

# **Navigating the Past, Facing the Present: Challenges and Opportunities in Re-Presenting Conflicts and Violence in Memory and Education Institutions**

Conference and Graduate Workshop

Venue: German Historical Institute Warsaw

Date: October 22-24, 2026

## **Thematic scope**

The representation of difficult pasts, violence, and human rights violations has predominantly been examined through singular case studies, often deeply rooted in specific national contexts. However, as (de)commemorative processes continue to evolve, there is a growing need for broader perspectives that consider the dynamic interplay between memory culture and factors such as technological innovation, curatorial practice, and sustainability.

The conference and graduate workshop “Navigating the Past, Facing the Present: Challenges and Opportunities in Re-Presenting Conflicts and Violence in Memory and Education Institutions” addresses the (evolving) representation of history in public and institutional contexts, with a focus beyond the often-studied field of “memory culture”. Rather than emphasizing the politicization of memory and cultural institutions, the discussion shifts toward new methods, media, and challenges in historical narration, education, and curatorial practices.

## **Key themes of the workshop include:**

- Innovative historical representation: How are new technologies and evolving methodologies reshaping the ways we narrate the past? Topics include digital exhibitions, online educational platforms (e.g. YouTube channels, blogs, virtual museum tours), participatory formats, educational crowdsourcing, and the use of AI in creating historical narratives.
- Commemoration vs. forgetting (de-commemoration): Who decides which events are commemorated, and which are omitted? What drives such decisions? How do these choices reflect broader societal values or exclusions, such as the marginalization of Ukrainian history in Western European narratives?
- War and peace narratives in the public space: How do museums, exhibitions, memorials, and textbooks convey narratives of war and of peace in light of contemporary political conflicts? How can war be represented critically and sensitively, without glorifying violence, while still honoring the victims? What roles do reconciliation and transitional justice play?

## Call for Papers

- Methodological and curatorial challenges: How can institutions navigate differing perspectives (e.g. local vs. global) in representing history? What tools and techniques can be used to create inclusive, engaging, and critically sound historical narratives?
- Infrastructural barriers: What practical and spatial challenges do institutions face when building or adapting spaces for historical exhibitions? Topics include physical limitations of buildings, access to resources, and the integration of multimedia technologies.
- Environmental perspectives on historical representation: How do climate change and sustainability affect the way we think about the past and the present? What new responsibilities do institutions have in preserving and narrating heritage in an era of ecological emergency?
- Historical education and geopolitical tensions: How do current conflicts shape historical education? What are the risks when history becomes a tool of ideological struggle? How can educational institutions foster critical engagement with the past, free from political manipulation?

The event is aimed at two groups of academics: postgraduate students (master's, PhD, recent graduates <1 year) and established researchers.

### **Postgraduate students**

This two day event offers a unique mentoring and presentation opportunity specifically designed for graduate students working on research-in-progress, such as draft articles or PhD thesis chapters. Selected students will be paired with experienced academics, including workshop presenters, who will serve as their mentors. Prior to the event, students will share their papers with their assigned mentors, allowing time for thoughtful feedback. During the workshop, each student will present their work in a dedicated 30-minute session, followed by a 15-minute in-depth response from their mentor. These sessions are designed as an inclusive space that will give postgraduate students an opportunity to present their research in front of a friendly and supportive group of scholars (without external audience participation). The workshop aims to foster meaningful academic dialogue and hopes to encourage ongoing mentorship beyond the event itself. The format combines both a mentoring component and a traditional conference setting, supporting the professional development of emerging scholars.

### **Established researchers**

Panels for established researchers will follow a more traditional conference/workshop format, with three papers per panel followed by a discussion between the presenters and the audience. Individual paper and panel proposals are equally welcome.

We might ask some of the established researchers attending a conference to also take up a mentorship role for one of our student presenters.

## Call for Papers

### **Practicalities**

We invite researchers in History, Museum Studies, Art History, Cultural Anthropology, Holocaust Studies, and related fields to submit proposals by April 30, 2026. The workshop will take place in person at the German Historical Institute Warsaw on October 22–24, 2026. The workshop's language is English. This is a fully in-person event that will not be recorded.

For both postgraduate and established researchers, we invite proposals comprising a paper title, an abstract of up to 300 words, and a one-page CV, submitted as a single PDF file by email to dr Izabela Paszko: paszko@dhi.waw.pl.

### **Costs and funding**

Participation fees are covered by the organisers.

Participants will make their own travel and accommodation arrangements. However, subsidies are available upon request for selected scholars, especially those who might not otherwise be able to attend the workshop, including junior scholars and scholars from universities with limited resources. Limited funding is available and will be distributed based on travel distance, length of stay, and financial need. Indicating a need for financial assistance will not negatively affect the application.

Organizing committee: dr Izabela Paszko, dr Sławomir Doległo, dr Tadeusz Wojtych

This event is organised in cooperation with the Museums and Memory working group of the Memory Studies Association, as well as with the Polish-German Textbook Commission.

Max Weber  
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