



“VWI invites the University of Bern“

Wednesday, 29 June 2022, 3.00 pm

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83376658694?pwd=VXRXSXBGa1JLdFFTZ3YvSS9lY1hQQT09>

Lukas NIEVOLL

SPATIALISING THE CAMP

REPRESENTATIONS OF SPACE AND PRACTICES OF VIOLENCE IN THE NARRATIVES OF FORMER PRISONERS OF GUSEN CONCENTRATION CAMP



In his Ph.D. project, Lukas Nievoll deals with the relationship between space and violence in Nazi concentration camps, using the example of Gusen concentration camp. Gusen was put into operation by the Nazis in May 1940 and existed until its liberation by American troops in May 1945. At least 71,000 people from across Europe were deported to Gusen of which around 36,000 were killed. The project's premise is that Gusen as a space of persecution and violence should be investigated as more than its mere topographical and material features and that experiences of persecution and survival almost always have a distinct spatial quality. This project asks beyond the duality of 'inside' and 'outside' – an exceedingly present demarcation that is thematised in most survivor accounts – about the socio-spatial zoning of the camp in survivors' memories. The project, therefore, explores key spaces in the quotidian experience of the camp. Spaces such as the *Block*, the *Revier*, or the *Waschraum* (including the latrines) were often connected to violent encounters that catalysed complex feelings in the memories of survivors (Natoli). However, many of those sites of degradation and violence were also linked to experiences of community, aid, and survival. The project also takes into consideration that how former prisoners spatialised their experiences connected to Gusen was strongly influenced by the communicative settings (at court, in diaries, in an interview, etc.) in which they told their stories.

Commented by Regina FRITZ

Lukas Nievoll is currently a Junior Fellow at the VWI. He is a university assistant at the Institute for Modern and Contemporary History at Johannes Kepler University Linz, where he is also completing his Ph.D. dealing with Space and Violence at Gusen Concentration Camp. Since 2021, he has also been a Doctoral Fellow at the Fondation pour la Mémoire de la Shoah in Paris. From 2019 to 2021, Lukas Nievoll worked at the Center for Jewish Studies at Karl Franzens University Graz in the research project Digital Memory Landscape – Persecution and Resistance under National Socialism.

Dr. Regina Fritz is a Postdoc Assistant at the Department of History, University of Bern. Her research deals with the history of Hungary and Austria in the 20th century with a particular focus on the interwar period, National Socialism, and the Holocaust. She was co-editor of the volumes *Gefangen in Mauthausen* (2021) and *Mauthausen und die nationalsozialistische Expansions- und Verfolgungspolitik* (2021) and editor of *Die Verfolgung und Ermordung der europäischen Juden durch das nationalsozialistische Deutschland 1933-1945, Band 15: Ungarn 1944-1945* (2021).

Image: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gusen_I_and_II_aerial.jpg

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