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**UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITES:
WAYS OF PRESENTING & INTERPRETING THE PAST**
As seen in: Kutná Hora, Hiroshima and Villa Romana del Casale
**SVĚTOVÉ DĚDICTVÍ UNESCO:
ZPŮSOBY PREZENTACE A INTERPRETACE MINULOSTI**
Na příkladech: Kutná Hora, Hirošima a Villa Romana del Casale

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Defining research

At the beginning of this research there was an interest in historical monuments and heritage in general, above all in those termed World Heritage and registered on the UNESCO World Heritage List. Heritage sites were understood to be places of some sort of a testimony to the past. Inspired by the collective memory thesis of Maurice Halbwachs and the places of memory concept of Pierre Nora, heritage sites were to be perceived as sources of remembering the past, where the past itself was grounded, concreted, expressed, produced, presented and interpreted. Special concern was given to the ways of presenting and interpreting the past at such sites. UNESCO was seen as a manipulator of the past, in that it was not simply preserving, conserving and restoring the heritage and its past but also it was seen to be re-creating it. Desiring to study such matters in a physical world the research proceeded to a case study approach by examining, one by one, three different cultural World Heritage sites in different geographical and cultural settings and observing the ways of presenting and interpreting their past.

Three various modes of being a UNESCO World Heritage site in the examples of the Czech historical town of Kutná Hora, the atomic-bombed city of Hiroshima and the archaeological site of the ancient Villa Romana del Casale in Sicily were explored. The choice of case studies was led by the UNESCO's proclaimed ideal of 'thinking globally' and by the recent central concept of diversity. Therefore the case studies represent diversity in terms of historical period, geographical location, heritage type, cultural setting, etc. Following UNESCO's policy the case studies are meant to show the diversity in any of its possible aspects and in different cultural contexts around the globe. Thus the aim of the thesis is to keep the variation between the cases and show the differences between the countries and the sites in order to contribute to the understanding of how World Heritage works in different kinds of settings and environments.

As the matter of remembering, presenting and interpreting the past is connected by its nature to the historical sites, the research is primarily concerned with sites listed as cultural heritage. Since UNESCO is putting together individual commemorative narratives into one single commemorative narrative of the world's past, this thesis analyses three UNESCO cultural World Heritage sites as three individual commemorative narratives that connect each part to a global whole. For such purposes, the research brings up three historically and culturally different cultural World Heritage sites, not comparable in terms of category, size, location or geographical condition, presented historical period or etc. and investigates how World Heritage is constructed in these particular settings.

By observing and analysing local attitudes to these heritage sites and the ways of presenting and interpreting them it is possible to assess how these sites and regions make use of the past. It can be seen that they all have also attempted to display their cultural heritage as a marketable value. Focus is on different modes of being a World Heritage site examining three various cultural heritages: the gothic town of Kutná Hora, representing architectural heritage, the Peace Memorial Park in Hiroshima, as a representative of non-material aspects of cultural heritage and the ancient Roman villa del Casale in Sicily, illustrating archaeological heritage.

The research design is based on a descriptive multiple case studies method in which the anthropological history logic has been applied. This complex research strategy is focused on a detailed examination and description of three individual UNESCO World Heritage sites and the way the past is presented and interpreted there. The case study serves as an inquiry that investigates this contemporary phenomenon of UNESCO WH sites within their real life context covering contextual conditions and relying on multiple sources of evidence. The method serves the aim of understanding these heritage sites in their originality and complexity. In a way our case studies are explorative, descriptive and explanatory all at the same time. The aspiration is to explore the structure of the ways of presenting the site and interpreting its past in their specific cultural contexts while describing, as much as possible, the concrete, in situ appearances and with the help of this to give an explanation of the individual case.

In a certain way the individual case studies have been isolated for the purposes of comparison, which means they have been taken from the whole of their developmental context and only certain aspects of their context have been studied. Because the cases were not studied in their totality, the research is dedicated to analysing only its immediate context, which is used in understanding the whole. This supposes a certain limited selection of details. By comparing three cases stemming from different contexts, the aim of this operation is to bring out the similarities and differences. The stress is put on the cases themselves and the contrasts between and among them that underline the uniqueness of each. Such exploration of the unique features leads to a kind of descriptive holism rather than framing new theories or hypothesis or explanatory problems.

The case studies are based on a variety and plurality of sources. Among the most influential ones that stand out is the direct observation practice together with a qualitative content analysis.

The thesis contains two parts. The first part provides a theoretical bases and context for the second practical part which introduces the individual case studies. Part one,

discusses the role of the past and heritage in contemporary society. Firstly, it briefly reviews theories and concepts of the public remembering the past and defines the relationship between the past, history, memory and heritage. Then the focus is also on the matter of heritage practice and use, relating to the issues of heritage values, heritage interpretation, heritage preservation or the tourism and heritage business. The following provides an analysis of the UNESCO World Heritage idea and system. Attention is given to the historical background and the development of the World Heritage strategy. The institutional framework is talked over and then the discussion is brought over to the definitions, criteria and categories of World Heritage.

Part two of the thesis shifts the focus to the local level of the three UNESCO World Heritage sites and the manner in which they tell their past stories. Moreover, these sites are put in the context of their heritage category and their inclusion on the World Heritage List. These chapters illustrate some of the cultural specifications and heritage perceptions of given countries. The purpose of this part is to give an account of presentations of the past connected with these sites, including the UNESCO official production, the academic history frame and most of all the in situ presentations and interpretation. An examination of the various meanings associated with those heritage sites follows. A comparative analysis of these individual case studies is given at the end leading to some of the conclusions.

Research results

The three case studies of the three different UNESCO World Heritage sites chosen for this thesis showed spatial, temporal, categorical and cultural variety and mutability. One site was located in the Czech Republic, one in Japan, and the last one was in Sicily; three different countries and cultures with their own distinct heritage settings. There were three variant placements for the heritage sites: one was the historical centre of a town, the second was located in the very centre of a big city and the last one lied in the outskirts of a small town. The case studies presented three miscellaneous heritage types: the first one was a group of architectural monuments, the second one was a single monument in torso state which represented the intangible form of heritage, and the last one was an archeological site. The three sites presented different historical periods and pasts: one brought the medieval and rather distant past, the second took in recent modern history, and the last one recalled a very distant past from ancient times. Their interpretation and presentation settings also varied.

The case studies represented three individual spatial strategies that helped to maintain collective awareness of the past in a society and that related to the ways of

presenting and interpreting the past. The presentation and interpretation of the past via heritage encompasses a variety of actions like: the preservation of monuments and sites (seen in all three case studies); the reconstruction of perished buildings and sites (seen in Kuntá Hora and at the Villa Romana); leaving debris in their authentic torso states (seen in Hiroshima); the erection of memorials (seen in Hiroshima); urban planning (seen in Hiroshima); the setting up of signboards and information panels (seen in all the three cases

In the matter of presentation, all three case studies show the effort of the World Heritage sites to present themselves as unique and original places on their own in order to clearly distinguish their own pasts. The common rationale of a heritage presentation, focuses thus on what is special, unique and particular about a site. It draws attention to and stresses the differences rather than the similarities. On this point the presentation model can seemingly appear to be inconsistent with the WHL and UNESCO's unifying tendencies. To overcome this methodological disbalance UNESCO adopted the 'unity in diversity' formula and the concept of 'cultural diversity as the common heritage of humanity' in the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity in 2001.

Remembering, presenting and interpreting the past can lead to creating a memoryscape which can be considered as a specific type of spatial strategy. Particular sites, objects and pictures are given importance and made into symbols that convey the past which is thus becoming localized. These sites, objects and pictures gain various intensities of importance. It is possible to compare it to a hierarchical structure where one or a few sites, objects or pictures represent central symbols which have stronger intensity and significance than the sublevels of other sites grouped around them and are used with objects and pictures that symbolize a lower order. There is usually one or a few central phenomena from which the other remembering figures stem. Such spatial practices structure the conditions of social life. In this way, to some extent, social memory is spatially constituted.

History is a very strong component in the presentation of a site. It tends to be cumulative and to include everything. But the presentations and interpretations are selective, they highlight just one or only a few aspects and for this purpose a few catchwords are developed. These catchwords are used repeatedly and are intended to evoke, express and represent the overall story of whichever past is associated with the site. The catchwords are there to integrate the whole site with its past into a single frame. In Kutná Hora these catchwords are: 'medieval town' and 'silver mining'. The catchwords in Hiroshima are: 'atom bombing' and 'peace'. In the case of the Villa Romana they are: 'mosaics' and 'Roman villa'.

UNESCO claims to provide leadership and guidance across the world in the search for international agreements and cooperations. In doing so it has produced the World Heritage concept, which can be seen as a kind of common project focused on the future. As the present time is often thought to be an epoch that lacks projects for the future, this could be a contributory factor towards the inclination of the World Heritage idea. Through World Heritage inscriptions UNESCO brings in multiple ways of knowing, explaining and of being in the world by relating to one own's past. The World Heritage List combines individual commemorative narratives into one, big, master commemorative narrative of the whole of the human past. Here again the cultural diversity approach and the 'unity in diversity' motto are to be pointed out. The World Heritage List brings together a collection of local memories from all over the world. It gives space to how people remember and how they construct the past through memory and remembering and not only through academic history.

In some aspects World Heritage is a political issue. As the selection process of heritage sites for the World Heritage List is driven by the diplomatic negotiations of member state delegations and by a country's political influence, World Heritage is a subject for politicization. Political interests play a role here and are one of the shaping factors in decision making activities concerning heritage as global public goods.

UNESCO and the World Heritage Centre function as opinion makers in heritage discourse and as such contribute to shaping national heritage practices. It is possible to see this, for example, in how the states are expanding their perceptions of heritage in the direction of incorporating and giving attention to new heritage categories such as the industrial, intangible, technological, agricultural or modern. The question is to what extent is this due to the efforts of the state to get its heritage sites on the WHL? Inasmuch as UNESCO policy prefers the inscriptions of 'unrepresented heritage' (industrial, cultural landscapes, cultural routes, technological, agricultural, military, modern, etc.) in order to better reflect the full spectrum, the state parties search for these types of sites in their territories and recognize them as such in order to be able to put them on their tentative lists to be submitted for nomination for inscription on the WHL.

In the matter of creating presentations and interpretations of the site, the heritage institutional authority is always present if the site has been claimed as a national heritage - in UNESCO World Heritage cases, the site is typically a national heritage. The amount of input from the municipality depends on various factors among which are: the pursued policy; the orientation towards tourism, the role the site plays in the current identification process; proactive involvement of local community and the existence of leaders and interest groups focused on topics

related to the heritage; the personal predispositions and preferences of the municipal representatives; the presence and intentions of investors and others. The case studies showed that both approaches, the top-down (coming from UNESCO or state) as well as the bottom-up (coming from the local community) usually operate together but a predominance of one or the other side can occur and can also change over time. At the Villa Romana the prevailing source of presentation and interpretation is the state via the local heritage institutional body. In Hiroshima it is the municipality, local interest groups and institutions established both by the municipality (e.g. peace museum, peace foundation, peace institute) and the state (memorial hall). The situation in Kutná Hora is something in between and supremacy is difficult to identify as both the municipality, with local heritage agents, and the state institutional heritage bodies are of similar intensity and scope in their involvement.

The World Heritage designation is not intended as a marketing device, but it can be seen in that way. From a touristic perspective, the World Heritage status acts as an international top brand, sites are also, perhaps, seen as a collectable set. From this point of view many see UNESCO as a trademark and there is a frequent claim that an inscription on the WHL generally increases the numbers of visitors and the amounts they spend at the site. Based on given statistical data the visitor rates at Kutná Hora, Hiroshima and Villa Romana all went up after their designations. But the question is whether the numbers would not have grown anyway and whether it is possible to efficiently evaluate the impact of the inscriptions in this sense. It should be taken into account that the World Heritage designation is only one of many factors influencing visitation and expenditure at particular sites and that attempting to tease out its particular contribution is complicated and perhaps dubious.

In conclusion, the thesis has brought some partial results and insights. However, the research had its limits and its shortcomings which prevent a holistic understanding of UNESCO's World Heritage. Further research at more sites in other countries, developing countries in particular, would be favourable for its continuation.

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Research projects, teaching, conferences

- 2009-2010 Charles University, Faculty of Arts project on space perception in historical perspective
- 2010-2011 Lecturer in ERAMUS history course 'Comparative history of Europe'
- 2012 Speaker and a session organizer at 11th International Conference of Urban History in Prague
Session *Cities of Memories: Aerial Attacks of WWII as Localized Lieux de Memoire*
Paper *The 'Peace City of Hiroshima' Project: Building a New City and Creating a Place of Memory*
- 2013 Speaker at conference "Třebíč – 10 let v elitní společnosti UNESCO" in Třebíč
Paper *Hirošima jako světové dědictví UNESCO*
- 2013 Speaker at AISU (Associazione Italiana di Storia Urbana) conference in Catania
Paper *La città di Kutná Hora: il patrimonio mondiale UNESCO e la rappresentazione della storia urbana*
- 2014 Session organizer at 12th International Conference of Urban History in Lisboa
Session *When UNESCO Comes to Town: World Heritage Cities in Historical Perspectives*
- Since 2014 Interdisciplinary applied research specialist for the ESF projects on regional development

Research and study visits

- 2010 Waseda University, Tokyo (4 months)
- 2011-2012 Università di Catania (4 months)

Academic societies, research associations membership

- since 2012 ČSUS, Česká společnost pro urbánní studia
(Czech Society for Urban Studies)
- since 2016 Anthropictures, Studio antropologického výzkumu
(Independent anthropological studio)

Articles, Reviews

'Hirošima jako světové dědictví UNESCO' in: *Třebíč. 10 let v elitní společnosti. Sborník příspěvků ke konferenci, Třebíč, 2013, p. 20-21.*

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