

Dialogue in the Dark

**What are its consequences
and how can they be proved?**

An Evaluation of the Exhibition Dialogue in the Dark, Hamburg

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I. Presentation of the Exhibition

Dialogue in the Dark

Dialogue in the Dark is an exhibition presenting itself as a road through darkness. Surrounded by complete darkness, blind guides are leading the visitors through a parcours of scenarios (a forest, a city, a market, a harbour, a bar, etc.). During this journey the visitors are forced to take a break from the visual world and try out a completely new way of experiencing themselves, in their social surroundings as well as in their physical world. No longer able to rely on visual input, they come to rely on the blind person who now becomes the perception expert. This experience, which is at first unsettling for the visitor, results in a new role distribution. The aim is to foster more openness and tolerance for all disabled people, especially the blind.

The exhibition Dialogue in the Dark was conceived 18 years ago. It has been shown worldwide in more than 130 cities and 18 different countries, always with great success. Five years ago a sort of "permanent branch" was formed in the buildings of the Port of Hamburg. At the moment, there are 25 employees working here full time, plus another 50 under a job creation scheme supported by the German Ministry of Labour. 80% of all employees are disabled.

Dialogue in the Dark, Hamburg, is open daily from Tuesday to Sunday (9 a.m.–5 p.m. Tues.–Fri. and 11 a.m.–7 p.m. at weekends). A maximum of 32 visitors can "see" the exhibition in every hour (8 persons every 15 minutes). Visits have to be booked in advance. There are two tours to choose from: one lasting one hour, and one lasting ninety minutes.

The visitors can largely be categorised as follows:

- Schoolchildren
- Single visitors and families
- Companies and their members

The programmes offered in conjunction with the exhibition are

- Workshops for primary school children and/or secondary school pupils
- Birthday parties
- Dinners in the Dark
- Evening events for companies

II. Questions / Hypotheses

The base of this exhibition is a dynamic view of man, i.e. as an individual able to change the scale of his values and judgements just as he can change the style of his relationships. Inspired by the philosopher Martin Buber, according to whom *“Encounter is the only possible way of learning”*, Dialogue in the Dark wants to be a platform for encounter which makes it possible for everybody to continue developing his views and judgements about the other person, the *different* person.

Do we achieve this goal, though? After five years, those responsible for Dialogue in the Dark (DID) are asking themselves what effects the exhibition has a) for the visitors, and b) for the blind guides:

- What sort of an experience is it *really* for the visitor?
- What percentage of visitors come a second time, and why?
- Does the exhibition really lead to a different attitude towards blind and/or disabled persons?
- Does DID make it easier for the blind guides to live with their disability?
- Does DID help the guides towards a better integration in society and in the workforce?

A number of hypotheses was put forward:

On the side of the visitors:

- DID is an experience touching each visitor individually by questioning his perception, his actions and his reactions.
- DID is an emotional experience which is remembered.
- DID is an experience changing our perception of blindness and disability in general.

For the guides, working in the exhibition has the following effects:

- The acquisition of new skills, a new realisation of their own potential
- A positive attitude towards their disability
- A new understanding of a sighted society
- An improvement in the so-called “soft skills” (ability to communicate, social skills, teamwork, self management)
- Belonging to a network (new, lasting contacts)
- New job possibilities

III. Study Protocol

The aim of the first phase of evaluation was an analysis of the effects which a visit of DID had for the visitors. This phase lasted from January to May 2005.

The study consisted of two parts:

1. **Analysis of 1000 comments, chosen at random from the last four guest books of the exhibition.**
2. **50 phone calls to visitors having been to the exhibition in 2000 (the 50 people were chosen at random from the booking lists, where visitors have to give a contact telephone number).**

At first, about 15 visitors were asked (general conversation, no special questions). The analysis of their comments led to a greater precision in the wording of our hypothesis. The most frequently mentioned elements in these 15 protocols formed the first base for the analysis of the 1000 comments and the 50 phone calls:

DID is an experience touching each visitor individually by questioning his perception, his actions and his reactions:

- Loss of orientation, the feeling of limitations
- A consciousness of the dominance of our visual sense
- A consciousness of our other senses
- A satisfaction at overcoming fear or having succeeded at it
- A certain feeling of excitement or even joy at being in the dark

DID is an emotional experience which is remembered:

- Remembering the name of the exhibition
- Remembering the contents of the exhibition
- Remembering who else came along to the exhibition
- Remembering the conversation with the blind guide
- The wish to talk about the experience and to share it with others

DID is an experience changing our perception of blindness and disability in general:

- More empathy with blind persons; an appreciation of the problems they have (feeling lost or lonely, needing precise information or help)
- More openness for the subject of blindness
- An awareness of our prejudice towards blindness and disability
- A greater readiness to support; solidarity in self-help
- A greater openness towards other kinds of disability.

IV. Results of Study 1:

When leaving the exhibition

The guest book carries information on paper, where visitors can voice their opinions, their impressions and/or criticisms ... In DID the guest book is lying out at the end of the parcours, behind the bar, in a semi dark room leading out into the light. Most comments consist of a few lines and a signature, but sometimes a comment just consists of one or two words, and sometimes there is a lot more. These spontaneous thoughts (nobody obliges them to write their impressions) are valuable, because their analysis is an exact mirror of their experience.

Where a visitor had mentioned several points, we allotted each comment to a subheading.

A positive emotional experience

The countless guest books slumbering in the archives of DID are irrefutable proof of the fact that visitors, after coming out of the exhibition, have a strong need to voice their feelings and thoughts. And more than 98% of all comments are positive.

If we had to compare our guest books with those of other exhibitions, then DID would without doubt come out tops, going by the number of visitors' comments as well as their quality.

The adjectives used to describe the exhibition are mostly superlatives: *Super, fantastic, marvellous, intensive, indescribable, fascinating, exceptional, Sensational! Confusing! Unique! unusual, Demanding, but enjoyable! Impressive! Enriching, Seeing a known world in a new way...*

The 2% of critical comments deal with practical points like the difficulty of getting an appointment, the acoustics (the noise of another group was disturbing in the sound room) or the impression that the time spent in the parcours was too short (if this can be called a criticism!).

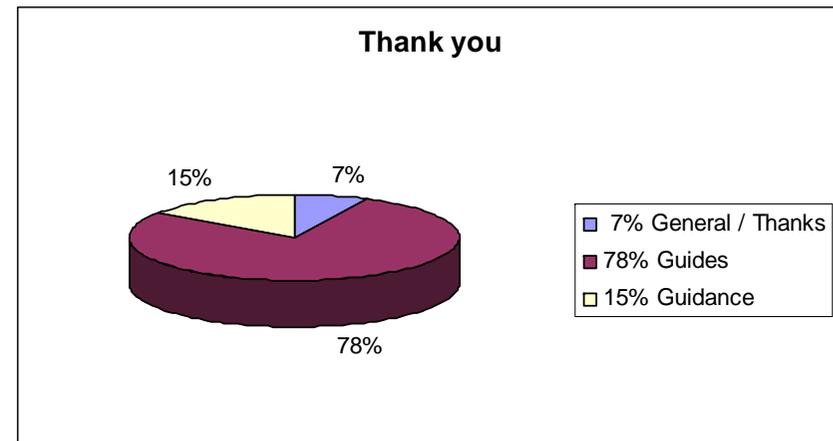
The 98% of positive comments can be divided into three large categories:

- 32% voice gratitude for the experience they have just had
- 37% voice satisfaction with the experience
- 31% take the time to analyse the experience and voice their thoughts in greater detail.

A common feeling of gratitude towards the guides

On leaving the exhibition, every third visitor writes "Thank you", "many thanks", "A thousand Thank yous" ... This feeling of gratitude is not often shown when leaving an exhibition. 78% of all 'Thank you' are aimed at the blind guide.

- *Jörg is a super guide, Thank you!*
- *Irina: Thank you for guiding us and for the experience I had, I wish you all the best*
- *Enver, your guiding was tops! We had lots of fun and are very impressed. Many thanks.*
- *Brilliant! Best regards to our guide, I'm afraid I don't remember his name, but he's from Yugoslavia. A super tour, Thank you!*



The encounter with the guide is a genuine moment of exchange, and sometimes there are even declarations of love:

- *Many thanks, Eva, for guiding us so competently and for telling us so much about yourself. We wish you all the best and every success for the future.*
- *Thank you very much, Jürgen. I was afraid when I went in, and found I could relax in a dark world.*
- *Many thanks, Mandy! The tour was super! It was nice to get to know you a little better.*
- *Jens, the guide, was really cool and friendly! I shall come again! Don't forget me!*

Respect for the blind guides

So, when they leave the exhibition of DID, the visitors are extremely grateful. They are conscious that for a short time (which, as we already mentioned, sometimes seems too short) that have undergone a genuine change. It is confusing and for most people very difficult to find oneself in complete darkness. The blind person is the one who helps and supports them and shows them how to overcome difficulties. The visitors cannot help feeling gratitude and respect for these people who have taken the trouble to help them, and most votes of thanks are in this vein.

- *Our thanks to Jörg for being so easy-going, he gave the group a feeling of security.*
- *Perhaps one should simply tell the blind people that we respect them and aren't afraid of them.*

Apart from this, there is the fact that there are no comments which could be described as out of place or mean (it should be pointed out, though, that this is a rare occurrence in a permanent exhibition), and this is further proof of the respect which the visitors feel for the exhibition and for the people working here.

The exhibition is “an unforgettable interesting and enriching experience”

Dialogue in the Dark is seen as a very sensible, important and unforgettable experience:

- *This is an experience I won't forget in a hurry*
- *I am sure one has much to think about it afterwards*
- *A day I shall always remember*
- *Unforgettable impressions for all of us*
- *This experience was really indescribable and incredible*
- *I shall never forget this experience!*
- *A painful experience, but also an interesting one.*
- *90 minutes in darkness were over far too soon*

The visitors express the surprise, the pleasure and the interest which they experienced during the visit, which is often described as instructive. They have learned something and have had to deal with something strange. For some of them the visit was an opportunity to think about themselves. They even go so far as to congratulate the organisers.

- *This was fun and an unusual experience.*
- *This was very enriching for me.*
- *This experience has enriched me tremendously.*
- *A super possibility to get to know the life of others!*
- *This was an experience where everybody could get to know something new – one can't be too enthusiastic!*

- *Jobwise we are also completely in the dark (new organization, new team, new processes). But we can also progress in the dark – we just have to think and act differently.*
- *An impressive experience which moves seeing into a different dimension*
- *Well done, it is great what you've created here.*
- *Very cool concept, brilliant experience.*
- *Very good introduction to a problem.*

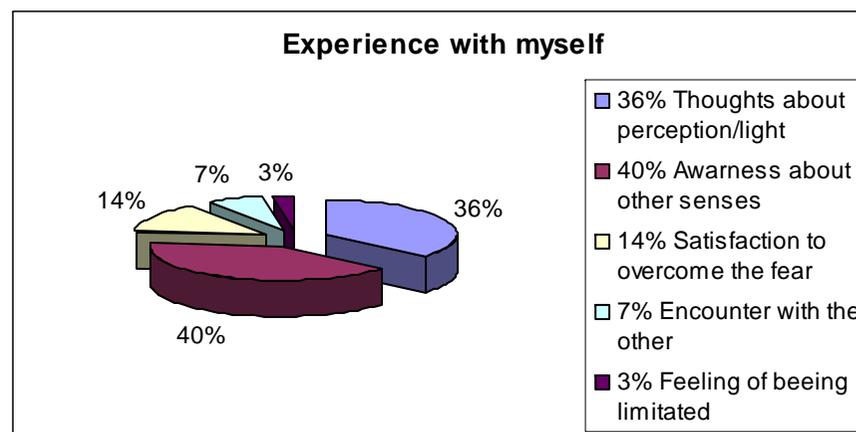
Some comments taking this even further:

A third of the visitors have taken the time to voice their thoughts in even more detail. Their comments deal mainly with three topics:

- A. *Dialogue in the Dark has given me exciting insights about myself (38%)*
- B. *Dialogue in the Dark has enabled me to discover the physical and intellectual world of blind people and their world (28%)*
- C. *Dialogue in the Dark is a place one should visit time and time again, a place that should become a permanent institution (34%)*

A. Dialogue in the Dark has given me exciting insights about myself

Of the 37% of comments dealing with discovering oneself, the comments most frequently made mention the growing self awareness and the deep meaning which this has for the individual. As shown in the following diagram, we can divide this subject into two categories of equal importance:



The visit is a fascinating and sudden discovery of the importance of one's eyes:

- *I feel a deep gratitude to have the gift of sight*
- *I am so happy to have my sense of vision.*
- *Only now do we appreciate being able to see.*
- *I hope I always remember how happy I am to be able to see*

- *It is quite incredible how little one sees when one can't see any more!*
- *Thank you for showing me how difficult it is if you can't see*
- *You only see properly with your heart*
- *Surprise, the world can be interesting even without colour.*

This immersion into darkness also brings awareness for the wonderful abilities which we have thanks to our other senses:

- *It was very impressive, seeing without looking!*
- *I could feel so many things by touch, quite wonderful!*
- *But you can also learn to live by ear*
- *The biggest handicap is not switching on what you have got*
- *It was a totally super experience not to see anything for such a long time and instead to perceive things in other ways*
- *In future I shall be more conscious of my other senses (they don't come as a matter of course)*
- *Incredibly impressive to discover the world by feeling and listening!*
- *We do have other senses!*
- *My perception was on trial here.*
- *A sensual journey without pictures in your head – without fear.*

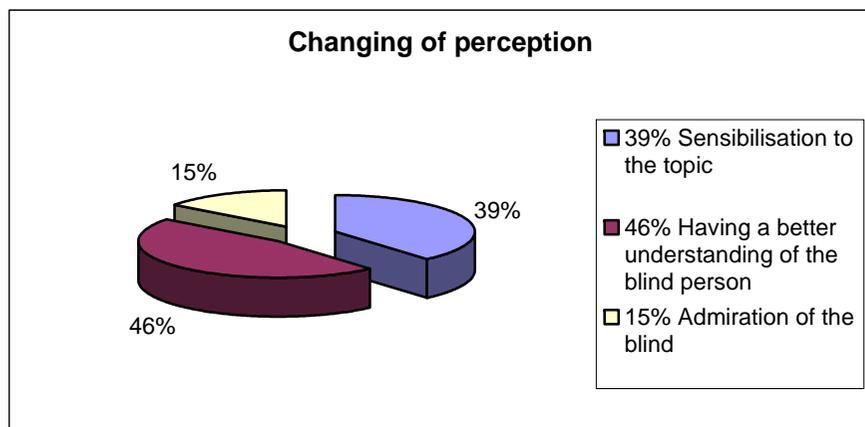
The experience also questions “Oneself in the Dark”:

Some of the comments deal with the satisfaction of overcoming fear of the dark:

- *At first I got a terrible fright, then I got used to it.*
- *At first I was very scared. In the end I didn't want to leave.*
- *It was awful to start with, but then it was nice!*
- *After overcoming my initial panic, it was most impressive.*
- *In spite of feeling frightened we would even do the longer tour now.*

Other visitors point out their pleasure and the excitement they felt by interacting in the dark: the darkness increased the wish of the group members for closeness. *Looks become unimportant. What counts is togetherness, which makes things easier.*

B. Dialogue in the Dark is a physical and intellectual discovery of blind people and their world.



On leaving the exhibition, 46% of the visitors write that they have gained some insight into the difficulties of blind people and that they feel for them:

- *Thank you for the impressions which have shown me a lot, and what difficulties there are if you can't see.*
- *I am sure this exhibition is a good way of making sighted people understand blind people better.*
- *This experience has rather changed my idea about blindness!*
- *I thought it was good to find out what it is like for a blind person!*
- *I think it very nice to experience how a blind person lives. I thought that was super!*

- *It is very hard to feel your way about with a white stick, but as a blind person one probably couldn't imagine ever being without it.*
- *After this visit I have a better understanding of the blind people with whom I have to deal through my job.*
- *For the first time I imagine having a blind child ... from now on I can imagine it.*

39% of all visitors are of the opinion that the visit serves to sensitize them for the world of the blind and for disabilities in general. Some even talk about a change of perspective:

- *We have discovered a new world!*
- *1000 steps in the dark have brought me a big step closer to the world of the visually impaired.*
- *It was nice to experience the world in a different way. It left a lasting impression, beautiful and intense.*
- *This exhibition is more important for a mutual understanding than one can guess beforehand.*
- *I kept being reminded of "The fabulous world of Amélie". You should try and notice those "insignificant" things more as you go through life.*
- *The exhibition is an excellent contribution when it comes to dealing with disability. I got a lot out of it. A successful change of perspective.*

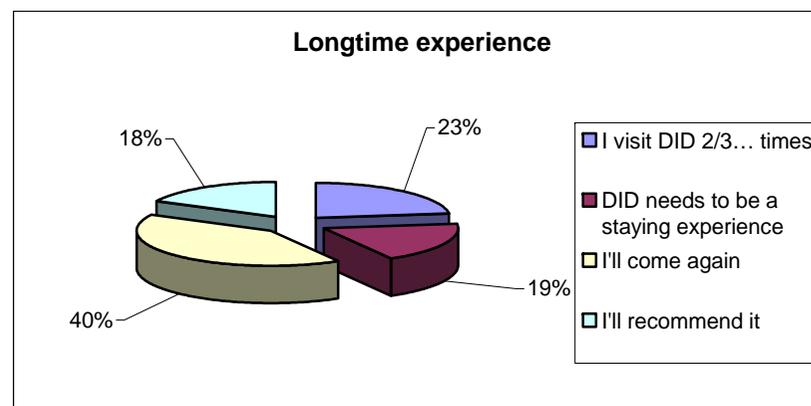
- *Values change ...*
- *Only one hour, which has changed so much – in the head, in the heart!*
- *I thought it was very good to get an idea about the life of blind and visually impaired people*

15% even go as far as expressing admiration for blind people:

- *It is just fabulous how much blind people experience and how they find their way about.*
- *All praise and respect for the blind!!! Very intelligent people, they have so many admirable perceptive abilities.*
- *My greatest respect to you!*
- *We never thought that the life of a blind person was so complicated, and we admire them all the more for the way they are dealing with it.*
- *Perhaps one should tell blind people simply that one respects them and isn't shy of them. I am sure they are much more sensitive, and therefore they deserve our full support.*
- *My admiration for all blind people for finding their way about in such a noisy, but fragrant world.*

C. Dialogue in the Dark is a place one should visit again and again. A place which should become a permanent institution.

Another big topic in the guest book: the wish that DID may stay in the Port of Hamburg. Many comments express the wish to come again and – generally speaking – the thought that the exhibition is so valuable and important that it should become a permanent institution.



40% express the wish to come and see the exhibition again, together with other people.

- *Best of all, I'd like to go through again.*
- *I am sure to come again!*

23% compare their second or even third visit with the first one:

- *I was here a second time, but it felt as if it was my first time, very exciting.*
- *Just as enriching an experience on this repeat visit*
- *A super experience every time*
- *At the 2nd visit I still thought it was great and I remembered it as being quite different.*
- *Even after my 4th visit I still think it's good!*
- *I have been here six times now and I still think it's cool.*

37% are of the opinion that everybody should have this experience and state that they are going to recommend it:

- *I hope that it can be "seen" here in Hamburg for a long time yet.*
- *I wish for your sake that it will run for another 5 years!*
- *I hope that this exhibition is here to stay.*
- *... and I hope that this place will stay in Hamburg!*
- *Everybody should come here!*
- *This experience was good for me, everybody should have it*

- *I thought it was really super and I want to come again, maybe even more often.*
- *I will definitely come again soon!*
- *I GUARANTEE that I'll come again!*
- *I am sure I'll come back with my class.*
- *I will come again and bring my friends.*
- *I can only recommend it!*
- *My mark: highly commended!*
- *We will definitely recommend Dialogue in the Dark.*
- *A very important and ingenious exhibition!*
- *A very impressive encounter and an important experience for everybody .*

First conclusions:

When leaving the exhibition, the visitors are moved and grateful.

Dialogue in the Dark has been recognized as a valuable cultural leisure activity. The visitors connect it with leisure and play activities as well as with the world of learning and education.

The visit is seen as an unexpected encounter with one's own self. The exhibition awakens a consciousness for the meaning of blindness in our society, and for the potential of our other senses for understanding and perceiving the world around us and for our interaction with this world. This discovery questions the visitors' usual ways of perception and interaction.

The visit leads to a discovery of the physical and intellectual world of the blind. A visit here awakens understanding, even empathy for blind people. The visitors feel respect for the people who have guided and helped them.

Dialogue in the Dark is an exhibition which should become a permanent institution. The exhibition has been recognized as an important educational tool, and therefore it should be permanently accessible for everybody. Many visitors state that they will repeat the visit or have already been several times.

IV. Results of Study 2: Five Years later

The results of the analysis of phone conversations with people who visited DID five years ago are impressive. Judge for yourself:

Dialogue in the Dark: 100% remember it

- 100% remember the name of the exhibition
- 100% remember with whom they visited it
- 90% said that the exhibition made them more aware of the world of the blind
- 100% are of the opinion that the exhibition has achieved its objective.

Dialogue in the Dark: 98% talk about it

98% have talked about the exhibition with friends, relatives or colleagues. Most visitors talk about it more than once. When asked "Who did you talk to about the exhibition?", the 50

probands gave the following 95 replies, which are described in more detail:

Firstly, they talk about their experience (86%):

- *they found it interesting, an unusual experience*
- *a positive experience for me*
- *An experience that answers to many questions*
- *An experience I wouldn't normally have*

52% ask others to go and visit DID or talk about going a second time themselves:

- *advertising the exhibition*
- *pointing out how great it is and that one should definitely visit it*
- *recommending it as a school outing*

On this occasion, 16% talk about blindness and blind people; "What do we think about blind people", "The everyday life of blind people", "how marvellous that there is this place giving blind persons a job".

Only 10% describe the exhibition in terms of its various rooms, and 8% talk about their initial fear “How timid one is at first and how quickly one gets used to it”.

There is no doubt that the quickest way to learn about the exhibition is by word of mouth. People talk about it and recommend a visit. 58% of the probands visited it upon recommendation by others.

Dialogue in the Dark: 76% talk about the encounter with a blind person

The encounter with the blind guide stays forever in their memory: 76% remember their conversation with the guide (10% even remember his/her name).

2a. Do you remember your conversation with the guide? If so, what did you talk about?¹

74%	Blindness
14%	Information about the exhibition
14%	Personal exchanges
10%	Taking out the fear

¹ Total higher than 100%. Several answers possible for each interviewee.

Most of the conversations with the guide are about his/her blindness (74%)

- *how did they get blind*
- *how do they get about outside, and how they need help sometimes*
- *how she nearly got blind, the transition from seeing to not seeing*
- *about practical questions, e.g. how does one, in a restaurant, find the coffee cup*
- *how they had felt when they became blind*
- *questions of everyday life were answered very openly*
- *children asked: Have you always been blind?*

Dialogue in the Dark: 80% more knowledge about blindness

- 80% think that thanks to the exhibition they are now better informed about disabled people
- 58% think that their attitude towards visual impairment has changed since visiting the exhibition
- 26% confirm that the exhibition has changed their behaviour towards disabled people

It goes without saying that a visit of the exhibition makes the visitors more sensitive for the world and the life of blind people. “*In traffic, I ask myself how a blind person copes...*”, “*What problems they*

have. I can see and feel safe. In the street everything is a danger and you only have your hearing. Incredible stress. My respect."

The exhibition results in a greater understanding for disablement:

- *how to use a stick, now I know that there are ball sticks*
- *my father-in-law is in a wheelchair and now I can help him more effectively*
- *I felt helpless, now I am more careful with blind persons*

Dialogue in the Dark: 52% have a very personal memory

1f. Do you remember a special episode?²

52%	A specific episode
34%	A room in the exhibition
20%	At first, I was afraid...
16%	Everything

Whatever else it may be, Dialogue in the Dark is a very deep experience. The memories are mostly about a personal episode during the visit:

²Total higher than 100%. Several answers possible for each interviewee

- *In the bar, finding my glass again*
- *I found myself in the arms of a man, I thought it was my mother's friend, but it was the guide*
- *In the exhibition a dog was barking. I am scared of dogs, I didn't think that was very funny.*
- *We were there on January 2nd, and because of the introduction of the Euro we didn't recognize the coins*

The bar is undoubtedly the place which is best remembered, followed by the boat trip.

But the fear of darkness is also present (20%):

- *My heart was racing and I was worried, it felt a bit threatening*
- *Taking my first steps I was timid, then it was o.k.*
- *Lianas in my face. I jumped, although we had been warned*
- *The first 30 seconds a shocking absence of all optical stimuli*

Dialogue in the Dark: 48% confirm the concept's immediate impact

The one impression most often mentioned by visitors five years after their visit is their awareness of the change which the exhibition has wrought in them: a true transformation

1g. What impressed you most in the exhibition?³

48%	The powerful concept
30%	How different things are in the darkness
22%	The awareness about my other senses
22%	The blind guide
16%	A particular room
10%	Fear/losing fear

48% state that the efficient concept impressed them most:

- *A direct personal and physical confrontation with the world of the blind*
- *How the disabled managed and built it all*
- *The exhibition helps you to put yourself into their shoes*
- *How well real-life situations are simulated*
- *It was overwhelming, some of the best I have ever visited*
- *The visit had enriched our world*
- *Seeing in a different way*

Some visitors even became aware of the problems of integration:

"The way disabled people are able to work on this project"

30% stated that what most impressed them was how different things appear in the dark:

- *It really is dark, and you have to find your way, and you can!*

³ Total higher than 100%. Several answers possible for each interviewee.

- *The fact that you can't imagine the size of the rooms*
- *Impressive, how helpful the voice is if you can't see anything*
- *The realization that you can manage in the dark*

Again, 20% talk about the blind guide:

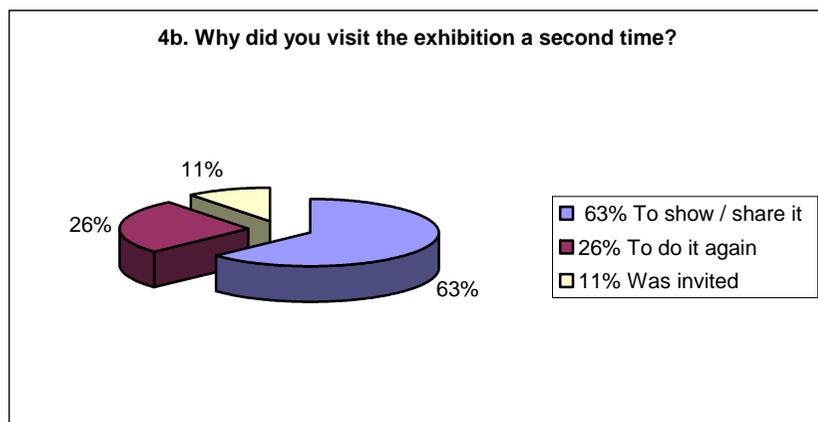
- *The guide recognized me by my voice*
- *The lady guiding us, she was very competent*
- *The guide always knows who is where and who belongs together*
- *Courageous and in full command of the situation*
- *Impressive encounter!*

22% talk about the awakening awareness of other senses

- *How dependent you are on touch and hearing*
- *How your other senses react, and how quickly they get sharpened*
- *Your other senses become more sensitive to noises and movement*
- *How quickly you switch over to other senses*

Dialogue in the Dark: 34% came again!

It is unusual to visit an exhibition several times. 34% of the probands stated that they had visited Dialogue in the Dark a second and even a third time.



The main reason for another visit is the desire to share the experience with other people (family, friends, colleagues) :

- *I wanted to show it to my children*
- *The first time I was so thrilled, and then we organized an outing with the Kindergarten staff to weld our group together*
- *I wanted to show it to my friend*
- *With the class of my middle daughter, some parents didn't want to go, so I was glad to oblige*
- *I organise a children's birthday*

The 16% critical comments mainly concern practical issues, in particular the booking and waiting list.

V. General Conclusions

There is no doubt that **Dialogue in the Dark is still a new, but unforgettable and most instructive leisure time activity.** The opinion voiced when leaving the exhibition is still remembered and confirmed after five years. 100% of the visitors remember the exhibition, its name and its contents. Dialogue in the Dark is an experience which is forever engraved upon the memory.

The personal involvement of every visitor is, without doubt, one of the main reasons why the memory is intact for 100% of them. 72% of the memories concern an unusual and unknown personal experience in the dark, 20% of them are about the initial fear. If visitors talk about the exhibition with others, 86% talk about their own experience.

Visiting the exhibition leads to two important physical and intellectual discoveries:

- 1. An awareness of the ability of one's senses**
- 2. A discovery of the blind and their world**

The first discovery fades over time, but the second one is still present after five years.

On leaving the exhibition, the majority of visitors mention the discovery of their senses, more precisely the importance of the sense of vision in our society. In this context, the limitations of our other senses (of sighted people) when interacting with the rest of the world is usually pointed out. However, only 24% still mention this point as the most impressive lesson from their visit.

On the other hand, when leaving the exhibition, more than 80% state that now they know more about the blind and their world. It is remarkable that this percentage remains constant over the years. Five years later, just as many visitors state that thanks to the exhibition they are better informed about disabled people.

The encounter with the blind guide is a very emotional one, resulting in respect and empathy. On leaving the exhibition, 78% voice gratitude and respect for the person who has led them through the darkness. Some people even show admiration. Five years later, this encounter is still present in their memory. 76% remember the conversation with their guide, 10% even remember his first name (how many people remember the name of a person with whom they only spent one hour?!) For 47% the bar, being the preferred place of conversations with the guide, is the place which impressed them most, and 22% are still impressed with the guides after five years.

The exhibition has achieved its objective, sensitizing people for the world of the blind. One third of the comments in the guest books deal with this subject. Five years later, 99% of probands reply to the question “Did you know what the objective of the exhibition was?” with “Opening our minds for the world of the blind”.

Dialogue in the Dark brings about a change of perspective. When leaving the exhibition, some visitors take the time to comment about their new perception of the blind. Five years later, 58% still state that as a result of the exhibition their perception of blind people has radically changed. A quarter of the visitors even go as far as stating that their attitude towards all disabled people has changed. It would be interesting to investigate this more closely and to try and understand in which way exactly their attitude has changed.

The permanent change taking place in people’s minds during the visit is probably the most impressive outcome. Already when leaving the exhibition there are several comments in this vein, but over the years they gain in importance. 48% of all persons interviewed after five years state that what impressed them most was the effectiveness of the concept of DID.

Dialogue in the Dark is rated a most valuable exhibition, which should become a permanent institution. When leaving the exhibition, many visitors write that they intend to come again, and indeed, every third visitor does return. For most of them the reason for returning a second or even a third time is the wish to repeat the experience or to share it with others. 98% have talked to other people about it, and 52% recommend a visit.

On leaving the exhibition, the very few critical comments concern the difficulties when making appointments. After five years, booking problems are still the only point of criticism aimed at Dialogue in the Dark.

VI. Outlook

To continue the study with regards to the blind guides.

This first study shows that Dialogue in the Dark has a deep and lasting effect upon its visitors. Now it would be important to investigate its effect on the blind guides. Has working in the exhibition changed their perception of sighted people? What were their reasons for working in the exhibition? What expectations did they have? Were they fulfilled? What has the experience taught them? In short, this needs to be investigated.

To initiate a longitudinal study about the changes in the conception of blindness.

As mentioned earlier, Dialogue in the Dark is trying to achieve a dynamic mentality of the individual, as a person who is able to change his scale of values and judgements just as he changes his style of relationships. Our first study has shown that DID brings about a change in perspective in the visitors. But how exactly does this happen? Does it exist only at conversation level? Can this change be observed in concrete actions? There is much at stake, because the question is to find out whether an exhibition alone can change behaviour! It would be interesting to conduct a comparative longitudinal study about the changes in perception of blindness and disability in general. This could investigate concrete changes, brought about by three different activities:

- Visiting DID
- Reading a book about the subject of blindness
- Seeing a film about the same subject.

In short, a fascinating subject for study, which no doubt would need the support of an experimental laboratory.

A comparative study about the effect of DID at international level

Dialogue in the Dark is an exhibition shown in many countries. A comparative study between these different productions would no doubt be interesting. Can DID claim, in certain ways, to be universal? Does it touch visitors in Italy, Japan or Mexico in the same way? The different forms of the exhibition shown worldwide could be investigated along the same criteria. In this way, the influence of cultural differences could be evaluated, and one could examine whether visiting the exhibition results in the same reaction all over the world.