

The Final Report of the International Exchange Program on Issues of Memory Work

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The aim of the program is to encourage international exchange on issues of Memory Work, to thereby deepen all participants' knowledge of concerned countries' histories and the ways these are addressed, and this to contribute to a better understanding of current debates and the historical and social factors underlying them in their respective contexts.

In the countries which suffered violent conflicts in their histories, it is crucial to work on the challenge how to transmit the knowledge about this difficult past to new generations and how to organize the memory work that a negative past will not happen again but that memory work should lead to reflection on a peaceful future. The careful requirement for collective healing has taken museums to presentations and education work which is not only informative but includes also emphatic and reflexive sceneries. Therefore, I have a big interest to understand and to compare the communicative and pedagogical experiences in the two Memorial places in Germany, Buchenwald Memorial, and in Cambodia, Tuolsleng Genocide Museum.

In this sense, the experiences which we made in the Memory Work program can contribute to the development of our concrete memory work with new generations: to help them to understand the history of the violence in the past and to enable them to build peace in the future. I propose three basic fields of activity in our memory work: The first one consists of the history education – development of pedagogical methods and activities for students. The second one is the further development of exhibition concepts about history, of materials and installations which can engage the visitors to a deeper understanding of real facts. The third one is the continuous improvement of archive organization and the development of the conservation workshop both in order to prepare documents and objects for a long-term proof to humanity in the world.

Following the activities of the concrete program which was organized by the Buchenwald Memorial I could visit, observe and analyze several memorial sites and museums and learn about their pedagogical concepts and methods in the Education Departments. I also could learn about the different concepts of exhibitions and the organization and structure of archives in the visited institutions. The proposed activities made it possible for me to finish the two month program with successful results.

1. Visits of memorial sites and museums and meetings with experts

I made a lot of good and fruitful visits and experiences in Weimar, Buchenwald, Erfurt and Berlin which helped me to understand how the historical places and their different layers of history are remembered and how the histories are presented to the public and applied through education

work. During these visits I studied thoroughly the memorial sites, museums, exhibitions and archives – I focused mostly on the periods of national socialist history, post-war and GDR history. In these periods I studied the different appearing forms of violence which people had to suffer in societies and how it was remembered in society afterwards. (In the Buchenwald Memorial I studied the history of the concentration camp Buchenwald, the soviet internment camp ‘Speziallager No. 2’ but also the memorialization process in GDR-times and after the German reunification.)

I was concerned by similarities to my country’s history, ‘Democratic Kampuchea’ (Khmer Rouge 1975-1979) and ‘People Republic of Kampuchea’ (1979-1989): There was so much suffering and the strong impact of violence on several generations of our society. We have a lot of evidences which can be documented so that people know and remember what happened in the past.

Especially I had the opportunity to meet colleagues who worked in different fields in the memorials and museums. Discussing in the meetings with many colleagues I could learn about the concrete work and experience of historians, exhibition makers, educators and tour guides. As a good result I see the exchange of ideas concerning our work in Germany and Cambodia. Together with my colleague Pheaktra Song we presented our history and museum activities to the team working in the Buchenwald Memorial and also we had a presentation in Erfurt.

2. Pedagogical concepts and methods of Education

In the Buchenwald Memorial and in the Memorial & Education Center Andreasstraße we could assist to a lot of concrete pedagogical methodologies and activities which are very important to build a connection to young people when they learn history on sites and places where history took place, out of their classrooms in schools. We learned about different pedagogical techniques and tools in seminars: Workshops with art, workshops which work on objects of the museum, workshops which work on documents, photos and biographies. Also we found interesting to participate in the work of the restoration department (of historical objects) where students can do conservation work on historical objects which have been found on the Buchenwald site by archeological excavations.

In discussions and meetings with colleagues we learned about the concepts and ideas on which the activities are based. Colleagues informed us, how they guide group visits and how they plan the different steps of seminars. Also we could have information on the training of tour guides.

We could assist to different guided tours with German students and international groups. In the Buchenwald Memorial we participated in a day project of international teachers’ training and in an international seminar ‘Learning lessons from a violent past for a peaceful future’ which gave us the opportunity to meet teachers and colleagues from Bosnia, France and German memorial places and to visit with them memorials and museums in Weimar and Erfurt.

In meetings with colleagues at the Klassik Foundation Weimar and at the European Youth Education Center we learned about their pedagogical programs and methods in the historical, cultural and political education.

We hope that we can apply some of the concepts, ideas and activities which we could learn to my museum in the future, especially how to make students more active in the learning processes - and also to implement more methods in intensive pedagogical programs. I and my colleagues are

able to prepare and convert all concepts and methods one by one for students who will come to our museum.

3. Exhibitions

As described above, I and my colleague visited a lot of museums and memorials (presenting different periods of German history) where we recognized different concepts and techniques to organize the installations for the exhibition. Being informed about the concepts by the institutions we tried then by ourselves to understand and observe the narratives and structures of the exhibitions. We had a focus on the question how to arrange the information texts, documents, objects and media in order to interest the visitors in the histories and in their explanation. And how to transmit the history in an exhibition especially to younger people, how to make an exhibition a learning space for students' activities. We had meetings with experts of exhibition making to discuss their principles, ideas and techniques when planning and designing a new exhibition. We could learn about a lot of aspects concerning the importance of concepts, the budget and time planning, the search for objects and documents, the role of teamwork and partnerships.

4. Archives

I and my colleague visited archives in several memorials and museums (concerning the periods of GDR-history, national socialist history and the time of Goethe and Schiller). We saw the different functions of archives: historical evidence, scientific research, historical exhibitions, family research, cooperation with filmmakers and writers. In the Buchenwald Archive we learned about the importance of the archive for family researches: A lot of families try to retrace the destiny of a family member who was deported to the Buchenwald concentration camp. We got information about the structure of the archive and how the research can be done. In the Goethe-Schiller-Archive and the Anna-Amalia-Library we were fortunately allowed to visit the restoration workshop and to discuss with experts the difficult conservation and restoration of old paper documents which were treated to keep them for a long time. We could see valuable documents which were kept in security rooms. We were informed about the services concerning the visitors and researchers (- how the daily visits are organized, which application forms are used...).

5. Conclusion

To conclude, this internship in the exchange program for Memory Work is a good project to build up a strong capacity network for long-term sustainable peace education for the world. As representative of my museum, I and my colleague got the opportunity to assist to this program because it is very necessary for us to improve our knowledge of concepts, pedagogical methods and to transmit it to our colleagues for an education of the young generation who will learn about violence in the history for building a peaceful future. We are very grateful for the help of the Bundesstiftung Aufarbeitung and hope to continue to work in the partnership with the Buchenwald Memorial and the Memorial & Education Center Andreasstraße.