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**Sustainable management  
of cultural heritage**

## **Representations, experiences and appropriations of glocalized heritage: opportunities and challenges of high-profile historical and religious sites (EXPER project)**

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**Keywords :** heritage imaginaries, religious/civic/touristic uses, multiscalarity, heritage regimes, vulnerabilities

**Abstract :** This research studies the opportunities and challenges of Europe's high profile historical and religious sites. We explore sites inscribed on the World Heritage List in Paris (Notre-Dame de Paris), Sintra (cultural landscape) and Westminster (Abbey). These spaces, where powerful imaginaries are at work, form glocal places for spiritual, touristic, scholarly and civic practices and the development of multiscalar identities. We pursue a crucial line of inquiry for heritage professionals and public authorities dealing with major management, conservation and economic issues while faced with both peoples' aspirations for global communion and their conflicting uses.

This interdisciplinary research project studies the glocalization of Europe's high profile historical and religious sites inscribed on the World Heritage List. With local experts, our researchers explore "Paris, Banks of the Seine" (particularly Notre-Dame de Paris) and the "Cultural Landscape of Sintra", the "Palace of Westminster and Westminster Abbey including Saint Margaret's Church", before others, like Seville. These spaces, where powerful imaginaries are at work, form glocal places for mediating meanings and values for spiritual, touristic, scholarly and civic constituencies. Our analysis unveils the complex topography of human interactions in these heritage and tourism centres of international significance, discerning their profound role in the formation of multiscalar identities. Our interdisciplinary exploration draws on various disciplines (anthropology; area, communication and cultural policy studies, history and art history) and complementary methods (text, media and visual analysis; ethnography, interviews, surveys).

The sites selected include religious buildings (for Paris and Westminster, cathedrals, and for Sintra, monasteries and palace chapels), but their contrasted religiosities go far beyond. Notre-Dame, a beacon for Catholics is also one of the world's most iconic monuments, whose fire spectacle moved many globally. The "Cultural Landscape of Sintra", a renowned vacation destination, is inscribed as "a model of Romantic monumental and natural heritage", whose religiosity is imbued with a mystical aura of its mountains. Westminster is the political and religious centre of Britain, where the monarchs are crowned, married and buried in the Anglican religion. These diverse religious local and national heritage practices coexist with those of visitors coming from various cultures, religions and cults.

With the help of our key local and international partners (the sites themselves, local heritage associations, ICOMOS International, the CNRS, ministries, etc.), we will:

- analyse diverse existing sources reflecting how the sites' patrimonial destiny extends across and beyond Europe: public discourses, individual testimonies, collective expressions, cultural and artistic creations;
- produce new data through surveys and questionnaires and untapped sources on the cultural imaginaries (private photographs);
- reflect on the use of participatory archiving and digital tools in these heritage site's museography.



Notre-Dame de Paris, 2021 (C. Doustaly)

Exploring heritage as a dynamic field constructed by society over time, we aim to unfold the representations, experiences and appropriations of heritage sites that are both relevant locally, nationally and globally (“glocal”), and the importance of innovative scientific research to understand those who decide, those who maintain and those who use them. We pursue a crucial line of inquiry for future policy making and for heritage professionals and public authorities dealing with major management, conservation and economic issues while faced with both aspirations for global communion and cohesion, and conflicting regimes of values and appropriation.

Our research questions the role of the traditional and social media in circulating images, ideas and emotions. How do heritage mobilizations or controversies travel through the media? What are the different appropriations and constructions of local value and international reputation depending on site, country of origin, religion, media, and cultural policy? How secular are these religious sites? Does their lay dimension help them become universal?



National Palace of Sintra. 2018 (Fascínio. Left Hand Rotation)

The project aims to gather and analyse detailed documentation and ethnographic data about heritage sites with diverse users (religious, historical, touristic, civic) to understand their representations and expectations. We aim to transform scientific knowledge and academic discourse into new methods, policy insights and recommendations. We plan to produce a reasoned framework for comparing such sites, analyse the underlying tensions, help devise refined visitor surveys, face issues of uses, enhance communication between stakeholders, support heritage management and conservation. This will allow capacity-building for the future of a common heritage. Our results will be shared with research and training institutions, heritage professionals and civil society through workshops, exhibitions and public events.

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