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Minority Topics, Ethnic Questions and Their Potential for Memory Work in Schools

Divergent narratives and memories face each other in a certain hierarchy. The dramatic events of the last century are interpreted differently in a democratic and pluralistic society, and different societies hand down disparate hegemonial narratives and counter-narratives. Two recent research projects in the field of memory studies in education have been conducted in the Austrian bilingual region of Kärnten/Koroška. Both projects focused on suspected transformations of memory culture towards more inclusive narratives in educational work. The following article introduces the methodology of these projects, along with new perspectives extracted from the assembled data – with a certain focus on ethnic aspects and the question of minorities in memory culture. Perspectives on how these matters could address and foster contemporary school lessons conclude the article.

Keywords: memory culture, historical and political education, minorities, ethnicity, memory of the others.

Manjšinska in etnična vprašanja ter njihov potencial za spodbujanje kulture spomina pri delu v šolah

Različne spominske pripovedi in spomini se soočajo v določeni hierarhiji. Dramatični dogodki zadnjega stoletja se v demokratični in pluralistični družbi različno razlagajo, različne družbe pa podajajo različne hegemonistične pripovedi in proti-pripovedi. V avstrijski dvojezični regiji Kärnten/Koroška sta bila nedavno izvedena dva raziskovalna projekta na temo kulture spomina v okviru izobraževanja. Oba projekta sta se osredotočila na domnevno preoblikovanje obravnave kulture spomina v bolj vključujoč diskurz znotraj pedagoškega procesa. Pričujoči članek opisuje omenjena projekta in nove perspektive, zasnovane na podlagi zbranih podatkov s poudarkom na etničnih vidikih in vprašanju manjšin v kulturi spomina. V zaključku članek ponuja priporočila za obravnavo omenjenih vprašanj v okviru sodobnega šolskega kurikula.

Ključne besede: kultura spomina, zgodovinsko-politično izobraževanje, manjšine, etničnost, spomin drugih.

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1. Historic Memory Culture in Kärnten/Koroška/Carinthia. Moving Slowly towards Inclusive Narratives

On 7 May 2015, the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II, a new memorial was installed at the *Burghof* in Klagenfurt/Celovec. It was created by the artist Melitta Moschik and installed by the NGO Memorial Kärnten/Koroška. The memorial addresses the victims of National Socialism, who were interrogated and tormented in the *Burg* (fortress) of Klagenfurt/Celovec, where the German GESTAPO had its regional headquarters. The circular background of the memorial is fully black, and in a brighter text one can read in German and Slovene the following words:

In diesem Gebäude war in den Jahren 1938–1945 der Sitz der Geheimen Staatspolizei. Hier wurden Menschen aufgrund ihrer Weltanschauung, ihrer ethnischen Zugehörigkeit oder ihres Widerstands gegen die NS-Gewaltherrschaft gefoltert. Das Unrecht, das sie erlitten haben, sei uns Mahnung und Auftrag im gemeinsamen Ringen um Freiheit, Demokratie und Menschenrechte.

V tej stavbi je bil v letih 1938–1945 sedež gestapa, kjer so mučili ljudi zaradi njihovega svetovnega nazora, narodne pripadnosti ali ker so se uprli nacističnemu nasilju. Krivica, ki so jo doživeli, naj nam bo opomin in poslanstvo pri skupnem prizadevanju za svobodo, demokracijo in človekove pravice.

From 1938 to 1945, this building was the seat of the Gestapo. Here, people were tortured for their worldviews, ethnicity, or for resisting to Nazi tyranny. The injustice they experienced should serve as a reminder and a mandate in our common struggle for freedom, democracy, and human rights [translated to English].

Until 2015, no visible sign or mark reminded visitors of the former National Socialist purpose of the *Burg*. The belated installation of the memorial, like the memorial itself, can be seen as a symbol of Austria's and Carinthia's struggle with the burdening past of National Socialism. Even today, memorials for fallen *Wehrmacht* soldiers are the most visible monuments related to WWII. Monuments and memorials for the victims of National Socialism can hardly be found – and have most likely been installed by NGO members on a voluntary basis, far from populated cities. While Germany took full accountability for its National Socialist past, Austria managed to deny its active involvement until the late 1980s, when the victim thesis began to be questioned on a broader societal level.¹ Until then, in official narratives, Austria was seen as the first victim of Nazi Germany, one that spinelessly had to participate in the felonies of National Socialism. This, certainly, never matched the historical facts.² Subsequent to the (belated) declarations by Chancellor Vranitzky of moral responsibility for and complicity in National Socialism, which occurred in 1991 in front of Austria's

national council and again in 1993 in Israel, and the creation of an Austrian fund for victims of National Socialism, many victim groups³ that had previously been overlooked gained respect through modest compensation payments.

In speaking of memory, we refer to an active process of reconstructing the past, a process initiated, controlled and organized by political actors. Memory does not just exist; it is to be fought for (Gstettner 2012, 30). The choice of historical events that are given special attention in a society, or those remembered as a national or a regional holiday (figures that are named in schoolbooks, and whose names can be found on memorial plaques), is inevitably determined from the perspective of the group that holds the power of interpretation. This group determines what history is and imposes its vision of the past through memorial sites, archives, museums, books, movies, education and popular culture. Certain historical events or persons are not as visible or remembered as others. In public and private spheres, different narratives of the history of a country, a region or a nation clash with one another. The power of definition of history is not static; rather, it is disputed and challenged and is therefore fluid. What is commonly named a culture of memory is thus a dynamic field of negotiation and conflict. It is an unfinished process of debate on what a group should call (its) history (Uhl 2010, 8). As established also by Nagy and Wintersteiner:

Which groups are able to officially exhibit and celebrate their view of history depends on [...] the place they occupy in the hierarchy of memories [...]. The choice of interpretations and narratives that are put forward is always politically determined, and the result of a permanent negotiation process (Nagy & Wintersteiner 2015, 17).

In pluralistic democratic societies, a certain heterogeneity of historical narratives is considered to be normal (Uhl 2002, 225). Following that, Carinthian Slovenes are not just a minority from an ethical or national point of view, but they have been part of (heterogeneous) memory communities with ineluctably lesser power. As a result of the complex societal changes in the last century, Carinthian Slovenes passed down different narratives and alternative views on the past, views which diverge considerably from those of the dominant German-speaking community in Carinthia. This specifically concerns the period of National Socialism. Many Carinthian Slovene individuals and families who had been victims of National Socialism because of their cultural and political activities defend memories that were diametrically opposed to the public memory of both Austria and Carinthia (Wutti 2015, 40). In Carinthia's public memory, the so-called *Abwehrkampf* (defense struggle) is still the main marker of and identity forming element in hegemonic (German-Austrian) memory culture. In the *Abwehrkampf*, Carinthian armed formations resisted Yugoslav/Slovene troops, who strove for annexation of the southern parts of Carinthia, which for centuries were mainly Slovene inhabited.⁴ In a specific ideological amalgamation of heroism

and patriotism, the *Abwehrkampf* legitimized regional aspects of WWI and WWII and thus became the historical marker to be focused on, heroic, and bearing witness to a self-determined (German-speaking) Carinthia. Remembering and commemorating the *Abwehrkampf* – together with 10 October 1920, when almost 60 % of Carinthians opted for Austria in opposition to Yugoslavia in a democratic referendum – are certainly more pleasant than commemorating the losses in WWI and the guilt and actions of National Socialism. For example, there has been only one museum that addresses particularly the Partisans' fight against National Socialism. Known as the *Peršmanhof*, this museum is remotely located, almost 1,000 meters above sea level and far from other cultural and political centers. It can be seen as a metaphor for the manner in which the Slovene narrative is handled. Since WWII, it has proven difficult for Carinthian Slovenes to make their version of history visible, as access to Carinthia's cultural memory was out of reach. Slovenes handed down their narratives in family memory and within their own community.

Cultural memory is, following Assmann (2010, 13), strongly institutionalised: various formal institutional bodies make decisions about what is to be published in schoolbooks, exhibited in museums or printed in magazines. Committees of historians argue about the historical truth of a national group, whether in a majority or a minority situation. However, tendencies such as the above-mentioned installation of a publicly visible memorial for victims of National Socialism in the *Burg* of Klagenfurt/Celovec, give evidence of a transformation of memory culture in Carinthia. Since 2010, several similar installations have appeared all over the region. Several memory initiatives have been increasingly influencing the discourse towards a more inclusive – and bilingual – memory culture.⁵ Since 2015, research has been done on how this transformation is influencing school education and how such transformations could be used to address contemporary teaching and schooling about the past – in pursuance of learning for a democratic and inclusive future. Research was conducted in two particular scientific projects at the University of Klagenfurt and the University College of Teacher Education in Carinthia.

2. Research Projects in the Field of Memory Studies in Education in Carinthia

With the two research projects, *Erinnerungsgemeinschaften in Kärnten/Koroška: Eine empirische Studie über gegenwärtige Auseinandersetzungen mit dem Nationalsozialismus in Schule und Gesellschaft* (Memory Communities in Carinthia: An Empirical Study of the Current Confrontation with National Socialism in Schools and Society) at the Alpen-Adria University of Klagenfurt/Celovec (Danglmaier et al. 2017a) and *Erinnerungskulturen im Grenzraum – Spominske kulture na obmejnem območju* (Cultures of Remembrance in the Border Area)

at the University College of Teacher Education (Wutti et al. 2020), essential cornerstones were laid for the empirical documentation and recording of issues relating to the culture of remembrance at Carinthian schools.

The work at the University of Klagenfurt/Celovec, which began in 2014 and lasted until 2017, opened up a broad field of research. The focus was on the teaching of content on topics of commemoration and remembrance culture at schools in Carinthia. The following project at the University College of Teacher Education builds on these previous research activities. The project duration extended over a period during which the federal state of Carinthia was preparing the 100th anniversary of the 1920 Carinthian referendum as well as the associated celebrations and commemorative events. This project was part of the state exhibition curated for this purpose under the title CarinthiJA 2020.

Both research projects used a research design for data generation and collection, which included both qualitative and quantitative research instruments. The mixed methods approach has meanwhile developed into an independent paradigm in the field of empirical social research (Kelle 2014, 154).

2.1 The Empirical Study of the Project *Erinnerungskulturen in Kärnten/Koroška* from 2014 Onwards

The scientific research project at the Alpen-Adria University of Klagenfurt consisted of an interdisciplinary research team at the interface between the fields of education, history, media and communication studies, and psychology. The empirical study focused on the question and analysis of the transmission of memories and educational knowledge about the time of National Socialism to the grandchildren of witnesses in schools and social areas. What differences are recognizable in the memory work compared to the four decades before? Can conclusions and recommendations for future work in the field be derived from this? Using different methodological approaches to the research, attempts were made to answer these questions during the individual project phases.

a) Project part: Discourse analysis of the *Kleine Zeitung* from 1986 onwards

At the beginning of the project, a database was created with relevant articles on media coverage of topics related to the Carinthian culture of remembrance in the daily newspaper *Kleine Zeitung* – the largest daily newspaper in Carinthia. By means of discourse analysis, categories and assumptions were first collected, and classifications were organized based on the interpretive analysis. Starting from the current research point of view, the newspaper material was interpreted in a reconstructive and constructive manner, and superficial units of meaning were summarized (Gitschtaler & Hudelist 2017, 38).

As one of the central transformations of the discourse on remembrance and commemoration, the researchers were able to observe and analyze the increasing coexistence and plurality of different narratives about and per-

spectives on the past, based on reports in the *Kleine Zeitung*. The analysis showed that the youth in Carinthia have been actively involved in shaping and co-determining the discourse of remembrance since 2000, e.g., as members of memorial associations and participants in memorial events (Gitschtaler & Hudelist 2017, 51).

- b) Project part: Quantitative surveys for school principals and teaching staff
In the course of one phase of the project, a link to the online questionnaires on the subject of National Socialism and the Holocaust in classrooms was sent to all Carinthian schools at the primary level as well as secondary levels I and II. One of the two questionnaires was addressed to the principals of Carinthian schools, while a somewhat more extensive questionnaire was aimed at teachers in Carinthian secondary schools. The target group was primarily teachers who are required to discuss topics related to National Socialism and the Holocaust in the federal curriculum (history, political education, religion, German and Slovene⁶) (Danglmaier et al. 2017b, 58).

Principals from 98 schools in Carinthia participated in the online survey. The survey sample included schools from both urban and rural areas. The aim of the survey for teachers at secondary level I and II was to find out what attitude they had towards dealing with the subject of National Socialism in the classroom, which areas of the subject were mainly dealt with and which teaching methods and teaching materials were used to convey these subjects. The response to this survey resulted in 223 fully completed questionnaires, with 39 people indicating that they did not address National Socialism and the Holocaust in class. A further eleven teachers taught in the elementary school sector, which, however, was not included in this study. For the data evaluation, 173 fully completed questionnaires were considered. The authors of the study point out that it is presumably mainly teachers who are interested in these topics who took part in the survey. The results must therefore be viewed and interpreted according to this initial situation (Wakounig 2017, 65).

- c) Project part: Qualitative interviews with teachers and students
In the course of the quantitative online survey of teachers, they were also invited to participate in individual, qualitative interviews. Twenty-one people responded to the call and were then invited to single or double interviews (Danglmaier et al. 2017b, 60).

By means of the snowball effect – also known as chain sampling – 22 pupils were then invited to group interviews via their interviewed teachers. These pupils had participated in specific projects about National Socialism and the Holocaust in the past five years (Danglmaier et al. 2017b, 60).

The case analysis was chosen as the method for both the individual interviews and the group discussions, while the problem-centered interview according to Witzel (1985) was used as the qualitative survey method for all interviews. As an evaluation method for the data obtained, the interview

transcripts were subjected to a qualitative content analysis (Mayring 2008). For this purpose, the material was inductively categorized by two independent coders. In a further step, a third person brought the categorizations together (Danglmaier et al. 2017b, 61).

2.2 The Project Cultures of Remembrance in the Border Region from 2019 Onwards

Building on the results and findings of the extensive empirical study at the Alpen-Adria University, the project *Erinnerungskulturen im Grenzraum – Spominjske kulture na obmejnem območju* placed greater focus on the region as a border area. At the start of the project, the 100th anniversary of the referendum in Carinthia was approaching. 10 October 1920 plays a prominent role in the Carinthian culture of remembrance, as established at the beginning of this article. The results of the empirical study by the University of Klagenfurt/Celovec in 2015 showed that this day was being widely discussed and celebrated in schools – especially at the primary level (Wakounig 2017, 71). This thesis was confirmed and examined in more depth during the subsequent project in 2020 (Hartmann & Merva 2020).

The research interest of the cross-border project was therefore focused on the Carinthian state holiday: How is it celebrated in Carinthian elementary schools? Which topics have been foregrounded so far? Where do the teachers get their knowledge from? Furthermore, the research team looked across the border. How is the Republic of Slovenia dealing with these historical events? Which topics of remembrance culture are foregrounded in lessons in Slovene schools?

In order to emphasize this cross-border character, teachers from Slovenia and Carinthia were brought together in the course of the project to exchange ideas about their own access to historical narratives at the border and to reflect on their teaching of the topic. In the following school year, they carried out school projects with their pupils on a sub-area of the broad topic of cultures of remembrance in the border area, projects which were accompanied and evaluated by the project team. The exchange of teaching practice, the content orientation of the lessons on memory culture on both sides of the border and project concepts then led to the development of cross-border, inclusive, innovative and multi-perspective teaching concepts especially for the border area that are presented in the anthology to the project (Wutti et al. 2020).

a) Project part: 10 October at Carinthia's elementary schools

In the period between December 2019 and May 2020, an empirical survey was carried out whose research interest lay in the teaching content for celebrations of the state holiday at Carinthian elementary schools. The data was collected in two successive survey phases. With the help of a quantitative

online survey, a general picture of the mood of the target group questioned – the principals of elementary schools in Carinthia – could be recorded and sketched. In the subsequent nine qualitative interviews, aspects were discussed that could not be dealt with in such detail in the online survey. After the end of the survey, a response rate of around 60 % can be assumed, which certainly allows for the deduction and interpretation of a general mood on the topic in Carinthian elementary schools (Hartmann & Merva 2020, 89).

In the course of the online survey of the elementary school principals, an invitation to a personal interview was issued. About 25 principals from nine out of ten political districts in Carinthia accepted this invitation. One director from each district was contacted at random and then interviewed. These were case analyses, with a problem-centered interview according to Witzel (1985), supported by an interview guideline.

In addition to those surveys, four teachers and elementary school principals who had actually submitted and carried out school projects in the course of the CarinthiJA 2020 exhibition were also interviewed. The survey method used to analyze the submitted school projects was the expert interview, and the material was evaluated using qualitative content analysis according to Mayring (2008).

b) Project part: Culture of remembrance in schools in Slovenia & Austria – some examples

Two further sub-areas of the research activity in the course of the project *Erinnerungskulturen im Grenzraum – Spominske kulture na obmejnem območju* dealt in more detail with the teaching of commemorative and remembrance culture in secondary schools. The target or research group for this purpose was defined somewhat more broadly, across national borders. Both Carinthian and Slovene teaching practices on these topics were examined.

After a thorough literature search, the search or choice of interlocutors in Slovenia was carried out by chain sampling. Eight expert interviews on how schools deal with topics of remembrance culture in Slovenia were evaluated, compiled and structured into a database. From the interviews, essential sub-areas were described in more detail, and analyzed particularly regarding their cross-border potential and design options. Some best-practice-examples were then presented in the anthology to the project (Kelih 2020).

In addition, interviews were held in Carinthia with teachers who had drawn attention to themselves with particularly outstanding school projects on topics of remembrance culture, both currently and in the recent past. These were mainly projects that were planned, prepared and carried out over a lengthy period of time. From the research activity in the course of both projects, it was possible to identify and record essential findings and recommendations for (project) teaching on topics and areas of the culture of remembrance (Peko 2020, 129).

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The existence of regionally distinct communities of memory is reflected in schools. Both teachers and students have a historical identity and a historical consciousness that is based on family histories, media information and associated feelings, which shape value concepts and political attitudes. Cognitive content tends to remain secondary (Georgi 2003, 198). Schools can occupy a central space in the development of education for the nation. Common ideas develop on the basis of which a sense of national belonging emerges (Markova 2013, 56). Schools must be aware of this role, as it holds considerable potential and dangers at the same time. Until now, teaching about historical events has often remained monocultural and focused on nation-state identity formation. Changes in society make it necessary to initiate a change in perspective, to think more pluralistically, to allow for more controversy (Borries 2000, 135) and not to avoid, but to stimulate a confrontation with foreignness – Looking past your own nose, as we called it in our project *Erinnerungskulturen im Grenzraum – Spominske kulture na obmejnem območju*. It showed how historical narratives on both sides of borders can have an inclusive rather than a divisive effect. One example would be the numerous visits of Slovene school classes, as well as individual pupils to Bad Eisenkappel/Železna Kapla in Austria in 2019 and 2020 in order to prepare for school leaving examinations. In Slovenia, questions about Carinthian Slovene author Maja Haderlap's novel *Angel of Oblivion* became part of these exams, which led to increased interest in the history of Carinthian Slovenes (Kelih 2020, 121).

a) Why is memory culture addressed in school lessons?

Our questionnaire, sent out to principals in Carinthia in the course of the first research project in 2014 (see section 2.1.b in this article), included both rural and urban areas and different types of schools. Ninety-three % of the principals stated that a central aspect of their idea for addressing National Socialism and memory culture in school lessons was to achieve an understanding of and respect for diversity of people among the students. For 79 %, understanding linguistic and cultural diversity was a key learning objective. Other objectives, focused more on factual knowledge about history and awareness of tradition, were given less importance. However, regional differences were also evident here: in the area of the minority school system in Carinthia as well as in the urban area of Klagenfurt/Celovec and Villach/Bejak, the understanding of linguistic and cultural diversity was given particular importance. In rural areas and outside the area of the minority school system, more attention was paid to tradition and awareness of the homeland (Wakounig 2017, 66). Similar findings and results emerged from the research project at the primary level in 2019 (see section 2.2.a in this article), which specifi-

cally examined the content and topics that were taught in elementary schools around the Carinthian referendum of 1920. In the surveys and interviews with principals, it became apparent that topics of diversity and bilingualism in Carinthia are increasingly being emphasized at schools in the area of the minority school system and in urban areas. At the same time, these school principals tend to reject traditional and homeland-related content (Hartmann & Merva 2020, 97). This finding is both central and interesting, since it tells us about the priorities in learning content chosen by teachers. For example, we found that currently, just two of four planned elementary school projects for Carinthia's celebration of the 100th anniversary of the plebiscite also dealt with the topic of bilingualism, and just one of these schools focused on the dispute about the resettlement of the Carinthian Slovenes during the Second World War (Hartmann & Merva 2020, 102). Teachers could have chosen instead to address generalised topics of humanity, democracy and tolerance, rather than raising the burdening and, to a certain extent unresolved, topics of the past.

b) Who addresses memory culture in school lessons?

Teachers design their lessons according to their own level of knowledge, interests and (family) experience. In the case of knowledge about the events surrounding National Socialism and the Carinthian referendum of 1920, our studies with both secondary school teachers in 2014 and elementary school principals in 2019 were able to demonstrate a strong correlation between personal interests and the subjective perception of knowledge. Those teachers who are personally interested in the topic also feel well informed about it – and are more likely to teach it. At this point, the family experience is obvious; teachers with strong biographical ties to the topic of National Socialism (e.g., because their ancestors were victims) rated their interest in the topic higher than others. This finding also corresponds with the fact that higher levels of participation was recorded by schools from the bilingual school system in Carinthia (Wakounig 2017, 66).

On the other hand, it emerged that neither teacher education nor teacher training were central sources of knowledge among those being questioned. Personal sources of information were identified as the most important source of knowledge in both studies. Those who teach in bilingual schools feel that they are generally better educated than others on the subject of National Socialism. This could be linked to the content of the lessons and the special education of bilingual teachers, but it could also be interpreted as meaning that these people are more likely to choose relevant content in their education because of personal interest (Danglmaier & Wakounig 2017a, 78).

c) The pupil's point of view

Results of the quantitative interviews with pupils in 2015 (see section 2.1.c in this article) showed that lessons where teachers brought in personal de-

tails and addressed their own family involvement, as, for example, victims of National Socialism, were appreciated (Danglmaier & Wakounig 2017b, 98). In the study, this was demonstrated by teachers who belonged to the Slovene ethnic group and who brought their family biography into the classroom. Parallel to this, pupils who identify with the ethnic group of Carinthian Slovenes show stronger interest in history as well as a more intense personal connection to history than others. The results of the interviews show the danger of emotional apathy among pupils without family connections (Wutti & Abing 2017, 192).

d) Teaching between the emotional and analytical approaches

One way to compensate for the lack of family connections is by regional references. This makes it possible to reduce the distance from historical events and to approach the topic on the basis of concrete biographies and familiar places, thus integrating an emotional component (Wutti & Abing 2017, 200). This represents a clear demand from the interviewed students, who spoke out against the teaching of purely factual knowledge (Abing 2017, 211). A study on dealing with National Socialism and the Holocaust at schools in Salzburg in 2017 yielded similar results to our study in 2014. Teachers and students decidedly demanded an emotional component in lessons related to National Socialism; only factual knowledge would not be remembered in the long term (Kühberger & Neureiter 2017). The confrontation with historical events should be designed neither to exclude feelings nor to deliberately evoke them. Astrid Messerschmidt warns that the core elements of National Socialism cannot be recognized if revulsion at the cruelty and unbounded violence determines the approach to the topic (Messerschmidt 2015, 274). Educators should not expect students to empathize with the victims, but to empathize with their situation, and to reflect on their position in society. Minority/majority issues should be objectively addressed, as well as hegemony and power in society.

e) Connections to currently relevant topics

The goals that teachers set themselves in relation to learning about historical events are strongly influenced by connections to currently relevant topics and range from awareness of democracy, human rights education and sensitization for injustice, to prevention of right-wing extremism. In our interviews with teachers at the secondary level I and II in 2014, they mentioned broad goals connected to these topics. One teacher stated that his goal was to counteract young people's indifference to and disenchantment with politics, to sensitize them to politics in general and to educate them to become mature democrats (Wutti et al. 2017, 128). Another teacher put it even more bluntly. For her, it was about teaching students to deal with moral questions concerning humanity. Stimulating inquiry through questioning was often stated as a learning objective.

The ambitious and noble goals of teachers in connection with learning about National Socialism raise the risk of overloading the lessons and establishing a tense atmosphere (Kühner et al. 2008, 79). In this respect, teachers move in a difficult field of tension between their own high demands, progressive decontextualisation of events and the extinction of contemporary witnesses.

Nevertheless, historical-political educational work includes various possibilities for identification, which result from the fact that historical narratives structure the confusing past (cf. Wrochem 2010, 59). Historical remembering conveys a sense of belonging, as Viola Georgi demonstrated in her studies of young migrants dealing with National Socialism. Identification with the historical narrative of the majority can create an experience of increased affiliation for people without family roots in the region, in particular migrant pupils. Thus, dealing with National Socialism as a field of negotiation for recognition and belonging can result in fostered inclusion (Georgi 2003, 185). Considering the differences between pupils, one should be careful not to create new differences, e.g., by making ethnic attributions. Multi-perspective approaches to historical topics consider the variety of pupil's initial situations. Nora Sternfeld (2011) uses the term contact zone, in reference to the concept of Mary Louise Pratt and James Clifford. In a contact zone, every individual can act and contribute, while remaining aware of asymmetry in power relations. Hierarchy is always considered but is not the only significant factor. Contact zones are social spaces where different positions are negotiated – sometimes in conflict (Sternfeld 2011). The concept of contact zones can be applied to the culture of memory in regions where players with different degrees of power shape historical narratives. It can also be applied to classrooms and can help teachers to deal sensitively with multi-perspectivity.

4. Outlooks: Towards Inclusive Historical Narratives

In the study *Erinnerungskulturen im Grenzraum – Spominske kulture na obmejnem območju*, school principals described respect, togetherness and tolerance as their guiding ideas when addressing the plebiscite of 1920. Their goal, they said, was to focus on what is common across borders and to teach students to be open to others. However, as our research showed, in practical implementation in the classroom, traditional forms of memory work predominated, which aimed at strengthening awareness of the homeland and patriotism. The national traditional viewpoint prevailed (Hartmann & Merva 2020, 103). This is precisely where we see great potential for establishing new forms of memory culture and more inclusive historical narratives. Theory must be turned into practice. For this, one must look past the end of one's nose, and old, traditional thought patterns must receive critical reflection. Schools from the minority school system in Carinthia tended to approach these challenges more openly, compared to schools in regions without a traditional ethnic minority presence.

Teachers who had a particular personal interest in memory work in schools also exhibited more interest in thinking and working across the national border as well as including the perspectives of minorities – and those were often Carinthian Slovene teachers with biographical ties to victims of National Socialism. Teachers in bilingual schools felt that they were generally better educated than others about National Socialism. Meanwhile, Carinthian Slovene pupils showed higher interest and knowledge concerning topics of memory culture in comparison to their colleagues from non-minority areas. We also found that pupils applauded and appreciated lessons that included personal information from and engagement by teachers. This was demonstrated by teachers who belonged to the Slovene ethnic group and who brought their family biographies into the classroom. The presence of a vivid and visible minority seems to foster democratic education.

The results of our studies show a clear requirement for future historical-political education for teachers. Teaching rigid dogmas and factual knowledge does not bring us closer to the ambitious and broadly defined goals. Rather, there is a need for forms of active participation in which teachers act as learning guides. Our task as teachers is to create a negotiating space with open learning processes, where dissent is allowed, if not encouraged (Sternfeld 2011). It can be of great advantage to address the constructive character of history, rather than teaching a single truth. There is no single true view on the past; instead, historical events are interpreted and evaluated in different ways. This can be of vast interest to pupils, especially in border regions and concerning events and topics that are still controversial. In this way, the classroom becomes a space for discourse in which everyone finds a place with their own individual narratives of history, and controversy is encouraged. This enables us to achieve our ultimate goal of having an impact on young people's actions through our teaching and ultimately fosters democracy education.

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Notes

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- ¹ See also Knight (2017).
- ² An interesting fact in this context is that the Moscow Declarations of 1943 demanded that Austria take an active role in liberation from Hitler's Germany, if the country sought to regain sovereignty within its borders from before 1938. This active role was mainly played by Carinthian Slovene Partisans – who in so doing, built the foundations for Austria's consolidation after National Socialism. Certainly, it is one of the most contradictory specifics of the Austrian and Carinthian memory discourse, that Carinthian Partisans have mainly been connoted negatively – i.e., solely as communist fighters for Yugoslavia and thus traitors to Austria – in broader public spheres.
- ³ E.g., victims of euthanasia and forced sterilisation, slave laborers, homosexuals, and socially marginalised groups such as the homeless. Carinthian Slovenes who were deported in 1942 were not counted as victims until the 12th amendment of the Victim Welfare Act (*Opferfürsorgegesetz*) in 1961 (Danglmaier & Koroschitz 2015, 403). As late as 2014, the first Austrian memorial for deserters was erected in Vienna (*Denkmal für die Verfolgten der NS-Militärjustiz*).
- ⁴ In Slovenia's narratives, these events are handed down as *boj za severno mejo* (struggle for the northern border).
- ⁵ E.g., the Organisations *Erinnern Gailtal*, *Erinnern Rosegg / Rožek se spominja*, *Erinnern Villach*, *Kuland Verein für Kultur & Informationsvielfalt*, *Memorial Kärnten/Koroška* and the *Mauthausen Komitee Kärnten/Koroška*, who are oriented towards a more inclusive memory culture.
- ⁶ In accordance with the Minority Schools Act for Carinthia (*Minderheiten-Schulgesetz für Kärnten* 1959), Slovene is taught at eligible elementary, middle and high schools.