

Genealogies of Memory 2020 – The Holocaust between Global and Local Perspectives. Conference report.

Organized by the European Network Remembrance and Solidarity (ENRS), the conference entitled *Genealogies of Memory 2020 – The Holocaust between Global and Local Perspectives* took place in the form of eight sessions between November 4 and 26, 2020. Due to the ongoing pandemic, instead of an in-person event, the organizers conducted the conference online, streamed via Zoom and Youtube, thus making it accessible to a wide international audience.

The most important goal of the conference was, according to the website of ENRS, “to assess the current state of Holocaust memory research” in the light of increasing globalization, as well as various new trends. Through seven key topics and a final roundtable discussion, the speakers explored issues connected to the interaction of universal and local Holocaust memory and ethical questions related to them. Each session started with a keynote address, which was followed by presentations by young and established scholars and the observations of a commentator.

The first session, which addressed the practical ethics of Holocaust memory, started with Piotr Cywiński’s (Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum) keynote, in which he delineated the development and major turning points of Holocaust remembrance. The following four presenters highlighted certain episodes and practices of the memorialization process, such as the role that Raul Hilberg, eminent scholar of the Holocaust, played in the establishment of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Olof Bortz emphasized that Hilberg wanted to make the museum’s exhibit as authentic as possible, which generated tensions between different views on how to present the past and thus contributed to the discussion on commemoration.

The second session was dedicated to the Ringelblum Archive, a collection of documents compiled by the Oneg Shabbath group in the Warsaw ghetto, which is considered “the earliest historiography of the Holocaust.” Keynote speaker Omer Bartov (Brown University) linked the Ringelblum Archive to the main topic of the conference by discussing four factors: the increasing importance of history writing from below, local histories, the Holocaust as a first-person history, and the benefits of these new approaches. According to Bartov, the term “industrial killing,” which is so often applied to the Holocaust, is problematic because it obscures the fact that in many cases the victims stood face to face with the perpetrators before they were killed. Research on these atrocities and the

relations between Jews, their neighbors and the Germans, as well as individual experiences can further an understanding of the nuances and dynamics of the Holocaust.

Bartov's points were supported by the following presentations, which discussed various characteristics of the Ringelblum Archive. Katarzyna Person, for instance, focused on the situation of women who were forced to become prostitutes in the ghettos and the assessment of their role by the historians of the archive. By placing a relatively small group in the center of the investigation, Person could provide a more detailed picture of their agency, the difference between sexual barter and rape, and the specificities of how they were written about in the archive.

The third session, which dealt with "borderland memories," began with Éva Kovács's (Vienna Wiesenthal Institute) keynote lecture. Kovács explored and compared various spaces of remembrance: a private Holocaust museum in Rwanda, an exhibition about Srebrenica in Budapest, and the efforts to uncover mass graves of Holocaust victims in Minsk. She then elaborated on the intertwining local and transnational memory, touching on idealized or suppressed local remembrance too. The following panel presentations also addressed the topics of landscapes of memory and remembrance culture, among them the project description of Nadja Danglmaier and Daniel Wutti. The educational project aimed to integrate the common cultural history (including the Holocaust) of Carinthia, a border region between Austria and Slovenia, into school curricula on both sides of the border.

The session "Overlooking the Local Dimensions of the Holocaust," which raised questions concerning linguistics and translation, started with a keynote lecture by Mindaugas Kvietkauskas, Minister of Culture of Lithuania and an academic, about the diaries of Jewish children in Vilnius. Three of the panelists then discussed Claude Lanzmann's documentary film *Shoah*. Dorota Głowacka, for instance, explored the mistranslations in the movie's languages: Polish, Yiddish, German, French, and how this implicitly conveyed an image of anti-Semitic Poles who were ignorant of Jewish culture. Roma Sendyka's presentation, on the other hand, suggested a possible solution to this problem, namely the re-translation of the Polish bystanders' lines.

The fifth session addressed current shifts and methods in Holocaust studies, such as avantgarde environmental history, as discussed by keynote speaker Ewa Domańska (Adam Mickiewicz University), which aims to reveal the complex relationship between the events of the Holocaust and their environment and

thus to construct holistic knowledge. In her presentation, Hannah Wilson presented three objects connected to survivors of the Sobibór death camp and how the meaning of these objects changed from generation to generation.

Jackie Feldman of Ben-Gurion University delivered the keynote for the sixth session. Feldman touched on the digital turn, the end of the age of the witness and the ways in which various technological solutions may alter the existing memoryscape. Liat Steir-Livny's presentation on the short film *Eva.Stories* was strongly linked to this topic. The movie, which is a compilation of Instagram stories, managed to foster interest among masses of young people, and Steir-Livny analyzed the components of its success.

The topic of the seventh session was the connection between global and local memory, to which Daniel Levy of Stony Brook University provided an adept background in his keynote address. The entanglement of national, cosmopolitan, and global memoryscapes was also tackled by Agnieszka Wierzycholska, who discussed the difficulties that emerged when she was pressed to satisfy the expectations of both Polish and German audiences with her research on social relations in pre-war and post-war Tarnów.

During the final roundtable discussion, Éva Kovács, Ewa Domańska, Daniel Levy, and Jackie Feldman summarized the core issues of the conference, raising new questions and discussing new trends and possibilities in Holocaust research. All in all, the conference offered a rich variety of topics examined by some of the most eminent researchers, and it offered young scholars opportunities to talk about their research. Since the sessions were recorded, they are still available both on the Youtube channel and the Facebook site of ENRS. Thus, those who missed the original event can still listen to them. This can be recommended not only to Holocaust scholars but to anyone interested in contemporary history.

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