

ICOHTEC

NEWSLETTER



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Newsletter of the International Committee for the History of Technology ICOHTEC

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Editorial

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

This Newsletter gives a conference report on the post-war development of destroyed cities in 20th century Europe. The organisers put their meeting in the context of urban history, but the subject can also be regarded as an interesting task for historians of technology.

Please keep the **deadline – 7 January 2010** – for our next conference in Tampere (10 – 15 August 2010) in mind. News concerning the conference can be found on our homepage for the Tampere Meeting, <http://www.tampere.fi/industrialpast2010/>. The obligatory reminder: if you have not yet paid your annual ICOHTEC fees for 2009 please do so now.

On behalf of all ICOHTEC members: warm thanks to Wolfhard Weber, who has been our hard working treasurer for several years and will hand over this position to Patrice Bret. Warm thanks also to Alex Keller, who edited our journal ICON for a long period and handed over the editor's work to Mark Clark in autumn.

Happy Christmas and a good & successful New Year!
Yours Stefan Poser

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I. Conference Report

Post-Catastrophic Cities: Total War and Urban Recovery in Twentieth Century Europe

16 October 2009, Warsaw

Conference report by:

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In twentieth-century Europe, urban populations witnessed not only the consequences of modernity and scientific planning, but also mass destruction. Recently, historians of postwar Europe have emphasised both shared experiences of ‘the extremes’ (that is, extreme ideology and extreme destruction) as well as common challenges of recovery throughout the continent. This approach has shed new light on European reconstructions and has helped to venture new areas in contemporary international and transnational historiography, where Central and Eastern Europe – the main battlefield of World War II ‘urbicide’ (Karl Schlögel) – is probably the most neglected. At the same time, the aftermath of the war, which dramatically transformed cityscapes and the lives of their inhabitants, has remained largely unexplored in interdisciplinary urban studies.

A workshop organized in Warsaw (which was itself a very telling arena of planned urban destruction) aimed to compare ‘post-catastrophic cities’ as they reemerged from wars and political censures imposed by dictatorial regimes. In the introduction to the workshop entitled, “Post-Catastrophic Cities: Total War and Urban Recovery,” STEFAN-LUDWIG HOFFMANN underlined the importance of Central and Eastern Europe in a revision of the conceptual framework of European urban history; systematic research on a region where *actual* total war between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union was waged would introduce wartime phenomena as starvation, genocide or mass resettlements to the social and cultural history of the twentieth-century European city. He also called for diachronic comparison (for example, the destruction of Sarajevo in the early 1990s with the devastated urban spaces of the Spanish civil war), which he said was necessary for rethinking the aftermath of wartime violence in a long-term perspective.

Addressing the state-of-the-art in urban history, organizers of the workshop called for shifting the focus from a top-down perspective – covering the well-researched histories of city planning and political regimes of reconstruction – to a bottom-up approach. Not only were post-catastrophic cities a ‘playground’ for urban experts and political regimes, they also constituted transitional social spaces for contingency. Be it an early postwar shift from war to peace, or the new politics of memory after 1989, individual experiences, expectations and memories shaped postwar urban spaces in multiple and politically subversive ways. Finally, organizers highlighted the newly emerging field of post-catastrophic urbanism, as best revealed by New York post-9/11. The exploration of differences and similarities, as MARTIN KOHLRAUSCH mentioned in the second introductory talk, should contribute to a better understanding of material devastation and reconstruction, both in the lived as well as the symbolic past.

LISA KIRSCHENBAUM was the first among panelists to stress that cities are not only physical places but above all social spaces constituted by imagination and memory. While discussing Leningrad in a comparative perspective, she pointed out that the city’s material landscape stayed relatively intact after the siege, nevertheless its immense human losses affected the post-war community. At the same time, architectural attempts to modernize the city and to give it a grandiose past not always facilitated survivors either to remember or forget the tragedy in ways the city’s planners had hoped. Therefore, Kirschenbaum proposed to shift the analytical framework of comparative studies of the post-catastrophic cities from the focus on their material destruction and reconstruction to research on changes in the ‘mental maps’ of the cities’ inhabitants and on the tensions between individual remembering and material rebuilding. GRUIA BĂDESCU’s paper corresponded particularly well with Kirschenbaum’s presentation. Following Walter Benjamin, Roland Barthes and Michel de Certeau, he proposed approaches to contemporary Sarajevo.

Whereas Kirschenbaum and Bădescu presented rather general theoretical remarks and methodological suggestions, drawing on their research on traumatized cities, STEFAN-LUDWIG HOFFMANN’S paper showed how successful this approach might be in opening new research agendas. Taking the case of Berlin, he discussed the city’s destruction as visual experience by examining the imagery of photographers and diarists who were in Berlin at the end of World War II. He pointed out that they proposed distinctive ways of portraying defeat and he distinguished between the Soviet triumphalist, American ethnographic (at the same time humanitarian) and German allegorical views of the city’s devastation and despair. Considering the possible effects of American photography in the transition period from war to peace, Hoffmann emphasized that for the US public it was demolished Germany and not Eastern Europe that became the visual landmark of both the consequences of war and the postwar humanist empathy.

The papers of STÉPHANE MICHONNEAU and DAVID CROWLEY were especially interesting with regard to the discussion of a variety of roles that ruins might play in post-war communities. Michonneau told a story of a small town in Spanish Aragon: while the actual Belchite, destroyed during the Civil War, was kept intact by the Franco regime as a symbol of

“red barbarity”, the New Belchite was erected nearby as a showcase of the fascist government. By pointing out the various ways in which the residents of the twin towns have kept the ruins up to date, Michonneau stressed the discrepancies between images imposed by different political regimes and social memories of the inhabitants. DAVID CROWLEY gave an interesting overview of various, conflicting political and artistic images of the ruins, by using the case of post-1944 Warsaw. He also noticed how in the shadow of their narratives, the ruins served as a space for social practices such as prostitutions, squatting, alcoholism or black-market trade; as such they also became a subject of aesthetic statements. In contemporary Warsaw, the ruins are once again ‘desired’; this time by right wing politicians who seek for legitimacy by making references to WWII history.

JAN MUSEKAMP took the conference participants on a tour to Szczecin (previously German Stettin) incorporated into Poland in 1945 and partially rebuilt by the communist authorities. Musekamp traced the origins of the architectural choices made in the course of town’s restoration: after the war, both the city’s Slavonic origins and the modern concepts of the Athens Charter were enunciated, while recent attempts have been to recreate prewar German cultural heritage. Finally, TARIK CYRIL AMAR concentrated on Lviv as a microcosm of the current West Ukrainian ‘politics of history.’ While discussing several commemorative initiatives in Lviv related to World War II, he argued that scholars too often interpret the historical imagination of contemporary Ukraine as a nationalist reversal of the former Soviet propaganda. Asserting the strong influence of nationalism, Amar argued, should be understood as only the beginning of a study of complex social phenomena in post-Soviet culture(s) of memory.

In most of the papers, post-catastrophic cities were presented as reservoirs of social memory and politics of commemoration. The workshop’s discussions showed an interest for a bifurcated approach to the examination of urban recovery: first, for a historicisation of transitory moments, such as the late 1940s or 1989-agenda in Central and Eastern Europe; and secondly, for a further exploration of cultural continuities connected to urban catastrophes. By combining temporality of disruption with actor-centered regimes of memory, the workshop innovatively embedded history of urban destruction in recent discussions on post-1945 and post-1989 Europe.

Conference overview:

INTRODUCTION

Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann (Center for Contemporary History, Potsdam)

Martin Kohlrausch (Bochum University)

PANEL 1

Lisa Kirschenbaum (West Chester University), Remembering and Rebuilding: Leningrad after the Siege in Comparative Perspective

Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann (Center for Contemporary History, Potsdam), Gazing at Ruins: German Defeat as Visual Experience

PANEL 2

Stéphane Michonneau (Casa de Velázquez, Madrid), Ruins and the Heritage of Civil War: The Case of Belchite in Spain

Jan Musekamp (Viadrina-University Frankfurt), A New Polish City on German Ruins? Rebuilding Stettin/Szczecin after 1945

PANEL 3

David Crowley (Royal College of Art, London), Memory in Ruins: Remaking Warsaw after 1944

Tarik Cyril Amar (Center for Urban History of East Central Europe, Lviv), After the 'Golden September': Recovering and Re-Covering Memories of War in Lviv, 1989-2008

Gruia Bădescu (London School of Economics and Political Science), Reading Post-war Sarajevo as Text

Please find the whole report published as: *Tagungsbericht Post-Catastrophic Cities: Total War and Urban Recovery in Twentieth Century Europe*. 16.10.2009, Warschau, in: H-Soz-u-Kult, 15.12.2009, <http://hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de/tagungsberichte/id=2912>

II. New Conferences

24-25 June 2010

IX EDHE – Convocatoria de propuestas de comunicación para el IX Encuentro de Didáctica de la Historia Económica / Conference on Didactics in the History of Economy of the Spanish Association for the History of Economy AEHE

Toledo, Spain

CFP – Deadline **31 December 2010**

Please find the call for papers on <http://www.aehe.net/noticias/09-11-6-2.html>

9 September 2010

II Encuentro de la Asociación Española de Historia Económica: convocatoria 2010 / Congress of Spanish Association for the History of Economy AEHE

CFP – Deadline **15 March 2010**

Please find the call for papers on <http://www.aehe.net/noticias/09-11-12-4.html>

29 September – 2 October 2010

Session: Bruxelles surréaliste. Topographien einer Stadt / Topography of a City

Stadt – Kultur – Raum / City – Culture – Space. 7. Frankoromanistentag 2010

Universität Duisburg-Essen, Campus Essen, Germany

CFP – Deadline **15 January 2010**

The interdisciplinary session *Bruxelles surréaliste* is dedicated to Surrealism in Belgium, especially in Brussels. The aim is to analyse surrealist elements in literature, in the arts and in architecture.

For information on the congress please visit: <http://www.uni-due.de/romanistik/frankoromanistentag>

For information on the session please contact Thomas Amos and Christian Grünagel, Romanisches Seminar der Universität Heidelberg, Thomas.amos@urz.uni-hd.de and christian.gruennagel@urz.uni-hd.de.

30 September – 3 October 2010

Annual Meeting of the Society for the History of Technology SHOT

Tacoma, Washington
(CFP forthcoming)

The Society will hold its 2010 annual meeting from the 30 September to 3 October, in the city of Tacoma, Washington. Over the course of four days, the meeting will feature dozens of sessions on a variety of scholarly topics within the discipline, the Society's annual awards banquet, and tours of historic sites around the region. Information about the conference theme and the call for papers will be forthcoming.

Please visit: http://www.historyoftechnology.org/annual_meeting.html

For additional information, please contact the SHOT Secretary Bernie Carlson, shotsecy@virginia.edu

28 June – 2 July 2011.

Encounters of Sea and Land. Sixth ESEH Conference

University of Turku, Åbo Akademi University
Finland

CFP – Deadline **3 May 2010**

The European Society for Environmental History is pleased to invite proposals for sessions, papers and posters for its next international conference. It will take place in Turku, Finland, from June 28 to July 2, 2011. The venues will be Turku University and Åbo Akademi University.

Inspired by Turku's surroundings, which include Europe's largest archipelago, the main theme of the meeting is *Encounters of Sea and Land*. We encourage proposals that explore the general theme from various environmental history perspectives, such as:

- The emergence of environmental crises of the seas

- Phases of conservation of inland waters, seas, and coasts
- Historical perspectives on marine biodiversity
- History of whaling, fishing and overfishing
- Exploitation of marine resources, such as water, gas, oil, seaweeds, in the past
- History of marine pollution including material flows from land to sea
- History of maritime mobility
- Development of catchment areas as environmental and socio-economic systems
- Environmental history of urban coastal areas
- Landscapes and seascapes: changes in the environment and interpretations
- Islands and archipelagos as natural habitats and social communities

However, contributions on other topics are equally welcome. Potential fields include, but are not limited to:

- Reconstruction of historical weather and climate, and adaptation to climate changes in the past
- Environmental history of the polar regions
- Development of environmental movements
- Dimensions of forest history
- Urban environmental history
- History of man-animal relationship, food supply and biodiversity
- Industrial environmental history
- Production, consumption and waste: commodity chains in environmental history
- Cultural values and economic interests: retrospective environmental analyses
- Theories and methods in environmental history

The conference covers all periods and all areas of the globe. In keeping with a cherished tradition of the field, the conference is open to scholars from all disciplines and backgrounds. We encourage submissions from graduate students. The conference language is English; no submissions in other languages will be accepted.

The deadline for submissions is May 3, 2010.

Submitting a Proposal

All proposals should be submitted through our online submission system. The online submission system will open in February 2010. The scientific committee will accept printed or emailed submissions only in exceptional cases.

Sessions

Sessions will usually consist of three papers, not more than 20 minutes each. Other formats (debate panels, roundtables) are possible, but please note that all sessions will need to conclude after 90 minutes. Session proposals should include a cover page with session title, list of contributors and a chair, and individual paper titles; a session abstract of 200-300

words; three individual paper abstracts of 200-300 words; and a one-page c.v. for each participant. Session proposal may also include a commentator. Nevertheless, all sessions should include sufficient time for general discussion.

Papers

Contributors may also submit individual papers of max. 20 minutes, which will be combined into sessions of three papers in case of acceptance. However, scholars should take note that the scientific committee has a certain preference for session submissions, and that it cannot guarantee thematic coherence for the resulting sessions. Paper proposals are to consist of an abstract of 200-300 words and a one-page c.v.

Posters

Poster proposals will include an abstract of 200-300 words and a one-page c.v. Posters will be on display during the Congress and authors will have an opportunity to introduce their research in brief (approx. three minute) oral presentations in a special plenary session.

Review Process

All proposals will be reviewed by a scientific committee consisting of Corinne Beck (Université de Valenciennes, France), Laura Hollsten (Åbo Akademi University, Finland, vice chair), Hilde Ibsen (Karlstad University, Sweden), Julia Lajus (European University, St. Petersburg, Russia), Simone Neri Seneri (Università di Siena, Italy) and Frank Uekoetter (Rachel Carson Center, Munich, Germany, chair). The committee will make its decisions by early September 2010.

For more information on Turku and the conference, please visit the conference website: <http://eseh2011.utu.fi/>

III. Recently Published Books

Stephen K. Jones: Links with Leviathans. From steamships to docks. = Brunel in South Wales, vol. 3. The History Press, Brimscombe Port 2009.

The author wrote two books on Brunel in South Wales: *In Trevithick's Tracks* and *Communications and Coal*. The new third volume focuses on Brunel's contribution to the maritime world, from his work on docks and shipping facilities to his steamships, including his 'great leviathan'.