

# SIGNS OF COMMEMORATION OF THE DEPORTATION OF PEOPLE OF JEWISH ORIGIN AT THE NORDBAHNHOF IN STUTT GART

Memorials, signs of commemoration or monuments are coming more and more within the area of responsibility of architects, urban planners and artists.

For a long time there were reservations and also a particular skepticism towards an area of activity that in many cases was abused or misunderstood by politicians, the state, the church or the military (ill.2).

In recent years there have been an increasing number of competitions, with a number of decisions, and the results were intensely discussed. The reason for this revival of interest is definitely due to the new socio-political and cultural energies that have developed since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the transfer of the German capital to Berlin.

On the other hand it is recognized that with the slow “disappearance” of the perpetrators as well as the victims, the nature of “commemorating” or at least “remembering” has to be reflected on again.

Spielberg’s documentary on interviews with survivors is an attempt to record these experiences.

But also the conversion of areas of the German Railways and the military offer new opportunities for urban development, the renovation of the city gains new dimensions, new locations and their significance are newly discovered.

So it is happening in Stuttgart with the extensive railway area and the consequently possible planning for “Stuttgart 21” (ill.3).

The results of some competitions (e.g. The Memorial of the Killed Jews of Europe in Berlin, Fort Zinna etc.) have shown how difficult an approach to these tasks is.

Also the poster campaign for the Holocaust-Memorial in Berlin set up in spring/summer 2001 (with the misleading quotation “the Holocaust never happened...”) indicates a great insecurity in dealing with these questions (ill.4).

As a result of the charges of alleged incitement of the people etc. the posters had to be taken down the middle of August 2001.

And also a very different sign of memory, the World-War-Two Memorial presently being discussed in the United States (ill.5) for the so called “good war“ in Washington (...with a hint of Albert Speer...\*), refers to the existing difficulties of expression.



Abb.1



Abb.2



Abb.3



Abb.4



Abb.5

On the other hand, museum buildings such as the Jewish Museum by Daniel Libeskind in its symbolic power of expression seem like an admonishing sign to take on the task of the monument itself – possibly with the disadvantage, that it “keeps memories present and renews the knowledge, but only from Tuesday to Sunday between 9 am to 4 pm, behind closed blinds...”\*\* (ill.6-7).

In contrast to those more museum-like protected places outside the everyday life this workshop is an attempt to explore the question, to what extent “remembering” is possible in a public open space, on the authentic site and within an urban area under construction.

The list of failed answers and projects within the architecture of monuments (just think of the distorted scale of the Pieta in the “Neue Wache” in Berlin, ill.8) can certainly be extended – but we should try to find an adequate answer for an authentic site of deportation (this is the essentially different approach to many other projects on “artificial” sites). We should try to keep a critical view on the self-establishing “coming-to-terms-with” sector of the cultural business. In a city defined by moving images, advertisements and event culture, contemporary ways of expression should be discussed (ill.9) that also include the aspect of permanent effect in context with possibly changing conditions of reception.

To what extent the potential of the new media will contribute is a further matter of interest.

The information on the subject (like the afterwards installed information centre in connection with the Berlin Monument) should be investigated as well as the insecurity in dealing with reminding elements or the much discussed “Making commemoration religious”.

It is amazing that the long process of dispute over the Berlin Monument gained more public attention than the design that will finally be realised. Those controversial discussions have not even been taken into consideration with the “Topography of Terror” as a meeting place – the design of Peter Zumthor seems now to fail for financial reasons – the works were stopped, where at the same time the former concentration camps Ravensbrück or Sachsenhausen are deteriorating.

Authentic sites of remembrance (“Topography of Terror”, the house of the Wannsee Conference etc.) are losing contact with the awareness.

Shortly before building the Berlin Monument it is being discussed whether demonstrations of neo-nazis will be possible or tolerated, who will be able to visit and who will be allowed at the monument (ill.10), whether the monument will be fenced off, who will be in charge of security etc. There are all of these insecurities in handling the responsibility in general and in particular with this monumental project.



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Abb.7



Abb.8



Abb.9

Autobahnschild mit Aufschrift „Mahnmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas“ Verf.: Herz/Matz



Abb.10

Those aspects are certainly not transferable to our site and our subject matter in Stuttgart, also the available scale and area, as well as the authenticity of the site of the deportation should possibly support and allow other responses to the problem – monumentality and size cannot and must not be decisive.

The forgotten world of railway tracks and remains of platforms, railings etc. on the site should be a part of the appraisal. The significance of the railway as a means of transport has been used as an issue again and again (e.g. Hans Holleins contribution to the Berlin Monument), but these approaches often led to very literal results.

Whether monuments or the accompanying projects are only perceived in public when they are disputed should be another issue to discuss and to research on.

Beside all the questions, insecurities and misunderstandings there are also examples that despite their different meanings give answers, like the memorial site for Walter Benjamin in Port Bou by Dani Karavan, 1992-1994 (ill. 11); the Harburg Memorial against fascism, war, violence and for peace and human rights by Jochen Gerz and Esther Shalev-Gerz, 1986-1993 (ill. 12); the homage to Pablo Picasso by Antoni Tapies in Barcelona, 1983 (ill. 13); the work of Eduardo Chillida "Peines del viento" in San Sebastian, 1977 (ill. 14); or Aldo Rossi's square in front of the town hall with monument in Segrate, 1965 (ill. 15) etc.

More than that as part of an opening session we will study and discuss the results of Louis Kahn, Gropius, Terragni or Rossi, in coming to terms with the task of a memorial, monument, signs of memory or site of commemoration.

The definition or "naming" of the object (is it a memorial, a reminder, sign of commemoration, memorial site, or even a monument or something else) is already an integral part of the task.

Otherwise the organizers assume that the participants have looked closely into the subject matter in advance.

It should be possible to study the authentic site of deportation in detail (ill. 16), but concepts going beyond the actual site are also accepted.

There are no rules for a certain number within the student groups, or in relation to scale and means of presentation.

Nevertheless we do assume that within this first workshop the way or basic concept chosen by the participants will be presented clearly and comprehensible in a form of text, models, drawings, collages etc. and that students of different nationalities and disciplines will make an effort to find answers in open discussions.

\* Der Spiegel, Nr.23/ 2001

\*\* J. Fried



Abb.11



Abb.12



Abb.13



Abb.14



Abb.15



Abb.16

Translation by Hendrik Scholz

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