Prisoner number 424: Josef Grabowski,
communicating history – from theory to practice
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A customized version of the training programme was carried out for and with the participants at the Pestalozzi Workshop.

A digital version of the exhibition and the teaching programme is available in English and Norwegian at www.grabowski.no.

www.grabowski.no
Prisoner no: 424 - Josef Grabowski

1933 1935 1938 1940 1941 1942 1943 1945

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ABOUT FALSTAD

The Falstad centre is a national education- and documenta-
tion centre, dealing with the history of imprisonment
during WW2 and the development of Human Rights.

The Falstad building was erected in 1921 as a reformat-
tive school. In 1941 the German occupiers seized the
school and established a prison camp at the premises.
"SS Strafgefangenenlager Falstad" became the second
largest prison camp in Norway.

About 4500 people from 16 countries were imprisoned
here in the period 1941–45. The majority were Norwe-
gian political prisoners. To a great number of them, Fal-
stad served as a station "en route" to Grini prison camp
outside Oslo or to concentration camps in Germany. In
1942 Norwegian Jews were imprisoned here before be-
ing deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Most of the execut-
ed prisoners were of Eastern-European origin.

After the liberation, Falstad served as a labour camp and
prison during the post war trials. This camp was closed in
1949, and in the period 1951–1992 the building housed
a special school.

The Falstad Forest, situated one kilometre south of the
Falstad Building, is today a national cultural memorial
and a war grave site. About 300 prisoners were executed
in this forest during 1942–43.
"One of the Jews was an opera singer, probably a Polish refugee. The guards were fond of singing, as most Germans are, and sometimes this singer was called out during evening assembly and ordered to sing. He then had to stand in front of us all and sing whatever the Germans told him, mainly songs from operettas. It was an unforgettable experience for most of us who were present. There he was, a Jew in his worn prison uniform, exhausted after a long day of toil and suffering, singing not only for a crowd of prisoners standing there in perfect lines, but also for their tormentors, the German guards. At times the atmosphere was brutally broken by a German who would rather hear another song. At other times the singer was chased back into position with kicks and shouts."  

This article will present one specific case used as a tool in history teaching. The project "Josef Grabowski – the fate of a Jewish cantor" is a documentation and learning project based on the story of prisoner number 424. He was one of the Jews from Trondheim in central Norway who was a prisoner at Falstad during the Second World War. The learning project consists of a variety of teaching methods including historical documents/primary and secondary sources, audiovisual accounts, digital tools, photographs and music. Part of the project is carried out in cooperation with The Jewish Museum in Trondheim, e.g. musical performances and cd recordings based on music connected to Grabowski's life and work. The learning programme at Falstad was new in the spring of 2010, and therefore just a few months of evaluation and experience from the project exist. I will return to empirical trends in the final part of the article. The article primarily presents specific suggestions and ideas that may transform theory into practice. Theoretical perspectives will be connected to and discussed through the practical design of the what, why and how of this learning programme. The target group is pupils in Norway, mostly in upper secondary education, but the programme also has in mind the learning objectives of the Norwegian National Curriculum for years 9 and 10 in lower secondary education.

The European and national histories concerning the persecutions and genocide of the Jews are linked in the learning programme to one specific individual: we follow the life of the Jewish cantor Josef Grabowski from 1933 when Hitler first took power to Grabowski's refugee life in Norway 1939-1942 and back again to Nazi Germany and his death in Auschwitz in 1943. The purpose of the learning project is to promote an understanding of how the different levels of history connect: (1) The growth of Nazism during the 1930s and the Jewish policies of Nazi Germany ending in "the final solution of the Jewish problem"; (2) the occupation of Norway and the roles Norwegian authorities took on during the imprisonments and deportations of the country's Jews, and (3) world history's individual consequences.

The primary goal of the project is – by conveying and teaching knowledge of history – to stimulate an understanding of history and a reflection about the processes of exclusion leading to the Holocaust, the genocide of the European Jewish population. An awareness of history is also relevant when developing democratic citizenship: being informed about the past can help pupils orient themselves in today's world and towards the future in ways that are compatible with a democratic society. Consequently, the aim of the learning programme is not value neutral, as we emphasise democratic values as a foundation for the development of society.

Historical consciousness develops in a range of arenas and is taught and conveyed in many different ways, through both formal and informal channels. The Falstad Centre's role as a national memorial site and a centre for human rights means that the Falstad Centre is formally authorised to document and inform about both history of imprisonment during WW2 and issues of human rights. The concept of historical consciousness thus connects these issues and different epochs of history, and the concept also guides the Centre's educational choices in the development of learning programmes. Although the chosen approaches and methodologies have to be considered in relation to the Centre's specific function and surroundings, the basic ideas of the learning programme

1 Reported by a former Falstad prisoner, Frank Storm Johansen, The Falstad Centre's archive, series F.
2 This article follows Erik Lund's definition of primary and secondary sources, where a primary source denotes the raw material used by the historian in his analysis. "Accounts based on this raw material, these primary sources, become secondary sources." (Lund, 2009: 103). For this article I will, for practical reasons, also define digitalised copies of the original documents as primary sources.
3 The project, however, is built upon experience, ideas and thoughts from the Falstad Centre's research, education and information activities throughout a particular period; the Centre received approximately 14,000 visitors during 2008, 4,000 of whom were pupils and students staying for a full day, learning about Falstad's history and about human rights' issues.
can be transferred to classrooms and schools. A web resource with a learning programme and teacher’s guide has been developed, and those who do not visit Falstad may work digitally with the project on this website (www.grabowski.no).

This article will also present the purpose of the project and evaluate the learning programme’s theoretical foundation, its background and its relevance to concepts like historical consciousness and democracy education.

Falstad prisoner of war camp in rural Ekne in the county of Nord-Trøndelag was one of the largest and most brutal prison camps in occupied Norway during the Second World War. Around 4200 prisoners were sent to the camp, which primarily served as a camp for political prisoners. But even other categories of prisoners were sent to the camp, 300 of whom were executed. The history of Strafgefangenlager Falstad from 1941 to 1945 has been described more in-depth elsewhere, but contemporary witness descriptions from the camp constitute the basis for both the learning project and this article.

JOSEF GRABOWSKI’S STORY

The night of 9 November 1938 marked the beginning of a dramatic stepping up of Nazi Germany’s persecution of Jews. All over the German empire the Nazis rampaged, destroying Jewish life and property; synagogues were set ablaze, Jewish shops were smashed up and the Jewish population was attacked. On this night, known as Kristallnacht or Crystal Night, the cantor Josef Grabowski – born in Posen and living in Gleiwitz – was one of about 30,000 Jews arrested. Around 10,000 of them were sent to the concentration camp Buchenwald (Lorenz 2003: 33-43).

Grabowski was one of the prisoners in Buchenwald, released after three weeks on the condition that he left Germany as soon as possible. Jews were released if their family or a Jewish volunteer organization financially supported an emigration. The Nazis had not yet invented the “final solution” and promoted forced emigration to get rid of what they referred to as the Jewish problem. (Lorenz 2003: 33). At an international refugee conference in Evian held prior to the November pogroms, it turned out that few countries were willing to receive Jewish refugees. Norwegian authorities did not recognise them as political refugees. Instead, they saw Jews as a threat to Norwegian society: minutes from a meeting in the Ministry of Justice held on 26 July 1939 tell us that Norwegian authorities were “(...) concerned that more Jews can give rise to a growing Jewish problem”, and “we must avoid a Jewish problem” (Johansen 1984: 121). In spite of such attitudes, Josef Grabowski successfully obtained immigration permission to Norway thanks to the small Jewish community in Trondheim, where he was offered the position of cantor. The permission only arrived from the Norwegian Central Passport Office after the Jewish congregation guaranteed that Grabowski, for as long as he stayed in the country, would not be a burden to the State (the Norwegian National Archive in Oslo).

A new life in Trondheim

In May 1939 Grabowski moved into a small flat in Kongens gate in Trondheim. During the next three years he worked as a cantor and teacher of religion in the Jewish community. He soon established a choir which took part in religious ceremonies, and the liturgical songs created a ceremonial atmosphere rarely felt before in the synagogue. Grabowski also participated in the town’s musical activities and achieved great recognition for his voice. An example of this was a review on a concert held on

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4 For a systematic account of Falstad during and after the Second World War, see: Nilsen, Trond Risto & Reitan, Jon: Falstad – naziliv og landssvikfengsel, Tapir Akademisk Forlag, 2006.
5 Posen and Gleiwitz are now Polish cities, known today as Poznan and Glewice.
6 Email from Gedenkstätte Buchenwald Archiv, dated 28 October 2008.
7 RA = Central Passport Office Archives (RA = Sentralpasskontorets arkiv, journalsak 1941/254)
2 April 1940, where Grabowski, the male choir Nidaros Mandsangforening and Trondheim Symphony Orchestra all contributed. The local Labour-party newspaper Arbeider-Avisen writes in its review that "In this man our town has a tenor that will be frequently used" (Regional State Archive in Trondheim).8

Persecuted again

However, practising as a cantor became steadily more difficult and risky, due to the authorities' increasingly hostile attitude towards Jews in Norway after the occupation.9 For Grabowski, the situation became serious from January 1941 when his application for an extension of his residence permit was turned down (The Norwegian National Archive).10

During spring 1941 the Nazis confiscated the synagogue in Trondheim, and a few months later a systematic confiscation of Jewish properties began. In January 1942 representatives from the German occupation forces and the Norwegian Nazi authorities started stamping a red letter "J" in passports belonging to Jews (Reitan 2005: 96-97). Simultaneously, SS leaders and representatives from different Departments met at Wannsee outside Berlin. The aim of the conference was a practical organisation of the genocide; coordination of the deportation and a further planning of the extermination of Jews from all over German-occupied Europe, including Norway (Bauer 2001: 220-227), a process already underway.

In the autumn of 1942 the German authorities declared a state of emergency in Central Norway. During the night of 7 October Josef Grabowski and 26 other Jewish men were arrested and sent to Falstad (Reitan 2005: 100-104). The persecution he had escaped from in Germany again became a reality to the cantor, now prisoner number 424 in SS Strafganglager Falstad.

Being a prisoner in the Falstad camp

The onset of a state of emergency in central Norway had consequences for the Falstad prisoners, and from the beginning the Jewish men who arrived at the camp were brutally treated by the prison guards. The dehumanisation of Jewish prisoners was carried out in numerous ways: they were separated from the other prisoners, beating and kicking became part of everyday life, with ongoing humiliation robbing the Jewish men of their human worth. The treatment was in accordance with the new guidelines from the German Security Police and shows the brutal face of Nazi ideology, here described by Grabowski's fellow prisoner Julius Paltiel:

8 SA – The Regional State Archive in Trondheim: Arbeider-avisen 3 April 1940.
“One day when we were outdoors at Falstad, he [Józef Grabowski] was ordered by the duty officer to sing German songs. [...] He stood on a platform singing for a quarter of an hour. It was a rather special atmosphere, as it was moonlight and it was cold, and I think we all sensed a shiver down our spine at that moment. But what was very interesting, was that the Germans, who always loved music, withdrew and remained quiet. [...] When he stopped after having sung the songs he had been ordered to sing, it became dead quiet for a moment. Then an Alsatian started to howl. [...] That’s when the SS people “woke up”. They started shouting and yelling, and of course they had to find someone to blame for these 15 minutes or so of “normality”. [...] Then someone had to be punished, and of course that someone was the Jews. [...] We were ordered to shake the leaves off a tree which is still there. When the leaves were on the ground, we were told to put it in a pile at the other end of the courtyard. We asked the guards if we could fetch a broom, a rake or some other tool. We were told that this would be unnecessary, since we were to use our mouth. We were told to lie on our stomachs, take one leaf at a time, and then crawl across to the other end of the courtyard” (Lothe & Storeide (red.)2006: 148-149).

Julius Paltiel, who passed away in March 2008, was one of the few Norwegian Jews who survived Auschwitz. His story about this special event is one of the main stories being told to pupils when they visit the Centre, used to describe the conditions at Falstad from the autumn of 1942.

Deportation and death

On 25 November 1942, Josef Grabowski and the other Jewish prisoners still in the camp were to be transported from Falstad. In accordance with the plans laid out at the Wannsee Conference, deportations on a large scale were carried out, and Jews across all of occupied Europe were deported by train to the camps in Poland. On the night of 3 March 1943, Josef Grabowski arrived at the death camp Auschwitz-Birkenau (Reitan 2005: 114-115).

Grabowski, who had given his fellow prisoners strength with his singing at Falstad and throughout the deportation, soon lost his own strength. After just a few weeks of hard labour in the Buna works he died, aged 32 (www.yadvashem.org ).

Around six million Jews were the victims of Holocaust. Of the 771 deported Jews from Norway, only 34 survived (www.folkemord.no).

CHOOSING THE CASE

There are several reasons why Grabowski’s story is an interesting case. Below I will give three of these.

1) A representative story?

Grabowski’s personalised history can shed light on central points of references in the various stages of Holocaust on an international, national and local level, and – not least – point to the connection between the three levels. Personalised histories, micro-histories, may at times be accused of generalisation based on individual, non-representative cases. For this reason it is necessary and essential to use the research results of other historians both on a micro and macro level, thus preventing us from conveying stereotypes or patterns that we may not want to convey.

Statistical representation refers to the ability of an individual case to shed light on larger structures or processes, or deviations from these. Naturally, any personalised history has unique elements that are not necessarily representative of other courses of events with the same outcome. However, even though Grabowski’s story is one among several million stories, it illustrates stages and key historical events on an international, national and local level, and in a context pupils are able to identify with. These factors make Grabowskis’s story interesting from an educational point of view.

The growth of Nazism on a systemic level in Germany is personalised by following the individual Grabowski: the movements of the Jewish cantor in the 1930s reflect the gradual societal exclusion experienced by much of the Jewish population, regarding both the establishment of laws and regulations directed against Jews by the Nazi-state and the escalating exclusion from civil society. All of these factors turned Jews into second-rate citizens leading to a loss of basic rights, a loss of ability to socially integrate, and to dehumanisation. Examples of these things are how the surges of persecution on Jews, such as NSDAP taking power in 1933, the Nuremberg laws from 1935 and the Crystal Night in 1938 affected people such as Grabowski.

Furthermore, Grabowski’s story will give the pupils an insight into Norwegian attitudes before the Second World War – showing how Norwegian authorities regarded Jewish refugees in particular, in relation both to the events mentioned above and in relation to how parts of the Norwegian authorities were willing to cooperate with the occupation forces before the deportation of Norwegian Jews to Auschwitz. The events in Norway must be put into an international context, so that the pupils get
an understanding of the deportations as a coordinated process that gradually points to “the final solution of the Jewish question”, as formulated by the Wannsee Conference in January 1942. Conveying information about the various phases leading up to Holocaust is as important as describing the process of extermination itself. In this perspective, the chosen case constitutes a representative case. Using Grabowski’s story is therefore relevant to the goals of this project.

2) Identification and teaching
The degree of identification is relevant when teaching young people. Identification is generally important in education, but it is often more a way of gaining a positive effect on learning. In our context, identification can be related to a form of historical empathy, where the audience is confronted with the sufferings of the victim, and of having to take a moral stand on the victim’s situation. This is an important point, where the answer is that we probably can only have a distant, abstract understanding of suffering we have not experienced ourselves. However, this form of empathy may also contribute to wanting to learn more about the people who have experienced it and about the reasons why they had to endure those sufferings.

History in school often focuses on the larger picture and macrohistorical approaches, which are and should be central in the pupils’ understanding of history. However, these perspectives may seem so abstract and of so little relevance to some that the motivation needed to learn is lost. Pupils’ approaches to history vary, but identification may contribute to an understanding of the human dimension in history (Barton & Levstik 2004: 150-151).

In our context, the human dimension can be related to a form of re-humanising of the victims of Holocaust, meaning that pupils must look beyond the abstract numbers of the genocide. Each of the six million human beings murdered, represents more than one number among those who ended their lives in the gas chambers, each had an identity and a history that was taken away from them, and looking at one individual case may result in pupils giving faces to the victims. This aspect is also related to pupils as agents in democratic processes, an aspect we will get back to.

3) Being at the site
The site itself plays an important part in the overall teaching strategies at the Falstad Centre, including this learning programme. Falstad is a memorial site, and the framework and possibilities provided by the history determine our educational choices. The physical place is also an important part of our communication strategy towards the pupils. Identity and proximity to history is important here, as is the pupils’ motivation for learning history in other places than in the classroom. Anne Eriksen describes the function of a specific site, a description also valid for Falstad. According to Eriksen, the presence of history at the site is made specific and accessible in a way that gives the individual a feeling of participation, where “the distance created by the dimension of time is mysteriously compensated for by an individual’s bodily experience of the place” (Eriksen 1999: 49).

THE LEARNING PROGRAMME

Relevance in Norwegian national curriculums
The learning programme about Josef Grabowski has been developed with the latest Norwegian national curriculum in mind, the National Curriculum for Knowledge Promotion in Primary and Secondary Education and Training (LK06). The learning programme intends to both meet the demands of and to promote many of the learning objectives in LK06, in history and the social sciences. After year 10 in secondary school, pupils should be able to “create narratives about people in the past, and thus show how frameworks and values in society influence thoughts and actions”. Another important learning objective is pupils’ ability to “search for and select sources, assess them critically and show how different sources might present history differently” (www.udir.no ). Based on the learning objectives in the history curriculum of upper secondary education – in common core subjects in programmes for general studies – pupils should be able to collect and assess historical material as sources and use them to give historical accounts. Pupils should also be able to use digital tools to retrieve information from various media, assessing the material and giving a critical account of the sources (www.udir.no). These learning objectives are related to LK06’s requirements that in the history subject, pupils should use the same methods researchers use and they should learn to handle and assess different types of sources. In other words, pupils are to develop the competence of posing critical questions and of creating narratives.

Our knowledge of Grabowski’s life is based mostly on research conducted at different archives in Norway, Germany and Poland, where we have gained access to primary sources that collectively form a picture of the cantor’s movements in time and space. The hunt for rel-
relevant primary sources has been a puzzle that can also be relevant for teaching purposes, in that pupils may take the role of the researcher on a minor scale in their hunt for clues. The sources are in themselves important when building a narrative around a person’s life, but in combination with secondary sources microhistory can be connected to the events that affected Grabowski’s life.

Introducing the pupils to the case

The goal of the learning programme at the Falstad Centre is that pupils should develop a critical understanding of and reflection on sources. The programme is three-dimensional, where dialogue-based communication with pupils, the use of primary and secondary sources and reflection tasks are all central. The programme lasts one school day, from four to five hours, adapting to the practical and financial requirements of the visiting schools. The introductory part of the learning programme forms the basis for the pupils’ active participation. The short 20-minute introduction gives a presentation of Falstad as a historical site, its connection to Holocaust as a transit camp to Auschwitz and also provides accounts from various time witnesses about how they experienced Josef Grabowski. The introduction is important for a number of reasons. The chief and most obvious reason is that pupils early on can begin to form an idea of what topics, goals and tasks may be expected of them. Another important goal with the introduction is to create the motivation and curiosity that will stimulate them into going deeper into Grabowski’s story, and connect events on a national and international level.

The pupils are being introduced to the history, establishment, function, categories of prisoners and treatment of prisoners at the Falstad camp and illustrated with pictures, before we enter the individual level by introducing prisoner number 424 as one of the prisoners sent to Falstad.

An interview with the contemporary Falstad prisoner Knut Gjørtz is also used in the introduction. He describes how Josef Grabowski was treated in the camp and also describes his singing. The sound recording is followed by a music example illustrating Grabowski’s song in the courtyard: the operetta song "Volgalied" by Franz Lehár.¹¹

These varied approaches in the introduction have been chosen deliberately to create a form of identification. The approaches also indicate early on the key topics and the aims of the learning programme: what, why and how. The varied approaches also facilitate different learning styles by including visual and auditory elements as well as dialogue. Dunn & Dunn refer to human beings having differing sense preferences in the learning process: auditory, visual, tactile and kinesthetic. In our learning programme we seek to include the variety of learning approaches pupils have when they acquire knowledge, in accordance with the Dunn & Dunn model.¹²

The short introduction aims to stimulate the pupils both “emotionally” and intellectually into taking the role of the researcher in the next stage of the programme. The emotional aspect is debated in history teaching: to what degree should teaching and presentation of history contain an element of emotion in order to interest and motivate pupils? This question is also related to ideas of identification and of being at the site, and thus, affect how close pupils are to history. An important point to

¹¹ The song recording is from 2009, and performed by Jon Kristian Karlsen. It is part of a recording from that year. The CD is dedicated to Josef Grabowski, and sheds light on the varied music he performed. Title: "Grabowski", Up North Discs (2009). The sound track with the song was recorded at Falstad, where the singer sings without accompaniment. No recording with Grabowski exists, but a number of prisoners has described "Volga Lied" as one of the melodies the prison guards ordered him to sing.

¹² There is a good description of Dunn & Dunn’s theories about different learning styles in, among others, Dunn, Rita and Griggs, Shirley, ed. (2004): Læringstil. Grunnbok i Dunn og Dunns læringstilmødell. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget AS.
make is that intellectual and emotional approaches do not necessarily exclude one another. In our experience, the emotional element is productive in creating interest for learning history as an academic discipline. As long as the emotional dimension is not the main goal, an emotional involvement may strengthen rather than weaken the motivation to work with history. In this sense there is a shift away from history as a cleansing process, the catharsis for Norwegian youngsters travelling to concentration camps, as described by Kyrre Kvemlokk (Lenz & Nilssen 2011: 145ff). This learning programme has a less authoritarian history teaching where we equip pupils with the tools to develop their ability to orient themselves in society and history.

Research tasks
Using a personalised history – looking at connections in historical processes by linking microhistory to national and international events – is not a new idea. But then, the degree of learning is not necessarily proportional to the degree of originality. Learning depends more on how the learning approaches coincide with the goals of the learning programme. In this instance we have two main goals. The first goal is related to disseminating knowledge and reflection about the various stages of Holocaust and of making clear how knowledge about the genocide on Europe’s Jews may be used even to help pupils understand and make critical analysis of their contemporary world and of their future. The other main goal is to widen the methodological competence in pupils through active participation. Active participation is a key element of a constructivist learning perspective, which maintains that "(...) the pupils' learning must be related to their own interests and experiences, and new knowledge, new skills and new attitudes must be acquired through the pupils' being active" (Koritzinsky 2002: 30).

In addition, the constructivist view of learning and knowledge is also an obvious part of the LK08 and the Core Curriculum.13 We base our methodological choices on a constructivist platform for two reasons: first, constructivist learning theories are part of the current Norwegian national curriculum and second, we have seen positive outcomes when pupils are active. Combining the use of primary and secondary sources and using dialogue between pupils can be productive in creating an understanding of history and interpretation. But it can also be a double-edged sword, a fact I will return to later.

After the introduction, tasks are handed out to the pupils, and they are told to work in groups of 4-6 members. The tasks given to each group are in many ways similar, but they are given different tools to solve them. A few key questions form the basis for the main task: first, construct Josef Grabowski’s story, and second, place his story in a wider historical context by adapting and interpreting primary and secondary sources. The key questions are specific, but open to interpretation of the task: Who was Josef Grabowski? Why did he come to Trondheim? What happened to him and why? What major events had consequences for his life, and why? We use an exhibition for study purposes, but our teaching methods may be transferred to the classroom. Similar methods are described by history teacher educator Erik Lund (Lund 2006: 165-170, 183-185).

The groups may choose between different tools to present their work: 1) a radio interview/radio report, 2) a blog or 3) a digital story. Each group is

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13 The teaching must be organised with a careful consideration of the interaction between specific tasks, actual knowledge and an understanding of concepts. Not least, the teaching must be organised in such a way that pupils gain a practical experience of knowledge and skills being something they contribute in developing. The Norwegian Core Curriculum (Læreplan, generell del, link: www.udir.no)
given a work station with a computer. The final products are available for the pupils afterwards, on a blog that follows the project. The website www.grabowski.no can also be used when the pupils return to school, either to do more work or for evaluation or discussion.14

Research stations

The sources are made available to the pupils through several research stations. These contain a selection of primary and secondary sources illustrating a journey in archives in Norway, Poland, Israel and Germany. Each station holds fragments of Grabowski’s life and work, and events that directly or indirectly influenced his fate. The research stations bear the names of the archives where the sources came from, and there is no chronological order. For instance, work station I is called the Falstad Archive, and selected sources are collected from the Centre’s archives and placed in display cases and on walls. Sources include narratives from time witnesses, soundtracks, prison cards and photos related to Grabowski’s story.

Work station II is a collection of primary sources from the Jewish Museum in Trondheim, containing minute books, correspondence about Grabowski’s role as a cantor, music sheets, photos and sources showing his activities in Trondheim, among them his work in a Jewish volunteer group in Trondheim (Jadisk Hjelpeforening). The National Archives in Oslo is work station III. It contains, among other things, correspondence between Norwegian authorities and Grabowski about applications for residence and work permits. The Regional State Archives in Trondheim (Dora Arkivsenter) in Trondheim and the Polish city archives of Gliwice and Poznan together form station IV. The Archive Centre contains a registration of applications for residence permits made by Grabowski and the Mosaic Community in Trondheim. The archive even contains newspaper articles about the cantor’s activities in Trondheim’s cultural life. The Polish city archives contain a wedding certificate, a residence registration card and the cantor’s home address in Gliwice and Poznan. Yad Vashem’s database on victims of the Holocaust makes up station V. At this station, pupils can search for names. Station number VI consists of the archives of Buchenwald and Auschwitz memorial sites, and holds correspondence with the archives concerning traces of Grabowski. Station VII shows a map of Grabowski’s movements in different European countries before and during the Second World War. Station VIII is a reading corner, providing secondary sources. Here the pupils can find more in-depth information about the Second World War and Holocaust. The reading corner also contains literature on and music from Jewish religion, history and culture in Norway, Poland and Germany.

The outer walls of the exhibition area have chronological presentations of a few important points of references on a national and international level, thus connecting the two levels. References include the stages of Holocaust in Germany, Norway and other parts of Europe. In this presentation we focus on, among other things, the consequences of NSDAP taking power, the Nuremberg laws from 1935, the Crystal Night of 1938 and the Wannsee Conference in January 1942, as well as similar decrees, registration of Jews and loss of rights in occupied Norway. However, it is important to point out that anti-Semitism goes back longer than the sources used, and this is emphasised to the pupils in the introduction. Each of the events listed above point to organised and systematic persecution of Jews, but they can also illustrate the different stages of the genocide.

The secondary sources first and foremost serve the key goal of connecting the different levels of history: linking local, national and international events and levels. For instance, a primary source showing Grabowski as a prisoner in Buchenwald can be chronologically connected to the Crystal Night and the laws, regulations and increasing anti-Semitism that gradually led to Jews losing their civil rights, among them the Nuremberg laws from 1935. The Falstad Centre’s permanent exhibition, which gives an account of the growth of Nazism and Holocaust on both national and international levels, is also a central secondary source. In total, both the temporary and the permanent exhibition, and the reading corner are available to the pupils.

PAST – PRESENT – FUTURE?

Does Grabowski’s story have anything to tell pupils about their own society, beyond knowledge of a specific epoch? In what way can this educational programme be a tool where pupils can gain a wider competence of orientation in society and history? Knowledge about the past is important in itself, to construct an identity, to gain an understanding of human beings as agents in historical processes and as “laboratories” for cause and effect as society develops. Without a contemporary relevance, disciplines of history and social sciences may lose much of its power and legitimacy, in their functions as constructors of identity and conveyors of values. The question is how history can have transfer value.

The Norwegian Education Act emphasises that the purpose of education, among other things, is to promote human equality and equal opportunities, intellectual freedom

14 The net resource contains a learning programme based on the same principles developed at the Centre, a search in archives with collections of primary and secondary sources that may be down-loaded, relevant links and tips for literature on Grabowski’s story, a teacher’s guide and a blog-spot for discussion of pupil works.
and tolerance. Social studies (and history) are important here, including how social studies help develop attitudes in keeping with a democratic system of government. Attitudes and values developed from a primary and secondary education, may serve as a platform for the behaviour and interaction shaping society. Democracy does not function adequately without critical reflection, knowledge and experience of democratic culture, values and norms on the one hand, and without sufficient trust and support for the political system on the other. Almond & Verba point out the importance of a specific participatory, political culture compatible with democracy; a "civic culture": a participant political culture in which the political culture and political structure are congruent (Almond & Verba 1989:30). This political culture is, on the one hand, activist oriented with a will to participate and a belief that it is possible to do so. On the other hand, there is also a trust in government and a substantial delegation of power to those elected by the people (Børhaug 2007:21).

However, knowledge and political culture are not static entities, in that democratic processes and knowledge about these also involve a critical attitude to the system of government, i.e. the ability both to ask critical questions which may cause given truths about democracy to be adjusted, and to understand that the processes are dynamic. To be values-based in this context means having knowledge about and understanding of basic norms and values without excluding criticism of the system, a principle which stands as a heavy contrast to dictatorships. The learning programme challenges the "authoritarian" features of traditional teaching, where museum exhibitions or the chosen narratives and chronology from textbooks and teachers form the basis for learning. An "objective" history may be dictated and shaped, and thereby controlled with the risk of pupils and students becoming passive recipients of information without having taken part in the process leading to the knowledge production.

In his 1974 exhibition "Exit/Dachau", visual artist Jochen Gerz not only criticises Dachau, but all museums in which audience experience is being consciously or unconsciously dictated (Young 2000:124). Audience experience is dictated as much by the sources selected for inclusion in or exclusion from exhibitions as by the rules of conduct and patterns of movement on the actual site. Some of the measures in Dachau interfere with and attempt to prescribe the end product. However, despite some of the more negative aspects, a strict control may be necessary in order to point out important elements that may form the basis of further learning. This issue is also valid for our learning programme. Even though pupils to a large degree use democratic processes in developing their story about Grabowski, there is an aspect of intervention in our choice of methods and our selection of sources.

The theoretical basis for democratic support can be found in e.g. Robert A. Dahl's dialogue-based work "Democracy and its Critics" (1989). It describes the nature of democracy, prerequisites and advantages, and contrast these with alternative systems of government.

The question about what basic norms and values mean, are debated and can seem both including and excluding in a multicultural perspective. The starting point here is the basis reflected in, for instance, The Human Right's Declaration: "Education and training shall be based on fundamental values in Christian and humanist heritage and traditions, such as respect for human dignity and nature, on intellectual freedom, charity, forgiveness, equality and solidarity."
The attitudes and values that rely on democracy may be acquired as early as school age, and the learning objectives in the Norwegian National Curriculum confirm this belief by stressing the points under discussion here. Research stations and other forms of education under pupils’ control may contribute to a heightened awareness of the values that society is built on, and will therefore often be an important supplement to a presentation in a book or a teacher’s monologue.

This learning programme will give pupils an opportunity to a) review and reflect on Nazism and its views on humanity, b) study and be specifically informed about a dictatorship and c) implicitly challenge their own abilities to see the consequences of totalitarian regimes. The latter is important in order to assess democracy as a system of government and human rights as an essential principle, in addition to challenging the pupils’ capacity for “historical empathy”. Historical empathy has been defined by, among others, Anne Kjersti Jacobsen and Karsten Korbel, board members of the Norwegian Historical Association (HIFO). Their definition of this concept, to be found on HIFO’s webpages, includes “trying to understand and assess the actions of human beings based on the situation they were in and what choices they had” (Jacobsen & Korbel 2004).

The learning programme also creates a variation in teaching, even within the same topic, something most educators find vital. For the programme we use a variety of methods: teacher controlled education as an introduction to further activity, interpretation of primary sources and use of digital tools in a setting where pupils have a lot of control, and last, but not least, a final discussion about the work that has been done. This combination thus meets many well-known educational learning principles also relevant in teaching history and social studies: motivation, topicalisation, concretisation, visualisation, individualisation, collaboration and evaluation (Koritzinsky 2002: 160).

CHALLENGES AND EXPERIENCES OF USING THE LEARNING PROGRAMME

Comparative elements?

Grabowski’s story is a unique narrative from an era in history where most things differ from the present. The referred to events of both the interwar and war period emerged in a Nazi dictatorship far removed from “our modern liberal democracy”. Many people will say that drawing parallels to our own age is problematic, and is at worst a “banalisation” and “relativisation” of history. The concept of “relativisation” is very forceful, but may also destroy productive debates about the roles of history teaching. Is it at all possible to parallel different historical epochs that have different contexts and different outcomes? What function does history education have if this is not possible?

However, between these two extremes it is fully possible to compare and analyse without relativising, even with young people involved. Making comparisons does not just entail finding similarities between for example regimes and epochs, it also means identifying differences between the cases. Trends in epochs and societies may share similarities, whereas outcomes and consequences may differ completely. For the pupils in our target group, making comparative analyses in dialogue with the group are suitable reflection tasks for the final part of the learning programme.

The starting-point in our learning programme can for instance be a comparison of the trends manifesting themselves in the interwar period on whether to welcome Jewish refugees from Germany. Norway, like most of the other European countries, was not willing to accept them, and viewed the refugees as a threat to Norwegian society. In the 1930s, the Norwegian Ministry of Justice was “concerned that more Jews [can] give rise to a growing Jewish problem” (Johansen 1984: 121). Grabowski was granted a residence permit on the prerequisite that he did not become a burden to the Norwegian state. This aspect of history forms the basis of comparison in the context “Norwegian refugee policy”. The transfer value does not necessarily lie in concluding that “these are the consequences of bullying”, “we are heading in that direc-

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values that also appear in different religions and beliefs and are rooted in human rights (…) Education and training shall provide insight into cultural diversity and show respect for the individual’s convictions. They are to promote democracy, equality and scientific thinking” (The Education Act).

17 In the Core Curriculum this is connected to a collective concept “the integrated human being”. (www.udir.no)
18 John Dewey’s basic principle of “learning by doing” is central.
19 Recommended reading on comparative methods is primarily research-related, but may also be relevant for teaching: Kaldal, Ingvar (2003): Historisk forskning, forståing og fortælgning. Samlaget.
tion now” or “Muslims are the Jews of our time”, but rather in both identifying any similarities in the views on human life, prejudices and xenophobia and identifying where the two epochs differ, in context and consequence.

An assessment of what role human rights, both legally and philosophically, have played is also relevant. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights came as a direct result of individual human sufferings in the Second World War. The Declaration has gradually been incorporated into Norwegian and international law, and the status of refugees has been strengthened further by Norway committing itself through international conventions. It is also natural in this context to point pupils towards a comparison of first, the philosophy and view of human life which is the basis for the human rights and second, the Nazi ideas that led Josef Grabowski to humiliation and ended with the Jewish cantor being sent to Auschwitz. Pointing out the obvious contrasts will to some be kicking in open doors, but the ability to compare ideologies and views on humanity also requires factual knowledge. Knowledge of the past may help develop an awareness of the pupils’ own roles as agents in society, as a safeguard against totalitarian trends and threats to the rights of the individual and the minorities.

Another related factor is an awareness of Holocaust’s different stages, meaning that pupils acquire knowledge of the genocide on Jews not being about six million Jews suddenly being sent to the gas-chambers. When pupils work with primary and secondary sources they gain an insight into the persecution of Jews, and thereby on the stages of Holocaust: from discrimination in public and civil society, to segregation and expulsion, from deportation to the final solution – the extermination. The centre of attention in the learning programme has consciously been on the stages leading up to the extermination, with the aim of making pupils aware of this being a gradual process that not only involved the military institutions, the bureaucracy and the political elite of the regime, but even lower-level civil servants.

The learning programme thus also invites reflections on mechanisms of genocide even in our time. Dr. Gregory H. Stanton defines eight stages of genocide: classification, symbolisation, dehumanisation, organisation, polarisation, preparation/identification, extermination and, finally, denial (Stanton 1998). These stages are debated and do not describe every single case of genocide throughout history. However, the stages are pedagogically interesting tools where the pupils’ understanding of the “nature of genocide” can be promoted through comparative methods. Even though Holocaust is a unique process, the uniqueness will not in itself mean a rejection of empirical research showing how genocides may share certain features. To what degree is it possible to tell any similarities between Holocaust and the genocide of either Rwanda or Bosnia? The International Criminal Court in Hague in 2007 decided that the massacres in Srebrenica in 1995 were a genocide. The genocides in Rwanda and Bosnia were on a smaller scale than Holocaust, in a different context and a different time. But should we on that account consistently reject learning anything from a comparison with Holocaust? These are key educational questions that may take up a lot of space. In our learning programme pupils are invited to reflect on the discourse in follow-up work once they are back at school.

THE PUPILS AND PRIMARY SOURCES

How do pupils use primary sources and how are the sources interpreted? Little empirical research has been done on these issues, although there are several studies related to interest and awareness of history, among these the comprehensive European investigation Youth and History. Use of primary sources will even in our learning programme be interpreted differently by different pupils, the interpretation patterns depending on a range of factors. One relevant factor is the degree of experience the pupils have with the method, and whether previous experience makes the pupils better equipped and more motivated for their tasks here. Another factor that comes into play is what basic knowledge of the topic they have beforehand, which is essential if the primary sources are to make sense. The learning programme depends on the teacher and pupils focusing in advance on the context of the interwar period, the Second World War and Holocaust, which will then function as a platform for the work at the Falstad Centre. A third factor worth considering is that pupils can have varied cultural backgrounds and therefore may have different patterns of interpretations which may affect how the sources are interpreted.

These factors may result in the pupils’ end products varying, both in terms of narrative devices, knowledge base, interpretation of the sources, and in what cultural context the pupils place Grabowski’s story. This is a challenge for the teachers, but also provides them with a great opportunity to discuss how the pupils arrived at their interpreta-

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20 An introduction to the topic of human rights in Norwegian is for example: Knut V Bergem, Gunnar M Karlsen and Beate Slydal (ed) (2002); Menneskerettigheter- en infirering, Oslo: Humanitaf Forlag.

21 Jews are today defined as a national minority, together with Kvens, Romanies/Travellers, Roma (“Gypsies”) and Skogfins. Norway ratified the Council of Europe’s Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities in 1999, which among other things entail certain rights and a particular cultural protection by Norway (Royal Proposition no. 80/St.prp. nr. 60:1997-1998).

22 The escalation of the persecution of Jews in e.g. Germany and Norway of course did not occur in the same manner, something pupils may also discuss with their teacher.
tions. The differing narratives can thus become a useful tool to make pupils aware of how history is constructed and interpreted as a process involving several factors connecting the past, the present and the future.

Our choice of method must be seen in relation to the constructivist view on knowledge and learning, that forms the basis for our educational approach (Barton & Levstik 2004: 188). The intellectual challenge lies in, as with the historian, how the sources are being perceived, what they can tell the pupils and how they can be related to the context of "Josef Grabowski's story". In connection with a project on perpetrators regarding prison guards from SS the students were given different sources, such as photos, excerpts from the diaries of prison guards and biographies focusing on the life course of the perpetrator. We then saw that the students, through their interpretations of these sources, in some cases began to identify with the perpetrator to such a degree that they excused their actions, relating them to a difficult childhood, a fear of reprisals, survival instinct, obedience to authority etc. — in other words a form of moral "exoneration" of the perpetrators.20

EXPERIENCES AND LESSONS TO BE DRAWN FROM THE LEARNING PROGRAMME

In this section I will include reflections on what we have experienced so far with the learning programme, without necessarily making conclusions on this limited scope. Based on the empirical evidence collected so far, can we see any trends? How do the pupils work? Are the pupils motivated to work with primary sources? What do the pupils focus on and why? How can we see a learning effect of the work? These are central questions in the evaluation process after the pupils have worked with Josef Grabowski's story. At the moment of writing, several groups of pupils from upper secondary schools have completed the learning project at the Falstad Centre.

In terms of motivation and interest, we expected the pupils to find the story gripping and the task a different contribution to learning than what a classroom may offer; a supplement to a foundation laid by the school. So far most of the pupils, if not all, find Grabowski's story interesting. The pupils are included in such a way that most of them actively participate in the work, dependent on a maximum number of five pupils to one group. There are, however, different levels and parts of the story that are emphasised as particularly interesting by the pupils who have answered this question in the plenary discussions. Some pupils find the fellow prisoners' narratives about Grabowski at Falstad the most interesting. They point to what fellow prisoners felt and experienced when they heard the cantor singing in the courtyard, which contrasted with the context of the performances. As one of the pupils stressed in his evaluation: "I have gained an insight into how the prisoners were treated, what things were like here. And that a little song could mean so much at a time with much evil". The pupils identified with the atmosphere the narratives conveyed, and became an angle for them to find out who the cantor was and what led him to this situation. The treatment of prisoners, indicative of a dehumanisation of the victim, is supplemented in the narratives and primary sources with descriptions of the victim's humanity; the pupils ensured a re-humanisation of the active person Grabowski. The pupils also focused on this aspect when they solved their work task, where they wrote about him working as a cantor in the congregation, singing in a choir, and working in the Jewish support organisation in Trondheim. The most interesting aspect here, is that the pupils added some qualities and events related to concerts not be found in any of the archives. One group chose to create a fictional person who had experienced Grabowski's song at first hand, and through this person an image of the cantor was created, partly from the primary sources and partly through their own imagination.

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There is a tendency to give the cantor a more significant role in the music life of Trondheim than he actually had. Grabowski is portrayed as a famous singer in the region, who gave many concerts, and they give several other similar pieces of information not referred to in the sources. The pupils' creative interpretation may be seen as an incorrect historical portrayal, but at the same time the source material is used as a starting-point and the

20 Traditionally, among researchers there have been two schools of thoughts on Holocaust; intentionalists and functionalists/structuralsists. See for example C. R Browning's book The Path to Genocide (1952), p. 85-121.
25 The project was initiated from Norway and Germany in 1991, by Magne Angvik at Bergen University College and Bodo von Borries from the University of Hamburg. The majority of data collection was conducted in most of the countries in spring 1995.
26 The project "The SS—trained for inhumanity" is an international collaborative project paying attention to the educational challenges of the perpetrators' perspective.
pupils interpret their task in the direction of the fellow prisoners' accounts. The tendency to give Grabowski a more significant role may also have something to do with an ordinary human being having been selected for teaching on the Holocaust. This fact may give the pupils the impression that our choice of case is based on his fame as a singer.

A third tendency, is that many pupils say that "we get a much more personal relationship to history", and that "we got to see the human being behind the numbers that we often hear about in connection with Holocaust". This tendency shows an awareness of an aspect which is one of the key objectives in the learning programme; the various stages of a genocide, and the connections between the various levels of history. We cannot conclude from this that the pupils have developed an understanding about all aspects of these issues, nor can we say what learning effect the programme really has, but what we can point to, however, is that there is an immediate reflection about connections and about the significance of the individual in genocides. There is no question that we are witnessing a re-humanisation of the victim, where the identity of the individual is being brought forward at the cost of anonymous numbers, and that this gives meaning to the pupils.

A fourth and equally important tendency so far, is that the pupils were motivated more by not being given a fully interpreted story, but instead were trusted to develop Grabowski's story in collaboration. In the final discussion it emerges that the largest motivational factor may have been working as a form of researcher with their tasks. To many this was a sort of "detective work" which appealed to their curiosity. "It was a very rewarding way to work" and it was "exciting to get a little glimpse of how history is created", was how two pupils expressed it. This attitude is echoed by most of the groups that have visited Falstad in connection with the learning programme, and it also corresponds with what we have observed regarding the pupils' efforts. If this really is a tendency, the learning programme may provide an interesting contribution to history and social science teaching and may strengthen the awareness of methodological challenges, and the learning programme may then also indicate a connection between participatory methodology, motivation and learning effect, which to a large degree can also be transferred to the classroom situation. I must also point out that there were exceptions to this tendency, where pupils handed in incomplete end products. This may be due to technical challenges caused by the production of digital narratives and radio reports and bad time management, but it could also indicate lack of interest and motivation for the learning programme. An important question, which cannot be answered in the scopes of this article, is: have we reached those who would not normally participate in school, or is it only the pupils who are "good at school" that we hear? We have also registered that some pupils expected more attention to be paid to the site itself; "I had hoped to hear more about Falstad as a prisoner of war camp". The gap between the expectations of some of the pupils and the content of the project suggests that information given before the visit should be improved.

When we summarise the learning programme together with the pupils, we have also asked them whether Grabowski's story can be made relevant today, and what parallels and differences may be discussed in the light of that. The pupils come up with a wide variety of topics, but their suggestions also share some characteristics, especially concerning comparisons with contemporary genocides. Comparisons are also drawn to more general societal challenges that the pupils identify in Norway today, such as racism, differences and stereotypes. To some pupils Grabowski's problems in obtaining a residence and work permit was the part they found the most interesting and wanted to find out more about. The reason was first, that they had no previous knowledge of that part of Norwegian interwar history and wanted to identify what caused the restrictive policy. Second, according to the pupils, they "knew people today who have been refugees". This motive reflects thoughts and ideas on the past-present perspectives, where the pupils have a desire to compare the refugee policy in the two epochs. This dimension has also led the pupils to a discussion about violations of human rights and minority issues in contemporary Norway, where some of the pupils emphasise differences between totalitarian and democratic societies.

However, this does not mean that we can conclude that the learning programme promotes an awareness and reflection about the relationship between the past and the present. For some pupils, providing present-day relevance for history is an abstract task; answers to questions related to today's world are often "textbook answers" that may be answers they think we want to hear, such as taking a critical stand to the comparative elements pointed out. A discussion at the end of the visit would not be sufficient to make visible the various topics pupils have brought up. Follow-up in school is important to enable delving deeper into the challenges and opportunities offered by comparing two epochs. This would also give time and space for pupils who need a safe environment to express themselves in.

27 Arne Johan Vetlesen, "Evil and Human Agency" (2005) and Lars Fr. Svendsen, "Ondskapens filosofi" (2001) are examples of Norwegian contributions to the debate on the nature of genocide, in particular the driving force of the perpetrators.
In general, the discussions show – provided the groups we have worked with so far are representative – that pupils tend to find Grabowski’s story relevant for discussing issues of democracy and human rights, but different pupils emphasise different parts of his story. They connect the concept of racism to their own environments, where derogatory remarks directed against ‘non-Western’ individuals and groups, Muslims, Jews etc. are aspects they know about and that provide concrete and relevant similarities between then and now, in spite of differences in time, society, regime and consequences. Parallels in prison treatment are also made by some of the pupils, where Falstad is compared to contemporary Guantanamo or Abu Ghraib. The most recurring parallel is that between genocides they know of from our time and Holocaust, whether it be the measures and use of propaganda in Rwanda or various forms of ethnic cleansing in Bosnia and Darfur.

The various aspects mentioned above suggest that the learning programme raises a lot of questions with the pupils, but that they need more follow-up in order to process and discuss the issues. It is not surprising that the results so far indicate that the schools preparing the pupils thoroughly have the most active pupils both in the work process and in discussions afterwards. The end products also mirror the pupils’ variation in previous experience with primary sources, manifesting itself in interpretations and narrative competence. When it comes to use of sources, this variation suggests a gap in the Norwegian educational system between the national curriculums and the pupils’ experience in the classroom. Museums and other institutions outside the school can partially fill that gap, but the topics should be integrated more even in schools in order to achieve a larger effect on learning.

CONCLUSION

Our experience of the programme so far, as well as the descriptions and discussions of it, reveal a range of challenges in this kind of education. Nevertheless, there is a lot of potential in following one individual story in order to gain an understanding of history and society. Of course, it is important to choose a limited amount of perspectives for a one day visit, the duration which most groups choose. Above, I have mentioned some of the topics presented to the students, along with the challenges related to these topics. In addition, Grabowski’s story invites a range of other issues that carries the story into the present, a point the pupils make after they have solved their tasks. The contemporary perspective includes various discourses such as racism and multicultural understanding, and can be used as a way of making pupils aware of national minorities, the role of music in extreme circumstances and other related ethical issues. Since this story has a more traditional victim’s perspective and not the perspective of a perpetrator, Grabowski’s story is not controversial in that sense. Had we chosen to combine the perspectives of victims, bystanders and perpetrators, the “grey areas” and complexity would have been an issue, but for now we have chosen this delimitation because of the time, level and aims of the programme. A full understanding of the nature of genocide, e.g. its causes, prerequisites, motivations and agents, will be somewhat reduced without any focus on the roles and motives of bystanders and perpetrators. Developing the learning programme to include the perspectives of the bystander and the perpetrator will be natural as research on these fields expands.27

However, our most important reason for the chosen perspectives is that Grabowski’s story illustrates central points of references in regards to Holocaust and that the primary sources invite knowledge and reflection about fundamental mechanisms separating democracy from totalitarian ideologies; in this case the Nazi policy leading millions of people to their deaths. ■

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