



Call for Papers:

Shadow Places. Urban Strategies of Dealing with Painful Pasts

International Conference · March 7–10, 2019 · German Historical Institute, Warsaw

Cities define themselves through historically acquired self-images. They are the projection screens and creators of social identities – and often come with historical burdens, sometimes even to the point of becoming iconographic condensations of past brutalities. Quite a few cities use these stigmas to their advantage, as “authentic” distinguishing characteristics in the global competition for urban tourism.

The term “shadow place” is a neologism that draws attention to memorialization and touristification as social processes. It designates places that are confronted with a publicly known and labelled historical burden, that are informed by them as spaces of memory, and have become tourist attractions as a result. Shadow places are different from “dark” or “evil” places in that their meaning cannot be solely reduced to terrors of the past; the attribute “shadow” implies positive as well as negative interpretations of the past. Accordingly, shadow places define spaces where the tension plays out between affliction and liberation, victimhood and heroism, between the onus and the pleasures of the past. It is the reception of historical burden and its place in the cultural memory of posterity, and not the historical events themselves, that decides on the type and degree of shadow cast on a particular place.

(I) The first core question of the conference is: How strongly do historical shadows cling to a place? Is there such a thing as a negative urban memory, an image that is inextricably linked to a certain place due to the willful politics of a city and its PR officers, that becomes a permanent fixture of a city in its self-perception and its perception by others, and that has a formative influence on its character? What role do its inhabitants play in their desire to live an unencumbered life in “their city,” and what effect can political efforts play in replacing or at least counteracting the negative image of a city with positive ones?

(II) A second focus of the conference is on the ambivalence of places, their “dissonant heritage” (Ashworth/Turnbridge), and hence on conflicting narratives. Who determines which are the “light” and which are the “dark” chapters of history? When is the painful suffering of victims, and when tragic heroism image-forming? What role do shame and pride play in city marketing and regional profiling? Which processes, dynamics and protagonists decide which shadows will be turned into narrative history? How are the “dark” and the “bright” aspects of urban history reconciled with each other? In what way



are the dissonances between particular and universal, between local, national and supranational interpretations managed?

(III) The third focus of the conference is on the touristic use of historically burdened places, a phenomenon that is usually dealt with under the concept of “dark tourism” (or sometimes “thanatourism”). According to Philip R. Stone, the concept describes “the act of travel to sites associated with death, suffering and the seemingly macabre.” The concept of “shadow places” would like to go beyond previous concepts by exploring the reasons for the growing popularity of places with a burdened past while at the same time contextualizing these places in the travel itinerary of tourists, who normally visit many different places during a single visit. The conference would like to investigate which role historical authenticity plays in the expectations of tourists.

It is these three guiding questions that the conference seeks to answer. The results will later be published in the form of an edited volume.

Confirmed speakers: Prof. Astrid Erll (Goethe University Frankfurt), Prof. Martin Sabrow (Humboldt-University Berlin/ ZZF Potsdam), Dr. Philip Stone (Institute for Dark Tourism Research).

We welcome abstracts from all disciplinary backgrounds. Please send your abstract (up to 350 words) and a short biography (up to 150 words) to Sabine Stach (stach@dhi.waw.pl) by September 15, 2018. Abstracts should please include name, affiliation, current academic status (PhD student, postdoc, etc.) and contact details. Selected authors will be notified no later than mid-October 2018. Travel costs within Europe will be covered and accommodation will be arranged.

Possible topics include but are not restricted to:

- Memoryscapes
- Urban Heritage / Heritage Marketing
- Urban History as Public History
- History and City Marketing
- Different Modes of Dealing with Urban Pasts
- Conflicting Narratives of a City’s Past
- Dark Tourism / History Tourism / Tourism & Historical Authenticity
- Labor Camp Towns
- Fascist New Towns
- Socialist New Towns
- Post-Catastrophic Towns
- Post-Colonial Towns



Organizers:

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