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Foreword to the Series

When war comes to your life, archives might be the furthest thing from your mind. But what traces of that war will be preserved in archives is crucial to what the future, and the future's past, will look like. In June 2023, around 150 people—scholars and journalists, lawyers and artists, writers and activists, nearly all of them from Ukraine—gathered in Lviv at the symposium “The Most Documented War” to share their stories of living through and documenting Russia’s full-scale war against Ukraine. At that moment, all of them, in different ways, had been engaged in documentation for almost a year and a half: some with a view to a future criminal tribunal, some focused on preserving the stories of the places and people closest to them—homes, workplaces, families.

The question “what comes next?” was a major preoccupation in these conversations about documenting, archiving, and access, possible research and possible resources. This underlying question prompted participants and organizers alike to look for ways to continue and indeed broaden such conversations. One way is to convene such symposiums annually, which we have done and will continue to do, and another is this publication series, “Stories of War: A Series on Documenting and Archiving.”

The series is conceived of as a collective and lasting effort in rethinking the processes of storymaking in the ways experiences of war are noted, stored, transmitted and made sense of. By considering how narratives frame, but also discriminate; link, but also divide; explain, but also silence, we want to problematize the very act of narration. The series, however, is not focused on narrative structures per se, but rather on the elements that enable these structures:

sources and archives. Furthermore, emphasizing the processes, rather than documents and institutions, helps to challenge the notion of knowledge and history as static and factual.

Thus, the series focuses on documenting and archiving as interconnected yet diverging processes. Some of the questions the series raises are: Who documents—or, rather, who has the capacity to document? Who has the resources to archive and maintain those archives? As a result, which experiences are noticed, which experiences are hard to catch, and which experiences are dismissed as irrelevant—or remain invisible? What choices and options are available to address the reality that not everything can be documented and preserved? Asking these questions in the midst of war might help us to see and discuss the ambiguities and contradictions of different priorities, motivations, and expectations of both those who are directly engaged in documentation and archiving and those who are impacted.

In the long term, we are also thinking about issues of access and maintenance. While documenting can be seen as an act of resilience with a view towards justice, thinking critically about archiving opens a conversation about long-term responsibility—justice in a different way. Both documentation and archiving are practices oriented towards the future. Yet, acknowledging the openness of the future, we see this series as a space where we acknowledge our limits—of knowledge, of awareness—and the need for joint efforts to face what might come.

For this first volume of the series, Natalia Otrishchenko interviewed documentation practitioners, who themselves had conducted interviews with eyewitnesses of the war. In this book, they reflect on their work and on the stories they recorded. Yet, for reasons ethical, practical, or coincidental, those recorded stories might be made available much later, or maybe never. Reflections can be shared before the material that informs those reflections. War confronts us with the different temporalities of what is experienced, documented, archived, and narrated. These are hardly linear relations.

The very design of the series reflects an attempt to engage critically with the issue of the time that is taken to produce and present knowledge, and the inequalities embedded in such timing. Wars result in publications on different timelines. Whereas journalists may file a story within an hour of an event, an academic monograph may take many years to appear. This series is a format that sits in between: publications will take much longer than media coverage, but will be significantly quicker to appear in comparison to traditional academic publishing. Such positioning can be seen not as undermining

the value of these other genres, but rather bridging immediacy and interpretation—allowing for reaction and reflection, emphasizing the process rather than isolated moments or final results, and noticing things that otherwise might later be overlooked. In a way, with this series we are making notes to revisit in the future.

Where one's work gets published conditions visibility. Experiences and their representation happen in different languages and may reflect imbalances, especially when we talk about knowledge production across different geographies. More often than not, wars take place in some locations, while knowledge is produced and capitalized on in others. This series originates in a specific place and time: Ukraine under attack from the Russian Federation. Volumes appear in both Ukrainian and English. Published in Ukrainian, this series acknowledges the immense effort that has been put into capturing mass violence, atrocities, and daily experiences of war in Ukraine. This series is a part of this newly emerging reality and we hope it might be helpful in living through the war and navigating the uneasy terrain of conceptualizing such a life-shattering experience. At the same time, the series is also published in English, a language which can be read broadly. Less a matter of representation and outreach, we see the English edition as a possibility to foster connections and conversations. This is especially meaningful when we are in the process of exploring ideas rather than presenting final results. Connecting precisely in this moment of uncertainty, and maybe even in a moment of academic vulnerability, is a way to effect change, through multi-vocal conversation rather than authoritative speech.

Time and space are resources, and they can be scarce, especially in the context of war. When and where one can publish tends to be unequally distributed, and this in turn conditions what is considered as knowledge and then as the basis for future actions. With this series we would like to address asymmetries in documentation, archiving, and knowledge production. In other words, we hope to add to ongoing efforts that challenge the division between places where there are sources and maybe even archives, on the one hand, and places where authoritative knowledge is produced, on the other. We envision the series as a venue to ponder the notions of source, archive, and knowledge, and to look for ways of building a more sensitive and collaborative process of reflection and research connecting different places.

Positioning this series both in-between and within the customary temporal frameworks of the publishing process calls for some experimentation. The forms of its volumes are fluid and hybrid. There will

be interviews, essays, selections of sources (whether textual, visual, or other), scholarly articles, and even artworks. Especially when brought together in one volume, diverse formats can help in challenging the hierarchy of theorizing and documenting and in questioning who has the right and visibility to make knowledge. Short compilations seem to be more appropriate to existing capacities, especially for people impacted by war, but also better suited to explore what we consider a source, an archive, or knowledge of war. Such an approach reflects where we are now. This can change, and perhaps down the line we may welcome a monograph, a form from which we refrain given its status as the pinnacle of knowledge production, but which we do not aim to exclude. It is also important to us that the series will be available open-access in both English and Ukrainian, as part of our commitment to broadening the conversation.

Our departure point is Ukraine in war. The first volume in this series is *Conversations with Those Who Ask about War: Practices of Interviewing during Russia's Invasion of Ukraine*, created by Natalia Otrishchenko in conversation with over twenty people who document the war. It directly engages with oral testimony practices in documenting war experiences in 2022-23. While the initial publications in this series will focus on the contexts of Russia's war against Ukraine, we see this series as not locked on one place. Instead, it will seek to connect people and places, across different geographies and times, who were or still are impacted and transformed by war.

Stories of War is launched as a cooperation between several institutions and initiatives: the Documenting Ukraine program of the Institute for Human Sciences (IWM Vienna), the Center for Urban History, the Max Weber Foundation's Research Centre Ukraine, and INDEX: Institute for Documentation and Exchange. The scope of the future series will be shaped by conversations among the editorial and advisory boards, and we are grateful to our colleagues from different disciplines and countries who agreed to join this initiative. The Ukrainian edition of the first volume was made possible thanks to the Körber-Stiftung, and in particular Gabriele Woidelko—a collaboration which was not limited to sharing resources but also ideas and motivation. While fuller acknowledgments and thanks will come as a part of the Introduction to this volume, we would like to thank Natalia Otrishchenko, who by conceiving this book in fact gave the impulse to the series that we are honored to inaugurate with this publication.

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