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| Institution: Nottingham Trent University (NTU) | | |
| Unit of Assessment: D28 – History | | |
| Title of case study: Legacies of the Holocaust: changing the way the Holocaust is remembered and understood in Britain and beyond | | |
| Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2000 - 2020 | | |
| Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit: | | |
| Name: | Role: | Period employed by submitting HEI: |
| Bill Niven | Professor | 1997 –2020 |
| Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2017 - December 31, 2020 | | |
| Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No | | |
| <p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Research by Niven has demonstrably changed how the Holocaust is understood, shifting it from a historical event to one that can be actively remembered in different ways. It has done this through shaping the co-creation of ground-breaking digital exhibition <i>Legacies of the Holocaust</i>. On permanent display at the National Holocaust Centre and Museum, <i>Legacies</i> provided, for the first time, an analytic lens on how the Holocaust has been represented in culture and testimony. Iterations of <i>Legacies</i>, focusing on the Kindertransport, were shown in the Midlands, London, Hamburg and Berlin. Combined, the exhibitions have reached a diverse in-person audience of 35,000 people, including primary and secondary schools, trainee teachers, embassy officials and policymakers, theatregoers and the wider public regionally, nationally and internationally; related online resources have reached an additional 15,000 people in several countries. Audiences were empowered to understand how memory is framed, and to approach representations critically, for instance by learning to identify how they are inflected by national and political agendas. The work changed how the Holocaust is taught, understood and remembered in partner schools and facilitated reflection on parallels between the Kindertransport and modern-day refugee crises. It also played a significant part in persuading the council of the town of Guldental to buy a former synagogue for use as a culture centre.</p> | | |
| <p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>For two decades Professor Bill Niven has researched the memory and legacy of the Holocaust, publishing seminal articles and books on the subject. His earlier research examined the influence of the Cold War on the different ways in which West and East Germans remembered Nazism, exploring what he termed <i>inclusive memory</i> [R1], which traced a greater openness towards the past since German unification.</p> <p>From 2010, Niven focused on processes of memorialisation, introducing the concept of a <i>combimemorial</i> to define shifts towards greater public involvement in such processes [R2]. He described <i>combimemorials</i> as a third generation of post-war memorials. Often collaborative, in which the public are encouraged to participate in the work of commemoration, these projects are made relevant to contemporary life by integrating digital technology into archival exhibitions. Niven developed the notion of <i>post-didactic memory</i> in reference to these shifts, which reflect a trend towards entrusting the public with memory work [R3]. <i>Post-didactic</i> is not to be understood as eschewing pedagogy: in Niven's understanding, it reflects a move away from top-down expectations or even implicit rules as to how memory should work, towards the empowerment of society as a whole as memory agent. Together with Stefan Berger (Ruhr University, Bochum), Niven published two edited volumes on European and global memory patterns, in which he explored memory of the Second World War and the Holocaust beyond Germany, with a focus on the interaction between memory and forgetting [R4, R5].</p> <p>Niven's research is interdisciplinary. To understand how memory works in Germany and beyond, he has written not just about memorials, but also about novels, television series, films, exhibitions, anniversaries and commemorative events. Most recently, he has researched the history and memory of the Kindertransport (the rescue of Jewish children from Nazi-occupied Europe), using it as a case study to explore the contrasts between different national memory frames (notably Germany and Britain), the tensions between these and transnational memory, and the operation of <i>post-didactic memory</i>. He examined re-enactment as a form of memorialisation in relation to the Kindertransport; Niven sees in re-enactment a level of public</p> | | |

engagement and initiative that reflects the principles of *post-didactic memory*. Niven also has a longstanding interest in issues of flight and expulsion and, in a journal article with his PhD student Amy Williams, he reflected on the degree to which national Holocaust memory frameworks facilitate or actually obstruct empathy for present-day refugees from Syria [R6].

Key findings from this body of research, which have shaped how Niven has encouraged diverse audiences to critically engage in the way the Holocaust is remembered, can be defined as:

- Our understanding of the Holocaust is transmitted through cultural memory, which is informed by political, historical, geohistorical and generational shifts.
- Differences between genres (i.e. film, testimony, literature, museums), to which too little consideration has been given to date, play a significant part in shaping this understanding.
- Broad national and transnational frameworks are important for understanding memory.
- National memory tropes can support but also hinder empathy towards the plight of today's refugees and discriminated minorities.
- We are witnessing a nascent shift towards *post-didactic memory*, a trend in which national memory tropes are questioned in favour of a more differentiated set of perspectives, underpinned by greater public involvement in memory work.
- The study of Kindertransport memory in international perspective offers an opportunity to explore all of the above. Kindertransport is remembered nationally (e.g. Britain, Germany), but also transnationally (through international reunions and transnational networks); it is represented in different genres; and different groups are working towards forms of memory that, in their complexity, move the event away from programmatic national memory.

3. References to the research

The quality of the research has been evidenced by externally peer reviewed outputs.

R1 Niven, B., *Facing the Nazi Past* (Routledge, 2001). Reviews: 'An excellent book, authoritative ... well researched, nuanced and perceptive ... remarkably and probably correctly upbeat about the effects of reunification on German public memory.' - Richard J. Evans, British historian and author of *Lying About Hitler*. 'Niven's book is an impressively comprehensive, insightful, and thought-provoking study that deserves a wide audience.' – Gavriel D. Rosenfeld, Fairfield University, German Studies Review.

R2 Niven, B., *From Countermonument to Combimemorial: Developments in German Memorialization*, *Journal of War & Culture Studies* 6:1 (2013), 75-91.

R3 Niven, B., Generation war and post-didactic memory: the Nazi past in contemporary Germany. In: P. Finney, ed., *Remembering the second world war (remembering the modern world)*. London: Routledge, pp. 30-45.

R4 Niven, B. and Berger, S. (eds.), *Writing the History of Memory* (Bloomsbury, 2016). Review: 'The collection includes essays on oral history, generational and collective memory, and memorialisation, each one with a list of further reading, making the book an excellent point of entry into the field.' – Stuart MacIntyre, University of Melbourne, *Australian Journal of Politics and History*.

R5 Niven, B. and Berger, S. Remembering and Forgetting in the Twentieth Century, in Niven, B. and Berger, S. (eds.), *A Cultural History of Memory in the Long Twentieth Century*, Vol. 6, (London: Bloomsbury, 2020).

R6 Niven, B., with Williams, A., *The Dominance of the National: On the Susceptibility of Holocaust Memory*, *Jewish Historical Studies: Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England*, 2020.

4. Details of the impact

Niven's research shaped the development of digital exhibition *Legacies of the Holocaust*, co-created by Niven and the National Holocaust Centre and Museum (NHCM). Prior to *Legacies*, the exhibition landscape of the NHCM, based in Nottinghamshire, told the history of the Holocaust only up to 1945. Following discussions between the Centre and NTU in 2016, Niven curated a multimedia exhibition that examines the history of the Holocaust from 1945 to the present: fundamentally, a history of its memory. *Legacies*, presented through a series of interactive screens purchased by NHCM, covers Nazi camps after liberation, Holocaust testimony, film, literature and memorials, the Kindertransport, and memory theory. Reflecting the principles underpinning Niven's research, the exhibition adopts a constructivist position, demonstrating the dependency of memory on shifting collective identities, national mythmaking,

generational change, political agency and cultural conventions. It opened at NHCM in May 2017 and is now a permanent part of the museum, on display in the main Holocaust exhibition and in the main hallway at the entrance of the Centre.

The Centre estimates the size of the audience engaged over the impact period through *Legacies*, in its physical form, at 17,531 members of the public and school audiences (excluding primary) at 37,134 children [S1]. To broaden its accessibility and reach, the Centre made the exhibition available on its website. Over the impact period there were an estimated 20,000 unique page views of the different sections of *Legacies*, with the sections on Kindertransport and Holocaust testimony proving the most popular. Each visitor spent an average of 3 minutes exploring the online resources, suggesting a deep level of engagement. *Legacies* was also designed for NHCM's in-person and online education programme aimed at primary and secondary schools and trainee teachers. Through school visits to the museum, the display of sections of the exhibition within schools, in-school talks by Niven, teacher training sessions and targeting of the online resources, *Legacies* has engaged an estimated 10,000 primary and secondary school pupils from 20 schools in neighbouring regions and 100 trainee teachers from five universities, including Bishop Grosseteste in Lincoln, Nottingham Trent University, University of Nottingham, University of Leeds, and University of Birmingham.

In 2017, Niven and Williams, who had worked together to create the Kindertransport section of *Legacies*, secured AHRC Midlands4Cities funding to expand this into two new exhibitions: *Rethinking the Story of the Kindertransports* and *Responding to the Present by Remembering the Past*. Both exhibitions, on banners to ensure they were mobile, placed the Kindertransport in international and historical context, and critiqued a British-centred memory of the event, looking beyond the positive British national narrative and reflecting on multi-layered international stories of the Kindertransports. The exhibitions travelled around the UK and Germany to schools, theatres, learning centres, the Scottish Parliament, the World Jewish Relief headquarters in London, events commemorating the 80th anniversary of the Kindertransport and the British Embassy in Berlin. They engaged 15,000 people, including schoolchildren, teachers, policymakers and the public.

Inspired by these two exhibitions [S2], the leading institution for art photography in Berlin, PhotoWerkBerlin, commissioned an outdoor exhibition on the Kindertransport in German and English, securing funding from the Culture Department of the Charlottenburg-Wilmersdorf Regional Office. Niven and Williams provided the text for two thirds of the exhibition. The exhibition, *At the End of the Tunnel*, was displayed in a public square in the borough of Berlin-Charlottenburg in August 2019 and ran until October 31, 2019; it took the creative form of 2.5-metre high advertising columns. Accompanied by two public-facing events involving Niven and Williams, it was the first Kindertransport exhibition to be displayed in Berlin and the first in Germany to present the event from a dual German-British perspective. It travelled to 2 other locations in Germany and was used in school projects. It is estimated to have reached a cumulative audience of 12,000 people.

The significance of the impact of this public-facing engagement programme, in terms of changing attitudes and influencing understanding and awareness, can be articulated via three key themes:

Raising public awareness of how politics and ideology shape memories of the Holocaust in order to change the way it is remembered

Legacies sought to engage audiences with the idea that the history of the Holocaust does not reach us in 'pure' form, but is reconstructed through sociopolitical frames and cultural conventions, a fundamental idea behind Niven's work. The NHCM CEO, Phil Lyons, [S3] emphasised how the exhibition '*explores how the Holocaust was remembered – and forgotten – since World War Two*' and '*seeks to explain the shifts, tensions and patterns in Holocaust memory, which often stood at odds with national memory in countries which preferred to look more positively on their past*'.

Reporting 'considerable' interest from visitors for what 'has proved a vital addition to our resources' and 'for our interaction with diverse audiences', Lyons said *Legacies* had 'added a new dimension to its exhibition landscape: its coverage now extends from 1945 to the present'. He wrote: '*Legacies help us to raise awareness among our visitors – from schoolchildren to adults – of the fact that memory is not a given, but had and has to be struggled for. It also 'raises awareness of the need to be sure we are remembering in a manner that is appropriate and free of political or ideological interest. Thanks to Legacies, our visitors are now introduced to the history of memory.'*' He said the success of the exhibition played a key role in widening the collaboration between NHCM and NTU through a formal Memorandum of Understanding signed in April 2019 [S4].

Changing how the Holocaust is taught, understood and remembered in schools

As Lyons puts it: 'As a Centre, our focus has always been on teaching about the Holocaust, and on the importance of remembering it: we educate, and we commemorate [S4].' *Legacies* supported NHCM's mission to teach schoolchildren to reflect on lessons from the past. The Kindertransport and the Holocaust in Film sections of the exhibition were key parts of the workshops for visiting schools; these are held regularly in NHCM's Ronson Learning Centre, which was designed to integrate the multimedia elements of exhibitions into the Centre's programme.

Legacies was also taken to local schools, including Arnold Hill Academy, Nottingham College and Studley High School. At Rushcliffe School (secondary) in February 2018, Niven gave a lecture based on the Memorials section to 300 pupils of all ages. In line with the aim of the exhibition to encourage creative personal reflection on and engagement with memorialisation, a number of the pupils took part in a competition to design a memorial for Holocaust Memorial Day. The winning entry featured a memorial comprising a structure of several triangles (to reflect the use of the triangle badge system in concentration camps) with one missing or 'lost' triangle to represent the loss experienced by individuals and the wider community as a result of the genocide [S5]. The School's Year 9 teacher commented [S5]: '*The memorials designed by students in year 9 showed a developed understanding of the causes, event and consequences of genocide and how, as a community we can remember.*' Explanations from the students about their memorials included: "*The lost triangle shows the incompleteness of the population after the Holocaust.*" "*Each wheel represents 1000 disabled people who were killed. There will be a lot to show the true size of how many people were killed and how it's often ignored when teaching about the Holocaust.*" "*The Nazis attempted to strip Jews of identity. I want to represent uniqueness and that Jews standing together can form one big strength.*" "*It's a children's counting toy with each larger piece revealing more children killed in the Holocaust.*" *Legacies* had a formative influence on trainee teachers at the NHCM. Representative comments [S6] included: '*I learnt lots of things I never knew and would develop and use for children*', '*There is a wide range of sources that practitioners can use to develop their subject knowledge, and relevant pedagogy to go with it*'.

As a direct result of *Legacies*, Niven was asked by NHCM to contribute teaching materials on the memory of the Kindertransport for its augmented reality, interactive story app *The Journey*, aimed at schoolchildren aged 9 and over and designed as '*an original and absorbing way to inspire empathy and critical thinking*' (<https://www.holocaust.org.uk/the-journey-app>) As of June 2020, teachers can download the app from Apple's App Store (average rating of 4.1 stars out of 5); this includes the lesson resources and teachers can either book visits to see the accompanying exhibition at NHCM or ask the Centre to bring it to the classroom (although these aspects of the programme have been disrupted by Covid-19).

Challenging nation-centric narratives of the memory of the Kindertransport and facilitating reflection on modern-day refugee and migration crises

The three exhibitions *Rethinking the Story of the Kindertransports*, *Responding to the Present by Remembering the Past* and *At the End of the Tunnel* revealed that memory of the

Kindertransport was not uniform, but shaped by national factors such as the role of these countries in the war, their post-war political, economic and social development, social and cultural policies towards refugees, and nationally conditioned memory discourses. Their audiences were invited to rethink the positive British narrative of the Kindertransport by drawing attention to internment, trauma, and testimony of abuse by foster parents. To accompany these exhibitions, Niven and Williams delivered talks and teaching sessions to schools, many of them coinciding with the 80th anniversary. They also co-authored a piece for the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance blog titled *The role of memory in the negotiation of the refugee crisis* and an article in The Conversation titled *Britain remembers the Kindertransport but is in danger of forgetting its lessons*. The Conversation piece received 3581 hits, was tweeted 79 times, shared 840 times on Facebook and republished by 8 media outlets around the world.

The headteacher of Deutsche Schule London [S7] said *Rethinking the Story* broadened 'our pupils' horizons both academically and emotionally'. He wrote: '... they engaged in conversations with their peers about the situation the Kinder were in, trying to imagine what it would be like to leave their homes and families ... Many pupils also saw parallels to the current refugees'. The headteacher and a history teacher at the Gymnasium Eppendorf [S8], a grammar school in Hamburg, said that most of their pupils had never heard of the Kindertransport prior to the showing of *Rethinking the Story*, as it is seldom mentioned in German historical accounts. They wrote: "(The students) liked the way the exhibition focused on individual cases and they were especially moved by the personal objects the children chose to take with them on their journey. Since many pupils are eager to learn about the Third Reich long before it is taught at the end of year 9 / beginning of year 10, they were extremely happy to visit the exhibition. After the visit, the pupils engaged their teachers in long discussions about the NS-regime. Repeatedly, they expressed their horror about the cruelty of the Third Reich and their compassion with the Jewish families.'

Responding to the Present was displayed at Leominster Priory in December 2018 for a musical performance about the Kindertransport called *Last Train to Tomorrow* (attended by 300 people) by a local youth choir and theatre group. Barbara Winton [S9], daughter of Sir Nicholas Winton (who organised the 1939 transport of children from Prague), said the exhibition was 'extremely helpful in giving more information and a wider context for those who had little or no understanding of the history of the Kindertransport and enabled them to understand the performance and talk better'. When *Rethinking the Story* was displayed at the Friends Meeting House in Euston for the 80th anniversary of the Kindertransport, it was viewed by 1,000 people. According to Winton, it was 'so appropriate for the audience (...) to have the opportunity to see that World Jewish Relief had not only helped back then, but continue to help today'. The outdoor exhibition *At the End of the Tunnel* reflected Niven's research by encouraging its audience to understand the Kindertransport from the perspective of both loss of home and the acquisition of a new home. The curator of Berlin-Charlottenburg's Kommunale Galerie [S2], which helped create the exhibition, said it 'succeeded in bringing new perspectives to the attention of new audiences'. It played a key role in persuading the town council of Guldental (Rhineland-Palatinate) to buy and restore a former synagogue for use as a cultural centre [S10].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- S1 Corroborating statement from the Operations Director at NHCM with visitor data.
- S2 Corroborating statement from the curator of the Kommunale Galerie, Berlin-Charlottenburg.
- S3 Corroborating statement from the CEO of NHCM (until 2019).
- S4 Signed Memorandum of Understanding between NTU and NHCM.
- S5 Corroborating statement from a Year 9 history teacher at Rushcliffe School, Notts.
- S6 Representative sample of feedback from trainee teachers participating in NHCM sessions.
- S7 Corroborating statement from the headteacher of Deutsche Schule, London.
- S8 Corroborating statement from the headteacher of Gymnasium Eppendorf, Hamburg.
- S9 Corroborating statement from Barbara Winton, daughter of Sir Nicholas Winton.
- S10 Corroborating statement from Guldental's Förderverein Ehemalige Synagoge (Committee for Promoting the Former Synagogue in Guldental).