SSH13-044 - Politics of remembrance and the transition of public spaces. A political and social analysis of Vienna, 1995-2015

Zusammenfassung

This project proposes to investigate social and political processes and practices that have shaped and transformed public spaces of remembrance in Vienna during the last two decades. The investigation's thematic focus is on symbolic representations of political violence during the time of Austro-Fascism and National Socialism that have changed public spaces in Vienna.

From the mid-1990s to the present, public institutions have subsidized approximately 270 commemoration projects in Vienna. The transformation of public spaces triggered by politics of remembrance can be understood as contested political terrain. This terrain provides space for identity formation as well as for symbolic politics such as the politics of regret. And ultimately, this is also a matter of negotiating control over the design and use of the public sphere. The dramatic increase in the number of visible signs of collective commemoration calls for explanation. The emergence and development of a specific policy area, the decision-making process, as well as the perception and use of monuments, signs and sites of remembrance and other commemorative interventions are subjects to be investigated.

This research will tackle the following questions: Who are the protagonists of Vergangenheitspolitik in Vienna? How is it shaped and regulated? What meanings are ascribed to practices of remembrance? Which changes to the form and usage of the public sphere are ascertainable?

The research design foresees an interdisciplinary mix of methods to be applied along three research axes: 1. Investigation of the ways historical commemoration projects are proposed and negotiated, and the decision-making processes regarding their implementation with emphasis on mnemonic actors (network analysis of the Vergangenheitspolitik policy area); 2. Analysis of the significance ascribed to politics of remembrance on the municipal, national and transnational level (discourse analysis of the politics of history); 3. Finally, the analysis of public places as spaces of remembrance in the area of tension and interplay between politics of history and everyday use and perception (socio-spatial analysis).

The project staff will perform a quantitative survey of projects of remembrance as well as a qualitative analysis of six selected public spaces of remembrance (including the memorial to Wehrmacht deserters on Ballhausplatz, the heroes' monument on Heldenplatz, and the Shoah memorial on Judenplatz). Furthermore, three contrasting case studies will be carried out. The first will compare the results of the analysis of current Vergangenheitspolitik and politics of history with those that were operative during the first decade after 1945. The second will investigate the process of erecting a memorial to Wehrmacht deserters in Hamburg that proceeded simultaneously to the efforts in Vienna. The subject of the third will deal with informal cultures of remembrance manifested, for example, by graffiti in Viennese neighbourhoods.

Schlagworte:
Politics of remembrance, politics of history, mnemonic actors, public spaces,urban studies, national socialism, fascism, Vienna, Hamburg

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https://www.wwtf.at/funding/programmes/past/ssh/SSH13-044/