

12. Berliner Colloquium zur Zeitgeschichte

**Dead Soldiers Fighting. War Monuments and Memorials
Beyond Memory and Representation**

Convenor: Mischa Gabowitsch (Einstein Forum, Potsdam)

Conference language: English

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Questionnaire

The questions in this guide are phrased so as to make us discuss specific memorials and practices. The intention is to enlarge our mutual store of empirical cases before trying to settle larger theoretical or conceptual questions in a comparative perspective. We start with contemporary uses of war memorials before looking at their origins, in order to counter the presupposition that the creators' intentions always automatically define a memorial's meaning. Participants are warmly encouraged to refer to specific memorials throughout.

Session 1 Rituals

- * What kinds of rituals have emerged around »your« war memorials? How have they changed over time?
- * Are there interesting practices of a non-ritual nature that are facilitated by the memorial, and does its being a war memorial significantly affect these practices?
- * How does the memorial structure the physical and emotional space of rituals? Is there a significant difference between individual memorials in contained, dedicated spaces, and complexes that are spread out across a city or integrated into non-commemorative spaces?
- * How do the ritual uses of war memorials differ from other funerary or commemorative rituals? For example, are they less personalized? Does it matter whether a memorial marks a burial place or is »just« a monument?
- * What kinds of behavior does the memorial's existence or location suppress or make more difficult?
- * How do state-controlled or state-organized rituals differ from grassroots rituals? Does the distinction make sense in every case? Is it useful to speak of local populations »subverting« rituals?
- * Is there a significant difference between military rituals (such as parades) and non-military ones? Who participates in these rituals, and who shapes them?

Who among those present at the memorial guides or polices behavior?

* Do war memorials possess a totemic value in the Durkheimian sense, and if so, what is the community whose self-image is being reinforced by the totem? Which values are being expressed by the memorial and its ritual or non-ritual uses?

Chair: Martin Schaad

Session 2 Origins

* What came first: the memorial or the ritual? Are states and other agencies free to design commemorative ceremonies and other memorials from scratch, or do they need to take pre-existing local, national, and international traditions into account, and if so, in what way?

* Who really shapes what the memorials look like, and decides on their materials, location, orientation, etc.? Who decides who is mentioned/included in the memorial, and who is left out? Who defines the categories used to describe those who are being honored/commemorated, such as heroes/victims, soldiers/civilians etc?

* Does it matter to a memorial whether the event commemorated actually took place at the location and if so, how?

* What is the role of the military leadership, and how do generals interact with national and local politicians, as well as with sculptors, architects, landscape designers, and also war veterans?

* What happens behind the scenes of architectural competitions, and after the awarding of the official commission?

* What is the role of local initiatives, e.g. by veterans and their associations, family members of dead soldiers, or local politicians?

* How does a war memorial gain legitimacy and acceptance among local populations?

* How do war memorials fit into a town's (or village's) general architectural and commemorative landscape?

* What is the relationship between war memorials and other kinds of burial sites for soldiers, such as military cemeteries or unmarked graves?

Chair: Bettina Greiner

Session 3 War memorials and the state

- * Is »the state« a meaningful unitary agent of the construction of war memorials?
- * What makes states erect (national) military memorials?
- * Which factors influence decisions at the highest level?
- * Who is the main target audience of the memorials from the point of view of the state? Its own military? Veterans? Family members? The domestic population as a whole? Conquered populations that may or may not continue to be under its military/colonial control? International supporters? Foreign leaders?
- * Do war memorials have a military significance that is distinct from their symbolic value? In situations of conquest and colonization, but also internal pacification, can they be viewed as part of a state's military machinery along with live soldiers and their equipment?
- * Do states uphold a military hierarchy in death as in life?
- * How does the state negotiate the conflicting interests that go into planning and erecting memorials? What makes state actors take up commemorative initiatives that emanate from non-state actors, such as veterans' organizations or sculptors?
- * What is a national war memorial? How does it differ from a regular war memorial?
- * In what ways do states police the landscape of war memorials?
- * What is the difference between states' interests in national memorials and minor or local ones? Are large, centrally located individual memorials more important than multitudes of smaller ones?
- * From the point of view of the state, can a war memorial fail? Are there examples of failed memorials?

Chair: Bernd Greiner

Session 4 Modifications

- * What is a war memorial?
- * How does one write the biography of a war memorial?
- * Are memorials eternal? What is their average life span, and how is it influenced by political developments and other factors, including environmental ones?
- * Can war memorials really keep the memory of a war, or of the soldiers who died in it, alive? Or is their meaning lost or modified as that memory becomes more distant?

- * What is the larger impact of the various events in the life of a war memorial: reburial, rededication, removal, destruction, reconstruction, etc.?
- * How do stone soldiers fight in memory wars?

Chair: Mischa Gabowitsch

Suggested Reading

Scott W. Palmer, How Memory was Made: The Construction of the Memorial to the Heroes of the Battle of Stalingrad. In: *The Russian Review*. 68(2009),3; 373-407

Michael A. Stern, The National Cemetery System: Politics, Place, and Contemporary Cemetery Design. In: Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn (Ed.), *Places of Commemoration: Search for Identity and Landscape Design*. Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 2001; 107-130

Jay Winter, Remembrance and Redemption. A Social Interpretation of War Memorials. In: *Harvard Design Magazine*. (1999),9; 1-6