

International Conference

Transit zones: Western European internment sites in the interspaces of Nazi persecution

26.-27. February 2026

Call for Paper

Application deadline: September 15, 2025

Organisation:

Centre for Contemporary and Digital History (C²DH) / University of Luxembourg
Centre Cinqfontaines / Zentrum für politisch Bildung (ZPB)

Location:

MICE venue at the Hotel Anatura - Weiswampach / Centre Cinqfontaines – Ulflingen
Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg



Introduction

The former “Jewish retirement home” Fünfbrunnen (Cinqfontaines)¹ in the north of Luxembourg is an example of a central but often overlooked structure in the National Socialist persecution system: internment sites. In the form of collection camps, detention places and/or transit centers, here, Jewish people were forcibly removed from their social environment, interned under poor living conditions and in many cases deported to the ghettos, concentration and extermination camps of the East.

Internment sites such as Fünfbrunnen were far more than just logistical stopovers. They were spaces of extreme exclusion and disenfranchisement in which individual biographies, family structures and social ties were violently destroyed. Their establishment and functioning raise urgent questions about the local dimensions of Nazi persecution policy, the scope for action of various actors and the intertwining of state organization and social complicity.

Despite their crucial role in the Holocaust, internment sites have often remained in the shadow of concentration and extermination camps. Their history, their material and immaterial traces and their reception in the culture of remembrance therefore deserve more intensive academic examination.

The conference takes the example of Fünfbrunnen as a starting point to comparatively examine the detention sites as an independent category in the National Socialist camp and detention system. In addition to allowing a comparison between better-known internment sites such as Drancy, Malines/Mechelen or Westerbork and lesser-known sites, the different panel also aim to open up new perspectives on the history of such places, discuss methodological and source-critical challenges, reflect on the dynamics of memory and provide impulses for educational mediation. It sees itself explicitly as an international and interdisciplinary forum.

Topics and focal points

Panel 1: History - Historical developments and functions of internment sites

This panel examines the development, structure, function and transnationality of internment sites in the National Socialist camp system. The focus will be on the following questions in particular:

- How and why were internment sites set up in different regions?
- Which local, regional and national actors (e.g. local authorities, police authorities) were involved?
- What differences and similarities can be seen between internment sites in Western Europe (e.g. Drancy, Malines, Westerbork and lesser-known places)?

¹ <https://cinqfontaines.lu/en/welcome/>

- What was everyday life like in the internment sites? What social hierarchies and dynamics developed among the prisoners?
- What role did internment sites play within the Nazi deportation policy (e.g. organization of transports, transitions to ghettos or concentration camps)?
- What cross-border and transnational dynamics exist? To what extent were internment sites embedded in the larger European deportation networks? How were the logistics coordinated? How did their history and function differ in the various occupied territories?

→ **Individual case studies as well as transnational and comparative analyses are welcome.**

Panel 2: Sources and preservation - Transmission and materiality in the research of internment sites

The second panel is dedicated to the source situation, the methodological challenges in research and the conservation of internment sites. The focus will be on the following questions in particular:

- What types of sources (administrative documents, deportation lists, photographs, eyewitness accounts, archaeological evidence) are available?
- What role do digital source editions and new technologies (e.g. mapping, digitized archive material, ...) play?
- How can oral history and survivors' accounts be systematically used to reconstruct everyday life and individual experiences in the internment sites?
- How can perpetrator and victim perspectives be differentiated from a source-critical perspective?
- What material traces did sites leave behind, and how can these be recorded archaeologically?
- What challenges exist in the conservation, documentation and interpretation of these remains?
- How can digital technologies - such as 3D scans, virtual reconstructions or digital archives - contribute to making these sites accessible to researchers and the public?
- What ethical questions arise in the visualization, museum staging or representation of destroyed or only partially preserved sites?

→ **We particularly invite contributions that either present existing or new sources or present innovative methodological or curative approaches.**

Panel 3: Commemoration and culture of remembrance - Internment sites in the field of tension between memory and forgetting

The third panel focuses on the past and present of the memorialization of internment sites. The focus will be on the following questions in particular:

- When and how were internment sites included or excluded from public remembrance?
- Which narratives and practices of remembrance dominate locally, nationally and transnationally?
- How are internment sites represented in museums, on monuments or at commemorative ceremonies?
- What conflicts or empty spaces characterize the memory of internment site (e.g. politicized or marginalized memories)?
- What role do survivors' initiatives, victims' families or local communities play in the process of remembrance and the preservation of historical heritage?
- To what extent do bottom-up initiatives - such as community or family archives and oral history projects - contribute to the culture of remembrance and to making previously marginalized perspectives visible?
- How can local voices and personal narratives be meaningfully included in the academic examination of historical sites?
- What role did the legal framework of the post-war period, processes of recognition and reparation as well as political debates on remembrance and historical responsibility play in dealing with the past?

→ Case studies of individual memorial sites and theoretical contributions on the culture of remembrance and memorialization are particularly welcome.

Panel 4: Pedagogical and medial transmission - Opportunities and limits of educational work, historical-political education, and media coverage

The fourth panel is dedicated to the pedagogical examination of the topic of the internment sites and its representation in the media. The focus will be on the following questions in particular:

- How can the history and significance of internment sites be conveyed in school and extracurricular education?
- What didactic materials, methods or formats (e.g. project days, digital learning opportunities, memorial site education) exist or are being developed?
- How can the specific experiences of the internment sites (segregation, insecurity, hope and fear) be made comprehensible to young people and adults?
- How are same internment sites depicted in literature, film, theater, art or digital and analog "games"?
- What opportunities and risks do virtual reality, digital reconstructions, new media or new possibilities such as serious games offer in the context of mediation?

→ Contributions can present concrete practical projects as well as theoretical-didactic reflections.

Organization and general conditions

We cordially invite **scholars at all career levels** as well as actors from memorial site work, archives, education and related fields to submit contributions.

Contributions can relate to specific **case studies of individual internment sites** in western Europe as well as to **comparative, theoretical or methodological issues**. **Interdisciplinary approaches** (e.g. from history, sociology, museology, political science, literary studies, anthropology or educational science) are expressly welcome.

Each application must include an **abstract of the presentation** and a **biographical note**.

- **Abstracts (300-500 words)** should propose a title and clearly state the topic, research question and methodology of the proposed presentation.
- Please include a short **biographical note (150 words maximum)** indicating your institutional affiliation and main research interests.

The conference will be **bilingual**: in **English** and **French**. Accordingly, abstracts can be submitted and presentations given in both languages. Simultaneous translation may be provided by the organizers if considered necessary based on the selected presentations.

The duration of the presentation is **20 minutes**. Each presentation will be followed by a **10 minute discussion** with the audience. It is encouraged to show a **PowerPoint presentation**.

Abstract and biographical note should be sent as a PDF file to c2dh.memorial@uni.lu by **September 15, 2025** at the latest.

The presentations will be selected by a scientific committee by October 10th, 2025, and a publication of selected contributions might be planned after the conference.

Catering (lunch and coffee breaks) will be covered by the organizer for all speakers and participants. Accommodation (night of February 26 to 27, 2026) and travel expenses (subject to conditions) will be covered by the organizer for key note speakers and panel moderators. Accommodation, travel and all additional costs for all other speakers and participants must be covered by own means.

If you have any questions or require further information, please contact the organizers at c2dh.memorial@uni.lu.