

Call for Papers

Public and Applied History on the Battlefield of Europe. Dealing with Painful Pasts in the 20th Century

First conference of the Jean Monnet Network “Applied European Contemporary History”

History and representations of the past have become an increasingly public issue, especially over the past decades. The prerogative of interpretation no longer belongs exclusively to scholars and institutions related to universities. The reasons for this vary. Civil society, for instance, increasingly wishes to have a voice in representing pasts that were experienced as painful (which e.g. holds true for NGOs in post-war or post-dictatorship societies). Another reason might be the effort to tell histories from below which so far have been neglected by academic discourse, as with the history workshop movement in Great Britain, Germany and other European countries. Yet a completely different explanation point toward the nostalgic appropriation of the past often found in local heritage and history societies.

In this situation of change historical sciences are undergoing a phase of adaptation in order to recognize the democratization of the production of historical knowledge. Public and Applied History are aiming at responding to this challenge. They provide an innovative approach to historical sciences that deals with the intersections between academic research and society's methods of producing historical knowledge. While Public History can be described as the broad and overarching concept that deals with the uses of the past in public, Applied History as its subordinate field explores more specifically how historical knowledge is made; how interpretations of the past impact society; why there is a societal need to deal with the past at all; and finally, what effect these issues have on the scientific methods of historical research.

In doing so Public and Applied History can provide an innovative contribution to that highlights historical science's European scope. This approach is the underlying idea of the **Jean Monnet Network “Applied European Contemporary History.”** As part of the broad field of Public History, the network aims to how methods of dealing with the past can be informed by a deeper understanding of the historical cultures of the neighbouring European countries. Comprising members from Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Germany, Poland, and Serbia, the network strives to explain national cultures of history in their specific constructions and further create relationships between them, thus making potential conflicts both appreciated and understood. A central issue is how societies come to terms with experiences of war and violence and of guilt and victimhood in the 20th century.

At the same time the network aims to sharpen the methodology and didactics of this approach through a transnational dialogue beyond its participants. During our first conference, we would like to discuss the network's approach with interested scholars and practitioners from European countries in order to map the European landscape of Public and Applied History.

In a first step, we would like to explore the similarities and differences between theoretical and analytical approaches to and terminology of Public and Applied History (not always necessarily labelled as such) and their uses in different national contexts throughout Europe. Initially these discussions were stipulated by the discourse concerning “memory” and “remembrance.” As the field

has been developing dynamically, the references and connections between the memory discourse and Public and Applied History should be scrutinized in this panel, too.

The papers in this section could address the following questions:

- When and why did “memory” become a crucial concept in the humanities in the respective countries?
- Which terms regarding Memory Studies and Public and Applied History have been coined so far? To what theoretical concepts do these terms refer?
- To what extent do transfer processes between countries and scientific communities play a role when new terms are coined in the field of Memory Studies / Public and Applied History?
- The debates in Memory Studies and Public and Applied History respond to what social needs?
- How do practitioners who work in sites of memory, museums, education, and other realms outside universities view the debate on Memory Studies and Public and Applied History?

In a second step, we would like to discuss case studies in Public and Applied History from European countries that are concerned with dealing with painful pasts in the 20th century. These case studies should focus on national frameworks of Public or Applied History as well as emphasize transnational constellations.

Questions addressed by these papers might be:

- To what extent does civil society claim to be an actor in the production, representation and implementation of historical knowledge? To what need(s) do civil society actors respond, and what aims do they follow when engaging in public history or memory work?
- To what theoretical concepts do these initiatives refer? To what extent do transnational networks play a role?
- How far do initiatives from below contribute to a democratization of the production of historical knowledge?
- How are negotiations shaped by public history actors and representatives of official politics of remembrance in cases of contested pasts? How do initiatives from below interfere with politics of history education?
- What alternative histories do these initiatives try to tell? What narratives do they shape? And concerning painful pasts: Where are limits of understanding the Other?

The conference will take place at Friedrich Schiller University, Jena, Germany, from November 7th to November 9th. Accommodation and travelling costs will be arranged and covered. The conference will take place in English.

If interested, please send an abstract (no longer than 300 words) and a short CV by **July 15th, 2017** to Dennis Dierks (dennis.dierks@uni-jena.de) and Juliane Tomann (juliane.tomann@uni-jena.de).