

CONFERENCE REPORT:

THE MISSING, MEMORY AND SITES OF CONSCIENCE

SARAJEVO, 8-10 MAY 2011

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. On 8-10 May 2011, the International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP) together with the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience (ICSC) held a two-day conference on *the Missing, Memory and Sites of Conscience*. This conference was a follow-up to the conference on *Promoting a Holistic Approach to Memorials and Remembrance* held in December 2010 where ICMP opened a debate among family associations of the missing and civil society from across the Western Balkans on post-conflict memorialization. For the second conference on memorialization, ICMP and ICSC gathered representatives of family associations of the missing and civil society organizations working on dealing with the past from the Western Balkans, as well as experts from Argentina, Chile, Northern Ireland and South Africa.
2. Bringing together representatives of victims groups, including representatives of families of persons missing as a result of armed conflict and from different national and religious backgrounds, the conference provided an important opportunity to share experiences and discuss in a collective, holistic manner how to commemorate victims of atrocities that took place and that resulted in loss of life and disappearances. The conference succeeded in its objectives of bringing together diverse victims groups and family associations of the missing from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Croatia and deliberating and ultimately determining what the goals of a process of memorialization of the missing should be, as well as the principles that should guide such a process.
3. The first day of the conference consisted of presentations from international experts. Bonita Bennett, Director of South Africa's District Six Museum told the conference about forced removals and social oppression in South Africa during the apartheid era and the way that the District Six Museum commemorates this painful period of the country's history. Kate Turner, Director of the "Healing Through Remembering" project discussed dealing with the legacy of Northern Ireland's violent past. Margarita Romero, President of the Villa Grimaldi Park for Peace Corporation from Chile, and Gonzalo Conte, Coordinator of the Topography of Memory Program at Memoria Abierta in Argentina, presented their work on remembering victims and crimes committed during the Pinochet regime in Chile and the period of "state" terrorism in Argentina respectively.
4. The second day of the conference was focused on local memorialization initiatives in the Western Balkans. On this day victims' groups and family associations from the Western Balkans presented their own initiatives and projects. In addition ICMP presented its report "Promoting a Holistic Approach to Memorials and Remembrance" from the regional conference held in December 2010 in cooperation with UNDP. Following the presentations, the conference participants splintered into working groups to discuss two key questions: a) Long term, what do we want to achieve by a process of memorialization of the missing? and b) What principles should guide a process of memorialization?
5. This brief report summarizes the discussion and key conclusions from the conference working groups. In short, although working separately from each other, each of the three working groups reached conclusions concerning memorialization that were strikingly similar. Working Group I concluded: "A central monument or memorial to all civilian victims of war at the state level should be built." Working Group II reached the following conclusion: "A memorial to all civilian victims of war from the former Yugoslavia – the same memorial in various cities in the region, such as Zagreb, Sarajevo, Belgrade – might be considered an appropriate form of memorialization that would send a strong message to society." Working Group III reached the following conclusion: "The issue of missing persons is a joint problem; it would therefore be appropriate to have a joint memorial to all missing persons from the region, which would serve as a symbol of reconciliation." The goals of a joint memorial to the missing are to acknowledge and honor the victims, and to help future generations to remember the past and to learn from it so that what happened never happens again – never again.

II. WORKING GROUP I

2.1. Day 1, May 9th 2011, facilitated by: Amela Suljic, ICMP

2.1.1. Participants

1. Amela Medjuseljac, Association “Women victims of War”
2. Melika Merdzic, Association “Women victims of War”
3. Damian Brkovic, Humanitarian Law Center
4. Aleksandra Nedzi, Academic tutor, Center for Interdisciplinary Studies University of Sarajevo
5. Semina Alekic, Organization of Families of Killed Captured and Missing persons “Vrbanja”, Kotor Varos
6. Sabaheta Fejzic “Association “Mothers of Srebrenica and Zepa Enclaves”
7. Mehmed Music, Association for tracing captured and missing from Hadzici
8. Zekija Avdibegovic, Family Association of missing persons of Municipality Ilijas
9. Muradif Burekovic, Association of Families of Captured and Missing Persons “ Kalesija 92-95”
10. Safija Hrinjic, Association of Families of Captured and Missing Persons Bosniaks “Prozor 92-95”
11. Gonzalo Conte, International Coalition for Sites and Conscience (ICSC)
12. Margarita Romero, ICSC

2.1.2. Notes and conclusions from the discussion

6. There is an absence of recognition or acknowledgement of war victims by society: it is important that such recognition become visible within society.
7. In some cases, the government of Bosnia and Herzegovina (in both entities) does not allow the marking of sites of suffering.
8. Victims must have the right to reparations as well as the right to document memory.
9. Existing laws should be used to preserve places of mass killings and torture.
10. Sites of mass killings and mass graves from which missing persons have been exhumed should be commemorated at least twice a year. In doing so we (family associations of the missing) exercise pressure on state authorities to take a pro-active role in memorialization and processes aiming at dealing with the past.
11. Our goal is to build a society that will honor all victims equally: the example of the memorial to civilian victims in Brcko is unique in that it pays tribute to all victims from Brcko. Although, by decision of the international community, the memorial does not include the names of victims.
12. It is necessary to include experts from different fields: historians, architects, academics and to create linkages with them.
13. If victims do not have space to tell their story, they might do so using the Internet. In Argentina, Memoria Abierta created a space similar to the courtroom and collected information in the same way as the court. Memoria Abierta brings historians, social workers, psychologist and victims to a space where they can tell their stories.
14. It is important to create a memory roadmap, recognition, and good practices and establish close cooperation with politicians.

15. In order to be independent and to have a long-term perspective, it is critical to establish a means of funding the marking of sites of suffering and the entire process. Who will provide financial support for that? In Villa Grimaldi (Chile) staff worked on a voluntary basis for 15 years until the government agreed to provide financial support.
16. It is important to prevent the destruction of houses where war crimes were committed and protect them from degradation.
17. It is important to create a space or spaces, or a museum, (in different places in Bosnia and Herzegovina or in the region of the Western Balkans) where the artifacts and evidence from the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia will be kept.
18. We (family associations of the missing) should create dialogue and include representatives of human rights associations and activists in the process, and we should share experiences with foreign experts.

2.2. Day 2, May 10th 2011, facilitated by: Amela Suljic, ICMP

2.2.1. Participants

1. Gonzalo Conte, ICSC
2. Margarita Romero, ICSC
3. Maria Musi, PhD candidate
4. Saida Karabasic, Association "Izvor", Prijedor
5. Semina Alekic, Organization of Families of Killed Captured and Missing persons "Vrbanja", Kotor Varos
6. Aida Mustacevic, Association "Viva zene" Tuzla
7. Branko Jurisic, Association "Serb National Council", Zagreb
8. Sead Golic, FA for Tracing Missing and Killed Bosniaks of District Brcko
9. Zerina Zukic, ICRC
10. Goran Bubalo, CRS
11. Suzana Bozic, Caritas
12. Hatidza Mehmedovic, Association of Citizens "Mothers of Srebrenica"
13. Nura Begovic, Association of Citizens "Women of Srebrenica"
14. Safija Hrinjic, Association of Families of Captured and Missing Persons Bosniaks "Prozor 92-95"
15. Hasan Nuhanovic, Memorial Center Potocari
16. Admir Operta, member of the Expert working group on transitional justice (EWG)
17. Muradif Burekovic, Association of Families of Captured and Missing Persons "Kalesija 92-95"
18. Damian Brkovic, Humanitarian Law Center, Belgrade
19. Aleksandra Nedzi, Center for Interdisciplinary Studies University of Sarajevo
20. Salih Rasavac, Association "Corridor" Sarajevo
21. Sefika Muratagic, Association "Key of Future" Kljuc
22. Mehmed Music, Association for Tracing Captured and Missing from Hadzici

2.2.2. Conclusions

19. The whole group agreed that all 10 principles of memorialization (see annex I) are very important but they prioritized those which they thought better reflect their circumstances and needs:
 - **Memorials should reflect the needs of victim groups**
First of all, a monument or memorial has to be built to the victims. Before starting the creation of a memorial, it is necessary to discuss all elements with the victims, since they must be part

of the process.

- **Memorials should encourage dialogue**

A memorial should lead to dialogue. We (family associations of the missing) might use existing laws that regulate building monuments and memorials. We should draw on positive examples from the world. Memorials should educate the community, they should tell stories and encourage active learning from the past (e.g. Villa Grimaldi).

Before creating a memorial, a space must be opened to create a dialogue in order to express identity. Youth should be included in the dialogue.

- **A memorial should be open to multiple interpretations**

A memorial has to be open to multiple interpretations and its appearance should reflect a universal message that will be acceptable for all. A memorial has to present facts about the past, but should also be able to evolve over time and space. In this sense, it is important to determine to whom a memorial is dedicated.

- **A memorial should recognize the victims equally and respectfully**

Victims must feel the symbolism of the monument or memorial. It should remind them of their missing loved ones. A memorial has to have meaning for the victims.

In order for memorials to honor the victims, it is necessary to support projects and initiatives that include the wider community - especially the younger generation - in dialogue.

- **A memorial must not offend**

Memorials should be located sensitively in appropriate places. That is to say memorials to one community should not be placed in locations where people from another community were killed or were victims of torture. Places of mass killings must be preserved and protected by the state.

- **Others**

Legal frameworks for building memorials need to be improved so as to allow sites of mass killing, detention and torture to be commemorated.

A central monument or memorial to all civilian victims of war at the state level should be built. The goal is to force the government to take responsibility for crimes committed in the past and pay tribute to all victims.

The names of victims (missing, victims of torture and all innocent persons killed) and the names of the places of atrocities, places of execution, suffering and disappearance should be incorporated in the memorial.

III. WORKING GROUP II

3.1. Day 1, May 9th 2011, facilitated by: Viktorija Ruzicic-Tokic, ICMP

3.1.1. Participants

1. Boro Peulic, Republican Organization of Killed and Detained Soldiers and Missing Persons of RS
2. Veljko Lazic, Republican Organization of Killed and Detained Soldiers and Missing Persons of RS

3. Julijana Rosandic, Union of the Associations of Croatian Civilian Victims of Homeland War Croatia
4. Ljiljana Alvir, Parents and Families of Detained and Forcibly Taken Away Croatian Defenders "Vukovar Mothers"
5. Slavica Marinovic, Union of the Associations of Croatian Civilian Victims of Homeland War of Croatia
6. Refika Aliskovic, Association "Bridges of Friendship" Prijedor
7. Saida Karabasic, Association "Izvor" Prijedor
8. Zvonimir Kubinek, Association of Families of Croatian Defenders Fallen and Missing from Homeland War - Tuzla
9. Smilja Mitrovic, Association of Families of Missing Soldiers and Civilians of Semberija and Majevisa
10. Sead Golic, Association for tracing missing and killed Bosniaks of District Brcko, BiH
11. Hedija Kasapovic, Association of families of missing persons "Visegrad 92"
12. Hatidza Mehmedovic, FA "Mothers of Srebrenica"
13. Nura Begovic, FA "Women of Srebrenica"
14. Ahmet Grahic, Union of Bosniak Associations of Families of Captured and Missing Persons in Bosnia and Herzegovina
15. Elisabeth Silkes, ICSC
16. Bonita Bennett, District 6 Museum

3.1.2. Notes and Conclusions from the discussion

- One of the major issues in regard to memorials in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the region is physical access to sites. Some of the sites are now private property, e.g. Keraterm, Omarska and Trnopolje. The NGO Izvor, from Prijedor, hopes it will be able to obtain permanent access to these places in the future. But until then it plans to develop virtual online Keraterm, Omarska and Trnopolje sites, in the same way that the Memoria Abierta has done for sites of suffering, that is illegal detention centers, in Argentina.
- Sometimes transitional processes are sending alarming messages to victims and to society, for example when places of detention are transformed into public institutions.
- Participants agree that one of the principle messages that must be passed on to future generations is that such events should never happen again.
- We (family associations of the missing) in the region do not know where and how to look for donations. We should build capacities in this regard as well as in terms of how to "fight" for our rights; that is advocacy among state institutions and dealing with biased local authorities, etc.
- We have to learn from other projects, for example the Healing Through Remembering project in Northern Ireland; we have to learn how to disagree in a polite manner.
- There is a need to see good examples in other countries, but also good examples from the region should be presented abroad.

3.2. Day 2, May 10th 2011, facilitated by: Viktorija Ruzicic-Tokic, ICMP

3.2.1. Participants

1. Cedomir Maric, Association of Families of killed and Missing Persons "Suza"

2. Olgica Bozanic, Association of Families of Kidnapped and Missing Persons from Kosovo and Metohija
3. Josip Drzenjak, Association of Croat Victims Grabovica '93 Mostar
4. Mirjana Miodrag-Bozin, Association of Parents and Families of Imprisoned, Captured and Missing Persons of Serbia and Montenegro
5. Marin Brkic, Association for tracing missing and killed Bosniaks of Brcko District, BiH
6. Milorad Zimonjic, Association of killed and missing Serb soldiers and civilian victims of war of Brcko Municipality
7. Snezana Zdravkovic, Association of Families of Kidnapped and Killed Civilians, Soldiers and Policemen in Kosovo and Metohija 1998-20..
8. Marko Smokvina, Documenta Zagreb
9. Natasa Lambic, Organization "Women in Black" Belgrade
10. Zvonimir Kubinek, Association of Families of Croatian Defenders Fallen and Missing from Homeland War - Tuzla
11. Amra Pandzo, Association "Small steps" Sarajevo
12. Vera Jovanovic, Helsinki Committee BH
13. Milada Hodzic, Association "Izvor" Prijedor
14. Elisabeth Silkes, ICSC
15. Bonita Bennett, District 6 Museum

3.2.2. Notes and Conclusions from the discussion

- Within the working group, all three sub-groups agreed that the victims should be the focus when thinking of memorials. Memorials should encourage dialogue and should have an educational dimension.
- All 10 principles of memorialization (see annex I) are almost of the same importance. But when thinking of memorials the various forms should be considered because a memorial may not only be tangible (memorial plaques, monuments, memorial centers, etc.) but also intangible, such as networks of individuals engaged in an on-going process of discussion on how to deal with the past, such as the Healing Through Remembering project in Northern Ireland, or Memoria Abierta's virtual memorials that can be accessed online.
- All victims should be acknowledged.
- Brcko provides a good example of where memorials for Bosniak, Serb and Croat victims will be placed next to each other. In Brcko District, three associations are collaborating and supporting each other's work.
- A memorial to all civilian victims of war from the former Yugoslavia, the same memorial in various cities in the Region, such as Zagreb, Sarajevo, Belgrade, etc., might be considered as an appropriate form of memorialization that would send a strong message to society.

IV. WORKING GROUP III

4.1. Day 1, May 9th 2011, facilitated by: Matthew Holliday, ICMP

4.1.1. Participants

1. Branko Jurisic, Association "Serb National Council" Zagreb
2. Cedomir Maric, Association of Families of Killed and Missing Persons "Suza"

3. Ervin Blazevic, Association of citizens - Optimisti 2004
4. Kate Turner, Healing Through Remembering
5. Mirjana Miodrag Bozin, Association of Parents and Families of Imprisoned, Captured and Missing Persons of Serbia and Montenegro
6. Olgica Bozanic, Association of Families of Kidnapped and Missing Persons from Kosovo and Metohija
7. Sarafina Kolovrat, Association of Families of Fallen and Missing Defenders of Homeland War from Municipality Bugojno

4.1.2. Notes from the discussion

(Working Groups participants reflected on the Healing Through Remembering project presented by Kate Turner)

- Healing Through Remembering Healing Through Remembering, and by extension any memorialization process, is not about right and wrong, but a process of dealing with the past.
- Healing Through Remembering is a diverse members organization, gathering individuals from all manner of social backgrounds, political persuasions and religious faiths. It has strength in its diversity; this is key for any memorialization process since the more voices involved in the project the greater the sustainability of the results.
- Healing Through Remembering Board decisions are made by consensus. As a result it is very hard for politicians to ignore the Board's decisions because they are measured; they do not go too far, and reflect the opinion of all members no matter what their background.
- Civil society proposes, government disposes. The Healing Through Remembering project is trying to work out what should be done in terms of memory, but government should implement that. Healing Through Remembering is essentially a bottom-up discussion about what needs to be done in terms of memorialization as a part of a comprehensive process of dealing with the past. But there is a need for top-down action; government should implement the proposals of the Healing Through Remembering discussion group.
- The genesis of Healing Through Remembering. The project was not something that came about by decision. Rather it was something that "happened around us" because of a need to discuss how to deal with the past together.
- Healing Through Remembering in many ways follows the lead of Memoria Abierta (Argentina). It presents the horror of what happened in the past in a way that is not horrible, rather in a way that helps us to understand the past.
- On dealing with the past in Northern Ireland. Some say the conflict in Northern Ireland is over. Healing Through Remembering says no, it is not over, but has become less. At this point we are not going back to the situation as it was in the 70s, 80s or 90s. But the concern is that conflict will come back in a generation's time. Previous generations are gone so we cannot access and recover their memory. This, coupled with the fact that parents and grandparents are telling their children and grandchildren their, often tendentious, version of the past, gives cause for concern.
- It is okay to disagree. In Northern Ireland there is no consensus as to whether the conflict started 30 years ago, 80 years ago, or 400 years ago. Neither is their consensus on what name to give the conflict in Northern Ireland: the war, the troubles, the terrorist campaign. When consensus is illusive, Healing Through Remembering, recognizes that and moves forward. What is crucial though is that as many diverse voices as possible are included in the discussion

about how to deal with the past.

4.2. Day 2, May 10th 2011, facilitated by: Matthew Holliday, ICMP

4.2.1. Participants

1. Boro Peulic, Republican Organization of Killed and Detained Soldiers and Missing Persons of Republika Srpska, Republican Board of Families of Missing
2. Ema Cekic, Association of families of missing persons of Municipality Vogosca
3. Ervin Blazevic, Association of citizens - Optimisti 2004
4. Juliana Rosandic, Union of the Associations of Croatian Civilian Victims of Homeland War of Croatia
5. Kate Turner, Healing Through Remembering
6. Klaudia Kuljuh, ICMP
7. Maria O'reilly, PhD candidate, Kings College London
8. Milan Mandic, Association of Families of Missing Persons of Sarajevo-Romanija region
9. Veljko Lazic, Republican Organization of Killed and Detained Soldiers and Missing Persons of Republic Srpska
10. Zekija Avdibegovic, Association of Families of missing persons of Municipality Ilijas

4.2.2. Notes and Conclusions from the discussion

- Memorials should not offend. From the beginning of a memorial project it should be agreed among all parties that the memorial should not offend anyone.
- Families of missing persons need to discuss to find a common goal for a joint memorial.
- NGOs can't speak for the victims, only families of missing can.
- Families of missing persons have to convince authorities that we have to live together.
- Families of missing persons need to create conditions for raising memorials. But to do that there has to be a change in the attitude of politicians and the authorities.
- It is important that memorials are not vandalized.
- We should start small – through respectful discussion among families of missing persons. The steps are small, but they are steps.
- Dealing with the past takes time: Fascism in Germany was utterly defeated but only after 30 years of silence were sites of suffering marked.
- Witnesses of the past conflict are getting older and becoming ever fewer. Their testimonies are important so that memory is preserved.
- Memorialization is about acknowledging and honoring missing loved ones. That is the principle of a memorial.
- The dialogue that is taking place at the conference is the first step towards a memorial; and we are in fact already involved in a process of memorialization.

- **The Goals of a Joint Memorial to the Missing**

To acknowledge and honor the victims – the missing.

To help future generations to remember the past and to learn from it so that what happened in the past never happens again in the future.

- **A Joint Memorial to the Missing**

The issue of missing persons is a joint problem; it is therefore appropriate to build a joint memorial to all missing persons.

We should have a joint memorial to the missing. The Regional Coordination Board of Family Associations of the missing in the former Yugoslavia could have a role in developing a joint memorial to the missing, which would serve as a symbol of reconciliation.

- **Principles that ought to guide a process of memorialization**

Memorials should take into consideration the needs and desires of victims and the families of missing persons.

Memorials should encourage dialogue; memorials are not the end of the story but the start.

Memorials should be open; they should not exclude certain groups or memories, but incorporate them so that all families of the missing feel the memorial speaks for, and to, them.

Memorials should be able to evolve over time so that they can continue to engage and convey the past to future generations.

The process of developing memorials should involve victims and reflect their needs.

Memorials should not be offensive.

It is important to listen respectfully to the experience of others, even if we do not agree with what is said.

It is important to visit others' memorials.

- **Next Steps**

ICMP's Justice and Civil Society Initiatives plans to hold five low-key consultations with associations of families of the missing and NGOs in June and July 2011. The purpose of the consultations is to build on the momentum of the conference on the missing, memory and sites of conscience with a view to testing and building consensus in mono-ethnic forums on the conclusions and recommendations coming out of the conference. Such consensus will later feed back into a third regional conference on memory later this year. The consultations are intended to give family associations a safe space to have a frank and candid discussion about the conclusions and recommendations. It is anticipated that between 15 to 20 people will attend each consultation; approximately 75% of participants will be from family associations and 25% from NGOs. The consultations will take place, tentatively, in Banja Luka, Sarajevo, Mostar, Belgrade and Slavonski Brod.

ICMP's Justice and Civil Society Initiatives will create linkages between the low-key consultations, which it will implement itself, and the consultation process being led by the ICMP-funded NGO "Mali Koraci" and its partners (the Organization of Families of Killed Captured and Missing persons "Vrbanja", Kotor Varos, and the Association of Families of Missing Persons of Sarajevo-Romanija region) on "How to mark the International day of the disappeared".

ICMP's Justice and Civil Society Initiatives will support universal forms of commemoration of the missing on the International Day of the Disappeared.

JCSI plan a third Regional conference in late September/early October. At that point, having established goals and principles of memorialization, and built consensus around them through the low-key consultations, the purpose of the conference will be to consider various *forms* of memorials and the processes of their creation. Possible international speakers include: James E Young, Daniel Liberskind, Horst Hoheisel, and Michaela Melián. JCSI would also invite its grantees with projects on memory to present the results of their projects.

ICMP will convene a regional high-level meeting of state from the Western Balkans to discuss issues relating to the search for, and identification of, missing persons later this year. At that meeting recommendations on memorialization coming out of the ICMP-sponsored dialogue among family associations of the missing and other civil society groups will be presented.

10 QUESTIONS TO ASK A MEMORIAL

Does it take into consideration the needs and desires of those for whom it is intended?

Memorials are often created to speak on behalf of a community or group. In beginning the process of creating a memorial, careful consideration must be paid to who is involved and whether the voices and needs of those for whom the memorial is intended are taken into account. Unsuccessful memorials are often inappropriate for the community that they were made for, because the community was not involved in the process. These memorials tend to alienate those for whom they were built, becoming objects of resentment and failing to engage the past and present.

Does it encourage dialogue?

Because memorials are made for communities and a diversity of individuals in the present and future, the process of memorialization must be one of dialogue and openness. Dialogue is an essential component of remembering the past, and thus is integral to the process of creating a memorial. However, for a memorial to be truly successful, the dialogue should not end upon the memorial's completion. To fulfill its function of keeping the past alive in the present, a memorial should be a constant source of dialogue. This is the only way to fully and openly address the past, to learn from it and to be able to move on.

Is it open to multiple interpretations?

The past is never remembered as one uniform narrative, and part of the work of memorialization involves acknowledging and incorporating the diversity of memories and narratives. A successful memorial is constructed in a way that allows for a plurality of viewers to identify with it. Rather than excluding certain groups or memories, it works to incorporate them, making its message more universal and meaningful to all. The most successful memorials are accessible to a broad range of people - many of whom do not have any immediate connection to the event that is being remembered. Rather than dictating one version of the past, memorials that are open to a diversity of responses and interpretations are imbued with much greater meaning over time and space.

Does it have the potential to evolve over time?

Static, unchanging memorials have a tendency to lose their meaning and become invisible over time. Just as our understanding of the past can change with the passage of time, so a memorial should be open to changing meanings. A memorial that dictates only one, unchanging view of the past runs the risk of becoming outdated and meaningless. Those memorials that can change and evolve are far more successful in conveying the past to future generations.

Does it work to learn from the past?

The philosopher George Santayana famously purported that "those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."¹ Memorials are created to help us to remember the past and thus to learn from it, lest history repeat itself. Rather than promoting memory as mere ritual, successful memorials work to educate viewers and to transmit lessons from the past to the present and future.

Does it work to advance democracy?

In conveying lessons from the past, memorials have the potential to be integral parts of democratization. However, to be successful in promoting democratic values, memorials themselves and especially the process by which they were created must be democratic. Successful memorials promote the ideals of inclusion, pluralism, and tolerance, because they were built upon these values and they serve as cornerstones of democracy within communities and society as a whole.

¹ From *The Life of Reason, Volume I*, 1905.

Does it recognize the victims equally and respectfully?

Part of the function of a memorial is to restore humanity, dignity and memory to those victims that it is remembering. It is symbolically intended to give back something that was lost to the victims and their loved ones. However, because of the grave importance of this duty, victims must be remembered equally. If names are included, it is important to consider how to order them, and to remember that omissions can be fatal flaws for the success of a memorial. Victims are central to the task of memorialization, and great care must be taken to represent them equally and respectfully.

Is it offensive?

Memorials that misrepresent the past, or represent only one version of the past can be more than just meaningless for those groups whose memories are excluded. As they have the potential to encourage reconciliation, memorials also have the potential to divide populations. Memorials that are used for divisive purposes, mobilizing populations against each other, ensure that history is repeated. Rather than promoting peace and an end to violence and conflict, they can trigger further violence.

Is it visible?

Austrian writer Robert Musil once proclaimed that “there is nothing in this world as invisible as a monument.”² Monuments and memorials have a tendency to disappear into the surrounding landscape - their meanings are forgotten and over time they become inaccessible to contemporary viewers. Memorials that don’t demand or inspire interaction and attention become invisible; they are devoid of emotional impact and unable to “remember” that which they were intended to.

Is it ugly?

Public art in many ways has a duty to be aesthetically pleasing. Memorials, however, do not. And often they are built to cause discomfort, a sense of foreboding, and sometimes even fear. However, when a memorial is intended to become an integrated part of the community, it must not alienate and inspire a sense of aversion.

² Robert Musil, *The Posthumous Papers of a Living Author*.

The Role of Sites of Conscience in Addressing the Past

“Seeing the past is a vital step in planning for the future. It is like looking into a rearview mirror; when a driver looks in that mirror, he is looking not to look at what is behind him, but preparing for what will come.”

Eloi Coly, Chief Curator

Maison des Esclaves, Senegal

Founding Member of the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience

What are Sites of Conscience?

From Liberia to Serbia, societies recovering from conflict and atrocities often pledge the common goal: “Never again.”

But how do we actually prevent atrocities of the past from repeating? How do we promote values that inspire us to take positive action?

In 1999, a small group of leaders in both heritage and human rights came together to imagine how historic sites could become new centers for dialogue on urgent questions their societies face today. The group included representatives of venerable historic preservation institutions seeking to make their heritage sites more socially relevant, such as the British National Trust, the US National Park Service, and the Senegalese Heritage Directorate. It included democracy and human rights activists from Russia, Argentina, Bangladesh, and elsewhere who had witnessed the power of places of memory to mobilize social movements and promote new dialogue across difference. Together, they imagined a new type of civic institution, which they called a “Site of Conscience,” defined by three commitments:

- to interpret history through site.
- to stimulate dialogue on pressing social issues and promote democratic and humanitarian values.
- to share opportunities for public involvement in those social issues.

They founded the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience to support communities around the world to create their own centers of memory and action. Since the Coalition’s founding, the membership has grown to over 250 in 45 different countries. Member sites do not all commemorate atrocities – they range from holocaust museums like Terezin Memorial in Czech Republic to the Lower East Side Tenement Museum in New York, which tells immigrant family stories. But all members are developing diverse and innovative approaches to confronting their most controversial histories. Combining rigorous scholarship, individual stories from multiple perspectives, and carefully facilitated dialogue, Sites of Conscience offer unique spaces for their societies to come together in peaceful and productive social dialogue.

How do Sites of Conscience help address past atrocities and prevent new ones?

Seeking Justice for Atrocities: Prosecuting perpetrators, reforming unjust laws, and hosting truth commissions are critical steps in preventing future atrocities. But these are fragile and temporary processes unless supported by an engaged, questioning citizenry that takes action to address new injustices as they appear. Sites of Conscience serve an important role in building public support for truth-seeking processes. But recognizing that the legacies of human rights abuse are not static, that they evolve with each passing day, Sites of Conscience also offer a space for ongoing, dynamic dialogue among new generations on the changing lessons of the past.

Twenty years after the end of Argentina’s military dictatorship, the majority of perpetrators remained unpunished, and many citizens were calling for the return of military rule. One of the International Coalition’s founding members, Memoria Abierta, an alliance of Argentine human rights organizations, mapped, marked, and memorialized sites associated with torture and detention throughout Buenos Aires, organizing hundreds of public actions to remember the “disappeared.” In addition, Memoria Abierta led a massive documentation and archiving of information on the disappearances available in their “Topografía de la Memoria” (Topography of

Memory), a web site that maps hundreds of centers in Buenos Aires and across the country, allowing residents to identify which ordinary places in their neighborhood were once used as sites of torture. (See <http://www.memoriaabierta.org.ar/ccd/>). These efforts led to the reopening of prosecutions, providing some of the key evidence in the trials as well as to a presidential decree for opening a permanent “Space for Memory and Human Rights” at ESMA, once an infamous site of torture and detention. Today, Memoria’s traveling exhibit *“Images for Memory”* publicly shares testimonies, press materials, photographs and other archival materials to shed light on and facilitate dialogue about the events of 30 years ago and their lingering effects today. The exhibit trains young guides to help bring the documents to life and transform them into opportunities for inter-generational discussion on the past and how to prevent future abuses.

In Cape Town, South Africa, the District Six Museum created an on-going, community-based center for remembering and recovery that served as the basis for material compensation for victims of apartheid. The District Six Museum covered the floor of a local Methodist church with a map of the integrated neighborhood that was razed to the ground in 1966 to make way for a whites-only district. It invited thousands of ex-residents to gather at the map and inscribe on it their memories of the homes and businesses they had lost. This process brought together thousands who had been displaced under the Apartheid regime. They mobilized to stop the construction of the whites-only district, and helped build the movement for land reparations, even holding a land court at the Museum. Today, the Museum works with diverse publics on new issues as they arise – from bringing together various stakeholders to plan for the neighborhood’s future development to raising awareness of how the 2010 Soccer World Cup affected communities around Cape Town.

Fostering Healing and Reconciliation: In vastly different contexts communities see public memorialization as central to justice, truth-telling, reconciliation, reparation, and coming to grips with the past—as in Rwanda, where many refused to bury their dead until they were adequately recognized. And truth commissions from South Africa to Sierra Leone have called for the development of memorials to ensure lasting reform. But memorials that trumpet ethnic superiority can deepen divisions and even provoke violence. Sites of Conscience in countries re-building from violence consciously create programs that invite people with wildly different experiences and opinions to engage in open dialogue to foster healing and reconciliation.

In Liberia, Sites of Conscience hosted the first “body-mapping” workshops where participants across generations and ethnic groups, including amputees from the war, widows of soldiers, and others, came together at a site of collective memory to share their personal experiences of the country’s 14-year civil wars. Through dialogue about their experiences, they created drawings, paintings, and “body maps” – life-size images of human bodies – to express their memories and identify ways to move forward. The exhibit and workshop was hailed by former Truth Commissioners as a critical first step in implementing the Commission’s recommendation for memorialization and creating a visual, public memory of the civil wars.

How to proceed when faced with “conflicting narratives”? How to describe and display controversial items from the conflict? How to develop programs from these materials for educational purposes? In Northern Ireland, Healing Through Remembering (HTR) is an extensive cross-community project made up of a range of individual members holding differing political, social and religious perspectives who have come together to address these questions and focus on the issue of how best to deal with the past relating to the conflict in and about Northern Ireland. Uniquely, HTR ensures comprehensive involvement of all stakeholders to investigate the feasibility, viability and usefulness of remembering the conflict and in so doing both individually and collectively contribute to building a better future for all. Through ongoing internal discussions, research, round table discussions, conferences and outreach programmes, HTR has produced a range of reports, options papers, discussion papers and audits which continue to inform discussion throughout society – this includes community groups, political parties, statutory and Government policy makers.

Preventing Future Atrocities: In 2008, on the 75th anniversary of Hitler’s rise to power in Germany, an article in the New York Times noted that for many young people, the Holocaust is an event distanced from their lives today. 3 Sites of Conscience explicitly invite young people to draw their own connections between past

^{3 3} <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/28/world/europe/28iht-nazi.4.9559139.html?pagewanted=2&sq=nicholas%20kulish%20%20%2060th%20holocaust%20anniversary&st=cse&scp=3>

and present and then decide how they want to get involved in the issues they face today.

Four hours from Perm (Russia), in a remote Ural Mountains village, lies the barracks and barbed wire of Perm-36, part of the vast system of Gulag camps used to harness labor and control the population during the Soviet era. Perm-36 was in use from the Stalinist period through the 1980s, holding high profile political dissidents and ordinary citizens. A pioneering group of human rights activists and historians rescued the camp from deliberate destruction to create the Gulag Museum at Perm 36. Today, museum directors bring students through the cells and work yards and talk about the human experience of living there, and how the camp fit in to the larger system of Soviet repression. The museum works with students to help them interview their own family members to learn of their experience during the Soviet period, often initiating conversations for the first time. Using the history of the camp and of their own families, students conduct workshops to define their vision of democracy and identify how they can promote it. Because of its remote location, the Museum receives about 15,000 visitors each year. But it developed exhibits on the history of the site that have traveled throughout the region and the country to reach thousands more, accompanied by educators who facilitate discussions in each community.

Site of Conscience Villa Grimaldi Peace Park in Chile, is the former site of one of the most important clandestine centers of detention and torture in Chile, where thousands of prisoners were incarcerated, and 230 disappeared or were executed under the command of the security forces of the Pinochet regime. In addition to serving as an important healing center for the immediate victims of the site and others like it, Villa Grimaldi works to communicate the lessons of the site to a new generation. This does not only mean bringing students on tours of the site with survivors so that they hear first hand accounts of what happened there. In addition, Villa Grimaldi works with students and teachers to identify the most pressing issues young people are facing in schools today which are related to or a legacy of the dictatorship. Villa Grimaldi discovered persistent cultures of exclusion, violence, and authoritarianism that result in high rates of bullying, xenophobia, and other forms of discrimination. Because so many of the people disappeared to places like Villa Grimaldi were student activists, the most severe legacy of the dictatorship was a lack of political engagement amongst young people, creating a culture of apathy that allows violence in schools to go unchecked.

In response, Villa Grimaldi developed partnerships with the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Human Rights, teachers, and school administrators to develop a youth program that uses the site and its history as the starting point for dialogue on how students can confront the issues they face in schools today. The program identifies mechanisms of discrimination, othering, and systemic violence at work at Villa Grimaldi; as well as successful strategies for organizing resistance and building social movements that led to their dismantling. Each class identifies a specific issue in its school and designs a project to address it.

A Global Advocacy Network: In addition to the work of each Site of Conscience, the Coalition also supports networks of Sites working together on the most pressing issues in their regions. To date, the Coalition has launched seven regional and thematic networks of Sites of Conscience addressing related histories and working together on common contemporary issues. These networks develop coordinated campaigns for broader public involvement in the issues they identify as most urgent.

As an example, the Liberation War Museum, which remembers the Bangladeshi genocide of 1971, successfully advocated for trials of perpetrators from the war; the Museum's extensive archives are serving to provide documentation to the tribunals which launched this year. Working together, Sites of Conscience across Asia are also using their histories of both conflict and harmony to model ethnic and religious pluralism in the region and are developing a variety of governmental and non-governmental initiatives to engage young people and others in promoting those values.

“He who forgets the past is condemned to repeat it,” said the philosopher George Santayana. Sites of Conscience not only help people remember the past, but also help them identify ways to serve as important actors in building a better future.