

Holocaust Remembrance and Representation

Documentation from a Research Conference

*Research anthology of the Inquiry on
a Museum about the Holocaust*

Stockholm 2020



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Preface

This anthology is the documentation from the international research conference on Holocaust remembrance and representation held in Stockholm in February 12–13 2020 arranged by the Inquiry on a Museum about the Holocaust (Ku 2019:01).

It contains the keynotes and papers presented at the conference as well as summaries of the panel discussions. The conference was an important input for the inquiry in putting together its report.

The mission of the inquiry was to propose how a museum to preserve the memory of the Holocaust in Sweden should be established.

The terms of reference for the inquiry points out that stories from survivors with a connection to Sweden should be of central importance. The museum should also be able to describe the Holocaust in a broad historical context as well as Sweden's role during the Second World War. The museum should have a strong foundation in current research on the Second World War and the Holocaust, and establish international networks, both within research and with other museums focused on the Holocaust.

One important part of the task was to gather knowledge and information from scholars, museums, government authorities, civil society and other organizations currently working on issues relating to the Holocaust, in Sweden. This was done in several ways, and one way was to hold a conference.

The creation of a Museum about the Holocaust is of high priority to the Swedish government. Prime Minister Stefan Löfven said in his Statement of Government Policy of January 21st, 2019:

A new museum will be established to preserve and pass on the memory of the Holocaust. Never forget – this was the promise we made to each other. Sweden will never forget.¹

¹ Statement of Government Policy, January 21, 2019.

Prime Minister Löfven will also host the Malmö International Forum on Holocaust Remembrance and Combating Antisemitism on October 26–27, 2020 in Malmö, Sweden.

The Forum will take place 75 years after the end of the Second World War and the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau. This year also marks 20 years since the first Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust was held, and the establishment of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA).

As can be noted, Sweden has a long tradition of observing these questions. The former Prime Minister Göran Persson engaged in these issues already in 1998, when he created the Uppsala Programme for Holocaust and Genocide Studies and published the book “... tell ye your children”, written by the scholars Stéphane Bruchfeld and Paul A. Levine, and in 2003 when the government authority The Living History Forum was established.

The conference was characterized by a wish to discuss, reflect and to start the conversation on what a Holocaust Museum in Sweden could be and what it should do. Hopefully, this anthology could contribute to that discussion.

Birgitta Svensson
Inquiry chair

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Introduction

Karin Kvist Geverts (editor)

A Conference on Holocaust Remembrance and Representation

The conference was an important input for the inquiry in finishing our report, and it proved to be a valuable arena for discussions between Holocaust scholars, experts from international Holocaust museums and representatives from universities, institutions and authorities in Sweden.

The conference showed that a lot of issues remains to be resolved before the museum can open. These issues concern for example how to develop the concept of the museum, strategies for collecting materials, a permanent exhibition, as well as practical issues regarding how to be wise about costs. Many important points were made, and my hope is that this anthology can fill the gap in between the work of the inquiry and the upcoming museum, but also serve as food for thought for scholars and practitioners in the field of Holocaust studies and museums.

As can be seen in the appendix, the conference had three keynotes and five sessions which included both panel discussions and paper presentations. The different themes of the anthology are outlined below.

It should be noted that although it was a research conference, the articles are not based on new research. Parts of the texts have been presented earlier and when this is the case it is noted in the footnotes of the article.

Themes addressed in the anthology

This year, 2020, marks 75 years after the end of the Second World War and the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau – the end of what was later named “the Holocaust”. But what do scholars mean when they use the term, the Holocaust, and what meaning does it have in the mind of the public? How should a museum about the Holocaust deal with this term, and what should the museum be called? These issues are discussed in an article by Stéphane Bruchfeld.

During the war, Sweden was neutral, and because of this, refugees were able to flee to Sweden. In the spring of 1945, there were about 185 000 refugees in Sweden, a huge number for a small country. Most of these were non-Jewish refugees.

Neutrality also paved way for rescue operations abroad, for instance in Hungary, where Raoul Wallenberg and several others at the Swedish legation in Budapest helped Jewish refugees. At the same time, the Swedish trade with Nazi Germany, the transit of German soldiers on the railway through Sweden on its way to the battle front in Norway or the Soviet Union was problematic to say the least.

What did these different experiences of the war do to the Swedish self-image, and how can a museum about the Holocaust use knowledge of this period in order to better understand and explain it? This was discussed in the session on research on Sweden and the Holocaust and is dealt with in the articles by Ulf Zander, Karin Kvist Geverts and Oscar Österberg.

Sweden was neutral during the war, and there are no other neutral countries who have established Holocaust museums. Yet. There are Jewish museums and there are memorials, but no Holocaust museums. The closest we can find is the Living History Forum in Sweden, but the Forum is not a museum.

So why here? Why now? How can a museum be established in a country with no killing sites? How can such a museum be relevant for Swedes today? What importance does research and collections have, for a museum? These questions were addressed in a panel discussion which included Guri Hjeltnes, Yigal Cohen, David Marwell, Richelle Budd Caplan and Henry “Hank” Greenspan. The panel discussion was summarized in an abstract by Victoria Van Orden Martinez.

Stories from survivors with a connection to Sweden will be of central importance for the museum. But which survivors? Which narratives? And what should we remember? This was the topic of one session and are dealt with in the articles by Cecilie Felicia Stokholm Banke, Malin Thor Tureby and Andrej Kotljarchuk.

What makes a good museum great? Of what importance is the building? How important is the narrative, or should the museum have multiple narratives, like the Polin museum in Poland? These questions were addressed in one session and are discussed in the articles by Paul Salmons, Christina Gamstorp and Janne Laursen.

The conference was concluded with a panel discussion on how to make a Holocaust museum in Sweden, in which Guri Hjeltnes, Yigal Cohen, David Marwell, Richelle Budd Caplan, Boaz Cohen, Birgitta Svensson, Paul Salmons and Karin Kvist Geverts participated. The panel discussion was summarized in an abstract by Victoria Van Orden Martinez.

In contemporary society, Holocaust memorialization is being politicized and distorted by states, and this is a potential problem for all Holocaust museums. How to make better stories and deal with these challenges was addressed in a keynote by Andrea Petö and in an article in this anthology.

Finally, Henry “Hank” Greenspan gave a keynote via link and contributed with two articles to the anthology. He reminded us of the importance not only to listen to survivors, but also to engage, reflect, learn and discuss, and most important of all, to start a conversation. Hopefully, this anthology could be a starting point for a conversation on the new museum about the Holocaust in Sweden.

On Listening to Holocaust Survivors: Beyond Testimony

Henry “Hank” Greenspan

Abstract

Since the 1980s, testimony interviews have been the near universal way that Holocaust survivors’ accounts have been gathered and engaged. Testimony, however, is only one genre of survivors’ recounting and quite different from collaborative conversation – the author’s approach. Testimony is about declaration: This I witnessed or endured. Collaborative conversation is about exploration: evolving questions and shared reflection. While conventional testimony is usually restricted to a single interview, collaborative conversation typically involves multiple meetings – over months, years, even decades. While testimony focuses almost entirely on experiences during the Holocaust, collaborative conversation equally includes survivors’ reflections on the meaning (theological, philosophical, political) of what they endured; their choices regarding how and what they retell in various contexts; their experiences *as* a survivor – and being known as a survivor – during the years since liberation; and more. A collaborative approach, in survivor Ruth Kluger’s phrase, means engaging survivors “as partners in a conversation.” In survivor Agi Rubin’s phrase, the core of collaborative conversation is “learning together.” This keynote illustrates “learning together” in practice.

Partners in Conversation

Some years ago, having performed my play REMNANTS in Duluth, Minnesota – a city with strong Scandinavian connections – I spoke at a middle school in the neighboring town of Superior, Wisconsin (home of the Vikings, by the way). I rarely speak to kids that age, but I thought I could put together something about bystanders that would work. I also quoted Agi Rubin, a survivor I'd known for many years.

One of the kids – probably eleven years old – approached me and asked a question I hadn't heard before. "What," he asked, "are Agi's hobbies?" Not her trauma, resilience, guilt, fears, lessons, legacy, story, nightmares, testimony, or any of the usual "survivor things." But what are her hobbies?

I was charmed. I did censor my initial list – smoking, playing cards, and gambling – and shared the next three: cooking, music, and family. That seemed to satisfy him, although probably not as much as gambling or – were it true – cavorting with ninjas and pirates.

I was sure Agi would have felt the same. In one of our interviews, she exclaimed: "I am *not* a quote-unquote, capital S, 'Holocaust Survivor'! OK, I survived. But I am not '*The Survivor*.' I am not a category. Not a thing. We have enough experience being categories."¹

The little Viking did not think of Agi as a category. Rather, he imagined that Agi was pretty much like him. In my view, there is no more important way of engaging survivors than to know them, most essentially, as us. Engaging as us the vastly greater number who did not survive may be even more important. Otherwise, it becomes possible to imagine that the Holocaust didn't really happen to anyone – at least not anyone like ourselves.

Over nearly fifty years, I have argued that experiencing survivors as "other" is common and that our near exclusive focus on their "testimony" contributes, if inadvertently, to that consequence.² Recording survivors' accounts – at best, knowing *from* them – is not the same as knowing *with* them. Survivor Ruth Kluger recalls:

¹ Henry Greenspan, "The Humanities of Contingency: Interviewing and Teaching Beyond 'Testimony' with Holocaust Survivors," *The Oral History Review* 2019 46:2, 362.

² This theme is developed throughout my work. See especially Henry Greenspan, *On Listening to Holocaust Survivors: Beyond Testimony* (St. Paul, MN: Paragon House, 2010), 67–71 and "The Humanities of Contingency" cited above.

I used to think that after the war I would have something of interest and significance to tell. A contribution. But people didn't want to hear about it, or if they did listen, it was in a certain pose, an attitude assumed for this special occasion; it was not as partners in a conversation.³

Nothing better summarizes the aims of my own work than meeting survivors as “partners in a conversation” – real partners, real conversation – beyond the constrictions of “special occasions.” Conversation is where we live and, in significant part, where we live on – whether we are Holocaust survivors or anyone else.

In what follows, I will develop these points in my own interviewing practice. I will also begin to suggest how a conversational framework might inform a museum, with more particulars in the panel to follow.

Sustained Acquaintance

Looking back, I was lucky that when I began my work in the mid-1970s there were few models for what “an interview with a survivor” was supposed to look like. Of course, there was oral history more generally and a range of early projects. But the approach that became almost universal in the 80s and 90s – a single “video testimony” aimed toward a more-or-less coherent, more-or-less chronological, account of wartime experiences – did not yet exist.

Survivors and I were thus free to make it up as we went along; in essence, to wing it. And one of the things we winged was to meet as often as seemed useful – several sessions over weeks; months; with some people, years; and with a few survivors, decades. This multiple-interview approach was itself initially suggested by survivors. Many said some version of “Come back next week; we'll talk again; we'll take some more.” And so we did.

As in most projects, my first interviews focused on wartime experiences; but sustained conversation led to much wider reflection, especially about the *process* of recounting. This includes survivors' reflections on their choices about how and what they retell in varying contexts; their assessments of different interview experiences; what it has meant to *be* a “quote-unquote” Holocaust survivor and be

³ Ruth Kluger, *Still Alive: A Holocaust Girlhood Remembered* (New York: The Feminist Press of the City University of New York, 2001), 94.

known as such. All of this is part of what survivors have lived since liberation, and it was what they were living “in real time” during the years that we met.

Sustained acquaintance also meant that I was often with survivors during the transitions between their “on the record” and “off the record” reflections. For example, during our drive home from talks in schools, Agi sometimes asked: “Do you think this does any good? Am I accomplishing anything by it?” Whatever the answers, they are certainly more complicated than conventional rhetoric suggests. And they compel conversation, as serious questions do.

Meeting with survivors over time also allowed me to listen to my recordings between sessions. I did my own transcribing, and this “listening to the listening” was as important as listening during interviews themselves. Along with hearing all I wished I’d asked – or simply missed – later interviews provided the chance to follow up. I sometimes brought short audio clips from one interview to the next, and survivors and I pored over them together. This is collaborative inquiry most palpably.

As all these examples suggest, sustained conversation leads to possibilities that conventional testimony typically does not. Once again, Agi articulated the difference. About her collaborative interviews, she noted:

One thought sparks another, and then another, that I may not have even known I had. That is the part that is so gratifying. Whatever I imagine I’m teaching, I’m learning at the same moment. We’re learning together.⁴

Testimony is about *declaration*: This I witnessed or endured. Learning together is about *exploration*: evolving questions and conversation. They are different genres of talk. Imagine a legal proceeding – the quintessential context for testimony – in which a witness thanked the court for the opportunity to “learn together.” Her lawyers, rightfully, would go crazy. “Learning together” is not what testimony is about. But it is part of what human beings are about – once again, survivors like all of us.

I believe we should listen to survivors in multiple ways. That is why I use “retelling” or “recounting” or simply “accounts” – relatively neutral words – as the umbrella terms for survivors’ speech, with “testi-

⁴ Agi Rubin and Henry Greenspan, *Reflections: Auschwitz, Memory, and a Life Recreated* (St. Paul, MN, Paragon House, 2007), 170.

mony” being one important subset. Every genre of retelling has benefits and limitations. The essential goal is that we bring self-consciousness to whatever approach we pursue and – equally essential – that we include survivors’ own reflections in our considerations.

Learning Together: Deepening and Widening the Conversation

One further example of “learning together.” Leon retold the same episode – the execution of a fellow prisoner named Huberman – in each of our first three interviews in 1979. It was the only memory he repeated in this way, and it was clear each time that he did not recall having told me the episode before. Indeed, he introduced each iteration with the comment that this was the sort of “traumatic” (his word) memory that he rarely retells. So here was a man who kept remembering what he said he hardly ever remembers without remembering that he kept remembering it. What, I wondered, was going on?⁵

By the time of the third iteration, Leon and I had established a solid working relationship. I was, therefore, confident that he would be comfortable discussing the significance of this episode and his returns to it. What followed remains one of the most memorable moments from all my interviews with survivors, precisely because of the learning together entailed. I had my own hypothesis about the repetitions which I shared. Leon responded with some frustration. “Yeah, yeah, yeah ... See, this is a good example of how hard it is to convey. You pose a question. I owe you an explanation. There are a few elements you couldn’t have known.”

And so Leon proceeded to explain what I could not have known, nor could anyone have known, from the event as initially retold. The key was that Huberman’s execution, in fuller context, meant that no one would survive. Leon explained:

Despite the killing all around us, we imagined this [camp] was a little island of security. And the Huberman incident destroyed the whole thing. You see, this was the moment of truth. Huberman was a favorite. Even to them, to the Germans, he was a favorite ... And all of a sudden we see that no one’s life is worth a damn ... They would kill you with as much thought as it takes to step on a cockroach. And so our pipe-dream

⁵ I have discussed Leon’s repeated story in many places. See, for example, *On Listening*, 2–3, 194–201, which includes the interview excerpts cited here.

was shattered right there. It was suddenly and dramatically shattered, along with Huberman's skull.

Leon then described the shattering from the inside, still the most vivid description of trauma as experienced that I have heard in fifty years of listening to survivors.

It was a feverish feeling. A feverish feeling. A terrible intensity ... It is like –, the only reality here is death... I wasn't aware of anything around me ... In one moment, the universe became –, what was real was only the turmoil within you. The rest was gone. The rest ceased to exist.

Used with precision, trauma refers to overwhelming terror in the face of anticipated imminent annihilation.⁶ That is what Leon recalls.

I have reviewed five interviews that Leon did for other projects between 1975 and 2006 – all but one after our 1979 meetings. The other interviews were all in single testimony format. The Huberman execution is mentioned in each, but none include Leon discussing its significance or impact. Rather, it is one of a sequence of atrocities. Nothing more was asked just as I would not have asked more had Leon not kept coming back to it over three interviews.

Does it matter? Isn't the historical record the same, whatever the wider repercussions of an episode? For Leon himself, it is *not* the same. Speaking more generally about his retelling, he insisted that simply "reciting names, dates and places violates the essence of my experience of the Holocaust. It robs it of what is most important." What is most important, he continued, are boundless "landscapes of death" in which particular atrocities occur. And, beyond those landscapes, all the wider questions of meaning or lack of meaning that they evoke.⁷ For survivors like Leon, and he is not unusual, oral history includes oral philosophy, oral psychology, oral narratology, and more. Limiting survivor "testimony" to "names, dates, and places" reflects *our* agenda; not necessarily theirs.

Discussing the Huberman story with Leon also occasioned a key insight about retelling more generally – and again a comment that would be rare in a conventional testimony. After I asked the half-question: "So this story ...?", Leon insisted about *all* his Holocaust re-

⁶ This understanding of trauma comes from Henry Krystal, "Trauma and Affects," *The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child* 33 (1978): 81–116. Krystal was himself an Auschwitz survivor and a founder of contemporary trauma theory. He was also a teacher and friend.

⁷ Henry Greenspan, "Beyond Testimony," *PastForward* (bulletin of the USC Shoah Foundation Institute) August 2010, 11.

counting: “It is *not* a story. It has to be *made* a story. In order to convey it. And with all the frustration that implies. Because, at best, you compromise. You compromise.”

Had I not used the word “story” – I could easily have said “memory” or “episode” – it is unlikely that Leon ever would have made this comment. “Story” was the immediate trigger, and what happens in a collaborative interview largely depends on what has already happened, including what just happened. That is why they are *inter*-views rather than vending machines in which one deposits a question to get out an answer. Leon’s reflection emerged *between* us, a direct result of conversational process. It is a virtual certainly that neither one of us could have anticipated it beforehand or arrived at it alone.⁸

The paradigm of evolving conversation is less familiar to us than the paradigm of fixed and finished testimony – and not only with Holocaust survivors. We favor single authors over co-authors – especially single authors with presumed expertise. That may be why Leon’s comment – which has been cited by many colleagues – is typically attributed to me: “Greenspan writes that ‘it is not a story’” etc. Of course, it was Leon, not Greenspan, who said it. But the operative author was both of us, learning together.

Nevertheless, it is wonderful that my conversations with Leon have widened to include others – students, colleagues, and other survivors. As noted, it is in ongoing conversations that any of us live on. Of course, Leon has not been physically present in most of these wider conversations. But he is with us in voice, perspective, and emotional and intellectual presence – as, to some degree, I hope he also was with us today. When I see my students wrestle with the views of survivors whom I’ve known – invoking segments from interviews that I did forty years ago – I am always moved. Conversations with survivors continue if we take time and pay serious attention. They require only actual, not artificial, intelligence.

⁸ Cf. Henry Greenspan, “The Unsaid, the Incommunicable, the Unbearable, and the Irrecoverable,” *The Oral History Review* 2014, 41:2, 233.

Embracing Complexity

Addi Kamb, one of the most brilliant students I've had, wrote when she was a college Senior:

Everything should have an arc, some form of resolution or non-resolution (purposeful open-endedness as opposed to a kind of fading away or spiraling outward), a dominant theme. This forces the contradictions inherent in almost all human experience, especially those at the edges of normalcy, to fall away or fall in line.

A museum must decide what to do with contradictions at the “edges of normalcy.” Should they “fall away” or “fall in line”? Or are there ways to sustain coherence yet still be true to the complexities of human experience and its retelling? Regarding survivors: Should a museum include the wide range of what they retell? Should it include, for example, their reflections on retelling itself, their postwar experiences specifically as survivors, their various – perhaps contesting – views about why a Holocaust museum at all? Can the “not story” as well as the “made story” at least be suggested? Can a museum stimulate conversation – real conversation – on site and not only in a hoped-for afterward when its visitors have gone home.

I will suggest some possible ways in the first panel.

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A paradigm change in Holocaust memorialization. Lessons to be learned

Andrea Pető

Abstract

In this paper I will argue that there is *a major paradigm shift happening in Holocaust memorialization* and this needs to be addressed in order to avoid sleepwalking when planning a new museum about the Holocaust. The 2008 triple crises migration, financial and security crises neoliberal global order had an impact on museology as well. This, what I would call an “organic crises” to use the concept of Gramsci, is not a backlash, as the world and the world of museology will not go back to the good old business as usual mode, but will change for ever due to the paradigm shift. Not all museums are good as the format is easy to misuse and instrumentalise. First let me list the signs which call for novel approaches and to urge us to think beyond the traditional museum as an educational institution paradigm.

First, a recent study shows that although education about the Holocaust is increasingly institutionalized, and there are more and more relevant study programs, research institutes and museums are set up about the Holocaust, but at the same time ignorance about the Holocaust has never been greater. Holocaust educators and researchers must ask the painful question, what have we done wrong if, in spite of all the funding that was put into Holocaust education and museums, the result is increasing ignorance?

Second, there is also an increasing violence against results of Holocaust research and the researchers themselves which has not been the

case in the past decades. Jan Grabowski was attacked in Paris. When I received online anti-Semitic death threat, the Hungarian police and the attorney's office refused to investigate.

Third the certain states in the EU do not comply with European norms and their governments are secretly setting up monuments and museums that are whitewashing the past,¹ and they pass legislation to include war criminals in the mandatory reading list for secondary schools.

These three factors are alarming for a very important reason. The Holocaust narrative that was conceived during the Cold War elevated the moral command of "Never Again" into a measure of universal integrity. The memory politics of the European Union was built on a positive normative notion, namely: that learning from the past is a process through which a "bitter experience" may become a positive force. International organizations, like the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) have been supervising whether individual states are committed to these values. Now this consensus is in danger. Not by Holocaust deniers who are on the margins in most countries. That would have made our work easier: we just have to continue what we have done in the past decade, just better. But the present situation is different: the more we believe that this is business as usual, the more we are losing in the long run, because of the paradigm change in Holocaust memorialisation. Now state actors are trying to challenge the previous consensus.

This challenge is different from revisionism. I analysed in a paper the revisionist museology setting up the Museum of Trianon. However, these museums about the Holocaust are different in two ways. First, as these museums play a key role not revisionising but hollowing or polypore museums which are emptying the meaning while on surface they look like real museums and comply with the Holocaust canon. Second, that the actor is the state, not NGOs or rich individuals. Therefore, in this paper I argue that due to the paradigm change in Holocaust memorialization museums are becoming a site of simulacrum. The new concept of the state requires a new concept of a museum.

¹ Pető Andrea, "Revisionist histories, 'future memories'. Far-right memorialization practices in Hungary" in *European Politics and Society*, 2017:1, 41–51.

New form of states is setting up new types of museums about the Holocaust. How to avoid sleepwalking?

To understand the changing role of the nation state from strong force and supporter of a universal narrative of the Holocaust canon to hollowing the meaning, I would like to bring in a new conceptual framework to understand the change in the state. In the past years, political scientists and analysts scrutinizing the impressive series of electoral victories of illiberal powers were forced to reconsider their conceptual tools when trying to understand the new phenomenon of “democratic authoritarianism”, “hybrid regime”, “state capture”, “illiberal state,” or “mafia state”. Together with the Polish sociologist Weronika Grzebalska, we compared Hungary and Poland, and based on our findings we argued that we are facing a new form of governance, which stems from the failures of globalized (neo)liberal democracy. (One of the failures being failing to teach history of the Holocaust in way that it will enable more resistance to the polypore challenge.)

Based on its *modus operandi*, we called this regime an “illiberal polypore state,” because as a mushroom, it does not have existence of its own, and it only produces other mushrooms. It feeds on the vital resources of the previous political system, and at the same time actively contributes to its decay by setting up parallel institutions and redirecting resources into them. The polypore state, by controlling hegemonic forms of remembrance, works within the framework of what is referred to as “mnemonic security”. Illiberal states do not have an ideology but memory politics and the memory of the Second World War and the Holocaust are at the center as a foundational event of today’s Europe and global order. Therefore, polypore states set up lavishly funded new historical research institutes and museums which have no quality assurance; and decreased the state funding of pre-existent internationally recognized institutions. Or set up new institutions, NGOs on the first sight but GONGOS after a closer look – to combat antisemitism or to do Holocaust education.

The polypore state agrees with the statement that the Holocaust is an unprecedented tragedy. But the lesson they learned is different as they think of this is only in the context how can use it for maintaining the existence of the polypore itself. They are not interested in values, lives, actions but only in the survival of their structures at

all costs. Therefore, I am arguing that there is a paradigm change in Holocaust remembrance.

The Paradigm change

That paradigm change is related to the French social theorist Jean Baudrillard's category of "simulacrum", which was in turn inspired by a one-paragraph story by Jorge Luis Borges entitled "On Exactitude in Science". In it, Borges describes an empire so attached to the map of its own territory that when the empire collapsed, nothing remained but the map, or the simulation of the land that once was a powerful empire. After the collapse, he writes, the land was "inhabited by animals and beggars".

Similarly, the memory of the Holocaust in Hungary and elsewhere is slowly becoming a simulacrum, owing to a paradigm change in the way it is memorialized. This shift aims fundamentally to alter the current, universally recognized status of the Holocaust as a moral landmark in European history, with major consequences for the continent's values and politics.

The paradigm change in Holocaust memorialization consists of nine elements:²

1. Nationalisation of the transnational Holocaust narrative ignoring the transnational dimension. What scientists call: methodological nationalism is a useful tool in order to argue for exceptionalism. So new museums meet the maximum expected enthusiasm on the side of the national governments shaping a new national narrative redefining the issue of responsibility and compliance.
2. De-Judaization of the Holocaust narrative. This process makes Jewish victims invisible, because their experiences are presented as marginal, while the suffering of the nation as such is being stressed (see point 1). It has been widely discussed how post-1945 antifascist rhetoric in Red Army occupied communist Eastern Europe invisibilized Jewish identity and the Jews as a group. History seems to be repeating itself: according to the illiberal states'

² For more on this see Petó, "Bitter experiences' reconsidered: paradigm change in Holocaust memorialisation", *Heinrich Böll Stiftung*, 1 July 2019, www.boell.de/en/2019/06/28/bitter-experiences-reconsidered-paradigm-change-holocaust-memorialisation.

memory rhetoric all survivors are victims, while the perpetrators, especially the “local” perpetrators are conveniently forgotten.

3. Establishment and enforcement of the competing victimhood narrative, i.e. the canonization of the narrative of “double occupation” in former communist countries, which relegates all responsibility to the occupying German and Soviet forces. Facilitating this the European Remembrance Network, EU funded network plays a key role which also raises questions about the role of European infrastructure and its role of facilitation a new memory politics.
4. The replacement of the Cold War’s fundamentally secular memory paradigm with a religious framework of remembrance. Here the different Jewish religious groups, especially the fundamentalists play a key role selecting who are the acceptable, desirable Jewish victims according to their standards, and the rest of the victims will be conveniently forgotten again.
5. Considering the Holocaust as an event in the past with no relationship to the present. The debate about historical analogies also touched this point. Holocaust memory is not a constant flux in relation with the different stake holders but something that should be closed down permanently which is the diametric opposite of the memory continuity intrinsic to the “Never Again” model, which was the foundation of the global Holocaust narrative as well as of the European human rights paradigm.
6. Establish its own, new terminology and narrative about the Holocaust, such as introducing the expression “police action against aliens” for a 1941 massacre in Kamenets Podolsk, when thousands of Jews were killed with the active participation of Hungarian authorities.
7. Double speech: state representatives, academics are sending different messages depending on the audience nationally and internationally, i.e. for international organisations or norm owners like Israel or the US. For this conference also be ready for pro-forma compliance and quiet sabotage.
8. Anti-intellectual attacks against the legitimacy of science is undermining the concept of expertise. In the illiberal states government appointments can turn almost anybody into an expert historian, no

previous credentials or training are needed but loyalty to the regime to be appointed in the newly founded historical institutions or GONGOS.

9. Self-censorship of historians as a result of science policy of illiberal states they are not asking critical questions nor giving explanations but find refuge in what they call 'objectivity' and what is in reality an ideologically censored silencing.

An example: the Holocaust simulacrum³

I will not be talking about the House of Terror, the McDonalds of revisionists museums as a lot has been written on this. But I will analyse a seemingly innocent and tiny museum as an example of this museological practice.

The exhibition at the House of Jewish Excellence in Balatonfüred, a small, picturesque town on the northern shore of Hungary's Lake Balaton, features some 130 prominent Jews in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), many of them of Hungarian origin. The museum shop, however, has nothing specifically referring to Jews in the Hungarian context. At best, one can purchase a bottle of kosher wine or a mug with the iconic photo of Albert Einstein sticking out his tongue.

Perhaps this is not a problem. Maybe we should just celebrate the opening of another Jewish museum in Hungary, which has the second-largest Jewish community in Europe but very few Holocaust memorial sites. We might even overlook the fact that by identifying excellence only with STEM research, the museum renders invisible several other prominent Jewish scholars whose oeuvre is more closely related to progressive ideas and actions. That skewed view doubtless please the current Hungarian government, which is supporting the museum financially.

Yet it is impossible to ignore the exhibition's painful lack of critical reflection as to why even the talented Jews it did decide to feature were persecuted, and how they survived. The only three-dimensional, material object in the museum is a plaque by the entrance that refers

³ For more on this see Andrea Petó, "Hungary's Holocaust Simulacrum", *Project Syndicate*, 15 August 2019, www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/hungary-holocaust-museums-simulacrum-by-andrea-peto-2019-08?barrier=accesspaylog.

in general terms to “wickedness” and “a plan to kill.” This vagueness – or rather silence – about the Holocaust, and Hungarian collaboration in it, is part of a wider, disturbing trend in Hungary.

Similarly, the memory of the Holocaust in Hungary and elsewhere is slowly becoming a simulacrum, owing to a paradigm change in the way the event is memorialized, including in museums. This shift aims fundamentally to alter the current, universally recognized status of the Holocaust as a moral landmark in European history, with major consequences for the continent’s values and politics.

Americanisation of the Holocaust Museums

It took a long time for the history of the extermination of European Jewry to achieve its current status. In countries occupied by the Soviet Red Army after World War II, Jewish communities had a corner or a room in their underfinanced and dilapidated synagogues dedicated to documenting the Holocaust. Official war memorials, however, did not mention the Jewish victims.

This Eastern European memory culture was fundamentally transformed after the collapse of communism by the “Americanization” of the Holocaust – meaning, as German cultural studies scholar Winfried Fluck puts it, a democratizing process of stripping away complexity in order to make complicated events accessible to a wider public. After 1989, the Americanized Holocaust narrative also reached Hungary. But not until the 2002 opening of a small memorial center in a former Budapest synagogue did any museum feature the international language of Holocaust exhibitions. At any rate, that language does not correspond with the national Hungarian memorial culture nor with the religious conceptualization of the Shoah.

The Americanization of Holocaust museums also technologized remembrance, resulting in exhibitions without historical objects. Instead, visitors use touchscreens to tailor their museum visit to their own interests – a dangerous educational strategy at a time when ignorance about the Holocaust is growing.

The over-technologized House of Jewish Excellence is an extreme example of this. On entering, visitors first come to a computer terminal on the ground floor. Here, they are expected to choose which scientist’s brief life story they want to read on an interactive board

conspicuously placed on the floor above. The mismatch between international, religious, and national discourse about the Holocaust could not be greater.

The memory of the Holocaust as a moral landmark will become a vanishing simulacrum: the more that museums put it on touchscreens, the emptier it will become. And soon we will all be living in lands “inhabited by animals and beggars,” selling kitschy mugs of Einstein sticking his tongue out at us.

Towards the museum of ‘better stories’

How could a new Holocaust museum attract audience beyond the usual suspects and the captive audience of schoolchildren? Especially now, in this contemporary moment in which we as Europeans find ourselves is shaped by environmental destruction, political polarization, structural and other forms of violence, and the transformation of liberal democracy into autocracies of different forms. This explains the predominance of apocalyptic visions and doomsday scenarios in contemporary political discourse and media. The history of the Holocaust conveniently and uncannily fits here. Unfortunately, this kind of ‘grim storytelling’ is typically utilized in exclusionary, racist, (hetero)sexist ways to instigate fear and insecurity and to propagate increasingly repressive nationalist politics. At the same time, ‘grim storytelling’ plays a major role in the social sciences and humanities where the response to the contemporary state of the world has often been to focus on decline, suffering, collapse, and conflict.

Can we move beyond pessimistic frameworks, while, at the same time, developing new tools to understand and transform the social, political, environmental challenges that we face in Europe and beyond? What are the consequences of ‘grim storytelling’ dominating these realms and, increasingly, the aesthetic realm as well? What possibilities could be opened up by ‘better stories’ of political, academic and aesthetic interventions that offer affective, embodied, and transformative alternatives? By asking such questions, the planned conference might seek to explore, understand, and make visible the liveable – that is, real and acceptable – alternatives to the ‘grim stories’ of the present.

This should be based on two arguments: First, ‘grim storytelling’ only gives access to part of the story and, therefore, needs to be supplemented with ‘better stories’ – stories which generate an understanding of human potentiality, creativity, resilience, interconnectedness and shared ‘vulnerability’. Second, the tendency towards ‘grim storytelling’ in critical social sciences constitutes a major limitation for the possibilities of imagining and enacting the very transformations that Europe most urgently needs in order to enhance the European project. That is why it is important that the alternative tools of knowledge production and practices of political engagement, which are already being put into effect in various activist communities and learned societies throughout Europe and beyond, become more visible. It is equally important to translate these alternative tools of knowledge production and political engagement into a methodology with which they can be made more intelligible in terms of their possibilities for transformative politics on a larger scale. To this end, a re-consideration of the potentials of critical social scientific praxis is urgently required. The planned conference should celebrate what has been achieved, together with providing a model by developing new concepts, methodologies, practices and pedagogies that would enhance critical social science’s capacity to both understand and engage with alternative forms of transformative politics on the ground.

The founders of Holocaust research have been fundamentally concerned with the community of remembrance: with ordinary people. Increasing the outreach of Holocaust research in an understandable and re-enchanting language can be one of the responses to these challenges.

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Should “the Holocaust” be discarded, or what’s in a name? Historiography(-ies), memory(-ies) and metanarrative(s)

Stéphane Bruchfeld

*In memory of Paul A. Levine (1956–2019),
colleague, co-author and friend.*

“A library to commemorate the Nazi Holocaust”

It would be easy to believe that the headline refers to some post-war initiative to gather books, documents and other items, in order to safeguard the memory of the Holocaust. The only question would be what this initiative is about, i.e. when it was taken, by whom and where this library is located. However, it is a headline to a letter to the editor in the Manchester Guardian 9 April 1934, signed by H.G. Wells, Margot Oxford (Asquith), Louis Golding, Wickham Steed, J.S.B. Haldane and Hubertus Prinz zu Löwenstein, informing about and asking for support for a “German Library of the Burned Books” to be officially inaugurated in Paris on 10 May, the one year anniversary of the book burnings organized all over Germany by the Nazi party. The library would apart from burned and forbidden literature and scientific works also collect “all those works which are indispensable to the study and analysis of Hitlerism, from H. S. Chamberlain to Alfred Rosenberg”. The collected works would be available to “students, research workers, and those to whom their preservation appears to be of the utmost importance”:

The work of maintaining and extending the library and of making it available to the public is beyond the unaided powers of the eminent German men of letters and sociologists to whom its inception is due. We have therefore undertaken the task of forming in this country, as has already been done in France, a Society of the Friends of the Library of the Burned Books in the belief that there are many who will agree with our view that such an undertaking is of historical and sociological importance. invite all those interested to co-operate with us in giving the library financial and other support.¹

The initiative for the library had been taken by among others Alfred Kantorowicz, and its president was Heinrich Mann. Known as “Deutsche Freiheitsbibliothek” (German Freedom Library) it was an affiliate of the International Antifascist Archive. Eventually the library contained some 20 000 titles and a very large number of documents and newspaper clippings. Subsequent to the German occupation of France six years later it was destroyed.²

Thus, the “Nazi Holocaust” in 1934 referred to burned books, while its contemporary meaning connoting either the Nazi genocide of the Jews only, or also a widened circle of victim categories, is a post-war phenomenon which entered common parlance only gradually.

“A crime without a name”

Following the German invasion of the Soviet Union in the summer of 1941 a vast murder campaign in the tracks of the advancing German armies increasingly targeted not least Jewish civilians, first men and before long also women and children. British monitors managed to pick up and decode Orpo (Order police) radio messages which reported mass killings directed by the HSSPF (Higher SS and Police Leaders). Even though, as Richard Breitman writes, the analysts “grasped only a fraction of the Nazis’ activities and policies in the East”, dozens of such reports made the scale of the massacres clear to them.³ In a summary of Orpo decodes dated 21 August 1941, the analysts commented:

¹ Quoted in Drewitt (9 April 1934).

² Schiller (2004). See also www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2011/may/12/german-library-burnt-books-1934.

³ Breitman 1999, p. 92.

The tone of this message suggests that word has gone out that a definite decrease in the total population of Russia would be welcome in high quarters and that the leaders of the three sectors stand somewhat in competition with each other as to their “scores.”⁴

Although the particulars of these mass killings were not yet clear the British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, who received summaries of such reports, realized that something out of the ordinary was unfolding in the occupied areas of the Soviet Union. In a radio broadcast 24 August 1941, he connected the killings to the fierce resistance shown by the Soviets and declared that “whole districts” were being “exterminated” in retaliation:

Scores of thousands – literally scores of thousands – of executions in cold blood are being perpetrated by the German police-troops upon the Russian patriots who defend their native soil. Since the Mongol invasions of Europe in the sixteenth century, there has never been methodical, merciless butchery on such a scale, or approaching such a scale.

To Churchill it was clear that this was “but the beginning” and that worse was to follow. He seems to have realized that what was happening deserved a label, but there was none. Churchill’s conclusion was: “We are in the presence of a crime without a name.”⁵

This statement has later often been interpreted as referring to what is now called the Holocaust or a genocidal policy generally, but as Richard Breitman argues this is unlikely since Churchill did not yet have enough “clear information from the police decodes about the Nazi focus on killing Jews in the Soviet territories”.⁶ Nevertheless, more details would emerge shortly. Only a few days later Churchill would circle figures specifically mentioning Jews in the reports, and by 12 September the staff at the SIS (Secret Intelligence Service) now considered it unnecessary to include such details in future briefings for the Prime Minister:

The fact that the Police are killing all Jews that fall into their hands should by now be sufficiently well appreciated. It is not therefore proposed to continue reporting these butcheries specially, unless so requested.⁷

⁴ Quoted in Breitman 1999, *ibid.*

⁵ Churchill quoted in *ibid.*, p. 93.

⁶ Breitman 1999, p. 94.

⁷ Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 96.

Although, largely due to a lack of central and essential sources from the top of the Nazi hierarchy, the exact whys and wherefores are unknown, in retrospect these months in the summer and autumn of 1941 appear as the beginning of what would eventually evolve into the “final solution of the Jewish question” as a continent-wide total and systematic murder campaign against Europe’s (and partly North Africa’s) Jewish population. Pieces of information regarding what was happening would continue to reach the Allies from various sources and through various channels, and 17 December 1942 the Allies issued a joint declaration condemning the “German authorities” for “carrying into effect Hitler’s oft repeated intention to exterminate the Jewish people in Europe”. They simultaneously affirmed their “solemn resolution to ensure that those responsible for these crimes shall not escape retribution”.⁸

As the war came to an end a name had yet to be given to what had happened. Some Jewish survivors began speaking of what had struck them and their communities as the “Ḥurban”/“Churb’n” (destruction, a term which had earlier referred to the destructions of the temples in Jerusalem in 587 BCE and 70 CE), or “Shoah” (catastrophe), the latter term since the 1950s the recognized designation in Israel, and following the 1985 eponymous film by Claude Lanzmann also widely used in France.⁹

At the same time the concept of “genocide” had begun to be known through the intense efforts of the Polish-Jewish lawyer Raphael Lemkin, and was cited in the trial of the major war criminals at the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg 1945–1946, though not yet as a defined term in international law. Even if the trial in no way dealt primarily with Nazi “Jewish policy”, the latter still played a part in the proceedings and was stressed by both the American and British chief prosecutors in their closing statements as a distinct evil.

⁸ In the House of Commons the declaration was read by Anthony Eden, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. See HC Deb 17 December 1942 vol. 385 cc2082-7, accessed 20 February 2020 from <https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1942/dec/17/united-nations-declaration>.

⁹ See for instance Max Kaufmann’s self-published work on the murder of the Jews of Latvia, titled *Die Vernichtung der Juden Lettlands: Churbn Lettland* (Munich 1947). The official name of Israel’s state memorial institution Yad Vashem founded in 1953 is Yad Vashem – Reshut laShoah ve-laG’vurah (literally The Authority for (remembrance of) the Shoah and Heroism, but officially in English The Holocaust Martyrs ‘and Heroes’ Remembrance Authority). In France the Fondation pour la Mémoire de la Shoah supports the Mémorial de la Shoah museum in Paris.

In his statement 26 July 1946, the US chief prosecutor Robert Jackson said that the Nazi movement would be of “evil memory in history because of its persecution of the Jews, the most far-flung and terrible racial persecution of all time”, while Sir Hartley Shawcross, Jackson’s British counterpart, later the same day said that it was not in doubt that the defendants had “participated in and are morally guilty of crimes so frightful that the imagination staggers and reels back at their very contemplation”.¹⁰ Shawcross spoke about the war and its terrible consequences, the destruction, the hunger, the diseases and the many millions of soldiers and civilians who had been killed in “battles that ought never to have been”. But this was not the defendants’ only or greatest crime. On the “lowest computation” 12 million men, women, and children” had been killed “in the cold, calculated, deliberate attempt to destroy nations and races, to disintegrate the traditions, the institutions, and the very existence of free and ancient states”:

Twelve million murders! Two-thirds of the Jews in Europe exterminated, more than 6 million of them on the killers’ own figures. Murder conducted like some mass production industry in the gas chambers and the ovens of Auschwitz, Dachau, Treblinka, Buchenwald, Mauthausen, Maidanek, and Oranienburg.

Shawcross also asked if the world was to overlook the revival of slavery in Europe, “slavery on a scale which involved 7 million men, women, and children taken from their homes, treated as beasts, starved, beaten, and murdered”.¹¹ The next day the British prosecutor continued and referred to German policies in the occupied territories and the “Lebensraum” plans for the Soviet Union, Poland and Czechoslovakia:

Genocide was not restricted to extermination of the Jewish people or of the gypsies. It was applied in different forms to Yugoslavia, to the non-German inhabitants of Alsace-Lorraine, to the people of the Low Countries and of Norway. The technique varied from nation to nation, from people to people. The long-term aim was the same in all cases.¹²

After giving various examples of these policies Shawcross turned to the “final solution of the Jewish question”, considering it his duty to make a point of its particular character:

¹⁰ Robert H. Jackson and Sir Hartley Shawcross quoted in *Trial of the Major War Criminals ...*, 1946, Vol. 19, p. 404 and 432, respectively.

¹¹ Shawcross, *ibid.*, p. 432–433.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 497.

There is one group to which the method of annihilation was applied on a scale so immense that it is my duty to refer separately to the evidence. I mean the extermination of the Jews. If there were no other crime against these men, this one alone, in which all of them were implicated, would suffice. History holds no parallel to these horrors.¹³

Another example of this early view of Nazi policies is seen in the series of four volumes about the war years published by the Swedish Institute of International Affairs between 1945 and 1947. The volumes covered many topics, not least the war’s political, military and economic aspects.

In the chapter about Nazi occupation rule in Europe the Norwegian journalist and author Torolf Elster also painted a picture of how different peoples and groups had been affected. Elster mentioned how a “complicated hierarchy” was intended to be implemented in a future “Neuropa”, but added that certain categories were “without any right of existence whatsoever: Poles, Jews and Gypsies”.¹⁴

Elster stated that it had not been a secret that “mass terror and extermination of whole population segments was one of the fundamental tenets of German national socialism”, and in a section of the chapter headed “The crime against the Jews” he attempted to explain what was distinctive about the “pogroms” against the Jews. Antisemitism had not been merely a “political demagogic tool” but had been included in the “idea of the political mission of Nazism” and was part of the “obsession which characterized the Nazi believers”. Moreover, Elster thought that as the war’s setbacks increased, the “hatred against the Jews flared up as a reaction against the misfortunes” which the Nazis had brought on themselves, but that there probably also had been “rational reasons more or less engendered by the situation”:

A war creates its own rules, which cannot be supplanted by mental illnesses of individuals. The pogroms against the Jews among other things probably aimed at making as many Germans as possible personally responsible for the cruelties, in order to create pitiless cadres who knew that there was no turning back, and no possibilities of reconciliation with the enemies.¹⁵

¹³ Shawcross, *ibid.*, p. 501.

¹⁴ Torolf Elster quoted in Lundström (1946), p. 129 and 130, respectively.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 158–159.

Many more examples from the period after the war could be given, but as a last example I will only mention the book *The Scourge of the Swastika* from 1954 by Lord Russell of Liverpool, which he wrote while serving as legal adviser in trials of Nazi war criminals in the British zone in Germany. A motive for writing the book seems to have been a concern that what had transpired during the Nazi period had never really been grasped and was being forgotten:

It may well be that it is because all this slaughter took place at a time when the world was preoccupied with battle, murder, and sudden death that its enormity has never been generally recognized and has so soon been forgotten.¹⁶

Like Elster, Lord Russell dealt with several facets of murderous Nazi policies, among them the “ill-treatment and murder of civilian population in occupied territory” the “ill-treatment and murder” of POWs, and the slave labour and concentration camps. The final chapter was devoted to the “‘final solution’ of the Jewish question”. Lord Russell feared that to those who had never experienced any of the occurrences in the “dreary catalogue of murders” he presented they could not “but seem incredible and unreal”. The British lord closed the chapter with these words:

The murder by the Germans of over five million European Jews constitutes the greatest crime in world history. That the total Jewish population of Europe was not exterminated is due solely to the fact that the Nazis lost the war before they could bring their ‘final solution of the Jewish question’ to its conclusion.¹⁷

Thus, although the term “Holocaust” had begun to emerge in the 1950s as a designation for the fate of the Jews during the Nazi period, a process about which much more could be said, the crime, or crimes, still had no established and well-known name, other than the by now legal term “genocide”, or references to the Nazi expression “final solution” or descriptive terms such as “extermination”, “mass terror” and “persecution”. Its ubiquity today might be taken for granted, but as Tom Lawson has pointed out, tracing the development of the term “Holocaust” is “almost impossible”, and that it cannot be identified

¹⁶ Russell of Liverpool 1954, p. 138.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 249–250.

“when it became adopted as the more or less universal signifier of the ‘Judeocide’”.¹⁸

It should also be noted that the status of the Holocaust in contemporary memory culture(s) as uniquely evil phenomenon has brought about a propensity to apply the term as a metaphor and an analogy to many more or (mostly) less comparable events, ranging from the “African/Black Holocaust”, the “Red/Communist Holocaust” and “Native American Holocaust” to the “Abortion” and “Animal Holocaust”, to name just a few examples. Thus, “the Holocaust” nowadays functions as a kind of yardstick and sought-after designation, its emblematic aura as it were conveying a shorthand and charged symbol for often very different phenomena.

From “*judeförföljelsen*” (the persecution of the Jews) and “*judeutrotningen*” (the extermination of the Jews) to “*Förintelsen*”

In contrast to the “Holocaust” the origins of the corresponding Swedish term “*Förintelsen*” is relatively easy to trace. When the American miniseries “*The Holocaust*” was broadcasted on Swedish television in March 1979 it was given the title “*Förintelsen*” in Swedish, which translates as “the annihilation” (as in the German “*die Vernichtung*”).

Why the series was called *Förintelsen* is unclear, but what is quite clear is that this name quickly and increasingly came to supersede earlier designations for the Nazi genocide of the Jews, such as “*judeförföljelsen*” or “*judeutrotningen*” (corresponding to the German “*Judenverfolgung*” and “*Judenausrottung*”, i.e. the persecution of the Jews and the extermination of the Jews). Thus, just like the Holocaust internationally *Förintelsen* is today in Sweden the dominant appellation for what used to be called the extermination of the Jews. Further, probably carrying on from the TV series, the new designation retained the capital F, a type of capitalization which is rarely seen in the Swedish language regarding names of historical events.

¹⁸ Lawson 2010, p. 8.



Left: A newspaper placard 7 March 1979 for the Swedish evening paper *Aftonbladet*. The major headline reads: “The Swedish government kept silent about Hitler’s extermination of the Jews. Extraordinary new revelations.” Right: The TV supplement of the Swedish evening paper *Expressen*: “The horror series the whole world is talking about is here. *Förintelsen*.”

However, both the Holocaust and *Förintelsen* are problematic terms, for both similar and distinct reasons, and some historians have voiced their unease with them or avoid them altogether. For instance, Tom Lawson writes:

It is definitely a problematic term. Its heritage in religious language, indeed in a Christian discourse, is potentially disturbing – suggesting the sacrifice of the Jews and concomitantly a redemptive purpose for the genocide. Carried to its logical conclusion, the term could be taken to imply that the Nazis were the agents of God.¹⁹

¹⁹ Lawson 2010, p. 8.

This doesn’t apply to the Swedish term *Förintelsen*, which could be understood as descriptive in the vein of Raul Hilberg’s term “destruction”.²⁰ Then again it is problematic due to its closeness to perpetrator language (as in Hitler’s threat in the Reichstag 30th January 1939 that a world war would end in the “annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe”).

Another aspect as noted by among others Dirk Rupnow is that although the Holocaust has become “globally established as a signifier of genocidal crimes”, it is

problematic as a term to signify complex historical events of the mass crimes against Jewry that were initiated by Germans and Austrians and committed with and by their collaborators all across Europe”.²¹

Similarly, Dan Stone writes that what we call the Holocaust was “in reality a mass of separate events, united by the virtue of the fact that they occurred because of the Nazi mania to kill all the Jews of Europe”. Stone quotes Saul Friedländer, who stated that these events “represent a totality defined by this very convergence of distinct elements”. As Stone points out this begs many questions.²² Dan Michman in an important analysis of several historians’ understanding and conceptualization of the Holocaust poses a central question:

What, then, was ‘the Holocaust’? Was it the ‘Nazi genocidal enterprise as focused on the Jews or Jewish people’? Our survey shows that definition, commonly used in general discourse, is simply not accepted by the historians. Their views differ very much from this general notion, and from each other as well.

Michman’s conclusion is that the underlying factor which causes these divergent views among the historians he examined is that “the genocidal enterprise emerged only in the later stages of the Third Reich”.²³

Additionally, and importantly, if what the past Swedish designations (albeit problematic in their own right) denoted was relatively clear the same cannot be said for the designations Holocaust or *Förintelsen*. Over the years the denotative scope of these two terms has undergone a similar trajectory, and today they may signify at one

²⁰ It should be noted that the last chapter of the first edition of Raul Hilberg’s *The Destruction of the European Jews* was translated and published in Swedish in 1963 and was titled *Hur de europeiska judarna förintades* (How the European Jews were annihilated), but whether this in any way influenced the naming of the TV series 16 years later is unknown.

²¹ Rupnow in Stone 2010, p. 61.

²² Stone 2010, p. 15.

²³ Michman 2002, p. 31.

end the Jewish genocide exclusively or an ever-increasing number of victim categories, at the other end serving as an umbrella term covering each and every victim of Nazi Germany, be they individual political opponents or members of various categories.

This tendency to expand, directly or indirectly, the range of the new term *Förintelsen* to include also other categories victimized by Nazi Germany was discernible already in a leading article 7 March 1979 in the major daily Swedish newspaper *Dagens Nyheter*, in which the editor-in-chief Per Wästberg was of the opinion that although the TV series was not too sophisticated and could be criticized on several accounts, it was still important as a tool to keep the “memory of the annihilation of the European Jews” alive. He continued:

Six million Jews from 23 countries, among them 800 000 small children. Gypsies, Poles, 2,5 million Soviet prisoners of war, also “subhumans”. Numbers.²⁴

A clear-cut example of a definition which includes the Jewish dimension only is that of the Israeli authority Yad Vashem, which on its website states that the Holocaust

was unprecedented genocide, total and systematic, perpetrated by Nazi Germany and its collaborators, with the aim of annihilating the Jewish people.²⁵

In a similar manner, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) in its Holocaust Encyclopedia defines the term as

the systematic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of six million Jews by the Nazi regime and its allies and collaborators.²⁶

Curiously, the USHMM elsewhere in its Encyclopedia puts forward a very different definition

The Holocaust was the murder of six million Jews and millions of others by the Nazis and their collaborators during World War II.²⁷

²⁴ PW, “Förintelsen”, *Dagens Nyheter*, 7 March 1979.

²⁵ “What was the Holocaust?”, www.yadvashem.org/holocaust/about.html (accessed 17 February 2020).

²⁶ “Introduction to the Holocaust”, (accessed 17 February 2020), <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/introduction-to-the-holocaust>.

²⁷ “Introduction to the Holocaust – Animated Map/Map”, <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/gallery/introduction-to-the-holocaust-maps> (accessed 17 February 2020).

Another respected institution is the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (EB), which in an ambiguous text states that the Holocaust, in parallel giving the Hebrew and Yiddish terms “Sho’ah (Catastrophe) and Hurban (Destruction)”, was

the systematic state-sponsored killing of six million Jewish men, women, and children and millions of others by Nazi Germany and its collaborators during World War II. The Germans called this “the final solution to the Jewish question”.

In what way and why “millions of others” were targeted due to the “final solution to the Jewish question” is left unsaid. The EB also states that the word “Holocaust”

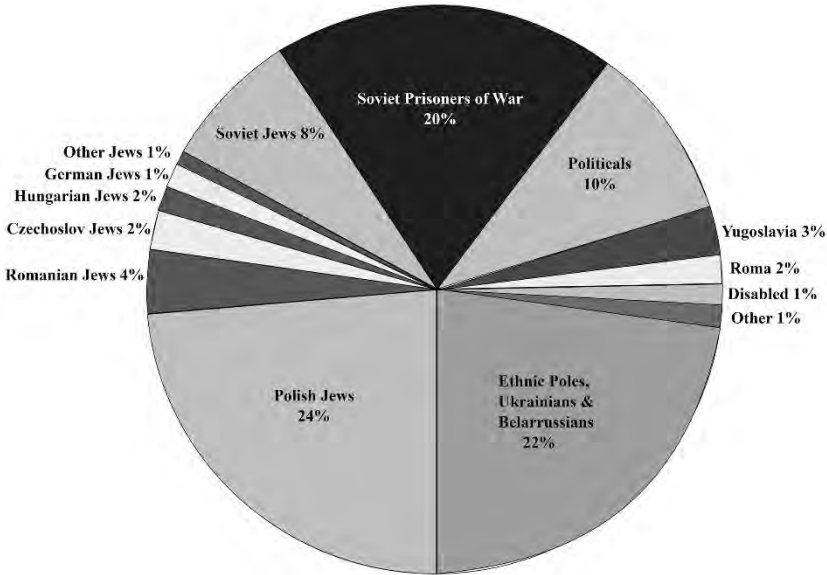
was chosen because in the ultimate manifestation of the Nazi killing program – the extermination camps – the bodies of the victims were consumed whole in crematoria and open fires.²⁸

However, who it was that “chose” the word for the given reason, and how and why it has become the dominant term, is also left unsaid.

A less weighty but nevertheless omnipresent and easily accessible and in practice probably more important source of information is Wikipedia. Let us first have a look at a pie chart, in which various categories of victims have been gathered under the heading “Holocaust Deaths”. The point is not to debate which groups are included or not, or whether the provided percentages are correct or not, but merely to show what an “Holocaust umbrella” may look like.

²⁸ “Holocaust.” Britannica Academic, *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 14 Nov. 2019, academic-eb-com.ezproxy.its.uu.se/levels/collegiate/article/Holocaust/40821 (accessed 19 February 2020).

Figure 1 Pie chart from Wikipedia entitled “Holocaust Deaths”



Pie chart from Wikipedia with the explanatory text: “Piechart showing distribution of Holocaust deaths during World War II, 1939–1945”. Source: Wikipedia, “Names of the Holocaust”.

This pie chart is used for instance on a Wikipedia page called “Names of the Holocaust”, which puts forward some somewhat surprising claims. We learn for instance that the term “Holocaust” was “commonly applied in English since the mid-1940s to the systematic extermination of 6 million Jews” but that it is also used

more broadly to include the Nazis’ systematic murder of millions of people in other groups they determined were ‘untermensch’ or ‘subhuman,’ which included primarily the Jews and the Slavs, the former having allegedly infected the latter, including ethnic Poles, the Serbs, Russians, the Czechs and others. Other groups targeted for racial reasons were the Romani or ‘Gypsies,’ Baltic people (especially the Lithuanians), people with disabilities, gay men, and political and religious opponents, which would bring the total number of Holocaust victims 17 million people.²⁹

The Wikipedia “Holocaust victims” page uses ostensibly more precise language, and defines victims as

²⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Names_of_the_Holocaust (accessed 19 February 2020).

people who were targeted by the government of Nazi Germany for various discriminatory practices due to their ethnicity, religion, political beliefs, or sexual orientation. These institutionalized practices came to be called The Holocaust, and they began with legalized social discrimination against specific groups, and involuntary hospitalization, euthanasia, and forced sterilization of those considered physically or mentally unfit for society. These practices escalated during World War II to include non-judicial incarceration, confiscation of property, forced labor, sexual slavery, medical experimentation, and death through overwork, undernourishment, and execution through a variety of methods, with the genocide of different groups as the primary goal.³⁰

Such very general and loose definitions are a probable extension of the phrase “millions of others”, and their lack of conceptual and historiographical precision are consistent with a tendency criticized among others by Jelena Subotić of a “de-Judaization” of the Holocaust, in that the Jews have “partly disappeared” from it. She attributes this tendency to a Western “cosmopolitan memory” and a focus on “broader issues of racism, human rights abuses, crimes against humanity, mass atrocity, and education for tolerance, equality and democracy”, which in her view has engendered a narrative which has “pushed aside the uniqueness of the Jewish experience of the Holocaust”:

The mission of the Anne Frank House, for example, is increasingly to educate the youth about the perils of discrimination and broader issues of social justice, and less on the specifically Jewish experience of Anne Frank herself. More bluntly, when it was first unveiled in Ottawa in 2017, the Canadian National Holocaust Memorial failed to mention the Jews at all, but instead commemorated “millions of men, women and children murdered during the Holocaust”.

Thus, the memory of the Holocaust has in Subotić’s judgment been transformed from a “particular story about the tragedy of the Jews” into a “universal lesson about inhumanity”.³¹

For Tom Lawson on the other hand it is precisely the focus on the Jewish dimension which is “morally problematic”, since in his “moral and historical opinion” the term “*should* include all victims of National Socialist extermination policies”.³² However, Lawson does not make clear why he thinks so, nor what he means by “extermination policies”, but conceivably he is in agreement with Henry Friedlander

³⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holocaust_victims (accessed 19 February 2020).

³¹ Subotić 2019, p. 22.

³² Lawson 2010, p. 8. Emphasis in the original.

who considered that the Holocaust, with which he meant “Nazi genocide”, should refer to categories the Nazis defined biologically, i.e. the Jews, the Roma and the disabled.³³

In short, it is more than apparent that the Holocaust/*Förintelsen* today implies many things. This has far less to do with what happened than with the conceptualization of the event(s), i.e. historiography(-ies), memory(-ies) and metanarrative(s). Potentially, this situation among other things runs the risk of descending into ugly zero-sum fights about what the term “should” signify, whether the Holocaust was “unique” or not and about who “owns” the Holocaust. As Michael Burleigh has stated, “this was not a competition, least of all for the victims, that is principally six million Jews”.³⁴ He has criticized the “acrimonious ways” in which the Holocaust is being institutionalised and memorialized.

This is unfortunate, for it dishonours both the survivors and several generations of able and serious scholars who have reconstructed the whens and wheres, if not always the whys, of what happened, an activity not to be confused with pontificating on television or on the “op-ed” pages of newspapers ... But these things, which trivialise the Holocaust by reducing it to the cultural climate and personalities of our time, have little to do with the enormity of the original event itself, about which there should be no confusion.³⁵

As it is unlikely that a stipulative definition would ever be universally agreed upon, I suggest that we look at the issue from another angle and, as it were, go back to the drawing board and ask some basic questions.

For instance, should the term be understood and used as an umbrella term, or more restrictively and specifically? And why? And more fundamentally: Is it at all necessary to describe and attempt to understand what took place during the Nazi period and how and why Nazi Germany targeted certain categories, or is it maybe even an obstacle? In my view the answer to the last question is predominantly yes. It is imperative to realize that the “Holocaust” is a constructed concept/term. It connotes and denotes different metanarratives, that reflect different understandings and receptions of Nazi Germany and its policies. An important question therefore concerns the relationship between the ex post facto construct “the Holocaust” and the perpetrators’ language found in the historical sources. They never

³³ Friedlander 1995, p. xii.

³⁴ Burleigh 2000, p. 571.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 811.

used or thought in terms of post-war constructs or thought they were carrying out the “Holocaust”. What they had was a vocabulary which reflected their own imagination, i.e. their conceptual and ideational world, which guided their intentions and policies.

The difference between the constructs and the source terms can be illustrated by setting up a chart with two columns. In the first column are placed various present-day terms related to victim categories, beginning with the “Holocaust” understood as identical with the “Shoah”. This column is then expanded category by category. The column to the right is likewise expanded with examples of some typical corresponding terms that are found in perpetrator sources. There is space here only for four categories (Jews, Roma, the disabled and the political opponents in Germany), but many more could be added consecutively.

This hopefully will illuminate that neither a historical study of the perpetrators’ “projects” and policies nor of their victims’ experiences, or any other perspective, can begin with the “Holocaust”, and that the historiographical challenge of explaining not only what happened and why, which is undeniably difficult enough in each separate case, will only grow harder as more and more categories are subsumed under the same label called the “Holocaust”. This is not to say that there are no connections and similarities between the genocide of the Jews, the genocide of the Roma, the genocide of the non-Jewish Poles, the murder of people with disabilities, and so on. But historiography, not to mention so-called Holocaust education, is not served by lumping everything together and disregarding the specifics of each case. Such conflation leads not only to a “de-Judaization” of what occurred but also to a “de-Romization” and a “de-Polonization”, among other similar consequences.

Table 1 Constructed terms and corresponding terms

The constructed (and expanding) term “Holocaust”	Some corresponding terms in the historical sources (perpetrator terms)
“Holocaust”; “Shoah”; “Churban”; “Judeocide” The “persecution”, “extermination”, “destruction” of the Jews	The “final solution of the Jewish question” (FSJQ); the “most dangerous enemy”; the “annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe”; the “extermination of the Jewish people”; “Jewish evacuation”; “J. resettlement”; “subhumans”; “disease carriers”
Holocaust = “Shoah” + “Samudaripe” (and other names)	FSJQ The “final solution of the Gypsy question” (FSGQ); “struggle against the Gypsy nuisance/plague”; “miscegenation”; “foreign race” (artfremd); “asocials”; “subhumans”
Holocaust = “Shoah” + “Samudaripe” + + “Aktion T4” (in Germany) + murders of disabled people in Poland, Baltic states and Belarus	FSJQ + FSGQ “Aktion Gnadentod”; “ballast lives”; “life unworthy of living”; “useless eaters”; “mercy killing of the incurably ill”; “racial hygiene”; “a heavy burden for people and state”; “asocials”; “subhumans”; “useless eaters”, “subhumans”
Holocaust = “Shoah” + “Samudaripe” + “euthanasia” + murders of disabled people in occupied territories + persecution and suppression of political opponents (in Germany)	FSJQ + FSGQ + “Aktion Gnadentod” + “useless eaters” “enemy of the people”; “decree of the Reich President for the Protection of People and State”; “protective custody”; “Law to Remedy the Distress of People and Reich”
Further categories	Further source terms

The point is that it is a *sine qua non* to “get the history right”, as Michael Marrus has expressed it, which, as he also underlines, is “extremely demanding”. For Marrus, getting it right involves among other things posing many questions about what happened, and to do so “with the best tools the historical culture of our society provides”. It also entails

putting ourselves in the shoes of others, often through the most vigorous efforts of the imagination, disciplined by the deepest and widest inquiry into the most varied of human circumstances. It also requires great efforts at objectivity, perhaps the most important methodological challenge for the student of the Holocaust.

“Objectivity” is a contested concept when it comes to historical research and writing, but Marrus has something specific in mind. To him there is a “world of difference” between seeing inquiry as a “sacred duty” involving “mourning, commemoration, denunciation, or a warning for future generations” – what I would call an activist approach – and the “quite different task of analysis”,

trying to deepen understanding in terms that are recognized by the general culture of our day. This last is the objective I am talking about here, an effort to integrate the history of the Holocaust into the general stream of historical consciousness, to apply to it the modes of analysis and the scholarly discourse used for other great issues of the day.³⁶

As an example of such a mode, I suggest that a very useful heuristic tool for comparative analyses of genocides and genocidal policies is the model developed by Tomislav Dulic. The model assumes that systematic mass killings and genocides should be seen as political projects designed by the elite of a state or similar collective actor that go through the three phases of “*conceptualization, implementation and (possible) realization*”.³⁷ The model looks at cases of mass murder along a timeline by examining phases and processes, while a methodological approach separately analyzes the “three ‘dimensions’ of mass killing”, i.e. “perpetrator *intent*, the *level of systematics* and the *magnitude of destruction*”, each dimension being related to one of the phases.³⁸

By analysing the dimensions separately and measuring them on a high-low scale, it will be possible to pinpoint the highs and lows along the axes of a three-dimensional model. When that is done, the dimensions are reunited in a way that will automatically place a particular case within the model. It is thus suggested that genocide entails the intended total or substantial destruction of a national or ethnic group by a state or similar political actor through a high level of systematic destruction. When the perpetrator intends but does not achieve substantial or total destruction, the result would be “attempted genocide”.³⁹

³⁶ Marrus 2016, p. 166–167.

³⁷ Dulic 2006, p. 256. Emphasis in the original.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 257. Emphasis in the original.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 257–258.

Dulić maintains that the model has the “advantage of being able to handle a considerable range of uncertainty for each dimension” and that it provides a “possibility of measuring and comparing various cases from the point of clearly defined criteria providing that identical methods and units of analysis are used”. Thus, in my view this model is applicable just as well to instances of mass killings which are technically – *pace* Friedlander – not genocides, such as the murder of disabled people in and by Nazi Germany.

The point is not to create a hierarchy of suffering, but to distinguish as clearly as possible between various instances of mass killings and massacres by employing the analytic tools provided by such and other models, in order to better comprehend what happened and what brought about the Nazi drive to target certain categories and individuals for different reasons and in different ways. However, the work of historiography, memory and metanarrative cannot stop there. Among other things it must be sure to include the perspectives and experiences of victims (and others) as well, in a way which is “multidirectional” in a sense akin to the one advocated by Michael Rothberg, avoiding zero-sum struggles about memory and constructed concepts.⁴⁰

Conclusion

To sum up: The usage of the term “the Holocaust” as an umbrella covering everything and every group or individual who was a victim of Nazi policies is, although common, quite problematic from a historiographical point of view. It tends to reflect a metanarrative that assumes a fundamentally global and total coherence and consistency in Nazi ideology and “practice”, which in fact did not exist. Such broad assumptions fail to provide an explanation for what happened and why, and in the final analysis amount to not much more than the correct but not very helpful observation that the Nazis were, to put it simplistically, “very bad to a lot of people”. Historiographically speaking, *ex post facto* concepts such as “the Holocaust” conceal more than they disclose, both with regard to the perpetrators’ and their collaborators’ actions and policies, the experiences and “choiceless choices” of the victims and the role of so-called bystanders, even if they are understood in a more restricted sense. In my view, if we

⁴⁰ See Rothberg 2009, *passim*.

wish to analyze for instance Nazi policies it is preferable to begin at the other end, i.e. from the Nazis’ own terms, such as “the final solution of the Gypsy question”, and try to understand what they thought they were doing and why, how their ideas about their various “problems”, projects, “solutions” and policies changed and developed over time, and how they were actually implemented between 1933 and 1945 in areas controlled or influenced by Nazi Germany, finally gauging their respective magnitudes and effects. By doing so as precisely and extensively as possible, crucial differences as well as similarities will be better delineated, enabling a deeper, richer and more nuanced historical understanding of the myriad of events that are presently connoted by “the Holocaust”.

This will enable the work of memory and historical understanding to encompass as much and as many as possible, without as is too often the case reverting to simplifications and perspectives which reduce and eradicate vital distinctions as well as parallels and connections. Both the specifics of each case and its relation to the overall context must always be emphasized, and it must always be made clear that it is not a question of creating competing victim hierarchies but of describing and understanding the events of the period in as rich and precise a fashion as possible.

Abstract

What is meant by “the Holocaust” or the corresponding Swedish term “*Förintelsen*”? Even a brief overview of present-day usage clearly shows that answers to this question vary widely, and that there is no general agreement on what the term, a postwar construct, means or ought to mean. At one end, it signifies the murder of six million Jews by Nazi Germany and its collaborators during the second world war often including the period 1933–1939, and at the other end it serves as an umbrella term covering all victims of Nazi Germany. The term’s varied meanings reflect different understandings and metanarratives of Nazi Germany and its policies, which sometimes leads to zero-sum fights related more to the politics of memory than with deepening the knowledge and understanding of what took place. With regard to the latter aspect it is argued that from a historiographic point of view the constructed concept of “the Holocaust” is not necessary for under-

standing the multitude of events the name represents, whatever meaning we wish to give it. To step out of the present impasse, a greater focus needs to be on “getting the history right” with the best analytical tools available to us. Doing so should support the work of memory and historical understanding to encompass as much and as many as possible in as rich and precise fashion as possible, instead of the current tendency of conflating Nazi policies and victim categories, which reduces vital distinctions as well as parallels and connections.

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Panel discussion: Sweden's New Holocaust Museum: A Site of Conversation, as well as Conservation

Abstract by Victoria Van Orden Martínez

Panelists:

Panel Chair: Guri Hjeltnes, Center for Studies of the Holocaust and Religious Minorities. Panelists: Henry “Hank” Greenspan, University of Michigan; Richelle Budd Caplan, Yad Vashem; David Marwell, formerly of the USHMM and Museum of Jewish Heritage; Yigal Cohen, Ghetto Fighters’ House Museum.

Panel discussion. What is a Holocaust Museum?

In this, the first session of the International Research Conference on Holocaust Remembrance and Representation, the panelists were asked to address three central questions:

1. What is a Holocaust museum? What distinguishes a Holocaust museum from other museums?
2. How can you make a Holocaust museum relevant when there are no authentic sites?
3. What do you believe is important to think about when establishing a Holocaust museum in Sweden?

The answers given by the panelists often addressed more than one question at a time, demonstrating a strong sense that this museum is an opportunity to create an institution that is not only informed by existing Holocaust museums, but also seeks and finds its own unique character and essence. Though each panelist addressed the questions from his or her particular position and perspective, most as directors or former directors of Holocaust museums, there was consensus that a Holocaust museum – both in general and in Sweden – should be not just a site of commemoration, but a place to foster education and stimulate dialogue. In addition, there was agreement among the panelists that a Holocaust museum should also be a place of research or, at the very least, an institution with close connections and in constant dialogue with researchers in the field.

Overall, there was a strong sense that the new Holocaust museum in Sweden is an opportunity to be not merely a conservation site – of memory, artefacts, symbols and so forth – but a conversation site. This would include not only the conversations that directly involve the museum – for example, with the public at large – or are stimulated by and take place within the museum or in response to its physical and virtual outreach, but also those conversations that are carried outside of these boundaries by visitors and are continued in homes, schools and places of meeting and worship.

In other words, the museum should be a place which continues to provoke and stimulate thought and consideration long after visitors have left. At the center of all these elements are, of course, the victims and survivors of the Holocaust, their stories and testimonies, and their descendants and the role they can play. The following is a summary of three strategies or approaches discussed which may help to achieve this vision of a Holocaust museum in Sweden.

1. Make the Holocaust personal to visitors by engaging them in critical thinking processes throughout the museum

The panelists consistently emphasized the importance of making the Holocaust museum a place of individual and shared reflection, understanding and discussion. One way of doing this is to attempt to engage each visitor personally. For instance, Dr. Henry Greenspan of the University of Michigan suggested that immediately on entering the museum, visitors could be greeted by the multiple voices of survivors,

relatives and others engaging them in considering the answers to questions of “Why?”, beginning with “Why am I here?”. The experience can be repeated at the exit with similar questions which engage visitors in contemplating what they have learned and how their questions have been answered or remain open. Similarly, Yigal Cohen gave the example of an interactive learning exhibit at the entrance of the Ghetto Fighters’ House Museum in Israel where visitors choose an archive item – for instance, an object which belonged to a victim or survivor – to focus on and consider from a personal point of view, thus becoming active participants in the memory process and leaving with a sense of a personal experience. Dr. Greenspan further recommended smaller side rooms in which selected artefacts or other elements from a main exhibit are discussed intensively to encourage deeper engagement.

2. Demonstrate the relevance of the Holocaust to contemporary issues

Several panelists emphasized how the history of the Holocaust as the main theme of the museum could also be a means of addressing and creating discussion on relevant current issues. Dr. David Marwell, for example, outlined how a core exhibit focusing on the history of the Holocaust could be projected onto secondary/temporary exhibitions about critical contemporary issues in bold ways. He stated that the new museum’s character and reputation could be defined by its willingness to be bold and take chances in addressing critical issues through its complete central program. Mr. Cohen explained how this is currently being done at the Ghetto Fighters’ House Museum, where burning issues of the present are addressed in group educational discussions held in both general exhibition spaces and in purpose-built rooms. Ms. Budd Caplan further emphasized the importance of educational/discussion spaces to foster conversation and dialogue with the past.

3. Place the Holocaust survivors, their voices and experiences, and even their descendants at the center

The panel began with Dr. Guri Hjeltnes remarking on the close relationship the Norwegian Holocaust Center has had with Holocaust survivors. Though the centrality of Holocaust survivors, their voices and stories, and their families within a Holocaust museum is perhaps implicit, each panelist underscored it nonetheless. Like Dr. Hjeltnes, Richelle Budd Caplan of Yad Vashem underlined the value and importance of a close relationship and good dialogue between the museum and survivors/victims and their descendants. Mr. Cohen related how his museum is actively engaged in working with second generation survivors who help keep their stories of their parents and other family members alive. Dr. Greenspan, who has spent decades working with survivor testimonies, recommended the museum should include video testimonies of survivors which relate their experiences before, during and after the war. He emphasized that it is important that survivors are represented – not as symbols of the Holocaust – but as people like ourselves, who somehow managed to live through and after the destruction. He suggested facilitating group conversations among survivors, whether actual or virtual, as well as conversations between and among other individuals, to engage with survivors and their stories in original and thought-provoking ways.

The above has engaged primarily with the first question – “What is a Holocaust museum and what distinguishes it from other museums?” – and, to a slightly lesser extent, the third question – “What do you believe is important to think about when establishing a Holocaust museum in Sweden?”. The following will briefly address the second question: “How can you make a Holocaust museum relevant when there are no authentic sites?” before concluding with a few final points related to question three.

How can you make a Holocaust museum relevant when there are no authentic sites?

In answer to the question of how a Holocaust museum can be established in a location with no authentic sites, Dr. Marwell invoked the numerous Holocaust museums in the United States, a country in which there was no Nazi occupation and from where few victims originated.

He pointed rather to the country's role in defeating Nazi Germany and bringing justice to Nazi perpetrators, as well as the large number of Holocaust survivors who settled in the country after liberation as key reasons for the nearly 20 permanent Holocaust museums in the country. These conclusions juxtaposed with Dr. Hjeltnes' references at the beginning of the panel discussion to Sweden's role in accepting – and, indeed, rescuing and evacuating – refugees and survivors both during and after the war demonstrate how suitable it is for Sweden to have its first Holocaust museum. As Ms. Budd Caplan stated, a Holocaust museum in Sweden is not only relevant, it is overdue. It was also pointed out by Ms. Budd Caplan and other panelists that the Holocaust museum in Sweden has the potential to be a site where individuals who want to or are planning to go to authentic sites – something that is being done increasingly in recent years – may visit in preparation for their desired or forthcoming encounters. It could also be a site where those who cannot go to authentic sites for various reasons may go to have an equally constructive experience. Finally, a Holocaust museum in Sweden – though not an authentic site – may be or gradually become the location of commemoration events, particularly if it is located in an area of Sweden without such natural gathering locations nearby.

Final remarks

As stated, the third and final question – “What do you believe is important to think about when establishing a Holocaust museum in Sweden?” – has already been addressed in the above. However, several final points made by the panelists will serve to conclude this summation. First, as Dr. Greenspan noted, to think of the Holocaust as the past is premature. As he mentioned, one of the Holocaust survivors he worked with over many years remarked that we don't know whether the Holocaust marked a beginning or an end, so it is vital not to situate it as a distant event in history. It is important that a new Holocaust museum does not move away from the historical event itself, as Mr. Cohen phrased it, even as it embraces contemporary issues of relevance. Ms. Budd Caplan also reiterated this first point, noting that it will be critical for a new Holocaust museum in Sweden to find a balance between the overall historical context of the Holocaust and

issues of relevance in Sweden's past and present, such as complicity, bystanderism, race science and antisemitism. Second, the issue of research, though emphasized as a critical component of a Holocaust museum in Sweden, was also recognized as one that requires careful consideration of resources, capacity and location. Whether the new museum has its own research department and, if so, how extensive it should be, or if it relies on scholarship emanating from a separate entity will need to be based on a variety of factors, such as: How much can one museum do – and do well? Is it nearby a sufficiently relevant research institute which is willing to and capable of working and coordinating with the new museum without pushing its own agenda? If not, are there alternative ways of engaging with scholars who can actively and adequately contribute to the museum? These are just some of the elements that will be important when shaping and building the new institution. Finally, there are, of course, many other important details to be determined, such as: Who is the target audience? Should the museum be placed near ample existing resources (other museums and sites of interest, for example) or where there are few? What balance should and can be found between aspects such as the Holocaust in general and Sweden's role in particular, and notable Swedish figures and Holocaust survivors who became Swedish citizens? Though naturally not in a position to answer these and similar questions, they have nonetheless raised them as essential to think about during the establishment and development of the Holocaust museum in Sweden.

Museums as Sites of Conversation

Henry “Hank” Greenspan

Abstract

Following from my keynote, this paper suggests ways museums could become sites of conversation as well as exhibition. The underlying concept is to include multiple voices along with single ones, and questions as much as answers. Thus, rather than the kind of summary epigram with which most Holocaust exhibits begin, I imagine a short video that includes a range of perspectives, perhaps contesting, in response to the question: *Why do we have a Holocaust museum in Sweden?* The aim would be to encourage visitors to ask the same question, with the possibility of space toward the end of the exhibit to discuss it.

Second, along with individual video testimonies, I advocate recorded group conversations with survivors and perhaps their heirs. Group conversations model shared reflection – and the process of “learning together” – while introducing survivors beyond their roles as formal “witnesses.” Finally, in light of the question – raised by survivors and others – of whether the Holocaust marked an end or a beginning, the end of a Holocaust exhibit deserves particular attention. In the world as it is, we might confront the possibility that we, too, could become the “last witnesses.”

Introduction

At the end of my keynote, I asked whether a museum could facilitate conversation – real conversation – on site and not only in a hoped-for afterward when visitors have gone home. What follows is a series of ideas about ways that might happen.

The concept is much more important to me than particular proposals. And, for me, thinking about a museum is largely untrodden ground. As in my first interviews with survivors so many years ago, I am mostly winging it. Here, too, my aim is learning together.

Entrances

Every Holocaust museum I know greets visitors with an epigram – e.g., Santayana’s “those who don’t remember the past” and similar – while the actual missions of most Holocaust museums are multiple: warning, documentation, memorialization, pedagogy, research, advocacy, universalism, particularism, and more. These are obviously complex institutions.

I have wondered whether it might make sense to be explicit about that multiplicity and the questions that follow. Specifically, in place of a summary epigram, I have imagined multiple voices at the start of an exhibit, all responding to some version of the question: “Why *do* we have a Holocaust museum in Sweden?” Survivors’ voices would be most central, but I am imagining also including excerpts from their heirs and some “regular citizens” of varying ages and backgrounds, following each other at the beginning of the main exhibit as short clips in a 4–5-minute video.

The aim of this format, besides representing the actual plurality of perspectives, would be to engage visitors in the same question. “Why is there such a museum? Why am I here?” Relative to a single aphorism (to which one mainly says “amen”), multiple – and sometimes contesting – perspectives create disequilibrium. And disequilibrium provokes reflection and, often enough, conversation in search of resolution. For those inclined, I also imagine a space at the end of the exhibit to have that conversation. It could be hokey, but relative to the “visitor feedback” forms I’ve seen from other Holocaust museums, the odds of substantive reflection may be greater in this format. And, of course, one does not preclude the other.

School and Community Based Micro Museums

Anticipating this talk, I used the terms “museum” and “conversation” in a Google search. That mainly yielded conversations *about* museums. But one piece asked the question: “How can we maximize the potential of museums to get people talking with one another?” And it included the assertion, which was frankly news to me, that “museums have long been places where people come together for discussion.”¹ Really?

Apparently, I have been going to the wrong museums. But the article featured Kate Baird, an educator at an art museum in Springfield, Missouri. Baird has been doing what sounds like extraordinary work with schools and other community groups in which mostly kids work together – in close collaboration with the museum – on every aspect of planning and constructing their own installations. The result has been a series of community-based micro museums. At least as described, the kids dive in.

Not so with adults. Baird notes that:

[...] adults expect to listen and be given information ... to be told what something means ... More than younger visitors, adults seem to feel ... they have nothing of value to contribute to a conversation about art.

There is obviously mature virtue in such modesty and reticence. And a Holocaust museum is different from an art museum in obvious ways. Still, knowing that all museum visitors, like people in general, will *inevitably* construct their own meanings – alongside whatever an exhibit suggests something means – there is also virtue in having a space in which those meanings can be articulated. We will never know how many unasked questions – including burning questions – accompany visitors home. I’d guess it’s not a small number.

Individual Testimonies and Group Interviews

Without question, a Holocaust museum in Sweden should include video testimonies of survivors retelling experiences specific to the Swedish context – before, during, and after the war. I understand the

¹ Rebecca Herz, “How can museums help us (re)learn the art of conversation?” February 13, 2017. Accessed 1/24/20 <https://museumquestions.com/2017/02/13/how-can-museums-help-us-relearn-the-art-of-conversation>.

Shoah Foundation recently co-produced such an exhibit for the Swedish History Museum, entitled: “Speaking Memories – The Last Witnesses of the Holocaust.”

Based on what I have read, it appears to have been a very effective project. Still, I have to say that I am a little allergic to invocations of “the last witnesses.” We hear it every day in a field – and a popular culture – near obsessed with disappearing survivors.

I first heard it from my would-be doctoral committee when I initially proposed a dissertation on survivors. “All the work on survivors has already been done,” three professors told me. They continued essentially verbatim: “And anyway, the survivors are all dying”. This was 1975 – forty-five years ago. The professors were not alone. A number of people in my own field – psychologists and psychiatrists – said the same in the mid-1970s. Bidding survivors farewell has been going on for a long time, decades before demography caught up with eulogy.²

Inevitably, the issue comes up when a new Holocaust museum is anticipated, and so I feel it appropriate to speak personally. Agi, Leon, and many other survivors I have known have not been on the planet for some years. There is nothing that substitutes for decades of knowing them and learning with them. Nothing. Paradoxically, however, knowing survivors well, and beyond their role purely as “witnesses,” also changes the nature of the loss. Remembered conversations – and seeing those conversations elicit new conversations, as I described in my classroom – yields a more complex sense of what survivors’ presence means. Of a survivor she got to know well, both directly and indirectly, one of my students said:

She was not “just” a survivor, if I can say it that way. And that made her being a survivor much more significant. The “not survivor” part of her – the experiences and traits that are just like us or people we know – is what made the “survivor part” real. Not a symbol of the Holocaust. But one of us.³

Exactly because there is more to lose in sustained relationships – and in relationships with people “like us” – loss itself is more palpable, but so also is what remains.

² Cf. Henry Greenspan, *On Listening to Holocaust Survivors: Beyond Testimony* (St. Paul, MN: Paragon House, 2010), 60–71.

³ Henry Greenspan, “The Humanities of Contingency: Interviewing and Teaching Beyond ‘Testimony’ with Holocaust Survivors.” *The Oral History Review* 2019 46:2, 372–373.

Before there was testimony, there was conversation. Before there was wider interest in their accounts, survivors spoke among themselves. Not all, of course, but many. Along with individual testimonies, therefore, I would advocate that group conversations among survivors be included in a new museum. These could be recorded group interviews or excerpts from discussions, as comfortable for participants, grounded in existing survivor organizations (e.g., child survivors). Conversations between and among survivors model shared reflection and learning together in ways that individual testimonies rarely do. They also are more likely to include the “not survivor” part. And, as noted, they represent the kind of contexts in which many survivors spoke before we interviewers appeared.

It is important to add that survival was itself a collective experience for many – both during the destruction and during the years that followed. This is epitomized by the famous “Buchenwald boys,” *Landsmannschaften*, and other group identifications. A focus on the “lone witness” has tended to obscure that.

Taking Time and Going Deep

As important as widening engagement is deepening it. In my classes, I ask students to “reverse engineer” video testimony; that is, to make a verbatim written transcript of a short segment in which I know there is lot that is easily missed when simply watching it through. That is what my students discover – all that they missed in their initial watching and, more generally, the fruits of taking serious time and paying serious attention.

I understand that museum visitors cannot be asked to create transcripts! But, along the main path of the exhibit, I am imagining side rooms in which selected artefacts or excerpts from the exhibit are met again; the second time, intensively. This would require facilitation that goes beyond usual curation; and that takes time, resources, and special training. The cost might be balanced by the fact that, in general, we remember better what we have discussed rather than only seen or heard.

Exits

Leon once reflected that when he was “young and naïve” he believed that learning about the Holocaust would “maybe cure mankind of this madness.” However, he continued: “But it is not the case. It is hardly the fact. It has not come to a realization”. Victor, one of the few Treblinka survivors, suggested that we don’t know whether the Holocaust marked a beginning or an end. He leaned toward the former. So did Primo Levi.⁴

If we agree with these survivors, there is a tension in all Holocaust museums. Historical museums, at least, are about the past. But thinking about the Holocaust as past may be premature, like the first signs of climate degradation.

I don’t know how, but I think that possibility should somehow inform what comes at the end of any Holocaust exhibit. Along with honoring survivors – a usual and appropriate way in which exhibits end – there is perhaps one more step. That is to engage the possibility that we ourselves, or our immediate descendants, could become “the last witnesses.”

⁴ Henry Greenspan, “On Testimony, Legacy, and the Problem of Helplessness in History,” *Holocaust Studies: A Journal of Culture and History* 13:1 2007, 52–55.

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Memories, testimonies and oral history. On collections and research about and with Holocaust survivors in Sweden

Malin Thor Tureby

Abstract

This article takes as its point of departure the Swedish government's directive for the committee of inquiry to propose a museum about the Holocaust and its instruction that "stories from survivors with a connection to Sweden should be of central importance" in the future museum. In Sweden, there are a great number of archival collections containing survivor stories. However, most of these collections were not gathered with the intention to preserve culturally significant stories for the future. Rather, the "survivor stories" collected were intended as evidence in Nazi trials or for future scientific or historical studies.

The article explores the history of the practice of collecting and archiving survivor stories in Sweden. The empirical example consists of six of the largest collections with "survivor stories", initiated during the years 1945 to 2020. The focus is on describing and comparing the different motives for how and why the various collections were initiated and the initiators ideas on what the collected material would be used for. Who were the initiators? What documentation methods were used during the different collection processes? What do the different documentation processes tell us about the perception of what a survivor story is and how it should be collected and used at different times? How has the perception of the "survivor story" changed or not over time? Finally, the article considers what we can

learn from these previous collection initiatives in Sweden and how this might be taken forward by the new Holocaust museum.

Introduction: “... stories from survivors with a connection to Sweden should be of central importance”

In the Statement of Government Policy of January of 2019, the Swedish Prime Minister, Stefan Löfven, stated that “A new museum will be established to preserve and pass on the memory of the Holocaust”.¹ A few months later a committee was appointed:

The committee of inquiry on a museum about the Holocaust (Ku 2019:01) will propose how a museum to preserve the memory of the Holocaust should be established in Sweden. [...] The terms of reference for the committee points out that stories from survivors with a connection to Sweden should be of central importance.²

Consequently, according to the task of the committee of inquiry, the mission is to propose how a museum of the Holocaust might make stories from survivors with a connection to Sweden of central importance.

In Sweden, there are a great number of archival collections containing survivor stories.³ This presentation aims to present an overview of why and how survivor stories have been collected over time. The empirical example consists of six of the largest collections with “survivor stories”, initiated during the years 1945–2020: Gunhild Tegen’s Archive (1945) at Uppsala University Library Archive; The Polish Research Institute Archive (1945–1946) at Lund University Library Archive, Adam Lesniewski’s collection (1972) archived at the National Archives; The Raoul Wallenberg Project Archive (1989–1991) at Uppsala University Archive, The Jewish Memory Collection (1994–1998) at the Nordic Museum and Bernt Hermele’s collection The

¹ Statement of Government Policy 21 January 2019, (Accessed 15 January 2020), www.government.se/speeches/20192/01/statement-of-government-policy-21-january-2019.

² Information from the webpage of the national inquiry A museum about the Holocaust, accessed 15 January 2020, www.sou.gov.se/mof/in-english.

³ I use the concept “survivor story” since it is the term used in the Government’s instructions to the inquiry. See for example Forum för levande historia, Vittnesmål från Förintelsen. Svenska samlingar med vittnesmål.

www.levandehistoria.se/fakta-fordjupning/forintelsen/vittnesmal/vittnesmal-fran-forintelsen/svenska-samlingar-med-0 Accessed 1 March 2020.

survivors, (2018–2020) collected in Sweden, but archived and curated at United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

The source material of the study consists mainly of metatexts such as archive descriptions of the different collections and other texts written and published by those who initiated and worked with the various collections.

In oral history, it is often underlined that the interviewees in dialogue with the interviewer create stories of coherent lives and understandable subjects. Henry Greenspan writes: “A good interview is a process in which two people work hard to understand the views and experience of one person: the interviewee”.⁴

The interviewers should therefore also be understood as co-creators of the stories created. I agree with this approach, but I believe that it is also important to consider that survivor stories are generated within and against particular political contexts and need to be understood in relation to their specific time and place.⁵ The idea and practice of collecting survivor stories/testimonies itself has a history. Survivors’ stories have been created, archived and curated in a variety of specific political, social and institutional contexts at specific times, a factor which also plays a major role for the content and form of the stories. Furthermore, certain documentation methods create a certain type or genre of stories. Therefore, I argue that we need to understand how the institutions and researchers who create collections with survivors’ stories also contribute to the shaping of those stories.⁶

Two collections in 1945

Historical commissions and institutions were established during and immediately after the Holocaust in order to collect, document, record and analyze what was happening. Already during the Holocaust, for example the people of the *Oyneg Shabes Archive* led by the historian

⁴ Henry Greenspan, *On listening to Holocaust survivors. Beyond testimonies*, St. Paul, 2010, 3.

⁵ Compare Alistair Thomson, “Moving stories: Oral history and Migration Studies”, *Oral History*, Vol. 27, No. 1, 1999, 24–37.

⁶ Compare Malin Thor Tureby & Jesper Johansson, “The making of cultural heritage and ethnicity in the archive. The example of the Nordic Museum” in Christina Johansson & Pieter Bevelander (eds), *Museums in a time of migration. Rethinking museum’ roles, representations, collections, and collaborations*, Lund 2017, 169–195.

Emmanuel Ringelbaum in the Warsaw Ghetto started to document, collect and archive what took place.⁷ One of the surviving members of the group, Rokhl Auerbakh, became active in the documentation of events and the collection of testimonial accounts and materials immediately after the war ended. She later became the founder and director of the Department for the Collection of Witness Testimony at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem.⁸ In Sweden such an institution responsible for documenting, creating, archiving and disseminating survivor stories was for several reasons never founded. But numerous collections with survivor stories or testimonies were initiated at different times and places; collections that was archived and still exist. Two large interview and questionnaire collections were initiated shortly after the liberated concentrations camp survivor's arrival in Sweden in 1945. One collection was started by *Samarbetskommittén för demokratiskt uppbyggnadsarbete* (SDU). The SDU distributed a questionnaire in Polish, Czech, French and Dutch to various refugee camps in Sweden. What is left of the collection is now archived at the Uppsala University Library as Gunhild Tegen's archive.⁹ The other collection was initiated in Lund in the southern part of Sweden, where the Polish Research Institute collected interviews with about 500 Polish survivors in 1945. The archive is today located at the Lund University Library.

Although initiated roughly at the same time, the objectives and documentation methods of the initiators and creators of the two different collections of 1945 differed.

The Polish Research Institute Archive 1945–1946

According to the webpage of The Polish Research Institute Archive, the initiator of what is called “the documentation project” was a lecturer in Polish at Lund university, Zygmunt Lakocinski.¹⁰

⁷ Samuel D. Kassow, *Who will write our history? Emanuel Ringelblum, the Warsaw Ghetto, and the Oyneg Shabes Archive*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2007.

⁸ Carrie Friedman-Cohen, “Rokhl Auerbakh” in *Jewish Women: A Comprehensive Historical Encyclopedia*. 27 February 2009. Jewish Women's Archive.

<https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/auerbakh-rokhl> Accessed 20/1 2020.

⁹ Uppsala universitetsbibliotek, Carolina Rediviva, Gunhild Tegens arkiv, www.alvin-portal.org/alvin/view.jsf?pid=alvin-record%3A8151&dswid=8634 Accessed 20 Jan. 2020.

¹⁰ The Polish Research Institute archive, Universitetsbiblioteket i Lund

www.ub.lu.se/witnessing-genocide/the-polish-research-institute-archive, Accessed 16 Jan. 2020.

Lakocinski had already in 1939 initiated a systematic effort of building up an archive in Lund that would document the politics of Nazi Germany in the occupied countries of Europe.¹¹ When the survivors arrived in Sweden, materials had already been collected under his leadership for six years.

In 1945, funded by the Swedish government, Lakocinski and a team of former prisoners of concentration camps conducted more than 500 interviews with the Polish survivors in Lund. The material was intended to be used as evidence in future trials and as source material for historical research in the future.¹² A Swedish historian, Sture Bolin, was affiliated as a scientific advisor to the institute in order to develop a method that ensured that the interviews would be reliable as source material for future historical research:

In practice, this meant that the interviews should take place as soon as possible after the liberation, and that the testimonies should be a combination of outlines and verbatim witness accounts, which could then be substantiated by other witnesses. It was also deemed important that the collection of information was as objective and impartial as possible, and that the interviewer distinguished between facts and the interviewee's emotions. To achieve this, it was essential to note names, places and expressions mentioned by the interviewee and to stick to the framework of chronology. To keep the interviews structured, they were conducted by using a set of general questions which allowed the interviewees to recount their personal experiences in an ordered way. After the interview, a transcript of the witness testimony was signed by both the interviewee and the interviewer.¹³

The motives for collecting the interviews were thus to create reliable evidence to be used in trials, but also in future historical research. The documentation method was designed to ensure objective and structured "witness protocols", with detailed facts about dates and places that could be verified by other survivors. But it was also a documentation method which did not allow the interviewed to express emotions or reflections, since it was considered desirable that the

¹¹ Paul Rudny, *Polski Instytut Źródłowy w Lund (PIZ) (The Polish Research Institute in Lund)*. A presentation of the archives.

www3.ub.lu.se/ravensbruck/piz-eng-presentation.pdf, Accessed 23 Jan. 2020.

¹² The Polish Research Institute archive, Universitetsbiblioteket i Lund

www.ub.lu.se/witnessing-genocide/the-polish-research-institute-archive, Accessed 16 Jan. 2020.

¹³ The Polish Research Institute archive, Universitetsbiblioteket i Lund

www.ub.lu.se/witnessing-genocide/the-polish-research-institute-archive, Accessed 16 Jan. 2020.

For further reading about the documentation methods used and the archive: Paul Rudny, *Polski Instytut Źródłowy w Lund (PIZ) (The Polish Research Institute in Lund)* A presentation of the archives: www3.ub.lu.se/ravensbruck/piz-eng-presentation.pdf accessed 16 Jan. 2020.

collected “information” should be “as objective and impartial as possible”.

Although reflected on the webpage that exactly how the interviewees were chosen is not fully known, it is stated, without further reflection, that more than half of the interviewees were under 35 years of age, 71 per cent were women, 85 per cent were Roman Catholics, 12 per cent Jewish and 3 per cent of other or unknown religious affiliation.¹⁴ The majority of the survivor stories in the Polish Research Institute archive are thus from young female Polish Roman Catholic survivors. Considering this archive, though we do not know how the interviewees were chosen, we do know that the interviewers were handpicked “ex-prisoners” that were considered to be “key persons” by Lakocinski. The interviewers were deemed to be mentally strong and had an academic education, many of them had a higher degree such as a Ph.D.¹⁵ In the end about ten persons started to work in the project, all of them former Polish citizens, the majority Roman Catholic women. One woman, Luba Melchior, was Jewish and “responsible for Jewish issues”.¹⁶

After the interviews, the interviewers transcribed the interviews to what was called “a witness protocol” (a story about what happened to the person during the Holocaust). The story usually starts with the arrest and ends with the arrival in Sweden. The story was written down after the interview by the interviewer and signed by both the interviewer and the interviewee. Each “witness protocol” also includes the comments of the person taking the record about the person being interviewed:

The person interviewed, a straightforward, sensitive, was strongly affected by these recollections and sometimes cried. Her memory is weak but she was trying to tell only the truth.¹⁷

There was no sound recording involved, but the interviewer transcribed the interview to a written text – a story after the interview. The focus was on what happened to the interviewed person during the war and the Holocaust.

¹⁴ The Polish Research Institute archive, Universitetsbiblioteket i Lund www.ub.lu.se/witnessing-genocide/the-polish-research-institute-archive accessed 15 Jan. 2000.

¹⁵ Rudny, 4–5.

¹⁶ Rudny, 4–5.

¹⁷ Protocol No. 001, Polish Institute of Source Research in Lund Sweden, www3.ub.lu.se/ravensbruck/interview1.pdf Accessed 24 Jan. 2020.

There are similarities between the different historical commissions that were organized around Europe and the Polish Research Institute in Sweden. Like many other documentation initiatives in Europe, Lakocinski started to document, collect and archive already during the catastrophe. Further, although initiated by Lakocinski, the practical work – the documentation in the form of interviews – was carried out by survivors who interviewed other survivors. The majority of the interviewed and the interviewees were, as mentioned above, young Roman Catholic Polish women. Further research is needed to fully explain why. However, there are indications that the Polish Research Institute in Lund, and especially Luba Melchior, were in contact with Nella Rost, the leader of the Jewish Historical Commission in Stockholm. The commission in Stockholm was conducting a similar investigation and collection of testimonies with Jewish survivors. Before her arrival in Sweden, Nella Rost was a member of the Krakow branch of the Central Jewish History Commission in Poland.¹⁸ One can therefore consider whether the reason that few Jewish stories were collected in Lund was perhaps connected to the fact that Jewish stories were being collected by the Jewish Historical Commission in Stockholm. One can also argue that the work of the Polish Research Institute needs to be understood in relation to how other similar initiatives developed within a transnational context where the survivors themselves were the active agents for collecting, documenting and archiving.¹⁹ Further research is needed, however, to make a definitive conclusion. Historian Izabela A. Dahl, who has previously researched the collection, writes that due to the lack of funds in Sweden, in 1949, the archive was transferred to the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace at Stanford University in the United States. It was returned to Sweden in 1984 and is now archived at Lund University Library. Since autumn 2017, the

¹⁸ See Izabela A. Dahl, “Witnessing the Holocaust. Jewish experiences and the collection of the Polish Source Institute in Lund” and Johannes Heuman, “In search of Documentation. Nella Rost and the Jewish Historical Commission in Stockholm” both articles in Johannes Heuman & Pontus Rudberg (eds.), *The Early Holocaust Memory in Sweden. Archives, Testimonies and Reflections* (prel. title), Palgrave Macmillan 2020 (in print).

¹⁹ Compare Rita Horváth, “A Jewish Historical Commission in Budapest”: the place of the National Relief Committee for Deportees in Hungary [DEGOB] Among the Other Large-Scale Historical-Memorial Projects of She’erit Hapletah after the Holocaust (1945–1948)” in David Bankier & Dan Michman (eds), *Holocaust Historiography in Context. Emergence, challenges, polemics & achievements*, Jerusalem 2008, 475–496; Laura Jockusch, *Collect and Record! Jewish Holocaust documentation in early Postwar Europe*, Oxford 2012.

collection has been digitized and testimonies are available as an open resource for research.²⁰

Gunhild Tegen's Archive 1945

As mentioned above, another documentation project was initiated in 1945 by *Samarbetskommittén för demokratiskt uppbyggnadsarbete*, (SDU). One of the initiators, Einar Tegen, wrote:

There was an outstanding opportunity to gather data on the experiences that these people have had to undergo in the German camps and about their reactions to them. It must of course be considered an interest of the utmost importance that what has taken place in the concentration camps will be known as fully as possible and by as many people as possible.²¹

In comparison with the Polish Research Institute in Lund, which mainly focused on Polish survivors, the aim of the SDU was to collect stories from “everyone recently transferred and taken care of in Sweden from the German labor and concentration camps”.²² The collected written answers to the questionnaire are referred to as “human documents”.²³ The questionnaire was still being distributed to different camps in Sweden, while Einar and Gunhild Tegen were authoring the book, *De dödsdömda vittna*, to which this text refers.²⁴ Einar Tegen emphasizes in the preface of the book, that the book has no scientific claims, as only part of the material has been translated and used. Instead, the idea was to later make a scientific processing of the materials and bring about a white paper, possibly in collaboration with doctors in southern Sweden, who, according to Einar Tegen, had conducted similar examinations through interviews of selected, representative cases among the sick in their care.²⁵

In comparison with the collection of The Polish Research Institute in Lund, the collection of SDU in Uppsala was an investigation

²⁰ Dahl 2020.

²¹ Einar Tegen, “Förord”, in Gunhild & Einar Tegen, *De dödsdömda vittna. Enquêtesvar och intervjuer*, Stockholm, 1945, 7.

²² Tegen 1945, 16. In Swedish the quote reads: “*samtliga i Sverige ombändertagna, från tyska koncentrationsläger nyligen överförda*”.

²³ Tegen, 1945, 83: “*Mänskliga dokument*” [Human documents].

²⁴ Tegen 1945. The book contains 19 of the collected questionnaire answers (referred to as “human documents”), together with a few of Dory Engströmer’s interviews and a few poems authored by the interviewed women.

²⁵ Tegen 1945, 7.

initiated by Swedish intellectuals and professors in Sociology and Psychology. However, a transnational influence is still present since, as Einar Tegen writes in the preface to the book, the initiative to document and collect the stories from the survivors who had arrived in Sweden came from France, where one considered it important to have authentic and objective accounts from experiences in the camps documented by scientists in a country such as Sweden. The request was first, according to him, directed to the Swedish Medical Society [*Svenska Läkaresällskapet*]. Nevertheless, Einar Tegen writes that he, together with some other professors, suggested that a government commission should be appointed consisting of doctors, lawyers and social psychologists. While waiting for a notification from the government, SDU launched its own investigations and funded it with their own money.²⁶

The questionnaire used by SDU was designed by two psychologists from Stockholm University, Valdemar Fellenius and Gunnar Boalt. The materials were collected in order to serve as source material in large-scale statistical and sociopsychological studies designed to research how and if people can return to life after they have experienced something like the concentration camps. The quantitative approach is also why they used the standardized questionnaire.²⁷ According to Swedish historian Lars M. Andersson, who is currently researching the collection, there are clear traces in the archive that demonstrate the members of the SDU were very influenced by the research conducted in the United States at the time.²⁸

Gunhild Tegen writes in the fall of 1945 that, up to that time, the questionnaire had been circulated to about 1 400 Polish women (she does not differ between Jewish and Roman Catholic women), 164 Polish men and about 600 Czechs (the majority were women).²⁹ Further, Dory Engströmer³⁰, had previously interviewed 15 French women before they returned to France, as well as some women from

²⁶ Tegen 1945, 7. Further research is needed to find out who in France contacted Tegen and his colleagues.

²⁷ Tegen 1945, 9.

²⁸ Lars M. Andersson, "Makarna Tegen, SDU & insamlingen av vittnesmål om Förintelsen 1945", Public Lecture at Uppsala University, 16 January 2020.

²⁹ Tegen 1945, 20.

³⁰ Dory Engströmer was affiliated with SDU. She started to interview women on her own initiative. Further research into Engströmer's role in the documentation project is needed. Einar Tegen, 1945, 8 writes that she "had a significant merit" (*betydanden förtjänst*) in initiating the collection.

Belgium, Holland, Poland Hungary and Romania. Engströmer did not use a tape recorder but wrote down the conversation as it took place. According to Gunhild Tegen, Engströmer's interviews were more spontaneous and contained more varied information than the answers to the questionnaire.³¹ Today, only about 200 of the collected stories, or what the Tegens referred to as "the human documents", are known to still exist. No one knows what happened to the rest of the materials.³² The disappearance of some of the materials and that no one knows what happened to it might indicate a lack of funding or, perhaps, a fading interest in the materials by the initiators and creators. However, further research is needed to make any conclusions about the fate and history of the collection in the post-war years. The material that still exist is archived as Gunhild Tegen's archive at Uppsala University library. The author Pia-Kristina Garde rediscovered the collection in 1980s. She then carried out a large research venture, in which she tried to find as many as possible of the persons whose stories were documented in 1945 in order to find out what happened to them. In particular, she was interested in how they continued to live their lives after the Holocaust? Garde published two books from her research.³³ Her interviews with the women she located and other collected materials is now also part of Gunhild Tegen's archive at Uppsala University Library.³⁴

Adam Lesniewski's collection 1972

In 1972, a collection was initiated as a collaborative work between the Historical department at Stockholm University and the library (*Stifts- och landsbiblioteket*) in the town of Västerås. This collection is currently housed at the National Archives in Stockholm with the name "The Adam Lesniewski collection". The purpose of this documentation project was to collect stories to be used in future research

³¹ Tegen 1945, 84.

³² Andersson, Public Lecture 2020.

³³ Pia-Kristina Garde, *De dödsdömda vittnar: 60 år senare*, Bromma 2004 and *Mina föräldrars kärlek*, Strängnäs 2008.

³⁴ "Material om de återfunna flyktingarna, sorterat i alfabetisk ordning efter namn" (Material about the found refugees, sorted in alphabetical order by name)

www.alvin-portal.org/alvin/view.jsf?pid=alvinrecord%3A8151&dswid=8634#alvin-record:8223 Accessed 20 January 2020.

about Sweden's immigration history. In a letter addressed to potential respondents one can read:

The questionnaire is part of a more extensive research on living conditions for various national groups of immigrants who have come to Sweden, as well as their adaptation to Sweden [---] Each and every one of you who receives this letter has played a part in Sweden's immigrant history, and your documents will contribute to map that history.³⁵

“The survivors’ stories” in this collection are thus not framed in relation to researching the Holocaust, but to the contemporary, developing research field of migration studies.³⁶ However, there is a connection to the emerging field of Holocaust studies in Sweden. One of the initiators to the Adam Lesniewski collection, the historian Gunnar T. Westin, was also one of the project leaders of the large research project “Sweden during the Second World War”. [*Sverige under andra världskriget* (SUAV)].³⁷

Still, the survivors are, in this collection, positioned and included into a larger social category: “the immigrants”. In the information that was sent to potential respondents, it was stated that a documentation center concerning immigrant questions was about to be founded at *Stifts- och landsbiblioteket* in Västerås, where “many documents about different people, among other Jews from Poland and other countries” were already archived. In the information to the respondents, it was explained that the research at the documentation center would be initiated from the answers to the questionnaires, but also that it was important that the questionnaires should be complemented with personal documents such as private letters, diaries, notes, articles, photos or official documents. The respondents were thus asked to

³⁵ Adam Lesniewskis samling, Volym 1, Brev till respondenter om enkät, undertecknat Gunnar T. Westin, Adam Lesniewski (Stockholms universitet) och Jan Nilsson (Stifts- och landsbiblioteket i Västerås) maj 1972. Riksarkivet (National Archives).

³⁶ For further reading about the developments of the research field “migration studies” in the 1970's in a Swedish context see Malin Thor Tureby & Jesper Johansson, *Migration och kultur- arv. Insamlingar och berättelser om och med de invandrade ca 1970–2019*, Nordic Academic Press, Lund 2020.

³⁷ Gunnar T. Westin, *En historikers historia. Gunnar T. Westins berättelse om sitt liv*, Stockholm, Hjalmarson & Högberg 2018, “Gunnar T. Westin” in *Årsbok 2009 KVHAA* Stockholm 2009, 58. The research project “Sweden during the second world war”. [*Sverige under andra världskriget* (SUAV)] mainly focused on the Swedish state security and neutrality policies. All the dissertations and books published within the project used the archives of the government agencies or local authorities. No historian in the project used oral history, or the collections discussed in this article. The focus in the project was on Sweden and Swedish politics, not on the refugees nor on the Holocaust.

state if they were willing to donate such materials to the future documentation center. Further, they were asked to write their life story for the years 1945 to 1970. Hence, when asking for the persons to write their life story, they were asked to exclude the years before their arrival to Sweden.³⁸ This was a different approach to the collections of 1945, which focused on the years of the Holocaust and war. Like the collections of 1945, however, the collection of 1972 does not ask for information about life before the Holocaust.

The questionnaire is divided into four sections: Personal information, Arrival to Sweden, The economic situation, and The Road to Swedish Society. Hence, the design of the questionnaire is not primarily constructing the respondents as Holocaust survivors. The documentary interest in them is therefore not as survivors, but as immigrants in Sweden. The questions asked about their background are not specifically related to the Holocaust or experiences in Europe before or during the catastrophe. The questionnaire asks for information about: where the person was born, what kind of education they had in their home country, what occupation they had before the war, when they came to Sweden and from where. In relation to the Holocaust, the respondents are asked whether they came to Sweden through the Red Cross action, as refugees, or to be reunited with their families. They are also asked how many of their family members survived the war and to describe their own health condition when arriving in Sweden.

In total, 106 persons answered the questionnaire, and about two-thirds of these were women. Most of the respondents answered very briefly, but four persons has also sent in longer life stories. The lengthier life stories ignore the instructions concerning what to write about, instead focusing on their life before and during the Holocaust, indicating that the narrators are expressing a survivor identity rather than an immigrant identity.³⁹

³⁸ Adam Lesniewskis samling, Volym 1, Brev till respondenter om enkät, undertecknat Gunnar T. Westin, Adam Lesniewski (Stockholms universitet) och Jan Nilsson (Stifts- och landsbiblioteket i Västerås) maj 1972, Riksarkivet (National Archives).

³⁹ See for example Adam Lesniewskis samling, Volym 2, Mapp: Insända biografiska texter: "Mitt liv 1914–1945" ["My life 1914–1945"], Riksarkivet (National Archives).

The Raoul Wallenberg Project Archive 1989–1991

The fourth example is the Raoul Wallenberg Project Archive, an archive created at the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s. In this section, I have mainly used two articles about the collection authored by Karl Molin and Paul A. Levine shortly after the archive was established.⁴⁰ Karl Molin was the project leader and Paul A. Levine worked as an interviewer in the project.

According to Karl Molin, the initiative for the archive came from the Wallenberg family or, rather, Marcus and Amalia Wallenberg's Memorial Foundation and the Marianne and Marcus Wallenberg foundation. They wanted a series of interviews with people who in one way or another encountered the Swedish rescue operation for Budapest's Jews from 1944 to 1945.⁴¹ The project was led by Molin, who at the time was active as a Professor at the Department of History at Uppsala University, together with Erik Åsard, associate professor of political science and head of the Swedish Institute for North American Studies. Molin writes that nearly 50 people participated in one way or another in the project, of which about ten carried out the interviews. The project was based at Uppsala University, but most of the practical work was done in Budapest. It is unclear in Molin's article what he and Erik Åsard did within the framework of the project or why they were appointed as project leaders. None of them had any experience of working either with oral history or researching the Holocaust. Both, however, were experienced and well-qualified researchers in Swedish political history. Karl Molin had also previously been part of the research project Sweden during the Second World War and had thus worked with Gunnar T. Westin (who was part of initiating the Adam Lesniewski collection). This is an interesting detail to note, which might connect the collections to each other, although this needs to be further researched before we can say anything conclusive.

Another thought-provoking statement about the initiation of the collection is made by historian Attila Lajos. He claims that it was initially intended that the Columbia University Center for Oral

⁴⁰ Paul A. Levine, "Oral history and the Holocaust. Some methodological reflections", *Multicultural* 1992:10, 6–10; Karl Molin, "Raoul Wallenbergarkivet i Uppsala", *Arkiv, samhälle, forskning*, 1993:3, 7–20.

⁴¹ Molin 1993, 7–20.

History Research (CCOHR) would carry out the project, while Uppsala University's role was to give the project credibility and status,⁴² indicating how oral history was perceived in Sweden in the 1990s. In the end, there was no cooperation with CCOHR (one of the oldest and most prominent oral history institutions in the world, which had initiated and created oral history research projects and collections since 1948).⁴³ Instead Paul A. Levine was employed in the project. He was at the time a doctoral student working on his dissertation, which sometimes is called the first dissertation in Holocaust studies in Sweden.⁴⁴ Levine was responsible for the development of the project's methodology. He writes:

I was determined to try to dig deeper into the memories of those interviewed and try to elicit more scientifically useful information.⁴⁵

According to Levine, it was not desirable that the survivors should tell, in their own way and at their own pace, uninterrupted by the researcher, what they remembered about the years of the Holocaust. That kind of interview method created a story with a lack of structure and context which, according to Levine, created a number of source critical problems for political historians. Levine writes that he therefore was determined to get information that would be useful for historians, which is why a detailed chronologically structured questionnaire was created. The interviewer began by asking each respondent about their families, their socio-economic background, and their life in Budapest both before and during the war. Also, it was argued in a positivist manner that the use of the questionnaire "created a similarity of structure for the interviews which readily permits comparative studies."⁴⁶ Further, the interviewer was instructed to intervene, carefully but often, into the respondents' own

⁴² Attila Lajos, "Raoul Wallenberg i muntliga källor" in Lars Berggren et al. (eds), *Sambällshistoria i fokus. En festskrift till Lars Olsson om arbete, migration och kultur*, Malmö 2010, 244.

⁴³ Columbia Center for Oral History Research www.ccohr.incite.columbia.edu/history Accessed 20 January 2020.

⁴⁴ However, already in 1994 Mirjam Sterner Carlberg's dissertation, *Gemenskap och överlevnad. Om den judiska gruppen i Borås och dess historia*, was published and Ingrid Lomfors dissertation *Förlorad barndom – återvunnet liv. De judiska flyktingbarnen från Nazityskland*, Göteborg 1996 was published the same year as Levine's. Further the year before Levine's dissertation was published, Lars Olsson's book, *På tröskeln till folkhemmet. Baltiska flyktingar och polska koncentrationslägerfångar som reservarbetskraft i skånskt jordbruk kring slutet av andra världskriget*, Malmö 1995. Hence one can argue that the research field of Holocaust studies had more than one beginning in Sweden.

⁴⁵ Levine 1992, 7.

⁴⁶ Levine 1992, 8.

independent narrative with questions relating directly to the particular experience, day or moment being recounted. Information and memories which were of “greatest interest to our research” were encouraged. For example, it was considered less interesting and important to know what the respondent thought about Horthy, the American President or Hitler, than to know how they acquired their Swedish protective document. Further, the interviewer should intervene to make the answers placed into a more complete and detailed background, a background based upon the specific details of each respondents’ own experiences, and with the entire telling set in an accurate chronological and historical context.⁴⁷

The stories (interviews and transcripts) collected from survivors in this collection are thus framed in relation to political history and the activities at the Swedish legation in Budapest during 1944 to 1945. The 170 interviews were conducted with people who could tell something about these operations. Thus, it was not the individual survivors’ destinies or experiences that were of interest, but what they could tell about Raoul Wallenberg and the Swedish relief activities during the years 1944 to 1945 that was documented. Consequently, it is a very specific “survivor story” and collection that is constructed. The purpose of this collection was to gather materials about the Swedish relief activities in Budapest, sources that could be used while writing political history, rather than to document personal experiences from the Holocaust. Positivist ideals, like the ones expressed in the collections of 1945 about creating scientifically useful sources, thus shaped the gathered stories in a very particular way. However, the materials were later put in a new context and used to investigate how Jews experienced the Holocaust in Hungary in an excellent dissertation by Swedish historian Laura Palosuo.⁴⁸ This usage demonstrates the possibility of reusing archived voices and collections in new knowledge projects in ways other than the materials initially was created and intended for.

⁴⁷ Levine 1992, 9.

⁴⁸ Laura Palosuo, *Yellow stars and trouser inspections, Jewish testimonies from Hungary 1920–1945*, (Uppsala University Press 2008).

The Jewish Memories collection 1994–1998

A few years after the Raoul Wallenberg Project archive was established, a new major documentation project, Jewish Memories, was initiated in Sweden. Between 1994 to 1998, the archive of the Nordic Museum collected autobiographical material – around 400 interviews and written life stories – for a Jewish Memories collection.⁴⁹ This was the first collection in Sweden, to my knowledge, that was initiated by a cultural heritage institution. I have researched this collection for several years and the following text draws from my previous publications on the collection.

There is a connection between the Jewish Memories collection, and another discussed in this presentation, Gunhild Tegen's archive. The idea for the collection, Jewish Memories, came from Pia-Kristina Garde while working on the project where she was revisiting Gunhild Tegen's archive and trying to trace as many of the survivors interviewed in 1945 in order to find out what happened to them later in life. As already mentioned, Garde traced the whereabouts of two hundred of the survivors, and her work resulted in, among other things, two published books. Her research materials are, as previously mentioned, today archived in Gunhild Tegen's archive at the Uppsala University library. While trying to find the women who were interviewed by the SDU, Garde discovered that no collection or bigger research works with survivors existed in Sweden. At the time, she worked at the library of the Nordic Museum, and because the museum already had large memory collections, she thought it would be the perfect institution to initiate such a collection with survivors in Sweden. She wrote several letters, the first one in 1992, to the museum about an idea to create such a collection.⁵⁰ Pia-Kristina Garde was for a period employed at the Nordic Museum to try to find funds for carrying out the project. However, once the project was carried out, she was no longer part of the project. It was instead led by historian Ingrid Lomfors, who was recruited as a project leader by the museum.⁵¹

⁴⁹ In Swedish the collection is entitled "*Judiska minnen*".

⁵⁰ Garde 2004 & 2008. See also Malin Thor Tureby, "To Hear with the Collection: The Contextualisation and Re-contextualisation of Archived Interviews." *Oral History*, Vol. 41, No. 2, 2013, 63–74; and "No, I never thought that we were different." Vulnerability, descriptive discourses and agency in the archive" in Ann Öhrberg et al. (eds), *From Dust to Dawn. Archival Studies After the Archival Turn*, Uppsala University Press, 2020 (in print).

⁵¹ Garde 2008, 17, see also footnote 48, 166; Ingrid Lomfors, "Inledning" in Britta Johansson (ed), *Judiska minnen. Berättelser från Förntelsen*, Stockholm 2000; Thor Tureby 2013, 63–74.

When the collection was initiated, it was motivated by the absence of any larger collection with survivor stories in Sweden, but also with the importance to create a counter-balance to the voices that claimed that the Holocaust never occurred and to record testimonies, before the opportunity disappeared, from the generation that experienced and witnessed the Nazi crimes. The idea was that a documentation of Jewish memories would also be a very important contribution and tool in the fight against antisemitism and racism.⁵² Thus, one could argue that the “Jews” or the “survivors”, often categorized as “vulnerable”, were assigned a mission here, to save the vulnerable Swedish society from perceived increasing antisemitism, racism and xenophobia. The main purpose was therefore not primarily to gather materials for research as in previous collection initiatives, but to collect and display the survivors’ stories to save the Swedish society from a perceived growing antisemitism and xenophobia.

The initiation of the collection can also be placed in a wider international context. Archived correspondence with, as well as brochures and interview guides from, for example, the Shoah Visual History Foundation in California, the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, the Montreal Holocaust Memorial Centre, the Holocaust Oral History Project in San Francisco and Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, reveals that the staff at the museum interacted with other memory institutions.⁵³ These contacts and visits to different memory institutions that had worked with documentation projects for decades (as, for example, the Montreal Holocaust Memorial Center and Yad Vashem) or more recently (as, for example, the Shoah Foundation) influenced most likely how the collection process in Sweden was designed. The memory collection initiated at the Nordic Museum in 1994, although also motivated by growing antisemitism in Swedish society, focused on individuals and their personal and subjective memories and experiences from and about the Holocaust, which was relatively new in a Swedish context. The collection at the Nordic Museum is in this way rather connected to developments regarding Holocaust and testimonial studies within the international research field of Holocaust studies and to similar collections in other countries, rather than to previous research and collections with survivors in the Swedish context.

⁵² Thor Tureby 2013 & 2020.

⁵³ Thor Tureby 2013 & 2020.

In this collection, the “survivors” are distinguished from the “refugees” and “the Swedish-born Jews”. The same interview guide is used when interviewing people from the three different categories. The interviews are in a life story format, while the interviews as well as the written life stories entails stories about Jewish lives before, during and after the Holocaust. The collected materials, the “survivor stories”, in this collection are thus telling the stories of historical subjects, and not only the stories of witnesses to the Holocaust. Still, the collection and all its stories are framed in relation to the Second World War and the Holocaust.⁵⁴

The interview guide developed within the project for interviewing people or to encourage them to write their own life stories was designed with inspiration not only from international Holocaust documentation and memory institutions, but also with inspiration from previous interview guides and questionnaires used in other collection projects conducted by the Nordic Museum to document various Swedish lives and cultures. The interview guide thus to some extent also connect the collection to the documentation tradition and other collections of the Nordic Museum.⁵⁵

The Survivors 2018–2020

My final example of collections of survivor stories is the podcast “the Survivors” (“*Överlevarna*”) initiated by the author and journalist Bernt Hermele and photographer Cato Lein.⁵⁶

According to Bernt Hermele, the podcast “the Survivors” was initiated as a spontaneous project. In comparison with other collections discussed here, the initial purpose was not to collect and create material for future research, exhibitions or to counteract a perceived growing antisemitism in society, but simply to publish a podcast. In fact, there was not an initial plan. The project developed over time, especially after the podcast got some attention through social media and people began contacting Hermele. He did not use an interview

⁵⁴ Thor Tureby 2013.

⁵⁵ Malin Thor Tureby, “Svenskjudiska liv. Levnadsberättelser i skuggan av Förintelsen”, *Svenska landsmål och svenskt folkliv. Tidskrift för talspråksforskning, folkloristik och kulturhistoria*, Årgång 141, 2018, 117–144.

⁵⁶ Överlevarna, Avsnitt 119 <https://poddtoppen.se/podcast/1287482909/overlevarna/119-special> Accessed 6 February 2020.

guide, but each interview was structured around the questions: What have you seen? What have you heard? What have you experienced? The interviews were rather conversations, with the focus on the years 1933 to 1945.⁵⁷ Hermele donated his oral history interviews to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in March 2019, where the collection is now being curated. In 2020, the book *Överlevarna* (*The Survivors*) was published.⁵⁸

Hermele's project is thought-provoking since he managed to find and interview 130 survivors almost 75 years after the Holocaust. Further, Hermele's collection could be compared with Pia-Kristina Garde's work and research, since neither are trained historians. This makes these collections different from the other collections discussed in this paper, though not necessarily different in a negative way. I would not argue that Hermele's or Garde's collections are of lesser historical value or importance than the collections initiated and designed by trained historians or other scientists. On the contrary, the stories in both Hermele's and Garde's collections are rich and detailed in the same ways as, for example, the collected stories in the Jewish Memories collection at the Nordic Museum. In fact, there are many similarities between the two collections, including that although the focus is on the years of the Holocaust, the collected materials contain reflections and descriptions of the interviewed persons' lives before and after the Holocaust. Compared to the collections initiated and designed by historians and other scholars with a positivistic epistemological standpoint, these collections might even be easier to re-use in new knowledge projects about the Holocaust and about being a survivor. The collections initiated by the researchers in 1945, 1972 and also the Raoul Wallenberg Project Archive from as late as 1989–1991, consist of "facts" about different events, but also, and most importantly, they reflect certain scientific principles and the historians' definitions on how and what a survivor story should be and be about, rather than individual survivors' perspectives and experiences. In this way, the three collections (Garde's, Hermele's and Jewish Memories) are more connected to the international trend in testimonial research concerning how to collect and record survivor stories from the 1980s and forward.

⁵⁷ Malin Thor Tureby, Notes from conversation between Bernt Hermele and Malin Thor Tureby, 4 February 2020.

⁵⁸ Bernt Hermele & Cato Lein, *Överlevarna. Röster från Förintelsen*, Stockholm 2020.

However, what is missing in the Swedish context is video testimonies. Although technological developments have changed how survivor stories have been created, collected and archived, which Hermele's collection can be an example of (starting as a podcast), the majority of the existing collections in Sweden today are written life stories, answers to questionnaires or transcribed interviews. In the 1980s and 1990s, video recording of Holocaust survivors recounting their experiences became the model for how to document, study and exhibit survivor stories. In Sweden, this way to document, archive and instigate survivor stories never got a breakthrough. At least not in the collections that have been examined here, even though both the Raoul Wallenberg Project Archive and the Jewish Memories collection were initiated when the era of the video witness began and peaked. Many scholars have argued that the practice of videotaping survivors has strongly influenced not only research, but also how museum exhibitions dedicated to commemorating the Holocaust have developed.⁵⁹ In Sweden, we have not experienced the same developments. This is also of importance to reflect upon when considering not only that stories from survivors with a connection to Sweden should be of central importance in the new Museum, but also how these stories can and shall be instigated.

Concluding remarks

What can we learn from these previous documentation projects and collections? I would argue that we can learn a lot about the Holocaust and about being a survivor. About life before, during and after the Holocaust. We can learn about being a survivor, but also about how a "survivor" has been defined by scholars in Sweden over time. We can also learn that documenting, collecting and archiving is not only about whose and what stories or testimonies are chosen to be preserved, but also how the stories are captured, collected and archived, and who decides the framing of the stories' or testimonies' themes and contents. In other words, the documentation project pro-

⁵⁹ See for example Steffi de Jong, *The witness as object. Video testimonies in memorial museums*, New York 2018; Jeffrey Sandler, *Holocaust memory in the digital age. Survivors' stories and New Media Practices*, Stanford 2017; Noah Shenker, *Reframing Holocaust testimony*, Bloomington 2015; Annette Wieviorka, *The era of the witness*, Ithaca 2006.

duces as much as it records the story.⁶⁰ The motives for and practices of how to collect, archive, and use stories from persons categorized as survivors have varied over time. Documentation methods are never neutral (even if positivistic historians continuously argue that they and their research methods, but not the survivors and their stories, are objective); rather, they are rooted in a specific time and place, and sometimes also in specific sets of institutional histories, practices and ideas. In Sweden, there are a great number of archival collections containing “survivor stories”. However, most of these collections were not assembled with the intention to preserve culturally significant stories for the future. Instead, the survivor stories collected were intended for scientific or future historical studies or as evidence in the trials immediately after the war against the Nazis.

All of the six different collections explored in this paper were initiated for different purposes. Many were initiated by historians or other researchers in order to answer specific questions, which varied from what happened in the camps, to Swedish immigration history, to what happened during the Swedish relief activities in Hungary. Very few of the collections actually gave any space or opportunity for the survivors themselves to formulate *their* stories, to ask *their* questions and reflect upon what was important *for them* to communicate. An un-reflexive reuse of already collected material in the future museum, I argue, is thus inherently problematic, as all archived “survivor stories” come with their own institutional histories.

This is perhaps the most crucial fact to consider and reflect upon when establishing a new memory institution, a new Holocaust museum. The new museum, which takes as its mandate to establish a museum where stories from survivors with a connection to Sweden should be of central importance – needs to initiate and collect its own collections with and from as many survivors as possible. This collection will be the heart of the museum, and it is therefore decisive that the stories collected and archived are in line with the visions and missions of the new museum. Most importantly, I would argue, that this time it is essential to start a conversation *with* the survivors and their families about what stories *they* consider to be of central importance, what stories *they* think should be collected, displayed and researched at the museum *and why*? I do not think there

⁶⁰ Compare Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever. A Freudian impression*, Chicago 1996. See also Thor Tureby & Johansson 2017, 169–195.

will be one single answer to such questions, or one single conversation. As Hank Greenspan reminded us in his keynote, the time has come to meet the survivors as “partners in a conversation” – real partners, real conversation – beyond the constrictions of “special occasions.” Beyond the documentation project. Consequently, this time, I hope for a memory institution that will not simply document, collect, archive and exhibit the survivors and their stories. I hope for a museum that will make it of central importance to listen and learn *together* with the survivors. Although it has been 75 years since the liberation of the camps, Bernt Hermele’s project and newly established collection shows that we still have time, and that the initiation and creation of a new collection, is still a doable undertaking.

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The Holocaust of the European Roma and the Nordic periphery. Terminology and preliminary state of research

Andrej Kotljarchuk

Abstract

Like other Nordic countries, Sweden has its dark chapter of ignominious history involving discrimination targeting the Roma. However, less is known about the fate of Romani people in the Nordic countries during World War II especially genocidal plans regarding Roma people in the Nazi-occupied Norway as well as the cooperation between the Nazis and the Nordic authorities regarding the so-called “solving of the Gypsy Plague”. The paper examines the results of recent research on the history of the Roma in the Nordic countries during World War II, focusing on terminology, preliminary results and dimensions for further research.

Introduction

Hundreds of thousands Roma were murdered during the war in Europe by the Nazis and local auxiliary police. The Roma from the Third Reich were first deported to the concentration camps and then murdered. Roma in the Soviet Union, Poland and the Baltic states were usually murdered on the spot. The annihilation of Roma and Jews by the Nazis and their collaborators was recognized as genocide by international law. The notion of genocide has a strictly defined legal meaning. The key notion for a legal evaluation of the genocidal nature of mass crimes is intent. The latter means that legal

theory treats differently *dolus generalis* and *dolus specialis* in cases of mass crimes against humanity. It means that a genocide did not occur when the mass murder of individual members of an ethnic group (*dolus generalis*) was not done with specific intent (*dolus specialis*) of exterminating the community as such.¹ As Michael Berenbaum pointed out, “the Nazis also singled out the Roma and Sinti, pejoratively known as Gypsies. They were the only other group that the Nazis systematically killed in gas chambers alongside the Jews”.²

Every genocide is unique. While paralleling each other in time and intent, the implementation of the extermination of Jews and Romani differs. The mass murder of Roma depended greatly on decisions of the local Nazi or collaborationist administration that could, for example, postpone “the final solution” because of the lack of resources. In 1942 a group of 880 East Prussian Sinti was deported from the East Baltic coast to Brest-Litovsk in Reichskommissariat Ukraine (today the town of Brest in Belarus) and resettled in the previous ghetto. One year after the discussion on how to deal with “the German Gypsies”, the local Nazi authorities decided “to treat them as Jews are”.³ In 1943 this group of Sinti were deported further to Auschwitz-Birkenau and gassed there. Theodor Christensen, the head of SD for Chernihiv in Ukraine, published in June 1942 the order according to which all Romani in the town and its suburbs had to go to the police office for registration. The need for registration was allegedly due to planned “further resettlement” to Serbia. Over 1 000 Roma who came to the registration offices were imprisoned and then murdered.⁴ In this and many other cases, the strategy of perpetrators was similar to the mass murder of Jews. In Kyiv 33 000 Jews sent to Babi Yar in September 1941 for “further resettlement” were massacred over two days of mass killings. However, in Lviv, another big city in Ukraine, the Roma population survived the occupation due to a better integration into the local society and, not least, the corruption within the

¹ William A. Schabas, *Genocide in International Law*, Cambridge 2000, p. 213-225.

² Michael Berenbaum, “Holocaust. From Kristallnacht to the ‘final solution’”, *Encyclopædia Britannica*, www.britannica.com/event/Holocaust, access date: February 19, 2020.

³ Martin Holler, “Deadly Odyssey: East Prussian Sinti in Bialystok, Brest-Litovsk and Auschwitz-Birkenau”, *Mass violence in Nazi-occupied Europe*, ed. by Alex J. Kay and David Stahel. Bloomington 2018, p. 105.

⁴ Andrej Kotljarchuk, “Le génocide nazi des Roms en Bélarus et en Ukraine: de l’importance des données de recensement et des recenseurs”, *Etudes Tsiganes*, 56-57 (2016), p. 205-206.

Nazi authorities. At the same time, outside town, the Romani were stopped and murdered by the Nazis *en masse*.⁵

As Piotr Wawrzeniuk, a historian at the Military Academy of Sweden, has noted, the history of the Nazi persecution of Roma should be studied with a sensitivity to the given context, while considering what explanations, interpretations, and knowledge it is possible to draw from various and very fragmented records.⁶ There is still a high degree of uncertainty about the number of the victims of the Roma genocide. Some researchers state that in total about 200 000 Roma perished at the hands of the Nazis and their collaborators in European countries. Others argue that up to 500 000 Roma were murdered by the Nazis, their collaborators and Axis-powers.⁷ In Ukraine alone, as a recent Swedish study shows, the number of Romani genocide victims varies from 20 000 to 72 000 individuals.⁸ All estimates are tentative, for it is based solely upon the few available records and often do not include nomadic Roma, who at that time usually lacked proper identification papers.

The Nazi genocide of the Roma in the countries of the Baltic Sea region is still under-studied and generally has been mentioned only in passing in genocide studies and Nordic historiography. Sweden's connections with Nazism and the Holocaust were the subject of a large-scale research project led by Professor Klas Åmark. The situation with the Roma people was not a focus of this project, however. The Nordic periphery is of special interest. Here, numerically small Romani groups generally survived the war. However, even in Sweden, which was outside the Nazi occupation zone, the government announced in 1942 a plan for resolving the "Gypsy problem" and ordered the registration and racial biological investigation of the Romani population. The official rhetoric was very aggressive, since both the Swedish state and state-affiliated experts argued in favor of fundamentally solving "the problem". How strange were such ideas to Sweden? To answer this question, we must examine the treatment of Romani people in Scandinavia during World War II in the international context.

⁵ Piotr Wawrzeniuk, "Lwów Saved Us": Roma Survival in Lemberg 1941–44, *Journal of Genocide Research*, 20:3 (2018), p. 327–350.

⁶ Wawrzeniuk, "Lwów Saved Us", p. 350.

⁷ Anton Weiss-Wendt, "Introduction", *The Nazi genocide of the Roma. Reassessment and Commemoration*, ed. by Anton Weiss-Wendt, New York-Oxford 2013, p. 1.

⁸ Kotljarchuk, "Le génocide nazi des Roms en Bélarus et en Ukraine", p. 207–209.

On terminology

The memory work and studies of the Roma genocide were very much inspired by Holocaust research and Jewish commemoration. Since the early 1970s, the Roma activists and some scholars looked for a specific term for the Nazi genocide of Roma. Already at the First World Romani Congress in 1971 in Orpington near London, the genocide was a major topic of discussion. The song *Gelem, Gelem* by the Serbian Rom Žarko Jovanović was adopted as a national anthem and this is a song about the genocide: *I once had a great family/The Black Legion murdered them.*

In 1966, Grattan Puxon, a British Traveller-Gypsy activist and Dr. Donald Kenrick, a prominent linguist, started the first-ever research project on the Nazi genocide of the Roma, supported by the Institute of Contemporary History at the Wiener Holocaust Library in London. In 1972, they published the groundbreaking book, *The Destiny of Europe's Gypsies*. Speaking about the Nazi destruction of the Roma, the authors used the legal term genocide. However, the term “the Nazi holocaust of Gypsies” was also mentioned.⁹ During the years after the 1972 publication, only a small number of academic books were published on the Nazi genocide of the Roma, particularly when compared to the research on the Jewish Holocaust. Most of the printed books are of a popular historical, rather than scholarly nature.

For the last three decades various terms for the Roma genocide have been proposed by scholars and Roma activists. Among them are the *Porajmos* (destruction), *Samudaripen* or *Mudaripen* (mass murder) and *Kali traš* (black fear). The most known term outside the Roma communities is *Porajmos*. However, this term has been rejected as inappropriate by many Roma, since in various dialects of Romani language this word connotes sexual violence, something that is a taboo for discussions in Romani traditional culture.

During the last decade many Roma activists began to argue for Holocaust as a term for the Nazi extermination of Roma. They believe that other terms work as a tool for exclusion of the Roma victims from the memory of the Holocaust. In Sweden, Roma activists protested in 2013 against the official silence regarding Roma genocide

⁹ Donald Kenrick and Grattan Puxon, *The destiny of Europe's gypsies*, London 1972, p. 18, 188.

victims during the commemoration of the Holocaust on 27 January.¹⁰ Today in Sweden, the Roma genocide victims commemorate both Holocaust Memorial Day in January and the European Roma Holocaust Memorial Day in August.¹¹ The term “Roma Holocaust” has been established recently in the academic fields of genocide and Romani studies, however mainly as an empirical, not a theoretical term.¹² In 2015, the Nazi genocide of Roma was recognized by Sweden and other countries in the EU as a Holocaust committed simultaneously with the Shoah. The European Parliament declared 2 August, the date in 1944 when the Nazis murdered the inmates of the “Gypsy camp” at Auschwitz-Birkenau, as the European Roma Holocaust Memorial Day. The European Parliament stated that for a long time, little attention was paid in European countries to the Nazi genocide of the Roma and urged:

The Member States to officially recognize this genocide and other forms of persecution of Roma such as deportation and internment that took place during World War II; Declares that a European day should be dedicated to commemorating the victims of the genocide of the Roma during World War II and that this day should be called the European Roma Holocaust Memorial Day; Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the governments and parliaments of the Member States and the candidate countries, the Council of Europe, the OSCE and the United Nations.¹³

It is well known that many major researchers of the Jewish Holocaust rejected the claim that what had happened to the Roma during World War II could be termed Holocaust. Those scholars who pushed for inclusion of the Romani genocide within the concept of the Holocaust argued that the Holocaust was one and the same historic phenomenon when it came to the eradication of different ethnic and

¹⁰ “Romer måste ges plats bland Förintelsens offer”, *Dagens Nyheter*, August 2 2013.

¹¹ Bengt O. Björklund, “Zigenarnattens’ offer”, *E Romani Glinda*, december 2019, p. 29; Birgitta Israelsson, ”Minnesstunder i två kyrkor”, *E Romani Glinda*, december 2019, p. 34.

¹² A simple search in the Google Scholar database for the term Roma Holocaust or the Roma under Holocaust gives about 32 000 results. An advanced search for the exact term “Roma Holocaust” yields 637 results in academic publications, and 465 results for term “Romani Holocaust” in academic publications. See: <https://scholar.google.com> access date: February 19, 2020. The term “Roma Holocaust” was introduced into Swedish academic research in 1990, see: Jahn Otto Johansen, *Zigenarnas holocaust*, förord av Elie Wiesel, efterskrift av Ingvar Svanberg och Mattias Tydén, Stockholm 1990.

¹³ European Parliament resolution of 15 April 2015 on the occasion of International Roma Day (2015/2615(RSP). www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2015-0095_EN.html access date: February 19, 2020.

other groups whom the Nazis considered unfit to live. As David Gaunt, a professor in history at Södertörn University, pointed out “although the ‘other’ Holocaust debates were very frustrating and bitter conflicts, they did have the positive effect of increasing the general and scholarly awareness of the other genocides”.¹⁴

The Nazi genocide of European Roma and its Nordic connection

Already in the 1930s the Nazi regime started the individual identification of German Roma and established the anti-Roma racial biological classification. In the absence of previous documentation, “experts” soon stepped forward. One of these, Robert Ritter, a psychologist at the University of Tübingen, became a leading Nazi authority on Roma. By 1940, Dr. Ritter and his team at Racial Hygiene Research Center (*Rassenhygienische Forschungsstelle*) had registered and examined some 30 000 Romani living in Germany. The majority of those were subsequently murdered (or sterilized) in the Nazi genocide.¹⁵

At a 1935 Interpol conference in Copenhagen, participating states backed an initiative proposed by representatives of the SS-dominated German police force regarding the creation of an international registry of Roma. Recent research shows that the well-known Swedish criminologist, Harry Söderman, played a key role in the promoting of the pan-European registry of Roma.¹⁶ As Nazi occupation spread throughout much of Northern Europe, so did the investigation and registration of Roma come to Norway and Denmark. Following the deportation of Jews to the Nazi concentration camps, Quisling’s collaborationist government began to discuss a “resolution of the Gypsy problem”. In summer 1943 Police Minister Jonas Lie proposed to Quisling the establishment of special Gypsy camps as well as forced mass sterilization of Romani. Another proposal was to treat Roma as Jews and deport them to Auschwitz. In a letter to Lie,

¹⁴ David Gaunt, “Understanding the Clashes Between historians and Roma Activists”, *Baltic Worlds* 3, p. 43.

¹⁵ Michael Zimmermann, *Rassenutopie und Genozid: Die nationalsozialistische ‘Lösung der Zigeunerfrage’* Hamburg 1996, p. 139–162.

¹⁶ Jan Selling, “The Obscured Story of the International Criminal Police Commission, Harry Söderman, and the Forgotten Context of Antiziganism”, *Scandinavian Journal of History* 42:3, 2017, p. 329–353.

Quisling stressed: “The simplest solution is actually the one proposed by Major-General [Oliver] Møystad [head of the collaborationist security police] – to collect all Gypsies and to deport them to Poland”.¹⁷ The registration of Romani would have to be carried out and the action should be done by local police and authorities. The pro-Nazi administration of Norway wanted to know how Sweden dealt with the Roma. In June 1943, the consul general for Norway, Ragnar Söderberg (a well-known Swedish businessman and philanthrope) asked the government of Sweden to share the documentation of the “Gypsy registration” with Quisling, since the Norwegian authorities were preparing a draft law on the registration of Roma and Travellers, and they knew about the ongoing Swedish registration.¹⁸ In 1944, the Norwegian collaborators continued to discuss incarcerating the Roma in concentration camps in the far North. This plan was stopped due to the Red Army’s advance in Finnmark.

Following the Nazi occupation of Denmark in 1940, two Danish physicians at the Institute of Human Genetics (*Arvebiologiske Institutet*), Erik D. Bartels and Gudrun Brun undertook the statistical and racial biological examination of Danish Romani that resulted in a book printed in 1943.¹⁹ The Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare (*Socialstyrelsen*) collaborated with the Danish researchers and sent them the requested information about Danish Romani residing in Sweden.²⁰ Finally, in autumn of 1942, the Finnish authorities proposed to gather all the itinerant Roma in the country and send them to special “Gypsy camps”. The plan, called “A Special Arrangement for the Gypsies”, was initiated by Dr. Urho Kekkonen, an attorney and member of the Finnish parliament, and future President of Finland. By 1944, the government had established three forced labor camps for Finnish Roma.²¹

Sweden was the only state in Northern Europe that managed to remain both democratic, and neutral throughout World War II. Although it remained independent, the country was not immune to

¹⁷ Terje Emberland and Matthew Kott, *Himmlers Norge: Nordmenn i det storgermanske prosjektet*, Oslo 2012, p. 483–484.

¹⁸ Andrej Kotljarchuk, “World War II and the Registration of Roma in Sweden in Transnational Context: the Role of Collected Data, Experts and Census Takers”, *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 31:3, 2017, p. 463–464.

¹⁹ Erik D. Bartels and Gudrun Brun, *Gipsies in Denmark: A Socio-Biological Study*, Copenhagen 1943.

²⁰ Andrej Kotljarchuk, “World War II and the Registration of Roma in Sweden”, p. 464.

²¹ Panu Pulma, “I krigets grepp,” *De finska romernas historia från svenska tiden till 2000-talet*, Helsingfors 2015, p. 158–167.

the spread of Nazi propaganda that accompanied and facilitated the unfolding genocide against Jews and Roma in Europe. As was previously mentioned, in 1942, the Swedish government decided that the “Gypsy problem” was to be fully resolved in the country since:

The populations known as Gypsies and Travellers constitute a problem that the nation have had to fight for almost four centuries. Their lack of ability to adapt to the Swedish rule of law, as seen in their vagabondage and parasitic nature, is obvious.²²

Two national registries, one on Roma and another one on Travellers were conducted, and a massive racial biological study of Travellers was done by various academic institutions, including the State Institute for Race Biology at Uppsala University and State Institute for Psychology and Pedagogy (*Statens psykologisk-pedagogiska institut*). One of the leading experts, Professor Nils von Hofsten, proposed in 1943 to the Swedish Parliament to introduce the immediate forced mass sterilization of Swedish Travellers.²³ It is important to note that five years later the United Nations recognized the forced mass sterilization as genocide.²⁴ At that time, Professor Hofsten held several top positions within academia and public authorities. He was Vice-Chancellor of Uppsala University, a member of the Board at the Institute for Racial Biology, and the chief member of the Academic Commission at the Swedish Medical Board. Another powerful advocate of resolving the “Gypsy problem” was Dr. Allan Etzler, a historian at Stockholm University College and director of the Central Prison in Långholmen in Stockholm. Etzler used the press to promote his plan to the government. Based on the Norwegian model, he argued for forced prison education of adult Roma and Travellers and special orphanages for all Romani children. The workhouses should be established in each region of Sweden. The orphanages should collect all the children of both the ‘tattare’ and ‘zigenare’ groups in order “to sep-

²² “Tattarproblemet: Socialstyrelsen föreslår utredning,” *Tidskrift för Sveriges Landfiskaler*, 1942:1, p. 165.

²³ Nils von Hofsten, “Utlåtande i anledning av väckta motioner angående viss ändring av lagen om sterilisering. Bilaga B”. *Bihang till riksdagens protokoll vid lagtima riksdagen i Stockholm år 1943. Nionde samlingen, första avdelningen, första lagutskottets utlåtande nr 41*, Stockholm 1943, p. 22.

²⁴ Article 2 (d) of the United Nations “Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide” defines genocide as “imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group”. <https://treaties.un.org> access date: February 19, 2020.

arate this bad element of the population and plant them in a healthy environment”.²⁵

However, in democratic Sweden, such dangerous plans met powerful opposition. Many researchers, civil servants and police chiefs were skeptical of racial biological and penal approaches. In Sweden, scholars could discuss, criticize, and influence official policy. Academic freedom was not questioned, even during wartime. In 1945 the so-called “resolution of the Gypsy problem” had become a non-issue for the government. This was not only due to the radical change in the geopolitical situation on Eastern front, but also to the nonconformist position of many academics. For example, Professor Gunnar Dahlberg, Head of the State Institute for Race Biology, sought to distance his Institute from Nazi Germany and racialist pseudo-science. In the final research report, sent by him in 1944 to the National Board of Health and Welfare, Dahlberg concluded that the Roma issue had no basis in race.²⁶

The situation for those European Roma which had tried to reach Sweden in order to escape the Nazi persecution was more problematic. Already in 1914, the Parliament had introduced a law forbidding foreign Roma to enter Sweden. This law was in force until 1954. How was this anti-Roma legislation implemented in practice? Findings in a recent Norwegian study can serve as an example. In 1934, a group of sixty-two Norwegian citizens of Roma origin, returning home from Belgium, arrived by ferry to Trelleborg in the southern part of Sweden. They had valid Norwegian passports, and yet, the Swedish authorities refused them to enter the country referring to the 1914 law, whereas the Norwegian government refused them to return to Norway. As a result, this group of Roma was turned back from Sweden. In 1944, these Roma were deported by the Nazis from Antwerp to Auschwitz and Buchenwald concentration camps. Only four persons survived.²⁷

In May 1941, a group of Norwegian youth came to Sweden seeking asylum, saying that they were the members of the Norwegian

²⁵ Andrej Kotljarchuk, “State, experts and Roma. Allan Etzler and the pseudo-scientific racism in Sweden”, *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 2019, 44:6, p. 9–10.

²⁶ Andrej Kotljarchuk, “State, experts and Roma. Allan Etzler and the pseudo-scientific racism in Sweden”, p. 11–14.

²⁷ Maria Rosvoll, Lars Lien, and Jan Alexander Brustad, ‘Å bli dem kvit’. *Utviklingen av en “sigøynepolitikk” og utryddelsen av norske rom*, Oslo 2015, p. 4–5, 86–123.

underground resistance. Almost all of them were granted asylum in Sweden. However, a sixteen-year-old, Roland Karlsen, was deported back to Norway because he was, according to the border police, of Roma origin.²⁸ In late February of 1942, a wealthy horse trader arrived in Sweden with his wife and four children. The family requested asylum since they had fled Norway due to threats of being made hostages. However, the local police chief, Åke Hiertner, found that the family was of Roma origin. After consultations with the Foreign Office of Sweden the family was deported back to the Nazi-occupied Norway. Their further fate is unknown. Their adult son had been granted emergency visa by Sweden only a few days earlier by concealing his Roma origin.²⁹

As is known, the definition of “asocial” was a major legal and propaganda tool for the Nazi persecution of Roma. Lars Hansson, a historian at Gothenburg University, has shown how this extremely problematic term was also used by the Swedish authorities in regard to the Roma people.³⁰ For example, in May 1942, Gustav Möller, the minister for Social Affairs, presented “The principles of refugee treatment in Sweden” in the Parliament. He informed the parliament that most refugees in the country are Norwegians and stressed that “nowadays no rejection by any reasons occurs for Norwegian or Jewish refugees ... with the exception of asocial elements that have been known to the Swedish border control, such as Traveller-Gypsies”.³¹

Only at the end of war did Swedish refugee policy change from active restrictions to rescue efforts. As Pär Frohnert and Mikael Byström points out, the government of Sweden had learned a great deal in the space of only few years.³² In one instance two Romani girls Hanna Dimitri and Sofia Taikon, former inmates from Auschwitz-Birkenau came to Sweden in the White Buses rescue operation organized by Folke Bernadotte. Both were granted asylum.³³ However, it is still unclear whether these two Romani women were granted

²⁸ Lars Hansson, *Vid gränsen: mottagningen av flyktingar från Norge 1940–1945*, Göteborg 2019, p. 248.

²⁹ Lars Hansson, *Vid gränsen*, p. 248–249.

³⁰ Lars Hansson, *Vid gränsen*, p. 57–67.

³¹ “Angående principerna för flyktingars behandling i Sverige”, *Riksdagens protokoll vid lagtima riksmötet år 1943. Första kammaren nr 18*, Stockholm 1943, p. 18.

³² Mikael Byström and Pär Frohnert, “Introduction II,” *Reaching a State of Hope: Refugees, Immigrants and the Swedish Welfare State, 1930–2000*, Lund, 2013, p. 69–79.

³³ Jan Selling, *Svensk antiziganism: Fördomens kontinuitet och förändringens förutsättningar*, Limhamn 2013, p. 147.

asylum despite the legal ban, or if they just hid their ethnicity. The number of Roma genocide survivors who came to Sweden was, most probably, higher and could include refugees who concealed their identity, as well as European Romani who came to Sweden after 1954. For example, in 1981, a group of Polish Roma came to Sweden as refugees after the pogrom in Oswiecim, a town in vicinity of former extermination camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau.³⁴ However, no scholars documented their experience of Nazi genocide.

In 1944 the Foreigners' Bureau of Sweden (*Utlänningsbyrå*) prepared a draft law forbidding racial hatred. The proposal included legal protections for Jews and Roma, but not for the Sami people, another stigmatized minority.³⁵ The fact that this initiative was raised suggests that some knowledge of the persecution of European Roma had reached Sweden. The Kingdom of Sweden was not occupied by the Nazis, which also meant that, after the war, the de-Nazification of academia, authorities and law enforcement agencies never took place in the country. Racial biologists and other academics who dealt with the pseudo-science continued their research careers unhindered after 1945. The academic quality of their work was undermined only during the last three decades by a new generation of researchers.

Conclusion

In his study on the memorialization of the Holocaust, Jeffrey Blutinger defines three basic approaches to the European memory of the Holocaust. The first approach, *aphasia*, means a virtual taboo on memory typical for the initial post-war period. The second stage, deflective *negationism*, means that the Holocaust is recognized, but all responsibility for it is placed exclusively on the Nazis. At the same time, the problem of local collaborationism is blurred over. Finally, the third stage is *open examination*, meaning the removal of all taboos.³⁶ The Nordic countries are, I believe, in the beginning of

³⁴ Slawomir Kapralski, "The Evolution of Anti-Gypsyism in Poland: From Ritual Scapegoat to Surrogate Victims to Racial Hate Speech?", *Polish Sociological Review* 193, 2016, p. 101–117.

³⁵ Karin Kvist Geverts, "A Study of Antisemitic Attitudes within Sweden's Wartime Utlänningsbyrå", *Bystanders to the Holocaust: A Reevaluation*, ed. David Cesarani and Paul A. Levine, London 2002, p. 209–210.

³⁶ Jeffrey Blutinger, "An Inconvenient Past: Post-Communist Holocaust Memorialization", *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies*, 29: 1, 2010, p. 73–94.

third stage. In 2014, the government of Sweden published a report entitled *The Dark and Unknown History: White Paper on the Abuse and Violation of the Romani People during the 20th Century*. The Swedish state recognizes and rejects historic abuses and see the book as “an important acknowledgment for all Roma, who have been the subject of violent treatment”.³⁷ However, the White Paper project was done with minimal funding and little participation by those professional historians critical of the official inquiry body.³⁸ This situation is completely different from Norway, where the state-Roma reconciliation process is based on the substantial research results.

The discussion on Roma identity and human rights cannot be isolated from the memory of the Nazi genocide, which makes the struggle over the past a reflexive landmark that organizes the collective memory of Roma people. Bringing together Roma representatives and scholars had been possible basically through two intellectual trajectories:

One approach emerged from the growing insight among historians that memory, previously shunned, could enrich and deepen historical narrative based on archival sources [...] Another, completely different, trend grew out of the Roma side, reacting to the fact that scholars who were not Roma dominated Romani studies, with an increasing demand to participate in research on all levels. The slogan ‘Nothing about us without us’, long expressed only informally, has now been formalized by leading Roma human rights activists.³⁹

The memory of the Nazi genocide is a cornerstone for Roma cultural movement and political mobilization. For decades the Roma minority in Sweden could not participate in the nation-building process. The memory of genocide has the possibility of changing this situation, boosting the inclusion of Roma into majority society. Today’s Sweden has a unique opportunity, instead of building one of the last Jewish Holocaust museums in Europe, to establish the first museum in the world that will integrate the memory of Jewish and Roma genocides.

³⁷ *Den mörka och okända historien: Vitbok om övergrepp och kränkningar av romer under 1900-talet*, Stockholm 2014, p. 4.

³⁸ Martin Eriksson and David Sjögren, “Problematiska utgångspunkter. Om en svensk vitbok för utredande av övergrepp mot romer”, *Historisk Tidskrift* 2, 2011, p. 250–257.

³⁹ David Gaunt, “Understanding the Clashes Between historians and Roma Activists”, *Baltic Worlds* 3, p. 38.

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⁴⁰ The study was supported by The Foundation for Baltic and East European Studies (*Östersjö-stiftelsen*) within the project “Police, Experts and Race: Handling the ‘Gypsy Plague’ in Denmark, Sweden and Latvia, 1930–1945”.

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Holocaust in the Periphery. Memory Politics in the Nordic countries

Cecilie Felicia Stokholm Banke

Abstract

For several contemporary scholars, historians and others, the Holocaust took place in the East, in the *bloodlands*, that is the countries in which most of the killings took place. But in a broader perspective, and in order to get a more comprehensive understanding of the history of the Holocaust, we also have to look into what happened in the peripheries, that is the countries where most of the killings did not take place. Outside the major killing grounds there extended a wide area, from Scandinavia to the Balkans, Italy and North Africa, which can be described as the periphery of the Holocaust. Geographically, the periphery included areas under German influence, but usually outside direct German control. There, the Holocaust unfolded in a far less straightforward way, and was either in some way limited, delayed, reduced, hidden from view, postponed, or all of these at the same time.

The peripheral Nordic hinterlands of the Holocaust

I was asked to talk about Holocaust in the periphery and memory politics in the Nordic countries.¹ Thus, my presentation is about what happened in a country that was occupied by, but cooperated with the Germans, a country that tried to resist German occupation, a

¹ I am grateful to Finnish historian Oula Silvennoinen for cooperating on this particular aspect of the history of the Holocaust, the Nordic peripheries.

country that in order to avoid Soviet occupation cooperated with the Germans, and a country that remained neutral and eventually became a 'safe haven' for many, fleeing persecution and Nazi Germany.

The countries described here are Denmark, Norway, Finland and Sweden, together the Nordic countries, which from a distance may appear very similar, but in fact are very different.

Throughout the peripheral Nordic hinterlands of the Holocaust, local collaboration or the lack of it was essential in shaping and deciding the local outcomes. Policy responses and popular attitudes would vary, but the responses were there. Furthermore, peripheral-ity was not just a matter of geography, but also of mentality.

The peripheral experience everywhere gave rise to post-war national narratives and myths downplaying or distorting the forms of local collaboration and the depth of actual local involvement in the Final Solution.

Thus, the peripheral mentality shaped the post-war response to the investigation and prosecution efforts against the perpetrators. It also shaped the way the victims would address, or even more often not address what they had experienced during the Holocaust.

During this short presentation I hope to provide you with a more comprehensive understanding of these four peripheral countries and the way they responded to the Holocaust. I shall try to give you an insight into the national differences and to a certain extent also point to similarities, one of them being that these four countries were by the time all relatively small and homogenous societies.

Similarities and differences in the Nordic countries

In 1933, when Hitler took power in Germany, Sweden was, and still is, by far the biggest country and had by that time 6.2 million inhabitants, Denmark had 3.6 followed by Finland's 3.5 million and Norway with its 2.8. The Jewish communities were simultaneously relatively small. In Finland it consisted of about 2 000, in Denmark 5 500, while 7 000 Jews lived in Sweden at the beginning of the 1930s. Roughly speaking. Of the countries occupied by the German armed forces, Norway in fact had the smallest Jewish population – 2 100 at the time of the German invasion. The Norwegian Jewish

community, representing less than 1 percent of the total population, was in all respects a small religious community.

The action against Jews in Norway during the fall of 1942 shared similarities to those launched in the rest of German-controlled Western Europe. Norway was occupied like Denmark, but Norway not only collaborated with the Nazi authorities. Norway also showed much stronger and more direct violent resistance before accepting the Occupation, and unlike Denmark, nearly 40 per cent of the Norwegian Jews were deported, to some extent even with the help of locals.

In that sense, Norway had a different experience with the Holocaust than the other Nordic countries, which also affects the way the Holocaust eventually entered national history culture in Norway and was commemorated.

I will take the liberty to focus my talk on Denmark and while doing this stress some themes of relevance for the understanding of the memory politics in the Nordic countries.

The ambivalence of Danish Holocaust history

In Denmark, the majority of the Jewish population managed to escape the upcoming round-up and eventual deportation. Around 8 000 Jews and their non-Jewish spouses escaped to Sweden during the fall of 1943 in what is generally known as a remarkable rescue operation. This number includes the refugees that came to Denmark during the 1930s, a little less than 2 000.

It may be useful and instructive, however, to place this rescue operation in a broader context and also include the years before the war and look at how Denmark reacted to the discrimination and persecution of Jews in neighboring Germany during the 1930s. Is there a connection between Denmark's restrictive refugee policy towards German-Jewish refugees in the 1930s and the rescue operation several years later?

I believe there is, and it has to do with the emerging welfare state and the well-defined national community in Denmark. The very system which, in the 1930s, was so intent on protecting itself and its own citizens by keeping Jewish refugees out, safeguarded the belong-

ings left behind in Denmark of the Jews who fled to Sweden during the war.

The same Danish state that was reluctant to take in Jewish refugees during the 1930s, took action to help its Jewish citizens and residents flee persecution during the fall of 1943. This paradox is what I have described as the ambivalence of Danish Holocaust history. How could Danes keep German Jewish refugees out, on the one hand, and carry out the remarkable act of civil courage in helping Jews escape to Sweden, on the other? Karin Kvist Geverts has pointed to this ambivalence too, but for the Swedish case.²

The importance of context: The emerging welfare states

The answer lies within the historical context. German Jewish refugees of the 1930s came to Denmark, and the Nordic countries, as immigrants and were considered a threat to national labor and to the social stability of Nordic society. If the Danish state took in too many immigrants with Jewish background, many believed that there was a risk that Denmark, like Germany, would have a so-called 'Jewish problem'.³

The general assumption in Denmark at the time was that too many immigrants with Jewish background would lead to widespread antisemitism within the Danish population. The restrictive refugee policy of the 1930s was, in that sense, a way both to protect Danish labor market from immigrant labor and to avoid antisemitism.

This is an important element in explaining how the Nordic countries responded to the anti-Jewish policy of Nazi-Germany both before and during the war. How much room did these emerging welfare states in fact have for people fleeing persecution and eventual extermination? And how should this aspect, the pre-war responses, be represented in a contemporary memory culture?

The same development happened in Norway and Finland, but unlike Denmark and Sweden, Finland and Norway were relatively young nation-states, Finland in particular. Finnish historian Oula Silvennoinen has in his research showed how conflicted Finland in

² Kvist Geverts 2008.

³ Stokholm Banke 2005; Rünitz 2005; Kirchhoff 2005.

fact was during the 1930s and 1940s, being situated directly next to the Soviet border, and how important it was for Finland to develop a strong national identity during this same period.⁴

We can say that the 1930s saw the groundwork laid for the post-war welfare state, even though two decades would pass before the 'welfare state' concept first appeared in the public debate. But the rudiments of a social security system, based upon universalism and preventive measures, were already present in the 1930s. And it was this system that confronted the German-Jewish refugees escaping Nazi persecution both in Denmark, Norway and Sweden, making these countries very reluctant during the 1930s to take refugees in.

Hence Denmark, Norway and Sweden had to be protected against immigrant labor, even if these immigrants were, in fact, refugees from a totalitarian system, fleeing discrimination, persecution, and eventually deportation as well. Danish politicians, and for that sake also Swedish, sought to be both humanistic and exclusionary at the same time, which is one of the many paradoxes in the history of the Holocaust. So where does this paradox leave us?

A need to balance between the universal and local aspects

First of all, the Danish example shows us how differently a society can respond to persecution and mass violence depending on the circumstances. What, during the 1930s, appeared to be a restrictive strategy which prevented entry to many who sought refuge, may have made possible the remarkable rescue operation that took place in October 1943.

In history, as in politics, there are no straight answers, no stories without complexities. This is particularly the case for the otherwise neglected aspects of the Holocaust in the Nordic countries, including the young men who volunteered the German army and went to the Eastern front to fight Soviet-Communism.⁵ The Nordic countries may be in the peripheries of *bloodlands*, of where the actual killing took place, but the Holocaust had its repercussions in these countries too.

These repercussions have to be integrated in a contemporary understanding of the Holocaust.

⁴ Silvennoinen 2012.

⁵ Silvennoinen 2012; Schön 2000; Bundgård Christensen, Nørregård & Poulsen 2018.

For many decades, the rescue of the Danish Jews overshadowed the other, and less heroic, aspects of Danish Holocaust history. Today, thanks, in part, to the Stockholm Declaration we know more about Jews who fled Nazi Germany only to be denied entry to Denmark.⁶ And we know about those Jews in Denmark who were not rescued in October 1943 but were deported to Theresienstadt.⁷

Also, thanks to a new generation of historians, we know that Danish industries and the Danish agricultural sector among other things collaborated with the Germans during the war.⁸ A recent study has also provided us with more knowledge about the Danish Waffen SS and the young men who left for Germany to volunteer as soldiers on the Eastern Front.⁹

These new aspects have to be incorporated into the way the Holocaust is being commemorated and taught today. The history of the Holocaust is, in part, local history with local aspects and local actors. If the Holocaust becomes too much a universal history lesson, as indicated by Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider, among others, with their work about global memory and the Holocaust, there is a risk that we will lose the local aspects, and, with them, the impact of these important history lessons, as well.¹⁰

Thus, local aspects of the Holocaust are important elements in a country's definition of Holocaust memory and education. There has to be a relationship between the universal message about "never again," on the one hand, and the local experiences on the other. This rule also applies to the Nordic countries.

The challenges however that Holocaust memory in Europe currently faces, is how to balance the universal never again imperative with the local aspects? How to make that balance and how to avoid that the never again-imperative becomes such a universalized slogan that the message loses its actual impact?

⁶ Stokholm Banke 2005; Kirchhoff 2005; Rünitz 2005; Kirchhoff & Rünitz 2007.

⁷ Levin 2001; Lundtofte 2003; Sode-Madsen 1995 & 2003; Goldbaum Tarabini Fracapane 2011.

⁸ Lund 2005; Andersen 2003.

⁹ Bundgård, Poulsen & Scharff Smith 1998.

¹⁰ Levy and Sznaider 2005.

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Exhibiting the Holocaust in countries where it didn't happen

Paul Salmons

Abstract

The Holocaust is – inescapably – a part of British (and Swedish) history and heritage. Not only in the aspects of the history that these nations have traditionally incorporated into their public memory (as places of refuge during the Nazi era, for example, or as providers of assistance to the survivors in its aftermath), but also in those aspects that are more troubling, and less reflected upon and remembered: what did the ‘outside world’ know and understand of the crimes committed in Nazi-occupied Europe; when was this known, and what more could have been done to prevent these mass atrocity crimes, and to rescue the victims? What does knowledge about the Holocaust mean for our understanding of genocide and can this strengthen our efforts at genocide prevention today?

Fundamentally, while being *outside* the territories where the killings took place, these countries are *inside* and *part of* the broader western tradition from which the Holocaust emerged. The Holocaust was not an aberration from the ‘normal course’ of western history, but rather had its roots in European history, culture and society. This is a tradition that Britain and Sweden have both contributed to and been shaped by for millennia. What does it mean for us that the Holocaust emerged out of our common European society, culture, polity and tradition?

Introductory remarks

Let us begin with Tutankhamun. This may seem a surprising place to start, but it can be a way into several of the questions that have already been raised in this conference.

I suspect that one of the reasons I have been asked to speak about exhibiting the Holocaust 'in countries where it did not happen' is because of the question of relevance. Why should people care about a Holocaust museum in Sweden or, in the case of my own country, in Great Britain?

But this concern, about the relevance of the Holocaust, takes a rather limited view of people's interests and concerns – are we so parochial that we are uninterested in events not immediately and intimately connected to our own identities and national histories? The evidence would suggest that this is not the case. 1.42 million people recently visited the *Tutankhamun: Treasures of the Golden Pharaoh* exhibition in Paris; we could also point to successful exhibitions on Ghengis Khan in the United States, or the Terracotta Warriors in London.

On the issue of relevance, then, it can be said that – even while Sweden remained neutral during the Second World War, and has no authentic sites of the Holocaust mass killings – still stronger connections and intersections exist between Swedish national history and the history of the Holocaust than they do between French national identity and the history of Ancient Egypt; twenty-first century America and the Mongolian empire of the 13th century; or British culture and the funerary art, rites and customs of Qin dynasty China. However, it is of note that the relevance of the Holocaust is so often questioned, when other subjects are not. It may be that this has to do with a reluctance to confront the Holocaust – understandable, as this is an extremely troubling and unsettling history, one that we might prefer to forget as it raises such difficult questions for our time.

With this in mind, beginning with Tutankhamun can also help us to address the issues of what a Holocaust museum has *in common* with other museums, and what *distinguishes* a Holocaust museum from others.

Traditional and Holocaust museums have much in common: both spheres are places of research, display and learning, concerned with

aspects of the human experience; both tell us something about who we are as societies, as communities; and – in my view – both can be made especially powerful and meaningful for the visitor through their display and interpretation of historical artefacts. Just as we would be disappointed to visit a Tutankhamun exhibition and not to see the things made, owned and used in the time of ancient Egypt, so too the physical remnants of the Holocaust have a special power to move and engage us. These objects give a sense of authenticity and authority to the narrative storytelling – they are the things that remain from that time, which continue in the present, a tangible connection with that ancient people and past, in the case of the Pharaohs, and with the traumatic past of a recent genocide in the case of the Holocaust. Both histories are made ‘real’ for the visitor through the special connection and resonance that is brought about when encountering in the present the original historical artefact.

However, while the artefacts of most museums and galleries celebrate the achievements of humankind, the wonders of art and culture, Holocaust and genocide museums instead present material evidence of our most atrocious crimes: they reveal deep flaws and fissures that allow apparently stable and peaceful societies, under certain conditions, to fracture and to descend into mass violence. This difference with traditional museums – the emotionally-challenging and deeply unsettling subject of the Holocaust – has consequences for the ethics of collection and display; challenges of conservation; the aesthetics of design; and the kinds of visitor experience and meaning making we intend, all of which a Swedish national Holocaust Museum will need to take into account, and which I am happy to discuss at more length at another time.

A special challenge of Holocaust and genocide museums is that they uncover parts of the human condition we might prefer to remain hidden. Whereas many exhibitions focus upon the exceptional, the inspirational and the extraordinary, Holocaust and genocide museums raise deeply troubling questions. How was it possible, not long ago and not far from where we live, that people across the continent became complicit in the murder of their neighbours? What did people and governments in the ‘outside world’ know and understand of these crimes while they were taking place, and what did they do to try to prevent them and to rescue the victims?

And what does the Holocaust mean for our view of ourselves, our ideas of progress? For, while the Holocaust was – first and foremost – a disaster for its victims, it was also a catastrophe for our notion of what we like to call ‘western civilization’. This, then, is not only a Jewish story. It is part of our national and of our European stories; it poses questions about our identity, the modern world, and the societies in which we live together. Unquestionably, it makes the Holocaust profoundly relevant today, at a time when in many countries society appears to be polarising; rhetoric is becoming more extreme; nationalism and antisemitism are on the rise; there is a turn towards autocratic and authoritarian rule; and liberal democratic institutions and values appear under threat.

This, also, is a central point of relevance for countries such as Great Britain and Sweden: the museums and exhibitions need to avoid a consoling (or even self-congratulatory) narrative that they are ‘countries where it did not happen’. Instead, they need to reflect on the far more uncomfortable realisation that these countries are a part of the wider European story of the Holocaust, because it is in our common culture, history and traditions that we discover the origins of the Holocaust. The factors that led to the Holocaust were not absent from the ‘countries where it did not happen’ and neither did they disappear in 1945, with the end of the Second World War.

The stories we like to tell ourselves about ourselves

Rather than a lack of interest in the Holocaust, a growing body of empirical research into Holocaust education across many countries and language regions suggests that there is very strong interest in the Holocaust and widespread belief that it is significant and meaningful.¹ However, this research also shows that much work remains to be done, that there tends to be broad but rather superficial knowledge about this history; many misconceptions and national myths that circulate in societies go unchallenged in the classroom; many societies do not adequately confront the dark aspects of their own national history; and that narratives tend to be very Hitler-centric,

¹ Jolanta Ambrosewicz-Jacobs, Monique Eckmann & Doyle Stevick (eds.), *Research in teaching and learning about the Holocaust: a dialogue beyond border*, IHRA 2017.

with little appreciation of why and how broader society became complicit.

All peoples, nations and societies have their myths, of course, that help to form the sense of identity that binds them together. As Tim Cole puts it, 'a myth is a story that evokes strong sentiments, transmits and reinforces basic societal values.'² For many in Britain, the history of the Second World War is an example of this – 'a good story' to tell. Its touchstones in the British collective memory are of Dunkirk, the Blitz, the Battle of Britain, self-sacrifice and common cause leading to an ultimate victory, the liberation of Europe, all of which go towards a sense that Britain fought a 'just war'. Such elements have deeply influenced some Britons' sense of national identity, so much so that warnings of the disastrous consequences of Brexit have at times been dismissed with an appeal to the 'Blitz spirit' which will supposedly see us through adversity. (Those who invoke such myths, of course, seem oblivious to the fact that no one voted for the Blitz.) But, in any case, the question remains, where does the Holocaust 'fit' into this national story?

Large scale, national research by UCL Centre for Holocaust Education may help to provide an answer, as it included one question that sought to explore secondary school students' understanding of Britain's role during the Holocaust.³ Students in Years 7–13 (aged 11–18 years old), were asked 'What happened when the British government knew about the mass murder of Jews?'

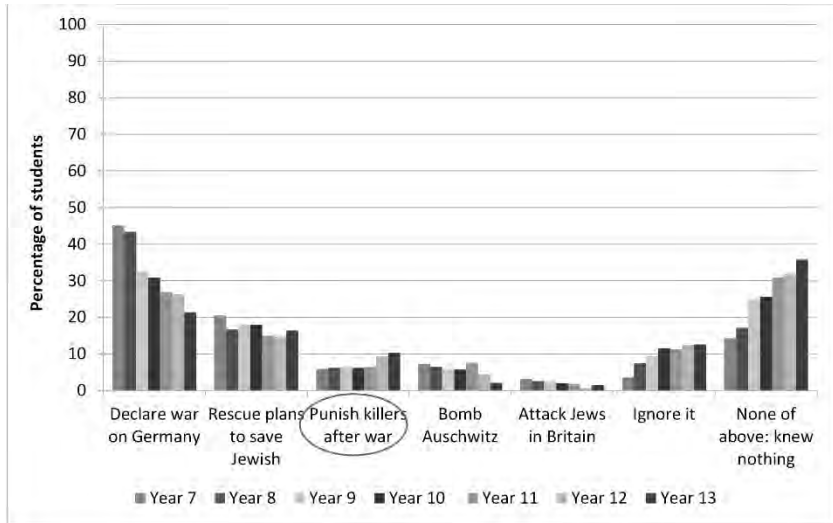
From the responses to a set of multiple-choice statements it appears that the Holocaust has been subsumed to some extent into the wider (mythical) national story of the Second World War, with the overwhelming number of students believing, erroneously, either that Britain declared war to save the Jews, vigorously conducted rescue efforts (including bombing Auschwitz), or else only discovered the crimes once victory had been achieved. Very few understood that, despite good and detailed knowledge by 1942 of the wholesale mass murder of Jews, Britain did not make saving Jews a war aim and did little beyond declaring its condemnation of the crimes and promising to bring the perpetrators to justice after the war. A break-

² Tim Cole, *Images of the Holocaust. The myth of the 'Shoah Business'*, London: Duckworth 1999, p. 4.

³ Stuart Foster et al., *What do students know and understand about the Holocaust? Evidence from English secondary schools*, UCL Institute of Education, London 2016.

down of these responses, by year group, follows below, with the historically most accurate answer circled:

Figure 1 'What happened when the British government knew about the mass murder of Jews?', responses by year group (per cent)



Source: Foster, S., et al. (2016).

Reflecting both the traditional view of Britain’s role in the Holocaust and, perhaps, at least an indication that a more critical period of self-reflection is needed, Prime Minister David Cameron proclaimed in 2015:

In commemorating the Holocaust, Britain remembers the way it proudly stood up to Hitler and provided a home to tens of thousands of survivors and refugees, including almost 10 000 children who came on the Kindertransports. In debating the more challenging elements of Britain’s history – such as the refusal to accept more refugees or the questions over whether more could have been done to disrupt the Final Solution – Britain reflects on its responsibilities in the world today.

How far that debate on ‘the more challenging elements of Britain’s history’ will be a focus of the new national memorial proposed in the report commissioned by Cameron remains to be seen. Will it recount, alongside stories of the *Kindertransport* and the liberation of Bergen-Belsen, also the limitations of British refugee policy in the 1930s (including forcible deportation of Jews refused entry to the United

Kingdom); British restrictions on Jews trying to enter Mandated Palestine; British knowledge of mass murder and subsequent failure to formulate rescue programmes during the war; or the longer histories of centuries-old British antisemitism and the role of British individuals and institutions in creating the pseudo-science of eugenics?

Similarly, how far will a new national Swedish Museum of the Holocaust be prepared to explore (alongside its uplifting stories as a safe haven for refugees in the 1930s, and as a destination for the rescued Jews of Denmark) the more difficult parts of its history? Will these include the problematic aspects of neutrality in the Second World War, which saw a profitable trade with Nazi Germany and a government instruction to the central bank to ignore suspicions that gold coming into the country had been looted from victims of Nazi crimes; the allowing of German troops and weaponry to travel through its territory to Norway; or indeed its own dark history of eugenics which influenced Nazi race 'scientists', and the forced sterilization of women that continued even until 1976?

Having discussed these and other issues with Swedish colleagues and being aware of the excellent work of Swedish historians and educational institutions, I am confident that many will wish to explore these difficult questions in the galleries and educational work of the new museum. If that is the case, then the new institution will make a major contribution to Swedish public discourse on the Holocaust, and the relevance of this history to Swedish visitors will be beyond doubt.

Where we situate Holocaust museums and exhibitions

An issue that has been raised several times already in this conference is where should a Swedish Holocaust Museum be situated, and does it matter if this is in a country that has no authentic sites of mass murder from the Holocaust? Britain, also, grapples with these issues, of course, in its Holocaust memory work.

In 2000, the United Kingdom established its national Holocaust Exhibition at the Imperial War Museum, London (IWM). What are the challenges and opportunities in situating the exhibition in Britain's national museum of twentieth century conflict? In an incisive and thoughtful analysis, Tom Lawson has argued that while the IWM's

Holocaust Exhibition avoided the triumphalism of much of Britain's collective memory of the Holocaust, still it may be difficult for visitors to come away without something of this impression as the exhibition is surrounded by other artefacts and exhibitions that speak to a traditional, even nostalgic, British representation of the Second World War.⁴

However, it may also be argued that there are real strengths in placing Britain's Holocaust Exhibition at the Imperial War Museum. Not only does the Museum provide a prominent site, archives, an infrastructure and the expertise to develop a major exhibition on this subject, its national and international reputation afford an authority to its telling of the Holocaust. In addition, potentially this existing institution brings a difficult, traumatic history to audiences who otherwise might choose never to enter a Holocaust museum. Many who come to the Imperial War Museum to visit its First World War exhibition, or to learn more about their grandparents' lives during the era of the Second World War may stay for, and learn from, the national Holocaust Exhibition galleries housed under that same roof. The potential impact of this on national memory and historical consciousness should not be underestimated – all museums, galleries and exhibitions should seek to reach new audiences, and the IWM has undoubtedly helped to bring the history of the Holocaust to a wider public.

It should also be acknowledged what the Holocaust Exhibition has contributed to the Imperial War Museum. Established by Act of Parliament in 1917, the IWM's remit became over the subsequent decades a social history of conflict, exploring the impact of twentieth century war on societies, individuals, communities and nations. How could it be said to fulfil such a remit without a strong focus on the causes and impact of genocide, a crime that had scarred so much of the world in modern times? When finally turning its attention to this subject in the 1990s, an early proposal was to create an exhibition exploring 'Man's inhumanity to man', a historical survey and analysis of genocide and crimes against humanity in the twentieth century. As this proposal was considered, however, it became apparent how difficult this subject would be to do justice in museum exhibition terms – each example of genocide has its own complex history,

⁴ Tom Lawson, 'The Holocaust and Colonial Genocide at the Imperial War Museum', *Britain and the Holocaust, Remembering and Representing War and Genocide*, Sharples, C. and Jensen, O. (eds.), Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke 2013, p. 161.

how could these multiple histories be adequately explained and conveyed to the visitor in a traditional linear exhibition? And in the artefact-led exhibition that was envisioned, wouldn't it inevitably be the case that certain genocides received more attention than others simply because of the availability of artefacts to display, and how could that possibly be justified?

The approach the IWM decided upon was to create a large, artefact-based exhibition on one example of twentieth century genocide and then another, smaller exhibition that looked more thematically at the phenomenon genocide. The case study decided upon was that of the Holocaust. This was for several reasons. The Holocaust is the most extensively documented; most intensively studied; and so best understood example of mass atrocity in human history – if you are to focus on one example, it makes sense to begin with the one we know most about. The Holocaust also held at least a marginal place in British collective memory of the Second World War, particularly regarding the British 'liberation' of Bergen-Belsen in April 1945, and to that extent it could be contextualised by other exhibitions presented in the Museum.

However, as Yehuda Bauer has since argued, if the Holocaust can be seen as the 'paradigmatic genocide' – a starting point for study, and one that can provide important conceptual understanding and insights of the phenomena, it should not be the end point of such a study. As mentioned, the Museum always planned for a second, smaller exhibition on the wider history of genocide in the twentieth century, which it opened under the name *Crimes Against Humanity* in 2002. This exhibition centred on a specially commissioned new documentary film, which allowed a thematic treatment of the history of genocide, along with touch screen interactive computers providing the opportunity for visitors to explore further and in more depth.

Looking to the future

Today, plans are being laid to redevelop the Imperial War Museum's Holocaust exhibition, to take account of the advances in historiography over the last 20 years. At the same time there are proposals for a separate, new United Kingdom Holocaust Memorial to be situated in Victoria Tower Gardens, alongside the Houses of Parliament, which

raises important issues that it may be worth the Swedish Government taking under consideration.



Proposal for a new United Kingdom Holocaust Memorial in Victoria Tower Gardens.

Source: UK Holocaust Government Memorial Foundation,
www.gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-holocaust-memorial-foundation.

It is undoubtedly a bold statement to locate the proposed new memorial and learning centre alongside the Palace of Westminster. While many have welcomed the move, there are also those who object: some who consider new building on this green space as a kind of vandalism of a much loved park; others who see the subject of the Holocaust as an unwelcome intrusion on the existing political and cultural landscape; those to whom the link between the Holocaust, Britain and 'our history' is not at all clear; some hostile to what they see as a 'Jewish story'; others who argue that, if there is to be such a memorial, then it should be about genocide more widely, rather than only focusing upon the Holocaust.

However, these objections also reveal why the decision to create a new national memorial is potentially so important, and why the location next to the Houses of Parliament could be significant: a new memorial and education centre has the potential to deepen – even to transform – Britain's national conversation about the Holocaust. To

be successful, however, it is imperative that both the winning design of the new memorial and its educational vision are equal to this bold ambition. The new memorial must speak not only to those who welcome this new national project, but also to those who doubt it.

In my view, in order for this to be possible, the new UK Memorial (and, similarly, a new Swedish Holocaust Museum) needs to move beyond the existing national discourse on the Holocaust, or they will not reach those currently disengaged from this memory culture. A new memorial and learning centre in the UK (and a new Holocaust Museum in Sweden) should aim to speak to diverse audiences on multiple levels. It should not simply be an 'echo chamber' for the same messages that are repeated across much existing Holocaust education and commemoration. The UK memorial needs to be a space which revisits Britain's national, imperial and colonial past in the light of the Holocaust; that re-examines Britain's role during the Holocaust and what that means for our notions of identity; that authentically and honestly attempts a full reckoning with the past, and reflects upon how Britain responds today as genocides and mass atrocity continue to scar our world.

As such, the new memorial needs to eschew easy, pre-packaged 'lessons of the Holocaust', that tend to oversimplify a complex past, and instead to search for more authentic meanings – those that emerge from deeper understanding of the history itself, in all its complexity and nuance. An educational encounter with the Holocaust should not only engage the emotions but also challenge common myths and misconceptions. It needs to create a space for cognitive dissonance, where new perspectives are possible, and that allow for deeper layers of meaning.

Such an approach would, of course, need to acknowledge the many positive aspects of Britain's role, as a place of refuge for many thousands; as a nation that confronted and helped to defeat Nazi Germany and to liberate Europe; its role in the relief efforts for the survivors of the concentration camps; as a home to survivors after the war; and its role in establishing a new democratic order founded on fundamental human rights. But, it should also seek to overturn the persistent national myth that the Second World War was somehow fought to liberate the Jewish people from Nazi persecution; to ask difficult questions about what was known and when, and what

more might have been done to prevent the genocide; and what are the implications of this difficult knowledge for today?

An important consideration for Sweden, similarly needs to be how far will the national story be integrated into the representation of the Holocaust? Will the new museum be a Holocaust Museum in Sweden (a narrative of the Holocaust that might be situated anywhere in the world); a Swedish Holocaust Museum (which incorporates elements of the Swedish story at points that intersect with the history of the Holocaust); or a Museum about Sweden and the Holocaust, which takes as its departure point a reappraisal of Sweden's role, national memory, and the significance of this history for Sweden today)? These are very different kinds of approaches, with important consequences for research, collection, display, visitor experience, and so for the ensuing national conversation.

As the UK project develops, it will be necessary to reassure institutions already working in the field that the new national memorial will not compete with them, but rather will serve and support their programmes. This is important in the Swedish context, also – how will the proposed Holocaust Museum work alongside existing institutions such as the Living History Forum? If the new museum's exhibition is successful in re-examining Sweden's role during the Second World War and the Holocaust; if it does not provide the visitor with catharsis and closure, with self-contained, neat and pre-packaged 'lessons', but rather it manages to inspire further reflection on difficult and contentious issues, then there is a role for others to carry on that conversation as visitors continue to search for answers to the difficult questions that have been posed.

Perhaps a strategy can be developed where existing institutions play an important role in facilitating the new conversations that should take place, not only in the Museum's building but before and after visits, in the towns and regions, online and in social media? It may be that partner institutions such as the Living History Forum, with their deep experience, expertise, and well-developed educational approaches are well placed to support the new Museum in this vital aspect of its work.

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Displaying the narrative of October '43

Janne Laursen

Abstract

In this paper, museums director Janne Laursen discusses how the so-called “narrative of October ‘43” – i.e. the rescue of the Danish Jews during the Holocaust in October of 1943 – affects the memory of the Holocaust in Denmark and the possibilities and challenges it provides for the Danish Jewish Museum in displaying the story. The fact that most of the Danish Jews survived the Holocaust has been described as “the light in the darkness”. This narrative is powerful but also problematic since it tends to overshadow other stories of Danish Jewry. The building of the Danish Jewish Museum was created by architect Daniel Libeskind with inspiration from the Hebrew word “Mitzvah”, meaning good deeds, as a symbol of the positive experience of Danish Jewry during the Holocaust. For a new Holocaust museum in Sweden, the artifacts and the collection will be of central importance, but of equal importance is the building of the new museum.

The Danish Jewish Museum

The Danish Jewish Museum is a private initiative from 1985 and managed to involve the world-famous architect Daniel Libeskind. The museum is today self-owned with its own board of directors under the Ministry of Cultural Affairs and the law of Danish museums. The museum is supported financially by the municipality of Copenhagen and the state.

The light in the darkness

Denmark has become world famous for the rescue of the Danish Jews in October 1943. 99 per cent of the Danish Jews survived the Holocaust, which also include those unfortunate who were deported to KZ-Theresienstadt. Especially after the Eichmann trial in Israel in 1961 the Danish exception became “the light in the darkness” in Holocaust history. “Maybe the Danes take it for granted”, Daniel Libeskind commented when he was assigned the mission to create the architectural layout for the museum. He started with a question: “What story can a Jewish Museum in Denmark tell, that no other museum may tell with the same right?”. For him it was the rescue in October '43. He saw it as a “mitzvah” (a good deed) and the Hebrew letters spelling Mitzvah became the focus point for the architectural layout.

Intertwined the letters represent the walking area within the museum. The walls are made of birch plywood as a reference to Sweden embracing the Danish Jews in October 1943, but also in order to underline, the light story in Denmark. The floor is laid as the deck of a ship – a reference to all the vessels carrying the Danish Jews to Sweden, and visitors sometimes experience feel seasick.



Interior of the Danish Jewish Museum. The architecture is part of the storytelling about the rescue of the Danish Jews in October 1943. Photo: Bitter + Bredt, 2004. Source: Danish Jewish Museum.

The architecture of the museum is a challenge since it communicates in another way with the audience than normally, in traditional museum work with objects and displays. It moves the audience; no one leaves the museum untouched. For some the architecture is positive and for others negative. For the latter group the architecture comes across as disorder and unfit for a proper museum. It is an important question, what you want your audience to experience in a museum? I can only say that no one leaves the Danish Jewish Museum untouched and that the architecture plays an important role for that personal experience.

The museum deals with 400 years of Jewish history and cultural heritage in Denmark. And so the question is, if it is possible to tell all that in an interior with an architecture dealing with '43 in such an impressive way? Not only survived 99 per cent of the Danish Jews. The Jewish cultural heritage in Denmark survived with them, since there was no looting or destruction of Jewish properties and cemeteries in Denmark. You may see the architecture as embracing the rescue and in many ways including the possibility to investigate, document and collect in a way, which isn't possible in the same way in many European countries.

The importance of an open mind

Looking at a model of the Danish Jewish Museum for the first time in 2001 I couldn't help thinking: "Where to put the paintings?" There wasn't one single proper wall. The Libeskind way of thinking certainly was a challenge and demanded a review on my own academic understanding. I found this very positive.

If you want to develop museums and exhibitions, you cannot keep walking in the same well-known paths. It is important to be able to ask new questions and discover the hidden areas not investigated before. The matter of architecture may further this but creating exhibitions in my experience may also give rise to important re-thinking. When the Danish Jewish Museum was to open in 2004, the collection contained of more objects from the 472 people that was imprisoned in KZ-Theresienstadt than from the ca. 7 500 Danish Jewish refugees who fled to Sweden. This was puzzling. In order to balance this, we had to collect objects which told the story of the exile in

Sweden. I managed to get hold of objects for the exhibition by knocking on doors of families having been in exile in Sweden.

After the opening, it became clear, that the rescue story ended by crossing the Swedish border both for those rescued in October '43 and for the rest of the world. Focus had been upon the drama of the escape. Almost nothing was written about the exile. If any museum should embrace wider documentation, studies and collecting this material, it was the Danish Jewish Museum. However, a member of the board of directors at the museum considered it "nothing to speak of".

Why wasn't it something to speak about? For many Jewish families it wasn't anything to speak about for many years and still, many don't speak about their war time experiences. Pictures from the camps were first published in Denmark in "*Billedbladet*" in the summer of 1945 – a women's magazine about fashion spiced up with an around the world article. Compared to these photos, pictures from the exile looked like holiday pictures although they are the pictures of refugees. The general idea among the Danish Jewish survivors was therefore: "We survived" and focus was on moving on.

Asking new questions is important, but that may be difficult having very established research patterns dealing with certain aspects of October '43. The war experience project managed to focus upon those having had the experiences: What it meant for them and their families and how it was commemorated in the families. Furthermore, the project disclosed at least 150 Jewish children hidden in Denmark for shorter or longer time after October '43, which was previously unknown. A lot of material was added to the collection including archive material, film and about 100 interviews.

All this was presented in the publication: *Nothing to speak of- Wartime experiences of the Danish Jews from 2010* and the exhibition: *Home – a special exhibition of the consequence of war and persecution*. The rescue of the Danish Jews is a very unusual story, but so it also is for the refugees wishing to go back to the country they left.

Home

What belongs to the narrative of October '43 and where do we limit it? This is indeed a matter for exploring. The exile in Sweden certainly belongs to this narrative just as the stay in KZ-Theresienstadt. The

return to Denmark after the war is also part of the narrative of October '43. October '43 has obtained an iconic and international life in films, songs and many sorts of celebrations as the light in the darkness. This is also part of the narrative of October '43. But how to display all this?

We did so in the exhibition: *Home – a special exhibition about the consequences of war and persecution.*

The exhibition confronted the bright story with the often-darker personal story of those having been in exile or deported. The layout for the exhibition was three circles – bright on the outside displaying the bright story, and on the inside a silent and more intimate presentation of the personal challenges and issues to deal with.

When does the narrative of October 43 ends? Not for the moment being. It is important to include the matter of processes in displaying the narrative of October '43.



From the exhibition "Home" displaying the "bright" story on the outside and the often-darker personal story on the inside. Photo: Ole Akhøj 2013.

Source: Danish Jewish Museum.

Creating the new Jewish Museum in Sweden

Christina Gamstorp

Abstract

This paper describes the creation of the new Jewish Museum in Sweden and some thoughts on the relation between the Jewish museum and a new Museum of the Holocaust in Sweden. The Jewish Museum was first established in 1987. In 2016, it moved to a new premise, enabling the museum to rethink the concept as well as the narrative. The new location was an authentic site of great importance for the Swedish-Jewish cultural heritage; the oldest preserved synagogue in Sweden, located in the Old Town of Stockholm. The new museum had two slogans: “There are many ways of being Swedish, being Jewish is one of them” and “About a minority, for the majority”, underlining both Jewish heritage as part of Sweden’s cultural heritage, thus integrating Jewish history within Swedish history. But the museum was also trying to reach new audiences with the message that Swedish-Jewish cultural heritage is relevant for everyone. The re-opening was made on the National Day of Sweden, on June 6th, a date chosen to manifest these ideas of making room for a new piece of the national puzzle. A Jewish museum is of course vital to the establishment of a museum of the Holocaust. They are two sides of the same coin, depending on each other, ensuring that Jewish history is not reduced to the history of the Holocaust and the annihilation of Jewish life throughout Europe.

A Jewish museum is vital to a Holocaust museum

I have spent the last four years creating a new Jewish museum in Stockholm. A Jewish museum was first founded in 1987 by Viola and Aron Neuman, and the old museum closed in September of 2016. The new Jewish museum was opened on June 6th, the National Day of Sweden.

The journey we then embarked on was just incredible, full of creativity, a sense of meaningfulness, a sense that the new museum was exactly in the right place at exactly the right time. Sweden was ready for a new museum, focusing on the relationship between minority and majority and placing Jewish heritage within Swedish cultural heritage. Thus, the new Jewish museum is a celebration of diversity, adding a new piece to the puzzle of Swedish history, expanding the notion of what it means to be Swedish and what Swedish culture consists of.

My first and most important point is exactly that, that the Jewish museum is vital to the establishment of a new museum on the Holocaust. They are two sides of the same coin, without the one, not the other. The history of the Holocaust is not Jewish history, that is the story of antisemitism and intolerance and hatred against the Jews and this story belongs to the majority. Jewish history, on the other hand, is a celebration of life and heritage. That is why a new museum on the Holocaust requires a strong and a lively Jewish museum. Let's make sure that is the case.

Creating a narrative

The second most important point is finding the narrative and the context of the narrative.

When the Jewish museum moved into its new premises, in the old synagogue at *Själagårdsgatan*, it was literally like moving back home. Here lived the rabbi, the kosher butcher and here was a mikveh and a kitchen for making matzah. From these premises the Jewish nation was ruled, its own nation in someone else's kingdom.

Later, when the synagogue closed, it was turned into a sailor's church, a police station and office. The murals were painted over, and the artefacts ended up in the storage of the Nordic museum, the former synagogue pulpit was now labeled "unknown church". The traces of the synagogue were a marginal note in the history book of

the majority. If something is central in Jewish history, that is the sense of not belonging. So, when we opened the new museum, we do more than showcase objects, and traditions, we fill in the blank spaces on Swedish history, on the relationship between majority and the minority. We tell the story of integration, assimilation, about prosperity and resistance. In our times which is marked by issues of migration, and increasing anti-Semitism, this is the way of making the Jewish museum relevant, the way of making us matter.

There are many ways of being Swedish, being Jewish is one of them

“There are many ways of being Swedish, being Jewish is one of them” was one of the guiding principles of creating the content of the new museum.

The site of the new museum also played an extremely important role in shaping the narrative. Being the oldest synagogue in the city, dating back to 1795, provided us with the story of the synagogue as a religious practice, the need to address Jewish practice and the idea to let Jewish thinking influence the whole museum. Ideas such as the Torah has 70 faces, that four eyes see more than two, and other elements of Jewish studies influenced both the process and the result. The Chavruta lamp, engaging visitors to the museum in the old practice of dialogue around text is a brilliant example of this.

We also looked for traces of a hidden cultural heritage on the site of the new museum. The idea was that a minority culture always is hidden under other layers of history deemed more important by the majority society. And as we worked our way through the paint, unknown decorative patterns and colors emerged, revealing an almost unknown cultural heritage, adding another piece of the puzzle to Swedish history.

Being the site of the Jewish nation between 1782–1838, the site also told us about the relationship between majority and minority. In the exhibition, we display parts of the laws and regulations regulating Jewish life in Sweden throughout history. The idea was really to convey the message of endurance, highlighting the effort it takes for people to tolerate each other. As this is not a new phenomenon, it thus allowed us to elevate the Jewish experience into something more universal. This was also important to the museum. This approach of

always trying to identify similarities rather than differences among human beings is also something that has been of utmost importance to the new museum, adding relevance and meaning to our own time.

Taking the museum outside the museum's premises

As the synagogue was an authentic site, we wanted to explore other authentic sites to unveil Jewish-Swedish relations and working together with other local museums that hold collections of interest to Jewish history. Working outside the museum was done for several reasons, first and most importantly, acknowledging that the collection held at the museum did not represent Swedish-Jewish cultural heritage. That was to be found elsewhere, in other collections or institutions. It was also a way to broaden the network of the museum and of utmost importance, working with new audiences that had never encountered Jewish history or knew very little about it.



Interior from the Jewish Museum in Sweden showing the art piece *Nej (No)* by Åsa Andersson Broms. Photo: Åsa Andersson Broms/Jewish Museum in Sweden.

In this process, another very important part of creating a new museum, was developed, and that was the use of contemporary art and collaborating with artists. This was an extremely powerful but also very complicated and challenging work process.

We did this type of work for a number of reasons, the first one was the urge to link historic events to a contemporary interpretation, again making Jewish history relevant to others. Secondly it was also a way to underline multiple perspectives, linking it back to Jewish thinking and the tradition of text and interpretation, one of Judaism's basic assumptions, as found in the Talmud. The art pieces were then incorporated into the core exhibition, adding new knowledge, an outside view and artist perspective on historical artefacts and facts.

Reframing the collection

Early in the process we also acknowledged that we needed to reformulate the objects that we found in other collections, primarily collected to reflect majority society history. Cotton hospital shirts are a very good example of that, earlier categorised by the Army museum as artefacts from the war between Sweden and Russia. But the hidden story was that the fabric used in the shirts, was made by Jewish cotton printers that entered Sweden in the 17th century. Adding this story meant adding a completely new perspective and meaning to the objects, again reformulating Swedish history and the notion of who writes history and for whom.

Reframing the collection was also a very important part of forming the new museum. The museum holds a small collection, in the old museum primarily collected and displayed with the overarching narrative of pride. The story we wanted to tell at the new museum was not really supported by the collection and its artefacts. So, a reframing of what the collections did tell us, was an important and time-consuming process. The idea of exposing parts of the collection from the collector's point of view in a very subtle and interesting way reinforced the museum's main narrative, i.e. the relationship between majority and minority. Part of the collections at the museum was collected by the Nordic museum in the late 1800s, part by the Jewish museum in the 1980s and a small part was artefacts with known provenience from Jewish life in Sweden. That also allowed the museum

to develop a collection strategy as well as defining its need of further collecting.

Target audiences for a new museum

My very last point relates to the audience and the target group for the museum, a very important aspect when creating the new exhibition. The new museum was clearly aimed at attracting people who knew very little about Jewish life in Sweden and about Jewish life in general. Integrating Jewish cultural heritage into Swedish cultural heritage was part of that process, expanding Swedish history, redefining the objects were all part of reaching out to a curious but maybe not so knowledgeable audience. Focusing on Jewish life was also a way to add a new narrative to complement the story of the Holocaust which I think has dominated Swedes perception of Jewish history. To reach new audiences, we asked them to contribute their own stories of finding home, offering them free entrance as “payment” for their stories. But we also developed a new museum “methodology”, I call it the mish mash method, quite simply to introduce Jewish ideas and traditions through something more well-known, for example young people talk about kosher through the Swedish *falukorv* (pork sausage) or we introduce Chanukah through the Swedish Christian tradition of Lucia. That is a way for the museum to lower the barriers to enter an unknown world of Jewish life and culture, enriching the visitor’s world of knowledge.

Refugee Policy in Sweden during the Holocaust. A historiographical overview

Karin Kvist Geverts

Abstract

This paper gives an overview of Holocaust historiography in Sweden focusing on research on Swedish refugee policy. It addresses the policy by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (*Utrikesdepartementet*) and the government agency The Foreigner's Bureau (*Utlänningsbyrån*), as well as the work by the relief organizations, such as the Jewish Community (*Mosaiska församlingen*). It demonstrates that although Sweden had a major research project dealing with Sweden and the Second World War already in the 1970s, it took until the late 1980s and the breakthrough of Holocaust studies in Sweden before the narrative of "the Good Sweden" was questioned. The refugee policy was characterized by discrimination of Jewish refugees in the 1930s and the first years of the war when it came to granting permits to stay. This was due to the presence of antisemitic ideas that, however, were not regarded as such but rather as self-evident, an antisemitic background noise. A shift in policy occurred in 1942–1943, starting with a change in public opinion after the deportation of the Norwegian Jews became known. Thus, when the Danish Jews fled across the strait in October of 1943, they were welcomed. Although the Swedish policy shifted, the antisemitic attitudes remained, and this ambivalence is described as the Janus face of Swedish refugee policy. Finally, the paper argues that the Jewish communities have been unfairly blamed for not doing enough; new research has nuanced this picture.

Introduction

It has been argued that “it is doubtful whether there are any actual Swedish ‘Holocaust historians’” in the sense of “scholars [dealing] exclusively with the Holocaust”.¹ If we by “Holocaust history”² refer only to the study of the Nazi genocide as such, on the killing sites and in the extermination camps, the argument is correct.³ However, this is too narrow an understanding of the phenomenon. Two central themes in Holocaust history since the 1970s are the responses of states outside of Nazi control, and Jewish responses, to the Holocaust.⁴ Another important theme is the transfer and dissemination of information about the Holocaust in countries outside of Nazi control.⁵

Since a few decades, the field of Holocaust history has also expanded to topics such as the actions of the neutral countries as bystanders, rescuers and enablers to the Holocaust.⁶ Some scholars place the Nordic countries in the category of “Holocaust in the periphery”, arguing that the study of these countries will further our understanding of the event as they “form a microcosm within a larger European experience with occupation, collaboration, deportations, resistance,

¹ This was stated in a recently published and very interesting dissertation which I would certainly characterize as part of Holocaust history. See Kristin Wagrell, “*Chorus of the Saved*”. *Constructing the Holocaust Survivor in Swedish Public Discourse, 1943–1966*, Linköping studies in Arts and Science no. 783, Linköping 2020, p. 31.

² What should be defined as Holocaust history and when did the field emerge is a topic of its own. Michael Marrus argues that the topic first existed in Israel and emerged in Europe and North America in the 1970s and 1980s. Michael Marrus, *Lessons of the Holocaust*, University of Toronto Press: Toronto 2016, p. 17 & 20. See also *The Holocaust in history* (1987) by the same author.

³ One example of a book where the focus is primarily on the Holocaust and not on Sweden is “... *Tell ye your children ... A Book about the Holocaust in Europe 1933–1945* by Stéphane Bruchfeld and Paul A. Levine, Regeringskansliet: Stockholm 1998 (and later editions).

⁴ David S. Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews. America and the Holocaust 1941–1945*, New York 1998; William D. Rubinstein, *The Myth of Rescue. Why the democracies could not have saved more Jews from the Nazis*, London & New York 1997; Yehuda Bauer, *American Jewry and the Holocaust. The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, 1939–1945*, Detroit 1981; Tony Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination. A Social and Cultural History*, Oxford 1994; Louise London, *Whitehall and the Jews, 1933–1948. British immigration policy, Jewish refugees and the Holocaust*, Cambridge 2001.

⁵ Richard Breitman, *Official Secrets: What the Nazis Planned, What the British and Americans Knew*, London 1999; Walter Laqueur, *The terrible secret. An investigation into the suppression of information about Hitler’s “Final solution”*, London 1980.

⁶ See for instance ‘*Bystanders*’ to the Holocaust. *A Re-evaluation*, David Cesarani & Paul A. Levine (eds.), Frank Cass: London 2002 and *Bystanders, Rescuers or Perpetrators? The Neutral Countries and the Shoah*, Corry Gutstadt, Thomas Lutz, Bernd Rother & Yessica San Róman (eds.), IHRA-series vol. 2, Metropol: Berlin 2016.

rescue and neutrality”.⁷ Swedish historians have contributed to the international historiography on all of these fields.

This discussion also puts focus on whether Sweden has anything to do with the Holocaust. Today, scholars and the general public in Sweden would say yes, but for many decades this was not the case. This article gives an overview of Holocaust historiography in Sweden focusing on the refugee policy.

Background on Swedish refugee policy

An understanding of Swedish refugee policy during the Second World War and the Holocaust requires knowledge of the historical background. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Swedish society, just like other countries in Europe, viewed itself mainly as a country of emigration.⁸ Since emigration was larger than immigration, there was no need to control the latter. The period between 1860 and 1914 has therefore been described as a liberal era where people moved freely across Sweden’s borders.⁹

During the last decades of the nineteenth century, strong ideas of nationalism swept across Europe, and nationalism brought ideas such as ‘one people, one language, one nation’, which led to categorizations where the ‘Swede’ became ‘Swedish’ and the immigrant was seen as an alien.¹⁰ The nationalist spirit pinpointed groups of so-called unwanted elements that the Swedish state wanted to get rid of – among these Eastern European Jews and Romani people. In order to stop these groups from immigration, a law was passed in 1914 which gave the border control the authority to refuse entry.¹¹

⁷ Antero Holmila & Karin Kvist Geverts, “On Forgetting and Rediscovering the Holocaust in Scandinavia. Introduction to the Special Issue on the Histories and Memories of the Holocaust in Scandinavia”, *Scandinavian Journal of Research*, vol. 36, no. 5, December 2011, p. 525. See also the chapter by Cecilie Banke in this anthology.

⁸ This part of the article has previously been published as Karin Kvist Geverts, “A Foreign Element Within the Nation. Swedish Refugee Policy and the Jewish Refugees in an international perspective, 1938–45”, *Reaching a State of Hope. Refugees, Immigrants and the Swedish Welfare State, 1930–2000*, Mikael Byström & Pär Frohnert (eds.), Nordic Academic Press: Lund 2013.

⁹ Carl Henrik Carlsson, *Medborgarskap och diskriminering. Östjudar och andra invandrare i Sverige 1860–1920*, Uppsala 2004, p. 86, 90.

¹⁰ Ingvar Svanberg & Mattias Tydén, *I nationalismens bakvatten. Om minoritet, etnicitet och rasism*, Lund 1999, p. 17.

¹¹ Kvist Geverts 2013, p. 54–55.

In the 1930s, Sweden had a population of about 6 million people.¹² This included a small Jewish community of about 7 000 people.¹³ The geographical location of Sweden, in northern Europe, meant that it shared borders with Norway and Finland but not with the continent, and this was important later when the Jewish refugees fled persecution in Nazi Germany.

The first Aliens Act was passed in 1927 with the clear purpose of protecting the Swedish labor market but also to maintain “the purity of the Swedish race”.¹⁴ Racial biological notions of a “pure Nordic race” was widely accepted in the 1920s, in Sweden as elsewhere in Europe, and the connection to immigration control can be seen in the foundation of a national institute for racial biology in 1921. A revised Aliens Act was passed in 1937, and although it did not mention the protection of “the race”, these notions were still apparent in official records of the government authorities.¹⁵

Swedish immigration authorities, just like in other European states, were struggling with “the refugee problem” and in particular with “the Jewish problem”. The perception that antisemitism was “un-Swedish” and non-existent was coupled with the idea that Jewish refugees brought antisemitism with them. If too many Jewish refugees should enter Sweden, antisemitism would rise. In the Aliens Act, the only group of refugees that were given asylum was the political refugees. The key question was whether Jewish refugees should be regarded as such. The decision not to, proved to be fatal for the Jewish refugees. Neither Sweden nor any other country in Europe included Jewish refugees in the definition of political refugees.¹⁶

At the outbreak of the war in September of 1939, Sweden declared itself neutral and it was not, like Denmark and Norway, occupied in April of 1940. Neutrality had a powerful impact on the Swedish war experience and the Swedish self-image in the post-war years.

¹² Mikael Byström & Pär Frohnert, “Acknowledgements and general background”, *Reaching a State of Hope. Refugees, Immigrants and the Swedish Welfare State, 1930–2000*, Mikael Byström & Pär Frohnert (eds.), Nordic Academic Press: Lund 2013, p. 9.

¹³ Pontus Rudberg, “The Politics of Jewish Refugee Aid and Relief Work in Sweden”, *Reaching a State of Hope. Refugees, Immigrants and the Swedish Welfare State, 1930–2000*, Mikael Byström & Pär Frohnert (eds.), Nordic Academic Press: Lund 2013, p. 81.

¹⁴ For a discussion of the immigration legislation, see Karin Kvist Geverts, *Ett främmande element i nationen. Svensk flyktingpolitik och de judiska flyktingarna 1938–1944*, Studia historica Upsaliensia 233, Uppsala 2008, ch. 2 and Tomas Hammar, *Sverige åt svenskarna. Invandringspolitik, utlänningskontroll och asylrätt 1900–1932*, Stockholm 1964 and Hans Lindberg, *Svensk flyktingpolitik under internationellt tryck 1936–1941*, Stockholm 1973.

¹⁵ Kvist Geverts 2013, p. 55.

¹⁶ Kvist Geverts 2013, p. 55–56.

Historiography on Swedish refugee policy

In post-war Sweden, the master narrative was that of “the good Sweden” (*det goda Sverige*); a country which rescued tens of thousands of refugees from Nazi terror. Mikael Byström and I have argued that the tone was set already by the Sandler commission which in 1946 reviewed the Swedish refugee policy and concluded that “the Swedish refugee policy had stood the test and, in most part, have been very liberal”.¹⁷ Embraced in this narrative was also the idea that Sweden didn’t have anything to do with the Holocaust.¹⁸

In Sweden, as in other countries, there has been a myth of silence surrounding the Holocaust. But as Antero Holmila and I have argued, there never was a total silence but rather a kind of uneasiness to talk about the Holocaust.¹⁹ As discussed elsewhere in this anthology, there were early voices, such as the scholars Gunhild and Einar Tegen, who conducted a field survey in the spring of 1945 in Swedish refugee camps asking questions about the survivors’ background as well as their experiences in the camps, of deportation, daily life and liberation.²⁰ We argued that in essence, the Tegen’s were interested in the very same issues which still perplex Holocaust scholars today.²¹

In the 1970s, there was a major research programme conducted at Stockholm University, called *Sweden and the Second World War*. The programme resulted in 21 dissertations in history, and most of them dealt with topics such as Swedish neutrality and defense policy, freedom of opinion and censoring of the free press, and the political parties.²² Only one dealt with refugee policy, Hans Lindberg’s disserta-

¹⁷ The commission was nick-named after the former Secretary of State, Richard Sandler. *Parlamentariska undersökningskommissionen angående flyktingärenden och säkerhetstjänst. I. Betänkande angående flyktingars behandling*, SOU 1946:36, p. 489.

¹⁸ Mikael Byström & Karin Kvist Geverts, “Från en aktivism till en annan. Hur ska Sveriges agerande i flyktingfrågan under andra världskriget förklaras?”, *Sverige och Nazityskland. Skuldfrågor och moraldebatt*, Lars M. Andersson & Mattias Tydén (eds.), Dialogos: Stockholm 2007, p. 148–149.

¹⁹ Holmila & Kvist Geverts 2011, p. 521.

²⁰ Gunhild and Einar Tegen, *De Dödsdömda Vittna. Enquetesvar och Intervjuer*. Stockholm: Wahlström & Widstrand, 1945. Later, Pia-Kristina Garde has traced almost all the survivors and re-interviewed them. Her results were published in the book *De dödsdömda vittnar – 60 år senare*, Bromma: Megilla förlag, 2004. See also the chapter by Malin Thor Tureby in this anthology.

²¹ Holmila & Kvist Geverts 2011, p. 522.

²² For an overview of the programme, see the concluding anthology *Stormaktstryck och småstatspolitik. Aspekter på svensk politik under andra världskriget*, Stig Ekman et al. (eds.), Liber förlag: Stockholm 1986.

tion “Swedish refugee policy under international pressure” but it did not relate to the emerging field of Holocaust studies and it ended its period of investigation in 1941: “since the Jews were no longer allowed to leave Nazi Germany”.²³ Thus, the programme related Sweden to the Second World War, and not to the Holocaust.

In all fairness, though, it should be said that it was not until the broadcasting in Sweden of the TV mini-series *Holocaust* in March of 1979, that a more general awareness of the topic arose.²⁴ Yet, the Holocaust remained a marginal topic in Swedish historiography until the late 1980s.

“Especially viewed from the 21st-century perspective, where Sweden has anchored itself as a prominent advocate of Holocaust remembrance and education” it is interesting to note that research on the Holocaust came later in Sweden than elsewhere in Scandinavia, Holmila and I have argued. Furthermore, impulses came from abroad as the American scholar Steven Koblik’s book, *The Stones Cry out*, was virtually the first scholarly book to examine Sweden and the Holocaust.²⁵

In 1990, Heléne Lööw published a dissertation on the national socialist movement in Sweden during 1920s until 1950s,²⁶ but it was not until a book by a Swedish journalist, Maria Pia Boëthius, called *Honour and conscience (Heder och samvete)*, was published until the topic was discussed in public debate.²⁷ Boëthius asked moral questions such as – why did Sweden allow 2 million German soldiers to pass on Swedish ground? Why did Sweden continue trading with Nazi Germany until 1944? Did it prolong the war?

After Boëthius book, new questions were being asked: Did Sweden as a neutral country had certain obligations to rescue Jewish refugees? What did the Swedes know about the Holocaust, and when?

²³ Lindberg 1973, p. 9–10.

²⁴ For a discussion of the Swedish term “*Förintelsen*” (“the Holocaust”) see the chapter by Stéphane Bruchfeld in this anthology.

²⁵ Holmila & Kvist Geverts 2011, p. Koblik’s book was first published in 1987 in Swedish as “*Om vi teg, skulle stenarna ropa*”. *Sverige och judeproblemet 1933–1945*, in translation by Erik Frykman.

²⁶ Heléne Lööw, *Hakkorset och Wasakärven. En studie av nationalsocialismen i Sverige 1924–1950*, avhandlingar från Historiska institutionen i Göteborg, Göteborg 1990.

²⁷ Maria-Pia Boëthius, *Heder och samvete. Sverige och andra världskriget*, Norstedts: Stockholm 1991. It can be noted that the subtitle of Boëthius book is not about the Holocaust, but about the Second World War.

Göran Persson and the information campaign in the 1990s

A major shift in public awareness in Sweden took place at the end of the 1990s when the Swedish Prime Minister Göran Persson decided to launch a big information campaign about the Holocaust in Sweden. The background was a survey among school pupils where many answered they were not sure the Holocaust had actually happened. Even though the results of the survey were misinterpreted, the campaign was launched, and it began with publishing of the book *Tell ye your children* by Paul A. Levine and Stéphane Bruchfeld in 1998. The book was first published in Swedish, and later translated to several languages, and given for free to all households with teenagers.²⁸

Already in 1997, simultaneously to several other countries, the Swedish government appointed an inquiry to investigate if and how Swedish authorities and banks had accepted payment in gold stolen from Jews from Nazi Germany.²⁹ The inquiry published its report *Sweden and the Jewish assets* in 1999.³⁰

The Prime Minister also launched a research center in 1998, the Uppsala Programme for Holocaust and Genocide Studies, at Uppsala university, currently the Hugo Valentin-center, and the information campaign was transformed into a government authority called the Living History Forum (in 2003).

And finally, also in 1998, Prime Minister Persson initiated the founding of the intergovernmental organization *Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance, and Research*. The organization arranged several international conferences in Stockholm, of which *The Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust* held in 2000 and attended by representatives of 46 governments resulted in the creation of the Stockholm Declaration. In 2012 the organization changed its name to *International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance* (IHRA).³¹

²⁸ Stéphane Bruchfeld & Paul A. Levine, "... om detta må ni berätta ... En bok om Förintelsen i Europa 1933–1945, Regeringskansliet: Stockholm 1998. Today it has been published in over 1,5 million copies and in several languages. It is distributed by the Living History Forum.

²⁹ Several historians with expertise were appointed to the inquiry, such as Alf W. Johansson, Paul A. Levine and Ingrid Lomfors. For a full list see *Kommissionen om judiska tillgångar i Sverige vid tiden för andra världskriget* (UD 1997:05).

³⁰ The Swedish title of the final report was *Slutrapport "Sverige och judarnas tillgångar"* (SOU 1999:20).

³¹ For a brief history of the creation of the IHRA, see the timeline on the website of the organization www.holocaustremembrance.com.

Holocaust research in Sweden

The 1990s also saw the publishing of new books on Sweden and the Holocaust, for instance Paul A. Levine's dissertation on Swedish Diplomacy and the Holocaust, Ingrid Lomfors dissertation on the Jewish children that came to Sweden as a part of the *Kindertransport* and a document collection on what was published in Swedish media about the Holocaust.³² Levine argued that the Swedish refugee policy changed from indifference to activism, and that the shift in policy was due to the knowledge of the deportation of the Norwegian Jews. They were seen as Norwegians first and foremost, as a "fellow people" ("*broderfolk*"), and due to this sense of community and due to knowledge of the Holocaust, the Swedish bureaucrats choose to act to save Jews. He, and others, argued that the shift in policy in 1942–1943 also meant a change in attitudes toward Jews.³³

At the end of the 1990s, historians also studied the connection to the Swedish labor market and especially xenophobic attitudes toward different groups.³⁴ Some, like Lars Olsson, in a pioneering study, analyzed the reception of survivors from concentration camps and the refugee policy at large from the perspective of the needs of the Swedish labor market.³⁵

Since then, more books have been published, for instance about the Red Cross Operation called "the White buses", led by Count Folke Bernadotte, where the master narrative of "the Good Sweden" has been both reinforced and questioned.³⁶ In 2002, Paul A. Levine

³² Paul A. Levine, *From Indifference to Activism. Swedish Diplomacy and the Holocaust 1938–1944*, Studia historica Upsaliensia 178, Uppsala 1996 (and re-printed 1998); Ingrid Lomfors, *Förlorad barndom – återvunnet liv. De judiska flyktningbarnen från Nazityskland*, avhandlingar från Historiska institutionen i Göteborg 12, Göteborg 1996; Mattias Tydén & Ingvar Svanberg, *Sverige och Förintelsen. Debatt och dokument om Europas judar 1933–1945*, Arena: Stockholm 1997. See also Sverker Oredsson, *Lunds universitet under andra världskriget. Mot-sättningar, debatter och hjälpinsatser*, Lunds universitetshistoriska sällsk. Årsbok, Lund 1996.

³³ Levine 1998, p. 279; Koblik 1988, p. 46; Lindberg 1973, p. 293.

³⁴ Sven Nordlund, "Kriget är slut. Nu kan ni återvända hem! Judiska flyktingar på svensk arbetsmarknad 1933–1945", *Historisk Tidskrift*, 1991:1; Rudolf Tempsch, *Från Centraleuropa till folkhemmet. Den sudetyska invandringen till Sverige 1938–1955*, Göteborg 1997; Björn Horgby, *Dom där. Främlingsfientlighet och arbetarkulturen i Norrköping 1890–1960*, Stockholm 1996.

³⁵ Lars Olsson, *På tröskeln till folkhemmet. Baltiska flyktingar och polska koncentrationslägerfångar som reservarbetskraft i svenskt jordbruk kring slutet av andra världskriget*, Malmö 1995.

³⁶ For a gratulatory view of the expedition, see Sune Persson, "*Vi åker till Sverige*". *De vita bussarna 1945*, Rimbo 2002. For a critical view, see Ingrid Lomfors, *Blind fläck. Minne och glömska kring svenska Röda korsets hjälpinsats i Nazityskland 1945*, Atlantis: Stockholm 2005. Later, there was also a debate between Lomfors and Sune Persson on how the Red Cross Operation and Folke Bernadotte's role should be interpreted and understood.

and David Cesarani's anthology on the re-evaluation of the bystanders to the Holocaust was published, which compared the actions of Sweden to that of other neutral and allied countries.³⁷

From 2000 to 2011, The Swedish Research Council funded another comprehensive research programme, but this time the focus had shifted to *Sweden's relations to Nazism, Nazi-Germany and the Holocaust*.³⁸ The programme contributed with studies on the Swedish press during the Holocaust, on racial biology, on German demands of "aryanization" aimed at Swedish companies, on National Socialism in Sweden, on trade relations between Sweden and Nazi Germany, and on relations between the Swedish cultural and intellectual elite of the Universities and Nazi Germany.³⁹ Some of the most important books were Mats Deland's study of war criminals, Anders Jarlert's study on the handling of marriage between Jews and Christians by the Swedish church, Sven Nordlund's book on aryanization and "business as usual" and Göran Leth's study of the reactions of the Swedish Press to the November pogrom in 1938.⁴⁰

One critique against the programme was that it did not research the refugee policy during the Holocaust. In order to compensate for this, professor Klas Åmark invited me and Mikael Byström to participate in a conferences arranged by the programme to share our ongoing research on refugee policy, attitudes toward Jewish refugees

³⁷ Cesarani & Levine 2002.

³⁸ The programme published overviews of research: *Sweden's relations with Nazism, Nazi Germany and the Holocaust. A Survey of Research*, Stig Ekman & Klas Åmark (eds.), Edsbruk 2003 and Patrick Vonderau, *Schweden und das nationalsozialistische Deutschland. Eine annotierte Bibliographie der deutschsprachigen Forschungsliteratur. 825 Einträge – 439 Annotationen*. Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis. Stockholm Studies in History. 65. Edsbruk 2003.

³⁹ For a description of the projects, see the report *Forskningsprogrammet "Sveriges förhållande till nazismen, Nazi-Tyskland och Förintelsen"*, Vetenskapsrådets slutredovisning av forskningen inom programmet, i enlighet med regeringens uppdrag i regleringsbrev för år 2006. See also the final report from the co-ordinator of the programme, professor Klas Åmark, *Att bo granne med ondskan. Sveriges förhållande till nazismen, Nazityskland och Förintelsen*, Bonniers: Stockholm 2011.

⁴⁰ Mats Deland, *Purgatorium. Sverige och andra världskrigets förbrytare*, Atlas: Stockholm 2010; Anders Jarlert, *Judisk "ras" som äktenskapshinder i Sverige. Effekten av Nürnberglagarna i Svenska kyrkans statliga funktion som lysningsförrättare 1935–1945*, Sekel: Lund 2006; Sven Nordlund, *Affärer som vanligt. Ariseringen i Sverige 1933–1945*, Sekel: Lund 2008; Göran Leth, "Kristallnatten" i svenska dagstidningar. *Konstruktionen av en likgiltighet*, Skriftserie no. 1, Forum för levande historia: Stockholm 2005.

expressed in political debates in parliament and in the press and the government agencies' attitudes and treatment of the Jewish refugees.⁴¹

Due to a critique both within and outside the Jewish community of not doing enough to help Jewish refugees during the Holocaust, the Jewish community in Stockholm decided to publish a white paper. The task was given to Svante Hansson who published a book on the relief work of the Jewish Community in Stockholm during the Holocaust and its role in the refugee policy conducted by the Swedish state (2004).⁴²

In the first decade of the new millennia, several doctoral dissertations were published which dealt with the refugee policy of the Swedish state and the relief work of Jewish and other organizations. Malin Thor Tureby published her study of the young German-Jewish men and women who came to Sweden as a part of the small quota established *Hechaluz* movement, as well as studies of the relief work of the local Jewish community in the town of Norrköping.⁴³ Pär Frohnert published a study of the relief organization the Swedish Mission to Israel which helped converted Jews flee Nazi Germany.⁴⁴ Pontus Rudberg has published several articles and two books on the relief aid of the Jewish community in Stockholm. His books has certainly helped nuance the description of the relief work of the community, and especially so since he has published in English, thus making the results available to the international field of Holocaust

⁴¹ Mikael Byström, *En broder, gäst och parasit. Uppfattningar och föreställningar om utlänningar, flyktingar och flyktingpolitik i svensk offentlig debatt 1942–1947*, Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis 85, Stockholm 2006 and Kvist Geverts 2008.

⁴² Svante Hansson, *Flyket och överlevnad. Flyktingverksamhet i Mosaiska församlingen i Stockholm 1933–1950*, Stockholm 2004.

⁴³ Malin Thor Tureby, *Hechaluz – en rörelse i tid och rum. Tysk-judiska ungdomars exil i Sverige 1933–1943*, Acta Wexionensia. Humaniora 56, Växjö 2005; Malin Thor Tureby, "Svallvågorna av katastrofen kom också till vår stad". Hjälpverksamhet inom Norrköpings mosaiska församling i skuggan av Förintelsen", *En problematisk relation? Flyktingpolitik och judiska flyktingar i Sverige 1920–1950*, Lars M. Andersson & Karin Kvist Geverts (eds.), Uppsala 2008.

⁴⁴ Pär Frohnert, "De behöva en fast hand över sig". Missionsförbundet, Israelsmissionen och de judiska flyktingarna 1939–1945", *En problematisk relation? Flyktingpolitik och de judiska flyktingarna i Sverige 1920–1950*, Lars M. Andersson & Karin Kvist Geverts (eds), *Opuscula Historica Upsaliensia* 36, Uppsala 2008.

studies.⁴⁵ Recently, local studies of the refugee policy has also deepened our understanding.⁴⁶

In 2012, there was a commemoration of Raoul Wallenberg since it marked 100 years since his birth in 1912, and several books on the topic followed.⁴⁷

Another part of this field is memory studies, which I and Antero Holmila have contributed to with the special issue of *Scandinavian Journal of History* on the history and memory of the Holocaust in Scandinavia (2011) and even more recently, the dissertation by Kristin Wagrell published in 2020, on the construction of the Holocaust survivor in Swedish public press 1943–1966.⁴⁸ In print is also an anthology edited by Pontus Rudberg and Johannes Heuman on *The Early Holocaust Memory in Sweden. Archives, Testimonies and Reflections* in which several Swedish historians deal with collections of Holocaust testimonies and narratives in Sweden, the construction of the survivor in film, Holocaust memory politics and early writings on the Holocaust, etc. This forthcoming book proves that the idea of a silence regarding the Holocaust is as wrong in Sweden as elsewhere.⁴⁹

Swedish refugee policy during the Holocaust

I was one of those researchers asking new questions starting in 2002. It was known from previous research that the Swedish refugee policy was described as shifting to a large-scale reception, and that this shift also meant a change in attitude towards the Jews, i.e. that antisemitism ceased to exist.

⁴⁵ Pontus Rudberg, “Restriktivitet eller generositet? Flyktingverksamheten inom Stockholms mosaiska församling och hjälpkommittén för Tysklands judar 1938–1940”, *En problematisk relation? Flyktingpolitik och de judiska flyktingarna i Sverige 1920–1950*, Lars M. Andersson & Karin Kvist Geverts (eds), *Opuscula Historica Upsaliensia* 36, Uppsala 2008; *The Swedish Jews and the Holocaust*, Taylor & Francis, London 2017; *The Swedish Jews and the victims of Nazi terror, 1933–1945*, *Studia historica Upsaliensia* 253, Uppsala 2015.

⁴⁶ Lars Hansson, *Vid gränsen. Mottagningen av flyktingar från Norge 1940–1945*, Göteborg 2019.

⁴⁷ Paul A. Levine, *Raoul Wallenberg in Budapest. Myth, history and Holocaust*, Vallentine Mitchell: Edgware 2010; Ingrid Carlberg, “*Det står ett rum här och väntar på dig*”. *Berättelsen om Raoul Wallenberg*, Norstedts: Stockholm 2013 and translated to English as *Raoul Wallenberg. The biography*, London 2015; Bengt Jangfeldt, *The hero of Budapest. The triumph and tragedy of Raoul Wallenberg*, London 2014; Klas Åmark, *Förövarna bestämmer villkoren. Raoul Wallenberg och de internationella hjälpkaktionerna i Budapest*, Bonnier: Stockholm 2016.

⁴⁸ Holmila & Kvist Geverts 2011; Wagrell 2020.

⁴⁹ *The Early Holocaust Memory in Sweden. Archives, Testimonies and Reflections*, Pontus Rudberg & Johannes Heuman, Palgrave Macmillan: London 2020.

But previous research had only investigated the policy level – not the actual outcome of it, and it had taken the change of attitude for granted. In my dissertation, I therefore made a qualitative and a quantitative study of the refugee policy conducted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (*Utrikesdepartementet*) and the Foreigner's Office (*Utlänningsbyrån*). I did so by reading records of decisions regarding permits to stay and visa applications. In these protocols, the records of the Jewish refugees were marked with the letter (m) for mosaic confession. However, after a Foreigner's census in Sweden in February of 1939, the meaning of the letter (m) changed into a racial definition following the Nuremberg Laws. This meant that converted Jews were still categorized as “Jews” by the Swedish state, even though they identified themselves as Christians.⁵⁰

Swedish authorities did not regard or treat refugees as a specific category. Instead, everyone was considered an immigrant, except for the political refugees. However, Jews were not categorized as political refugees; racial persecution was not regarded as political persecution and thus did not as such warrant status as political refugee. I gathered 44 000 decisions on permits to stay, entry or visa to Sweden, among these 11 000 were marked with (m) for “Jews”, during the period of 1938–1944. Using statistical methods, I was able to show that Jews were discriminated against on the grounds of race.

A shift in refugee policy

Previous research had argued that a shift in refugee policy took place in November of 1942 when the Norwegian Jews were deported, and Paul A. Levine showed that this had to do with the fact that they were seen as a fellow people (*broderfolk*) with close connections to Swedes. There seems to be no doubt that this event meant a big shift in Swedish history. Swedish newspapers reported on the deportation of the Norwegian Jews, ignoring censorship laws on newspapers. The Swedish churches as well as student organizations protested and there certainly was a major shift in Swedish opinion. Levine also showed that the very same diplomats who actively kept Jews out of Sweden

⁵⁰ The conclusions stem from my dissertation, see Kvist Geverts 2008, and especially the summary in English.

pre-1942, now started to act on behalf of the Jews, trying to help them.

And in October of 1943, the Swedish prime minister publicly declared that all Danish Jews who managed to cross the strait between Denmark and Sweden, would be allowed to stay in Sweden.

So, was the shift that clear already in 1942 in the records of decisions and what about the attitudes toward the Jews – did antisemitism disappear?

Visa application asked questions about “race”

It turned out the shift was not that immediate, but should rather be described as a slow process, and we know this from visa applications where the Ministry of Foreign Affairs asked the refugee to state their “race”.

It is, as indicated above, known that there was a clear shift in practice in October of 1943. All the Danish Jews were welcomed to stay in Sweden and no Danish Jews were denied residence permits. At the same time, Swedish authorities kept track of who was a Jew and who was not, which is obvious from the application forms used.

One example was a 16-year-old Danish citizen named Finn Hannover. He fled to Sweden in October of 1943, and even though he stated he belonged to the “Danish state church” being a “lutheran”, he was categorized as a “half Jew” by Swedish authorities.

The refugee policy was regulated in the Aliens Act, but it left latitude for the authorities that handled the applications. This meant that to a large extent, the refugee policy was secret and not known either to the public nor to the Parliament. This was for instance the case regarding the measures taken during the fall of 1938 to stop a feared “invasion” of refugees, through secret instructions to deny holders of German passports stamped with the letter J (for “Jew”) entry to Sweden.⁵¹

This did not mean, however, that everyone in Swedish society accepted the policy. One example is the prominent economist and politician (Social Democrat) Karin Kock who found that Swedish official statistics made a distinction between Jewish and non-Jewish

⁵¹ The J-stamp was a measure by the Nazi authorities but the initiative to separate “Jews” from non-Jewish persons with German or Austrian passports came from Swiss and Swedish authorities.

Norwegian refugees. She asked questions about why this distinction was made and accused the authorities of antisemitism. Her protests resulted in that Jewish refugees disappeared as a separate category in official statistics. However, this differentiation was still applied, but only in unofficial documents; the Danish Jews who were not categorized as belonging to the Danish brethren a "*broderfolk*" but as Jews.

The Janus Face and the antisemitic background noise

So, how does the narrative of "the good Sweden" fit with the fact that the Swedish authorities separated Jews from non-Jews and used "race" in Swedish official statistics on foreigners? How can we explain the paradox that Swedish authorities on the one hand saved Jewish refugees, but on the other hand still held antisemitic perceptions of the same group?

My conclusion is that antisemitic perceptions, as well as the differentiation between Jews and non-Jews and the racial categorization it entailed, continued in spite of the fact that the discrimination stopped, and the Swedish refugee policy changed radically.

I have argued that this paradox can be explained by using a metaphor for antisemitism, describing it as an antisemitic background noise (*antisemitiskt bakgrundsbrus*). Thus, moderate antisemitism was regarded as something quite "normal" in Swedish society in the 1930s and 1940s. However, this does not imply that everybody in Swedish society embraced antisemitism, nor that all persons expressing antisemitic attitudes are antisemites. But this does imply that moderate antisemitic perceptions were not seen as such by most Swedes.

There were people who saw the true face of antisemitism and protested, such as Karin Kock. The antisemitic background noise is hopefully a useful metaphor for trying to understand the paradox that a changed behavior is not necessarily followed by a change in attitude. Therefore, the Swedish refugee policy could be described as having a Janus face: on the one hand the large-scale reception and rescue operations, on the other hand antisemitic perceptions of Jews existing at the same time.

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Teaching and learning about the Holocaust in Sweden – some challenges for a new Swedish Holocaust museum

Oscar Österberg

Abstract

The teaching of the history of the Holocaust has a very prominent place in the Swedish syllabus for history in compulsory school. It is also evident that there are high expectations on the teaching of this topic as a cure against racism, prejudice and intolerance in contemporary so society. Swedish teachers have also made much use of Holocaust survivor testimony in their dealing with the topic. A new museum would do well to find out more about how this is done in order to meet teachers' needs. Another phenomenon which is important for a new museum to relate to is the common practice for many Swedish schools to travel with students to different Holocaust related memorial sites on the continent, especially Auschwitz. Taken together, these circumstances will provide a special challenge for a new Swedish Holocaust museum.

Introduction

Teaching and learning about the Holocaust is a vast topic, even if we restrict ourselves to a small country such as Sweden. I will therefore limit myself to make a few points, aiming at contributing to the discussion about a Swedish Holocaust Museum. I will mainly focus on

formal education inside the Swedish school system but will also say a few words about learning that takes place outside this formal setting.

Initially it might be instructive to note the central position of the history of the Holocaust in the Swedish school curriculum. Mandatory teaching of the history of the Holocaust is explicitly found in the syllabus for history for grade 7–9 in the Secondary School.¹ Of course, this has not always been the case. Teaching the history of the Holocaust was explicitly mentioned in the Swedish syllabus for history only in 2000, even if many teachers of course had dealt with the topic well before that.

In 2018 the Living History Forum asked a nationally representative sample of the adult Swedish population in the ages 18–79 years and asked the respondents if they had received formal school instruction about the Holocaust.² The results are displayed in table 1.

Table 1 Have you received school instruction about the Holocaust?

Age	No, I'm certain that I haven't	No, I don't think so	Yes, I believe so	Yes, I know that for certain
18–29 yrs	1,4	2,3	9,8	86,5
30–49 yrs	0	2,5	19,4	78
40–64 yrs	3,2	8,3	25	63,5
64–79 yrs	14,2	24,5	27	34,3

Source: Österberg 2019 (N = 1027).

I think it is important to be careful when interpreting the results especially for the older cohorts. It is certainly hard to remember what was brought up in class many years after the event, and it is also by no means certain what the respondents put into the term Holocaust, but as expected there is a clear tendency over time. Younger respondents are more inclined to state that they have received school instruction about the history of the Holocaust.

¹ Curricula for the topic history for Secondary School grade 7–9, [www.skolverket.se/undervisning/grundskolan/laroplan-och-kursplaner-for-grundskolan/laroplan-lgr11-for-grundskolan-samt-for-forskoleklassen-och-fritidshemmet?url=1530314731%2Fcompulsorycw%2Fjsp%2Fsubject.htm%3FsubjectCode%3DGRGRHIS01%26tos%3Dgr%26p%3Dp&sv.url=12.5dfee44715d35a5cdfa219f.\[2020-02-18\]](http://www.skolverket.se/undervisning/grundskolan/laroplan-och-kursplaner-for-grundskolan/laroplan-lgr11-for-grundskolan-samt-for-forskoleklassen-och-fritidshemmet?url=1530314731%2Fcompulsorycw%2Fjsp%2Fsubject.htm%3FsubjectCode%3DGRGRHIS01%26tos%3Dgr%26p%3Dp&sv.url=12.5dfee44715d35a5cdfa219f.[2020-02-18].).

² Oscar Österberg, *Uppfattningar om Förintelsen – 20 år efter informationsinsatsen Levande Historia*, Stockholm: Forum för levande historia, 2019.

But even if the Holocaust is almost unique in its central place within the Swedish syllabus for history this is hardly the only thing that makes it special in a Swedish school setting.

Great expectations

The first point I'd like to make is that the teaching of the topic of Nazi Germany and the genocide of European Jewry has for many decades carried the burden of unusually great expectations. In post-war Sweden, history, as a school subject, was for a long time considered to be of limited value to society. The future belonged to the social sciences. History had little to teach the modern future-oriented welfare state. But there are indications that many still held on to the notion that teaching the history of Nazi Germany would function as a "vaccine" against a resurgence of Nazism. Normally this belief would however only surface on special occasions.

We can for example find it in the spring of 1960 in the public reactions to the desecration of the Synagogue in Cologne on Christmas Day 1959. Another example was given when the existence of a Swedish neo-Nazi organisation was made public in the spring of 1965. At the same time the Swedish television also made public the results of a survey that indicated that many Swedish school children lacked knowledge about Nazism.

EXTRA Torsdagen den 13 maj 1965 **AFTONBLADET**

Vad vet skolorn om nazister:
**DET ÄR VÄL SÅNA
SOM BADAR NAKNA**

— Nazismen, det är en rökelse för såna som badar nakna...
Aftonbladet har frågat en grupp tonåringar vad de vet om nazismen. Och fick bl a nedan citerade svar.

Vi har också bläddrat i de aktuella historieböckerna för att se vad de berättar om nazismen.

AV BERIT THURESSON

Historieböckerna för grundskolans högstadiet användes i regel tre sidor om nazismen och Adolf Hitler.

Historieböckerna för gymnasiet använder ca fyra sidor. På detta utrymme finns fakta om Tysklands roll i andra världskriget och data om Hitler. Men mycket lite om den biologiska bakgrunden, i den nationalsocialistiska rörelsen.

I en bok för högstadiets elever står...

"nationalsocialisterna betraktade kommunister och socialdemokrater som sina bittra fiender. Alldeles särskilt gick emellanisterna hat och fysiskt ut över jødarna, som de såg på som mindrevärdiga ras. Jøderna blev ett stort oönskat drag för den nationalsocialistiska rörelsen"

I en annan högstadiet bok hittar man inte vad som är nationalsocialisternas syn på den ariska rasen och jødarnas som världens herrefolk. Och att 6 miljoner ju-

dar avkrävdes under andra världskriget.

I gymnasielböckerna finns meddelat ett speciellt avsnitt på 12 rader som berättar om nazisternas metod för politiska motståndare och om judoffentlighet. Såredomen av materialet om Tyskland under andra världskriget behandlar Hitlers utöppolitik och den ekonomiska politiken.

De femte lärorens om nazismen behandlar nazismen som rasism i samhällsbyggnaden.

Metodiktor Nik Sjövan vid Lärarhögskolan i Stockholm på-

pekar att läroboken bara är ett av medlen i undervisningen.

Lärarna har sedan möjlighet att fördjupa studierna i vissa avsnitt genom att skaffa fram speciallitteratur och film. Vilka dessa speciallitteratur avsnitt skall bli avgör naturligtvis läraren.

Lektor i samhällskunskap Birger Brånqvist vid samma lärarutbildande högskola beklagar att det inte finns något om nazismen i samhällsbyggnaden.

När i stort sett ingen lärorens är undervisningen om nazismen är ganska grundig.

Source: Aftonbladet May 13th 1965.

One newspaper, *Aftonbladet*, followed up the story by interviewing several Swedish teenagers and came to the same conclusion, which made an unexpected headline: “What do school children know about Nazis: They are the ones who take a swim naked.”³ Of course, the interviewed boy mixed up “*nazist*” (Nazi) with “*nudist*” (nudist).

The matter was even brought up in the parliament where the responsible minister, Ragnar Edenman, had to answer questions about how Swedish schools dealt with the nazism. In his reply he stated that he believed that Swedish schools were well equipped to deal with this topic. The history text books in the secondary school, for example, not only discussed nazism from a political point of view but also the atrocities committed by the Nazi regime:

A student in 8th grade can surely not avoid to be touched by and reflect upon photographs of for example a girl of the same age who is torn away from her home, attached to her is a police number and the star of David which her people, despised and persecuted by the Nazis, must carry. And it is also made clear to the students that this girl knew that her journey would end with death in the gas chamber of the concentration camp. Her crime was that of being a Jew.⁴

However, if this proved to be insufficient, Edenman stated that he was willing to do more. He was especially interested in an initiative which he recently had come across about distributing a special publication to all young Swedes in the ages of 14–25 years of age which would contain information about fascism, nazism and racial prejudice.⁵

As we all know, it would, however, take another thirty years before a similar project was realised, but the incident clearly demonstrates that there were in fact special expectations attached to the teaching of the history of Nazi Germany well before Göran Persson’s information campaign about the Holocaust in the end of the 1990s, which included the distribution of about 700 000 copies of ‘*Tell ye your children ... A book about the Holocaust in Europe, 1933–1945*’ by Stéphane Bruchfeld and Paul A. Levine to Swedish families with children and schoolteachers.

Nowadays such expectations are no longer implicit but quite explicit. It is interesting to note that they are also shared by many Swedish schoolteachers. In a survey conducted by the Living History

³ “Vad vet skolungdomen om nazister: det är väl såna som badar nakna”, *Aftonbladet*, 13 maj 1965.

⁴ Andra kammaren (AK) protokoll nr 29, 26 May 1965.

⁵ AK protokoll nr 29, 26 May 1965.

Forum in 2008, 60 per cent of the interviewed teachers answered that they absolutely believed that education about the Holocaust would increase the students' interest for and awareness of racism today.⁶ In a new survey carried out last autumn by the Living History Forum, 53 per cent of 350 teachers who all teaches history in the years 7–9 in the compulsory school gave the same answer.⁷

These high expectations are indeed noteworthy, and one might wonder if they are reasonable? Perhaps we are demanding too much and it would be better to recognize that knowledge about the Holocaust has a value as such, as historical knowledge. In fact, no other historical topic in the Swedish curriculum seems to carry the same high hopes of achieving some sort of transformative effects. Are there actually any grounds for this assumption? Well, it is difficult to say. There is to date no real empirical research in Sweden that could provide any guidance. The closest we have is the Living History Forum's survey carried out in 2009 in which students in the Upper Secondary School were asked about their attitudes towards certain minority groups in Swedish society. It was then possible to find a statistically significant correlation between the amount of instruction about the Holocaust that the respondents claimed to have had and their attitude towards Jews. The correlation remains statistically significant also under control for other variables, but the effect size is however very small.⁸

Of course, here history instruction is treated as a “black box” and we only study what we perceive as the output of school instruction without any knowledge about what took place in the classroom. There are only a few studies of how Swedish teachers go about it when teaching the history of the Holocaust, but they all indicate that Swedish teachers in fact have several different ways of teaching.

In her pathbreaking study, Ylva Wibaeus, for example, identified five different approaches to teaching about the Holocaust in Swedish schools. The first she named “Never again” and is characterised by the notion that the Holocaust is believed to be more important than any other topic in the history curriculum. Teachers using this approach

⁶ Anders Lange, *En undersökning om lärares erfarenheter av och uppfattningar kring undervisning om Förintelsen*. Stockholm: Forum för levande historia, 2008.

⁷ Oscar Österberg, *Undervisning om Förintelsen och Gulag. En undersökning om svenska historielärare i åk 7–9*. Stockholm: Forum för levande historia, 2020 (forthcoming).

⁸ Birgitta Löwander & Anders Lange, *Den mångtydiga intoleransen – En studie av gymnasieungdomars attityder läsåret 2009/2010*. Stockholm: Forum för levande historia, 2010.

emphasises above all the extent of the atrocities and the horrible in the Nazi crimes. The educational content is more about presenting what happened there and then, than analysing the process or discussing possible implication for our time. Focus rests on the last part of the genocidal process and there is little discussion about the initial steps. The main historical characters are the perpetrators and the victims. Teachers taking this approach emphasise the importance that the education engages the students emotionally. The aim seems to be to make students appreciate the importance of not letting something similar happen again,

The second theme, “Not only the Holocaust,” is characterised by a broader focus where the teachers address totalitarian ideologies and regimes in Europe of the 1930s and 1940s. The Holocaust is not given a separate treatment. Instead, teachers use a comparative approach that also includes crimes committed by Stalin, and in some cases also Italian Fascism and the Spanish civil war are brought into the picture. One reason why the teachers use this approach is that they feel that students already know comparatively much about the Holocaust, compared to other genocides and crimes against humanity. The approach is more analytical than the first, and it makes stronger connections to the present situation.

In the third theme, “Think critically,” the focus rests not so much on the genocide *per se* but on the Nazi propaganda and the establishment of the Nazi regime in Germany that preceded it. The main purpose of school instruction in this approach is to develop students’ skills in critical thinking. Individual responsibility is brought into the limelight and teachers not only work with propaganda analysis and exercises in sourcing, but also use literature to capture questions concerning “ordinary” men.

The fourth theme, “Understand the psychology of man”, is above all about exploring the psychological mechanisms that made the Holocaust possible. The aim seems to be to make students realise that the genocide was conducted and prepared by the actions of ordinary people. Much of the education is devoted to demonstrating how division of “Us” and “Them” are social constructions and teachers try to reach into the students’ life worlds. Much of the material is about the behavior of ordinary people during the Holocaust but also about the components of Nazi ideology.

History teachers using the fifth and final theme, “Realise the value of democracy,” often involve other school subjects, such as social science, geography or religion, when dealing with the Holocaust. Focus rests on questions concerning democracy, meanings of democracy and consequences of lack of democracy. The Holocaust is brought up and analysed as one of many examples of what dictatorship and lack of human rights has meant to people and societies throughout history. The aim is to raise insights among students about the importance of democracy as a political system and why democracy and human rights consequently is worth defending. In this theme Holocaust Education is mainly a way of doing Human Rights Education. Students often work thematically, for example analysing documents that demonstrate how democratic freedoms and rights have changed and developed historically.⁹

Wibaeus’s findings were overall confirmed in a study by Niklas Ammert, who equally found that there was much variation in the teaching about the Holocaust. Even if Ammert categorises his material slightly differently, the general picture is the same showing heterogeneity in the way Swedish teachers teaches the history of the Holocaust.¹⁰

For those familiar with Swedish schools of today this is hardly surprising. Swedish teachers have, in comparison with colleagues in some other countries, great freedom in deciding upon what to bring up and not bring up in class and on how to do it. One should also note that the Swedish curriculum does not define the Holocaust or give any hints on how to teach its history, and it’s therefore hardly surprising to find much variation in educational practice.

Yet another example of this variation is given if we look to the victim groups that Swedish teachers deal with when teaching the Holocaust. Of 350 Swedish history teachers who in the autumn of 2019 were asked to state which groups they bring up when they teach the Holocaust, only 1 teacher stated that he only mentions the Jewish victims. 15 per cent mentioned 4 different victim groups, 20 per cent 5 groups, 27 per cent 6 groups, 23 per cent 7 groups, and 10 per cent would bring up as many as 8 different groups.¹¹

⁹ Ylva Wibaeus, *Att undervisa om det ofattbara. En ämnesdidaktisk studie om kunskapsområdet Förintelsen i skolans historieundervisning*. Stockholm: Stockholms universitet, 2010.

¹⁰ Niklas Ammert, *Om vad och hur “må” ni berätta: undervisning om Förintelsen och andra folkemord*. Stockholm: Forum för levande historia, 2011.

¹¹ Österberg 2020 (forthcoming).

In the discussion about a Swedish Holocaust museum, I would therefore initially stress the importance of paying attention to the rather special societal expectations that rest heavily on the topic at hand and bearing in mind the different ways that Swedish school-teachers meet them. The late David Cesarani noted in his last book that the gap between the findings of historical research on the one hand and the general teachings on the history of the Holocaust on the other tend to increase over time.¹² Perhaps this is a normal course of events, but I have a feeling that, in this case, it also is due to the high expectations on Holocaust history to serve societal needs. There might even exist a pedagogical trade-off between presenting a comprehensive, historically correct and detailed narrative of what took place during the Holocaust and trying to meet present needs to combat racism and political extremism. A new museum needs to position itself in this respect.

Survivor testimonies

My second point is that the teaching of the Holocaust in the last decades also has been special in the way that many Swedish schools and individual teachers have made testimonies of Holocaust survivors an integrated part of their educational activities. We have much anecdotal evidence of this but there is still no systematic study of the phenomenon, and I have therefore no detailed information about the scope or exactly how teachers have integrated survivor narratives in their teaching. A new museum will hopefully help to fill the gap which the last Holocaust survivors inevitably will leave behind them in this respect. But I also believe a new museum would do well to find out more about exactly how survivors' narratives have been used in Swedish school education in order to as far as possible be able to fill this gap in such a way that it will meet the needs of Swedish teachers.

¹² David Cesarani, *Final Solution. The Fate of the Jews 1933–1949*. London: Macmillan, 2016.

Journeys to memorial sites

My third point relates to the phenomenon of school trips to different Holocaust memorial sites on the continent, especially Auschwitz. We know that each year many schools or individual teachers arrange such school trips, either alone or with the help of organisations such as the Swedish Committee against Antisemitism or *Toleransprojektet*. This activity is also sadly under-researched, but in 2018 The Living History Forum and the Segerstedt Institute at Gothenburg university carried out a study based on interviews with teachers who had taken part in such travels. It demonstrated that also in this field we meet a variety of approaches. Broadly we can identify three main types.

First there are school trips that above all aim to let the students experience something different together outside school. They are characterised by joint decision making, lot of involvement from parents and no or limited fixed framework. Secondly, we have the historical studies journey, often organised by ambitious history teachers. Here, the aim is to acquire historical knowledge and to explore the moral dimensions of history. They are often carefully planned and integrated in the history course. Focus tend to be on chronology, critical distance, analysis of different uses of history and on taking different perspectives. Finally, we have a journey which more could be characterized as a project in social pedagogy. The goal is to develop the identity of the individual. These journeys are also well organised, and they tend to be made deliberately long in order to let certain group dynamics to develop by letting the participants spend quite some time together in an unfamiliar environment. On these journeys, physical experience and feelings of authenticity are of great importance and different ceremonies and writing assignments are a common feature.¹³

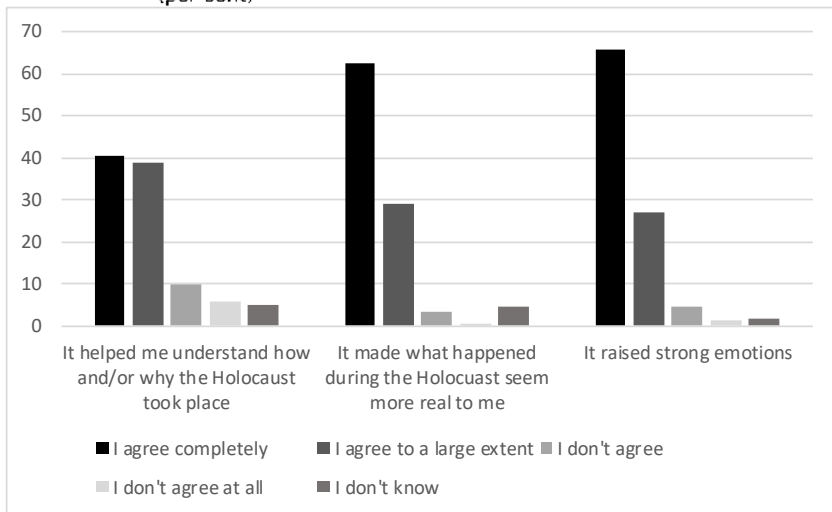
What are the implications of this for a new Swedish Holocaust Museum? To me, it seems unlikely that these teachers working within the third genre will find any Swedish museum a good substitute. The journey will be too short, too safe and too “unauthentic” to really trigger off those psychological mechanisms that one is striving to

¹³ Ola Flennegård, *Besöksmål Auschwitz. Om svenska resor för elever till Förintelsens minnesplatser*. Stockholm: Forum för levande historia, 2018.

work with. However, the chances to provide an alternative to school trips focused on learning more about history seems less bleak.

It's however not only school classes that visit Auschwitz. In fact, the Living History Forum's survey from last year suggests that many people visit these memorial sites as adults, most likely as tourists. There is still no Swedish study in the field of dark tourism that could inform us about what kind of learning that takes place on these occasions. Yet, our survey shows how the respondents positioned themselves to three different statements about their experience of the visit: "It helped me understand how and/or why the Holocaust took place", "It made what happened during the Holocaust seem more real to me", and "It raised strong emotions".

Figure 1 Experiences of visiting a former death or concentration camp (per cent)



Source: Österberg 2019 (N = 244.)

Even if we should be careful when interpreting this; much time might have passed since the visit, and the statements above all express peoples' memories of having visited these camps rather than their actual experience, it is still interesting to note that respondents above all emphasise feelings of authenticity and emotions. This is a finding that correlates well to international studies of dark tourism

to Holocaust related sites and German so-called *Gedenkstättenpädagogik*.¹⁴

Public interest in the Holocaust

But what about the rest? Even if almost one out of four Swedish adults, judging from the Living History Forum's survey of Swedish adults from 2018, might have at one point or another visited a former concentration- or death camp it still leaves three quarters of the population out. Of course, there is always books and probably even more important that potent creator of historical narratives which are feature films and documentaries. Just to finally, if ever so briefly, touch upon the individual learning that takes place outside any formal setting, I will display what we can learn from the data of 2018. Based on information about the books the respondents claim to have read and the films and documentaries they claim to have seen, I constructed an index. The items included range from popular works such as *The Diary of Anne Frank* and *Schindler's list* to perhaps more demanding *oeuvres* such as Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* or the Swedish author Steve Sem-Sandberg's *The Emperor of Lies*. Included are also positive answers to the statement "I have read/watched another book/film about the Holocaust" and "I have read/watched a book/film about the Holocaust but don't remember its name". If we think of this index as a proxy for the general interest among the adult Swedish population to learn about the Holocaust what can we surmise about background factors?

¹⁴ See, for example, Annette Eberle, *Pädagogik und Gedenkkultur. Bildungsarbeit an NS-Gedenkorten zwischen Wissenschaftsvermittlung, Opfergedanken und Menschenrechtserziehung. Praxisfelder, Konzepte und Methoden in Bayern*, Würzburg: Ergon Verlag, 2008; Philip R. Stone, *Death, Dying and Dark Tourism in Contemporary Society: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis*, Ph.D. Thesis, University of Central Lancashire, 2010.

Table 2 Means Z-score, books, films and documentaries about the Holocaust

Education	Mean	Std. Deviation
Compulsory School	-0,477	0,837
Upper Secondary School	-0,125	0,915
University or university college	0,390	1,023
Place of residence		
Big cities	0,195	0,977
Larger towns	0,018	0,996
The rest of the country	-0,208	0,987
Interest in history		
No or very limited interest	-0,498	0,951
Comparatively strong interest	-0,023	0,918
Very strong interest	0,539	1,012
Interest in questions concerning human rights		
No or very limited interest	-0,530	0,847
Comparatively strong interest	-0,021	0,996
Very strong interest	0,404	0,987

Source: Österberg 2019 (N = 1027.)

As we can see in table 2 educational level is, not surprisingly, one factor which seems to influence the responses. Another, perhaps more unexpected factor is place of residence. A third is the level of interest in history and finally, perhaps also not very surprisingly giving the matter at hand, the degree to which a person is interested in questions relating to human rights.

But are all these of equal importance? Could it not be that for example the geographical differences in fact are to be explained by differences in educational level? To answer that we will have to take the analysis one step further with a multivariate ordinary least regression analysis.

Table 3 **Multivariate analysis Z-score, books, films and documentaries about the Holocaust**

	Coeff.	Sig.
Upper Secondary School	0,304	**
University or university college	0,675	**
Big cities	0,298	**
Larger towns	0,304	**
Interest in history (1–3)	0,387	**
Interest in questions concerning human rights (1–3)	0,312	**
Total	1 027	

Source: Österberg 2019. (Significance level: **=0,01. Reference categories for dummy variables are: Compulsory School and Rest of the country.)

In table 3, we see that it turns out that all factors still have an effect under control for each other. The strongest effect comes from university education followed by interest in history and questions regarding human rights. Even if there is no statistically significant difference between residing in larger cities and the rest of the country, the effect for residing in the three big cities remains.

My last and final observation, therefore, is that as far as these results can be seen as a reflection of popular interest in the Holocaust, they would suggest that a future Swedish Holocaust museum will have to consider whom to reach and the consequences of that decision. If the aim is to provide a possibility for the already informed to even further develop their knowledge about the Holocaust one should obviously aim for the well-educated public in Sweden's three big cities with an interest in history and questions regarding human rights. If the ambition, however, is set otherwise, the challenge might be bigger.

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Outsider, Bystander, Insider. The Second World War, the Holocaust and Uses of the Past in Sweden

Ulf Zander

Abstract

One way to analyze the twists and turns in Swedish history politics regarding the Second World War and its legacy is to turn to a typology of uses of history. Despite differences in occupations, places, and times, uses of history are often joined together by certain needs and functions that certain choices of history can provide. In this paper, I discuss how the images of the Second World War and the Holocaust have changed due to the dominance of different uses of history. The Swedish history culture has gone from a combination of scholarly and ideological use of history, based on the concept of small-state realism, via a moral use of history, characterized by critical challenges of the former dominating narrative, to a renewed ideological use of history with moralistic undertones.

The Holocaust in the Museum

Harold Kaplan and David Cesarani are among those who have argued why there is a need for museums dedicated to the Holocaust. For sure, the Nazi genocide was extreme, but it raises questions of a wide variety, from notions of humankind, races, religion, nation and class to the characteristics of far-reaching modernization and dehumanization. Kaplan and Cesarani also accentuate that Holocaust museums differ. Not least because of different national experiences

as well as a variety of nationalizations of the history of the Holocaust, it is “futile to keep the Holocaust strictly an issue between the Germans and the Jews, forbidding all palliations by analogy and example”, writes Kaplan.¹ Cesarani supplements the argumentation, claiming that there are “broadly universal reasons why every country should have a Holocaust museum”. With Britain as an example, he emphasizes the double perspective necessary for such an exhibition. On one hand, Britain was a stern enemy of Nazism, a haven for refugees and British efforts to help those liberated from concentration camps during the spring of 1945. On the other hand, the British history before, during and after the Second World War is also about (some) positive or hesitant attitudes towards Nazism and ambiguity towards immigration and refugees as well as outbursts of anti-Semitism. In short, the history of the Holocaust must include both aspects of the victims and of the perpetrators, both the history that Brits could be proud of and the other not so bright side of the coin.²

It is however not necessarily an easy task to combine different aspects of the Holocaust. In the introduction to his last book, David Cesarani warned for consequences of the widening gap between current scholarship and popular and political understanding. He was well aware of the fact that many efforts were made in good faith, but that is not very helpful when the history of the Holocaust should both promote national history and be the antidote to anti-Semitism, xenophobia and racism in order to promote different kinds of tolerance.³

It is, not least if you are a critical and analytically trained scholar, easy to sympathize with Cesarani. At the same time, we must bear in mind that history is always used. Professional historians have often claimed that other ways of dealing with the past than theirs are abuses of history. If we take into consideration that different senders have different motives to use history, it is not so obvious that other uses of history than the scholarly per definition are abuses of history. Even if the premises and research methods and materials are alike, the conclusions usually differ. A professional historian approach material, genre conventions and practices in other ways than for instance an artist, a photographer, or a journalist. This does not necessarily mean

¹ Harold Kaplan 1994, p. xiii.

² David Cesarani 1998, pp. 19–21.

³ David Cesarani 2016, p. xxv–xxvi.

that historians possess an especially authentic understanding of the past. Rather, the point that must be driven home is that historians, just like other agents in the public, are themselves constructors of history, working with particular purposes and intents. In other words: studies of the past often say as much about those looking back as about history itself.

When it comes to mediating the past, museum exhibitions have a lot of credibility. This does not exclude different interpretations and many pasts in the museums. Which history is remembered, and which is neglected or forgotten? How is the past presented in words, pictures and objects? Such questions are important to ask, since it is obvious that museums are both valued and value-laden sites.

A point of departure is that objects in the museum, as any other historical source material, do not speak for themselves since they are an important part of the history culture. One attempt to define history culture takes as its starting point the ongoing struggle between what is included or excluded from dominating narratives of the past. This is at the same time a construction of memories and a struggle for meaning. Seen in this way, collective memory is both an important part of a construction process aiming to find meaning in a chaotic diversity and an ideological fight in which history is used in order to win advantages in the present or in the near future.⁴ In other words, history is never written in an arbitrary way. This is also true for the different ways that the history of Sweden and the Second World War and the Holocaust has been mediated and used from 1945 and onwards.

Ideological and Scholarly Uses of History: Sweden as an Outsider and a Bystander

Politicians and historians alike emphasized the principle of small-state realism both during and after the Second World War. In a way, Sweden was a nation of outsiders, but Swedes were not only spectators, even though the concept of the isolated island was central to the imagery. In many ways can Thomas More's vision in his classic *Utopia* from 1516 lend itself to describe Sweden as no longer a great power in war, as had been the case in the 17th and early 18th century,

⁴ Klas-Göran Karlsson 2007, pp. 34–43.

but an egalitarian nation and also in other aspects a peaceful, humanitarian example to follow. The ideal that More was named Utopia after the words for a good (*eu-topos*) and at the same time non-existing (*ou-topos*) place. Trade, peace, prosperity and equality characterize life in this fantasyland. They are all dressed in the same kind of clothes and show contempt for gold and jewels and do not praise military virtuous.

Thus, wartime Sweden was seen as a modern Utopia. The image of peace-loving Sweden as a compassionate Samaritan fitted well with the conception of the “people’s home” definitions and was therefore easily integrated into the post-war national identity.⁵ The similarities between More’s utopian vision and Sweden during the Second World War can primarily be explained with the fact that the Swedish government’s objective to remain not directly involved in the war could be realized. Sweden declared itself non-belligerent rather than neutral. However, it was mostly neutrality as a concept and reality that was discussed both during and after the war. Neutrality became in many ways synonymous with Swedish foreign policy then and now and developed into “a state of mind” for many Swedes.⁶

Already during the Second World War, influential critics opposed departures from the principles of neutrality, especially in connection to the decision to allow transports of German soldiers through Swedish territory. The main argument in the public debate was however that the Swedish government had acted accordingly with the principle of small-state realism. This legitimization of wartime politics is a good example of an ideological use of history. It got strong support on an official level, not least because many well-known Swedish historians contributed to it.⁷ Thus, the ideological and the scholarly use of history were combined early on and continued to be intertwined for decades.

⁵ Max Liljefors & Ulf Zander 2003, pp. 209–211.

⁶ Alf W. Johansson, 1997, pp. 170–171.

⁷ Cf Johan Östling 2011, pp. 127–132.

The Holocaust: from non-use to a moral use of history

True enough, it was never all quiet in post-war Sweden about the Holocaust. The trauma of the Holocaust was represented in post-war films. Survivors wrote novels and poems about their experiences, and the Nazi genocide got renewed attention in connection to The Diary of Anne Frank and the trial against Adolf Eichmann.⁸ However, the Holocaust seldom dominated the public eye. Consequently, differences and similarities between the Swedish welfare state and the Nazi German dictatorship was seldom debated. In a Swedish society, characterized by economic prosperity and confidence in the future, reminders of the Holocaust were rarely welcome. When it was discussed, for instance in 1979 when the television series *Holocaust* was broadcasted, the dominant Swedish interpretation was that the Holocaust was a part of German history.⁹

Altogether, this led to a situation whereby many of the Swedish rescue operations during the Second World War was downplayed. Early on, it was the efforts to help Danish Jews in October 1943 and survivors from concentration and death camps who came to Sweden in the spring of 1945 that was highlighted.¹⁰ Swedish medical care, the Swedish Red Cross and, above all, Folke Bernadotte, who had a prominent role during the White Bus-action in the spring of 1945, were the narrative's heroes – at the cost of those who were rescued, especially the Jews. The focus was directed almost entirely upon the rescue of Danes and Norwegians. It was only in the last decades of the 1900s that Folke Bernadotte's hero status was supplemented with critical perspectives. Debaters repeatedly questioned both the heroic conception of the count and his work to help the Jews.

Over the last decades the notion of neutral, but at the same time humanitarian and helpful Sweden has been successfully challenged. The combination of ideological and scholarly use of history was replaced by a moral use of history, focusing on aspects seldom heard before.¹¹ The result was that despite continuing tributes to Bernadotte, his defenders had to struggle to ascend a media uphill slope. New

⁸ See for instance Åsa Bergström 2018, pp. 111–136; Anders Ohlsson 2002, pp. 43–260; Corinne Susaneck 2008, pp. 57–87; Kristin Wagrell 2020, pp. 193–354.

⁹ Ulf Zander 2003, pp. 277–283.

¹⁰ Ulf Zander 2013, pp. 169–177.

¹¹ Johan Östling 2011, pp. 136–140.

books and articles highlighted “blind spots” in Swedish history writing from 1945 up until the end of the Cold War. In accordance with this, there was a recurrent reflection that the buses’ both literally and figuratively white innocence henceforth should be exchanged for a somewhat greyer shade.¹² Sune Persson, one of Folke Bernadotte’s most ardent defenders, underlined that it was indeed on one hand true that the Jews were not prioritized during the rescue mission. It was on the other hand also a fact that more than 5 000 Jews were saved by the White Buses.¹³ This more positive understanding of the White Buses and Folke Bernadotte turned out to have the future on its side.

A Renewed Ideological Use of History: Sweden as an Insider

At the same time as battles were thought in the newspapers about Swedish modern history, official Sweden went on to transform the nation from an European outsider and bystander to an insider when Sweden became a member of the European Union in 1994. As historian Klas-Göran Karlsson somewhat provocative has put it, Sweden joined the Second World War retrospectively in the 1990s.¹⁴ The culmination of this renewed ideological use of history were several big conferences about the Holocaust and its legacy in Stockholm in the early 2000s.

Such an approach was in accordance with post-war Swedish history and self-understanding. Sweden after 1945 exerted itself for a considerable time to obtain a standing as a great moral power and world conscience. In a modernistic and supposedly anti-nationalistic spirit, the post-war national identity was founded upon the conception that Sweden was a country that other states should measure themselves against and, by implication, strive to resemble. In a way, the combination of an increased interest in memory dimensions in historical science as well as in popular culture changed the perspective. Thus, the “tilt towards moral issues” paved the way for the Holocaust as a relevant Swedish topic.¹⁵ At the same time as a more critical perspective towards Swedish politics before and during the Second

¹² Ulf Zander 2006, pp. 358–368; Björn Magnusson Staaf 2016, pp. 169–172.

¹³ Sune Persson 2002, pp. 247–264.

¹⁴ Klas-Göran Karlsson 2002, p. 145; Klas-Göran Karlsson 2016, p. 79.

¹⁵ Kristian Gerner 2011, p. 92.

World War came to the fore, the continuity of Sweden as a role model became obvious in the aftermath of the many heated discussions on the idealized post-war Swedish history writing that dominated the public eye in the 1990s. In present-day Sweden, the morality issues are still important when national history is evaluated, but a prerequisite for the new ideological use of history includes an awareness of former mistakes – an awareness that makes Sweden of today all the better.

Let me conclude with an illustrative example, namely Raoul Wallenberg. The official Swedish Year of Raoul Wallenberg in 2012 demonstrated the importance of historical selection. The most important factor was to focus on the Holocaust and his work in confronting the German and Hungarian offenders in a dangerous and chaotic Budapest from the spring of 1944 to January 1945. The Swedish interest in Wallenberg was, as was the case already in the 1970s and the 1980s, reinforced by the international attention of him as a hero of almost mythical dimension.

This late recognition from the Swedish government paved finally the way for Wallenberg to become a symbol or even a Swedish brand and, as such, an important part of an altered ideological use of history. After many decades of political debate about Swedish failures to save him from Soviet captivity, he had risen to become a Swedish hero who was the subject of great praise. The emergence of a Wallenberg above former political disagreements was perhaps even more a result of the changing image of Wallenberg from the missing Swede to the heroic savior of Jews. The then Foreign Minister Carl Bildt underlined in connection to the official Year of Raoul Wallenberg such a perspective. The heroic Swede ought to be remembered for his deeds, what he accomplished in Budapest 1944–45, and not his fate in the Soviet Union thereafter. Bildt's demand can be seen as an example of how history can be used as part of public diplomacy in the promotion of a nation's ideal self-image.¹⁶

At last: when we study how we remember or forget history, we must bear in mind that history is not only belonging to the past – it is also a part of our lives, here and now.

¹⁶ Ulf Zander 2013, pp. 177–182; Ulf Zander 2016, pp. 205–209.

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Panel discussion: A Museum with the Holocaust and Survivors at its Heart

Abstract by Victoria Van Orden Martínez

Panelists:

Panelists: Birgitta Svensson, head of the inquiry *A Museum about the Holocaust*; David Marwell, formerly of the USHMM and Museum of Jewish Heritage; Guri Hjeltnes, The Norwegian Holocaust Center; Richelle Budd Caplan, Yad Vashem; Yigal Cohen, Ghetto Fighters' House Museum; Boaz Cohen, head of the Holocaust Studies Program of the Western Galilee College, Akko; Paul Salmons, formerly of the Imperial War Museum in London and the Centre for Holocaust Education at University College, London. Panel moderator: Karin Kvist Geverts, Secretary of the inquiry *A Museum about the Holocaust*.

Panel discussion. Creating a Swedish Holocaust Museum

The fifth and final session of the International Research Conference on Holocaust Remembrance and Representation saw most of the panelists from the first session joined by several additional voices, all of whom were gathered to share final thoughts on the creation of a Swedish Holocaust museum. As with the first panel, the themes of education, research, creating conversation and the centrality of survivors were at the forefront of the discussion.

Some of the panelists, like Yigal Cohen of the Ghetto Fighters' House Museum in Israel, suggested tools for facilitating education within the museum. He spoke, for instance, of how his institution

brings together groups in conflict within museum spaces to create a dialogue and stimulate tolerance. He also reminded that even in an age of technology, it is important to engage young visitors in non-tech exercises and experiences, such as encouraging them to choose a role model – either from among the righteous or not – to emulate.

Returning to the idea of creating a museum that fosters education and conversation not only within the institution's walls but also outside of them, Richelle Budd Caplan of Yad Vashem in Israel suggested that the Swedish Ministry of Education and Culture should be as involved with the museum as the Ministry of Culture. She also reiterated that the museum could potentially play a role in preparing individuals and groups for authentic site visits, perhaps through some type of training or capacity-building unit.

Professor Birgitta Svensson, head of the advisory committee, remarked that it has been made clear over the course of the conference that research will be essential to the new museum. Research must be ongoing and closely connected with the education, collections and exhibits of the museum. Dr. Boaz Cohen of the Holocaust Studies Program of the Western Galilee College, Akko (Israel) urged that the institution's research should be conducted from within. To do so, he argued, would ensure that the museum and its exhibitions were "alive."

The centrality of survivors in the new Museum

Last, but certainly not least among the four core principles discussed during the conference, the panelists argued eloquently for the centrality of survivors in the new museum and advised care and consideration in their treatment. Dr. David Marwell, formerly of the USHMM and Museum of Jewish Heritage, remarked that the Holocaust victims and survivors should not be the object of the history, but rather the subject. Their lives and voices must be paramount. Dr. Karin Kvist Geverts of the advisory committee specifically asked the panelists how to make it a survivors' and victims' museum. Mr. Cohen urged that the survivors are invited to be a part of the museum's educational activities and that their testimonies are given the highest importance. Both Dr. Cohen and Paul Salmons, curator of the recent international exhibition *Auschwitz. Not long ago. Not far away*, advised

that recognizing the agency of the victims and survivors is essential. Likewise, Mr. Salmons argued, it is equally important not to dehumanize the perpetrators. In response to an audience question, it was made clear that the history of the Holocaust and of the survivors' experiences and lives should certainly go beyond 1945.

The purpose and content of the institution

During this session, a fifth central consideration of establishing a Holocaust museum in Sweden was discussed at length: the institution's purpose and content. As Mr. Salmons remarked, it must be determined whether it will be *a Swedish Holocaust museum* or *a museum about Sweden's part in (and following) the Holocaust*. As a Swedish Holocaust museum, the purpose and content would be driven by the particular perspectives that Sweden has brought and still brings to the history of the Holocaust. A museum about Sweden's part in and following the Holocaust, on the other hand, would bring the national aspect to the forefront of the exhibitions and research.

Professor Svensson suggested that this ambivalence of purpose will need to be passed on to the builders of the museum, who must carefully evaluate how the Holocaust and Sweden should relate to and be balanced by one another within the new institution. She argued for a museum that is about the Holocaust in its own right, but which also recognizes that there are many ideas and narratives that should also be addressed at the same time. These points return to the conceptualization suggested in the first session and reiterated in this session that the new museum should have at its core a thoughtful and rigorous history of the Holocaust, which could then be projected onto a variety of other relevant issues addressed in secondary or temporary exhibits.

As with the more general discussion of what the overriding purpose of the museum should be, there was also ambivalence regarding the topics which might be covered in the secondary elements of such a model. Some panelists argued that wider atrocities and genocides should be addressed, while others felt that more general issues of racism and intolerance would dilute the message of the systematic murder of Jews and others during the Holocaust. What was unanimous among the panelists, however, is that the Holocaust must be

at the center of this museum and its mission, beginning with the name of the institution, and great care must be taken not to relativize or trivialize the historical event and its significance.

The panelists also discussed several practical issues to consider when establishing a Holocaust museum in Sweden, including the target audience, the location and costs. The major points discussed in relation to these issues are summarized below.

The target audience

Dr. Andrea Petö of Central European University, one of the conference's keynote speakers, raised the issue of how to attract not only individuals who want to learn about the Holocaust, but also those who do not necessarily have such an interest. She suggested implementing social outreach programs toward groups and individuals with different stories, experiences and backgrounds. Richelle Budd Caplan also noted that the new museum must attract more than primarily tourists. She also observed that individuals who attended the *Auschwitz. Not long ago. Not far away*-exhibit in Madrid were required to pay an entry fee but pupils' school visits to the exhibit were free.

The location

Commenting on the panel discussion, one conference delegate suggested that the new Holocaust museum in Sweden should find a temporary site in an existing state institution to occupy for the first few years as it builds up its mandate, research and collections. Dr. Guri Hjeltnes of the Norwegian Holocaust Center also recognized that building a new site for the museum would take a significant amount of time. She suggested considering her institution's model of taking over an existing building, particularly one with historical or other relevance.

Costs

Simplicity and financial conservatism were stressed by the panelists, particularly by those with direct experience building and managing such institutions. Dr. David Marwell made an overt plea for modesty, citing his experience working in large and expensive institutions that drain energy and resources from local and regional efforts. He urged, as others did in relation to location, to take advantage of and coordinate with existing resources, including research and educational institutions. Likewise, Dr. Hjeltnes recommended both proximity to a university and a strong internal research department which could benefit from grants. She also urged that the museum should not be large or expensive to build and operate. Her advice was to remember that such an institution takes years to develop, so building competence will require patience. Dr. Boaz Cohen reasoned that costs will be kept low more easily if the museum is created on the understanding that the medium should not overtake the message. The message is strong enough and the stories speak for themselves; therefore, the design of the museum and its internal spaces should be simple, practical and useful so as not to overshadow the message.

Author presentations

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Cecilia Felicia Stokholm Banke, is Head of Research Unit and a Senior researcher in Foreign Policy and Diplomacy, at DIIS, Copenhagen, Denmark. She is also the Danish Head of Delegation to the IHRA. Her research deals with Foreign Policy and European political history 20–21.th centuries, politics of memory in Europe, the history of the Holocaust and other genocides, antisemitism. She has also dealt with Social cohesion and the welfare state, Turkey and the EU, and the Baltic Sea and European security, and European security and defence policy.

Stéphane Bruchfeld is a historian of ideas at Uppsala University. He has written a book and several articles on Holocaust denial, antisemitism and on the Swedish term “*Förintelsen*” (the Holocaust). He is (together with Paul A. Levine) the co-author of the book *Tell Ye Your Children ... A Book about the Holocaust in Europe, 1933–1945*, first published in 1998 and in 2012 in a third revised and expanded edition. It has been printed in over 1,5 million copies and is translated into 18 languages, most recently (2018) a Croatian and a Ukrainian version were published.

Richelle Budd Caplan, is currently Director of International Relations and Projects at the International School for Holocaust Studies of Yad Vashem. From March 2009 to March 2019, she served as the Director of the School’s European Department. Richelle received her M.A. from the Institute of Contemporary Jewry of the Hebrew

University of Jerusalem and her B.A., from Brandeis University. She has published many articles related to Holocaust education and developed several pedagogical resources. She is an active member of the Israeli delegation to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) and has developed Holocaust-related projects with numerous international organizations and institutions.

Boaz Cohen is the head of the Holocaust Studies Program of the Western Galilee College, Akko, and a lecturer at the Shaanan College, Haifa, in Israel. He received his Ph.D. from the Department of Jewish History at Bar Ilan University for a thesis on “Holocaust Research in Israel 1945–1980: Characteristics, Trends, Developments”. His work focuses on Jewish post-Holocaust society and the development of Holocaust memory and historiography in its social and cultural context. Dr. Cohen’s current research is on early children’s Holocaust testimonies in their historical, social and cultural context.

Yigal Cohen, is the General director of Ghetto Fighter’s House Museum (Beit Lohamei Haghetat) in Israel, the first Holocaust museum in the world, founded in 1949. He has a vast experience in the educational field.

Christina Gamstorp is the director of the Jewish Museum in Sweden. She has spent the last four years creating a new Jewish museum in Stockholm’s oldest synagogue. Before joining the museum, she was a project manager at the Living History Forum, curating large theme projects such as *Spelar roll*, which deals with the role and consequences of the bystander, and *Lethal history*, a project which focused on the use and interpretation of history during the Balkan wars in the 1990s. She is also the founder of the Stockholm Jewish Film Festival.

Henry “Hank” Greenspan is a psychologist, oral historian and playwright at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor who has been interviewing, writing about, and teaching about Holocaust survivors since the 1970s. Rather than one-time “testimony”, Greenspan’s approach has been multiple interviews with the same survivors over a period of weeks, months, years, and – with a few people – even decades. His work demonstrates that how and what survivors retell is

different in the context of sustained acquaintance and deepening conversation than in single “testimonies”.

Guri Hjeltnes is a historian and since 2012 the director of The Norwegian Holocaust Center in Oslo, Norway. She has been a professor and provost of the private university The Norwegian Business School (BI). Her historical research on World World II has been extensive through several books: on everyday life in occupied Norway, the press and media, on Jewish children, and a major study of the Merchant marine during the war. She has been a member of several national committee’s, among these the commission to investigate the terrorist attack of July 22, 2011.

Andrej Kotljarchuk is a Senior Researcher at the Institute of Contemporary History, Södertörn University. His research focuses on the Roma minority, experts and memory politics. His list of publications includes the articles “State, experts and Roma. Allan Etzler and the pseudo-scientific racism in Sweden”, *Scandinavian Journal of History* (2019: 44/6) and “World War II and the Registration of Roma in Sweden in Transnational Context: the Role of Experts and Census Takers”, *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* (2017: 31/3) as well as a book chapter “The Memory of Roma Holocaust in Ukraine. Mass Graves, Memory Work and the Politics of Commemoration”, in *Disputed Memories. Emotions and Memory Politics in Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe*, ed. by Tea Sindbæk Andersen & Barbara Tornqvist-Plewa. Walter de Gruyter. 2016.

Karin Kvist Geverts is a Swedish Holocaust historian and researcher at the National Library of Sweden. She has written on Swedish refugee policy and the Jewish refugees during the Holocaust, on anti-semitism in Sweden, on Holocaust education and on Holocaust memory cultures. She was the Swedish delegate in the Academic Working Group in IHRA during 2015–2017 and is currently one of the secretaries in the inquiry *A Museum about the Holocaust*. She was responsible for arranging the international conference and for editing the anthology.

Janne Laursen holds a magister degree in European Ethnology at the University of Copenhagen (1984) and is one of the pioneers in museology in Denmark. Laursen has solved many tasks at Danish Museums, as well as the Danish Tourist Board. She was responsible for the cultural program The Historic City in “Copenhagen as European Cultural City in 1996”. Since 2001 Laursen is the director of The Danish Jewish Museum and was one of the driving forces behind the opening of the museum in 2004 and the state recognition in 2011. Laursen was responsible for the opening exhibition in 2004: *Space and Spaciousness* and the special exhibition *HOME – A special exhibition about the effects of war and persecution in 2013–16*. Laursen has published multiple articles about museums and exhibitions and is the co-author of *A Story of Immigration. Four Hundred Years of Jews in Denmark* (2018).

David Marwell is an American historian, formerly at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington (1997–2000). He has been the director of the Museum of Jewish Heritage in New York City, the director of the Berlin Document Center and the executive director of the Assassination Records Review Board. He also served as Chief of Investigative Research for the U.S. Department of Justice Office of Special Investigations. He has also served as an expert witness and consultant to the governments of Canada and Australia on several war crime prosecutions.

Andrea Pető is Professor in the Department of Gender Studies at Central European University, Budapest, Hungary and a Doctor of Science of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. She has written six monographs, edited thirty-one volumes and her works on gender, politics, Holocaust and war have been translated into 22 languages. In 2018 she was awarded the All European Academies (ALLEA) Madame de Staël Prize for Cultural Values.

Paul Salmons is a curator of “Auschwitz. Not long ago. Not far away.” This major new travelling exhibition brings some 700 original artifacts to new audiences in Europe and North America. He is also curator of the exhibition of archival photographs, “Seeing Auschwitz” for UNESCO and the United Nations, which opened simultaneously in Paris and New York in January 2020. Paul worked for ten years at

the Imperial War Museum in London, helping to create the United Kingdom's national exhibition on the Holocaust and developing its distinctive educational approach. He was a founding Director of the Centre for Holocaust Education at University College London; served on the United Kingdom delegation to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance for some 20 years; and has consulted on numerous international projects. He is the first Leslie and Susan Gonda (Goldschmied) Foundation Fellow with the William Levine Family Institute for Holocaust Education, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Birgitta Svensson is a professor in Ethnology at Stockholm University. She is the head of the inquiry *A Museum about the Holocaust*, appointed by the Swedish Government. Her research deals with processes of marginalization and cultural studies within migration/citizenship, the history of identification as well as scenery and spatiality. She has been a board member of several academies, such as The Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities and International Society for Cultural History.

Malin Thor Tureby, associate professor, Linköping University. Thor Tureby is an expert in oral history and has done research within the fields of cultural studies, migration studies, Holocaust and Jewish studies. She is currently the head of three major research projects: 1) Jewish and Woman. Historical and Intersectional perspectives on Jewish Women's lives in Sweden in the twentieth and twenty-first century 2) DigiCONFLICT. Digital heritage in culture conflicts 3) Narratives as cultural heritage. Power and resistance in collections with and about immigrants and ethnic minorities at the archive of the Nordic Museum. She has previously published on the Hechaluz movement, local Jewish relief help and refugee receptions in Sweden during the Holocaust and the Jewish Memory collection at the Nordic Museum.

Victoria Van Orden Martínez, Ph.D. candidate in history, Linköping University. Her doctoral thesis, which is tentatively titled *Afterlives: Histories of Women Concentration Camp Survivors in Sweden*, is a historical study of women survivors of Nazi persecution who came to Sweden as refugees following the Second World War and became

central and significant figures in Swedish society, culture and, ultimately, history.

Ulf Zander is Professor of History at Lund University. He has written extensively on Sweden, the Second World War and the Holocaust, for instance in Helle Bjerg et al. (eds.), *Historicizing the Uses of the Past* (2011), Teresa Pinheiro et al. (eds.), *Ideas of Europe/Ideas for Europe* (2012), Marie Louise Seeberg et al. (eds.), *Holocaust as an Active Memory* (2013), Krzyszttof Kowalski & Barbara Törnquist-Plewa (eds.), *The Europeanization of Heritage and Memories in Poland and Sweden* (2016), Johannes Heuman & Pontus Rudberg (eds.), *The Early Holocaust Memory in Sweden* (2020) and in *Revue d'histoire de la Shoah* (2015). He is also co-editor for several anthologies, among them *Echoes of the Holocaust* (2003), *Holocaust Heritage* (2004), *The Holocaust – Post-War* (2006), and *Perspectives on the Entangled History of Communism and Nazism: A Comnaz Analysis* (2015).

Oscar Österberg is a historian and the research co-ordinator at the Living history Forum. He was the co-author of the anthology *Research in Teaching and Learning about the Holocaust: A Dialogue Beyond Borders*, IHRA-publication (2017), and is the Swedish delegate to Academic Working Group in IHRA.

Conference Program

Wednesday, February 12, 2020

Welcome remarks: Birgitta Svensson, professor and head of the inquiry and Karin Kvist Geverts, Ph.D., secretary

Keynote: *On Listening to Holocaust Survivors: Beyond Testimony*, Henry “Hank” Greenspan¹

Keynote: *A paradigm change in Holocaust memorialization: lessons to be learned*, Andrea Petö

Keynote: *Should “the Holocaust” be discarded? Reflections on a problematic term*, Stéphane Bruchfeld

SESSION 1: *What is a Holocaust museum? (Panel discussion)* Chair: Guri Hjeltnes, Holocaust-centre, Norway, Hank Greenspan, on Museums as Sites of Conversation, Richelle Budd Caplan, Yad Vashem, Yigal Cohen, Ghetto Fighter’s House Museum, David Marwell, on Holocaust museums in the US

SESSION 2: *What narrative and which survivors? Whose memory should we remember and represent?* Chair: Lars M. Andersson
Child rehabilitation after the Holocaust and its relevance for today, Boaz Cohen

Memories, testimonies and oral history. On collections and research about and with Holocaust survivors in Sweden, Malin Thor Tureby
The Nazi genocide of European Roma. Terminology and recent Nordic research, Andrej Kotljarchuk

Holocaust in the Periphery. Memory Politics in the Nordic countries, Cecilie Felicia Stokholm Banke

¹ Professor Henry “Hank” Greenspan participated via link.

Thursday, February 13, 2020

SESSION 3: *What makes a good museum great? The building, the narrative, or what?* Chair: Birgitta Svensson

Exhibiting the Holocaust in countries where it didn't take place, Paul Salmons

Displaying the narrative of October -43, Janne Laursen

Creating the new Jewish Museum in Sweden, Christina Gamstorp

SESSION 4: *Research on Sweden and the Holocaust*

Chair: Malin Thor Tureby

Refugee policy in Sweden: the state and the relief organizations, Karin Kvist Geverts

Teaching and learning about the Holocaust in Sweden, Oscar Österberg

Holocaust Memory and representation in Sweden, Ulf Zander

SESSION 5: *Creating a Swedish Holocaust Museum. (Panel discussion)*

Participants: Birgitta Svensson, David Marwell, Guri Hjeltnes, Richelle Budd Caplan, Yigal Cohen, Boaz Cohen, Paul Salmons, moderator: Karin Kvist Geverts

List of Participants at the Conference

Name	Affiliation
Alexandra Folkeryd	Ministry of Culture
Anders Blomqvist	Uppsala University
Andrea Pető	Central European University, Hungary
Andrej Kotljarchuk	Södertörn University
Birgitta Svensson	The Inquiry (Chair)
Boaz Cohen	Western Gallilee College, Israel
Bodil Sundén	Living History Forum
Britt-Marie Herdevall	The Association of Holocaust Survivors in Sweden
Caroline Källner	Living History Forum
Cecilia Ahlberg	Raoul Wallenberg Academy
Cecilie Felicia Stokholm Banke	Danish Institute for International Studies, Denmark
Christer Mattsson	Gothenburg University
Christian Berg	Center for Studies of Holocaust and Religious Minorities, Norway
Christina Gamstorp	Jewish Museum, Sweden
David Marwell	formerly Museum of Jewish Heritage, USA
David Neuman	Jewish Museum, Sweden
Diana Chafik	HHF
Elisabeth Åsbrink	Author
Erika Aronowitsch	Living History Forum
Eva Fried	Living History Forum
Fred Taikon	È Romani Glinda
Frida Schatz	Paideia
Gerth Svensson	Raoul Wallenberg Academy

Name	Affiliation
Gregory Kwiek	Romano Paso & Haninge Municipality
Guri Hjeltnes	Center for Studies of Holocaust and Religious Minorities, Norway
Hania Rosenberg	The Association of Holocaust Survivors in Sweden
Hank Greenspan	University of Michigan, USA
Hanna Mühlrad	The Association of Holocaust Survivors in Sweden
Harry Pommert	The Association of Holocaust Survivors in Sweden
Ingrid Lomfors	Living History Forum
Isak Reichel	The Official Council of Swedish Jewish Communities
Izabela Dahl	Örebro University
Jakob Kihlberg	Ministry of Culture
Janne Laursen	Danish Jewish Museum, Denmark
Johannes Heuman	Jönköping University
Julia Sahlström	Stockholm University
Karin Kvist Geverts	The Inquiry
Kathy Hauptmann	The Swedish History Museum
Klas Åmark	Stockholm University
Kristin Thompson Wagrell	Linköping University
Lars Hansson	Göteborg University
Lars M. Andersson	Uppsala University
Lars-Eric Jönsson	Lund University
Lena Jersenius	Swedish Committee against Antisemitism
Lena Mirow	Ministry of Education
Lina Sjöquist	Robert Weil Family Foundation
Lizzie Oved Scheja	Jewish Culture in Sweden
Lukasz Gorniok	Paideia
Magnus Hagberg	The National Swedish Museums of Military History
Malin Thor Tureby	Linköping University

Name	Affiliation
Mathan Ravid	Swedish Committee against Antisemitism
Mats Deland	Södertörns University
Matthew Kott	Uppsala University
Mia Kuritzén Löwengart	The Inquiry
Niclas Järvklo	The Inquiry
Oscar Österberg	Living History Forum
Paul Salmons	Formerly IWM and University College London, UK
Petra Mårseius	Malmö International Forum
Pontus Rudberg	Uppsala University
Rebecca Krus	Malmö International Forum
Rebecka Katz Thor	Södertörns University
Richelle Budd Caplan	Yad Vashem, Israel
Sanne Houby-Nielsen	Nordiska museet
Stefan Lundblad	The Army Museum
Stéphane Bruchfeld	Uppsala University
Susanne Nylund Skog	Institute for Language and Folklore
Sylwia Szymanska Smolkin	Uppsala University
Tommy Ringart	The Association of Holocaust Survivors in Sweden
Ulf Zander	Lund University
Victoria Martinez	Linköping University
Yael Fried	Jewish Museum, Sweden
Yigal Cohen	Ghetto Fighter's House Museum, Israel