Transforming a dark heritage building into a sensitive site: the faith-based message of the Inquisitor’s Palace in Malta

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This study delves into the motivations that managers of faith-based dark heritage sites should consider in relation to the site and its exhibits impact the overall experience of the visitor. Adapting the servicescape concept proposed by Booms and Bitner (1981), an in-depth case-based method is employed. Using the Inquisitors’ Palace in Malta, the investigation considers how visitors, believers and non-believers, can benefit from the experience of the visit informed and possibly transformed. Particular faith-based heritage sites no longer want to be identified as dark places, but rather aspire to become sensitive heritage sites where heritage interpretation focuses exclusively on the visitor and social engagement. Servicescape allows for the exploration of the socially symbolic dimension that the site manager generates which consequently impacts on this experience of an ever-evolving and pluralist society, meeting the individual as well as the collective needs and expectations.