

Combining Education at Memorial Sites and Civic Education
Experiences from the Mauthausen Memorial

Introduction

The following paper is offered from my experience with educational work at memorial sites. It is not an academic research, but rather a collection of observations and thoughts mostly based on my experience in creating an educational infrastructure at the Mauthausen Memorial in Austria, where I have been employed since fall 2007. The invitation to the conference at the Strassler Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies triggered the compiling of this text, which is offered here *unedited and very raw*. Accordingly it contains complicated formulations and mistakes. Still, I hope it can serve as a basis for discussion at the conference.

The paper has two parts. The first presents my observations on the status and the roles of memorial sites. The second part offers a glimpse into the specific case of the Mauthausen Memorial, and the attempt to relate to the educational challenges touched upon in the first part.

Part I: The Status of Memorial Sites and their Roles

The growth of memorial sites

Over the last decades commemorating the Holocaust has achieved a paradigmatic status for western civilization, with a growing influence over its moral codes of behavior. The recognition of its importance is exemplified in different areas, from academic life through popular film and literature, from legislation and financial restitution through political discourse to school activities. Whereas the generations visiting the school system in the western world until the 1980's received little

structured curricular exposure to the subject, their children situation today will most likely be different.

The growth of memorial sites commemorating the Nazi atrocities has been especially impressive. Over the last couple of decades the number of sites and museums, the infrastructure of existing sites and the activities they offer, as well as the number of visitors to the sites has seen unprecedented growth. Although not a mandatory part of national curricula, the visit of sites is a fast growing norm, recommended and subsidized in several countries. The public funding for infrastructure and activities has been growing accordingly, reaching many millions of dollars annually.

The mandate of memorial sites

The sites have a number of roles. They commemorate the dead and the suffering of the prisoners, in the form of actual or virtual burial grounds and monuments, as well as through commemorative acts and ceremonies. Additionally, the sites are also established places of learning, inviting the public to view the historical remains and visit explanatory exhibitions in order to decipher the events. Through the mourning of the painful events and the understanding of their evolution memorial sites seem to offer society a place in which it – society - may reinstate its commitment to its shattered moral codes. These codes have their respective national shades, depending on which country they are situated in. They do share some central ideas, such as the abhorrence of Nazi disregard towards human life and dignity, and the heroic resistance of some groups and individuals, as well as human, universal solidarity. The mandate of memorial sites is explicitly expressed on different societal levels, from legislation and political speeches; through formal and informal school activities; to NGOs and voluntary activities. Survivors of the Holocaust have continually asserted the importance of visiting memorial sites as a tool to prevent future atrocities. The memorials are vested with responsibility for enlightening society on the atrocities of the Nazi regime, strengthening society's commitment to humanistic values and deterring potential genocidal developments. The phrase "never again!", so often heard at commemoration events, expresses both the hope and the assumption, that remembering will act to prevent future atrocious breaches of human rights.

Questioning memorials sites' role

The last two decades have shown a growing skepticism as to the extent to which memorials can fulfill their task. This skepticism has different sides, some professional, others of a political nature. One major aspect being questioned in professional circles is the pertinence of the connection between the History of the Holocaust and issues of Human Rights. Can history in general and the history of the Holocaust specifically be a tool for teaching Human Rights? Is there a danger of distorting history when it is used as a means to acquire ethical lessons? Is there a danger that in order to arrive at certain educational goals the symbolic meaning of the Nazi atrocities will be misused, and thus banalizing, depreciating and contradicting the true meaning of the events?

In my opinion the answer to all the above is positive. In the second part of this paper I would like to show how my colleagues and I combine between universal issues of human rights without moving an inch from the concrete historical events that took place at the Mauthausen Concentration Camp. First I would like to ponder a bit longer over the general picture.

Debates on the questions of illegitimate comparisons and abuses of Holocaust history can be heard on different levels, from teams developing programs on the grass roots level to institutions such as **The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance** (IHRA, formally known as the "Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research"). At the heart of the debates are often themes such as the legitimacy of comparing the Holocaust with other atrocities, especially those perpetrated by the Stalin regime, or drawing lessons from the Holocaust, for instance for the sake of human rights education.

There is no doubt that the danger of misconstruing historical facts and misusing memorial sites as a tool for proving one idea or another exists. As a result of this danger and the skepticism mentioned above, there is a tendency at memorial sites to stick to the historical data and avoid comparisons, or offer lessons from the Holocaust. This tendency is problematic on several levels. On one hand it questions the sites' above mentioned mandate given to memorial sites by society and thereby undermines the legitimacy of the sites. Moreover, it is the act of reading meaning into

historical events that renders them important. Without the discursive and negotiating act of interpreting meaning into history, the importance of events cannot be established. Beyond the incoherence of the assumption that it is possible to simply stick to facts, it is the meaning society gives to the interpretation of the events at the memorial sites that justifies investing resources to maintain them. Once reduced to collecting historical data, memorial sites would have no grounds on which to justify the enormous investments of resources with which society endows them.

Furthermore, the academic discourse within the discipline of historical research over the last decades has shown that there is no such thing as mere historical facts in representing the past. The representation of the past is always subject to narrative structures, selecting specific data and creating coherence and meaning within a particular discourse. This renders the claim to simply sticking to historical facts impossible and misleading. The question therefore is not if we draw meaning and lessons out of the past, but rather what meanings we create and most importantly, how we go about it.

Part II: The core of Holocaust Education: the visit to a historical Memorial Site

The dynamics of visits to a memorial site

The visit to a historical site is especially valued as an addition to Holocaust education curricula. In some countries, the number of youth visiting historical sites is very high, and may reach the majority of the countries students' population. The visits have an important socializing and identity-building significance for society and play a major role in formal and informal educational systems.

But what is the concrete reality of visits to memorial sites? In comparison to the size of the phenomena we are dealing with, data on this is meager. One major research was conducted by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) and published in 2010. It has shown that over 90% of visitors stay an average of two hours. Due to the sheer size of most sites these time constraints allow only for the basic tour of the site. Additional activities, such as a workshop, demand additional time, which a very small portion of the visitors takes.

This means that the most important activity the sites have to offer is the basic tour of their grounds, and would imply that appropriate investments would be made in the tours' concept. Unfortunately, this is not the case. The major investments at memorial sites – beyond the maintenance of the grounds - are in their exhibitions, in monuments and monumental buildings housing their exhibitions. Investments in educational activities flow into workshops that go beyond the basic site tour, demanding the visitor to stay longer than two hours. Concepts and activities on the pedagogical structure of the basic tour for training guides are missing. The guide's knowledge is thus limited to accumulation of historical data, and is lacking in training and knowledge as to how to use this data educationally in the framework of the basic site tour.

The common tour of the site has to fulfill different tasks, which do not easily coincide with each other. It has to inform about the past as well as aim for moral reflection, a task enormously challenging when one bears in mind what this demand. Due to the size of the sites, there are often large areas to be covered, and many places of interest which need to be visited. This leaves very little time to actually speak and exchange with the group about vast and partially uncharted areas. Some of these areas are of pure historical nature (touching themes such as what were concentration camps and what was the SS); other areas are of both historical and moral nature (such as what was the racist ideology and how did mass murder of civilians and POWs come about); and additionally other areas involve profound moral issues (such as how can we understand the perpetration of torture and murder of fellow human beings in the midst of civilian society).

Based on research that has been done (e.g. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights publication, "Human rights education at Holocaust memorial sites across the European Union: An overview of practices", 2010, p.11), as well as my own observations, it seems that one aspect missing from our work carries an especially important significance, and that is the visitor. The basic tours of sites do not manage to engage students in a structured and planned exchange. Instead, they tend to create a

situation in which the group follows the guide for some two hours, passively listening to the depictions presented by the guide. This is problematic on several levels:

- **Conflict between content and form.** Whereas contending with the atrocities aims to empower participants, and educate them as to the importance of taking responsibility and the implications of failing to do so, the tours' structure does not engender empowerment. On the contrary, it creates pressure on the students to conform through the socializing elements of the tours. Observing teachers' behavior towards their students during a visit to the Mauthausen Memorial exposes one to examples of this on a daily basis. As the tour begins, the teachers often position themselves in sight of their students. When questions are presented by the guide, the teachers communicate verbally and through their body language, what the students are expected to reply. Thus, rather than battling sincerely with moral dilemmas for which we do not have a clear set of answers, the visit turns into quiz, in which the participants are expected to prove that they can deliver the proper answers.

In order to achieve an open and sincere engagement, the tour settings have to enable and support an honest and open exchange among staff, teachers and visitors. The attitude of the staff, as well as the accompanying teachers, should communicate the dilemmas posed by the historical facts authentically. Narrations need to be open, allowing contradictions and difficulties to surface, and avoid leading the visitor to predetermined answers.

The nature of the historical events poses such deeply existential questions on society's conduct, and places society in such a bad light, that the accompanying adults and the general public, seem to expect the visit to underline society's narrative rather than expose the nature and extent of its failure. With most guided groups in Mauthausen coming from Austria and many from Germany, this is predominantly a narrative of society as victim and hostage of Nazi terror. Teachers accompanying their students often expect them to offer the "right answers", or keep a pious silence. Thus, instead of youth being allowed to contend with and ponder on difficult issues, which remain unresolved among society's adults, the tour rather reinforces societies' existing messages.

- **Communicating false certainties.** Although we know a great deal about the Nazi atrocities, we still fail to understand a lot of it. None the less the tours, often focusing on the brutality of the SS and the suffering of the prisoners, tend to create coherent narrations and along with it the impression that we understand the phenomena represented. Our enormous difficulties to understand the routine of violence - i.e. how did society enable it, how were normal people able to perpetrate it, and what it did it do to the people who were victimized by it – is usually left out, creating a false impression of coherence.

Quite a few studies have been done examining the extent of knowledge among the Reich's citizens concerning the atrocious policies of their government. Although these studies have shown the widespread exposure of the Reich's population to atrocities, we still understand little as to how people integrated and processed this knowledge. Civilian craftsmen were working next to concentration camp prisoners, and watched daily as they were beaten and murdered. Concentration camp prisoners were transported through civilian train stations, marched through cities and towns with civilians watching them being beaten, attacked by dogs and murdered. Not only do we understand little about the perspective of the Reich's citizens - who enabled and sustained the Nazi atrocities - we also hardly understand where these experiences disappeared to after the war ended, i.e. how millions of people processed the change from a societal routine of racist violence and murder to one of democracy and equality.

Moreover, the perpetrators were an integral part of society. The SS officers at the Mauthausen concentration came from the Reich's society, had lived with their families a few hundred meters from the camp, some were married into local families. They sent their children after breakfast to the local school, and walked to the camp to proceed with their daily share of murder. On their way to school their children, mixing with other children, would watch the prisoners marched, beaten and murdered. Austria, with a population of some seven million, had some 1,200,000 soldiers in the Wehrmacht. Many of them participated in committing atrocities or were exposed to them. After the war these men were integrated into society, created families and became normative citizens of society.

These phenomena contain some of the most troubling and important issues, which memorial sites need to deal with. Instead of presenting the challenging incoherencies they pose for our understanding of human nature and society, narrations of the Nazi past tend to avoid it and offer us explanations which make sense and reiterate existing assumptions.

- **Active learning versus passive learning.** The quality of learning differs greatly between an educational setting which allows an active engagement of students to a setting in which they are passive listeners. Although this educational idea has been around for centuries, formal educational systems are very slow in its integration. It is a general educational concept and does not pertain specifically to our subject matter. Concerning visits to memorial sites, participants' expressions of their questions and opinions allow them to negotiate meanings and implications for themselves. The act of speaking and of creating one's own formulations enables a much higher digestion and integration of information. The act of expression and representation puts the individual in a different position and status vis-à-vis the group and the matter at hand. The self representation is an act of investment, of involvement and positioning, and has thus the potential to be an act of empowerment as well. When we invest our selves in something we also carry responsibility for it.

As mentioned before, the tour at memorial sites tends to consist of a two hours monologue of the guide. A setting which allows participants to voice themselves enables thereby their involvement and investment into the issues at hand.

- **False assumptions.** When expressing something to others, we tend to assume that the said is being perceived as we intend it. A guide describing situations on the site assumes they are perceived accordingly. But the process of communication is much more complex, and a gap always exists between what the speaker intends to communicate and what is received and perceived by those listening. Visitors are individuals, and as such bring their different perceptions, affections and images along with them, influencing their taking in of information offered by the guide. The lesser participants express themselves, the higher the degree of false

assumptions on the side of the guide as to what has been perceived and acknowledged.

In observing groups at Mauthausen, one is constantly surprised by the notions participants bring to the discussion. Then again, there is something so extreme, so unbelievable about the reality of a concentration camp, of gassing people, that one should actually not be surprised. The process of exchange and interaction enables the guide to relate to the concrete perceptions and understandings of participant.

Introduction to the Interactive Methodology

In September 2007 I was given the task of developing a pedagogical infrastructure for the Mauthausen Memorial. A year later, after recruiting two colleagues, we began the work of developing our educational concept, which served as the basis of the first guides training course. This process lasted one year, and in October 2009 we began the first guides training. By now three such courses have taken place, with each taking about a year from the moment the public tender for interested participants is published to the moment some thirty to thirty five participants receive their Mauthausen guides' certificates.

The development of the pedagogical concept related to observations described above. Based on the reality of memorial sites, i.e. average visit duration of two hours allowing for a basic tour of the site, the educational concept takes the tour as its main challenge. It tackles the challenges of time budget, vast grounds to cover and a complex history to present.

The educational tour of the Mauthausen Memorial's grounds aims to combine three elements: the history of Mauthausen, i.e. the history of the concentration camp; its topography, i.e. the structural remains of the concentration camp and its geographical situation; and the memorial's visitor, i.e. the individuals who come to visit and the memorial's grounds. In order to achieve this goal the memorial's educational team developed an interactive methodology, subject to continual further progress.

The average time budgeted at a memorial site, combined with the memorials' size and its complex history allows for an average of some ten minutes for each of the tour's stations. This demands an exceptionally well structured methodology. The less structured it is the higher the chance that one of the three elements will be compromised. The narrative is created by the guide, through the input and structure he offers. The places visited on the memorial's grounds have a specific history. The educational challenge is in creating a setting which enables *a discussion among the visitors on the specific history and its meanings*. Through the conscious use of structural elements the setting is created for an exchange based on 1) a minimal narrated context, 2) source material, 3) focused observations of the memorials grounds and 4) questions.

1. Narrative. The guided tour of the Mauthausen Memorial confronts the visitor with the question, how was it possible to murder one hundred thousand people in the midst of society, in a civilian environment. This question has developed into a major focus of the site's visit. The explicit underlying assumption of the tour's Narrative is that both perpetrators and victims were recruited from society, and without society's interest and active support the concentration camps would not exist.

The guided tour's course is divided into three themes which coincide with the memorial's topography. The tour begins with the camp's environments, exposing its integration into society; it continues by looking into the camps staff, the SS, and closes with victims.

a. **The integration of the concentration camp into society.** The first part of the tour takes the visitor around the concentration camps wall until the area of the former SS camp. This area is outside the walls of the concentration camp, thereby exposing the visitor to some historical data contrasting popular sentiments.

Major parts of the concentration camp, such as the sick camp and the quarry, were outside the camp's walls. These parts of the camp were not hidden from the town's people and villagers living next to concentration

camp. Many thousands of people were murdered in these places, which today are serene meadows. The quarry, place of torture and murder of thousands, was used by the neighbors as picnic and bathing grounds *right after* the war.

Popular notions in Austrian public place the atrocities behind the walls, exterritorial to the eye as well as the mind. Reality was different, and the camp was built in the midst of civilian society and intended to be part of it, with the houses of the town Mauthausen a few hundred meters away.

The fact that the memorial's architecture excluded these parts of the concentration camp supports this popular suppression, perpetuating the post war narrative claiming "we didn't see and we didn't know".

For decades the tour of the site began at the gate of the in the camp's wall, thereby leaving out the sick camp and the quarry, and with it the visibility of mass murder perpetrated in the midst of villages and below the windows of neighboring houses.

The new pedagogical concept has changed that, and today half of the site's two hours tour takes place outside the camp's walls, exposing the visitor to the immense integration of the concentration camp into society.

- b. **The Perpetrators.** The second part of the tour is the area of the former SS camp, still outside the camp's wall. Most buildings of the SS camp were dismantled after the war, and today national monuments representing different nations are standing in its place. One building, the concentration camp's headquarters, was not dismantled and is used by the memorial's administration. With the dismantling of the SS camp, crucial physical evidence of the concentration camp's reality vanished, such as the civil registry office, a riding stable, and a movie theater. The opening of the memorial site after war met with local criticism, and articles in Austrian newspapers claimed the memorial has no place on Austrian soil. The formal Austrian claim was that Nazism was a German phenomenon, and Austria was its victim and cannot be held responsible for the perpetration of its policies. The fact that Austrian society was no less integrated into the

Nazi Reich than German society and no less supportive of its policies was intensely suppressed.

Buildings such as Civic Registry Office exemplify some of this integration. In a filmed interview with three elderly women from the town of Mauthausen one of them describes her wedding to an SS man with glistening eyes, reminiscing about the lovely wedding party and the wonderful music band, all taking place in the SS camp, some 30 meters distance from the concentration camp's wall gate. She talks of the many adorable, good looking SS men, exposing the normalcy of relations of her time, totally unimaginable to her grandchildren's generation. The SS officers were living with their families next to the camp. Their children went to the local school, and they participated in the local cultural activities. The SS had a soccer team competing in the local league, with people coming to watch the games at the soccer field vis-à-vis the sick camp. All this was utterly natural since they were situated in the heart of the Reich, and not in a foreign or potentially alienated environment. The common image of the SS, exposed through expressions of Austrian school children visiting the memorial today, are of people everyone feared. This expression serves as a cornerstone of the Austrian victim's myth, construing the SS as so brutal and scary that no person in his right mind would oppose them. The SS is not depicted as an admired elite unit every young man dreams of joining, nor its men as being one's loveable grandfather.

- c. **The victims.** The third part of the tour takes the visitor through the gate of the concentration camp's wall, into the former "Protective Custody Camps" (in German Schutzhaftlager). This area comprises what is today recognized by visitors as *the* concentration camps. It contains the barracks, an array of service buildings such as showers and laundry, and an execution area. In Mauthausen several execution methods were used, one of which was gassing, and thus this area houses a gas chamber. As the memorial was established most of the barracks were still standing. All but

three standing along the roll call area ("Appelplatz") were dismantled. With the four buildings (Laundry, with the prisoners' showers in the cellar; Kitchen; Jail and Infirmary, with the execution and crematoriums in the shared cellar) vis-à-vis, on the other side of the roll call area, they created the perception of the Mauthausen Concentration Camp. Accordingly, the contents of the tours in the past focused on the victims, aiming to create identification with their suffering. The tendency was to provide vivid descriptions of the brutality, shocking the visitor, e.g. through standing in the gas chamber and describing to 14 year olds the bodily reaction to Cyclone B.

The identification with the victims, and the sympathy and solidarity with human suffering is morally sensible and necessary. In Mauthausen it often tended, and too often still does, to create the false assumption that one can imagine the horror of the concentration camp, thereby creating superficial simplifications. Additionally, it tends to place the visitor automatically with the victims, thereby creating a community of Nazi victims. Seen in the context of the general suppression of responsibility for collaboration with the atrocities or respectively their perpetration – not only in Austria but in Europe quite generally - generating such a chimera is problematic. In the specific Austrian context, it underlines the myth of Austria being a nation of victims of the Nazis.

In developing our educational work, the treatment of this part of the tour causes us the most difficulty. Still, the current tours take a few steps in trying to avoid the problems described, through seeking precision about where and how should sober descriptions be used, and where and how should identification be engendered. Some examples of this follow below.

The introduction by the guide upon arriving at each station has to create a context in order to allow the visitor to understand the historical conditions at the specific station visited. The challenge here is giving *only* the relevant, clearly structured and well formulated information, and avoiding long speeches. It is easy to forget, that the visitor did not come in order to hear us, but rather to see the memorial. We

need to help the visitors decipher what they are seeing, but avoid becoming the focus. This becomes especially challenging when we consider that many, not to say most visitors come ill prepared. The wish to widen the visitors' scope, to offer more background, is not easy to resist, and we easily find ourselves standing fifteen minutes and telling an awfully interesting story, with all eyes focused on us, but having said nothing about the very specific place we are standing at and forced to skip a station or two in order to allow the group to get back on time to their bus. Still, the visitors do not come void of all knowledge. They have heard of the Nazis, about the SS, and they know they did awful things to others – most visitors think immediately of Jews as victims – in concentration camps. Based on this, and acknowledging that we cannot tell the visitors the whole story during a two-hour visit to a memorial site, offering concisely packed pieces of information goes a long way.

- 2. Materials (Texts, photographs etc.).** After introducing a concise context, the next step is to observe the specific area at which we stand or offer source material. Historical source material plays an important role in narrating history. In order to help the visitor understand the historical reality source materials, texts or photographs are used throughout the guided tour. The texts are personal accounts, describing a scene or a situation in or around the concentration camp which the author witnessed. In so doing the author opens a small window into the past, a snapshot, enabling us to view the memorial's grounds with different eyes. A similar role is played by, e.g., an aerial photo taken by ally planes in March 1945. The use of source material can fulfill several roles, assuming that the texts are carefully chosen (which is not to be taken for granted). It allows for historical accuracy and the authority of a historical source. It also enables a conciseness, which is difficult to achieve in a freely spoken presentation. Since the average time visitors spend at a memorial site allows for a guided tour of approximately two hours, in which enormous grounds and highly complex themes need to be covered, conciseness is a very important category. Additionally the source used needs to have the potential for awakening interest, i.e. present interesting contents and be comprehensible.

But the use of material is aimed to achieve more than this. An important methodological challenge here is to find texts that contain some of the moral issues the site's tour is contending with. The following text can serve as an example for this. It can be used to depict the routine exposure of society to violence, torture and murder:

Mrs. Gusenbauer, a farmer living at Marbach number 7, community of Ried in the Riedmark, filed the following complaint:

"In the Mauthausen Concentration Camp, at the Wienergraben, prisoners are constantly being shot. Those of them who are not hit accurately lie there next to the dead for hours, sometimes even half a day long. My property is situated on a hill next to the Wienergraben, and one thus becomes an unwilling witness to such atrocities. I am not well as it is, and such sights take such a toll on my nerves that I will not be able to endure this for long. I ask that an instruction be commissioned to cease such inhuman acts, respectively be done elsewhere where one does not see it."

Source: a letter from the police station in Mauthausen to the local government in Perg concerning the complaint of Mrs. Eleonore Gusenbauer pertaining to inhuman treatment of concentration inmates, 27th of September 1941.

Mrs. Gusenbauer's complaint offers a snapshot of the concentration camp's integration into the Reich's society. It thus sets the stage for understanding historical reality, as well as for challenging mainstream assumptions relating to attitudes and collaboration.

After introducing the sources, the next stage would be to develop a discussion within the group on the meaning of these historical facts for us, the individuals standing today at this site. Standing with a group at one of the guided tour's stations, e.g. on the edge of the quarry walls, is intended to unfold a compact workshop of some ten minutes. The use of source materials, the narrating of a

context, the observation of the site and the posing of questions are the structural elements of such a workshop.

In order to optimize participation the format of the sources must be well thought through and well prepared. The size of the paper (A4 respectively A5), lamination, and distribution among the participants is an important factor in enabling a discussion. Participants need to be able to take a good look into the sources, especially when these sources challenge them. Viewing photographs also demands more than just swift glimpse in order to take them in. Distributing the right amount of copies to enable individual work, but also small group discussions (we tend towards three to a group) plays an important role in participants' involvement.

Having the historical source in one's hands reduces the participants' dependence on the guide as a source of knowledge and understanding. Historical material can be and should be interpreted. Visitors' unmediated ownership of a historical source puts him/her in a better position to think independently and negotiate its interpretation and meaning. Thus having it at ones disposal supports individual contending and interpretation of source material and through it interpreting history (and thus responsibility and empowerment of the individual participating).

- 3. Observations.** Standing on the former camp's grounds, with the Wienergraben - where the camp's quarry was located, and prisoners murdered daily - in sight just below, and Eleonore Gusenbauer's house in sight above it, just as the source describes, the visitor is offered a snapshot into a historical reality of the camp and its environment. The combination of the material and the observation of grounds, coupled with context which ties the pieces together, allow the visitors to get a sense of the historical situation.

Observing our work at Mauthausen, we easily forget that the visitor is here for the first and in most cases for the last time. After having gone through something several times we tend to forget how it felt *not* having gone through it, and thus we often neglect giving visitors enough time to see what is around them, and helping them to see that which is not obvious at first sight, because to us it is obvious. The same goes for the use of source materials; visitors also need time to take them in,

to see the details of a photograph or read a sentence a second and third time in order to understand it better.

Similarly to the use of materials the observation moves the focus away from the guide as the sole source of information. It allows the visitor more direct access to the matter at hand, and enlarges both the number and nature of the sources from which the visitors derive their information. In this it applies some of the basic ideas of interdisciplinary education, allowing for information to be communicated in more ways than just the voice of the guide. Observing the grounds and their surrounding environment, reading texts of different styles and genres, looking at photographs of people or topography all enlarge the options of communication of information and ideas with the visitors beyond the transmission through the guide's voice.

The soccer field and sick camp - situated right next to each other - of the concentration camp can serve as examples for the importance of observation. Although the memorial opened its gates to visitors in 1949, it was not until a couple of years ago that these parts were integrated into the site's tour. Millions of visitors were simply not offered the possibility, and were thus not made aware of the place where many thousands of prisoners died while others were enjoying themselves playing or watching the game.

Today the soccer field and sick camp are a beautiful meadow. Without one's sight directed to it, and being shown photographs showing the soccer field and the barracks of the sick camp, these parts of the concentration camp's reality would be neglected. The visitors, positioned during the guided tour just above the meadow and looking at the aerial photographs, can grasp the vicinity of fun and death.

They can see that people watching the game could not but see the sick camp right in front of them. With the addition of a newspaper article from 1944, describing a match of the local league at the concentration camp, the historical image receives additional depth and focus.

- 4. Questions.** The image just created is troubling. It is not so easy to grasp, especially not for people stemming from the society depicted in this image. Beyond the difficulty of imagining our own families being part of this, it opposes

the mainstream narratives of the surrounding society. In these narratives the perpetration of atrocious acts took place behind walls, away from society's sight and by men not akin to us.

Offering the visitor this troubling information, which questions and undermines mainstream narratives and assumptions, allows the guide to assess the implications and their meanings *with the visitors*. In order to do this, the guide needs to invite the visitors to ponder this through posing a question. Our experience shows, that posing a good question is one of the most difficult tasks. Questions on meaning and interpretation are hard to formulate. We tend to use questions involving data, or closed questions we already have an answer to, or suggestive questions leading the participants to our preconceived set of ideas. But as I mentioned above, although research accumulated a lot of historical information, we are still at loss trying to understand much of its implications. The scene of a football match vis-à-vis the sick camp allows us open some of these issues up for discussion in a public, popular setting of a memorial site. In the search for defining what a good question might be, we came up with some ideas.

- A question that has more than one possible answer.
- A question that evokes interpretation and analysis.
- A question which I sincerely have, and am not posing for the sake of conversation.

The space between the data, i.e. the information the visitors were exposed to, and the question, i.e. the introduction of discussion, can be filled with questions evoking the visitors' imagination. This is often necessary simply because of the emotional and intellectual challenge such a setting creates for the visitor. An example would be a question relating to the football matches in Mauthausen: "let's try to imagine what contemporaries' watching the game were seeing when they looked beyond the football field and saw the emaciated prisoners behind the barbed wire of the sick camp?"

The imaginative process evokes historical knowledge, moral judgment and interpretation. Since there is more than one possible answer to the question, it would ideally engender a discussion among the visitors. Another question might

be "how did people become blind to the suffering of others, that they were able to enjoy themselves while seeing such suffering?"

It is with this question, which moves from the circumstances of widespread knowledge of the atrocities within society, to the psycho-social analysis of these circumstances, that I wish to conclude this text on the development of the educational concept of the Mauthausen Memorial.