

Focus area 3 Cities of Academic Exile and Their Translocal Networks

Musealizing exile



Memory-making, narration and epistemological order in museums on exile history

By: Domenic Teipelke

Conceptual starting point

Academic exiles are rarely written about as actors. They are usually framed as 'victims' of oppression, but not as academics who engage with new projects in their current host country (Berger & De Baets 2016). Thus, reinstating their position as exiles, academic exiles are not properly recognized in their capacities.

The usage of the term exile has increased in media coverage in Germany in recent years. This is on the one hand due to political processes and human catastrophes in Germany and other countries. On the other hand, it is a result of voices calling for a more visible engagement with the history of exile (i.e. Müller 2011).



View on Tagesspiegel and Anhalter Bahnhof, prospected location for the Exilmuseum (photo: D. Teipelke).

This has also had an effect on the attention that institutions engaging with exile receive. New institutions have emerged such as Stiftung Flucht Vertreibung, Versöhnung; Körber-Stiftung's "Tage des Exils."

The epitome of this new attention can be seen in the private form of a collaboration, with support from local politics in Berlin, to found a museum which deals singularly with the topic 'exile' (cf. Stiftung Exilmuseum 2018).

What happens when institutions take part in the narration and display of a part of history? What influence do they have on memory-making? Who assumes the right to speak on behalf of exiles? Who labels what is recognized as 'academic exile'? Is Berlin a centre point of this new interest?



Axes in the Libeskind-Bau in the Jewish Museum (photo: D. Teipelke).

By displaying parts of 'the past', institutions actively take part in the memory-making of a certain topic (Johnson 2018). The stories, objects and their media of presentation go through a careful curation process during which selections and exclusions are made. Following Jacques Derrida and other theorists on 'archives' and 'institutions', the musealization of a part of history always produces



Jewish Museum (photo: D. Teipelke).

gaps and seemingly leads to a dichotomy: control of memory by states enables stable rule, representation of marginalized memories is achieved by non-state groups (Derrida & Prenowitz 1995).

Research question

How are exiles represented within institutions that engage with the topic? How do institutions deal with the history of exile and how do they present this engagement to a Berlin, German and international public?

State of research

The research on exile history has taken diverse pathways. The history of exile has been a topic of interest in the German public and academia since the 1980s. Partially due to a strong demand for greater investigation into Germany's history during the Nazi-regime, research has been conducted on the conditions of people, especially of Jews, who sought refuge in other countries.

Footnotes

Stefan Berger & Antoon De Baets. 2016. 'Reflections on Exile Historiography'. *Storia della Storiografia*, 69 (1), 11-26.

Herta Müller. 2011. 'Erinnert ans Exil! Eine unerledigte Aufgabe der deutschen Kulturpolitik'. *Frankfurt Allgemeine*. 24 Juni 2011, 144, 39.

Stiftung Exilmuseum Berlin. 2018. *Exilmuseum Berlin. Vision und Hintergründe*.

Rebecca Johnson. 2018. 'Archive Fever' in der zeitgenössischen Kunst. Jumana Manna – Akram Zaatari – Naeem Mohaiemen,

<https://blogs.hu-berlin.de/mediaiaaw/2018/11/16/archive-fever-in-der-zeitgenoessischen-kunst-jumana-manna-akram-zaatari-naeem-mohaiemen/> [retrieved 11.12.2018].

Jacques Derrida & Eric Prenowitz. 1995. 'Archive Fever. A Freudian Impression.' *Diacritics*, 25 (2), 9-63.