



## **Stones of contention - provocation or mainstream ritual? The role of the Stolpersteine project in contemporary remembrance conflicts**

**Conference on 21 & 22 February 2019 in the German Resistance Memorial Centre,  
Stauffenbergstraße 13-14, 10785 Berlin hosted by the Coordination Office Stolpersteine  
Berlin and the Centre for Contemporary History Potsdam (ZZF)**

The Stolpersteine (stumbling stones) memorial project began over 20 years ago as a small artistic intervention in public space. Its initiator, the artist Gunter Demnig, has been laying 10x10cm brass plates in front of the last voluntarily chosen places of residence of people having been persecuted by the Nazis ever since. Their names and dates of persecution are inscribed on the stumbling stones, commemorating their fate. Initially, Gunter Demnig did so without official authorization or in the face of considerable resistance. But over time, the project has gained increasing public support and is now one of the most broadly approved remembrance projects in Germany. With interest spreading internationally, stumbling stones have been laid in almost all the countries formerly occupied by the Wehrmacht, and do not always meet with approval. The conference aims to discuss the art project's context in terms of remembrance and political history and its place in European memorial cultures, and welcomes proposals for talks on the following thematic areas:

1. Who are the local protagonists of the project? What are the goals of the project and to what extent are they being achieved? Do stumbling stones stimulate critical consideration of the Nazi past or do they serve to ease the public's social and personal burden of responsibility? How do stumbling stones relate to other markers of contemporary history in the public sphere, such as monuments, information posts, memorial centres and electronic simulations? What role do the stumbling stones play in German memorial culture and their perception abroad ("DIN standards of remembrance")? Did Gunter Demnig conceive the project as a social sculpture, as defined by Joseph Beuys, and can it be regarded as such?
2. Stumbling stones have now been laid in over 20 European countries. What commonalities and differences in terms of the forms and content of remembrance can be observed? What relevance does the laying of stumbling stones have for local, national and international remembrance conflicts? What controversies have arisen from the project's application in different contexts? What do the stone-layings, and the controversies, tell us about the different memorial cultures in Europe?
3. What similar projects as the stumbling stones exist - which functions do they fulfil, and which do they not? What does it imply for Gunter Demnig's project when its concept is borrowed for application to other historical contexts and memorial cultures? Is its model function an indication of its own success or does it threaten to dilute and devalue it?

The conference is co-hosted by the Centre for Contemporary History Potsdam and the Coordination Office Stolpersteine Berlin, part of the Active Museum Fascism and Resistance in Berlin e.V.

The conference will be held in German and English. It is aimed at specialist scholars and historically interested members of the public. Proposals based on interdisciplinary research are especially welcome. A conference publication is planned. Speakers' travel and accommodation costs will be reimbursed.

If you would like to present the findings of your research at the conference, please send a short proposal (max. 3,500 characters) and a brief curriculum vitae in German or English by **15 October 2018** to [info@stolpersteine-berlin.de](mailto:info@stolpersteine-berlin.de). Also contact us here should you have any inquiries.

Approved speakers will be notified by **15 December 2018**.

**Contact person at ZZF Potsdam for questions about CfP:**

Prof. Dr. Thomas Schaarschmidt  
Head of Department „Regimes of Social Sphere“  
Centre for Contemporary History  
E-Mail: [schaarschmidt@zzf-potsdam.de](mailto:schaarschmidt@zzf-potsdam.de)

Dr. Irmgard Zündorf  
Head of the unit „Public History“  
Centre for Contemporary History  
E-Mail: [zuendorf@zzf-potsdam.de](mailto:zuendorf@zzf-potsdam.de)