

Study on Sites of Memory and World Heritage

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Commissioned from the International Coalition of
Sites of Conscience by the World Heritage Centre
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International Coalition of Sites of Conscience

Founded in 1999, the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience (“the Coalition”) is the only worldwide network of Sites of Conscience. With over 230 members in 55 countries, we build the capacity of these vital institutions through grants, networking, training, transitional justice mechanisms and advocacy. These members and partners remember a variety of histories and come from a wide range of settings – including long-standing democracies, countries struggling with legacies of violence, as well as post-conflict regions just beginning to address their transitional justice needs – but they are all united by their common commitment to connect past to present, memory to action.

Sites of Conscience are at the crossroad of Human Rights advocacy and heritage conservation. They often deal with events in recent living memory. All Sites of Conscience are Sites of Memory but most Sites of Memory are not Sites of Conscience.

Terms of Reference

1. *Review existing theories and models of heritage interpretation and how to develop effective methods of heritage interpretation for future generations to assist States Parties and the World Heritage Committee in their deliberations;*
2. *Clarify the extent and ways in which inscription on the World Heritage List may affect the interpretation of cultural sites for present and future generations;*
3. *Shed light on the potential challenges and opportunities in the interpretation of sensitive cultural sites related to memory for visitors and the public at large, including the necessity of dealing, in some instances, with conflicting views of the values of a site;*
4. *Set out the ethical considerations on the interpretation and presentation of cultural sites of memory, given the varied range of approaches available;*
5. *Explain that the issue of interpretation is relevant not only for World Heritage properties, but also for any significant cultural site;*
6. *Focus on best practice of interpretation at Sites of Memory.*

PREPARATION - METHODOLOGY

Process:

Working Group of 10 +
« Correspondents »

Circulation of a discussion paper
(5 successive drafts)

Preliminary meeting + working
meeting

Provisional report – November
2017

Final Document – January 31 2018

Coverage:

Heritage places (cultural & natural)

**All Heritage properties (inscribed
of not)**

**Special attention to WH sites with
memorial aspects**

With continuous reference to:
UNESCO vision,
1972, 2003, 2005 Conventions,
relevant UNESCO
Recommendations and
Programmes

Audience

Primary Audience:

- World Heritage Committee
- States Parties to the Convention

Secondary audience:

- Heritage agencies
- Communities involved with particular sites
- Site managers
- Interpreters/ specialist consultants
- Other special interest groups

Working Definition of Sites of Memory

Sites of Memory ... are places which are vested with historical, social or cultural significance because of what happened there in the past....Some are obviously primarily Sites of Memory and their principal value is generally seen as such. Others will have aspects of memory which may not be seen by the public at large as the principal aspect of their value. (Report, para 51)

A specific location with architectural or archaeological evidence, or even specific landscape characteristics which can be linked to the memorial aspects of the place. (Report, para 47)

What are Sites of Memory 1

- Extreme natural events: earthquakes, tidal waves, volcanoes, great fires
- Hunter/gatherer site: (Head-Smashed-in Buffalo Jump)
- Home and/or grave of illustrious personalities (Confucius)
- Places associated with famous artists or scientists (Darwin, Cervantes)
- First European landing in the Americas (L'Anse aux Meadows)
- First landing in New Zealand (Tongariro National Park)
- End of an epidemic (Vienna Plague Column)
- Human rights affirmation (Statue of Liberty)
- Others including places of spirituality and religion

What are Sites of Memory (2)

- War sites (battlefields, war cemeteries)
- Places of human rights abuse:
 - Discrimination (racial, ethnic, religious, gender, minorities),
 - Slavery,
 - Crime against humanity (genocide),
 - War crimes, mass murder,
 - Ethnic cleansing, displaced peoples,
 - Colonial repression,
 - Forced labour, labour exploitation, indentureship
 - Crimes under dictatorship, repression of free speech, state sponsored terror, severe detention, internment, incarceration,
- Places of escape, refuges (Maroon sites, US Underground Railroad, Anne Frank's house)
- Places that celebrate accomplishments (homes of renowned activists, sites of resistance, sites of reconciliation and peace building)
- Places that record the deliberate destruction of heritage (Bamiyan, Palmyra, Timbuktu, Mostar)
- Others

Contents of the report

- 1 Introduction
 - 2 Growing importance of the intangible dimension of heritage, and of interpretation
 - 3 Sites of Memory
 - 4 Interpretation for understanding and sharing the multiple narratives of all heritage places
 - 5 The impact of the designation of Sites of Memory on their interpretation
 - 6 Recommendations
- Bibliography
- Membership of Expert Group
- ICOM and 'difficult issues
- Examples of good practice

17 Recommendations

Concerning all heritage sites:

- Approaches to Interpretation (*Inclusiveness of values and communities, multidisciplinary, changing over time*) (Recommendations 1-5)
- Principles for interpretation (Recommendation 6)
- Communication (*Inter-cultural, inter-generational programmes, full access, networking*) (Recommendations 7-10)
- Conservation (*material evidence and documentation*)(Recommendation 11)
- Intellectual Development and Capacity Building (Recommendation 12)

Concerning World Heritage properties and nominated properties 1

- 13 Make explicit reference to UNESCO values and vision in interpreting World Heritage properties, particularly if they have memorial aspects, in terms of cultural dialogue, mutual understanding and respect.
14. Urge that interpretation of a Site of Memory recognized as such follows the guidelines set out above for all Sites of Memory, with a global, international perspective and demonstrates its outstanding universal significance.
15. Recognize that some World Heritage properties and nominated properties proposed on the basis of other criteria may have memorial associative values which need to be interpreted as part of or in addition to their Outstanding Universal Value. If there are memorial aspects which may hurt some communities, whether at national or at the international level, this dimension should be particularly taken into account when developing the interpretation of the property.

Concerning World Heritage properties and nominated properties 2

16. In order to allow the development of inclusive interpretative frameworks, avoid World Heritage nomination of a property with potential divisive memories within some lapse of time (for instance 50 years or 2 generations after the events). *(NB there are other forms of recognition which may be more appropriate for many Sites of Memory of international significance)*

17. In developing interpretive frameworks for World Heritage properties or nominated properties which have memorial aspects, take into account any international independent academic review of interpretation proposals.

Conclusion

Both Sites of Memory and Sites of Conscience and, indeed, any site with memorial aspects can be contentious because of conflicting views among those concerned with them, and require careful interpretation of such differing views. This interpretation needs to be inclusive and address all the sensibilities associated with a particular place, as should designation and overall management of such places.