

Institution: Aberystwyth University

Unit of Assessment: Modern Languages 28 (A)

Title of case study: The Kindertransport to Britain 1938/39: New Perspectives

1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)

The Kindertransport was the movement to rescue 10,000 mainly Jewish children from Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia and bring them to the UK in 1938/39. This project focusses on archival research as well as qualitative social research to reassess aspects of the Kindertransport. The aim of this project was to influence public discourse and civil society and to provide new perspectives to stakeholders such as the former Kindertransportees themselves, both in the UK and abroad, the Jewish community and the interested public in general.

The research is being disseminated through public events, the media and publications. The focus of the Kindertransport: New Perspectives project was to revise common assumption and introduce new critical perspectives regarding the commemoration, memorialisation and reconciliation of the Kindertransport to different groups of people.

2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)

This impact study is based on Dr Andrea Hammel's research in Aberystwyth since 2010. It follows on from research on Jewish writers in Germany, and from her position in the Centre for German-Jewish Studies in the University of Sussex, prior to coming to Aberystwyth in 2010. It can be seen as part of what has become a major academic interest in memory and history amongst British-based Germanists. Between 2005 and 2008 she was the lead academic for the project compiling an Online Database of British Archival Resources Relating to German-speaking Refugees, 1933-1950 (BARGE) funded by the AHRC.

She is currently Co-Director of the 'Holocaust Writing and Translation' Network (formerly funded by the AHRC). She is a Committee Member of the Research Centre for German and Austrian Exile Studies, IGRS, University of London Since 2010 she was elected a member of the executive of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Exilforschung and was appointed to the Academic Steering Committee of the Study Group for the Forced Migration of Children, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand.

For the Kindertransport 1938/39: New Perspectives Project (see Reference to Research 3.1) Dr Hammel interviewed Kindertransportees and their descendants and carried out archival research at the Wiener Library, the Imperial War Museum in London, and the John Rylands Library at the University of Manchester as well as at the Jewish History Centre, New York; at the Deutsche Literaturarchiv Marbach; at the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People, the Central Zionist Archives and Yad Vashem in Jerusalem; at the Diozösearchiv des Bistums Berlin, the Zentrum fuer Antisemitismusforschung and the Deutsche Bundesarchiv in Berlin; and at the USHMM Archive, Washington DC (supported by grants, see 3.1).

The research findings are manifold:

- a. Dr Hammel's research confirms that there was no obvious bias when choosing individual children for the transports from German, Austria and Czechoslovakia, although there might have been an implicit pre-selection as it was mainly the children's own parents who signed them up for transports and parents from certain backgrounds were more likely to do so than others (see 3.5)
- b. In recent years more focus has been placed on the attitude of the Continental parents who let their children come to the UK unaccompanied and the attitude of the British government who were determined to admit only unaccompanied children. This goes hand in hand with a general evaluation of the British government's intention and policy decisions. Hammel's

research has shown that there was a discrepancy between the efforts of the parents to use the Kindertransport to keep families together (by trying to place children on the Kindertransport and at the same time by trying to get domestic servant permits for adult family members) and the UK government's intention to only allow unaccompanied minors (as they were considered to generate more sympathy in the British public and to constitute no competition in the British labour market) (see 3.4).

- c. A comparative investigation of the memorialisation processes regarding the Kindertransport is needed: is the Kindertransport considered a safe topic compared with the Holocaust? Is this problematic? In what way is the narrative directed by various stakeholders? Which stories are told and which are neglected? (see 3.3)
- d. Hardly any work so far has been carried out regarding the Reunion of Kindertransport Movement and the Second Generation groups. These groups and bodies have a significant influence on the memorialisation of the Kindertransport and Andrea Hammel has instigated research in this area.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

3.1 Andrea Hammel was awarded a grant by the British Academy (March 2010 to Feb. 2012).

3.2 Andrea Hammel was awarded a grant by the New York-based Claims conference to support this project (February 2011 to January 2013).

3.3 Andrea Hammel, 'Authenticity, Trauma and the Child's View: Martha Blend's *A Child Alone*, Vera Gissing's *Pearls of Childhood* and Ruth L. David's *Ein Kind unserer Zeit*' in *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, special issue 'Writing Childhood in Postwar Women's Writing', Oxford University Press, April 2013. Article in peer-reviewed journal. [REF2 submitted]

3.4 Andrea Hammel and Bea Lewkowicz (eds), *The Kindertransport to Britain 1938/39: New Perspectives. Yearbook of the Research Centre for German and Austrian Exile Studies*, Vol.13, 2012, Rodopi, Amsterdam, co-edited with Bea Lewkowicz, 273pp. Edited book.

3.5 Andrea Hammel, 'The Future of Kindertransport Research: Archives, Diaries, Databases, Fiction' in Andrea Hammel and Bea Lewkowicz (eds), *The Kindertransport to Britain 1938/39: New Perspectives. Yearbook of the Research Centre for German and Austrian Exile Studies*, Vol.13, 2012, Rodopi, Amsterdam, co-edited with Bea Lewkowicz, 273pp. Peer-reviewed chapter. [REF2 submitted]

3.6 Photographic exhibition 'Double Exposure', including special viewing public event, organised by Andrea Hammel at the Aberystwyth Arts Centre, 11 February – 7 April 2012:

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Dr Hammel has integrated the findings of the Kindertransport 1938/39: New Perspectives project into different interdisciplinary frameworks and has engaged with a wide variety of different audiences in the UK and internationally.

Discussing the topic of the Kindertransport in different interdisciplinary contexts as well as with different stakeholder groups is an important way to support and challenge processes of commemoration, memorialisation and reconciliation. Below are examples of impact aimed at different groups:

4.1 Stakeholder group: the Jewish community:

In February 2011, Andrea Hammel gave a public talk together with former Kindertransportee Ruth David at the Wiener Library London on David's memoirs (related to 3.3). The audience of ca. 50 people consisted mainly of members of the Jewish community and other members of the general public. The discussion focussed on the Kindertransport, memoir writing and translating life stories.

It sparked a lively debate between academics and stakeholders about authenticity and memory.

4.2 Stakeholder: an individual Kindertransportee: In November 2011, Andrea Hammel acted as a consultant for a memoir project by former Kindertransportee Susi Bechöfer. They discussed Bechöfer's life story as well as her personal archival material in view of commonly held assumptions regarding Kindertransport stories. Bechöfer's story is an extraordinary one and it has been appropriated outside her control several times. Hammel advised on a suitable co-writer for such an autobiographical project.

4.3 Stakeholder group: the general public: In March 2012, Hammel organized a talk by former Kindertransportee William Dieneman at Aberystwyth University as well as the exhibition 'Double Exposure: Jewish Refugees from Austria in Britain' at the Aberystwyth Arts Centre. The talk attracted an audience of over 100 people and the special viewing attracted over 80 participants and a subsequent feedback questionnaire showed the positive impact of this venture on a diverse audience ranging in age from 9 to 83. The above event featured in the digital media and in the local newspaper, the Cambrian News ('Jewish man who fled the Nazis to talk about his experiences', Thursday, 15 March 2012, Cambrian News; 5.2). Feedback questionnaires confirmed that this event changed the thinking of audience members of various ages relating to migration and refugees as well as refugees and the history of the 1930s and 1940s: 'I think that stories like this are relevant today as they indicate both how Britain has a long tradition of taking refugees in and how refugees make a contribution to British life (Male, 46); 'Made me consider the different types of immigration and that they are a lot of immigrants that don't fit the stereotypes' (Female, 39) (5.6).

The town community of Aberystwyth clearly appreciated this opportunity to discuss these issues as there are not at the forefront of cultural life of the town, but it became clear that they are still significant for the audience. In January 2013, Hammel gave a talk on the Kindertransport at the Aberystwyth Branch of the University of the Third Age (U3A). Feedback questionnaires show that the talk inspired many members of the audience to think about their own experiences during World War 2. A number of them remembered contacts with former refugees and Kindertransportees: 'I found the talk very interesting, particularly as I have had friends who came to the UK by train as refugees.' (5.4). They also stated that it provided new knowledge ('The lecture widened my understanding of the pre-war, post-war period.' 5.4) and inspired some participants to do further research (the talk 'made me want to learn more and read new information' 5.4).

In July 2013 Dr Hammel gave a presentation to a group of 16 to 18-year olds taking Sociology and Psychology AS level at Penglais Secondary School in Aberystwyth to enhance their learning experience in relation to issues of childhood, attachment and separation: 'Andrea's talk provided [the students] with a prompt to consider and empathise with the suffering of others [...] I have no doubt that her talk made a significant impact and will use it as a reference point throughout the year.' (5.5).

4.4 Stakeholder group: Kindertransportees and their descendants, mainly USA: Hammel was invited to give a keynote presentation at the Conference of the North American Kindertransport Association (KTA) in November 2012 in Los Angeles. The North American KTA is an organisation of former child refugees and their descendants and the event was attended by over 130 people (5.7). This presentation was followed by a workshop co-facilitated by Hammel in which ca. 40 participants were able to discuss points made in the presentation and raise questions' There is email and social media evidence that the talk had a profound effect on a number of participants: 'your presentation was most informative, and helped me as a Kind Second Generation understand the path that my mother travelled from Cologne to England in 1938.' (5.3)

Hammel's research finding regarding the differing intentions of the parents in Continental Europe and the UK government received attention from the audience after the presentation. During the workshop the question of how the children for the transports were chosen sparked lively debate (5.8).

4.5 Stakeholder group: Kindertransportees and their descendants, mainly UK: In June 2013 the findings of the Kindertransport 1938/39: New Perspectives project were presented at the Kindertransport Symposium in London. This event was part of the Association of Jewish Refugee's commemoration events celebrating the 75th anniversary of the Kindertransport. The event was attended by 97 people of varying ages and the question of Kindertransport stories and the ownership of the narrative sparked lively and extensive discussions (5.6).

It is thus clear that the Kindertransport: New Perspectives project challenged processes of commemoration, memorialisation and reconciliation within a number of different stakeholder groups by presenting new research findings at public events in the UK and the US. The lively debates encountered at these events shows that the Kindertransport remains highly topical in the 21st century.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

5.1 Feedback questionnaires for William Dieneman talk, March 2012

5.2 Citation in Cambrian News, March 2012

5.3 Email and social media response to the talk at the Conference in Irvine, California, November 2012

5.4 Feedback questionnaires for U3A talk, January 2013

5.5 Feedback from teacher at Penglais school, Aberystwyth

5.6 Social Anthropologist and Oral Historian, Independent Scholar

5.7 Film Maker and President, The Kindertransport Association, USA

5.8 Social Work Consultant, Second Generation Network, UK