

## From Segregation to Murder to Memory: The Fate of the Disabled in Twentieth-Century Germany

This panel addresses Lessons and Legacies XVI's call to rethink paradigms in research and representation in regard to the Holocaust, and the challenges ensuing from the insight "that the uniqueness and specificities of the Holocaust should neither prohibit nor be lost in the process of drawing historical analogies."

One way to approach these issues is to contextualize prior efforts to draw analogies, and to elucidate concrete links, between the Holocaust and two other mass crimes of the Third Reich. One is the estimated 400,000 coercive "eugenic" sterilizations of individuals deemed cognitively disabled and/or diagnosed as carrying a heritable disability. The other is the close to 300,000 "euthanasia" murders of individuals with cognitive disabilities or psychiatric illnesses in the German Reich and in the occupied territories of Poland and the Soviet Union.

In the current terms of debate with regard to these issues in German-language scholarship, there are three notable trends. First, evident above all in an important anthology of 2010, *Die nationalsozialistische "Euthanasie"-Aktion "T4" und ihre Opfer* (Rotzoll et al.) –based on a close analysis of thousands of rediscovered T4 patient files held in Stasiarchives – were two key (and to the authors themselves evidently disconcerting) discoveries. One is that the "eugenic" sterilizations and the "euthanasia" murders, while partially overlapping in their victim base, overwhelmingly affected different categories of the disabled, and thus it was problematic of prior historians to treat the one mass crime as a "stepping-stone" to the other. The second finding, evidently yet more epistemologically destabilizing, was that the selection process already in the "T4" phase of the "euthanasia" murders, was largely economically motivated –concerned with distinguishing between those able to work and those requiring labor or care from others –rather than on "racial hygiene" or in any way construable as "hereditary" condition diagnoses. Third, recent research on the fate of Jewish psychiatric patients and Jewish children with disabilities has confirmed and deepened earlier arguments made by Henry Friedlander on a nexus between "euthanasia" murders and the Holocaust.