

Fourth EHISTO-project meeting from 9th to 11th of September 2014 in Wroclaw, Poland

Miriam Hannig (University Augsburg)

Final international EHISTO Conference at Wroclaw University, Poland

From 9 to 11 September the final conference of the two-year EHISTO-project funded by the EU was held in Wroclaw (Poland). In the scope of the international conference “History and Edutainment”, which was jointly organised and realised with the International Society for History Didactics, the worldwide leading association of history educators, the results of the EHISTO project were presented.

A strong network

Within two years EHISTO has managed to create a sustainable network. With the International Society for History Didactics a further globally aligned institution working with innovative approaches could be obtained as an associated partner in addition to the International Institute of the German Adult Education Association (DVV international) and EUROCLIO (European Association of History Educators). One highlight of the cooperation was the joint conference in Wroclaw (Poland), which served the dissemination of EHISTO.

Conference “History and Edutainment”

Within the scope of the conference “History and Edutainment” EHISTO presented three sessions under the title “Popular history magazines: information, entertainment and persuasion” illustrating the current state of research as well as the project to an interested expert audience and the wider public.

After a warm welcome by the host and coordinator Prof. Dr. Susanne Popp (Germany), the first session of the thematic block “Popular history magazines: information, entertainment and persuasion” started with Prof. Dr. Susanne Popp’s presentation “Popular history magazines between transmission of knowledge and entertainment – some theoretical remarks”. The primary object of this contribution was the question how to understand the meaning of “popular” in the case of popular history magazines. Can they be compared to popular science magazines, which “popularise” and present new research results to an interested but non-expert audience? Or is their main intention to entertain a lay audience with “history stories”, i.e. to present familiar narrative structures in historical disguise? Even though the immense diversity of the genre posed difficulties the aim was nevertheless to determine useful well-considered clarifications.

This was followed by Prof. Dr. Terry Haydn’s (England) contribution “Starting a War”?

– Using popular history magazines to problematize the start of World War One in schools in Sweden and the UK”. This presentation was the result of an English - Swedish cooperation between Prof. Dr. Terry

Haydn, Prof. Dr. Monika Vinterek (Sweden) and Dr. Thomas Nygren (Sweden) based on an empirical study in history classrooms. So as to stimulate critical thinking and multiperspectivity the experts, together with inservice teachers, designed a lesson unit on the basis of popular history magazines from different countries with contrasting perspectives on the “outbreak” of World War One.

The contribution “Popular history magazines between information and entertainment – a qualitative study on the expectations of consumers” by Miriam Hannig (Germany) concluded the first EHISTO session. Miriam Hannig presented a qualitative study based on group discussions of history students (University of Augsburg, Germany) in which the motivation to regularly buy and read popular history magazines was addressed. Furthermore, the readers’ expectations regarding the quality of the popular presentation of history were analysed.

After a small break, the EHISTO consultant Prof. Dr. Meng Zhongjie from Shanghai, China opened the second session and welcomed the first speaker Prof. Dr. Terry Haydn, who presented “A case study of the use of popular history magazines in history teaching in England”. His talk focused on the English strand of the EHISTO project. It examined the extent to which popular history magazines were used by the seven teachers in the EHISTO partner department and considered the teachers’ views regarding the usefulness of popular history magazines.

Shen Chencheng M.A. (China/Germany) followed with a talk on “Popular history magazines in the PR China – a growing market”. He introduced the most widespread history magazines in the PR China and their different focal areas. Popular history magazines are a phenomenally new element in the history culture of today’s China. They are transforming the peoples’ ways to read, express and think about history. A handful of market pioneers enjoy great popularity due to their highly diversified selfdefinitions and managing strategies. Essentially, it is the ongoing marketization of the Chinese media system that shapes the booming but unbalanced market.

The third contribution of this session “The use of powerful men, naked women to edutain: popular history magazines in Sweden” was presented by Prof. Dr. Monika Vinterek. Initially, an overview of the Swedish history magazine market during the last decade of the 20th century was given focusing on the two biggest magazines. The front covers of issues published during a period of five years were examined and analysed in a more specific way asking the following questions: Which time periods, places, main topics and images have been covered and what forms of presentation are predominantly used? The findings from this part of the study were then applied to education with the help of the following questions: What kind of understandings are offered by the way history is presented on these front covers and what values seem to be promoted by the selection of presentations in regard to what is illustrated and how it is shown?

Ass. Prof. Dr. Katja Gorbhan (Denmark) presented a comparison of a Danish and a German magazine: “Heroes, victims, perpetrators – Second World War and Nazism in Danish and German history magazines”. The paper analysed the presentation of the Second World War and Nazism in Danish and German popular history magazines comparing them to school textbooks and relating the results to changes in memory culture. In addition, the presentation focused on the transnational entanglements in the field of history entertainment and on their impact on the interpretation of the past. Finally, the

relevance of history magazines for history education was discussed: Are history magazines a chance or a risk in history teaching? And to what extent and how can history magazines as a medium of history entertainment contribute to promoting history education?

The talks were each followed by stimulating discussions, which were carried on during dinner.

On Wednesday, the second day of the conference, Prof. Dr. Terry Haydn chairing the session welcomed the first speaker. Dr. Antonio Miguel Seoane Pardo (Spain) opened with his presentation “Gamebased learning experiences within a history CLIL classroom: a case study”, which was based on the use of EHISTO material. The innovative approach of crosscurricular teaching according to the CLIL model was met with great international interest and again illustrated the importance of the EHISTO approaches. This talk was followed by “The use of history in popular history magazines”, the contribution by PhD candidate Marianne Sjöland (Sweden). Her talk focused on the use of history in selected articles of two popular history magazines, a Swedish and an English one: Populär Historia and History Today. Both magazines are well-established and popular products. This makes them suitable objects to study aspects of history cultures. The theoretical framework consisted of a theory of history culture in general and the use of history in particular. Her study has so far shown that the uses of history are very different. Nevertheless, they have in common that various aspects of an academic use of history are widespread. Since the magazines attract a lot of readers, the concept of the “commercial use of history” was particularly interesting.

The last speaker of the public part of the EHISTO conference was Claudius Springkart M.A. (Germany), who talked about “Popular history magazines in Germany. A useful tool for history teaching?” The contribution presented an analysis of German special interest magazines focusing on history. It dealt with questions of basic research, e.g. the magazines’ role in the media market and the analysis of the tendencies of the historical topics that are predominantly presented on the cover pages. Based on this, the quality of the mediation of history was discussed from the point of view of history didactics, which is obliged to ensure democratic and rational history education in Europe.

The majority of the contributions will be published in the EHISTO volume or in the Yearbook of the International Society for History Education. In this way the dissemination is supported and the sustainability of the project enhanced. Additionally, audio recordings of the talks are available on the EHISTO website (<http://www.european-crossroads.de/outcomes/final-conference/>).

In conclusion, the host and coordinator Prof. Dr. Susanne Popp summarized the different innovative and inspiring EHISTO contributions and gathered feedback as well as further suggestions. On behalf of the project team she thanked the interested audience and all lecturers for their worthwhile presentations and fruitful feedback.

Furthermore, the two Polish EHISTO partners Joanna Szczecińska M.A. and Katarzyna Czekaj-Kotynia (University of Social Sciences, Lodz) presented the EHISTO project at the conference of the Polish history educators with the title “Education – Culture – Society”, which also took place at Wrocław University. EHISTO was again met with great interest.

Subsequently, the internal conference of the EHISTO partners took place, which, on the one hand, focused on the dissemination and sustainability but, on the other hand, also dealt with organisational questions.

During a sightseeing tour in the city and dinner at night the EHISTO partners, associates, consultants and international guests had the possibility to discuss the conference as well as future cooperation and to bring the eventful day to a close.

The last part of the conference for the EHISTO partners took place on Thursday. The coordinators provided a project overview and in their subsequent outlook illustrated the new cooperation with EUROCLIO for a joint international teacher training as well as the final publication written in English, which is supposed to ensure the sustainable dissemination of the results of the EHISTO project. Accordingly, the publication primarily addresses university lecturers as well as students training to be teachers. The aim of the publication is to strengthen the critical engagement with commercialised history products and the popular history culture in Europe in the scope of the educational training of history teachers. Moreover, it aims at enhancing the critical media competence in dealing with the presentation of history in the media as well as guiding the way to an increased application of internationally comparative perspectives on Europe's "shared history" in history teaching. This publication will be available both as print edition and as open access online version on the EHISTO website (www.european-crossroads.eu).

As a consultant Prof. Dr. Meng from Shanghai, PR China conclusively outlined the EHISTO project in a comment.

By warmly thanking all participants who have contributed to the considerable success of the EHISTO project for their support the project coordinator concluded the last EHISTO meeting.

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