

**Monumental Issues: Exploring a values-based approach to the localized management of questionable monuments**

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Questionable monuments are public statues, sites, markers, spaces, and other heritage resources dedicated to events or people of the past which may be considered problematic in contemporary contexts. In the United States, questionable monuments are generally identified as monuments of oppression and relate less to public art or history and more to darker issues such as genocide, racism, sexism, and war. As Elizabeth Alexander (2020), President of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation notes, “Acts of violence and war are disproportionately exalted across the country, while the bulk of our history and its brilliant actors are nowhere to be found in the public places where we are constantly taught who we are and what we value” (para. 5).

As the realities of the country’s darker past are realized, the management of such monuments has become a hot button issue within communities both large and small. Sociocultural changes demand a reckoning with questionable monuments and an opening of dialogue within communities of concern. The answer is not simply to leave something as is and say it’s history, nor to remove or rename it under the cover of night, but to welcome the multivocality of public heritage stakeholders as crucial to a broader understanding of the effects of questionable monuments within communities.

Recognizing the importance of historically marginalized voices speaking to issues of identity, injustice, or inequality raised by questionable monuments is critical to understanding the place of monuments in modern society—as well as to addressing their ongoing management. “Like all heritage places, their conservation and management is shaped by the challenges of curating historical fabric (using the sites as archives) as well as the desires projected onto them by broad stakeholder interests located in society at large (using the sites as agents for societal change)” (Mason, 2019, p.158).

Questionable monuments can not be considered only by historians or policy makers in terms of their general insensitivities. There is no one issue which applies to all questionable monuments—indeed, the question of their offensiveness depends on the experiences and views of the unique communities that host them. In the case of questionable monuments it is essential that the public drive management decisions, assuring that politics or blanket historical values do not assert certain values over others “when contemporary interpretations of these places are sufficiently traumatic and urgent” (Avrami & Mason, 2019, p.13). Recognizing this also brings understanding that monuments not seen as questionable today may be considered so in the

future. As traditionally marginalized voices find amplification in the dynamism of cultural conversation, ideas of what is questionable will undoubtedly diversify with them; as in most issues of heritage, culture, society, and politics, these discussions are not finite and will continue to evolve.

It is apparent that as this national narrative unfolds, local communities could benefit from a broader understanding of why monuments become questionable and guidelines for how to manage discussions surrounding them. As King (2013) noted, “everything is imperfect, challenge and change are not necessarily your enemies, and the traditional authorities don’t have all the answers” (p.358). With this in mind, the overall goal of this paper is to review “monumental issues” from a historical international perspective, examine current situations in the U.S. as case studies, and apply values-based heritage management practices in the development of a model which localities can adopt to address questionable monuments at a community level.

This model allows for a greater understanding of the complexities of culture within communities, recognizing that “value is defined through political, emotional, and moral meanings attached to specific events, places, objects, or social practices” (Korostelina, 2019, p. 84).

### **Monumental Issues Through History**

Monuments to certain times have long-proven to present issues in others. In the 1500s, Spanish conquistadors razed monuments of the Inca and Maya. In 1776, newly independent Americans tore down a statue of King George III in Manhattan. In 2001, the Taliban infamously dynamited the Buddhas of Bamiyan, a UNESCO World Heritage site in Afghanistan.

The question is how do we fairly consider and discuss the issues presented by questionable monuments versus hiding them away or, as in many cases, seeing them destroyed? Aside from the artistic value of some monuments, is there societal value in discussions surrounding the ideas, activities, heritage, history, or people they represent and who encounter them? Are there ways of managing questionable monuments that can change or enhance the narratives they present? Precedent for the answers to such questions exists both in philosophy and practice

After the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 monuments to the regime began showing up in Gorky park, many dumped haphazardly about its grounds. In 1992 the Mayor of Moscow officially deemed the area Muzeon Park of Arts, also known as the Fallen Monument Park, and the relics of oppression were soon joined by hundreds of contemporary sculptures. Some stood alone, such as a large bust of Lenin, others were reinterpreted with the addition of reactionary art—such as the Soviet-era statue of Stalin now backed by contemporary sculptural installation of stone heads encased in a metal cage. The artist of the latter mentioned artwork, Yevgeny Chubarov, donated the piece, meant to represent Stalin’s victims, with the condition it be displayed next to the dictator’s statue (Kim, 2020).

Over time the area evolved from a statue park into a professionally designed urban oasis featuring cafes, music venues, sports areas, and more, all backed by the Russian government as both an economic and tourism development initiative. Among the more than 1,000 sculptures now in the park, statues of leaders such as Lenin have lost their political meaning and symbolic power. Displayed in this new context has given them power, instead, of provoking thought. "The history of Russia—and any other country—has different periods, some of them bad, some of them good. Still, we have to remember them, and these sculptures are an important reminder of Soviet times," explained a Muzeon park guide (Kim, 2020, para. 9).

Unlike Russia, in Germany monuments and relics of the Nazi regime are not displayed publicly. After the fall of the Third Reich, deNazification of Germany was nearly immediate, the Federal Republic of Germany criminalizing in 1949 nearly everything associated with the regime—from flags and books to statues and monuments. Instead of addressing issues, the government chose not to reflect on the past and instead look to the future—rebuilding its cities, and image, to project the values of a unified Germany. But erasing the Nazi visual entirely did little among people to quell the conversation surrounding the era, nor other darker parts of German history including militarism, fascism, and colonialism (Neiman, 2019; Zeitz, 2017).

Recent events have revealed what some are calling a “rapidly growing crisis in the country’s attempts to balance its history and its future” (Kuras, 2021, para. 1). At issue is a contested memory culture cultivated over the generations of quietude which focuses nearly singularly on the holding up of the Holocaust as an internationally incomparable incident of criminality against Jews. This Pandora’s Box of political and cultural criticism questions why other international acts of genocide are seen as less than the Holocaust; why other groups

systematically exterminated in the Holocaust are not monumentalized comparably; and if this thinking affords Israel a special status in terms of its own political actions towards Palestinians. Critics claim the memory culture created, in part, by the absolute erasure of Nazism from the national discussion deprives Germans of crucial cultural perspectives leading to “cultural warping” and “an entrenched and cramped position in the world—until the arrival of the inevitable reactionary backlash” (Kuras, 2021, para. 20).

As is evidenced by review of these two well-known periods of history and how monuments to them—and therefore conversations surrounding them—were managed, the ways in which the “questionality” of monuments were dealt with has had lasting results. Some are positive, some not. The results of chosen treatments are testament to the fact that monuments, the discussions they provoke, and their ultimate management can have lasting effects on broader society; whether country-wide, as in the case of Germany, or more localized, as with the Muzeon Park in Moscow. These reviews also point to the importance of recognizing that heritage is not a “one and done” discussion. No matter what decisions are made, and when, “the reality is that decision making revolves less around a set of fixed values reflected in fabric, and is increasingly influenced by a broader range of values reflective of contemporary society” (Avrami et al, 2018, p.3).

## **CASE STUDIES**

In the United States recent unrest has centered around Confederate and Civil War monuments for two main reasons. First, there are a lot of them. Second, high profile news events ranging from the white nationalist protests in Charlottesville, VA, to the numerous incidents of police brutality against African Americans that stoked the Black Lives Matter movement, have raised the profile of the topic of endemic racism in American culture. Outside of the South, other regions and localities also wrestle with monuments questionable for similar reasons such as colonialism, genocide, and other types of cultural oppression. Many of these questionable monuments have long been debated in terms of their appropriateness in modern society and specifically within their communities.

### **Santa Fe, New Mexico—DeVargas/Soldiers monuments**

Two monuments have recently been highlighted in Santa Fe, New Mexico as being problematic: one, a bronze statue of Diego de Vargas, and the other the Soldiers' Monument (locally called "the obelisk") in the city's historic central plaza. The sculpture of de Vargas, installed at the city's Cathedral Park in 2007, is a life-like portrayal of the Spanish colonialist who served as Governor of the New Spain territory Santa Fe de Nuevo México (now New Mexico and Arizona) effectively from 1692-1696 and 1703-1704. The obelisk, a 33-foot tall stone structure set atop a four-sided plinth, was installed in 1868 by the New Mexico territorial legislature to honor Union soldiers in the Civil War as well as soldiers who lost their lives in "Indian Wars".

Because of its relative youth as a monument, the statue of de Vargas has been contested by community activists as part of a larger discussion surrounding the local celebration of the man based on historic inaccuracies surrounding his governance of the territory. While most historic retellings celebrated de Vargas for his "bloodless reconquest" of Santa Fe after the 1680 Pueblo Revolt, which successfully drove Spain and its missionaries from the area until 1692, more accurate historical facts point to the opposite. These histories, such as a time when de Vargas publicly executed 70 Pueblo warriors on the plaza, are not commonly acknowledged. As pointed out by Enrique Lamadrid, a professor emeritus of Spanish at the University of New Mexico, "a lot of blood was spilled on that plaza, but you have to go to a university history class to learn about it, because they won't teach that in high school. Real history is too terrifying" (Goodluck, 2021, para. 9).

In 1712 Santa Fe city leaders voted to hold an annual feast and festival, called Fiestas de Santa Fe, celebrating de Vargas', and Spain's, re-conquest of the city. Over the years the festival has received much criticism, specifically of "The Entrada", a re-enactment of de Vargas' re-taking of Santa Fe which many saw as glorifying the defeat of the native Pueblo Indians. With 19 self-governing Pueblo Nations in the state, complaints and protests by Indigenous rights activists came often and The Entrada was dropped from Fiesta in 2017—but the statue of de Vargas continued to stand.

The obelisk's age, and highly visible public location in the center of the city, inured it with a much longer history of controversy. Some in the community specifically claimed offense at a panel on one side of its plinth which read, "To the heroes who have fallen in the various battles with savage Indians in the territory of New Mexico". Others rejected the entirety of the

monument itself, the prevailing feeling being that the monument occupied stolen land and that any celebration of Anglo soldiers in New Mexico was a celebration of the U.S. military's sustained campaign of genocide of Native Americans. These feelings led the Santa Fe City Council to vote in 1973 for the obelisk's removal. The vote was rescinded due to "serious penalty of losing federal money if the Plaza monument was removed" (Chacón, 2020, para 9) as the plaza, including the obelisk, was in process of being nominated as a National Historic Landmark. Perhaps in response to the council's backtracking, in 1974 an unknown individual chiseled the word "savages" from the face of the obelisk replacing it with the handwritten words "our brothers".

In fall of 2017 then Mayor Javier Gonzales requested the city Arts Commission to compile a list of public monuments—including markers, memorials, murals, and plaques—for review and public comment, aiming to open discussions within the community regarding "its own contentious history" (Cantú, 2017, para. 3). Though the inventory was crafted, including 58 monuments, memorials, and markers for review, no final report was ever released to the public. When Mayor Alan Webber took office in 2018 he quickly signed a proclamation of tribal recognition focused on reconciliation and cultural inclusivity noting, "We acknowledge the past and its trauma, tragedy, and sorrow; we understand its legacy in the present. We acknowledge wounds older and deeper than any on this continent. On behalf of those from the past who cannot ask forgiveness, we do now" (Cantú, 2018, para. 1).

Still no action was taken regarding the previously identified questionable monuments and by spring 2020 city leaders were again confronted with demands regarding the opening of discussion on the community's long-standing complaints. In response, Mayor Webber publicly announced the formation of a commission to discuss options surrounding the disposition of both the more publicly visible de Vargas and obelisk monuments, as well as a contested obelisk honoring Kit Carson. This latter addition was a more proactive move on the part of the Mayor as the monument itself is placed in a far less trafficked area. Erected in 1885 the small sandstone monolith sits rather ignored, in front of the U.S. Courthouse, blocks from the busier areas of downtown Santa Fe.

Despite continued community interest the commission did not materialize. In June 2020, as nationwide protests over racism erupted, city crews were directed to remove the monuments without allowing a formal public input process. While crews were successful in removing the

statue of de Vargas, the obelisk was not able to be safely removed. Unspecified legal issues (likely federal) prevented the removal of the Carson obelisk. While indigenous activists applauded these actions, those of Spanish descent complained removal of the deVargas monument amounted to an erasure of their history and bemoaned the lack of public discourse regarding its determination. Soon after, in July 2020, Santa Fe Arts Institute fellow and multidisciplinary artist Heidi K. Brandow unveiled “The Memory Project” in which she culture-mapped public art and memorials to Santa Fe’s demographics. Her findings identified over 80 percent of memorials as dedicated to colonizers; just four of the 65 memorials she examined were dedicated to Native people or culture. Of these, most were to men (Goodluck, 2021).

In response to these concerns the Mayor again promised creation of a “Truth and Reconciliation” committee to open up public discourse regarding questionable monuments. When it, and clear communication regarding the legal and/or practical issues surrounding the remaining contested monuments, failed—yet again—to materialize a crowd of activists took action into their own hands, pulling down the obelisk on Indigenous Peoples Day 2020. Various groups lamented the destruction of the obelisk and continued calls for open discussion regarding the disposition of remaining monuments of concern.

In January 2021 it was announced that the city had approved the formation of a Culture, History, Art, Reconciliation, and Truth (CHART) working group which would focus “on fostering as much participation from the community as possible. The approach aims to increase “inclusivity, transparency, and community participation” (City of Santa Fe, n.d.) in culture and heritage management decisions in the city—including the management of questionable monuments. CHART development is to be overseen by a cultural competency consultant experienced in community-focused processes.

### **Washington, D.C.—Freedmen’s Memorial monument/Lincoln Emancipation Proclamation memorial**

The Freedmen’s Memorial in Washington, D.C. 's, Lincoln Park depicts a former slave, chains broken, kneeling at—or rising from—the feet of former President, Abraham Lincoln. Financed mainly by donations from former slaves, the statue was unveiled to great fanfare in

1876 but came under political fire on the very day of its dedication. The dedication's featured speaker, abolitionist Frederick Douglass, was sure to make known that Lincoln, while responsible for the emancipation proclamation, issued it more in the interest of white people than of black people. Douglass (1876) pointed out to the gathered crowd of 25,000:

Truth is proper and beautiful at all times and in all places, and it is never more proper and beautiful in any case than when speaking of a great public man whose example is likely to be commended for honor and imitation long after his departure to the solemn shades, the silent continents of eternity. It must be admitted, truth compels me to admit, even here in the presence of the monument we have erected to his memory, Abraham Lincoln was not, in the fullest sense of the word, either our man or our model. In his interests, in his associations, in his habits of thought, and in his prejudices, he was a white man. He was pre-eminently the white man's President, entirely devoted to the welfare of white men. He was ready and willing at any time during the first years of his administration to deny, postpone, and sacrifice the rights of humanity in the colored people to promote the welfare of the white people of this country. (p. 12)

Indeed, just a few days after his address, Douglass made his feelings even more well known, penning a letter to the *National Republican* newspaper in which he called for a counter monument to be added to the park, “a monument representing the negro, not couchant on his knees like a four-footed animal, but erect on his feet like a man” (White & Sandage, 2020, para. 16).

Many African Americans have long expressed discomfort with the composition of the sculpture. This discomfort turned from complaints after the events of Charlottesville in 2017 to physical protests following the killing of George Floyd in May of 2020. In June 2020 protestors gathered in Lincoln Park, some calling for the statue's removal and others against the idea. Those for its removal said it was paid for by slaves who then had no say in its design or composition—a composition that demeans African Americans “and suggests that they were not active contributors to the cause of their own freedom” (Natanson et al., 2020, para. 4). Many of those against its removal pointed out the historical import of the Emancipation Proclamation and that

Lincoln, for all his flaws, still deserved recognition for it.

In order to protect the statue from vandalism, it was secured behind fencing as were other monuments in the National Park Service (NPS)-operated park, where it still sits today. Though a replica of the statue in downtown Boston was removed in December 2020 there have been no determinations regarding the fate of the original. Washington, D.C., representative Eleanor Holmes Norton has twice introduced legislation to legally remove the statue and have it placed in a museum. Yale history professor and Douglass biographer, David Blight (2020), has countered these actions, agreeing that while the imagery of the statue is racist, the history of it is not, noting:

It is reasonable to clear our landscape of public commemoration of the failed, four-year slaveholders' rebellion to sustain white supremacy known as the Confederacy, even if it doesn't erase our history. But the Freedmen's Memorial is another matter. For those contemplating the elimination of this monument... please consider the people who created it and what it meant for their lives in a century not our own. We ought not try to purify their past and present for our needs. (para. 2)

Blight instead called for the creation of an arts commission to “engage new artists to represent the story of black freedom from one generation to the next. Let today's imaginations take flight...So much new learning can take place by the presence of both past and present. As a nation, let's replace a landscape strewn with Confederate symbols with memorialization of emancipation. Tearing down the Freedmen's Memorial would be a terrible start for that epic process” (Blight, 2020, para. 8).

In July 2020 Washington, D.C., Mayor Muriel Bowser formed a working group, D.C. Facilities and Commemorative Expressions Working Group (DCFACES), to review “namesakes, including buildings, parks, public spaces and monuments, in order to ensure the individuals' personal and public policy views did not contribute to the nation's history of slavery, systemic racism and other biases, and, instead, are consistent with our DC values — empowering and uplifting African Americans and other communities of color” (DCFACES, 2020, p. 5)

The group, made up of experts and community members, used eight core community values—accessibility, diversity, equity, livability, opportunity, prosperity, resilience, and

safety—developed for the District of Columbia Comprehensive Plan to assess namesakes in three areas: living, learning and leisure environments, public spaces, and landmarks/commemorative works.

DCFACES made its evaluations through engagement, policy, and research committees through which it engaged community stakeholders to make recommendations concerning the removal, renaming, or contextualization of namesakes. The results, released in September 2020, noted the Freedman’s Memorial as one of the “most cited public assets not in alignment with District values” (DCFACES, 2020, p. 12). Despite this feedback from the community, the group noted that, because the Freedman’s Memorial was located on Federal land, the City had no authority to demand actions regarding its ultimate disposition.

### **New York City—Theodore Roosevelt monument**

A bronze statue of Theodore Roosevelt on horseback flanked on one side by an African American man and on the other by a Native American man has long stood outside the Museum of Natural History in Manhattan. Erected in 1940 this monument has been “subject to sustained adverse public reaction for many decades” (Mayoral Advisory Commission on City Art, Monuments, and Markers, 2018, p. 25) and in recent years began to draw more fevered complaints as a monument to both racial discrimination and colonial expansion. Owned by the city of New York, the statue was originally intended to celebrate Roosevelt’s history as a naturalist but in modern days, “communicates a racial hierarchy that the Museum and members of the public have long found disturbing” (American Museum of Natural History, n.d., para. 3).

After the events in Charlottesville, complaints regarding the monument, and others in the city, were heard and considered in 2017 by the Mayoral Advisory Commission on City Art, Monuments, and Markers (MAC). This commission included an “advisory body composed of members with widely recognized expertise in a range of relevant disciplines, such as history, art and antiquities, public art and public space, preservation, cultural heritage, diversity and inclusion, and education” (MAC, 2018, p. 4). MAC immediately set to work holding various public meetings as well as created an online survey for comment by members of the public who could not attend meetings in person. In its 2018 findings the committee noted:

The public hearings opened our eyes to the passions, depth of knowledge, and incredible intelligence that people are willing to bring to this discussion if you are willing to listen. While the diversity of opinion we encountered mirrored that of the Commission members themselves, we came away even more convinced of the shared values that drove our work: the paramount values of art, public space, and civic discourse, and the millions of ways our individual and shared experiences color our view of how they intersect. (p. 7)

In its process of considering questionable monuments, the commission developed a set of review policies that localities within New York City proper could apply to future discussion of questionable monuments on City property. This policy created by MAC (2018) outlined five principles to guide discussions, and for future conversations, regarding questionable monuments:

- **Reckoning with power to present history in public:** recognizing that the ability to represent histories in public is powerful; reckoning with inequity and injustice while looking to a just future.
- **Historical understanding:** respect for and commitment to in-depth and nuanced histories, acknowledging multiple perspectives, including histories that previously have not been privileged.
- **Inclusion:** creating conditions for all New Yorkers to feel welcome in New York City's public spaces and to have a voice in the public processes by which monuments and markers are included in such spaces.
- **Complexity:** acknowledging layered and evolving narratives represented in New York City's public spaces, with preference for additive, relational, and intersectional approaches over subtractive ones. Monuments and markers have multiple meanings that are difficult to unravel, and it is often impossible to agree on a single meaning.

- **Justice:** recognizing the erasure embedded in the City's collection of monuments and markers; addressing histories of dispossession, enslavement, and discrimination not adequately represented in the current public landscape; and actualizing equity. (p. 10)

MAC noted that these principles should be applied to proactively open dialogue around questionable monuments as well be considered before the addition of new monuments and markers. It outlined nine initiatives including assessments, commissions of new artwork, education programs, creation of equity funds, and use of new technologies to facilitate such dialogues (MAC, 2018, pp. 11-12).

Even with these guidelines and related community input, the commission was ultimately unable to reach a consensus regarding the disposition of the Roosevelt monument, noting only that it “believes there is ample existing research and scholarship that offers historical understanding to make the decision to relocate the monument” (MAC, 2018, p. 26). The city decided to keep the monument in place, directing the Museum of Natural History to provide additional context surrounding the statue. The Museum did so, mounting an “Addressing the Statue” exhibit in 2019 which explained, “to understand the statue, we must recognize our country’s enduring legacy of racial discrimination—as well as Roosevelt’s troubling views on race. We must also acknowledge the Museum’s own imperfect history. Such an effort does not excuse the past but it can create a foundation for honest, respectful, open dialogue” (American Museum of Natural History, n.d., para. 5).

After the killing of George Floyd in May 2020, the Museum formally requested the City to remove the statue. Mayor Bill de Blasio supported the decision but as of the time of this writing the statue is still in place with no published plans as to its ultimate disposition.

## **VALUES-BASED MANAGEMENT THEORY**

With the complexity of such cases—in the U.S. and internationally—it is worth noting that discussions surrounding questionable monuments have long been held within professional heritage and cultural resource management circles. These discussions have produced specific management theories and guidelines known collectively as values-based (also called

values-centered) preservation management. Values-based management takes both traditional heritage and contemporary societal values into consideration to answer the key questions, “what is important about heritage, and which places or items are important as heritage? What purposes can heritage serve? If heritage conservation is organized to serve society, who does it serve and how well does it serve?” (Avrami et al., 2019, p.7).

First, what exactly is values-based heritage management? “Values-based heritage conservation aims to retain the cultural significance of places, typically by balancing the aesthetic, historic, scientific, spiritual, and social values held by past, present, and future generations” (Avrami et al., 2018, p.1) This description is guided by principles regarding societal values first explored in the 1979 introduction of the Australia International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) Charter for Places of Cultural Significance, or Burra Charter. The charter, last updated in 2013 to reflect increased understanding and changing societal values, has been refined to put forth the core idea that “a very sound understanding of a place should enable the full array of its values to be articulated in a statement of significance, which is then the touchstone of policy development and decision making” (Buckley, 2019, p. 51).

Furthering this idea of meshing societal values and policy development, ICOMOS in 2014 adopted a set of “Ethical Principles” to guide management decisions regarding heritage resources—including questionable monuments. These principles include identifying and understanding that cultural heritage “may hold different meanings for different groups and communities” and therefore, that both public interest and community collaboration are vital to effective, and inclusive, heritage management decisions (ICOMOS, 2014, p. 1).

What values-centered management requires then, is creation of a preservation model that honors perceived social values as well as heritage values. In order to create a statement of cultural significance regarding a questionable monument, localities must build a socially responsive and socially responsible decision making framework as its basis. According to values-based management theory the following key tenets are crucial in the creation of such foundations:

- **Participation:** Without broad and inclusive participation, the values of a resource are impossible to determine. Participation requires the involvement of all interested stakeholders including experts, policy makers, community leaders,

laypeople, and social interest groups—in particular those from traditionally marginalized groups—as equal partners not only in discussion but in decision making. Broad participation enables a clear understanding of “what matters, why, and to whom” (Clark, 2019, p. 71) and ensures recognition that “the essential narratives and values of heritage places are rarely, if ever, singular. This multiplicity can only be recognized through more participatory heritage management processes that give voice to a range of stakeholders, including those beyond the realm of heritage experts” (Avrami et al., 2019, p.6).

- **Values:** What are the values associated with a resource? These include heritage values (historical, artistic, aesthetic) as well as social values (identity, symbolic, memory). A further definition of lesser-known social values identifies them as “broader forces forming the contexts of heritage places as well as the non-heritage functions of heritage places—including economic development, political conflict and reconciliation, social justice and civil rights issues, or environmental degradation and conservation” which “must be understood in relation to the person or group ascribing a value to a place, and in relation to the place’s physical and social histories” (Avrami & Mason, 2019, p. 11). As values are explored it must also be recognized that they may be conflicting, not always positive, but always are valid. Finally, it must be accepted that no values are fixed and that “acknowledging and embracing the *changeability* of values and significance brings historic preservation in line with the dominant contemporary understanding of culture as a *process* not a *set of things* with fixed meaning” (Mason, 2006, Theory into practice section, para. 1).
- **Engagement:** Discussions can not simply be considered the result of a single public meeting. Discussions must be ongoing, accessible, and engage all stakeholders as equal partners. This engagement is most effective when these partnerships include stakeholders as decision-makers central to the process.

- **Knowledge:** Knowledge gathering regarding resources in question must include traditional historical knowledge from experts but also be accepting of other types of knowledge including traditional, spiritual, and generational. The gathering of this knowledge must be proactive and wide-reaching.
- **Policy and governance:** Policy makers must be involved in the process to recognize that “resource values and hence public benefits are defined in social contexts that extend well beyond the regulatory frameworks and cultures of the agencies charged with managing resources on behalf of the public(s)” (Lipe, 2009, p. 63). The ultimate understanding being that both institutional and policy infrastructure must be updated to reflect contemporary heritage values and make room for more participatory decision making (Avrami & Mason, 2018, p. 27).
- **Process:** All of these must be worked through within a process that reflects the urgency of societal demands and is communicated with transparency and regularity. It also “establishes a process by which preservation practitioners can track the changing meanings of a particular place—as culture continues to shift, evolve, create, and destroy meanings—and incorporate them in policies and plans for conservation, interpretation, protection, and investment” (Mason, 2006, Theory into practice section, para. 2).

Working through these key considerations ensures that all aspects of a resource’s value are able to be fully explored before any actions or determinations are made. This values-based approach is one of democratized heritage management which recognizes the fact that heritage in its various forms, whether a monument or a landscape, is not static. It must be continually revisited by all stakeholders in order to determine continued meaning in a broader, more inclusive, context than that of the time when the resource was placed, assigned, named, or otherwise determined. Overall, “a single theme links all aspects of values-based conservation: the belief that conservation is more effective and relevant when the variety of values at stake for a place are well understood and embraced in decision making at all levels” (Avrami & Mason, 2018, p. 11).

## APPLICATION

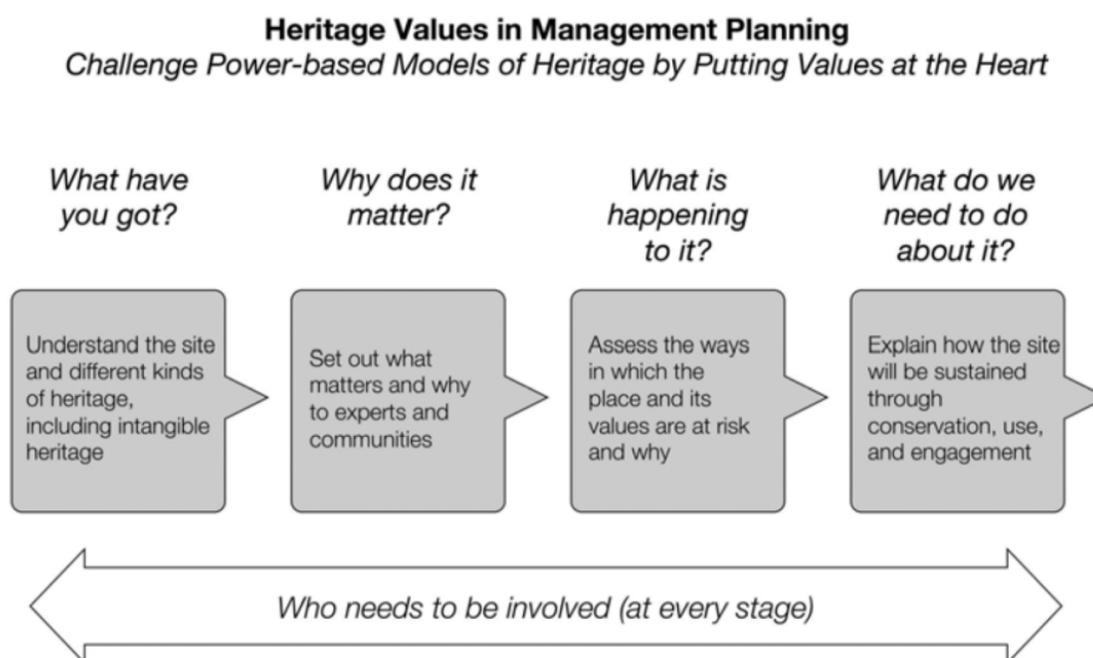
To put the principles of values-based heritage management to practice at a local level we must first recognize that no two places are the same and that issues surrounding questionable monuments will differ with each monument in each place. In the same city, the values surrounding one specific monument in question may be different from another just as the legalities of ownership may differ from resource to resource. Recognizing these challenges, the National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP) in June 2020 offered the following guidance to communities dealing with questionable monuments:

We believe that communities have an obligation to take on this issue forthrightly and inclusively. We recognize that not all monuments are the same, and a number of communities have carefully and methodically determined that some monuments should be removed and others retained but contextualized with educational markers or other monuments designed to counter the false narrative and racist ideology that they represent, providing a deeper understanding of their message and their purpose. We also recognize that some state legislatures have prohibited removal of such monuments, disallowing the rights of local communities wishing to remove these offensive symbols. Until such state laws are changed or overturned, contextualization may be the only option, at least for the present. Our view, however, is that unless these monuments can in fact be used to foster recognition of the reality of our painful past and invite reconciliation for the present and the future, they should be removed from our public spaces. (para. 6)

Though the NTHP's statement was specific to communities dealing with Confederate monuments, its content can be considered relevant to any questionable monument. In effect, the NTHP recognizes the importance of communities in determining their own values related to the significance of monuments. In order to make such determinations communities can use the tenets of values-based management described in the previous section within a planning framework to inclusively explore the values specific to their localities. This type of framework must be structured in a way that ensures it is inclusive, repeatable, and scalable. Clark (2019) suggests

such a process to which the key tenets can be applied, adapting a strategy for communities to adopt in the creation of statements of significance regarding questionable monuments.

Figure 1.



*Note: From *The Shift toward Values in UK Heritage Practice*, by K. Clark. In E. Avrami, S. Macdonald, R. Mason, & D. Myers (Eds.), *Values in Heritage Management - Emerging Approaches and Research Directions* (p. 73). Getty Conservation Institute.*

By combining key tenets with a scalable and flexible planning model (in consideration of the size and needs of specific communities) a strategic process emerges in five steps:

- **STEP ONE:** Who needs to be involved and when?

(Key tenets: participation, engagement, process)

This first step includes the identification and invitation of stakeholders that have value attachment to a resource. These stakeholders will be engaged in the conversation of process including guidelines, outcome measurements, and more. Questions at this stage

might include: Is there a board overseeing the process? Who is it made of and does it represent all identified stakeholders? What process will they work through and what metrics will they use? Will all of these be accessible and inclusive to all in the community?

- **STEP TWO:** What have you got?

(Key tenets: knowledge, engagement)

Once the objectives of step one are in place, group exploration begins by understanding the heritage resource. Research includes not only traditional knowledge but also explores generational, spiritual, and cultural knowledge certain groups may have regarding the resource. Definitions of its current value may come into play—historical, aesthetic, economic, social. Questions at this stage might include: What are the origins of the resource? Who owns it? Why is it where it is? Who made it? Who paid for it? What legalities govern it? What was its original intention?

- **STEP THREE:** Why does it matter?

(Key tenets: knowledge, values)

Additional knowledge is gained through allowance of competing narratives and explorations of both heritage and societal values associated with the resource. A dialogue is opened between all stakeholders of values associated with questionable monuments; recognizing that conflicts can be ways of building bridges. The simple act of discussing a resource's significance to multiple stakeholders can go far in terms of mediation by building understanding and breaking down ideas of agency and power structures (Avrami et al., 2019, p.6). Questions at this stage might include: What does this resource mean to you? Why? How does it make you feel? How does this resource in its current state impact you?

- **STEP FOUR:** What is happening to it?

(Key tenets: values)

Here, previous identification of values leads to discussion of the contemporary significance of the resource. This further opening of dialogue may “identify common,

crosscutting, or overarching identities that can facilitate understanding and cooperation between groups” (Korostelina, 2019, p. 94). Questions at this stage might include: How could the meaning of this monument be altered? Is that even possible? Can you understand the meaning it might have to someone else?

- **STEP FIVE:** What do we need to do about it?

(Key tenets: process, policy & governance, values)

Short of making an actual determination, this step allows exploration of appropriate actions based on a renewed values assessment. Recommendations of actions, based on agreed upon process and measurements, can be made and submitted to the public and agencies/institutions. Getting to this point means the important work is done (for now). Questions at this stage might include: Should the resource be reinterpreted, recontextualized, relocated, adapted, or removed? What are our recommendations based on those determinations? If we can’t make a recommendation, how can we most effectively revisit this?

As this planning model is worked through, communities would also benefit from three additional considerations concerning timeliness, communications, and accessibility. First, it is imperative that communities respond immediately to societal concerns regarding questionable monuments. Delaying action, or refusing to act at all, serves no one and can result in community distrust and even destruction of heritage resources. Second, consistent and transparent communications, both intergroup and to the public, regarding process, progress, and outcomes are a must. Third, accessibility options must be considered throughout the process. Opportunities and options must be presented for inclusion of those who may not be able to add input via traditional methods. These would likely include digital methods of access allowing for broader input and inclusion.

As to the ultimate disposition of questionable monuments, it makes sense to address here that actual determinations are too complicated to posit in the scope of this paper. Because localities must adhere to a wide-ranging variety of legal issues related to ownership and management of publicly-owned property, it can only be assumed that community developed recommendations would hold the power to positively influence related discussions. This would

be an interesting place for a round of case studies examining the actual determinations of contested monuments as well as public sentiment to these outcomes.

In sum, a combination of key tenets of values-based management and planning process has the “potential to promote accountability for past injustices, heal traumas, and reduce the likelihood that injustices will occur in the future” (Avrami et al., 2019, p.6) when it comes to the localized determination of questionable monuments. Though additional questions regarding monuments to the past are likely to be posed as the future becomes the present, such an application could prove useful in proactively addressing such concerns.

Considering real-world applications of this model, it makes sense at this point to revisit the case studies presented earlier.

### **Santa Fe**

Though Santa Fe city leaders have announced the creation of a CHART committee to review culture and heritage issues, including questionable monuments, concern for immediacy still appears to be lacking. Calls for proposals from cultural competency consultants have gone out and a choice was slated to have been made April 22, 2021. As of the time of this writing (April 27, 2021), there has been no public communication as to if this decision has been made or who was chosen.

Being that the community has been calling for action for decades it will be crucial for the CHART committee to follow a values-based approach, such as the one outlined above, to deal not only with questionable monuments but also with issues stemming from generations of exclusion and societal devaluation. It will be important to allow and encourage stakeholder input that relates to this history as part of the community heritage values discussion. As the CHART committee takes shape, the importance of bottom up decision making must be prioritized in discussions with policy makers. CHART must also be forthcoming and transparent in its communications to achieve its goal of building trust and creating cultural cohesion within the community.

The good news is that CHART, thanks to the work of its community, has a wealth of information to start with.

## **Washington, D.C.**

The Washington, D.C., case study reveals the implementation of a highly-responsive values-based management process. Leaders acted with immediacy to concerns from the community and worked with a broad base of stakeholders to work together in a values-based process to identify monuments which stood counter to local values.

Though the DCFACES report highlighted Freedman's Memorial as problematic, the portion of the report detailing recommendations regarding landmarks and commemorative works (one of the three total asset groups reviewed) has been redacted. No information as to why has been made available though it can be implied that these recommendations related primarily to federal heritage assets and therefore, may have caused some political discomfort. Nevertheless, identifying the memorial as problematic is a first step in exploring the social values attached to it, ideally opening a dialogue between the community and the NPS.

The NPS, overseen by the Department of the Interior, identifies civic engagement, public participation, and public involvement as key to its overall management plan. In particular, the NPS employs a specific public involvement process in its planning which directs NPS managers to "share information about legal and policy mandates, the planning process, issues, and proposed management directions; learn about the values placed by other people and groups on the same resources and visitor experiences, and build support for implementing the plan among local interests, visitors, Congress, and others at the regional and national levels" (NPS, 2006, pp. 24-25). Ideally, working through the values-based system will give the community surrounding the Freedman's Memorial the information they need to share public comment with the NPS, ultimately resulting in open discussion about future management.

## **New York City**

The proactive creation of the MAC committee and the efficient, transparent, and inclusive manner in which it worked to create its recommendations, report, and suggestions is an effective example of values-based management strategy. Though MAC was not able to come to an actual determination for the Roosevelt memorial, but did agree it should no longer remain

where it is, the process and multivocality of the stakeholders involved ensure that future decisions will be made according to a well thought out and tested process. MAC's forward-thinking report outlined guidelines for proactive discussion and future management and are in line with values-centered theory and guidelines suggested in this paper.

As a whole, when comparing case studies and outcomes to the application theory it is evident that a values-based planning process proves impactful in the management of questionable monuments at the community level.

## **CONCLUSION**

Questionable monuments are not just of issue right now and right here. Wherever monuments have been placed or named, questions have arisen regarding the suitability of those that represent histories of oppression in its myriad forms. This cultural clash of historical values versus contemporary social values has necessitated exploration of how to best manage such monuments. In some instances communities, even countries, have succeeded in recontextualizing questionable monuments to the betterment of society. In others, the absolute erasure of questionable monuments has led to a delayed cultural crisis in the form of a displaced memory, inaccurately reflecting the realities of the times or people which made such monuments questionable in the first place.

In the United States, recent events have focused a spotlight on monuments perceived to celebrate people or events associated with the country's history of colonization, racism, and oppression. Demands to confront these histories come from society as a whole—seeking social justice, equality, recognition, validation, and atonement—but also from within communities wrestling with their own specific historical and cultural narratives.

As society becomes more globalized and historically undervalued narratives are amplified, questionable monuments become “both archives of past events and agents of contemporary social change, framing the potentials and stresses of expanding the spectrum of values at play in conservation decisions” (Mason, 2019, p. 158). While cultural heritage professionals have been discussing and laying out policies related to more inclusive management there exists little real-world action steps for those who are not in the industry to use to engage

communities in active, inclusive, transparent management within their localities. The question for communities faced with the opportunities and obstacles presented by questionable monuments is, how do we do it? An answer lies in using a values-based heritage management framework to guide communities through the process of identifying and applying societal values to traditional heritage value determinations. The ultimate goal being “broader societal relevance for heritage conservation through construction of broader concepts of value” (Mason, 2019, p. 167).

We have explored such a framework here and determined through case studies that such a strategy not only proves effective for working through current issues regarding questionable monuments but is also relevant to inevitable future discussions. This framework is scalable and flexible yet also focused and detailed, allowing communities of different sizes and with different heritage concerns to apply it based on their needs. This framework also identifies the necessity of timeliness, transparency, and regularity in official responses to, and communications regarding, societal demands, values, and concerns related to shared public heritage. Finally, application of values-based management policies can assist communities in the transition from traditional top-down management policies regarding heritage, to bottom up, inclusive management models.

Such methodologies, when successfully employed, can empower communities, change historically inaccurate narratives, open lines of communication between groups, transform traditional power structures, and build trust. Ultimately, these result in a more equitable, well-informed, involved, and understanding community that bases decisions regarding its heritage—past, present, and future—on data that represents the values of all community members. When it comes to questionable monuments, communities have the tools to build value sets that are reflected in their monuments and shared public spaces.

Monuments are not just to the people and events of the past, they are living history that needs to remain relevant to those who encounter and find meaning, whether positive or negative, in them. Applying values-based heritage management practices can help communities achieve inclusive, sustainable public spaces and monuments that reflect their contemporary societal values—not just the values of those that placed such monuments, nor the times in which they were created. Solnit (2019) provides a particularly poetic summation:

Statues and names are not in themselves human rights or equal access or a substitute for it. But they are crucial parts of the built environment, ones that tell us who matters, who decides, who will be remembered. They furnish our imaginations. They also shape the sense of the past that we call on when we decide what future to choose and who to value and listen to in the present. (para. 5)

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