

22nd Workshop on the History and Memory of National Socialist Camps and Extermination Sites - Practices of Memory and Knowledge Production

Veranstalter: Janine Fubel (Berlin), Christoph Gollasch (Berlin), Katja Grosse-Sommer (Stockholm), Borbála Klacsmann (Budapest), Denisa Nešťáková (Bratislava), Mareike Otters (Oberhausen)

Datum, Ort: 16.10.2017–22.10.2017, Budapest

Bericht von: Sandra Franz, Historisches Seminar, Heinrich-Heine-Universität Düsseldorf/University of Oxford; Jozef Hyrja, Hochschule für Jüdische Studien Heidelberg

The 22nd Workshop on the History and Memory of National Socialist Camps and Extermination Sites took place in Budapest, Hungary and was organized by MA and PhD students and young professionals. The workshop has been organized annually by and for university graduates from various disciplines. It generally intends to support international and interdisciplinary research by promoting a dialogue between researchers. A distinctive feature is its principle of self-organization. The topic of the workshop is linked to the place where it is organized. The subject of this year's workshop was „Practices of Memory and Knowledge Production“. The workshop presenters will have the possibility to publish their papers in a collective volume.

This year, twelve young scientists and professionals from eight different countries and fields of history, literature, cultural science etc., presented their current research related to the memory of National Socialist camps, extermination sites, forced labor, victim groups, etc. During the six days of the workshop two keynote speeches were given by Andrea Pető (CEU) and by Csaba Dupcsik (Hungarian Academy of Sciences). Both speakers elaborated on different aspects of discourses of remembrance, focusing particular on the Hungarian case.

As part of the additional activities, the group visited the site of the Monor transit camp, the Holocaust Memorial Center, House of Terror and had a presentation at CEU Budapest and the follow-up guided tour at Liberty Square. The group had dinner at Au-

rora, a hub for activist and civil associations in Hungary. On the final day of the workshop, János Forgács, a Hungarian Holocaust survivor, held a speech.

The first panel was dedicated to sites of memory. KAROLINA KOPROWSKA and SYLWIA PAPIER (Krakow), both members of the Research Centre for Memory Cultures at the Jagiellonian University, presented their project „Between Art and Academia: The Un-memorialized site of KL Plaszow – Possible Futures“. They presented various projects of commemorative practices using art as a public communication tool. They also created exhibitions and interventions directly on the site of the former NS camp in Krakow. During the presentation, participants had the opportunity to explore the interactive and successful project „Mark Plaszow“.¹

HANNAH WILSON (Nottingham) took part in the archeological excavations at the site of the death camp Sobibor. Her presentation „Uncovered Topographies: Preservation and Memorialization of Sobibor Death Camp“ addressed the nature and extent of changes at the memorial site of Sobibor from the 1980s until today. Wilson explored how archeological excavations and various findings in Eastern Europe contributed to the increased focus on the once neglected Sobibor death camp.

GERO FEDTKE (Jena) from the Buchenwald and Mittelbau-Dora Memorials Foundation, one of the cooperation-partners of this year's workshop, asked whether the phenomenon of forced labor should be dealt with as a separate topic, as it is now often identified with Holocaust history. In his presentation „Nazi forced labour: An „appendage to the Holocaust“? Fedtke explained that the complexity of Nazi forced labor should not be reduced in public discourse to one narrative. The international travelling exhibition „Forced Labor. The Germans, The Forced Laborers and the War“ contextualized how scholars should contribute to the adequate public awareness of the topic.

While today there is a memorial erected at the site of the former concentration subcamp of Leipzig-Thekla, commemorating 80 prisoners massacred there in 1945, all the other subcamps are un-memorialized. MAXIMIL-

¹<http://www.oznaczplaszow.com> (05.02.2018).

IAN SCHULZ (Leipzig) presented his PhD research on three other subcamps which served as a source of labour for a fighter aircraft manufacturer. His presentation „Commemorating National Socialist Forced Labour and Subcamps in Leipzig: The Erla-Maschinenwerke GmbH Leipzig and the ‘Abtaundorf Massacre’“ focused on existing knowledge of the subcamps and what forms commemoration could take in the future, given more information about the forced labour camps system in this specific case.

In Panel II „Hegemonic and Counter-Narratives“, NICHOLAS WARMUTH (Budapest) focused on the Flossenbürg war crime trials and the social stigmatization of the victims and witnesses during hearings. Originally initiated by Nazi camp guards, prisoners had to wear different colored triangles in order to differentiate between prisoners. Warmuth showed that the US Army court kept the same identification system, and the attached stigma, during the trials. His research deals with the danger of reproducing the systematic prisoner classification, allowing for generalization of prisoners’ identities. By accepting this stratification, the US army court acknowledged the legality of the Nazi regime.

ANJA THIELE (Jena) focused on the memory of the Holocaust in German Democratic Republic (GDR) fiction literature. During the existence of the GDR, the topic of Jewish persecution and extermination was marginalized due to the myth of antifascist resistance. The topic of the Holocaust found its place in the writings of some Jewish authors who survived and resided in the GDR, including Stephan Hermlin, Peter Edel, Fred Wander or Jurek Becker. Detailed examination of their texts shows a historically unique approach to Holocaust memory.

„The Politics of Holocaust and Jewish Memory in Contemporary Poland“ was the title of JONATHAN ZISOOK’s (New York) presentation. Zisook showed the impact of Jan Gross’ book „*Sąsiedzi*“ („Neighbors“), sparking a vigorous national debate, also because the topic was not addressed during the Communist era. In order to demonstrate the character of the Polish debate, Zisook drew parallels to the West German *Historikerstreit* („The Historians’ Controversy“) of the 1980s.

MIRJAM SCHNORR (Heidelberg) opened Panel Three and examined the post-war commemoration of „anti-social women“ between 1933 and 1945 in her presentation „Forgotten Victims: Prostitutes and pimps between Stigmatization and Memorization“. Their stigmatization continued in concentration camps as they stood at the bottom of the hierarchy of inmates. After 1945, their prosecution during the Nazi period was not criminally classified. Schnorr pointed out that up until today, some organizations of NS victims and former camp inmates distance themselves from those who were then classified as „anti-socials“. Schnorr showed that prostitutes and pimps can be seen as „forgotten victims“, systematically excluded from public remembrance as well as restitution practices.

ANJA REUSS (Berlin) presented „Sinti and Roma survivors in the aftermath of WWII in Germany“, focusing on the living conditions of Sinti and Roma survivors from 1945 to 1950. She analyzed the continuity of their stigmatization on a social, cultural, educational and political level in everyday life. Reuss focused on three points: The struggle for recognition as victims of Nazi persecution the specifics of post-war antigypsyism within German society, as well as the persecution of Sinti and Roma by police and how their racist views shaped German public discourse.

BIBIJANA PAPO (Zagreb) presented on „Memorialization of the Roma genocide: The Case of Croatia“. During World War II, almost the entire Roma community in the Independent State of Croatia was killed. Papo argued that under the Yugoslav socialist government from 1945-1990, but also afterwards, Roma victims were marginalized and rarely commemorated. This began to change in the late 2000s, and today there is more attention to the Roma genocide. Increased attention is given to the Roma cemetery with the remains of at least 21 mass graves within the former Jasenovac extermination site. Papo focused on the forms of commemoration of Roma victims in Croatia and its recent development, as well as the role of the state and the Roma community itself in the commemoration process. For example, while some Roma would prefer a memorial place especially dedicated to the Roma persecution and genocide at Jasenovac,

others would prefer to be fully included in the main exhibition and perceive the fact that they are not as discriminating.

The last panel of the Workshop began with the presentation of DANIEL SCHUCH (Jena). His presentation „Remembering Buchenwald? Considerations about the Transformations of Holocaust Testimony“ focused on narratives of NS camp survivors and how they changed over time. Schuch showed how their complex experiences and memories were transformed into tellable stories. He questioned how we define the value of interviews with Holocaust survivors as historical sources concerning knowledge production, Focusing on the Jewish survivor Jack Unikowski (né Izrael Unkowski) and his experiences in Buchenwald concentration camp, interviewed first in a DP camp and two more times since, Schuch explored how Unikowski talks about the camp and the narrations change in the three interviews, thus illustrating to what extent and why the recordings conducted shortly after the end of World War II differ from later interviews. Schuch argued that there is a significant transformation in the objectives of testimony production: from early knowledge production to moral lessons for future generations. The largely consistent autobiographical narrations are shaped by different cultures of historical social expectations.

The last presenter LUKAS NIEVOLL (Graz), who, in his presentation “‘Mem’ for Murer and The Different Shades of Memory: Moving Between Victim’s Testimonies and Perpetrator Narratives of the Ghetto Vilnius and the Paneriai Extermination Site“ talked about the narratives of the events in the Ghetto Vilnius and Franz Murer who oversaw the ghetto from July 1941 until July 1943. He was arrested and brought to court in Austria, where he was acquitted in June 1963. Nievoll focused on the accounts of this trial and the channelization and the superimposition of memory. Witness testimony of former ghetto inmates were labeled within the court as „unauthentic“ and met with much skepticism, which, Nievoll argued, denied them their own memory. Additionally, frames of experience and interests collided during the trial, for example in form of judges with a

Nazi past and a lack of knowledge about the complex Ghetto environment. During the trial testimonies accuracies were reduced and the performance of the witnesses was judged leading to further conflicts.

The presentations of this years’ workshop touched upon a wide spectrum of topics and highlighted several research desiderates, especially when it comes to NS persecution in Eastern Europe. The political changes in some countries and the larger national narrative heavily influence the way individual groups of victims are commemorated. Places of persecution as well as perpetrators and victim groups were discussed and compared in relation to established narratives and practices of commemoration. One of the main issues was the tendency of West-European countries to regard their established way of commemoration as the „correct one“, disregarding and easily dismissing other national approaches, particularly by Eastern-European countries and being insensitive to these countries’ individual history and cultural background. During discussions, the group talked about ways to sensitively deal with this subject. The keynote lectures, excursions and exhibitions were valuable impulses and experiences which enabled the participants to engage with the complex situation in Hungary. The transnational exchange within the group proved to be most useful and rewarding. In a collegial and supportive environment with a low hierarchy the participants gave constructive feedback on each other’s projects from various national perspectives. In 2018, the workshop will be carried further with the 23rd Workshop with the title „Between absence and affirmation“, taking place in Thessaloniki, Greece.

Conference Overview:

Keynote lecture

Memorialisation of contagious memories: politics of spaces in Holocaust remembrance
Dr. Andrea Peto (Budapest)

Panel I: Sites of memory

Between Art and Academia: the Unmemorialized site of KL Plaszow – Possible Futures
Karolina Koprowska & Sylwia Papier (Krakow)

Uncovered Topographies: Preservation and Memorialization of Sobibor Death Camp
Hannah Wilson (Nottingham)

Nazi forced labour: An „appendage to the Holocaust“? Gero Fedtke (Weimar)

Commemorating National Socialist Forced Labour and Sub-camps in Leipzig: The Erla-Maschinenwerke GmbH Leipzig and the „Abtnaundorf Massacre“ Maximilian Schulz (Leipzig)

Panel II: Hegemonic and counter-narratives

Social Stigmatization and the USAC: A Case-Study of the KL-Flossenbürg Trials
Nicholas Warmuth (Budapest)

Representations of the Holocaust in East German Literature Anja Thiele (Jena)

The Politics of Holocaust and Jewish Memory in Contemporary Poland Jonathan Zisook (New York)

Panel III: Forgotten victim groups

Forgotten Victims: Prostitutes and Pimps between Stigmatization and Memorization
Mirjam Schnorr (Mannheim)

Sinti and Roma Survivors in the Aftermath of WWII in Germany Anja Reuss (Berlin)

Memorialization of the Roma Genocide: the Case of Croatia Bibijana Papo (Zagreb)

Keynote Lecture: The other Holocaust (Porrajmos, Pharrajamos, or Roma Samudaripen)
Csaba Dupcsik (Senior Research Fellow, Research Department for Methodology and History: Hungarian Academy of Sciences)

Panel IV: Sources of memory and knowledge production

Remembering Buchenwald? Considerations about the Transformation of Holocaust Testimony
Daniel Schuch (Jena)

„Mem“ for Murer and the Different Shades of Memory: Moving Between Victims' Testimonies and Perpetrator Narratives of the ghetto Vilnius and the Paneriai Extermination Site
Lukas Nievoll (Graz)

Tagungsbericht *22nd Workshop on the History and Memory of National Socialist Camps and Extermination Sites - Practices of Memory and Knowledge Production*. 16.10.2017–22.10.2017, Budapest, in: H-Soz-Kult 10.02.2018.