World Heritage :
50 Years and Moving Forward

Cultural Heritage Administration

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
국제연합 교육과학문화기구

whipic
International Centre for the Interpretation and Presentation of World Heritage Sites under the auspices of UNESCO
유네스코 세계문화유산해석실천센터

World Heritage :
50 Years and Moving Forward

Cultural Heritage Administration

whipic

An Anthology of World Heritage Interpretation and Presentation

Edited by Neil A. Silberman

Contributors

Sarah Court is an archaeologist and independent heritage consultant based in Italy. Her professional practice has been strongly influenced by over a decade of involvement with the Herculaneum Conservation Project (Italy), where she coordinated initiatives that promoted participatory approaches to cultural heritage in order to improve management strategies and realize heritage benefits for the local community. She contributes to the World Heritage Leadership programme as the focal point for impact assessment, as well as in activities relating to people-centred approaches to heritage management. With an M.St. degree in Interpretation, she also coordinates the ICOMOS Italia Committee for the Interpretation and Presentation of Cultural Heritage and provides support to WHIPIC activities.

Michelle Duong holds a Master of Architecture degree from Carleton University and Bachelor of Architectural Studies degree from the University of Waterloo. She has also completed a degree in History and Theory of Architecture and a graduate diploma in Architectural Conservation, also at Carleton. She is a member of CIPA Heritage Documentation, ICOMOS Canada and OurWorldHeritage, co-leading the CIPA Emerging Professionals team and the core team of the OWH team on Transformational Impacts of Information Technology. Michelle is a documentation specialist and researcher, formerly at the Carleton Immersive Media Studio in Ottawa, Canada, where she led projects documenting and modelling international World Heritage Sites after some time with the Digitally Assisted Storytelling team. She is currently an intern architect at KWC Architects in Ottawa.

Yesenia López García is a Costa Rican biologist and Adjunct Professor for undergraduate/graduate courses about environmental interpretation, environmental education, and tourism and sustainable development at Universidad de Costa Rica (UCR) and Universidad del Turismo (UTUR). With an M.Sc. in Biology, she is a researcher and founder of environmental education and natural heritage programmes and a speaker at international symposia, seminars and congresses on environmental education for sustainability and environmental interpretation as a tool for sustainable local tourist development. She is also coordinator of Reserva Ecológica Leonelo Oviedo (RELO), through the Protected Area Network research unit at UCR, responsible for design, implementation and evaluation of an interpretive planning proposal for the visitation and public use of RELO.

Shu-Mei Huang is an Associate Professor at the Graduate Institute of Building and Planning, National Taiwan University. Her research area intersects heritage studies, indigenous studies and recovery planning. Huang serves on the review committee of Historic Sites, Memorial Sites, Settlements, and Cultural Landscape under the Ministry of Culture of Taiwan. She recently co-edited a book, alongside Hyun Kyung Lee and Edward Vickers (2022), titled *Frontiers of Memory in the Asia-Pacific: Difficult Heritage and the Transnational Politics of Postcolonial Nationalism*, published by Hong Kong University Press.

William Logan is Professor Emeritus at Deakin University, where he was previously UNESCO Chair of Heritage and Urbanism. He has undertaken UNESCO and ICOMOS missions to Bangladesh (Paharpur), China (Lijiang), Laos (Luang Prabang, Wat Phou, Plain of Jars), Pakistan (Moenjodaro) and Viet Nam (Hanoi, Hue). He was member of the small team that drafted UNESCO's World Heritage and Sustainable Development policy (adopted November 2015) and was an invited expert at the Consultative Meeting on Cultural Rights at the United Nations Human Rights Commission, Geneva, in 2011, where he also addressed the Human Rights Council. He has published extensively on cultural heritage, particularly in relation to human rights, peace and security, cities and urban planning, World Heritage, and Vietnamese and other Asian heritage.

Daniel Morales is an architect postgraduate in the design and management of heritage systems; Deputy Director of the Institute of Cultural Heritage of the College of Architects of the Province of Cordoba, Argentina; director of the Culture Section of I-PAL; co-director of the training programme in the restoration of heritage assets; and a maintenance manager with more than twenty years of experience. He has participated in the Diploma of Law for people with disabilities at the National University of Cordoba. He also teaches technology to younger students and has planned and collaborated in many educational-cultural journeys with students to build a more complete and inclusive vision of identity.

Orlando Araque Pérez is a Mexican-Venezuelan architect, lecturer and trainer, expert in heritage management for tourism. He plans architectural refurbishment and conservation projects of natural and cultural heritage through his consultancy. He was part of a multidisciplinary team at the Children's Museum of Caracas. The team advises tourist municipalities, especially communities that make up the cultural tourism programme Pueblos Magicos in Mexico, on tangible and intangible assets declared World Heritage by UNESCO. Orlando is a member of ICOMOS, ICOM, AIP, I-PAL, NAI and OITS.

Mike Robinson is Professor of Cultural Heritage at Nottingham Trent University and Emeritus Professor at the University of Birmingham in the United Kingdom, where he was also Director of the Ironbridge International Institute for Cultural Heritage with the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site. He has held visiting professorships and fellowships in Italy, the United States, Taiwan and South Africa. For over thirty years and across forty countries, Mike has worked on projects exploring the relationships between heritage, culture and tourism. He has advised the UNESCO World Heritage Programme in Sustainable Tourism, was principal consultant to the UNESCO World Heritage European Journeys Project and has worked with UNESCO offices in China, the Middle East, Central Asia and South-East Asia. Mike is Principal Consultant with the Tourism, Heritage, Enterprise (THE) network. His research and consultancy focuses mainly on World Heritage and sustainable development, communicating World Heritage, cultural routes and heritage as a driver for enterprise and regeneration.

Mario Santana-Quintero is a full professor in the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering at Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada. He is also the director of the NSERC CREATE Heritage Engineering programme and faculty member of the Carleton Immersive Media Studio Lab. Along with his academic activities, he serves as Secretary General of ICOMOS, and was formerly president of the ICOMOS Scientific Committee on Heritage Documentation. Furthermore, he has been a Getty Conservation Institute scholar and has collaborated in several international projects in the field of heritage documentation for the institute, UNESCO, Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities, ICCROM, World Monuments Fund, UNDP, Welfare Association and the Department of Culture and Tourism of Abu Dhabi. In 2018 he was awarded a Doctorate Honoris Causa from the University of Liege, Belgium, and since 2021 has been an elected member of the Association of Preservation Technology College of Fellows.

Neil Silberman is an author and heritage scholar with a special interest in the politics and impact of heritage on contemporary society. He served for a decade as the founding president of the ICOMOS International Scientific Committee on Interpretation and Presentation. In that position he served as chief editor of the 2008 ICOMOS Charter for the Interpretation and Presentation of Cultural Heritage Sites. From 2004 to 2007 he served as director of the Ename Center for Public Archaeology and Heritage Presentation in Belgium. In 2008 he joined the faculty of the Department of Anthropology of the University of Massachusetts Amherst and became one of the founders of its Center for Heritage and Society. He is now a managing partner of Coherit Associates, an international heritage consultancy, and is co-editor of *The Oxford Handbook of Public Heritage Method and Practice* (2018).

Gamini Wijesuriya is an architect and archaeologist, and renowned heritage conservation and management professional with over forty years of experience. Dr Wijesuriya was the recipient of an ICCROM award in 2021 in recognition of his significant contributions to the development of ICCROM and to the field of cultural heritage in his native Sri Lanka and internationally. He is known for his work on World Heritage and pioneering work on living heritage and people-centred approaches to conservation that have gained attention worldwide. He served as Director of Conservation of Sri Lanka (1983–2000) and a Principal Regional Scientist of the New Zealand Department of Conservation (2001–4). He was a staff member at ICCROM (2004–17) before his retirement. He has obtained a Ph.D. from Leiden University, Netherlands; an M.A. from the University of York, United Kingdom; an M.A. from Carnegie-Mellon University, United States; as well as M.Sc. and B.Sc. degrees in Sri Lanka on a variety of heritage-related subjects.

Yujie Zhu is Associate Professor in the Centre for Heritage and Museum Studies at the Australian National University. His research focuses on cultural heritage, particularly in relation to politics, social memory and cultural tourism. His recent books include *Heritage Tourism* (2021), *Heritage Politics in China* (2020, with Christina Maags) and *Heritage and Romantic Consumption in China* (2018). His work has shown heritage to be a powerful instrument of identity-making, memory activism, geopolitics, post-conflict recovery and reconciliation. He served as Vice-President of the Association of Critical Heritage Studies from 2014 to 2020.

I-PAL is a professional network established to encourage collaboration to contribute to the professional development of heritage interpretation in Latin America and the Caribbean. As the primary purpose, I-PAL aims to support the efforts of heritage interpreters in their development and recognition of their work in planning interpretive programmes in museums, national parks, zoos, botanical gardens, aquariums, historical sites, theme parks, aviaries, planetariums and other related sites. It also promotes the interpretation of natural and cultural heritage as a profession that develops thought-provoking experiences which help transmit knowledge, deepen understanding and establish an intellectual and emotional connection between visitors and their environment. Furthermore, I-PAL focuses on consolidating heritage interpretation in Latin America and the Caribbean as a professional discipline that requires research-based theory, standards for practice, training, continuous education and organizational representation for its progress.

Foreword

Fifty years have passed since the adoption of the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (the World Heritage Convention) in 1972. Over the past five decades, public awareness of heritage protection has grown significantly and international cooperation for effective conservation practices has strengthened beyond national boundaries. However, it has become clear that improvements can be made to some aspects of the World Heritage system, whose conservational and managerial discourses have centred on Outstanding Universal Value. At the same time, the involvement of the public has been increasingly important beyond expert-led practices because of communities' regular contact with the heritage places around them.

In January 2022, after a two-year preparatory period, the International Centre for the Interpretation and Presentation of World Heritage Sites under the auspices of UNESCO (WHIPIC) was established as a UNESCO Category 2 Centre in the Republic of Korea. The movement towards encompassing the perspectives of diverse stakeholders in the World Heritage system has engendered interest in the concepts of World Heritage interpretation and presentation, aimed at integrating various values and meanings of World Heritage Sites. Since 2020, WHIPIC has organized series of online lectures and webinars to act as a platform to raise awareness of World Heritage interpretation and presentation, and to promote communication between experts and the general public. Free participation and exchange of opinions during these series enabled a general audience as well as professionals from broad fields to find out about these emerging concepts and to discuss their visions of the shape the World Heritage Convention should take in future.

In this edited volume, *World Heritage: 50 Years and Moving Forward*, heritage scholars from various regions around the world present their ideas and thoughts about World Heritage interpretation and presentation. They have developed and expanded their previous studies based on talks they gave for the online lectures and webinar series. In particular, this volume, published to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the World Heritage Convention, not only discusses the meanings and significance the World Heritage system has brought to the heritage field but also considers its limitations and potential for the coming decades.

I thank everyone involved in this significant project for their generous support and hard work. As a stepping stone for the next fifty or even one hundred years of the World Heritage Convention, I hope the book will encourage experts and the general public to understand and sympathize with the diverse meanings and values of the World Heritage Sites around us.

Chae Su-hee
Director General, WHIPIC

Introduction

Neil Silberman

Introduction

Neil Silberman

The formal establishment of the International Centre for World Heritage Interpretation and Presentation (WHIPIC) as a UNESCO category 2 centre in the Republic of Korea in January 2022 marks an important milestone in the continuing development of effective and inclusive cultural communication at World Heritage Sites. Its value as a centre of research, capacity-building and global networking can hardly be overestimated as the theories and techniques of interpretation and presentation have often been relegated to marginal and largely undefined roles in the World Heritage process – and, in the multicultural world of the twenty-first century, the need for effective, socially productive intercultural communication about cultural and natural heritage is more pressing than ever before. How can we reflect on the past in a way that encompasses all perspectives? How can nations that have been long embroiled in conflict reconcile conflicting historical narratives? And, most urgent of all, how can World Heritage interpretation and presentation help raise global awareness and action regarding climate change, and help communities around the world implement sustainable development goals?

This volume offers important reflections on these challenging questions and seeks to highlight some of the themes that will occupy the attention and energies of WHIPIC in the coming years. The chapters in this volume present a wide range of perspectives on the opportunities and challenges of accessible and inclusive interpretation and presentation at World Heritage Sites, contributed by participants in WHIPIC online lecture and webinar series in 2020 and 2021, as well as by additional contributors who have been invited to share their perspectives. As readers of this volume will see, the themes of importance to effective cultural communication at World Heritage Sites are wide ranging; they cover subjects from peacemaking, to community engagement, to digital technologies, to education and reconciliation, through innovative interpretation and presentation philosophies and techniques.

Beginning with an attempt at defining the terms 'interpretation' and 'presentation', and the distinct role that each plays in the public understanding of the values and significance of World Heritage Sites, the subsequent chapters of this volume deal with specific aspects of interpretation and presentation within the World Heritage process.

The chapter by Professor William Logan of Deakin University stresses the importance of ensuring that the interpretation of sites nominated for inclusion in the World Heritage List conforms to the foundational peacemaking role of UNESCO. In addition, Professor Logan suggests that the interpretation of both inscribed and potential World Heritage Sites should serve to advance the World Heritage Committee's Policy for the Integration of a Sustainable Development Perspective into the Processes of the World Heritage Convention. In both cases, the interpretation of places associated with memories of recent conflicts – between States Parties, States Parties and their former colonial rulers, and even between rival groups within a single State Party – should encourage reconciliation and intercultural understanding between former belligerents. Presenting case studies from Australia, Japan, Rwanda, Türkiye and Viet Nam, Professor Logan describes how these policy objectives are being addressed by national heritage officials and local site managers.

In the next chapter, Professor Mike Robinson of the University of Birmingham, founder of the Centre for Tourism and Cultural Change, offers a provocative overview of one of the most serious tensions within World Heritage interpretation and presentation – namely, the uneasy relationship between the Convention's emphasis on the shared heritage of humanity and the emphasis of individual States Parties on the elaboration and commemoration of their distinct national identities. According to Robinson, this tension, seemingly becoming more dramatic and divisive in recent years, poses a serious threat to the universalistic aspirations of the World Heritage Convention and poses a direct challenge to the role of interpretation and presentation in raising awareness and assisting in the conservation of global heritage on a shared, rather than particularistic basis.

Interpretation and presentation have long been seen as important media for education. In his chapter, Yujie Zhu, Senior Lecturer at the Centre for Heritage and Museum Studies of the Australian National University, presents an innovative approach to assessing the contribution of heritage to public education. In describing a scale of heritage interpretation activities in the form of a ladder, rising from superficial entertainment, through the communication of factual information, to personal revelation and immersion, culminating in the transformational potential of interpretation as a medium of reconciliation in post-conflict situations, Dr Zhu emphasizes the benefits of seeing heritage interpretation as an inclusive educational strategy that engages all stakeholders to work together to acknowledge and prioritize the needs of marginalized groups and communities.

In the twenty-first century, World Heritage interpretation and presentation has, in some cases, become a subject of acrimonious political and ethical conflict. In her chapter, Professor Shu-Mei Huang of the National Taiwan University analyses one such case: the discussions regarding the presentation of the 'Sites of Japan's Meiji Industrial Revolution', nominated by Japan for inscription on the World Heritage List in 2015. By avoiding more than a superficial reference to the exploitation of Korean and Chinese forced labourers

there during the Second World War, the inscription of Hashima Island on the World Heritage List failed to acknowledge a significant and tragic chapter in the history of the site. Professor Huang utilizes this case study to pose the more general question of how the interpretation of World Heritage Sites can facilitate reconciliation and peacemaking, through open discussion rather than the omission of painful historical events. Her suggestion is that interpretation can serve as a dialogical process in which stakeholders are encouraged to participate in ongoing discussion about issues of accountability and reconciliation through reflection on silences and erasures in official narratives about the past.

The increasingly prominent role played by digital technologies in heritage interpretation and presentation is examined in the chapter by Mario Santana-Quintero, professor at Carleton University in Canada and Secretary-General of the International Council on Monuments and Sites, and Michelle Duong, researcher at the Carleton Immersive Media Studio. Surveying the challenges and benefits of digital technologies for documentation and interpretation in the post-COVID-19 pandemic era, they suggest that the ethically directed use of technology is an essential tool in the documentation and nomination of potential World Heritage Sites, in enhancing visitor experience at inscribed sites, as well as for continuous monitoring and the precise planning of risk management strategies and ongoing conservation work.

Gamini Wijesuriya, senior advisor at the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM), notes in his chapter the continuing need for interpretive planning at World Heritage Sites. As an eloquent proponent of 'people-centred heritage', he underscores the increased emphasis on local community engagement in the strategic directives of the World Heritage Committee and suggests that both interpretation and presentation should become essential components of the overall management planning of World Heritage Sites. Moreover, Wijesuria highlights the dynamic character of site interpretation that reflects multiple perspectives and changing perceptions of the importance of such themes as human rights, heritage conflicts and sustainable development goals, and advocates their integration in the interpretive planning of nominated sites – as well as the advisability of revisiting interpretive texts and activities at already-inscribed World Heritage Sites.

In her chapter on the importance of local community participation in interpretation, Sarah Court, consultant to the World Heritage Leadership Programme of ICCROM and the International Union for Conservation and Nature, explores how public engagement can give communities a greater role in World Heritage activities. Recognizing the need to measure more accurately the impact of public participation on the interpretation and management of heritage places, she compares practitioner-led and participatory

approaches to interpretation planning and delivery at two World Heritage properties on the Bay of Naples in southern Italy: the archaeological site of Herculaneum in Ercolano and the neighbourhood of Rione Sanità in Naples. As she relates, participatory approaches were found to include a greater range of heritage values, and she suggests that participatory interpretation not only improves the visitor experience but can also potentially also contribute to improved management and overall sustainability.

Each region of the world naturally possesses a distinct context for heritage interpretation and has developed its characteristic methods of communicating the values and significance of the past. This volume's concluding chapter, contributed by members of the professional network of Heritage Interpretation for Latin America and the Caribbean (I-PAL) and based on semi-structured interviews and direct observation of interpretive practices at heritage sites throughout the region, documents the development of interpretation and presentation in Latin America and the Caribbean and highlights its potential for linguistic diversity in Spanish, French and Portuguese, as well as its integration in future heritage planning initiatives.

This inaugural volume in the WHIPIC research publication series will thus offer heritage professionals, interpretive specialists, site managers and other interested readers important insights on the potential to be realized and the pitfalls to be avoided in constructively communicating the significance of humanity's cultural inheritance – as the field of World Heritage interpretation and presentation expands and deepens in the coming years.

Neil Silberman
21 November 2022

Chapter 1

What is World Heritage Interpretation and Presentation?

Neil Silberman

What is World Heritage Interpretation and Presentation?

Neil Silberman

Abstract

This chapter will seek to provide a general overview of the role of interpretation and presentation at World Heritage Sites – and by example at heritage sites at the regional, national and local levels. It will suggest that the quest for a single universal definition of interpretation and presentation deserves continuing reflection, since the two terms – often understood and used as synonyms – each possess distinct histories. This chapter will trace the historical contexts in which the two terms emerged and will highlight their underlying philosophies and social roles in contemporary society. Though both terms are usually considered to be forms of objective, factual, historiographical and scientific explanation, the deeper examination now under way under the auspices of the International Centre for World Heritage Interpretation and Presentation of World Heritage Sites is fully justified. Indeed, such a reconsideration of the terminology of cultural heritage communication may be essential for the future development (and effectiveness) of World Heritage processes and the public appreciation of specific properties. This chapter will revisit the distinction between didactic 'presentation' and experiential 'interpretation' as defined in the 2008 ICOMOS Charter for the Interpretation and Presentation of Cultural Heritage Sites. It will further suggest that the deeper significance of heritage communication in all its forms will not be found in a single, all-encompassing definition or universal methodology, but rather in the impact that the various forms of public discussion and reflection about cultural and natural heritage exert on the character of contemporary society.

World Heritage seems so solid, so stable, so timeless – a local and global collection of unique places, structures and ideas that have somehow survived the forces of time. That capacity for survival across years, centuries, millennia is a deeply reassuring sentiment shared in various forms by all of humanity (Lowenthal, 2011). At its most basic psychological level, heritage reminds us that time and decay can be resisted, even if they cannot ever be completely overcome (DeSilvey, 2012; Wells, 2020). The 1972 World Heritage Convention remains the flagship programme of UNESCO to promote and protect the cultural and natural heritage of humanity. Yet, over the years, its Operational Guidelines and other policies have been refined and expanded, seeking to widen the geographical distribution of World Heritage properties (Labadi, 2005), elaborating new understandings of authenticity and Outstanding Universal Value (Khalaf 2020), and adding a new category of eligibility to encompass the world's seemingly infinite variety of cultural landscapes and the values that are accorded them (Rössler, 2006). The interpretation and presentation of World Heritage Sites of every type, size and associated values compose the main channel through which World Heritage – and indeed all the world's heritage – is disseminated to all classes of stakeholders: visitors, local residents, associated communities, heritage managers and heritage policymakers alike.

Figure 1. On-site interpreter at the site of Pachacamac, Peru, 2005. (Photo: author's own.)

Indeed, interpretation and presentation are rich and complex subjects for further research and methodological experimentation. Each in its own way has always been an important heritage activity, even if they have sometimes been regarded as secondary to the work of historical research and physical conservation at World Heritage and other regional, national and local sites. Yet the use of the dual terms 'interpretation' and 'presentation' to describe the act of explaining and communicating the values of every inscribed World Heritage Site is somewhat puzzling, as they are sometimes understood as mere synonyms.

The texts of the World Heritage Convention and the Operational Guidelines use both terms without explaining precisely what either of them mean. Article 4 of the World Heritage Convention, for example, declares that 'each State Party to this Convention recognizes the duty of ensuring the identification, protection, conservation, presentation and transmission to future generations' of the world's cultural and natural heritage (UNESCO, 1972). But nowhere in the Convention text is the term 'presentation' further defined. The Operational Guidelines use both terms interchangeably, generally equating them with the public 'explanation' of World Heritage Sites (UNESCO, 2022).

So what exactly is the difference between the two? As I will suggest in this chapter, we must revisit our most basic definitions of both interpretation and presentation, for each word has a history and a specific meaning within the heritage field. I believe that the terms should be distinguished clearly, especially because, as I will attempt to explain, each has a distinct function and history. Moreover, understanding their distinct roles has become an increasingly pressing challenge as the scope of heritage has dramatically widened, since both interpretation and presentation have been obliged to serve many explanatory tasks: to encompass both the tangible and the intangible (Ahmad, 2006); to deal with grim memory places with conflicted pasts to reflect on, not venerate (Sevcenko, 2010); to explain how sacred sites whose value is informed by Indigenous concepts merge the traditional heritage binary of nature and culture (Beacham et al., 2017); and, not least of all, to commemorate the modern landmarks of architecture, scientific achievement and art (Weaver, 2011).

World Heritage interpretation and presentation, however, should not be seen as strictly antiquarian endeavours. Beyond the aim of raising public awareness about the significance of the sites inscribed on the World Heritage List and encouraging support for their physical conservation, interpretation and presentation can serve as inspirations for a wide range of other social processes that utilize explanations of material remains to justify such varied goals as peacemaking efforts, authoritarian ideologies, contemporary political struggles, human rights crusades, aesthetic preferences or the joy of community solidarity, and even provide leisure-time entertainment that can boost local economies (Bendix et al., 2012; Silberman, 2012; Smith, 2006).

In the following pages, I will trace the history and definitions of the two terms 'interpretation' and 'presentation' in order to highlight their evolving roles in the theory and practice of heritage preservation and promotion from the nineteenth century to the present day.

Presentation as Pedagogy

I will begin with the term 'presentation', which is defined in the 2008 International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) Charter as 'the carefully planned communication of interpretive content through the arrangement of interpretive information, physical access, and interpretive infrastructure at a cultural heritage site' (ICOMOS, 2008). As such, it is characterized in the charter primarily as a one-way medium of communication that usually requires some management authority over the site (in the case of text panels, visitor centres and authorized guided tours), and the means to publish or otherwise disseminate printed and online content in the case of off-site presentation. Its primary characteristic is therefore its didactic form, communicated to the general public on the basis of an authorized academic source, usually by an official heritage agency.

Figure 2. Interpretation? Presentation? Learning about the World Heritage site of Brú na Bóinne, Ireland, 2015. (Photo: author's own.)

Of course, promoting public appreciation of heritage monuments through the techniques of presentation has not always been entrusted to governments, academic authorities, museums and cultural organizations. Though today the presentation of cultural and natural heritage is recognized as a special skill, combining expert knowledge with a flair for engaging performance, graphic design skills or – increasingly – facility with digital technologies, it obviously was not always that way. In fact, it might be fair to say that before the emergence of modern cultural heritage practice, heritage presentation was a quasi-religious ritual, performed by elders and professional bards. In traditional societies, the past was considered an integral part of the present. In this view, the whole world and everything in it was a heritage site. For many Indigenous groups who still maintain traditional lifeways, wisdom indeed 'sits in places', as the anthropologist Keith Basso (1996) famously observed. Describing the stories passed on by the tribal elders of the Western Apache in the American Southwest, he noted how significant features of the landscape

bore visual witness to ancestors' exploits, ancient battles and boundaries, and the earthly traces of cosmic creation myths. The landscape was thus presented as an evocative historical record that embodied collective understandings of the significance of past, present and future. And so it was – and still is – not only for Indigenous peoples but also for many other communities and social groups all over the world.

Scattered allusions in ancient texts testify to a similar legendary interpretation of the ever-present past embodied in tangible features of the landscape. Geographical oddities, unique geological phenomena and venerated sites were all seen (or interpreted) as visible verifications of cherished religious narratives. These 'origin stories' were the earliest form of heritage presentations that aimed at keeping traditional knowledge alive. In the Bible, for example, a prominent pillar of salt in the southern Dead Sea region was associated with the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah; twelve large stones rising above the surface of the Jordan River near Jericho and the 'great heap of stones' in the hill country near Ai were each seen as reminders of the conquest of Canaan under Joshua (Long, 2011). Buddhism's four principal shrines – Lumbini, Bodh Gaya, Sarnath and Kusinagara – placed instructive episodes of the life of the Buddha at specific places on the landscape, forming a composite geographical narrative that enlightened the faithful (Geary and Shinde, 2021). Such was also the case with the exotic descriptions of the famous landmarks of Egypt by Herodotus in the fifth century BC (Manuel, 2022), and those in Greece described by Pausanias in the second century as the actual locales of the great events of Greek myth (Alcock et al., 2001). These ancient 'heritage places' were all symbolic, materialization of venerated narratives, in which each physical landmark represented a particular episode. And so it continued for centuries in the customs of Jewish, Christian and Muslim pilgrimage, in which the presentation of place-based historical traditions shaped human belief and behaviour rather than being a factual description of empirical evidence.

In times of change and intellectual ferment, the contents of the presentations changed but the basic purpose remained. Significant sites and features of the landscape were still presented by local guides and religious authorities as tangible evidence of sacred events and personalities. With the rise of the cult of relics in many regions, material objects and structures connected with sacred figures offered a new medium for physical contact with the divine. To visit a saint's tomb or touch a martyr's relic was to establish a direct, tactile connection to the source of life-giving grace that could heal sickness and answer fervent prayers (Brown, 2009). And as the humanist artists and explorers of the European Renaissance would subsequently show, communion with ancient monuments and relics could become a kind of secular religion. Cyriac of Ancona, among the first of the European Renaissance antiquarians, travelled widely throughout the eastern Mediterranean in the fifteenth century, studying, drawing and describing long-ignored and neglected classical remains (Belozerskaya, 2009). His was not merely a search for information, but a pilgrim's quest for communion with spiritual ancestors. When asked by a priest why he so tirelessly searched for half-buried ruins, sarcophagi and ancient Latin inscriptions – which we would today unhesitatingly call archaeological artefacts and heritage places – Cyriac revealed his higher motive: 'to bring the dead back to life'.

Presentation took on new forms in Europe as the Grand Tour became the key to the cultural literacy of young aristocrats and noble travellers (Brodsky-Porges, 1981). The Romantic movement gave rise to new approaches to illuminating the significance of iconic structures as embodiments of national character (Jensen et al., 2010). And with the rise of mass tourism by train and steamship in the nineteenth century, presentation of exotic places and monuments became the lucrative profession of countless tour guides, guidebooks and popular lecturers (Koshar, 1998) – all too many of whom, as the American humorist Mark Twain hilariously recounted in his travelogue *Innocents Abroad* (1869), had only a passing knowledge of reliable facts.

Alois Riegl, the great Austrian art historian and first Conservator General of Monuments of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, laid the foundation for modern heritage presentation in his classic essay 'The modern cult of monuments' (Lamprakos, 2014), which was meant to serve as a rationale and justification for the new imperial monument protection law. Riegl explained that in earlier times, commemoration of the past was a private or religious matter. Monuments were arbitrarily erected by churches, families and individuals to commemorate venerated ancestors, miraculous acts and other noteworthy events. But Riegl insisted that now, at the turn of the twentieth century, some order had to be imposed. The physical traces of the past would henceforth be governmentalized and given over to specially trained experts, appropriate in an age that had become increasingly dependent on experts with specialist educations to classify and manage the resources of the State. Heritage professionals (like Riegl himself) were now empowered on behalf of the government to designate official monuments that, according to their expert opinion, bore outstanding historical or artistic significance. Thus was born what Laurajane Smith (2006) has called the 'authorized heritage discourse' or what the philosopher Eric Matthes (2018) has called the 'positive view' of heritage. Put most simply, a new cadre of professional administrators and scholars, not only in the Hapsburg Empire but throughout Europe, were given the responsibility of defining and explaining to the general public exactly what heritage was.

Significant sites now had to be consciously 'presented' to emphasize their importance in the most positive and conspicuous way. And the proper techniques of presentation were a matter of consensus among scholars and experts. The landmark Athens Charter for the Restoration of Historic Monuments, adopted by the First International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments (1931), identified national governments as 'the wardens of civilization' and urged active official involvement in the presentation of ancient sites in a series of specific recommendations:

> Firmly convinced that the best guarantee in the matter of the preservation of monuments and works of art derives from the respect and attachment of the peoples themselves; Considering that these feelings can very largely be promoted by appropriate action on the part of public authorities; Recommends that educators should urge children and young people to abstain from disfiguring monuments of every description and that they should teach them to take a greater and more general interest in the protection of these concrete testimonies of all ages of civilisation. (Article VIIb)

To add to the strictly educational dimension of heritage presentation, the Athens Charter was also concerned with the visual aspect, recommending that the surroundings of ancient monuments should be given special consideration and that a study should be made of 'the ornamental vegetation most suited to certain monuments or groups of monuments from the point of view of preserving their ancient character', recommending 'the suppression of all forms of publicity, of the erection of unsightly telegraph poles and the exclusion of all noisy factories and even of tall shafts in the neighbourhood of artistic and historic monuments' (Article III).

Presentation was thus reserved for scholars, educators and heritage policymakers, and discussion of the subject as a top-down method of cultural communication continued and even intensified after the Second World War under the auspices of UNESCO. As Cameron and Rössler (2013, p. 40) relate, early in its own history UNESCO organized an international committee of experts, whose work during the 1950s included 'information-sharing on preservation and presentation techniques'. Little wonder then that the text of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, exclusively used the term 'presentation' in its text to describe the public communication of information about historic districts and heritage monuments. Its meaning was clear: as noted in the 1964 Venice Charter, which served as an important source of inspiration for the World Heritage Convention, the 'sites of monuments must be the object of special care in order to safeguard their integrity and ensure that they are cleared and presented in a seemly manner' (Second International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments, 1964, Article 14). Yet the defining characteristics of that seemliness of presentation was a matter best left to international experts to decide.

Interpretation as Reflection

While the tradition of heritage presentation focused on the expert-driven communication of authorized information in a 'seemly manner', an alternative route to increasing public

understanding in the significance of both cultural and natural heritage arose in the awe-inspiring landscapes of the American West. John Muir, the legendary naturalist, conservationist and philosopher who is credited with establishing the main outlines of the environmental conservation movement, saw personal revelation and reflection – rather than the acceptance of expert opinion – as the heart of heritage understanding (Oravec, 1981). Deeply influenced by the transcendentalist philosophy of Ralph Waldo Emerson (for whom he served as a guide during Emerson's visit to Yosemite in 1871), Muir possessed an almost religious passion for experiencing the grandeur of nature. Indeed, in one of his elegies on the grandeur of Yosemite Valley, he is credited with the first use of the word 'interpret' to describe his personal dedication to conserving its spectacular landscape of forests, mountains, famous waterfall and soaring cliff face. In his memoirs of his first encounter with Yosemite, Muir vowed: 'As long as I live, I'll hear waterfalls and birds and winds sing. I'll interpret the rocks, learn the language of flood, storm, and the avalanche. I'll acquaint myself with the glaciers and wild gardens, and get as near the heart of the world as I can' (quoted in Wolfe, 2003, p. 144).

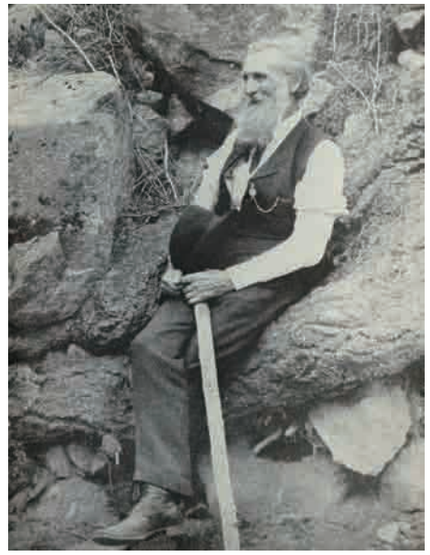


Figure 3. John Muir (1838–1914), 1907. (Photo: Francis M. Fritz.)

Indeed Muir's influence on the expanding 'interpretation' programmes of the US National Park Service for both natural and cultural heritage was profound (Brockman, 1978). The classic exposition of this experiential approach to heritage communication was written in 1957 by the US Park Service official Freeman Tilden. Tilden's classic work *Interpreting Our Heritage* described six guiding principles, each of which stressed the central role of personal revelation in the mind and spirit of the visitor, activated by the heritage guide (Tilden, 2008). These principles included a creative communication style, the ability to spark the visitor's imagination about the significance of the site and sensitivity to the cultural or educational level of any group of visitors to determine the appropriate tone with which they should be addressed. Later followers of Tilden expanded the number of principles to modernize them for twenty-first-century audiences (Beck and Cable, 2002), but the revelatory – rather than pedagogical – goal of one-way discourse from a guide to their listeners remained the same. And it had a very specific purpose. Tilden urged that not only aesthetic and historical information be communicated, but also a conservation ethic as well. 'Through interpretation,' he wrote, 'understanding; through understanding,

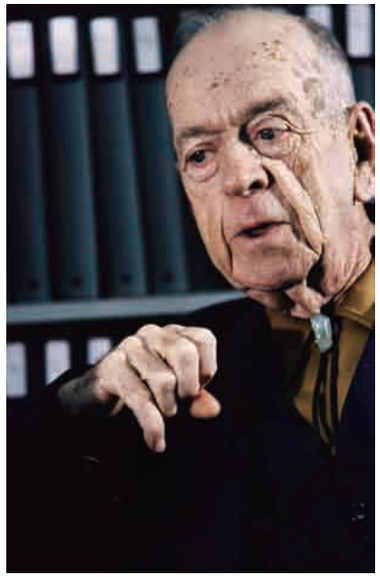


Figure 4. Freeman Tilden (1883–1980), 1965. (Photo: Wilber "Bud" E. Dutton.)

appreciation; through appreciation, protection' (Tilden, 2008, p. 38). This was Tilden's much quoted dictum, which has served as a guiding motto of heritage interpretation and the global profession it has spawned.

This approach centred on the emotional impact of cultural and natural heritage on the visitor, rather than the communication of expert opinions and empirical facts. The audience is assumed to be composed of distinct and autonomous individuals, whose 'personality and experience' – rather than knowledge, communal identity or sociocultural orientation – are, according to Tilden, the targets of interpretation's direct relational appeal. Its content – its view of historical 'truth' – is enlightened but not dictated by the perspectives of historians, architects and archaeologists. It is seen as an action designed to promote public appreciation for the importance of heritage, its physical vulnerability and the necessity for its conservation through personal commitment. And this distinctive, activist method of cultural communication was enthusiastically adopted in Great Britain and Australia under the influence of Tilden's writings and ideas (Black and Weiler, 2003; Light, 1991).

Even this brief overview of the development of the techniques of heritage explanation clearly indicates that 'presentation' and 'interpretation' are not indistinguishable synonyms. Each term has a its own historical context and each has its own goal. As the historian and cultural policy scholar Dipesh Chakrabarty (2002) has noted, a contrast can be seen in the museum world. There, a traditional, top-down pedagogical approach was opposed by a turn to an ever-greater measure of active public participation, which Chakrabarty characterized as a 'performative' approach. From its primary responsibility of inculcating the public (and, in particular, young people) in majoritarian civic values, cultural heritage communication was becoming a vivid, if sometimes contentious, reflection on the past that served to enrich and reinforce individual experience and identity.

Thus, as noted in the definitions of the 2008 ICOMOS Charter, the term 'presentation' refers to formalized statements about heritage significance, in most cases carried out by the official stewards of the locality or the state at sites and through formalized methods and conservation principles of which they approve. In contrast to its definition of expert-designed presentation, the charter characterizes 'interpretation' as the full range of potential activities intended to heighten the public awareness and emotional resonance of a cultural heritage site. In that sense, interpretation can – and is – done by every visitor and staff member at a heritage site. Everyone tries to make sense of the site's significance and its relevance to their understanding of the world. What distinguishes the two terms is the role of the visitors in the process: in presentation they are for the most part passive consumers of information; in interpretation they are active participants in making meaning and making sense of a site's significance.

Figure 5. Visitors at the Temple of Karnak, Egypt, 2006. (Photo: author's own.)

A Conflict of Visions

Increasingly, the unfortunate truth is that, in our time, heritage is not seen by everyone as a universally recognized and shared resource, nor are its official stewards always regarded as impartial guardians. Postcolonial independence and civil rights movements have given rise to yet another meaning of the term 'heritage place'. As mentioned above, the creation of 'officialized' heritage places by national governments gave voice to essentialized, self-justifying narratives of national distinctiveness that ignored or downplayed the heritage perspectives of Indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities. Yet the eventual recognition of Indigenous rights and the legitimation of the cultural (if not always full political) autonomy of ethnic minorities led to the identification of their own set of heritage places as proud symbols of independence from the long-dominant majority elites. Heritage self-definition became a declaration of independence from a presumably united (although unjust and unequal) society. And therein lies the cruel irony of this stage of the evolution of heritage places. In encouraging acceptance and respect for the cultural monuments and expressions of all polities and peoples, there is a tendency for more and more social groups with aspirations for legitimation and legal recognition to define heritage in a highly essentialized way (Rico, 2008). As a zero-sum game, heritage can turn conflictual and sometimes deadly. The power to unilaterally declare where heritage significance lies, to craft self-justifying historical

narratives, and to demand repatriation and control of sacred places and objects, have all come to define a new way of dealing with heritage in the age of identity politics (Silverman, 2011).

As we see in so many places today, irreconcilable conflicts over what heritage is, how and to whom it is significant, and which nations or ethnic groups own it have sometimes become matters of bitter dispute. Both the didactic approach of traditional 'presentation' and the individual experiential dimension of 'interpretation' often fail to address adequately the reality of conflicting perspectives. Among the many examples that could be cited are the contested history of Jerusalem, the political controversies over the Kasubi tombs in Uganda, the destruction of the Buddhas of Bamiyan, the cultural affinities and territorial significance of the Preah Vihear temple on the border of Thailand and Cambodia and the conflict between Hindus and Muslims over religious primacy at Ayodhya in India. And that is before we even start to speak about the destruction of the unique Sufi tombs and libraries in Timbuktu in Mali, and the extensive devastation of World Heritage Sites in Syria and Iraq by religious fundamentalist groups that interpret certain kinds of heritage as idolatry.

But we need not dwell only on these cases of violent heritage conflict to grasp the full extent of the problem, for in our era of identity politics, Indigenous rights campaigns and increasing regional autonomy, the control of heritage sites and objects – and their interpretation and presentation – have become bones of contention between regions, localities, communities, ethnic groups and nation states all over the world. This situation poses complex challenges to the possibility of a single, 'universal' method of both interpretation and presentation that will unfailingly mobilize unanimous community support.

The power to define what heritage *is* has now become a means of expressing the dignity and political aspirations of contemporary ethnic minorities, Indigenous peoples, local communities and diasporic groups (Weiss, 2007). The familiar typologies of monuments and intangible heritage elements may be useful for techniques of physical conservation, but do not fully explain why or even if they are significant (Fredheim and Khalaf, 2016). And because heritage significance, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder, there can be no single definition of what heritage is that encompasses its vast range of material types (Cameron, 2020). Thus, I am convinced that it is time to consider a new approach towards a definition of cultural communication at World Heritage (and indeed all heritage) Sites. Put most simply, we need to widen our quest for the essence of heritage communication from an exclusive focus on its various media and genres to a deeper analysis of the social role it can play (Silberman, 2013b).

In other words, I want to suggest that heritage *is* what heritage *does* (as authoritatively argued by Smith, 2006). Both interpretation and presentation can be best be defined as the collective reflection on the significance of any physical structure, archaeological feature, performance, skill, tradition, object or landscape that helps soften the often-disruptive and often-frightening impact of environmental degradation, global climate change and jarring socio-economic transformations (Sedikides and Wildschut, 2016). Today, as the pace of global interconnections quickens and familiar vistas and traditional ways of life are quickly disappearing, the need for both social groups and individuals to grasp onto a stable foundation is strong. But the heritage resources that provide that strong foundation do not all do the same thing, though they all in some way serve as visible embodiments of distant eras where the very social elements now perceived to be lacking – social stability, unambiguous ethnic identities and the flowering of creative individual craftsmanship – prevailed. Those nostalgic visions of a once (and possibly future) social existence (Connerton, 1989) can reflect a society's self-absorption in a combative 'us' versus 'them' mentality – or, alternatively, highlight humanity's highest achievements and shared goals.

Paul Connerton, in his classic works of social anthropology *How Societies Remember* (1989) and *How Modernity Forgets* (2009), has masterfully explored the various types of collective memory that animate our relationship to sacred places and cherished monuments. I believe that we should follow Connerton's lead and pay far more attention to the character of the emotional connections between social groups and certain constellations of material and intangible things. I would go so far as to suggest that the presence of an emotional connection is the factor that distinguishes heritage from 'non-heritage' and indeed creates the category of heritage itself. In this sense, heritage should be seen as much as a universal *activity* as a list or collection of specially preserved things. And that activity can be both constructive and destructive. It can be used to cultivate a public appreciation of the diversity of human cultural expression, but it can also be used to stimulate exclusivist, essentialized nationalism at the opposite end of the ethical scale. This ambivalence of social function clearly contradicts the common assumption that heritage is an intrinsically positive, unitary global resource, as the widely publicized UNESCO hashtag #Unite4Heritage implies (UNESCO, 2015). Heritage places – whatever their specific components – can thus be defined as focal points of veneration, resentment, reflection, commemoration, mourning and sometimes violent conflict over the most pressing questions of social debate in contemporary society (Meskell, 2002).

Laurajane Smith, among others, has suggested that emotion or 'affect' is a key component of a heritage experience, felt in different degrees of intensity and widely differing emotions at all kinds of official and unofficial sites (Smith, 2020). It is thus the relationship between mind and monument – not any intrinsic quality of the heritage element itself. However, it is impossible to define – or even predict – what kind of reaction a particular site will evoke in the visitor. Each visitor inevitably makes his or her own interpretation of even the most polished interpreter or tour guide's story. And there is certainly no guarantee that the official interpretation will match what is carried away in the visitor's heart and head.

Heritage as Commodity

From the perspective of economics and the repeated assertion that heritage can be a driver of economic development (Ashworth, 2014), yet another definition of heritage can be made. Public visitation to heritage places – in other words, cultural tourism – is a form of modern pilgrimage, in which an enjoyable or educational experience is the most common visitor goal. The aesthetic quality of the remains, the ease with which they can be reached, and – not least – the design of the site and the appeal of its entertaining programming and interactive installations can often determine a heritage site's financial failure or success (Lowenthal, 2002; Silberman, 2013a)

Gradually, as economic considerations rose higher and higher in the heritage agenda, heritage places developed a distinctive infrastructure. At first a perimeter fence, a simple ticket booth and a few identifying signposts were all that was needed to equip a heritage site. But as local and international mass tourism increased, heritage sites became just one of many kinds of holiday destinations – theme parks, nature reserves and shopping cities – and the design of heritage places gradually grew more complex. A new architectural form gradually crystallized, adding a standard set of basic amenities: car parks, hi-tech visitor centres, cafeterias, toilets and souvenir shops. Borrowing design principles from theme parks and shopping malls (Lukas, 2007), heritage places became entertainment

Figure 6. Guided tour at the Born Cultural Centre, Barcelona, 2018. (Photo: author's own.)

attractions, whose hoped-for popularity would boost the local economy. The *experience* of visiting a heritage place, rather than the knowledge and particular facts and figures presented, has become the modern heritage site's principal draw (Silberman, 2007).

Thus, an increasingly common definition of heritage – and in particular of heritage sites – among international organizations and international development agencies is as a place highlighting a historic structure or feature, whose meticulously designed infrastructure gives it a high degree of visibility and 'visitability' (Dicks, 2004). In such cases, we are confronted with two simultaneous definitions – or perhaps perceptions – of what heritage is. For visitors, a heritage place is often primarily a leisure-time venue that provides both a glimpse of an idealized, entertainingly mediated vision as well as welcome relief from everyday routines at home (for a wider examination of this function, see MacCannell, 2008). No less significant is a quasi-industrial definition; for the members of local communities whose economic underdevelopment often serves as the main reason for investment in the often-costly design and management of such heritage places, the heritage place often loses its distinctly local significance or historical value, becoming just another workplace in a service industry designed to appeal to consumers from the outside (Miura, 2005).

Heritage is What Heritage Does

I cannot conclude this overview of the many definitions of twenty-first century heritage communication without also mentioning the use of heritage places as sites of conscience and sources of diasporic identity. The transformation of places of mass murder, enslavement, exploitation and inhumanity into formal heritage sites (with the infrastructure of modern heritage presentation, but designed to encourage moral reflection) offers a sobering counterpoint to the use of heritage places as platforms for partisanship or as simple entertainment venues (Sevcenko, 2010). And in an era of massive demographic shifts through rural-to-urban migration or the forced displacement of ethnic minorities, we can often see powerful heritage statements that embody the cultural and demographic changes that are occurring in nations and regions that were formerly considered to be culturally homogeneous (Dellios and Henrich, 2020). Indeed, these twenty-first-century variations in the significance and social role of heritage places make it clear that a better understanding of the dynamic *processes* of heritage place-making – rather than a single comprehensive definition – must be sought.

Heritage places can simultaneously be sites of conflict, entertainment, patriotism, militant parochialism and human rights campaigns. None is necessarily more important or constitutive of the essential definition of heritage than the rest. The new social networks of shared heritage significance being created through Indigenous and 'bottom-up' approaches

Figure 7. Interpretation as personal revelation: Waterloo Battlefield, Belgium, 2008. (Photo: Ename Center.)

stand alongside and almost always intertwine with the web of relationships to the past that earlier concepts of heritage places inspired. Heritage places should, therefore, be seen as stages for a kind of performative action, namely an expression of a value or a sense of identity, during a time of dramatic change. Heritage is what heritage *does*, even though the ephemerality of any particular interpretation or action contradicts the very notion of the 'timelessness' of cultural heritage. Former ICOMOS president Gustavo Araoz has perhaps best defined heritage places, not as material relics with a single unchanging Outstanding Universal, National or Local Value, but rather as 'vessels' of many values, in which multiple intentions are embedded and all of the values change with time (Araoz, 2011).

The significance of heritage places is neither static nor inherent in their material components; authenticity and significance are ascribed, not intrinsic. As we have seen, the categories and constellations of heritage places chosen for protection and commemoration throughout the centuries embody each era's spectrum of (often contradictory) collective memories. But collective memories are not merely passive reminders of former times, like neatly arranged photos in an old scrapbook. They are potential catalysts for action in the present. But as I suggested at the beginning of this chapter, we must begin to see heritage places as contemporary cultural phenomena with far-reaching effects. Good or bad, noble or immoral, constructive or confrontational, heritage *is* what heritage *does*.

And it may be ironic that heritage – in all its tangible and intangible forms and wide variety of expressions – presents us with the illusion of its apparent timelessness. Its function in society – and most basic definition – is as a selection of places and things that help us come to terms with the disruptiveness of change (Grenville, 2007). Today, as global transformations of economy, politics and climate quicken their pace and increase in their intensity, many find an at-least-temporary escape from the chaos of the lived present in the contemplation of distant eras where social stability, unambiguous ethnic identities and the flowering of the fine arts prevailed. Because heritage is, at its base, a social psychological process, it can take many forms, with both positive and destructive effects. But the outward forms to which so much scientific effort has been devoted have yet to tackle with equal vigour the deeper psychological longings that motivate our attention to the physical reminders of the past. So what, in the final analysis, is the public interpretation and presentation of heritage?

I am by no means suggesting that heritage interpretation become nothing more than wild, free association by every group, faction or community. But together with the scholarly, factual information that heritage professionals can provide, new approaches that encourage ever more inclusive participation in and appreciation of heritage activities may help us all to benefit from a more holistic understanding of what World Heritage – all heritage – can mean. In our age of mass movements, social upheavals, and demographic, economic and technological changes, Freeman Tilden's motto should be replaced by a new one that reflects the ongoing paradigm shifts: 'Process, not product; collaboration, not passive instruction; memory community, not heritage audience.' And the relationship between communities and World Heritage Sites could, and maybe even should, benefit more widely from tools of engagement, ethics, inclusiveness and empathy.

Figure 8. Community heritage workshop, Castries, Saint Lucia, 2018. (Photo: author's own.)

Put most simply, it is and will always remain a universal human quest to grasp onto something that reassures us of our own potential to transcend the inevitability of change. Without a better grasp of the social psychology and underlying philosophies of heritage communication, we are just guessing about its significance and value to society. Despite the common perception that heritage presentation and interpretation are synonymous, our greatest theoretical challenge may be to recognize and accept the fact that all forms of heritage communication are evolving, in lockstep with the emergence of new communications media, and – no less important – in response to contemporary society's deepest hopes and fears.

References

Ahmad, Y. 2006. The scope and definitions of heritage: from tangible to intangible. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 3, pp. 292–300.

Alcock, S. E., Cherry, J. F. and Elsner, J. (eds). 2001. *Pausanias: Travel and Memory in Roman Greece*. New York, Oxford University Press.

Araoz, G. F. 2011. Preserving heritage places under a new paradigm. *Journal of Cultural Heritage Management and Sustainable Development*, Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 55–60.

Ashworth, G. J. 2014. Heritage and economic development: selling the unsellable. *Heritage and Society*, Vol. 7, No. 1, pp. 3–17.

Basso, K. H. 1996. *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language among the Western Apache*. Albuquerque, NM, University of New Mexico Press.

Beacham, D., Copping, S., Reynolds, J. and Black, C. 2017. Indigenous cultural landscapes: a 21st-century landscape-scale conservation and stewardship framework. *George Wright Forum*, Vol. 34, No. 3, pp. 343–53.

Beck, L. and Cable, T. T. 2002. *Interpretation for the 21st Century: Fifteen Guiding Principles for Interpreting Nature and Culture*, 2nd edn. Champaign, IL, Sagamore Publishing.

Belozerskaya, M. 2009. *To Wake the Dead: A Renaissance Merchant and the Birth of Archaeology*. New York, W.W. Norton & Co.

Bendix, R., Eggert, A. and Peselmann, A. 2012. *Heritage Regimes and the State*. Göttingen, Germany, Universitätsverlag Göttingen.

Black, R. and Weiler, B. (eds). 2003. *Interpreting the Land Down Under: Australian Heritage Interpretation and Tour Guiding*. Golden, CO, Fulcrum Publishing.

Brockman, C. F. 1978. Park naturalists and the evolution of national park service interpretation through World War II. *Journal of Forest History*, Vol. 22, No. 1, pp. 24–43.

Brodsky-Porges, E. 1981. The Grand Tour travel as an educational device 1600–1800. *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 8, No. 2, pp. 171–86.

Brown, P. 2009. *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity*. Chicago, IL, University of Chicago Press.

Cameron, C. 2020. Recognizing associative values in World Heritage. *Plural: History, Culture, Society*, Vol. 8, No. 1, p. 17–36.

Cameron, C. and Rössler, M. 2013. *Many Voices, One Vision: The Early Years of the World Heritage Convention*. Farnham, UK, Ashgate.

Chakrabarty, D. 2002. Museums in late democracies. *Humanities Research*, Vol. 9, No. 1, pp. 5–12.

Connerton, P. 1989. *How Societies Remember*. Cambridge, UK, and New York: Cambridge University Press.

Connerton, P. 2009. *How Modernity Forgets*. Cambridge, UK, and New York: Cambridge University Press.

Dellios, A. and Henrich, E. (eds). 2020. *Migrant, Multicultural and Diasporic Heritage: Beyond and Between Borders*. London: Routledge.

DeSilvey, C. 2012. Making sense of transience: an anticipatory history. *Cultural Geographies*, Vol. 19, No. 1, pp. 31–54.

Dicks, B. 2004. *Culture on Display*. Maidenhead, UK, and Blacklick, OH, McGraw-Hill Education.

First International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments, Athens. 1931. *The Athens Charter for the Restoration of Historic Monuments*. Available at: https://www.icomos.org/en/167-the-athens-charter-for-the-restoration-of-historic-monuments (accessed 10 November 2022).

Fredheim, L. H. and Khalaf, M. 2016. The significance of values: heritage value typologies re-examined. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 6, pp. 466–81.

Geary, D. and Shinde, K. 2021. Buddhist pilgrimage and the ritual ecology of sacred sites in the Indo-Gangetic region. *Religions*, Vol. 12, No. 6, p. 385.

Grenville, J. 2007. Conservation as psychology: ontological security and the built environment. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 6, pp. 447–61.

ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites). 2008. *ICOMOS Charter for the Interpretation and Presentation of Cultural Heritage Sites*. Available at: https://www.icomos.org/images/DOCUMENTS/Charters/interpretation_e.pdf.

Jensen, L. E., Leerssen, J. T. and Mathijsen, M. 2010. *Free Access to the Past: Romanticism, Cultural Heritage and the Nation*. Leiden, Netherlands, Brill.

Khalaf, R. W. 2020. Authenticity or continuity in the implementation of the UNESCO World Heritage Convention? Scrutinizing statements of Outstanding Universal Value, 1978–2019. *Heritage*, Vol. 3, No. 2, pp. 243–74.

Koshar, R. 1998. 'What ought to be seen': tourists' guidebooks and national identities in modern Germany and Europe. *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 33, No. 3, pp. 323–40.

Labadi, S. 2005. A review of the global strategy for a balanced, representative and credible World Heritage List 1994–2004. *Conservation and Management of Archaeological Sites*, Vol. 7, No. 2, pp. 89–102.

Lamprakos, M. 2014. Riegl's 'Modern Cult of Monuments' and the problem of value. *Change Over Time*, Vol. 4, No. 2, pp. 418–35.

Light, D. 1991. The development of heritage interpretation in Britain. *Swansea Geographer*, Vol. 28, pp. 1–13.

Long, B. O. 2011. *The Problem of Etiological Narrative in the Old Testament. The Problem of Etiological Narrative in the Old Testament*. Berlin, De Gruyter.

Lowenthal, D. 2002. The past as theme park. In T. G. Young and R. B. Riley (eds), *Theme Park Landscapes: Antecedents and Variations*. Washington, DC, Dumbarton Oaks, pp. 11–23. (Dumbarton Oaks Colloquium on the History of Landscape Architecture, 20.)

Lowenthal, D. 2011. Why the past matters. *Heritage and Society*, Vol. 4, No. 2, pp. 159–72.

Lukas, S. A. 2007. How the theme park gets its power: lived theming, social control, and the themed worker self. In S. A. Lukas (ed.), *The Themed Space: Locating Culture, Nation, and Self*. Plymouth, UK, Lexington, pp. 1–22.

MacCannell, D. 2008. Why it never really was about authenticity. *Society*, Vol. 45, No. 4, pp. 334–37.

Manuel, M. L. 2022. Fantastically real. *Pleiades: Literature in Context*, Vol. 42, No. 1, pp. 51–57.

Matthes, E. H. 2018. Who owns up to the past? Heritage and historical injustice. *Journal of the American Philosophical Association*, Vol. 4, No. 1, pp. 87–104.

Meskell, L. 2002. Negative heritage and past mastering in archaeology. *Anthropological Quarterly*, Vol. 75, No. 3, pp. 557–74.

Miura, K. 2005. Conservation of a 'living heritage site' a contradiction in terms? A case study of Angkor World Heritage Site. *Conservation and Management of Archaeological Sites*, Vol. 7, No. 1, pp. 3–18.

Oravec, C. 1981. John Muir, Yosemite, and the sublime response: a study in the rhetoric of preservationism. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, Vol. 67, No. 3, pp. 245–58.

Rico, T. 2008. Negative heritage: the place of conflict in World Heritage. *Conservation and Management of Archaeological Sites*, Vol. 10, No. 4, pp. 344–52.

Rössler, M. 2006. World Heritage Cultural Landscapes: a UNESCO flagship programme 1992–2006. *Landscape Research*, Vol. 31, No. 4, pp. 333–53.

Second International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments. 1964. *International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites*. Available at: https://www.icomos.org/en/participer/179-articles-en-francais/ressources/charters-and-standards/157-thevenice-charter (accessed 10 November 2022).

Sedikides, C. and Wildschut, T. 2016. Past forward: nostalgia as a motivational force. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, Vol. 20, No. 5, pp. 319–21.

Sevcenko, L. 2010. Sites of conscience: new approaches to conflicted memory. *Museum International*, Vol. 62, No. 1–2, pp. 20–25.

Silberman, N. A. 2007. Sustainable heritage? Public archaeological interpretation and the marketed past. In Y. Hamilakis and P. Duke (eds), *Archaeology and Capitalism: From Ethics to Politics*. Walnut Creek, CA, Left Coast Press, pp. 179–93.

Silberman, N. A. 2012. Heritage interpretation and human rights: documenting diversity, expressing identity, or establishing universal principles? *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 3, pp. 245–56.

Silberman, N. A. 2013a. Discourses of development: narratives of cultural heritage as an economic resource. In R. Staiff, R. Bushell and S. Watson (eds), *Heritage and Tourism: Place, Encounter, Engagement*. London, Routledge, pp. 213–25.

Silberman, N. A. 2013b. Heritage interpretation as public discourse. In M.-T. Albert, R. Bernecker and B. Rudolf (eds), *Understanding Heritage: Perspectives in Heritage Studies*. Berlin and Boston, De Gruyter, pp. 21–33.

Silverman, H. 2011. *Contested Cultural Heritage: Religion, Nationalism, Erasure, and Exclusion in a Global World*. New York, Springer.

Smith, L. 2006. *Uses of Heritage*. London, Routledge.

Smith, L. 2020. *Emotional Heritage: Visitor Engagement at Museums and Heritage Sites*. Abingdon, UK, and New York, Routledge.

Tilden, F. 2008. *Interpreting Our Heritage*, 4th edn, expanded and updated. Durham, NC, University of North Carolina Press.

Twain, M. 1869. *The Innocents Abroad: Or, The New Pilgrims' Progress*. New York, Hippocrene Books.

UNESCO. 1972. Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage. Available at: http://whc.unesco.org/en/conventiontext/ (accessed 10 November 2022).

UNESCO. 2015. #Unite4Heritage – celebrating and safeguarding cultural heritage. Available at: https://www.unite4heritage.org/ (accessed 10 November 2022).

UNESCO. 2022. *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*. Available at: https://whc.unesco.org/en/guidelines/ (accessed 10 November 2022).

Weaver, D. B. 2011. Contemporary tourism heritage as heritage tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 38, No. 1, pp. 249–67.

Weiss, L. 2007. Heritage-making and political identity. *Journal of Social Archaeology*, Vol. 7, No. 3, pp. 413–31. https://doi.org/10.1177/1469605307081400.

Wells, J. C. 2020. Does intra-disciplinary historic preservation scholarship address the exigent issues of practice? Exploring the character and impact of preservation knowledge production in relation to critical heritage studies, equity, and social justice. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, Vol. 27, pp. 1–21.

Wolfe, L. M. 2003. *Son of the Wilderness: The Life of John Muir*. Madison, WI, University of Wisconsin Press.

Chapter 2

Interpreting World Heritage Cultural Sites to Meet UNESCO Principles: New Responsibilities at the Workface

William Logan

Interpreting World Heritage Cultural Sites to Meet UNESCO Principles: New Responsibilities at the Workface

William Logan

Abstract

This chapter focuses on those cultural heritage places inscribed by UNESCO under its Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972). In all cases when UNESCO Member States nominate heritage items for inscription on the World Heritage List, they should ensure that the interpretation provided for those items is in line with the constitutional remit of UNESCO, which is essentially to build bridges to peace. In the case of World Heritage, interpretations must also conform to the principles embedded in other UNESCO policies, such as the Policy for the Integration of a Sustainable Development Perspective into the Processes of the World Heritage Convention (2015). These requirements are particularly important in relation to the nomination of places associated with memories of recent conflicts. Such conflicts may be international wars and colonial tensions between States Parties to the Convention or domestic between groups within a State Party, such as between Indigenous and settler populations. The interpretation of such places embedded in Statements of Outstanding Universal Value should aim at reducing rather than exacerbating tensions, and helping former antagonists to understand each other's cultures, achieve reconciliation and avoid future conflict. Meeting these principles may mean that the interpretations initially proposed have to be reconsidered and places to be nominated need to be reinterpreted. New negotiating and cross-cultural skills will be required. Using case studies from Australia, Japan, Rwanda, Türkiye and Viet Nam, this chapter explores how the requirement to uphold UNESCO constitutional and policy principles is being met in relation to World Heritage Site management, with a particular focus on the new impacts on practice now being confronted by national heritage officials and local site managers.

Introduction

• *The critical role of interpretation in heritage management*

'Heritage' does not exist, except in the mind; it is a mental construct in which 'significance' is attributed to certain places, artefacts and cultural expressions from the past. It is not an inherent quality of things; it is a quality that people attribute to things. The result is an interpretation. The focus of this chapter is on cultural heritage places, particularly those for which UNESCO World Heritage status has been or is being sought. There are, of course, for any such place as many interpretations as there are visitors to it – that is, people seeing the place in person, viewing it online or reading about it in books and brochures, whether they are traditional owners/custodians, members of local communities or heritage practitioners, policymakers or technicians.

Interpretation is a critical element in programmes aimed at protecting heritage places. It is interpretation that links the site as it exists with those who see and think about it, enabling them to make sense of the place. Regrettably, it is a neglected element at many sites around the world and further research needs to be done on how interpretations form in people's minds and how this can be utilized by site managers to improve interpretation and presentation plans for their sites. Often only brief descriptions of the main site structures are provided. Commonly, a single type of visitor is assumed and a variety of language registers is not used for visitors with different language skills and education and interest levels (technical/professional cf. general knowledge). The intellectual content should be made accessible to visitors who have a non-technical interest in the site and should cater to those who want the site to be set in a broad historical context.

Interpretation is, however, far from simple, and even apparently straightforward statements about how the process works can prove to be problematic. It is now well accepted that the creation of 'heritage' is the result of a process that is essentially political in the sense that it is based on the distribution of decision-making power in local communities, nations and international organizations. Places are nominated because they reflect the interpretation endorsed by the official authorities responsible for them, and that, in turn, almost always conforms to the vision of the society held by the political regime in power and its supporters. Interpretation is no less political in this sense.

As Neil Silberman (2020) noted in his presentation to the WHIPIC online lecture series on World Heritage Interpretation, heritage interpretation should not merely be a top-down process done by professional experts and government agencies. In his view, there needs to be collaboration with local communities in dialogic interpretation; that is, engaging the community in conversations to explore the meaning of a place. The existence of immeasurable numbers of interpretations should be acknowledged and ways found to bring these together to form an inclusive, multilayered understanding of the

place. Difficulties arise, however, around the notion of community: how is it formed? Who represents it in discussions, and why? Does it have a single voice?

Political groups use culture – particularly cultural differences – to argue for and justify conflict. Such conflict is not between cultures, as has sometimes been stated, but between people, communities and nations. The preamble to the founding constitution of UNESCO explains that

> ignorance of each other's ways and lives has been a common cause, throughout the history of mankind, of that suspicion and mistrust between the peoples of the world through which their differences have all too often broken into war. (UNESCO, 1945 [2016])

Further work also needs to be done on the interpretation of the many places that are associated with recent conflicts. We know that memories of an international or civil conflict do not end with the ceasefire. They continue and become an important element of the intangible cultural heritage that we must now consider in World Heritage nomination and management practices, including site interpretation. When places are remembered differently by opposing sides in a conflict, nationalistic interpretation commonly reinforces divisions and maintains or even increases tensions.

• *UNESCO constitutional and policy principles*

Since the UNESCO Constitution has as its principal ambition working on the minds of men to build bridges to peace, it follows that interpretation plans should aim at reducing rather than exacerbating tensions and at helping former antagonists to understand each other's cultures, achieve reconciliation and avoid conflict in future. While this chapter focuses on World Heritage places inscribed under the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (UNESCO, 1972) – much of the discussion also applies, as I have shown in another paper (Logan, 2022), to the interpretation of intangible heritage under the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003) and documentary heritage registered under the UNESCO Memory of the World programme established in 1992.

In the case of World Heritage, interpretations must also conform to the principles embedded in the Policy for the Integration of a Sustainable Development Perspective into the Processes of the World Heritage Convention (UNESCO, 2015a). This is not simply an option: a UNESCO policy is, like UNESCO conventions, binding on all UNESCO Member States. The Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention (UNESCO, 2021a) have now been revised to accommodate the policy, and compliance with it is being checked through reactive and periodic reporting.

The 2015 policy sees the achievement of sustainable development as being dependent on abiding by four policy dimensions – environmental sustainability, inclusive social development, inclusive economic development and the fostering of peace and security – and three overarching principles – human rights, equality and long-term sustainability. This broad understanding of sustainable development is based on the conceptual framework adopted at the wider United Nations level in formulating its post-2015 development agenda (Larsen and Logan, 2018, ch. 1).

Each of the dimensions and principles is explained in the policy. For instance, Paragraph 17 calls on States Parties to the World Heritage Convention to recognize that full inclusion, respect and equity of all stakeholders, including local and concerned communities and Indigenous (First Nations) peoples, together with a commitment to gender equality, are a fundamental basis for inclusive social development. Moreover, the policy states, inclusive social development must be underpinned by inclusive governance.

Paragraph 28, meanwhile, reminds States Parties that, as one of UNESCO's multinational normative instruments, the World Heritage Convention must play its part in working towards the organization's constitutional mission, which comes under the dimension of fostering peace and security. It asks States Parties to use their critically important role to ensure that the implementation of the World Heritage Convention, including the establishment of the World Heritage List and management of inscribed properties, is done in such a way that conflicts are prevented and cultural diversity is respected within and around World Heritage properties (Paragraph 29). The policy further explains that this dimension includes ensuring conflict prevention, protecting heritage during conflict, promoting conflict resolution and contributing to post-conflict recovery.

• *New responsibilities at the World Heritage workface*

One of the strengths of the UNESCO World Heritage project, now in its fiftieth year of operation, has been the World Heritage Committee's measured improvement of the processes adopted for implementing the Convention, notably through regular revision of the Operational Guidelines. States Parties are now required to take the 2015 policy changes into account in the development of new World Heritage List nominations, which generates new kinds of additional work for national heritage bureaucrats and site managers. The Statements of Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of places already inscribed before 2015 will need reconsideration to check that they conform to these principles. The OUV interpretations in nominations currently being developed may also need revision where nominating States Parties lack awareness of the constitution and 2015 policy. This reconsideration and revision will be facilitated by the World

Heritage Committee's adoption of a new nomination process in 2021 that introduces 'preliminary assessment' as a first phase followed by the current mechanism described in the Operational Guidelines (UNESCO, 2021a, Paragraph 128) as a second phase.

Inscription is not the end of the process in any case; indeed, the main work – that of managing the site, protecting its OUV into the future and making it accessible both physically and intellectually to the general public and overseas visitors – is only just beginning. Many new roles and responsibilities will fall on the shoulders of local heritage officials and site managers, many of whom are already heavily loaded and may lack the necessary skills to perform the new duties effectively. For instance, how easily will site managers trained in architectural conservation or natural sciences cope with ensuring social inclusion or peace and security principles? Major retraining will be required at the very least, as well as bringing new kinds of specialists into the management team.

This chapter explores how the requirement to uphold UNESCO constitutional and policy principles is being met in relation to World Heritage Site management, with a particular focus on the new impacts on practice now being faced by national heritage officials and local site managers. The discussion works through series of case studies from Australia, Japan, Viet Nam, Rwanda and Türkiye. These are widely spread geographically and culturally and lead to a set of conclusions that will apply, it is hoped, even more broadly.

Australia

In some respects Australia is doing well to address the new challenges. Under the social inclusion heading, for instance, gender equality in heritage decision-making and management has largely been achieved. By contrast, respecting, consulting and involving Indigenous peoples, another of the 2015 policy's social inclusion concerns, has been a slow and often bitter process, and is still ongoing.

Australia has had long involvement in World Heritage. In August 1974 it became the seventh of the 194 nations that have ratified or acceded to the World Heritage Convention. It now has twenty sites on the World Heritage List. Of these, most (twelve) are natural sites. Four sites are listed as cultural sites – three being related to the settler majority – and, even though Indigenous Australians do not recognize the binary division between culture and nature, the fourth is entirely Indigenous (Budj Bim). Another four – Kakadu, Tasmanian Wilderness, Uluru-Kata Tjuta and Willandra Lakes – are mixed.

The input of Australia into discussions helped lead, in 1992, to the acceptance of cultural landscapes – the combined works of humanity and nature – as a form of heritage that could be inscribed on the World Heritage List. The third category of cultural landscape identified by the World Heritage Committee – associative landscapes – is particularly relevant in Australia where the Indigenous or First Nations peoples associate significant religious, artistic and/or cultural meanings with the natural environment. The initial 1987 inscription of Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park as a natural site (UNESCO, 1987) was thus extended in 1994 to include its cultural landscape values – an early case of official site reinterpretation. Budj Bim was inscribed from the outset as a cultural landscape (UNESCO, 2019).

I have written previously about the lack of meaningful engagement with the traditional owners in decision-making that led to inscription of the Kakadu National Park (UNESCO, 1981a), in particular how excision of part of the park for uranium mining led to acrimonious conflict between the local Mirrar people and the Australian Government (Logan, 2013). This conflict spilled over onto the World Heritage Committee stage and threatened to weaken the World Heritage in Danger mechanism and perhaps the credibility of the whole World Heritage system. Nevertheless, by the time I was publishing on Kakadu, Australia appeared to have already come a long way towards more serious engagement with its Indigenous peoples. In another case then under way – Cape York – the governments of both Australia and Queensland had come to adopt a rights-based approach designed to enable local Indigenous peoples to decide whether or not the nomination process would proceed.

The concept of a rights-based approach to World Heritage is included in the 2015 UNESCO policy as one of the fundamental statements of international standards underpinning sustainable development (UNESCO, 2015a, Paragraph 21 and footnote 13). The notion that any activity that affects the ancestral lands, territories and natural resources of First Nations peoples requires governments to adopt free, prior and informed consent was initiated in 2007 with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (United Nations, 2007). The declaration was signed by Australia in 2009 and the World Heritage Committee amended the Operational Guidelines to reflect it in 2015.

Achieving free, prior and informed consent in Cape York seems to have been more difficult than anticipated, however, and the nomination has not proceeded far since 2013. A major difficulty is that Cape York is a vast peninsula, almost 15 million hectares in area and with a population of around 19,000 people, of whom over half are Indigenous. The governments of Australia and Queensland have so far supported the idea of Cape York (or at least parts of it) being nominated, probably as a cultural landscape, but neither the exact area nor the site boundaries have yet been defined. This means that, as there is no site yet identified, it has not been possible to register the proposal on the Australian National Heritage List or the nation's Tentative List, both actions being prerequisites for World Heritage nominations. But the Queensland Department of Environment and Science still lists it as a 'potential new World Heritage area' (Queensland, 2021), and the Queensland Government continues to seek to engage First Nations groups on Cape York peninsula who are interested in nominating their Country. This is something of a waiting game, and

department staff find themselves challenged by the need for new skills and more time to work with local communities.

The most recent Australia World Heritage inscription – Budj Bim Cultural Landscape in south-western Victoria (inscribed 2019) – stands out in terms of Indigenous leadership in site management. The entire site is Aboriginal-owned and managed to respect the customary and legal rights and obligations of the Gunditjmara traditional owners (UNESCO, 2019). The nomination was promoted from the outset by the Gunditjmara, at times having to convince an unsure state government and working with non-Indigenous heritage specialists where necessary. The local arrangements for the World Heritage property include the Budj Bim Ranger programme, which is managed through the Winda-Mara Aboriginal Corporation. Full-time rangers are employed and mentored by Gunditjmara elders who provide them with traditional and cultural knowledge and support.

In another state – Western Australia – efforts to nominate the Murujuga Cultural Landscape to the World Heritage list are being led by the traditional custodians referred to as Ngurra-ra Ngarli. The site was added to the Tentative List for Australia in January 2020 (UNESCO, 2020). Commonly known as the Dampier Archipelago and surrounds, including the Burrup peninsula, the site contains one of the world's most significant collections of hunter-gatherer petroglyphs and has been the focus of a long and intense conflict between culture, tourism and industrial development. Pressure from the Ngurra-ra Ngarli and heritage advocates eventually forced the state government in August 2018 to support the preparation of a bid for World Heritage status (Wahlquist, 2018).

Despite the successes at Budj Bim in Victoria, Cape York in Queensland and Murujuga in Western Australia, Indigenous empowerment in cultural heritage protection processes remains a matter of concern. In April 2021 another site was added to the Tentative List of Australia: Flinders Ranges in South Australia, 500 km north of the state capital, Adelaide (UNESCO, 2021b) The OUV is currently seen as the area's geological features: rock layers that present a geological record of Earth's climatic changes and environmental impacts over 350 million years, the critical time-frame in which multicellular animal life first emerged. From the Tentative List document and discussions during a visit to the Flinders Ranges in March 2022 it seems that while some Indigenous people are in favour of inscription, they appear not to have been centrally involved so far in the development of the final nomination dossier.

At this stage, the Indigenous interpretation of the geological features is not central to the site's Statement of OUV, nor is there any reference to UNESCO constitutional or policy principles. It is not too late, however, to develop a more inclusive story about the site and, indeed, the Tentative List submission indicates that the state government is working to engage with the Adnyamathanha traditional owners to build a partnership that might lead to such a site reinterpretation. The Australian Government recognizes that the proposed property lies entirely

Figure 1. The Flinders Ranges centrepiece is the Wilpena Pound, an ancient geosyncline remaining as a long valley enclosed by mountain ranges and scarps on either side. (Photo: author's own.)

Figure 2. The Indigenous interpretation of the geological landscape is presented through signage and heritage walks led by local Aboriginal people. (Photo: author's own.)

within the traditional lands of the Adnyamathanha and has committed to not submitting the final nomination dossier until free, prior and informed consent has been obtained. The Tentative List nomination document, however, does not explain how such consent will be sought.

Australian traditional owners have usually effective ways of selecting representatives with the skills and confidence to be effective spokespeople on cultural heritage matters. This can become a very sensitive process, however, when the traditional owners do not share a common view on the interpretation and/or management of a particular site. This is currently being seen in the dispute that has erupted at the Willandra Lakes World Heritage property in south-western New South Wales (UNESCO, 1981b) over whether to secretly rebury the ancient bones of Mungo Man and Mungo Lady (Latimore, 2022). The representativeness of the property's Aboriginal Advisory Group, which decided on reburial in 2018, has been challenged by other Indigenous groups. Some non-Indigenous scientific experts question whether reburial is the best solution, with one saying that reburial 'signals the virtual death of a world heritage area' (quoted in Latimore, 2022). Negotiations are continuing.

Japan

The slow progress of reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Australia is reflected in the evolution of heritage management arrangements, especially since the turn of the millennium. It is a process that is being worked out within a single State Party. At the international level of heritage management, however, many disputes involving UNESCO and its World Heritage Committee have been between two or more States Parties. These disputes have commonly been over the inscription of sites that relate to earlier international conflicts between States Parties. The concept of extraterritoriality is involved; that is, where State Party A claims that a site lying within the territory of State Party B has significant links with the history of State Party A and that this gives State Party A some say in how the site should be interpreted and presented. Considerable diplomatic involvement is required to reach solutions that satisfy all sides. This takes vast amounts of time, energy and funding on the part of governments, their diplomats and heritage policymakers. Where the sites are inscribed on the World Heritage or Tentative lists, UNESCO is almost inevitably drawn into the fray. Again, national heritage bureaucrats and – to a lesser degree – local site managers find themselves with new roles requiring skills of negotiation and a sound understanding of relevant UNESCO principles.

In East Asia a case in point is the 'Sites of Japan's Meiji Industrial Revolution: Iron and Steel, Shipbuilding and Coal Mining' (UNESCO, 2015b). Here the interpretations of several States Parties were in conflict, leading the World Heritage Committee to seek, in vain, to allow for multiple interpretations to be presented at the site. Media and academic observers have focused on the inclusion in the serial nomination of the industrial ruins on Hashima Island, off the coast of Nagasaki. This inclusion has been particularly controversial because of claims by China and the Republic of Korea that forced Chinese and Korean labour had been used to build and run the Hashima industrial complex (Lee, 2019, pp. 299–301; Nakano, 2018, pp. 58–59; Palmer, 2018, pp. 29ff). The accusation was wider, in fact, since Hashima was only one of eleven sites in the nomination, seven of which are said to have used 57,000 Korean forced labourers (Park, 2019).

When the nomination came to the World Heritage Committee at its thirty-ninth session in Bonn, Germany, in mid-2015, the Republic of Korea refused at first to support it, but a closed meeting led to a compromise agreement that allowed the inscription to proceed (UNESCO, 2015c, pp. 222–23). Being a side agreement, minutes of the closed meeting were not included in full in the final documentation released by the committee. Some scholars have suggested the deal seems to have involved the Republic of Korea agreeing to support the Japanese nomination in return for Japan supporting the Korean nomination of the Baekje Historic Areas, which was also being considered in Bonn (Nakano, 2018, p. 59; Palmer, 2018, p. 18).

The official summary of the Bonn session includes reference, however, to the Japanese delegation declaring at the side-meeting that

> Japan is prepared to take measures that allow an understanding that there were a large number of Koreans and others who were brought against their will and forced to work under harsh conditions in the 1940s at some of the sites, and that, during World War II, the government of Japan also implemented its policy of requisition. Japan is prepared to incorporate appropriate measures into the interpretative strategy to remember the victims such as the establishment of information center. (UNESCO, 2015c, p. 222)

This was repeated after the side-meeting by the Japanese ambassador to UNESCO, Sato Kuni (UNESCO, 2018). The official summary also shows the Korean delegation's response:

> Today's decision marks another important step toward remembering the pain and suffering of the victims, healing the painful wounds of history, and reaffirming that the historical truth of the unfortunate past should also be reflected in an objective manner. (UNESCO, 2015c, p. 223)

The nomination was subsequently passed with Decision 39 COM 8B.14, which included the request that an 'interpretative strategy for the presentation of the property [be prepared that would allow] … an understanding of the "full history" of each component site'. The committee also asked Japan to make a progress report after two years. When Japan presented its report, it skirted around the forced labour issue (Japan Cabinet Secretariat, 2018; Park, 2019). The report indicated that an interpretation strategy had been developed by the nation's cabinet secretariat, that the views of 'independent international experts' had been taken into account and that advice on what the 'full history' of each site meant had been specifically sought from the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) International Scientific Committee on Interpretation and Presentation (ICIP). The report also advised that the Japanese Government was planning the establishment of a comprehensive 'Industrial Heritage Information Centre' in Tokyo in the 2019 financial year, and that it would 'dispatch information mainly on the overall property … as well as other information on industrial heritage, including workers' stories'.

Observers such as Palmer (2018, p. 20) had hoped that the World Heritage Committee would criticize the lack of a guarantee that there would be appropriate interpretation at the Hashima site and would recommend a range of corrections required for Hashima if it was to retain World Heritage status. That this was not to be can be seen in the World Heritage Committee Decision 42 COM 7B.10 at its forty-second session in Bahrain in 2018, where the committee accepted the assertion by Japan that sufficient interpretation was available digitally for all site components and that there would be a single information centre located in Tokyo. The committee nevertheless left the door open for a more inclusive reinterpretation of the site by repeating that it

> Strongly encourages the State Party to take into account best international practices for interpretation strategies when continuing its work on the interpretation of the full history of the property, both during and outside the period covered by its OUV. (UNESCO WHC, 2018a)

The period of the property's OUV is the Meiji period 1868–1912 but the committee was here requesting that the interpretation strategy go wider, enabling the inclusion of the forced labour issue dating from the colonial period and Second World War.

The second State of Conservation report from Japan (Japan Cabinet Secretariat, 2019) was posted on the UNESCO website on 2 December 2019 and, again, no mention of the forced labour matter was made. The South Korean Foreign Ministry responded immediately, urging Japan to faithfully implement the follow-up measures, calling for renewed dialogue on the matter and threatening to raise the issue with the World Heritage Centre and at various multinational meetings, such as the UNESCO Executive Board (Park, 2019).

The interpretation issue was not going to be forgotten by South Korea and its concerns led to UNESCO inviting Japan to establish a mission to investigate whether or not Japan had fully complied with the decisions of the World Heritage Committee as well as its own undertakings made at the time of inscription. A joint UNESCO–ICOMOS mission took place from 7 to 9 June 2021 and submitted its report on 2 July. It found that, while a number of aspects of the State Party's commitments had been met, such as establishing the interpretation centre in Tokyo using the latest in digital technologies, the historical narrative presented to visitors 'did not attempt to present a variety of narratives in a way that would allow visitors to make their own judgement on all aspects of industrial labor, including the darker side of industrial heritage, particularly during wartime' (UNESCO, 2021c, p. 6). The mission also observed, especially in relation to Hashima, that the oral testimonies used by the centre provided little evidence of people being forced to work and stated that there was no difference between Japanese workers and Koreans and others in relation to 'harsh conditions' or 'victim' status. Moreover, 'although the history of the period up to 1910 is presented extensively, there is far less material on the period after 1910. In particular, the role of the Meiji industrial sites in Japan's military program after 1910 was barely mentioned as part of the "full history"' (UNESCO, 2015c, p. 5).

The Japanese response to the mission report is yet to be seen. But, while waiting, it is pertinent in this chapter to consider further what is meant by the committee's reference to 'best international practice for interpretation strategies'. In fact, such a standard has yet to be set. Several agencies have the potential to do this, including the committee itself. At the moment, however, the committee's Operational Guidelines (UNESCO, 2021a) remain very quiet on interpretation, with the term being taken, on the few times it is used, to mean techniques for presenting information to tourists and other visitors. Nothing is said about ensuring accurate and balanced intellectual content. The ICOMOS ICIP could also take greater responsibility for determining international best practice in developing interpretation strategies, especially for conflict-related places. Its charter (ICOMOS, 2008), however, fails to mention key concepts such as 'peace', 'reconciliation' or 'sustainable development'.

Heritage practitioners are left unsupported in relation to how they should now operate to uphold the constitutional and policy principles of UNESCO. In places related to recent conflict, it is essential that heritage interpretation helps former antagonists to understand each other's cultures, achieve reconciliation and avoid future conflict. The increasing number of nominations of places related to recent conflicts has made a toughened stance particularly urgent. By 2018 eleven new nominations had been submitted – as Table 1 shows, two for the World Heritage List and nine for Tentative Lists (ICOMOS, 2018, Annex). This led the World Heritage Committee to impose a temporary halt in processing nominations until a

'comprehensive reflection' on all relevant issues could be undertaken, including 'whether and how sites associated with recent conflicts and other negative and divisive memories might relate to the purpose and scope of the World Heritage Convention' (UNESCO WHC, 2018b). ICOMOS led this review, and its final report (published in February 2020) concluded that inscribing such sites would not be in line with a positive message of OUV and the UNESCO peace mandate (ICOMOS, 2020). The report was considered by the committee at its forty-fourth annual session in mid-2020 but was withdrawn for further consideration. It was on the agenda for the 2022 session but this schedule has been caught up in events – the invasion of Ukraine by Russia – and the session, which was to have been in Kazan, Russia, has been postponed indefinitely (UNESCO, 2022).

Table 1. Places associated with memories of recent conflicts added to the Tentative List, 2012–17

Place	Country	Date added
Genocide memorial sites	Rwanda	2012
Çanakkale (Dardanelles) and Gelibolu (Gallipoli) Battle Zones in the First World War	Türkiye	2014
Normandy's Embarkation Beaches	France	2014
Cellular Jail, Andaman Islands	India	2014
Mamayev Kurgan Memorial Complex 'To the Heroes of Stalingrad'	Russia	2014
Terrefal Concentration Camp	Cabo Verde	2015
The Walk of Peace from the Alps to the Adriatic – Heritage of the First World War	Slovenia	2016
Cuito Cuanavale, Site of Liberation and Independence	Angola	2017
ESMA Site Museum – Former Clandestine Centre of Detention, Torture and Extermination	Argentina	2017

Source: UNESCO Tentative Lists

Viet Nam

The difficult, perhaps ill-fated passage of the above-mentioned ICOMOS discussion paper through the World Heritage Committee demonstrates the institutional power that lies in the hands of the States Parties. Indeed, 'best practice' interpretation is commonly resisted by States Parties that want the World Heritage inscription process to support their particular ideological or geopolitical positions or other essentially non-heritage objectives. It has become common among academic observers to lay the blame for World Heritage failings on UNESCO, where in fact it is the State Party that ultimately determines what happens at World Heritage Sites (Logan, 2018a, pp. 145–48). It is the national government, after all, that ratifies the Convention, thus becoming a State Party. It also submits nominations to the World Heritage Committee and it jealously protects its national interests in committee meetings.

National governments and their agencies can and sometimes do step in to insist that interpretations are consistent with their non-heritage ambitions or are reworked to achieve a stronger fit. Such intervention can be seen in Viet Nam during periods when I was engaged as a consultant to work with local heritage bureaucrats and site managers in developing the World Heritage nomination dossier for the 'Central Sector of the Thang Long-Hanoi Citadel' and subsequently (2011–14) in preparing the textual and illustrative content of interpretation panels at Hanoi's citadel (2011–14) and Confucian *Van Mieu* (Temple of Literature) (2016–17). The funding for these interpretation projects came from the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade as part of its cultural diplomacy in the Asian region, which is another form of heritage intervention intended to meet non-heritage strategic objectives (Logan, 2020b, p. 162).

The citadel's Central Sector was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2010 (UNESCO, 2010). The property comprises two physically distinct parts: the central axis of the ancient Forbidden City and, adjacent to the west, an archaeological site at 18 Hang Dieu Street. The Statement of OUV describes the Central Sector as the most important and best-preserved part of the ancient Imperial Citadel of Thang Long. Its location in Hanoi, the heart of the capital of Viet Nam, gives it a special symbolic status nationally, reflecting the origins of the Vietnamese people and state, their resilience in the difficult colonial years (1883–1954), their thirty years of war against the French (1946–54) and the United States and its allies (1955–75), and their progress since national reunification in 1975.

In preparing the nomination dossier, an interpretation problem quickly emerged that revolved around the use of heritage for nationalistic purposes (Logan, 2014). Winning World Heritage status for the Thang Long-Hanoi citadel, or at least its Central Sector, was seen as a major component of the 1,000th anniversary celebrations in Hanoi scheduled for October 2010. A hiccup in interpreting the citadel had already occurred in 2002 when the discovery of the archaeological remains of a seventh-century Chinese fortress at 18 Hang Dieu challenged the city's founding story in which King Ly Thai Tho had decided in 1010 to create a new capital at Hanoi. This problem was quickly solved by reshaping the birthday message to emphasize that it was a thousand years of Vietnamese independence

from China, a clear case of the official heritage interpretation shifting to accommodate government needs.

Undaunted by this need to reinterpret the site, the Vietnamese authorities began mobilizing resources to secure the World Heritage nomination. The site was added to Viet Nam's Tentative List in 2006 and it was recognized as a 'National Relic of Special Importance' in 2009. My Deakin University colleague Dr Colin Long and I were brought in to build the capacity of the local team who were preparing the nomination dossier. It quickly became clear that the team needed to understand better the World Heritage Committee's requirements. At the time, the Operational Guidelines were not translated into Vietnamese and the citadel team was not familiar with their content.

The critical issue was how to identify and articulate the site's OUV. The requirement that nominating States Parties provide a Statement of OUV was only introduced into the Operational Guidelines in 2005, well after the Hue, Hoi An and My Son cultural sites in Viet Nam were inscribed (1993, 1997 and 1997, respectively). There was, therefore, little expertise in Viet Nam about how to satisfy this hurdle. In the capacity-building workshops, chaired by eminent historian Phan Huy Le, Paragraph 52 of the Operational Guidelines (2008 version) was highlighted. This stated clearly that a property on a State Party's national heritage list would not be automatically inscribed as World Heritage. This was quite unlike the approach adopted in Viet Nam under its 1984 Ordinance on Protection and Usage of Historical, Cultural and Famous Places, which promoted the nomination of heritage sites that commemorated heroes and people who had rendered great service to the nation. By contrast, for the World Heritage submission it was crucial for the team to show how the national heritage was of significance to the world more broadly.

It was also important for the team to avoid patriotic language and ideological content that might raise the ire of other States Parties, particularly those against which Viet Nam had fought in its wars of independence. As in the Japanese case discussed above, the team needed to understand that the interpretation should support the UNESCO constitutional goal of promoting a culture of peace rather than creating, exacerbating or prolonging tensions between States Parties.

By the time the nomination eventually came before the World Heritage Committee at its thirty-fourth session in Brasilia in July 2010, the citadel's OUV had settled on three indisputable features: its longevity, its continuity as a seat of power and the presence of a layered record of archaeological and architectural remains. Acceptance of this interpretation of the property's values made possible what the State Party had hoped for – successful inscription in good time for the October 2010 celebration of the millennial status of Hanoi. The world had recognized the formation and development over more than a thousand years of an independent nation with Hanoi as its capital.

Figure 3. Doan Mon (South Gate), Thang Long-Hanoi Citadel. (Photo: author's own.)

Figure 4. World Heritage inscription – a major feature in Hanoi's 1,000th anniversary parade in front of Ho Chi Minh's mausoleum in Ba Dinh Square, 10 October 2010. (Photo: author's own.)

Later in the month Hanoi hosted the seventeenth Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Summit, another status marker. The meeting was attended by the Australian prime minister, Julia Gillard. In the lead-up to her visit the Australian embassy in Hanoi proposed that a fitting birthday gift, which she could announce during the visit, would be to fund the preparation of interpretation materials for some of the heritage sites in Hanoi (Logan, 2020b, p. 162). This was subsequently narrowed down to the creation of a set of interpretative panels for the citadel.

Discussions with the site managers led to an agreement that fourteen panels would be sufficient to inform visitors about the OUV for which the site was inscribed. The panels were to be developed as a sequence that would provide a logical interpretation of the site, starting with a general introduction to the site and its World Heritage values and moving through the various cultural layers that are demonstrated in the structures above and below ground. Several panels attempted to set the site in an international and social context, widening the citadel story to give visitors a better sense of what the residents of Hanoi had to endure under the American aerial bombardment during the Viet Nam War. It was also agreed that the panel texts would be presented in several key languages (Vietnamese, English and French), written in a style that would be accessible to non-heritage-professional visitors and supported by appropriate illustrations. Most of the agreement made with the site managers was carried through. The panels providing a wider international and social interpretation, however, apparently did not meet official expectations higher up in Vietnamese heritage bureaucracy and the texts of these panels were modified at the last moment, without any consultation with the development team and upsetting the interpretative logic.

There has subsequently been pressure from the Hanoi People's Committee and the national Ministry of Construction to modify the interpretation further, to take the site back to the imagined, halcyon period of King Ly Thai To's reign. Governments often make this kind of leap into a mythical past, either for ideological and nation-building reasons or because they think this makes places more attractive to tourists. In the Hanoi case, the king's role in creating an independent kingdom resonates strongly with the government, anxious as it has been to win international recognition for the nation's (and its own) achievements. In line with this reinterpretation, some of the citadel's surface structures – including French colonial elements and some more recent Vietnamese military buildings – have been demolished since the inscription, while the citadel's principal imperial palace, which had been demolished by the French in colonial times, is to be rebuilt.

Similar interventions to satisfy governmental concerns occurred in the Van Mieu interpretation project. Here an attempt to outline the temple complex's Chinese inheritance was apparently vetoed by Vietnamese authorities, who overrode the Van Mieu site manager on the grounds that they wanted to portray the temple as a purely Vietnamese creation – a position that reflected the nation's millennia-long history of asserting independence from its northern neighbour and perhaps also present-day regional geopolitics.

Rwanda

Serious tensions over conflicting interpretations of the past exist around the world, not only between states but also between communities within states. There are now many case studies demonstrating the blatant imposition of the majority culture on minorities, commonly with governments using the pretext of seeking national harmony and cohesion but disregarding the human rights abuses that are involved. This has been seen in the discriminatory treatment of Indigenous peoples and their cultures in settler states like the United States, Canada and Australia (Logan, 2013). It is also seen in Myanmar, where a particular interpretation of national history and identity underlay the campaign of ethnic cleansing in Rakhine State between 2012 and 2017 that forced the Muslim Rohingya minority into refugee camps in neighbouring Bangladesh, a campaign that has been described as genocidal by many observers (Logan, 2018b).

Another atrocious example of intercommunal tensions existing within states is that of Rwanda. A long history of violence between the country's Hutu majority and Tutsi minority existed well before the so-called 'Tutsi Genocide' of April–July 1994 in which between 800,000 and 1 million Tutsi, Twa and moderate Hutu were slaughtered (McKinney, 2012, p. 160). Because Rwanda did not have a monumental tradition, when commemoration practices began after the genocide they focused on the bodies of the dead (Korman, 2015). Eventually, however, attention turned to preserving the main genocide sites and, today, Rwanda contains more than 400 memorial sites, several of which are being restored for educational as well as commemorative purposes. Four of these – Nyamata, Murambi, Bisesero and Gisozi – were submitted to the World Heritage Tentative List in 2012 (see Table 1).

The United Nations and several Western states – notably, the United States, United Kingdom and especially France – have been accused of providing material support to the Hutu perpetrators of the genocide. Since the genocide, Rwanda has moved out of the French orbit, joining the Commonwealth – the organization that grew out of the British Empire – and replacing French with English as the main foreign language taught in schools. Continuing difficult relations with those states may perhaps complicate the Rwandan serial sites' translation from the Tentative List to the World Heritage List. In any case, the matter is in abeyance given the slow passage of the above-mentioned ICOMOS second discussion paper on sites associated with memories of recent conflicts (ICOMOS, 2020).

According to Friedrich et al. (2018), current commemoration practices bear the danger of fostering a continuing collective guilt within one part of the population, as well as creating a sense of victimization within another. World Heritage inscription might well have heightened these tensions. By contrast, Korman (2015, p. 66) suggests that there has been a significant movement in the official Rwandan attitude since 2010: while the genocide remains a foundational element of the Rwandan nation, it has been 'shifted aside and "reconciliation" is now at the heart of the memorial process'. Friedrich (2016) supports this view in her research centred on the Kigali Genocide Memorial, which is the principal Rwandan memorial site in terms of visitation although not itself a massacre site. The memorial, she observes, is

> increasingly undergoing changes to promote tolerance and human rights through positive themes of peace, such as highlighting reconciliation and the acts of individual peacemakers. Such narrative shifts 22 years after the genocide were regarded by the majority of participants [in Friedrich's research] as appropriate adjustments, since the country's journey of political and social transformation should be reflected in the memorial's storylines. (Friedrich, 2016, p. 287)

What does this shift mean for site interpretation in Rwanda? Should a Hutu view of 1994 be incorporated? Or perhaps Colin Long and Keir Reeves' admonition with regard to the growth of Khmer Rouge cult devotion at Anlong Veng, Cambodia, should be taken into account, that

> if the purpose of heritage preservation in the case of places of pain and shame is to commemorate the victims, then there is little role for the preservation of perpetrator sites. Heritage preservation is not about preserving all of the past – it is about remembering aspects of the past which we believe worthy of remembrance. (Long and Reeves, 2009, p. 78)

At what point can memories of the past be let go? Are the memories of some conflicts simply so personally bitter and so engrained now in the popular culture that reconciliation must remain incomplete? Or can the development of national and international tourism at difficult heritage sites contribute positively to the symbolic reparations needed by societies recovering from conflict, as suggested by Friedrich (2016) in the Rwandan case? These questions present a complex set of challenges for the heritage bureaucrats, site managers and other practitioners working in such societies.

Türkiye

Another property caught up in the current World Heritage Committee embargo on progressing places on the Tentative List associated with memories of recent conflicts is the 'Çanakkale (Dardanelles) and Gelibolu (Gallipoli) Battle Zones in the First World War' in Türkiye (see Table 1). The property was added to Türkiye's Tentative List in 2014 (UNESCO, 2014) and, as in Rwanda, national and global heritage management systems behind the nomination have been operating in ways that are compatible with the constitutional and policy principles of UNESCO, especially with regard to building bridges to peace. Indeed, the Turkish property is potentially one of the finest examples of heritage being used to promote reconciliation and peace between peoples of different cultures who were formerly active belligerents.

The Gallipoli peninsula is today a remarkable cultural landscape, comprising the natural features of the peninsula lying between the Aegean Sea and the Dardanelles, steep, heavily eroded ridges, almost sand-less narrow beaches, overlain by the remains of the Gallipoli campaign of 25 April 1915 to 9 January 2016. These relics include an extensive range of trenches, forts, bastions, guns, sunken ships and other war-related artefacts together with Turkish, Australian, New Zealand, British and French war graves and memorials. Although it is reckoned that the battles in the Dardanelles and Gallipoli peninsula had no bearing on the overall course of the war, their significance lies in the very high and pointless death toll (Table 2).

While the following comments focus on Turks and Australians, it needs to be remembered that the United Kingdom, Ireland and France lost greater absolute numbers than Australia, although as a proportion of the home population the Australian and New Zealand tolls were higher. The Gallipoli battles thus became more important in the national identity formation of post-Ottoman Türkiye, Australia and New Zealand, and the nominated World Heritage property is highly significant cultural heritage for these countries. The site is of less interest to the other main Allied belligerents, largely because they have other more significant First World War battlefields to commemorate elsewhere, although France celebrated the 2022 anniversary of the Allied landing by reburying seventeen of its Gallipoli dead at its Seddulbahir cemetery (Guzel and Frazer, 2022).

Table 2. Gallipoli casualties by country

Country	Killed	Wounded
Allied forces		
UK and Ireland	21 255	52 230
Australia	8 709	19 441
France	10 000	17 000
New Zealand	2 779	5 212
India	1 358	3 421
Newfoundland	49	93
Total Allies	44 150	97 397
Ottoman Empire	86 692	164 617
Total	130 842	262 014

Source: New Zealand. (2014)

Significant, too, is the fact that within twenty years of the end of the First World War Gallipoli became synonymous with reconciliation. The words delivered in 1938 by the then Turkish president, Kemal Atatürk, who had led the Ottoman troops in the Gallipoli battles, set a tone of post-conflict reconciliation between the 'Mehmets' and 'Johnnies'. His words, including the following, have become an integral part of annual memorial services in Australia and New Zealand:

> Those heroes that shed their blood and lost their lives … You are now lying in the soil of a friendly country. Therefore rest in peace. There is no difference between the Johnnies and the Mehmets to us, where they lie, side by side in this country of ours …
>
> You, the mothers who sent their sons from faraway countries wipe away your tears; your sons are lying in our bosom and are at peace. After having lost their lives on this land, they have become our sons as well.

The role of Gallipoli in Australia and New Zealand nation-building has made the peninsula and especially the memorial cemeteries established and maintained by the Commonwealth Graves Commission at Anzac Cove and Lone Pine the focus of tourism. The number of Australian tourists peaked at 10,000 in 2015, the centenary of the ill-fated Anzac landing. Scates (2006) identifies many visitor interpretations of Gallipoli and a variety of reasons for Australians visiting: some are pilgrims, looking for the graves of family members; others see it as a rite of passage, their visit a statement of what it means to be Australian. In the last decade or so Gallipoli became a stopping point on backpacker itineraries.

The Turkish cemeteries and memorials, such as the Çanakkale Martyrs Memorial and the Fifty-Seventh Regiment Memorial Park, are also much visited by officials, family members and tourists. This is unsurprising given that more than a quarter of a million Turkish men participated in the Gallipoli battles, including whole classes of university and school students, and that so many died. Because of its status in the formation of the new Türkiye, there have long been plans to protect the Gallipoli war landscape. A Gallipoli Peninsula National Historical Park was established as long ago as 1973 and in the 1990s the creation of a peace park was proposed covering the entire peninsula. The peace park was still under master planning development in the late 1990s when the Australian and New Zealand governments sought and were granted permission by the Turkish Government to construct a commemorative site at Anzac Cove, chiefly for conducting Anzac Day services. The Anzac Commemorative Site was constructed in 1999–2000 and forms part of the Battlefield Heritage Zone in the peace park.

Figure 5. Turkish Fifty-Seventh Regiment Memorial Park at the southern end of Edirne Sirti (Mortar Ridge), Gallipoli peninsula. (Photo: author's own.)

Figure 6. Commonwealth graves and memorial at Lone Pine, Gallipoli peninsula. (Photo: author's own.)

Türkiye's Tentative List submission nomination document builds on this history, the notion of reconciliation and the peace park concept, the Statement of OUV claiming that

> [The] Çanakkale and Gallipoli battles constitute a landmark in the world military and political history. This is frequently acknowledged. The significance of these battles in the world cultural history[,] however, is not well known. Examples of battles which turn prejudiced foes into admiring and respecting counterparts … are extremely rare …
>
> Indeed, … [the] Gallipoli battles constitute the only [time] where 'war' turns into a unique social and cultural happening and becomes an open invitation for mutual understanding, respect and tolerance, better said, for 'peace'. (UNESCO, 2014)

The property has been nominated to the Tentative List under a single criterion – Criterion (vi). This criterion enables the listing of places directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance. The World Heritage Committee prefers this criterion to be used in conjunction with other criteria. Türkiye maintains that the property fits Criterion (vi) because of its associations with the campaign and with the ideas, beliefs, ritual practices and artistic and literary works that flowed from it. While the campaign is written on the ground, Gallipoli's chief significance is as a place of commemoration, an essentially intangible heritage value.

Regrettably the reconciliatory spirit has been blunted in recent years. The renovation of the Anzac Cove monument bearing Atatürk's words in May 2017, which was part of a process of 'restoration' of all Turkish memorials and epitaphs on the Gallipoli peninsula, set off fears among some historians in both Australia and Türkiye that the restorations were in part politically motivated and likely to reflect Türkiye's greater Islamist emphasis under President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. This fear was allayed by a clarification from the Turkish national agency responsible for Gallipoli peninsula monuments that the wording on the restored monument 'will be the same as in the past'. Even so, according to Daley (2017), there are other indications that Gallipoli is being reinterpreted as a clash between jihadi defenders and invading crusaders on the shores of Islam, as for instance in the Çanakkale Epic Presentation Centre built in 2012 at Gaba Tepe (Kabatepe) where the Turkish dead are depicted as 'martyrs'.

Presidential statements made during Türkiye's national election campaign in March–April 2019 further undermined the reconciliation message. These had the effect of temporarily souring Australian and New Zealand diplomatic relations with Türkiye. It also helped cut the number of Australian and New Zealand visitors to the site for that year's memorial service at Anzac Cove to 1,434, although, as Fathi (2021) notes, attendances were also significantly lower at services in Australian capital cities. The reduction in visitors had a severe impact on the local tourism-based economy.

To be fair to Türkiye, the Australian Government had been stretching bilateral diplomacy and pushing the notion of extraterritoriality to their limits. As at the Long Tan battlefield in Viet Nam (Logan, 2020c, pp. 22, 27), the numbers attending the annual memorial service at Anzac Cove had grown beyond an acceptable size for the host country and a reappraisal was probably inevitable. Moreover, the attempt by the Australian Government under Prime Minister John Howard in the early 2000s to encourage Türkiye to inscribe Gallipoli on the World Heritage List (Parliament of New South Wales, 2003) and to allow it – or, more specifically, Anzac Cove – to be inscribed on the Australian National Heritage List was seen by Türkiye as not respecting its territorial sovereignty (Davis, 2005). In retrospect, it was perhaps surprising that the Turkish Government broke with normal international practice to allow a foreign power to give its own name – Anzac Cove – to a part of Türkiye.

As Ziino (2012, p. 153) has observed, Howard's interventions showed that 'the histories and identities attached to the Gallipoli peninsula were not one and the same, or simply shared, and that they have their contemporary politics'. Newspaper reaction in Australia was unfavourable, branding the proposal as 'arrogant and insensitive' (*The Age*, 3 January 2004, p. 18, quoted in Ziino, 2012, p. 153). The Turkish press also rankled at the arrogance of Australia, reporting that Australia and New Zealand had requested that Anzac Cove should be 'considered an independent territory, much like embassy grounds' (*Hürriyet Daily News*, 1 May 2005, quoted in Ziino, 2012, p. 157). War-exhausted France may have ceded land to the Imperial War Graves Commission in 1917, but that was a model not to be repeated here. In the end, the best the Australian Government could do was to add Anzac Cove to a 'List of Overseas Places of Historic Significance to Australia' established in 2007 (Australia, 2021).

The Anzac Day services were cancelled in 2020 and 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a hiatus that has allowed relations between the two countries to stabilize. They restarted on 25 April 2022 with an estimated 500 Australians in attendance. In the meantime, at UNESCO, the promised further consideration of the 2020 ICOMOS discussion paper was to have taken place in June 2022 at the World Heritage Committee's forty-fifth annual session. Hopefully, the matter would have then been resolved so that the embargoed nominations whose interpretations in fact focus on peace and reconciliation, such as Gallipoli, could proceed. Türkiye will have to wait.

Conclusions

While the management arrangements at each UNESCO World Heritage Site are unique in detail, there are nevertheless a number of common challenges facing most, if not all, of them. The five national case studies outlined above demonstrate some of these. Firstly, they clearly highlight how the attribution of significance to places occurs through processes that are essentially political in that they deal with who has access to and control over these resources, meaning that site interpretation is inevitably political and not merely a technical or management matter but a form of cultural politics. The messages presented to visitors in interpretation panels and brochures and electronically in videos and online content will normally fit the official vision and, as the Japan and Viet Nam case studies showed, attempts to include other views can quickly run into official opposition.

In a democratic world, the protection of heritage sites is not done primarily to serve governments, heritage bureaucrats or heritage professionals, but for the people whose heritage it is. The last part of this assertion is not straightforward, seeming as it does to give priority among visitors to local custodians and communities, which can lead to tensions with wider groups of stakeholders, including the 'world' in the context of World Heritage. There is a diversity of stakeholders, ranging from national and local governments and their agencies to professional experts and members of the general public as communities, groups or individuals, and all should have a say in the interpretation of heritage. But this, too, is not without problems, since diversity poses, as Silberman (2020) notes, 'complex challenges to the possibility of a single universal method of interpretation that will unfailingly mobilize community support'.

The UNESCO Constitution and its 2015 policy on World Heritage and sustainable development set some parameters around the operation of the protection system that has grown up under the World Heritage Convention. The message needs to be driven home to heritage bureaucrats, site managers and other practitioners at the State Party level that it is a requirement – not just an option – that site interpretation must support the UNESCO constitutional and policy goal of promoting a culture of peace rather than creating, exacerbating or prolonging tensions between States Parties. The World Heritage Committee, its secretariat (World Heritage Centre) and its advisory bodies need to be quick to disallow nominations that do not meet the requirement. Earlier and firmer intervention in the process leading to the nomination of 'Sites of Japan's Meiji Industrial Revolution' would probably have removed it as a stimulator of further tension between Japan and its regional neighbours.

Many contextual difficulties of course hinder the ability of heritage interpretation to support reconciliation between former enemies. Chief among these difficulties are that international, national and local community contexts are constantly shifting and that national interest nearly always dominates interpretation strategies. Heritage is fluid, constantly being reappraised and used in new ways that can be either benign or malign. In its efforts to protect the heritage of the Gallipoli peninsula, Türkiye is making use of national and global heritage management systems to good avail. The war heritage identified at Gallipoli reflects such reappraisal over time, moving from difficult uses associated with the nationalistic intentions of governments in the First World War to a greater sense of shared history, shared loss and shared heritage. Rwanda appears to be moving, too, from a narrow interpretation of its history to a less punitive, more inclusive approach. Japan has yet to shift from its official nationalist interpretation but perhaps it may be that not enough time has elapsed since open conflict ended for reconciliation and reinterpretation to be possible.

In order to facilitate site reinterpretation that conforms with UNESCO principles, a first-order task for heritage agencies at all levels – global, national, regional/state/provincial and municipal – is, therefore, to devise educational strategies that better enable people to understand other peoples' cultures and histories and to appreciate the reasons for safeguarding other peoples' cultural heritage. Tourism development strategies can also play an important role, as Friedrich (2016) observes in her Rwanda research, to contribute positively to the symbolic reparations needed by societies recovering from conflict, including the reinterpretation of sites associated with memories of recent conflict.

Some reorientation in the development of training programmes and other capacity-building in the form of documentation support is also needed. Training needs are already considerable across the World Heritage system and range widely from the technical aspects of conservation to the interpretation of sites that more effectively elucidate their OUV. Ensuring site interpretation and management conform to UNESCO principles adds new tasks that require attention. Site managers trained in architectural conservation or natural sciences will not easily cope with ensuring the principles are brought into their management processes. Major retraining will be required, firstly to make clear what is meant by principles such as achieving social inclusion, or peace and security principles, and then how to develop appropriate site management approaches. It may also mean that new kinds of specialists should be brought into the site management teams and that, too, may make necessary some preparation for the kind of cross-disciplinary collaboration that will ensue.

Training must especially encompass the negotiation skills needed to work with local communities in the identification and management of sites and, where heritage lies across political boundaries, with decision-makers and site managers who come from different cultural, political, economic and social contexts and have different philosophical and technical approaches to protecting cultural heritage. As the Australian case study illustrated, there is a special need for sensitive negotiations between Indigenous and settler peoples about World Heritage inscription and management issues on Indigenous land. The role of non-Indigenous heritage practitioners in these situations becomes one of providing advice to help ensure that those negotiations are consistent with UNESCO constitutional and policy principles and World Heritage processes.

Negotiation that leads to heritage reinterpretation and changed management practices in line with UNESCO principles cannot be done quickly through top-down directives but, instead, requires time, patience and cross-cultural and interpersonal sensitivity. The challenge is enormous but, if the World Heritage system is to maintain its credibility as a global system in which nation states work together to uphold the UNESCO mission, it is both necessary and overdue.

Notes

This chapter updates and extends my presentation on 17 September 2020 to the online lecture series on World Heritage Interpretation organized by the International Centre for the Interpretation and Presentation of World Heritage Sites (WHIPIC) in Seoul, Republic of Korea (Logan, 2020a).

1. 'Interpretation' and 'presentation' are different processes, although closely related in the practice of site management. The terms are not interchangeable (Logan, 2022).
2. The speech from which these words are taken is now found in many forms, from a memorial stone erected at Gallipoli to Anzac Day ceremony programmes in Australia.
3. 'Anzac' is the acronym for the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps.

References

Australia. 2021. *Anzac Cove, Turkey*. Canberra, Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment. Available at: https://www.awe.gov.au/parks-heritage/heritage/places/list-overseas-places-historic-significance-australia/anzac-cove (accessed 22 April 2022).

Daley, M. 2017. Turkish Islamist push may be to blame for removal of Atatürk inscription at Anzac Cove. *Guardian*, 16 June. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jun/16/turkish-islamist-push-may-be-to-blame-for-removal-of-ataturk-inscription-at-anzac-cove (accessed 25 April 2022).

Davis, M. 2005. Turks block Anzac site listing. *Australian Financial Review*, 28 April. Available at: https://www.afr.com/companies/manufacturing/turks-block-anzac-site-listing-20050428-jl04s (accessed 2 April 2022).

Fathi, R. 2021. Crowds at dawn services have plummeted in recent years. It's time to reinvent Anzac Day, *The Conversation*, 21 April. Available at: https://theconversation.com/crowds-at-dawn-services-have-plummeted-in-recent-years-its-time-to-reinvent-anzac-day-157313 (accessed 25 April 2022).

Friedrich, M. 2016. Heritage interpretation of the dead as a tool for peace and reconciliation: the case of visitor development at Rwanda's post-conflict memorialscape. PhD thesis, University of Central Lancashire, UK. Available at: http://clok.uclan.ac.uk/16577/15/16577%20Mona%20Friedrich%20Thesis%20July%202016%20redacted.pdf (accessed 21 April 2022).

Friedrich, M., Stone, R. R. and Rukesha, P. 2018. Dark tourism, heritage and memorialization: a case of the Rwandan Genocide. In P. R. Stone, R. Hartmann, T. Seaton, R. Sharpley and L. White (eds), *The Palgrave Handbook of Dark Tourism Studies*. London, Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 261–89.

Guzel, M. and Fraser, S. 2022. Remains of 17 French WWI soldiers buried at Gallipoli. *Washington Post*, 24 April. Available at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/remains-of-17-french-wwi-soldiers-buried-at-gallipoli/2022/04/24/8cb4e4ca-c3bc-11ec-8cff-33b059f4c1b7_story.html (accessed 26 April 2022).

ICOMOS. 2008. *ICOMOS Charter for the Interpretation and Presentation of Cultural Heritage Sites*. Available at: https://www.icomos.org/charters/interpretation_e.pdf (accessed 27 April 2022).

ICOMOS. 2018. *Evaluations of World Heritage Nominations Related to Sites Associated with Memories of Recent Conflicts: Discussion Paper*. Available at https://www.icomos.org/images/DOCUMENTS/World_Heritage/ICOMOS_Discussion_paper_Sites_associated_with_Memories_of_Recent_Conflicts.pdf (accessed 20 April 2022).

ICOMOS. 2020. *Sites Associated with Memories of Recent Conflicts: Second Discussion Paper*. Available at: https://www.icomos.org/images/ICOMOS_Second_discussion_paper_Sites_associated_with_memories_of_recent_conflicts.pdf (accessed 20 April 2022).

Japan Cabinet Secretariat. 2018. *State of Conservation Report. Sites of Japan's Meiji Industrial Revolution: Iron and Steel, Shipbuilding, and Coal Mining (Japan) ID: 1484* (revised 19 January 2019). Available at: https://whc.unesco.org/en/soc/3704 (accessed 27 April 2022).

Japan Cabinet Secretariat. 2019. *State of Conservation Report. Sites of Japan's Meiji Industrial Revolution: Iron and Steel, Shipbuilding, and Coal Mining (Japan)*. Available at: https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1484/documents (accessed 27 April 2022).

Korman, R. 2015. Mobilizing the dead? The place of bones and corpses in the commemoration of the Tutsi Genocide in Rwanda. *Human Remains and Violence: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, Vol. 12, No. 2, pp. 56–70. Available at: https://www.manchesteropenhive.com/view/journals/hrv/1/2/article-p56.xml (accessed 21 April 2022).

Larsen, P. B. and Logan, W. 2018. *World Heritage and Sustainable Development: New Directions in World Heritage Management*. London, Routledge.

Latimore, J. 2022. Traditional owners challenge federal environment minister over Mungo Man reburial. *The Age*, 18 April. Available at https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/traditional-owners-challenge-federal-environment-minister-over-mungo-man-reburial-20220416-p5adxi.html (accessed 18 April 2022).

Lee, H. K. 2019. *Difficult Heritage in Nation Building: South Korea and Japanese Colonial Occupation Architecture*. London, Palgrave Macmillan.

Logan, W. 2013. Australia, Indigenous peoples and World Heritage from Kakadu to Cape York: state party behaviour under the World Heritage Convention. *International Journal of Social Archaeology*, Vol. 13, No. 2, pp. 153–76.

Logan, W. 2014. Making the most of heritage in Hanoi, Vietnam. *Historic Environment*, Vol. 26, No. 3, pp. 62–72.

Logan, W. 2018a. Heritage, sustainable development and the achievement of peace and security in our world: ambitions and constraints. In P. B. Larsen and W. Logan (eds), *World Heritage and Sustainable Development: New Directions in World Heritage Management*. London, Routledge, pp. 134–52.

Logan, W. 2018b. Ethnicity, heritage, human rights and governance in the union of Myanmar. In J. Rodenberg and P. Wagenaar (eds), *Cultural Contestation: Heritage, Identity and the Role of Government*. New York, Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 37–60.

Logan, W. 2020a. *UNESCO World Heritage Listing and Heritage Interpretation*. Online lecture series on World Heritage Interpretation and Presentation, International Centre for the Interpretation and Presentation of World Heritage Sites (WHIPIC), Seoul, 17 September. Available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UlHN4NxxrhQ.

Logan, W. 2020b. Blowing hot and cold: culture-related activities in the deployment of Australian soft power in Asia. In S. Labadi (ed.), *The Cultural Turn in International Aid: Impacts and Challenges for Heritage and the Creative Industries*. London, Routledge, pp. 152–70.

Logan, W. 2020c. Long Tan, Coral-Balmoral and Binh Ba: remembered, unremembered and disremembered battlefields from Australia's Vietnam War. In A. Hubbell, N. Akagawa, S. Rojas-Lizana and A. Pohlman (eds), *Places of Traumatic Memory: A Global Context*. London, Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 15–36.

Logan, W. 2022. Heritage interpretation, conflict and reconciliation in East Asia: global issues in microcosm. *Journal of Cultural Heritage Management and Sustainable Development*, Vol. 12, No. 1, pp. 5–18.

Long, C. and Reeves, K. 2009. 'Dig a hole and bury the past in it': reconciliation and the heritage of genocide in Cambodia. In W. Logan and K. Reeves (eds), *Places of Pain and Shame: Dealing with 'Difficult Heritage'.* London, Routledge, pp. 68–81.

McKinney, S. L. 2012. Narrating genocide on the streets of Kigali. In M. Gegner and B. Ziino (eds), *The Heritage of War*. London, Routledge, pp. 160–76.

Nakano, R. 2018. Heritage soft power in East Asia's memory contests: promoting and objecting to heritage dissonance in UNESCO. *Journal of Contemporary Eastern Asia*, Vol. 17, No. 1, pp. 50–67.

New Zealand. Ministry of Culture and Heritage. 2014. Gallipoli casualties by country. Available at: http://www.nzhistory.net.nz/media/interactive/gallipoli-casualties-country (accessed 19 October 2022).

Palmer, D. 2018. Gunkanjima/Battleship Island, Nagasaki: World Heritage historical site or urban ruins tourist attraction? *Asia-Pacific Journal*, Vol. 16, No. 14, pp. 1–26. Available at: https://apjjf.org/2018/01/Palmer.html (accessed 26 April 2022).

Park, H. N. 2019. Ministry urges dialogue as Japan reneges on pledge to honor forced labor victims. *Korean Herald*, 3 December. Available at: http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20191203000708 (accessed 26 April 2022).

Parliament of New South Wales. 2003. Anzac Cove World Heritage Listing, *Legislative Assembly Hansard*, 1 July. Available at: https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/Hansard/Pages/HansardResult.aspx#/docid/HANSARD-1323879322-30094 (accessed 22 April 2022).

Queensland Government. 2021. Potential new World Heritage areas. Brisbane, Department of Environment and Science. Available at: https://parks.des.qld.gov.au/management/managed-areas/world-heritage-areas/potential (accessed 23 March 2022).

Scates, B. 2006. *Return to Gallipoli: Walking the Battlefields of the Great War*. Melbourne, Cambridge University Press.

Silberman, N. 2020. *Introduction to World Heritage Interpretation*. World Heritage Interpretation online lecture series, WHIPIC, 10 September. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wqMKSlgq8dY (accessed 27 April 2022).

United Nations. 2007. *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)*. Available at: http://www.un-documents.net/a61r295.htm (accessed 28 March 2022).

UNESCO. 1945 (latest revision 2016). *UNESCO Constitution*. Available at: http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=15244&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html (accessed 27 April 2022).

UNESCO. 1972. *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage*. Available at: https://whc.unesco.org/en/conventiontext (accessed 27 April 2022).

UNESCO. 1981a. *Kakadu National Park*. Available at: https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/147 (accessed 21 April 2022).

UNESCO. 1981b. *Willandra Lakes Region*. Available at: https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/167 (accessed 21 April 2022).

UNESCO. 1987. *Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park*. Available at: https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/447 (accessed 21 April 2022).

UNESCO. 2003. *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*. Available at: https://ich.unesco.org/en/convention (accessed 27 April 2022).

UNESCO. 2010. *Central Sector of the Thang Long-Hanoi Citadel*. Available at: https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1328 (accessed 21 April 2022).

UNESCO. 2014. *Çanakkale (Dardanelles) and Gelibolu (Gallipoli) Battles Zones in the First World War*. Available at: https://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/5911/ (accessed 21 April 2022).

UNESCO. 2015a. *Policy for the Integration of a Sustainable Development Perspective into the Processes of the World Heritage Convention*. Available at: http://whc.unesco.org/en/sustainabledevelopment/ (accessed 23 March 2022).

UNESCO. 2015b. *The Sites of Japan's Meiji Industrial Revolution: Iron and Steel, Shipbuilding and Coal Mining*. Available at: https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1484 (accessed 27 April 2022).

UNESCO. 2015c. *Summary Records, Thirty-ninth session of the World Heritage Committee in Bonn, Germany (28 June – 8 July 2015)*, WHC-15/39.COM.INF.19, pp. 220–24. Available at: https://whc.unesco.org/archive/2015/whc15-39com-INF.19.pdf (accessed 28 April 2022).

UNESCO. 2018. *State of Conservation Report: Sites of Japan's Meiji Industrial Revolution: Iron and Steel, Shipbuilding and Coal Mining*. Available at: https://whc.unesco.org/en/soc/3704 (accessed 27 April 2022).

UNESCO. 2019. *Budj Bim Cultural Landscape*. Available at: https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1577 (accessed 21 April 2022).

UNESCO. 2020. *Murujuga Cultural Landscape*. Available at: https://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/6445 (accessed 23 March 2022).

UNESCO. 2021a. *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*. Available at: https://whc.unesco.org/en/guidelines/ (accessed 19 April 2022).

UNESCO. 2021b. *Flinders Ranges*. Available at: https://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/6524/ (accessed 23 March 2022).

UNESCO. 2021c. *Report on the UNESCO/ICOMOS Mission to the Industrial Heritage Information Centre related to the World Heritage Property 'Sites of Japan's Meiji Industrial Revolution: Iron and Steel, Shipbuilding and Coal Mining' (Japan) (C 1484), 7 to 9 June 2021*. Available at: https://whc.unesco.org/document/188249 (accessed 21 April 2022).

UNESCO. 2022. *45th Session of the World Heritage Committee*. Available at: https://whc.unesco.org/en/sessions/45COM (accessed 24 April 2022).

UNESCO WHC (World Heritage Committee). 2018a. *Decision 42 COM 7B.10. Sites of Japan's Meiji Industrial Revolution: Iron and Steel, Shipbuilding and Coal Mining (Japan) (C1484)*. Available at: https://whc.unesco.org/en/decisions/7293 (accessed 20 April 2022).

UNESCO WHC. 2018b. *Decision: 42 COM 8B.24. Funerary and memorial sites of the First World War (Western Front) (Belgium, France)*. Available at: https://whc.unesco.org/en/decisions/7137 (accessed 20 April 2022).

Wahlquist, C. 2018. 'The rocks remember': the fight to protect Barrup peninsula's rock art. *The Guardian*, 27 August. Available at: http://theguardian.com/environment/2018/aug/27/the-rocks-remember-the-fight-to-protect-burrup-peninsulas-rock-art (accessed 30 March 2022).

Ziino, B. 2012. 'We are talking about Gallipoli after all': contested narratives, contested ownership and the Gallipoli peninsula. In Gegner and Ziino, *The Heritage of War*, pp. 142–59.

Chapter 3

A World of Difference? Missed Opportunities in the Interpretation of World Heritage Sites

Mike Robinson

A World of Difference? Missed Opportunities in the Interpretation of World Heritage Sites

Mike Robinson

Abstract

Despite its problems, World Heritage remains a potentially powerful concept in global society; more than ever, the vast variety of tangible sites and landscapes that constitute the World Heritage List have the capacity to illuminate important messages that are the very foundation of the United Nations and UNESCO ideal. Beyond the functional aspects of the safeguarding of cultural and natural heritage, World Heritage Sites possess symbolic value that can convey substantive educational messages of global interconnectedness, common human understanding, diversity and tolerance, as well as practical instruction. World Heritage should be leading the way in terms of interpretation, of both cultural and natural heritage.

However, all too often the interpretation of World Heritage is inward looking, focused upon the technical and historical attributes of the property. So too is interpretation limited in its geographic scope, more than occasionally defaulting to localisms and nationalisms that collide with the ideals of a 'common humanity' and the universalism that were conceived as central to the World Heritage Convention. While acknowledging that, in part, World Heritage is about the recognition of local diversity and identities, what differentiates it is precisely its ability to speak to shared transnational values.

When properties are inscribed on the World Heritage List, existing site interpretation is commonly retained from their previous status, with only limited adjustments regarding their new transnational significance. At the same time, audiences for heritage continually change and certainly have expanded and transformed dramatically since the first World Heritage Sites were designated back in 1978. The context in which UNESCO and the World Heritage system operates has also undergone rapid and marked changes, with key features being the development of technological and economic interconnectivities, the growth in global mobilities, mass migrations and mass international tourism, the asymmetries of international development, the realities of climate change and other major environmental challenges, together with the attempted global responses to all of these issues encapsulated in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. This chapter argues that World Heritage Sites should, by virtue of the investments made through the nomination process and the subsequent status accorded to them, be addressing the above issues and that this should be reflected in their interpretation strategies. This is not only a question of the application of innovative digital technologies, but in the communication of reinvigorated messages that can connect with a rapidly changing, international, multicultural audience concerned with contemporary issues. Key to this is how World Heritage properties can mobilize their global standing so as to be relevant to non-experts, to visitors from different cultures, to younger generations often disconnected from their heritage and to the less-developed communities of the world who look to culture and heritage as often the only economic resources they have, through which they can participate in sustainable development.

It is a concern of this chapter to highlight the need for there to be a significant difference between the interpretation of heritage and the interpretation of World Heritage. Site interpretation is an opportunity to communicate connections across geographic and political boundaries, across cultures and generations, between tangible and intangible heritage, and to communicate genuine commonalities and the core messages of UNESCO and make them relevant to a truly global audience.

Introduction

Some fifty years after the 1972 UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, the inscription of cultural and natural sites on the World Heritage List continues apace. The prime intention of the Convention was the protection of vulnerable heritage and, on the surface, it remains so. However, the World Heritage system is also driven by nationalist interests of making heritage visible on the world stage and the pursuit of attendant economic benefits, closely tied to tourism (Di Giovine, 2009), that are seen to follow global recognition. The central tension between the UNESCO rhetoric of 'common humanity' and 'universalism' and the interior agendas of nation-building and States Parties seeking, quite legitimately, to project more regionalized/localized interests, is increasingly exposed (Rakic and Chambers, 2008). The macropolitics of the World Heritage system and the decline from the ideal of a unified process of decision-making to a far more disjointed practice involving many competing interest groups, calls into question the fundamental *raison d'être* for the category of World Heritage and picks at the threads of the philosophical fabric of UNESCO.

As Meskell (2014, 2018) has pointed out, the appellation of the World Heritage label and the technocratic mechanics of its production serve to point out the very contested nature of heritage and the global inequalities at work. This seems a far cry from the optimistic humanism and foundational ambitions of UNESCO to foster peace. Indeed, considering the conflict that rages in Ukraine at the time of writing, along with numerous episodes of war and insurgency around the globe since 1972, it would seem that the principle of protecting heritage sites for the benefit of all humanity, as part of this wider ambition of securing peace and understanding, has been at best misplaced. At the very least, it opens both moral and practical questions regarding what 'good' the World Heritage system performs within the wider framework of generating cultural understanding, tolerance of diversity and meeting the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The adoption by UNESCO in 2015 of a policy to utilize cultural heritage, of which the World Heritage List is a high-profile marker, as an 'enabler' to achieve the SDGs was seen to be a major development towards a more engaged approach between World Heritage Sites and global needs. It is within this context that it is appropriate to address the role that interpretation plays as part of this engagement.

A key concern of this chapter is to ask two related questions: is there a difference between the interpretation of heritage and the interpretation of World Heritage? And, if not, what should that difference be? The wider context to this is the role of interpretation in the production and consumption of heritage sites and the ways the significance of cultural and natural heritage, and intangible heritage, is communicated to various publics. Considerable attention is given in the literature to strategies and techniques of interpretation, with a recent leaning towards 'storytelling' and the interrelated mobilization of digital technologies. Numerous cases explore the transformative, liberational aspects of virtual reality, augmented reality, gaming and mobile applications in the telling of stories as a way of linking heritage buildings, structures and museum objects and their place and community contexts with audiences (see, for instance, Kidd, 2019; Mutibwa et al., 2020; Rahaman, 2018). Technology allows heritage providers to break free from restrictions of space and time and to engage with more interactive interpretive approaches and multiple voices (Burkey, 2019; Ross, 2018). Despite worries such as exclusivity of access through new technologies and an increase in inert, passive consumption where the medium apparently overtakes the message, the rise of the digital continues. World Heritage Sites, in a fragmented and wholly uncoordinated way, have embraced digital interpretation to varying degrees, from the common use of on-site QR codes to the construction of immersive augmented reality experiences, which can be either on- or off-site. It appears that the bulk of the academic literature is addressing the question of 'how' heritage is being communicated rather than 'what' is being communicated and 'why', and with little differentiation between heritage and 'World Heritage'.

The promise of heritage interpretation

The practice of heritage interpretation has moved on a long way since its early applications in museums and heritage sites based upon the so-called 'principles' of interpretation as set out by Freeman Tilden (1957). Various researchers have taken issue with the application of Tilden's six guiding principles (see, for instance, Deufel, 2017; Silberman, 2013; Staiff, 2014), recognizing that the composition of audiences has changed considerably, and that the production of heritage reflected the so-called 'authorized heritage discourse' (Smith, 2006). Critics also recognize that heritage has undergone a process of democratization, moving more to 'co-production' (Graham and Vergunst, 2019), noticing that heritage is, more than ever, culturally, politically and morally contested, and that increasing recognition of intangible cultural heritage also presents new challenges. Tilden's work continues to be dissected; it is 'of its time', and now sits within much wider debates regarding global communication flows, transnational mobilities, trust and the legitimacy of knowledge. Audiences for heritage can no longer be defined as static, passive, homogeneous entities. Rather, they are ethnically, culturally superdiverse (Vertovec, 2007) and subject to the normative, but apparently easily forgotten, processes of generational change. Cultural diversity and the rapidity of youthful replacement are significant challenges in heritage interpretation as they are founded upon different and often very remote a priori knowledge regimes that interpreters frequently take for granted.

Arguably, as in art, there remain heritage sites, properties and landscapes – or certainly parts of them – that defy any need for communicative intervention. However, where we formally intervene with narrative in the form of some degree of interpretation, there is an underlying promise being made to the audience that a heritage site will serve to educate, enlighten, entertain or – in line with Tilden – at the very least provoke further discussion. Such a promise is usually bound to the management of a site and increasingly tied to the public funding of that site – directly via state subsidy or indirectly through tourist revenue. It reflects a view that a site has public value (not necessarily publicly recognized value) and that wider society deserves to gain something from the site that is being protected and managed.

How this promise is framed varies from an established and pervasive didactic expression of 'this is what you will learn' to a more recently emotionally referenced articulation of 'this is what you will experience'. Of course, these are entangled with one another, but they largely reference interpretation as a process and not as an outcome. The intended outcome is that the audience will ultimately deepen their understanding of a heritage site and, moreover, be moved to action, usually narrowly formulated as fostering better stewardship for heritage. It would seem reasonable to assume that through effective interpretation, be that via static and passive interpretative panels or active through a tour

guide that allows for some interactivity, the visitor leaves a heritage site better informed than when they arrived, presumably part of the original intention of the visit. But such an assumption requires qualification on several grounds.

First, there is seldom any follow-up investigation to assess what visitors have learned and therefore no real testing as to the efficacy of the interpretation provided. This is not surprising given that such assessments are problematical and need to go beyond simple counting of how many people have accessed a QR code. The measurement of what we may term 'learning outcomes' borrows from pedagogic studies which indicate that interactivity helps, enjoyment of the wider experience helps, and achieving the right tone between expert and non-expert language is also critical. Testing the absorption of knowledge and understanding is not something that heritage site managers are usually skilled in or have adequate time and resources to carry out regarding their own visitors. Surrogate assessments usually come in the form of post-trip comments either left on-site through visitor book entries, sometimes through an evaluative self-completion survey or, more commonly, through self-motivated online entries on websites like TripAdvisor or a travel blog. Scrutiny of online visitor discourse is an important, if imperfect, way of assessing the overall experience of a visit to a heritage site and may make a recognizable reference to the interpretation provided.

Academic studies tend towards instrumental assessments of differing forms and formats of cultural and natural heritage interpretation at specific sites, with some evaluation of their perception among visitors in contributing, or otherwise, to the visitor experience (see, for instance, Ballantyne et al., 2014; Liu, 2020; Lo and Hallo, 2012; Packer and Ballantyne, 2016; Poria et al., 2009). For instance, Weng et al. (2020) examined the relative performance of non-personal interpretation and interpersonal interpretation through tour guiding at the World Heritage Site of Wulingyuan Scenic Area, Hunan, China, and found that a tour guide was preferred as the way to convey the cultural dimensions of a largely natural site. This resonates with other studies which identify that interaction allows for emotional engagement.

Second, the promise of site interpretation is relatively unreflective as to the wider value of the knowledge and understanding that is being conveyed – the 'what' that is the subject of intended communication. Not surprisingly, the subject of interpretation is largely shaped by the type of heritage site. The heritage category is very broad indeed, ranging from what may have been termed 'traditional heritage' tangible properties and artefacts of significant age – ancient temples, castles and the like – to more recently recognized heritage of industrial complexes and modernist architecture. It also includes natural heritage, which is frequently imbued with cultural interpretations and representations, and the more amorphous intangible cultural heritage that spans various traditions, immaterial expressions and symbolic representations of culture and ways of life. Each subcategory of heritage is invariably championed by bodies of expertise that are called upon, to varying degrees, as the authors of the site narrative to be presented through interpretative media to various stakeholders, and particularly to visitors. So, generally, one would expect archaeologists to be the obvious people to accumulate, select and construct the foundational knowledge of an archaeological site that will be communicated to its audiences. The value of this knowledge cannot be overestimated, but technical language and jargon can dominate interpretation, and assumptions about the audience, the level of their knowledge and interest and their awareness of the wider context are common. It is the language used in interpretation that is perhaps the most visible public sign of the authorized heritage discourse. Seldom do tourists engage with a heritage site as epistemic virgins. Rather, they are 'trans-textured tourists' (Robinson, 2005), already armed with knowledge and interests derived from non-technical sources, news, film, television, literature and the immediate global circulations of popular culture. At the same time, they are rarely experts.

Third, and related to the point of authorship, the ability of heritage site interpretation to provoke thought and discussion, as Tilden had intended, is not always apparent. Attachment to fact-based narratives would seem to provide little room for ethical discussion. Key variables here relate to how much intellectual space is provided, or indeed allowed, for provocation. Interpersonal interpretation would seem to provide greater opportunity for stimulating thought and genuine discussion, but this is contingent on how much a tour guide is willing or able to deviate from his or her rehearsed narrative. As Salazar (2013) pointed out in his work with tour guides in Indonesia and Tanzania, interpreting the cities of Yogyakarta and Arusha, respectively, their role was to effectively present the places and the communities in a staged-authentic way, largely ignoring the influences of colonialism. Since heritage sites in different parts of the world, particularly those on the World Heritage List, are open to both overt and more subtle political appropriation for their symbolic value, displaying strands of nationalism and historicism, it would seem that interpretative neutrality, rooted in the distant past, is often a 'safe' option.

Fourth, accessing our understandings of both effect and affect of interpretation at heritage sites upon an international audience is severely limited by the parameters of language. Academic studies have examined the impacts of both cultural and natural heritage interpretation on tourists, mainly to assess levels of satisfaction (Huang et al., 2015; Reino et al., 2007). But while useful, such research is invariably constrained within discrete language groups. Translating post-visit and *in situ* survey instruments is, generally, prohibitively costly. Depending upon the scale and resources of a heritage site, there are usually acknowledgements to the language needs of international visitors evident in multiple language interpretation panels, brochures and audio guides. The decision as to which language groups are privileged in interpretation practice is usually driven by a

vague understanding of the established tourist markets. So, within the established tourist hotspots of Europe, heritage sites would usually offer interpretation in English, French, Spanish, Italian and German. The smaller and lesser-known heritage sites and museums would normally struggle to provide texts beyond two or perhaps three languages. Since around 2010, the rapid expansion of outbound tourism from Asia – Korea, Japan and particularly China – has exposed the resource limitations of even the largest heritage attractions in Europe in terms of being able to provide a greater understanding of them to an international audience.

The conceptual ideal of interpretation of being able to communicate meaning is, in part, a promise to generate understanding and also to result in some sort of action directed to the appreciation of significance and ongoing protection of heritage (Costa and Carneiro, 2021). However, this is contingent on numerous variables, many outside of the control of the owners and managers of heritage sites. At the level of World Heritage, these variables are added to in terms of heightened profile, global political exposure, intended international audiences and greater financial commitment, along with the requirements of reporting and monitoring that sit outside of national frameworks.

The World Heritage context

Despite a variety of ongoing critiques (Keough, 2011; Meskell, 2018; Rodwell, 2012), the 1972 Convention on World Heritage continues to function in essentially the same way as it was intended at the time of its inception and remains largely heralded as successful in protecting its selected heritage properties, in raising the importance of heritage generally and, though not strictly with any dedicated goal, in encouraging related tourism activity and the economic benefits that can bring. The expansion of the World Heritage List, purely in terms of number, is easily appropriated as a marker for success. Global recognition of the 'specialness' of a heritage site is an understandable aspiration for both local communities and for nations, and in a sense overshadows the very need for ongoing protection. Despite the high-profile cases of overtourism at some World Heritage Sites, the perception (before the COVID-19 pandemic) that UNESCO designation will boost economic development through tourism has become an implicit, if not explicit, motivation for the nomination of heritage sites.

The persistent and pervasive influence of the World Heritage 'brand', along with an extensive list of World Heritage properties and the burgeoning Tentative Lists of nations queuing for the opportunity to be evaluated, all point to markers of success. The fact that, around the world, national registers of heritage sites under various threats – of anthropogenic, environmental, political and particularly economic origin – continue to grow would seem to be a powerful argument for maintaining a World Heritage system. What needs to be kept in mind is that the practical and legally binding instruments of protection, preservation, conservation and management, with all the resource commitments these entail, are not 'gifted' through World Heritage inscription, but are already embedded – to varying degrees – in national legislative planning frameworks that need to be in place before a heritage site is awarded World Heritage status.

The argument that World Heritage status acts as a 'brand', a symbolic marker of global importance, framed by the core concept of Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) is evidenced by the attention the sites gain through tourism, through the media, political attention and in terms of relative resource allocation. The processes of World Heritage nomination and inscription are predicated on selectivity and an implicit acceptance that some heritage sites are more important (to humanity) than others. Both the 'outstandingness' and the 'universality' of World Heritage remain subject to scrutiny on philosophical and pragmatic grounds (Cleere, 1996; Labadi, 2013; Schmutz and Elliot, 2017), with the former targeted for its innate subjectivity and its openness to political manipulation and the latter highlighting Eurocentric cultural values and the asymmetries between the developed and developing world. But while discussion should rightly continue regarding OUV and its related dimensions of authenticity and integrity, and despite significant questions relating to finance (or lack of), governance and transparency, World Heritage continues to operate as a 'privileged category' (Meskell, 2013). It does so because it broadly retains the extensive support of 194 States Parties as signatories to the 1972 Convention, whose interests are now firmly embedded in the World Heritage system.

The production of heritage sites is continually being recognized at national, regional and local levels, either through the operation of some version of an authorized heritage discourse, or increasingly via more localized initiatives of co-production. But what marks out the World Heritage category is the recognition of global significance granted by UNESCO as an agency of the United Nations. The associative value of being connected to, and awarded by, UNESCO as a supranational body is powerful. The process of interrogation, orchestrated through UNESCO and the Convention, which seeks to evaluate heritage sites against agreed criteria and requires them to demonstrate OUV is important, but the fact that this is carried out in the name of UNESCO is akin to a form of sanctification. Nationally designated heritage sites cannot carry the same authority of a body of the United Nations replete with its moral mission. It is argued that the specialness of World Heritage also carries several responsibilities that non-World Heritage Sites do not have, and it is not unreasonable to suggest that these differences are both acknowledged and communicated.

The physicality of a temple, bridge, city or cultural landscape remains exactly the same before and after ascension to the World Heritage List. Protection policies may be

enhanced, site management capacities may be better developed and resources may be easier to access, but the materiality of the property remains effectively unaltered. It is the denotation of the site that has changed, the recognition that it 'stands for' or represents something more than it once did. The direct, tangible reward for what can be many years of work is the permission to display the World Heritage logo. The use of the World Heritage logo is defined by the World Heritage Committee, and it is normally displayed in conjunction with the UNESCO logo. Indeed, public recognition of the former logo on its own is generally assumed to be weak compared with when it is used with the latter. But while policy regarding the use of the logo is the domain of the World Heritage Committee, in explicit recognition of its marketing and fundraising potential as well as its power to promote the 1972 Convention, it is the State Party who is requested to provide and locate a plaque bearing the logo. As the Operational Guidelines state:

> These plaques are designed to inform the public of the country concerned and foreign visitors that the property visited has a particular value which has been recognised by the international community. In other words, the property is exceptional, of interest not only to one nation, but also to the whole world. However, these plaques have an additional function which is to inform the general public about the World Heritage Convention, or at least about the World Heritage concept and the World Heritage List. (UNESCO, 2021, p. 77, paragraph 269)

Common observation reveals a variety of forms and locations of the World Heritage symbol across several types of sites ranging from discreet siting of a small, simple plaque to more creative, large, three-dimensional manifestations. However, seldom is the World Heritage symbol foregrounded by any further interpretation as to 'why' a site has been accorded its special international status. Occasionally, a plaque or sign may also allude to the specific criteria through which a site has demonstrated OUV, but these too remain largely unexplained. The required Statement of OUV (introduced in the Operational Guidelines in 2005) is an attempt to encapsulate and convey the reasons why a particular site is worthy of its heightened status and is present in nomination files but rarely communicated alongside the World Heritage emblem. Indeed, there is a distinct disconnect between the symbolic denotation of World Heritage and the wider interpretation of a site.

The production of World Heritage has historically been a 'top-down' process, engaging 'experts', using technical language and a formulaic process that, depending on the system of governance with a State Party, varies in its transparency from the point of view of the general public. Over the years and despite some tweaks on the part of UNESCO and within some nation states, the World Heritage system is the embodiment of Smith's (2006) authorized heritage discourse; as Askew (2010, p. 22) calls it, 'a monolithic and overbearing international structure'. While local communities and visitors alike may rightly celebrate the accolade of joining the World Heritage List, they are frequently at a loss to articulate the reasons for this and, notably, what the implications of this may be.

Defaulting to the narrow and the ordinary

While it is impossible to meaningfully assess all World Heritage Sites (1,154 at the time of writing), it is suggested that in relation to their apparent significance, the overall quality of interpretation is not as high as it should be, albeit with exceptions. This is not a mere matter of technique, but one of content and of context. In both developed and developing countries there are World Heritage Sites with extraordinarily little interpretation. This does vary with location, access, type of heritage, management capacity and levels of visitation, though established and large tourist destinations do not equate with impactful interpretation. Moreover, interpretation is (and should be) work in progress, as a World Heritage Site develops over time and audiences change, with the not unreasonable expectation that long-established, popular and well-managed sites will have had time to evolve an interpretive strategy. Of course, the label of 'World Heritage' is layered upon sites that are already recognized for their heritage value, so it is understandable to some extent that existing site interpretation remains – whether it be through interpretation boards, audio guides or a visitor centre. In the first instance, once a site is added to the World Heritage List, it is usual that nothing substantive changes at the site and any existing interpretation remains to capture the history, the former uses and the technical aspects of the buildings, monuments or landscape. In the second instance, it is a costly exercise to (re) interpret a heritage site, particularly if new audiences are sought and the use of advanced technologies is desired.

On the securement of World Heritage status, there are many additional tasks facing site management authorities: the implementation of the management plan, ongoing conservation work, periodic reporting and the like. Interpretation is not usually seen as a primary concern, particularly if it is already in place. At the same time, there is little guidance provided within the 'new' World Heritage framework. Indeed, the text of the 1972 World Heritage Convention tells us little about the interpretation of sites and of the process they go through to 'become' World Heritage. The text of the Convention is written for a well-educated audience which, it is assumed, understands and appreciates its very rationale and the concepts it employs in the assessment of heritage value. Core concepts

of OUV, authenticity and integrity are challenging ones and increasingly contested but are, nonetheless, the very concepts that can assist public understanding of why heritage sites are elevated into the World Heritage category.

The tangible structures and spaces of World Heritage Sites, be they cities or forests, are the obvious locations for explaining the World Heritage concept. Article 27 of the Convention partially deals with this with its reference to education and information programmes directed to encourage people to strengthen appreciation and respect for their heritage and, by definition, to contribute to the ongoing protection and conservation of the property. The responsibility for education lies with the States Parties, who are 'requested' to undertake to keep the public broadly informed of the dangers threatening heritage. Reflecting the onus upon the State Party post-inscription, the Operational Guidelines (UNESCO, 2021) also offer extremely limited guidance regarding interpretation, with only passing reference to prospective plans and techniques that can form part of the nomination documentation.

Despite limited initiatives through UNESCO, the non-statutory and inconsistent implementation of this 'request' entails that wider publics remain largely uninformed about the philosophies and processes of World Heritage. Every World Heritage Site has its own story to tell about how it came into being. For some sites, this story is authored directly through experts and top-down governance and is relatively straightforward. For others, the journey from heritage site to World Heritage status is a long and arduous one, highlighting the role of local communities, a wide variety of stakeholders and the mobilization of considerable resources. Such journeys invoke notions of pride, identity, territorial disputes, uncomfortable histories, political struggle and recognition, and genuine passion for the tangible remains of the past. The 'becoming' of World Heritage is an important and instructive narrative that could significantly contribute to a wider understanding of the World Heritage concept. Seldom is this very particular story conveyed in the interpretation of a World Heritage property, and thus, to both local communities and to visitors, the real meaning of World Heritage as a process of differentiation is lost.

This aspect of World Heritage interpretation is not solely the responsibility of a site and its management but is part of a wider issue regarding the extent to which a State Party (and more precisely which agency within a national or federal framework) has communicated its commitment to the 1972 Convention. While civil society may understand that World Heritage Sites have a heightened level of significance and may well be justifiably proud of their sites, there would appear to be a lack of communication as to the value and rationale of the Convention, the implications of long-term management of properties and how they reflect the wider values of UNESCO.

The majority of World Heritage Sites appear to rely on the narratives that were already in place prior to designation. Leaving aside the now expansive techniques of interpretation, these narratives broadly reflect a narrowness of vision, linked with the wider evolution of how heritage has been constructed and consumed within a dominant Eurocentric paradigm. Technical authoring of site narratives remains prevalent where emphasis is placed upon the presentation of site-specific historical facts and evidence. This echoes a widely adopted cognitive psychological model of 'learning' where the visitor is taught in didactic mode using various media – panels, guides, brochures and so on. This transmission of information, be it historical or scientific, has certainly evolved since the early 1970s in recognition of the need for 'translation' and a decoding of technicalities so that the visitor can access the 'facts' of a site. Much of this translation work has been made possible by advances in technology (gaming, augmented reality, etc.) that allow the visitor to have greater interaction and a richer experience. However, the basic, asymmetrical pattern of knowledge transfer from expert to visitor remains in place, albeit via a more enjoyable format. Moreover, it continues to work on assumptions that it produces meaningful affects and effects upon visitors while largely ignoring long-standing recognition that heritage meanings are also made by visitors themselves who possess 'mindful' agency in constructing their own understandings of sites (see, for instance, Livingstone, 2003; McIntosh and Prentice, 1999; Moscardo, 1996, 1999; Roppola, 2012; Schorch, 2014).

Numerous heritage sites are based on narratives that fix upon defined space and time. The notions of 'sense of place' and local or rooted identities are frequently fused with the narratives of sites. Indeed, heritage sites build both communities and local and regional visitor constituencies upon their specificities of place which are articulated through a localized sense of ownership and pride. Uzzell (1998) points out that interpretation reflects 'specialness' and 'uniqueness' and identifies heritage places as markers of difference. This also extends beyond the tangible to intangible and the adjunct differences in local traditions and cultural practices. For heritage sites valued at local, regional or even national level, reflecting locality in interpretation is understandable, but within the canon of World Heritage there emerges a tension between 'parochialism and globalism' (Uzzell and Ballantyne, 1999). Though the World Heritage Convention recognizes the sovereignty of States Parties upon whose territories World Heritage properties are located, it also refers, in the optimistic tone of humanistic internationalism, to the significance of these to 'mankind as a whole' and 'for all peoples of the world'. Clearly, this significance is ultimately reflected in the distinguishing concept of OUV.

This tension regarding the significance of heritage at different space scales underlies many debates about which sites make it onto the World Heritage List and which do not. The reality is that heritage sites can be meaningful to different constituencies – local and global – at the same time. But the question remains as to how this defining, additional, transnational element surfaces in the interpretation of the site. The question

is important on two counts. First, if World Heritage needs to be accessible to a global audience through international tourism, then extant narratives – however meaningful to local and national visitors – need to be transformed and translated to visitors from many parts of the world. This is not merely language translation but also cultural translation. As Uzzell and Ballantyne (1999) note, the desire to use World Heritage as an instrument for tourism development (now well embedded in the motivations for nominations) is seldom matched by interpretation that remains with and mainly speaks to local audiences and knowledges of specific place. Interpretation is invariably constrained by language, but the real challenge is cultural translation that can provide the meaning of the site through identifiable, universal concepts. It is the responsibility of a World Heritage Site to highlight the universality of its heritage attributes, of its story. This is not in place of the importance of the local but is an addition that can also pay dividends in enhancing the experience of international visitors.

Second, and again noticing observations made by Uzzell and Ballantyne (1999), within the framework of the UNESCO core principles and notions of a common humanity, in the accentuation of uniqueness and difference with heritage interpretation we are arguably narrowing the opportunities to celebrate commonalities between peoples. Uniqueness – or, more accurately, distinctiveness – is frequently seen as a sought-after quality in the process of World Heritage nominations. It does not necessarily equate to OUV, but it is invariably tested in the process of comparative analysis. As the World Heritage List continues to expand, with distinct categories of heritage clearly discernible, commonalities become evident but they are hardly reflected in site-specific interpretation, which at best acknowledges wider contexts and at worst can lapse into nationalisms.

At the time of writing there are six World Heritage Sites that feature significant coal-mining heritage and many more that relate to infrastructure associated with the transport and use of coal. More or less, these sites span the nineteenth century and are found in the United Kingdom, France, Belgium, Germany, Japan and Indonesia, and they would seem to be linked in so many ways, through a more-or-less shared technical process of extracting and processing coal, to connections through the transfer of technologies and workers, to the shared and difficult process of de-industrialization. While these sites are now privileged with their place on the World Heritage List, there are numerous other coal-mining heritage sites that were part of the global phenomenon. While the interpretation of the latter may not focus upon the global connections that were part of coal mining, interpretation at World Heritage mining sites is in a position to exploit the overarching narratives of industrialization, shared cultures of coal mining and the struggles of decline within mining communities. Again, the local dimension is far from unimportant, but it is the common ground that surely should be at the forefront of the World Heritage Sites.

Communicating through connecting

Despite ongoing scrutiny, the core of the World Heritage system retains a moral authority in its mission to protect heritage. It does so with a technocratic optimism that, despite being idealistic, remains a worthy goal (Meskell, 2018). However, it is argued that the persistent desire for World Heritage status now reflects not the dream of internationalism and of 'nations united' but rather the re-entrenchment of nationalisms and open competition for the dominance of difference. Diversity is something that is represented through both cultural and natural heritage that UNESCO seeks to protect not only through the 1972 Convention but also through the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003) and the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005). But the supranationalism of the UNESCO discourse does not always penetrate to the understandably narrower concerns of the States Parties.

If we accept the not unreasonable premise that World Heritage Sites should be at the forefront of heritage interpretation, then engaging with global audiences, promoting the transnational values that are the foundation of the World Heritage ideal and addressing the wider goals of UNESCO should be integral to their communication strategies. The core concept is that of *connecting* with the multiple publics that will encounter World Heritage in all its forms.

• *Connecting across cultural boundaries*

National heritage and national museums have transnational resonance, but cultural heritage sites operate chiefly within the cultural specificities and significance of the local, regional or the national, or a combination of all three. They are very much part of what makes a place and its population distinctive and are claimed as such, remaining symbols of histories, geographies and particular expressions of culture that invite a sense of ownership and belonging. Heritage interpretation understandably reflects a site's audience, and outside of historical fact there would seem to be no reason to include any further messages of internationalism or untie the knot of distinctiveness with reference to related sites elsewhere. However, the award of the World Heritage badge offers an opportunity to place a heritage site in an international context, not as an isolated case but as part of a much greater narrative that links to other sites. The comparative analysis undertaken in the nomination process appears to focus more on seeking ways of isolating a site's 'uniqueness'. But this analysis often reveals precisely the opposite: that a property is illustrative of and part of a larger and more extensive wave of history that permeated a wider world. It invites us to reflect on questions such as: is the sense of *transnational significance* and the way that a World Heritage Site can highlight connections with other sites, on and off the

List, fully communicated in its interpretation? For instance, how many of the numerous Gothic cathedrals designated as World Heritage across Europe effectively communicate the significance of their similarities and their meaning within the Christian religion? How many of the Gothic cathedrals can translate their structures, their symbolism and their meanings to audiences from outside the Christian tradition?

The above indicates the cultural boundaries of our understandings of the world. As Saipradist and Staiff (2008) found in their analysis of the interpretation of the World Heritage Site of Ayutthaya, Thailand, to non-Thai tourists, it is a sizeable task for the cultural translation to communicate the whole of Thai history and Buddhist culture embodied in the site. That task becomes even greater when the inevitable short period of the tourist visit is factored in. Overall, tourists to World Heritage Sites are not experts in art history, archaeology or the local culture, yet site interpretation – with or without the most dynamic technologies available – is frequently scripted by experts in such fields. This implies several disconnections at different scales: first, between site managers and their visitors, and a possible failure to appreciate the changing cultural constituency of audiences; second, between the site managers and local communities who have an important role to play in expressing their cultural identity, and how this is symbolized through their heritage; third, between the State Party and the site manager, with the former perhaps not fully grasping and communicating the potential value of a site through interpretation; and fourth, between the World Heritage Convention and other UNESCO conventions and declarations. In the context of communicating across cultural divides, the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001), as a precursor to the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005), argues:

> In our increasingly diverse societies, it is essential to ensure harmonious interaction among people and groups with plural, varied and dynamic cultural identities as well as their willingness to live together. Policies for the inclusion and participation of all citizens are guarantees of social cohesion, the vitality of civil society and peace. Thus defined, cultural pluralism gives policy expression to the reality of cultural diversity. Indissociable from a democratic framework, cultural pluralism is conducive to cultural exchange and to the flourishing of creative capacities that sustain public life. (UNESCO, 2001, Article 2)

The rhetorical question this generates is, how can World Heritage appear not to embrace the principles of intercultural dialogue, which are so fundamental to UNESCO?

• *Connecting commonalities*

The above reflections point to being able to highlight commonalities between quite different forms of heritage. Instinctively, it would appear that a cathedral in Europe would clearly be different from a Buddhist temple in Japan, a Hindu temple in India and a mosque in Bangladesh. Of course, histories, physical structures and local meanings differ, but the commonalities work with metanarratives of a shared human spirituality, of the pervasiveness of faith and the existence of something greater than the human self. A heritage of the world would surely benefit from interpretation that, while not neglecting the distinctiveness that infuses diversity, highlights common elements, expressions and meanings that are common across different cultures. This is not usually the initial thinking when constructing an interpretive programme for visitors at a World Heritage Site (or any heritage site), but the translation and communication of shared realities would underline the universality that should be demonstrable with UNESCO designation. Such global narratives of humanity, tolerance, peace and justice are the hallmarks of the UNESCO system and can be understood as the true transcendent elements not only of World Heritage but of all UNESCO designations. However, as Goodale (2018) has argued, while this notion of empirically demonstrated universality may well be mythical, humanity has nonetheless come to require it as a 'beacon of hope'. Not to highlight the collective beliefs of common humanity through World Heritage Sites – as localized, embodied expressions of UNESCO – is a missed opportunity.

In a world of 'superdiverse' audiences and rapid mobilities (Vertovec, 2022), the appeal of metanarratives is that they provide structure to different beliefs, cut through specifics and offer inclusive points of access in heritage interpretation. While it is argued that World Heritage interpretation would benefit from the application of certain metanarratives, this entails knowledge of other sites and cultures, in addition to reflection and imagination regarding the deeper meanings that this heritage represents. In the global landscape of 'universal' special significance, one would think that this should be relatively easy to undertake, given that the 'specialness' of World Heritage, codified as OUV, is a condition defined by its relations with other World Heritage Sites and, indeed, all broadly similar heritage sites. However, as recalled earlier, the framing of World Heritage continues to privilege a sense of uniqueness and varying tones of nationalism that, together with an inherited normality, entail that commonality is frequently not at the forefront of the interpreter's mind.

In an emphasis on basic commonalities, the values of cultural heritage are allowed to surface. While there may well be historic precedent, the values that can be expressed are essentially contemporary ones. If nothing else, heritage sites embody survival, not by chance but through recognition and intervention based on the values they represent

to the world today. It is recognition of their importance to local, regional and national communities, as well as religious, ethnic and cultural groups, in providing reference points in identity making. Whether as symbolic of rights previously fought for, or of human rights still to be recognized, World Heritage is a statement of humanity, its diversity and the need to protect this diversity (Silberman, 2012).

• *Connecting the tangible and intangible*

Just as the focus of the World Heritage Convention is on the immovable heritage of both culture and nature, as outlined in articles 1 and 2 (UNESCO, 1972), so too does its interpretation focus, not surprisingly, on the tangible realities of the designated properties. The morphology, materials, features and formations of cultural sites and natural habitats are the basic elements that require explanation for the visitor, and the focus on the visible attributes of heritage allows for descriptive explanations that are the cornerstone of interpretation. The communication of events, stories and memories related to tangible cultural heritage is well established in interpretation, but the conscious link to intangible heritage is not so common. In the context of World Heritage designation, despite the invocation of Criterion VI relating to 'associative values', which still need to be anchored in tangible attributes, there is a clear differentiation in UNESCO terms between the heritage covered by the 1972 Convention and that covered by the 2003 Convention on the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. However, as Bouchenaki (2003) has remarked, 'Even if tangible and intangible heritage are very different, they are both sides of the same coin: both carry meaning and the embedded memory of humanity.' Despite this view, the World Heritage List and the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage are fundamentally different, involving different processes and different stakeholders. But of course, this is the case for UNESCO recognitions. Every heritage site, culturally produced, has intangible elements.

It is argued, again with exceptions, that World Heritage Sites often fail to fully acknowledge in their interpretive narratives their intangible aspects and the role that these play within the understanding of the site as a whole. For example, World Heritage Cities are frequently spaces for rituals, festivities and various expressions of culture, often demonstrating continuity of purpose. These may, or may not, be recognized through the UNESCO system, but nevertheless they can animate and bring meaning to the built environment and cultural landscape, acting as an interpretative instrument themselves. However, intangible heritage, as defined by its intimacies to local communities, also requires considerable translation and interpretation to wider audiences.

Aside from what we may term 'associated' intangible heritage at World Heritage properties, there is an immaterial aspect that is common to all cultural heritage and frequently underplayed in site narratives. This relates to the local knowledge, design and craft practices that lie behind the construction of sites. Temples, churches, fortifications, industrial plants, vernacular buildings and various cultural landscapes are founded on the intangible and did not just suddenly come into being.

In 2020, 'Craft techniques and customary practices of cathedral workshops, or Bauhütten, in Europe' was placed on UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage Register of Good Safeguarding Practices for the countries of Austria, France, Germany, Norway and Switzerland (UNESCO, 2020). While not as well recognized as the other categories of intangible cultural heritage, such as that in 'need of urgent safeguarding' or that being 'representative' of a place or people, this inscription nonetheless highlighted the importance of the German concept of 'Bauhüttenwesen', which refers to the place of work of many trades – stonemasons, sculptors, plasterers, carpenters, roofers and more – and to an organized network of these workshops involved in the construction and restoration cathedrals. These networks emerged in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries with the expansion of Gothic architecture and adapted practices for the ongoing and inevitable maintenance of the buildings. These workshops, be they located at a specific cathedral or 'mobile', are an obvious and vital part of the narrative of the great cathedrals of Europe. Importantly, and as demonstrated by their UNESCO inscription, these intangible skills have been transmitted through the centuries and remain central to the contemporary restoration and management of religious heritage. In the entry for this example of best practice in safeguarding the intangible, reference is made to how this relates to 'potential' sites of World Heritage in the five nominee countries, but there would seem to be no formal connections being made with the interpretation at these sites. World Heritage properties, more than any other heritage sites, communicating this aspect of intangible heritage would seem to carry a critical and helpful message. Some cathedrals, temples and other built structures do indeed feature insights into their restoration, but far more can be done to invoke the close connections shared with the intangible traditions and practices of design and construction. While it is not always possible to see this type of artisanship in action, it nevertheless represents the element of continuity and the need for management and the ongoing maintenance of heritage. Not only does it provide a better understanding of how the built environment comes into existence but it also explains the critical need for constant attention and restoration.

• *A need for relevance*

Interrogation of the interpretation concept and the myriad writings surrounding it, in relation to both cultural and natural heritage, reveals considerable emphasis upon the objects, sites and landscapes and their meanings. Though still largely rooted in an educational process of information transfer from expert to relative novice, there is a

detectable shift towards the idea of co-production between site and visitor, particularly around the concept of experience and emotional engagement. In the case of World Heritage there appears to be an implicit assumption that the visitor is somehow automatically entranced by a mixture of scale, significance and aesthetic spectacle, so inducing some emotional connection. Undoubtedly, this does occur, but it is far from axiomatic and indeed points to the fact that cultural and social relations with the material world are extremely complex (Robinson, 2012; Robinson and Picard, 2010). Particularly since 2000, new interpretative techniques within the digital domain have been designed to accentuate this emotional dimension. But one concept that is fundamental to interpretation, and that has not been so well developed in the literature, is that of relevance.

The question of how relevant World Heritage is to a particular audience is a challenging one. Primarily, it focuses not on the qualities and attributes of the site, which are more-or-less fixed under the criteria for designation, but rather on the audience that is (in theory) global and (in practice) ever-changing. The notion of World Heritage, articulated through the World Heritage Convention in 1972, was born of a time of optimistic humanism and a somewhat Eurocentric vision of the world. Concepts such as globalization, mobilities and international tourism, migration, multiculturalism, climate change, sustainable development and intangible cultural heritage were nascent, if considered at all. Significant changes in global politics, economy, society and environment, along with new generations, continue to be layered upon the World Heritage system. While the ideals of the 1972 Convention remain, its relevance is being challenged. This goes beyond the obvious economic issues of how World Heritage is paid for in times of financial austerity to more fundamental ruptures in knowledge frameworks and different priorities for generations X, Y, Z and beyond. This is not restricted to World Heritage, but all heritage.

A sobering reality for heritage managers and heritage enthusiasts is that sizeable populations find heritage uninteresting, boring and irrelevant. Surprisingly limited work has addressed this, in part reflecting the dominance of the heritage voice but also the methodological problems in identifying what qualifies as expressions of disinterest. The boredom of heritage for the younger generations has long been recognized within heritage interpretation and education, with various novel forms of active engagement having been developed to encourage youth participation. Approaches appear to work for younger audiences, until the later teen years when interest wanes again (Bajec, 2019). The relevance of heritage to audiences from diverse cultural backgrounds has already been referred to and remains a challenge for interpreters (Saipradist and Staiff, 2008). But this goes beyond an appeal to the younger generations and beyond engagement with visitors from other cultures. How are World Heritage Sites relevant to local audiences and local communities, who may well be from a diversity of cultures? The lack of involvement of local communities in the planning and management of heritage sites and even local antagonism towards heritage is well addressed in the literature (see, for instance, Bello et al., 2017; Chauma and Ngwira, 2022) and is tightly bound to attitudes regarding tourism development and its winners and losers. Beyond functioning as tourist attractions, what other meanings can World Heritage Sites impart through effective interpretation to make them relevant to a far wider constituency?

The importance of this wider constituency is implicitly recognized by the recent reorientation of World Heritage where, at the 2015 Bonn meeting of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee (40 COM 5C), a policy was adopted to recognize that a 'sustainable development perspective' should be integrated into the processes of the World Heritage Convention. This echoed the earlier adoption of the SDGs by the United Nations and marked a major philosophical shift from portraying World Heritage as an end in itself, based on the Eurocentric notion of intrinsic value, towards a more pragmatic view of World Heritage designation as a means (or part means) to an end. Through the shift to a more instrumentalist view, addressing the SDGs can become embedded as a goal of World Heritage designation (Katapidi and Robinson, 2022). As the policy states:

> In addition to protecting the OUV of World Heritage properties, States Parties should, therefore, recognise and promote the properties' inherent potential to contribute to all dimensions of sustainable development and work to harness the collective benefits for society, also by ensuring that their conservation and management strategies are aligned with broader sustainable development objectives. In this process, the properties' OUV should not be compromised. (UNESCO, 2015, p. 2)

To paraphrase, this effectively sets out the need for World Heritage Sites to be relevant to the immense sustainable development agenda and that World Heritage should indeed be contributing directly to the SDGs such as alleviating poverty and inequalities, and providing security and health through shelter, access to clean air, water and so on.

While the physicality of cultural heritage remains more or less fixed, as defined by its World Heritage status and core OUV, the narratives that are employed in its interpretation have considerable flexibility and can be reimagined, articulating just how World Heritage can be relevant to the global challenges of today. Some World Heritage Sites possess innate and powerful narratives that can communicate their relevance to contemporary global situations and the seventeen SDGs. Sites of 'dark heritage' such as the Hiroshima Peace Memorial have a core narrative within their interpretation that such conflict should never occur again (Labadi, 2013). Other transboundary World Heritage Sites such as that of Kaesong, inscribed in 2013 between North and South Korea (Choi, 2015), reflect directly the UNESCO ideas of common

pasts and common legacies between different nations. And even sites that remain contested can be narrativized as what Maddern (2005, p. 32) terms 'spaces of intercultural dialogue', and sites of 'transnational rather than national spaces of citizenship'.

Other World Heritage Sites need to be a little more creative in how they communicate their relevance to the wider messages of UNESCO and the specifics of the SDGs. For example, since its designation in 1986, the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site in the UK, as an extensive and rather complex landscape, has largely been interpreted in a technical way in terms of how its component sites worked; a historical way regarding how the site shaped industrial development of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; and in a regional and national way in terms of highlighting the historical significance of the geographies of industrial production. One of the key monuments of the site, upon which UNESCO designation relies, is a brick-built blast furnace, constructed in the seventeenth century but adapted for the use of coke rather than coal for fuel in 1709. For those who know, it is an important technical structure in the history of iron production. For those that do not know – and that is a large majority of the population – it is just an old brick construction. Interpretation panels are presented in several languages, and the overall synthesis of the significance of this furnace is:

> The world's first coke-fired furnace for the production of iron – 1709. Operated by Abraham Darby at Coalbrookdale, Shropshire England. The production of iron using coke rather than coal allowed the commercial production of iron.

This underpins claims of the site to be the birthplace of mass iron production and thus the birthplace of the industrial revolution. The apparently simple text contains many assumptions for visitors – that people should know what coke is, who Abraham Darby was, where Coalbrookdale is and so on. There is further explanation by way of panels and diagrams that explain how a blast furnace works and how coke was produced. But it still does not explain the relevance of the site as 'world' heritage, nor its contemporary significance. However, there is an additional narrative that could assist in making the site relevant to the younger generations, and to audiences across the world: this site can be said to be the birthplace of global warming, in that mass burning of fossil fuels in the eighteenth century started a trend that has since proved to have global impact and is central in explaining climate change. Such a narrative, which of course is applicable to many other industrial heritage sites on the World Heritage List, allows for drawing attention to global environmental concerns and taps into a very pressing, contemporary agenda that is clearly relevant to the young and environmentally aware generation. While still maintaining the OUV of the monument, such a new, central message of interpretation could be used to draw in new generations who have limited knowledge of industrial processes but do have concerns as to how to address climate change. If nothing else, industrial sites can be used to raise awareness, act as a meeting place to discuss and profile new pollution control technologies and low-carbon innovations, and thus contribute directly to one of the SDGs.

In this suggested case and others, the focus of interpretation is on connecting the past with both present and future. Without accentuating continuities and extrapolating meanings to contemporary life through interpretation, heritage sites are in danger of being stranded only in their historical contexts and effectively rendered irrelevant to large sections of the population. While not negating the clear value of interpreting the specific historical and technical aspects of a site, a starting point for World Heritage interpretation lies in what can be shared that is relevant to the contemporary world, new generations and all cultures.

Conclusion

It is widely agreed that effective interpretation is essential in conveying an understanding of our cultural and natural heritage. Furthermore, such understanding is the foundation for action, not only related to heritage protection but also to the ways in which World Heritage can contribute to wider global needs. New technologies continue to offer innovative modalities to deliver the messages that heritage sites consider important, hopefully with all of their audiences in mind. But the category of World Heritage is, and should be, different. Through the processes of inscription, the privilege and the symbolic power that is the World Heritage/UNESCO brand, and by virtue of the universal and moral message at the heart of the 1972 Convention and indeed all of the UNESCO agenda, interpretation carries greater responsibility. 'Communication', as one of the five strategic objectives for the World Heritage system, has overfocused on attempting – with varying degrees of success – to raise public awareness and gain support for World Heritage. However, the full value of interpretation has not been fully grasped, particularly in the light of World Heritage contributing to the SDGs. In 2021, an initiative orchestrated by the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Science and Culture in Europe sought to develop training for interpretative planning that does seek to link sites with a much wider context in terms of values, other sites and audiences (UNESCO, 2022). This is welcome, but at the time of writing it is focused only on the territory of Europe.

The responsibility for more effective and relevant interpretation of World Heritage Sites is the remit of States Parties and site managers who should have agency in terms of the narratives that they wish to communicate to their audiences. UNESCO, as ever, has a vital role to play in setting standards, but the extent to which the importance of interpretation filters down to sites remains an issue. There is a vital need for reimagining the role that interpretation can play within the World Heritage system, with room for considerable creativity directed to the narrative and the way this can reach wider goals that are synonymous with the UNESCO ideal.

The Italian physicist Carlo Rovelli (2018), in his poetic dissection of time, concludes that the world is not made up of 'things' but of our relationships with things. And, if nothing else, communities, local economies, tourists, different cultures, new generations and other heritage sites need better relations with World Heritage. While acknowledging McLuhan's (1964) oft-cited epithet of the 'medium being the message', the message in the case of World Heritage is critical and needs further reflection, along with the issues of the authoring power of, and behind, the narrative, and the fact that World Heritage Sites are not islands stranded in the sea of history but much needed beacons of best practice and agents of change for a better world.

References

Askew, M. 2010. The magic list of global status: UNESCO, World Heritage and the agendas of states. In S. Labadi and C. Long (eds), *Heritage and Globalisation*. London, Routledge, pp. 19–44.

Bajec, J. F. 2019. The interpretation and utilization of cultural heritage and its values by young people in Slovenia. Is heritage really boring and uninteresting? *Ethnoloska Tribina*, Vol. 49, No. 42, pp. 173–93.

Ballantyne, R., Hughes, K., Ding, P. and Liu, D. 2014. Chinese and international visitor perceptions of interpretation at Beijing built heritage sites. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, Vol. 22, No. 5, pp. 705–25.

Bello, F. G., Lovelock, B. and Carr, N. 2017. Constraints of community participation in protected area-based tourism planning: the case of Malawi. *Journal of Ecotourism*, Vol. 16, No. 2, pp. 131–51.

Bouchenaki, M. 2003. The interdependency of the tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Keynote address, ICOMOS 14th General Assembly and Scientific Symposium, 'Place, memory, meaning: preserving intangible values in monuments and sites', 27–31 October, Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe. Available at: http://openarchive.icomos.org/id/eprint/468/ (accessed 24 February 2022).

Burkey, B. 2019. Total recall: how cultural heritage communities use digital initiatives and platforms for collective remembering. *Journal of Creative Communications*, Vol. 14, No. 3, pp. 235–53.

Chauma, E. C. and Ngwira, C. 2022. Managing a World Heritage Site in Malawi: do residents' sentiments matter? *Journal of Heritage Tourism*, Vol. 17, No. 2, pp. 142–57.

Choi, H. 2015. North and South Korea collaborate in excavating ancient palace. *Guardian*, 3 June. Available at: http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jun/03/north-and-south-korea-excavate-ancient-palace-kaesong (accessed 15 February 2022).

Cleere, H. 1996. The concept of 'Outstanding Universal Value' in the World Heritage Convention. *Conservation and Management of Archaeological Sites*, Vol. 1, No. 4, pp. 227–33.

Costa, M. and Carneiro, M. J. 2021. The influence of interpretation on learning about architectural heritage and on the perception of cultural significance. *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change*, Vol. 19, No. 2, pp. 230–49.

Deufel, N. 2017. Agonistic interpretation: a new paradigm in response to current developments. *Anthropological Journal of European Cultures*, Vol. 26, No. 2, pp. 90–109.

Di Giovine, M. A. 2009. *The Heritage-scape: UNESCO, World Heritage*, and Tourism. Washington, DC, Lexington Books.

Goodale, M. 2018. The myth of universality: the UNESCO 'Philosophers Committee' and the making of human rights. *Law and Social Inquiry*, Vol. 43, No. 3, pp. 596–617.

Graham, H. and Vergunst, J. (eds). 2019. *Heritage as Community Research: Legacies of Co-Production*. Bristol: Policy Press.

Huang, S., Weiler, B. and Assaker, G. 2015. Effects of interpretive guiding outcomes on tourist satisfaction and behavioural intention. *Journal of Travel Research*, Vol. 54, No. 3, pp. 344–58.

Io, M.-U. and Hallo, L. 2012. A comparative study of tour guides' interpretation: the case of Macao. *Tourism Analysis*, Vol. 17, No. 2, pp. 153–65.

Katapidi, I. and Robinson, M. 2022. World Heritage and the Sustainable Development Goals: West Lake experiences. In C. Cross and J. Giblin (eds), *Critical Approaches to Heritage for Development*. Abingdon, UK, and New York, Routledge. (Rethinking Development.)

Keough, E. B. 2011. Heritage in peril: a critique of UNESCO's World Heritage Programme. *Washington University's Global Studies Law Review*, Vol. 10, No. 3, p. 593.

Kidd, J. 2019. With new eyes I see: embodiment, empathy and silence in digital heritage interpretation. I*nternational Journal of Heritage Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 1, pp. 54–66.

Labadi, S. 2013. *UNESCO, Cultural Heritage, and Outstanding Universal Value: Value-Based*

Analyses of the World Heritage and Intangible Cultural Heritage Conventions. Lanham, MD, and Plymouth, UK, AltaMira Press. (Archaeology in Society Series.)

Liu, Y. 2020. Evaluating visitor experience of digital interpretation and presentation technologies at cultural heritage sites: a case study of the Old Town, Zuoying. *Built Heritage*, Vol. 4, No. 14, pp. 1–15.

Livingstone, S. 2003. On the challenges of cross-national comparative media research. *European Journal of Communication*, Vol. 18, No. 4, pp. 477–500.

Maddern, J. 2005. Huddled masses yearning to buy postcards: the politics of producing heritage at the Statue of Liberty – Ellis Island National Monument. In D. Harrison and M. Hitchcock (eds), *The Politics of World Heritage: Negotiating Tourism and Conservation*. Clevedon, UK, Channel View Publications, pp. 23–34. (Current Themes in Tourism.)

McIntosh, A. J. and Prentice, R. C. 1999. Affirming authenticity: consuming cultural heritage. *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 26, No. 3, pp. 589–612.

McLuhan, M. 1964. *Understanding Media: The Extension of Man*. New York, McGraw Hill.

Meskell, L. 2013. UNESCO's World Heritage Convention at 40: challenging the economic and political order of international heritage conservation. *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 54, No. 4, pp. 483–94.

Meskell, L. 2014. States of conservation: protection, politics, and pacting within UNESCO's World Heritage Committee. *Anthropological Quarterly*, Vol. 87, No. 1, pp. 217–43.

Meskell, L. 2018. *A Future in Ruins: UNESCO, World Heritage, and the Dream of Peace*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Moscardo, G. 1996. Mindful visitors: heritage and tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 23, No. 2, pp. 376–97.

Moscardo, G. 1999. *Making Visitors Mindful: Principles for Creating Quality Sustainable Visitor Experiences through Effective Communication*. Champaign, IL, Sagamore Publishing. (Advances in Tourism Applications Series, 2.)

Mutibwa, D. H., Hess, A. and Jackson, T. 2020. Strokes of serendipity: community co-curation and engagement with digital heritage. *Convergence*, Vol. 26, No. 1 pp. 157–77.

Packer, J. and Ballantyne, R. 2016. Conceptualizing the visitor experience: a review of literature and development of a multifaceted model. *Visitor Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 2, pp. 128–43.

Poria, Y., Biran, A. and Reichel, A. 2009. Visitors' preferences for interpretation at heritage sites. *Journal of Travel Research*, Vol. 48, No. 1, pp. 92–105.

Rahaman, H. 2018. Digital Heritage interpretation: a conceptual framework. *Digital Creativity*, Vol. 29, No. 2–3, pp. 208–34.

Rakic, T. and Chambers, D. 2008. World Heritage: exploring the tension between the national and the 'universal'. *Journal of Heritage Tourism*, Vol. 2, No. 3, pp. 145–55.

Reino, S., Mitsche, N. and Frew, A. J. 2007. The contribution of technology-based heritage interpretation to the visitor satisfaction in museums. In M. Sigala, L. Mich and J. Murphy (eds), *Information and Communication Technologies in Tourism 2007*, Proceedings of the International Conference in Ljubljana, Slovenia, 2007. Vienna, Springer, pp. 341–52.

Robinson, M. 2005. The trans-textured tourist: literature as knowledge in the making of tourists. *Tourism Recreation Research*, Vol. 30, No. 1, pp. 73–81.

Robinson, M. 2012. Beyond Stendhal: emotional worlds or emotional tourists? *Literature and Aesthetics*, Vol. 22, No. 1, pp. 1–19.

Robinson, M. and Picard, D. (eds). 2010. *Emotion in Motion: Tourism, Affect and Transformation*. Farnham, UK, Ashgate.

Rodwell, D. 2012. The UNESCO World Heritage Convention, 1972–2012: reflections and directions. *The Historic Environment: Policy and Practice*, Vol. 3, No. 1, pp. 64–85.

Roppola, T. 2012. *Designing for the Museum Visitor Experience*. New York, Routledge.

Ross, J. 2018. Casting a line: digital co-production, hospitality and mobilities in cultural heritage settings. *Curator: The Museum Journal*, Vol. 61, No. 4, pp. 575–92.

Rovelli, C. 2018. *The Order of Time*. London, Allan Lane

Saipradist, A. and Staiff, R. 2008. Crossing the cultural divide: Western visitors and interpretation at Ayutthaya World Heritage Site, Thailand. *Journal of Heritage Tourism*, Vol. 2, No. 3, pp. 211–24.

Salazar, N. B. 2013. Imagineering otherness: anthropological legacies in contemporary tourism. *Anthropological Quarterly*, Vol. 86, No. 3, pp. 669–96.

Schmutz, V. and Elliott, M. A. 2017. World Heritage and the scientific consecration of 'Outstanding Universal Value'. *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, Vol. 58, No. 2, pp. 140–59.

Schorch, P. 2014. Cultural feelings and the making of meaning. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 1, pp. 2–35.

Silberman, N. A. 2012. Heritage interpretation and human rights: documenting diversity, expressing identity, or establishing universal principles? *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 3, pp. 245–56.

Silberman, N. A. 2013. Heritage interpretation as public discourse: towards a new paradigm. In M.-T. Albert, R. Bernecker and B. Rudolff (eds), *Understanding Heritage: Perspectives in Heritage Studies*. Berlin and Boston, DeGruyter, pp. 21–34.

Smith, L. 2006. *Uses of Heritage*. London, Routledge.

Staiff, R. 2014. *Re-imagining Heritage Interpretation: Enchanting the Past-Future*. Abingdon, UK, and New York, Routledge.

Tilden, F. 1957. *Interpreting our Heritage: Principles and Practices for Visitor Services in Parks, Museums, and Historic Places*. Chapel Hill, NC, University of North Carolina Press.

UNESCO. 1972. *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage*. Available at: http://whc.unesco.org/en/conventiontext/ (accessed 12 October 2021).

UNESCO. 2001. *Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity Adopted by the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization at its thirty-first session on 2 November 2001*. Available at: https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/universal-declaration-cultural-diversity#:~:text=Article%202%20%2D%20From%20cultural%20diversity%20to%20cultural%20pluralism,-In%20our%20increasingly&text=Policies%20for%20the%20inclusion%20and,the%20reality%20of%20cultural%20diversity (accessed 24 March 2022).

UNESCO. 2005. *Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions*. Available at: https://en.unesco.org/creativity/convention (accessed 12 October 2021).

UNESCO. 2015. *Policy for the Integration of a Sustainable Development Perspective into the Processes of the World Heritage Convention*, WHC-15/20.GA/INF.13. Available at: https://whc.unesco.org/archive/2015/whc15-20ga-inf13-en.pdf. Accessed 20/10/21.

UNESCO. 2020. *Craft Techniques and Customary Practices of Cathedral Workshops, or Bauhütten, in Europe, Know-how, Transmission, Development of Knowledge and Innovation*, Intangible Cultural Heritage Register of Good Safeguarding Practices. Available at: https://ich.unesco.org/en/BSP/craft-techniques-and-customary-practices-of-cathedral-workshops-or-bauhtten-in-europe-know-how-transmission-development-of-knowledge-and-innovation-01558 (accessed 4 July 2022).

UNESCO. 2021. *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*. Paris, UNESCO.

UNESCO. 2022. *Interpretative Planning at the World Heritage Properties in Europe – Report on the Pilot WH-Interp Training Course in 2021*. Paris, UNESCO.

Uzzell, D. L. 1998. Interpreting our heritage: a theoretical interpretation. In D. L. Uzzell and R. Ballantyne (eds), *Contemporary Issues in Heritage and Environmental Interpretation: Problems and Prospects*. London: The Stationery Office, pp. 11–25.

Uzzell, D. and Ballantyne, R. 1999. Contemporary Issues in Heritage and Environment Interpretation, Chichester: Wiley.

Vertovec, S. 2007. Super-diversity and its implications. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 6., pp. 1024–1054.

Vertovec, S. 2022. *Superdiversity: Migration and Social Complexity*. London, Routledge.

Weng, L., Liang, Z. and Bao, J. 2020. The effect of tour interpretation on perceived heritage values: a comparison of tourists with and without tour guiding interpretation at a heritage destination. *Journal of Destination Marketing and Management*, Vol. 16, June, pp. 1–11.

Chapter 4

The Ladder of Heritage Interpretation

Yujie Zhu

The Ladder of Heritage Interpretation

Yujie Zhu

Abstract

This chapter offers a novel contribution to the discussion on how heritage interpretation can contribute to public education. It examines hegemonic heritage interpretation and its consequences, the various goals of heritage interpretation and the opportunities to develop it as a form of public education. I address a range of approaches with the framework of a ladder of heritage interpretation, climbing from (1) consumption and entertainment, to (2) knowledge and truth-telling, (3) learning and understanding, (4) imagination and immersion, finally to (5) reparation and reconciliation. While this ladder simplifies the complex realities of the actual world, the goals described depict the general framework of 'heritage interpretation', each step aligning meanings with goals. I use further metaphors in the shape of university tutorials and lectures to indicate the key issues in heritage interpretation. Heritage interpretation as a form of public education can be considered a type of reflection and co-creation that promotes critical thinking, inclusion and diversity. Heritage interpretation benefits from open dialogue and assessment of the past from multiple perspectives. Without public participation and reflection, official claims of heritage interpretation for public education remain superficial.

Introduction

Today, the World Heritage Convention, adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO on 16 November 1972, is one of the most significant policies and guidelines for protecting cultural and natural heritage in the world. The Convention has developed a mechanism for identifying, presenting and registering cultural and natural heritage of the world that is considered to have Outstanding Universal Value (OUV). During the fifty years since its ratification, the Convention has undergone extensive evolution and change. Operational Guidelines have been substantially updated and terms such as 'cultural landscape', 'intangible heritage' and 'cultural route' have been integrated to expand the meaning and scope of heritage. These changes reflect the global movements since the adoption of the Convention, and call for democracy, diversity, inclusiveness and equality.

This chapter focuses on heritage interpretation that reflects on one of the changes brought about by the World Heritage Convention since 1972. Heritage interpretation is critical in recreating and presenting the past in the present. Following the end of the Cold War, international organizations recognized the value of heritage interpretation and the opportunities it might provide for dealing with global and regional geopolitics. In response, the International Council on Monuments and Sites Charter for the Interpretation and Presentation of Cultural Heritage Sites was established in 2008 to develop professional interpretation and presentation standards. Six years later, the International Conference on World Heritage Interpretation was held in Seoul, Republic of Korea. The conference revealed that heritage interpretation could be included as an integral component of managing and safeguarding all World Heritage Sites (Zhu, 2022).

While international organizations have developed new guidelines and policies on heritage interpretation, some countries are more interested in transforming heritage sites and museums to fit local and national agendas (Zhu and Logan, 2022). Heritage interpretation can serve a variety of political functions, including: the creation of a sense of (national) belonging within an imagined community (Anderson, 1983); the establishment and legitimization of political regimes; the regulation of lower-class and minority groups; and the facilitation of the state's economic and diplomatic strategies towards neighbouring countries (De Cesari and Rigney, 2014). Heritage interpretation can become a powerful tool for spreading propaganda to international visitors or for patriotic education. Local governments and tourism operators are also passionate about turning heritage sites into consumption spaces and popular tourist sites to stimulate local economies and employment. In so doing, the resulting heritage interpretation focuses on romanticizing the past and tourism consumption instead of truth-telling or remembering.

Heritage scholars are increasingly aware of the critical role of heritage interpretation in public education (Hems and Blockley, 2006; Silberman, 2013). Although different sectors have put forward different methods of interpretation according to their agendas, the increasingly politicized and controversial nature of heritage inevitably brings many challenges to its interpretation. In significant heritage sites and museums where the authority of interpretation belongs to experts and officials, a more democratized approach to understanding the historical values of heritage is particularly important. A diversity of stakeholders need to participate in the interpretation process, especially for heritage sites with a complex history, unresolved conflicts or marginalized communities.

The various attitudes towards heritage and human past agree on the significance of heritage interpretation, but are each different in specifying how to remember, interpret and

present heritage. These different attitudes towards heritage interpretation raise essential questions about the role of heritage and museums in public space. What can heritage and museums do? Are they primarily nation-building tools, or can they facilitate public education and critical thinking? Do they allow people from various cultural backgrounds to learn about specific universal values from the human past? Or do they stimulate desires of consumption influenced by neoliberalism and developmentalism? All of these questions go beyond heritage interpretation and push us to think about what our heritage and museums actually are and what they can do.

Taking such discussion as a starting point, this chapter aims to present a ladder of heritage interpretation as a framework to examine its effects and implications. I further use the metaphor of university tutorials and lectures to indicate the key issues and factors in heritage interpretation. Heritage interpretation as a form of public education requires the needs of marginalized groups and communities to be recognized and prioritized. As such, it can be considered as a form of reflection and co-creation that promotes critical thinking, inclusion and diversity. Heritage interpretation benefits from open dialogue and assessment of the past from multiple perspectives. Without this form of open dialogue and reflection, official claims of heritage interpretation for public education remain superficial (Zhu, 2022).

Background: from authorized discourse to public education

Scholars have developed various understandings of the term 'heritage interpretation'. It had been defined as a window on the past, storytelling and communication (Harrison, 1994; Moscardo, 1999; Uzzell, 1996). Since the start of the twenty-first century, the definition of heritage interpretation has reflected a more inclusive approach to heritage and its application in broader cultural sectors. Heritage interpretation is also described as an action taken by the community's or state's official stewards to increase public awareness of the value of heritage, its fragility and the necessity of its safeguarding. It is a combination of techniques that aim to convey the values and meanings to the public (Albert et al., 2013; Silberman, 2013). Appropriate heritage interpretation can enhance visitors' understandings of heritage values and their experiences at heritage sites.

Despite changing understandings of meaning and social function, experts, curators and heritage managers are still the authorities and have the power to define and control the content and value of heritage based on their ideological frameworks and political interests (Wight and Lennon, 2007). The language created by heritage organizations and professionals is often used to (re)construct the past in specific ways to consolidate elite interests (Nora, 1990). As heritage is often recorded and interpreted through political and ethnocentric frameworks, these narratives emerge from and mix with the wider discourses established by the political agenda (Lehr and Katz, 2003).

This expert-driven influence in heritage interpretation, to say nothing of how the past is interacted with, leads to two critical questions about agency: who interprets heritage, and how is it interpreted? In many places around the world, heritage interpretation is situated in the domain of certain organized (national and international) institutions and professionals. Through international conventions and laws, ideas about heritage have become internationally naturalized to the extent that principles presented have become 'common sense' (Smith, 2006). As such, I do not intend to suggest that the professionalization of heritage interpretation is morally wrong. Heritage professionals and scholars use the international standards, policies and charters to access, record, interpret and manage heritage sites. These standards often integrate specific ethical codes to regulate how professionals and experts should practise in their respective countries. Experts need to ensure that certain standards are met in governing the quality of heritage interpretation (Zhu, 2022).

However, these systems of heritage interpretation tend to provide an idealized version of heritage that heavily relies on professional, institutionalized knowledge and expertise to fulfil upper- or middle-class demands while ignoring local community needs. The heritage purported by these groups often reflects elite social practices and experiences, or 'high culture', such as beauty, order and magnificence (Herzfeld, 2015). One reason for this is that museum curators and heritage managers often design heritage interpretation based on their evaluation of visitor needs. The emphasis has often been placed on evaluating visitor experience rather than assessing how and what people actually learn from their visits. So, the voices from the general public, especially the poor, the less educated, those of ethnic minorities and other marginal groups, can be excluded from the making of heritage interpretation.

Described by Laurajane Smith (2006) as 'authorized heritage discourse', heritage involves political authority that communicates a society's or group's power and knowledge within geographical and temporal superiority. As a result, heritage interpretation becomes the tool to support cultural hegemonies, homogenization and the interests of the rich and the powerful (Bakker, 2011). Through particular re-narration, romanticization and reinterpretation, heritage interpretation might reinforce specifically authorized values and dominant ideologies such as nationalism.

These issues become even more severe, especially when heritage sites are associated with histories of atrocities and violence, such as jails, concentration camps, battlefields, war memorials and cemeteries. Once such traumatic historical events are transformed into heritage, certain elements of the past can be ignored or supressed while others are favoured for political uses. Without appropriate interpretation, sensitive sites can be misinterpreted and have different consequences. While some of them become meaningless

representations to the public, others facilitate the state's practices of cultural amnesia and memory distortion, transforming unresolved pasts into useful resources for nation-building (Zhu, 2022). The latter can even reinforce stereotypes and public opinions and attitudes towards the past, creating more conflict. As a result, poor heritage interpretation can create various messages of domination and injustice that are shaped by exclusion, manipulation and oppression (Young, 1990).

I believe that interpretation is an essential part of the knowledge production of heritage. Instead of falling into the hegemonic trap of various dominant ideologies, heritage interpretation can serve as a form of public education. By 'public education', I mean that heritage sites and museums can perform important public activities of forming social debates and discourse for policymaking and awareness-building. Heritage interpretation can facilitate discussion to criticize the forces of domination and hegemony and recognize the practices and values of the unrecognized and marginalized (Bramwell and Lane, 2014, p. 1).

As Tunbridge and Ashworth (1996) argue, all heritage is dissonant and shaped by different opinions and interpretations. In this sense, heritage interpretation as public education also means de-essentialization and pluralization. The key issue is how heritage interpretation can support cultural diversity associated with race, historiography and other identity issues. For instance, can heritage interpretation include the voices of Indigenous and ethnic minority people, or does it only serve the assertation of white rights? Can heritage interpretation only promote a linear process of historical development, or does it also respect other possible ideas of the human past? Does it only use material evidence as the key to interpretation in modern archaeology, or does it also recognize other forms of evidence such as texts? Does heritage interpretation only show the human past as a His-story, or does it also recognize the role of women in the human past? In terms of military history, does it simply present victors' memory or does it reveal the nature of war? These questions can evoke discussions regarding different forms of knowledge interpretation beyond the control of elites. They facilitate the recognition of those marginalized and forgotten voices for social justice.

The Ladder of Heritage Interpretation

As heritage entails different meanings of the past, heritage interpretation can serve various goals in the context of public education. Inspired by Arnstein's (1969) seminal work on the ladder of citizen participation and Bloom et al.'s (1984) taxonomy of learning, I propose a typology of five levels of heritage interpretation that can elaborate on the different social functions (Figure 1). The form of a ladder can help us to visualize the potential effects heritage interpretation can achieve. This model can also facilitate better understanding of the

different degrees of interpretation and their impacts on the public. For illustrative purposes, these five types of heritage interpretation are arranged in a ladder pattern, with each step corresponding to various visitor interactions with heritage sites and associated communities: (1) consumption and entertainment; (2) knowledge and truth-telling; (3) learning and understanding; (4) imagination and immersion; (5) reparation and reconciliation.

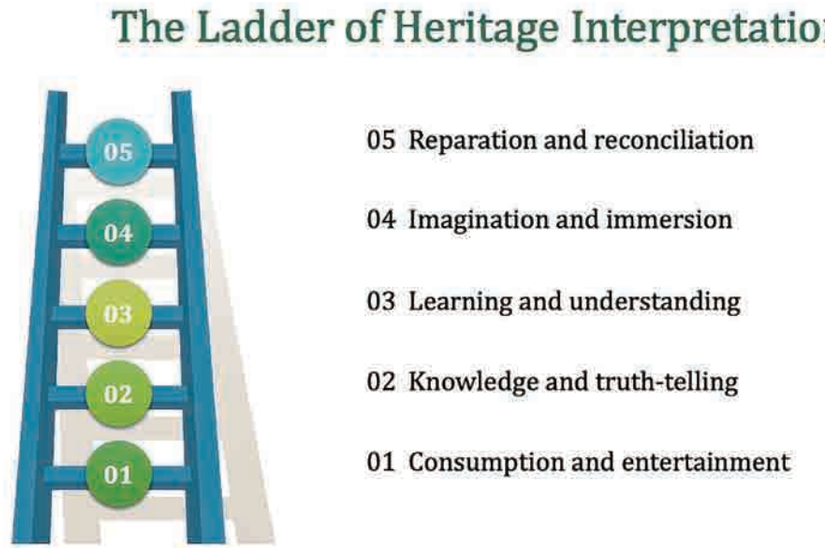


Figure 1. The Ladder of Heritage Interpretation

It is important to note that the ladder does not indicate linear development embedded in enlightenment ideologies, nor does it indicate that the lower 'rungs' are of more importance than the higher. Since heritage sites vary in content and nature, the values and meanings they aim to express and the purposes of their interpretation will also differ. These ladders should not be treated as straightforward processes; rather, the 'rungs' can coexist simultaneously in heritage interpretation. They are often co-dependent, complementary and sometimes in contest. Although the ladder proposes a simplified version of a complex reality, it serves as a guide for heritage and museum professionals and all involved communities, enabling them to reflect on their practices and further current discussions.

- *Consumption and entertainment*

On the first step of the ladder, heritage interpretation contributes to visitor entertainment and consumption. At this stage, heritage interpretation's primary purpose is to serve as hedonistic pleasure-seeking. Visitor consumption at some historical re-enactment sites becomes romanticized as a form of commoditized production. In this scenario, visitors

might not be interested in the historical facts of the past. Instead, visitors are attracted by a romanticized performance that serves their hedonistic desire to experience others. In this sense, heritage interpretation does not aim to use heritage sites and museums as memory institutions but as attractions and entertainment, which may sometimes lead to misrecognition of heritage values or disrespect of a shared past.

Consumption and entertainment appear to be the primary purposes of heritage interpretation in the recent cultural industry and mass tourism development at the old town of Lijiang World Heritage Site, China. Since the 1990s, interpretation at Lijiang has romanticized the town to attract both Western and Chinese domestic tourists. Despite the official reason for the site's World Heritage listing being its history, well-preserved architecture and cultural exchange with other regions, these narratives have been downplayed. Its heritage interpretation does not focus on the actual history of the place but uses ethnic music, performance, religious culture and reconstructed architecture to fulfil visitors' longing for the natural, the ethnic and the sacred cultural practice (Zhu, 2018). As a result, lots of information and narratives regarding the place focus on romance and the love stories of local ethnic communities. In so doing, tourists are attracted by a romanticized image of the place, and local ethnic communities have been stereotyped as exotic, barbarian and uncivilized. Here, heritage interpretation focuses on the stimulation of pleasure-making and direct consumption without confronting the actual historical and social values of heritage, similar to a Disney theme park.

Figure 2. A row of bars and romantic lanterns in Lijiang, China. (Photo: author's own.)

Like Lijiang, many heritage sites worldwide have become popular tourist destinations. With the rapid development of heritage and cultural tourism, heritage interpretation is increasingly utilized by local managers as a tourism marketing tool. While such promotion may be economically beneficial to the area, heritage interpretation of this type tends to centre on attracting tourists and encouraging their pleasure-making practices. This means the heritage values may be modified and romanticized, sometimes deviating from the historical truth or disrespecting universal values.

This trend of interpretation has made authenticity an essential issue. While some scholars may contend that authenticity refers to the objective reality, tourists may not wish to see this reality and instead seek a staged 'authentic' experience (MacCannell, 1976). Visitors often bring their personal agendas, imagined expectations of a place or their previous experiences of the site when they encounter heritage (McIntosh and Prentice, 1999). An important question here is whether the goal of heritage interpretation merely satisfies tourists' needs for pleasure-making to increase visitor numbers and tourism-related incomes or mainly aims at educating the public on significant values and meanings of the past. These questions refer to the ethics of heritage sites and museums and the meaning of heritage as public property.

• *Knowledge and truth-telling*

The second goal of heritage interpretation is knowledge and truth-telling. Heritage interpretation's primary and most important role is to provide factual knowledge of historical events. These interpretations often reflect the site's historical context in a chronological sequence of specific dates and events, as gathered and created by specialists and professionals (Zhu, 2022). This form of interpretation often appears on information boards or at heritage visitor centres, where the narrative states factual information on the location, layout, collections and historical development of heritage sites.

Seemingly common at many heritage sites, accurate and factual information-sharing is crucial in some countries and regions of the world, especially where historical facts are hidden, revised or forgotten for various political reasons. Such an approach to heritage interpretation allows public truth-telling through heritage spaces. As cultural injustice is deeply 'rooted in social patterns of representation, interpretation and communication' (Fraser, 2003, p. 13), truth-telling through heritage interpretation has become a core matter of justice. It is a matter of politics and social justice to ensure the rights of diverse groups are recognized in public policy development and implementation. For instance, truth-telling through heritage interpretation is particularly important at Holocaust sites in Europe or museums of Aboriginal history in Australia. Focusing on the questions of what, who, how, when and where, truth-telling is presented as factual, unemotional and objective, and it frequently becomes part of the official discourse that influences people's understanding of social history. Visitors are given a preliminary understanding of heritage sites from the specific, accurate and official information.

However, truth-telling through information-sharing still has its limitations. It does not allow people to engage and interact with the past so that they can learn from heritage and the meanings behind the interpretation. In other words, this stage of heritage interpretation does not help to transform truth-telling into understanding and learning. Simply displaying facts seldom enables visitors to establish emotional bonds with the narratives. Few people can remember the birth date of a famous person or the construction date of a specific museum after they leave the heritage site.

• *Learning and understanding*

The third goal of interpretation is to offer a deeper understanding of and learning from heritage from different social and political frameworks. Learning and understanding are active forms of information processing. Different tools of visual representation can be used to facilitate the actions of learning and understanding by transforming information into sense-making. People gain a sense of understanding and knowledge not by passively receiving information but by active association with initial ideas and concepts. The integration and connection between new information and the visitor's personal knowledge is the key to evoking a sense of learning and understanding.

Another key difference between Stage 2 and Stage 3 is the recognition that heritage is not neutral and objective but is often subjective, emotional, and political. Stage 3 heritage interpretations make statements about past events, and provide answers to why and how certain historical events took place. For instance, Jewish museums worldwide have shown the impact of the Holocaust on affected communities and the wider world. Besides presenting the general factual background, these museums are often equipped with digital platforms where visitors can learn about survivors' life stories and experiences. The combination of macro- and microhistory provides a vivid description of the significance of the events and their socio-political implications. In so doing, this heritage interpretation helps visitors to understand and recognize the damage of war and the trauma and victimhood of affected people.

The goal of understanding and learning in heritage interpretation is particularly relevant to visitors whose families have personal connections with those heritage sites. Such visits can offer people 'spiritual truth, emotional response, deeper meaning and understanding' (Nuryanti, 1996, p. 253). This can be found at the Kigali Genocide Memorial, which provides a transparent acknowledgement and recognition of the Rwandan genocide and the devastating impact one ethnic group had on another (Sodaro, 2011).

• *Imagination and immersion*

It is acceptable for some heritage sites and museums to stop at the stage of learning and understanding, but that is not enough for those with historical significance, a contested nature or voices from marginalized groups, especially for those who are not directly associated with the related history and the sites. In such cases, a further step is necessary to help visitors develop empathy with heritage content alien to their cultural backgrounds. With the help of different technologies, visitors will be able to go beyond rational understanding and actively reflect upon their relationship with the heritage. Therefore, the fourth aim of heritage interpretation is to encourage imagination beyond the actual physical space and time. Unlike the previous stages, which were concerned with facts and knowledge, this step enables visitors to traverse the boundaries between heritage and memory, which often involves processes of imagination and reflection.

Oral history and storytelling together represent another important strategy in heritage interpretation for public education through imagination and immersion. According to Russell Staiff (2016, p. 113), storytelling transforms 'material things into the touchstones of our deepest aspirations, sensations, imaginations and emotions'. Listening to tour guides from local communities share their personal stories is a powerful interpretative tool for communication and meaning-making. Such narrative-making much result from cooperation among related communities rather than just curators and specialists (Zhu, 2021).

Imagination can help people integrate into a world they could not otherwise apprehend. Nowadays, heritage sites and museum sectors are exploring how to immerse people in displays and enrich their visiting experience through new techniques such as virtual reality. Western people often find it difficult to understand the worldview of Indigenous communities in other parts of the world. Since the turn of the millennium, Australian museums have been utilizing multimedia and interactive technologies to help visitors enter the Country of Indigenous peoples and to better comprehend their beliefs and values. For instance, Connection was an exhibition at the National Museum of Australia that portrayed the Songlines of the First Peoples of Australia through contemporary 2022 Indigenous art and culture. Visitors could immerse themselves in the epic dreaming tracks through paintings, photos, videos and songs. They could learn the Indigenous idea of 'Country' through audio transitions, colourful projections, virtual lightning and the sounds of nature. These techniques helped visitors transcend time and space, leading them to a different view of land, nature, culture and home. Rather than passively receiving the information, visitors were able to engage in the narration actively and become immersed in the multimedia modes of knowledge transmission.

Furthermore, imagination and reflection are particularly essential for understanding the significance of climate change at related heritage sites. Through certain digital

technologies like simulations and visualizations, heritage interpretation can help visitors understand the impact of human beings on the planet and the associated geological and climate changes. Such approaches can make heritage interpretation go beyond a human-centred vision to a geo-centred understanding of the world, enabling visiting these heritage sites to contribute to the learning of complex debates of the Anthropocene.

• *Reparation and reconciliation*

This last goal of heritage interpretation is to accommodate reparation and reconciliation, especially concerning World Heritage Sites or those of great significance to all humankind. As stated in the UNESCO definition of OUV, World Heritage Sites aim 'to transcend national boundaries and to be of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity' (GSU, n.d.). Such an idea of OUV indicates that heritage interpretation can go beyond information-giving, be directly related to the present and ultimately achieve reparation and reconciliation. Heritage interpretation can explore the possibilities for healing in heritage spaces.

Reparation and reconciliation in the context of heritage interpretation can be understood from two aspects: individually and socially. On the individual level, it refers to relationship (re)building between people – that is, to reconcile with oneself or others. Heritage sites can bring visitors mindfulness and mental well-being through interpretation and other relevant practices. Many religious heritage sites provide a sense of sanctity and peace that facilitates the healing process. For instance, the Potala Palace is a famous Buddhist temple in Tibet and a symbol of the Tibetan Buddhist religion. Even though not all of the visitors are Buddhists, they can still go there and receive calm and happiness. The architecture, burning incense, chanting and praying in the palace all contribute to a peaceful and tranquil atmosphere that enables tourists to slow down and reconcile with their hearts.

On the social level, reconciliation means open dialogues between different affected communities with the aim of peacebuilding. This social function of heritage interpretation is central to dark-heritage sites connected to tragic events such as genocide, war and natural disasters. Interpreting and visiting these sites has the potential to offer open dialogue, reduce conflict between different groups and foster reconciliation within divided societies, with the ultimate goal of preventing such tragedies from happening again (Zhu, 2022).

Eventually, heritage interpretation hopes to offer fertile ground for peacebuilding and to mitigate conflicts for involved parties. World Heritage mechanisms are regarded as 'UNESCO's vehicle for peace' to create shared value beyond national policies, encourage intercultural dialogues and promote cultural diversity. In a UN Security Council meeting in April 2015, UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova declared: 'Heritage must be at the frontline of peacebuilding' (UNESCO, 2015). One year later, at another UNESCO event, 'Cultural Diversity under Attack: Protecting Heritage for Peace', European Union High Representative for external relations Federica Mogherini pointed out that 'promoting heritage is not for archaeologists only – it is a peace imperative' (UNESCO, 2016).

The listing of practices like the 'safeguarding strategy of traditional crafts for peacebuilding' by Colombia in 2019 is one important example of the direct work that heritage processes can do for peace as a direct pathway to reconciliation. Likewise, the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki have been reconstructed as cities of peace through memorials and tourism to commemorate the atomic bombings of the Second World War (Zwigenberg, 2014). Memorial sites and museums commemorating the Second World War and the atomic blasts aim to promote peace by demonstrating the destructive nature of war as both a warning and a catalyst for visitors' compassion and emotions. In another example, many Aboriginal art festivals and programmes in Australia recognize the importance of reconciling Indigenous and non-Indigenous differences and histories (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2016). Lurujarri heritage trails in North West Australia were established as a collaborative project between people and the land to acknowledge different worldviews and Indigenous culture (Wergin, 2016). These heritage sites and practices illustrate gradations of the contributions of heritage interpretation in peacebuilding.

Figure 3. Peace guide with students at Nagasaki, Japan. (Photo: author's own.)

While these five goals on the ladder simplify the complex realities of the actual world, they illustrate the various gradations of effect that heritage interpretation can have. Each goal targets various forms of heritage site and is associated with different interpretation techniques. Some sites require the earlier goals of the ladder, such as truth-telling, while others can aim at later goals, such as reconciliation and reparation. Efforts towards those later goals require more heritage work for visitors to interact with the objects and the stories and meanings. Deeper engagement with heritage meanings and values allows visitors to effectively learn from heritage interpretation (Macdonald, 2015).

However, these goals are not exclusive to each other, and are often mutual or interrelated. The achievement of the later goals does not necessarily exclude the earlier goals of the ladder. Sometimes, for instance, the strategies of reparation and reconciliation

can also contribute to truth-telling and learning. On those occasions, the framework of a ladder can transform into a cycle of these goals, which are embedded in co-dependency, mutual interaction and negotiation (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Cycle of heritage interpretation as public education.

A metaphor: from lectures to tutorials

The ladder helps us to understand what goals heritage interpretation can achieve, but achieving reparation and reconciliation through heritage interpretation is a complex and challenging endeavour. It requires all stakeholders to work together to develop heritage interpretation strategies that acknowledge and prioritize community well-being and the needs of post-conflict societies (Zhu, 2022). Otherwise, the social function of healing and reconciliation can easily fall prey to superficial propaganda without having meaningful impacts on local societies.

The old bridge at Mostar (Stari Most), Bosnia and Herzegovina, was demolished during the Bosnian War of 1993. After a reconstruction project in 2004 supported by international organizations, UNESCO nominated the bridge as a World Heritage Site in 2005. The interpretation of the rebuilt bridge focuses on the international cooperation, political unification and reconciliation. However, the intention to call for peacemaking had a limited effect; tensions between the two ethnic groups in the area continue. The bridge has since become a popular tourist destination without achieving its goal of reconciliation in the post-conflict society (Forde, 2016).

In this case, the question of how heritage interpretation can serve as public education remains unsolved. Here I use two education techniques to illustrate this issue: lectures and tutorials. A lecture is a format where lecturers present and students listen, learn and take notes on the content delivered. Tutorials are a format in which students discuss and interact on the topic based on questions guided by the lecturers and tutors. These are common forms of education techniques employed in universities as a package for student learning.

Let us now focus on two fundamental differences between these techniques. The first factor is the difference in format. Lectures are mainly composed of information-giving, whereas tutorials start with 'questions', which lead the following discussions and debates. Inclusive, open and inspiring questions can evoke students to engage with the tutorials for debates and discussion. The second factor is the relationship between lecturers/tutors and students. In lectures the lecturers dominate the space, whereas in tutorials the students lead and work together to develop their learning experience through discussion. The tutor only serves as the facilitator.

- *Question-led interpretation*

The metaphor of lectures and tutorials offers two implications for heritage interpretation. Instead of delivering information for passive acceptance, heritage interpretation can allow visitors to reflect and develop critical thinking about values and points of view different from their own (Uzzell and Ballantyne, 1998, p. 170). Like in tutorials, raising open and engaging questions as a key heritage interpretation strategy can help heritage and museum spaces to move away from a detached, objective approach to an active and emotion-centred interpretation (Zhu, 2022). It makes it possible to shift from a one-way lecture model to an interactive and reflexive tutorial model that is open to the negotiation of meanings and values (Affleck and Kvan, 2008).

Such a question-led approach is particularly relevant to difficult heritage sites and can help people to evoke an open, inclusive and critical reflection of the nature of historical events. Scholars, officials, and victims and their families can be invited to discuss their interpretation of the site and its associated past. Apart from factual questions of what, who, when and where, more in-depth questions of how, why and 'so what' can be asked. For example, how and why did the event(s) occur? How have people experienced an event? How did the event shape the world and the affected societies? Most importantly, how can we learn from the past to create a

better future? Incorporating these questions in heritage interpretation is particularly important when engaging with crucial and hidden knowledge of the past (Zhu, 2021).

• *Interpretation as open dialogue*

The second consideration is the relationship between heritage authorities and visitors. Instead of a top-down approach, interpretation can develop as a form of co-creation that centres on a tutorial-led and flattened mechanism. All participants – states, local tour guides, local communities, visitors and international organizations – can be seen as potential participants in heritage interpretation. Here the idea of inclusive, open dialogue breaks down the barriers in the relationship between authorities and the public, and all participants are viewed as collaborators. Viewing heritage interpretation as open dialogue shifts the focus of interpretation from information and knowledge production to mediation and conversation between different people.

In the context of university teaching, university lecturers and students are initially situated in an asymmetrical relationship. This means that extra work is required to empower the students to participate in the open dialogue of the tutorial. In a similar situation, the work of empowerment is needed for those community members, especially the marginalized and grass roots, to contribute to heritage interpretation. According to Timothy (2007), empowerment is both a capacity and a process that shifts decision-making and resource distribution from authorities, external experts and investors to community members. These instruments allow local individuals and communities to build cultural awareness and identity while promoting their social and economic interests.

In detail, members of local communities, regardless of gender and age, can be invited by heritage interpretation managers to participate in designing and interpreting materials to tell stories to visitors. This form of co-creating heritage interpretation provides these groups with opportunities to link their cultural traditions and personal life experiences, thus strengthening their cultural identity and sense of belonging. This issue is particularly relevant to Aboriginal areas where Indigenous communities and their cultures are situated at the centre of heritage interpretation. In this way, the representation and understanding of local history, knowledge and environment can follow the Indigenous ontological visions of the world beyond Western philosophies, such as the Western division between nature and culture, and tangible and intangible (Wergin, 2016).

By extension, visitors can participate in heritage interpretation by presenting their unique travel experiences at heritage sites. Visitors are not passive information receivers (Silberman, 2012); they can actively record their understandings of heritage values by engaging with visitors' books and social media. These records are integrated as part of the heritage sites' authentic and valuable interpretation. This way, heritage interpretation allows the public to improve awareness and appreciation of heritage values and significance (Beck and Cable, 2002, p. 1).

Conclusion

Since 2020, the Preparatory Office for the Interpretation and Presentation of World Heritage Sites under the auspices of UNESCO (WHIPIC) has organized several activities for international scholars and experts to discuss ideas and practices of heritage interpretation and presentation including conferences, online lecture series and publications. On 23 May 2022, the WHIPIC was officially established as a Category 2 Centre of UNESCO in the Republic of Korea. These activities have shown that both UNESCO and the States Parties have realized the significance of heritage interpretation and presentation. Interpretation and presentation are now recognized as critical components of heritage issues in addition to the nomination and management of sites.

While UNESCO and other international organizations have increased awareness of the significance of heritage interpretation, many countries and NGOs have questioned official understandings of the human past, especially regarding those events that engage with mass trauma and social injustice. Furthermore, traditional definitions of heritage and public museums have begun to receive criticism. In the postmodern era, what are the responsibilities of public spaces such as heritage sites, monuments and museums to society, and what kind of role can they play in public education? Recent debates regarding the issue of 'comfort women', those women and girls forced into sexual slavery by Japanese occupying forces during the Second World War, is one such instance of transnational controversy and the trend of politicizing World Heritage (Lee et al., 2022). These debates centre on the factual nature of history books and the interpretation of heritage sites and museums, and are used by NGOs and the cultural sector to authenticate the past for truth-telling and transitional justice.

This example has shown that the priorities of heritage interpretation in many countries still need to be truth-telling and learning. This is particularly important as many survivors, family members of survivors, and even volunteers have passed away, especially those associated with wars. Without proper documentation and interpretation of the human past, those significant points in human history will be buried and forgotten. The development of digital technology and digital heritage might help to transform those memories into other formats, but the more challenging issue is how we can remember and interpret these human pasts in museums, heritage sites and history books, so we can develop a better platform for future generations to learn about those pasts.

These problems cannot be solved through one chapter, but I believe that this ladder framework can be used to evoke a new approach to heritage interpretation. Despite the generalized and simplified frameworks, I hope these ideas can begin to mitigate the challenges and existing problems and limitations in heritage interpretation. They can help us minimize the risk of creating new mistakes and exacerbating problems already embedded in current global geopolitics and international relationships. Instead of falling into ideological traps embedded in certain ideologies or authorized discourses, such as nationalism and neoliberalism, I hope heritage interpretation can provide a basis for public education and open dialogues about the past so we can use heritage to create a better future.

Note

Early versions of some parts of this chapter were presented at the 2019 International Conference on UNESCO World Heritage Interpretation in Seoul, Korea; Zhu (2021); and Zhu (2022). I would like to thank WHIPIC and the editors for their support, and Junmin Liu for her assistance.

References

Affleck, J. and Kvan, T. 2008. A virtual community as the context for discursive interpretation: a role in cultural heritage engagement. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 3, pp. 268–80.

Albert, M.-T., Bernecker, R. and Rudolff, B. (eds). 2013. *Understanding Heritage: Perspectives in Heritage Studies*. Berlin and Boston, De Gruyter. (Heritage Studies, 1)

Anderson, B. 1983. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London and New York, Verso.

Arnstein, S. R. 1969. A ladder of citizen participation. *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, Vol. 35, No. 4, pp. 216–24.

Bakker, K. 2011. Heritage as transmission. *Heritage and Society*, Vol. 4, No. 2, pp. 239–52.

Beck, L. and Cable, T. T. 2002. *Interpretation for the 21st Century: Fifteen Guiding Principles for Interpreting Nature and Culture*. Champaign, IL, Sagamore Publishing.

Bloom, B. S., Krathwohl, D. R. and Masia, B. B. (eds). 1984. *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The Classification of Educational Goals*. New York, Longman.

Bramwell, B. and Lane, B. 2014. The 'critical turn' and its implications for sustainable tourism research. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, Vol. 22, No. 1, pp. 1–8.

De Cesari, C. and Rigney, A. (eds). 2014. *Transnational Memory: Circulation, Articulation, Scales*. Berlin and Boston, De Gruyter (Media and Cultural Memory, 19).

Forde, S. 2016. The bridge on the Neretva: Stari Most as a stage of memory in post-conflict Mostar, Bosnia–Herzegovina. *Cooperation and Conflict*, Vol. 51, No. 4, pp. 467–83.

Fraser, N. 2003. Social justice in the age of identity politics: distribution, recognition, and participation. In A. Honneth and N. Fraser (eds), *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange*. London and New York, Verso, pp. 7–109.

GSU (Georgia State University). n.d. Outstanding Universal Value. Georgia State University World Heritage Initiative. Available at: https://worldheritage.gsu.edu/outstanding-universal-value/.

Harrison, R. 1994. *Manual of Heritage Management*. Oxford and Boston: Architectural Press.

Hems, A. and Blockley, M. R. (eds). 2006. *Heritage Interpretation*. London and New York, Routledge. (Issues in Heritage Management.)

Herzfeld, M. 2015. Heritage and the right to the city: when securing the past creates insecurity in the present. *Heritage and Society*, Vol. 8, No. 1, pp. 3–23.

Higgins-Desbiolles, F. 2016. Sustaining spirit: a review and analysis of an urban Indigenous Australian cultural festival. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, Vol. 24, No. 8–9, pp. 1280–97.

Lee, H. K., Sorensen, M. L. and Zhu, Y. 2022. The UNESCO Memory of the World programme and claims for recognition of atrocities: the nominations of Documents of Nanjing Massacre and Voices of the 'Comfort Women'. *Memory Studies*.

Lehr, J. and Katz, Y. 2003. Heritage interpretation and politics in Kfar Etzion, Israel. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 3, pp. 215–28.

MacCannell, D. 1976. *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class*. New York, Schocken Books.

Macdonald, S. 2015. Is 'difficult heritage' still 'difficult'?: Why public acknowledgment of past perpetration may no longer be so unsettling to collective identities. *Museum International*, Vol. 67, No. 1–4, pp. 6–22.

McIntosh, A. J. and Prentice, R. C. 1999. Affirming authenticity: consuming cultural heritage. *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 26, No. 3, pp. 589–612.

Moscardo, G. 1999. *Making Visitors Mindful: Principles for Creating Quality Sustainable Visitor Experiences through Effective Communication*. Champaign, IL, Sagmore Publishing. (Advances in Tourism Applications Series, 2.)

Nora, P. 1990. Between memory and history: Les lieux de mémoire. *Representations*, Vol. 26, pp. 7–24.

Nuryanti, W. 1996. Heritage and postmodern tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 23, No. 2, pp. 249–60.

Silberman, N. A. 2012. Heritage interpretation and human rights: documenting diversity, expressing identity, or establishing universal principles? *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 3, pp. 245–56.

Silberman, N. A. 2013. Heritage interpretation as public discourse: towards a new paradigm. In Albert, Bernecker and Rudolff, *Understanding Heritage*, pp. 21–34.

Smith, L. 2006. *Uses of Heritage*. London, Routledge.

Sodaro, A. 2011. Politics of the past: remembering the Rwandan genocide at the Kigali Memorial Centre. In E. Lehrer, C. E. Milton and M. E. Patterson (eds), *Curating Difficult Knowledge: Violent Pasts in Public Places*. Basingstoke, UK, Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 72–88. (Palgrave Macmillan Memory Studies.)

Staiff, R. 2016. *Re-imagining Heritage Interpretation: Enchanting the Past-Future*. Abingdon, UK, and New York, Routledge.

Timothy, D. J. 2007. Empowerment and stakeholder participation in tourism destination communities. In A. Church and T. Coles (eds), *Tourism, Power and Space*. London, Routledge, pp. 199–216.

Tunbridge, J. E. and Ashworth, G. J. 1996. *Dissonant Heritage: The Management of the Past as a Resource in Conflict*. Chichester, UK, and New York, J. Wiley.

UNESCO. 2015. Irina Bokova at Chatham House: culture must be at the frontline of peace. News, 1 July. Available at: https://en.unesco.org/news/irina-bokova-chatham-house-culture-must-be-frontline-peace-2.

UNESCO. 2016. Proceedings of the conference '#Unite4Heritage. Cultural Diversity under Attack: Protecting Heritage for Peace', Brussels, 9–10 June 2016. Available at: https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/proceedings_brussels_final.pdf.

Uzzell, D. L. 1996. Creating place identity through heritage interpretation. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 4, pp. 219–28.

Uzzell, D. and Ballantyne, R. 1998. Heritage that hurts: interpretation in a postmodern world. In D. Uzzell and R. Ballantyne (eds), *Contemporary Issues in Heritage and Environmental Interpretation: Problems and Prospects*. London, The Stationery Office, pp. 152–71.

Wergin, C. H. 2016. Dreamings beyond 'opportunity': the collaborative economics of an aboriginal heritage trail. *Journal of Cultural Economy*, Vol. 9, No. 5, pp. 488–506.

Wight, A. C. and Lennon, J. J. 2007. Selective interpretation and eclectic human heritage in Lithuania. *Tourism management*, Vol. 28, No. 2, pp. 519–29.

Young, I. M. 1990. *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press.

Zhu, Y. 2018. *Heritage and Romantic Consumption in China*. Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press.

Zhu, Y. 2021. *Heritage Tourism: From Problems to Possibilities*. Cambridge, UK, Cambridge University Press.

Zhu, Y. 2022. Hot interpretations of difficult heritage: the Memorial Hall of the Nanjing Massacre in China. *Journal of Cultural Heritage Management*, Vol. 12, No. 1, pp. 32–44.

Zhu, Y. and Logan, W. 2022. Guest editorial: heritage interpretation, conflict and reconciliation in East Asia. *Journal of Cultural Heritage Management and Sustainable Development*, Vol. 12, No. 1, pp. 1–4.

Zwigenberg, R. 2014. *Hiroshima: The Origins of Global Memory Culture*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Chapter 5

World Heritage Interpretation and Reconciliation

Shu-Mei Huang

World Heritage Interpretation and Reconciliation

Shu-Mei Huang

Abstract

Interpretation of the past is never easy. Heritage can be a way of interpreting the past – indeed, it can mediate our interpretation of the past – and has increasingly become an important one as global heritage fever has increased. Nevertheless, the interpretation of contested heritage can itself become a new source of contestation if it is delivered as a one-sided presentation rather than as a result of communication; one such example is the recent debates between Japan and Korea over the 'Sites of Japan's Meiji Industrial Revolution'. With the case ongoing, the move by Japan in early 2022 to submit the Sado gold mine (Niigata Prefecture, Japan) – one site among several where Koreans were used as forced labour – as a candidate for inscription on the UNESCO World Heritage List, has, again, intensified the ongoing history war and prevented heritage from being used as a way of interpretation and reconciliation for peace. How can World Heritage Sites contribute to the historical process of reconciliation? How can the conversation over reconciliation be taken into account in interpreting related World Heritage Sites? This chapter aims to answer the questions in proposing a dialogical approach to heritage interpretation. It demonstrates how interpretation of contested heritage should be conducted with the aim of both finding closure to historical trauma and paving the way for reconciliation and future relationships. It requires that the stakeholders unfold heritage interpretation as dialogical processes in the context of advancing global accountability and acknowledge how the uneven history of globalization itself has become a specific driving force of human history. In this light, it is important to reconsider heritage interpretation as a way of bringing international stakeholders to correspond with one another and taking accountability together rather than drawing or presenting conclusions individually.

Introduction

Heritage interpretation is a social and cultural process; elucidation is but one goal of heritage interpretation (Staiff, 2016). There is a tension between the two instrumental purposes of interpretation – that is, the type of interpretation that is inevitably a transmission of authoritative facts and authorized narratives (Smith, 2006), and the type that sees interpretation as an art, where the chief aim of interpretation is provocation rather than instruction (Tilden, [1957] 2009). At the same time, there is always wishful thinking that heritage interpretation is intended to cultivate public appreciation. Heritage interpretation brings forth the potential of heritage being a source of inspiration, imagination and, moreover, critical reflection on the interaction between people and the world we live in as a global community of communities that try to share diverse and oftentimes conflicting memories, identities and responsibilities upon inheriting heritage. It is not at all easy to achieve these goals, as we can learn from the lessons of the past. The UNESCO World Heritage List – the most visible programme of the World Heritage Convention of 1972, an effort to facilitate the goal of the United Nations to promote peace and to uphold human dignity – has itself become a contested terrain where competing claims on the past negotiate with if not totally confront one another (Meskell, 2018). Worse still, the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 directly threatened World Heritage in the Ukrainian capital Kyiv, including the Saint Sophia Cathedral and related monastic buildings, causing worry for UNESCO and heritage experts around the world. In times of crisis, the role of heritage interpretation and its potential relevance to cultivate public appreciation of human rights and universal values cannot be overstated.

Human rights should not become slogans but something to be embodied. Ensuring their application requires continuous communication and collaboration in action. Silberman (2012) suggests that three distinct cultural concepts and associated interpretive approaches are of potential relevance to rights-based heritage management – (1) interpretation as the accurate, objective documentation of heritage sites; (2) interpretation as an expression of collective identity; and (3) interpretation as promotion of the universal value of cultural diversity – and that an interpretive balance should be the goal for heritage interpretation. Human rights values are only sustained in continuous dialogues across borders to prevent stakeholders from delivering one-sided presentation and interpretation of heritage that could easily eclipse universalism.

The interpretation of contested heritage, nevertheless, can itself become a new source of contestation if it is delivered as a one-sided presentation rather than as resulting from communication. In terms of sites associated with conflict and human suffering, Zhu (2021, p. 56) points out the way in which new, positive relationships can be nurtured and reconstructed between host and visitor communities via commemorative practices

combined with educational programmes, to 'traverse the boundaries between heritage and memory'. In reality, however, State-controlled heritage tourism might do just the opposite in its promotion of national history and collective identity at the cost of homogenizing local memories, a long-standing issue that has been embedded in the development of heritage institutions and professions – what Laurajane Smith and other critical heritage studies scholars call an 'authorized heritage discourse' (Smith, 2006). One such example is the debates between Japan and Korea over the 'Sites of Japan's Meiji Industrial Revolution'. The move by Japan in early 2022 to submit the Sado gold mine (Niigata Prefecture, Japan) – a site where Koreans were used as forced labour – as a candidate for inscription on the UNESCO World Heritage List, has, again, intensified the ongoing history war and prevented heritage from being used as a way of interpretation and reconciliation for peace.

Heritage interpretation is conducted with the aim of both finding closure to historical trauma and paving the way for reconciliation and future relationships. How can World Heritage Sites contribute to the historical process of reconciliation? How can the conversation over reconciliation be taken into account in interpreting related World Heritage Sites? This chapter aims to answer these questions in proposing a dialogical approach to heritage interpretation. It demonstrates how interpretation of contested heritage should be reconsidered carefully in terms of its objectives, scope and approaches.

Historic justice and transnational heritage

Heritage is inevitably limited by its presentism and brings about tension with historic justice. Transnationalizing heritage, especially over the 'decolonization of heritage' (Giblin, 2015), can be a way to overcome these limitations. Transnationalizing and decolonization, however, encounter many more difficulties in Asia, as the definition of 'colonialism' is usually much more contentious in the region as it is not necessarily intrinsically Western, but can be homegrown (Huang et al., 2022). Here, colonialism is definitely not confined to the past; rather it is intertwined with present cross-border initiatives – for instance, not only Japanese colonialism in the past but also settler colonialism in the present.

Here in Asia, it is more difficult to draw a line and to clearly identify the boundary between the past and the present. Conceiving difficult heritage sites as 'frontiers of memory', Huang et al. (2022) illuminate how heritage has played an instrumental role in expanding the temporal dimension of frontiers. The increasing number of case studies of difficult heritage in Asia allow us to observe the dynamism between memory and heritage, and how heritage interpretation matters in the continuous negotiation over heritage sites. Heritage interpretation of difficult cases, if conducted responsibly, can contribute to fostering transnational discourses of peace and reconciliation rather than conservative, introverted, parochial consciousness that only reinforces competition and, in the worst case, resentment, such as in the case of the 2015 inscription on the UNESCO World Heritage List of 'Sites of Japan's Meiji Industrial Revolution: Iron and Steel, Shipbuilding and Coal Mining' (hereafter the Meiji Industrial case). It is not necessary to repeat here the details of the contestation over the nomination and the backlash it caused, which have been discussed by existing scholarship, especially in terms of the memory politics and intentional forgetting that heritage could contribute to (Boyle, 2021; Matsuura, 2019; Nakano, 2021a; Nakano and Zhu, 2020). The issue of forced labour in the history of industrialization in Japan and its colonies, obviously, cannot be adequately addressed by the technical exclusion of the Korean presence at those industrial sites with the periodization of the nomination set between the 1850s and 1910. The Sites of Japan's Meiji Industrial Revolution (2015) listing, being a selective remembering, only recognized the positive side of industrialization. It is indeed a pity that Japan did not consider it an opportunity to invite Korea to join a more constructive dialogue regarding the past. Instead, historical revisionism (Morris-Suzuki, 2001) and, worse still, 'consumerist nationalism' (Gerow, 1998), which scholars noted around the turn of the millennium, dominated the discourses that supported the nomination. Despite the efforts of UNESCO to mitigate the conflict and prevent similar disagreements in the future, there has not been enough progress to make necessary changes, even after the Industrial Heritage Information Centre was established to respond to the challenge (Boyle, 2021).

The frustration was soon increased by another contested case in the making – the case of the Sado gold mine in Niigata, one of the world's largest gold producers in the seventeenth century, which Japan nominated for inscription on the UNESCO World Heritage List in early 2022. In respect of the forced Korean labour working on the site during the Second World War, the Korean Government called upon experts to monitor the case closely (personal communication, 10 January 2022) and hoped that Japan might delay its plan so the unresolved issues over the Meiji Industrial case would not occur again with the Sado case. Yet, Japan pursued the nomination, allegedly for domestic political reasons that concerned the incumbent prime minister Fumio Kishida's administration (Nikkei, 2022).

The aforementioned conflicting understanding of heritage between Japan and Korea can easily lead us to essentialize the differences in heritage interpretation and to miss the fact that interpretation can diverge even within the same national community. For instance, how the heritage around Hashima Island is interpreted varies among Japanese people. Not all Japanese people valued the sites of Japan's Meiji Industrial Revolution the same way as presented in the booklet produced for the UNESCO World Heritage nomination campaign: 'Hashima coal mining island is an artificial reclaimed island, the site of Japan's first major undersea coal exploitation (1895) pioneered by Mitsubishi – and host to one of the world's

most extraordinary former mining communities.' Here, we can see how the focus is placed on the extraordinary nature of the site. Among others, the documentation prepared by Japanese architectural historians in 1970 demonstrated a totally different interpretation of the past (NPO et al., 2015). It highlights the concrete high-rise buildings that were constructed on Hashima Island, dating back as far as the 1910s, as the earliest experiment of dense living in a rather compact built environment. Without natural resources, the living conditions were anything but pleasant, not helped by the dire condition of the small island. In other words, the sentiment about the difficult labour conditions posed by the particular kind of undersea mining done on Hashima might not be necessarily limited to the Korean labourers but also their Japanese peers, and yet this possibility of transnational connection has not been grasped by the State actors, at least not in the debates over the 2015 World Heritage nomination and the following years, which is indeed a pity.

Interpreting the past from the subaltern perspective: the case of the Sakubei Yamamoto Collection and the related transnational dialogue

The Sakubei Yamamoto Collection is a set of annotated drawings and documents of Sakubei Yamamoto, a former mine worker at the Chikuho coal field in Fukuoka, Kyushu, which eventually contributed to the interpretation of heritage sites across Fukuoka and New Taipei City in Taiwan. The collection of documentary heritage, as the submission to the UNESCO Memory of the World (MoW) Register pointed out, provided 'a human face' to the industrialization process in which coal export helped finance the rapid development of Japanese growth 'from a craft-based society in the 1850s to a world naval and industrial power by the First World War' (UNESCO, 2010). The documentary heritage was recommended for inclusion in the MoW Register in 2011. It was nominated by Tagawa City thanks to a collaboration between the city government and the local Fukuoka Prefectural University, which came about as the two agencies both owned some paintings and documents donated by the Yamamoto family. The annotated paintings illustrated the hardship of coal-mining work and how the miners as a subaltern community managed to survive the difficulties.

At the time when Sakubei Yamamoto was mining, Japanese coal was exported to China, Hong Kong and Singapore. The rapid expansion of coal mining during this period demanded a significant workforce, and this included former rural workers and their children, ex-convicts and foreign labourers. Yamamoto's paintings and diary provided a vivid, first-hand account of the painful memories of his childhood while he followed his

parents working and living at the Chikuho coal field. The mining history has been kept rather underground, despite some pre-existing scholarly work on the exploitative nature of child and female labour involved in coal mining before the Second World War, which did not get enough attention (Smith, 1999, 2005; Sone, 2003, 2017). Donald W. Smith's work brought attention to the presence of Korean women in Japanese coal mining at that time. It was only with the entry of the Sakubei Yamamoto Collection in the MoW Register that the public in Japan and beyond got to learn about the past from the miner's perspective rather than the capitalist's. Through Yamamoto's artwork, people were reminded of the human cost of the Meiji Industrial Revolution. Unlike the beautiful garden at the Glover House, former residence of Scottish merchant Thomas Glover (1838–1911), from where visitors can view the port of Nagasaki and associated infrastructure, the dark setting of the underground mine presented the less pleasant side of the history of industrialization.

Figure 1. The Glover House and harbour view from the gardens, Nagasaki, Japan (2019). (Photo: author's own.)

Instead of describing the collection in detail, I would like to bring attention to the transnational dialogue it brought up between Fukuoka, Japan, and New Taipei City, Taiwan. The Yamamoto case had attracted a community of former miners and scholars of industrial heritage in New Taipei City, especially due to its success in shedding light on the working-class workers' role in driving human progress and, at the same time, the sometimes-unbearable cost that we should remember. Since 2017 there has been cross-border exchange in the form of travelling exhibitions, symposia and exchange site visits, all of which have brought local actors together. Some Taiwanese former miners presented at those events and were able to make their voices heard directly by the public, with the cross-border support of their counterparts in Fukuoka. They also learned about specific ways of managing archives and heritage sites associated with coal mines from the Japanese partners and, moreover, how coal-mining history is indeed embedded in larger-

scale global political-economic change throughout the twentieth century. It contributed to a more interactive, communicative way of heritage interpretation than the one-sided interpretation supplied at the World Heritage Site of Hashima or the Mitsubishi shipyard in Nagasaki. In 2020 and 2021 I was able to attend some events at the Taiwan Coal Mine Museum at the former Xin Pingxi coal mine (established in 1965 and closed in 1997). The visualized presentation of the past at the Xin Pingxi coal mine exhibition also provided a rare chance for children to learn about the difficult past.

Figure 2. The Sakubei Yamamoto Collection exhibition in Xin Pingxi (2021). The drawings were exhibited in the open air next to the heritage site. (Photo: author's own.)

Figure 3. The Fukuoka–New Taipei forum on industrial heritage and coal miners' memory, held as a webinar due to COVID-19-related travel restrictions (September 2021). (Photo: author's own.)

The exchange led by local actors across Fukuoka and New Taipei brought the labourers' memories back to presenting industrial heritage in a manner that is quite different from the 2015 Meiji Industrial Revolution nomination led by the Japanese State. The bottom-up heritage interpretation could inspire a more critical and, by extension, more ethical practice of interpreting heritage across borders. The key here is the focus on the labourers' voices that can be easily lost in interpreting and presenting industrial heritage. It is especially important in a global age for its potential for nurturing a sense of stewardship across borders and ethnicities. In addition, the exchange between Fukuoka and New Taipei demonstrated the important role of non-State actors (local governments, local university, local museums and NGOs) in interpreting heritage.

It is worth mentioning that the Sakubei Yamamoto case was a success before the MoW programme was challenged by the crisis around the nomination for listing of documents related to the 'comfort women' kept by the Japanese military, which the International Advisory Committee (IAC, the agency responsible for recommending MoW Register listings to the Director-General of UNESCO) has not totally resolved. The most recent tension has arisen from the already existing East Asia memory war (Nakano, 2018). In East Asia, the MoW received relatively little attention until 2011 and the inscription by Korea of the archives relating to the Gwangju Uprising of 18 May 1980. The move by China to nominate the Nanjing Massacre case as a modern set of documents rather than historical (pre-1911) documents in the 2014/15 cycle followed the Korean predecessor. This attracted Japan, which had been relatively inactive in the MoW, to join the race. The international competition intensified and eventually turned the MoW into a new battleground of the existing history war in the region. The Japanese Government regarded the successful Chinese nomination as the outcome of the MoW programme's (and IAC's) incompetence in ensuring a credible review of submissions (Nakano, 2021b) and took issue with the selection process. Indeed, there is no mechanism to ensure the participation of UNESCO States Parties in the selection process and, therefore, it was seen as being outside the routinized practices of diplomatic negotiations (Nakano, 2018, 2021b). Nevertheless, it is the exact same factor of downplaying the role of states that has made the MoW Register more open to the voices of subaltern communities and civil societies across borders. The tension further escalated in the 2016/17 nomination cycle (Suh, 2020, pp. 99–103), especially for the submission to the MoW Register made by the International Committee for Joint Nomination of the Documents on the Japanese Military 'Comfort Women' (fourteen organizations across eight countries, including Korea, Japan, China and Taiwan; for more information, see Suh, 2020; Vickers, 2021).[1] The Japanese Government considered the nomination as threatening the nation's mnemonic security, as Nakano (2021b) argues. It blamed the MoW nomination procedure for failing to engage related national states to avoid disagreements.

Ray Edmondson (2020, p. 75), the chair of the MoW Committee for Asia and the Pacific, makes it clear that 'MoW is no stranger to lobbying'. The debated nomination of 'Voices of the "Comfort Women"' has brought about unprecedented institutional chaos and suspension of the nomination cycle of the MoW, exposing the inherent limitations of UNESCO to resolve conflicts between solidarism and pluralism: the former emphasizes universality and shared norms, while the latter embraces a state-centric, pluralist approach to culture and history (Nakano, 2018). Given the focus and available space in this chapter, the ongoing MoW crisis cannot be discussed exhaustively here, although it certainly merits further attention.

The difficult memories and heritage of the Mudan incident

In 1871 a ship returning to the Miyako Islands, part of Okinawa today but then within the Ryukyu Kingdom, was shipwrecked in Ba Yao Bay, southern Taiwan, in a tropical storm. The sixty-nine Ryukyuan sailors were initially received by the local Indigenous people who inhabited Kuskus village, but fifty-four of them were found killed by the water to the east of the village the next day. The few survivors fled to a village inhabited by non-Indigenous Han people and eventually made it home. The Ryukyu Kingdom, at that time, was struggling to manage in between the Japanese empire in its early stages and the Qing dynasty, under which Ryukyu had long submitted to the tribute system in which China was the dominant centre. The Ryukyu King was uncertain whether the tragic incident would develop into larger trouble in terms of international relations so his attitude was to mitigate rather than seek revenge (Wong, 2022). However, in part owing to the intervention of Charles Le Gendre, an American diplomat who had rather in-depth knowledge of Indigenous affairs in southern Taiwan thanks to his previous position stationed in Amoy, the Japanese Meiji government eventually approved a plan to invade Taiwan with the strong support of the military power of the former Satsuma *han* (domain) in 1874, three years after the shipwreck incident (Eskildsen, 2002).

Historians like Eskildsen (2019) have argued that the incident was used as the justification for colonization that Meiji Japan was searching for at that time. In so doing, Japan also reinforced its sovereignty claim to the Ryukyu Islands, which later became what we know today as the Okinawa Islands. In fact, Japan officially incorporated the Ryukyu Kingdom in 1872 (the so-called Ryukyu Disposition or *Ryūkyū* shobun in Japanese), just one year after the shipwreck. The later expedition, led by Saigo Judo, landed in the Indigenous territories of southern Taiwan in May 1874; the fighting with the Mudan tribe lasting until July (Figure 4). The chief of the Indigenous tribal society and his son were

killed in the war. Its success was acknowledged by the Qing regime, whose sovereignty over Taiwan was partial and did not reach deep into the mountains inhabited by Indigenous peoples.

Japan did not stay and govern the Indigenous territories right away. The success, however, contributed to greater Japanese ambition over Taiwan and later Korea. After the Sino-Japanese war of 1894–95, Taiwan fell under Japanese rule. The Indigenous people in the Republic of Formosa (as Taiwan became known for a time), including several tribes that had been attacked in 1874, became third-class citizens under the Japanese empire; the Japanese being the first class and Han Chinese the second. The rapid political change forced the Indigenous people to keep silent about their painful memories under the colonial oppression until the end of Second World War in 1945. In addition, with Japan forcefully imposing its culture and language onto the colonized people, the so-called Kominka Movement from the 1930s until 1945, it was all the more difficult for Indigenous communities to pass on their knowledge of and feelings about the Mudan incident. The knowledge gap has been widened as there are no clear written records available from the local community. Today, those who are eager to explore the past have only the records produced by the officers who served the Japanese empire, inevitably making for a lot of challenges and limitations. The Indigenous communities suffered from the Japanese depiction of them as 'violent barbarians' (凶蕃), which can be read in the historical documents or on monuments, such as the tomb established under the order of Saigo (see Figure 7).

Figure 4. The memorial established by the Japanese to commemorate the landing of Southern Taiwan during the 1874 expedition (1936). The word 蕃 in the inscription means 'barbarian' in both Chinese and Kanji. (Photo: ref. 1399710, from the old photos collection at National Taiwan University Library.)

During the colonial era, the tomb of the Ryukyuans was listed as one of the first batch of monuments in the colony in 1933 (see Figure 7). Two years later the battleground at Shimen where the 1874 expedition saw action (Figure 5) and the memorial that recognized Saigo's military achievement (Figure 6) were added to the second batch of monuments by the colonial government (Japan, 1936). In 1936, the Association of Taiwanese Education (社團法人臺灣教育會) selected a series of photos as teaching materials to promote the teaching of Taiwanese history and culture. A photo of the Ryukyuan memorial was included, which indicated the significance of the historical Mudan incident from the Japanese State's perspective.

Figure 5. The battleground of Shimen (石門之役) (1923). Originally from the Photo Book of Takaoshū [高雄州寫真帖], with a note (author unknown) about the unique geography of the place that made it a natural gate through which the Indigenous were able to fight the Japanese army. (Photo: ref. 0372812, from the old photos collection at National Taiwan University Library.)

(Left) Figure 6. The memorial of Saigo, now a municipal heritage monument in Pingtung, Taiwan (2021). (Photo: author's own.)

(Right) Figure 7. The tombstone of the Ryukyuans (2021), where the local Han people buried the dead bodies near their village. With the inscription 'The fifty-four Ryukyuan Indigenous people that belong to the Great Japan (大日本琉球藩民五十四名墓)', the tombstone as a memorial was built under Saigo's orders to solidify the relationship between the Ryukyu Kingdom and Japan. It is now a municipal heritage monument in Pingtung, Taiwan. (Photo: author's own.)

In the post-war years, the tomb and the memorial saw various changes. The tomb fell into disrepair while the memorial of Saigo was modified – the post-war government changed the message engraved on the memorial into an aspirational expression about reclaiming lands under peace. But in the 1970s and 1980s, people from across borders, including those living in Okinawa on one side and those residing in Mudan, Kuskus and other significant locations on the other, gradually began to establish connections and later collaboration. Oral histories from the two sides gradually came together and challenged the heritage interpretation dominated by the Japanese invaders' perspective.

In Taiwan, safeguarding the heritage of the legacy of the Japanese colonial government was unthinkable between the 1950s and 1980s, but moves in that direction gradually gained momentum from the 1990s onwards. The safeguarding and incorporation of Japanese heritage into the national project of diversifying Taiwanese culture differentiates the Taiwan case from the Republic of Korea. In Taiwan, the notion of Japanese/colonial heritage is rather positive or even nostalgic. Under the dynamic development of civic participation in heritage safeguarding following the *bentuhua* (localization) movement, views on the built heritage left by the Japanese regime have gradually shifted from a negative view of imperial legacy to seeing them as sites of memory and modernity. Today, more than half of the officially recognized historic sites in Taiwan date from the colonial era (Huang, 2022).

Nevertheless, some heritage elements inherited from past regimes elicit feelings of pain and shame. These include the remaining war memorials constructed by the Japanese after they conquered the Indigenous people deep in the mountains. Among others, the memorial of Saigo is one of the most difficult cases. For the Indigenous communities in the area around Mudan, it is not easy to forget that Saigo and the army he led killed their leader and his heir, devastating the tribal society, and later started the colonial history that deprived them of their resources, culture, beliefs and so on. Worse still, the Indigenous communities were not able to mourn their loss for fear of further reprisals. Instead, they had to make sense of a most tragic case in which the Japanese took one young Indigenous girl they found during the war back home to Japan and dressed her in a kimono and taught her the Japanese language. The Japanese at that time, even before the formal colonization of Taiwan, were proud of transforming the girl into a colonial subject, as can be read from the documentation kept by the Japanese (Chen, 2010). She was sent back to Mudan after five months, but unfortunately passed away at home not long after, allegedly due to her finding it difficult to cope with the differences between the urban, modern life she experienced in Tokyo and the rural conditions back home. The loss of a girl of their own added to the pre-existing sense of grief and fear that the Indigenous communities suffered from.

The Saigo memorial was not built in the immediate aftermath of events in the 1870s but in the late 1930s, on top of a mound by the battleground, in order to celebrate the fortieth anniversary of Japanese governance of Taiwan. Under the committee established by the then colonial government, the memorial was designed by Ideka Horu, a significant architect who was involved in designing many civic buildings in the colony of Taiwan. In the same year, the memorial was listed as heritage, as mentioned earlier. After the colonization of Taiwan ended at the conclusion of the Second World War, the Japanese left behind these monuments, which were largely kept in place, with modifications added depending upon local contexts. Studying the case of monuments associated with the Mudan incident, Miyaoka (2021) demonstrates that many monuments and institutions derived from Japanese colonialism are still seen by Indigenous people as retaining their colonial meaning, the memorial of Saigo among them. The latter was kept, although the local mayor ordered the initial inscription to be replaced with a new one, 'Viewing the clear waters around, we are reclaiming the rivers and the mountains' (澄清河海還我河山), which implied the post-war nationalist regime's will to reclaim the lost territory of the mainland. Following the trend mentioned above, the local government listed both the tomb of the Ryukyuans and the memorial of Saigo as municipal monuments in 2011. Moreover, the local government decided to restore the Japanese inscription in 2016 in the name of authenticity. The change, however, upset the Indigenous communities as they were not involved in the discussion and decision, even though they might not necessarily have been against the proposal.

The Indigenous communities in both southern Taiwan and Okinawa had felt frustrated by their situation for more than a century and decided to begin their own initiatives for interpreting the past from the Indigenous perspective between the 1970s and 1990s (e.g. the descendants of the Ryukyuan victims and some scholars from Okinawa came to southern Taiwan to search for the history of the shipwreck in the post-war years; see Marikiyo, 2018), which eventually contributed to a monumental visit of the Indigenous Mudan community to the Miyako Islands in 2005 – the year of the 60th anniversary of the end of the Second World War and the 131st anniversary of the Mudan incident. The Indigenous communities went on to make multiple visits to each other and then decided to establish a shared memorial of Love and Peace to communicatively interpret the contested past in their own visual and linguistic tradition. In Taiwan, the memorial is set in the Mudan Incident Memorial Park (Figure 8).

Puzzles over the reason for the Mudan incident killings remain and might never be totally solved due to the lack of written records by the Indigenous people involved. Yet, the two sides have brought together a unique effort to narrate their own histories and, in so doing, to share and at the same time to differentiate the two closely related incidents – the Miyakojima shipwreck and the Mudan incident – that the Japanese State purposefully reduced to one. Today, we can find the cross-border exchange and dialogues that tried to heal the wounds and close the gaps at the Peace and Love memorial.

Figure 8. The Peace and Love memorial at the Mudan Incident Memorial Park in Mudan, Pingtung (2022). The statue features an Indigenous person from Mudan and another from Miyako to represent the connection across history and geography. There is another memorial statue on the Miyako Islands, Okinawa. (Photo: author's own.)

Reconciliation with whom?

The significance of rewriting histories from the Indigenous perspective is recognized by the national government in Taiwan. After taking office in 2016, President Tsai Ing-wen officially apologized to Indigenous people for how they were unfairly oppressed and marginalized under the past regimes and, arguably, in the present as Taiwan continues to be a settler state. The Tsai administration has established the Indigenous Historic Transformation and the Transitional Justice Committee (HTTJC) to investigate and develop policies to bring forth transitional justice for Indigenous people in Taiwan. Safeguarding of Indigenous heritage and heritage interpretation have been seen as highly important in filling the gap of telling the past from the Indigenous perspective; these are key tasks taken on by the cultural division of HTTJC, the Council of Indigenous Peoples, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Culture. In this light, since 2019 the Regeneration of Historic Sites programme under the Ministry of Culture has contributed to the representation of the Mudan incident. Under the programme, the Mudan Incident Memorial Park has been expanded, including the addition of a statue of Aruqu, the heroic tribal leader, and his son, and a Museum of the Mudan Incident (still under construction at the time of writing). A memorial trail was established, supported by necessary infrastructure to allow the visitors to reflect on the history while walking along the rivers that intersected the Shimen battleground. Several exhibitions have also been curated to present a more Indigenous-oriented telling of the conflict and its aftermath.

A large-scale commemoration event was organized on 20 May 2022, around the 148th anniversary of the Mudan incident, to highlight the accomplishment of presenting the Indigenous voices and enabling reconciliation (from the perspective of the Government of Taiwan) and to recognize the pain and shame inflicted on the Indigenous people in the area by the incident. Higher-up representatives of the Tsai administration attended the event to show their respect and deliver addresses to continue the message of President Tsai's desire, first expressed in 2016, to 'set this country and all its people on the path towards reconciliation'. The visible and invisible cultural work of heritage presentation and interpretation supposedly are contributing to revelation of 'truth', which is a key component of transformative justice and reconciliation. President Tsai, in her 2016 apology speech, borrowed the Atayal saying of truth as *Balay* and reconciliation as *Sbalay* to emphasize that 'truth and reconciliation are in fact two related concepts … only by facing the truth can reconciliation be attained' (Republic of China (Taiwan), 2016). This particular part of President Tsai's address has been acclaimed internationally and continuously promoted in the initiatives of reconciling with the Indigenous community that followed. But just being at the site where the past conflicts occurred is seen as one significant way to 'face the truth' even though the actual facts of the incident, as mentioned, can only be known to some degree given the limited materials and evidence.

At the 148th anniversary of the Mudan incident, there was an expectation that attendees would go further to express their reflections on the past and form a meaningful, encouraging dialogue to guide the following generations. This expectation was suggested not only to the representatives of the Tsai administration but also those from the Japanese side. However, the Japanese representatives remained silent throughout as they had not been granted the authority to make any comment on the occasion, which upset the Indigenous communities. 'Reconciliation with whom?' asked one of the Indigenous teachers from the Mudan tribe. The frustration and confusion were not unique in the Mudan case but shared across memories of the more than ten battles that the Japanese colonial government instigated to turn the Indigenous peoples of Taiwan into its colonial subjects in the early twentieth century. The absence of the voice of the Japanese State in the efforts guided by HTTJC has been critically questioned in that the committee did not engage one of the most important actors that brought violence to Indigenous people in the past. It goes beyond the question of 'reconciliation for whom' to demand a more fundamental question of 'reconciliation *with* whom'. Experts in international relations would suggest that it would be most unwise for the Tsai administration to force its 'Japanese friend' to answer this question – the relationship between Taiwan and Japan has been increasingly close under the Tsai administration, although there has still not been any official diplomacy between the nations (Dreyer, 2021).

The takeaway of this case, if we do not focus solely on international relations and geopolitics, is the significance of the performativity of heritage. It is not enough to safeguard heritage and to invest in infrastructure that supports heritage tourism, especially in the case of difficult heritage based on a painful past. Presence, action and voices are all important in ensuring that the heritage performs its service to all stakeholders in a more communicative, dialogical way, and only in so doing can we expect to see a more concerted practice of heritage interpretation that can fulfil the three goals suggested by Silberman (2012), especially the third that sees interpretation as promotion of the universal value of cultural diversity and human rights. This can only be sustained in continuous dialogue across borders to avoid the one-sided presentation and interpretation of heritage that still prevail today.

Conclusion

We need to recognize that multiple actors have a role in safeguarding heritage and advancing heritage interpretation. While the heritage sector is leading the task, education,

media and international relations are all playing significant roles in cultivating a more 'unified liberal discourse' that is arguably still lacking in the Asia-Pacific region, as Mitter (2020, p. 50) notes. Difficult heritage related to modern conflicts could give rise to a shared, transcending narrative of resistance to imperialism or colonialism rather than a neocolonial sentiment that again fuels national victimhood and grievance.

The Sakubei Yamamoto Collection MoW Register entry and the cross-border dialogues that followed demonstrated that there could be positive exchange out of a more proactive engagement with the difficult past. A more interactive, communicative heritage interpretation from the bottom up can nurture reconciliation and solidarity beyond the State's single, narrow frame. We need more cases that can promote cross-border dialogue and critical reflection on the transnational elements of the difficult past, and to learn lessons and try not to repeat the same errors, which usually involve much more than one single perpetrator.

Adequate interpretation of difficult heritage can allow us to learn more about the complexity of the past. Another case of the collaborative learning around the Mudan incident demonstrated a long-awaited effort to face the difficult past between the Indigenous peoples and settler states, and yet more needs to be done, as we can learn from Indigenous activism in Australia, New Zealand and Taiwan since around 2010. Yet, if the nation state is not willing to open up to heritage interpretation, any alternative programmes can become sites of contestation, or worse still, geopolitical weapons. It requires stakeholders to unfold heritage interpretation as dialogical processes in the context of advancing global accountability and acknowledge how the uneven history of globalization itself has become a specific driver of human history. In this light, it is important to reconsider heritage interpretation as a way of bringing international stakeholders to correspond with one another and take accountability together rather than simply drawing or presenting conclusions.

Note

1. There are four Japan–US groups behind the nomination: the Alliance for Truth about Comfort Women, the Study Group for Japan's Rebirth, the Institution of Research of Policy of Media and Broadcasting, and Japanese Women for Justice and Peace. Their joint statement of 31 October 2017 can be read at http://www.sdh-fact.com/essay-article/1071/.

References

Boyle, E. 2021. Shifting borders of memory: Japan's Industrial Heritage Information Centre. *Journal of Cultural Heritage Management and Sustainable Development*, Vol. 12, No. 1, pp. 19–31.

Chen, C. 2010.《臺博物語：臺博館藏早期臺灣殖民現代性記憶》第五章〈牡丹少女事件簿〉 [The case of the Mudan girl. In T*he Stories of the Memory of Modernity Collected in the Taiwan Museum during the Early Japanese Colonial Period in Taiwan*]. Taipei, National Taiwan Museum. (In Chinese.)

Dreyer, J. T. 2021. Taiwan–Japan relations in the Tsai era. In J. T. Dreyer and J. deLisle (eds), *Taiwan in the Era of Tsai Ing-wen*. London, Routledge, pp. 43–71.

Edmondson, R. 2020. Reviewing the MoW general guidelines: reflections on the experience of 2015–2017. In R. Edmondson, L. Jordan and A. C. Prodan (eds), *The UNESCO Memory of the World Programme: Key Aspects and Recent Developments*. Cham, Switzerland, Springer, pp. 59–89.

Eskildsen, R. 2019. A justification for colonization. In *Transforming Empire in Japan and East Asia*. Singapore, Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 43–71.

Eskildsen, R. 2002. Of civilization and savages: the mimetic imperialism of Japan's 1874 expedition to Taiwan. *American Historical Review*, Vol. 107, No. 2, pp. 388–418.

Gerow, A. 1998. Consuming Asia, consuming Japan: the new neonationalist revisionism in Japan. *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, Vol. 30, No. 2, pp. 30–36.

Giblin, J. 2015. Critical approaches to post-colonial (post-conflict) heritage. In E. Waterton and S. Watson (eds), *The Palgrave Handbook of Contemporary Heritage Research*. London, Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137293565_20.

Huang, S. 2022. Heritage preservation. In H. H. Hsiao (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Taiwan Studies*. Leiden, Netherlands, Brill.

Huang, S., Vickers, E. and Lee H. K. 2022. Introduction. In: S. Huang, H. K. Lee and E. Vickers (eds), *Frontiers of Memory: Difficult Heritage and Cross-border Politics of Postcolonial Nationalism*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, pp. 1–24.

Japan. 1936. 史蹟調査報告. 第2輯 [Report on the Survey of Historic Monuments, Vol. 2]. National Diet Library. Available at: https://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/1071657/1 (accessed 25 September 2022). (In Japanese.)

Marikiyo, M. 2018. 大日本帝国植民地下の琉球沖縄と台湾 - これからの東アジアを平和的に生きる道 [The colonized Ryukyuan Okinawa and Taiwan under the Japanese Empire: for a peaceful East Asia in the future]. Tokyo: doujidaisya. (In Japanese.)

Matsuura, Y. 2019. World heritage and the local politics of memory: the Miike coal mine and *fu no isan*. *Japan Forum*, Vol. 31, No. 3, pp. 313–35.

Meskell, L. 2018. *A Future in Ruins: UNESCO, World Heritage, and the Dream of Peace*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Mitter, R. 2020. Evil empire? Competing constructions of Japanese imperialism in Manchuria, 1928–1937. In L. Narangoa and R. Cribb (eds), *Imperial Japan and National Identities in Asia, 1895–1945*. London and New York, Routledge, pp. 146–68.

Miyaoka, M. 2021. Multi-layered realms of memory: a diachronic study of the commemoration of the Mudanshe Incident in Taiwan. In Y. Mio (ed.), *Memories of the Japanese Empire*. London, Routledge, pp. 180–200.

Morris-Suzuki, T. 2001. Truth, postmodernism and historical revisionism in Japan. *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 2, pp. 297–305.

Nakano, R. 2018. A failure of global documentary heritage? UNESCO's 'memory of the world' and heritage dissonance in East Asia. *Contemporary Politics*, Vol. 24, No. 4, pp. 481–96.

Nakano, R. 2021a. Mobilizing Meiji nostalgia and intentional forgetting in Japan's World Heritage promotion. *International Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 1, pp. 27–44.

Nakano, R. 2021b. Japan's demands for reforms of UNESCO's Memory of the World: the search for mnemonical security. *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 34, No. 4, pp. 590–607.

Nakano, R. and Zhu, Y. 2020. Heritage as soft power: Japan and China in international politics. *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, Vol. 26, No. 7, pp. 869–81.

Nikkei. 2022. Japan goes forward with Sado gold mine World Heritage bid. Nikkei Asia, 28 January. Available at: https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/Japan-goes-forward-with-Sado-gold-mine-World-Heritage-bid (accessed 20 June 2022).

NPO, Uzo Nishiyama Memorial Collection, and S. Matsumoto. 2015. 軍艦島の生活<1952/1970>:住宅学者西山卯三の端島住宅調査レポート [Life on Hashima (1952–1970): a survey by Uzo Nishiyama]. Tokyo, Sogensha. (In Japanese.)

Republic of China (Taiwan). Office of the President. 2016. President Tsai apologizes to indigenous peoples on behalf of government. News releases, 1 August. Available at: https://english.president.gov.tw/NEWS/4950.

Silberman, N. A. 2012. Heritage interpretation and human rights: documenting diversity, expressing identity, or establishing universal principles? *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 3, pp. 245–256.

Smith, L. 2006. *Uses of Heritage*. London, Routledge.

Smith, W. D. 1999. Ethnicity, class and gender in the mines: Korean workers in Japan's Chikuho coal field, 1917–1945. PhD thesis, University of Washington, DC.

Smith, W. D. 2005. Sorting coal and pickling cabbage: Korean women in the Japanese mining industry. In B. Molony and K. Uno (eds), *Gendering Modern Japanese History*. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Asia Center, Harvard University Press, pp. 393–422.

Sone, S. 2003. Exploitation or expectation? Child labor in Japan's coal mines before World War II. *Critical Asian Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 1, pp. 33–57. http://doi.org/10.1080/1467271032000061479.

Sone, S. 2017. Japanese coal mining: women discovered. In K. Lahiri-Dutt and M. Macintyre (eds), *Women Miners in Developing Countries: Pit Women and Others*. London, Routledge, pp. 51–72.

Staiff, R. 2016. *Re-imagining Heritage Interpretation: Enchanting the Past-Future*. Abingdon, UK, and New York, Routledge.

Suh, K. H. 2020. History wars in the memory of the world: the documents of the Nanjing Massacre and the 'comfort women'. In Edmondson, Jordan and Prodan, *The UNESCO Memory of the World Programme*, pp. 91–107.

Tilden, F. [1957] 2009. *Interpreting Our Heritage*. Durham, NC, University of North Carolina Press.

UNESCO. 2010. Memory of the World Register: The Sakubei Yamamoto Collection (Japan), ref no. 2010–36. Available at: https://es.unesco.org/sites/default/files/japan_sakubei_yamamoto_collection.pdf (accessed 22 July 2022).

Vickers, E. 2021. Slaves to rival nationalisms: UNESCO and the politics of 'comfort women' commemoration. *Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus*, Vol. 19, No. 5, pp. 1–18.

Wong, T. 2022. On the pretext of protecting Ryukyuans, Japan invades Taiwan. In *Approaching Sovereignty over the Diaoyu Islands*. Singapore, Springer, pp. 117–44.

Zhu, Y. 2021. *Heritage Tourism: From Problems to Possibilities*. Cambridge, UK, Cambridge University Press.

Chapter 6

Augmenting World Heritage Interpretation and Presentation: Opportunities and Challenges of Digital Technologies

Mario Santana-Quintero & Michelle Duong

Augmenting World Heritage Interpretation and Presentation: Opportunities and Challenges of Digital Technologies

Mario Santana-Quintero & Michelle Duong

Abstract

The use of digital technologies for the interpretation and presentation of World Heritage properties involves significant technical challenges and should be governed by serious ethical engagement. This contribution is aimed at providing an overview of the current role and application of technology, taking into consideration ethical commitments, opportunities and challenges, as well as the development of emerging approaches for World Heritage. Furthermore, the chapter will introduce the benefits of the World Heritage Convention, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on presentation strategies, principles, visitor-experience expectations, infrastructure and technology requirements. Technology use in heritage documentation plays an essential role in decision-making for protecting cultural World Heritage Sites. Information collected with digital technologies can be used for the compilation of a nomination file, for monitoring the site and to interpret and present it to the public. These tools offer many opportunities but also relevant challenges.

Introduction

Conserving the past is a natural human instinct. Attributing significance to places and things and wanting to save them to pass on certain ideas is an inherent part of the human condition. Significant places are our homes and communities – they remind us of important events, people and families in communities and bind everyone together with past, present and future generations. These places are tangible examples of education, memory, and history.

Since its inception in 1972, the World Heritage Convention has proved to be a highly efficient international instrument that integrates nature conservation concepts and cultural properties in a single document. Millions of dollars and a significant number of human resources have been deployed by the World Heritage Committee for the protection, collaboration, research and valorization of cultural heritage. The Convention has been an important instrument for promoting the protection, awareness and appreciation of heritage. Over forty World Heritage Committee meetings have been organized and 1,154 properties have been listed by 167 States Parties. The last meeting in China (UNESCO WHC, 2021) was held almost entirely online with some in-person components. This is an example of how technology played a vital role in continuing the function of the Convention despite the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 1. An aerial panoramic image taken using a drone showing the Jones Falls lock station, part of the Rideau Canal UNESCO World Heritage Site, Canada, 2020. (Photo: author's own.)

When looking at important precedents that led to the creation of the World Heritage Convention, it is clear that many involved applying new technologies. For example, at the outset of the UNESCO campaign to relocate the Nubian Monuments above the rising waters of the Nile River in the 1960s, Maurice Carbonell used surveying techniques to coordinate the inventory of the temples. Carbonell, one of the founders of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) Scientific Committee on Heritage Documentation (CIPA), used architectural photogrammetry, at that time the most advanced recording technology available, to create an accurate record of each block of the two temples at Abu Simbel. The records produced facilitated the safe transport of the temple fragments to a new, higher place, 64 metres above the original location.

According to the UNESCO manual on the preparation of World Heritage nominations (Marshall, 2011), a World Heritage property might provide the following benefits:

- Celebration for the state party and local community of the property as one of the most important places on earth
- A flagship for recognition and better protection of heritage in the life of the community
- Interest in international cooperation and joint efforts in their conservation
- Potential funding and support from donors and the World Heritage Fund
- Techniques and practices for the protection, conservation and management of the World Heritage property can be applied to other national and local heritage properties

However, Labadi's assessment of three of the six goals of the Strategic Action Plan for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention 2012–2022 (UNESCO, 2011), namely those 'dealing with protection and management; the credibility of the World Heritage List; and sustainable development', underlines very serious issues that have prevented their effective implementation. In fact, since 2012 the situation has worsened considering, in particular, 'the gap between heritage conservation, the well-being of local communities, and sustainable development' (Labadi, 2022, p. 12).

The issue addressed in this chapter is the use of information technology for improving the presentation of properties for the education and promotion of heritage, emphasizing the need for more attention from the international community at large. As indicated by experts of the Transformational Impacts of Information Technology debates of OurWorldHeritage (a new not-for-profit global platform (network) that brings together heritage voices to generate new perspectives, new points of view and new sensibilities about our world's heritage), the correct application of digital technologies 'could have a transformational impact on the management of World Heritage sites and improve knowledge-based decision-making' (OurWorldHeritage, 2021).

- *Outstanding Universal Value*

Outstanding Universal Value (OUV), in its notion of World Heritage symbolically belonging to all people, is very important for humankind (Stubbs, 2009, p. 66). The World Heritage Convention was basically established to recognize sites of OUV that are part of the heritage of humankind, which deserve protection and transmission to future generations.

The OUV for which a property was inscribed should fundamentally speak to the values of the communities and stewards of those properties. These values need to be protected, and in order to protect them, awareness through education is key. Thus, OUV must play a vital role in how heritage places are presented, because an effective presentation will create awareness by transmitting the significance, attributes, features and components of World Heritage properties. When OUV is compromised, the door opens for a World Heritage Site to be considered for the List of World Heritage in Danger. If there is serious decline of an endangered species, for example, which is protected through the inscription of their habitat to the World Heritage List, that natural site could be deemed in danger (UNESCO, 2021).

Discussing OUV can also contribute to opportunities for reconciliation in communities. The adoption of retroactive statements of significance is one step that can be taken. The site of Mesa Verde in the United States was inscribed under Criterion (iii) and was justified as 'bearing a unique testimony to a civilization which has disappeared', which is untrue (ICOMOS, 1978, p. 7). The statement was revised retroactively in 2014, along with many other World Heritage Sites, to acknowledge that the landscape represents 'a graphic link between the past and present ways of life of the Puebloan Peoples of the American Southwest' (UNESCO, n.d.), recognizing the living culture present at Mesa Verde. To continue dialogue and safeguard what is valuable, the understanding of OUV and inscription criteria should be the foundation of any presentation strategy.

- *World Heritage under siege*

Heritage sites do not die – they are damaged, demolished or destroyed. The effects of natural disasters like fires, earthquakes, flooding, landslides and storms are among the significant causes of loss and damage to physical objects and human life. But increasing abandonment, development, the pressures of tourism, neglect and other threats inflicted by human activity also pose a real risk to World Heritage properties.

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic, which caused lockdowns worldwide, resulted in partial and total restricted access to World Heritage Sites due to the danger of spreading the virus. The livelihoods of local communities that depend on the tourism industry have been substantially affected by the lack of visitors to these sites. The 2020 ICOMOS report 'The Impact of COVID-19 on Heritage' explains the negative extent of impacts to the economy of stakeholders and communities, the impacts of delays to rehabilitation and maintenance, as well as the lack of 'self-expression and recreation' of cultural activities (Kono et al., 2020).

The World Heritage Convention was enacted as an international catalyst to protect heritage sites worldwide, particularly in challenging times. For example, when armed conflict arose in Ukraine, Iraq and Syria, or when natural disasters hit Nepal and Myanmar, the UNESCO World Heritage community played a crucial role in mobilizing funding and relief. While the world is, at the time of writing, still recovering from the pandemic, UNESCO remains at the forefront of acknowledging crises facing the cultural sector, as expressed in the final declaration at the Mondiacult 2022 conference. The participants,

ministers of culture from UNESCO Member States, understand that 'the global COVID-19 crisis … has profoundly disrupted the cultural ecosystem as a whole – exacerbating structural fragilities and inequalities, including social and gender gaps and unequal access to culture', and thus 'call for the protection of cultural heritage, tangible and intangible, as well as cultural expressions, notably in times of crisis, including extreme climate events and natural hazards' (UNESCO, 2022).

Figure 2. Aerial mapping of the Vatsala Durga Temple after it was damaged by the Gorkha earthquake, Nepal, 2017. (Photo: author's own.)

World Heritage and digital technologies

Over the years, the application of digital technologies has been a vital tool for implementing the Convention's Operational Guidelines. For example, after its cancellation in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting global lockdown, the forty-fourth session of the World Heritage Committee was held primarily online in 2021.

Additionally, a vast array of technologies is available to heritage professionals for the conservation and management of World Heritage properties, ranging from mapping large-scale protected areas to setting up buffer zones and deploying information systems for the consolidation of practical conservation management approaches. For example, remote sensing and geographic information systems have been used in places such as the Silk Roads Heritage Corridors in Asia, the Archaeological Sites of the Island of Meroe in Sudan, and the Qhapaq Ñan, Andean Road System in South America. In 2018 the World Heritage Committee also recommended that Egypt apply appropriate remote sensing techniques

to better define the buffer zone for Memphis and its Necropolis – the Pyramid Fields from Giza to Dahsur (UNESCO WHC, 2018), and to apply for a Minor Boundary Modification that reflected the new findings.

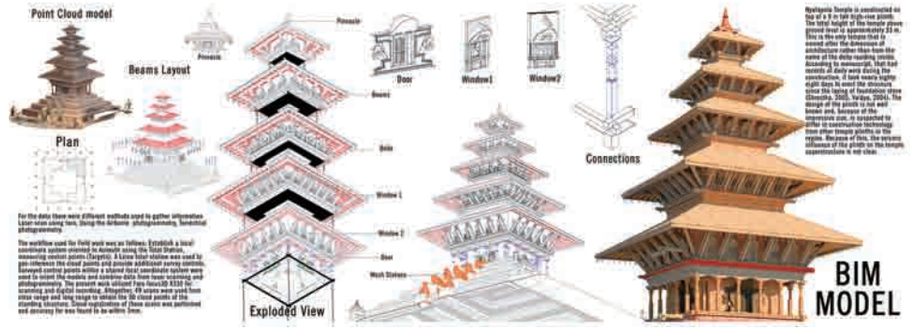


Figure 3. Building information modelling, Nyatapola Temple, Nepal, 2017. (Photo: author's own.)

Digital technologies have also been used to prepare cartography, digital photography, charts and other illustrations supporting nomination files. For example, the nomination file for Sítio Roberto Burle Marx in Brazil, which was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2021, consisted of extensive digital cartography and a comprehensive 'georeferenced Inventory and Management Framework' of assets (IPHAN, 2021). The preparation of this material helps to protect the many components of the OUV of this important cultural landscape.

More recently, architects and engineers designing the reconstruction of Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris are using digital 3D models that pre-date the devastating fire of 2019 and are updating them with the current in situ investigation; by doing so they have managed to create a digital twin of this precious site (Platt, 2021). Created by notable researchers who were already engaged in studying the wonders of Gothic cathedrals, the 3D models provide valuable information on Notre-Dame's roof and spire, both of which were damaged extensively by the fire.

Figure 4. Vertical digital photography with a mast of the Bytown Museum next to the of the Rideau Canal UNESCO World Heritage Site in Ottawa, Canada, 2020. (Photo: author's own.)

In a dialogue between Kat Borlongan, former director of La French Tech, and Chance Coughenour, Head of Preservation at Google Arts & Culture, for the UNESCO portal on the fiftieth anniversary of the World Heritage Convention, the two rightfully indicated the capacity of technologies to digitally recreate properties, emphasizing the accessibility and balanced representations of heritage in close communication with local and international experts (UNESCO, 2022b).

Furthermore, online conference tools have enabled communities and individuals located in different parts of the world to collaborate. The globinars organized by the Transformational Impacts of Information Technology debate team of the OurWorldHeritage initiative, as reported in 2021, gathered hundreds of actors to talk about the establishment of 'a robust global network of organizations and professionals to discuss and formulate recommendations as to how information technologies can be used to support World Heritage sites'. The results of these conversations have been captured in the debate's report, which highlights monitoring and interpretation with concrete transformative proposals 'to provide interpretation for heritage sites, including the ability to present multiple or under-represented narratives about a site' (OurWorldHeritage, 2021).

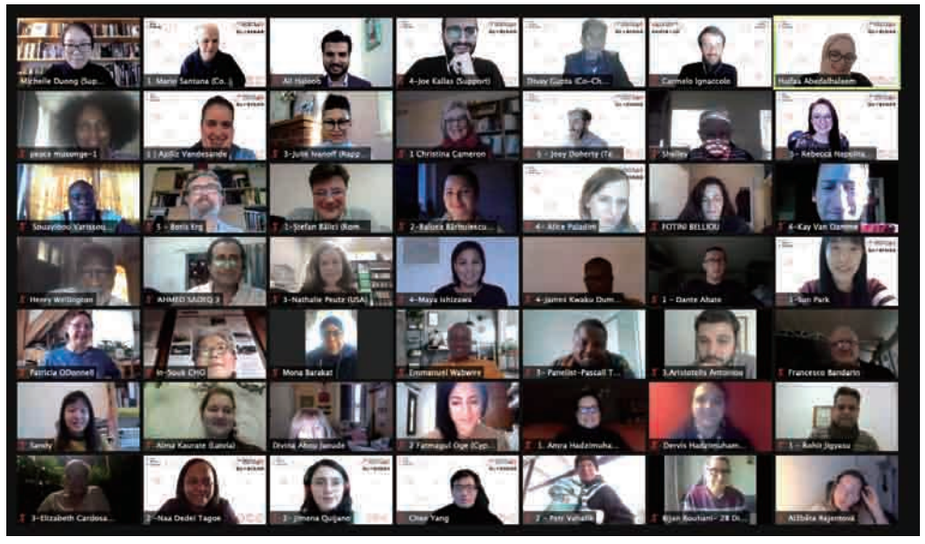


Figure 5. Online globinar on the transformational impacts of information technology, OurWorldHeritage, 2021. (Photo: author's own.)

Other applications of digital technology, such as online tours with different interactivity levels, allow users to explore heritage sites remotely and experience their significance digitally. For example, using Google Street View, it is possible to access panoramic views of many places around the world. Virtual tours are also available on

YouTube and other dedicated web- or cloud-based virtual tour applications such as Kuula and Theasys. These have been particularly useful during the lockdowns related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

To optimize risk preparedness and condition assessment, conservation planning, tourism management and monitoring of sites, applications, and digital technologies such as remote sensing, advanced information systems and inventory platforms offer new approaches to integrating layers of data and permit site managers to make better-informed decisions. However, these technologies can be further improved to effectively assist 'rights-holders and other stakeholders' with the interpretation and presentation of World Heritage Sites (Court et al., 2022). In particular, contested narratives and difficult pasts need to be included. Further, aspects of intangible cultural heritage also need to be considered alongside tangible elements in the presentation of World Heritage Sites.

When dealing with information technology, some essential issues should be considered, such as the local and global levels of commitment required, affordability, long-term deployment and stakeholders' responsibilities. Furthermore, ensuring the quality, proper characterization, provenance of information collected and an ethical commitment to privacy is of utmost importance – this demonstrates respect for the community and promotes adequate presentation of the sites.

• *The role of ICOMOS as an advisory committee in presenting World Heritage Sites*

ICOMOS is a professional network of over 10,000 members and is an official advisory body to the World Heritage Committee. It has drafted doctrines as a framework for practice and theory, many of which have been adopted in the legislation of numerous nations around the world.

A particular doctrine that has substantially contributed to the interpretation and presentation of World Heritage properties is the ICOMOS Charter for the Interpretation and Presentation of Cultural Heritage Sites, or the Ename Charter, adopted in Quebec, Canada, in 2008 (ICOMOS-ICIP, 2008). The objectives of the Ename Charter in relation to cultural heritage sites are to:

- Facilitate understanding and appreciation
- Communicate their meaning
- Safeguard their tangible and intangible values
- Respect their authenticity
- Contribute to their sustainable conservation
- Encourage inclusiveness in their interpretation
- Develop technical and professional guidelines for their interpretation

Although this document requires updating, it presents several significant principles for the proper design and implementation of any interpretation and presentation framework, referring to: access and understanding; information sources; attention to setting and context; safeguarding authenticity; planning for sustainability; concern for inclusiveness; the importance of research, training and evaluation.

Furthermore, the ICOMOS International Charter for Cultural Heritage Tourism should be considered, particularly Principle 3, which is to 'enhance public awareness and visitor experience through sensitive interpretation and presentation of cultural heritage' (ICOMOS, 2021), stressing the responsibility to consider the need for broader accessibility and also inclusion of tangible and intangible dimensions for enhancing the experience of visitors when incorporating the use of new technologies at World Heritage Sites.

• *World Heritage Sites: presentation strategies*

The development of strategies to present World Heritage properties should take into account that they are 'inherently a spatial phenomenon, characterized by location, distribution and scale' (Graham et al., 2000, p. 256). Properties have a specific geographic setting, components, attributes (and features), boundaries and buffer zones, such as those in serial and transboundary sites; one example is the corridors of the Silk Road, in particular the Routes Network of Chang'an-Tianshan Corridor, which covers components across three countries in Asia (UNESCO, 2014). During the nomination process, a comparative analysis is prepared with a description justifying the inscription and OUV criteria. Analyses can be useful in designing the presentation content, with special consideration for the attributes and features of important intangible elements or those that are threatened. Highlighting these elements in the presentation will bring awareness to those issues.

According to Matero (2013, p. 155), 'Any consideration of the interpretation and display of heritage sites demands reflection on three critical questions':

- How should we experience a place, especially one that is fragmented, accreted and possibly illegible?
- How does intervention affect what we see, what we feel and what we know?
- How can display promote effective and active dialogue about the past across space and time?

Answering these questions using accurate and appropriate storytelling technology can be challenging, particularly the last question in relation to a presentation approach being a tool for 'mediation between the past and the present' (Matero, 2013, p. 155).

Silverman indicates that presentation is a one-way experience, from the site to the visitor; however, with the evolution of technology, this is no longer true in a digitally connected world (UNESCO-WHIPIC, 2020). More efforts aimed at training, research and

mobilization of best practices in presentation are still required to improve multidirectional dialogue through the use of digital technologies. The ministers of culture present at Mondiacult 2022 called on UNESCO to 'assist Member States in harnessing the digital transformation in the cultural sector' through a process of 'participatory dialogue' with relevant community players and cultural professionals (UNESCO, 2022a, p. 6).

• *The visitor-experience dimension*

A traditional visit to a World Heritage Site with a trained tour guide and information panels is no longer the only way to present properties. Humanity is more connected than ever before and the flow of information happens at lightning speed. Planning a trip and accessing relevant information about sites and practicalities can be done with a simple Google search. However, with progress comes challenges. It is essential to understand that the quality of the information retrieved can be compromised. Rather than providing interpretation of a site, digital information could negatively impact perceptions about the values of the site and affect the local community whose livelihoods depend on the qualities that attract tourists in the first place.

Visitor-experience expectations should be studied by interdisciplinary groups of heritage professionals who will respect the significance and integrity of World Heritage Sites while acknowledging the privacy of communities. It is essential to ensure transparency in how digital content is collected and presented online and how these virtualized representations will create a solid sense of community and pride. Using digital technology is an excellent way to enhance a visitor's experience at any World Heritage Site, but it should also integrate the voices of local communities.

• *Requirements of a digital presentation infrastructure*

According to the Ename Charter, 'Interpretive infrastructure refers to physical installations, facilities, and areas at or connected with a cultural heritage site that may be specifically utilized for the purposes of interpretation and presentation including those supporting interpretation via new and existing technologies' (ICOMOS-ICIP, 2008). Therefore, the adoption of digital methodologies offers an opportunity to develop principles, guidelines and protocols for interpretation and presentation that could help site managers hire consultants who will create experiences that will enhance the OUV of the site. It is essential to bear in mind that digital assets have shared ownership and therefore shared responsibilities. A clear ethical commitment to utilizing these tools is desperately needed.

When deciding on the best way to adopt digital technologies, several factors should be considered to determine the best workflow to ensure the site's core mission, for example:

- The collective view of the stakeholders (local communities, custodians, experts, etc.)
- The typology, extent and nature of the World Heritage Site
- The amount of digital material available
- The ability of the technologies to give access to visitors who have been excluded in the past such as visitors from low-income countries with inadequate means to travel or access these sites
- The need to offer universal access to the sites and create a natural feeling of a place
- The types of digital infrastructure available, internally or externally, to the site managers
- Availability of skilled labour: the organization's capacity and the funding available to adopt digital strategies

Finally, a comprehensive data management plan should be implemented that would indicate when the digital infrastructure needs maintenance, updating and eventual replacement.

Producing digital platforms for presentation

Closely looking at technology for sharing and disseminating World Heritage, there are three main components: the digital asset or media; the container (repository); and the platform and interface(s). Digital media (or assets) refers to audio or visual information, like photos, video, audio files or other created content that is edited, stored or accessed in digital form. When digital media is hosted on a platform, it becomes a digital asset, which come in many different file formats, such as JPGs for images, MP4s for movies and so on.

The container, meanwhile, is a repository where those assets are stored, managed and retrieved. This involves a remote cloud service or a local server hosting the data sets. The Arches Project, launched by the Getty Conservation Institute and the World Monuments Fund, provides an excellent overview of implementation considerations for digital inventories, which include 'historic environment records' (Arches, 2022). This guide can be helpful when deciding on the type of container and platform required by considering the institutional hosting requirements, rules and technical specifications.

Finally, the platform and interface allow the user to access, look at, interact with and eventually retrieve data. An interface can be physical, such as nomination files for World Heritage Sites, which contain a linear sequence of documents, drawings or other graphic elements presenting the relevance of the site. A digital platform is also an electronic stage used to visualize, manage and communicate digital media, often publicly. Most popular platforms use photos, audio clips and videos to communicate information. Panoramic photos, 360-degree images and videos, and 3D models are also becoming more popular.

The digital platforms providing remote access to World Heritage properties are useful, but they are not a complete replacement for a physical visit. Before COVID-19 and the subsequent lockdowns, statistics and online polls showed that virtual experiences were mainly used by educators or by potential visitors to plan their trips ahead of a visit. However, the inaccessibility created by the mandatory partial or complete closure of sites during the pandemic brought awareness to the heritage community of the need to balance physical and virtual experiences going forward. A growing push to strengthen networks, online platforms, connectivity and telecommunications has allowed many people to remain at home. This digital revolution has allowed a substantial number of heritage organizations to quickly move their existing digital assets to social media and other digital platforms.

- *Digital tools to produce and access assets (media)*

Digital tools are used to acquire and produce, as well as to view these assets, or media. Currently, massive digitization of World Heritage is possible through various means. The use of off-the-shelf unmanned aerial vehicles, commonly known as drones, allows people to digitize large areas of protected properties that are otherwise inaccessible. Examples of other acquisition tools include digital cameras (single or 360 degrees), 3D scanners and surveying instruments, all of which produce data that can be used in processes such as photogrammetry and 3D modelling.

Figure 6. Carrying a portable 3D scanner to record under a mosaic floor, UNESCO World Heritage Site Nea-Paphos, Cyprus, 2019. (Photo: author's own.)

Digital workflows are the methods or approaches used by heritage recording specialists to carry out digital recording of a heritage place, in this case aimed at presentation. When digital media is utilized to produce a digital record for a conservation dossier or storytelling, the site's narrative must be hosted on a digital platform.

For 3D visualization, there is a growing range of available virtual reality (VR) viewers and head-mounted displays to access sites, such as Google Cardboard, Oculus Go and Meta Quest. Another visualization approach is mixed reality (MR), an experience that can be offered by devices like the Microsoft HoloLens and Magic Leap, in which digital and real-life elements interact. These can be used to create an on-site experience for people who are remotely connected. Augmented reality (AR) technology, like MR, can create a digital experience that can be layered over reality. For example, using AR glasses, a university professor can show

students how a 3D scanner is used to record a heritage place's historic surface or explain weathering in a deteriorated construction assembly. Three-dimensional reconstruction can also be visualized using AR. Besoain et al. (2021, p. 243) explain that '[VR] technology has become important for providing users with unique experiences due to the high sense of immersion that increases their perception and, in some cases, provokes the sense of being there (presence)'.

• *Examples of platforms and interfaces*

Virtual tour platforms for digitally accessing physical sites are being used more than ever to showcase historic buildings, with an increase in popularity since the lockdowns of the pandemic. A virtual tour is essentially several 360-degree photos or panoramas organized sequentially so that the user feels like they are flowing through a space. Within a tour, interactive hotspots can be added to show additional information about an object or space.

Matterport, a platform originally developed for the real estate industry, is just one example of a company that offers this service. The tours are available on a website platform with an option to view the experience through a VR headset, an alternative viewing method that increases the user's level of engagement with the experience. This kind of active virtual tour gives the viewer full control of navigating the spaces and determining how much time to spend interacting with the panoramic images, hotspots or other elements (Duong, 2020).

Figure 7. An immersive experience using a virtual reality headset to explore heritage sites, 2017. (Photo: author's own.)

On the other hand, an example of a passive VR experience is the Áísínai'pi Writing on Stone project developed by Mammoth VR Inc. This tour is considered passive because it is a 360-degree video with a set duration. The user does not have control of which spaces to go through, but they can rotate their view from their central location as the video progresses (Duong, 2020). The tour is guided by a Blackfoot Elder and showcases a large collection of petroglyphs and pictographs. Although the experience was made available through Oculus Studios, the stewards of this World Heritage Site and the developer have made the tour more accessible by uploading it to YouTube, where it can be viewed free of charge without a VR headset.

An example of a VR/AR platform is the TimeLooper application, Xplore. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the developers created AR experiences using existing data sets and offered a service to cultural institutions called TimeLooper Foundations at no cost.

• *Virtual reconstructions of World Heritage Sites*

The digital technologies used for the virtual presentation of partially or fully destroyed World Heritage Sites have been widely developed by academics, industry and governments. Such technology is used to show the chronology of interventions or historic layers of a property, helping viewers to understand a place's evolution through history. For example, the iHERITAGE: ICT Mediterranean platform for UNESCO cultural heritage project, with a budget of more than €3.8 million, supports initiatives from Italy, Egypt, Spain, Jordan, Lebanon and Portugal that aim to provide digital access to World Heritage properties in their respective countries by using the latest technological developments (ENI CBC, 2021).

When creating virtual reconstructions, it is crucial to consider the International Principles of Virtual Archaeology (Seville Principles). Adopted by ICOMOS in 2017, they provide a framework for the digital reconstruction of heritage sites. The eight principles describe the need for interdisciplinarity, purpose, complementarity, authenticity, historic rigour, efficiency, scientific transparency, training and evaluation (IFVA, 2017).

• *Virtual visits and sustainability*

It is easier than ever to provide online experiences using social media and other services to negate the need to travel, which can positively affect climate change. Virtual visits also provide an alternative that helps to reduce the physical impact of tourism at World Heritage Sites. Images of Venice that were shared online during the COVID-19 lockdown provided evidence that the pandemic had positively impacted the physical site insofar as the canal waters were clear and there was less pollution and uncontrolled tourism. These visible changes suggest the importance of undertaking further study to revise the carrying capacity estimates for the heritage site. It will be essential to develop strategies that consider the site's physical integrity and attempt to mitigate pollution and other pressure from tourism.

The use of digital tools for presenting information about heritage places online was a sustainable option during the lockdowns that enabled schoolteachers and visitors to explore closed heritage places. Looking at the post-pandemic period, virtual visits can continue to contribute to sustainability by reducing the carbon impact of visiting a site in person, and equally important, by generating far-reaching promotion of sites' values. The relevance of digital data and infrastructure is evidenced by the European Commission's 'common European data space for cultural heritage' initiative, which aims to fund projects in 'digital services for the public' for the purpose of 'expanding pan-European themes and perspectives across editorial and campaigns to broaden the impact of cultural heritage', among other important activities (European Commission, 2022).

Figure 8. The Library of Parliament as an immersive digital environment provides an alternative to guided tours, Ottawa, Canada, 2019. (Photo: Carleton Immersive Media Studio and Stephen Fai.)

• *Ethics and professional obligations in presenting World Heritage Sites*

It is essential to ensure transparency in the way that digital content is collected and presented in virtualized presentations; digital assets have aggregated challenges related to their integrity, arising from a lack of adequate provenance, completeness, ownership and interactivity. We can identify five basic ethical categories based on the ICOMOS Ethical Principles (ICOMOS, 2014) and the Canadian Association of Heritage Professionals Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics (CAHP, 2019), related to:

- Ethical conduct: the heritage information technology team's commitment to showing respect, integrity, impartiality and accountability while conducting their activities and maintaining open, upright and tolerant attitudes. It also addresses issues related to conflicts of interest.
- Best practice: professional advice and services that heritage information technology specialists render to potential clients or community stakeholders, and accessibility, retrieval and posterity of records produced by specialists for the enjoyment of future generations.
- Cultural heritage: profound respect for the values and integrity of cultural heritage.
- The public and communities: respects the privacy rights of communities and their right to control how knowledge about their heritage is shared.
- Appropriate or adequate qualifications: the presentation team should be assembled according to the needs of the site. Appropriate skills, such as certification or university training, knowledge of technology and expertise in the heritage field should be required, particularly preparedness and recovery experience.

Emerging tools

Strategies for using digital assets, containers and platforms should support the well-being of stakeholders and the World Heritage property. Soon it will be possible to use artificial intelligence applications to recognize and customize the experience of visitors accessing presentation platforms. The Unmasking Tourism in Venice research project by Ignaccolo and his team, studying 'how tourism dynamics unfold within the built environment' under the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Department of Urban Studies and Planning, is an example of using data to understand the impact of tourism; their findings could be very important for developing good presentation strategies (MIT DUST, 2020).

In another pertinent example, Parker et al.'s (2019) deep-learning approaches for 'noninvasive digital restoration of ancient texts', specifically the Herculaneum scrolls, use micro-CT scans and morphological contrast for ink detection. This method has proven to be effective in digitally reconstructing very damaged papyri by creating realistic renders that can be displayed to the public, showing the original condition of these important texts (Parker et al., 2019, p. 17).

Another emerging application of deep learning is the automatic semantic segmentation techniques used to recognize historical architectural elements to improve historic building information modelling. The promising work of Pierdicca et al. (2020, pp. 18–19) not only highlights the challenges of using these techniques but also shows the opportunities that deep-learning approaches can provide in optimizing the workflow of modelling World Heritage Sites.

The Mogumber VR project in Australia, one of three projects of Missions Connect, focuses on the development of a VR environment for reconciliation (Missions Connect, 2022). This is a collaborative project with the Aboriginal communities through the Bringing Them Home Committee (Western Australia), the Southern Aboriginal Corporation and Curtin University. Together they are 'transforming former mission sites into healing spaces for Stolen Generations survivors, using virtual technology' (Curtin University, 2022). The VR experience can be part of the healing process for survivors and families traumatized by events in the Mogumber Native Mission (1951–74). The project is also hoping to educate the community and raise awareness about the existence of this place.

The iDiscover initiative has been developing an 'inclusive platform for cultural mapping, community engagement and place branding that's simple and affordable' (iDiscover, 2021). Their projects are community-led, following a bottom-up approach that ultimately aims to promote appreciation of 'the value of living heritage … to increase local pride and a sense of belonging', and showcases how information technology can be used to reach those goals (Abedalhaleem et al., 2021). The project puts visitors' mobile devices at the heart of the experience.

The advancements of mobile technology continue apace, including the addition of brilliant and novel recording tools and dissemination technologies. Devices such as the Apple iPad, iPhone 12 Pro and later versions equipped with a Lidar sensor and aligned to the phone imaging system allow the condition of sites to be recorded in detail. Several improvements in the immediate future promise a new era for acquisition of heritage information using just a smartphone. Teppati Losè et al. (2022), for instance, have tested 'three iOS apps (SiteScape, EveryPoint, and 3D Scanner App)', and offer insights on their potential application for cultural heritage.

The development of digital twin platforms has been on the drawing board of many governments and institutions around the world for some time. The digitalization of a process or a city should be considered as an emerging technology, particularly because a digital twin can change perceptions when it is used as an interpretation and presentation approach for heritage places, and is significant within the current dialogue about ethical and technological challenges such as real-time updates and the privacy of citizens.

The OurWorldHeritage 2021 debates, specifically the theme of Transformational Impacts of Information Technology, have offered excellent opportunities to network and prepare new policies for interpretation and presentation by cataloguing existing approaches, apps, open data and training material. The tools documented in the report provide a baseline from which digital technologies can be improved, allowing purpose-built technologies for presentation and interpretation to emerge.

Considerations in adopting digital technologies for World Heritage and the future

A core consideration about digital representations of World Heritage is that they do not replace the need to conserve and care for sites, nor do they replace the experience of visiting a place. For example, a virtual visit to the former concentration camp Auschwitz-Birkenau would never replace the impact of physically visiting the place with a local tour guide and witnessing first-hand the effects of the Holocaust on humanity.

Adopting digital technologies can also have ethical implications. For example, experts from Carleton Immersive Media Studio who have developed virtually assisted storytelling projects argue that a digital story should be crafted to help guide the viewer through the material. It is the storyteller's responsibility to ensure that the narrative has a clear focus and is accessible to a broad audience (Fai and Graham, 2020). The purpose of digital technology is, therefore, to augment the art of storytelling. It should tell a history rather than become a form of entertainment or detract from the main message conveyed by the OUV of the World Heritage Site in question.

Based on the findings and recommendations of the OurWorldHeritage Transformational Impacts of Information Technology debate (OurWorldHeritage, 2021), the following considerations should contribute to the design and implementation of any digital interpretation and presentation project:

- Presentation should not undermine the OUV of properties.
- Curation in digital storytelling requires that the presentation approach consider different ways to engage visitors with the interpretation of the site.
- Digital tools should be accessible, affordable, easy to operate, available in local languages and adaptable to small or large cultural and natural sites.
- Technologies should also be affordable to the site custodians and communities of the historical place.
- Digital tools should follow the FAIR principles: findable, accessible, interoperative and reusable.
- The digital infrastructure should be based on accepted data standards, digital archiving, data-collection and management practices, regular updating and sound security.
- An ethical framework should be developed to assist any interpretation and presentation project – the use of open data sources and software should be considered.
- Information technologies should offer opportunities for communities to actively take part in stewardship of the historical place.
- Information technologies should transcend time; to that end, a data management plan should be developed.

The impact of COVID-19 and the adoption of digital methodologies offers an opportunity to develop principles, guidelines and protocols for documentation, monitoring, interpretation and dissemination that could assist site managers in adopting these approaches, hiring appropriate services and improving their overall application to enhance the OUV of the site.

The development of digital technologies in this sector promises to amplify the capacity to promote the conservation of World Heritage. Soon, it will be possible to utilize machine-learning applications to remotely inspect and analyse sites in real time and obtain reliable information that will allow site managers to identify, prevent and mitigate risks from any threats.

Next steps

What do the next fifty years of the World Heritage Convention look like? How would the improvement of interpretation and presentation methodologies change the approaches to the protection, management, monitoring and conservation of World Heritage Sites? We must also ask, can an ethical framework be developed and the Ename Charter updated in a way that guides the adequate and respectful use of technology? And to those referring to the guidelines, how do we define the essential skills of multidisciplinary experts to ensure they will prepare inclusive presentations of World Heritage Sites that connect with local communities? Finally, can purpose-built technologies for the interpretation and presentation of World Heritage Sites be developed, and can organizations dealing with World Heritage contribute to this ambition?

ICOMOS Scientific Committees and working groups can be instrumental in continuing the dialogue for updating charters, guidelines and ethical frameworks. Furthermore, effective adoption of technologies that are changing the ways in which World Heritage Sites are interpreted and presented should be considered when updating these documents. Also, as a catalyst for change among the international community, the experience of the OurWorldHeritage debates on the topic of information technology can serve as a platform to 'establish a robust global network of organizations and professionals to discuss and formulate recommendations as to how information technologies can be used to support World Heritage sites' (OurWorldHeritage, 2021), which can then be easily implemented by UNESCO and World Heritage stakeholders at large.

References

Abedalhaleem, H., Cameron, C., Duong, M., Kallas, J., Napolitano, R., Quibell, T., Rigauts, T., Santana Quintero, M., Shim, H. and Smith, L. 2021. *Catalogue of Information Technology on Presentation and Monitoring: A Summary of the 2021 Global Competition*, compiled by OurWorldHeritage. Sejong, Republic of Korea, and Ottawa, Canada, International Centre for the Interpretation and Presentation of World Heritage Sites under the auspices of UNESCO (WHIPIC) and Carleton Immersive Media Studio, Carleton University.

Arches. 2022. Implementation considerations. Available at: https://www.archesproject.org/implementation-considerations/ (accessed 4 September 2022).

Besoain, F., Jego, L. and Gallardo, I.. 2021. Developing a virtual museum: experience from the design and creation process. *Information*, Vol. 12, No. 6, p. 244. https://doi.org/10.3390/info12060244.

CAHP (Canadian Association of Heritage Professionals). 2019. Code of professional conduct and ethics. Available at: https://cahp-acecp.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/2018-CAHP-ACECP-Code-of-Conduct-Ethics-Agreement.pdf (accessed 18 November 2021).

Court, S., Jo, E., Mackay, R., Murai, M. and Therivel, R. 2022. *Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context*. Paris, Rome, Charenton-le-Pont, France, and Gland, Switzerland, UNESCO, ICCROM, ICOMOS and IUCN. (World Heritage Resource Manual.)

Curtin University. 2022. From mission sites to healing centres. News stories, 30 June. Available at: https://news.curtin.edu.au/stories/from-mission-sites-to-healing-centres/ (accessed 18 September 2022).

Duong, M. 2020. *Low-Cost Digital Platforms for Historic Places*. Ottawa, National Trust for Canada. Available at: https://regenerationworks.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Low-Cost-Digital-Platforms-National-Trust-2021.pdf.

ENI CBC. 2021. iHERITAGE EU-funded project selected to represent the Sicilian Region at Expo Dubai 2020 (press release). Available at: https://www.enicbcmed.eu/sites/default/files/2022-01/iHERITAGE_PP1_Press%20release_EXPO%20DUBAI_EN_0.pdf (accessed 3 September 2022).

European Commission. 2022. The deployment of a common European data space for cultural heritage. News & Views, 19 October. Available at: https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/news/deployment-common-european-data-space-cultural-heritage (accessed 20 October 2022).

Fai, S. and Graham, K. 2020. Big stories, in CIPA EP | Webinar #1 | Accessing Heritage Places from Home (AHPH-Part 01) | 07.05.2020 [video]. YouTube, 27 May. Available at: https://youtu.be/Kki1Wp_LERo?t=1370 (accessed 2 October 2022).

Graham, B., Ashworth, G. J. and Tunbridge, J. E. 2000. *A Geography of Heritage: Power, Culture and Economy*. New York, Arnold.

ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites). 1978. *Advisory Body Evaluation (ICOMOS) Mesa Verde Nomination*. Paris, ICOMOS.

ICOMOS. 2014. *ICOMOS Ethical Principles*. Available at: https://www.icomos.org/images/DOCUMENTS/Secretariat/2015/GA_2014_results/20150114-ethics-asadopted-languagecheck-finalcirc.pdf (accessed 30 October 2021).

ICOMOS. 2021. *ICOMOS International Charter for Cultural Heritage Tourism*. Available at: https://www.icomos.org/media/com_acymailing/upload/ictc_draftcharter_culturalheritage_final_22072021_1.pdf.

ICOMOS-ICIP (ICOMOS Scientific Committee on Interpretation and Presentation). 2008. *The ICOMOS Charter for the Interpretation and Presentation of Cultural Heritage Sites*. Available at: http://icip.icomos.org/downloads/ICOMOS_Interpretation_Charter_ENG_04_10_08.pdf (accessed 9 April 2021).

iDiscover. 2021. About us. Available at: https://i-discoverasia.com/community/about/ (accessed 10 September 2022).

IFVA (International Forum of Virtual Archaeology). 2017. *The Seville Principles: International Principles of Virtual Archaeology*. Available at: https://www.vi-mm.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/The-Seville-Principles.pdf (accessed 31 October 2022).

IPHAN (National Institute of Historic and Artistic Heritage). 2021. *Nomination of Sítio Roberto Burle Marx for Inscription on the World Heritage List*. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, IHPAN. Available at: https://whc.unesco.org/document/172875 (accessed 9 September 2022).

Kono, T., Adetunji, O., Jurčys, P., Niar, S., Okahashi, J. and Rush, V. (2020). *The Impact of COVID-19 on Heritage: An Overview of Responses by ICOMOS National Committees* (2020) and Paths Forward. Charenton-le-Pont, France, ICOMOS. https://openarchive.icomos.org/id/eprint/2415.

Labadi, S. 2022. The World Heritage Convention at 50: management, credibility and sustainable development. *Journal of Cultural Heritage Management and Sustainable Development*, online first. https://doi.org/10.1108/JCHMSD-05-2022-0077.

Marshall, D. (coordinating author). 2011. *Preparing World Heritage Nominations*, 2nd edn. Paris, UNESCO. (World Heritage Resource Manuals.)

Matero, F. G. 2013. Editorial: interpretation, experience, and the past. *Change Over Time*, Vol. 3, No. 2, pp. 154–61. https://doi.org/10.1353/cot.2013.0013.

Missions Connect. 2022. Transforming mission sites into healing centres. Available at: http://missionsconnect.net/#.

MIT DUST (Massachusetts Institute of Technology Department of Urban Studies and Planning). 2020. Unmasking Tourism in Venice: how tourism dynamics unfold within the built environment. Available at: http://www.overtourismvenice.mit.edu (accessed 24 February 2022).

OurWorldHeritage. 2021. Report on the Our World Heritage #2021 debate on Transformational Impacts of Information Technology. Available at: https://static1.squarespace.com/static/6285301200e13121d0b62f93/t/62c6bed657ff901262af0ed4/1657192174732/2021debate-report-01-Information-Technology.pdf.

Parker, C. S., Parsons, S., Bandy, J., Chapman, C., Coppens, F. and Seales, W. B. 2019. From invisibility to readability: recovering the ink of Herculaneum. *PLoS ONE*, Vol. 14, No. 5, e0215775. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0215775.

Pierdicca, R., Paolanti, M., Matrone, F., Martini, M., Morbidoni, C., Savina Malinverni, E., Frontoni, E. and Lingua, A. M. 2020. Point cloud semantic segmentation using a deep learning framework for cultural heritage. *Remote Sensing*, Vol. 12, No. 6, p. 1005.

Platt, K. H. 2021. A futuristic simulation of Notre-Dame to power its real-world resurrection. *Domus*, 10 April. Available at: https://www.domusweb.it/en/architecture/2021/04/08/a-futuristic-simulation-of-notre-dame-to-power-its-real-world-resurrection.html (accessed 1 September 2022).

Stubbs, J. H. 2009. *Time Honored: A Global View of Architectural Conservation*. Hoboken, NJ, John Wiley & Sons.

Teppati Losè, L., Spreafico, A., Chiabrando, F. and Tonolo, F. G. 2022. Apple LiDAR sensor for 3D surveying: tests and results in the cultural heritage domain. *Remote Sensing*, Vol. 14, No. 17, p. 4157.

UNESCO. n.d. Mesa Verde National Park. Available at: https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/27/ (accessed 23 October 2022).

UNESCO. 2011. *Strategic Action Plan for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention 2012–2022*. Available at: https://whc.unesco.org/archive/2011/whc11-18ga-11-en.pdf (accessed 7 October 2022).

UNESCO. 2014. *Silk Roads: The Routes Network of Chang'an-Tianshan Corridor*. Available at: http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1442 (accessed 12 April 2021).

UNESCO. 2021. *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*. Available at: http://whc.unesco.org/en/guidelines/ (accessed 27 December 2021).

UNESCO. 2022a. *UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development – MONDIACULT 2022 Draft Final Declaration*. Available at: https://www.unesco.org/sites/default/files/medias/fichiers/2022/09/6.MONDIACULT_EN_DRAFT%20FINAL%20DECLARATION_FINAL_1.pdf (accessed 5 October 2022).

UNESCO. 2022b. Dialogue between Kat Borlongan and Chance Coughenour: 50 Minds for the Next 50. Imagining Heritage in the Digital Dimension session. Available at: https://whc.unesco.org/en/50-minds/digital/dialogue-1/ (accessed 13 September 2022).

UNESCO WHC (World Heritage Committee). 2018. *Decision 43 COM 7B.45: Memphis and its Necropolis – the Pyramid Fields from Giza to Dahshur (Egypt) (C 86)*. Available at: https://whc.unesco.org/en/decisions/7583/.

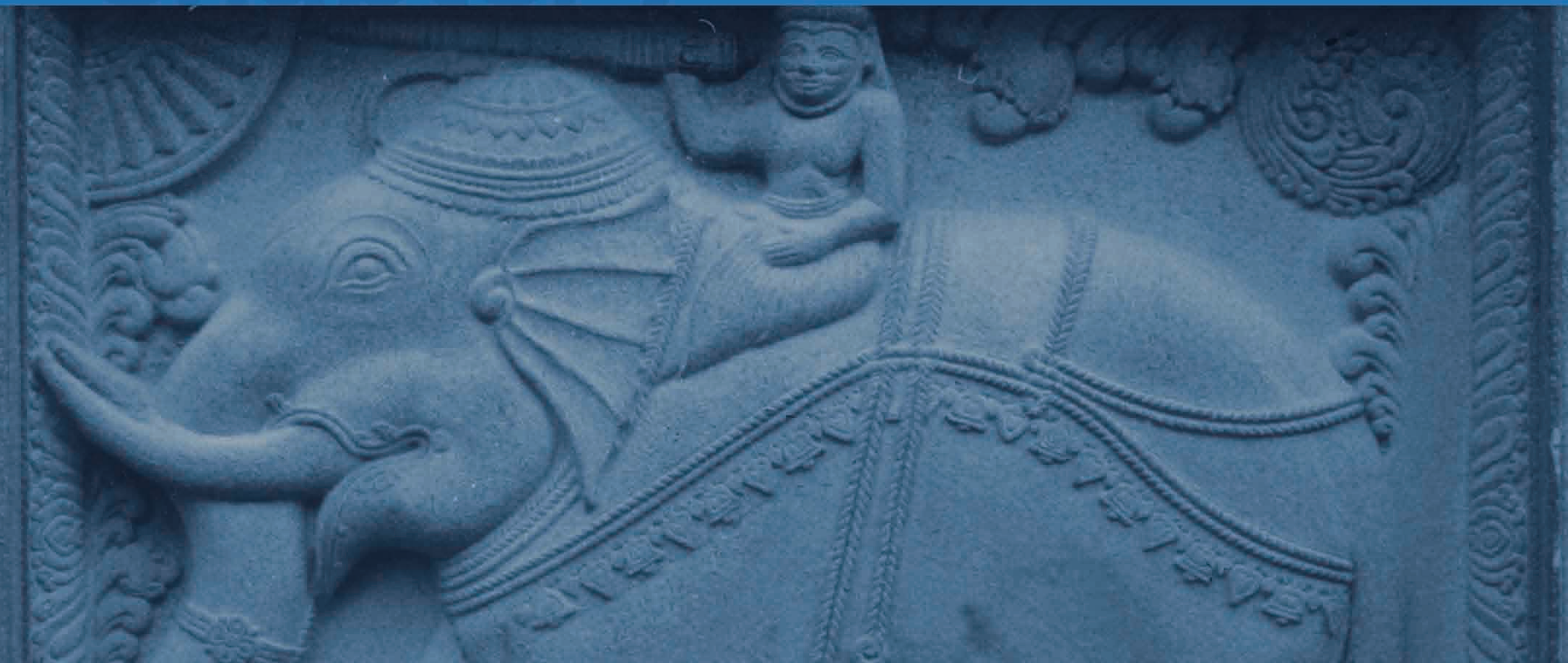
UNESCO WHC. 2021. Extended 44th Session of the World Heritage Committee. Available at: https://www.44whcfuzhou2021.cn/en.shtml (accessed 14 September 2022).

UNESCO-WHIPIC. 2020. Opening lecture of 2020 online lecture series: World Heritage interpretation and presentation [video]. YouTube, 10 September. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4QlOb9yesSM (accessed 31 October 2022).

Chapter 7

An Integrated Approach to Heritage Interpretation

Gamini Wijesuriya



An Integrated Approach to Heritage Interpretation

Gamini Wijesuriya

Abstract

The practice of heritage interpretation and presentation is crucial to enabling an understanding of heritage places. For many years, however, although it is specifically referred to within the World Heritage Convention and forms part of the nomination process for inscription on the UNESCO World Heritage List, little practical support has been provided to those actually carrying out interpretation. As a result, interpretation fell outside of the framework of heritage management processes and became established in something of an independent silo. The 2008 ICOMOS Charter for the Interpretation and Presentation of Cultural Sites, however, raised the visibility of interpretation, which ICCROM recognized to be an integral part of heritage management. As a result, the flagship training course developed by ICCROM on the Conservation of Built Heritage (2006–2016) included a core module in interpretation, which identified three key principles framing how interpretation should be conducted and what it should deliver: 1) interpretation should be an integral part of overall heritage management; 2) interpretation is to be guided by a comprehensive understanding of heritage places and emerging issues; 3) interpretation should deliver comprehensive results. These principles reject the notion that interpretation can be carried out independently of other World Heritage processes and the work of the official advisory bodies to the Convention. They promote active engagement with such concepts as cultural landscapes, sustainable development, nature–culture linkages and people-centred approaches to the management of heritage. The principles also reflect a broader paradigm shift from the conventional approach of safeguarding heritage towards an approach that seeks to deliver benefits to society too, which should be true of interpretation as well. This paper argues that instead of being a stand-alone strand of practice, interpretation should be an integral part of heritage management. By embracing some of the key concepts that have recently developed within World Heritage discourse, interpretation can play a critical role in achieving World Heritage objectives over the coming decades.

Introduction

Heritage discourse evolves when new ideas are introduced or existing ideas are strengthened and given broader scope (Thompson and Wijesuriya, 2018). In the process of development, however, the new direction taken can create an offshoot strand, or silo, and this is exactly what has occurred to some extent in the practice of heritage interpretation (the ways in which the values of the heritage are articulated and communicated). There can be valid reasons for considering the interpretation of heritage as a discrete activity, particularly in relation to World Heritage Sites, which, for example, have only been required to provide a Statement of Outstanding Universal Value (OUV), and been given guidance to that end, since 2005 and the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2005). Sites inscribed before 2005 did not benefit from this guidance, and the requirement for a retrospective Statement of OUV for each of these sites therefore prompted a swell of demand specifically for interpretation activities and plans that would inform the new statements. Another reason is the introduction of communities as a strategic directive for the World Heritage Committee as late as 2007. This acknowledged a historic lack of visibility of people-centric values – also described as a secularization of heritage (Wijesuriya, 2017b) – and a prevailing focus on materiality in the conventional approach to heritage conservation, both of which impacted on the interpretation solutions adopted. At site level, even within the same office, conservators might work completely independently of site interpretation activities, and therefore reinforce the silo effect. This chapter will argue that heritage interpretation should not be carried out as a separate, stand-alone practice, rather that it should be treated as an integral part of the entire heritage management process. Embedding interpretation within this broader context is the only way to achieve comprehensive interpretation of heritage, regardless of its level of international, national or local importance.

My thesis draws on the key people-centric themes that were discussed in 2021 at the inaugural lecture series presented by the International Centre for the Interpretation and Presentation of World Heritage Sites under the auspices of UNESCO (WHIPIC): complete histories; human rights; the political context of heritage; inclusivity; conflicts; contested sites; reconciliation; the rights of minorities; engaging (local) communities; empowerment; and sustainable development. The main basis of my argument, however, is founded on the contributions made by the Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) course on the Conservation of Built Heritage, which was developed within the ICCROM World Heritage Programme and partially funded by the World Heritage Committee. Six editions of this course were held between 2006 and 2016, engaging 122 heritage practitioners from over 100 countries. The course aimed to provide

a comprehensive understanding of the principles and processes of conservation and management of heritage, and was designed as a series of seven modules delivered over eight weeks, one of which focused on interpretation and presentation (a core lecture in this module was titled 'From Tilden to Ename'). From this basis I aim to describe what an integrated approach to interpretation can look like and how to achieve it.

The chapter is framed around the three principles on which the interpretation module for the course was based. Figure 1 sets out these principles, as well as providing the broader context of the whole course in which the module sat. The following sections will therefore follow the same model and assertions:

- **Principle one**: Interpretation should be an integral part of overall heritage management.
- **Principle two**: Interpretation is to be guided by a comprehensive understanding of heritage places and emerging issues.
- **Principle three**: Interpretation should deliver comprehensive results.

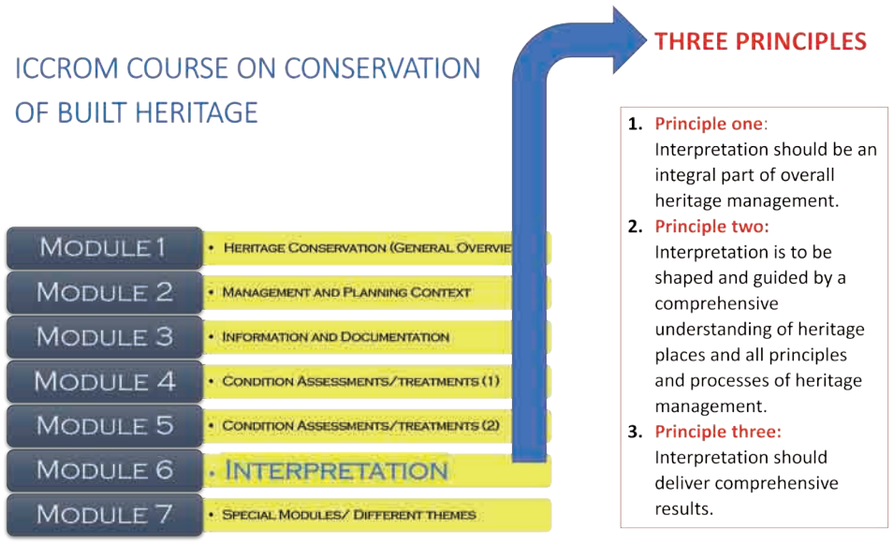


Figure 1. Course contents of the ICCROM course on Conservation of Built Heritage (2006–2016).

The experience of designing and delivering the module is used below to explain why heritage interpretation should be an integral part of heritage management, why it must be shaped by shared principles and processes, and why it must aim to serve the widest array of audiences through diverse means.

Principle 1: Interpretation should be an integral part of overall heritage management

The heritage interpretation module was delivered as the sixth of a total of seven modules and ran over a number of days. A significant proportion of the time allocated for the module aimed to demonstrate that interpretation has an important role to play in heritage management. The purpose of placing the module towards the end of the course schedule served to indicate that successful interpretation requires prior understanding of a range of different themes and practices, namely those covered in the first five modules: a general overview of heritage, including history and emerging concepts; management and planning context, which covers participatory approaches, values-led management and understanding the context; and condition assessment and treatments for the benefit of heritage as well as people. Participants were required to have a thorough understanding of these topics before embarking on the interpretation module. The aim of this was to reflect the view that interpretation sits within and is an integral part of overall heritage management, not a discrete, stand-alone project. Such a view was not new, but it felt necessary to reinforce it in the structure of the course and the way in which participants engaged with the theme.

The heritage sector has evolved (Wijesuriya, 2017a), and it continues to evolve (ICOMOS Japan, 2014). For this reason it is essential to acknowledge changes in concepts and approaches to be able to manage heritage most effectively. Figures 2 and 3 illustrate the course that the heritage sector has taken towards developing a focus on people. This has been happening since the 1990s, drawing also on discussions around values and the World Heritage Convention that had been taking place over the previous two decades. Such key people-focused ideas include cultural landscapes, people-centred approaches to conservation and management of heritage, the linking of nature and culture, and the integration of sustainable development concerns into World Heritage processes. All of these ideas were discussed by course participants before starting the interpretation module, to raise awareness of how conservation theory and practice has moved away from Eurocentric, expert-led, material-focused, one-size-fits-all approaches (Ndoro and Wijesuriya, 2015), and towards values-led and people-centric concepts that respect and recognize diversity and context, and seek to deliver benefits to both heritage and society. It was an objective of the course design that, once equipped with an insight into such themes (discussed below), participants would have greater understanding of how to shape and guide heritage interpretation.

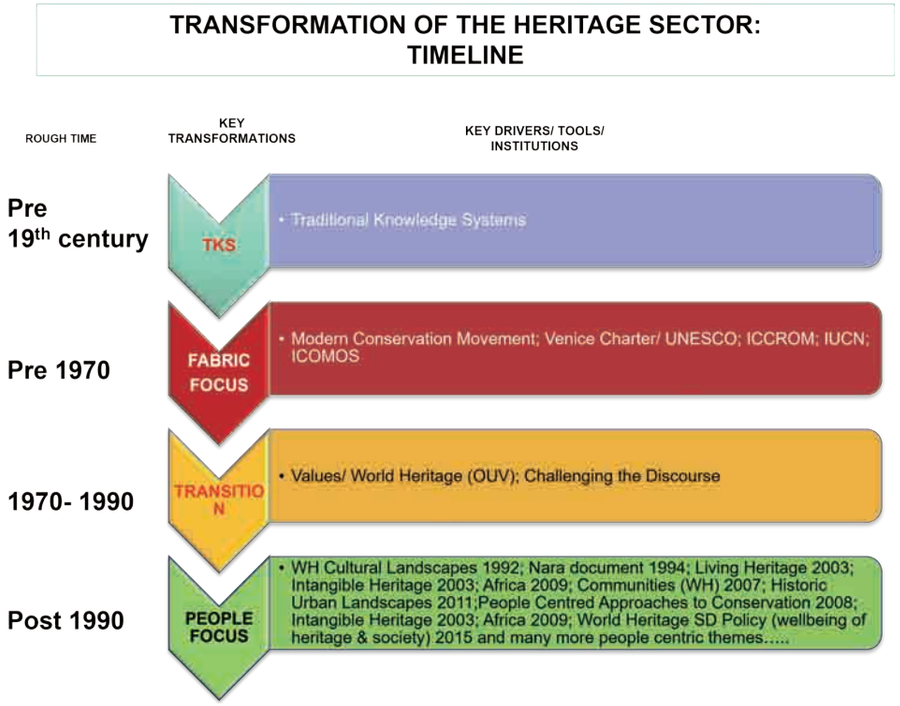


Figure 2. Timeline of the transformation of the heritage sector.

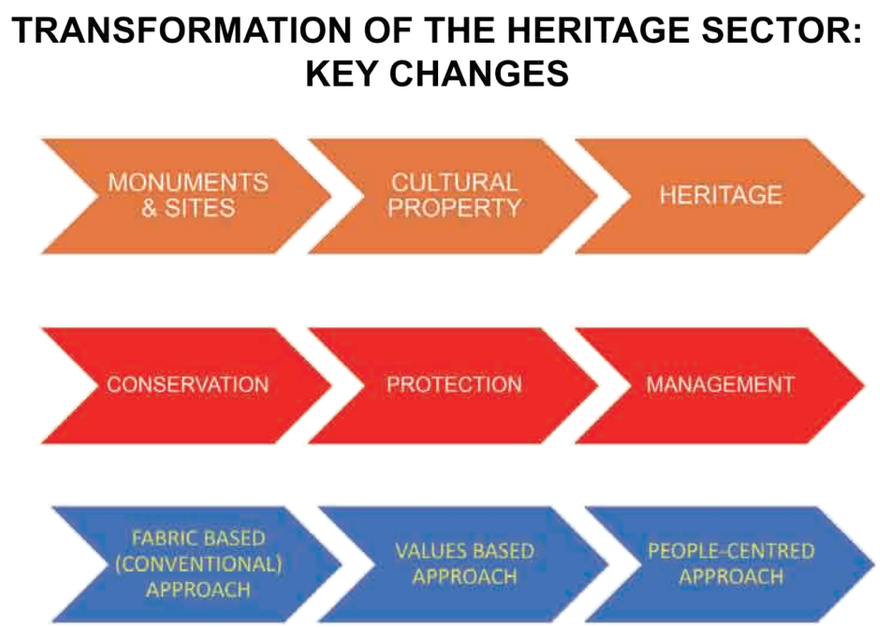


Figure 3. Key changes in the transformation of the heritage sector.

• *World Heritage cultural landscapes*

The concept of cultural landscapes uniquely demonstrates the evolving nature of heritage discourse. It has contributed to a long-awaited expanded definition of heritage, by focusing on people, the environment and the interaction between them. As a result, the traditional concept of 'people' as being simply visitors to heritage places has been considerably expanded to include users of these places and the populations living and working in and around them. The concept also relates to the livelihoods of communities and acknowledges such important related issues as people's rights and the practising of traditional knowledge systems. Consequently, the scope for interpretation has expanded exponentially.

• *People-centred approaches to conservation*

A people-centred approach to the conservation and management of heritage was initially developed by ICCROM as an extension to the values-led approach and with the aim of addressing a number of identified gaps. It came out of the ICCROM Living Heritage Sites programme (Wijesuriya, 2018; Wijesuriya et al., 2017) launched in 2003, which recognized continuity and change as fundamental considerations in conservation, and the central role played by people and communities in these processes.

People-centred approaches place people at the heart of heritage discourse (ICCROM, 2015). They acknowledge that a focus simply on the protection of heritage fabric is inadequate: it must be expanded to aim to ensure the well-being of society as well. When people are placed at the heart of considerations, the heritage community is, inevitably, confronted with a new set of issues that are quite different from the more familiar conservation challenges of decay, authenticity, integrity and so on. Indeed, these new issues include such topics as: the evolving nature of discourse and practice; participatory approaches; the political context and social role of heritage, including livelihoods and sustainable development; constructing inclusive and widely consulted heritage narratives; addressing rights and traditional knowledge systems; building community resilience through heritage and its role in recovery from conflict situations; and many others. And discourse in this area continues to develop. Indeed, many of the sessions in the WHIPIC online lecture series, as mentioned in the introduction, focused on people-centred topics that should integrated into interpretation. Effective heritage management should seek to address such matters through its strategies, but interpretation is the means for communicating and demonstrating that this has been or can be achieved.

• *Linking nature and culture*

In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, efforts to protect nature and culture were, despite the good intentions of the World Heritage Convention to bring them under

one umbrella, conducted independently, creating a silo effect between the sectors that endured for nearly forty years. Since 2014, however, thanks to many initiatives, these two sectors have begun to recognize each other's values (Larssen and Wijesuriya, 2015), and this has led to an awareness not only of the interdependency of nature and culture and the implications for their management, but also the ecosystem services that bring benefits to both. This approach helps us to understand a heritage place in its entirety. Nature and culture are inseparable realities, and this acknowledgement of their values and the interdependency that exists between them presents new challenges when interpreting and presenting environmental and heritage settings for the benefit of all audiences.

• *Sustainable development concerns*

The perspective of sustainable development is a relatively new addition to World Heritage discourse, but it was built into the ICCROM course right from the start, in 2007, on the premise that heritage conservation should contribute to both heritage and society. Indeed, the discussion on the theme of sustainable development was introduced to ICCROM courses through the programme on Integrated Territorial and Urban Conservation in 1997 and its offshoot Living Heritage Sites programme in 2003. However, its entry into the World Heritage domain marks a milestone that is going to have a lasting impact. The *Policy for the Integration of a Sustainable Development Perspective into the Processes of the World Heritage Convention* (UNESCO, 2015) was adopted by the General Assembly of the States Parties to the Convention at its twentieth session, in 2015. This event coincided with two other key moments: one occurring within the heritage sector and the other at the broader global level. Within heritage, we have seen a paradigm shift 'from the care of heritage to that of pursuing the well-being of both heritage and society as a whole', and thus the placing of people at the heart of heritage discourse (Thompson and Wijesuriya, 2018). Across the world, the adoption of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with clear Sustainable Development Goals, raises important questions for the heritage sector.

Sustainable development concerns are now fully integrated into the Operational Guidelines. Working towards aligning conservation goals with the four pillars or dimensions of sustainable development – namely environmental, social, economic, and peace and security – provides opportunities to address issues people-centric issues such as human rights and reconciliation, among others mentioned above. For instance, the fourth pillar/dimension, introduced in 2012, specifically addresses: fostering peace and security, meaning conflict prevention; protecting heritage during conflict; promoting conflict resolution; contributing to post-conflict recovery (UNESCO, 2015). The World Heritage Policy requires States Parties to develop strategies based on three fundamental principles: 1) human rights; 2) equality; and 3) ensuring sustainability through a long-term perspective. These principles should be interpreted in the light of the Charter of the United Nations and the 2030 Agenda (UNESCO, 2015, para. 7):

1) Environmental sustainability: protecting biological and cultural diversity and ecosystem services and benefits; strengthening resilience to natural hazards and climate change
2) Inclusive social development: contributing to inclusion and equity; enhancing quality of life and well-being; respecting, protecting and promoting human rights; respecting, consulting and involving Indigenous peoples and local communities; achieving gender equality
3) Inclusive economic development: ensuring growth, employment, income and livelihoods; promoting economic investment and quality tourism; strengthening capacity-building, innovation and local entrepreneurship
4) Peace and security: ensuring conflict prevention; protecting heritage during conflict; promoting conflict resolution; contributing to post-conflict recovery

Due recognition of this sustainable development policy, specifically in the context of heritage interpretation, was highlighted throughout the lectures presented by WHIPIC in 2020/21. Certainly, the sustainable development policy is now fully integrated into the World Heritage Operational Guidelines (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2021) and heritage can and should contribute to achieving these goals. Work is needed, however, to demonstrate how this is possible through heritage interpretation. It is only through interpretation that we can understand heritage places and their surroundings fully, and for a comprehensive and holistic understanding it is essential that we consider and address all relevant audiences – not forgetting key groups who may engage with the territory in quite different ways, such as farmers.

Principle 2: Interpretation is to be guided by a comprehensive understanding of heritage places and emerging issues

The second principle requires systematic planning to ensure that all audiences, including local communities and minorities, are engaged right from the outset to ensure a collective mapping of values and enable full participation in management decision-making. Values are as central to the management of all heritage places as OUV is central to the management of World Heritage: we must, therefore, place greater emphasis on assessing all values. The process of doing this can provide ample opportunity to consider who should be involved and what issues should be discussed; it creates a platform on which to address

the sort of people-centric themes mentioned above (including conflict sites).

The knowledge, understanding and relationships established on this platform can make a crucial contribution to shaping and informing interpretation decisions. All the themes highlighted in the previous section are relevant and appropriate here, and guidance can already be found within much of the official documentation that is produced by World Heritage advisory bodies and, indeed, within the Operational Guidelines themselves (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2021; Wijesuriya et al., 2013).

In the ICCROM course, we emphasize the importance of undertaking the assessment of values with all relevant audiences (stakeholders, rights-holders) at an early stage of the heritage management process. There has traditionally been a tendency to attach interpretation to attributes of the OUV of the site. For the site's local- and national-level communities, however, the OUV is only one among multiple values. Other values, such as religious significance or utility, which are not listed as contributing to OUV, may be more significant and relevant to these groups.

We suggest that the values assessment is the appropriate stage in the process to discuss issues such as conflicts and compromise on acceptable solutions, which have been highlighted by the previous speakers. We place people at the heart of the discourse to ensure that all these matters are people-centric, thereby making them more relevant and better discussed. In future, such issues should be dealt with at the time of the values assessment rather than trying to find answers later on in discussions of interpretation, when they may not be given due or appropriate consideration.

In the case of World Heritage, discussion of these issues at the early stages of nomination or placement on the Tentative List can significantly increase opportunities to find successful solutions, and interpretation can, in turn, help greatly in presenting and communicating them to the world. The sites impacted by conflicts after inscription can be exceptions.

In the guidelines for planning, which are discussed at an early stage of the ICCROM course, we place emphasis on values-led approaches since World Heritage management is driven by the concept of OUV (Wijesuriya et al., 2013). To give an example, let us consider the site of Bamiyan in Afghanistan, where the two colossal Buddha statues stood before their destruction in 2001. How do we interpret a site like this? The local Muslim community had considered these two familiar sculptures as lovers belonging to the narrative of a local story. For Buddhists elsewhere they were examples of some of the finest sculptures representing the Buddha and had deep spiritual significance. Where do interpreters stand when faced with such diverse cultural perspectives? There has been discussion about extending interpretation issues beyond nation states, but what about the national sovereignty guaranteed by the Convention in cases like this?

Such examples point to the importance of the second principle being followed as the first step in any interpretation exercise. A comprehensive view and understanding of heritage places and emerging issues is essential. Any effort made to understand heritage through a singular interpretive lens alone will not be successful.

Principle 3: Interpretation to deliver comprehensive results

Interpretation to deliver comprehensive results means representing all values, catering to all audiences (not just tourists or visitors) and exploring diverse themes. This principle is directly relevant to the course module and the interpretation results that we should expect. I do not intend to discuss this at length, but I will highlight one or two current gaps in approach, where certain values and audiences may be overlooked and where potential new ways of thinking may exist. This may also add additional people-centric themes to our list, such as spirituality and pilgrimages, and culture-specific solutions.

Whether we like it or not, there is a strong tendency to shape interpretation specifically for tourists or visitors to a site. But what, or who, do we actually mean by visitors to a site? Although we might automatically think of holidaymakers, some 90 per cent of visitors to the World Heritage Site of Anuradhapura in Sri Lanka are pilgrims, and the numbers are staggering, sometimes exceeding 2 million on certain festival days alone. There are many such sacred places around the world that attract similarly high numbers of pilgrims, as opposed to tourists. In stark contrast, the practice of pilgrimage and its relationship to many heritage sites has historically been overlooked in tourism theory, which I consider to be a significant gap in the relevant literature. For this reason, I have argued that the practice of pilgrimage has become a victim of modern tourism. Furthermore, so as to ensure the subject receives due attention within the framework of the Conservation of Built Heritage course, I insisted that pilgrims and pilgrimage be discussed in the interpretation module of ICCROM mentioned earlier.

There is an anecdote that I often narrate to illustrate this issue. Once I was invited to a meeting to discuss the interpretation of an extensive so-called archaeological site that is included in the World Heritage List. For myself, however, this was not simply an 'archaeological site'; it was a site of significant spiritual importance. My first question to the interpretation planner was, therefore, to ask the annual number of foreign and local visitors to the site. What I meant by local visitors were those who attended the site as pilgrims, who undertook the visit as adherents of a particular belief system. The interpretation planner knew exactly the number of foreign visitors, which was close to 1 million, but did not know the number of local visitors. Local site staff, however, were able

to confirm that over 100,000 pilgrims visited the site – a substantial number, and yet one that the interpretation planner had barely considered.

One clear indication from this particular example is that pilgrimage sites are 'different' and so their interpretation requirements are different. For example, the needs of pilgrims to understand a religious place and engage with its spirituality will be quite distinct from those of visitors who expect an intellectual interpretation. But what have we done within the heritage sector to address these differences? Although religious and sacred sites are far more likely to represent notions of peace – and thus can actively promote peace, which supports the UNESCO mandate – they may also represent contested/conflict sites in the World Heritage List. Unless we fully recognize and acknowledge the unique spiritual characteristics and significance of such sites at an early stage of values assessment, we will continue to overlook them and focus on delivering a level of interpretation that can only satisfy scholars and tourists.

• *Conservation as interpretation*

Conservation interventions on heritage can be a powerful tool in enabling and facilitating site interpretation. In contrast to the archaeological interpretations of material remains of the past that most usually appear in books and visual material, conservators can, in the process of preserving these remains *in situ*, make them readable and understandable for visitors and users. An example I can use to illustrate this is the site of the Temple of the Tooth Relic in Sri Lanka (Figure 4), which required emergency reconstruction in the aftermath of a terrorist attack in the late 1990s.

Not long after the Old City of Dubrovnik became the first World Heritage Site to suffer damage as a direct consequence of military conflict in 1991, the Temple of the Tooth Relic in Kandy became, in 1998, the first World Heritage Site to be deliberately destroyed by terrorists (Wijesuriya, 2007). The temple is the primary sacred site for Sri Lankan Buddhists and for many Buddhists in the wider region. Its importance to the majority of Sri Lankans made it a target for a militant separatist group – fighting for independence for the Tamils, a minority Hindu group in Sri Lanka – who detonated a bomb at the site. Although the intention of the terrorists was to escalate tensions between the Tamil and Sinhala ethnic communities, it did not, fortunately, incite any revenge attacks on Hindu temples in Kandy or anywhere else in response.

Nevertheless, the Temple of the Tooth Relic was severely damaged. Figure 5 illustrates the extent of the destruction caused to the front of the temple, where stone sculptures stood. Attention turned swiftly to how to address it, with one school of thought proposing that the remains of the damaged temple be left as ruins, as a reminder of the atrocities caused by the terrorists. As the conservator in charge, I felt that such an

Figure 4. Sculpture at the entrance to the Temple of the Tooth Relic before the 1998 bombing. (Photo: author's own.)

Figure 5. Sculpture at the entrance to the Temple of the Tooth Relic after the 1998 bombing. (Photo: author's own.)

approach would risk fuelling animosity towards the ethnic group the terrorists represented. So instead, I proposed a culturally sensitive restoration solution that was fitting for such a sacred site and would not impact the spiritual experience of the thousands of pilgrims who entered the temple. The conservation response was led by the Buddhist philosophy of letting go, which in the Pali language is expressed as *Nahi verena verani*, meaning 'In this world, hatred never ceases by hatred; it ceases by love alone. This is an eternal law.' Discussions around the entire recovery process for the temple and its communities demonstrated how the site and the practices related to it were active, lived elements, and from this the notion of living heritage (which would later inform the development of a people-centred approach) took shape. On this basis, the parts of the temple that had been damaged were completely reconstructed (Figure 6) as a measure of building peace.

Figure 6. Sculpture at the entrance to the Temple of the Tooth Relic after restoration. (Photo: author's own.)

Taking into account the particular lived aspects of heritage is essential to both interpretation and conservation practices, and in understanding how it can function more broadly in society and for purposes of reconciliation and recovery. This is illustrated not only in the case of the Temple of the Tooth Relic, but also in 2019 following the suicide bomb attacks in a number of Christian churches in Sri Lanka during Easter celebrations. I was approached for advice regarding the conservation of a sculpture that had become stained with blood as a result of the attacks. I was informed by colleagues in Italy that it is in fact not unusual to see representations of blood or even blood itself within churches. In this case, a different culturally sensitive, culture-specific approach to conservation and, consequently, interpretation was therefore needed to support efforts by the churches' communities to reconcile themselves with the terrible events that had taken place.

• *Conventional approaches*

Heritage places have been created with meanings and their own interpretations. Figure 7 shows the ruins of a Buddhist stupa built in the second century BC that had fallen into ruin at the time of its rediscovery in the nineteenth century. It had been used as a place of pilgrimage, but no traditional conservation had been carried out during colonial period. Its true interpretation is given in the Buddhist texts – that is, a Buddhist stupa has to be treated 'as a living Buddha. All the respect and honour that one pays to the Buddha should be paid to the stupa as well' (Rahula, 1956; Stovel et al., 2005). Based on this interpretation, such ruins have been restored by people over the last 2,500 years using traditional knowledge systems. The ruin of this particular stupa was restored completely by the people (see figures 8 and 9). Western scholars who came to Sri Lanka during its restoration saw this activity in a negative light and the restorers were labelled as 'pious vandals' (Wijesuriya, 2001). Nevertheless, millions of people gather in this place on full moon days, carrying the interpretation of the stupa in their mind.

Figure 7. The ruined Ruwanweli Stupa in Anuradhapura, built in the second century BC, as it looked in the 1860s. (Photo: Department of Archaeology, Sri Lanka.)

Figure 8. The ruined Ruwanweli Stupa in Anuradhapura being restored in the 1940s. (Photo: public domain.)

Traditional knowledge systems were well documented and widely used (Wijesuriya and Court, 2020). We should have a thorough understanding of traditional conservation methods when interpreting those places restored using this knowledge.

Figure 9. Ruwanweli Stupa in Anuradhapura after restoration. (Photo: author's own.)

• *No-interpretation approach*

There are heritage sites that have intrinsic values that need hardly any formal interpretation. If we consider the many pilgrims who visit Anuradhapura, we can understand that the interpretation and understanding of the site takes place for individuals through personal actions that are guided by accepted customs, traditions and practices. Indeed, in Anuradhapura, the idea of trying to provide interpretation for so many people gathering there presents considerable challenges and raises the question of whether official interpretation is really needed in such circumstances.

Conclusions

My aim in this chapter has been to highlight the importance of creating a comprehensive understanding of heritage places and of using principles and processes of heritage management to guide interpretation. I suggest specifically that the tools and approaches developed for defining World Heritage cultural landscapes, people-centred approaches and nature–culture linkages can facilitate this. Programmes on these themes have successfully expanded the scope of values and recognition of societal need, in keeping with the objectives of the World Heritage Convention. For example, people-centred approaches to conservation and management of heritage can bridge all types of heritage (natural, cultural; tangible, intangible; movable, immovable) by placing people at the heart of the discourse and embracing a model of sustainable development. Such an approach is gaining popularity worldwide and has become one of the key drivers for the activities developed under the World Heritage Leadership programme; in particular, the training programmes launched since 2015. As a result, the management of heritage is increasingly shaped around delivering benefits to people as well as heritage, and so the understanding of heritage deepens. Interpretation should draw on and build on this knowledge.

Similarly, the concept of cultural landscapes, which considers how nature and culture interact, offers much to the practice of interpretation. Since 2014, efforts to identify links between nature and culture have become much more dynamic. A key outcome of this is the World Heritage Leadership programme, which aims to boost effective management of World Heritage Sites through recognizing the relationships between nature, culture and people, combining knowledge and experience across these domains to create a shared and comprehensive set of management tools. Interpretation has a key role to play here as well.

As we can see, the approach that has traditionally been taken to interpretation practice, namely as a stand-alone activity that is situated outside of most heritage management processes, is no longer suitable or relevant. The important shifts in World Heritage discourse outlined above demonstrate the importance of considering not only the preservation and enjoyment of heritage, but also related environmental and societal challenges, and why cross-discipline collaboration and understanding is necessary in the face of these over the coming decades. By ensuring that interpretation considers the wider context in which heritage is experienced, we can not only enhance public understanding and appreciation of heritage but also contribute to promoting peace where there is conflict and seek to ensure the well-being of people and our planet.

Note

The thoughts expressed in this chapter are based on a webinar titled 'Comprehensive World Heritage Interpretation', delivered on 26 November 2020. This was organized during the preparatory period as part of the 2020 WHIPIC online lecture series: World Heritage Interpretation and Presentation.

References

ICCROM (Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property). 2015. *Promoting People-Centred Approaches to Conservation: Living Heritage—Guidance Note*. Rome, ICCROM. Available at: https://www.iccrom.org/sites/default/files/PCA_Annexe-2.pdf.

ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites) Japan. 2014. Nara+20: on heritage practices, cultural values, and the concept of authenticity. *Heritage and Society*, Vol. 8, No. 2, pp. 144–47. https://doi.org/10.1080/2159032X.2015.1126115.

Larsen, P. and Wijesuriya, G. 2015. Nature–culture interlinkages in World Heritage: bridging the gap. *World Heritage Review*, No. 75, pp. 4–15. Available at: http://whc.unesco.org/en/review/75/.

Ndoro, W. and Wijesuriya, G. 2015. Heritage management and conservation: from colonization to globalization. In L. Meskell (ed.), *Global Heritage: A Reader*. Chichester, UK, Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 131–49.

Rahula, W. 1956. *History of Buddhism in Ceylon; the Anuradhapura Period, 3rd century BC-10th century AD*. Colombo, M. D. Gunasena.

Stovel, H., Stanley-Price, N. and Killick, R. (eds). 2005. *Conservation of Living Religious Heritage*. Papers from the ICCROM 2003 Forum on Living Religious Heritage: Conserving the Sacred. Rome, ICCROM. Available at: https://www.iccrom.org/publication/conservation-living-religious-heritage. (ICCROM Conservation Studies, 3.)

Thompson, J. and Wijesuriya, G. 2018. From 'sustaining heritage' to 'heritage sustaining broader societal wellbeing and benefits': An ICCROM perspective. In P. B. Larsen and W. Logan (eds), *World Heritage and Sustainable Development: New Directions in World Heritage Management*. London, Routledge, pp. 180–95.

UNESCO. 2015. *Policy for the Integration of a Sustainable Development Perspective into the Processes of the World Heritage Convention*, WHC-15/20.GA/INF.13. Paris, UNESCO. Available at: http://whc.unesco.org/document/139146.

UNESCO World Heritage Centre. 2021. *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*. Paris, UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Available at: http://whc.unesco.org/en/guidelines/.

Wijesuriya, G. 2001. Pious vandals – restoration vs. destruction. In R. Layton, P. G. Stone and J. Thomas (eds), *Destruction and Conservation of Cultural Property*. London, Routledge, pp. 256–63.

Wijesuriya, G. 2007. The restoration of the Temple of the Tooth Relic in Sri Lanka: a post-conflict cultural response to loss of identity. In N. Stanley-Price (ed.), *Cultural Heritage in Postwar Recovery*. Rome, ICCROM, pp. 87–97. (ICCROM Conservation Studies, 6.)

Wijesuriya, G., Thompson, J. and Young, C. 2013. *Managing Cultural World Heritage*. Paris, UNESCO. (World Heritage Resource Manual.)

Wijesuriya, G. 2017a. Global Trends in Human Resources Development in Protection of Cultural Heritage. Paper presented at the International Conference on the Present Situation and Challenges Regarding Human Resource Development for Cultural Heritage Protection in the Asia-Pacific Region, 13–15 December 2016, Nara, Japan. Nara, Japan, Cultural Heritage Protection Cooperation Office, Asia-Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO. Available at: http://www.nara.accu.or.jp/img/report/Internationalconference/2016.pdf.

Wijesuriya, G. 2017b. Towards the de-secularisation of heritage. *Built Heritage*, Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 1–15.

Wijesuriya, G., Thompson, J. and Court, S. 2017. People-centred approaches: engaging communities and developing capacities for heritage. In G. Chitty (ed.), *Heritage, Conservation and Communities: Engagement, Participation and Capacity Building*, London, Routledge, pp. 34–50.

Wijesuriya, G. 2018. Living heritage. In A. Heritage and J. Copithorne (eds), *Sharing Conservation Decisions: Current Issues and Future Strategies*, Rome, ICCROM, pp. 43–56. Available at: https://www.iccrom.org/sites/default/files/2018-05/sharing_conservation_decisions_2018_web.pdf.

Wijesuriya, G. and Court, S. 2020. *Traditional Knowledge Systems for Conservation and Management of Asia's Heritage*. Rome, ICCROM. (ICCROM-Cultural Heritage Association Conservation Forum Series, 3.)

Chapter 8

Exploring the Benefits of Community Participation in Heritage Interpretation

Sarah Court

Exploring the Benefits of Community Participation in Heritage Interpretation

Sarah Court

Abstract

This chapter explores local community participation in interpretation, how it might support the World Heritage objective of giving communities a greater role and how, in turn, this might help fulfil responsibilities under the World Heritage Convention. Academic and professional literature often discusses the need to open up heritage management systems to the contribution of a broader range of stakeholders but there are not many examples of how that contribution might be harnessed and channelled. In addition, there have been few attempts to measure what impact such participation might have on the interpretation and management of a heritage place and what benefits might be gained.

For this reason, a research project was carried out to explore these issues by comparing practitioner-led and participatory approaches to interpretation planning and delivery at two World Heritage properties on the Bay of Naples in southern Italy: the archaeological site of Herculaneum in Ercolano and the neighbourhood of Rione Sanità in Naples. Practitioner-led and participatory interpretation were analysed to understand the heritage values that were conveyed, with participatory approaches found to include a greater range of heritage values. In addition, interviews with those involved in the interpretation allowed insights to be gained into their practice, its consequences and challenges, as well as the benefits they perceived. A significant number of benefits were identified – for visitors, for the local community, for those involved in interpretation and for the heritage itself – suggesting that participatory interpretation not only improves the visitor experience but can potentially also contribute to sustainable development and improved heritage management.

Introduction

In the World Heritage Convention, States Parties recognize their core duties as the 'identification, protection, conservation, presentation and transmission to future generations of the cultural and natural heritage' (UNESCO, 1972, Article 4). One of the Convention's strategic objectives is to 'increase public awareness, involvement and support for World Heritage through communication' (UNESCO, 2022). Evolving approaches to heritage mean that today the presentation and communication of information about heritage is often integrated within more ambitious approaches known as heritage interpretation. At its best, heritage interpretation provides experiences for people where they can better understand the heritage and its multiple heritage values, and make their own meanings, thereby potentially changing their attitudes towards the heritage and so influencing their behaviour (Ham, 2013). Good interpretation planning places a focus on the importance of interpretation that supports management objectives, including protection and conservation (Merriman and Brochu, 2005), so as a practice, it can provide an important contribution to the core World Heritage duties.

In addition, the Convention mentions other State Party commitments that could be usefully addressed by interpretation: 'to give the cultural and natural heritage a function in the life of the community' (UNESCO, 1972, Article 5), and 'by educational and information programmes, to strengthen appreciation and respect by their peoples of the cultural and natural heritage' (UNESCO, 1972, Article 27). These articles also illustrate that communities have been a concern of World Heritage since its inception, although greater emphasis has been placed on them since the adoption of a fifth strategic objective, to 'enhance the role of communities in the implementation of the World Heritage Convention' (UNESCO, 2022). Approaches to communities and their relationship to World Heritage have evolved over the Convention's fifty years, as more people-centred approaches to heritage are being encouraged (ICOMOS, 2021; Wijesuriya and Court, 2015). However, even while greater recognition is being given to the knowledge, skills and capacities of communities, all too often it remains a challenge to provide genuinely meaningful ways for communities to participate in World Heritage processes.[1]

This chapter brings these two themes together by summarizing the results of a research project that explored whether greater participation in interpretation by communities could be beneficial, both to the communities themselves and to the heritage. In order to ensure that the research was grounded in the reality of management practices at heritage places, two World Heritage properties were analysed where local communities had contributed in different ways to heritage interpretation. Through these examples, the chapter attempts to understand better the potential contribution of communities, not just as audiences receiving interpretation but as knowledge-holders contributing to interpretation planning and delivery.

Participatory approaches in heritage management and interpretation

There is ongoing discussion in the heritage sector on increasing the meaningful participation of a broader range of stakeholders in heritage management – in particular, local and associated communities. It has been recognized that natural and cultural heritage in many (often Western) countries has been managed by specialists, within relatively rigid management systems, who have not had a mandate to work with other stakeholders and have often excluded their perspectives (Araoz, 2013; Byrne, 1991; Wijesuriya, 2017). This has led to many harmful situations, including the separation of communities from their heritage, the abandonment of heritage or its destruction, and conflictual relationships with heritage authorities (Chirikurea et al., 2010; Gao and Woudstra, 2011; Ndoro and Tauvinga, 2003).

A call to reverse this trend has led to renewed efforts to provide ways for people to engage with their heritage, including: community displays within museums and galleries (Christophilopoulou, 2020); community members becoming involved in archaeological projects (Westmont, 2022); volunteers providing visits and live interpretation at heritage places (Tsenova et al., 2020); and community members working with archives (Stevens et al., 2011). In terms of promoting physical and intellectual access and democratizing society, this increase in participation in heritage has given positive results with more people gaining benefits from, as well as more people providing support to, heritage (Galla, 2012).

However, while the literature shows that communities can be – and increasingly are – involved in a range of heritage activities through research projects and cultural events, heritage practitioners still face the challenge of sharing decision-making and allowing meaningful participation in the actual management of heritage, not just inclusion in short-term activity programmes (Chirikurea, 2010). One particular aspect of this challenge is how to include community-held heritage values in values-based heritage management systems, which includes World Heritage with its concept of Outstanding Universal Value. One difficulty has been that heritage practitioners continue to play the central role of identifying (and potentially filtering) those values within heritage management systems that do not necessarily have the flexibility to incorporate diverse and non-academic values.

Recognition of these issues has led to a call for more people-centred approaches: a shift from heritage practitioners perhaps consulting communities but ultimately holding decision-making power, to practitioners working together with communities (Poulios, 2010). In such cases, heritage practitioners are encouraged to engage with multiple stakeholders – in particular, rights-holders and local community members – in identifying and working with heritage values. These people-centred approaches have been the subject of discussion, under various names, in recent years within the field of heritage management and can be seen as part of a wider discourse on making heritage more participatory (Wijesuriya et al., 2017). Specifically, within the World Heritage system, the role of local communities has increasingly been included in discussions since 2007 when 'communities' became a strategic objective. Of particular note were the 2012 celebrations of the fortieth anniversary of the World Heritage Convention, when the theme of sustainable development and local communities was highlighted throughout the year (Galla, 2012).

Interpreters are holding their own similar and parallel discussions about participation and who should contribute, and in what ways, to the interpretation of heritage. It should be recognized that the very discipline of interpretation itself is part of a move away from specialists presenting heritage to a relatively passive public, towards the use of interpretive techniques that are more inclusive in terms of audiences and their role in meaning-making (Silberman, 2013). Nevertheless, current interpretation practice can often be compared to those values-based heritage approaches mentioned above, where the interpreter frequently takes a central role in the identification and interpretation of heritage values. Indeed, many manuals for interpretation planning specifically promote the interpretation planner as the holder of decision-making power who selects which of many values are included as themes in interpretation (see, e.g., Brochu, 2014, pp. 41–49; Veverka, 2015, pp. 53–54). Even in more-inclusive approaches to interpretation planning, specialists do not seem to recognize the limits they are putting on participation: for example, in one project, described as an experiment to see if 'community archaeology projects like this transform the meaning and significance of a place', practitioners had already stated the heritage values associated with the site and defined the participatory activities permitted within the management system in advance (Reynolds, 2014, pp. 174–75). Chirikurea (2010) illustrates other examples of participatory management that have been compromised when the interests of practitioners and local communities did not coincide. All too often practitioners retain most, if not all, decision-making power related to the identification, management and interpretation of heritage while community members are only provided with short-term opportunities to be involved (Klamer et al., 2013). Here, too, more people-centred approaches are needed.

While recognizing existing limits, it should be noted that there is huge potential for interpretation to become a key entry route for community members to engage more with their heritage. Heritage management systems seem better able to engage with stakeholders in the context of interpretation than in other areas of management and so interpretation can prove a starting point for partnering with communities. As a result, interpretation can be used to encourage participation in the process of identifying heritage values and sharing them with others, and it is noticeable that interpretation practitioners are now discussing how community members might be more significantly involved in defining which heritage values should be highlighted (interpretation planning) and then communicating them to others (interpretation delivery) (see, e.g., AHI, 2014; Bevan, 2014; Curthoys et al., 2007). Brochu and Merriman (2011) go so far as to suggest that interpretation of a town could be taken over by local residents and used as the basis of strategic interpretation planning for

exploring a sense of place and potentially encouraging sustainable tourism; others would highlight the importance of other positive results that can be gained by communities and individuals from greater understanding of and connection to their heritage through interpretation (see, e.g., many of the cases in Jameson and Musteaţă, 2019).

There are many indications that using interpretation in this way could contribute to many heritage and social issues, such as: raising awareness of broader definitions of heritage for its protection (Munjeri, 2004); urban regeneration and sustainable development (Nowacki, 2021); increasing social inclusion (Gard'ner 2004); safeguarding traditional crafts and skills (Cominelli and Greffe, 2012; Mananghaya, 2012); and promoting sustainable tourism and tourism-related economic benefits (Tam, 2017). Interpretation is based on the understanding that increasing awareness of heritage and its values can potentially gain support for its conservation, so the delivery of interpretive messages that reflect the wide range of community-identified values should be of great importance to those managing heritage places.

Comparing practitioner-led and participatory interpretation

In order to explore these broad themes, the author carried out a research project to examine how participatory approaches to the interpretation of heritage places might differ from conventional, practitioner-led approaches. This was considered in terms of the range of heritage values shared through interpretation. An attempt was also made to clarify how participation by communities might affect interpretation and, in so doing, contribute to broader management aims. In addition, the research attempted to test the hypothesis that such participatory interpretation can bring benefits to the management of heritage.[2]

The methodology adopted for this research project was divided into two main phases: a) an analysis of both practitioner-led and participatory interpretation at two heritage places; followed by b) interviews with practitioners working there to establish how participatory approaches to interpretation impacted on the management of the heritage place. In particular, there seemed to be two areas to explore where communities could play a more proactive role in interpretation:

- interpretation planning: by including community members in the identification of heritage and its values, as well as in decision-making about which will be shared with wider audiences through interpretation
- delivery of interpretation: by participating in interpretative experiences that connect audiences to a range of heritage values, so as to raise awareness and thereby gain support for the protection and conservation of the heritage.

The author carried out the research at two World Heritage properties on the Bay of Naples in southern Italy: Herculaneum (a component of the 'Archaeological Areas of Pompei, Herculaneum and Torre Annunziata') and Rione Sanità (a neighbourhood of the 'Historic Centre of Naples') (Figure 1). The two heritage places have conventional management systems in place, where responsibility for heritage has long been held by institutions. Both places are in similar urban environments, with high population density and difficult socio-economic contexts, including poverty, unemployment, social exclusion, organized crime and high school drop-out rates (Loffredo, 2013; Mollo et al., 2012). In response to these conditions, both places have begun using heritage in support of sustainable development (Court et al., 2019) and, for that reason, have experimented with new participatory approaches, including interpretation (Court, 2013). Neither place has a formal interpretation framework or plan, although this is not unexpected given that interpretation is a relatively new discipline in Italy and not widespread.

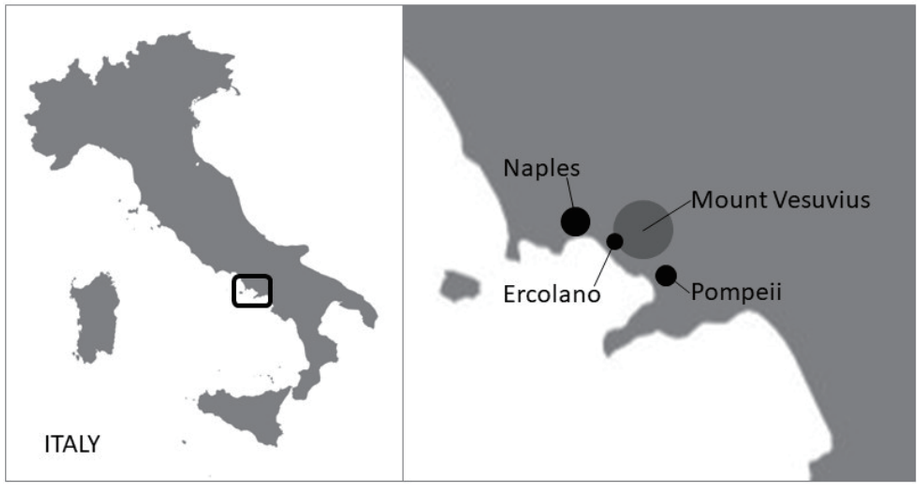


Figure 1. Research was carried out around the archaeological site of Herculaneum and the surrounding town of Ercolano, and in the Rione Sanità neighbourhood of Naples, Italy, 2022. (Photo: author's own.)

- *Herculaneum (Ercolano)*

The archaeological site of Herculaneum lies within the modern town of Ercolano, at the foot of Mount Vesuvius (Figure 2). This Roman town was buried, along with Pompeii, when the volcano erupted in AD 79. Ercolano includes a range of other natural and cultural heritage – the volcano with its national park, the so-called Golden Mile with twenty-two eighteenth-century villas, the historic urban centre of Resina, Pugliano historic market and the Virtual Archaeology Museum – all of which are interconnected and part of the long history of people living with the natural abundance and risks generated by the volcano.

The site of Herculaneum is also known for its early twentieth-century experiment in presenting original artefacts within the Roman houses, creating an open-air museum within the ancient town (Camardo and Notomista, 2017). In more recent times, the management authority has provided visitors with various interpretation options (including guided tours, audio guides, site panels and on-site exhibits).

Figure 2. Today the ancient Roman town of Herculaneum is overlooked by the town of Ercolano, 2017. (Source: Ascanio D'Andrea/Herculaneum Conservation Project.)

In recent years a number of grass-roots initiatives have sprouted in Ercolano to address various social and cultural challenges, many of which have used heritage to support their efforts. Of particular interest at the time of the research project were the initiatives coordinated by the Herculaneum Centre, which used interpretation techniques to involve stakeholder groups (Biggi et al., 2018) with the wider aim of promoting participatory heritage management.[3] For example, one initiative involved local residents in an oral history project with specific themes related to their relationship to local heritage (Vignola and Matafora, 2009). Another project saw the creation of a multisensory trail through the archaeological site in partnership with the Unione Italiana dei Ciechi e degli Ipovedenti, an association for blind and visually impaired people (Figure 3). While the interpretation was planned in such a way as to provide a full visit to the archaeological site for those with visual impairments, there was an explicit acknowledgement that other visitors could enjoy the same multisensory experience and that it could potentially overcome intellectual access issues associated with the demanding text-based site presentation that had long been on offer (Vignola, 2010).

Figure 3. Interpretation at Herculaneum was enriched by the contributions of local community members: (*left*) an oral history project uncovered local knowledge about the archaeological site though the involvement of older people; (*right*) a collaboration with an association representing blind and visually impaired people led to the creation of a multi-sensory trail, 2009 and 2010. (Source: Ascanio D'Andrea and Sarah Court/Herculaneum Conservation Project.)

• *Rione Sanità (Naples)*

Rione Sanità is a densely populated neighbourhood that is currently considered to be in the heart of the city of Naples, but which in the Greco-Roman period was located just outside the city walls, lying above the ancient burial grounds (Figure 4). Urban expansion in subsequent periods created a neighbourhood full of impressive built heritage, most notably the seventeenth-century parish church of Santa Maria della Sanità and the eighteenth-century residential

Figure 4. The neighbourhood of Rione Sanità in the centre of Naples is characterized by dense residential streets (left) containing a wealth of built and archaeological heritage, such as the seventeenth-century church that is built over catacombs (right), 2014. (Photo: author's own.)

buildings designed by architect Ferdinando Sanfelice. The most famous local resident was Totò, the twentieth-century comic actor, who is one of the most recognizable film icons in Italy. Responsibility for the heritage is divided between state, municipal and church institutions.

While a variety of interpretive media are used to present the huge range of heritage resources in the city centre, the Rione Sanità area is of particular interest for the fact that the local community have been heavily involved in identifying heritage resources and interpreting them to others (Loffredo, 2013). Initially, an association was created by local young people to provide walking tours of their neighbourhood, where the personal interpretation by a local resident was an added feature to visits that otherwise focused on architectural, religious and associative values (Buono et al., 2002, pp. 146–76). Over time, the association took over day-to-day management of two catacomb complexes within the neighbourhood, providing site presentation and interpretation (Figure 5). As an indirect result of these community-led activities, the historic Fontanelle cemetery was reopened to the public (Wijesuriya et al., 2017). While the interpretation still focuses primarily on archaeological and historical values, connections are made between ancient and modern traditions of the people of Rione Sanità by sharing local customs and beliefs (Loffredo, 2013, pp. 76–93).

The community is explicit about the fact that they plan and run interpretation initiatives in order to improve the lives of local residents, in particular to provide opportunities for young people in this disadvantaged area by opening up to local and international tourism (Moretti and Massa, 2011).

Figure 5. Interpretation of Rione Sanità is delivered by an association, formed by local community members, who lead visits and ensure that visitors understand the heritage in its contemporary social context, 2014. (Photo: author's own.)

Analysis of practitioner-led and participatory interpretation

The first step of research sought to understand if – and to what extent – participatory approaches could affect the content of interpretation. If communities are involved in deciding what should be included in interpretation, does this mean that additional or different heritage values are conveyed? For this reason, the interpretation provided at the two heritage places was analysed in order to make a direct comparison between a) the interpretative content that had been created by heritage practitioners, and b) that created by/with the community.

It should be noted that the participatory interpretation analysed at both heritage places was based on live interpretation (i.e. guided visits and events), which had been intentionally adopted in order to increase visitors' connections to the heritage and its people. At the time of research, both heritage places mainly delivered interpretation via guided walking tours through a defined neighbourhood and visiting key heritage along the route. The content of these tours had been influenced by a participatory process involving local community members and other stakeholders.

In contrast, the practitioner-led interpretation in both cases relied heavily on written texts, which might be better described as the presentation of information (i.e. not meaningful interpretation experiences that encourage greater understanding of the heritage). At Rione Sanità the institutions responsible for the heritage did not provide live interpretation. At Herculaneum the options included visits with tour guides and audio guides, but preliminary research showed the content of these was almost entirely based on written base material that was presented orally. For this reason, analysis of practitioner-led interpretation was based on texts, while the participatory approaches were analysed through observation of guided visits.

- *Analysis of practitioner-led interpretation*

Interpretation at the two heritage places had traditionally been created by individual practitioners from within the management system, for example the site director at the Herculaneum archaeological site and the regional archaeological inspector for the Rione Sanità catacombs. The analysed content included:

- official material produced by the municipality and the heritage authorities about the heritage place
- key guide books and non-technical publications by practitioners intended for the general public
- more general guidebooks and tourist material.

The interpretive provision created by practitioners was analysed to allow the identification of heritage values, allowing understanding of a) the breadth of coverage of the interpretive texts, and b) what type of values were most emphasized. Summaries

were then produced to show the types of heritage values most likely to be included in the practitioner-led interpretation (figures 6 and 7).

Figure 6. A summary of the values included in the interpretation produced by practitioners for Herculaneum and Ercolano, 2022. (Photo: author's own.)

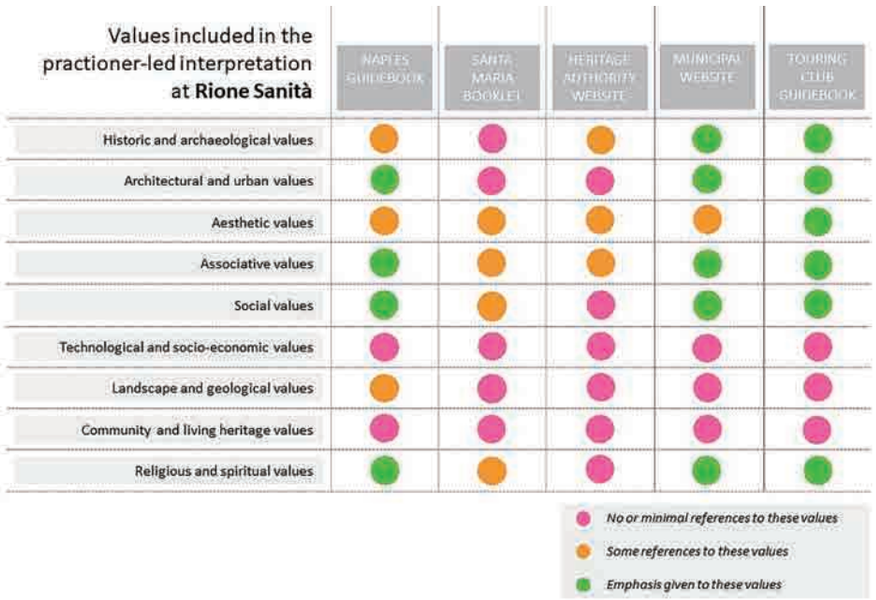


Figure 7. A summary of the values included in the interpretation produced by practitioners for Rione Sanità, 2022. (Photo: author's own.)

Overall, most practitioner-authors of Herculaneum/Ercolano's interpretation favoured a strong presentation of historic and archaeological values, as well as architectural and urban values (see Figure 6). At Rione Sanità there was greater emphasis on associative, architectural and urban, social, and religious and spiritual values (see Figure 7). Broadly speaking, the heritage values that were prioritized corresponded to the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage properties. However, there were significant differences in the breadth of coverage of heritage; for example, some interpretation focused only on the Herculaneum archaeological site while some covered the heritage of the entire modern town of Ercolano. The inclusion of other heritage values seemed to be also partly influenced by the amount of space available – longer guidebooks referred to a broader range of values, whereas a shorter booklet made only brief references to them.

All practitioner-led interpretation was weakest on making links between the heritage and its role for communities today, possibly influenced by the ideological orientation of the practitioners. For example, significantly less attention was paid to contemporary religious and spiritual values and social values at Ercolano, whereas interpretation at Rione Sanità did not seem to touch technological and socio-economic values at all. Links between cultural heritage and natural heritage were also weak, as shown in the limited reference to landscape and geological values.

• *Analysis of participatory interpretation*

Guided visits at the two heritage places were observed where participatory approaches had been used to influence live interpretation. A similar analysis of the content of the interpretation was undertaken to identify the types of heritage values that were shared with visitors (Figure 8).

Analysis of the participatory interpretation provided at the two heritage places revealed some very clear results. It emerged that in both cases the participatory interpretation referred to a wider range of heritage values, significantly more so than the practitioner-led interpretation. In

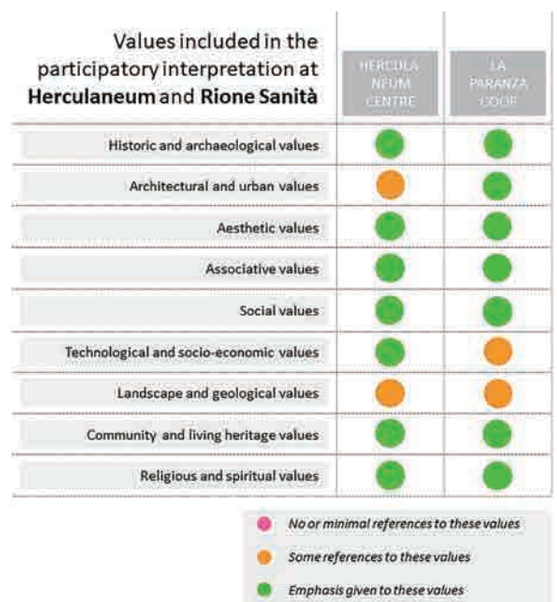


Figure 8. A summary of the values included in the participatory interpretation at Herculaneum/ Ercolano and Rione Sanità, 2022. (Photo: author's own.)

addition, those heritage values that were most rooted in the contemporary relationship between the community and their heritage – and that had been ignored to a large extent in the practitioner-led interpretation – were highlighted in both cases during interpretation.

Insights from those delivering interpretation

After understanding the extent to which the practitioner-led interpretation differed from more participatory approaches to defining heritage values and sharing them through interpretation, a second phase of research was undertaken in which a series of interviews aimed to look at the processes by which the participation of the local community potentially informed interpretation planning and the delivery of interpretation, and the benefits these approaches potentially offered.[4]

Interviewees at both heritage places pointed to weaknesses in the conventional management systems as the reason for their organizations having been created. In the case of Herculaneum, there had been dramatic conservation problems at the archaeological site combined with significant social problems in the surrounding modern town (Biggi et al., 2018). At Rione Sanità there had been a similar situation with partially closed and poorly conserved heritage being located in a context of urban decay and challenging social issues. In both cases, cultural projects were promoted within wider initiatives to tackle the two neighbourhoods holistically. This led to the launch of the Herculaneum Centre, where heritage practitioners partnered with local community groups in Ercolano (Biggi, 2011) and the creation of La Paranza Cooperative through which community members from Rione Sanità took the lead themselves (Loffredo, 2013, pp. 76–93). Both organizations were explicit that their social role was as important as their role in promoting and protecting heritage. This was the factor that led to them carrying out broad consultation and involving other stakeholder groups, including local community members: the process of working with others seemed to be as important as, if not more important than, the final result of providing interpretive experiences. The community's knowledge of their neighbourhood had been understood by the practitioners to be a source of richness. They had gained this appreciation as they lived and worked in the area, and they sought to provide space for this contribution by the local community and convey this richness to visitors.

Interviewees from both case studies expressed frustration with the limited content of the conventional presentation of heritage, which did not allow a broad range of heritage values to be expressed and focused largely on an academic understanding of heritage. Instead, they all reported that visitor feedback was particularly positive when more personal and community connections to the heritage were made, and when intangible heritage was included in the delivery of interpretation. While there was little measurable data to show that the visitor experience had improved, anecdotal evidence and the significantly increased visitor numbers at Rione Sanità suggest that the participatory approach can be very successful (Catacombe di Napoli, 2021).

When discussing the conventional provision of interpretation, it was noted that it focused almost entirely on those attributes of heritage that were individual isolated sites and monuments, for example the Herculaneum archaeological site and Vesuvius in Ercolano, and the San Gennaro catacombs and the parish church in Rione Sanità. These were not presented as part of a wider urban landscape or social context, meaning their connections with many other heritage attributes were ignored and the past was essentially segregated from the present.

It was explained that official tour guides in Italy gain their licence through an exam system based on an academic approach to heritage, with no reference to other heritage values, sustainable tourism or interpretation techniques. Personal interpretation by guides, therefore, is usually based on the repetition of knowledge from academic publications. Should these general academic sources fail to provide information on a particular attribute, elements of intangible heritage or community history, the guide will generally not include details about those other heritage values when delivering a tour. Moreover, it was noted in both examples that licensed guides felt uncomfortable taking groups around the Ercolano and Rione Sanità neighbourhoods due to the negative reputation they had gained for safety and urban decay.

Participation in interpretation at the two heritage places took slightly different forms. For interpretation planning at Herculaneum/Ercolano, the Herculaneum Centre drew on local contacts that had first been encountered in the context of other non-tourism-related initiatives. The early visits they organized had been based at the archaeological site alone. Many informal discussions had been held with local groups, small businesses and individual community members before beginning to provide visits to the modern town of Ercolano and actively attempting to promote tourism that could contribute to the sustainable development of the area. Many of their partners participated directly during a tour, talking to visitors, thereby increasing contact between visitors and local residents during interpretive delivery.

Instead, at Rione Sanità, the La Paranza Cooperative had been formed by local residents themselves, so from its inception interpretation planning had included the participation of non-practitioners. They chose to reinforce their knowledge of their own neighbourhood by organizing training for themselves with specialists from different disciplines. Initially, their delivery of interpretation was based on the material inherited from the former management system, but as they grew in confidence they evolved their delivery to include a more community-based understanding of the area. They continue to extend their interpretation to include more heritage in their tours, as well as seeking to increase the range of heritage values that are shared with visitors.

Both organizations used events, concerts, contemporary art and other forms of interpretation, above and beyond walking tours, to explore diverse themes and encourage the engagement of both new and repeat visitors, including local community members. This was considered to be another difference to conventional approaches, even if the constraints of this particular research project did not allow these additional events to be evaluated.

The four interviewees perceived different benefits to have been gained through their participatory approaches, primarily an improved visitor experience, by which they meant a more complete visit to the heritage of the whole neighbourhood. All interviewees easily listed the advantages that their approaches had brought to the local area and the heritage. Indeed, these benefits were seen as part of the reason for providing interpretation to visitors, with the two organizations seeking to ensure that there were reciprocal benefits for both society and heritage within a sustainable framework.

Benefits of participatory interpretation

Analysis of the interviews at the two heritage places revealed a considerable number of benefits that emerged from their experiences of participatory interpretation. The benefits they identified coincide in many ways with those suggested in heritage-sector literature as the objective of participatory heritage management at large (see, e.g., Galla, 2012). It is interesting to note that interpretation was seen to contribute so strongly to the participatory heritage agenda.

These benefits were analysed and grouped in terms of the advantages brought by participatory interpretation in four areas – namely, the benefits for: 1) visitors, 2) local community members, 3) those involved in heritage interpretation, and 4) the heritage itself.

• *Benefits for visitors*

The long list of benefits for visitors (Box 1) suggests that the visitor experience improves dramatically when interpretation shifts from practitioner-led to participatory in approach, not only because the delivery of such interpretation is more multifaceted and can reveal more about heritage to visitors but also because the benefits for the community (Box 2) and the heritage (Box 4) also impact positively on the visitor experience. Although some of the improvements to interpretation may be due to the use of live (as opposed to text-based) interpretation, it should be noted that this choice in itself differentiates practitioner-led and participatory approaches. Certified guides working within the formal guiding system, which is largely based on delivering academic knowledge, chose not to provide visits to the modern town of Ercolano or Rione Sanità, meaning that visitors only had static media to rely on; in contrast, participatory approaches favoured live interpretation.

This broader adoption of heritage values – beyond the Outstanding Universal Value and those values recognized by academics – can potentially bring more satisfying interpretation for visitors, as there is less risk of simply communicating 'expert' information and a greater chance of sharing personal experiences and meanings. This was not the only benefit for visitors that emerged from the research, indeed an extensive list suggested that the visitor experience improves dramatically at all stages of the visit when participatory interpretation is adopted. In particular, interpretation brings on board values that are rooted in the wider context of the heritage place and its people, becoming more multifaceted and richer.

BOX 1: Benefits gained by visitors from the participatory interpretation.

- Visits communicated a broader range of values, potentially catering to the interests of diverse visitors.
- A greater variety of visits to different heritage attributes was possible.
- Visits included places that were lesser known and not included in standard tour packages.
- Visitors had contact with local residents, experiencing hospitality and a warm welcome to the neighbourhood.
- Visits included heritage places that were not always accessible under other conditions or that had reopened thanks to participatory efforts.
- Opening hours were more reliable and/or visits could be arranged at more flexible times to suit visitors.
- Visits could be tailored to individual/group requirements.
- Reliable recommendations were available for visitors who wanted to visit the area further, to eat and shop locally or to stay overnight.
- Local service providers were improving standards to offer better quality accommodation/meals/products to visitors.
- Interpreters were part of a wider local network, meaning that they had up-to-date insights on a range of initiatives related to the heritage.
- Heritage places had improved conservation conditions and infrastructure.
- Explanations were given of local efforts towards sustainable development and the role of heritage and tourism in that context, allowing visitors to feel that their presence was making a positive contribution.

• *Benefits for the local community*

It is not just visitors who gain from participatory approaches: local community members can also benefit. The list of benefits gained by the local community presented in Box 2 shows that local residents can benefit from direct involvement in identifying values for interpretation and even suggesting additional heritage to be shared with the public. They also benefit directly through different forms of involvement in interpretation initiatives, as well as indirectly obtaining advantages from the increased visitor numbers that upgraded interpretation can bring.

BOX 2: Benefits gained by the local community from the participatory interpretation.

- A redefinition of local heritage that went beyond the isolated 'monuments' of expert-led interpretation and included intangible heritage and places associated with the daily life of residents, increasing a sense of connection by community members with their heritage.
- The identification of 'local heritage' and its being of interest to visitors gave a sense of dignity to the neighbourhood and became a source of pride.
- Where local residents were unfamiliar with a heritage attribute, visitors sparked their curiosity to understand more, thereby reconnecting community members with disconnected heritage.
- Some inaccessible heritage was reopened to the public, which gave local residents the opportunity to visit.
- Residents had increased opportunities to gain financially from visitors, for example through direct job opportunities related to interpretation and heritage management; more clients for existing local businesses; opportunities to open new services/businesses due to increased visitor numbers.
- Guidebooks and word-of-mouth recommendations increased for local businesses and improved local reputation.
- Visitors were encouraged to stay overnight in the local area because of the increasing amount of heritage on offer to visitors, thereby significantly increasing their contribution to the local economy.
- Local schools were able to provide more experiences for their pupils, even with budget constraints.
- Local heritage became a mechanism for debating contemporary issues and contributed to broader social issues such as education, social inclusion, legality and immigration.
- Increased heritage activity became part of a wider framework for social and urban regeneration.
- Results of heritage projects and increased visitor interest acted as leverage for gaining funding for other cultural and social projects and for attracting other organizations to contribute to improving the local area.

• *Benefits for heritage interpreters*

It is interesting to note that those interviewed, who can be considered to be heritage interpreters, perceived benefits for their own work from adopting a more participatory approach (Box 3). This is a key message for interpretation and heritage practitioners given that the shift in the heritage sector from conventional to people-centred approaches is sometimes perceived as threatening the role of practitioners. However, there can be clear advantages for sharing decision-making with communities.

BOX 3: Benefits gained by those involved in interpretation from participatory interpretation.

- Other stakeholders provided interpreters with new knowledge (insights, memories and information) on heritage to include in their interpretation.
- Participants and partners brought new perspectives and inspired new forms of interpretation.
- Increased income was gained from ticket sales for visits and other programmes.
- Increased visitor numbers and increased repeat visiting contributed to an improved sustainable tourism model.
- Interpretation potential was leveraged for gaining and then providing access to closed heritage.
- Impetus for training heritage practitioners and other related service providers with practical skills.
- Successful interpretation projects acted as leverage for accessing official funding sources for additional initiatives.
- Increased interest led to increased numbers of supporters for the heritage, with consequent additional financial support, such as donations and crowd-funding for conservation and other projects.

• *Benefits for the heritage*

There were also a number of advantages identified that can be gained from participatory interpretation for the heritage itself – and for those working in the related heritage management systems (Box 4). However, it should be noted that these benefits could only be obtained in Herculaneum and Rione Sanità due to the fact that the management system was able to accept the new contributions provided by the interpretation initiatives, which may not be the case in all systems. However, when a management system is able to take on board the contribution of wider stakeholders, there are potential benefits to be harnessed in terms of improved management, conservation and access, among other issues.

BOX 4: Benefits gained by heritage from participatory interpretation.

- Creation of an (informal) interpretation audit meant that heritage values/attributes were formally recognized, the first step towards safeguarding.
- More human and financial resources were obtained for tackling conservation issues.
- Investments were made in visitor infrastructure over time as improvements were made to interpretation programmes.
- Heritage authorities gained assistance in providing access and enhancement initiatives when they were short-staffed, underfunded and without a clear mandate on these fronts.
- Increased public awareness on the importance of protecting sites and moral support for ensuring political and institutional commitment to heritage.
- Impetus for resolving issues related to access to heritage.
- Demonstrable interest in the heritage as leverage to request additional financial resources or apply for external funding.
- Broader range of practitioners from across the heritage sector – and beyond – contributing specialist input to the heritage.
- Additional initiatives provided by new teams of heritage practitioners, local organizations and groups, raising awareness of heritage.
- Heritage given an active role in contemporary society, contributing to sustainable development issues and in return gaining support for more sustainable management of the heritage.

It is clear that these benefits do not come automatically without a price: participation can be a threat to the practitioner and can challenge assumptions of authority that may not be welcomed by all those involved in existing management systems (Leighninger, 2006). There is also a price to be paid in human and financial resources when interpretation increases visitor numbers and so requires an investment in visitor management, conservation, maintenance, infrastructure, presentation and all the other issues related to running a successful visitor attraction. However, despite the costs that will inevitably be involved in making any changes to an existing management system, the long list of benefits that were identified at just two heritage places suggests that the advantages of a participatory interpretation process far outweigh the disadvantages.

Management implications of participatory interpretation

Despite the limits of the research project, clear evidence emerged that participatory interpretation included a broader range of heritage values. Indeed, it could be argued that this process of consulting a wider range of stakeholders in the interpretive planning process resulted in an informal heritage audit of both values and attributes – something that is the basis for good management practice and not just of use in interpretation. This is a reminder that different people hold different heritage values and their involvement with interpretation can contribute to a greater richness in terms of understanding the full range of meanings the heritage conveys. However, once values and attributes are identified and then brought to the fore in the delivery of interpretation, management implications will necessarily arise, particularly if there is a consequent increase in visitor numbers.

Physical, social and intellectual access is a key issue, as not all attributes identified within a participatory process will be physically accessible to visitors (as was the case of the Fontanelle cemetery in Rione Sanità or the Roman theatre at that time in Ercolano) or socially accessible (e.g. some areas of both neighbourhoods were considered off-limits for social and safety reasons, while some residents felt that visiting heritage was not for them). Increasing access is a major management consideration and will require human and financial resources that may not always be readily available to the heritage authorities. In such cases, it is problematic to raise community expectations if the authorities cannot then deliver that access. However, it is here that participation in heritage can prove to be an advantage because, when conventional management systems do not have all the necessary resources to manage heritage, new solutions might be found in civil society (Aas et al., 2005). This was the case of the catacombs in Rione Sanità, where it was a group from the community who provided the human resources necessary to open the site to the public.

Conservation is another related issue, as any plans to extend interpretation will need to ensure that the heritage is in a suitable condition to be presented to the public and is robust enough to withstand increased visitor numbers. Again, this requires human and financial resources to tackle conservation and maintenance issues, and potentially new visitor infrastructure, something that is a major challenge around the world. However, one of the advantages of the participatory approaches identified in both case studies was that new sources of support could become available for this, including simple mechanisms such as fundraising among community members and visitors.

Intellectual access also needs to be guaranteed and the first step towards this involves making information about heritage available (Rayner, 1998, p. 18). There is, therefore, a challenge involved in making sure that any heritage attributes that had previously only been valued by community members are recognized by others. In the two heritage places examined, sharing of community knowledge was largely achieved through personal interpretation by local interpreters, but interviewees in both Ercolano and Rione Sanità mentioned that out-of-date and/or negative information provided by guide books and websites was discouraging visitors from coming to the area. Moreover, restricted knowledge of the heritage meant that not even tour guides were aware of what was potentially available for visits, again influencing choices made by visitors and therefore limiting the benefits of sustainable tourism (Hu and Wall, 2012). Investment in providing basic information is part of the knowledge infrastructure that brings visitors in the first place (Brochu, 2014, p. 110).

Another challenge related to visitor management is that many of the experiences promoted by participatory interpretation as part of wider sustainable development agendas for the local community are only suitable for independent visitors and small groups. For example, accommodation in family-run bed and breakfasts, food bought from small family-run businesses or restaurants, and individual contact with local residents cannot be easily scaled up to serve very large numbers of visitors. These are issues that have been discussed in relation to mass tourism and the impact that upscaling can have in terms of changing local culture and thereby losing what made the place attractive to visitors (Pleumarom, 2002). A balance needs to be found between increasing visitor numbers in order to gain benefits from their presence, while setting carrying capacities and mitigating negative impacts, and so on (Fletcher et al., 2020). However, the advantage that participatory approaches bring to this scenario is that the greater the number of community members involved with interpretive programmes, the greater the potential to increase the network of participants available to interact with visitors (Andereck and Vogt, 2000).

Above and beyond the specific benefits obtained and requirements for managing heritage assets, the participatory approach to interpretation should be seen as a step towards a more holistic approach to participation in heritage management. Despite being an issue that has been much debated in recent times, very few mechanisms have been proposed that allow stakeholders outside of the official management system to provide a meaningful contribution. This research suggests that participatory interpretation can be one of them. This is a finding that goes beyond the discipline of interpretation and should be brought to the attention of the wider group of practitioners involved in heritage management, particularly because being more inclusive not only brings advantages to interpreters but also produces significant results for the heritage management system in general and even for the heritage itself.

Conclusions

This chapter began by noting that it is a strategic objective of World Heritage to increase the involvement of communities in the implementation of the Convention. As its fiftieth anniversary prompts discussions about how best to move forward, heritage interpretation might be one way in which management systems can start to build relationships with communities. Many of the benefits gained by participatory interpretation are in line with the aspirations of the World Heritage policy on sustainable development (UNESCO, 2015) to ensure that World Heritage can play a positive role in contributing to community well-being and other Sustainable Development Goals. In addition, there are clear benefits for the heritage and its conservation and management, demonstrating that increased participation by communities can help support the State Party's duties under the World Heritage Convention. Further research would be needed to confirm that these benefits can be obtained at other heritage places, but the similar experiences found at both heritage places in this study suggests that it is likely.

However, in order to gain these benefits, some changes in approach will be needed. The central characteristic of participatory interpretation was the broader range of heritage values that were shared and which went beyond the Outstanding Universal Value. This was a feature that allowed the local community to take a meaningful role as knowledge-holders; it also enabled more visitors to make more connections to the heritage in diverse ways through the interpretation. It also connected the heritage place to its wider social and physical context. This is an interesting result because, even while communities are gaining greater recognition of their knowledge, skills and capacities, all too often it remains a challenge to provide them with genuinely meaningful ways of participating in World Heritage processes. Heritage interpretation could be a successful way of starting the process whereby heritage places can partner with their communities, but it will require heritage practitioners to facilitate, rather than lead, interpretation.

Notes

1. The concept of 'community' differs from country to country and who belongs to a particular community is best defined by community members themselves (and who may feel a sense of belonging to multiple communities). However, in the context of this discussion, the term 'community' will be used for groups of people who have a connection to a heritage place. This does not necessarily imply legal ownership; in some cases, communities may be rights-holders and have customary ownership. It is noted that in the World Heritage context, the 'local community' is most frequently discussed (e.g. in the Operational Guidelines; UNESCO, 2021), meaning the group of people who live in or near to a World Heritage property. However, there can be communities who are not physically located near to the heritage place but who have historic, cultural, spiritual or other connections.
2. The research summarized here was carried out by the author for a 2014 MSt dissertation project looking at 'Participatory interpretation as a tool in support of cultural heritage management' for the University of the Highlands and Islands.
3. For this reason, many of these interpretation initiatives were supported by the heritage authority, now known as the Parco Archeologico di Ercolano, and the Herculaneum Conservation Project (Biggi et al., 2014). The Herculaneum Centre is no longer operative but many of its experiences have influenced the work of the heritage authority.
4. I would like to thank Christian Biggi and Francesca Del Duca of the Herculaneum Centre, and Susy Galleone and Antonio Della Corte of La Paranza Cooperative for taking part in these interviews, for their time and insights.

References

Aas, C., Ladkin, A. and Fletcher, J. 2005. Stakeholder collaboration and heritage management. *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 32, No. 1, pp. 28–48.

AHI (Association for Heritage Interpretation). 2014. Special edition: working with communities. *Interpretation*, Vol. 19, No. 1.

Andereck, K. L. and Vogt, C. A. 2000. The relationship between residents' attitudes toward tourism and tourism development options. *Journal of Travel Research*, Vol. 39, No. 1, pp. 27–36.

Araoz, G. 2013. Conservation philosophy and its development: changing understandings of authenticity and significance. *Heritage and Society*, Vol. 6, pp. 144–54.

Bevan, B. 2014. The community, the interpreter and the co-produced project. *Interpretation*, Vol. 19, No. 1, pp. 19–21.

Biggi, C. 2011. Il ruolo delle comunità locale e internazionale nella salvaguardia del ricco e complesso patrimonio culturale di Ercolano. In E. Buondonno, C. Biggi and E. Battisti (eds), *Progetti di architettura. Concorsi, realizzazioni e sperimentazioni. Atti*. Naples, Doppiavoce, pp. 15–25.

Biggi, C., Capasso, B. and Del Duca, F. 2018. The Herculaneum Centre: the reciprocal benefits gained from building capacities for cultural heritage among institutions and communities. In V. Apaydin (ed.), *Shared Knowledge, Shared Power: Engaging Local and Indigenous Heritage*. Cham, Springer, pp. 87–105.

Biggi, C., D'Andrea, A. and Pesaresi, P. 2014. Herculaneum: joining forces to secure heritage benefits for the ancient and the modern towns. In M. Bachmann, C. Maner, S. Tezer and D. Göçmen (eds), *Heritage in Context: Conservation and Site Management within Natural, Urban and Social Frameworks*. Istanbul, Ege Yayınları.

Buono, F., Campanelli, D. and Cassani, S. 2002. *Napoli*. Naples, Electa.

Brochu, L. 2014. *Interpretive Planning: The 5-M model for successful planning projects*. Fort Collins, CO, InterpPress.

Brochu, L. and Merriman, T. 2011. *Put the HEART Back in Your Community: Community Experience Planning*. Fort Collins, CO, Heartfelt Publications.

Byrne, D. 1991. Western Hegemony in archaeological heritage management. *History and Anthropology*, Vol. 5, pp. 269–76.

Camardo, D. and Notomista, M. (eds). 2017. *Ercolano 1927–1961. L'impresa archeologica di Amedeo Maiuri e l'esperimento della città museo*. Rome, L'Erma di Bretschneider.

Catacombe di Napoli. 2021. About us. Available at: https://catacombedinapoli.it/en/about/.

Chirikurea, S. 2010. Unfulfilled promises? Heritage management and community participation at some of Africa's cultural heritage sites. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 1, pp. 30–44.

Chirikurea, S., Manyanga, M., Ndoro, W. and Pwiti, G. 2010. Heritage and community engagement: collaboration or contestation. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 1–2, pp. 30–44.

Christophilopoulou, A. (ed.). 2020. *Material Cultures in Public Engagement: Re-inventing Public Archaeology with Museum Collections*. Oxford, Oxbow Books.

Cominelli, F. and Greffe, X. 2012. Intangible cultural heritage: safeguarding for creativity. *City, Culture and Society*, Vol. 3, No. 4, pp. 245–50.

Court, S. 2013. *Heritage Interpretation at Herculaneum and Its Relationship to Visitor Management and Experience*. Ercolano, Herculaneum Conservation Project.

Court, S., D'Andrea, A., Del Duca, F., Pesaresi, P. and Thompson, J. 2019. Managing Herculaneum in context: measuring benefits for people and places. In D. Comer and A. Willems (eds), *Feasible Management of Archaeological Heritage Sites Open*

to Tourism. London, Springer, pp. 21–34.

Curthoys, L. P., Cuthbertson, B. and Clark, J. 2007. Connecting to home-place through community-focused heritage interpretive planning. *Journal of Interpretation Research*, Vol. 12, No. 2, pp. 63–66.

Fletcher, R., Murray Mas, I., Blanco-Romero, A. and Blàsquez-Salom, M. 2020. *Tourism and Degrowth: Towards a Truly Sustainable Tourism*. London and New York, Routledge.

Galla, A. (ed.). 2012. *World Heritage: Benefits Beyond Borders*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Gao, L. and Woudstra, J. 2011. Repairing broken continuity: garden heritage in the historic villages Xidi and Hongcun, China. *Historic Environment*, Vol. 23, No. 1, pp. 48–55.

Gard'ner, J. M. 2004. Heritage protection and social inclusion: a case study from the Bangladeshi community of East London. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 1, pp. 75–92.

Ham, S. H. 2013. *Interpretation: Making a Difference on Purpose*. Golden, CO, Fulcrum Publishing.

Hu, W. and Wall, G. 2012. Interpretative guiding and sustainable development: a framework. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, Vol. 4, pp. 80–85.

ICOMOS. 2021. A reminder that people-centred approaches should be at the heart of cultural heritage management, ICOMOS website, 4 March. Available at: https://www.icomos.org/en/focus/our-common-dignity-initiative-rights-based-approach/91199-a-reminder-that-people-centred-approaches-should-be-at-the-heart-of-cultural-heritage-management.

Jameson, J. H. and Musteaţă, S. (eds). 2019. *Transforming Heritage Practice in the 21st Century*. Cham, Springer.

Klamer, A., Mignosa, A. and Petrova, L. 2013. Cultural heritage policies: a comparative perspective. In I. Rizzi and A. Mignosa (eds), *Handbook on the Economics of Cultural Heritage*. Cheltenham, Edward Elgar Publishing, pp. 37–53.

Leighninger, M. 2006. *The Next Form of Democracy: How Expert Rule Is Giving Way to Shared Governance*. Nashville, TN, Vanderbilt University Press.

Loffredo, A. 2013. *Noi del Rione Sanità. La scommessa di un parroco e dei suoi ragazzi*. Rome, Mondadori.

Mananghaya, J. B. 2012. Living cultural landscape: rice terraces of the Philippine Cordilleras. In Galla, *World Heritage*, pp. 178–87.

Merriman, T. and Brochu, L. 2005. *Management of Interpretive Sites*. Fort Collins, CO, InterpPress.

Mollo, L., Pesaresi, P. and Biggi, C. 2012. Interactions between ancient Herculaneum and modern Ercolano. In the proceedings of the international conference 'Sustainable Environment in the Mediterranean Region: from Housing to Urban and Land Scale Construction', held 12–14 February 2012 at the Seconda Università di Napoli. Naples, Edizioni Franco Angeli, pp. 1–7.

Moretti, V. and Massa, C. 2011. *Rione Sanità*. Naples, Ediesse.

Munjeri, D. 2004. Anchoring African cultural and natural heritage: the significance of local community awareness in the context of capacity-building. *World Heritage Papers 13: Linking Universal and Local Values*. UNESCO World Heritage Centre, pp. 76–80.

Nowacki, M. 2021. Heritage interpretation and sustainable development: a systematic literature review. *Sustainability*, Vol. 13, No. 8, p. 4383.

Ndoro, W. and Tauvinga, P. 2003. The vandalism of the Domboshava Rock Painting Site, Zimbabwe: some reflections on approaches to heritage management. *Conservation and Management of Archaeological Sites*, Vol. 6, No. 1, pp. 3–10.

Pleumarom, A. 2002. How sustainable is Mekong tourism? In R. Harris, T. Griffin and P. Williams (eds), *Sustainable Tourism: A Global Perspective*. Oxford, Butterworth-Heinemann, pp. 140–66.

Poulios, I. 2010. Moving beyond a values-based approach to heritage conservation. *Conservation and Management of Archaeological Sites*, Vol. 12, No. 2, pp. 170–85.

Rayner, A. 1998. *Access in Mind: Towards the Inclusive Museum*. Edinburgh, NMSE.

Reynolds, F. 2014. A site's history does not end: transforming place through community archaeology at Tinkinswood Chambered Tomb and surrounding landscape, Vale of Glamorgan. *Journal of Community Archaeology and Heritage*, Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 173–89.

Silberman, N. A. 2013. Heritage interpretation as public discourse: towards a new paradigm. In M.-T. Albert, R. Bernecker and B. Rudolff (eds), *Understanding Heritage: Perspectives in Heritage Studies*. Berlin and Boston, De Gruyter, pp. 21–34.

Stevens, M., Flinn, A., Shepherd, E. 2011. New frameworks for community engagement in the archive sector: from handing over to handing on. In E. Waterton and S. Watson (eds), *Heritage and Community Engagement: Collaboration or Contestation*. Abingdon, Routledge, pp. 67–84.

Tam, L. 2017. World Heritage for whom? Sustainable heritage tourism and community development of Luang Prabang. In J. Rodrigues dos Santos (ed.), *Preserving Transcultural Heritage*. Casal de Cambra, Portugal, Caleidoscopio, pp. 723–32.

Tsenova, V., Wood, G., Dolfini, A., Tindley, A. and Kirk, D. 2020. Un-authorized view: leveraging volunteer expertise in heritage. In CHI '20: Proceedings of the 2020 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems, pp. 1–14.

UNESCO. 1972. *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage*. Available at: https://whc.unesco.org/en/conventiontext/.

UNESCO. 2015. *Policy for the Integration of a Sustainable Development Perspective into the Processes of the World Heritage Convention*. Available at: https://whc.unesco.org/en/sustainabledevelopment/.

UNESCO. 2021. *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*. Available at: https://whc.unesco.org/en/guidelines/.

UNESCO. 2022. *The World Heritage Convention*. Available at: https://whc.unesco.org/en/convention/.

Veverka, J. 2015. *Interpretive Master Planning: Strategies for the New Millennium*. Edinburgh, Museums Etc.

Vignola, L. 2010. *Un percorso multisensoriale agli scavi di Ercolano. Una vista alternativa per tutti* [A multisensory trail for the archaeological site of Herculaneum: an alternative visit for all]. Ercolano, Herculaneum Centre.

Vignola, L. and Matafora, P. 2009. Nuove generazioni e patrimonio culturale: le iniziative del Centro Internazionale per gli Studi di Herculaneum [New generations and heritage: some initiatives of the International Centre for the Study of Herculaneum]. *Cronache di Pace*, Vol. 1, No. 9, p. 57.

Westmont, C. (ed.). 2022. *Critical Public Archaeology: Confronting Social Challenges in the 21st Century*. New York and Oxford, Berghahn Books.

Wijesuriya, G. 2017. Towards the de-secularisation of heritage. *Built Heritage*, Vol. 2, pp. 1–15.

Wijesuriya, G. and Court, S. 2015. *Guidance Note. People-Centred Approaches to the Conservation of Cultural Heritage*. Rome, ICCROM. Available at: https://www.iccrom.org/sites/default/files/PCA_Annexe-2.pdf.

Wijesuriya, G., Thompson, J. and Court, S. 2017. People-centred approaches: engaging communities and developing capacities for heritage. In G. Chitty (ed.), *Heritage, Conservation and Communities: Engagement, Participation and Capacity Building*. London, Routledge, pp. 34–49.

Chapter 9

Contributing to the Future of Heritage Interpretation in Latin America and the Caribbean

Heritage Interpretation for Latin America and the Caribbean (I-PAL)

Contributing to the Future of Heritage Interpretation in Latin America and the Caribbean

Heritage Interpretation for Latin America and the Caribbean (I-PAL)

Abstract

This chapter brings together perceptions of interpreters from Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) countries to contribute to the growth of heritage interpretation as a professional discipline in the region. For this chapter, we collected the interpreters' perceptions about the development and needs of heritage interpretation in LAC with semi-structured interviews and on-site observations.

The interpreters interviewed were a group of men and women from the LAC region and others who work in LAC. Some are new to heritage interpretation, while others have laboured and observed the development of the profession for more than four decades. This group included academic professors, trainers, planners and managers in heritage interpretation, contributing to the professional network of Heritage Interpretation for Latin America and the Caribbean (I-PAL) as members or consultants. As we prepared the final draft of this chapter, it was reviewed by two of the most respected interpretation 'elders', Dr Sam Ham and Jorge Morales, whose training and books were foundational for advancing interpretation in Latin America from the 1980s through to the present day. Sam and Jorge share a detailed historical perspective that was critical to the accuracy of this report.

We considered that understanding, documenting and making known the fundamentals of the development of heritage interpretation in LAC is vital to finding opportunities to improve its practice, and so become better equipped to collaborate in the protection, conservation and transmission to future generations of local cultural and natural heritage, and appreciating its Outstanding Universal Value.

Heritage interpretation first arrived in LAC thanks to the international assistance of the United States, from organizations such as the US Peace Corps and US National Park Service, especially in protected areas of Ecuador, Chile, Argentina, Venezuela and Costa Rica during the 1960s and 1970s. Subsequently, the need for training grew during the 1980s and 1990s. By the twenty-first century, as the number of interpreters continued to grow, more organizations for heritage interpretation began to be known in LAC.

Observing the development of heritage interpretation in LAC since the early 1970s, the significant needs for improving its professional practice are greater access to Spanish, French and Portuguese literature, and more regular evaluation of interpretive programme effectiveness with an eye towards continual improvement. Furthermore, improvement is also needed in interpretive planning for sites and more widespread organizational representation of heritage interpreters through local associations and formal institutionalization.

In preparing this chapter, the interpreters who were interviewed expressed joy and passion for the heritage interpretation field. Their interest in the continual development of heritage interpretation in Latin America was also evident, as was their collective optimism about the future of their profession.

Some context: natural and cultural heritage interpretation for Latin America and the Caribbean

As human beings, we enjoy a remarkable capacity to communicate, considering communication – in simple terms – as the process of transmitting information, thoughts or feelings in such a way that they are satisfactorily understood. Heritage interpreters share the values of natural and cultural heritage, having a purpose in mind, using proactive communication strategies with clearly defined key messages and different channels to reach various audiences. Although communication in general seems simple, heritage

Figure 1. Latin American and Caribbean countries are well known for their stunning landscapes and extraordinary natural and cultural diversity, for example at Ruinas de Ujarrás, Orosi, Cartago, Costa Rica, 2021. (Photo: Marco Díaz.)

interpretation requires a plan and methodology to be effective (G. Plumasseau, personal communication, October 2022).

When considering heritage interpretation, common factors among the Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) countries came to mind to explain and understand its communication processes – starting with the official languages that bring together countries where the population speaks Spanish, Portuguese and French (Latin-rooted languages), as well as English. In total, the region, which has 522 Indigenous groups, boasts 420 different languages (UNICEF and FUNPROEIB Andes, 2009).

European colonization, whether at the hands of the Spanish, Portuguese, French or English, shaped the political history of the entire region. Consequently, the area now has a diverse cultural mix resulting from the integration and hybridization of European and Indigenous peoples and cultures after the conquest and colonization activities in the fifteenth century (Galeano, 2018). In addition, Europeans forcibly introduced enslaved Africans and Asians to work in the colonies, this after European diseases and swords decimated the Indigenous populations. The perception of the regional culture in LAC is that it emerged from three fundamental sources: European, African and Native American cultures (Etecé, 2020).

We recognize that family bonding benefits the nature and cultural heritage of LAC, given values and traditions are kept alive because older generations pass on knowledge, stories and practices to new generations. Cohabitation and being as close to the family nucleus as possible are common in LAC countries. Parents teach their children from an early age to give special recognition and respect to older people. It is common for children to grow up listening to grandparents' stories, which often include ancient teachings – for example, why a particular thing or place (birds, food, weather, hills, mountains, rivers) was given its name. Explaining those meanings is helpful when younger family members do not fully understand the native languages.

When meanings are shared, it helps to relate something with a specific heritage value, allowing it to last longer as part of the people's common knowledge and also to travel to other regions. An example of this is the guanacaste tree (*Enterolobium cyclocarpum*), the national tree of Costa Rica. The name guanacaste is thought to originate from Nahuatl, an Uto-Aztec language, inspired by the seed pods resembling human ears (*cuahuitl* means tree and *nacaztli* mean ear). The original word corresponds to *Huanacaxtle*, a story that reveals meanings through first-hand experiences. It is interesting how the name of the tree becomes part of the cultural heritage of a country some distance away from the original place that named it, all the way down at the southern end of Central America. This enrichment from a foreign contribution resulted from oral transmission and the listening of subsequent generations. It is a living story that changed history itself by making its way through the continent.

It is worth mentioning that there is no direct influence of the Nahuatl language from the centre of Mexico on Costa Rican Indigenous languages. Therefore, Nahuatl words must have arrived during colonization, used by the conquerors and members of other native groups, giving us an example of how powerful it is to communicate messages that last in the mind of those who were reached by their influence. In this context, we can say cultural heritage is diverse in origin, process and current perception. Consequently, disagreement regarding its values, appreciation and significance can be expected when making heritage interpretation visible to the public.

Figure 2. Monumento Nacional Guayabo, Turrialba, Cartago, Costa Rica, 2012. (Photo: Marco Díaz.)

Regarding the natural landscape of LAC, because of its geographic distribution, the climate varies significantly throughout the continent, giving rise to an enormous variety of environments and living species. The region includes the immense river and jungles of the Amazon, the Andes mountain chain with its diversity of reliefs, the cold plains of Patagonia and the warm coasts of the Caribbean Sea. As a result, LAC boasts some of the planet's highest rates of biological diversity. It is home to almost half of the world's tropical forests, 23 per cent of the forested areas and more than 30 per cent of all available fresh water. It has 33 per cent of the world's mammal species, 35 per cent of reptiles, 41 per cent of birds and 50 per cent of amphibians. Half of the Caribbean's plant species are endemic (Mexico, 2014).

Figure 3. Where the forests are made of stone: Bosque megalítico de Cumbemayo, Perú, 2021. (Photo: Arjun Ghosh.)

- *Some improvements to better contribute to the safeguarding of cultural and natural heritage in LAC*

Today, much natural and cultural heritage in LAC is threatened. Nature reserves and both tangible and intangible cultural heritage elements are at constant risk from natural causes of decay, adversity, climate change, and changing social and economic conditions. Interpreters are concerned about the future of LAC heritage and ponder what is needed to protect it.

The World Heritage Convention notes that a well-protected World Heritage Site contributes directly to environmental, social and economic development, and helps to improve the lives of the local community (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, n.d.). The regional action plan for World Heritage in the LAC region, 2014–24, observes that education, communication and information are necessary to improve the understanding, conservation and management of cultural and natural heritage:

> it is essential to develop outreach activities at all levels and particularly targeting different groups in society (civil society, including children and young people, local, traditional, and indigenous communities, managers and political decision-makers, etc.) with the purpose of raising awareness of the sentiment and the value of cultural and natural heritage as an identity factor and a tool for development. (UNESCO, 2014, p. 11)

During the Latin American Forum on Heritage at Risk in a People Centered Approach, organized by the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) Peru and ICOMOS LAC group in July 2021, specialists in heritage conservation observed that 'the main support for the protection of the historical and cultural assets is the ability of citizens and institutions to value the preservation of those assets' (ICOMOS, 2021).

The natural and cultural assets of World Heritage build the 'spirit of the place' of our planet. They are also fundamental actors in the LAC localities that contain them, strengthening the pride and love of their inhabitants for their territories. To achieve that level of appreciation, knowledge, understanding and application are vital for natural and cultural heritage to find meaning in people's lives. Why do people need to know about cultural and natural heritage? How can they find the relevant information? What should they do with it? These questions can be answered by understanding the purpose and outcomes of effective interpretive programmes.

> Among the most common ways to promote the value of natural and cultural heritage in LAC is through conferences, forums, and the design of campaigns and educational programs. There are also studies, research, norms, and legislation to protect heritage. Projects and programs about sustainable tourism, ecotourism, responsible tourism, cultural tourism, etc., are also emerging everywhere. All efforts are indeed essential and appreciated. Are those efforts practical? Yes, they are, to a certain level, and they can successfully fulfill specific goals. However, to effectively promote the value of natural and cultural heritage to the people and to provoke beneficial actions on its behalf, it needs to become significant for them to care about it. 'People' means the citizens, say people from local communities (those who are not tourists), tourists, and representatives of institutions and organizations related or not to natural and cultural heritage. (G. Plumasseau, personal communication, October 2022)

It is essential in LAC to understand the importance of heritage interpretation for interpreters to build confidence about the value of proven interpretive techniques. It is also vital to increase access to Spanish, French and Portuguese literature; evaluate the effectiveness of delivered interpretive programmes; improve interpretive planning for sites; and strengthen organizational representation through local associations and formal institutionalization.

Three features require special attention to increase the appropriation and use of heritage interpretation to protect heritage and to use it as an instrument for social well-being in this large region. First, we must recognize and accept the conflicts and diversity of perspectives about desired uses and values of heritage in various contexts; second, we must be more accepting that there are differences in institutional and organizational structures in each country; and third, we must be sensitive to the fact that different approaches to interpretation are needed in each place and physical context.

A deep understanding of these necessities is required for us to begin thinking about interpretation as something regional. Today, our appreciation (which is still not adequately documented) leaves us with more questions than answers. This situation urges us to promote long-term inquiry that can lead to a more informed basis for heritage interpretation and a more strategic vision of goals for its use in LAC (M. A. Jimenez, personal communication, November 2022).

- *The World Heritage Convention and the exceptional value of heritage interpretation in achieving its objectives*

Thanks to the 1972 Convention, historic cities, archaeological zones, cultural itineraries, monumental complexes, modern heritage assets, and natural and mixed assets on the UNESCO World Heritage List make up a set of features with interpretive potential. This potential is determined by national and international multidisciplinary teams in conjunction with local communities seeking their protection under an 'interpretive plan'.

Under the discipline of heritage interpretation, this set of interpretive, cultural and natural features is presented to the visiting public after a complex process of conditioning and enhancement. Indeed, the effective communication techniques of heritage interpretation take on a high level of importance. How should we convey the symbolic character of heritage assets? How do we provoke and foster the creation of thoughts and behaviours in tune with an interpretive message, leading to the conservation of assets under the postulates of the World Heritage Convention? It is undoubtedly a challenge clearly stated in its articles and in all the files on the sites declared World Heritage.

The need arises to observe the territory from a holistic perspective as a natural and cultural landscape where many factors come into play, including the need to update concepts and recommendations. These factors undoubtedly had to do with the establishment of the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Heritage (thirty-one years after the Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage).

In 1982, ten years after the Convention for the Protection of Cultural and Natural Heritage was created, the Mondiacult event was held in Mexico City, which facilitated the review of many concepts related to culture and its management (UNESCO, 1982). Later, in 1999, the Cultural Tourism Charter was issued at the ICOMOS World Congress, also in Mexico. At that time, awareness of the inhabitant–visitor relationship was emphasized, observed as an intercultural encounter where each side should come out strengthened, sharing cultural characteristics, and considering, in addition, the conservation of cultural assets that make up tourism products. From this perspective, the interpretation of heritage reinforced its value as an instrument to raise awareness in favour of heritage conservation, a notion which was reconfirmed forty years later at Mondiacult 2022, held in September, again in Mexico City (UNESCO, 2022).

A fundamental aspect that the 1972 World Heritage Convention points out is the need to create management plans related to the planning of World Heritage Sites. Observing this from the perspective of the interpretation discipline and its interpretive plan or programme model suggests the importance of the facilities where the interpretive messages will be offered to the visiting public. It then leads us to consider the conditioning of the public space, the historic urban landscape where the interpretive message will be presented.

Article 27 of the Convention mentions that:

> The States Parties to this Convention shall endeavor by all appropriate means, and in particular by educational and information programs, to strengthen appreciation and respect by their peoples of the cultural and natural heritage defined in Articles 1 and 2 of the Convention.
>
> They shall undertake to keep the public broadly informed of the dangers threatening this heritage and of the activities carried on in pursuance of this Convention.

Meanwhile, Article 28 stipulates that:

> States Parties to this Convention which receive international assistance under the Convention shall take appropriate measures to make known the importance of the property for which assistance has been received, and the role played by such assistance. (UNESCO, 1972)

The discipline of heritage interpretation has particular importance in effectively communicating the exceptional value of World Heritage assets through interpretative media. Then, the planning of the interpretative programme, considering the physical spaces, the printed media, self-guided supports and the participation of interpreters are all part of the communication strategy for the transmission of the interpretative message in favour

of the protection and conservation of the heritage. Whether they are tour guides, cultural promoters, rangers or mediators, these groups constitute a vehicle par excellence in the construction and promotion of local identity and the creation of collective awareness for the care of the planet, as well as carrying the intrinsic message of the Convention.

In recognizing that interpretation is part of the overall process of cultural heritage conservation and management, the irreplaceable role, the 'exceptional value' that heritage interpretation has, is clear in seeking to achieve the purposes for which the Convention for the Protection of World Heritage was created (ICOMOS, 2008).

Some roots: a perspective from five decades of observing the development of heritage interpretation in LAC

• *The beginnings*

Just like the name given to the guanacaste tree, conservation strategies for natural heritage came to LAC thanks to foreign contributions. The first works in interpretation date back to the late 1960s and 1970s, when volunteers from the US Peace Corps worked at the national parks in the Galapagos Islands and in Costa Rica at the Poás Volcano, continuing with their work during the following decades with the development of plans and interpretive activities. In general, having its origins associated with natural areas is why heritage interpretation was initially known in LAC as 'environmental interpretation' (J. Morales, personal communication, November 2022).

Figure 4. Poás Volcano, Costa Rica, 2019. (Photo: Carlos Umaña.)

In 1991, the University of Costa Rica opened a specialization with a bachelor's degree in biology with an emphasis on environmental interpretation, becoming to this day the only university in the region for professionals in the field of interpretation. Due to being administratively located in the Faculty of Biological Sciences, as at 2022 the name 'Environmental Interpretation' is still used for the undergraduate degree programme. As the University of Costa Rica restructures its educational programmes, new alliances and certifications with national institutions and international networks keep the profession updated on theoretical research and implementation.

In Chile, heritage interpretation was first reported during the 1970s by Professor Juan Oltremari Arregui from the Faculty of Forest Sciences of the Austral University of Chile. Oltremari went to the United States, where the known roots of interpretation are, and in 1974 presented the thesis for his master's degree, 'Survey on the desirable preparation and professional career development for interpreting personnel', at the University of Washington, Seattle (Oltremari Arregui, 1975). Writing about his own country, he noted:

> The interpretive programs in the country's national parks are of recent creation. The first program was initiated in the Puyehue National Park in 1971. Under this program, whose report was published in 1972, the first Visitor Center in the country and two self-guided trails were built. (Oltremari Arregui, 1975)

Oltremari's report also mentions the work of technicians from the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in developing interpretive sites and programmes, and how heritage interpretation programmes started to be established in other national parks in Chile. The way that Oltremari describes heritage interpretation in Chile back in the 1970s is similar to how the scope of this profession is perceived today:

> These facts demonstrate that interpretation – even though it is a concept that was only introduced in the last four years in the country – is increasingly important in developing national parks. Along with these thoughtful programs and plans, interpretation has excellent potential to extend beyond the very boundaries of national parks, thereby delivering a message not only to current visitors but also to non-users. (Oltremari Arregui, 1975)

At the time that heritage interpretation arrived in LAC, in addition to knowing what it was and where it could be applied, learning about how it should be put into practice was

the next step. For that, it was necessary to train those who would be interpreters. Freeman Tilden's book *Interpreting Our Heritage* (1957) was, and for many still is, the initial reference to consult for anyone who would like to become an interpreter. That was the case when the Peace Corps volunteers and FAO technicians worked in LAC; they applied a methodology consistent with the US National Park Service based on Tilden's principles.

It is not easy to find information about the history and development of heritage interpretation in LAC. However, the history of the beginning of the profession itself is available in English and, thanks to a monograph by Marta Brunelli on the origins of heritage interpretation in the United States (1872–1920), also in Spanish (Brunelli, 2019).

• *The 1980s and 1990s*

Jorge Morales Miranda and Sam Ham, renowned heritage interpretation authors, played an essential role in developing heritage interpretation in LAC. Both published books in 1992 that made significant contributions to the learning and applying of interpretive techniques throughout the LAC region.

FAO for Latin America organized an International Workshop on Environmental Interpretation in Protected Wilderness Areas. It was held in Puyehue National Park in Chile in 1988, where Jorge Morales presented a lecture entitled *Un recorrido por la interpretación* ('A journey through interpretation'), where he attempted to tell the story of interpretation. A few years earlier, Jorge Morales began to write a text for that workshop that later served as a reference for all the workshop participants. Morales's text was photocopied and circulated throughout Latin America, and FAO published it as a book in 1992, titled *Manual para la Interpretación Ambiental en Áreas Silvestres Protegidas*. This book was the seed for the one that Morales published in Spain in 1998 and another published much later in Chile (Morales, 2022).

Figure 5. Puyehue National Park in Chile, 2020. (Photo: Vladimir Fedotov.)

Along with Dr. Sam Ham's *Interpretación Ambiental – Una Guía Práctica para Gente con Grandes Ideas y Presupuestos Pequeños* (1992), there now existed an actual literature published in Spanish and directed specifically to the current reality of management of Latin American protected areas. Consequently, more training began to be given; for example, training in interpretation was implemented in 1990 at the Park Ranger School of the National Parks Administration of Argentina, supported by the US National Park Service's Office of International Affairs both in terms of funding and, just as importantly, through the detailed Spanish-language training manual the US National Park Service created (Moore, 1989 and 1993). The need to update the training manual in 1993 was precipitated by the simultaneous publication of the books by Sam Ham and Jorge Morales in 1992. The new edition of the manual, which guided the training delivered by the Argentina National Parks Administration, relied heavily on both books and included several excerpts from Morales's text along with full reprints of several chapters Ham had generously given the US National Park Service permission to include.

Sam Ham remembers 1983 when he taught a three-day course on interpretation at the National Natural History Museum in El Salvador, the first of seventy-five courses he would teach across Latin America during the next seven years, reaching more than 2,500 interpreters. In 1992, these experiences culminated in Ham's seminal *Interpretación Ambiental*, which greatly expanded awareness of the interpretation field across LAC. For the first time in any language, this book presented the TORE model of thematic interpretation to the world, which today helps us remember that interpretation is Thematic, Organized, Relevant and Enjoyable (Ham, 1992). The TORE model, which Ham developed from study of more than a century of cognitive science research, remains today a cornerstone approach for interpretive practice, what Ham called 'the interpretive approach to communication'.

Elsewhere in the early 1990s, the University of Idaho created the Center for International Training and Outreach (CITO) and appointed Sam Ham as director. The core mission of CITO was to advance the interpretation profession in Latin America. From 1990 to 2013, CITO delivered short courses and workshops on thematic interpretation methods to several hundred interpreters in twenty Latin American countries. Moreover, it also graduated one Ph.D. and seventeen Central American master's students focused on heritage interpretation between 1990 and 1995. To date, Ham has delivered ninety-two courses on interpretation in every Latin American country except Peru.

Conversing with Jorge Morales, it was also possible to find out how others started to work in the interpretation field in LAC; examples of these are Rosendo Martínez and Cristina Juarrero, who began working on interpretation projects for the Cuban National System of Protected Areas during the 1990s. As they recall:

> our boss called us into the office. The work that he was going to entrust to us was 'simple': he displayed a map on the desk, showed us some places in a national park, and told us that we should design some interpretive trails there … he gave us an Argentine pamphlet clarifying some rules and concepts so that we could begin to invent – or instead work. In this way, the first steps began to be taken on the path of environmental interpretation in Cuba. (Juarrero de Varona and Martínez Montero, 2003)

Martínez and Juarrero extended their work and have been awarded various interpreting consultancies in Costa Rica, Mexico, Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, Colombia, Honduras and Venezuela.

Jorge Morales also mentioned Tomas Estevez's work in protected natural areas in Colombia, as well as Carlos Fernandez Balboa and Victor Fratto from Argentina, where many courses on heritage interpretation have been given to hundreds of guides in various national parks. In addition, Morales has taught courses in Chile, Brazil, Bolivia, Peru, Cuba, Ecuador, Venezuela, Mexico, Honduras, Costa Rica, Argentina and Uruguay.

In Venezuela, Simón Bolívar University introduced the concept of interpretation through an environmental interpretation programme, which aimed to provide visitors with active experiences that can link them emotionally, sensorially and intellectually to the natural, social, cultural and historical environment of the university (Pellegrini Blanco and Reyes Gil, 2007).

In 1999 the Asociación para la Interpretación del Patrimonio (AIP) in Spain began to publish its electronic bulletin *Boletín de Interpretación*, in which interpreters could post articles in Spanish. This professional journal made important literature available to the Spanish-speaking world and allowed LAC interpreters to share articles internationally. From its beginning, Jorge Morales has served as the Boletín's editor.

• *The twenty-first century*

Since the early 2000s, the Certified Interpretive Guide course from the US National Association for Interpretation (NAI) has been successfully taught in Mexico and Panama. Materials for the course have been translated into Spanish to make the programme accessible throughout Latin America. As the number of certified interpretive trainers who speak Spanish and reside in Spanish-speaking countries grows, this Latin American network will likely continue to develop. NAI studied options to build a global international network to benefit all professionals in the field of interpretation and hosted international conventions in Puerto Rico, Panama, Mexico and Brazil (Merriman and Brochu, 2004).

On 5 and 6 September 2001, the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation held a workshop on Environmental and Heritage Interpretation, hosted by Jorge Morales, in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, as part of the Araucaria programme. The workshop was part of the Araucaria Ecotourism Seminar and was attended by Spanish aid workers and representatives of various tourism institutions in Latin America (J. Morales, personal communication, November 2022).

Around the same time, Dr Manuel Gándara, a Mexican archaeologist, anthropologist and interpreter, proposed in 2003 to take advantage of thematic heritage interpretation to promote the appreciation of and care for archaeological heritage, something that by then had not been widely practised (indeed, was barely known) in Mexico. In this context, he suggested that interpretation programmes on cultural heritage should present sociocultural diversity to non-specialist audiences. Furthermore, based on an analysis of what was advocated by previous authors, Dr Gándara proposed that cultural heritage deserved an additional treatment to the above principles, taking advantage of the cultural quality that differed from the rest of the themes and types of heritage (Izarraraz, 2019).

Because heritage interpretation typically takes place in leisure settings where visitors go for recreation, the tourism industry in LAC countries recognized the potential of interpretive services to add value to tourist experiences and thereby benefit local economies. It is not easy to ascertain precisely when the role of heritage interpretation in Latin American tourism began to be recognized. However, Dr Sam Ham's worldwide work has been heavily focused on the interpretation–tourism connection since the 1980s. His first involvement in Latin America was in 1993 when the World Wildlife Fund asked him to teach a five-day course in Oaxaca, Mexico, on how to incorporate thematic interpretation into tourism activities to enhance tourist experiences and strengthen economic opportunities for local people. During the thirty years following this first course, Dr Ham has been asked to provide technical advice and to teach several more courses on thematic interpretation and tourism throughout much of Central and South America, as well as in Cuba, the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico. These projects have included training in thematic interpretation for private tour operator guides in Argentina, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Panama, as well as his widely acclaimed work in using thematic interpretation to stimulate travellers' philanthropy in the Galapagos, Ecuador and Baja California, Mexico, that has generated millions of US dollars in tourists' donations to support local conservation and local economic development (Ham, 2011; Ham and Ham, 2010).

Jorge Belmonte, federal guide in Mexico and director of the Latin American Training Centre for Tourist Guides, mentions that it was not until 2006 that heritage interpretation as *interpretación ambiental* (environmental interpretation) began a slow, formal path in the tourism sector since its official recognition as a federal normative that directed the accreditation of tourist guides oriented to natural sites. The training and accreditation involve techniques to promote and strengthen the environmental services that natural and cultural

heritage grants to the integral development of the visitors in an entertaining, dynamic and didactic way through guided tours (J. Belmonte, personal communication, September 2022).

Although sections of Freeman Tilden's (1957) seminal book *Interpreting Our Heritage* were translated to Spanish in 1967 by Isabel Castillo at the Centro Agronómico Tropical de Investigación y Enseñanza in Costa Rica and made available in Latin America, it was not until 2006 that Tilden's book was fully translated and finally published in Spanish by AIP in Spain. Thanks to this effort, primarily due to the leadership of Jorge Morales, interpreters in LAC could better understand Tilden's six principles of heritage interpretation. When these six principles were then expanded to fifteen by Larry Beck and Ted Cable (1998), a translation of the principles was also shared on the AIP website (AIP, n.d.).

Heritage interpretation in LAC countries is still developing its own story and structure as a professional discipline. Today it is possible to find specialist associations, companies, training centres and networks for heritage interpretation, such as InterpatMx, the Mexican Association of Heritage Interpreters, IP Peru, Heritage Interpretation Peru and I-PAL.net (the Heritage Interpretation Professional Network for LAC). However, the work needed is so immense – considering the sheer scale of natural and cultural heritage in LAC – that it requires more formal and local representation for advancing the profession.

A vision for the future of heritage interpretation in LAC

Examples of heritage interpretation already exist in LAC, capitalizing on the abundance of resources to produce great histories for great interpretive programmes. Moreover, there are remarkable examples of interpreters' work and of many others interested in becoming interpreters. However, even though the current panorama is respectable, there are still many opportunities to improve the perception of heritage interpretation as strategic communication, its techniques and many methodologies.

When Gabriela Plumasseau, a NAI certified interpretive trainer with experience in delivering certification courses in LAC, was asked about the perspective of heritage interpretation training in the region, she mentioned that:

> the understanding of what is the core of heritage interpretation, which is to know and recognize what it is and how it manages to provoke thinking and connect the interests of the audience with the values of the resource, is something that most of the trainees and new interpreters, but not all, come to understand after the workshop.

She also discussed post-training follow-up with certified interpreters:

> the crucial points about the importance of demographic, geographical and psychographic [interests and motivations] analysis of the audience and giving more importance to their motivations for visiting a place and their interests, instead of what the interpreter's interests are, seem to be well understood in theory; in practice probably is good too, but honestly, we need that the sites implement measuring methods to confirm it; also the need for broad and up-to-date knowledge of the topic to be interpreted and the conception of strong themes are elements that need to be reinforced. (G. Plumasseau, personal communication, September 2022)

Sadly, the comprehension of the actual scope of heritage interpretation is not stable enough throughout LAC and lacks uniformity. One of the main reasons for this is the monumental deficiency of literature available in Latin-based languages – the material exists mainly in English. Interpreters who speak Portuguese and French also said that despite publications usually being of high quality, they are often not fully applicable in a LAC environment since many are produced in the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, European Union and Australia. Adjustments would be needed to fit the specific characteristics of LAC heritage.

The interpreter, in their work of planning and implementing personal and non-personal interpretation programmes of the natural and cultural heritage in museums, national parks, protected natural areas, zoos, botanical gardens, aquariums, historical sites, theme parks, aviaries, planetariums and other such sites, requires standards and specialist training. In LAC, these have not been easy to obtain due to the lack of knowledge about the specificities of an interpreter's work requirements, the insufficiency of training, limited access to relevant literature and the lack of organizational representation that could shape and underpin development opportunities.

Since the early 1970s, attendees at international meetings, members of associations, organizations and sites related to heritage interpretation have collectively aspired to strengthen understanding and cooperation within the profession. These are efforts that the interpreters of LAC need to be a part of to externalize their precise needs to organizations, promote international collaboration and demonstrate achievements that exemplify local interpreters' work.

There is a need to promote a multi- and interdisciplinarity view of the heritage interpretation profession rather than what some see as an arbitrary division into 'nature' and 'culture'. For example, both the interpretation of heritage and the didactics of the

social and natural sciences have numerous common objects of study and, therefore, areas of intersection (for example, botany, ethnology and the combination ethnobotany). Additionally, architecture, arts and technology are part of interpretive planning. If they are not considered for developing interpretive sites and programmes, their effectiveness will probably suffer.

In Latin America, interpreters are often confused with their close colleagues – the tourist guides and environmental educators who, although they conduct complementary work and use interpretive techniques, require different training depending on their areas of specialism and work activities. Therefore, the current lack of a broader and more comprehensive view of the interpretation profession is also a factor in need of improvement.

Since the early evolution of the heritage interpretation profession was often more focused on nature, environmental conservation and nature-based tourism, it has often been challenging to visualize how nature interpreters use methods and techniques that might benefit interpretation in museums. Museum institutions do not always use all the communication tools at their disposal to effectively convey their message and provide a different and unique experience for the visitors who come into contact with the heritage that the institutions present. Cultural management institutions seem to have forgotten to communicate a relevant message to the visitor – that is, themes that matter to the audience. These themes connect to what is important to them (Hervías Beorlegui, 2016).

Museums are complex and require specialist professionals to develop programmes based on didactic museography. These professionals require literature that speaks specifically to their actual needs instead of material based only on the interpretation of nature. The same applies to zoos, aquariums, botanical gardens and so on, where their understanding of what constitutes 'heritage' is often at odds with how those institutions and organizations see and manage their resources. As Sam Ham has argued forcefully in two recent virtual presentations for Mexico, whenever we talk about 'heritage interpretation', we are always, and in every instance, referring to both cultural and natural heritage.

Some call the profession 'interpretation' alone, perhaps having the idea that in this way it can be used in more fields; others are very attached to the term 'environmental interpretation'. Meanwhile, others prefer terms such as 'mediation', 'divulgation', 'pedagogical facilitation' and 'heritage interpretation'. These are the most common terms used in LAC. The word 'heritage' next to 'interpretation' implies, for many, a significant connotation for the profession because people feel the adjectival use of 'heritage' gives real-world context to the profession's goals. Moreover, thanks to that word, the possibilities envisioned for heritage interpretation in LAC might today be more diverse than they previously have been.

The committee of ICOMOS, in its International Charter on Cultural Tourism (1999) at the twelfth general assembly in Mexico, argues that the only legitimate way to bring heritage to the visitor respectfully and educationally is by using communicative disciplines such as heritage interpretation:

> Individual aspects of natural and cultural heritage have differing levels of significance, some with universal values, others of national, regional, or local importance. Interpretation programs should present that significance in a relevant and accessible manner to the host community and the visitor, with appropriate, stimulating, and contemporary forms of education, media, technology, and personal explanation of historical, environmental, and cultural information. Interpretation and presentation programs should facilitate and encourage the high level of public awareness and support necessary for the long-term survival of the natural and cultural heritage. Interpretation programs should present the significance of heritage places, traditions, and cultural practices within the past experience and present diversities of the area and the host community, including that of minority cultural or linguistic groups. The visitor should always be informed of the differing cultural values that may be ascribed to a particular heritage resource. (ICOMOS, 1999)

The same charter defines the word 'heritage' in a way that helps clarify its appropriate use for heritage interpretation:

> Heritage is a broad concept and includes the natural as well as the cultural environment. It encompasses landscapes, historic places, sites, and built environments, as well as biodiversity, collections, past and continuing cultural practices, knowledge, and living experiences. It records and expresses the long processes of the historic development, forming the essence of diverse national, regional, indigenous, and local identities and is an integral part of modern life. It is a dynamic reference point and positive instrument for growth and change. The particular heritage and collective memory of each locality or community are irreplaceable and an important foundation for development, both now and in the future. (ICOMOS, 1999)

The power of heritage interpretation techniques can be corroborated and improved only through research. The primordial importance of research for developing heritage interpretation is not yet fully recognized in LAC. The main factors contributing to low interest and productivity are limited access to research grants, inadequate budgets, poor research infrastructure and equipment, and the hesitancy of major universities to hire and retain researchers interested in heritage interpretation issues. Heritage interpretation has an extensive theoretical trajectory (Ham, 2007a, 2007b, 2009, 2013), especially in the field of natural heritage and, more recently, cultural studies too. These theoretical foundations help to inform us not only about what interpretation is and its elements, but they also give us a way to explain the outcomes of interpretive programmes. The theories direct our eyes to what needs to be measured in a given evaluation and how those results should be understood and documented. Such evaluations give us the best way to determine if the interpretive methods have worked and whether the impacts were significant. Heritage interpretation is unlikely to advance in LAC without the adequate application of substantiated theoretical foundations, research and evaluations.

The vision of the future of heritage interpretation is encouraging. When they first hear about interpretive communication, many in the social and natural sciences almost immediately see how interesting, logical and powerful it sounds, and how it far exceeds what one-way didactic discourse can achieve. However, as scientists, their recognition of these things naturally leads to questions such as: how does one prepare an effective interpretive programme? What exactly is the objective or desired outcome? How do we verify the results and impact? Those questions are important for interpretation programme planning, which represents one of the most important aspects of effective implementation of communication techniques for the interpretation of heritage. Although interpretive planning is complex, it will undoubtedly be better able to meet the challenge that interpretation faces in the responsible management of natural and cultural heritage if it is informed by research.

The importance of physical space as a 'container' for communicating interpretive themes is fundamental to achieving a compelling interpretation of heritage. Spaces range from the minimal space where a visitor and a given interpretation product meet. Through ingenious use and design by the architects, they can grow into a much larger space, potentially integrating towns and cities that are themselves immersed in a natural and cultural landscape – becoming spaces within spaces, which results in an exciting set of containers and contents to interpret heritage more comprehensively and in an integrated way.

Containers and content are concepts that seem very relevant to us, and cannot be considered in isolation. For a good understanding of the interpretive message, the spatial quality of where it is conveyed must consider details such as comfort and cleanliness for a good interpretive experience. The public space and facilities where interpretation takes

place – say visitor centres, museums and buildings of exceptional value – make up heritage sites, containers of history, the significance and essence of the interpretative message (the content) created especially according to the theme of the site and its strategic objectives.

Seeing the territory holistically allows us to craft quality, thought-provoking interpretive themes. For example, observing the beautiful city of San Miguel de Allende in Mexico from above, the urban landscape is a historical heritage coexisting with modern architecture. It is rich interpretive content contained in a magnificent city – the container – symbolically. The importance of the natural and cultural value of the city can be best understood through locally relevant interpretive themes created collaboratively by all the actors, which include the people and the sectors involved in city management and planning.

Figure 6. Aerial view of San Miguel de Allende, Mexico, 2022. (Photo: Orlando Araque.)

As in many other aspects of the safeguarding, conservation and maintenance of heritage, interpretation implies knowledge of the resource and the context that gives rise to and values it. It is about recognizing both the attributes of cultural property and the values it encompasses and promotes. It is feasible to be preserved and recover within a process of interpretation and communication of the theme addressed and according to the time. This way, exploring potential communication strategies to reach the intended audience with those relevant themes is necessary.

Despite the protection afforded by national and international legislation, the cultural heritage of LAC remains severely affected by the illicit trafficking of natural heritage, fuelled by international demand and extreme poverty. Haiti and other Caribbean islands are an example of that. An interpreter in Mexico reported that he had asked people living in areas with ongoing projects for the protection of endangered species why they were not cooperating and continuing to illegally sell the very protected specimen. They responded that it was because there are people who will pay for it, and they need the money. Again, if heritage does not mean anything significant to people, they will not value it and will not do anything about it. If their heritage is not strongly relevant to them, they will not be motivated to help safeguard it. This recognition makes us ponder potential strategies to benefit local peoples and their heritage resources. One strategy is employing heritage interpretation programmes that successfully encourage the participation of the local population to find sustainable advantages and economic opportunities in heritage resource protection.

Most would agree that it is crucial to design and implement community interpretive programmes to increase public awareness of the value of heritage and to promote greater knowledge of the heritage represented at the site and of the actions that local people can take for the benefit of all. At the same time, we should be working to create more opportunities for local people to participate in and benefit from the local economy.

- *Heritage interpretation will be relevant as nature and culture mean something in people's lives*

The professional practice of heritage interpretation in LAC has emerged in four primary contexts: 1) environmental interpretation in natural areas; 2) as a component of ecotourism; 3) the interpretation of the historical and cultural heritage that, although scarce, has begun to appear since around 2007; and 4) in museums, zoos, botanical gardens and aquariums.

Natural resources as well as tangible and intangible heritage are not 'fixed paintings', and people are not following an exact way of thinking and functioning as if they were programmed robots. On the contrary, people's minds are full of perceptions, imagination, emotions and feelings based on their individual lives and experiences. It has been said that heritage interpretation is a social actor searching for ways to motivate people to benefit both themselves and the planet, encouraging a sense of union, understanding and peace, together with the recognition of the value of culture and nature that allows a richer enjoyment of life itself. Yes, 'heritage interpretation' always implies both nature and culture. They are inseparable.

References

AIP (Asociación para la Interpretación del Patrimonio). n.d. Interpretación. Oleiros, Spain, AIP. Available at: https://interpretaciondelpatrimonio.com/interpretacion/ (accessed 16 October 2022). (In Spanish.)

Beck, L. and Cable, T. T. 2002. *Interpretation for the 21st Century: Fifteen Guiding Principles for Interpreting Nature and Culture*, 2nd edn. Champaign, IL, Sagamore Publishing.

Brunelli, M. 2019. *Monografía acerca de los orígenes de la interpretación del patrimonio en los Estados Unidos (1872-1920). Boletín de Interpretación*, No. 40. Available at: https://boletin.interpretaciondelpatrimonio.com/index.php/boletin/article/view/390. (In Spanish.)

Etecé. 2022. América Latina. *Concepto*. Available at: https://concepto.de/america-latina/ (accessed 27 August 2022). (In Spanish.)

Galeano, E. 2018. *Las venas abiertas de América Latina*. Buenos Aires, Siglo Veintiuno Editores. (In Spanish.)

Ham, S. H. 1992. *Interpretación Ambiental – Una Guía Práctica para Gente con Grandes Ideas y Presupuestos Pequeños*. Golden, CO, Fulcrum Publishing. (In Spanish.)

Ham, S. H. 2007a. Can interpretation really make a difference? Answers to four questions from cognitive and behavioral psychology. *Proceedings of the Interpreting World Heritage Conference*, Vancouver, Canada, 25–29 March, pp. 42–52.

Ham, S. H. 2007b. ¿Puede la Interpretación marcar una diferencia? Respuestas a cuatro preguntas de psicología cognitiva y del comportamiento. *Boletín de Interpretación*, No. 17, pp. 10–16. (In Spanish.)

Ham, S. H. 2009. From interpretation to protection: is there a theoretical basis? *Journal of Interpretation Research*, Vol. 14, No. 2, pp. 49–57.

Ham, S. H. 2011. The ask – or is it the offer? In M. Honey (ed.), *Travelers' Philanthropy Handbook*. Washington, DC, Center for Responsible Travel, pp. 141–49.

Ham, S. H. 2013. *Interpretation: Making a Difference on Purpose*. Golden, CO, Fulcrum Publishing.

Ham, S. H. and Ham, B. 2010. *The 2010 Lindblad Expedition–National Geographic Fund for Galápagos Campaign: Report of Research Findings and Recommended Communication Strategy*. New York and Washington, DC, Lindblad Expeditions and National Geographic Society.

Hervías Beorlegui, J. J. 2016. Interpretación del Patrimonio a través del Análisis de las Técnicas utilizadas en el Museo de Jamtli. Ph.D. thesis, University of Barcelona. Available at: https://www.tdx.cat/bitstream/handle/10803/400093/JJHB_TESIS.pdf?sequence=1. (In Spanish.)

ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites). 1999. *International Charter on Cultural Tourism: Managing Tourism at Places of Heritage Significance*. Available at: https://www.icomos.org/images/DOCUMENTS/Charters/INTERNATIONAL_CULTURAL_TOURISM_CHARTER.pdf (accessed 27 September 2022).

ICOMOS. 2008. *ICOMOS Charter for the Interpretation and Presentation of Cultural Heritage Sites*. Available at: http://icip.icomos.org/downloads/ICOMOS_Interpretation_Charter_ENG_04_10_08.pdf.

ICOMOS. 2021. *Latin American Forum on Heritage at Risk in a People Centered Approach*. Available at: https://www.icomos.org/en/about-icomos/committees/latin-america-caribbean-lac-group/93672-weben (accessed 12 November 2022).

Izarraraz, M. A. J. 2019. Interpretación del patrimonio cultural: el arte de presentar gente a otra gente. *CR: Conservación y Restauración*, Vol. 19, pp. 9–28. Available at: https://revistas.inah.gob.mx/index.php/cr/article/view/15809 (accessed 27 September 2022). (In Spanish.)

Juarrero de Varona, C. A. and Martínez Montero, R. 2003. El camino de la interpretación en Cuba. *Boletín de Interpretación*, No. 8, pp. 4–6. Available at: https://boletin.interpretaciondelpatrimonio.com/index.php/boletin/article/view/98/98 (accessed 27 September 2022). (In Spanish.)

Merriman, T. and Brochu, L. 2004. Twelve trends in the interpretive profession. *Journal of Interpretation Research*, Vol. 9, No. 2, pp. 65–71. https://doi.org/10.1177/109258720400900207.

Mexico. Presidency of the Republic EPN. 2014. Características de los Estados Latinoamericanos y Caribeños. 29 January. Available at: https://www.gob.mx/epn/articulos/caracteristicas-de-los-estados-latinoamericanos-y-caribenos (accessed 27 August 2022).

Moore, A. 1989. *Manual para la capacitación del personal de áreas protegidas*. Washington, DC, US National Park Service, Office of International Affairs. (In Spanish.)

Moore, A. 1993. *Manual para la capacitación del personal de áreas protegidas (Modulo C)*. Washington, DC, US National Park Service, Office of International Affairs. (In Spanish.)

Morales, J. 1989. Un Recorrido por la Interpretación. In *Informe del Taller Internacional sobre Interpretación Ambiental en Áreas Silvestres Protegidas, Parque Nacional Puyehue, Osorno, Chile, 6–12 de diciembre de 1988*, RLAC/89/21 PARA 29. Santiago, Chile, FAO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean. (In Spanish.)

Morales, J. 1992. *Manual para la interpretación ambiental en áreas silvestres protegidas*. Project FAO/PNUMA. Technical document no. 8, FP 6105 85 01. Santiago, Chile, FAO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean. (In Spanish.)

Morales, J. 2022. *Interpretación del Patrimonio – El arte de acercar el legado natural y cultural al público visitante*, 3rd edn. Valdivia, Chile, CEA Ediciones. (In Spanish.)

Oltremari Arregui, J. 1975. La Interpretación y el Desarrollo de los Parques Nacionales. *Bosque*, Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 28–32. https://doi.org/10.4206/bosque.1975.v1n1-05. (In Spanish.)

Pellegrini Blanco, N. C. and Reyes Gil, R. E. 2007. Programa de interpretación ambiental en la Universidad Simón Bolívar: Sus recursos, su cultura y su historia. *Educere*, Vol. 11, No. 39, pp. 605–11. Available at: http://ve.scielo.org/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1316-49102007000400004&lng=es&tlng=es (accessed 27 September 2022). (In Spanish.)

Tilden, F. 1957. *Interpreting Our Heritage: Principles and Practices for Visitor Services in Parks, Museums, and Historic Places*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.

Tilden, F. 2006. *La interpretación de nuestro patrimonio*, 1st Spanish edn. Trans. and ed. AIP. Oleiros, Spain, AIP.

UNESCO. 1972. *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage*. Available at: https://whc.unesco.org/archive/convention-en.pdf.

UNESCO. 1982. *1982–2000: de MONDIACULT a 'Nuestra diversidad creativa'*. Available at: https://ich.unesco.org/es/1982-2000-00309#1982-mondiacult-mexico (accessed 16 October 2022). (In Spanish.)

UNESCO. 2022. *Los Estados adoptan una Declaración histórica en favor de la cultura*. Available at: https://www.unesco.org/es/articles/mondiacult-2022-los-estados-adoptan-una-declaracion-historica-en-favor-de-la-cultura (accessed 16 October 2022). (In Spanish.)

UNESCO World Heritage Centre. n.d. *Latin America and the Caribbean*. Available at: https://whc.unesco.org/en/lac/ (accessed 27 September 2022).

UNESCO World Heritage Centre. 2014. Action Plan for World Heritage in Latin America and the Caribbean (PARALC, 2014-2024). Annex to *Report on Periodic Reporting in all other regions*, WHC-14/38.COM/10B.

UNICEF and FUNPROEIB Andes. 2009. *Atlas sociolingüístico de pueblos indígenas en América Latina y el Caribe*. Available at: https://www.unicef.org/lac/informes/atlas-sociolinguistico-de-pueblos-indigenas-en-ALC (accessed 27 August 2022). (In Spanish.)

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the Cultural Heritage Administration of the Republic of Korea for their support for publishing this edited volume to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the UNESCO World Heritage Convention. The concept of this book was initiated by the International Centre for the Interpretation and Presentation of World Heritage Sites under the auspices of UNESCO (WHIPIC). All managerial and administrative works that followed were systematically completed by the staff at the Centre.

We are grateful to Neil Silberman for his review and insightful comments on the chapters. We also thank the contributors who were willing to develop their ideas and thoughts into the more concrete reflections on the burgeoning field of heritage interpretation and presentation. We appreciate their commitment to this project on top of their regular work.

Index

- Page numbers in **bold** denote photographs
- Page numbers in *italics* denote tables, graphs and other graphics

A

B

C

D

E

F

G

H

I

J

K

L

M

N

O

P

Q

R

S

T

U

V

W

X

Y

Publisher
Chae Su-hee (Director General, WHIPIC)

Publication Secretariat
International Centre for the Interpretation and Presentation of World Heritage Sites under the auspices of UNESCO (WHIPIC)
3rd Floor, 2107, Hannuri-daero, Sejong-si, 30150, Republic of Korea
Tel. +82 44 251 1000
Email. whipic@unesco-whipic.org

Editor-in-Chief
Neil Asher Silberman

Editorial Director
Shim Hae-ree

Editorial Staff
Kim Hwa-jung, Cho Soo-been

Copy Editor
Joe Haining

Proofreader and Indexer
Allison McKechnie

Design
Graphic Korea

Published on 30 December, 2022

ISBN 979-11-980698-7-0 (paperback)
979-11-980698-8-7 (online resource)

World Heritage :

50 Years and Moving Forward

95300
9 791198 069887
ISBN 979-11-980698-8-7 (EPUB2)