

European Commemoration 2014: Conference Report, Berlin, 16-17 December 2014

Duyster Borredà, Joana

Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version

Sonstiges / other

Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Duyster Borredà, J. (2015). *European Commemoration 2014: Conference Report, Berlin, 16-17 December 2014*. (ifa Edition Culture and Foreign Policy). Stuttgart: ifa (Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen). <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-51209-6>

Nutzungsbedingungen:

Dieser Text wird unter einer CC BY-NC-ND Lizenz (Namensnennung-Nicht-kommerziell-Keine Bearbeitung) zur Verfügung gestellt. Nähere Auskünfte zu den CC-Lizenzen finden Sie hier:

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/deed.de>

Terms of use:

This document is made available under a CC BY-NC-ND Licence (Attribution-Non Commercial-NoDerivatives). For more information see:

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0>

ifa Edition Culture and Foreign Policy

European Commemoration 2014

Conference Report, Berlin, 16–17 December 2014

Joana Duyster Borredà

ifa



European Commemoration 2014

“The commemorative year may be coming to a close, but the past is still with us. This has become quite clear over the course of the year 2014.”
(Frank-Walter Steinmeier, German Foreign Minister)

From 16 to 17 December 2014 ifa - Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen (German Institute for International Cultural Relations) held, with the scientific consultancy of the Professorships for Contemporary History and Public History at the University of Heidelberg, a conference on the subject of “European Commemoration – *Europäische Erinnerungskulturen 2014*”. More than 100 researchers, teachers, artists and experts in the area of European museology and in the fields of journalism and communications took part in this experts’ conference, with participants coming from more than 20 countries. Other partners who collaborated in the organisation of the conference included the German Federal Agency for Civic Education (Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung), the German international broadcaster Deutsche Welle, the public radio station Deutschlandradio Kultur, and the Zeughauskino, cinema at the German Historical Museum in Berlin.

The conference was organised in the context of the many commemorative events held over the course of the year 2014: the beginning of the Second World War 75 years ago, the end of the Cold War 25 years ago, and the beginning of the First World War 100 years ago. In light of those events, the focus of the conference was on the examination of European cultures of memory concerning the First World War.

The international conference of experts was divided into four areas: research, education, society, and culture. Within each of these areas, workshops were held within three main subject areas. The conference participants discussed, with respect to the commemorative year, the importance of commemoration and changes within cultures of memory. At the same time, they focused on the differences among existing narratives, as well as forgotten spaces and topics of memory. The last of the workshops presented projects and European initiatives, approaches to solutions, and practice-oriented examples of ways of handling the commemoration of the First World War. Thus, the conference presented the opportunity for a productive dialogue on the disparate and shared cultures of memory in Europe. For two days, the conference served as a platform for interdisciplinary exchange and networking among the participants.

The conference concluded with an evening event that featured a panel discussion on 17 December 2014 in the “Weltsaal”, at the Federal Foreign Office. At this event, the chairs

of the various workshops reported on their respective results, and together with moderator Christian Trippe (Deutsche Welle), discussed reassessments and challenges within European commemoration. The evening began with a speech by the German Foreign Minister, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, which concluded the series of commemorative events entitled “On the Failures and Benefits of Diplomacy” (*“Vom Scheitern und Nutzen der Diplomatie”*). The evening was rounded out with music by the German-Russian duo of Lydia Kavina and Caroline Eyck on the theremin, and by Christopher Tarnow on the piano.

The key findings of the two-day conference are summarised in the following pages. At the outset, attention is drawn to disparate and shared aspects of European cultures of memory and the premises behind them, with particular consideration given to national, political, historiographic and social tensions. Next, the reassessments that were discussed at the conference and the challenges of shared memory are illustrated. In conclusion, the individual results and overall interpretations and theses are presented.

Key results:

- The First World War was commemorated in 2014 predominantly as a “European experience”. In addition, there were many joint commemoration projects and memorial ceremonies at the governmental and civil-society levels.
- The focus of memorial activities in the commemorative year was on the civilian and military victims of the war, and on the everyday experiences of common soldiers and the civilian population.

On that basis, the conference participants committed the following statements to the record:

- A critical analysis must be undertaken concerning the national appropriation of history, and a debate must be held on differences in the content and form of shared commemoration.
- The globality of war must be incorporated into cultural memory, and the First World War must be remembered as a global war. By the same token, particular attention must be paid to the eastern front and the Balkan region, especially within historiography and the area of education.
- Because of the loss of eyewitnesses due to the passage of time, and the increasing importance of digital media for the younger generation, projects featuring participatory approaches should be supported.
- Dialogues concerning the conflict-ridden past must take place mainly at the level of civil society.
- The goal should not be a uniform European memory, but rather, the sharing of divergent memories. Consequently it will be possible to foster knowledge about other perspectives – and only then – to create a shared memory.

1. Dividing lines and commonalities

The commemorative year 2014 demonstrated the existence of disparate memories and forms of commemoration in Europe concerning the First World War. Some of these had been the subject of controversial discussions in many places in the run-up to the commemorative year. The reason for the commemorations, in addition to the remembrance of the Second World War and the Cold War, was above all the 100th anniversary of the outbreak of the First World War. In many European countries, political figures in particular called for a critical look at the cultures of commemoration associated with the First World War. This objective was reinforced by the generational loss of eyewitnesses, which presents a significant turning point for memory and the teaching of history. For the Conference “European Commemoration – *Europäische Erinnerungskulturen*”, the representation of the memory of the First World War in many regions of Europe provided the occasion to reflect on the importance of commemoration, as well as to discuss changes within the culture of memory over the course of the year 2014, with its multiple occasions for commemoration.

In the discussions at the conference it became clear that commemoration of the First World War, which was initiated at the political level, was often perceived of as a compulsory exercise by representatives and multipliers from the areas of education, society and culture, such as universities or museums. The consensus was however, that surprisingly, the first commemorative events were very well received by the general public, so that the political impetus proved to be fruitful and further projects and initiatives were set up. The conference participants agreed that in 2014, the First World War was remembered as a “European experience”. They concurred that the commemorative events within nation-states were planned in part with a European focus, and transcended traditional boundaries. This, participants said, marked a significant change from earlier years, in which the focus lay on national narratives of legitimacy or guilt, and on victory or defeat. As an example of the change in national cultures of memory toward a commemoration of the First World War as a European experience, many conference participants cited the “Ring of Memory” at Notre-Dame-de-Lorette in France, which is dedicated to all of the soldiers who died in the First World War, without regard to nationality.¹

¹ The architect Philippe Prost created the “Ring of Memory” (*L’Anneau de la Memoire*) for the Region Nord-Pas-de-Calais. The memorial was opened to the public on 11. November 2014, and displays the names of nearly 600,000 soldiers in alphabetical order on metal steles.

1.1 National dividing lines

Through joint transnational commemorative projects, new perspectives have emerged in which European commonalities have come to the forefront. Pim den Boer (University of Amsterdam) pointed to the transferability of places of memory as a reflection of this new narrative. Thus, for example, in nearly every city and village in Europe there are plaques and monuments memorialising the soldiers who died in the First World War. With regard to the frequency with which they are found, the sites chosen for them, and their appearance, they are quite similar, participants said. According to a number of conference participants, it is possible on this basis to detect a kind of common “European culture of remembrance” concerning the First World War, even if the respective interpretations of the historical events are different. Speaking in the opening address, Alan Kramer (Trinity College Dublin) noted that besides the form of the culture of memory concerning the First World War, a number of transnational commonalities can be found in contemporary interpretations. Thus, for example, it can be ascertained that at the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, most people in Europe underestimated the war and its possible consequences. On the one hand, it was assumed that the war would end much more quickly than it did. And on the other hand, the effects of modern machines of war and the social consequences of the war were massively underestimated.

1.1 National dividing lines

Joint commemorative events, however, also made possible a discourse on differences in the content and form of commemorations of the First World War. Thus, all conference participants pointed out that the year 2014 was one in which critical discussions were held on national commemorative practices.

Conference participants said that in recent years, government sponsored activities commemorating the First World War were generally national in scope. Even though there were a number of examples of joint commemorative events in 2014, participants said it was also possible to ascertain that, for example in Great Britain and Russia, politicians had put forth an interpretation of the First World War that was very national in scope. In Bosnia-Herzegovina this phenomenon became very apparent in 2014. It was reported that entirely within that country alone there were three different commemorative narratives concerning the First World War (Krsto Lazarevic, free-lance journalist).

The national appropriation of history presents a great challenge, especially in the area of education, participants said. It is possible to detect in school curriculums in parts of Europe since the beginning of the 2000s a tendency towards re-nationalisation, as for

1.2 Europe and Europeanisation

example, in Denmark. On the cultural level, Geert Buelens (University of Utrecht) presented the problems associated with the creation of a canon at the international level (in literature and film, among other areas). The formation of a canon takes place within the context of competing national grand narratives (for example, “The Great War”, “All Quiet on the Western Front”). This canonisation, Buelens said, is a manifestation of national power-political, economic and geopolitical factors that have not yet been overcome, and which ensure that mainly the narratives from the larger countries are taken into consideration. For this reason, it is imperative to make a greater attempt to include smaller countries (for example, the Netherlands, the Baltic countries, Switzerland) that have until now tended to be excluded within the culture of memory. Geert Buelens tried to give a voice to countries that have been neglected up until now by using multiple perspectives and a multilingual approach in an anthology of poems. At the same time however, he stressed that this can be only one possible solution, and he called for reflection on new forms of cultural approaches to this problem.

1.2 Europe and Europeanisation

The discussions at the conference demonstrated that there are also very varied definitions of the concepts of Europe and Europeanisation. Thus, many participants agreed that in most of the discourses and debates held in Western Europe, it is still just Western Europe that is meant when the talk is of “Europe”. The eastern countries are seldom taken into account, or they are considered within separate narratives. Participants criticised that the impression might arise thereby that the eastern part of the continent is “delayed” in its memory of the First World War, and underdeveloped, and must “catch up” with regard to commemoration and coming to terms with history. Participants said that in eastern central Europe, the First World War has been either “forgotten” and has to a large extent disappeared from public memory (Maciej Gorny, Historical Institute of the Polish Academy of Sciences; Boris Kolonitsky, European University at St. Petersburg), or, since it represents a positive turning point in the process of national liberation, it has a very different societal significance.

The conference participants agreed, however, that in considering European cultures of memory, it is necessary to look beyond the Europe of institutions, and also, that a European perspective is more than the sum total of national narratives. Particularly in the area of education, participants discussed with Joke van der Leeuw-Roord (Founder and Special Advisor of EUROCLIO) the ways in which multiperspectivity can be utilised. On the one hand, this can mean that one must take more perspectives into account and discuss them in classroom instruction, even if this is difficult to put into practice in view of packed curriculums.

1.3 Peripheries and Globality

On the other hand, multiperspectivity means that one addresses experiences that divide people. Using the example of the war in Yugoslavia, the participants in the discussion stressed that multiperspectivity should, however, not mean that in the end, all controversial points are omitted. Disagreement must be integrated into memory, and perspectives must be challenged and scrutinised using empirical analysis. Multiperspectivity should not lead to arbitrariness, and it is necessary to consult sources time and again to re-examine perspectives in classroom instruction.

Thus all of the conference participants stressed that the goal of a common European commemoration is not primarily to overcome the dividing lines among nations, but to gain knowledge of those perspectives that are not familiar, or hardly so, in one's own country. Along these lines, Aleida Assmann (University of Constance) emphasised that national narratives cannot be overwritten, but rather, that connections will become evident in the process of learning from the other perspective. The question as to whether a shared process of commemoration leads to mutual understanding, or whether it is mutual understanding that leads to shared commemoration was not resolved in this discussion.

1.3 Peripheries and Globality

Another perspective that became increasingly evident over the course of the commemorative year 2014, and also at the conference, brought the globality of the First World War into focus. Thus, lesser-known theatres of war and regions have come to the attention of researchers. The First "World" War was now viewed more in terms of a global war than in terms of a "great" war of national-historical significance, as it is still characterised in many countries today. In this context, the conference participants also discussed the question as to whether a focus on European commemoration might be too narrow, and whether the emphasis should rather be placed on global interrelationships. Thus, one could take a look at worldwide developments following the First World War, as for example, the movements protesting imperialism in Asia and North Africa, as well as the independence movements in the Near East and the Ottoman Empire. When these stories come to the fore, the global dimension of the First World War and the memory associated with it become apparent. In this connection, there was also a call to incorporate the globality of the war into cultural memory, and to commemorate the First World War as a global war.

One example of an attempt to overcome the Eurocentric perspective is the digital encyclopaedia “1914-1918 online”,² which with the help of an international team of experts offers a global-historical perspective on a number of subject areas. Alan Kramer, one of the editors-in-chief of the project, stressed in his opening address the global dimension of the First World War as an “altering experience”. It was not only in the combat zones that the First World War proved to be a life-changing experience, and it had an effect on nearly every conceivable area of life. By taking common experiences into consideration, one can detect lines of connection and similarities.

Ingrid Sharp (University of Leeds), for example, discussed international women’s movements during and after the war in her study, and described how common experiences of suffering led to the formation of transnational peace movements in Europe. Among the supporters of those movements were more and more women who were able to play a greater role in civil-society protest movements due to the absence of men, who had been drafted into the military.

Xu Guoqi (University of Hong Kong) reported on the roughly 140,000 Chinese labourers who were employed in work crews during the First World War, mainly in France, to compensate for the loss of French workers. This represents a subject whose importance has been underestimated, on the one hand, in the history of China, in global history, and in particular, in commemoration in France and Europe: for the dispatching of Chinese workers to the Western Front to labour in support of the war effort meant that the young Chinese republic could perceive itself as a partner on an equal footing within the global community. On the other hand, the fact that the West, which was seen as being advanced, could create a situation characterised by extreme barbarity led to a readjustment in China’s perception of the West. The presentation illustrated the importance that the dispatching of the workers had for the construction of national identity in China, and hence, the need to re-evaluate this subject within the academic field of history.

² The English-language reference work “1914-1918 online. International Encyclopedia of the First World War” was opened for public access in October, 2014. See: <http://www.1914-1918-online.net/>.

At many other points during the conference it became evident just how rewarding such shifts in perspective can be for a dissolution of borders within research on the First World War. For example, following the presentations on the Armenian Genocide by Taner Akcam (Clark University) and Hayk Demoyan (Director of the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute in Yerevan, Armenia), conference participants discussed striking lines of connection between the events of 1915 and the Shoah. This can be seen on the one hand in the terminology used at the time to justify the genocide, which as early as 1914 made use of terms that correspond to the later interpretations by the National Socialists in Germany (“final solution”, “Armenian question”). On the other hand, the international legal process of coming to terms with the Armenian genocide was an important benchmark for the Nuremberg and Tokyo trials. Information on this topic and on the globality of the war is contained in documents stored in the archive of the German Foreign Office. The conference participants called for a greater focus on this subject on the occasion of the 2015 anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. For that reason, Markus Meckel (President of the German War Graves Commission) suggested that an exhibition of the Foreign Office documents be set up in the Atrium at the Foreign Office.

1.4 Society and Generations

Besides governmental remembrance narratives, the culture of memory is formed in particular by social activities. In the 2014 commemorative year, a number of social initiatives designed to commemorate the First World War were established. The main focus of public interest and of social activities was not on generals and national war heroes, but rather on the civilian and military victims of the war, and on the everyday experiences of common soldiers and the civilian population in the war.

Special attention was paid during the 2014 commemorative year to individual family histories, and the fate of individuals. As a consequence, commemoration activities focused more on “stories” than on the “history”³ of the First World War, and called for an empathic, personal approach. Thus, anthropological universalisms such as shared grief over the loss of children as a problem of the generation of parents, or the fear of flight and expulsion from one’s homeland, created a shared narrative of experience. The violence and the sufferings caused by the war, as well as the way of dealing with the losses

³ Translator’s note: In German, the word “Geschichte” can mean either “history” or “story”.

2. Reappraisals and Challenges

suffered in the war, became a shared European narrative. This shift in memory was reflected in joint European projects that presented the commemoration of different nationalities within one project. This was strikingly illustrated by the opening film entitled “14 – Diaries of the First World War,” as well as by the Internetportal Europeana 1914-1918⁴ that collected materials from libraries and archives, along with personal mementoes from families all over Europe. Nonetheless, the focus on individual characters and an approach that depended solely on family histories came in for criticism. Thus, the participants in the discussion questioned the extent to which the characters in the film were representative of an entire country, and whether history could be reduced to the fates of selected individuals. In conclusion however, it was determined that the common soldier had become the leitmotif of the 2014 commemorative year. This represented a turning away from the heroic epic towards a post-national narrative style and towards the topos “united in senseless death” (Heidemarie Uhl, Austrian Academy of Sciences).

2. Reappraisals and Challenges

The conference participants stated that one of the successful reappraisals from the 2014 commemorative year consists in the fact that the First World War is no longer viewed exclusively through the lens of the Second World War. The memory of the First World War and of the period between the world wars was overlaid in Germany by the national-socialist instrumentalisation of that time period, by a marginalised communicative memory, and above all, by the experiences of the Second World War. For that reason, the focus in one panel at the conference was brought to bear on the period between the wars. This was made clear in a presentation by Michael Dreyer (University of Jena) which presented a case history of the memory place “Weimar Republic” after 1945. The presentation took issue above all with the thesis of a weak Weimar government, and with it, the interlocked narrative of a “republic doomed to failure from the start.” This reassessment was accompanied by a re-evaluation of the political structures of the Weimar Republic.

⁴ The goal of the portal Europeana 1914-1918 is to publish historical primary and secondary sources on the First World War. At the same time, it “brings together materials from libraries and archives throughout the world with personal mementoes from families throughout Europe”. It is a part of the greater Europeana Project, in which European cultural artifacts such as books, films, objects in museums, artworks and the contents of archives are being digitalised and made accessible to the public. See: www.europeana1914-1918.eu/.

2. Reappraisals and Challenges

By the same token, the history of elites and military history, according to some conference participants, moved further into the background of historical research in 2014. However, in this connection one must bear in mind that a “new or modern military history”, which incorporates social history perspectives, has taken shape since the 1970s. In a reflection of the shift in the social sciences, classic military history was supplemented and expanded by the addition of aspects of culture, mentality, and everyday life. No longer did researchers focus solely on strategic warfare and individual battles, but also on institutions, social strata, gender relationships and rituals, among other things. Due to the wide range of research perspectives, in this respect it is possible only to ascertain the loss of significance of classic military history.

The experiences of the First World War in Eastern Europe are underrepresented in research on this topic, and eastern theatres of war remain for most people in Western Europe “blind patches”. It is urgent that they be taken into greater account. In 2014 it was possible to detect an increase in interest in a historical coming-to-terms with the eastern front, but the focus on experiences in the First World War in eastern Europe brought with it new challenges. On the one hand, the watershed dates of the war (1914-1918) do not apply in the same way to many countries in central and Eastern Europe as they do in Western Europe, since acts of war continued for some years, and led to a series of further conflicts. On the other hand, when one looks towards the east, existing narratives must be opened up, for example by incorporating the great shifts and movements on the eastern front alongside the mostly static trench warfare on the western front.

Furthermore, participants discussed present-day points of reference to the First World War. The process of social memory is always defined by interests in the present, and present-day political developments have an effect on memory. The book by the historian Christopher Clark entitled “The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914”, which has been widely discussed in Germany, above all because of the debate on liability for the war, was said to demonstrate in a particularly clear way this form of memory, which can be reconstructed and makes reference to the present. Thus, it was said, the interest in the First World War may possibly be so great because of the hope that it is possible to learn from history and to avoid “tumbling” into a new war (Vesna Goldsworthy, Kingston University London). In the current conflicts with Russia concerning the crisis in the Crimea, and the Ukraine, journalists and politicians often endeavour to present the picture of “sleepwalking” diplomats. It is imperative to prevent political miscalculations and errors, participants said. However, many conference participants said, strained analogies and overdone attempts to make the war accessible to a modern-day public will not be effective.

2. Reappraisals and Challenges

Thus, the question was posed as to why for example, Bosnian young people should come to terms with the First World War when the last war in Bosnia took place just 20 years ago. Projects for young people, however, show that history that reaches further back in time can be helpful when dealing with more recent history. The juxtaposition of experiences of war and violence from the world wars and the Bosnian war, and the exchange of views on those topics, can help the young people of the Balkans to enter into dialogue with and get closer to each other and with Europe, argued Frank Morawietz (DFJW, Seminar Dachau-Den Haag – Oradour-Srebrenica with German, French, Serbian and Bosnian young people), among others.

The conference participants perceived the idea of competition as a challenge in general concerning commemorative years. Years like 2014, in which different historical events are remembered, can lead to competition between commemoration projects and remembrance events in seeking the attention of the public. As a rule, the competition among cultures of memory is expressed in a victims' competition, and in the weighing and comparison of divergent fates. By the same token, some participants had the impression that also in the area of education, for example, the relationships among the various organisations and projects are characterised by competition, and not real cooperation. There was a call for a more intense networking and cooperation among educational initiatives that create links between activities inside and outside of schools.

One challenge that came into particularly sharp focus in 2014 was the relationship between generations and history. In this context, on the one hand, the loss of eyewitnesses due to the passage of time, and with it, the danger of losing crucial aspects of primary memory was noted. On the other hand, in this connection the participants pointed to the increasing importance for the younger generation of digital media, which make possible a comprehensively democratic and participatory form of teaching history. The opportunities presented by such participatory approaches, aside from new points of access and perspectives on history, are to be found in the abolition of the classic division of roles between consumer and producer, and memory and the teaching of history. This approach could, however, become problematic, it was said, if the necessary critical classification and evaluation of material no longer takes place, and consequently, a loss of quality results. However, a number of conference participants put forth the thesis in this connection that with the democratisation of memory through participation, it is no longer the result, but the process that is relevant.

3. Interpretations and Theses

At the conference, various papers addressed the research community's turn toward digital methods of teaching history, and pointed out examples for the use of digital media. Thus, for example, Edward Serotta presented CENTROPA⁵, Frank Drauschke (Facts and Files) the project Europeana 1914-1918, and Bernd Körte-Braun (Free University of Berlin) the project on Holocaust holograms entitled "New Dimensions in Testimony"⁶. The speakers on this topic and participants said these projects presented in particular the opportunity to preserve authentic messages. Through the teaching of history via new media, pupils can establish an emotional link to times past. This was demonstrated by the project "Duet14 | 14 – Duetting the army postal service", which set the love-letters of soldiers on the front to music. Conference participants, however, called for a more intense dialogue in future projects between the new media and those who teach history via "old media", such as for example, classic museum educators. This could prove to be very productive for both parties, participants said.

In summary, it can be said that the conference participants agreed that reconciliation and dialogue concerning the conflict-ridden past must mainly take place at the civil-society level ("from the bottom up"). At the same time, participants expressed the wish to see European civil-society initiatives receive greater financial support.

3. Interpretations and Theses

In conclusion, it can be said that the conference "European Commemoration – *Europäische Erinnerungskulturen*" can be seen as one expression of the beginning of a shared process of coming to terms with memory. In this connection, Heidemarie Uhl put forth the thesis that in 2014, the First World War has become a European site of memory. This new landscape of memory can in turn give rise to new developments in the culture of memory. For this reason, participants noted in another finding, it is still difficult to extrapolate long-term impacts and consequences from the year 2014. Aleida Assmann spoke in this connection of occasions for commemoration as "Rorschach Tests", in which the reactions to the occasions for remembrance cannot be predicted.

⁵ The oral history project CENTROPA collects, documents and archives the life stories of European Jews, as well as their family photographs. See: <http://www.centropa.org/>.

⁶ The 3-D holograms from the project "New Dimensions in Testimony" by the USC Shoah Foundation, the Institute for Visual History and Education (USC SF) and the Institute for Creative Technologies (ICT) are meant to be used first and foremost in instruction in schools and in museums.

“One of the greatest achievements of the 2014 commemorative year is to have learned more about the perspectives of others, since in the past, if the First World War has been remembered at all, it has been on a national level” (Heidemarie Uhl). For some countries, the commemorative year has provided the opportunity to begin anew to remember the First World War. In addition, this commemorative year heightened sensitivity overall to the perspectives and perceptions of others. The incorporation of new perspectives and places into the memory of the First World War has opened up new areas of knowledge. At the same time, it appeared instructive to look at other levels besides national cultures of memory, and to see how these are interconnected. Thus, on closer examination, differences and similarities on the local, regional, national, European and global levels have become apparent.

On the one hand, participants in the conference agreed that uniformity of memory is not a desirable goal. A uniform memory in Europe (in the sense of a shared history) is neither possible, nor would it make sense, participants said. Ideally, diverse forms of memory could exist on an equal footing. In order to achieve that goal, however, it is necessary to increase understanding of Europe’s diversity and plurality, by communicating a variety of narratives and experiences. Mutual acknowledgement will be possible only on the basis of knowledge of alternative forms and narratives of memory. Consequently, interest in what others have to say is the precondition for “shared commemorations”. At the same time, in this connection the question as to what shared commemoration means is of primary importance. Are we talking about shared memory, that is to say, a common result, or about shared remembrance, that is, the process of remembering? In conclusion it can be said that the focus should be on the sharing of memory and on common remembrance. What is important, then, is the process of remembering – the sharing memory with each other.

Imprint

The publication is created within the framework of the ifa conference “European Commemoration – *Europäische Erinnerungskulturen* 2014“ with the scientific consultancy of the Chairs for Contemporary and Public History of the University of Heidelberg and in cooperation with the Federal Agency for Civic Education, Deutsche Welle (DW), Deutschlandradio Kultur and the Zeughauskino. The report is published in the ifa Edition Culture and Foreign Policy. The project was funded by the Federal Foreign Office.

The views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the ifa.

Publisher: ifa (Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen e. V.),
Charlottenplatz 17, 70173 Stuttgart,
P.O. Box 10 24 63, D-70020 Stuttgart,
info@ifa.de, www.ifa.de
© ifa 2015

Author: Joana Duyster Borredà
in cooperation with: Miriam Jost,
Raffael Rogger, Dr. Angela Siebold,
Inéz-Maria Wellner und Felix Wenzel

Editing: ifa-Research Programme
“Culture and Foreign Policy”

Credits: Frank Hurley (1885-1962) via
Wikimedia Commons, Australian War
Memorial E01220

Design: Eberhard Wolf, Munich

European Commemoration – *Europäische Erinnerungs- kulturen 2014*

„...the past is still with us.“

(Frank-Walter Steinmeier, German Foreign Minister)

2014 has been the year of commemoration: the beginning of the Second World War 75 years ago, the end of the Cold War 25 year ago and the beginning of the First World War 100 years ago.

With respect to the commemoration of the First World War, the international conference „European Commemoration – *Europäische Erinnerungskulturen 2014*“ presented the opportunity for a productive dialogue among researchers, teachers, artists and experts in the area of European museology and in the fields of journalism from more than 20 countries on the disparate and shared cultures of memory in Europe.

The ifa-conference was supported by the scientific consultancy of the professorships for Contemporary History and Public History at the University of Heidelberg. Cooperation partners have been the German Federal Agency for Civic Education (Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung), Deutsche Welle, Deutschlandradio Kultur, and the Zeughauskino, cinema at the German Historical Museum in Berlin.