



CroMe

CROATIAN MEMORIES

UNVEILING PERSONAL MEMORIES ON WAR AND DETENTION



ERASMUS UNIVERSITEIT ROTTERDAM



DOCUMENTA

UNIVERSITEIT TWENTE.

Data Archiving and Networked Services



News bulletin nr. 2, June 2011

We are happy to present the second newsletter of Croatian Memories (CroMe), Unveiling personal memories on war and detention.

The 1st of May 2011 was the first anniversary of the CroMe-project. In this second news bulletin we will inform you about the most important issues of the second half of the project's first. This bulletin is richly provided with photos, most made during one of the recording days in Croatia.

Open Internet Platform

Noterik BV was responsible for the design and implementation of the Open Internet Platform (OIP) and started this activity in September 2010.

.Technical meetings were organized frequently to synchronize the needs of the end user (Documenta) with the technical capacities (Noterik & University Twente).

Next to the **OIP**, an Index and Research Platform (**IRP**)

had to be developed. This was done by the scientific programmer of the HMI-group of the University of Twente.

[Collective Access](#) (an Open Source cataloguing tool) was selected as the most suitable application and the platform was realised in May 2011.

The metadata set (including a key wordlist) was designed together by Documenta, Noterik and the University of Twente.

Draft versions of both the OIP and the IRP were tested in the first quarter of 2011. Due to the fact that more interviews were recorded than initially expected for this period, Noterik BV was asked to advance the development and implementation of the editing functionalities. With these editing functionalities the project staff in Zagreb has the possibility to edit the interviews on-line. As foreseen in the original project plan, the launching of the website for the general public will take place during in the second year of the project.

The IRP and the OIP are mutual dependent on each other.

Information stored in Collective Access (such as transcriptions, translations, and crucial keyword lists) can be accessed by the OIP on the Noterik platform while video's, stored on the OIP, can be accessed by the CA-platform.

Training of interviewers

The project required a considerable number of volunteers who needed to be trained. This was done in 2 rounds – summer 2010 and winter 2011.

The first training was organized in cooperation with the Faculty of Philosophy in Zagreb (Department of History) in the form of a course "*Oral history and culture of Remembrance*" for postgraduate doctoral studies of History. 25 doctoral students of History and 8 volunteers from the Centre of



Peace Studies participated in this training program. The course was carried out by Prof. Drago Roksandić (Dept. of History), Prof. Tatjana Jukić (Dept. of English), Prof. Renata Jambrešić Kirin (Inst. of Ethnology and Folklore Research), Sandra Prlenda (Center for Women Studies), Zdenka Pantić (International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims) and Vesna Terselič & Tanja Petrović (Documenta).

The second training was provided by Maja Dubljević & Tanja Petrović (Documenta) and Zdenka Pantić (IRCT).

The trainings covered the following topics

Importance and meaning of oral history method:

Understanding of the oral history method and the "personal" dimension on the basis of which it is different from other methods of historical research. Through oral history we can understand what a



particular time period meant to an individual and how it was experienced by an individual. In this way, oral history helps us to better understand the past events.

Personal motivation: Participants share with others their basic motives for working on collecting memories with oral history method and share their understanding of oral history.

Identities: Participants share their background and family experience; what they think about what they've heard from their family; who they are loyal to; how they understand the experience of the others.

General principles of communication skills:

Asking questions (open-ended questions, close-ended questions, suggestive questions, non-obliging questions); *active listening* - includes three actions: to hear - to listen - to understand. Active listening is one of the basic principles that the listener must respect. He/she must be certain that he/she understands to the fullest what the interviewee is saying and that those listening to the interview will also understand what is meant. Through active listening it is easier to form questions which will be asked in later phases of the interview; exercise - communication skills - aim of the exercise: to raise awareness of own potentials and weaknesses in communication skills and work on their improvement.



Secondary traumatization:

How to deal with secondary traumatization and burn out syndrome;

Methodology

Phase 1 *Research and preparation for an interview* (Basic information on the place/area where the interview is being recorded, knowing the basic information about the interviewee)

Phase 2 *Before the beginning of recording the interview* (Developing a trust relationship with the interviewee before the interview, filling out the documents)

Phase 3 *Recording of an interview* (structuring an interview, beginning of an interview, interviewing techniques, ending an interview)

Phase 4 *After the recording of an interview* (thanking the interviewee, psychological support).



Recording of interviews

105 interviews have been conducted and recorded between September 2010 to April 2011 during more than 50 field trips to different regions in Croatia. Recorded interviews referred to personal memories from Korenica, Ličko Petrovo Selo, Krbavica, Rakovica, Saborsko, Plaški, Donji Lapac, Gospić, Gračac, Islam Latinski, Posedarje, Benkovac, Obrovac, Karin, Bjelovar, Zagreb, Pula, Rijeka. All interviews were recorded with a high quality digital camera that meet the appropriate technical standards for high quality audio-visual recording as defined by Noterik.



When the recording begins, the interviewee is asked to pronounce audibly his/her first- and last name, and the date and place of birth. Then the interviewer starts asking questions using the list of questions. This list is conceptualized in such a way that at the beginning more general questions are asked: the interviewee usually needs some time to relax and gain trust. The interviewer follows the interviewee's experience in a chronologic order and determines the experiences which take a central place in the life

of that person. For example, persons who were already adults before 1991, will probably focus more on the pre-war period than those who were still children/adolescents during the war.

The recorded interviews (original files) are stored in Documenta and DANS, while the compressed versions are stored on the on-line OIP.

At this moment, the status of the interview recordings is as follows:

- 105 interviews recorded.
- 70 interviews transcribed with [Transcriber](#).
- 20 interviews translated in English. This is very time consuming, since interviewees speak often confusingly (don't finish their sentences, don't mention issues which in Croatian are obvious but in English are not). So, everything interviewees don't say or say in between the lines has to be translated. Otherwise it will be less understandable to non-Croatian speaking users.
- 95 interviews have the permission to be publicly broadcasted, while 10 interviews are granted permission for research use only at Documenta premises due to the fear of the participants for possible retaliations that the interview could bring about for a family.



The audio-visual recordings were first stored on a local sever in Zagreb, and then downsized and finally uploaded on the Noterik-webserver in Amsterdam. In April 2011 Documenta started indexing the interviews in the IRP (Collective Access). Every interview has an input of about 25 meta-fields that needs to be entered. Also keywords, transcriptions and translations need to be imported in the IRP. After storing these data in the IRP, they are automatically exported to a searchable asset of the OIP (Noterik).

Promotion of the project in Croatia

To promote the project locally, designers in Zagreb made flyers and poster in both English and Croatian. Local networks of Documenta in all regions of Croatia will be provided with this material. Moreover, researchers of Documenta will provide all libraries and public places they are visiting with these flyers and posters. A strategy- and planning meeting for the PR was organized in June 2010. 7 public presentations took place in April 2011 at Ličko Petrovo Selo, Korenica, Saborsko, Plaški, Benkovac, Obrovac, and Donji Lapac.



Video presentations of an edited set of interviews from the area were given to the interviewees, local government officials, regional representatives of NGOs, war veterans, minority representatives and a general audience. The presentation were followed by discussions where participants shared their own memories.

Some stories were told out loud for the first time, representing different interpretations of war events through personal lenses.

The effectiveness of a presentation usually depends on the quality of the cooperation with local (government) representatives.

Because of this presentations of the project were very successful in Ličko Petrovo Selo, Korenica, Saborsko, Plaški and Donji Lapac.

The project was also presented in the retirement home Lavoslav Schwarz in Zagreb, on the "International Day of Tolerance 2011" (organized by the Jewish community in Zagreb), and in the public discussion "Web and Dealing with the Past" (organized by the Faculty of Philosophy and Peace studies in Zagreb).

Conclusion

The first year of the CroMe project was successful and the progress is more or less in accordance with the original project planning. Besides the on-going recording of the interviews, three focus areas were selected.

Translation: Special attention will be given to the translation of the transcriptions: a more time-consuming process than initially thought. The number of translations per month will be increased by putting more labor force into this activity.

Editing: In July, Documenta will start the editing process on the Noterik platform.

Indexing: Extra effort will be given to speed up the elaboration of metadata on the IRP of the edited and uploaded interviews.



Figure 1: Ličko Petrovo Selo area, spring 2011



Figure 2: The Crome crew taking pictures after the recording of an interview

Acknowledgments: the MATRA-project CroMe was made possible due to funding of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and sponsoring by DANS-KNAW and Noterik BV.