The Nazi Camps in the Norwegian Historical Culture

JON REITAN

> "When you look at these hammocks in three layers [...] when it has become a museum here [...] it really does not say much. Because the inmates are not here, the stench is not here [...]. In the night prisoners went out of the barrack and touched the electric fence, they could not take anymore. And in the morning dead prisoners were hanging on these fences [...]. These are things we experienced and which cannot be visualized by looking at these hammocks."[1]
>
> Holocaust survivor, Robert Savosnick, Auschwitz, November 1992.

A Holocaust survivor revisiting Auschwitz

In the fall of 1992, 50 years after the deportation from Norway, the 77 year old pediatrician returned to Auschwitz for the first time since the end of World War II. His second meeting with the former concentration camp was taped by a journalist. The tape is today located in the archives of the Jewish Museum in Trondheim.

Robert Savosnick returned to a camp landscape which at the time was in the limelight of intense international attention (Van Pelt/Dwork 1996). A few months later, parallel to Steven Spielberg's world wide

1 The Jewish Community of Trondheim 1992.

box office success "Schindler's list", a group of experts gathered to discuss the future of Auschwitz as a cultural memory, museum and site of learning (Marrus 1999). In spite of varying professional views on best practices for the preservation of the world's largest cemetery and memorial site, there was, and still exists, a broad consensus that the material presence of such disturbing remains benefits international society (Schofield/Johnson/Beck 2000).

A significant manifestation of this consensus is the fact that Auschwitz, as the only remnant of the Nazi camp system, is placed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. In its "Statement of significance", the communicative power of these material remains is highlighted as follows:

"At the centre of a huge landscape of human exploitation and suffering, the remains of the two camps of Auschwitz I and Auschwitz II-Birkenau, as well as its Protective Zone were placed on the World Heritage List as evidence of this inhumane, cruel and methodical effort to deny human dignity to groups considered inferior, leading to their systematic murder. The camps are a vivid testimony to the murderous nature of the anti-Semitic and racist Nazi policy that brought about the annihilation of more than 1.2 million people in the crematoria, 90 % of whom were Jews." (Unesco 2009)

Remains of camp barracks and buildings, crematoria, watch-towers and barbed wire fences tend to function as material evidence of the Nazi policies of mass murder. However, concrete localizations of the past also bear several inherent dilemmas and challenges. Perhaps it was the risk of intellectual simplifications Savosnick had in mind, when he exclaimed outside one of the barracks in Auschwitz I: *"When it has become a museum here, it really does not say much."* His statement can be interpreted as a reflection over the possibilities and limitations both of the physical site, of architecture and language. As such, Savosnick positioned himself in the centre of a discourse which artists, authors, film directors, academics and others have been grappling with ever since Theodor Adorno's famous dictum on writing poetry after Auschwitz (Adorno 1969; Friedländer 1992; Levi/Rothberg 2003).

The taped revisit to Auschwitz almost 20 years ago illuminates several historio-cultural aspects of the Holocaust. On the one hand, we can understand his, *the witness',* thoughts as a message of concern: What have we really learnt, or what is there possibly to learn, from the Holocaust? Perhaps he also alluded to the problems of inscribing Auschwitz into our present understanding of reality? Regardless of what kinds of, and how many, cultural and didactical representations we make about

the Holocaust, the past itself is irrevocably gone – *"the prisoners are missing, the stench is missing"*. In my opinion, the dialogue between Robert Savosnick and a fellow traveler in the ruins of Auschwitz constitutes a small image of a complex interplay between private and collective memories, between consumption and production of history, between past realities and representations of the same. It is this interplay which the following text will discuss, empirically based on some of the former Nazi camp complexes established on Norwegian soil during WWII.[2]

The afterlife of the prison camps in Norway

The postwar European memorial sites which rose from the ruins of the Nazi camp system have been formative for the present iconographic status of the Holocaust in the Western World (Levy/Schneider 2002: 87). Particularly in the last few years, parallel to the inevitable passing away of the survivors, these landscapes have become increasingly important as evidence of truth of the Nazi mass crimes (Engelhardt 2002: 18). In Germany alone there are over 100 so-called *Gedenkstätten* in remaining physical environments from the concentration camps – with Sachsenhausen, Dachau, Neuengamme, Buchenwald and Bergen Belsen among the most well-known. Equivalent sites constitute significant cultural symbols in other countries as well, such as Terezin in the Czech Republic, Froeslevlejren in Denmark, Westerbork in the Netherlands or Mauthausen in Austria (Lutz 2009).[3] And in the indisputable centre of this characteristic European landscape we find Auschwitz, which attracts more than one million visitors a year. The museum and the memorial site symbolize not only a place name and the main scene of the implementation of the Holocaust. Auschwitz has also become a concept for absolute evil, close to incomparable with other genocides and crimes

2 Nazi Germany established close to 500 prison camps in Norway between 1940-45. A total number of 150 000 people were incarcerated in these facilities during the war. Among these, there were around 44 000 Norwegian political prisoners, of whom 8 500 were deported to concentration camps on the continent. Furthermore, 100 000 Soviet Prisoners of War (POWs), 4 200 Yugoslavian POWs and 1 600 Polish POWs were deported to Norway from 1941 onwards. About 15 000 East European POWs died in so-called Stalags, numerous satellite camps and work battalions in Norway – either by execution or as a consequence of systematic maltreatment, exhaustion, starvation and disease. These numbers exceeded the total Norwegian military and civilian loss of lives during WWII. See Soleim 2005.

3 Analyses of such landscapes can be found in Bodemann 1998; Marcuse 2001; Young 1993.

against humanity – a phenomenon which sociologist Ronit Lentin has labeled *the Auschwitz code* (Karlsson 2005; Lentin 1992).

The majority of the Jews who were deported to Auschwitz from all corners of Europe had already prior to the transports experienced suffering and death in camps and ghettos in their home countries. Most of the deported Norwegian Jews in the fall of 1942 and winter of 1943 were incarcerated either in Berg prison camp outside of Tönsberg, Sydspissen prison camp near Tromsö, Bredtvedt prison and Grini prison camp in Oslo, or the SS camp Falstad outside of Trondheim.[4]

It was on the remnants of the latter camp complex where the Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Jonas Gahr Støre, inaugurated the Falstad Centre in October 2006. This institution is today a state-sponsored study centre for the history of imprisonment during WWII and modern human rights issues. The Centre, located in the former main building of the SS Lager Falstad, offers its visitors exhibitions, educational programs, research facilities, a library, seminar rooms and full accommodation.[5] During the official opening of the centre, the foreign minister reflected on the dynamic functions of cultural buildings, and that it remains in our power to change their meaning and content:

"Buildings, monuments and symbols are established through choice and action. It is also in our power to change or expand the meanings and contents of these symbols: to become monuments, memorials, sites of experience, narratives, communication and education. This is what is now happening to Falstad. We are *doing* something with the site, which is now to become a national study centre for the history of WWII imprisonment and human rights. Many years of hard work have come – not to an end – but to a new beginning." (Støre 2006)

I understand this statement as a call to avoid memorial sites being depicted as static expressions of a definite, collective memory. These reflections are also shared by the linguist James Young. In his book *The Texture of Memory* he calls for memorial sites where material, political and esthetical factors merge and contribute to dialogue and active social commitment (Young 1993: x). It is within this image we must position the landscape and the institution Falstad, which lately has been subject

4 772 Norwegian Jews were deported during WW II. Only 34 survived. Altogether 230 families were annihilated. See Justis- og politidepartementet 1998.

5 On behalf of the Norwegian Government, the restoration works were undertaken by the owner of the building, The Directorate of Public Construction and Property, in the years 2004-06. More here: www.falstadsenteret.no.

to several public and even heated debates. The controversies around Falstad have had both historical, conceptual overtones – for instance with regard to what epochs of the site's history to include in the research and educational activities of the centre – but also material, like the shaping of the memorial in the Falstad Forest and the renovation of existing building structures at Falstad.[6]

In a broader postwar perspective, however, these remains of the Nazi camp system established in Norway have existed only in the margins of the national historical culture.[7] This phenomenon has a complex background. In the following I will highlight a few central lines of development.

The historio-cultural exit of the camps

In 1985 the author and famous Holocaust survivor Primo Levi wrote about the relationship between the presence of the camp facilities and the spirit of the times:

"If we had been asked as we were liberated: 'What do you want to do with these infected huts, these nightmare barbed wire fences, these multiple cesspits, these ovens, these gallows?' I think most of us would have said, 'Away with it all. Flatten it, raze it to the ground, together with Nazism and everything that is German.'" (Levi 2005: 82)

To a certain extent, this appeared to be a real scenario in parts of Norway during the peace summer of 1945. Particularly hit by this mental condition were the camps for East European prisoners-of-war in Northern Norway, where the density of camps was superior to other regions of the country. Tearing down watch-towers, barbed wire fences and burning camp barracks might be interpreted as collective acts of symbolism,

6 Falstad has since the 1920s functioned as a special school for delinquent boys, as an SS Camp during the War Years 1941-45, as an internment camp for Norwegian Nazis and war criminals, from 1950 onwards yet again as a special school for so-called mentally disabled pupils, and finally as a museum and memorial site. One of the Falstad debates was the empirical focus of the PhD dissertation by Sem 2009.

7 This fact does by no means indicate an overall weak Norwegian tradition of WWII remembrance. On the contrary, no other period in our history has given rise to a corresponding amount of memorials and monuments. These can be found everywhere in the public sphere, and they have been inaugurated with great momentum in postwar Norway. See Eriksen 1995.

maybe also as a continuation of the war – this time against the raw materiality of the Nazi past.

These concrete, physical actions to remove camp remnants from the North-Norwegian cultural landscape were soon followed by the harsh realities of the Cold War. With the repatriation of 80 000 Soviet POWs from Norway, and an increasing suspiciousness of Russian espionage, this narrative of suffering and mass death was rapidly positioned in the shadowlands of the Norwegian historical culture. One of the major manifestations of the Cold War politics was the so called Operation Asfalt, a state-directed operation where the remains of dead Soviet POWs in the northern counties Nordland, Troms and Finnmark were dug up, collected in large sacks of asphalt and transported to the war cemetery Tjøtta on the Helgeland Coast (Soleim 2005). This action was described by the Soviet government as an "insult to the memory of Soviet soldiers", and it caused significant diplomatic turbulence between Norway and the Soviet Union. Only after the dissolution of the Soviet state did the climate of memory politics improve.

Instrumental to the public disinterest in this catastrophe, is probably furthermore the fact that 360 Norwegians, among them many returned Waffen-SS soldiers from the Eastern Front, served as guards in German POW camps. Some of these camps had extreme death rates among the prisoner population. A former Yugoslavian POW recalls in his memoirs:

"These Hird guards [the political soldiers of the Norwegian Nazi Party, Nasjonal Samling, authors note] were more dangerous than the SS guards. They beat and tormented us; they shot us like sparrows, in the work commandos and on the way there." (Reitan 2007)

The public marginalization of this catastrophic experience represents one, among several, instances of a lack of elasticity in the Norwegian historical culture. However, there is reason to believe that new research and other historical products about the Norwegian Waffen-SS volunteers will contribute to new ways of interpreting, representing and using WWII.[8]

With regard to another camp category in Norway, the so called *Polizeihäftlingslager,* where mainly political prisoners were incarcerated, it is to some extent surprising that these landscapes have occupied a modest position in the Norwegian historical culture. The sites in many ways reflected the catastrophic and painful consequences of resistance

8 The Holocaust Centre in Oslo is also conducting a research project on the Norwegian SS Volunteers, which will be finalised in 2010. Other recent publications on this issue are Christie 2008 and Veum 2009.

and fierce fight against the Nazi system of terror – in other words, the nucleus of the Norwegian *Gründungsmythos*. The Polizeihäftlingslager perfectly projected an unambiguous moral, dichotomical system of "good" (prisoners from the Norwegian Resistance Movement) and "evil" (the brutal German SS camp regimes). From this angle, there is a strange disparity between, for instance, the history of Grini on the one hand, the largest prison camp in Norway with a population of close to 20 000 prisoners, a war experience which has produced many memoir books, and on the other hand the afterlife of the camp landscape Grini.[9] The material memory of the prison camp is today mediated through two monuments, the last one inaugurated by the HM Crown Prince Harald in 1990, and a low-budget, and non-professional museum exhibition, located in the former *Abteilung Vermittlung* of the camp. The Grini Museum was opened on May 8th 1997.[10]

One possible explanation for this can relate to the 93 000 Norwegians investigated under suspicion of treason. To meet the extensive demands for space during the up-coming war trials, 200 prison camps were established – many of them on the remains of abandoned Nazi installations (Nilssen 2008). Several of the largest camp complexes during the war were transformed into permanent internment camps for Norwegian Nazis and sympathizers – such as Grini, Falstad, Espeland near Bergen, Krøkebærsletta in Tromsdalen and Berg near Tønsberg.

In the summer of 1945, pragmatic spatial arguments and solutions seemed to merge into symbolic ones. Newspapers were on the one hand filled with articles on the lack of space within the Norwegian prison administration. In the local newspaper Vestfold Arbeiderblad we can read about camp Berg on May 24th 1945: "The police are still arresting the traitors. But there is a need for space for the arrested. The police are therefore now working on expanding the prisons. At Berg there are now 400 men, but they intend to incarcerate 100 more in there" (Bugge 2001: 197). On the other hand, there was an obvious symbolism in placing Nazis behind the same barbed wire fences where "good" Norwegians had suffered during the war. And the most central camp complexes were renamed, to signal new meanings and avoid any possible linkage and comparison between the political prisoners, the "men of honor" imprisoned in these sites 1940-45, and the "quislings" populating the same

9 Among the most famous books about Grini are those by Lange/Schreiner 1946-7 and Nansen 1946.

10 The museum does not have a web page. Information of the museum and opening hours, Sundays 12-15, can be found on the web pages of the local authorities, Bærum Kommune, www.baerum.kommune.no.

physical environments after the war. As such, Grini, Falstad and Berg were renamed into Ilebu, Innherad and Sem prison camps respectively.

In relation to the symbolic and real processes of transformations during the summer of 1945, I have found no references to the tragic imprisonment of the Jews prior to the deportations to Auschwitz. A number of emotional articles about the new names and functions of the camp facilities alluded to "the strong, national resistance movement", not to the Nazi mass murder of Jews and East European POWs. And it is former political prisoners and resistance fighters who express themselves, in particular through the interest groups "Griniklubben", "Falstadkomiteen" or "Norsk Samband av Politiske Fanger" – later to be renamed "Foreningen av politiske fanger". It was also the latter which first initiated the establishment of the Grini Museum. Many war veteran organizations closed down their activities during the Anniversary of Liberation in 2005. Until now, there is regrettably no substantial research on the vast archives which the veterans left behind, and on the positions and functions of these actors in the Norwegian historical culture.

Within this specific context it seems easy to draw parallels from the early afterlife of the camps to other categories of historical products from the same period of time. Significant features in the formatting of the public uses of the war past can, for instance, be found in the three volume work "Norges krig", published in the years 1947-1950. In an analysis of this book, historian Synne Corell writes that it is loaded with linguistic and harmonic references to a Norwegian fellowship community (Corell 2007). According to Corell, several groups of people are placed outside of a "we-category". Norwegian Jews are practically excluded from the overall narrative, while members of the Norwegian Nazi Party are labeled as social or moral dregs of society. Furthermore, the East European tragedy unfolding on Norwegian soil from 1941 onwards is hardly mentioned by the authors.[11]

In a national, consolidating process of reconstruction, there was no room for the two prisoner categories in Norway that fell victims to the Nazi genocidal policy. None of them could be integrated into a morally edifying image of resistance fighters and heroes, a feature which historian Ole Kristian Grimnes in 1990 called the "national syndrome of consensus" (Grimnes 1990). According to Grimnes, the Norwegian wartime experience served as a marker of a positive, national formation of identity throughout the postwar years. This essential feature seems to merge with the findings of historian Pieter Lagrou in *The Legacy of Nazi Oc-*

11 Corresponding patterns of inclusion – exclusion can be found in school textbooks. See for instance Skarsem 2007.

cupation, where he demonstrates surprisingly many points of resemblance regarding how western countries constructed a national epos after WWII. Within the establishment of so-called patriotic cultures of remembrance there simply was no place for the Jewish catastrophe, because this narrative was not usable in producing edifying meaning (Lagrou 2000: 2).

In addition to this, there is a perspective of cultural memories, or perhaps – rather a lack of it. Archive research has so far proven that relevant Norwegian authorities after the war remained indifferent to these camp landscapes as cultural memories or future environments of learning.[12] In an extensive archive of the Ministry of Justice and the Police, which managed the former camp facilities in the early postwar period, a letter from the director of Ilebu prison camp to the Ministry, dated September 3rd 1948, might serve to illustrate the status of the camp landscapes after the war:

"The watch-towers surrounding the inner camp area at Ilebu, built by the Germans, are – except from the towers in each corner – not in use. The towers that are placed between these corner towers obstruct the view, which makes it difficult to monitor. For this reason we suggest to tear down the towers, and possibly reuse the materials here at Ilebu."[13]

This letter also illustrates a postwar climate where the country was hit by a general lack of commodities. At times, this deficit was so precarious that barrack buildings in partly good shape were dismantled and used for other purposes. This happened repeatedly both at Falstad and Grini. For instance, a letter from a shoe factory in Halden to the postwar camp administration at Ilebu says: "We know from the daily press that dismantled barracks from Ilebu are put up for sale. We need barracks for working houses; there is a glaring shortage of rooms for workers in our company."[14]

Around 1950, the majority of the internment camps for Norwegian Nazis were closed down, only to be given new functions – as public school institutions (Falstad), regular prisons (Grini) or community homes (Berg, today, in 2010, a so-called open prison). As such, the ma-

12 This subject will be elaborated more in my ongoing PhD dissertation, Norske bilder av tilintetgjørelsen. Holocaust og historiekultur, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim. The project will be published in 2011.

13 Riksarkivet. Fengselsstyrets landssvikavdeling, D II, Da – Sakarkiv, sak 21, eske Da 0065 "Ilebu". Letter dated 03.09.1948.

14 Riksarkivet. Fengselsstyrets landssvikavdeling, D II, Da – Sakarkiv, sak 21, eske Da 0065 "Ilebu". Letter dated 15.12.1948.

jor camp sites progressively were taken out of their historical, World War context. These many-faceted layers of different and changing meanings deposited in the camps' history of effects arguably corrupted the potentials of these sites as stable, moral, didactical and political points of identification. In particular, it seems that there were, for several years, difficult growing conditions for memorial arenas in landscapes overcrowded with the losers and traitors of the war. It is probably in the combination of these factors where we can find the answers to why the prison camps soon were consigned to the dark shadows of the national historical culture – in contrast to other history products from the same time, like books and memoirs, TV series, films and unambiguous monuments commemorating the heroes of the war, as elaborated by Zander in this volume.

The return of the camp landscapes

Elsewhere in Europe there are examples of preservation of camp installations from the late 1940s. Most often education and democratization formed an ideological and moral back curtain to cultural memory projects of this kind. However, several have born fruit only since the 1970s (Marcuse 2001). In Norway, these historio-cultural movements took place at a much later stage. How can we explain that the former Nazi installations have again engaged the Norwegian public interest? And in what kind of narratives are these sites molded today, over 60 years after their disappearance from the public eye?

The decade between 1990 and 2000 represented in general a paradigm with regard to the level of public consciousness around former Nazi institutions in the country. Several new centers, like the Centre for Studies of the Holocaust and Religious Minorities in Oslo, the Nordsjøfartmuseet in Telavåg, Falstadsenteret, Nord-Norsk Fredssenter in Narvik and Stiftelsen Arkivet in Kristiansand were founded with some form of state support in this period. Research, remembrance and education constitute core institutional practices.[15] In spite of variations regarding historical background and institutional profiling, all of them communicate the following main educational target: The wartime experience is to be used as a tool for stimulating the fight against racism and intolerance, and for human rights, democratization and humanitarian commitment. In other words, nurturing and safeguarding the memory of

15 The North Norwegian Peace Center in Narvik 1990, The Espeland Prison Camp Foundation in Bergen 2000, Falstad Memorial and Human Rights Centre 2000, The Archive Foundation in Kristiansand 2001.

WWII is quite simply not enough to legitimize their public function, existence and state sponsoring. For instance, the Archive Foundation in Kristiansand, located in the former Gestapo headquarters in the city, is promoting itself as a centre for "history communication and peacebuilding", Falstad is a "memorial site and human rights center", while the North Norwegian Peace Centre in Narvik, localized in close proximity to the former death camp Beisfjord, profiles a bilateral focus on "peace" and "war memorialization".[16] This mindset, imprinted in all new memorial site concepts in Norway, seems to attract increasing attention from the state educational sector. As such, they might to some extent appear like competing elements to the older institution Foundation White Buses to Auschwitz, which in the past two decades has sent around 130 000 school pupils to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Accompanied by former concentration camp inmates, the articulated target of these travels is for the students to learn, existentially and morally, from the experiences of the Holocaust.[17]

There are numerous other examples to illuminate this phenomenon of practical-political uses of history in Norway today. When the foreign minister spoke at the opening of the Falstad Centre in October 2006, his speech contained several temporal shifts and references from the extreme realities of the Nazi camps and the SS camp at Falstad, to contemporary issues of treatment of prisoners, international binding conventions and the human rights profile of the Norwegian Government:

"Everyone imprisoned at Falstad, and everyone today incarcerated at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba, in the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, or other places, and in all places not carrying recognisable names: They have the right to humanitarian treatment, and to be protected against injustice, torture, and against degrading and inhumane actions and punishment." (Støre 2006)

In the National State Budget for 2009, the respective memorial institutions were organized in a separate Chapter, Chap. 255 "Grants to Peace- and Human Rights Centres". A corresponding use of history is clearly mirrored also here, when the so called KUF committee in the National Parliament (Church, Education and Research) noted that preservation and access to the past is an important task to "avoid a repetition of history":

"The committee notes that in order to understand phenomena in our own time, such as denouncing, actualized for instance in Burma lately, it would be useful

16 More here: www.fred.no and here: www.stiftelsen-arkivet.no.
17 www.hvitebusser.no

if topics like 'denouncement' were included in the presentation of World War II. Furthermore, the committee notes that this could be arranged for instance at the Falstad Memorial and Human Rights Centre." (KUF 2008)

Furthermore, the introduction of this chapter outlines in particular the relationship between the material evidence of the past and the fact that in a short time there will be no survivors left:

"The KUF committee requested in the Budget Proposition S nr. 12 (2007-08) a case depicting the different perspectives of the varying memorial sites, and discussing the challenges of a time when we no longer have the witnesses among us. The Ministry has asked Vox [an agency of the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, my remark] to discuss with the Peace and Human Rights centers how to meet the National Parliament's call in relation to the time witnesses." (The Ministry of Education and Research 2008)

Evidently, the new memorial sites seem – at least to some extent – to inherit a role as "new witnesses" in an ongoing generational paradigm shift. This development is arguably an expression of collective wishes, and not least needs, to stabilize the memory of the Holocaust and the Second World War in otherwise changeable times. This "Era of the Witness", as this epoch is labeled by historian Annette Wieviorka (2006), has left several imprints in Norway.[18] When the editor of the national newspaper Aftenposten in 2007 wrote that "we [...] are in the middle of a paradigm shift – without quite realizing the consequences of it", he was referring to the witnesses from WWII and the fact that they soon will be gone.[19] A kind of powerlessness and anxiety reflected on the surface of the text: What awaits the collective "us" when there are no witnesses left?

In the fall of 2008, the Falstad Memorial and Human Rights Centre conducted geophysical investigations in the original camp area, targeting to uncover barrack foundations and other "things" originating from the SS camp. On September 29th 2008, director of the centre, Tone Jörstad, was interviewed in the biggest newspaper in Norway, Verdens Gang. Under the headline "Researchers intend to document Nazi traces", she was quoted as saying: "The traces and remnants of evil must be secured, the existence of the camps must be documented and we need to establish

18 For instance, the bestselling book, Tidsvitner – fortellinger fra Auschwitz og Sachsenhausen, was selected as "the most important book of the year" by the readers of the newspaper Morgenbladet in 2006: Jakob Lothe and Anette Storeide, ed., Tidsvitner – fortellinger fra Auschwitz og Sachsenhausen, Oslo: Gyldendal, 2006.

19 Aftenposten, 20.10.2007.

a plan of preservation which must be integrated into the National Cultural Heritage Act." (Verdens Gang 2008) The examinations at Falstad continued in August 2009, including works to uncover unidentified mass graves in the former execution site – the Falstad Forest. Furthermore, 2010 marks the beginning of a plan to establish a new site of learning and contemplation in the old camp area surrounding the main building at Falstad. It remains to be seen how this project is conceptualized. Anyhow, in light of already ongoing processes it seems as if contemporary archaeology will constitute a major element in the forthcoming Falstad memorial landscape.

A smaller, but still similar, cultural heritage project is under development at the Grini Museum in Oslo. In the 1950s, one of the original barracks from the camp was replaced as a storage building in the municipality of Bærum. Today, local politicians have committed themselves to returning the barrack to its original surroundings in the Grini landscape. The aim of the project is to exhibit objects made by former Grini inmates in the barrack, in order to integrate the building into the existing exhibition concept. A local politician gave the following statement on the matter:

"It is important to speed up the process, so that we can finally return the Grini barrack to its original surroundings close to the museum. The war veterans are passing away, and therefore it is even more important to preserve history when those who carry it with them are gone. The Grini Museum constantly receives donations from families of Grini ex-prisoners. It would be a shame if we were to lose the opportunity to preserve the historical memorial site Grini and the personal memories from the former inmates." (Senterpartiet 2007)

In the contemporary Berg landscape, from where 227 Norwegian Jews were deported to Auschwitz during the war, only the former kitchen barrack, a few prison cells and barrack foundations are all that remain from the authentic camp landscape. In cooperation with Berg prison, the Vestfold Fylkesmuseum in Tönsberg wishes to develop an exhibition concept on the history of the camp in situ, mainly based on original "things" and objects found in and around the remnants of the camp. According to the project leader this exhibition will open in 2010.[20] The main target of the project is to "put Berg on the map", thus making manifest the ambition to convey lessons about the Nazi past and to push the history of the site and the Norwegian Holocaust towards the centre of our collective memory (Tønsberg Blad 2008).

20 Conversation with Curator Rune Sørlie, Vestfold Fylkesmuseum, Tönsberg, April 2009.

A consensus-like highlighting of the cultural, moral and educational qualities of the material presence of the past seems to be a central indicator of our historio-cultural climate today. The historian Ewa Domanska speaks about a renewed, human "enchantment with things" and a "longing for reality". Things, or objects, appear as crucial in the making and legitimating of human identities, and as such function as active agents of social life: "The renewed interest in things signals a rejection of constructivism and textualism and the longing for what is 'real', where 'regaining' the object is conceived as a means for re-establishing contact with reality." (Domanska 2006: 337-348) There is an obvious correlation between the advanced, general position of existential matters of life and death, good and evil in our cultural sphere, and the establishing of memorial sites related to catastrophic experiences, such as natural disasters, wars, terror and genocide. Identifying the modern age with extreme tragedies and occurrences is described by sociologist Kai Erickson as "one of the social and psychological signatures of our time" (Erickson 1994: 240).

There is, however, some sort of paradox, or antagonism, in the close to obsessive attitudes towards the value of specific, authentic "things" on the one hand, like archaeological findings of barrack foundations, and the general historio-cultural pattern of universalizing and globalizing the wartime history on the other. In describing the genocide of European Jewry as a representation of an emerging "transnational political morality" and a "meta-narrative for suffering", historian Helmut Dubiel argues that the Holocaust has constituted a new practice of "a culture of apology" by leading Western politicians (Dubiel 2003). In this particular context it is interesting to register that the genocide has been incorporated into the narratives of the new Norwegian memorial sites, even in cases where historical lines of connection to the Holocaust are rather remote. This condition is manifested not least through rituals of commemoration, where the international Holocaust Day of Remembrance, on each January 27th, nowadays attracts far more medial attention than the traditional dates of April 9th and Day of Liberation, May 8th.

The gradual incorporation of the Holocaust in the profiling of the new Norwegian memorial institutions can obviously be seen in light of international historio-cultural movements. Many argue that there has been a so-called reversal of remembrance in the last decades, where the Holocaust has taken over the functions of conventionalized victim roles and narratives of resistance (Alexander 2002). The historian Christoph Cornelissen writes that the Holocaust in the 21st Century "einen Dreh- und Angelpunkt für die Formierung öffentlicher Erinnerungskulturen in Europa und Nordamerika abgegeben hat" (Cornelissen 2003). Daniel

Levy and Natan Sznaider describes the genocide as a container for a cosmopolitan or universal practice of commemoration (Levy/Sznaider 2001), while historian Dan Diner seven years ago anticipated an establishment of a common European canon of remembrance in the image of the Holocaust: "The tendencies presently dominant indicates, that this will happen against the backdrop of the memory of the Holocaust as the constituting, in effect the inaugural event of a commonly shared European memory." (Diner 2003: 42)

Regarding national, historio-cultural energies, the restitutions at the end of the 1990s were undoubtedly among the most momentous. It all started with the article "Det norske jøderanet" ["The hold-up against the Norwegian Jews"], published in the newspaper Dagens Næringsliv by journalist Bjørn Westlie, on May 27th 1995. The article, dealing with the economic liquidations of Jewish property by the Quisling regime, was printed in a context which usually tends to preserve national master narratives. The unconventional perspective of Westlie therefore reached the media limelight, both on a national and international scale. Combined with pressure from abroad, the article activated a movement with a considerable effect on the position of the Holocaust in the Norwegian historical culture.

On June 26th 1998, three years after the article was published, the National Parliament Proposition nr. 82 was accepted in a Cabinet Meeting after recommendations by the Ministry of Justice and Police. The contents of the Proposition, named *"Et historisk og moralsk oppgjør med behandlingen i Norge av den økonomiske likvidasjon av den jødiske minoritet under den 2. verdenskrig"*, referred to a preceding work published as a White Paper called *"Inndragning av jødisk eiendom i Norge under den 2. verdenskrig"*.[21] The historical and moral restitution had both an individual and a collective part. The first constituted a sum of money paid out to former victims of anti-Jewish actions as a token of acknowledgment, the latter, collective part, was divided into three separate sections: a one-time allocation with the main target of preserving Jewish culture in future Norway, another amount going to Jewish cultural actions abroad, and finally the financing of a national research center, today known as the Centre for Studies of the Holocaust and Religious Minorities (HL-senteret), localized in the former villa of Vidkun Quisling.

21 Justis- og politidepartementet 1998, and Norges Offentlige Utredninger 1997. The background chapter in the Proposition refers explicitly to the public attention caused by Bjørn Westlie's article in Dagens Næringsliv.

Conclusion

In the book *Echoes of the Holocaust,* historian Klas-Göran Karlsson writes that the Swedish Government Project "The Living History Forum" was a success with impact on several international levels. The establishment and the actions of this institution put Sweden on the world map, and deserve to be called a paradigm shift in the Swedish historical culture (Karlsson/Zander 2003: 15ff). The Norwegian restitution, and its history of effects, obtained a corresponding effect in Norway. In a time where several international movements of compensation (Karlsson 2008: 58) were under way, Norway was the first country to conclude a process with such an economic and moral scope. This fact was dramatically underscored when the country in 2003 became a full member of the institution Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research (ITF). In 2009 Norway occupied the Chairmanship of the ITF.

In 2007, in Prague, all member states of the ITF adopted a so-called "Historic site Resolution", highlighting the importance of identifying, marking and preserving sites of destruction – be they camp landscapes, ghettos or execution sites during the Holocaust – for posterity. The examples from Grini, Berg, Falstad and finally the ITF, illustrate clearly the reinforced national and international history-cultural positions of memorial sites. Our present "enchantment with things", the globalization and universalization of the Holocaust together form solid political, social and cultural foundations to the once forgotten camp landscapes and environments. Still, it seems rather striking that along this main current of positive attitudes towards these disturbing remains of the past, there has hardly existed any counter flow, at least not in public Norway. For instance, there is little Norwegian research analyzing effects of school pupils visiting memorial sites from WWII. Do teaching and excursions to Falstad, Grini or Berg strengthen the democratic, tolerant and humanitarian stock of 15 year old pupils? Will travelling with the Foundation White Buses to Auschwitz immunize youth against xenophobia? By mirroring the experiences of the Holocaust in modern narratives on topics such as informing or contemporary policies towards refugees, is there an inherent risk to assess the past ahistorically, and furthermore perhaps contribute to the establishing of black and white images of the world of yesterday and today? Can such juxtapositions of the past and present inflict upon us a blindness of perspectives in any way? A comprehensive research project "The Role of commemoration sites, original sites and historical museums in Holocaust Education and Human Rights Education in the EU", conducted by the Living History Forum with vast

international expertise on board, was published in January 2010.[22] Hopefully this project, illuminating questions and subjects as presented above, can stimulate future Norwegian research within this field of expertise.

According to historian Tony Kushner, it is precisely the abstracted, universal aspect of the Holocaust which in the past few decades has made the Holocaust so usable in the liberal world of imagination – centered on values like pluralism, tolerance and diversity (Kushner 1994: 272ff). In regard to future perceptions, negotiations and uses of past Nazi relics, I think the former camp landscapes will occupy even more prominent positions and functions than is the case today. It is probably the combination of these factors which stimulated Foreign Minister Jonas Gahr Støre when he addressed former camp inmates, their children and grandchildren at the opening of the Falstad Memorial in 2006: "Buildings, monuments and symbols are established through choice and action. It is also in our power to change or expand the meanings and contents of these symbols [...]. Many years of hard work have come – not to an end – but to a new beginning."

References

Adorno, Theodor (1969): Prismen. Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft, Frankfurt am Main.

Alexander, Jeffrey C. (2002): "On the Social Construction of Moral Universals. The Holocaust from War Crime to Trauma Drama". In: European Journal of Social Theory, Volume 5, No. 1, 2002, pp 5-85.

Bodemann, Y. Michael (1998): "Eclipse of Memory: German Representations of Auschwitz in the Early Postwar Period". In: New German Critique, No. 75, 1998, pp. 75-89.

Bugge, Svein (2001): Skyggene fra Quislings hønsegård. Den norske konsentrasjonsleiren på Berg i Vestfold, Færder Forlag, Larvik.

Corell, Synne (2007): "Hva er historien om krigen? Historiografien om den tyske okkupasjonen av Norge under annen verdenskrig". In: Fortid, 2/2007, pp16-21.

Cornelissen, Christoph (2003): "Was heisst Erinnerungskultur? Begriff-Methoden-Perspektiven". In: Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht (54), 10/2003, pp. 548-563.

22 Fundamental Rights Agency homepage: www.fra.europa.eu.

Christie, Nils (2008): "Serberleirene i Nord-Norge. Gjensyn med en studie av fangevokterne". In: Bernt Hagtvet (ed.),Folkemordenes svarte bok, Universitetsforlaget, Oslo, pp 461-468.

Diner, Dan (2003): "Restitution and Memory: The Holocaust in European Political Cultures". In: New German Critique, no. 90, Taboo, Trauma, Holocaust, 2003, pp. 36-44.

Domanska, Ewa (2006): "The Material presence of the past". In: History and Theory 45/2006, pp. 337-348.

Dubiel Helmut (2003): "The Remembrance of the Holocaust as a Catalyst for a Transnational Ethic?". In: New German Critique, No. 90, Taboo, Trauma, Holocaust, 2003, pp. 59-70.

Engelhardt, Isabelle (2002): A Topography of Memory. Representations of the Holocaust at Dachau and Buchenwald in Comparison with Auschwitz, Yad Vashem and Washington DC, P.I.E. Peter Lang, Brüssel.

Erickson Kai (1994): A New Species of Trouble: Explorations in Disaster, Trauma and Community, Norton, New York.

Eriksen Anne (1995): Det var noe annet under krigen, Pax Forlag, Oslo.

Friedländer Saul (ed.) (1992): Probing the Limits of Representation. Nazism and the 'Final Solution', Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachussetts, London, England.

Grimnes, Ole Kristian (1990): "Historieskrivingen om okkupasjonen. Det nasjonale konsensussyndromets gjennomslagskraft". In: Nytt Norsk Tidsskrift, 2/1990, pp. 108-121

Hoffmann, Detlef, (ed.) (1998): Das Gedächtnis der Dinge. KZ-Relikte und KZ-Denkmäler 1945-1995, Frankfurt.

Justis- og politidepartementet (1998): Stortingsproposisjon nr. 82 (1997-98), Et historisk og moralsk oppgjør med behandlingen i Norge av den økonomiske likvidasjon av den jødiske minoritet under den 2. verdenskrig, Oslo.

Karlsson, Klas-Göran (2008): Med folkmord i fokus – Förintelsens plats i den europeiska historiekulturen, Forum för Levande Historie, Skriftserie 6: 2008, Stockholm, http://www.levandehistoria.se/files/skriftserie_6_web.pdf.

Karlsson, Klas-Göran (2005): "Förintelsen som historiekulturellt fenomen – en översikt". In: Historisk Tidskrift, 4/05, pp.721-733.

Karlsson, Klas-Göran/Zander, Ulf (eds.) (2003): Echoes of the Holocaust. Historical Cultures in contemporary Europe, Nordic Academic Press, Lund.

KUF [The Standing Committee on Education, Research and Church Affairs] (2008): Innstilling fra kirke-, utdannings- og forskningskomiteen om bevilgninger på statsbudsjettet for 2009, kapitler un-

der Kunnskapsdepartementet og Kultur- og kirkedepartementet, samt forskningskapitler under Nærings- og handelsdepartementet, Fiskeri- og kystdepartementet og Landbruks- og matdepartementet (rammeområde 16), http://www.stortinget.no/no/Saker-og-publikasjoner/Publikasjoner/Innstillinger/Budsjett/2008-2009/innb-200809-012/?lvl=0

Kushner, Tony (1994): The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination, Blackwell, Oxford.

Lagrou, Pieter (2000): The Legacy of Nazi Occupation. Patriotic Memory and National Recovery in Western Europe, 1945-65, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Lange, August/Schreiner, Johan (eds.) (1946-47): Griniboken, Volume 1 and 2, Gyldendal, Oslo.

Lentin Ronit (1992): Postmemory, received history and the return of the Auschwitz code, http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2002-09-06-lentin-en.html.

Levi, Neil/Rothberg, Michael (eds.) (2003): The Holocaust: Theoretical Readings, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh.

Levi, Primo (1985): The Black Hole of Auschwitz, Polity Press, Cambridge.

Levy, Daniel/Sznaider, Nathan (2001): Erinnerung im globalen Zeitalter: Der Holocaust, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main.

Lothe, Jakob/ Storeide, Anette (eds.) (2006): Tidsvitner – fortellinger fra Auschwitz og Sachsenhausen, Gyldendal, Oslo.

Lutz, Thomas (2009): Dear Internet Visitor! Welcome to the memorial museums database, http://www.memorial-museums.net/WebObjects/ITF

Marcuse, Harold (2001): Legacies of Dachau. The Uses and Abuses of a Concentration Camp 1933-2001, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Marrus, Michael (1999): "The future of Auschwitz: A case for the ruins". In: Peter Hayes (ed.), Lessons and Legacies, Vol. III, Memory, Memorialization, and Denial, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, Illinois, pp 169-177.

Nansen, Odd (1946): Fra dag til dag, Oslo, Dreyer.

Nilssen, Trond Risto/Reitan, Jon (2008): Falstad – nazileir og landssvikfengsel, Tapir Akademisk Forlag, Trondheim.

Norges Offentlige Utredninger (1997): NOU-rapport 1997:22. Inndragning av jødisk eiendom i Norge under den 2. verdenskrig.

Reitan, Jon (2007): Ansikt til Ansikt, Script, permanent museum exhibition of the Falstad Centre, Levanger.

Schofield, A. J./Johnson, William Gray/Beck, Colleen M. (eds.) (2000): Matériel Culture. The archaeology of twentieth century conflict, Routledge, London and New York.

Sem, Leiv (2009): For oss var Falstad det norske Holocaust, University of Oslo.

Senterpartiet (2007): Få Grinibrakka til Grinimuseet nå!, http://www.senterpartiet.no/article47206.html?articleID=47206

Skarsem, Bjørn (2007): Andre verdenskrig i lærebøker for gymnaset/den videregående skolen, MA History dissertation, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim.

Soleim, Marianne N. (2005): Sovjetiske krigsfanger i Norge 1941-45 – antall, organisering og repatriering, Doctoral thesis in History, University of Tromsø.

Steiner, Georg (1969): Language and Silence, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books.

Støre, Jonas Gahr (2006): Offisiell åpning av Falstadsenteret (Norwegian only): http://falstadsenteret.no/støre_tale_senteret_071006.htm

The Jewish Community of Trondheim (1992): Tape, marked "Robert Savosnick, 1992". Interviewer unknown.

Tønsberg Blad (2008): "Graver i Tønsbergs nazi-historie", 14.07.2008.

Unesco (2009): Auschwitz Birkenau. German Nazi Concentration and Extermination Camp (1940-1945), http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/31

van Pelt, Robert Jan/Dwork, Deborah (1996): Auschwitz: 1270 to the Present, Yale University Press, New Haven, Connecticut.

Verdens Gang (2008): Forskere vil dokumentere nazi-spor, 22.09.2008, http://www.vg.no/nyheter/innenriks/artikkel.php?artid=516775

Veum, Eirik (2009): De som falt: nordmenn som døde i tysk krigstjeneste, NRK Aktivum, Oslo.

Wieviorka, Annette (2006): The Era of the Witness, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London.

Young, James (1993): The Texture of Memory. Holocaust Memorials and Meaning, Yale University Press, New Haven and London.