

Images of Remembrance and the Construction of Memories The Legacy of the First World War in Central Europe (1918-1939)

Numerous publications, written from different perspectives and different academic disciplines, appeared during the centenary years of 2014 to 2018, consolidating the image of the First World War as one of the most significant turning points of the twentieth century. European societies were unsettled by the war events, the hitherto unprecedented escalation of violence, deprivation and hardship as well as by political and revolutionary repercussions in the aftermath of the collapsing multi-ethnic empires and the subsequent rise of the concept of the nation state. These developments needed to be processed and given meaning at both the collective and individual levels that were expressed by several commemorative narratives or cultures in the interwar period. The process of remembering and rendering meaning was the basis of different war interpretations that turned into various divergent stereotypes remaining effective far beyond the historical watershed of 1945. Historians and other scholars have investigated several aspects and both male and female actors – albeit the latter to a lesser extent – of war remembrance. However, a systematic and comparative synopsis that takes into account different social, ethnic, religious and political groups as well as gender specific issues for entire Central Europe is still missing.

The conference “Images of Remembrance and the Construction of Memories. The Legacy of the First World War in Central Europe (1918–1939)” focuses on different aspects and practices of war remembrance in Central Europe on the territory of the former Habsburg Monarchy and its successor states. However, for the purpose of a comparative perspective, case studies on other European regions are also welcome. The temporal emphasis is on the interwar-period when war remembrance was constituted.

We are looking for contributions that apply theoretically and methodologically innovative approaches from the new cultural and military history, memory studies, women’s and gender history as well as the field of interdisciplinary research. The papers should emphasise either on relevant male and female actors who represented different cultures of remembrance or on how these cultures were hierarchised within the framework of mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion in terms of the public hegemonic commemoration of the war. Which political and social formation, stabilisation and medialisational processes of remembrance can be identified? Who promoted or rather propelled which kind of war remembrance and by what means? Which narratives were ignored in these processes? Which types of media played a decisive role?

We also welcome contributions that examine how war memories were interpreted and instrumentalised over the course of time. Winners and losers of the bygone war prospectively invoked different memories for their own purposes. It is necessary to ask when and for whom the war was a point of reference and what argumentation strategies were used. We aim to bring together papers that not only emphasise on publically visible and dominant groups but also on the “silent masses”, that is on small-scale, local and private war memories which have not yet been adequately researched. What can we find out about the war remembrance of different social groups that remained in the shadow of the public’s collective memories, a topic which has been widely neglected by historical research for a long time? What role do categories such as gender, ethnicity and religion play in this respect?

Finally, the conference also intends to make regional and international comparisons in order to highlight similarities and differences of local, regional and national narratives and strategies of war remembrance in Central Europe.

Scholars of relevant disciplines are invited to submit an abstract, either in German or English (300 words max.), and a short biography until 31 March 2019 to regional.history@unibz.it. Conference languages are German and English, simultaneous translation will be provided.

The conference will take place at the University of Brixen from 7 to 8 November 2019. We will try to reimburse travel and accommodation expenses of all contributors.

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The conference is organised by the Competence Centre for Regional History of the Free University of Bozen/Bolzano, the Department of History of the University of Vienna and the Center for Jewish Studies of the University of Graz.