

# The concentration camp as a site of 'dark tourism'

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In the years following the end of World War II there was already some demand among the survivors, the relatives of victims, and the interested public to visit the sites of the atrocities committed in concentration, forced labour and extermination camps<sup>1</sup>. Some of these camps were made open to the public just a few years after their liberation. Auschwitz was opened as a site of remembrance as early as 1947, although this raised considerable controversy with calls to destroy the site completely being made in 1948<sup>2</sup>. Other sites only became publically accessible decades later as they were put to other uses. For example Dachau was used to imprison members of the SS leading up to the Dachau trials and then became a 'displaced persons' camp run by the Bavarian government until it was opened as a memorial site in 1965. Sachsenhausen was used as a 'NKVD special camp' by the Soviet Union until 1950. From 1961 they opened a small portion of the site as a memorial, focusing on 'resistance to Fascism' until the end of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) in 1990. It opened again to the public in its present form in 1993. Other camps were completely destroyed by the Nazis, and the site later marked with a simple memorial (e.g. Treblinka).

But for those camps that remained, there has always been an element of curiosity and tourism with reports from as early as the 1950s noting those who come to take photographs of the chimneys at Auschwitz, for example<sup>3</sup>. With time this voyeuristic demand to witness the actual sites of the Holocaust has grown exponentially. This mirrors the public's mediated fascination with the Holocaust - from the explosion of public awareness following on from the televising of the Eichmann trial in 1961, to the impact of Steven Spielberg's Hollywood film *Schindler's List* in 1995 and the

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(1) For simplicity I will be using the more general term 'concentration camp' here to discuss all types of former Nazi camps. I recognise that this is, however, a misleading term given the variety of camps, and their different (and changing) functions within the wider camp system during this period of time.

(2) Tim Benton, 'Heritage and changes of regime', in Tim Benton (ed.) *Understanding Heritage and Memory*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2010, p. 126-163.

(3) The 1955 French documentary *Night and Fog [Nuit et Brouillard]* by director Alain Resnais describes this public interest at Auschwitz.

subsequent 'Schindler tourism' to Poland. This fascination with the Holocaust in the public consciousness continues to grow, perhaps as more recent atrocities bring the relevance of the Holocaust into sharper and sharper focus.

Opinions have been mixed about the morality and ethics of public access to these sites over the years. Whilst there has been the recognition that some sites need to be retained to memorialise the millions of dead under the Nazi regime, the decision about *where*, *how*, and *who* to remember has raised numerous contentions. Nevertheless, these former camps have become important sites for the purposes of memorialisation and historical instruction. Memorialisation both in terms of personal remembrance for ancestors of those who were interred and/or lost their lives in these places, and more widely in terms of national remembrance for the victims of National Socialism as a whole. Remembering the past, including the darker parts of our history, forms an important part of our collective memory, and, especially in those countries most affected by the Holocaust, for national identity. Little research has explored people's motivations for visiting sites of former concentration camps, but statistics reveal the increased interest in Holocaust memorial sites and museums generally. In 2012 over 1.4 million people visited Auschwitz memorial site<sup>4</sup>, whilst Dachau (as the most visited concentration camp site in Germany) estimates around 800 000 visitors a year<sup>5</sup>. Whilst a large proportion of these visitors are likely to be schoolchildren there on educational visits, and some may well be survivors and their relatives, or those remembering the fate of specific victims, the vast majority of visitors will have no personal connection to the events that happened there. Whilst this in itself should not be seen as problematic, some critics argue that increased accessibility to Holocaust sites changes the site itself as it caters for the demands of the tourist industry<sup>6</sup>. There has also been an increased interest in the rise of 'dark tourism' in recent years.

In my current research I have been exploring the applicability of the concept of 'dark tourism' to visitors to sites of former concentration camps, sometimes termed 'Holocaust tourism'<sup>7</sup>. As so little is known about visitor motivations, perceptions and experiences, I am particularly interested in exploring the multifaceted nature of visitor motivations, expectations, and outcomes of visiting a variety of former concentration camps and Holocaust memorial sites. My fieldwork so far has focused on Germany and Austria, within the context of memorialisation of 'difficult heritage', and shifting social, political and historical narratives of the Holocaust. The points raised within

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[4] Auschwitz Memorial and Museum website [www.auschwitz.org](http://www.auschwitz.org)

[5] Figure taken from a meeting with Dachau Memorial's Education Department, May 28 the 2013. This represents a significant increase on official survey figures of 618 000 in 2007. IQ-Projektgesellschaft und Universität Regensburg, *Empirische Analyse der Besucher der KZ- Gedenkstätte Dachau*, Regensburg, University of Regensburg, 2007.

[6] For notable examples see Harold Marcuse 'Reshaping Dachau for visitors: 1933-2000', in G. Ashworth, R. Hartmann (Eds.), *Horror and Human Tragedy Revisited: The management of sites of atrocities for tourism*, New York, Cognizant Communication Corporation, 2005. Also Tim Cole, *Selling the Holocaust: From Auschwitz to Schindler: How History is Bought, Packaged and Sold*, New York, Routledge, 2000.

[7] John Beech, 'Genocide tourism', in Richard Sharpley, Philip R. Stone (eds.), *The Darker Side of Travel: The Theory and Practice of Dark Tourism*, Bristol, Channel View Publications, 2009, p. 207-223.

this article are, however, equally applicable to the sites of former extermination camps in Poland. In fact most of the literature to date exploring 'Holocaust tourism', and the reconstruction and representation of former camps for public consumption, has focused on Auschwitz I and II<sup>8</sup>.

### **DARK TOURISM AND HOLOCAUST TOURISM**

The term 'dark tourism' was introduced in 2000 by John Lennon and Malcolm Foley<sup>9</sup> and described the growing interest of the tourist in visiting sites of recent death and disaster. An abundance of terms have been used to describe these more 'alternative' or 'niche' markets of tourism<sup>10</sup> that have increased in popularity over the past couple of decades. Nevertheless it is the term 'dark tourism' that has captured the public's imagination and attention, and has therefore filtered down from academic use to public consciousness. Philip Stone defines 'dark tourism' as "the act of travel to sites associated with death, suffering and the seemingly macabre" (p. 146)<sup>11</sup>. Literature in the area has focused on a number of forms of dark tourism from visits to battlefields, assassination sites, disaster sites, sites of former prisons and asylums, and sites of genocide. Stone<sup>12</sup> created a typology of dark tourism capturing the range of sites falling within this term, and also the spectrum from more entertainment-focused sites to those with more serious and educative purposes. According to this spectrum, 'dark camps of genocide'<sup>13</sup> represent both the most 'authentic' and the 'darkest' form of dark tourism<sup>14</sup>.

Broad definitions of dark tourism, such as those by Stone, do not tend to factor in the motivation of the visitor so that all visitors to these sites are 'dark tourists'. Whilst it is clearly the case that some people will purposefully seek out sites of death and suffering for their travels, for many who visit these sites the motivations may be more multifaceted and less tourist-driven. This is reflected in Lennon and Foley's more restricted use of the term whereby 'dark tourists' are only seen as those whose motivations are superficial - "It is those who visit due to serendipity, the itinerary of tourism companies or the merely curious who happen to be in the vicinity who are,

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[8] For example John Lennon, Malcolm Foley, *Dark Tourism: The Attraction of Death and Disaster*, Andover, Cengage Learning, 2000 ; Tim Cole, *Selling the Holocaust: From Auschwitz to Schindler: How History is Bought, Packaged and Sold*, *Ibid*.

[9] *Op. cit.*

[10] For example 'thanatourism' and 'black spot tourism' along with wider concepts such as 'roots tourism', 'heritage tourism' and 'memory tourism'.

[11] Philip R. Stone, 'A dark tourism spectrum: Towards a typology of death and macabre related tourist sites, attractions and exhibitions', *Tourism*, vol. 54, 2006/2, p. 145-160.

[12] *Op. cit.*

[13] *Op.cit.*, p. 151.

[14] These sites are authentic in that they are the actual place of mass death, so are therefore *in situ* unlike museums and exhibitions that are located away from the site itself. They are 'darkest' because they will tend to be very educationally orientated. Although, you could argue that the scale and nature of the atrocities committed there would also make this a particularly 'dark' site.

for us, the basis of dark tourism" (p. 23) - and does not include friends and relatives of victims, for example. The term 'dark tourism', can therefore be problematic and there are a number of noted conceptual weaknesses. Furthermore, the motivations of so-called 'dark tourists' have not been sufficiently studied to-date. Research is particularly scarce on the experiences and motivations of visitors to sites of genocide, or more specifically 'Holocaust tourism', whereby the sensitivity of the subject matter generally precludes the use of visitor surveys at the sites themselves<sup>15</sup>.

Even using the term 'Holocaust tourism' can be seen as controversial and inappropriate as (like dark tourism more generally) it brings to mind superficial and recreational motivations – that visits are motivated by voyeurism, curiosity, and even enjoyment. A tourism industry does, however, clearly exist around these sites. Holocaust memorial sites, particularly those *in situ* at the site of former concentration camps, will tend to see their purpose more in terms of the role they have to play in education about, and remembrance of, the Holocaust. But due to the natural curiosity of tourists to visit such sites of historical importance, they do become part of the 'tourist trail', which has an inevitable impact on the memorial site and the nearby towns. For me this raises a number of ethical questions – should these sites be places for tourism? And how might they be compromised as historical and commemorative sites by the demands of tourism?

Tim Cole refers to the moral dilemma he felt when visiting Auschwitz: "We were tourists of guilt and righteousness: guilt at an almost pornographic sense of expectancy at the voyeurism ahead. And yet guilt tempered by a sense of righteousness at choosing to come to this place" (p. 98). He also felt that as a consequence of catering for the public consumption of the site there was the danger of losing it's sense of authenticity, referring to Auschwitz I as 'Auschwitz-land'. Both Keil<sup>16</sup> and Dalton<sup>17</sup> have similarly made comparisons between the very structured and reconstructed nature of Auschwitz I, and Auschwitz II (Birkenau) where the site has been allowed to decline and tourists are left to wander around the site and make their own interpretations. Obviously, this argument does not just apply to the Auschwitz memorial site. Reaching an optimum balance between preservation and reconstruction, and between promoting an accessible history without oversimplification, is difficult and contentious.

Remembering and memorialising is inherently difficult and political in many of the countries affected by the Holocaust<sup>18</sup>. For example, which sites become symbolic of the Holocaust in the public's mind, which victims we choose to remember, and how we choose to represent 'history'. Remembering is arguably most difficult in those countries that bear the burden of responsibility, where history may be most contested

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[15] John Beech, 'Genocide tourism', in Richard Sharpley, Philip R. Stone (eds.), *The Darker Side of Travel: The Theory and Practice of Dark Tourism*, *Ibid.*

[16] Chris Keil, 'Sightseeing in the mansions of the dead', *Social and Cultural Geography*, vol. 6, 2005/4, p. 479-494.

[17] Derek Dalton, 'Encountering Auschwitz?: A personal rumination on the possibilities and limitations of witnessing/remembering trauma in memorial space', *Law Text Culture*, vol. 13, 2009, p. 187-225.

[18] Tim Benton, 'Heritage and changes of regime', in Tim Benton (ed.) *Understanding Heritage and Memory*, *Ibid.*

or dissonant<sup>19</sup>. Or where initially the memories were too raw to be formally represented. Dachau concentration camp memorial site, like Auschwitz, has been criticised in terms of its (in)authenticity and presentation. It also attracts a large tourist market, and has had to change to accommodate this. Established in 1933 Dachau was the first Nazi concentration camp and became the ‘model camp’. This was both in terms of setting out how other camps would be operationalised, and in terms of presenting the public image of the camp as a clean and efficient correctional camp for criminals, political opponents, and other ‘enemies of the state’<sup>20</sup>. This clean image created for propaganda purposes was, however, far removed from what the camp was actually like for those interred there. It was an image that could not even be maintained for propaganda purposes as wartime conditions within the camp deteriorated even further. Estimates suggest that over 30 000 inmates died there before its liberation in April 1945, although many more will have been sent from there to other camps to die (such as the ‘invalid camp’ of Bergen-Belsen) or be killed (for example, within the gas chambers of Mauthausen in Austria).

Immediately after the war survivors campaigned to have Dachau opened as a site of memorialisation, and were allowed a modest exhibition focusing on the brutality of life in the camp. But local residents were reluctant to confront what had happened there, and the Bavarian government remained opposed and continued to use the site as an internment camp for German refugees returning from Eastern Europe. The camp structures were therefore either destroyed or altered for its new use. Early visitors to the site in the 1950s either commented on how the site had become nothing more than a ‘curiosity’ for visiting foreigners who show little respect for remembrance, or criticised how the German state had tried to ‘sanitise’ all signs of its Nazi past<sup>21</sup>. After intervention in 1960 by a group of Catholic priests who had been imprisoned there, religious memorials were built at the far end of the site, and finally a permanent exhibition was opened in 1965. Over the years the ‘narrative of the camp’ has changed, and a major new exhibition was opened in 2003, which remains to date. A consistent criticism of the site has been its ‘clean image’. Marcuse discusses the stages and changes that have occurred to the memorial site over the years, and how it seemed to have been “repeatedly sanitized of authentic historical substance” (p. 118)<sup>22</sup> presenting at times a somewhat sterile image. Nevertheless, as Auschwitz has come to symbolise the Holocaust ‘death camps’, Dachau has become the symbol of the Holocaust for Western visitors<sup>23</sup>. This may be surprising given that

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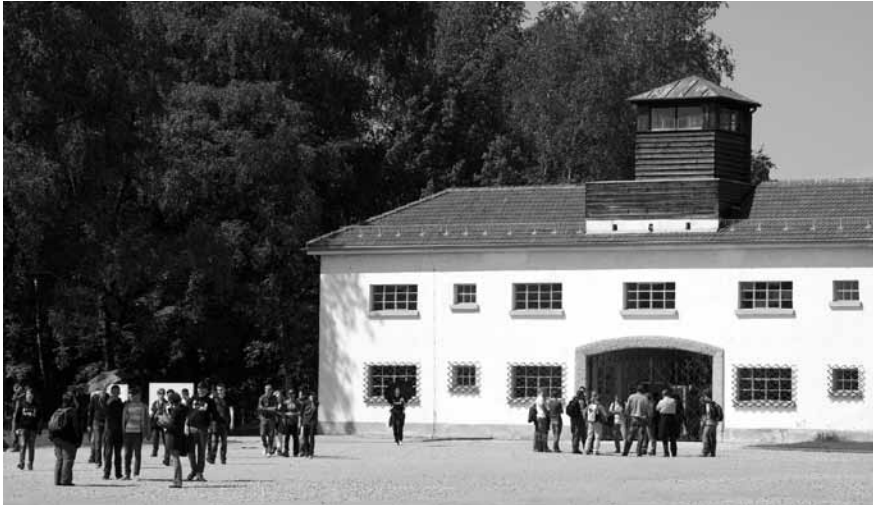
[19] See Bill Niven, Chloe Paver (eds.) *Memorialisation in Germany since 1945*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

[20] See Harold Marcuse, *Legacies of Dachau: The Uses and Abuses of a Concentration Camp, 1933-2001*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008.

[21] Harold Marcuse ‘Reshaping Dachau for visitors: 1933-2000’, in Greg Ashworth, Rudi Hartmann (eds.), *Horror and Human Tragedy Revisited: The Management of Sites of Atrocities for Tourism*, *Ibid.*

[22] *Op. cit.*

[23] James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, London, Yale University Press, 1993.



Tourists gather outside the gatehouse to Dachau memorial site.  
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Dachau was not one of the deadliest camps - other camps within Germany and Nazi-occupied Austria witnessed much higher death tolls. There are, however, a number of factors to explain Dachau's fame in the West. This includes the media focus on its liberation, its subsequent role in the Dachau trials of SS war criminals, its success and popularity as a memorial site, as well as its location close to Munich (a prime tourist 'hub' in its own right).

Over the past couple of decades Dachau memorial site have made concerted efforts to dispel its 'clean' and historically sanitised image, and to acknowledge the initial reluctance to remember and preserve the camp in the late 1940s and 1950s. I was fortunate to discuss the role of the camp as a memorial and educational site, and as a growing tourist attraction, with their Education Department on my recent fieldwork visit to the camp. Like most former camps they do not hold specific data regarding the motivations of their visitors, but estimated that they have seen a rise of approximately 620 000 visitors in 2007 to 800 000 visitors a year. Although exact figures are hard to obtain as there are no admission fees and no way to monitor those who choose to visit the site but not use the visitor centre, guided tours or audio-guides. Furthermore whether these visitors constitute 'dark tourists' is much more difficult to ascertain.

## **REMEMBRANCE, EDUCATION AND TOURISM**

All the sites that I have been working with, Dachau included, tend to agree that visitors tend to fall into three broad (and overlapping) groups. There are those who visit for remembrance – the friends, relatives and ancestors of victims. For them their

experiences and motivations have been compared to a ‘modern day pilgrimage’<sup>24</sup>. This can also be more widely applied to those who less personally, but collectively, relate to a specific group of victims – be that a national connection, or a religious one<sup>25</sup>. You can also include in this group the survivors themselves who come to confront their own time there, reflect on and often share their experiences. At Dachau for example they work closely with survivors and families of victims, and organise special events where survivors take part in seminars on the site, or go into schools. They do feel, however, that survivors and victims families only represent a very small proportion of the total visitors to the site. This is also reflected in Marcuse<sup>26</sup> who argues that as time passes, the proportion of visitors with a personal connection to the Holocaust diminishes.

The second group of visitors are those who visit as part of an educative trip, such as schoolchildren on an organised school visit. This undoubtedly forms a large percentage of visitors to former concentration camps. The camp memorial sites see historical instruction as a key part of their mandate - in order to learn from atrocity we must educate future generations about these darker parts of history. Taking Dachau as an example, it is a compulsory part of the national curriculum in Germany to visit the site of a former concentration camp. As Dachau has become a key symbol of World War II in Germany it is the most commonly visited camp by German schools (and of course they also receive visits from schools all over Europe). In their 2007 survey 32 % of visitors to the site were groups of children on organised school visits<sup>27</sup>. Educational visits may also include adults who visit on educational trips such as those organised through historical societies, for example. Many that we assume to be casual visitors or ‘dark tourists’ may also be motivated by an interest in history and a desire to learn. There is likely to be considerable overlap between groups who visit for remembrance, education and tourism.

The final group of visitors are the more casual tourists to the site who will generally have no personal connection to the Holocaust or the camp itself. They may be those who are visiting a specific camp as part of a wider tour of related sites associated with World War II, National Socialism or the Holocaust. Some organised group tours specialise in such trips, many focusing on ‘themed’ tours of Europe for American

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[24] Chris Keil, *Sightseeing in the mansions of the dead*, *Ibid*. The visit to a concentration camp as ‘pilgrimage’ has, however, been criticised in Chris Keil and other literature. Although some people may expect some form of ‘spiritual epiphany’ or deeper understanding of human nature, it could be seen as another way we seek to gain positive meanings from atrocities or seek a redemptive narrative from the Holocaust.

[25] See James E. Young and his discussion of Jewish tours to sites in Poland, J. Young, *Holocaust memorials in history*, New York, Prestel-Verlag, 1994. Dachau, whilst not an extermination camp, and primarily set up for political prisoners rather than Jewish deportees, is likely to also receive similar visits as greater numbers of Jews ended up here towards the end of the war. It is also likely to include more ‘national’ pilgrimage as many nationalities were interred at Dachau as political prisoners.

[26] Harold Marcuse ‘Reshaping Dachau for visitors: 1933-2000’, in Greg Ashworth, Rudi Hartmann (eds.), *Horror and Human Tragedy Revisited: The Management of Sites of Atrocities for Tourism*, *Ibid*.

[27] Dachau memorial site has recently conducted another survey of visitor numbers and types of visitors, the results of which will be available by the end of 2013.

tourists. They may be sightseers on holiday in the vicinity who feel interested, or even obligated, to visit the former camp as another stop on their itinerary<sup>28</sup>. These would fit into the broad definition of the 'dark tourist', although again we know little about specific motivations. This constitutes the largest proportion of visitors to Dachau. The Education Department consider that the majority of visitors are sightseers to Munich who visit because of the proximity of the site and the ease of getting there. Dachau is advertised by the Tourist Board in Munich, and the site is highly accessible to individual visitors via a short train ride from Munich and a bus that runs directly to the camp from outside Dachau train station. In this way this more 'niche' tourism is increasingly mainstreamed.

Regardless of 'dark' motivation there is clearly a tourist market in sites such as Dachau, and the site has been modified to accommodate increased visitor numbers and tourist interest. For example, a new modern visitor centre was opened in 2009 with a large cafeteria and bookshop. Organised tour groups are available from Munich or on site, with all tour guides being approved and regulated by the site. Marcuse<sup>29</sup> discusses how the site exhibitions have also evolved to cater for the more naïve tourist as well as those more personally invested in visits of remembrance. But there is always a danger that by making a site more accessible to tourists the message of the history of the camp becomes diluted or simplified, or the authenticity is compromised by the need to reconstruct camp structures, or modernise other parts of the site to create a tourist-friendly image.

There are other negative implications of increased visitor numbers, and trying to meet the demands of differently motivated visitors. Beech<sup>30</sup> discusses the dissonant narratives that may emerge from trying to balance the need to meet the expectations of those with more personal emotional motivations, with those who visit out of a desire to learn, or even out of curiosity. Accessible sites may also attract attention from right wing groups and there have been numerous incidents of anti-Semitic graffiti, arson attacks, or thefts from the sites. For example, in Sachsenhausen, in late 1992 (not long after a visit by the Israeli Prime Minister) there was an arson attack by right-wing extremists destroying two former Jewish barracks. In Dachau, in September 2001, the model barracks were sprayed with anti-Semitic, anti-Israeli and anti-American slogans. In Mauthausen, in February 2009, the outer walls were covered with racist, anti-Semitic and anti-Turkish graffiti.

There is also the risk that large groups of tourists at any one point in time may hinder the opportunity to reflect and memorialise. On my visit to Dachau in May

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[28] See for example Chris Keil, 'Sightseeing in the mansions of the dead', on this, *Ibid*.

[29] Harold Marcuse 'Reshaping Dachau for visitors: 1933-2000', in Greg Ashworth, Rudi Hartmann (eds.), *Horror and Human Tragedy Revisited: The Management of Sites of Atrocities for Tourism*, *Ibid*.

[30] John Beech, 'The enigma of Holocaust sites as tourist attractions: The case of Buchenwald', *Managing Leisure*, vol. 5, 2000/1, p. 29-41.





Tourists wandering the grounds of Dachau.  
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2013 some of the buildings were overcrowded at times, and visitors queued to take pictures of specific 'landmarks' of the site such as the entrance gate, the gas chambers and the crematorium. Although the site discourages visits from children under the age of 14, there were lots of families with children of all ages there. Some families posed for group photographs at the site, or smiling couples had their pictures taken together outside the gatehouse or the barracks. Some visitors bring dogs onto the site, as a pleasant place to walk them. Personally I found this aspect of tourism deeply disrespectful – it affected my impression of the place as both a site of former atrocities and as a present-day site for commemoration. Many concentration camps are now in quite picturesque and pleasant surroundings, which conflicts with your knowledge of the terrible things that happened there, particularly when you visit in the height of summer and are surrounded by smiling family groups. This juxtaposition of the bleak history of the site, and the site today as a place of tourism, is disconcertedly incongruent.

The *ethos* of the memorial site at Dachau is that it should be a place for anyone to visit, with little regulation or rules imposed. Whilst I found the family photos and queues to take pictures distasteful, you could argue that it is natural human curiosity to be interested in that which should appal us<sup>31</sup>. This aspect, along with the pristine nature of the site itself, did limit the emotional impact that the site made on me.

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[31] Obviously this voyeurism into the darker aspects of life and death is by no means a new phenomenon. Consider, for example, the 19<sup>th</sup> century trade in visits to lunatic asylums, the popularity of public executions, and entertainment provided by Roman gladiatorial games.

Striking a balance to meet the needs and expectations of differently motivated visitors is inevitably difficult to achieve. The Education Department at the Dachau memorial site commented that some people may want a more emotional experience, but it is not their role to impose this on them. I found the balance of the exhibition worked well in that the main content of the audio-guide related the full history and context of the camp, but did so quite factually. For those interested in a more emotional experience, the main content could be supplemented with extra audio-guide material more focused on survivor testimony and case studies. This allows the visitor to decide how emotional their experience is, and you can dip into and out of the material at your discretion.

Although they impose no restrictions on who visits and why, they do monitor and limit the number of organised tour groups at any one point in time. No more than 15 groups are allowed per day, with only three groups commencing at the same time, with no more than 30 people per group. Although many visitors will enter the site individually and not as part of a group, the size of the site means that it is not generally crowded as you wander around. Although some parts of the site do receive particular attention – notably the structure containing the gas chamber, corpse rooms and crematorium.

What is apparent is that as time passes, and the Nazi regime becomes less and less recent history, the nature of tourism to associated sites evolves. Almost 70 years after the liberation of the camps, few survivors will soon remain. Although commemoration continues to be important, even this becomes less about specific victims, and visitors with a personal family connection will ultimately decline. Those that administer and manage former concentration camps have to accept their role as tourist attractions<sup>32</sup>. Holocaust memorial sites therefore have to carefully consider who visits and why, and what they expect to get from their experience. Whilst these sites are of continuing importance as a forum for education and remembrance, the sites themselves must also evolve as 'niche' tourism experiences become more mainstreamed, and as ease of access and greater public awareness of the sites increases. Dachau recognises these different, sometimes, dissonant visitor needs. They try to balance the needs that the site should be a place to remember, a place where you can learn, but also a place that is transparent and open to everyone. The site itself cannot dictate who goes or to question why they visit.

The terms 'dark tourism' and 'Holocaust tourist' can be problematic here – it seems to infer shallow or even sinister motivations among those who do not have a personal connection to the site. Even if the visitor is primarily a sightseer in the vicinity and are motivated by curiosity, motivations are likely to be complex and overlapping. Even the 'dark tourist' is also still likely to want to learn more about the history, context and significance of the site. My current fieldwork has focused

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[32] Teresa Leopold, Brent Ritchie, 'Former Nazi concentration camps in Germany: Memorials or tourist attractions?', in Brent Ritchie, *Managing Educational Tourism*, Toronto, Channel View Publications, 2003, p. 78-82.

on sites in Germany and Austria, and involves analysing the sites in terms of their dominant social, political and historical narratives, and observing their roles in terms of memorialisation, education and tourism. I am also conducting an online survey of visitors' experiences of Holocaust memorial sites<sup>33</sup>. Research into visitor motivations, expectations and experiences has been somewhat neglected. This may in part be due to the inherent sensitivities involved in discussing the interface between the Holocaust and tourism, and in part because of the difficulties in surveying visitors to sites. Visiting former concentration camps is a very personal and individualised experience. Consequently it is not generally ethically appropriate to approach visitors at the site, as it is difficult to ascertain what personal and emotional connection they may have to the events that happened there. Even for those with no personal connection, the events of World War II and the Holocaust resonate with all of us, and confronting this darker aspect of human nature can be a deeply upsetting and emotional experience. This makes research in the area challenging and subject to complex sensitivities.

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(33) The online survey can be found at [www.le.ac.uk/extremes-human-cruelty/online-survey](http://www.le.ac.uk/extremes-human-cruelty/online-survey)