

Proposal for THE ENAME CHARTER:

International Guidelines for Authenticity, Intellectual Integrity, and Sustainable Development
in the Public Presentation of Archaeological and Historical Sites and Landscapes

(Preliminary Draft Structure)
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To Be Circulated for Additions, Comments, Suggestions, Deletions

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PREAMBLE

1. It being generally recognised that public presentation, along with multidisciplinary research and physical conservation, is an essential part of the preservation of universal and local patrimony;
2. It being also observed that governmental heritage authorities and interested scholars throughout the world are becoming increasingly aware of their responsibility to communicate the significance and meaning of heritage sites to the general public;
3. It being noted that tourist authorities, private firms, and international organisations often invest in expensive and technologically advanced presentation systems as a spur to tourist development;
4. And while there are a large number of international charters, declarations, and guidelines to maintain the quality of the conservation and restoration of the physical fabric of archaeological and historical monuments (inter alia: Athens 1931; Venice 1964), there is no generalised international oversight of the methods and quality standards of public presentation;
5. And while relevant international charters dealing with Heritage Management and Cultural Tourism repeatedly stress the need for sensitive and effective interpretation, they do not define the standards for this quality.
6. Therefore, we, the governmental officials, heritage professionals, and scholars assembled at the conference “Heritage, Technology, and Local Development” at Ename, East-

Flanders in September 2002 strongly support the formulation of an acceptable international code of practice to ensure the scientific accuracy, intellectual integrity, and educational usefulness of public presentations at heritage sites, while at the same time showing respect and sensitivity for their cultural uniqueness and local significance.

BACKGROUND

The history of the Preservation Movement has gradually expanded from an awareness of the significance of heritage to a recognition of the responsibility to communicate it to the public, both local and universal:

- Manifesto of 1877 by English “Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings” notes the importance of conservation over unrestricted and unsupervised restoration.
- The 1931 Athens Conference of the International Museums office established general code of conduct.
- The ICOMOS Venice Charter (1964) sets out the standards of authenticity and good practice in physical conservation.
- The ICOMOS Florence Charter (1982) and the ICOMOS Washington Charter (1987) expand the principles of the Venice Charter to landscape and historic town centers.
- The ICOMOS Charter for the Protection and Management of the Archaeological Heritage (1990) mentions the necessity of public presentation as “an essential method of promoting an understanding of the origins and development of modern societies” (Article 7) but does not further elaborate acceptable standards or methods.
- The ICOMOS International Cultural Tourism Charter (1999) likewise speaks of presentation in positive but very general terms.
- In regards to the quality and sustainability of tourist experiences, the Charter for Sustainable Tourism (1995) and the “Agenda 21” Action plan of the World Tourist Organization, World Travel & Tourism Council, and Earth Council (1996) emphasize the importance of training, education, and cultural awareness in the development of tourist sites.
- In consideration of the need for an international frame of reference for the sustainable and durable development of international tourism, the World Tourist Organization established the World Code of Ethics for Tourism, which was unanimously approved at the thirteenth session of General Assembly of the WTO in Santiago (Chile) in October 1999. This Code has recognised the necessity of reducing to a minimum the negative effects of tourism on the environment and cultural heritage, and, at the same time, of maximizing the benefits for the inhabitants of tourist destination. This Code includes nine articles defining the accepted "rules of the game" for destinations, governments, tour operators, developers, travel agents, workers and travelers. The tenth article involves the redress of grievances and marks the first time that a code of this type will have a mechanism for enforcement. It will be based on conciliation through the creation of a World Committee on Tourism Ethics. Among the articles of this Code, Article 4, "Tourism, a user of the cultural heritage of mankind and contributor to its enhancement," more specifically underlines the necessary equilibrium between cultural heritage and tourism.

The importance of the public presentation of heritage sites has therefore become an accepted norm of cultural preservation and tourism. Yet presentation remains to become a fully professional field of endeavor. Because of the vast range of public presentation programmes currently operational at national, regional, and local heritage sites and because of the wide range of presentation techniques being utilised (signs, live guides, audiotapes, costumed interpreters, Virtual Reality, physical reconstruction, and “open air” museum recreations), it now seems appropriate—in accordance with the aims and expressions of the earlier charters—to formulate a framework of general standards to maintain the quality of public heritage communication throughout the world.

AIM

ARTICLE 1. The aim of this Charter is to emphasize the essential role of public communication and education in heritage preservation. It seeks to establish professional and ethical guidelines to ensure that preserved archaeological and historical sites are valuable resources for local community cultural and economic development and that they are recognised by the general public as reliable and authoritative centers of learning and reflection about the past—not mere antiquarian curiosities, fenced monuments, or static works of art.

DEFINITIONS

ARTICLE 2. An Archaeological or Historical Site embraces not only its physical structure, but also the human context and local historical conditions in which it was created, built, or inhabited. The environmental setting is likewise an essential part of the heritage site.

ARTICLE 3. Heritage Presentation is the carefully planned public explanation or discussion of an archaeological or historical site. Its communication medium can range from a text panel, to live guides, to a complex Virtual Reality application, but it should in every case provide information about the site that would be unavailable through visual inspection alone.

ARTICLE 4. Public Interpretation is the arrangement of information about a particular archaeological or historical site into a meaningful sequence or narrative. Public interpretation should strive to contextualize the significance of the site for the visitor—not merely present disconnected statistics, dates, or technical terms.

SCIENTIFIC AND PROFESSIONAL GUIDELINES

A. PRESENTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

ARTICLE 5. The visitor facilities of a site and its presentation technology must be responsibly maintained and kept in good repair..

ARTICLE 6. Kiosks, walking paths, and informational signs must be as inconspicuous as possible and in must not alter the visual aspect of a site in a drastic way. The light and sound from kiosks, screens, and speakers must be restricted to the immediate area of the presentation, so as not to adversely affect the surroundings or disturb nearby residents.

ARTICLE 7. The public presentation of a monument should always make clear to the visitor the extent of the authentic physical remains. Modern recreations of missing elements or modern reconstructions of missing fabric must be clearly identified as such.

ARTICLE 8. Buildings constructed especially for visitors' centers or other public facilities must be clearly identified as modern, and, whatever their architectural style, they must respect the historic landscape and the proportions of the visible remains. It is essential that the architects of the new facility work closely with the site's scientific researchers from the initial planning phase.

ARTICLE 9. In cases where the structural stability of a monument is not in danger, non-intrusive visual reconstructions (by means of artists' reconstructions, 3D computer modeling, Virtual Reality) should be preferred to physical reconstruction.

ARTICLE 10. The physical recreation of destroyed or missing historic landscape features (canals, parks, formal gardens etc.), when deemed necessary (i.e. when not accomplished by non-intrusive means such as 3D computer simulations), must be placed on their original location. The incorrect placement of such reconstructed features may offer a mistaken impression of the original character or function of the site.

ARTICLE 11. Every effort should be made to ensure that heritage presentations are accessible to the handicapped and to visitors with limited mobility.

B. INTERPRETATIVE TECHNIQUES

ARTICLE 12. The process of historical interpretation for the general public should be seen as far more complex than the mere "simplification" of scientific reports. Its aim is to explore the significance of a monument in a multi-faceted archaeological, historical, social, political, and artistic context.

ARTICLE 13. Historical Interpretation must be based on a multidisciplinary archaeological and/or historical study of the site and its surroundings, yet must also indicate clearly and honestly where conjecture, hypothesis, or philosophical reflection begin.

ARTICLE 14. Because the presentation of a site often involves a description of a living local community and its archaeological, historical, cultural, artistic, and ethnic heritage, representatives of the local community should be involved in the formulation of the basic presentation concept. Moreover, they should be involved in the various stages of production and be given the opportunity to offer comments and corrective suggestions.

ARTICLE 15. The contributions of all periods and groups to the historical significance of a monument should be respected and conveyed. Although particular periods and styles can be highlighted, the recreation of a single period or event should not be the exclusive aim of a presentation. Following Article 11 of the Venice Charter, the evaluation of the relative importance of historical facets of a site—and which can be ignored—must be the result of close consultation between the site team, the local community, and academic advisors.

ARTICLE 16. The history of the surrounding landscape, natural environment, and the overall geographical should be included in the interpretation of a site.

ARTICLE 17. The full variety of peoples involved in the history of the site must be given a voice in its interpretation—including minorities, women, immigrants—in addition to the familiar rulers,

elite, and majority group. Special care must be taken to ensure that “generic” characters are fully based on historical research and that the monologues of historical characters connected to the site are based on verifiable texts.

ARTICLE 18. The construction of 3D computer reconstructions and Virtual Reality environments should be based upon a detailed and systematic analysis of the remains, not only from archaeological and historical standpoints but also from close analysis of the building materials, structural engineering criteria and architectural aspects. Together with written sources and iconography, several hypotheses should be checked against the results and data, and 3D models “iterated” towards the most probable reconstruction.

ARTICLE 19. Opening day is the beginning, not the end, of the interpretation process. The presentation should be constructed in a modular way so that content updating can be performed without substantial additional investment.

C. DOCUMENTATION

ARTICLE 20. Full scientific documentation of all elements in a presentation programme should be compiled and made available to visitors as well as researchers. This documentation should be in the form of an analytical and critical report, in which the archaeological or historical basis for every element of the work of presentation is included. This record of documentation should be placed in the archives of a public institution and should be published or posted on the Internet.

PLANNING, FUNDING, AND MANAGEMENT

ARTICLE 21. The unique archaeological and historical heritage of local communities is threatened by global cultural homogenisation as well as by physical threats. Therefore policies for encouraging and funding the public presentation of heritage should constitute an integral component of local, regional, and national antiquities legislation.

ARTICLE 22. The presentation of recent discoveries or understandings of the archaeological and historical heritage to the general public is a responsibility no less important than physical conservation. This obligation must be acknowledged through relevant legislation and the provision of funds for presentation programmes connected with every public heritage project.

ARTICLE 23. Legislation should in principle require some form of permanent, accessible public interpretation (publication, website, video) in cases where the destruction of an archaeological or historical site is authorised for reasons of modern development.

ARTICLE 24. The scale, expense, and technological complexity of a heritage presentation should be appropriate to the location and available facilities (roads, parking, electricity, water, etc.) of the site. The goal should be physical and financial sustainability.

ARTICLE 25. A detailed environmental impact study should be made before the creation of any large archaeological or historical presentation site. The likely environmental, traffic, and economic effects (both positive and negative) of such a project should be realistically evaluated and taken into account in the project planning.

ARTICLE 26. The efforts of governmental institutions, local organizations, and private firms should be closely coordinated to ensure the continued funding and maintenance of on-site public presentation programmes.

TOURISM ASPECTS

ARTICLE 27. Effective and professional management is essential for a public presentation programme at a heritage site to provide tangible economic benefits for the local community.

ARTICLE 28. The raising of tourist attendance figures or increasing tourist revenue alone should not be the only criterion or goal for success. The presentation must also serve a range of educational and social objectives for the benefit of the local community.

ARTICLE 29. A heritage presentation site should be designed to safeguard the social and physical structure of the location and to ensure the privacy and dignity of local residents.

ARTICLE 30. The contribution of tourism to the sustainable economic development and cultural identity of a local community should entail close cooperation between tourism operators and both public and private groups, regarding formulation of tourism strategies and promotions, the flow of visitor traffic, and use of public facilities.

ARTICLE 31. Efforts should be made to coordinate local businesses and commercial activity with the heritage site in a respectful and sustainable way. The authenticity and local origin of handicrafts, for example, should be highlighted and encouraged.

ARTICLE 32. As a local cultural resource, the heritage presentation site should be made available for fairs, concerts, and public performances, with due respect for the character of the site.

HERITAGE EDUCATION AND TRAINING

ARTICLE 33. Every presentation programme should be seen as an educational resource and its design should take into account its possible utilisation in the curricula of local schools.

ARTICLE 34. Local students should be encouraged to participate in the maintenance and operations of the heritage presentation site through special programmes, events, and summer employment.

ARTICLE 35. The local community should be regularly updated on developments and new features at the heritage presentation site through the distribution of a newsletter, website, public lecture series, or other means of public education, such as specially trained local interpreters.

ARTICLE 36. The training of an adequate number of qualified professionals in the relevant fields of presentation technology, content creation, management, and education is an important objective. Standard curricula should be formulated for professional training.

ARTICLE 37. As noted in the ICOMOS Charter for the Protection and Management of the Archaeological Heritage (Article 8), academic training “should take account of the shift in

conservation policies from excavation to in situ preservation. It should also take into account the fact that the study of the history of indigenous peoples is as important in preserving and understanding the archaeological heritage as the study of outstanding monuments and sites.”

ARTICLE 38. Postgraduate training programs and courses should be developed with the objective of updating presentation professionals on recent developments and innovations in the field.

RECOMMENDATIONS

ARTICLE 39. International cooperation is essential to developing and maintaining standards in heritage presentation techniques and technologies.

ARTICLE 40. There is an urgent need to create an international forum for the exchange of information and experience among professionals dealing with archaeological and historical heritage presentation. This requires the organisation of conferences, seminars, and workshops at international as well as regional levels, and the establishment of regional centers for heritage education on all levels, from primary school to postgraduate studies.

ARTICLE 41. Regular international exchanges of professional staff and cooperation on selected pilot projects should be developed as a means of refining the methodology of heritage presentation.