



MEMORIAL AND  
EDUCATIONAL SITE  
HOUSE OF THE  
WANNSEE CONFERENCE



HISTORY

MEMORY

ART

DIDACTICS

INTERDISCIPLINARITY

## Call for “digital” Participation

in the international project

### **Living Memorials**

#### **Innovative concepts for the House of the Wannsee Conference (Berlin/Germany) and the Jewish Bielski Partisans (Novogrudok/Belarus)?**

Are you a motivated pedagogue – teacher, student (future teacher), researcher, member of a museum/memorial staff, a community leader ... – or otherwise personally concerned about the topics of history & memory? And would you like to

#### **leave your personal trace**

– words, sounds, graphics, ... –

#### **in the middle of the Naliboki forest**

– at the former camp site of the Bielski partisans, where more than 1200 Jews survived the Holocaust – or

#### **at the historical building of the Wannsee Conference**

– Europe’s most emblematic site when it comes to the planning of the deportation and murder of European Jews – ?

## I. The Project | Your Contributions

With your digital contributions (see under II.) you will become part of the following international exchange project (August 2021-March 2022), financed by the German Foundation "Erinnerung, Verantwortung, Zukunft".<sup>1</sup>

The project centers around two historical sites: firstly, the Memorial and Educational Site House of the Wannsee Conference (Berlin/Germany; henceforth: GHWK)<sup>2</sup> and, secondly, various sites in and around Novogrudok (Belarus) linked to the history of the Jewish Bielski partisans<sup>3</sup>; the latter received worldwide attention through Edward Zwick's movie *Defiance* (2008), with James Bond 007 actor Daniel Craig portraying the Jewish partisan commander Tuvia Bielski.<sup>4</sup> At both sites a group of local pedagogues will explore the following guiding questions: What could be understood under the concept of a "Living Memorial"? And how may such a concept enrich the pedagogic practice of international youth encounters by engaging young people more creatively in shaping the narrative at historical sites of National Socialist persecution? The groups will dive into this process with an interdisciplinary approach linking the topics of history and memory with the arts, philosophy, literature and the contemporary question of responsible citizenship.

**Your associations with the concept of a "living memorial" (see below under II.) will be sent to these two local groups and enrich their discussions.**

The two memorial and educational sites chosen for the project provide a rich (as complementary) source for the comparative exchange of expertise on international youth encounters: While, on the one hand, with the GHWK we have a "site of the perpetrators", central to the planning/theoretical origins of the deportation and murder of European Jews, the sites in Belarus illustrate an emblematic case of its subsequent practical repercussions in Eastern Europe through one of the most successful stories of Jewish Resistance in WWII. Moreover, the GHWK already looks back on a long history and rich experience as an educational site; the former camp site of the Bielski partisans in the middle of the Naliboki Forest, on the other hand, is still an untouched area of land without any fixed educational concept, where the question of its future pedagogical development is being raised at this very moment.

The local group meetings at both sites will follow a two-fold structure: In the first part of both meetings, the local experts (Belarus: Tamara Vershitskaya; GHWK: Dr. Matthias Hass) will present the history of the sites and the currently existing

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.stiftung-evz.de/eng/home.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Introduction to the House of the Wannsee Conference (in the videos please click on "CC" at the bottom of the video frame to select/activate the English etc. subtitles): <https://www.ghwk.de/de/bildungsangebote/digitale-angebote>.

<sup>3</sup> Introduction to the Bielski Brothers: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IE46oEXXs58>; Cyla (Tzila) Yoffan describing daily life partisan camp: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I9ZJYhD-L9A>; for further background: <https://www.yadvashem.org/articles/general/solidarity-bielski-brothers.html>; descendants of the Bielski Partisans dancing at the former camp site: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QtL0KDtdKtc>.

<sup>4</sup> Movie trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yw6Rwum7zcu>.

formats to deal with the challenges of youth encounters. The second fold consists in realizing at each site a two day art workshop. These workshops will be led by Roman Kroke, an interdisciplinary artist and former lawyer, who has become one of Europe's leading experts when it comes to developing on-site workshops for youth encounters especially at sites linked to National Socialist crimes; the particular quality of his approach consists in using art as a medium to connect the specific historic profile of a site as well as its landscape with the multi-faceted living-universe of young people while fostering their critical thinking about challenges in today's world (construction of responsible citizenship).<sup>5</sup>

In Belarus, the art workshop will take place in the midst of the of the Naliboki forest at the former campsite of the Bielski partisans. Today, this space is untouched wilderness where nature has reconquered the terrain; only the overgrown dugouts have remained as silent witnesses of the former Jewish settlement.<sup>6</sup> The local group will launch itself into the adventure of creating their personal "living memorial", mostly with natural materials. The idea will be to creating an innovative space beyond "classical memorial plaques" which may allow future (youth) groups to establish a sensitive relationship towards this natural site (outdoor education).

**Your input of what kind of traces YOU would like to leave at this site will be at the group's disposal in order to integrate them into their artworks. Of all the sounds which will have been sent to us by you, the "digital participants", we will also create one collective sound patchwork which will be played in the forest.**

In a similar way, your input will nourish the on-site meeting at the GHWK in Berlin. At all places with sufficient internet-connectivity, we will live-stream the meetings so you will be able to accompany our working process and your impact as the project unfolds. After both on-site meetings, the two local groups will exchange about their experience via zoom-conferences; for those among your community of "digital contributors" who wish to join these conferences there will be a time slot reserved for direct interaction with the local groups (questions, comments etc.)

All stages of the project will be documented on the online-platform [www.livingmemorial.app](http://www.livingmemorial.app) (videos, photos, text) which will be accessible starting 23 July 2021. The platform will also provide you with basic background information about the historic sites and the evolving concept of a "Living

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<sup>5</sup> See the following publication, co-financed by the European Commission (Erasmus+ Programme), which documents school workshops realized by Kroke at five different historical sites in Europe for the organisation EUROM (European Observatory on Memories): [http://roman-kroke.de/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/CATALOGUE\\_Our-Memories-and-I-Interdisciplinary-Art-Workshops\\_Roman-Kroke\\_20191.pdf](http://roman-kroke.de/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/CATALOGUE_Our-Memories-and-I-Interdisciplinary-Art-Workshops_Roman-Kroke_20191.pdf). Kroke's research travels in Belarus on the traces of the Bielski Brothers: <http://roman-kroke.de/themes/the-bielski-brothers/#subcontent-784>. Workshop about the Bielski Brothers: <http://roman-kroke.de/workshops/the-bielski-brothers/>.

<sup>6</sup> See the oral interventions by Tamara Vershitskaya at the historical camp site (credit to WE ARE HERE! Foundation CEO Eli Rabinowitz): [Proof of Bielski Camp - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wt1odw9pU9c); [Oak Tree Remembers - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wt1odw9pU9c); [Partisans in the Naliboki Forest - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wt1odw9pU9c).

Memorial". The two group meetings will be accompanied by a camera team of the organisation MEDIEL which will produce a multilingual documentary movie (26 min). The movie will be broadcasted on European TV Channels and also be available for free online streaming. The results of the project will be presented in an exhibition at the Memorial and Educational Site House of the Wannsee Conference (until the end of the project in March 2022); places to exhibit the results in Belarus are still in the planning process.

## **II. Details about your Input | Deadline for Submission**

The attached Word-Document "*ANNEX\_Your contribution to the international project LIVING MEMORIALS\_2021\_2022*" will guide you through the different ways of how you will be able to provide your digital contributions.

The meeting in Belarus will take place from 8 - 13 August 2021, the one in Berlin from 20 – 24 September 2021. In order to allow us to integrate your contributions into the on-site meetings, please send us the document **the latest until 1 August 2021** for the Belarus meeting and **the latest until 12 September 2021** for the Berlin meeting.

We would appreciate if you could forward this call for participation to appropriate friends and colleagues. We are all very much looking forward to hearing from you,

### **The Project Team**

*André Bossuroy*

MEDIEL, General Coordinator, Belgium

*Roman Kroke*

Artistic and Pedagogical Coordinator, Germany/France

*Dr. Matthias Hass*

The Memorial and Educational Site House of the Wannsee Conference, Acting Head of the Education Department; Local Project Coordinator in Berlin/Germany

*Tamara Vershitskaya*

Local Project Coordinator in Novogrudok/Belarus

*Konstantin Victorovich*

Novogrudok Museum of History and Regional Studies/Belarus, Director

*Debra Brunner*

The Together Plan/United Kingdom, Chief Operating Officer

*Artur Livshyts*

The Together Plan, Belarus Country Director

*Natan Shamsutdinov*

Kislev Foundation/Belarus, Director

## Background information about the project partners

### **André Bossuroy | General Coordinator, MEDIEL, Belgium**

As a member of the European Observatory of Memories (EUROM) network MEDIEL works with its 51 international partners on the following objectives: fostering multidisciplinary research and work on activities focused on the construction of public memory; identifying and analyzing the different memorial processes occurring in Europe and other continents from the point of view of experts, professionals and civil society (with a particular focus on European youth encounters, see: <https://www.at-home-in-europe.tv/blog/remembrance/>). André, general coordinator for the MEDIEL's projects, has developed over 20 years a specific methodology for organizing its projects supported by media and young people based on the concept of "Citizen Reporters", which meet, actively research and discuss together while meeting European history, culture and people. <https://europeanmemories.net/partners/mediel/>

### **Roman Kroke | Interdisciplinary Artist**

Artist, curator, former lawyer, located in Berlin (Germany) and Lyon (France). Drawings & multimedia installations. Artistic genre: process art. Development, coordination and direction of international projects: exhibitions, workshops, lectures, teacher trainings. Partnerships with universities, scientific research institutes, schools, memorial sites, prisons, museums, foundations and TV productions. Within this project, Roman occupies the position of the Artistic and Pedagogical Coordinator. With respect to his artistic approach to history/memory and more specifically about the Shoah, Roman has been giving lectures, workshops and teacher trainings throughout Europe at many historical sites, among others at the Berlin memorial "Gleis 17" on behalf of the "Permanent Conference of Nazi Memorial Sites in the Berlin Area" (Foundation Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, the Memorial site and Educational Centre House of the Wannsee Conference, the Topography of Terror Documentation Center, the Memorial and Museum Sachsenhausen, the German Resistance Memorial Centre) or in partnership with the Holocaust museum "Mémorial de la Shoah" and the Foundation for the Memory of the Shoah (both Paris). Documentations about his approach have been published/broadcasted, among others, by ARTE.TV, the Berlin University of the Arts and in the Swiss pedagogical journal on history teaching DIDACTICA HISTORICA.

[www.Roman-Kroke.de/de](http://www.Roman-Kroke.de/de)

### **Dr. Matthias Hass | House of the Wannsee Conference**

In today's Memorial and Educational Site, fifteen high-ranking representatives of the SS, the NSDAP and various Reich ministries discuss their cooperation in the planned deportation and murder of the European Jews on January 20, 1942. In addition to its exhibitions, the Memorial and Educational Site offers a wide range of educational programs to learn about the history of the persecution and murder of the European Jews, the history of National Socialism, its prehistory and its consequences. Dr. Matthias Hass is the acting head of the education department. He is the curator of the traveling exhibition "The Wannsee Conference and the persecution and murder of the European Jews" which was shown in a number of cities in North America and South Africa. Dr. Hass was the director of the U.S. program of Action Reconciliation Service for Peace in Philadelphia from 2005 – 2009. He studied Political Science at the Free University of Berlin and specialized in the field of Historical Foundations of politics and the Politics of Memory. Over the last years, Dr. Hass has organized a number of international exchange seminars for Canadian, Polish, German and American students with different organizations and universities. He has taught at the Free University in Berlin, York University in Toronto and Touro College Berlin, and worked at several museums and memorial sites to the Nazi past, among them the Topography of Terror Foundation and the House of the Wannsee Conference Memorial Site and Education Center.

<https://www.ghwk.de/en/>

### **Tamara Vershitskaya | Jewish Heritage Specialist, The Together Plan, Belarus**

Researcher, founder of the Jewish Resistance Museum in Novogrudok, author of the book *Pain and Anger. Holocaust and Resistance in Novogrudok* and dozens of publications about the Bielski partisans in materials of international conferences; researcher and producer of several documentaries about the Holocaust and Jewish resistance in Belarus, organizer of seminars for teachers on the Holocaust, history and cultural heritage of Belarusian Jews, organizer of the reunion of the Bielski partisans' descendants and an advocate of creating a Living Memorial to the

Bielski partisans in the Naliboki Forest. Oral interventions by Tamara at the historical camp site (credit to WE ARE HERE! Foundation CEO Eli Rabinowitz):

[Proof of Bielski Camp - YouTube](#)

[Oak Tree Remembers - YouTube](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wt1odw9pU9c>

[Partisans in the Naliboki Forest - YouTube](#)

### **Debra Brunner | Co-Founder and CEO of The Together Plan**

As a passionate advocate for Jewish community, history, heritage and identity, Debra has been working in Belarus for over ten years. She is co-founder and CEO of The Together Plan a UK registered charity which gives agency to Jewish people coming out of a traumatic past, to empower them and give them skills and self-belief to rebuild and revive. The charity helps communities discover what can be achieved collectively and, through a range of pioneering projects, work alongside community members to develop skills and knowledge while providing the necessary training to build a sustainable future. It is Debra's mantra that together we can make a real and positive difference for a better, stronger and more cohesive Jewish landscape in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Debra has a degree in business, is a fellow of the Royal Society of Arts and an Associate of the University of Hertfordshire.

<https://thetogetherplan.com/>

### **Artur Livshyts | Co-Founder and Belarus Country Director of The Together Plan Charity**

Born in Minsk, Artur spent two years living with a relative in Nashville, Tennessee, where, as a child of the Soviet Union, he discovered Judaism; studied Hebrew and had his bar mitzvah. It was his first foray into Jewish life. He spent a year living in a boarding school in Israel before returning to Belarus where he completed his education in Minsk, studying Human Rights Law. Having had a taste of Jewish life, he has made it his life's work to strive for a revival of the Jewish community in Belarus. He met Debra Brunner in 2009 and together, since that time, they have worked to build and grow The Together Plan. Artur is also the Chairman of International Charitable Organisation Dialog, The Together Plan's partner organization in Belarus.

<https://thetogetherplan.com/>

### **Natan Shamsutdinov | Co-Founder of the Kislev Cultural and Educational Charitable Foundation**

Natan was born in Izhevsk/Russia and later moved to Belarus. He took part in the life of the Jewish community from birth. He studied at a Jewish school. Since 2016, he began active work on the preservation and development of Jewish life, the restoration of the Great Choral Synagogue in Grodno. Since 2019, he has been working as Chairman of the Council of the First Jewish Community named after I. Leib Naidus in Grodno.