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Born in 1967 in Berlin
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PROJECT

Metropolis in Ruins: Berlin in the 1940s

Metropolis in Ruins explores the social and cultural history of Berlin in the 1940s, as it was being transformed from the capital of the Nazi empire to the shattered metropolis of the early Cold War. The bounded space of the city allows us to combine close-ups of concrete situations, actors, and social relations with long shots of mid-twentieth century disjunctions in the international arena. My project aims to change how we think about the compressed time of deep historical ruptures. With Reinhart Koselleck and other historical thinkers, I ask how a catastrophic event (genocide, uricide) that participants themselves anticipated could still come as a shocking surprise to them. If historical change is rarely smooth and linear and proceeds instead in intense and unforeseeable bursts, as I contend, then we need to take a closer look at those relatively fleeting but intense periods that bring about deep and pervasive structural transformations - moments that can stretch over a few years, when everyone lives on the edge. By exploring Berlin as a shattered, multinational space in transit from war to peace, this project also investigates the resilience of urban life after catastrophe.

Recommended Reading

Hoffmann, Stefan-Ludwig. "Rückblick auf die Menschenrechte." *Merkur. Deutsche Zeitschrift für europäisches Denken* 812, 71 (2017): 5-20.

- "Germans into Allies: Writing a Diary in 1945." In *Seeking Peace in the Wake of War: Europe, 1943-1947*, edited by Olivier Wieviorka et al., 63-91. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2015.

- "Ins Freie Fallen: Das Kriegsende 1945 als Ursprung der Gegenwart." *Die Zeit* (April 29, 2015).

How Rights Became Human

Like globalization, human rights have become a key concept to describe the convulsions of our contemporary world. Since the 1990s, human rights research has exploded across the humanities and social sciences. Yet, historians have started to explore this history only very recently. In the last ten years, human rights historiography has emerged as a vibrant, incessantly growing field together with and alongside global history. Recent historiographies of human rights have privileged particular moments of this history as the moment of origin, the French Enlightenment, for example, or the demise of anti-colonialism and global socialism in the 1970s. Such genealogical arguments run the risk of doing history backwards, that is, of projecting our current understandings of individual human rights onto the past.

In my talk, I will propose a different way to think about this history. By employing the theoretical work of Reinhart Koselleck, I will argue that conceptions of rights based on our common humanity were contested throughout their history. As I show for different historical moments, rights became human only through social, political, or moral claim-makings within a more and more interdependent world. The history of human rights is the history of these contestations on different scales: the imperial, the international, and the global. One might think of these different scales and contestations as succeeding each other in a linear temporal sequence. But what I think marks not only the history of human rights is that these different conceptions actually overlap and clash in (our) time.

Hoffmann, Stefan-Ludwig (München,2019)

Die zerstörte Metropole : Berlin zwischen den Zeiten, 1943-1947

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1685496512>

Hoffmann, Stefan-Ludwig (Stanford, California,2018)

Sediments of time : on possible histories

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1008840513>

Zeitschichten : Studien zur Historik

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1008840513>

Hoffmann, Stefan-Ludwig (2017)

Rückblick auf die Menschenrechte

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1018590714>

Hoffmann, Stefan-Ludwig (Oxford,2016)

Human rights and history

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1018592377>

Hoffmann, Stefan-Ludwig (2015)

Haben die Menschenrechte eine Geschichte : gehalten am 20. Mai 2015

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1018591788>

Hoffmann, Stefan-Ludwig (2015)

Germans into allies : writing a diary in 1945

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=89405998X>

Hoffmann, Stefan-Ludwig (Amsterdam,2015)

Seeking peace in the wake of war : Europe, 1943-1947

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=84730017X>

NIOD studies on war, Holocaust, and Genocide ; 2

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=84730017X>

Hoffmann, Stefan-Ludwig (2011)

Zur Anthropologie geschichtlicher Erfahrungen bei Reinhart Koselleck und Hannah Arendt

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=894217658>

Hoffmann, Stefan-Ludwig (Cambridge [u.a.],2011)

Human rights in the twentieth century

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=727507354>

Human rights in history

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=727507354>

Hoffmann, Stefan-Ludwig (2010)

Besiegte, Besatzer, Beobachter : das Kriegsende im Tagebuch

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=894218360>