

# **‘Good Citizens, Terrible Times’: Notions of Individuality, Community and Responsibility in the Holocaust - History, Memory, Learning -**

Dec. 3-4, 2025 | Evangelische Akademie Tutzing, Germany

Final conference of the DFG/AHRC Project: “Good Citizens, Terrible Times: Community, Courage and Compliance in and beyond the Holocaust”, Bielefeld University (Christina Morina) & University College London (Mary Fulbrook)

## **Abstract:**

The conference aims to discuss and enrich the results of a collaborative research project on the nexus between *notions of citizenship, community and (non)compliance* in the Holocaust by placing them within a wider scholarly and public history context. Bringing together international researchers and museum professionals from various relevant fields and institutions, the conference is set to *widen* our conceptual and empirical historiographical horizons, *reevaluate* the premises and ‘messages’ of Holocaust education aimed at teaching about and preventing genocidal violence and *bridge* distinct – and often effectively siloed – areas of inquiry: the significance of notions of community, individuality and citizenship within and beyond the Third Reich (including Austria from 1938); processes of collaboration, complicity and rescue in both eastern and western Europe under Nazi domination; and ways of addressing these ‘difficult pasts’ across postwar Europe, as Holocaust remembrance became increasingly significant.

Papers and panels aim at in-depth probing and – ideally – comparative exploration of specific regions in eastern and western Europe, as well as transnational and pan-European analysis, within a common conceptual framework. The pivotal *notion of (non)compliance* will focus attention both on how people perceive and enact their roles as ‘good’ citizens in societies that foster or succumb to systematic discrimination and violence, and on *competing conceptions of community and responsibility*, including the question of how (individual and societal) levels of empathy and moral obligation towards others are constituted and sustained – or undermined and destroyed.

## Draft Program

Wednesday Dec. 3, 2025

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2 pm

Welcome & Opening remarks (Christina Morina & Mary Fulbrook)

Afternoon

### Section I – Societies under Nazism: Notions of Community, Individuality and Citizenship before and during World War II

*Questions both panels might address: How do we conceptualize and understand ‘society’ under Nazi domination both within and outside Germany? How do societies change under different regimes and types of occupation, and in the context of genocidal war? How are forms of governance/authority, individual and collective beliefs and (communal) patterns of behavior interrelated?*

#### Panel 1: The Rise of Nazism and Societal Changes in Germany and Beyond (1933-1939)

Mark Roseman – Lidia Zessin-Jurek – Christina Morina

#### Panel 2: Communal Logics and Collective Patterns of Behavior during War, Occupation and Genocide in Europe (1939-1945)

Tomasz Frydel – Havi Dreifuss (zoom) – Maria Fritsche – Tatjana Tönsmeier – Barnabas Balint

Thursday, Dec. 4, 2025

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Morning

### Section II – Interpersonal Dynamics of Violence: Complicity, (non)Compliance, Survival and Rescue in East and West

*Questions both panels might address: How are individual acts of taking – or not taking – responsibility in helping the persecuted related to larger societal and structural factors? How do differing political structures and social relations in different areas of Europe affect the ways in which people excluded from the ‘national community’ seek to evade persecution? What are suitable conceptual and empirical approaches to understanding the (unstable, shifting) nexus between the micro- and the macro-levels within wartime societies? How relevant are egodocuments in this respect and how can we best use them in the systematic study of such questions?*

### **Panel 3: Individual Experiences, Practices of Exclusion and the Question of Complicity**

Nitzan Lebovic – Lovro Kralj – Emil Kerenji – Kim Wünschmann

### **Panel 4: Conditions and Practices of (non)Compliance, Survival and Rescue in Comparative Perspective**

Andrew Apostolou – Nadège Ragaru (zoom) – Éva Kovács – Mary Fulbrook

## **Afternoon**

### **Section III – Bitter Pasts, Better Societies: Addressing the Holocaust as Social Crime and Legacy**

*Questions both panels might address: In what ways were the political-cultural reconstructions of states after 1945 and, in many cases, after 1991, tied to a reckoning with the role of ‘ordinary’ citizens in the Holocaust? How did (past/recast) notions of ‘good citizenship’ inform these processes? How do current WWII, Holocaust, and ‘occupation’ memorials/exhibitions address the relationship between individual, communal and societal-structural factors in explaining the Holocaust (and genocide in general)? What ‘lessons’ are being conveyed – and how do/should these efforts relate to current historiographical debates (and vice versa) as well as the “securitization of the past”?*

### **Panel 5: National Reconstruction, Historical Reckoning and Notions of “Good” Citizenship in postwar Europe**

Anton Weiss-Wendt – Georgiy Kasianov – Gaëlle Fisher – Geraldien van Frijtag-Drabbe-Künzel – Sandra Lipner

### **Panel 6: Representation and Education beyond “Courage” – Critical Perspectives**

Agnieszka Wiercholska – Lea David – Mark Rusling – Margaret Comer

## **Evening**

### **Roundtable: “(Un-)Learning from the Past: Violent History, Democratic Citizenship and the Future of Holocaust and Genocide Education”**

*This panel will address three main questions, focusing on both German and wider European experiences in a comparative and transnational perspective*

- 1) how does Holocaust history & memory inform current efforts to fight antisemitism;*
- 2) how is Holocaust and genocide education linked to the ‘crisis’ of democracy and efforts at civic/citizen education; and*
- 3) how and what could be done better in both areas going forward.*

Natalia Aleksion – Andrea Löw – Michael Mayer – Andrew Port

Chair: Christina Morina