

Inclusive commemoration

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Hartheim Castle is a memorial site and also an exhibition, which has approx. 18.000 visitors every year. The castle used to be a living facility for around 200 people with disabilities before 1940. In 1940, the facility was closed by the Nazis and remodeled as a “euthanasia centre”. By the end of 1944, around 30,000 people were murdered in its gas chambers. Most of the victims -- some of which had been former inmates of the facility - were people who either had disabilities or psychiatric diagnoses, considered by the Nazi doctors as “unworthy to live” (Kepplinger et al., 2008).

Museums and sites of national cultural importance in general are places for learning, and, as such, need to consider how to create an inclusive environment. They must integrate accessibility at all levels of operation (Art beyond sight, 2014). However, there is little research or published literature that explores the perspective of people with disabilities (Shepherd, 2009).

The presented research/teaching study was conducted with the help of students in a participatory and emancipatory manner. Persons with disabilities were involved in all stages of research. The research aimed to explore people's impressions about performance and representation of content and services at the memorial site and exhibition in Hartheim Castle. People with intellectual disabilities as well as people with hearing impairment or hearing loss were interviewed face to face and in focus group discussion settings. Data analysis provided insights about what the two selected groups think about visiting this historical place, their views, experiences as well as needs and wishes. This research project was part of a comprehensive strategy to make the content of memorial site Hartheim castle accessible to all interested people.

Art beyond Sight 2014, <http://www.artbeyondsight.org/dic/module-6-museum-access-inclusive-practices-by-museum-teams/museum-access-inclusive-practices-by-museum-teams/>, dl 1/31/2018)

Shepherd, H. (2009), Focus on Practice. Inclusion and museums: developing inclusive practice. *British Journal of Special Education*, 36: 140–146. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8578.2009.00437.x

Kepplinger, Brigitte – Marckhgott, Gerhart – Reese, Hartmut (eds.) (2008): *Tötungsanstalt Hartheim*. Linz