

Colloquium and Workshop

Debating Heritage: National Connotations of Historical Matter

University of Wrocław – November 7th and 8th, 2014

“True, the knowledge of what has happened [...] does not tell us anything about our own prospects, but it will at least enable us to look at the contemporary scene from a distance.”

Siegfried Kracauer, *History. The Last Things Before the Last*¹

Researching historical heritage always means partaking in a political arena. In an analysis of historical material, the scholar is forced to interpret ‘history’, to make sense of it, to formulate its significance for us today. This inextricable connection of historiography and interpretation becomes especially evident when touching upon controversial connotations in historical ‘givens’. Writing history and talking about it, the researcher is tied to discursive restraints. She or he is confronted with changing meaning inherent in historical facts – an epistemological problem that is age-old. It has often been addressed from two extremes: by those who claim that the historiographical process can still be essentially and scientifically objectified and those who dismiss history as narrations not far from fictitious accounts.

Lévi-Strauss argued that “history is never history, but history-for”. The colloquium and workshop intend to address this “history-for” by applying the debate to current research projects focusing on Polish, German, and Polish-German heritage. Scholars working on topics concerning national identity and heritage inevitably face established taboos within their specific (national) research setting. The colloquium and workshop are to serve as a forum to discuss such academic confrontation with discursive obstacles – obstacles that can be a challenge, that can, however, at times even be perceived as a stumbling block to the research process.

The call addresses researchers on a doctoral and postdoctoral level. They are invited to present their current research on heritage in Poland and/or Germany with a *content-oriented* as well as a *methodological* focus. The idea of the workshop is to discuss research-relevant questions with as little inhibition as possible – that is, to create a most cooperative exchange between young researchers with a common interest in a collective European imaginary and its fault lines. The call invites scholars from the history of architecture, art history, history, and cultural studies, and hopes for an enriching debate among diverse disciplinary approaches.

The topics will be brought to the fore in short, informal presentations (max. 20 minutes) in order to be further discussed in the workshop section of the event. The latter is centered on current European/national historical narratives, questions of national identity, and the very notion of ‘heritage’ in 2014.

Please send an abstract of no more than 500 words and a short CV at the latest by September 1, 2014 to

¹ Siegfried Kracauer. *History. The Last Things Before the Last*. Princeton: Markus Wiener Publ. 2014, p. 4–5.

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The abstract should describe the research project concerning historical questions that bear (political) relevance for national historiography/-ies. Confirmations will be sent out by September 15, 2014. The workshop's language is English. Travel costs and accommodation can most probably not be covered by the organizers, or only partially. Help will be provided in finding economical, or private, accommodation.