

# Creating, Documenting and Using Archives of Spontaneous Memorials

## International Workshop

20-21 September 2018  
Manchester Art Gallery

## Report



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## List of Contents

Executive Summary	p. 3
Introduction	p. 4
Workshop Schedule	p. 5
List of Delegates	p. 6
Workshop Themes, Questions, and Discussion Points	p. 7
Theme A: Collecting, Retention, Conservation, and Disposal	p. 7
Theme B: Public Archives and Publics of Archives	p. 10
Theme C: Digital Archives	p. 13
Theme D: Impact on cultural organisations and authorities	p. 14
Theme E: Psychosocial perspectives of spontaneous memorials' archives	p. 16
Theme F: Spontaneous and Permanent Memorialisation	p. 18
Theme G: Research and Interpretation of Spontaneous Memorials	p. 19
Theme H: Future(s) of the Archives	p. 20
Recommendations and Actions	p. 22
Contact	p. 22

## Executive Summary

A British Academy/Leverhulme Small Research Grant enabled Dr Kostas Arvanitis to initiate an international Network of Archives of Spontaneous Memorials.

A 2-day research workshop in September 2018 brought together 35 researchers and representatives of cultural and local authority organisations from seven recent cases of large scale memorials after terrorist attacks or disasters (Barcelona, 2017; Brussels, 2016; Nice, 2016; Paris, 2015; Manchester, 2017; Shoreham, 2015; and Stockholm, 2017) to share experiences and formulate guidance in rapid documentation, contemporary collecting, digitising and using spontaneous memorials; form a support network for individuals and organisations involved; and propose ways that work on archives of memorials is embedded in post-disaster recovery policy and processes.

On Day 1 we had presentations related to the 7 case studies represented on the formation, documentation, use and legacy of their archives of spontaneous memorials. This was followed by a visit to the Manchester Together Archive. On Day 2 participants discussed in groups different issues, as identified in the pre-workshop questionnaire. These included:

- Collecting, Retention, Conservation and Disposal
- Public Archives and Publics of Archives
- Digital Archives
- Impact on cultural organisation(s) and authorities
- Psychosocial perspectives of spontaneous memorials' archives
- Spontaneous and Permanent Memorialisation
- Research and interpretation of spontaneous memorials' archives
- Future(s) of the archives

The workshop provided an opportunity to develop an early-stage contact and strategic engagement among researchers, policy makers and practitioners in the research and management of spontaneous memorials and their legacies. Through the formation of the international network the project kick-started a programme of collaboration and knowledge exchange that has the potential to inform and influence national and international policy and practice in this area.

The project led to the formation of the International Network of Archives of Spontaneous Memorials, an international community of practice and the development of an [online resource for cultural professionals, policy makers and researchers dealing with archives of spontaneous memorials](#). Through the Network, the project facilitated and maximised the impact of this research into archiving practices of spontaneous memorials beyond academia and yielded organisational and cultural benefits. This included enabling local, national and international government and cultural authorities and practitioners reflect critically on the role and value of spontaneous memorials (and their archive) in contributing to the personal and collective memory and the institutional memorialisation of the event(s) that led to their formation; and assisting them develop professional practices, processes and guidelines in documenting and giving access to this material.

## Introduction

This report captures the scope, aims, discussions, and recommendations of a 2-day international workshop (funded by the British Academy and Leverhulme Trust) that took place in Manchester on 20-21 September 2018. The workshop, which brought together practitioners, researchers and organisations involved in archiving and studying recent and past spontaneous memorials from around the UK and Europe, discussed the creation, archiving, documentation, digitisation, and use of archives and collections of spontaneous memorials after large-scale traumatic events.

“Spontaneous memorials” (also termed “spontaneous shrines”, “temporary memorials”, “grassroots memorials”, or “makeshift memorials”) are, Santino notes, “silent witnesses [...] a primary way to mount those who died a sudden or shocking death, and to acknowledge the circumstances of the deaths” (Santino 2006, 5, 12). Such memorials have been the context or object of different disciplinary and interdisciplinary investigations, such as: spontaneous memorials as spaces of cultural negotiation of public grief (Doss 2008; Eyre 2006; Senie 2006); their commemorative and performative roles (Santino 2016); rituals of gift-giving and the material culture of mourning (Hallam and Hockey, 2001); spaces of social action (Margry and Sanchez-Carretero 2011), or political protest and death rituals (Marchi 2006); examples of mass mediation of disaster and tragic death (Dayan and Katz 1994); and in the context of a sociology of terrorist attacks (Truc 2018).

However, spontaneous memorials raise also questions about the cultural professional practices, agents, outputs and impact of creating, documenting, managing and using their archives (see e.g. Maynor 2015; Milošević 2018; Morin 2015; Purcell 2012; Rivard 2012; Schwartz 2012; Whitton 2016). An examination of the impact that spontaneous memorials have on local museums, libraries, archives or related cultural organisations tasked with their documentation, archiving and long-term use is significant because of the value and roles that these memorials (and their archive) have in constructing personal and collective memories of tragic events and the impact they have in challenging established archiving and museological methods and timeframes. In the case of spontaneous memorials, cultural organisations are faced with challenges such as rapid documentation and contemporary collecting, which most often fall outside their usual acquisition, collecting and management frameworks. In this context, what is collected, documented and archived (or not), when and how often, by whom and what/who for, are questions that need to be addressed, in order to reveal the agency, pre-conceptions and comprehensiveness in the formation and use of a spontaneous memorial’s archive. Also, the frequency of spontaneous memorials over recent years makes such an examination all the more important and timely.

Accordingly, the workshop was an opportunity to share experiences and discuss conceptual, practical and ethical challenges in archiving spontaneous memorials, including: the preparedness of city and cultural authorities to respond to the speed, timeframe and public expectations of these memorials; issues of public participation and co-production; the expansion of the spontaneous memorialisation on digital and social media; how archiving decisions affect the construction and evolution of the memory of the relevant events; and the use of the resulted archive in the context of health and wellbeing of people affected psychologically and/or physically by the events. Workshop participants had also the opportunity to discuss practical and

methodological challenges, plan for a long-term programme of activity, and discuss possible funding routes to support this work.

The workshop led to the formation of an international network of archives of spontaneous memorials, a community of practice on creating, documenting and using archives of spontaneous memorials (<http://www.spontaneousmemorials.org/>).

## Workshop Schedule

### Thursday 20th September 2018

09.15	Registration and Tea/Coffee (use the Gallery's entrance on Princess Street)
09.50	Welcome (Alistair Hudson, Manchester Art Gallery Director)
10.00	Introduction (Kostas Arvanitis)
10.20	Paris (Mathilde Pintault and G�r�me Truc)
10.40	Nice (Marion Duvigneau)
11.00	Discussion
11.20	Break
11.50	Brussels (Fr�d�ric Boquet and Marie Van Eeckenrode)
12.10	Overview of Belgian and French archives of spontaneous/grassroots memorials (Ma�lle Bazin and Marie Van Eeckenrode)
12.30	Discussion
13.00	Lunch
14.00	Stockholm (Elisabeth Boogh, Kajsa Hartig, Johanna Karlsson and Hans �jmyr)
14.20	Barcelona (Josep Bracons, Daniel Alcubierre G�mez and L�dia Font Pag�s)
14.40	Shoreham (Wendy Walker)
15.00	Discussion
15.30	Break
15.50	Manchester (Kostas Arvanitis, Larysa Bolton and Amanda Wallace)
16.10	The Manchester Together Archive Visit
17.15	End

19.00	Workshop Dinner
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### Friday 21st September 2018

09.00	Tea/Coffee (use the Gallery's entrance on Princess Street)
09.30	Collecting, Retention, Conservation and Disposal
10.30	Public Archives and Publics of Archives Digital Archives
11.15	Break
11.30	Impact on cultural organisation(s) and authorities Psychosocial perspectives of spontaneous memorials' archives
12.15	Spontaneous and Permanent Memorialisation Research and interpretation of spontaneous memorials' archives Future(s) of the archives
13.00	Lunch
13.45	Aims and Activities of the Network
15.00	Next Steps
15.30	End

## List of Delegates

Daniel Alcubierre	MUHBA Museu d'Història de Barcelona
Kate Allsopp	Manchester Resilience Hub
Maria Paula Arias	University of Manchester
Kostas Arvanitis	University of Manchester
Amy Batley	Centre for Urban Conflicts Research, University of Cambridge
Maëlle Bazin	University Paris 2 Panthéon-Assas (CARISM)
Larysa Bolton	Archives+ Manchester Central Library
Elisabeth Boogh	Stockholm County Museum
Frédéric Boquet	Archives de la Ville de Bruxelles - Archives of the City of Brussels
Josep Bracons	MUHBA Barcelona City History Museum
Ana Carden-Coyne	University of Manchester
Marion Duvigneau	Service des Archives Nice Côte d'Azur
Sophie Everest	Belle Vue Productions/University of Manchester
Anne Eyre	Independent consultant and Disaster Action
Sarah Feinstein	University of Manchester
Lídia Font Pagès	Barcelona History Museum ( MHUBA )
Paul French	GMHSCP
Andy Hardman	Belle Vue Productions
Kajsa Hartig	Nordiska museet/The Nordic Museum
Johanna Karlsson	City Museum of Stockholm
Jen Kavanagh	Freelance curator
Chrisoula Lionis	University of Manchester
Owen Munday	The National Archives
Hans Öjmyr	Stockholm City Museum
Mathilde Pintault	Archives de Paris
Arran Rees	University of Leeds
Gérôme Truc	ISP - CNRS (Paris)
Marie Van Eeckenrode	States Archives in Belgium / Université de Louvain
Meg Venter	The National Archives
Wendy Walker	County Archivist, West Sussex Record Office
Amanda Wallace	Manchester Art Gallery
Jelena Watkins	Independent therapist & Disaster Action
Shona Whitton	Independent Consultant

## Workshop Themes, Questions, and Discussion Points

### THEME A: COLLECTING RETENTION, CONSERVATION AND DISPOSAL

#### Time

#### Questions

- *Timeframes for collecting. When is it acceptable to move spontaneous memorials?*
- *When should we get involved? (Risks of too soon vs risks of too late)*
- *Challenge: to be prepared for the unforeseen and work rapidly*
- *When to stop collecting?*

#### Discussion Points

- There's no best practice in terms of when to remove a memorial, or when to start, or when to stop; putting any kind of parameters is unhelpful.
- Spontaneous memorials function as early rituals, so they need to be given space and time.
- Spontaneous memorials need to be considered as a kind of community collective response and that it's really more about how you communicate what's happening with the memorial, rather than be fixated on a rigid timeframe.
- It is important to communicate to the public about the timeframe of the memorial, especially when it is planned to be removed.
- Political decision making has an impact on time.
- Weather plays a role too; it did play a key role in the case of Barcelona.
- Important dates that might be coming up for the community impact on the decision. So, in Manchester it was Manchester Day was coming up. In Sydney it was Christmas after the siege.
- We know that people behave like this after mass casualty events. So, one can anticipate that there's going to be some kind of collective memorialising. So, organisations, museums, art galleries, local governments can expect that this will happen. So, how do we start planning around that before it happens so that you're not having these kinds of conversations on the fly and thinking that 'oh, this is never happened before, I am alone in it. I don't know what to do'.

#### What

#### Questions

- *How much to keep?*
- *As museums or cultural institutions, should we keep all the objects?*
- *Is it possible/ethical to do an objective triage of what to keep and what not?*
- *What might be retention/selection criteria?*
- *Where are the edges of such an archive? How to appraise/select? Limited to a particular time frame or geographical area? All materials/formats?*

- *Can practices around these materials be codified, or do local circumstances and contexts always dictate how material can or should be kept?*

## Discussion Points

- What to keep is a pressing question – around all collections, not just spontaneous memorials in France .
- Scale has an impact; e.g. the scale of the spontaneous memorial after the Shoreham disaster is different to the one after Diana's death.
- Practicalities around space and cost, as well as the long-term conservation prospect impacts on how much we can keep.
- Political influence can stop/start collect. Be clear about who is in charge in each case.
- Any timeframe needs to be driven by context
- Immediacy of the situation makes it hard to do appraisal on the spot. There is a good argument about taking everything at first and do the appraisal at a later time.
- Emotional pressure has an impact on professional decisions.
- Are messages information? Is it an expression of emotion rather than information? Does it give you provenance? Does that make it more or less important? If an object has no message, can it still document the event in the same way? Difference in approach by museums and archives.
- What if someone wants something back? Objects as offerings. Do you have some sort of time frame in which time people can take things back? In Manchester, we certainly gave things away; it wasn't static.
- What happens next time? For a lot of cultural professionals this is the first time they've had to deal with the outcomes and legacy of spontaneous memorialisation. This gives people the space, time, an in time the distance to think about the decisions one has taken. But what would you do next time? So, it's about developing a rationale about how one would approach any relevant future instances.
- There are things that are very similar because people have these behaviour patterns and they will give very consistent things. And it is around having the network and being able to say, 'oh, you know in Paris they did this, or we could try that', but that can also work the other way. It can work against you because then if they did that then there's a pressure and an impact on you to do the same and it might not work for you and for that context?

## Who

## Questions

- *Who should be involved in the creation of a new archive? (And what are their motivations?)*
- *Are we allowed to collect objects people put in memorials when this is not the will of the contributors?*

## Discussion Points

- In most cases, it would make sense for local authorities to be involved for it actually to work. But, in other cases, such as the Grenfell Tower fire, that was the last group that got involved.
- Cultural heritage professionals, who have relevant expertise.
- Ideally you would have the survivors and families of the bereaved involved.
- The people that actually left items in the memorials. It would be really important to involve them in that discussion, but that's really difficult due to the nature of how such memorials are created. So, the closest we've got to the "authors" of the memorials is "the public". This ties in with the idea of not just who should be involved but are we allowed to actually assume that an archive should be created of the memorial in the first place? Communication and consultation are key to this.
- There is a question mark around why we are creating these archives. It doesn't depend on what the end user is going to be, whether that's in six months or a year, or in 50 years. What good is going to come out of these things? And again, that's really hard for us to answer particularly at the time that the spontaneous memorial is happening.
- Is there a therapeutic use of the archive? Is that going to be a good that comes out of these kinds of initiatives? And if so, if we think there's a good chance that that's going to be the end result, then it would be good to involve relevant experts in the decision-making process around the creation of the archive.

## Space

### Questions

- *How to preserve the importance of the location of the memorials?*
- *How can we archive public memorials that are not moveable - e.g. graffiti?*

## Discussion Points

- Often, the spontaneous memorial places have already an importance, like Place de la Republique in Paris, or Place de la Bourse in Brussels. But, also, in other cases, there is a shift between locations. E.g. in Manchester, the bombing happened at Manchester Arena, but the key focus of the spontaneous memorialisation was St Ann's Square.
- People try to seek for safe spaces where they can memorialise the event, which are either historically charged (e.g. Place de la Republique has always been the place for demonstrations in Paris).
- Some of those spaces are also neutral gathering places, in the sense that they are not too much charged with the sadness of the event itself. But they're also powerful spaces; places of gathering where people can commemorate.
- Locations as places of pilgrimage and attractions. They become kind of weird tourist attractions. They've become places of interest through a sad cause, when they haven't been places of interest before.
- With regards to preserving immovable objects, like graffiti: audio-visual records, general observations and fieldwork at the locations. It is also

important to just be there; be the first to respond and just spend as much time as possible on this basis from the very beginning. The mapping of places with all the disciplinary groups like in Manchester, for example, to work together with filmmakers and others, to get different input.

## Disposal and no archives

### Questions

- *What must be the final destination of “discarded” objects, if any? Protocols adopted by different cities when retiring the objects from the public space;*
- *“Do not archive grassroots memorials”.*

### Discussion Points

- it can't just be the museum's or the archive's decision what and when to dispose of. Other stakeholders need to be involved too. How can you make sure you're reaching the right people in asking the questions about what should be removed from the memorial
- Document and digitise everything before it's reused.
- Consider what type of material might be unsuitable for that kind of reuse; in which case how can they be disposed of in an ethical way?
- There are also practical reasons why things might have to be disposed of, e.g. the objects' condition or organic material.

## THEME B: PUBLIC ARCHIVES AND PUBLICS OF ARCHIVES

### Publics, stakeholders, ownership

#### Questions

- *Inclusion and exclusion issues: who is the memorial for?*
- *Democratic issues: whose stories/memories do we collect?*
- *Who owns such an archive? (what are their responsibilities? Issues around creators/unknown donors)*
- *How can we connect with the original owners/donors of the material?*
- *What can an archive like this be used for? (And when? Who gets to decide?)*
- *Wider community issues around access and ownership.*

#### Discussion Points

- Whilst the bereaved families are the main focus, a tragic event will also impact the wider community and the archives will raise other issues that may need to be addressed both at the time of the event and afterwards at significant times or anniversaries
- The ephemeral nature of those memorials influences people's expectations of what happens to the memorial items.
- Ownership might not be a useful concept in this case. Cultural organisations are, instead, custodians of those items, which should be shared and utilised.

- It is important to seek out guidance from the bereaved families in terms of the process of making this material visible. This applies to the digital archive too. Collaborating with families is incredibly important.
- Changes over time provide a focus for positive narrative.
- There's a great deal of interest from researchers and students.

## Ethics/Privacy

### Questions

- *Is it legitimate to show intimate messages and content created to be not public? Is it right, or are we encouraging a parallel (commercial, promotional) use that corrupts the meaning of these memorials?*
- *Issues regarding the protection of privacy of persons involved (victims and donors as well) when communicating memorials.*
- *The sensitivity of these archives and the need to ensure that the bereaved families are consulted and made part of the decision-making process in such a way as to respect their privacy and everything that they are going through.*
- *Confidentiality particularly around personal and sensitive data versus the huge press and media attention; how to share this experience with other professionals whilst respecting the families and communities involved and without attracting undue/inappropriate publicity.*

### Discussion Points

- The material is very sensitive; it relates to individuals and can contain personal data.
- This may include material that is difficult to present to the public.
- If someone is depositing an object, a note, etc at a public memorial, it is assumed that it is public. They've made their conscious decision to put it into the public realm
- There should be, though, opportunities for consultation and discussing with people about the legacy and use of those memorial items. So there is the opportunity for people to withdraw their object, or to intervene with that process.
- Despite the public nature of those memorials, there might be material that should not be made public or should be treated in a different way. For example, material that's sealed should be respected and be kept in the form that it was left.
- The most sensitive material will probably be that that relates to the people who were killed, eg. photographs and personal messages. Consultation with the families is key in this case.
- Data protection and legal requirements play a role in terms of what we can make publicly available. However, cultural professional standards and ethics also need to be taken into consideration. There should be an extra layer of conversation around the ethics.
- Scale will affect how much consultation we can do. In some cases when the scale is too big, and there are so many people to consult with, instead you make it public but with the understanding that you will potentially have to

withdraw some of that material if somebody comes forward to say that they don't want it public.

- Families might have different approaches to the material: Some families might want their loved ones to be celebrated and be presented in a specific way; other might not be willing to engage at all in this.
- How do you balance messages of love and community and support, and hope and remembrance, and peace, versus messages that are directed at anger and hate. So, when it comes to presenting this material sensitively, we need to consider how we present different material; e.g. some material might need to be kept separately and behind the scenes, rather than make it part of a public display.

## Access and Exhibition

### Questions

- *How is access facilitated to the archives of spontaneous memorials?*
- *Is it legitimate to make public use and exhibit in the near time or is it better to wait a more appropriate time? What could be the lapse of time in this case?*
- *Is an exhibitionary context ever appropriate for this material?*

### Discussion Points

- Should there be quarantine for an object before it is exhibited and how long is it?
- In some cases, there might not be an agreement about whether specific objects can be exhibited. It is important for those discussions and debates to be given space, rather than decisions to be made in a rush.
- There might be a contradiction between what the media present during anniversaries and what the museum/archive is prepared to show and display.
- There is no ideal time about when a display/exhibition might be appropriate. It depends on various factors, including the nature of the event, the relationship created between the cultural organisation and different stakeholders (including families).
- Different timeframes of access for different groups might be required (eg. families, researchers, the "general public").

## Public and community engagement

### Questions

- *Community engagement around preservation*
- *Role of collaboration with communities*
- *How are members of the affected community involved in the care and display of collections?*
- *Role and involvement of family members and survivors; Communication with affected communities*
- *Managing public involvement and public expectations*
- *Engagement with media*

## Discussion Points

- Consultation and communication with affected communities is key.
- There might be divisions or disagreements in those communities about how to memorialise the events. Specific people in the community become guardians or keepers of memorials.
- Sometimes there might be a memory of hate. So, consideration needs to be given on how to memorialise the trauma in a different way; or, how to deal with how people are memorialising the trauma
- A traumatic event might feed into underlying social divisions.
- Media and grassroots memorials have become a kind of stock image when discussing terrorism, especially when it isn't possible to show the site of an attack, or when it isn't acceptable to show images of the people who were killed, or where the attack happened.
- Documentaries may use and plan for one year anniversaries by using the images that have emerged immediately after an attack - the grassroots memorials.
- Many representations can perpetuate the wider knowledge of a terror attack or space that's being targeted. In Madrid, there was some American tourists who knew about the space from images they'd seen of grassroots memorials and a year later they couldn't understand why the grassroots memorials weren't still at the, at the train station, as they'd seen in on the footage in the US.
- The media images of an attack, for example, of the grassroots memorials in one site can lead to a similar repetition of a similar approach to memorialising in a different city (standardisation / "copycat")

## THEME C: DIGITAL ARCHIVES

### Questions

- *What methods and systems can make these archives accessible to as wide an audience as possible? (Including the potential of film and digital archives)*
- *Can digital media – inc. digitised archives and film – provide satisfactory documentation of spontaneous memorials in place of material archives?*
- *What should a database that aims to preserve archives post-attack include?*
- *Outreach through social media and collecting from social media*
- *Inclusion of those geographically dispersed: how to use digital tools to include those who are unable to physically attend the temporary memorial*

### Discussion Points

- Independently to how the digital archive is used for, it should be on a robust and usable platform.
- Importance of recording metadata and the contextual information of the objects.
- Digital preservation needs to be thought of from the very beginning.
- Develop ways so that people can continue to contribute to the archive.

- Archives and museums might record their information about their collections in different ways. Are some cataloguing structures better to record a memorial as a whole? Museums tend to record information about singular objects and are less well-equipped to record entireties of collections.
- Have a clear communication strategy. Make sure that you know who you're trying to talk to. Who you're trying to get to access this but in a sensitive way
- The timing of the release is important. Families having priority to the digital archive before it's just put out there to the public, is also a really important factor.
- social media and the wider communication about the digital archive before and afterwards, is part of the ongoing memorialisation. This content could feed into the collection
- Possible uses of the archive alongside a physical memorial. The possibility of using the digital archive of the spontaneous memorial to make connections with the permanent memorial in the future.
- How can digital archives be used to facilitate creative and therapeutic responses to the incident?

## THEME D: IMPACT ON CULTURAL ORGANISATIONS AND AUTHORITIES

### Impact on cultural practices

#### Questions

- *How to fit rapid response collecting into the regular museum activities*
- *What is/will be the impact of spontaneous memorial collections on other collecting strategies for associated organisations?*
- *How can spontaneous memorials help influence our contemporary collecting of archives?*
- *How to transform current work practices to meet the needs of rapid response collecting, ethical issues, technical infrastructures, engaging museum experiences related to collecting and disseminating archives of spontaneous memorials*
- *How do archivists process these archives and capture them, if they are part of an ongoing narrative that doesn't have a resolution?*
- *Define an action plan for the preservation and conservation of documents: define the minimum actions for such a project; The conservation and preservation challenges of dealing with archives/photographs/objects that are wet, in poor condition and made of non-standard materials*

#### Discussion Points

- Imperfect improvisation with regards to collecting and managing these objects as they are coming into archives or into galleries and museums.
- They're spontaneous practices that have to fit in with existing policies and training, issues of resources and how they integrate with existing activities in the organisations.
- Need to keep a certain distance from the archive itself.

- Existing practices don't have the same emotional charges that the archive brings in. So, how do you deal with that on a day-to-day basis and make it part of the organisation's policy?
- The sensitivity and scale translate into issues of authenticity, conservation, and storage.

## Funding; Recovery and Emergency Services

### Questions

- *Integration of memorial management into wider support and recovery strategies/emergency planning implications*
- *Grassroots memorials and public policies*
- *How should projects to archive spontaneous memorials be funded in the future?*
- *Who should fund these projects?*

### Discussion Points

- What recovery are we talking about? Are we talking about community recovery or about the recovery actions that we're taking that we're actually doing ourselves in collecting.
- In terms of community recovery, we need to consider whether it can be very traumatic for local people who live within the vicinity of these memorials to actually be passing them every day. For them, when the material was collected and taken away, there was a sense of relief and a sense of normality coming back into their lives.
- At what stage do we bring in the wider emergency response? Traditionally, archivists are called in as an afterthought, after the event. There is as a strong feeling that with such events, cultural professionals should be involved as part of the wider emergency response team. That their professional expertise should be in there along with the other emergency services so that it could be seen as a cohesive whole and they weren't brought in trying to play catch-up.
- Funding of this work varies from country to country and from place to place.
- It also depends on the scale of the event and the range of funds available.
- If this cultural work is seen as part of the main recovery response, then this will also affect where the funding comes from.
- Private organizations feel also a kind of civic responsibility and offer their services for free.
- There is a difference between the immediate offer one can receive (e.g. in terms of volunteering time or donations) and the longer term funding needs of a documentation project of a spontaneous memorial.

## THEME E: PSYCHOSOCIAL PERSPECTIVES OF SPONTANEOUS MEMORIALS' ARCHIVES

### Interaction with families and people affected

#### Questions

- *What should be the use of the archives, beyond academic research? Is there an approach specifically useful to the victims?*
- *Psychosocial perspectives – understanding memorialisation and archiving from the perspective of those directly affected*
- *Consultation strategies with those directly affected*
- *What is our responsibility towards (and role of) victims and families?*
- *What has been the response of the families who have seen the archives?*
- *What to do with messages clearly directed to victims?*

#### Discussion Points

- The importance of recognising all the different potential groups and their potential contribution.
- Need to consider who you are consulting with and when you are consulting with them; and being able to link into all the different groups involved in the wider social media and communications, and to understand that research is a collaborative endeavour.
- The integration of personal expertise in how in the use of language. We should be careful and informed about we identify and talk about the people that are affected in different ways and to be sensitive to the issues around terms such as 'victim'.
- Need to work in partnership with professionals and bodies who deal directly with those affected.
- Understand the therapeutic potential and value of the work involved around spontaneous memorials.
- The psychosocial impact of the incident is potentially very broad and unanticipated and the people affected may include people who didn't think would be affected.
- Consider how the cultural staff that get involved in the relevant work are recruited. It must not be taken for granted that everyone/anyone in an organisation should/would/could be involved. This requires forward planning, training and support. Consider the personal motivations for those being involved in the process.
- Consider the specific psychosocial implications of the specific incident as well. The different incidents have different traumatic implications.

## Trauma and healing

### Questions

- *Is main purpose of preservation historical or for community healing?*
- *How can archival spaces act to make space for trauma and not replicate systems of oppression?*
- *How can temporary memorials bring healing and avoid harm to those directly affected?*
- *Is there a therapeutic benefit to archiving Spontaneous Memorials (short, medium and long term)? How can this be evaluated?*
- *What are the policy implications of this work, and how might these be implemented?*
- *Emotions and archiving*

### Discussion Points

- Temporary, grassroots and permanent memorials are but one part of a whole system of recovery in a community/city, and what that means for people themselves and the community more broadly.
- Archiving role of museums is part of broader community recovery. When we're talking about healing or trauma and its relationship with memorials, there's a lot of other activity going on after disasters and terrorist attacks.
- Collecting items from a memorial and creating an archive might not be finite. Creating the archive isn't necessarily the end goal; the end goal should be what you're trying to achieve with it, which often happens along the way.
- Do archives of temporary memorials heal? We do not know a lot about how and why, or what parts of it do heal. Research had shown that social support and connection helps people recover psychologically and psychosocially, so grassroots memorials and their archives provide a space for people to go and interact with people that have experienced similar things to them.
- Archivists and curators have a role in community healing, but they also need to find support themselves. Memorialising is a process
- Archives can create psychological "safety" zones.

## Welfare and support for professionals

### Questions

- *How are archivists/cultural professionals supported emotionally when processing archives generated as the result of trauma?*
- *Using volunteers to help with the archiving of spontaneous memorials and managing any emotional impact on them*  
*Training and ongoing support for staff handling the commemorative items*

### Discussion Points

- The profession has started recognising the need to support archivists that deal with material linked to traumatic events.
- Need for emotional distance to protect oneself.

- Difficulty of language and vocabularies; there is no key word for trauma when it comes to cataloguing. E.g. black and minority ethnic archives or archives that relate to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender communities are often very insensitively described. Archivists are trying to reclaim that and change the language used. So, is that something we need to think about with traumatic collections as well?
- Traumatic archives provide a lightbulb moment for colleagues who are not familiar with what archivists do.
- Additional pressure is put on cultural professionals, as they are the ones talking to the media.
- How do you engage with the bomber's family?
- Volunteers: Need to be able to make mistakes; support from management

## THEME F: SPONTANEOUS AND PERMANENT MEMORIALISATION

### Questions

- *How are archivists/cultural professionals supported emotionally when processing archives generated as the result of trauma?*
- *Using volunteers to help with the archiving of spontaneous memorials and managing any emotional impact on them*  
*Training and ongoing support for staff handling the commemorative items*

### Discussion Points

- Links between spontaneous and permanent memorialisation – purpose, organisation, ownership, politics and management
- The role of the archive in the interim period between the incident and the creation of a permanent memorial
- Why do we archive objects and documents while politicians create "monuments" or similar in the public space as permanent reminders. Permanence / perishable nature of memorials
- Relationship between the immediate response of the spontaneous memorials vs the longer term systematic reflection of the permanent memorial.
- Often permanent memorials are contested spaces and they have contested symbolism.
- Consider them as anniversary spaces and unfinished political businesses and how this may affect a permanent memorial or a spontaneous memorial in that case.
- Who gets a say and who facilitates permanent memorials? Whose agenda are we following?
- Explore theoretical and historical framework of memory – collective, personal, cultural and social – as well as theoretical and historical context of commemoration rituals and memorialisation (the temporary, ephemeral and spontaneous vs the permanent and architectonic)
- How to balance the sensitive and even political nature of memorials with an academic or museological approach. In other words: by preserving the objects do we preserve the whole meaning of the memorial or just a memory of it?
- The Keepers of Memory: protection by the civil society of grassroots memorials

- Institutionalising grief and making parallels and to the “middle-class saviour”. Decolonizing grief. These are questions of power, of authority and of legitimacy.
- In Nice there was an example of not a spontaneous memorial, not a permanent memorial, but like an in-between temporary memorial. It was brought on by a family requests and that was put in the garden of a museum. It was a house with the names of the families of the victims, which brought in another discussion of the significance of space and the international scale because in that case the families were from all over the world and they needed a shared space where they can all come together

## THEME G: RESEARCH AND INTERPRETATION OF SPONTANEOUS MEMORIALS

### Research: Questions, Comparisons, Expectations

#### Questions

- *What might be the expectations of researchers with regard to these archives?*
- *What use for historians?*
- *Parameters allowing to set a comparative analysis of different memorials; sharing of the exact content available for research in each archival collection*
- *Articulation between fieldwork studies and archives of spontaneous memorials*
- *What narratives are contained within these archives of spontaneous memorials, and is there a responsibility associated in the idea of its ongoing representation and depiction (i.e. the inclusion of far-right material if forming part of a response to an event?)*
- *Creative interpretation approaches*
- *"Tributes", "testimonials", "objects", "things": How to designate the elements of grassroots memorials ?*
- *Historical situation in British memory cultures in comparison with other national practices or traditions in relation to war/conflict and peace time disaster.*
- *Religions, rites and grassroots memorials*
- *Art, monument and grassroots memorials*

#### Discussion Points

- Need to agree on terminology, e.g. how we call the items of a spontaneous memorial; tributes, memorials, etc? It isn't important to start the process by having an answer to that question. The process of dealing with the archive will give the right language.
- The archives invite different research approaches and research questions.
- It is important to think about the broader context of grassroots memorials and not just think about those memorials as something completely distinct from other manifestations of cultural practice. For example, there's a lot of work on roadside shrines and memorials. There are also permanent memorials as well. So, rather than approach grassroots memorials as something completely

distinct, it might be useful to identify the links between different memorialisation practices.

- It is important to be able to do comparison across case studies. It is also very challenging because then it could mean that in order for that to happen, different cases need to do things in a similar way in order to create a body of material that can be compared.
- So, perhaps the network is one way to create some kind of norms - not too narrow, not too broad, but good enough to allow for this kind of research to happen.
- Grassroot memorials as/and art
- A research interpretive framework might be different from a museum's or an archivist's interpretive framework. So, having that conversation allows us to understand where people are coming from.
- Need for interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary research.
- Think also globally when you deal with archives of spontaneous memorials

## THEME H: FUTURE(S) OF THE ARCHIVES

### Questions

- *Ethical issues: should we follow up by making interviews and further collecting or should we let the material rest?*
- *Are these static spaces or can they continue to grow and evolve?*
- *How do we develop our understanding of spontaneous memorials and how do our perceptions of them change?*
- *What must be the policy with respect to annual or recurrent memorial events? Should we study or keep the new offerings as part of the same phenomenon?*
- *Is it a sustainable policy for cultural institutions to keep the full physical form of historic events?*
- *Is there a risk of creating a very large, rapid increasing collection, monothematic and unbalanced compared to other collections?*
- *How to manage memorials posterity. Can they be processed as simple museum pieces or heritage objects?*
- *How to archive public memorials when they are becoming so frequent?*
- *Is it possible to envisage an action of international valuation of these collections?*
- *How and when could we reassess the collection?*

### Discussion Points

- Documentation may not have an end point but certainly a site does. And we need to think about how we deal with accruals. This is not an uncommon concept in archive practice, but it needs some thought around memorials, around anniversaries and more collecting during those events.
- Is exhibition and digitisation this "accrual"? A digital space can function as the space where the archive enlarges.
- Does being the first event offer a special privilege? If the second event wasn't as significant, what difference does that make?
- Museums and archives have changed. Back in the 1980s and the 1990s there was a different approach sociologically to what such institutions did after

relevant events. Museum and archive professionals were certainly not interested in rapid response collecting and contemporary collecting in the way that we are now. Impact of social media

- How ethically sensitive is it to compare memorials. Do we dehumanize if we compare, eg. number of objects?
- Connection between international events with local individual significance
- We need to bring this debate out into museum forums, into museum training courses – open the dialogue in our professional organisations internationally
- Follow up interviews and further collecting?
  - Opportunities to enhance or even correct the archive
  - More familiar in practical, professional, ethical terms
  - More records management than archive? Procedures wanted by e.g. community groups collecting
  - Questions of ownership
- Static spaces or can grow and evolve?
  - Resources implications: time, money, space, who will fund?
  - But potential benefits could be huge. When would work of museum / archive be finished?
  - How do we collect? Film, audio, adding value
  - Future value of archives – bringing funding from other sources and fulfilling different needs
- How do we develop our understanding of these memorials and our perceptions of them?
  - We need to understand benefits. Can we keep on keeping this?
  - We need help from healthcare professionals etc. and to test what we need to keep. Context – e.g. one-off vs repeated incidents
  - Can technology help with e.g. recalling the scale of the original memorials, VR, arts professionals?

## Recommendations and Actions

1. Establish a Network of Archives of Spontaneous Memorials.
2. Set up mailing list for the Network.
3. Develop an online resource and website for the Network.
4. Develop and strengthen links between network members via joint sessions and papers in relevant conferences.
5. Expand the network's membership by inviting practitioners, policy makers, and researchers from other cases in Europe and beyond.
6. Follow-up the workshop with further discussion on shared interests for further research and policy making work.
7. Identify possible funding routes, including EU calls.

## Contact

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The Network's Online Resource and Website:  
<http://www.spontaneousmemorials.org/>