

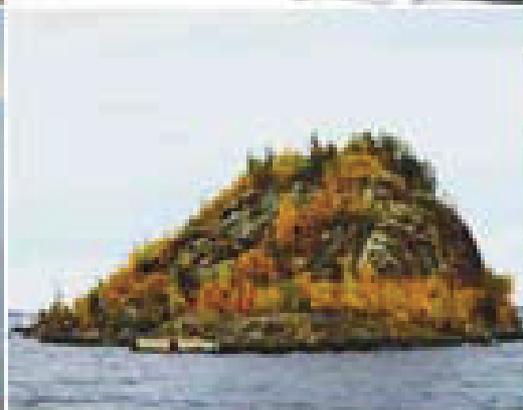
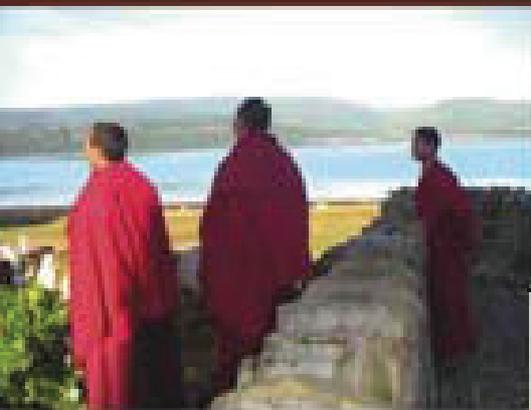
IUCN
World
Commission
on Protected
Areas



Protected Areas and Spirituality

Proceedings of the First Workshop
of The Delos Initiative - Montserrat 2006

Edited by Josep-Maria Mallarach & Thymio Papayannis



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Proceedings of the First Workshop
of The Delos Initiative

WCPA Task Force on Cultural and Spiritual Values of Protected Areas

Monastery of Montserrat, Catalonia, Spain, 24-26 November 2006

Edited by Josep-Maria Mallarach and Thymio Papayannis



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Publications Services
Rue Mauverney 28
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Tel +41 22 999 0000
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3. Introduction

The Delos Framework

Thymio Papayannis and Josep-Maria Mallarach

In the highly appropriate setting of Montserrat, resplendent in the unique natural beauty of its mountain landscapes and monastery and ancient hermitages, a workshop on nature and spirituality was held on 23-26 November 2006. This meeting of international experts was organised as part of the Delos Initiative, a project focussed on sacred natural sites in developed countries.

1. The Delos Initiative

1.1 Aims

The purpose of the Delos Initiative is to identify the relevance and significance of sacred natural sites in technologically developed countries and to investigate whether and how spiritual values can contribute to both the conservation and proper use of important natural areas and the maintenance of cultural heritage. Its main focus is on protected sites of great natural value that are rep-

resentative of the world's religious and spiritual traditions.

More specifically, the principal objective of the Initiative is to reach an understanding of the views of the major faiths in developed countries on the sanctity of certain natural sites and the relationship of these faiths with the natural world. A second aim is to assess the pertinence and importance of sacred natural sites in people's lives today and thus to attempt to estimate their exact significance.

Finally, the Delos Initiative aims to resolve possible conflicts between the essential nature of sacred sites and conservation and management requirements via the implementation wherever possible of interacting synergies.

The aim is for these objectives to be fulfilled by the Delos Working Group via work based on the experience gained from a representative sample of case studies or pilot sites. Conclusions will be drawn from the analyses carried out and then, after a process of sensitisation, recommendations will be made and/or specific guidance provided.

< Hermitage of the Holy Grotto of Montserrat, in the morning mist, from the Rosary Way.

1.2 Framework and *modus operandi*

Within the framework of the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas, a Task Force on Cultural and Spiritual Values of Protected Areas (CSVPA) is focussing its activities on the point at which humans and nature interact. The Delos Initiative was launched in September 2004 as part of this Task Force in order to study the contemporary relevance of sacred natural sites in technologically developed parts of the world. More specifically, the Initiative was set up to determine whether the spiritual/cultural values of a site are compatible with its natural values, and whether conservation efforts can create synergy between these different types of values.

The methodology of the Delos Initiative combines complementary bottom-up and top-down approaches. The bottom-up approach is based on an analysis of specific sites that aims to:

- Identify participants and sites in representative countries;
- Examine objectives at local level;
- Debate the results of the analysis with different stakeholders to reach conclusions acceptable to all;
- Generalise results and extrapolate them to a broader level;

The top-down approach applies the basic metaphysical principles that all spiritual and religious traditions share a belief in the symbolic character of nature and in the sacredness of at least some natural theophanies and, thus, profess an awe and deep respect for the natural order as a terrestrial reflection of a celestial or divine order. Hence, the Initiative attempts to:

- Identify the underlying principles of different spiritual traditions;
- Examine their relevance and influence in different contexts;
- Propose and validate relationships and analogies.

The Delos Initiative is coordinated jointly by Thymio Papayannis and Josep-Maria Mallarach with the support of Med-INA and Silene, the two non-governmental organisations they direct. Its web site is located at www.med-ina.org/delos.

The initial small Delos Working Group has expanded into the Delos Network and today includes members from countries in America, Asia, Europe and Oceania. All of its members contribute their work on a voluntary basis.

1.3 Activities

During 2005 and 2006, the following activities were carried out:

- Selection of pilot sites using clear criteria and the designation of a person in charge of each site.
- Bibliographic study of each pilot site aimed at identifying their spiritual and natural characteristics and significance.
- On-site questionnaire answered by key local stakeholders to determine challenges and threats and to identify attitudes and expectations.
- Analysis of the results of the questionnaire and drawing up of conclusions and recommendations. The recommendations were submitted whenever possible to the person in charge of the site's natural and spiritual heritage in order to reach a consensus.
- Organisation of the Montserrat Workshop to present the lessons learnt from the pilot sites, debate the results and issues that have arisen, and plan for the future.
- Presentation of the Delos Initiative in different international and national events such as:
 - The International Symposium on Conserving Cultural and Biological Diversity: The Role of Sacred Natural Sites and Cultural Landscapes, Tokio, 2005.
 - The European Nature Conference, Europarc & Eurosite, Apeldoorn, The Netherlands, 2005.
 - The 11th & 12th Conferences of the Spanish Section of Europarc, in Cangas de Narcea, 2005 and Vall de Boí, 2006.

2. Sacred sites in technologically developed countries

The notion of a sacred site is undoubtedly culture specific. During the work of the Delos Initiative the term was interpreted in a broad sense and thus sites of significance to most of the world's major faiths were included, even when they only represented a small minority of the population, as in the case of the Holy Isle of Arran and its Tibetan Buddhist monastery. Particular attention was devoted to indigenous spiritual traditions such as the Sámi in Scandinavia and the Cherokee Native Americans in the USA that still exist in a number of technologically developed countries.

It is worth highlighting here a high degree of diversity. Some sacred natural sites owe their status to the existence of important religious communities: this is the case of the large Christian monasteries on Mount Athos and Montserrat, which continue to attract a wide range of believers from many different countries. Other sites possess mainly oral traditions and experiences associated with particular groups of people: this is the case of the groups that retreat to nature such as Buddhist or Christian hermits and, above all, indigenous sites.

A few sites are well-known and attract hundreds of thousands of people to major events, as occurs during the most multitudinous pilgrimages to the shrine at El Rocío in the Doñana wetlands. Others are of significance to much smaller groups and are celebrated in more modest or even secret fashion.

In terms of the natural environment, Delos focuses on sites of high biodiversity that already possess protected status at national or international level. Quite a few of the pilot sites examined are national parks or nature reserves, some are World Heritage Sites and one a Wetland of International Importance. Most of the European sites are included in the European Union Natura 2000 network, defined on a basis of ecological criteria applied at a bioregional scale and currently at varying stages of implementation in the individual countries involved.

2.1 Threats and challenges

In spite of their protected status and the significance that the associated faiths may have for society, sacred natural sites in technologically developed countries are today having to face up to a variety of threats to aspects of both their spiritual heritage and biodiversity,

as has been confirmed by the case studies analysed.

Most of the threats can be put down to indifference and abandonment, especially in the case of sites that are of significance to traditional and indigenous peoples, which are often ignored by both government authorities and the public.

As a result, these sites are often degraded –or even destroyed– by large development projects such as ski resorts, hydroelectric stations or motorways. The fact that most of these projects eventually prove to be unsustainable does not seem to prevent them from being planned and executed. Excessive tourist development (Meteora is a characteristic example) and spreading urban development exert pressures that are intolerable in sacred sites and both are exacerbated by inadequate, weak or non-existent land-use planning and control.

Additional threats to the spiritual values of a site can arise as a result of insensitive practices carried out by nature management authorities: this conflict originates from the centuries-old schisms between science and spirituality, and between secularism and religion, sometimes aggravated even more by populist political or ideological considerations.

2.2 Opportunities

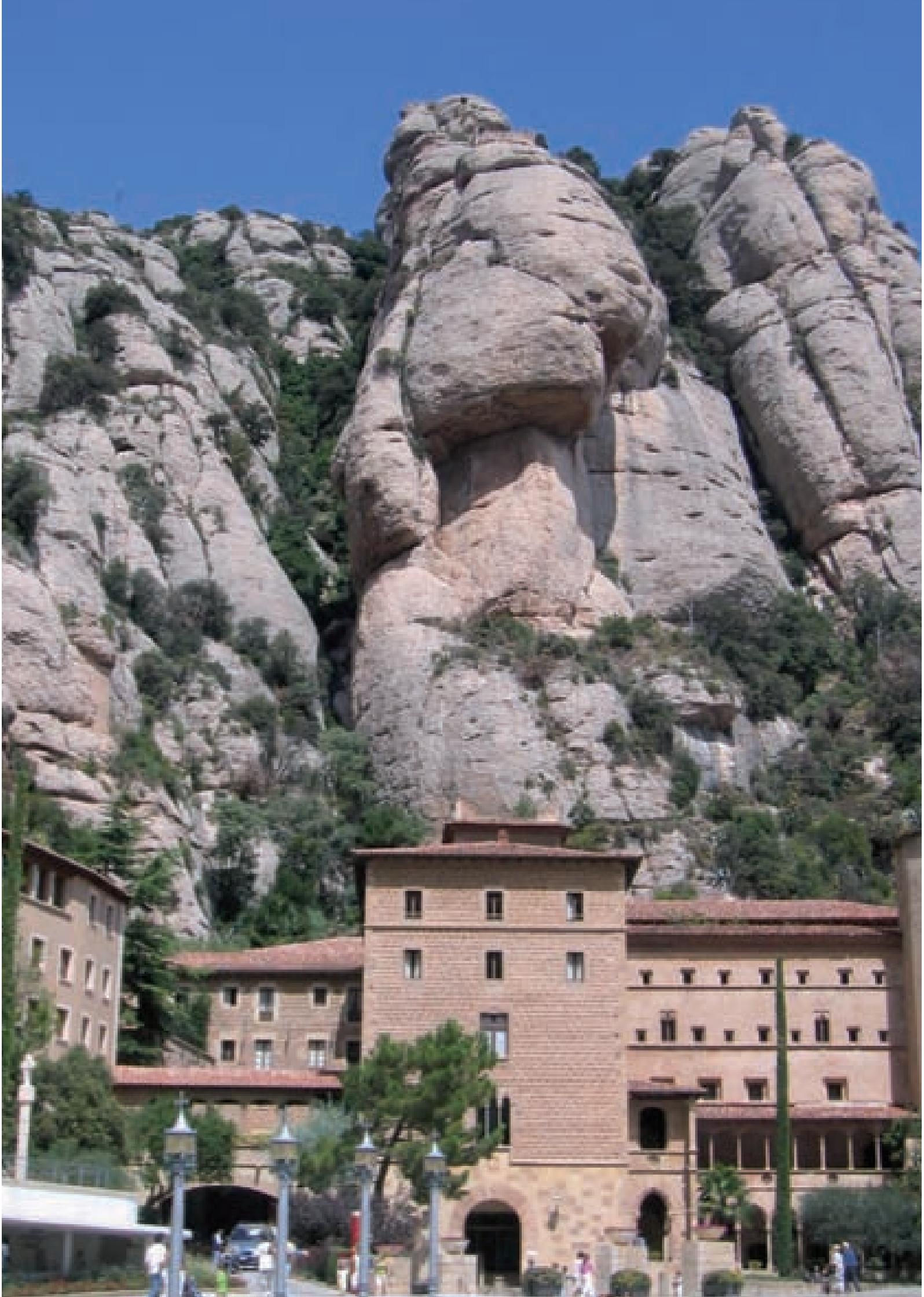
Looking on the bright side, a number of recent developments have occurred that may have a positive impact on the management and conservation of sacred natural sites.

One such development is the increasing awareness in the major faiths of environmental issues as a result of the recognition that nature is part of the Divine Creation and that its destruction by human beings is a sin. This has led to active initiatives such as the sustainable management of church properties. Monasteries, as well, have started recognising that asceticism –one of their guiding principles– represents a deeply ecological approach to life and a close collaboration between the Catholic and Orthodox Christian faiths has arisen as a result, in part facilitated by the work of the Alliance of Religions and Conservation.

Likewise, nature conservation organisations –both multilateral and nongovernmental bodies such as the Conventions on Biological Diversity and on Wetlands, IUCN and WWF International– have become much more conscious of cultural and spiritual values and are attempting to implement specific initia-

tives into the management of protected areas and other fields of work. The Durban World Park Congress in 2003 issued a recommendation in the session entitled ‘Building Cultural Support for Protected Areas’ that all systems of protected areas should recognise and incorporate spiritual values and culture-based approaches into their conservation efforts. The Convention on Wetlands as well has established a Culture Working Group to provide guidance on the incorporation of cultural and spiritual values into the management of wetlands. The 11th Conference of the Spanish Section of EUROPARC held in Cangas de Narcea, Asturias, Spain, 8-12 of June 2005, approved conclusions related to the integration of non-material values, both cultural and spiritual, into the methods and strategies of planning and management of protected areas. It was decided to include a new section devoted to non-material values in the existing Action Plan for Protected Areas of Spain, during the evaluation process.

As a result, it seems that the schism mentioned above is narrowing, mainly thanks to the efforts of enlightened religious leaders and conservationists.



3. The Montserrat Workshop

The Montserrat Workshop was organised by Josep-Maria Mallarach, one of the two coordinators of the Delos Initiative, with the assistance of Jordi Falgarona and Mariona Ortí and other colleagues from the Silene Association.

Moral support was provided by the Monastery of Santa Maria de Montserrat, with financial assistance from the Governing Board of the Mountain of Montserrat, the Catalan Ministry of the Environment and Housing and the Fundació Territori i Paisatge (that belongs to the Caixa Catalunya savings bank).

3.1 Venue: The Monastery of Montserrat

Montserrat has been considered a sacred or holy mountain since written records have existed and is regarded by many as the spiritual heart of Catalonia. Nestling on a narrow platform 600 m above the valley below, the famous Benedictine Monastery, dedicated to the Holy Virgin, has been at the service for almost 1,000 years of the pilgrims from all over the world who come to worship the Black Madonna. The monastery today retains its centuries-old cultural and spiritual significance reflected

in its publishing house and school of music and its works on biblical, liturgical, theological and historical subjects. For many centuries there were hermits living in scattered and isolated hermitages, or caves, in different parts of the Montserrat massif. For centuries these hermits enjoyed great prestige as wise and holy men. There are 12 hermitages in the mountain, of which two are still used for temporary retreats by the monks.

A few years ago the monastic community of Montserrat chose 'Nature, Culture and Spirituality' as their motto for consumption by the general public. These words encapsulate the combination of important values to be found in and around the monastery and so it was only logical that the monastic community should be interested in hosting the Delos Initiative's workshop devoted to exploring the interaction between these three coexisting dimensions.

Father Ramon Ribera-Mariné, an experienced walker who has published several guidebooks on the footpaths that criss-cross this unique mountain, lent his full support to the project during its preparation and was very active during the workshop itself as a leader of field trips.

< Guest houses of in the Monastery of Montserrat, where some of the participants stayed.

3.2 Objectives and agenda

The most important of the multiple objectives of the Montserrat Workshop was to draw conclusions from an analysis of the pilot sites that would guide the future work of the Delos Initiative. Representative sites were selected on the basis of both their geographical location and their natural and spiritual characteristics and, although most belong to mainstream faiths, some also reflect the challenges posed by indigenous and minority beliefs. An unavoidable and pragmatic criterion was the existence of experts able and willing to analyse the pilot sites on a voluntary basis within a fixed time frame and some case studies had to be postponed until a second phase of work begins.

A further objective was to strengthen the links between members of the Delos working group through personal contacts and lively debate, which had not been possible previously.

The contribution of the Delos working group to other IUCN activities and, especially, to the preparation of the UNESCO/IUCN Guidelines on Sacred Natural Sites, was of special concern during the workshop.

Finally, it was hoped that the workshop would debate the future of the Delos

Initiative and suggest directions for the future.

Adequate time for all these objectives was included in the agenda of the meeting (see Appendix II). The meeting was inaugurated by addresses from members of the Catalan Government, the Monastery of Montserrat and the IUCN, and continued with the keynote speech from Jesús García-Varela on 'Nature and Spirituality'. Four lectures then followed that provided a broad background and an invaluable framework for the discussions of the case studies:

- Gonzalo Oviedo, 'Protected areas and sacred sites of indigenous and traditional peoples';
- Santos Casado, 'Spiritual values in the history of protected areas of Spain';
- Edwin Bernbaum, 'The experience of the Sacred Mountains Programme';
- Liza Higgins-Zogib, 'Contribution of sacred natural sites to nature conservation'.

The presentation and discussion of the pilot sites occupied most of the workshop's time; however, the last day was devoted above all to the discussion of more general issues and the drawing up of conclusions.

Despite its tight programme, participants in the workshop were able to go on guided visits to selected parts of the natural and sacred site (the historical hermitages of Tebas, the area around the monastery of Santa Maria, the Holy Grotto and the Agulles section of the mountain, the latter a favourite area for climbing), participate in some of the religious rites and ceremonies of the Benedictine community and listen to the monastery's boy's choir.

3.3 Case studies

As mentioned above, the core work of the workshop focused on the presentation of ten case studies of sites from seven developed countries. The presentations,

mostly by the experts in charge, included a critical analysis of the natural and spiritual significance of each site, a discussion of potential threats and prospects and usually some initial recommendations for improved management policies.

The Meteora site was presented by T. Papayannis and the Kii Mountain Range by B. Verschuuren in lieu of the experts in charge who were unable to attend the workshop.

The Solovetstky Island case study, which had been prepared during the pilot phase, was not discussed since the author of the case study, Alexander Davydov, could not be present.

Country	Site	Protected Status	Faith	In charge
Finland	Kolovesi	National Park	Indigenous Sámi	M. Määttä
Finland	Äjjis / Ukonsaari Island	Natura 2000	Indigenous Sámi	Y. Norokörpi
Greece	Meteora	WHS, Natura 2000	Christian Orthodox	I. Lyratzaki A. Sorotou
Greece	Mount Athos	WHS, Natura 2000	Christian Orthodox	T. Papayannis
Japan	Kii Mountain Range	WHS, National Park	Shinto + Shugen Buddhism	M. Motonaka
Romania	Vanatori Neamt Natural Park	Nature Park, Natura 2000	Christian Orthodox	S. Catanoius
Spain	Doñana Protected Areas	National and Natural Parks, Ramsar Site	Christian Catholic	J. Falgarona J. García-Varela
Spain	Mountain of Montserrat	Natural Park + Nature Reserve	Christian Catholic	J.-M. Mallarach
United Kingdom	Isle of Arran, Scotland	Marine Reserve	Celtic Christian + Tibetan Buddhism	I. Soria
USA	Ocanaluftee River Trail, Great Smoky	National Park	Native American (Cherokee)	E. Bernbaum Mountains

Kolovesi National Park, Finland

Kolovesi National Park lies in the province of Eastern Finland and was established in 1990 to preserve the natural features of the Lake Saimaa archipelago, home to the endemic Saimaa Ringed Seal (*Phoca hispida saimensis*) and forest ecosystems characteristic of southern Finland. The rock paintings in the park are sacred sites associated with the annual cycle of spiritual fishing and hunting ceremonies. The sacred sites were once collective meeting places where spiritual rituals were carried out that reflected and strengthened the social identity of the local people.

Äjjis/Ukonsaari Island, Finland

The Inari Hiking Area is situated in Northern Lapland and the whole area is part of the European Natura 2000 network. It is being set up as a national hiking area, protected by an act of parliament. In the middle of Ukon-selkä open water area in Lake Inarijärvi rises the island of Ukonsaari, Ukonkivi or Ukko (Äjjis in the Inarisámi language), a strange-looking hunchbacked-shaped lump of rock. It is a famous natural sight and was once a very important and well-known site of worship for the indigenous Sámi people and is today one of the most investigated of all their sacred places of Finland.

Meteora World Heritage Site, Greece

Situated in central Greece, these enormous natural megaliths in the west of the Thessaly plain first attracted hermits in the eighth century and by the fourteenth century an Orthodox monastic community was well established there. The astonishing complex of tall sandstone pillars of Meteora, a name deriving from the ancient word *meteoros* meaning 'hovering in the air', rises over 400 m above the surrounding plains. The site is rich in both natural and cultural values and has been declared a Special Protection Area for Birds, a Natura 2000 site and a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Mount Athos, Greece

The peninsula of the 'Holy Mountain' of Mount Athos lies in Chalkidiki, Northern Greece. Rich in history and with a continuous living Orthodox tradition of over 1,000 years, Mount Athos possesses great natural biodiversity and a unique landscape; it was designated a World Heritage Site in 1988 for natural and cultural reasons. It is characterised by an unusual diversity of ecosystems, ranging from Alpine to Mediterranean, and has rich coastal and marine biodiversity. Mount Athos enjoys a special degree of political autonomy and self-management under the spiritual guidance of the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople.

Although access is limited (women are not allowed), the flow of visitors has been increasing during recent decades. Its monasteries are not only Greek, but also Bulgarian, Russian and Serbian.

Kii Mountain Range protected areas, Japan

The Sacred Sites and Pilgrimage Routes in the Kii Mountain Range are a group of temples and shrines connected by pilgrimage trails that are related to both Shintoism and the Shugen sect of ascetic Buddhism. Since ancient times, the Kii Mountain Range has nurtured a tradition of nature worship, in which mountains, rocks, forests, rivers and waterfalls are revered according to the Shinto interpretation of the world. Over one thousand years ago the region was already regarded as sacred by people from the ancient capital cities of Nara and Kyoto and pilgrimages have been undertaken ever since. All elements in the core area of the World Heritage Site are designated as part of a National Park or as National Historic Sites, Places of Scenic Beauty or Natural Monuments under the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties.

Vanatori Neamt Natural Park, Romania

Vanatori Neamt Natural Park is situated in north-east Romania in a forested moun-

tainous region with important natural populations of species such as Brown Bear and Wolf.

The park was set up in 1999 and since then has been managed by the National Forest Administration. It was designated as a Natural Park on the strength of the sustainable management of its forests, the conservation of its landscape and local traditions, the reintroduction of European Bison into its natural habitat and the encouragement of tourist activities based on these natural values. The area has also been proposed as a Natura 2000 Site. Vanatori Neamt is famous for its 16 Orthodox monasteries, as well as for the 40 churches and small hermitages scattered throughout the area. In addition the area has acted as inspiration for many important Romanian artists.

Doñana National and Natural Parks, Andalusia, Spain

Located at the mouth of the Guadalquivir river on the Atlantic coast of Andalusia, the Doñana area is the most important wetland in Spain and is protected by its designation as a National Park, a Natural Park, a Ramsar Site and a Wetland of International Importance. The variety of different habitats ensures that the main environmental value of the area is its biodiversity. Just on the edge of the National

Park stands the shrine of the Virgin del Rocío ('Our Lady of the Dew'), known locally as 'The Queen of Marshes', object of some of the most important pilgrimages in the whole of Spain. Over one million pilgrims participate each year, walking or riding through the dunes and marshlands, chanting and praying for days on end during their journey to the shrine.

Muntanya de Montserrat Natural Park, Spain

The Mountain of Montserrat (in Catalan 'serrated mountain') in Catalonia, characterised by a multitude of astonishing rocky pinnacles, has been considered a holy mountain for centuries. It was initially declared a Picturesque Landscape, but was subsequently awarded Natural Park status (including a natural reserve) by the Catalan Government in 1987. Two Catholic monasteries are situated on the mountain's slopes, of which one, devoted to the Holy Virgin, has been an important centre of pilgrimage since the fourteenth century. The Benedictine community at the monastery of Santa Maria has had over the centuries a significant spiritual and cultural influence on the region and today the Natural Park receives almost three million visitors per year, of which the vast majority visit the area of the main monastery.

Holy Island of Arran, United Kingdom

Holy Island is a small island lying off the coast of the Isle of Arran and was the site in the sixth century of the hermitage of St Molaise, an important figure in the early Christian church in Ireland and Scotland. In the twelfth century it also housed a monastic community. For many years the island was uninhabited, but has recently been purchased by a Tibetan Buddhist organisation, which is in the process of setting up a retreat and interfaith conference facility. The island is also home to a breed of traditional livestock, also in need of conservation since the island has become severely overgrazed. Conservation efforts have included the restoration of native woodland and the implementation of more appropriate grazing regimes on the moorlands. A marine protected area has recently been established offshore.

The Oconaluftee River Trail - Great Smoky Mountains National Park, USA

The Great Smoky Mountains National Park is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and Biosphere Reserve and is shared between the states of Tennessee and North Carolina. It experiences a wide range of the climates and habitats to be found in the eastern USA between

Georgia and the Canadian border and boasts extraordinary levels of biodiversity.

The site has particular spiritual and cultural significance for two local groups, the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians and the descendents of the Scottish-Irish settlers who created what is known today as 'Appalachian culture'. The discovery of gold in 1828 led to the main part of the Cherokee Indians being forcibly removed to Oklahoma along the infamous Trail of Tears, a journey which many did not survive. After the forced removal, a separate group of Cherokees who had been

allowed to stay behind, settled in the area to form the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Nation.

3.4 Participation

Over 50 people attended the opening session, although numbers eventually levelled off to a stable core group of around 25. The diversity within the group was considerable: in all, eight countries and four continents were represented, with two-thirds of the group connected to scientific/conservation organisations or agencies and the rest to

Participants in the wWorkshop at the Sant Joan lookout point.



religious bodies. There was also a good age balance, with both very young and elderly participants, although only 15 % of participants were women.

Of particular significance was the participation of monks from three monasteries –Montserrat (Catholic-Benedictine), Santa Maria de Poblet (Catholic-Cistercian) and Sakya Tashi Ling (Buddhist-Vajrayana)– located inside protected areas near Barcelona.

The IUCN was well represented by Purificació Canals, IUCN Vice-President, and Gonzalo Oviedo, Senior Advisor on Social Policy.

3.5 Outcomes

The conclusions of the workshop are summarised in the Montserrat Declaration (see page 311), drawn up collectively by all participants as a firm statement of the need for closer collaboration between the custodians of sacred sites and those in charge of the management and conservation of protected areas. The strength of the Statement lies in the diversity of people from a broad array of fields of work and organisations who have endorsed it.

Additional outcomes include guidance on planning for the future development of the

Delos Initiative, growing contacts between monastic communities (for the moment in Catalonia, Greece and Scotland), and the strengthening of the Delos Network, which will replace the initial Delos Working Group.

4. Perspectives for the future

The Montserrat Workshop, held approximately two years after the inception of the Delos Initiative, marks the completion of the first phase of the Initiative. However, it should be stressed that the Initiative might well have ended up as just another innovative research and analysis project if there had been no interest in or further need for its activities. The success of the workshop at Montserrat, however, has confirmed the significance of the initial propositions and the interest it has generated in both spiritual and nature conservation circles will ensure that work will continue into a second phase.

An important future date is the World Conservation Congress of IUCN to be held in Barcelona in October 2008; the intervening period will be useful for broadening and expanding the analyses of the pilot sites, for determining what kind of technical guidance is needed and how to obtain it, and for consolidating views on major issues.

Sometime in 2007 a second workshop

will be organised –probably in Greece– to review the progress of the work under way. The outcome of the activities planned for this workshop will be presented to the World Conservation Congress and laid open for debate and criticism. The results will be evaluated by the Delos Network and a third phase will then be planned, if it is deemed to be necessary and worthwhile.

4.1 Deepening the case studies

During the next biennium, monitoring of the pilot studies analysed during the first phase will continue. This will allow us to identify developments –both positive and negative– that may lead to a better understanding of the specific situation of each case study.

In certain cases, it might be possible to become further involved and to provide advice or even guidance on the implementation of some of the recommendations made regarding, for example, the promotion of integrated management policies and synergy between the custodians of sacred sites and managers of protected areas. This will have to be done with great care and only at the request of those officially in charge of the pilot sites. It will also depend to a large extent on the background of the person in charge of

each site and on the contacts that this person can establish with its custodians and managers.

4.2 New case studies for a more balanced representation

During its second phase, the Delos Initiative aims to add further case studies in order to improve the balance between the faiths and countries in the list of sites under study.

Mainstream faiths found in technologically developed countries as yet not included in the Delos Initiative include Islam, other branches of Buddhism, Protestantism and Judaism. On the other hand, despite being technologically developed, a number of huge countries such as China and India that are undergoing great transitions are still a world unto themselves. Nevertheless, in these countries there are numerous experts working on sacred natural sites and the results can be found in the proceedings of the Xishuangbanna International Workshop (2003). There is thus no need for the Delos Initiative to become involved.

Australia, Canada and New Zealand, however, are quite different cases. Their

protected areas share many features with those already analysed and these countries possess experts who are interested in preparing case studies within the framework of the Delos Initiative.

4.3 Towards technical guidance

During the workshop, some of the participants argued convincingly for the need to go deeper and to start developing serious guidelines for the management of sacred natural sites in developed countries. This position seemed to have general support, although some strong reservations were

raised concerning the legitimacy of attempting to provide guidance to those who have been managing sacred sites since long before the existence of modern protected areas.

The Delos Initiative has already started looking into guidance as part of an effort to incorporate its inputs and perspectives into the UNESCO/IUCN Guidelines on the management of sacred natural sites, which will be developed further in 2007 and published probably in 2008.

However, it was generally agreed that this is a very difficult task that will require

Workshop session. From left to right: P. Canals, T. Papayannis and I. Soria.



important backing and that a pragmatic discussion of the issue, based on experiences gained in representative cases, should be initiated in early 2007.

4.4 The way forward

The World Conservation Congress (Barcelona, October 2008) constitutes a key event for the Delos Initiative. Not only will it allow its views and suggestions to reach a wider public in the field of conservation, but it will also provide the opportunity for in-depth critical assessment of the initiative's achievements, positions and

plans. As such, the Initiative may well play a significant role during the Congress.

For this reason we feel that the activities of the Delos Network during the intervening period should focus on organising its participation and contribution to this major event. During the Montserrat Workshop various possibilities were discussed, including the possibility of organising a parallel event, which would include visits to three sites around Barcelona, all –it is to be hoped– previously analysed as case studies within the framework of the Delos Initiative.

