

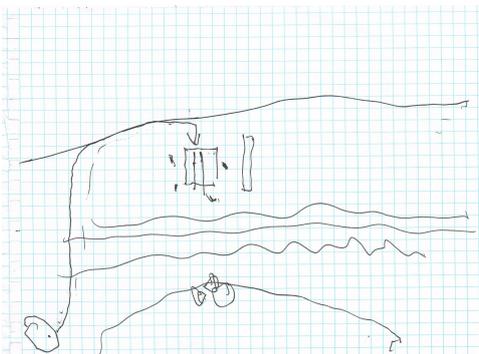
“VWI invites Masaryk Institute and Archives of the Czech Academy of Sciences”

Wednesday, 1 December 2021, 3:00 pm (CET)
Online: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81588903978>

Aleksandra SZCZEPAN

SITUATED WITNESSING:

THE MAP AS A TOOL OF MEMORY IN HOLOCAUST VIDEO TESTIMONY



The project explores the significance of the map as a form of Holocaust testimony. Its main premise is that Holocaust maps – namely, maps created, used, or referred to by witnesses to the Holocaust – are much more than mere visual representations of a given space. They might serve as evidence, as a way of referring to and imagining the past, a tool for memory, an intimate medium of experience, and alternative testimonies. The project aims at a thorough analysis of maps used by Holocaust survivors and eyewitnesses in video testimonies, as well as objects, gestures, narrative tools, and language expressions that serve as maps – all of them situate the testimonies and navigate the witnesses through the space of the Holocaust.

Cartographic testimonies help us reassess the concept of testimony as a predominantly narrative, temporal, and verbal form of expression. By focusing on space and body as fundamental frames of experience, memory, and witnessing, we can, moreover, understand better how long-lasting violence, inflicted on rural and urban communities during the German occupation, made genocide a “communal event both cruel and intimate” (Bartov) and reconsider the conceptualizations of East-Central Europe in Holocaust research.

Commentator: Michal FRANKL

Aleksandra Szczepan is a literary scholar, co-founder, and member of the Research Centre for Memory Cultures at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków and a collaborator of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in oral history projects in Poland and Spain. She authored the book “Realista Robbe-Grillet” (2015) on 20th century redefinitions of realism. She has been recipient of scholarships from the USHMM, the European Holocaust Research Infrastructure (EHRI), the Polish National Science Centre and the Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage. Her research interests include Holocaust memory, decoloniality in the perspective of East-Central Europe, oral history, and space-based testimonial practices of witnesses to the Holocaust.

Michal Frankl is a senior researcher at the Masaryk Institute and Archives of the Czech Academy of Sciences. His research focuses on the history of modern antisemitism and the Holocaust as well as the history of ‘refugeedom’. He is the principal investigator of the ERC Consolidator grant “Unlikely Refuge? Refugees and Citizens in East-Central Europe in the 20th Century” and is active in the European Holocaust Research Infrastructure (EHRI).

Description of the picture: map of the mass execution of Jewish residents of Mszana Dolna (Poland) from 19 August 1942, drawn by an eyewitness interviewed by Yahad – In Unum. © Courtesy of Renata Masna