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**„Human, Living Document!“:
Polish Sociological Traditions and
the Jewish Historical
Commissions in Poland,
1944-1949**

**Donnerstag, 6. März 2014, 12:00
Seminarraum 1
Institut für Zeitgeschichte der
Universität Wien
Spitalgasse 2-4/Hof 1, 1090 Wien**



One of the most remarkable responses by Holocaust survivors to the Shoah was the urge to collect testimony. Almost as soon as the Nazi threat had passed, survivors in cities and camps across Europe formed historical commissions whose central mandate was to gather eye-witness accounts of Jewish suffering and persecution. And yet, the urgency with which some survivors pursued this testimonial project, as valuable and obvious as it may seem today, was neither inevitable nor universal. The fact that Polish Jews, for example, were at the forefront of such efforts in the mid- to late-1940s should be understood as a reflection of particular circumstances that included the intellectual and cultural legacies of the Polish Second Republic (1918-1939). This lecture will explore how pre-war Polish sociological traditions, on the one hand, and a public discourse of „social memoir“, on the other, left an enduring imprint on Polish Jewish survivors, shaping the methods and assumptions with which historical commissions approached the meaning and practice of testimony.

Katherine A. Lebow, (Ph.D.) has taught at the University of Virginia and Newcastle University. Recent publications include *Unfinished Utopia: Nowa Huta, Stalinism, and Polish Society, 1949-1956* (Cornell, 2013) and *“The Conscience of the Skin: Interwar Polish Autobiography and Social Rights,”* *Humanity* 3, 3 (2012). She is writing a book about „everyman autobiographies“ in transatlantic space from the Great Depression to the Holocaust.

In Kooperation mit dem Wiener Wiesenthal Institut
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