

ABSTRACT

This thesis deals with a specific group of historical sites called World Heritage, which are registered on the UNESCO World Heritage List. It characterizes the basic elements of the UNESCO World Heritage idea as a cultural and social process, which engages in acts of remembering that work to create ways to understand, present and interpret the past within the present social frameworks. The thesis brings to the attention a range of viewpoints about the nature of heritage in general and the UNESCO World Heritage in specific that have emerged in the relatively new area of academic interdisciplinary heritage studies. For the purposes of exploring different aspects of the World Heritage phenomenon, following themes of heritage discourse have been developed: remembering and making public use of the past, the UNESCO approach and the ways of presenting and interpreting the past. In order to give a sense of what World Heritage looks like on the ground this thesis details some aspects of three different World Heritage sites. To study such matters in the physical world a strategy of undertaking case studies of three specific UNESCO sites and employing the methods of direct observation and a fieldwork were chosen. Closer examinations of the Czech medieval town of Kutná Hora, the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park in Japan and the archaeological site of the Roman Villa del Casale in Sicily as individual UNESCO sites shed light on the matter of presenting and interpreting the past within the UNESCO commemorative narrative framework of the human past. These three case study investigations show three singular ways of approaching the past and of being a UNESCO site.

Key words: heritage, presenting and interpreting the past, UNESCO, World Heritage, UNESCO World Heritage sites