

Governing Collective Memory and the Future: Two Different Paradigms?

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Egle Rindzeviciute

“Most countries struggle to predict their future, but the Soviet Union has the most unpredictable past”, wrote the former vice-chairman of the Soviet State Committee for Technology and Science Jermen Gvishiani. Drawing on an ongoing research project about a history of prediction in the Soviet Union, as well as an earlier study about the politics of collective memory in post-Soviet Lithuania, this paper will engage with several questions that deal with the governance of the past and the future.

The main hypothesis is that so far the existing models of the governance of the future were principally based on scientific methods and techniques. These methods and techniques varied, they gained and lost their popularity since the 1960s.

In contrast, the models of the governance of “collective memory” were principally based on a definition of the “collective memory” itself. However, the first investigations of collective memory emphasised the importance of a special scholarly technique of data gathering: the notion of “memory” was popularised by those academic historians who used non-expert accounts of the oral history. Later the notion of “collective memory” was extended to a wide range of verbal and nonverbal materials, such as photographs, monuments, both natural and man-made environments.

It therefore seems that the governance of the future began and remained an epistemological project, whereas the governance of collective memory was transformed into an ontological project. In other words, to govern the future means to find an answer of the knowability of the future. But to govern “collective memory” means to identify its material expressions and support or discontinue their existence.

If this distinction holds, it is interesting to explore if the governance of the future and “collective memory” demands for/stimulates different types of politics and governmental actions. Does the governance of the future attract technocratic politics? Do populist political strategies and/or civil society micro-politics prevail in the governance of “collective memory”? Several case studies drawn from post-Soviet Lithuania will be used to discuss these questions.

Post-Soviet Policies of History: Making the past more predictable

A modern country that has experienced several waves of occupation and foreign rule has many reasons to revise its history. Hence Lithuania, a grand duchy in the 1300s-1700s, a province of the Russian empire in 1795-1900s, an nation-state in 1918-1940, a Soviet republic in 1940/44-1990 and since then an independent nation-state, a member of the European Union (2004), was never short of need to actively reconsider its past in order to ensure its future. A historian could go as far back as the Middle Ages, but in this paper I would like to direct my focus to the most recent developments of the 1990s-2000s. In what follows, I will survey the efforts that the Lithuanian government has invested in creating policy documents and programmes for explicit governance of the country's historical past and the future. I write 'explicit', because implicit agendas towards the past and the future are present in the most of policy related materials. However, in order to limit my study, here I will only study the most prominent attempts to shape, announce and implement a governmental policy towards the past and the future. My principal sources, therefore, are policy documents and related publications, as well as debates in the press.

All governmental programmes outline the anticipated future and situate the actions in several time-bounded contexts, one-year or longer ones. Concern with the past, however, does not contradict this mentality of governance: the abundant research on nationalism has showed that nation-states, and modern states in general, project themselves as synchronic communities that maintain their connection with the past generations through variety of material sources, such as written texts, works of art, architectural heritage, natural landscapes and traditions. A nation-state is particularly concerned with bringing forth into the future what is perceived as its ancient community, but even modern mentality of governance seeks to bring the past into the future, usually the past successes, be they economic domination, scientific excellence or industrial innovation. A country like Lithuania belongs to the nation-states that dwell a lot on their historical past in order to construct a platform for the future. The research question here is the following: how is the past explicitly governed through state policy and how this governance of the past is different from the governance of the future?

Governing the past

Even before the collapse of the Soviet Union, the parts of the Lithuanian past that were censored away by the communist regime were opening up to academic research, public discussion and scrutiny. The themes included a broad range of subjects, ranging from the Grand Duchy of Lithuania to the history of the interwar republic, from holocaust, the killing of the Lithuanian Jews and European Jews in Lithuania to the communist repressions and armed resistance to Soviet occupation. Together with history, a word 'memory' was often used in the public discourses: many memoirs were published and previously silenced individuals could speak out about their experiences. While this liberalisation constitutes a highly complex and politically charged terrain (the experiences were communicated through existing cultural frames and hence the accounts on the holocaust often were narrated on the basis of the Soviet version of the

events), my focus is on the specific institutionalisation of ‘memory’ as a specific epistemological device that was used for governing the present through activation of the past.

Explicit governmental programs about the past probably started as a consequence of the Napoleonic wars, when Europe saw a boom of national museums (Aronsson). The Second World War horrors saw wide programmes for commemorating the fallen soldiers both in Eastern and Western Europe (Staliunas). Particularly significant were the atrocities of the Second World War. On the one hand, it was a challenge to integrate the horrid recent past into the present and the future. On the other hand, obvious evil of national socialism provided a frame to criticise any traditional nationalist governmental attempts to mobilise the envisioned past to govern the present.

In the Soviet Union commemoration of the Second World War was a high priority in the state cultural policy and history writing. The terms of commemoration and memory hence were present in the speeches on special occasions and numerous publications that testified to the war experiences. The holocaust was addressed only in a very skewed and limited fashion. In the West, it was the tragic holocaust experience that fuelled the commemoration and memory discourses. However, it is intriguing that since the late 1980s, there appeared a boom of ‘memory’ as an issue for academic research and governmental policies.

Lithuanian governmental policy, although it assumed its own way, hence was part of this rather universal phenomenon of the memory-oriented mentality of governance.

Several stages can be distinguished:

The first stage of 1988-1999 saw ardent parliamentary discussions about commemoration and historical studies of various events, legislation concerning official days of commemoration (the Holocaust, Soviet deportations, etc). There was, however, no systematic, lasting and explicit governmental programme towards the governance of the past. Events were decided in case by case manner. Given that at that time Lithuania underwent transition from centrally-commanded to market economy and experienced two heavy economic crises (in 1992 and 1998), the lack of systematicity is not particularly surprising.

The second stage of 1999-2012 could be described as a period of a certain systematisation and institutionalisation of the governance of the past. A range of state cultural policy legislation was initiated, developed and approved. At the same time a first programme for active governmental management of history was written and adopted by the Ministry of Culture. Economic growth from 2004 to 2008 constituted a window of opportunity to many state and non-state actors to tap in and actively shape the nascent field of the policy towards the past. Here the celebration of the Millenium of the name of Lithuania in 2011 and adoption of the Law on the Fostering of Historical Memory in 2012 are important milestones in the evolution of the memory-oriented mentality of governance.

The Law on Historical Memory (2012)

In spring 2012 the Lithuanian parliament adopted a plan of the means to ‘foster historical memory’. The group behind this law consisted of several influential historians who were actively involved in public uses of history and, from the late 1990s, studies of collective memory. The plan listed funding allocated for a range of specific projects of commemoration of the Holocaust victims, Lithuanian independence leaders, Soviet deportations, activities of the Union of Political Prisoners and Deportees, and, more originally, a preparation of a dictionary of similar words in Lithuanian and Polish languages and commemoration of tsunami victims in Japan. There were no, however, projects that would be open to bids from the general public. The means, in this way, were targeted to support already existing organisations that have self-proclaimed being bearers of the Lithuanian historical memory. The innovative dimension is an attempt to demonstrate the shared Polish-Lithuanian linguistic heritage, something that breaks away from the previous puristic approach to the Lithuanian language, often voiced as the basis of the ethnic Lithuanian identity, and inclusion of a global dimension in the commemorative activities (Japan).

The structure of the means is quite typical of projects that are normally funded by the Lithuanian Ministry of Culture.

An explanatory document of the National Historical Memory Law stressed that ‘historical consciousness and memory is the foundation of the orientation of human values and the existence of the Nation State’. A specific approach of the Lithuanian citizens to historical memory was outlined: the ‘understanding of historical memory’ had to be ‘unitary’ and ‘mass involvement’ was essential in order to ensure patriotic attitudes, which were, in turn, listed as the primary goal of ‘the purposive state policy of history’.

The individuals were those who were active in the 1980s’ independence movement and exhibited highly conservative, rather ethnic-nationalist views in the 1990s (Kuzmickas, Genzelis, Ozolas). I suggest that there is a good deal of Soviet approach to unifying powers of cultural policy at work in the conceptualisation of the historical memory document.

A proposal was made to create a Council of Nation’s Historical Memory, chaired by the Parliament Chancellor and includes representatives from national and local governmental bodies and several public cultural associations. Nation not State. No ethnic minority organisations listed as able to delegate representatives: academy of science, signatories of the independence act, youth association, creative unions, i.e. establishment of the cultural elite, national archives, Unesco chair and the director of the Genocide research centre. The institutional backbone of the Council, in this way, is dominated by the governmental institutions and strong cultural policy actors with a significant presence of the members of the Academy of Science.

The law (project) defined the national historical memory as ‘a sphere of public memory that includes a system of past and present events, locations, historical processes and other memorable phenomena that are typical of the Nation and significantly important for its existence, as well as

appropriate to the traditions, mores, culture, law and state development'. The specific objects of 'national historical memory' are memorable dates, places and historical processes. The law lists 58 memorable dates, both national and international ones – three months a year, a vehicle for entire industry of commemoration managers. Memorable years are calculated by 20/25/50/100 cycles.

The Background on Forecasting in the Soviet Union

In the Soviet Union forecasts were done for separate sectors by the specialised departments at the institutes of the Soviet Academy of Science. Similar smaller, locally-adjusted studies were done in the institutes of the Soviet Lithuanian Academy of Science. Further research is needed to understand how these two processes of forecasting interacted. Forecasts were made public via translation in Communist Party Programmes that were announced at the Party Congresses.

After the declaration of Lithuania's independence, I hypothesise, that Academy institutes continued their work on sectorial forecasting for governmental purposes. It is still unclear for me when other actors stepped into the field of forecasting in Lithuania. Here an interesting question is when anticipatory knowledge about the country as a whole was first produced. So far I have located that in 2001 the non-governmental Open Fund Lithuania, sponsored by philanthropist George Soros, announced a public competition for the development of scenarios of Lithuania's future for the years 2001/2010/2020. A wide range of organisations, not only Academy institutes, supplied their versions of Lithuania's future.

On the governmental level, future knowledge was used to devise governmental programmes. As part of the European accession process, the Lithuanian government was asked to produce long-term strategic programmes, the first one (to check) was adopted in 2002. A scenario *Lithuania 2030* was developed with respect to *Europe 2020* programme, adopted in 2010 by the Council of European Leaders.

In 2012 a *National Progress Strategy 2014-220* to implement the scenario *Lithuania 2030* was adopted by the government. The strategy was developed by a specially appointed Council of National Progress under the prime minister. The council members were drawn from various experts, scholars and independent analysts from private sector.

The Strategy had the following priorities: 'Societal development, science and culture' postulates that a 'smart society', establishment of which is the goal of the strategy, cannot be created solely by the government but is a prerogative of each and every citizen. Fast accelerating technological change demands for social adjustment and poses needs of 'life-long learning, production of knowledge, creativity and entrepreneurship'. But also a lack of responsibility is identified as a problematic issue and here 'weakening historical memory' is identified as a symptom of a deeper social problem. A solution is the development of 'identity of Lithuania' (hence, not Lithuanian

identity with ethnic connotations, but an identity of a country that has a more open content) as well as ‘citizenship, leadership, collaboration and responsibility for oneself, the state, natural and cultural environment’. Responsibility as a neoliberal idea. One of the directions is to ‘establish and strengthen “lieu de memoire” of Lithuanian statehood and European integration in the civic memory’. (...)

The scenario *Lithuania 2030* opens up with words ‘Lithuania – is an agreement among all of us’. The production process involved consultations with the society and involvement of school children (need to find out if that had any impact on the final document at all). Some, however, criticised the programme for being insufficiently debated in public. The main vision is ‘Lithuania – a smart country in which it is good to live and work’ that is also a country that is ‘modern, vigorous, open to the world and fosters its national identity’, its citizens are ‘responsible, creative and open people’. ‘Smart governance’ is also to be created.

Lithuania 2030 does not make any references to scientific techniques of forecasting the future. It does not, in this way, claim authority from scientific knowledge. Instead, it claims authority from its collective authorship: the types of actors involved and the open process of discussion is described at length. It is, it seems, a consensus generating effort that does not attribute a particularly strong role to the scientific input. Forecasts, indeed, do not occupy an important role in the final text of this strategy. Instead, *Lithuania 2030* surveys a large amount of data about the existing situation as depicted on various rankings and indicator tables. Future prognoses are not used. I wonder if this is not yet another Soviet legacy, where planning methodology was principally departing from ‘an achieved level’.

On the other hand, it is not that future studies do not exist in Lithuania. There are many future scenarios done for separate sectors, such as higher education, economy, energy. It is interesting, though, that they are not explicitly present in the national strategy. A question is whether these scenarios have implicitly influenced the strategy, which would lead to a further inquiry into what particular political and policy role the strategy assumes and why scenarios need be in the background. How does this look in comparison with other countries? What kind of institutional setting / path dependence is required for explicit and active involvement in scientific governance of the future?

National Strategies and Consultant Visions

Emergence of new actors? (about 20 NGOs were involved in the production of *Lithuania 2030*), how does the organisational field for long term planning in Lithuania differ from the organisational field that engages in historical memory governance. Neoliberalism, public management.

When and How Do Forecasts and Commemorations Converge?

A preliminary observation is that there is a certain ‘presentism’ that is pertinent to governing both the past and the future in Lithuania. Both programs, on the historical memory and of the future, depart from the ‘present’ criteria that are then normatively weighed against desired state of being.

An interesting difference between attempts to govern the historical memory and the future is invoking of the wider context. The historical memory invokes a temporary horizon that is largely limited to the current territory of Lithuania and its professional historiography (with some exceptions allowed to Poland and Siberia). The future, in contrast, is continuously measured against European and global indicators.

A third observation is that the future strategy heavily emphasised involvement of multiple actors in its preparation; this was not the case of the programme for the historical memory. It seems, that there is a perception that the group that is delegated a task of outlining the governance of the future needs more legitimisation, whereas the intellectual circles that position themselves to govern historical memory do not experience a lack of legitimacy, hence they do not feel pressed to orchestrate public participation.