

Comparing museum displays on Post-Second World War forced migration in Germany and Japan: Reflections on November 2018 research trip

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This paper includes my initial thoughts from a research trip I made from 5th to 17th November 2019 to museums in Germany, Poland and Belgium. The trip was possible thanks to the generous financial support provided by the National History and Collective Memory Project's 'Program for Younger Scholars' led by Professor Hashimoto Nobuya to whom I am especially grateful. As a historian whose research has focused on contemporary Japan, this was my first time to conduct research in a European context. My research proposal for the trip stated that I intended to compare displays of post-World War Two migration in different European museums with institutions in Japan. I was especially keen to visit two institutions in Germany: 1) Foundation, Flight, Expulsion, Reconciliation, and 2) Museum Friedland. I wanted to think about their work in the context of research I did in 2017 about the Maizuru Repatriation Memorial Museum in Kyoto prefecture, Japan. In 2015 the Japanese museum succeeded in having hundreds of its documents about Japanese prisoners of war of the Soviet Union entered in to the UNESCO Memory of the World Register. The impression remained however, that despite changes, the museum still predominantly displayed a narrative of 'Japanese victimhood'. In Japanese Studies, comparisons of Japan's 'failure to come to terms with its wartime past' relative to Germany's achievement of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* are almost a cliché. Nevertheless, one of the most effective ways of gaining new insights on a familiar topic is comparative research and it was in this spirit that I made the trip.

Starting in Bochum, I presented the findings from an article I had co-written with Steven Ivings (Kyoto University) about the renewal of the display at the Maizuru Repatriation Memorial Museum.¹ Speaking to the faculty and students at Ruhr University, Bochum's Institute for Social Movements I talked about how we understood the mass movement of people after the collapse of the Japanese empire in terms of 'repertoires' and 'regimes' of migration.² Repertoires refer to the actions taken by those migrating within the framework of government and NGO policy that forms the regime. Our motivation for using this theory was to recognise how those migrating still exhibited agency despite the constraints of government policy. Our research on Maizuru sought to understand how

¹ Jonathan Bull and Steven Ivings, 'Return on display: memories of postcolonial migration at Maizuru,' *Japan Forum* 31(3) (forthcoming in September 2019).

² Lewis Siegelbaum originally used these terms in his work on mass migration in the USSR after the Second World War. Lewis Siegelbaum, 'The 'Flood' of 1945: Regimes and Repertoires of Migration in the Soviet Union at War's End,' *Social History* 42(1).

repertoires and regimes of migration featured in the Museum's display. We concluded that although the renewal of the display included a greater emphasis on repertoire by featuring more stories of 'ordinary people', overall it was still heavily reliant on the narrative of the state and the regime of migration. I finished the presentation with my preliminary thoughts on possible comparisons with museums in Germany. One of the main differences seemed to be that the

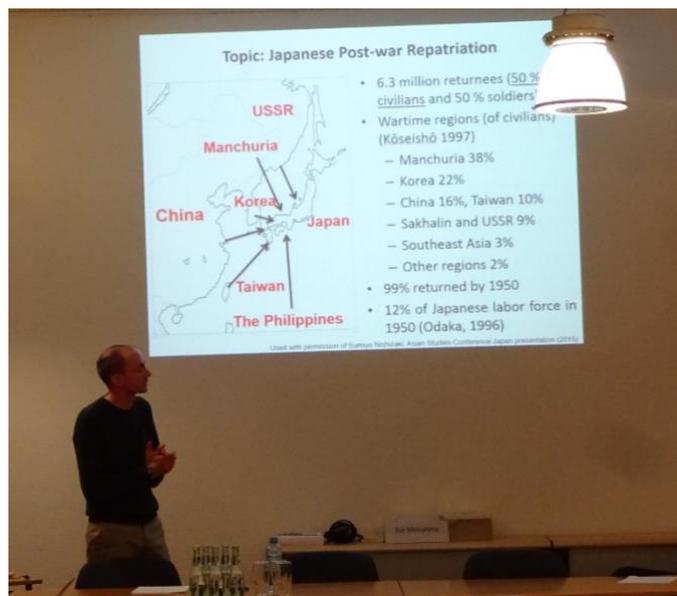


Figure 1 - Presentation at Institute of Social Movements, Ruhr University, Bochum (Photograph by Kinugasa Taro)

authorities and the media made a clearer terminological distinction between the soldiers and civilians who arrived after 1945. In Japan while officials and journalists sometimes used different wording (for the processing at repatriation centres, for example), in general, they often conflated soldiers and civilians as *hikiagesha* ('repatriates' when translated into English).

Following the presentation, the audience questioned the use of regimes and repertoires to analyse the museum and the role of local citizens in influencing the new display. I replied that the theory was an attempt to deconstruct the monolithic image of the 'pitiful' repatriate. From what little I had read about museums in Germany, there seemed to be a more critical engagement with how politicians, officials and journalists' actions contribute to the construction of 'figures' of the refugee and prisoner of war. Once such figures start to circulate in public discourse, they often acquire a powerful influence that can be resistant to challenge. Nevertheless, doing so is necessary if museum narratives are going to include the experiences of 'non-Japanese' such as Chinese, Koreans and Taiwanese who the Allies moved under the same 'regime of migration' from 1945 onwards. Because the narrative of return to Japan at Maizuru has largely gone unquestioned, local citizens/memory activists involved in 'their' museum can also be hesitant to make changes. In response, Professor Stefan Berger pointed out that what one sees as memory culture in Germany today is not necessarily what one would have seen ten or twenty years ago. In particular, the central role given to the Holocaust in contemporary discussions about memory and remembrance is something that took time for researchers to develop.

Since finishing the article on Maizuru I had learned about Professor Berger's role in the project 'Unsettling Remembering and Social Cohesion in Transnational Europe'

(UNREST). The centrepiece of UNREST is promoting the concept of ‘agonistic memory’ as a ‘third memory way’ to negotiate memory politics in contemporary Europe. According to UNREST, ‘bottom-up, antagonistic right-wing memory’ is challenging the European Union’s ‘top-down cosmopolitan’ mode of remembrance.³ Over dinner following the seminar I had a chance to find out more about agonistic memory. Whereas cosmopolitan memory identifies primarily with victims, agonistic memory includes victims, perpetrators and bystanders. In a museum setting, agonistic memory can be displayed by making visible conflicts over clashing interpretations of the past. This means explaining why perpetrators took their positions and emphasising that others might have taken similar decisions if historical circumstances had only been slightly different.

The dinner discussion left me with many more questions than answers. If much of the memory discourse in Germany and other European countries was a result of debates over the legacies of the Holocaust how did this influence memory theory in non-European contexts? If agonistic memory depended on the categories of victim, perpetrator and bystander, what happened when there was a lack of agreement over who was who? How practical was the theory for reworking museum displays created by curators working with the constraint of the hegemonic memory narratives that exist in most societies? Thinking back to the display at the Maizuru Repatriation Memorial Museum, points of tension were almost completely absent from the hegemonic narrative of the ‘joyous homecoming’ provided for former Japanese prisoners of war. The history of the Siberian Internment is largely about disagreements as fundamental as whether we should use the word ‘prisoner’ or ‘internee’. Yet the Maizuru Repatriation Memorial Museum seems to have decided to avoid mentioning that there were significant differences of opinion in favour of a homogenous figure of the Siberian Internee.

Writing the article about Maizuru made me aware of how a locally run museum, in addition to the challenge of curating a historically accurate and balanced display, faces practical problems such as drawing in visitors as part of the city’s tourist plan. A local museum must justify its demands on the limited funds of a municipal budget in a way that a nationally-backed institution might not. Other pressures exist: for example, local people might not welcome a museum that displays local history in an unfavourable way. The curator probably also lives in the local community and so challenging established narratives is likely to be a fraught task. Such quotidian questions might seem minor compared to the major ones about modes of remembrance. Nevertheless, to establish agonistic memory in the museum requires finding satisfactory solutions for those involved in the day-to-day running of local museums. Visiting a small town (population approximately 10,000) called Friedland in Lower Saxony provided me with an excellent opportunity to think through these issues at a locally

³ Unsettling Remembering and Social Cohesion in Europe (UNREST), ‘Home’ <http://www.unrest.eu/home> [Accessed 9 December 2018]

run museum dealing with a similar subject to Maizuru.

A 15-minute journey south of the city of Göttingen, stepping off the train in Friedland felt like arriving in idyllic rural Germany. Surrounded by fields and woodlands, the autumn colours were at their finest. Located next to the platform was an attractive red brick building with a grey tiled roof. This is the old railway station which the Lower Saxony government turned into Museum Friedland in 2016. Situated a five-



Figure 2 - Entrance to Museum Friedland (this and all subsequent photographs by the author)

minute walk from the museum is

the Friedland transit camp which, since 2011, has been a reception centre for asylum seekers coming from Afghanistan, Eritrea, Iraq, Lebanon, Pakistan, Russia, Syria, Turkey and Vietnam. In contrast to my quant first impressions, the museum's explanation seemed more suggestive of what Friedland is really like: 'a place of refuge where the German, European, and global past and present meet' and 'a mirror of today's global flashpoints'.⁴

Occupying six rooms spread over two floors, Museum Friedland's display is about the history of the Friedland transit camp from its beginning in September 1945 to the present. Organised chronologically, the rooms focus on the following periods:

- 1939-1945: War, Flight, Displacement – The Friedland Transit Camp as a Result of World War II
- 1945-1952: Friedland as a Refugee Hub – The Friedland Transit Camp as an Instrument of Order in the Post-War Years
- 1953-1956: Friedland as a Political Stage – The Arrival of the Last Prisoners of War
- 1956-1969: Moving West – The Friedland Transit Camp in the Cold War
- 1970-1987: An International Friedland? The Friedland Transit Camp between Routines and Challenges
- 1988-2015: Openness and Restrictions – The Friedland Transit Camp after the End of the Cold War⁵

The first three rooms of the display particularly interested me because they covered a similar historical period to the display in Maizuru. The British occupation authorities

⁴ Museum Friedland, 'Friedland. Perspectives of Migration: The Transit Camp from 1945 – today' (Conrad City Druck: Berlin, 2016), 5, 43.

⁵ Ibid.

established Friedland. They selected the site because of the good transport connections and proximity to the American and Soviet zones. During 1945 and 1946 most of the people arriving in Friedland were civilians. This changed in 1947 when former prisoners of war became more numerous. The bulk of the former POWs transited through Friedland during the next three years. Establishment by occupation authorities, and the transition of civilians to POWs resembles how migration occurred at Maizuru. The main difference between the two was the overall numbers of people arriving: Friedland numbered 1.8 million people between 1945 and 1952 compared to the approximately 600,000 handled by Maizuru.

Moving into the 1950s, what Friedland and Maizuru had in common was how they became the focus of press attention in Germany and Japan leading to the widespread dissemination of ‘images of the camp’. The images from this period were the ones that lodged in the public imagination and have proved resistant to change. From October 1953 to January 1955 the Soviet Union released approximately 6000 POWs and 1300 civilian internees.⁶ In Maizuru from 1953 until 1958 about 40,000 people arrived and of this number just over 8000 were from a military background and had been released by the USSR.⁷

My lasting impression of the display at Maizuru was that it did not engage in a critical way with the construction of a ‘media event’ which was what was happening in the 1950s. Whereas during the late-1940s media access to Maizuru had depended on US occupation authorities giving their approval, by the mid-1950s Japan had regained its sovereignty and the journalists had more leeway in their reporting. A strong contender for a keyword to connect the dominant images might be ‘drama’ and the Japanese press showed numerous close-up pictures of tearful men and women embracing. Alongside these images of reunion was the tragic figure of ‘the mother waiting by the wharf’. Teichiku Entertainment turned news reports of Hashino Ise waiting for her son to return on a boat that never came into a hit song in 1954. In contrast, Museum Friedland addressed the 1950s in an altogether different way. This was immediately apparent from the use of the phrase ‘political stage’ in the section’s title. According to the explanation, ‘their [the POWs] arrival is a major political and public event’.⁸ The explanation for the reception given to those arriving made clear that it was part of a media event constructed to meet the requirements of the West German state during the Cold War. Criticism of the USSR meant to ‘shape the image’ of Friedland as the ‘Gateway to Freedom’.

In this section of the display, the curators appeared to be keen to problematize any impression that the viewer could uncritically accept the rhetoric of the ‘Gateway to Freedom’. That West Germany was a state where different views of the POWs had jostled for recognition came through clearly in the section ‘Friedland in the Public Eye’. Using nearly 20 separate

⁶ Ibid., 24.

⁷ Maizuru chihō hikiage engo kyoku shi (1961), 55, 287-8.

⁸ Museum Friedland, 23.

television screens of varying sizes, different photos of the arriving POWs appear alongside quotations. These suggest not only the mixed messages of the time but also how the media operated to convey a coherent narrative of the POWs as ‘suffering by proxy for the German people’. One quote stood out: ‘There is something alarming about the indiscriminate way a nation clasps all returnees to its bosom’. On the opposite side of the room, the display goes from the media event to the stories of those who were returning. In addition to the detailed life stories provided (which included information about Nazi activities and reasons why the USSR had detained the individual for such a long period of time), the challenge to the idea of the ‘happy reunion’ left a strong impression. Next to a panel describing the organised celebrations for one returning ex-soldier was the recorded testimony of that man’s son. The son’s words spoke of how he experienced little emotion at the return of his father because for most of his young life he had never known his father – his father ‘was like a stranger to me’. No sooner had the curators hinted that they might allow a sentimental depiction than they challenged it with the unforgiving words of a child witness.

The display at Museum Friedland continued on the second floor, with an account of the Friedland transit camp during the remainder of the Cold War and then its transformation into a centre for refugees. Overall, perhaps the most impressive feature of the display was the curators’ willingness to incorporate descriptions of policies and decisions that reflected badly on the running of the transit camp. The curators encapsulated this approach in a selection of postcards free for visitors to take away. Each postcard had a quote from someone who had passed through the transit camp. Examples included ‘Friedland was just the way we had imagined Germany’, ‘Friedland was an entirely different world for us’ and ‘Pleasant it was not in Friedland’. Seeing positive and negative descriptions juxtaposed in this way reinforced how there could not be one ‘true’ account of camp life.

The visit to Museum Friedland was the highlight of the trip. I gained an insight into how a museum at the local level might go about challenging dominant memory narratives that present the past in a nostalgic and uncritical way. The location of Museum Friedland next to the reception centre also left a strong impression. I had expected the latter to be off limits behind a wire fence but visitors could walk around freely. Part of Museum Friedland – a preserved Nissen Hut from the original camp – is located inside the reception centre. As I was leaving Museum Friedland the staff were preparing for a film screening. A man and a woman with a small child arrived and the staff asked them if they were staying at the reception centre. Apparently without hesitation they answered yes; the museum staff welcomed them and told them that the screening was free. Such an effort to connect with those entering Museum Friedland’s seemed to epitomize the institution’s approach to displaying a politics of the past that draws in the visitor and invites him or her to engage with its relevance to the present.

Museum Friedland's website emphasises the organisation's ambition to be at the forefront of research about migration issues.⁹ In Berlin there is another institution with a similar goal called Foundation, Flight, Expulsion, Reconciliation (*Stiftung Flucht, Vertreibung, Versöhnung*; hereafter FFER). In contrast to Museum Friedland FFER has a much higher public profile owing to its controversial origins. The Federal Government proposed FFER in 2008 as a 'Visible symbol against flight and expulsion' but ten years later there is still no fixed date for the museum's opening. The controversy surrounding FFER is because the original initiative came from the main organisation representing Germans expelled from Eastern and Central Europe after the Second World War. Called the Federation of Expellees (*Bund der Vertriebenen*; hereafter 'BvD') many in and outside Germany associate it with right-wing politics. In 2000 the BvD head, Erika Steinbach, proposed a Center Against Expulsions to display the history of German expellees. This proposal drew fierce opposition from politicians in Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary where many people understand the expulsion of Germans after WW2 as having been a justified reaction to Nazi policies and support for those policies by Germans living in those states (or their predecessors) at the time. Sensitive to what the proposed Centre might do to Germany's image, the Federal Government decided to found the FFER and to incorporate it as part of the German Historical Museum.

The FFER's nondescript temporary offices are still quite easy to find on Bethlehemkirchplatz because of a distinctive sculpture in front of the building. It is a five-metre high ball shaped like a bundle of cloth tied together with rope and with various



Figure 3 - 'Houseball', Bethlehemkirchplatz, Berlin

objects such as a chair and a broom protruding from it called 'houseball' (Der Hausball). Made by Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen it is meant to represent the suffering of refugees. When FFER opens in its new facilities, the location will also be one with an important connection to the history of forced migration. The building chosen is the former

⁹ Museum Friedland, 'Mission Statement,' <https://www.museum-friedland.de/de/about-us/mission-statement/> [accessed 5 January 2019].

Deutschlandhaus which is opposite the ruins of the Anhalter train station. Many expellees arrived in Berlin at this train station. As a plaque near to the ruins also explains, the station was one of three in the city from which the Nazis deported Jews.

I spoke with two curators from FFER who clarified how the Federal Government intends the forthcoming museum as a response to the BvD. Over nearly two hours the curators explained how political entanglement was unavoidable but that FFER 'is probably the most interesting historical project in Germany to be working on'.¹⁰ The Board of Trustees which includes politicians, government officials, representatives of the Protestant and Catholic Churches in Germany and the Central Council of Jews in Germany oversees the running of FFER. Six members of the BvD also sit on the Board.¹¹ The BvD has long taken the view that the expellees are the last 'group' in Germany to be 'remembered' and that a museum is one way of addressing this. However, when the first generation born in the post-war reached adulthood in the 1960s, they pushed German society towards a more critical approach to the nation's recent history. Promulgating group memories focusing solely on German victimhood as the BvD did became less socially acceptable. In addition, West German Chancellor Willy Brandt's policy of *Ostpolitik* made the BvD's revanchist views politically unsavoury in the 1970s. Nevertheless, by the end of the 1990s, post-Cold War social changes increased public receptivity to reconsidering expellees' experiences. Many thought that since Germany had made efforts to come to terms with the legacies of its Nazi past, Germany's neighbours should also re-evaluate some of their more comfortable historical understandings.

For the curators going about the work of collating objects and preparing descriptions, embedding the museum's narrative in historical and contemporary contexts is critical. The historical context is that of the Nazi politics of expansion in the Second World War. While the 12 to 14 million Germans expelled by the Allies, Polish, Czechoslovak and Hungarian and other governments represent a considerable number, the Nazis had planned to force 51 million people to migrate. Expulsion was therefore a reaction to Nazi aggression.¹² The contemporary context is that forced migration was a means of politics in the twentieth century. The curators want to display the expulsion of Germans alongside other forced migrations such as those of the Armenians, the post-World War One population exchanges and Yugoslavia in the 1990s. The layout of the museum reflects the curators' determination to contextualise: the first floor will provide a 'big frame' for the visitor by outlining the development of international law and the global phenomenon of forced migration and camps. The second floor will focus on World War Two and the early post-war period and emphasise how expulsion shaped society in both the Federal Republic of Germany and the German

¹⁰ Interview at Stiftung Flucht, Vertreibung, Versöhnung. 9th November 2018.

¹¹ Stiftung Flucht, Vertreibung, Versöhnung, 'Foundation FAQ: Who are the decision-makers and advisors at the Foundation?' <https://www.sfvv.de/en/foundation/faq> [accessed 26 December 2018].

¹² Interview at Stiftung Flucht, Vertreibung, Versöhnung. 9th November 2018.

Democratic Republic.

My aim for the interview was to get a sense of how the curators intended to use objects to create a display about forced migration. Researching the display at Maizuru piqued my interest in the tension that exists between a museum receiving objects from the public and how it displays those objects in ways that might not show the original owner of the object in a flattering light. My impression of Maizuru was that those curating the display were reluctant to use objects to criticise. The curators at FFER acknowledged that finding the balance between using an object donated by a family about their loved one and putting said object in a critical context is a difficult issue. The curators often deal with examples where an object is from a person who fled but who prior to fleeing was a Nazi. Some families will be open about the fact that their relative was a Nazi; others less so and inclined to focus on the suffering of their family. While the curators always try to stay in good contact with a donor, anyone giving FFER an object signs a contract giving the institution all rights to use. Such contracts are standard practice for museums.

The administrative framework behind the donation process is important for enabling the curators to produce displays that are not subject to ‘control’ by the donors of objects. Another significant factor is the curators’ understanding of what putting an object on display in the context of a history museum about war and its aftermath involves. Because the topic of the expulsion of Germans was (and remains) politically controversial, certain objects have taken on iconic status. Examples include keys, suitcases, handcarts and wooden boxes. The curators explained that visitors to FFER will *expect* to see these objects on display and so when displayed ‘we [the curators] want to discuss them and put them into other contexts’.¹³ What the curators are striving to avoid is to ‘reactivate’ such objects so that they only tell one story of German victimhood. The curators connect this approach to de-iconizing familiar objects to a broader appreciation of collective memory and how ‘Rather than one narrative we suggest there can be several perspectives on one item’.

During the interview I gathered that the day when FFER opens to the public is probably still a while away. Although FFER published a *Draft Concept for Permanent Exhibition* in June 2017, the curators have still to write the chapter texts that go alongside the objects on display.¹⁴ These texts are likely to be especially difficult to write because of the scrutiny that they will receive. Watching particularly closely will be the BvD and the Polish government. The curators candidly explained that FFER had been criticised for a lack of transparency and for taking a long time to make the concept of the display public. Such criticism was one of the reasons why FFER’s first director left his post in December 2014. FFER is also unsure if institutions in Poland will be willing to cooperate in lending objects

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Stiftung Flucht, Vertreibung, Versöhnung, ‘Draft Concept for Permanent Exhibition’ https://www.sfvv.de/sites/default/files/downloads/Draft%20Concept%20for%20a%20Permanent%20Exhibition_sfvv_0.pdf [accessed 3 January 2019].

for display. Such lending is one way of ensuring the display provides various perspectives on the past and avoids concentrating on German suffering.

Interviewing the curators at FFER encouraged me to consider the differences and similarities between organising a display in a ‘national’ museum as opposed to a regional or local one such as Museum Friedland. The political circumstances the FFER curators negotiate seem to be more fraught than those of Museum Friedland. However, interviews with the curators at the latter institution are necessary to reach a firmer conclusion. The academic perspective of the curators at both institutions did appear to be similar as did the intention to unpack the political meanings of the objects on display.

During my interview at FFER I mentioned that I was going to visit the Museum of the Second World War (hereafter ‘MSW’) in Gdańsk, Poland. MSW has become controversial because after opening in early 2017 the Polish government deemed the displays to be insufficiently ‘patriotic’.¹⁵ Some leading politicians insisted that the museum should focus more on the bravery and resistance by Poles.¹⁶ The Polish government intervened to affiliate another institution – the Museum of the Battle of Westerplatte – with MSW. On entering the main foyer of MSW visitors see a video display about the ongoing work to turn ‘The Battlefield of Westerplatte Peninsula’ into a major tourist attraction. The Westerplatte Museum, according to its director, is about righting the wrong of why ‘in free Poland the history of the defence of Westerplatte was not treated with the respect it deserved’.¹⁷ This video display, and an even more dramatic one entitled ‘The Unconquered’ at the end of the MSW permanent exhibition left me with a strong impression of a museum determined to present the visitor with an account of Polish national heroism. The curators at FFER mentioned that the new display at MSW was likely a response to the suspicion that Germans were trying to portray themselves as victims from the Second World War.

¹⁵ Julia Szyndzielorz, ‘Dispute over ‘patriotism’ delays opening of Gdańsk’s new war museum,’ *The Guardian*, 28 January 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2017/jan/28/gdansk-second-world-war-museum-delay-patriotism-poland> [accessed 29 November 2018].

¹⁶ Rachel Donadio, ‘A Museum Becomes a Battlefield Over Poland’s History,’ *The New York Times*, 9 November 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/10/arts/design/museum-of-the-second-world-war-in-poland-debate.html> [accessed 28 November 2018].

¹⁷ Muzeum Westerplatte, *Seven Looks at Westerplatte*, (Muzeum II Wojny Światowej w Gdańsku: Gdańsk, 2017).

The size of the permanent exhibition at MSW is overwhelming with sections not only about the war in Europe but also on the fighting in the Asia-Pacific. The focus of my visit was to look at how the museum put forced migration on display. MSW's narrative states that the end of the WW2 in Europe led to 'the beginning of a new captivity'.¹⁸



Figure 4 - Museum of the Second World War in Gdansk

Perhaps because of the museum's emphasis on the role of the Soviet Union after Germany's defeat, the planners restricted the display space for forced migration to one room. Here, they divide the display into three sections: 'Post-war travels of Poles', 'Post-war expulsion (deportation) of Germans' and 'Expulsions (Deportations) in the east'. The last section refers to 'resettlement of Ukrainians' from Poland after WW2. The text in the display had subtle differences of wording suggestive of a different emphasis being given to actions carried out in and outside of Poland. For example, the relatively mild English word 'evictions' was used to describe Germans expelled from Poland. The explanation for "'wild' evictions" that happened from the end of WW2 until the signing of the Potsdam Agreement mentioned that it was 'often accompanied by robberies and acts of violence'.¹⁹ After August 1945 the deportations 'were carried out according to the resolutions made by the victorious allied powers'. In contrast, the text for Germans expelled from Czechoslovakia used the harsher word 'expulsions' throughout and those occurring during the initial phase involved 'great brutality'.²⁰ As evident from R.M. Douglas' research, the population transfers from Poland were considerably more complex than the MSW suggests. According to Douglas, "Only two months after the beginning of the Polish 'organized expulsions,' then, the operation had already degenerated into such a state of near chaos that officials in the reception areas had begun to press for its immediate suspension."²¹

¹⁸ Museum of the Second World War, 'Total victory, ambiguous liberation,' display panel [viewed on 14 November 2018].

¹⁹ Museum of the Second World War, 'Post-war expulsion (deportation) of Germans,' touchscreen display panel [viewed on 14 November 2018].

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ R.M. Douglas, *Orderly and Humane: The Expulsion of the Germans after the Second World War* (Yale University Press: New Haven, 2012), 171.

In contrast to MSW's emphasis on World War Two as a 'Polish national' narrative, the European Parliament opened the House of European History (hereafter 'HEH') in Brussels to provide a 'European' historical narrative. As with the Gdańsk museum, the HEH also attracted criticism. Some accused it of being an 'elite-led' project that involved minimal consultation outside of a small group of experts. For hacks working for the tabloid and right-wing press in the United Kingdom, articles slamming EU elitism have been a go-to story for decades. The opening of the HEH in 2017 was no different with the usual hatchet job reporting in evidence.²² The largely closed process for the design of HEH was, however, a deliberate decision so as to enable the curators and historians to make relatively unimpeded progress.²³ Historians behind HEH decided that the display should avoid telling a series of national histories



Figure 5 - House of European History, Brussels

of the EU's constituent states. This made HEH an easy target for critics sore that the museum was ignoring a favourite national hero such as Winston Churchill.

The approach to displaying European history that the curators of HEH settled on was to focus on the twentieth century. The display incorporated the topic of forced migration in several places and there was a specific section about flight, expulsion, deportation and displacement for the Second World War and post-war period. Because the curators could draw on materials available in migration museums, they felt that this was 'relatively easy to research' compared to the work involved in organising contemporary information about migrants trying to reach Europe in the twenty-first century.²⁴ The section on forced migration was smaller than I had anticipated considering how important the topic is for understanding the rebuilding process. The permanent display has been described as reflecting 'more left-wing historiographical paradigms and curatorial perspectives' and

²² Klaus Welle, 'The making of the house of European History,' in *Creating the House of European History*, eds. Andrea Monk and Perikles Christodoulou (Publications Office of the European Union: Luxembourg, 2018), 13.

²³ Wolfram Kaiser, 'Limits of Cultural Engineering: Actors and Narratives in the European Parliament's House of European History,' *Journal of Common Market Studies* 55(3) (2017), 519. I am grateful to Professor Stefan Berger for sharing the manuscript of his forthcoming book chapter with me and making me aware of this source.

²⁴ Constanze Itzel, 'The memory of migration,' in Monk and Christodoulou, 258.

interpretations close to the work of historians like Tony Judt and Eric Hobsbawm.²⁵ However, on forced migration after World War Two, the curators chose not to pursue in any detail Judt's verdict that "The term 'ethnic cleansing' did not yet exist, but the reality surely did – and it was far from arousing wholesale disapproval or embarrassment".²⁶ The display includes identification badges for German expellees, keys to a house in Poland and a reproduction of the order for all Germans to leave Poland.

Although the curators suggested that the history of forced migration in Europe in the twentieth century was a relatively straightforward subject to organise, the secondary literature and information gathered on this trip suggest otherwise. While the organisers of the HEH took considerable efforts to ensure the display did not become a paean to the formation of the EU, as Kaiser argues, this meant a curatorial decision to emphasise Eastern European history and memory to a greater extent. Consequently, HEH moved closer to 'Eastern European memory cultures'.²⁷ Possibly because of this increased attention to Eastern Europe, incorporating a more in-depth analysis of forced migration may have been difficult for the curators. Having learned from the curators of Flight, Foundation, Expulsion, Reconciliation about the politics of their work, a more forthright analysis of forced migration at HEH may have been too sensitive considering Polish, Czech and Hungarian national narratives on the expulsions.

Through the research trip I gained several insights into how displays of forced migration after the Second World War vary not only between Japan and Germany, but among institutions in Europe. Without wanting to uncritically repeat the familiar accusation that museums displaying war memory in Japan fail to engage with questions of war responsibility compared to their counterparts in Germany, the difference in approach evident in Museum Friedland compared to the Maizuru Repatriation Memorial Museum was striking. The main distinction is in the degree of self-reflexivity curators work with and decide to incorporate into the displays. The word 'hikiagesha' (repatriate) is rarely problematized in museums in Japan. Displays seldom include questions about how and why the *figure* of the repatriate emerged and how and why the figure's meanings changed during Japan's long post-war and after.²⁸ At Museum Friedland a self-reflexive approach was more visible and it will be fascinating to see whether the closely watched Foundation, Flight, Expulsion, Reconciliation is able to take a similar stance towards the history and memory of forced migration. The compromises that have gone on in the cases of the Museum of the Second World War in Gdańsk and the House of European History in Brussels suggest the curators at FFER will be hard pressed to implement their vision without a significant struggle. No matter the outcome,

²⁵ Kaiser, 528.

²⁶ Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (Penguin: New York, 2005), 27.

²⁷ Kaiser, 531.

²⁸ For the concept of Japan's long post-war see Carol Gluck, 'The Past in the Present' in *Postwar Japan as History*, ed. Andrew Gordon (University of California Press: Berkeley, 1993), 66.

analysing the results of their work will be essential to understanding the potentialities and pitfalls inherent in the display of forced migration after war and imperial collapse.