

chapter nine

**t h e m a (r) k i n g o f
m e m o r y
& t h e r i g h t t o
r e m e m b e r**

9.1 INTRODUCTION

As was introduced in Chapter three, the modernist Architect Adolf Loos believed that the only true and pure architecture was that of the memorial, as it had no function other than memory (Heathcote, 2006, p. 50). He also said, architecture is about monuments and graves, “*that an individual human life could be commemorated by a stone, a slab, a cross, or a star*” (Eisenman, 2005a, p. 10). This simplicity of course ended with the Holocaust, with Hiroshima, with Cambodia, Rwanda, 9/11 – the mechanisms of mass death. Individuals today can no longer be certain to die an individual death, and architecture can no longer therefore remember life as it once did. “*The markers that were formerly symbols of individual life and death must be changed, and this has a profound effect on the idea of memory and the monument*” (Eisenman, 2005a, p. 10).

This research is a design critique based thesis looking at the memorialisation of genocide in the three very different nations of Cambodia, Rwanda and Germany. Often thought of in traditional terms, the process of critique may attempt to render a piece of art or architecture - a design - successful or not in terms of achieving its stated aim. In terms of genocide memorialisation then, should a ‘successful’ memorial therefore be critiqued in its ability to achieve the ultimate goal - to prevent genocide? Investigated in these terms, this study would have indeed shown that no memorial to genocide could be deemed a ‘success’, as the planned and deliberate mass killing of man, by man, continues throughout the world. With this said, this research did not expect to use the process of design critique in these terms, but aimed to start a conversation about the ways in which memorial design might begin to engage the mind and heart of those who visit, and as such, work towards developing a better understanding of how future generations and those who do not ‘know’ the tragedy first-hand may come to engage with it in the landscape through space and built form. Also realising my limitations as a ‘distanced’ researcher from the people and places directly affected by the genocides of Cambodia and Rwanda, my research was cautiously planned to turn what could be described as a ‘limitation’, into a positive contribution to the conversation relating to genocide memorialisation. As such, this research looks specifically at the issue of memorial design, and what role site design plays in shaping Euro-Western experience and interpretation of post genocide memorialisation in Cambodia and Rwanda, as the tourism industry, vital to the economy of these emerging nations, develops.

This chapter will outline the key findings of this research, and will then discuss the implications of the findings for those involved in the practice of memorialisation – from the communities surviving in the aftermath of genocide, to the designers and scholars involved in the creation of memorial space and discourse.

9.2 KEY FINDINGS

This research has reinforced the contemporary conviction that genocide is a human problem unbounded by time, geographic location, culture or religion. It is a problem we are yet to understand fully, and as such it is a problem we seem unable to prevent. In our global world of instant information, we today assume responsibility for actions committed throughout the world merely through our ability to 'see'. With this assumed responsibility, the core assumption established in Chapter one was that genocide memorialisation has moved beyond being a primary custom or ritual for the victim/survivor community, to today attaining a privileged position within the international context, where the act and process of genocide is viewed as a grave crime against humanity. Highly relevant to today within the contemporary context of modern developments in mass media, advanced communications and a growing tourist interest in emerging nations, this research has specifically investigated how memorial sites in Cambodia and Rwanda engage the Euro-Western visitor who may have little previous or personal connection with site and context (Williams, 2004a, p. 208).

Firstly, the research undertaken within this study has shown that the process of genocide memorialisation moves through identifiable stages in time that respond to the needs, expectations - and as this research has reinforced - the political, social and economic pressures present in a nation surviving in the aftermath of genocide. Analysis has shown that in the immediacy following tragedy there is a deep need to document and preserve evidences – to retain the actual places of tragedy, to provide spaces for burial, and to retain first-hand artefacts and evidentially significant items. This research demonstrates through the 'Memorial Development Model' - and examined with reference to Berlin's public memoryscape of the Jewish Holocaust - the idea that as a community moves through the aftermath of genocide, the public expression of that process is expressed through the development of its memoryscape, from a landscape of preservation, documentation and education, to today including memorial sites of abstraction and non-representation.

The case study research carried out in Cambodia and Rwanda has clearly illustrated the initial stages of this process, where memorial sites are explicitly shown to respond to the contextual conditions of time and place in which they sit. This study has shown for example, through an analysis of Cambodia's memoryscape of genocide, that the form and function of memorial sites in Cambodia are undoubtedly a result of the complex political situation of the nation today, that has not seen for 30 years, any justice relating to the crimes committed against humanity during the 1970's. Similarly, research undertaken in relation to Rwanda's memoryscape to genocide again revealed a parallel between societal and political needs, and the subsequent public expression of memorial form and function.

In addition to the vast and complex contextual situations in which this research was located, the core research issue around tourism, and experience of international visitors was considered by way of phenomenological enquiry. Returning to the 1993 article 'Phenomenology and Auschwitz: seeking practical application of the paradigm in design analysis', Mezga states,

“Auschwitz facilitates outsider participation and is acknowledged as a substantial repository of meaning. It carries an identity of shuddering emotional impact, providing an environment where attached meanings far exceed the collection of objects which constitute its physical structure” (Mezga, 1993, p. 69). This research has shown that the post genocide memoryscapes of Cambodia and Rwanda also act as ‘substantial repositories of meaning’ – potent containers of memory. Like Auschwitz, the raw reality of death presented through the memorial sites in Cambodia and Rwanda undeniably carry also *‘an identity of shuddering emotional impact’*. For Euro-Western tourists considered primarily in this study, site elements common to all human civilisations such as skulls, bones and clothes presented on site in these foreign nations, proved to cross traditional cultural and linguistic boundaries - connecting the ‘human’ self to site and context – through the intrinsic reality of death, and what it is to be human.

Another key finding of this research which relates to Mezga’s observations of Auschwitz, is the complex idea relating to ‘site and the attachment of meaning’. Mezga suggests that the experience of Auschwitz provides *“an environment where attached meanings far exceed the collection of objects which constitute its physical structure”* (Mezga, 1993, p. 68). Through field data analysis this research has explicitly shown that the design of memorial sites in Cambodia and Rwanda express certain on site ‘cues’ that allow, or perhaps encourage, the culturally specific attachment of meaning, in this case through our pre-understanding of the Jewish Holocaust. For Cambodia and Rwanda, nations very different to that found in the West, these ‘cues’ act to connect the Euro-Western visitor with, for most, a ‘foreign’ site and a ‘foreign’ context. It is through this process of site interpretation that the attachment of individual meaning comes to ‘exceed’ the actual physicality of space. I propose that it is primarily through these two experiential mechanisms – the ‘human’ connection with reality, and the individual attachment of meaning - that Euro-Western visitors to memorial sites in Cambodia and Rwanda come to engage with site.

Finally, as an extension discussion to the field research, this study suggests that post genocide memoryscapes purely orientated around issues of preservation, documentation and education – here represented by the current post genocide memoryscapes of Cambodia and Rwanda - may risk losing their significance within contemporary society if they do not evolve with the needs of society around them. For Berlin, the memoryscape of genocide remains, 60 years on, dominated by sites of preservation and documentation. With the opening of Peter Eisenman’s Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe in 2005 however, the opportunity was given to consider and analyse the design strategies of abstraction and non-representation in relation to the built form of genocide memorialisation. Extending beyond the expected 'stand and stare' relationship between visitor and memorial as commonly experienced in visually dominated sites of traditional memorialisation, this research suggests that the 'being in time' of the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe goes beyond the established expectations of memorial experience. Not telling the visitor what to think, but instead encouraging each visitor to ‘just’ think, the ability of memorial design to facilitate individual thought and self reflection is a compelling issue for those involved in the design and theorising of genocide memorialisation.

9.3 IMPLICATIONS FOR MEMORIAL DESIGN & DEVELOPMENT

Having far-reaching implications, genocide memorialisation is an extreme example of the political, cultural and economic complexities that surround the process of memorial design in the world today. Highlighting in a globalised setting the profound ramifications of memorialisation and its interpretation for those involved or affected by its expression, this research has highlighted the need to be vigilant within the future discourse and practise of memorial design and development, particularly in the aftermath of genocide. The design of built memorial works is one that carries with it significant and complex realities for those involved in the design, discourse, experience and engagement with genocide memorialisation.

The first implication identified through this research that must be considered within any future discourse or practice of genocide memorialisation is that memorials have the ability within post genocide communities to either build or destroy any sense of unification or reconciliation, as was discussed by Susan Cook in relation to Rwanda (Cook, 2006). On the question of whether commemorative works might handicap efforts at peaceful cohabitation in Rwanda, Cook found that the implications of memorialisation for the victim/survivor community were complex, with memorial design having a profound effect on the way a society survives and develops in the aftermath of genocide.

A second implication to consider with regard to memorial design, and related to the issue identified above, is what place the memory of genocide should be given within a post genocide landscape. As Sabrina Van der Linden a Holocaust survivor stated at the opening of the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, *"I do not believe in the collective guilt. And if I may paraphrase the great writer and an exceptional man Elie Wiesel: 'The children of the killers are not killers. We must never blame them for what their elders did. But we can hold them responsible for what they do with the memory of their elder's crime'"* (Van der Linden, 2005, p. 37). By placing the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe at the heart of Germany's capital, a debate was sparked that has in some ways transcended the designed memorial form itself – a debate that continues to challenge visitor and scholar alike about what place contemporary German society should allow the memory of the Holocaust and Nazi Crimes committed during WWII. In 1998, German novelist Martin Walser cited the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe in his public condemnation of Germany's 'Holocaust industry.' In the speech given on 11 October 1998 as he accepted the Frankfurt Book Fair Peace Prize, Walser decried the exploitation of German disgrace for present purposes, criticising Berlin's latest proposal as 'monumentalising' and continuing Germany's 'ceaseless presentation of shame' (Frontline, 2005). By placing a memorial to the Jewish Holocaust in the heart of Berlin - a public memorial and public space that is experienced as part of the everyday - the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe has tested the limits considered so far by the established discourse surrounding memorial design, and provides an opportunity for the critical extension to discourse relating to the expression of memory in the landscape.

A third ramification to consider in relation to genocide memorialisation is that the form and meaning of a memorial can be an important way to broach complex and difficult subjects within a post genocide community, prompting critical social debate. Justin DeRose and Ekaterina Haskins suggest that it is a memorial's faithfulness to being 'multiform' and a 'forum for open debate' that renders a memorial meaningful – as different to a site that encourages collective affirmation (DeRose & Haskin, 2003). As Paul Williams suggests, memorials are important not only as completed structures, but as a process for public questioning (Williams, 2004b, pp. 248-249). With regard to Daniel Libeskind's Jewish Museum in Berlin for example - a building that aimed through design to interrogate the history of Jews in Germany - Williams comments that "*an intense debate erupted over questions of guilt, culpability and forgiveness*" (Williams, 2004b, p. 249) - in other words - a forum for open social debate. James Young suggests, a memorial should aim "*not to consol but to provoke; not to remain fixed but to change; not to be everlasting but to disappear; not to be ignored by passersby but to demand interaction; not to remain pristine but to invite its own violation and desanctification; not to accept graciously the burden of memory but to throw it back at the town's feet*" (Young, 1993, p. 30). Drawing on the work of Juan Pablo Bonta, this research has shown that in the context of genocide memorialisation in Cambodia and Rwanda, memorial sites may run the risk, through appealing for 'collective affirmation' - through the universal acceptance of the 'official interpretation' - of losing their ability to construct a forum for public debate, as the primary interpretive response is dominated by one officially led understanding.

A fourth important ramification for memorial design that is particularly pertinent in the 'connected' world of today, and is a core issue of this research, is how the international visitor, who may have little previous or personal connection with site and context, engaged through site experience and interpretation of the post genocide memoryscapes of Cambodia and Rwanda. This study has shown that what might be termed a documentative approach to memorial design - such as that seen primarily in Cambodia and Rwanda - are understood by their basic informational, photographic and symbolic imagery, by what they stand for, and rely significantly on visual and thematic 'cues' to transcend cultural and linguistic boundaries. The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe however, at the other extreme, offers no specific or 'told' visual or cultural 'cues' in which the international visitor can understand or experience the site. An individual's experience of the memorial grants no didactic understanding – "*there is no goal, no end, no working one's way in or out*" (Eisenman, 2005a, p. 12). In this context there is only the living memory of the individual - knowing the past through its manifestation in the present (Eisenman, 2005a, p. 12). In an article written about the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe for the German newspaper Die Zeit, Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben offers an interpretation of the memorial, where, he suggests the underground information centre embodies the 'memorable,' just as memorials focused around preserving and presenting first-hand evidences, photos and text might. With reference to the field of stelae above however, Agamben believes the 'pillars' manifest the 'unforgettable' (Benjamin, 2005). In this context the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe presents a new idea of memory, as distinct from the traditional archival, historical and symbolic nature commonly presented

through didactic representation, or the actual lived space – the ‘memorable’. The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe - the silence of the field of stelae - denies closure and becomes, what Agamben terms, the ‘unforgettable’, challenging the visitor to comprehend the experience as part of an individual dialogue between man and meaning, transcending the traditional need for visual, linguistic and cultural ‘cues’. It is an experience you can’t explain, or separate the ‘self’ from.

The final issue considered within this research that has important implications for anyone involved in the process of memorialising genocide, is the ability of memorial form to allow for the ‘movement of meaning’ as the needs and expectations of society change and evolve around them. Through the research undertaken in this study a generalised process of memorialisation in the aftermath of genocide has been identified and discussed. Acknowledging that the nations and cultures of Cambodia and Rwanda are very different to that of Germany, the Memorial Development Model introduced in Chapter three, and discussed in further detail in Chapter eight, is proposed as a tool for discussion, and not as a ‘prescribed’ approach or process which ‘will’ or ‘should’ be followed by Cambodia or Rwanda, or any other nation surviving in the aftermath of genocide. It does however offer an interesting opportunity grounded in the actual built space of a post genocide community to critically focus discussion around the aims and realities of memorial design and the process of genocide memorialisation over time. Memorial design framed by what Agamben describes as the ‘unforgettable’ traverses time and place, moving and evolving with society. In this reality, the meaning of the memorial only exists with the connection of man in his/her immediate and individual lifeworld.

Differences in approach seen in the built form and interpretation of genocide memorials in Cambodia, Rwanda and Germany, indicate that the post genocide memoryscapes of each nation are undoubtedly immersed in the processes of political, emotive and social realities of a community existence after genocide. This research, grounded in actual designed space within post genocide communities has highlighted the compelling relationships between memorial design and reconciliation, the representation of memory, and critical social debate within post genocide communities. This research has also shown that with the added complexities of tourism and time, the relationships between memorial design and interpretation are critical implications to consider in the design and discourse of contemporary genocide memorialisation.

9.4 IMPLICATIONS FOR PHENOMENOLOGY AS METHODOLOGY

A key finding of this research was that the three modes of phenomenological enquiry demonstrated within the method - 'encountered', 'existential' and 'hermeneutic' - give an in-depth and unique 'human understanding' of the way man experiences landscapes of tragedy.

The mode of 'encountered' phenomenological enquiry offered in-depth, meaningful and expressive descriptions of each site under enquiry. Using the collective media of photographic, film and textual records, the 'encountered' approach to design interpretation -where pre-understanding and knowledge of site and context are placed alongside in-depth descriptions focused on the design and experiential qualities of site - illuminated issues and concepts that were 'important' or 'significant' when considering Euro-Western experience of site.

The 'existential' mode of phenomenological enquiry provided an expansive and relatively unmediated view into the experiences of space, site and self of Euro-Western visitors to the case study sites. The three 'on-site' and two 'follow-up' exercises that provided information by way of text, graphic and photographic expression of site experience and interpretation proved effective in elucidating the experience and attached meanings of others.

The 'hermeneutic' mode of phenomenological enquiry was interpreted widely, and focused on an interpretive discussion around the development of post genocide memorialisation. Enlisting the discourse of key scholars and designers, the hermeneutic enquiry developed unrestrictedly in response to key issues identified as a result of the encountered and existential enquiries.

The methodology also expanded the ideas of Bonta's *Anatomy of Architectural Interpretation*. Bonta's framework offers an approach with which to rigorously address the concept of design interpretation through time, and has proven through this research - research that is grounded in a very different context to his seminal work undertaken with a meta-linguistic analysis of the Barcelona Pavilion - to be a useful tool across the design professions, where an investigation into the 'meaning' of landscape or architecture is sought.

The implications of this research for the future development of phenomenology as a rigorous and legitimate mode through which to conduct design critique across the design profession is also an important result of this study. Providing a wealth of relatively unmediated information, the phenomenological method of design critique illuminated what was important in the broad issue set at the outset of this study, which aimed to investigate the role of design in shaping Euro-Western experience and interpretation of genocide memorialisation in Cambodia and Rwanda. Revealing the multiple 'meanings' of design and experience through layers of graphic, photographic, and text based response, the phenomenological method outlined in the study offers the future of landscape architecture, and other design industries involved in the

relationship between man and meaning, an enduring, flexible and innately intimate method of enquiry

9.5 FUTURE DIRECTIONS:

HUMAN RESPONSE & MEMORIALISATION

Through the process of this investigation, several important and interesting issues have arisen that have been assessed as exceeding the limits set for this research, but that would offer interesting future directions for the continuation of research surrounding genocide memorialisation. This investigation has, to date, looked at the site design of genocide memorials, and Euro-Western interpretation of the post genocide memoryscapes of Cambodia and Rwanda. The response and interaction of local communities however – perpetrator and victim groups – would provide an extension to this research not so far considered, offering insight into the relationship between collective ‘grief’ and public memorialisation. Introduced here is the idea that as a society moves through stages of grief after tragedy, so too does the public memoryscape - developing perhaps in response to the collective grief - offering an outward and public view.

Grief historically has been looked at in an individualistic way, but here, the idea of memorialisation as response to a society’s collective grief is proposed. Understanding that both the grief and memorialisation processes are highly complex, and resist by their very nature a concise or rational analysis, this idea is not intended to offer a conclusive analysis or comparison, but to spark a conversation on how memorial form and texture may be looked at as a response to grief that arises from mass death, and in this case, genocide. The Kubler-Ross model describes, in five discrete but inter-related stages, the process by which people deal with grief and tragedy. The model was introduced by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross in her 1969 book "*On Death and Dying*", and introduces the concept known as '*The Five Stages of Grief*' (Kubler-Ross, 1969). The stages - denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance - are set here alongside the memorial textures as introduced in this research. The model presented below, figure 9.1, suggests a new investigative tool into considering the possible relationship between physical representation of public memorialisation, and ‘collective’ grief.

GRIEF / MEMORIAL RESPONSE MODEL

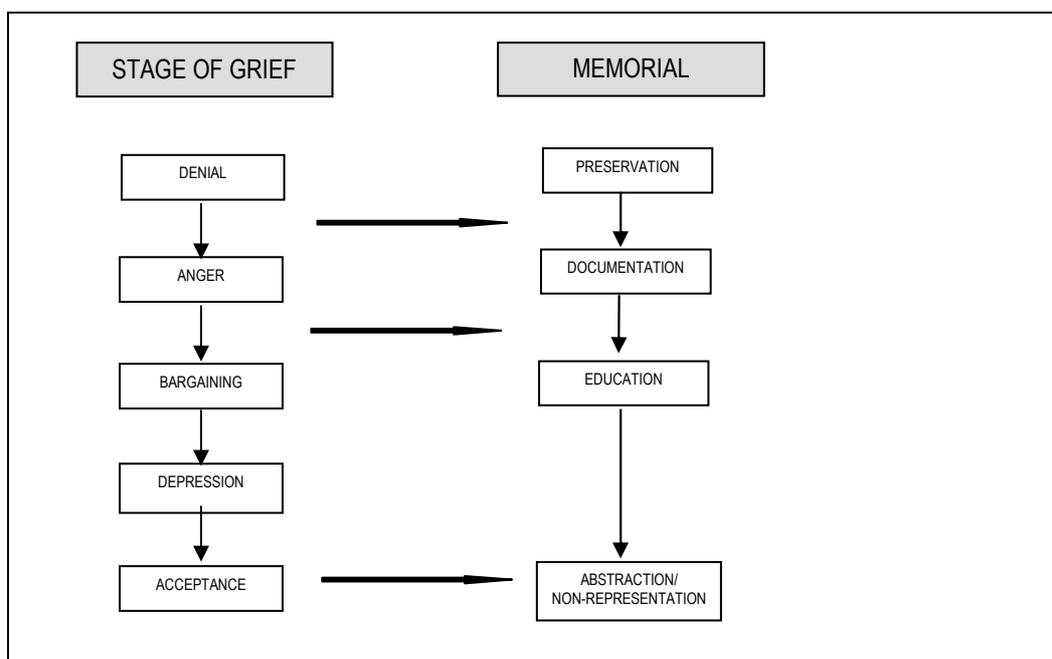


Fig. 9.1

Introduced in the model above (figure 9.1), the relationship between the Kubler-Ross model of the grief process and the expression of memorial textures as identified within the Memorial Development Model is presented. By looking at the process of grief, in relation to the dominant memorial texture expressed in the national memoryscape of a nation surviving in the aftermath of genocide, the relationship between collective ‘grief’ and ‘memorial response’ may be discussed. For example, preserving evidences as ‘proof’, such as the case for Cambodia over the past 30 years, may develop in response to issues of denial by certain groups with a particular agenda to ‘forget’, or future generations who ‘do not know’. By clearly documenting the event, victim groups can know that their suffering will be seen by those who witness the first-hand documentation provided by the processes of preservation and documentation - proof. Education as a memorial texture may respond to several stages of the grief process, namely ‘denial’, ‘anger’ or ‘bargaining’, as a community comes to terms with what happened. Expressed within the case study of Rwanda, the Kigali Memorial Centre is seen to respond clearly to the external issue of current genocide ideology within surviving communities, and particularly anger for what happened. Finally, the concept of memorialisation focused on abstraction/non-representation is best illustrated within this research by the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe. As Germany has come to *accept* its genocidalry past (whether through choice, necessity or other means) the memoryscape of genocide has responded accordingly. *‘Less burdened’* perhaps by the raw and immediate emotion that is seen to so strongly direct the quite tangible actions of memorial form in the first three stages of the Memorial Development Model, there appears through time, to be possibility for the broadening out of memorial response – a parallel between *acceptance* and *abstraction/non-representation*.

This relationship between collective grief and memorial response, although also explicitly effected by the external tensions of politics - both national and international - society, religion

and economics, I believe warrants further investigation, and would offer a structured framework in which to consider 'local' perceptions and beliefs around memorial design.

9.6 CONCLUSION DISCUSSION

Samantha Power states “*More than a half century has passed since the Genocide Convention came into effect, and genocide has proceeded virtually unabated. Press coverage of the atrocities has generated outrage, but it has generally been insufficient to prompt Western action*” (Power, 2002, p. 85). It is one thing to talk about genocide, the raw mechanics, the overwhelming statistics, the hopelessness of a world repeating itself time and time again, a wish for prevention - these factors can all be described, spoken and heard. However how can those who don't know genocide in the first instance attempt to understand the reality, to make a personal connection, to be able to reflect, to realise, to know?

Investigating the differing modes of memorialisation within this study I believe that memorials to genocide must focus on the universal concept of social consciousness, where man is willing to participate in the active engagement of mind and heart, and where ‘meaning’ is not limited by time or culture. Genocide is a human problem, and as such it is an issue that must be confronted in ‘as human a way as possible’. The ‘being in time’ that built genocide memorialisation offers the visitor, has the ability to connect man and meaning through the critical human process of self reflection.

Some might say that genocide memorialisation in Cambodia and Rwanda should be aimed completely and uncompromisingly at the populations of those nations, providing them with places to mourn, remember, commemorate and learn. The reality is however that genocide memorialisation is today developing under the opportunities, expectations and pressures asserted by the globalised world. Genocide memorials have become key tourist sites and hold a significant and privileged position within the international context. Through the placing of the memorials on a global stage it becomes clear that a primary right to memory for the victim community does not exist within the complex context of post genocide society today. With this said however, this research has shown that there is opportunity through the visitation of international tourists to engage and connect man with site and context, and in so doing, provide a broader cognition base for the future dialogue of genocide prevention and responsibility.

Returning to the introduction of my research, it has long been accepted that ‘landscape’ is a reflection of society and culture, the physical manifestation of man and his environment. Corner has suggested that underlying this however, is the belief that landscape architecture can critically engage the ‘self’ – to not simply be a “*reflection of culture but more an active instrument in the shaping of modern culture*” (Corner, 1999, p. 1). Through my investigations of the post genocide memoryscapes of Cambodia, Rwanda and Germany – the visual, emotional, experiential and interpretive qualities of tragic space – the potential for design to engage the mind and heart becomes clear. The design of landscape has the ability to shape aspects of our modern world, encouraging people to step outside the everyday, to challenge their perceptions of life, and our role in the world, to increase awareness, and most importantly

to awaken our consciousness to the realities of the world we live in. The developed assumption of my work, building on that of Steele (2006) who highlighted “*that genocide memorialisation has attained such a privileged position in the post-genocide international community that it has moved beyond merely being a . . . ritual for the victim/witness and their community, becoming a compulsively practiced . . . ritual for ‘international society’*” (Steele, 2006, p. 1), this research has investigated the idea that genocide memorialisation has in fact become a right also for the international community to participate in. Believed at the outset of this research that catering for the international visitor at memorial sites in Cambodia and Rwanda was ethically compromising, the process of this investigation has shown the need for international involvement and interpretation at international genocide sites. Genocide is a human problem, and as such we must all take responsibility for genocide in the world. I do believe however, that to retain integrity and meaning, memorial design must attempt to enter the ‘unforgettable’, where visitors are not only engaged through the shocking visual reality of mass death which may easily become exploited, but to be engaged critically in self consideration.

Different cultures carry with them the baggage of time, politics, culture and religious belief. The power of memorials therefore must come in their ability to speak through time, to shift in meaning as generations and time change, to engage man in a self-reflective way, where individual pre-understanding and personal circumstance is drawn out and actively contemplated regardless of background. In conclusion, I believe that the design of post genocide memoryscapes should be about healing; to not emphasise the injustices of one group upon another, but to emphasise the human tragedy of genocide. As Wolfgang Thierse stated at the opening of the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe on 10 May 2005, “*That is how it can be. That is the intent. Not a kind of negative nostalgia but a commemorating of the victims that obligates us for the present and future: to a culture of humanity, of recognition, of tolerance in a society and country in which we can dare to be different as human beings and not be afraid*” (Thierse, 2005, p. 17).