

COMMITTEE: UNESCO

ISSUE: *Methods to preserve cultural heritage from expanding populations and globalised tourism.*

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**INTRODUCTION:**

*“Our cultural and natural heritage are both irreplaceable sources of life and inspiration. They are our touchstones, our points of reference, our identity” –UNESCO*

*“Heritage is our legacy from the past, what we live with today, and what we pass on to the future generations. Our cultural and natural heritage are both irreplaceable sources of life and inspiration.”*

*“What makes the concept of World Heritage exceptional is its universal application. World Heritage sites belong to all the peoples of the world, irrespective of the territory on which they are located”.*

**DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS:**

**Heritage:** Features belonging to the culture of a particular society, such as traditions, languages, or buildings, that were created in the past and still have historical importance.

**Preserve:** To keep something as it is, especially in order to prevent it from decaying or being damaged or destroyed.

**Cultural Site:** An expression of the ways of living developed by a community and passed on from generation, including customs, practices, places, objects, artistic expressions and values.

**Cultural Tourism:** the journeys of people to specific destinations that offer **cultural** attractions, including historic sites and artistic and **cultural** events and shows, with the aim of acquiring new knowledge and experiences that meet the intellectual needs and individual growth of the traveller.

**Further vocabulary:** <http://whc.unesco.org/archive/gloss96.htm>

**UNESCO'S WORLD HERITAGE MISSION IS TO:**

- Encourage countries to sign the World Heritage Convention and to ensure the protection of their natural and cultural heritage.
- Encourage States Parties to establish management plans and set up reporting systems on the state of conservation of their World Heritage sites.
- Provide emergency assistance for World Heritage sites in immediate danger.
- Encourage participation of the local population in the preservation of their cultural and natural heritage.
- Encourage States Parties to the Convention to nominate sites within their national territory for inclusion on the World Heritage List.
- Help States Parties safeguard World Heritage properties by providing technical assistance and professional training.
- Support States Parties' public awareness-building activities for World Heritage conservation.
- Encourage International cooperation in the conservation of our world's cultural and natural heritage.

**THREATS TO CULTURAL HERITAGES SITES:**

**ASCERTAINED DANGER:**

- Serious deterioration of materials
- Serious deterioration of structure and/or ornamental features
- Serious deterioration of architectural or two-planning coherence
- Serious deterioration of urban or rural space, or the natural environment

- Significant loss of historical authenticity
- Important loss of cultural significance (e.g. Education of historical importance, impact on the current society, customs, traditions and values etc.)

#### **POTENTIAL DANGER:**

- Modification of its legal status, which diminishes the degree of the property's protection
- Lack of conservation policy
- Threatening effects of regional planning projects
- Threatening effects of town planning
- Outbreak or threat of armed conflict
- Threatening impacts of climate, climate change, geological or other environmental factors

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

The protection of historical and cultural heritage by the United Nations started shortly after its creation. The importance of cultural property is more important than merely the tourism that it creates or the economic value that sites represent. UNESCO holds this issue to such importance due to the fact that culture is seen by the United Nations as a treasure of civilisation.

Tourism is one of the world's largest industries and is also a double-edged sword in that it generates substantial income, but also increasing tourist numbers generates negative side effects (damage, pollution, theft, erosion, town planning and transport logistics to name but a few). The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) estimates that tourism generates some 12% of the world total GNP. With studies predicting continued growth, tourism is an increasingly important factor in the planning and management at UNESCO World Heritage sites. Tourism is an important issue at World Heritage sites. A 1993 UNESCO-United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) study showed that most managers of natural sites regard tourism as a key issue. Interviews and surveys carried out by the World Heritage Centre at cultural sites have revealed similar concerns.

#### **MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED:**

Heritage Emergency National Task Force (HENTF)- A partnership of 42 national service organizations and federal agencies. They provide useful tools for post disaster assessment of heritage resources, as well as, locating professional help for post disaster heritage conservation. (<https://culturalrescue.si.edu/hentf/>)

International council for monuments and sites (I'COMOS) - A non-governmental, international organisation that represents the conservation monuments the conservation of monuments and sites around the world. (<https://www.icomos.org/fr/>)

UNESCO World heritage – Provides timely resources to address threats and emergencies affecting Natural World Heritage sites and surrounding areas of influence. (<https://whc.unesco.org/>)

Upstream Process: Launched in 2010, aimed to reduce significant problems encountered during the evaluation process for more challenging nominations. A heritage site is nominated when it is of outstanding universal value that meets at least one of the selection criteria. (see criteria here: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/criteria/>)

ASOR's Cultural Heritage Initiatives: It implements cultural property protection by documenting damage, promoting global awareness, planning emergency and post-war responses.

Look at the World Heritage list to see exactly the circumstances of your country: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list>

Here you can find a list of the top endangered heritage sites in the world: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/danger/>

Flanders Funds-in-Trust: In 2010 they signed an agreement with UNESCO establishing a Trust Fund that will, among other, support the World Heritage Marine Programme activities.

Netherlands Funds-in Trust: Co-operation to support the World Heritage Centre which was established in 2001 by the Netherlands Ministry of Education, Culture and Sciences with the aim of reinforcing the implementation of the 1972 “Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage”.

The European Travel Commission: Non-profit organisation responsible for the promotion of Europe as a tourist destination in third markets.

United Nation World Tourism Organization: UN agency responsible for the promotion of responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism.

### **TIMELINE OF EVENTS:**

- Creation of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation in November 1945
- The World Heritage convention 1972- “Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage” adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO.

Discuss which natural or cultural sites can be inscribed on the World Heritage List:

<http://whc.unesco.org/en/convention/>

- The “Convention concerning the protection of the world cultural and natural heritage” becomes enforced and has been ratified and signed by 191 countries in December 1975
  - Eight sites inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1978
  - September 2015, Sustainable Development Agenda for 2030 agreed
- <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>
- World cities summit on July 2016
  - World Cities summit - July 2018 in Singapore
  - UNESCO is continuously hosting events and conferences to educate the public on the importance of cultural heritage preservation.

### **PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE:**

In 2011 UNESCO embarked on developing a new World Heritage and Sustainable Tourism Programme. The aim was to create an International framework for the cooperative and coordinated achievement of shared and sustainable outcomes related to tourism at World Heritage properties.

The World Heritage Journeys of the European Union: a project implemented in partnerships with National Geographic and convening together 34 World Heritage sites in the European Union. Each theme is intended to help travellers understand the sites’ contribution to World Heritage including a greater understanding of the Outstanding Universal Value and cultural heritage of the destination at large. Cultural heritage is the primary focus for this initiative, combining both built heritage, with historic and existing intangible cultural heritage expressed through the community’s living cultural values.

The General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization meeting in Paris from 17 October to 21 November 1972, as its seventeenth session.

<https://whc.unesco.org/en/conventiontext/>

September 2015 United Nations meeting to decide Sustainable Development Goals that need to be met by 2030.

### **POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS:**

The community contribution in preserving heritage sites is the most important factor when conserving these areas. The cultural heritage significance of a place or element can be extremely localised. Within a community sites have specific variations of spiritual and emotional importance. Effective protection can only be achieved through wide community participation in recovery and reconstruction planning. This should focus mainly on both cultural importance and on the cultural and livelihood activities that depend on the conservation of these areas.

To promote the concept of World Heritage, and the vital importance of linking natural and human systems and maintaining the balance between the two. The World Heritage Convention helps bring attention to the world's most iconic and important cultural and natural heritage, provides support for management planning and implementation and monitors the state of conservation of the properties on the list.

Cultural tourism has been discussed at World Tourism Organization in 2002, to be used as a tool to stimulate regional development. Tourism is the number one largest growing industry in the world making it making it an extremely effective development stimulator. Cultural tourism is specifically used for the preservation of urban regions as well as economic development of those regions. It usually focuses on countries with specifically unique cultures and customs of the native population, that set it apart from other cultures. This interests tourists to first hand observe and learn about these cultures therefore, generating the income needed for rejuvenation through tourism. Urban areas typically have the highest concentration of people and of valued monuments, museums, buildings, etc. Receiving mass tourism in low income countries through cultural tourism creates economic benefits therefore providing the basis for rejuvenation of historical sites, museums, etc. As well as being a sustainable approach to development.

To extend the inclusion of sites on the World Heritage List can help drive tourism to properties, which if managed in accordance with principles of sustainable development can provide important economic benefits to local communities and national economies extend the inclusion of several other cultural and natural sites around the world.

### **BIBLIOGRAPHY:**

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### **FURTHER READING:**

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