Exploring the Inherent Conflicts of the Site Museum

Abstract:

'Site Museum' refers to a particular kind of museum built on or near a historical or natural site with the goal of preserving and interpreting the site and its excavations. This study is an early exploration of the inherent conflicts of the site museum, which have not been discussed much in existing studies. These conflicts are believed to exist in all site museums. Some are considered unique to the site museum, and others are more severe than those in other museums. The causes of these conflicts could be divided into three main types: the site characteristics, mainly including immovability, location, scale, materials, and conservation; the architectural characteristics of the site museum, such as architectural foundations, enclosure, architectural forms, and permanence; and the institutional characteristics of the site museum, which are collections, exhibitions, and museum powers. The conflicts they have caused are challenging the appropriateness of the way site museums are built. The study argues that these conflicts could not be eliminated but only mitigated partially. Some mediation methods are further discussed in the planning, architectural design, exhibition design, and operation levels.

Keywords: Site Museums, Sites, Inherent Conflicts, Causes, Mediation Methods

Introduction

A site museum is a particular type of museum that preserves and interprets the remains of cultural history or natural history phenomena on a site where these have been preserved in situ or reconstructed (Küseh, 1989, 183; Moolman, 1996, 387). The scope of it is the story and significance of the site, and the purpose of its exhibits is to explain the site to visitors (Paardekooper, 2020). Site museums have emerged since World War II with the development of theories and practices of cultural heritage conservation and interpretation. They provide a space for the public to interact with archaeological finds and their context while preserving sites and excavations (Huijun, 2021, 7). In the theoretical realm, the study of site museums in English perhaps started in 1955, when Allan (1955) first published an English paper outlining the essential attributes of site museums; the research number has increased since then. Since the 1980s, especially in some emerging economies, such as India, Turkey, and China, academics have been concerned and studied site museums, considerably enhancing the theoretical base of the discipline. Concerning the practical realm, some pilot site museums have been erected in several nations since the 1950s, including the Banpo Museum in China, which opened in 1958, the Fishbourne Roman Palace Museum (Figure 1) in Britain, which opened in 1968, etc. Last few decades, the practice of site museums has shown colossal progress worldwide in quantity, design, management, and exhibition. It could be argued that constructing the site museum on or near the site probably has been one of the best methods to achieve site conservation and interpretation.

After conducting a literature review on the history of site museum research, many research tendencies can be revealed: Most research focuses on positively discussing the site museum's definitions, aims, functions, education, etc. (Allan, 1955; Lewis, 1959; Küseh, 1989; Moolman, 1996; Sarma, 1998; Silverman, 2006; Frankenberg, 2018; etc.); some studies reveal some specific conservation issues of site museum cases, and suggest corresponding solutions (Wensheng, 1997; Nan, 2004; Xiuquan et al., 2009; Dongming, 2018; etc.). A significant research field, however, has been generally ignored, which is the inherent and universal conflicts present in all site museums, although a few researchers slightly mentioned very few conflicts without a thorough organisation.

These conflicts, which are explored in the next chapter, are believed to have appeared since the excavation of the site or construction of the site museum; they cannot be eliminated by changes in various factors such as the site location, architectural design, budget, etc. Of course, a decent design, efficient management and operation, the sufficient budget could reduce some of these conflicts, to some extent, but can never altogether remove all conflicts. These conflicts are universal and present in every site museum, challenging the reasonableness and effectiveness of building site museums to conserve and interpret sites. Carefully categorising and then thoroughly clarifying the inherent conflicts of site

museums form a vital process of this study, which could demonstrate a way to re-judge the significance of site museums and show an essential structure for further solution research of the conflicts. It is regarded that the mentioned conflicts universally inherent in site museums could be categorised into three main causes: site characteristics, architectural characteristics of the site museum, and institutional characteristics of site museums. Each of these characteristics has several sub-characteristics that create contradictory points, forming the conflicts inherent in site museums. Some conflicts may be unique to site museums, while others may be present in all history museums but less severe or apparent.

Clarification of the inherent conflicts

A. Site Characteristics

a. Immovability

Some of the site's inherent characteristics will inevitably create tension with various aspects of the site museum. The classification of the site that the site is a part of immovable heritage (Wensheng, 1997) indicates physical locations of all sites are permanently fixed, which leads to the relatively fixed location of the site museum building as well. Thus, this characteristic can reduce the flexibility of site museum design, somewhat inevitably conflicting with designers' free creativity. On the other hand, it possibly prompts the design to interact more with the particular physical context of the site museum. This characteristic is both an opportunity and a challenge.

b. Location

The diverse locations of sites, such as cities or outskirts, could generate related issues. urban site museums may face conflicts between the historic site, the newly-built museum building, and the modern city and community. For instance, site conservation, which is generally very large, and museum building areas would conflict with the planned development of commercial or residential areas of the city. It would be a great challenge for architects to carefully design a museum building that simultaneously interprets the characteristics of a historic site and integrated into the modern city's texture (Xiaoling, 2011, 46-47, Figure 2); It is also tricky to minimise the negative impact on the site environment without disturbing the community life throughout the construction phase of the site museum (Xiuquan et al., 2009, 56), etc. In contrast, suburban site museums may struggle to balance the museum building with the natural environment surrounding the site. In addition, those site museums are too remote to arrive conveniently, which would reduce people's visiting interests, leading to low popularity and financial income.

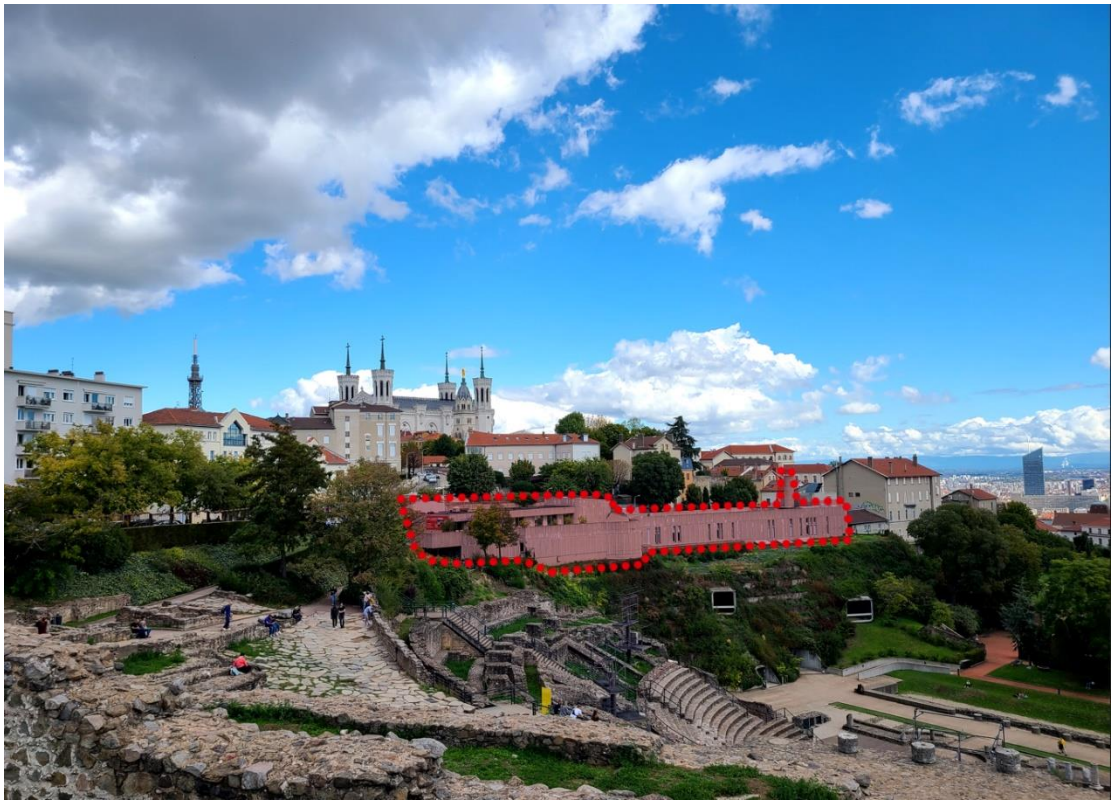

Figure 2 The difficulty of integrating urban site museums the surrounding texture (Gallo-Roman Museum of Lyon-Fourvière)
Photograph and Annotation: Author, 2022

c. Scale

If the site scale is small, the relationship between the site and the museum building is relatively easy to be reconciled. Nevertheless, more conflicts appear between design, budget, and conservation if the scale of a vulnerable site is vast and the site has to be protected by a covering 'Shed'. Under this situation, holistic site conservation is hard to achieve ideally, even with enough funding. A case of the Hanyangling Museum could illustrate this matter. Under sufficient finance, the site is completely preserved in a vacuum space inside the museum building but is still gradually subject to microbial and mould damage (Dongming, 2018, 85). Dongming (2018, 85) further argued that this case shows that creating a constant temperature and humidity environment to protect a large site inside a building is almost impossible, and there could be a risk that the condition of the site will deteriorate more quickly after conservation.

d. Materials

Sites with vulnerable materials could generate many conflicts, e.g., wood, thatch, or clay. These sites are fragile in the natural environment and thus need to be protected by a cover, which negatively limits the whole architectural form of the museum, increases the construction budget, and prevents visitors from viewing up close or even touching the site, decreasing visiting interests.

e. Conservation

The conservation and archaeological works immediately start when the site is accidentally found. It usually takes years between the site excavation and museum construction when the site will be somehow damaged without idealistically complete conservation. A typical case, the Hanyanglin Site Museum, vividly demonstrates this argument. 'Although the museum building was well designed, three or four years have passed between the site excavation and the completion of construction… Even with canopy protection during the process, the site has been damaged from temperature, air, and biology. Much soil moisture has evaporated (Dongming and Xiaocong, 2018, 85, 90)'. Alternatively, the site may not be fully excavated and studied if the process is idealistically assumed to accelerate. It possibly could be argued

that even with considerate conservation, site condition deteriorates every minute after the site excavation yet deteriorates more severely and quickly in the construction of site museum buildings because the site's original environment will be physically interfered with to a large extent by the construction works.

B. Architectural characteristics of the site museum

a. Architectural Foundations

Many scholars (Wensheng, 1997; Xiaolin, 2014, 52; Nan, 2004, 26, etc.) from various fields have already mentioned that the construction of the site museum building changes the original conservation conditions of the site. For architectural foundations of site museums, although the planned allotment of building structures is designed to avoid as essential parts of the site as possible, there will still be a few overlaps with some underground parts of the site, which could inevitably damage the site to some extent (Figure 3). In addition, some permanent, non-recyclable, non-green building materials could negatively influence indoor site conservation in terms of air, humidity, temperature, etc.

Figure 3 The inevitable overlap between the museum building foundations and the site (El Born Centre de Cultura i Memòria)
Photograph and Annotation: Author, 2022

b. Enclosure

Once the museum building is built, the original site environment is eternally broken. There are three general types of geographical relationships between the site and the site museum: fully covered, partially covered and uncovered (Figure 4). The building of the first two types, which enclose the site spatially with enclosure structures and materials, such as walls, glass walls, and canopies, could block, to varying degrees, the physical and visual connection between the site and its original surrounding environment. Such disconnection may counter the well-known principles of reversibility and minimum intervention in site conservation. In addition, the fixed physical space of the site museum being built in the site environment may cause visitors to naturally focus on the site and cultural relics inside the museum and ignore the surrounding environment (McManus, 2012, 58; Huijun, 2021, 154).

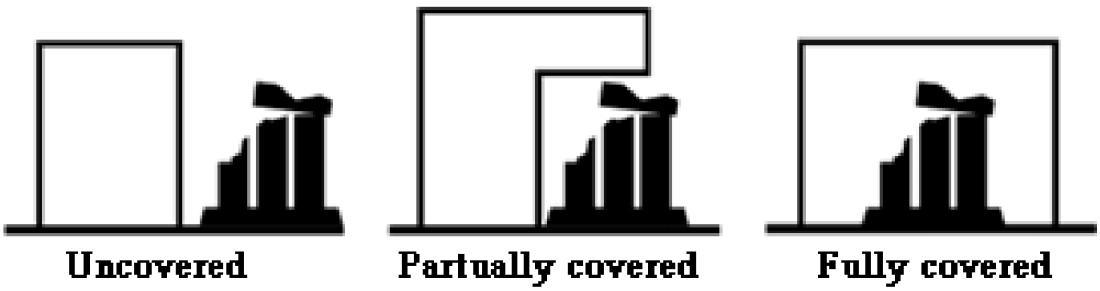

Figure 4 Three general types of geographical relationships between the site and the site museum
Drawing: Author, 2022

c. Architectural Forms

Different architectural forms can influence the conservation and interpretation of sites. As Roberts (2013, 125) notes, human perceptions are shaped by their preconceptions and immediate situation. Before visiting a site, visitors hold their imaginations and experiences and view the architectural form of the site museum, which could inevitably add new meanings to the visitor's fore-understanding of the site. In detail, a high-profile museum building can negatively impact the authenticity and original texture of the site and its environment and even inject a new 'spirit' or a layer of new meaning, somehow misleading visitors' perceptions and understandings of this site area. Even a more low-key building could somewhat diminish the site's significance since the architect's design ideas will not always be accepted and understood by all uninformed visitors. Any architectural interpretation can mislead visitors' original perceptions of the site.

d. Temporality & Permanence

Permanent buildings can hugely increase the museum regeneration workload and invalidate the principle of reversible site conservation. Even for non-permanent buildings, maintaining the exact condition of site conservation as usual during the building renewal period becomes quite challenging. Further, some spare multi-functional spaces need to be kept for the sustainable development of a site museum, which requires museums to be designed with a large building mass and footprint, occupying and negatively influencing more site surrounding environment.

C. Site Museum Characteristics

a. Exhibits & Collections

Exhibits and collections of site museums are closely bonded with the site regarding the historical background, time and even type. E.g., suppose a site is a king's crumbling mausoleum. In that case, the exhibits and collections of this site museum will be excavated from the mausoleum, which is mainly the king's daily necessities and burial objects at the time; the identity of these objects is inseparable from the king's identity. These objects are unified in the same historical period and are relatively homogeneous and esoteric compared with those in general or history museums. Some relatively small and remote site museums with outdated exhibitions and lesser-known sites, therefore, may struggle to attract a wide range of visitors but can only target those with a certain level of historical knowledge and specific visiting interest. This can lead to a lack of revenue, affecting the quality of site museum exhibitions and renewals, and eventually causing the museum to decline. This scenario is found chiefly in small-scale remote site museums with small site areas and values.

As Crane (2006, 99) noticed: 'Collected or conserved objects are frozen in the moment of their most emblematic value of singularity, of implementation, or representativeness-and denied their natural, or intended, decadent lifespan.' The same is true for the site and exhibited artefacts at the site museum. When they are dug, researched, and exhibited, their time cycle is permanently frozen to the point where it can be said that they are dead. Of course, this situation can also be seen in various museums, but frozen sites lose relatively more information, and the process is of a lower degree of reversibility.

However, once permanent museum buildings are built to cover the site entirely, most excavations are forever stopped. Some museums perform fake archaeological excavations on-site only to complement site exhibitions (Dongming, 2019). This cessation of excavation can lead to difficulties in replenishing museum exhibitions with new excavated exhibits and in continuing sustainable museum research. Over time, this could result in the gradual decline of the museum. Even if excavation activities were to continue, the total resources available on the site would eventually be exhausted. Once the excavations are fully completed, the site museum will still be converted into a decline. This conflict is unique to site museums which fully cover the site, as it is relatively insignificant in cases where the building is separated from the site because the museum can continue the indoor exhibition with part of the outdoor site while excavating another part of the site. Pompeii is a famous example where excavations will continue for many generations.

b. Exhibitions

Due to the strict requirement of site conservation and limited construction budget, which leads to limited architectural space for the site display, as well as the impossibility of placing exhibition equipment, such as heavy cabinets and large acoustical and optical equipment, on the site, the site display space of the site museum is often designed to be separate from the exhibit display space. This separation hinders the realisation of the continuing narrative of exhibitions and bewilders visitors with a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between the site and its excavated objects.

It is also a massive challenge for archaeologists and curatorial staff to interpret the site comprehensively and interestingly for visitors, as the interpretation they present may not always meet visitor preferences and understandings. Moreover, sites have already been interpreted for many layers in the whole process, such as by original users, archaeologists, historians, architects, exhibition designers, curators, guides and visitors successively, and parts of the site's original meaning may have been diminished or distorted in this process. The interpretation of the site is not an interpretation of the actual past of the site but can be understood as a result of several elaborations of the so-called identity of the site in the light of contemporary economic, political, social and linguistic influences. A typical example is China's first site museum, the Banpo Museum. During its development for around 50 years, with the changes in ideology, the theme of the exhibition has been changing dramatically, from primitive commune life to Marxist materialist historical view, to ancient science and technology, to open and diverse interpretations based on archaeological materials (Huijun, 2021, 7-8; Wang, 2022, 428-430). This situation is present in all types of museums. However, the misinterpretation is more pronounced in site museums because, as mentioned earlier, the sites contain much ambiguous and even esoteric information that is relatively difficult to research and interpret.

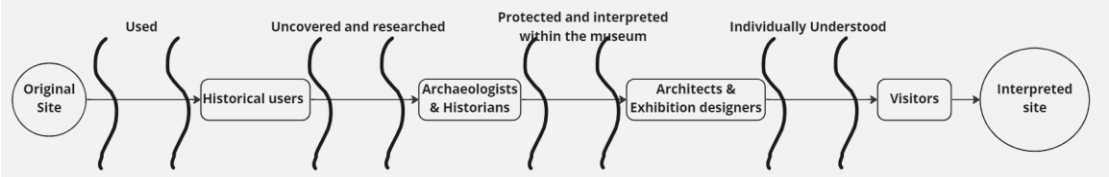

Figure 5 A diagram of how the significance of the site has been interpreted
Drawing: Author, 2022

Site museums also have inherent conflicts between visitors' expectations and exhibitions in their hermeneutic dimension. The historical period interpreted by the site museum is strongly connected to the site, resulting in more constrained themes than other historical museums. This limits the achievement of site museums' diversity of interpretation. People's understanding of texts is influenced by both linguistic and personal contexts (Bontekoe, 1996). Recently, tourists have varied personal contexts and requirements and desire to actively comprehend and interpret the site based on their contexts. However, this cannot be achieved in some conventional site museums that convey a single narrative.

c. Powers

Compared to other types of museums, site museums take longer from plan to build due to the involvement of a higher number of stakeholders in the construction process, such as archaeologists, historians,

architects, government, organisations, developers, local communities, etc. During this procedure, these stakeholders hold various appeals that can be challenging to reconcile. A visual example of this is that to better preserve, study and interpret the site, archaeologists and historians usually want to take years to excavate and research the site, as well as architects who want enough time to explore different design possibilities. These aspirations may conflict with those of developers, governments, boards of directors, etc., who want to see the museum built and run as soon as possible, obtaining financial or political benefits. Compared to other types of museums, the intensity of the conflict and the number of forces between various powers in the site museum are greater.

Discussion – Analysis and Possible Responses to the Inherent Conflicts

The site, architectural, and institutional causes collectively form a network of universally inherent conflicts of site museums. Some uniquely exist in site museums, such as all site causes. In contrast, the others, which could be found in other types of museums, are more intense and obvious in site museums. All of them, particularly the former ones, have perhaps been ignored sometimes, and they could vigorously challenge the reasonableness and effectiveness of the aim of site museum construction if there are no targeted and effective solutions or mitigation methods. Current practices with delicate design, sufficient budget, efficient operation, etc., and theories can respond to some conflicts.

In terms of the site characteristics, although conflicts caused by the immovability and scale of the site are inevitable and tricky to be solved entirely, some architects might treat this as the most exciting challenge of the design of a site museum rather than a problem to be solved. For a site located in an urban area, if the site conservation area is big enough, a site park, a complex of site museums, green space, and event venues might be a preferred choice. Such a site park offers urban green space, keeps the historic site a certain distance away from the modern city, protects the authentic site environment, and gives designers more freedom to get creative to create a 'mini-ecology' of the site. A typical urban site park example is the Daminggong National Archaeological Site Park in China, which provides the city with a vast central park while preserving the originality of the palace site environment relatively wholly. However, site parks are not always the perfect solution. Their infrastructure construction and long-term operation require huge funds and successive administrative support. Moreover, the construction of large-scale site parks often leads to the isolation or relocation of local communities (Wang, 2022, 432). During the construction of the Daminggong National Archaeological Site Park, about 25,000 houses were demolished and 100,000 residents were relocated, inevitably impacting the structure of local communities and industries (Maags, 2018, 11; Dongming, 2018, 55-57). The cost of these constructions is something that decision-makers should weigh in advance. If the site conservation area is limited, site museum design would be more challenging. Subtle design and multidisciplinary expertise could be one of the solutions. For example, the Acropolis Museum by Bernard Tschumi creates a visual and narrative connection to the impossibly mobile Acropolis site, with corresponding conservation and narrative integration of sites around the museum building. For a site located in a countryside area, museums' operations, such as internet marketing, exhibition updates, educational events, etc., could improve the popularity of the site museum to obtain more visiting income.

In terms of the architectural characteristics, for the conflicts caused by the structure and material of museum buildings, using green, lightweight, non-permanent local material in the design may reduce some of the site damages from the building foundation. Brading Roman Villa Museum and Norton Priory Museum in Britain are brilliant examples. They are mainly built with sustainable wooden materials that can be dissembled to reverse the site to its pre-construction state efficiently and generate fewer damages to the site. For the enclosure conflicts, in recent years, when sites can be protected open-air, site museums are built in protected areas away from the site. This approach allows a great deal of freedom in the location and design of the museum building, and the authenticity of the site environment is well protected. For example, the Stonehenge Visitor Centre in the UK is far from Stonehenge, requiring visitors to hike or take a shuttle bus to the site, and they cannot view any modern constructions but the original geographic features on-site. When site museum buildings must cover the site, designers could increase the visual connection between the museum’s interior site and the outdoors. For example, the Novium

Museum and the Hadspen Roman Villa Museum have a large area of long floor-to-ceiling glass on the side of the building near the site, visually connecting the indoor site and its environment and also providing an opportunity for passers-by and the community to view the indoor site without entering the museum. The Hanyangling Museum and the Luoyang Zhouwangcheng Emperor Six Horses Carriage Museum are two examples in China. However, there are risks associated with this method, as it can potentially seriously damage unexcavated parts of the site during construction or abruptly stop work because significant new archaeological traces have been discovered. Rigorous and comprehensive preliminary archaeological work with financial and policy support is a prerequisite for this approach.

For the architectural form, any symbolic architectural form may be more or less misinterpreted by visitors. ‘Let things show themselves as they are in themselves rather than imposing our presuppositions on them’ (Bontekoe, 2000, 73). A relatively neutral architectural form may be more appropriate for the site museum. Examples include the Hedmark Museum in Norway and the Hill House Box in Scotland. Their architectural bodies are transparent, without biased architectural forms interfering too much with the perspective penetration between the interior and exterior of the museum building, as well as the visitor's understanding of the site. In this way, the power of interpretations of the site is given back to visitors to a certain extent, without too many preconceived notions of the site being implanted before visiting. In addition, the mentioned solution of the site park with a site museum could respond to the conflicts caused by the characteristics of temporality and permanence.

In terms of the institutional characteristics, many conflicts caused by the exhibitions and exhibits of the site museum probably cannot be solved. Nonetheless, some may be mediated. To address the inherent issues of over-specialised and uninteresting exhibits and exhibitions in site museums, the exhibition of JORVIK Viking Centre in the UK is a noteworthy case, though the museum's architectural design is relatively unremarkable, which appears to be similar only to the architecture of the surrounding commercial area. The museum's designers have created a realistic recreation of a Viking village in the Middle World in an enormous underground space, with various visual, auditory and olfactory stimulating equipment and moving models. Visitors enter the village on a tram carriage, viewing several scenes of the Viking village life (Figure 6). Nevertheless, this exhibition approach has been highly controversial, with some traditional archaeologists (Citizen, 1988, 87) criticising it as a 'pop-up book view of history, as it excessively embellishes the hardship life of Viking village into a so-called 'fantastical Disneyland'. Personally thinking, however, this case exactly demonstrates museum's designers, backed by an adequate budget, have used technology to create a compelling narrative line that reconnects the site with the exhibits through a new means of presentation, which could go some way to alleviate the inherent conflicts of exhibits and exhibitions, for yearly visiting number shows this method is highly appealing to general visitors. Thus, this approach may be informative. After all, as Paardekooper (2020) suggests, museums need to actively adapt to a group of tourists who usually do not like to visit cultural and heritage sites, rather than hoping that these tourists will adapt to museums. At the hermeneutic dimension, site museums also need to offer equal possibilities for dialogue with visitors, an atmosphere that can best support how visitors are living their experience, and an openness to a range of visitor viewpoints (Roberts, 2013, 164). The problem that sites cannot be excavated consecutively may be mediated to some extent by regrouping and redeveloping the existing archaeological resources of several related sites and museums. A case in point is The Nanyue King Museum in China, a recent reorganisation museum formed by several separate site museums of Nanyue King's tomb or palace, etc., located in different parts of the city. The new museum complex delivers a more complete and inclusive narrative of the identity of the Nanyue King, increases the connection possibilities between the objects excavated from the different sites, and benefits the future renewals of exhibitions. In addition, museums may abandon too many 'grand and objective' narratives but retain diverse narratives, even conflicting narratives, while partially ceding the interpretation of exhibitions and exhibits to visitors, which could reduce the conflict between visitors and site interpretation. Last, a democratic, efficient, balanced, bottom-up system of site museum management and heritage conservation is argued to go a long way toward reconciling the conflict between the complex and disparate powers in the site museum during the excavation, planning, design and operation. Many scholars have already contributed to this field (Cleere, 2020; Saunders, 2020; Sandell and Janes, 2007).

Figure 6 Restoration of a scene of Viking village life
Photograph: Author, 2019

The responses indicate that some inherent conflicts may be mitigated, while a few cannot be solved. Again, this leads to a review of the origin of these conflicts and reflects on the following two questions: Should a museum be established on the site? And under what conditions is it essential to construct a site museum? It may be claimed that not all locations are appropriate for the construction of site museums. It depends on the condition of the site, the surrounding environment around it, the level of financial support, etc. A viewpoint gradually emerged after extensive fieldwork and discussions with some archaeology and museum professionals, namely a site with continued and multiple stratigraphic layers may not be ideal for establishing the site museum. Because typically, the establishment entails selectively destroying other stratigraphic layers through archaeological excavation and partially ignoring them during museum interpretation, with the exception of the stratigraphic layer with the most notable historical period fully preserved and interpreted (Dongming, 2018, 64). On the contrary, a severely damaged site that mainly remains one historical stage could be more appropriate for the constrction. The same is true for site parks, as they can only be constructed only when the site's original residents, finance concerns, archaeological significance, and dimension can all be addressed in a satisfactory manner. In general, the establishment of site museums still has an extensive degree of appropriateness at the moment, when a series of fulfilled prerequisites and proper handling of the inherent conflicts.

Conclusion

The existing theory and practice concerning site museums are fruitful, but there is a need for a comprehensive study on the inherent conflicts that arise in these museums. Some of these conflicts may be considered unique to site museums, while others may be present in all history museums but less severe or pronounced than in site museums. The causes of these conflicts can be categorised into three main aspects, namely the site characteristics (immovability, location, scale, materials, and conservation), the architectural characteristics (architectural foundations, enclosure, architectural forms, and temporality & permanence), and the institutional characteristics (Exhibits & Collections, Exhibitions, Powers). The conflicts they have caused are challenging the reasonableness of the way of building site museums.

Moreover, these conflicts cannot be eliminated but only mitigated partially. The mediations should be multi-layered. A rigorous and comprehensive pre-archaeological work, as well as adequate funding and policy support, are prerequisites. At the planning level, when sites can be conserved open-air, site museums can be planned slightly away from the site but in protected areas; if the site conservation area is large enough, a complex of site park, site museum, and green space may be a preferred option. But it is not always the best option, since the substantial and perpetual costs of finance, administrative support,

and community impact of it cannot be disregarded. At the architectural design level, a comprehensive and sophisticated design that is the result of open and transparent competition is a must; multidisciplinary cooperation in co-design is worth promoting; the green, lightweight, non-permanent local materials could be adopted; the location and footprint of building structures and foundations should be carefully considered; design should be tailored to different types of sites; the visual connection between the site within the museum and the outdoors could be promoted, and the main body of the museum building could be located underground where possible sometimes; the museum building which has a low-profile form, much interaction with the form and character of the site, and integration with the architectural texture with the local community is to be promoted.

At the exhibition design level, too much of the 'grand and objective' narrative could be abandoned, and with the aid of various technologies and adequate budgetary support, diverse, compelling and inclusive narrative lines could be planned; the interpretation of the exhibition and exhibits could be partially ceded to the visitor. At the operational level, the site museum needs to provide visitors with an equal space for dialogue and experience. Once the site museum is built, a democratic, efficient, bottom-up management system to reconcile conflicts between powers should be retained. Cooperation and the consolidation of existing resources between old established site museums on related themes perhaps is the answer to the depletion of archaeological resources, and even the reorganisation of them in some instances is worth considering; the online operation and marketing in the age of new media should not be overlooked.

In general, Site museums may not always be a permanent and solid answer to site conservation and interpretation. It depends on the site and some external factors. A damaged site that primarily represents one historical period may be more suitable for establishing a site museum than one with continuous and multiple stratigraphic layers. When the inherent conflicts are as much mitigated as possible, the establishment of site museums is still a reasonable way for site conservation and interpretation.

This study is an early exploration of those conflicts. Future research could analyse one of these inherent conflicts in greater depth, or particular conflicts of site museums in a specific region, and propose more solutions for site conservation and interpretation.

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