent criminal investigation in the matter appeared to be very low, especially among those favoring the anti-Maidanists and those adhering to the third narrative. Generally, such interviewees would disregard the respective investigation based on their presumption that it was unlikely for the authorities that they perceived to be responsible for the respective events to effectively investigate their own actions. The short description of the criminal investigations into the events provided in chapter 2 indicate that the judicial process has provided ample grounds for citizens to question the independence of the case, which without a doubt reflected on the attitudes of the interviewees.

Secondly, few people who were not directly involved in the events were aware of the activities of the 2nd of May group. Here, it seemed that in the absence of individuals' desire to actively gather information, this resource did not find the appropriate channels to influence people's perception of the events. Moreover, the fact that the respective group presents its materials in a way as to refrain from a generalizing narrative contributes to the fact that for few, the material served as a reference to back up their storytelling of the events.

On the contrary, most interviewees' accounts were based on a combination of personal accounts and references to hearsays. A good example of a situation in which a personal account was presented to overrule an official account came forward during my talks with several employees of a library I liked to work at (P3,P4,P5). A colleague of the women of age working here died in the Trade Union Building, at 55 years old. All the respective colleagues told me, while making a strangling gesture around their necks, that she had been strangled to death. Stating that her body was found without burn marks and in an unnatural pose, they did not believe the official account that the woman had died as a result of the fire.

When I later browsed the internet to follow up on this case, I found many news articles proposing various theories regarding the cause of death of this woman and the perpetrator, and others, among which the 2nd of May Group, debunking these (Radio Svoboda, 2014). A photo of the woman, bowed backwards over a table with her back in an awkwardly unnatural angle, adds to the suggestion that the woman was forcefully killed. Moreover, she has a suspiciously inflated belly in the picture, feeding a rumor that she was pregnant. The latter seems quite unlikely at an age of 55. Social media accounts added to this story by saying that the woman was not part of any of the conflicting sides, and had been in the Trade Union Building since she worked there (Radio Svoboda, 2014). My personal information that she worked in a library clearly disproves this rumor. This single case, in which the official cause of death of the woman is disputed and the wildest rumors regarding the actual cause of death exist, is a recurrent element in the case people make both online and offline to question the official investigations. Higher trust in the investigative authorities would arguably have reduced space for such rumors challenging their results to develop.

When comparing accounts of the 2nd of May events by first hand witnesses, such as participants in the events or bystanders, to those provided by interviewees basing their accounts on second-hand information, those of the former group were generally more detailed. This should not come as a surprise, since the base of direct information they could build their account on was bigger. In the competition between *coherence* and *correspondence* of memory such individuals thus had more complete information in the scale weighing in for correspondence than those relying on second-hand information. Accordingly, direct witnesses can be expected to experience difficulty to pursue a simplistic narrative that overrides their own observations.

The accounts of eyewitnesses were generally more descriptive, proposing a more or less chronological set of events as they observed them, whereas others often referred to secret organizers, politicians, or to conspiracy theories in attempts to explain the chaotic set of events. Here, their descriptions were often less detailed. In order to support their arguments, the respective interviewees would often propose (part of) a single eyewitness account.

For example, to support his claim that the deaths in the Trade Union Building resulted from a gas attack, retiree Valeriy (P13) referred to "an acquaintance in the police". Another interviewee (P22) referred to a friend who saw the clashes and had said that he had seen pro-Maidanists walk without fear while shots were being fired, supporting his claim that the shooting in the city center were a manipulation by the pro-Maidanists. Claims of snipers installed in the Afin shopping mall were persistent throughout all narratives, often referring to hearsays from others.

However, when I would then propose such claims to actual participants, they would either refute the claims or state that they could not say anything about this, as they were not at that location during the respective incident. For example, Ivan (P19), head of the *Prawi Sektor* in Odesa during the 2nd of May events, refuted the claims of snipers on the Afin shopping mall, stating that these were simple pistols, unlikely to hit a target at street level from the respective building. The fact that there are no accounts of people (lethally) wounded by sniper rifles adds to the suggestion that the respective rumors are unlikely to be true.

In line with the difference described above between the accounts provided by eyewitnesses and those not present at the 2nd of May events and furthering the notion on coherence and correspondence, we can argue the following. The events of the 2nd of May are a rather chaotic collective, in which it is hard to identify direct causal links between subsequent events. For those who directly witnessed or participated in the events, theories that try to impose order onto this chaos were often opposed by their own direct observations. However, those relying on indirect information on the events tended to select and interpret accounts by others in ways that supported a storyline of the events that corroborated their beliefs. Accordingly, these interviewees often made heavy claims resting on the reference to a single presumed witness, which are likely to be refuted by other eyewitness accounts.

Such 'filling in the gaps' as performed by interviewees in their accounts of the events occurred across all narratives. Interestingly, very similar types of explanations of the events were provided by some of the interviewees adhering to the first narrative (P17,P37) and the fourth narrative (P13,P16). Here, the same level of causality was suggested, while only the agents addressing the relevant roles differed. For example, alternatingly the FSB and SBU (respectively the Russian and Ukrainian secret service) were suspected of having staged the attack in the Trade Union Building. Moreover, reasons provided for such a predetermined attack were similar. Anti-Maidanists claimed that the 2nd of May events served for Ukrainian nationalists to teach Odesa a lesson not to resist the new central government, whereas pro-Maidanists suggested Russia wanted to provoke an escalation in Odesa to serve as a pretext for intervention. The tendency to interpret the events as the result of a political conspiracy, seemingly resulting from a need for an overarching and an explanatory instead of descriptive narrative, was thus not unique to any of the narratives.

The irony here is that, according to the investigation conducted by the 2nd of May Group, there was some degree of conspiracy in the 2nd of May events, namely in the financed deal that had been struck between the conflicting sides to have the Kulykove Pole evacuated by pro-Maidanists. However, this element appeared in none of the interviewees' narratives.

To summarize the observations regarding the selection of information by interviewees in their narratives, we conclude the following. Firstly, there seemed to be a complete lack of an authoritative source of information to the formation of memory regarding the 2nd of May events. Neither the criminal investigation, which has serious shortcomings in terms of its independence and credibility, nor the investigations by the 2nd of May group, which appeared insufficiently authoritative to overcome interviewees' bias in information gathering, came forward as sources to back up the storytelling by interviewees. Alternative sources of information, most notably eyewitness accounts and hearsays, appeared more frequently. Secondly, the competition between coherence and correspondence came forward well in the differences in narration by direct witnesses and others. Whereas the former had relatively complete packages of information to base their narration on, the latter expressed a higher tendency to support overarching theories based on very limited selections of information.

Multifaceted lieu de memoire

The starting point of most of the conversations conducted for my research was a simple, broad question, namely if my interviewees could tell me something about the 2nd of May events. For all, with maybe a rare exception, this question did not require further explanation. Namely, the reference to the 2nd of May, 2014, was implicitly understood. Mentioning the date induced the recollection of a memory, often paired with emotion, for some more specific than for others, of the respective events.

We can compare this to for example the Maidan events in Kyiv, which have become known under a reference to the place, namely the *Maidan Nezalezhnosti*, at which confrontations with the central government most notably occurred. Liubarets has argued that, through active commemoration and continuous harboring of the memory of these events by political agents, Euromaidan or the Revolution of Dignity has become a *lieu de memoire* (2016). In contrast to this reference to a concrete place of the events in Kyiv, the events in Odesa are known under a reference to the date they occurred in. One can argue that this signals the abruptness, or the shock by which these events occurred and formed a breach in continuous time, comparable to how the date 9/11 has become a *lieu de memoire* to most of the Western world.

As is evident in the discussion of the narratives corresponding to the 2nd of May in Odesa, the interpretation of this *lieu de memoire* is far from uniform and actually provokes conflicting and often disjunct narratives. This should not come as a surprise when we discuss an event with two or more conflicting sides, which are accordingly likely to hold different interpretations of the same set of events. However, the specific character of the 2nd of May events made that between some interviews corresponding to different narratives, there was simply no overlap. Namely, the fact that we can split the events in two mostly disjunct parts, the events in the city center and those at Kulykove Pole, enables a narrator to emphasize the part that best fits his beliefs.

This univocally came forward in the conversations with people that clearly supported or were part of one of the sides in the conflict. Namely, pro-Maidanists would emphasize the clashes in the city center, which they generally described as an attack by the anti-Maidanists on a (peaceful) march for the unity of Ukraine. Often only upon further questioning would they give a description of what happened at Kulykove Pole. On the other hand, those favoring the anti-Maidanists often had their story started at the Kulykove Pole, without paying attention to the preceding clashes. When asked about the first casualties on the side of the Maidan

supporters, they were either unaware of these or would disregard them as negligible in comparison to the casualties on the other side, or by saying that these were manipulations by the Euromaidan side.

Upon arrival to Odesa, it surprised me that for many, talking about the 2nd of May events seemed to be some sort of relief. Most of the interviewees that did not adhere to narrative three, and thus picked one of the two sides in the conflict, were not hesitant and often even eager to present their recollections of the events. I might have expected to observe the absence of this memory, to speak in Van Vree's terms (2013), from the side of pro-Maidanists. Namely, when one considers solely the events at Kulykove Pole, the fact that here only anti-Maidanists died and the way in which they did, could suggest that this event is hard to incorporate in a narrative that speaks positively of the pro-Maidanists. As Assmann suggests (2005), the role of a group as perpetrators is difficult to integrate into a mobilizing narrative.

However, the preceding events in the city center, which the pro-Maidanists interpret as a premeditated attack on their march, in their narratives appeared to serve as, firstly, a tool to divert the story from the tragedy that followed and, secondly, to justify the move to tear and burn down the encampment at Kulykove Pole. If not explicitly addressed, the fire in the Trade Union Building then generally did not become a central part of these interviewees' narratives. In this sense, the part of the 2nd of May events at Kulykove Pole is for the respective interviewees akin to an absent memory for the pro-Maidanists.

Accordingly, the specific character of the 2nd of May events accommodates the existence of two narratives that are largely disjunct: one narrative begins where the other ends, namely as the clashes moved to the Kulykove Pole. Referring to the juxtaposition of *coherence* and *correspondence* (Conway, 2005), it appears that for both parties, exclusively focusing on one of the two parts of the events enabled them to pursue coherence between their recollections and their wider belief systems, while not resulting in explicit violations of the correspondence of their recollections to the information they were acquainted with. In this sense, omission of (part of) an event from one's memory is likely to be more easily accommodated by the human psyche than the overt manipulation of events to fit a storyline.

Memory as a confirmation of the self and the other

Halbwachs' famous proposition accounts for the existence of resemblances in the memories held by individuals as the result of social frameworks shaping the content and form of remembering (1992). Accordingly, characteristics that are shared across a social group, which can range in size from a family to a nation, are argued to result in shared recollections of a shared past. This notion presupposes a positive definition of a social group in terms of shared characteristics that make one part of the social group and cause shared memories. Still, Halbwachs did not speak of memory *of* the group, as some writing on the concept of collective memory do, and his perception seems to allude mostly to memory *in* the group. In the present section, the different levels of identification expressed through the different narratives are evaluated.

In the interviews conducted for this research, several levels of identification came forward. The first and the fourth narrative largely coincided with the depictions made by the pro-Ukrainian and pro-Russian narratives in chapter 3. Accordingly, respectively Ukrainian nationalistic sentiments and pro-Russian or Soviet sentiments shaped these narratives and the past served as an active point of reference to justify certain representations of the present. In the second narrative, interviewees described the Maidan movement as an element foreign to their perception of the city of Odesa. However, they would simultaneously stress that there was no desire to move in the direction of Russia. While it did include elements present in the juxtaposition between the pro-Ukrainian and pro-Russian frame, this narrative departed mostly from a perceived identity of the city of Odesa and its citizens.

More often than not, these three narratives sought to define the respective collective they alluded to in a negation or delegitimization of the *other*. For example, pro-Maidanists denounced the ideas of their opponents as the result of propaganda, often referring to them watching Russian state channels on their so-called 'zombieboxes' (*zombyjashiki*). On the other hand, Ukrainian nationalism was generally qualified as an element foreign to the city of Odesa, blaming the new regime, or 'Western-Ukrainians', for actively importing this element. An accusation made from both sides was of the other side being financed, arguing that their participation in the events was financially driven. Through all such argumentative tactics, the possibility of the presence in Odesa of antagonists that genuinely and autonomously supported ideas that the interviewees disliked was undermined.

Whereas the adherents to the first, second, and fourth narrative al seemed to argue at least partly from sort of a shared perception of the *self*, interviewees supporting the third narrative were divergent in what they most explicitly identified as the *self*. Some narrated referring to their religious beliefs, others seemed to argue based on the fact that they were from a higher socioeconomic class or too intelligent to get involved in political games. However, their narration did share a representation of the *other*. Namely, both sides involved in the clashes were supposedly paid to participate or victims of propaganda. The idea of moving to the streets on the basis of one's political ideas was often rejected by the narrators.

Based on this observation regarding the supporters of the third narrative, the idea that a shared memory presupposes a collective, a social group with distinct characteristics, seems not to hold in all cases. Namely, in the third narrative we observe a more or less shared recollection of the 2nd of May events without explicit characteristics connecting those that hold the respective memory. The most unifying characteristic seemed to be that the respective respondents often called themselves apolitical and seemed to consider themselves of a higher or different socioeconomic class than those involved in the 2nd of May events. Such qualifications do not seem to correspond to hard delineators of a social group.

If we depart from the more concrete notion of social groups to the notion of belief systems, we can explain for this occurrence of a shared memory across different social groups. Namely, belief systems, or perceptions and interpretations of the world around us, can be expected to flow over the supposed boundaries of social groups. Social groups can be expected to share belief systems, but a shared belief system does not presuppose a single social group. If we then accept the notion that individuals are expected to hold memories that confirm their idea of the self and the world around them, shared belief systems can be expected to lead to shared memories (Conway, 2005). Now, it is no hard proposition that individuals belonging to a distinct social group hold similar belief systems. Thus, an argument explaining shared memories as a result of shared belief systems can also be used to account for those holding the first, second, and fourth narratives as they belong to respectively a pro-Ukrainian, 'old-Odesan', and pro-Russian camp. Moreover, the argument explains for the shared narrative by those who see the 2nd of May events as typical of the current situation in Ukraine. This group does not share an identifiable social characteristic, but does appear to argue from a shared perception that differentiates the *other*, namely the participants in the 2nd of May events, from the *self.*

Negotiating Odesa

In the preceding section, it was argued that the levels of identification along which we can explain the different narratives regarding the 2nd of May events are variant from nation to socioeconomic class to religion. An interesting object of negotiation, however, was the perceived status of the city of Odesa. Interviewees tended to argue in a way as to appropriate the city of Odesa and link the city to their perceived identity. Whereas Maidan-supporters consider the city a part of both the Ukrainian state and nation, such claims were rejected by many who typified Odesa as non-Ukrainian. This contrast came forward not only in the conducted interviews, but also through subtilities such as the use of flags.

Namely, the flag of Odesa, a red-white-orange tricolour with a shield and anchor in the middle, is omnipresent throughout the city. On governmental buildings, it is always joined by the Ukrainian flag. This combination appears in more everyday use as well, for example on the front window of a car. However, I also observed the use of merely the flag of Odesa, in cars or for example in souvenir stands in the city centre. In such souvenir stands, items relating to the city of Odesa are abundant, while items referring to the Ukrainian state and culture are generally absent. This is in sharp contrast with the image portrayed by souvenir stands in for example Kyiv or Lviv, where the sale of Ukrainian national and cultural items is the rule rather than exception, as I can say from own observations travelling the country.

An interview with one of the salesmen at Soborna Plosha (P10), who described the appearance of the Odesan flag next to the Ukrainian flag at a memorial to the pro-Maidanist who died during the 2nd of May (see figure 8) as abuse of the Odesan flag, suggested why he did not sell Ukraine-related items. He emphasized that he considered Odesa to be a "non-Ukrainian city". When I told some of the pro-Maidanists about my interactions with the merchants at Soborna Plosha, they were not surprised. "Of course, why do you think you do not see a Ukrainian flag there?" Some argued that the Odesan flag, in the absence of the Ukrainian flag, is a disguise, or refuge, for people with separatist intentions. This substitutes the overt display of the Russian tricolour on Odesa's streets prior to 2014, according to these interviewees.

Figure 7: Memorial to first casualty on pro-Maidan side. Odesan flag that I had seen her before was now gone. (July 2019, photograph by author)

This negotiation of the identity of Odesa, of what is Odesan and what is not, came forward, explicitly or implicitly, in many of the conducted interviews. As has been discussed, many interviewees recollected the events in a way as to externalize what they considered to be the cause of the tragedy. For example, the Maidan-movement was pictured as imported by Western-Ukrainians, implying that within Odesa, the Ukrainian nationalism Maidan was perceived to represent did not enjoy support. Others, pursuing the third and sometimes the second narrative, linked in to the view of Odesa, and themselves, as apolitical, often expressing clear skepticism towards political processes in the city and country, claiming such processes were generally financially motivated.

Most Maidan-supporters seemed to realize that at least on the surface, Odesa is akin to a Russia-friendly city. Accordingly, this narrative did not externalize the perceived perpetrators, often called separatists, from the

city. However, the respective antagonists were delegitimized, as Maidan-supporters consistently referred to them as the victims of propaganda. Accordingly, the respective narrative could both account for the perceived reality of a Russia-friendly majority of the population, as well as justify the claims made by the supporters of this narrative of Odesa being a Ukrainian city.

Local identity in Odesa in the context of Ukrainization has been subject to earlier academic work. The subtility of the connection between nationality and language in this city, where Russian is abundantly spoken by pro-Ukrainians as well, comes forward in such works (Polese, 2018). Other research describes how informal historiography, in the form of stories and anecdotes related to the city's past as part of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union, feeds the perception of the city as non-Ukrainian, a cosmopolitan place mentally closer to Russia than to Ukraine (Richardson, 2005). Descriptions of the city as apolitical, exploiting the "Odesan myth" claiming a unique humorous and multicultural atmosphere, arguably serve to refrain from taking a stance in the contraposition between Ukraine and Russia, which many of the interviewees described as artificial, or imposed by politicians.

It would be of interest to consider such a debate from a more critical stance. Namely, many pro-Maidanists argued that the acclaimed Odesan identity served as a refuge for those who prior to the Maidan events explicitly showed their preferences for Russia. Accordingly, it is imaginable that given the current political climate in Ukraine, interviewees that were actually pro-Russian might have downplayed their sympathies for Russia by reverting to narrative two and emphasizing the special identity of Odesa. On the other hand, an urban identity is something that is not a strange element in other big cities around the world. The absence of good qualitative data on the period before 2014 would sadly form a limiting factor for such further research on urban identity in Odesa.

7. Conclusion

Through the consideration of the memory of individuals in Odesa, Ukraine, regarding the tragic events of the 2nd of May in their city, I have attempted to analyze the interaction between individual and collective memory. In simpler terms, this thesis served to answer the following question: "Why and how do some individuals believe story A, while others believe story B?" As the event under consideration was rather recent, five years before the conduction of the fieldwork, and each interviewee had his/her own interaction with the event, each of the stories I heard was unique. However, the recollections generally fitted one of the four narratives as identified in the work: a pro-Ukrainian, an 'old-Odesan', an apolitical, and a pro-Russian narrative. Comparing the content of the interviews conducted during this field work, the main findings presented in this thesis are as follows.

The involvement of the past in order to account for the present occurred in varying degrees. For some, the past served as an essential premise for their explanation of the 2nd of May events. Here, the right or wrong regarding the various factions involved in the 2nd of May events was supported by a version of the past. Most notably, the history of Ukraine under the Soviet Union and the more recent events of Maidan in Kyiv enjoyed widely divergent interpretations amongst interviewees adhering to different narratives regarding the 2nd of May events in Odesa. Using the past in order to interpret the present was sometimes pushed to the extreme, as perceived historical analogies served to justify one's interpretation of the present. This occurred to varying degrees across all narrative, but was especially present in those adhering to a pro-Russian or anti-Ukrainian narrative. Both through the use of historically charged references such as *fascists* or by equating the present event to war crimes conducted in Khatyn during World War II, room for negotiation of the 2nd of May events was small.

The simple juxtaposition of coherence and correspondence of an individual's memory provided for a useful tool. The weighing of different sources of information in order to achieve a reasonable degree of correspondence of interviewees' narratives to the available information was analyzed. Here, it was found that neither the criminal investigation into the matter, nor the investigation by the 2nd of May group formed authoritative sources of information. On the other hand, the eyewitness accounts and hearsays that formed the basis of storytelling were countless and often were induced by those not directly involved in the events to support the wildest claims and reach overarching narratives regarding the events.

The notion of coherence is one that explains for the urge to fit narratives of specific events into frames, translating into temporally consistent representations of a chain of events. A prior expectation that the 2nd of May events might be a topic difficult to fit into such a logical and mobilizing chain of events, for example for the pro-Ukrainians, was found not to hold. It has been argued that the fact that the 2nd May events actually consist of two rather disjunct sets of events, namely the city center clashes and the Trade Union Building fire, enables supporters of both conflicted sides to include the events in a narrative that speaks well of their side. Here, omission of (part of) an event from one's memory to achieve coherence is likely to be more easily accommodated by the human psyche than the overt manipulation of events to fit a storyline.

An overarching explanation for the different narratives follows by situating memory as an instrument that is principally individual. Accordingly, narration of the 2nd of May events occurred in such a way as to emphasize an individual's perceived role in a society. For some, the assumption of such a position, for example of pro-Ukrainian, pro-Russian or anti-Ukrainian, was perceived to benefit from situating their narration in a consistent chain of historical events. This can be expected to lead to the development of collective narratives, supported by parts of the society while rejected by respective antagonists. For others, the 2nd of May events appeared to be more an event that confirmed their perception of current-day society in Ukraine, not necessarily deeply intertwined with the past. This perception does not necessarily rely on the respective individuals being part of a certain social group and was more reliant on a shared perception of the other,

namely those involved in the clashes. On the basis of this observation, it has been argued that shared belief systems serve as a more overarching explanatory variable for shared memories than group identities.

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Appendix

A1: Interview log

P1- Male cab driver, 13 July 2019
P2- Female land lord, real estate agent, 13 July-13 August 2019
P3, P4, P5- Female librarians, 16 July 2019
P6- Female student, bookshop employee, 16 July 2019
P7- Female librarian, 17 July 2019
P8- Female student in conservatorium, daughter of land lord (P2), 17 July 2019
P9- Female art seller at Soborna Plosha, 19 July 2019
P10- Male souvenir seller at Soborna Plosha, 19 July 2019
P11- Female NGO worker from Lugansk (met at Kulykove Pole), 19 July 2019
P12- Female, tourist from Kyiv (met at Kulykove Pole), 19 July 2019
P13- Male, retired entrepreneur (met at Kulykove Pole), 19 July 2019
P14- Male, lawyer of defendant in appeal against anti-Maidanists (met at court), 22 July 2019
P15- Male, defendant in appeal against anti-Maidanists (met at court), 22 July 2019
P16- Female international relations and law student, daughter of founder NGO "Global Rights of Peaceful People", 22 July 2019
P17- Female guide of free tours, 23 July 2019
P18- Male guide of free tours, participant on pro-Maidan side, 23 July 2019
P19- Male former head of Odesan *Prawi Sektor*, 25 July 2019
P20- Female artist, participant on pro-Maidan side, 26 July 2019
P21- Male business analyst and entrepreneur, running second hand book store, 29 July 2019
P22- Male, retired worker in train transportation of cargo, 29 July 2019
P23- Female employee of souvenir shop in art gallery, 30 July 2019
P24- Male coffee stand employee, 30 July 2019
P25- Male musician, 31 July 2019
P26- Male import/exports trader, 31 July 2019
P27- Male defendant in appeal against anti-Maidanists (met at court), 1 August 2019
P28- Male, retired, was playing chess on Soborna Plosha on 2nd of May, 5 August 2019
P29- Female, participated in pro-Ukrainian march on 2nd of May, left when violence erupted, 5 August 2019
P30- Female, imports foods stuff from Moldova, 6 August 2019
P31- Female book stand holder at Kulykove Pole, 6 August 2019
P32- Male journalist and member of 2nd of May Group, actively reported on 2nd of May events, 6 August 2019
P33- Male, 7 August 2019
P34- Female teacher in college, pro-Maidanist participant in 2nd of May events, 7 August-13 August 2019
P35- Male shipper, 8 August 2019
P36- Male painter and reconstruction worker, 8 August 2019
P37- Female, former press representative of political party "Udar" in Odesa, 8 August 2019
P38- Female, head of "Odesan regional center for patriotic education of children and youthful", sister of P34, 8 August-13 August 2019
P39- Male, 9 August 2019
P40- Male, apartment rental agent, 9 August 2019
P41- Female, 9 August 2019

A2: Questions asked

In general, interviews departed from an open question:

- Could you tell me what happened on the 2nd of May?

In an ideal case, the answer to this question would give an all-encompassing reflection of one's memory, with no follow-up questions required. After all, we are researching the individual's memory, not attitudes. Thus, the asking of guiding questions might involve elements into one's narration that are originally not part of their active memory of an event. In some cases, this simple question indeed led to very extensive and natural narration, whilst others were more reluctant to expand their storytelling. Thus, dependent on the answer of the respective interviewee to this first question, I would ask more guiding questions, such as:

- Who made up which party?
- How many people were on each side?
- Who carries responsibility for these events?
- What were their motivations/ goals?
- Who started the attack?
- How many people died that day? (possibly differentiating between the city center clashes and the Trade Union Building fire)
- What caused the fire in the Trade Union Building?

After a description of the 2nd of May events was established, the interviews proceeded to a discussion of the wider political context of the events in Ukraine during and since Maidan. However, often interviewees themselves would naturally involve references to this context in their storytelling of the 2nd of May events.

- What do you think about the Maidan events?
- How would you classify the Maidan events (as a revolution or coup d'ètat)?
- Who carries responsibility for the events here (e.g. deaths from sniper attacks)?
- How do you evaluate the roles played by Russia and 'the West' in the developments in Ukraine?
- How do you relate the developments in Crimea to what happened in Odesa?
- What do you think of Poroshenko/Zelenskij/Boiko?
- What do you think of the new 'language law'?

If this not already happened automatically, I would steer the conversation to test opinions relating to the more distant history of Ukraine.

- How do you view Ukraine's history as part of the Soviet Union?
- What is your attitude towards the independence Ukraine gained in 1991?
- Do you view Odesa as a Ukrainian city?

As a final note, I would like to add that some of the above questions were included based on my observation that some elements were recurrent in the group of early interviewees. Accordingly, I found it appropriate to explicitly address these elements in later interviewees. Thus, the above list should not be considered as a list fixed from the beginning of my inquiries.