



# PREMASTER THESIS

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## A COMPARISON BETWEEN BRITISH AND AUSTRIAN CULTURAL MEMORY RELATED TO THE HOLOCAUST

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## Abstract

The year 2020 marks 75 years after the end of the Second World War, emphasising the need for remembrance. This study compares the Holocaust remembrance in Britain and Austria and the integration of it into their cultural memory. Although Austria and Britain were on opposing sides during the war, investigating their dealing with the Holocaust demonstrates not only differences, but also similarities. Both countries started in the 1970s and 80s with remembering the Holocaust. While Austria is yet to fully integrate the Holocaust into its cultural memory, the country has slowly started to deal with its own co-responsibility in the Holocaust. On the other hand, Britain can be seen as having integrated a Holocaust remembrance into their cultural memory with the Hyde Park Memorial Garden, the Holocaust Centre and HMD. Nevertheless, Britain is positioning itself as a moral leader when it comes to the Holocaust and stress British heroism.

## 1 Introduction

It is commonly said that if history is not remembered it will repeat itself. 2020 marks 75 years after the Second World War. Regarding the Holocaust, awareness and knowledge of the matter is crucial to ensure that such a tragedy is prevented to happen again. Austria's Holocaust past is complex and controversial, due to several factors which will be elaborated hereafter. On the other hand, Britain is said to have taken on the role of a moral leader within Europe in regards to the Holocaust (Critchell, 2016: 23).

In recent years, scholars such as Uhl (2001) and Judt (1993) have dealt with remembering and forgetting the National Socialism past in Europe, which helps to see the similarities as well as differences of how European countries have dealt with the Holocaust. According to Kannonier-Finster & Ziegler (2016), these past studies have demonstrated that, despite Austria's controversial way of Holocaust remembrance, its approach has been similar to other countries (Kannonier-Finster & Ziegler, 2016: 277). Since the Holocaust continues to be a persistent subject in

British culture and society (Pearce, 2014: 1) and Britain is said to have institutionalised a Holocaust consciousness (Critchell, 2016: 22), this thesis will focus on similarities and differences of remembering the Holocaust in Austria and Britain.

A study conducted by the Claims Conference in 2019 demonstrated that Austrians possess fairly little knowledge about the Holocaust. 42 percent of Austrians did not mention the Austrian concentration camp 'Mauthausen' when asked to name concentration camps (Claims Conference, 2019). Yet, the Austrian Holocaust memorial day is celebrated on May 5<sup>th</sup>, the day the concentration camp Mauthausen was liberated. Thus, it can be called into question how this memorial day is honoured and the kind of knowledge that is passed on. In addition, only 44 percent could state the number of 6 million Jews who were killed during the Nazi regime. In comparison, a study conducted by the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust in 2019 found that five percent of British respondents were doubting whether the Holocaust really happened and another eight percent believed the scale of the Holocaust has been exaggerated (Holocaust Memorial Day Trust, 2019). Similarly to the results in Austria, 64 percent of British respondents did not know that six million Jews were murdered during the Holocaust or underestimate this number (Holocaust Memorial Day Trust, 2019). Correspondingly, a study on the Holocaust understanding and knowledge of English secondary school students conducted by Foster et al. (2016) reported "several concerning gaps, confusions and significant inaccuracies in the accounts and responses that most students were able to provide" (Forster et al., 2016: 203).

Bastel et al. (2010) claim that "if remembrance is to be a key concept for human rights learning, we will need an honest and courageous approach to personal, national and collective memories" (Bastel et al., 2010: 70). Hence, this study will look at Holocaust remembrance in terms of collective memory. Halbwachs (1992) brought forward the notion of a collective memory, as "it is in society that people normally acquire their memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognize and localize their memories" (Halbwachs, 1992: 38). Collective memory can be

separated into communicative and cultural memory (Assmann, 1988: 9). Communicative memory describes everyday communications (Assmann, 1988: 10). Cultural memory, on the other hand, is maintained through cultural formation, namely texts, rites, monuments, and institutional communication, (Assmann, 1988: 12) communicated via various kinds of media and multiple acts of communication (Rigney, 2005: 15). With this in mind, this paper will focus on cultural memory.

Austria's Holocaust past is complex as it has officially supported the 'victim myth' until the 1980s and only then, the country has started to deal with its responsibility for the Holocaust. Uhl (2001) describes the victim myth of Austria portraying itself as being violently occupied by Germany in March 1938 and being liberated by the Austrian resistance as well as the Allies (Uhl, 2001: 2). According to this, Austria does not carry responsibility for the suffering brought upon Jews, homosexuals, and other groups during the Second World War. However, as scholars have pointed out, the victim myth was revealed in the 1980s in connection with the Waldheim debate (Wodak, 2016: 13; Uhl, 2001: 6; Kannonier-Finster & Ziegler, 2016: 44). This victim theory can be ascribed to the "Moscow Declaration" in November 1943 which recognised Austria as the first victim of National Socialism (Kannonier-Finster & Ziegler, 2016). It should also be mentioned that in the years after the Second World War, Austria claimed that the majority of Austrians were against the annexation of Hitler's Germany. Hence, the official position suggested that Austria should not and cannot be held accountable (Garscha, 2012). Only after the Waldheim debate in the 1980s, Holocaust education started to become prevalent in Austrian education, which was previously ruled by the victim myth. However, it has still been the subject of criticism (Bastel et al., 2010). Even though in the 1990s Austrian politicians continued to recognise the state of Austria as a victim of National Socialism, for the first time, they confirmed co-responsibility of Austrian citizens. Correspondingly, financial compensations had been initiated (Uhl, 2001). Although many Austrian citizens were in fact perpetrators, Kannonier-Finster & Ziegler (2016) state that the proposition that Austria has been a victim of National Socialism is institutionalised in terms of Austrian politics of memory.

In addition, the right wing party, Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ), which evolved out of a collective movement of former Nazis (Kannonier-Finster & Ziegler, 2016: 75), has still a strong influence within Austria's government (Gärtner, 2019). Even though Holocaust remembrance in Austria has considerably changed over the past 20 years, towards a more self-critical engagement with the past, it should be mentioned that Austria had several scandals related to the Holocaust. Still, fraternities in Austria exist which, according to Gärtner (2019) are associated with Nazi Socialism (Gärtner, 2019: 112).

In contrast, in Britain, Holocaust consciousness started to be formed from the late 1970s onwards (Pearce, 2014). The War Crimes Act as well as National Curriculum in 1991 initiated institutionalisation of the Holocaust and consequently "changed the status of the Holocaust in British culture and society, helping to alter perceptions" (Pearce, 2014: 60). According to Critchell (2016) the Holocaust institutionalisation has influenced questions of civic morality, immigration, and the memory of other genocides (Critchell, 2016: 1). In terms of cultural memory, Pearce (2014) states that the Hyde Park Memorial Garden and the Holocaust Centre contributed to the cultural memory of the Holocaust during at least particular times (Pearce, 2014: 104). This, however, is not to say that no criticism regarding Britain and its Holocaust remembrance exists. While Britain positions itself as the moral leader of Europe, having liberated concentration camps and having been safe for British Jews, Holocaust survivors have spoken out about more negative experiences they endured in Britain, which put pressure on them to conform and assimilate (Critchell, 2016: 14). Moreover, the country has failed to address its own colonial past and recognise genocides such as the Armenian genocide (Critchell, 2016: 17). Yet, Britain's Holocaust consciousness is a central point in the country's collective memory, reinforcing British pride of tolerance and liberalism (Critchell, 2016: 14).

This leads to the following research question: How is the Austrian and British remembrance of the Holocaust integrated in both cultural memories? Due to Austria's controversial dealing with the Holocaust and Britain's own positioning as one of the leading countries in Holocaust remembrance, this thesis will focus on a

comparison between the cultural memories of Austria and Britain. Moreover, since this tragedy should not and cannot be repeated and the FPÖ was again second strongest party in the Austrian legislative election in 2017 it is important to look at how Austria is remembering the Holocaust in comparison to other countries. On the other hand, Boris Johnson, next to other politicians since 1990, referred to Adolf Hitler in his campaigning to leave the EU by suggestion that “the attempt at political union in the EU had also been the aim of Hitler” (Kushner, 2017: 1), making a comparison even more relevant.

Therefore, in order to answer the research question, this study is focusing on the most significant memorials in Austria and Britain and uses the way in which the memorial days are commemorated to elaborate the approaches of dealing with the Holocaust.

## 2 Historical Background

In order to be able to make a comparison between Britain and Austria, it is necessary to briefly examine the history of each country after the Second World War. Firstly, the complex history of Austria's Holocaust past will be elaborated on; how it came to be that Austria was seen as the “first victim” of National Socialism, and how the nation dealt and continues to deal with its Holocaust past.

### 2.1 Austria After the Second World War

#### 2.1.1 Austria's joint responsibility for the Holocaust

The history of the annexation of Austria into Nazi Germany in 1938 is multifaceted. Gerhard Botz (1986/87) states that there was hardly any possible defence against foreign politics blackmail, military threats and the invasion of the German Wehrmacht related to the National Socialist annexation. However, there was an internal take-over of adherents of the regime which took advantage of the

authoritarian-dictatorial structure.<sup>1</sup> The Austrian population was largely connected to the political and ideological system. Moreover, the percentage of Austrian NSDAP party members was even higher than in Germany (Ziegler & Kannonier-Finster, 2016: 45). Since National Socialism was popularly accepted by the majority of the Austrian population and thus the persecution and murder of Jews was both tolerated and supported (Ziegler & Kannonier-Finster, 2016), the co-responsibility of the Holocaust is beyond question. Additionally, the involvement of many Austrian citizens in National Socialism, but above all of Austrian Nazis such as Ernst Kaltenbrunner, Amon Leopold Göth, Alois Brunner, Franz Murer and Arthur Seyß-Inquart, clearly indicates that Austria shares responsibility for the Holocaust.

### 2.1.2 Austria after 1945

The first years after the war are marked by justifications of how such a tragedy could have transpired. Austria had pleaded for deception by the regime and for innocence, with the excuse that Austria was violently occupied with great resistance of the population (Ziegler & Kannonier-Finster, 2016).

In the Moscow Declaration of November 1943, Austria was described by the Allies as the first victim of National Socialism. Correspondingly, after the Second World War Austria publicly positioned itself in a way that signalled that the majority of Austrian citizens were against the annexation. On this ground, during the negotiations of the State Treaty, Austria urged to neglect the co-responsibility of

<sup>1</sup> Original text: *"Natürlich dominierten in der Realisierung des nationalsozialistischen Anschlusses die außenpolitische Erpressung, die militärische Drohung und das Element des Einmarsches der Deutschen Wehrmacht; dagegen gab es kaum ein erfolgsversprechendes Verteidigungsmittel. Aber neben diesem äußeren Faktor gab es auch einen Prozeß, der Machtübernahme von innen heraus, und zwar von oben und von unten. Denn einerseits war der Nationalsozialismus in die Positionen der höheren Staatsbürokratie und privaten Wirtschaftsverwaltung, selbst in Regierungspositionen, eingedrungen und konnte von hier unter Ausnutzung der autoritär-diktatorisch Struktur scheinlegal die gewalttätigen Aktionen seiner Anhänger unterstützen und legitimieren. Andererseits war der „12. März 1938“ eine Art Aufstandsbewegung, wenngleich gesteuert und durchaus auch von der NSDAP kontrolliert und ins Leben gerufen, aber immerhin eine aufstandsartige Erhebung von unten her, die dazu führte, daß zeitweise die in ihrem Abwehrwillen schon sehr geschwächte österreichische Exekutive total gelähmt wurde (...)"* (Botz, 1986/87: 23).



the Second World War (Uhl, 2001; Kannonier-Finster & Ziegler, 2016). However, according to Kannonier-Finster & Ziegler (2016), the end of the war was seen as a defeat rather than a liberation by many Austrians (Kannonier-Finster & Ziegler, 2016: 51). In addition, denazification, which was demanded by the Allies, was largely seen as a punishment, with the argumentation that the Austrian population had suffered enough from the war (Kannonier-Finster & Ziegler, 2016: 69). After the National Council elections in 1949, the VdU (a party which mainly collected National Socialists; predecessor party of today's FPÖ) had 16 mandates out of a total of 165 (Kannonier-Finster & Ziegler, 2016: 75). All of this can be seen as an argument for Austria's rejection of their co-responsibility of the Holocaust.

In particular, however, in the years after the war, Austria refused to make (financial) reparations to Jewish victims, since it was declared that Austria was occupied by the Germans, and thus has no obligations under constitutional law to make any payments (Uhl, 2001: 3). Moreover, Austria rejected any moral responsibility, since the crimes had been committed by the Germans (Uhl, 2001). Nevertheless, as scholars have discussed the Waldheim debate in 1986, in which the Nazi past of Kurt Waldheim, fourth Secretary-General of the United Nations, was publicly revealed and debated, caused the victim myth to be called into question and eventually revealed (Wodak, 2016: 13; Uhl, 2001: 6; Kannonier-Finster & Ziegler, 2016: 44). Yet, according to Uhl (2001), it was not until the 1990s that Austrian politicians admitted co-responsibility of Austrian citizens for the Holocaust Uhl (2001: 7).

Another noteworthy event in 1975 is the political dispute of then chancellor, Bruno Kreisky, and Simon Wiesenthal, who was denouncing Friedrich Peter and revealing his crimes during the war (Böhler, 1995: 1). While both were Jewish descendants (Böhler, 1995: 3), Kreisky tried to diminish Wiesenthal's credibility by indicating a connection between the Gestapo (Böhler, 1995: 9). Moreover, Kreisky went to great lengths to protect Peter from consequences for his crimes. Israel's government reacted to multiple incidents involving Kreisky by for example demanding an explanation for Kreisky's statements and cancelling a state visit (Böhler, 1995: 8).

Additionally, the chancellor at the time was quoted saying “If the Jews are a folk, it's a lousy folk”<sup>2</sup> by the German Spiegel newspaper (Böhler, 1995: 12). This political scandal once again demonstrate once the ambivalence and controversial dealing with Austria’s Holocaust past.

### 2.1.3 Austria after 2000

Wodak (2016) points out that in 2005 before the commemoration ceremony scandals again occurred, due to a Holocaust denial case by Johann Gudenus (Wodak, 2016: 16) and statements about “deserters as comrade traitors”<sup>3</sup> by Siegfried Kampel, the President of the Federal Council at the time (Wodak, 2016: 17). Chancellor Schüssel had to take a stand on precisely these statements. Wodak (2016) argues that Schüssel reconstructed the victim myth in his speech by referring to Austria as “child” that had resisted the Nazi regime longer than any other country (Wodak, 2016: 17).<sup>4</sup> Moreover, since an essential part of FPÖ members are members of fraternities which show a confession to National Socialism (Gärtner, 2019: 112), the connection of many Austrian fraternities and the Austrian right-wing party FPÖ to National Socialism is undisputable. Nevertheless, in the commemoration, year of 2015 politicians did not resurface this victim myth again.

Furthermore, the Holocaust Knowledge and Awareness Study conducted by the Claims Conference (2019) shows that the victim myth still continues to persist today as 68 percent of the Austrians state that Austria was victim and perpetrator of the Holocaust (Claims Conference, 2019: 14).

<sup>2</sup> “Wenn die Juden ein Volk sind, so ist es ein mieses Volk.”

<sup>3</sup> “Deserteuren als Kameradenverrätern”

<sup>4</sup> Speech 27.04.2005 (Wodak, 2016: 17): „Das Drama dieses sechsjährigen Kriegs und das Trauma des nationalsozialistischen Terrorregimes werfen aber düstere Schatten auf die Wiege dieser rotweißbroten Wiedergeburt, aber das Kind lebt. Inmitten von Ruinen, Not, Hunger und Verzweiflung, lebt dieses kleine, neue Österreich, weil an diesem Tag alle nach vorne schauen. [...] Und daher ist für mich und hoffentlich für uns alle klar, dass, wer Gräuelt des Regimes verharmlost und die Existenz von Lagern, von Gaskammern relativiert, nicht in unserer Institutionslandschaft passt. Wann, wenn nicht jetzt, muss man zur Besinnung kommen, gerade in einem Land, das sich ja länger als jedes andere gegen Hitler und gegen den Nationalsozialismus gestemmt hat, in dem aber auch viele, allzu viele, schuldig geworden sind?“

## 2.2 Britain After the Second World War

### 2.2.1 Liberation of the camps in 1945

In the first half of the post war period, awareness of as well as interest in the Holocaust was rather uncommon in British culture. Yet, the liberation of the concentration camp Bergen-Belsen evoked a significant emotional response among the British population and thus marks a key event in the remembrance of the Second World War (Kushner, 2017:4). Nevertheless, the fact that the majority of victims were Jews was disregarded. This could be due to antisemitism being prevalent in Britain, too. Moreover, the focus in Britain was more on the perpetrators' motives, instead of the effect the tragedy had on the victims (Kushner, 2017: 5).

In addition, since many concentration camps in the East of Europe, such as Auschwitz, were liberated by Soviet troops, these camps had been neglected in Britain. This was also due to several other reasons such as the beginning of the Cold War, but also the fact that hardly any Western reporters, photographers or film cameras were present at these liberations and thus documentation was missing (Little, 2013: 22). Yet, even though the emphasis was on Bergen-Belsen, the testimonies of Auschwitz POW added to the popular image of heroism and Britain's fight against National Socialism (Little, 2013: 18). Some of POWs located close to Auschwitz later became witnesses in the Nuernberger trials, having experienced the Nazi extermination programme (Little, 2013). On the other hand, one of the POWs remarked: "After the war, people were only interested in heroes. If you escaped from a prison camp then you became a hero. If you didn't escape then you became forgotten" (Little, 2013: 22). This, again, demonstrates how British heroism was emphasised.

### 2.2.2 The Eichmann Trial in 1961

The Eichmann trial in 1961 was the first trial of a Nazi official who was primarily responsible for the crimes against Jews (Cesarani, 2013: 1). While it aroused strong emotions across the globe, British population did not show as much interest (Pearce, 2014: 26). Yet, it re-highlighted the controversy of the role the British government

had in rescuing Jews during the Nazi era as well as “possible negotiations between the Nazis and the Allies for Jewish lives, or “goods for blood” in 1944 when Hungarian Jewry was being deported en masse to Auschwitz” (Kushner, 2017: 11). Likewise, already during the war the British government had been criticised for its inactivity and consequently failure to rescue European Jews (Kushner, 2017: 10). While Britain positioned itself as a having received many Jews during the war, in fact, only few found rescue in Britain and the ones who did had to assimilate and conform (Critchell, 2016: 14). Eventually, British press lost interest in the matter of the Eichmann trial, leading to “an exercise in self-confirmation and it was emphasized that no serious opportunities had been rejected without serious consideration” (Kushner, 2017: 12).

### 2.2.3 From the mid-1960s until now

The compensation schemes resulting from complex diplomacy and agreements from the 1950s were another missed opportunity of Britain to reflect on their own role in the Holocaust. By contrast, it was de novo used to reassert British war narrative. Moreover, it was unclear who was attributed compensation, as British victims who were in prison cells within concentration camps were denied these compensations (Kushner, 2017: 13).

From the mid-1970s onwards, popular and political interest became more prevalent in British culture (Pearce, 2014). Though Kushner (2017) argues that “Britain has thus imbued the message of the Holocaust without knowledge of the event itself or the country’s relationship to it” (Kushner, 2017: 14). The 1990s were marked with increasing interest in the Holocaust by the wider British population. In 1991, the Holocaust became a mandatory part of the British Secondary School National Curriculum (Pearce, 2014: 35), but returned to the umbrella of the Second World War through a revision of the curriculum in 2013, seemingly suggesting that “ ‘the Nazis’ were the only ones responsible for the Holocaust, but also confirmed their function as ‘Other’ by way of the ‘unique evil’ of their ‘atrocities’” (Pearce, 2014: 223). Still, outreach projects of survivors during the late twentieth century and

twenty-first century were intended to encourage tolerance and appreciation of difference via education and remembrance of the Holocaust (Critchell, 2016: 12).

In addition, British Holocaust remembrance ascribes great relevance to the “Kindertransport” (Critchell, 2016: 12). Following the Pogrom Night, approximately 10,000 children were accepted into Britain. This later became increasingly relevant in Holocaust remembrance and has been used in education and memorialisation as a positive example of Britain rescuing thousands of Jews. Again, this can be seen as an emphasis of the position that Britain was the hero of the Second World War. Critchell (2016) argues that remembrance of the Holocaust “encourages the British people to retain a sense of moral authority based on allusions to supposed stoicism, unity and heroism within the narrative of the national past” (Critchell, 2016: 1).

### 3 Cultural memory

To answer the research question, it is necessary to look into cultural memory. Cultural memory preserves the knowledge of a group through cultural formation, namely texts, rites, monuments, and institutional communication (Assmann, 1988: 12). Cultural memory depends on media (Erll, 2011: 113) as it is communicated via various kinds of media (Rigney, 2005: 15). Likewise, it relies on orality and literacy as well as radio, television, the Internet and symbolically charged media such as monuments, serving as occasions for collective remembering (Erll, 2011: 13). However, media do not neutrally represent the past, but instead, they are influenced by versions of past events and persons, cultural values and norms, as well as concepts of collective identity (Erll, 2011: 114).

Additionally, for an individual to understand the meaning of the memory an object or place portrays, knowledge about the cultural meaning is required (Meusburger, 2011: 51). Meusburger (2011) states that “if a person has no knowledge about the cultural meaning of a given sign or object or about the history of a certain place, then this sign, object, or place cannot spark or refresh memories in that individual”

(Meusburger, 2011: 51). Furthermore, cultural institutions, exhibitions as well as media can be manipulated by hegemonic elites. Similarly, access to archives and the distribution of monuments and rituals in the public can be controlled by these groups (Meusburger, 2011: 51). Hence, the understanding and interpretation of cultural memory can be said to be more dependent on ideology, emotions and prior knowledge of the observer rather than the intention the producer of images and monuments had (Meusburger, 2011: 52). This also makes the importance of education regarding the Holocaust prominent, since for instance a memorial on its own will not have the intended effect if the receiver does not possess the required knowledge to comprehend the meaning of the memorial. This is crucial since Rigney (2005) points out that places and monuments can emerge as a focus for remembrance, but the stories told about them via various other media such as images and texts play a critical role for this remembrance and the cultural memory allocated to it (Rigney, 2005: 19). However, Cooke (2000) stresses that a memorial site is more than just a representation of remembrance, since it is likely the outcome of compound negotiations and compromises (Cooke, 2000: 450) and require willpower and resources (Pearce, 2014: 104). Therefore, according to Pearce (2014), they intentionally express power and politics, intrigue and interest (Pearce, 2014: 104).

Moreover, Pearce (2014) argues that “while technological developments and transnationalism force us to think in new ways about memory, traditional habits and approaches to remembrance seem to die hard. This much has tended to be true of the Holocaust” (Pearce, 2014: 87). For this reason, this study will focus on memorials and Holocaust memorial days as approaches to remembrance of the Holocaust.

Since individual’s memory is dependent on cultural memory (Kannonier-Finster & Ziegler, 2016: 54), if Austria’s co-responsibility of the National Socialism is not integrated in Austria’s collective memory, individuals might not remember this responsibility, making the relevance of this acceptance even more evident.

For these reasons, the following will highlight the most important monuments in Austria and Britain. Additionally, since memorial days symbolise collective memory (Pearce, 2014: 157), an assessment of the Holocaust memorial days in both countries will be given.

### 3.1 Cultural formation in Austria

In this chapter, cultural formation in Austria will be looked at based on the Mauthausen memorial, as it is, according to Graefenstein (2016), perhaps the most relevant memorial in Austrian Holocaust commemoration (Graefenstein, 2016: 156)

#### 3.1.1 Mauthausen Memorial in Austria

Mauthausen was one of the concentration camps in Austria between 1938 and 1945, imprisoning around 190,000 people, of which at least 90,000 died (Mauthausen Memorial, 2020). The concentration camp was liberated on May 5<sup>th</sup> and the occupying Soviets later handed over Mauthausen to Austria. However, the occupation force made it a requirement to turn the concentration camp into a memorial (Lamprecht, 2010: 32). According to Perz (2003), the Austrian government quickly lost interest in the Mauthausen memorial. Since the 1970s, the Mauthausen Memorial has gained increasingly political importance, even though at first still characterised by the victim theory (Perz, 2003: 9). Nonetheless, due to Austria's confirmation of co-responsibility of the Holocaust, the Mauthausen memorial became increasingly important (Perz, 2003: 9). Yet, the government pursued an approach of an event culture, rather than critical examination of Austria's Holocaust past (Perz, 2003: 9). Thus, it can be seen as an attempt to internationally convey a positive image of Austria's dealing with the Holocaust, which might not be too different to other countries.

Nevertheless, today the memorial has implemented an interactive education strategy, which, according to Gaefenstein (2016), "follows a deeply national agenda: to break the myth of Austrian victimhood" (Gaefenstein, 2016: 169).

Moreover, the memorial's goal is to inspire young people to engage with the Holocaust past on a personal level (Graefenstein, 2016: 158). It includes a museum, a Visitor Centre, two permanent exhibitions as well as 'Room of Names', commemorating the dead of the Mauthausen concentration camp and its subcamps (Mauthausen Memorial, 2020).

Meusburger (2011) emphasises that an individual has to possess knowledge about the cultural meaning of an object or place in order to spark or refresh memories in that individual (Meusburger, 2011: 51). As a result, since 42 percent of Austrians do not know Mauthausen it is arguable how well Mauthausen is integrated in Austria's cultural memory.

## 3.2 Institutional communication in Austria

### 3.2.1 Austria's Memorial Day against Violence and Racism in Memory of the Victims of National Socialism

The Holocaust in Austria is commemorated on May 5<sup>th</sup>, dedicated to the liberation of the concentration camp Mauthausen on May 5<sup>th</sup> (Lamprecht, 2010: 32). In 1997, the Austrian government introduced it as "Austria's Memorial Day against Violence and Racism in Memory of the Victims of National Socialism" (Lamprecht, 2010: 35). Even though Lamprecht (2010) notes that Austria is striving to make the Memorial Day more visible, it is not yet enshrined in Austrian collective memory (Lamprecht, 2010: 37). Among other reasons, this can also be attributed to the fact that some political parties and parts of the population have a conflicting view on Austria's role during the Second World War and liberation of National Socialism. It should be reiterated that fraternities in Austria are connected to both the political party FPÖ as well as National Socialism (Gärtner, 2019: 112).

Regarding the 75<sup>th</sup> day after Mauthausen's liberation, it needs to be mentioned, however, that due to COVID-19 many events could not take place. The website of the Mauthausen memorial states:



“On 5 May 1945 soldiers from the US Army liberated Mauthausen Concentration Camp. The open camp gates became a symbol of freedom, peace and the dawning of a new and better age. Now, 75 years after the liberation of Mauthausen Concentration Camp, we want to send a clear signal. Even though the corona pandemic has made it impossible to hold remembrance ceremonies at the Memorial, we still wish to join you in celebrating the liberation from National Socialism. #Liberation1945” (Mauthausen Memorial, 2020).

### 3.3 Cultural formation in Britain

In the following, the Hyde Park Memorial Garden and the Holocaust Centre will be elaborated on, as they can be referred to as “high-water marks in the history of Holocaust consciousness” (Pearce, 2014: 104). Firstly, the history of the Hyde Park Memorial Garden will be examined, followed by the Holocaust Centre.

#### 3.3.1 The Hyde Park Memorial Garden

The idea of a Holocaust memorial in Britain was first emerged in the 1960 and revived again in 1979 (Pearce, 2014: 90). The Hyde Park Memorial Garden, created in 1983, was the first official national memorial to the Holocaust to commemorate the 11 million victims of the Nazi Holocaust (Pearce, 2014: 91) and thus, lacking clear reference to 6 million Jews who were murdered during the Holocaust. Cooke (2000) summarises: “What would have been a conspicuous monument in a central site of British war memory, near the Cenotaph, became an unobtrusive and marginal monument in Hyde Park” (Cooke, 2000: 461). At first, controversy existed around the memorial attracting vandalism and negative attentions (Pearce, 2014: 94). Later, the ambiguity over reference of the memorials to Jews persisted (Pearce, 2014: 95). Though organized and campaigned for by the Board of Deputies of British Jews (Cooke, 2000: 449) and profoundly indebted to private institutions, it still had needed the support from the government to come to be (Pearce, 2014: 93). Furthermore, Pearce (2014) notes that “the Hyde Park garden was an unusual public-private partnership: at once ‘official’ and ‘non-official’; ‘Jewish’ and ‘non-

Jewish’ (Pearce, 2014: 93). Additionally, according to Pearce (2014) “the site sought to domesticate something regarded as alien, but in the process removed the violence, the horror, and the human nature of the events. With history hidden from view, intentionally or unintentionally, memory became vacuous” (Pearce, 2014: 95). This emphasises the need for knowledge about the memorial, too, as it has been highlighted in chapter three that knowledge about a site and cultural memory are undeniably intertwined in order for the visitors to fully understand the meaning of a memorial.

### 3.3.2 Holocaust Centre

Founded by a non-Jewish family, the first memorial centre, the Holocaust Centre, opened in 1995 (Pearce, 2014: 87). Similarly to the Hyde Park Memorial Garden, the Holocaust centre was heavily indebted to private initiatives. The Holocaust exhibition in the centre provided extensive explanation of the Nazi camp network; including explanation of different types of camp, their function, and outline of living conditions (Pearce, 2014: 99). Moreover, though the centre’s purpose was to offer its visitors the opportunity to reflect and conclude on the Holocaust themselves, the exhibition provided enough evidence to the visitors to understand the identity of the Holocaust’s victims (Pearce, 2014: 103). This is contrary to the Hyde Park Memorial Garden, which lacked references to the Jewish victims. Since a memorial can miss the effect of the intended meaning when visitors do not possess enough knowledge, it is especially critical that the Centre gives enough input to ensure the importance of the site is conveyed.

## 3.4 Institutional communication in Britain

### 3.4.1 Britain’s Holocaust Memorial Day

Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) in the UK was inaugurated in 2001, marking on January 27<sup>th</sup>, the day Auschwitz was liberated. It is framed around a different theme each year such as “Britain and the Holocaust” in 2002 (Critchell, 2016: 6). and “Keep the Memory Alive” in 2015 (Critchell, 2016: 7). Implementation of HMD

relied on the determination of individuals and agencies, on the vast electoral majority of the Labour party (Pearce, 2014: 157) as well as the London Conference, Washington Conference, and Stockholm Forum (Pearce, 2014: 158). Critchell (2016) notes that “the establishment of the day marked the biggest shift towards a sustained and deliberate institutional engagement with the Holocaust since the subject became a mandatory part of the National Curriculum for British Secondary Schools in 1991” (Critchell, 2016: 3). HMD is not only meant to remember the Holocaust, but rather to commemorate similar recent genocides and highlight current atrocities that raise similar issues (Critchell, 2016: 5). While it stimulates remembrance and tolerance, it can also be argued that this memorial day also offers an opportunity to politicians to “demonstrate their own moral standing through promoting their own role in the commemorations themselves” (Critchell, 2016: 7). This allows for politicians, and the British public in general, to promote their own moral superiority (Critchell, 2020: 16). On an international level, this can also be said to be true as well, since Kushner (2017) noted that David Cameron’s attendance at the commemoration ceremony of Auschwitz attracted transnational media attention (Kushner, 2017: 8).

Moreover, scholars have also critically noted that there might be an issue regarding commemorating for performance reasons (Richardson, 2018: 8; Critchell, 2016: 12). Critchell (2016) argues that “the visible position of naturalised British survivors during memorial days provides indisputable proof of the value of past British actions on the international stage whilst at the same time championing deeply ingrained self-perceptions of Britain that might end up hindering open discussion about less uplifting aspects of British life in the present” (Critchell, 2016: 12). Since Britain can be criticised for not admitting and dealing with its own colonial past, which makes it dubious that the nation highlights its own heroism during the Second World War.

For the 75<sup>th</sup> Holocaust Memorial Day, the topic “Stand Together” was chosen. The aim of this theme was to examine how intentionally downgrading certain groups by genocidal regimes has led to fractured societies and how these strategies can be

opposed by protesting and standing up against these oppressions (Holocaust Memorial Day Trust, 2019).

## 4 Discussion

Since both countries were on opposing sites during the Second World War, different allocation of cultural memories regarding the Holocaust could be suspected. Comparing the integration of the Holocaust in cultural memory of Britain and Austria, it can be seen, that both countries have started roughly around the same time to deal with the Holocaust. Consequently, in both countries, cultural formations and institutional communication started to be inaugurated from the 1980s onwards.

Firstly, since a memorial site is likely the outcome of compound negotiations and compromises (Cooke, 2000) and require willpower and resources (Pearce, 2014) it was necessary to analyse the most relevant memorials in both countries. This has shown that politics and interest groups in both countries have played a role in the opening of memorials and the introduction of the memorial days. In both countries, hegemonic elites, with different objectives in mind, manipulated cultural institutions. Austrian politicians were framing the approach of dealing with the Holocaust around the victim theory whereas in Britain, politicians positioned the country's actions during the Second World War, as well as afterwards, as morally superior. Moreover, Critchell (2016) argues that this moral superiority as well as "the extent to which Holocaust 'lessons' can really be said to be learnt" is questionable, taking into account the conflicts in which Britain has played a part in since 2006 and "the apathetic if not outright callous treatment of refugees fleeing conflict in Syria in 2015 and 2016" (Critchell, 2016: 19).

Moreover, Pearce (2014) argues that the Hyde Park Memorial Garden and the Holocaust Centre were both contributions to Britain's cultural memory as well as efforts to enshrine certain elements of the past in its Holocaust consciousness (Pearce, 2014: 107). Nonetheless, they also included efforts to self-justify certain

rationales. In comparison, in the past, the Mauthausen Memorial was used as a means to reinforce the Austrian victim myth (Perz, 2003: 9). In recent years, however, the memorial started to change its approach towards an educating visitors and elucidate the victim theory (Graefenstein, 2016: 169).

Secondly, regarding the comparison of institutional communication, Britain's Holocaust memorial day has been examined as well as Austria's Memorial Day against Violence and Racism in Memory of the Victims of National Socialism. In Britain, the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust can be said to strive to integrate HMD in British cultural memory by organising the memorial day as well as offering free workshops. Yet, although the day is meant to commemorate similar recent genocides and highlight current atrocities that raise similar issues (Critchell, 2016: 5), according to a survey conducted by Holocaust Memorial Day Trust in 2014, half of British population cannot name post-holocaust genocide (Holocaust Memorial Day Trust, 2014). In addition, as Critchell (2016) notes, the "visible position of naturalised British survivors during memorial days" and "deeply ingrained self-perceptions of Britain" (Critchell, 2016: 12) could potentially hinder Britain from an open conversation about other aspects of its present-day society.

In contrast, fairly little assessable research has been published on Austria's Memorial Day against Violence and Racism in Memory of the Victims of National Socialism. Lamprecht (2010) argued that this Remembrance day is not yet enshrined in Austrian collective memory. The lack of available and/or accessible research could be seen as a potential confirmation of this. Taking into account that 42 percent of Austrians do not mention Mauthausen when asked to name concentration camps (Claims Conference, 2019), even though the day is meant to commemorate the liberation of Mauthausen, it can be argued that Lamprecht's assessment remains true at present.

## 5 Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be said that the approaches of how to deal with the Holocaust in Britain and Austria have been similar. To compare how Austrian and British remembrance of the Holocaust are integrated in both cultural memories, the most significant memorials as well as the Holocaust memorial day in Britain and Austria have been studied.

Both approaches in integrating the Holocaust in cultural memory can be said to have benefitted self-serving objectives in at least the past, although with different reasoning behind them. Deducing from the literature, Austria is yet to fully deal with its Holocaust past and integrate it into its cultural memory, in particular since members of Austria's Freedom Party are connected to fraternities which are associated with National Socialism (Gärtner, 2019: 112). However, the country has started to deal with its co-responsibility by for example integrating a different educational strategy at the Mauthausen Memorial.

On the other hand, with the Hyde Park Memorial Garden, the Holocaust Centre and HMD, Britain can be seen as having integrated a Holocaust remembrance into their cultural memory (Pearce, 2014: 104). Nevertheless criticism around the portrayal of Britain as a moral leader in Holocaust remembrance remains since politicians are considered to use the matter for their own moral superiority.

Moreover, although it has been demonstrated in this research paper that both countries have set measures in place to integrate Holocaust remembrance in their cultural memories by means of memorials and Holocaust memorial days, the public still shows some critical knowledge gaps. Since knowledge is critical to understand the intended meaning of a memorial, it is important to make education a significant component in Holocaust remembrance. Thus, future research should investigate Holocaust education in schools and universities.

Finally, as was shown that Britain has used the Holocaust to position itself as a moral leader and stress British heroism. Similarly, Austria has been criticised for

pursuing an event culture approach in commemorating Mauthausen. Therefore, this too can be seen as an attempt to internationally and nationally convey a positive image. Hence, future research should look into how this affects national identity, as identification with the nation is crucial for a symbols and institutions to exist (McCrone & Bechhofer, 2015: 10).

Another possible future study could assess media coverage of the Holocaust memorial days in Britain or Austria. Analysing social media content of the different political parties which are posted on the Holocaust memorial days could be a potential way of assessment. Moreover, a critical analysis of these commemorations is important to define what the incentives and reasons of politicians to integrate it in cultural memory and consequently learn from.

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