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CONSEJO INTERNACIONAL DE MONUMENTOS Y SITIOS

Conference ‘Procedures and Methods to Strengthen World Heritage Protection’

(Leipzig and online, 8 November 2024)

Report

On 8 November 2024, the conference ‘Procedures and Methods to Strengthen World Heritage Protection’ took place at the *denkmal* Fair in Leipzig. The conference was organised by ICOMOS Germany and sponsored by the Federal Foreign Office.

The conference was dedicated to the protection and preservation of UNESCO World Heritage. A large number of the approximately 1,200 World Heritage sites worldwide are increasingly exposed to a variety of threats, and the number of reports on the state of conservation that the UNESCO World Heritage Committee addresses at its annual meetings is constantly rising. Infrastructure projects and large-scale construction projects in and around World Heritage sites, in particular, have the potential to negatively impact the outstanding universal value (OUV) and its attributes. In recent years, the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, together with the Advisory Bodies ICCROM, ICOMOS and IUCN, has developed guidelines to support World Heritage stakeholders in protecting and preserving World Heritage sites.

The aim of the conference was a presentation of the World Heritage procedures and the available tools by World Heritage experts, and to jointly identify challenges in their application as well as to discuss possible further solutions for strengthening protection. The one-day international event was aimed particularly at site managers of World Heritage sites, authorities and departments responsible for World Heritage, national World Heritage Focal Points and ICOMOS members, as well as the broad expert audience. The interest in the German-English hybrid conference was high: 94 people took part on site at the *denkmal* Fair, with additionally up to 70 joining online.

Tino Mager, President of ICOMOS Germany, and Friederike Hansell, World Heritage Focal Point at the Federal Foreign Office, welcomed the participants and gave an introduction to the conference topic.

The first section was devoted to the topic of ‘Monitoring and Quality Control at International Level’. The introductory keynote was given by Berta de Sancristóbal, Director of the Europe and North America, World Heritage, Cultural Sector Division at UNESCO in Paris. She provided an introduction to the 1972 World Heritage Convention as a globally significant instrument for the protection of cultural and natural heritage. She identified the key concepts of the Convention, which include outstanding universal value, effective management systems and principles of good governance. They are essential for the sustainable protection of World Heritage sites, all the more so in the face of persistent and emerging global challenges such as increasing development pressure, rapid urbanisation, climate change, and the rise of mass tourism. She paid particular attention to the two main monitoring tools of the Convention: periodic reporting and reactive monitoring.

Tamás Fejérdy, a World Heritage expert and long-standing board member of ICOMOS Hungary, followed up on this in his presentation ‘Procedures and Methods for Strengthening World Heritage Protection’. The *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* are the working document (and therefore adaptable) used to implement the World Heritage Convention. According to Fejérdy, preventive protection mechanisms should be preferred. The best preventive tool is the prior notification according

to Article 172 of the Guidelines, although there is still room for improvement in the way the States Parties apply this instrument.

In his presentation, 'World Heritage in Danger: the Example of Vienna as Good Practice?', Florian Meixner from the Austrian UNESCO Commission addressed the effects that a listing can have on the List of World Heritage in Danger. The World Heritage site 'Historic Centre of Vienna' was added to this list in 2017. The inclusion should not be seen as a punishment, but rather as a suggestion for improving the state of preservation and the legal status of the site. According to Meixner, the associated multi-year reactive monitoring process has since played an important role in the management of the site and its protection, as well as in that of the associated structures and mechanisms. Meixner emphasised the particular importance of this reactive monitoring for the continued preservation of the outstanding universal value.

Following this case study from Vienna, the last presentation of the section dealt with the topic 'World Heritage Resources and Capacity Building: Guidelines, Tools and other Resources for World Heritage Management'. Nicole Franceschini, Programme Officer at the ICCROM-IUCN World Heritage Leadership Programme, pointed out the wide range of options available for the long-term protection of World Heritage. A central aspect of this is that World Heritage sites cannot be considered in isolation, but must always be seen as one component of a larger structure. Furthermore, the rights holders, the local population and the stakeholders must always be involved (keyword: participation). Capacity building is an ongoing process of knowledge transfer, learning and networking.

The second section, entitled 'Heritage Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context', was introduced by Nicholas Clarke, architect and ICOMOS World Heritage Advisor, who identified the dos and don'ts of these assessments. This includes ensuring that the Heritage Impact Assessments focus on the preservation of the outstanding universal value of a property. At the same time, other values, the involvement of communities and ensuring that an impact assessment can influence the decision-making process, must also be taken into account.

Michael Kloos, UNESCO Chair on Historic Urban Landscapes and Heritage Impact Assessments at RheinMain University of Applied Sciences, dealt with the principles and case studies of such Heritage Impact Assessments. In his view, in addition to the preservation of UNESCO World Heritage sites, their sustainable further development is increasingly coming to the fore, and these sites should also be part of the sustainable further development of their urban and cultural landscape environment. Using the example of the World Heritage site of Baden-Baden, he highlighted the potential and shortcomings of the assessments specifically for the stated purpose (keywords: knowledge of the values outside the core area of the World Heritage site; landscape sensitivity; field-of-view study, etc.).

Hjördis Dall from the master's programme 'Built Heritage. Building with Existing Structures' at the RheinMain University of Applied Sciences provided a further practical case study of the opportunities and limitations of applying a Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA). She analysed the risk assessment for a planned wind farm outside the buffer zone of the Upper Middle Rhine Valley World Heritage site by examining the compatibility of the protection of complex cultural landscapes with the requirements of energy transition. The interdisciplinary approach of nature and monument protection is crucial to promoting the sustainable use of this sensitive cultural landscape.

Patrick Patiwaël of the Netherlands Commission for Environmental Assessment looked back on ten years of Heritage Impact Assessments. The aim of his presentation was to reflect on the application of the framework for Heritage Impact Assessments (HIAs) to the protection of cultural heritage sites. In the Netherlands, dozens of HIAs have been carried out to date for a wide range of spatial development projects. These have raised awareness of the importance of protecting Dutch World Heritage sites, how this could be done, and the limits to development in these areas. At the same time, however, they have also led to more restraint in adding new sites to the World Heritage List.

The third section was dedicated to the topic of ‘Monitoring and Quality Control at National Level’. The first presentation was given by Kathryn Roberts, Chief Inspector of Historic Buildings and Monuments at Cadw, the Welsh government's heritage protection agency. She explored the question of how to deal with inevitable changes in World Heritage sites (keyword: managing change). Using examples from Wales (such as the medieval castles of King Edward I, the testimonies of the industrial revolution, or the slate mining landscapes in the northwest), she explained how various legal protection mechanisms and formal and informal guidelines are used in Wales. She also identified the challenges of using Heritage Impact Assessments to effectively manage change.

Matthias Maluck from the Schleswig-Holstein State Office for Archaeology spoke about ‘World Heritage as Part of the Monument Protection Act of Schleswig-Holstein’. The federal state of Schleswig-Holstein has comprehensively integrated the consideration of World Heritage sites in its monument protection act. This includes the obligation to draw up a management plan and to establish a World Heritage coordination. In addition, site managers are to be involved as public authorities in planning and measures. Maluck demonstrated the application using the archaeological site of Hedeby/Danevirke as an example.

Věra Kučová from the National Heritage Institute in Prague presented the main aspects of the monitoring practice of Czech World Heritage sites. There, the monitoring of World Heritage sites is considered one of the most important tools for promoting and disseminating the principles of the World Heritage Convention among larger sections of the population, including local interest groups. A national monitoring report is prepared every two years. Kučová also identified both the main risk factors for the World Heritage site and examples of good practice.

Ulrike Herbig from the board of ICOMOS Austria provided an insight into monitoring work in Austria. The Austrian monitoring group was restructured in 2018 and a manual was created that defines the tasks. According to Herbig, preventive monitoring is a key strategy for implementing protective measures and raising awareness of World Heritage sites at the local and national levels. It supports the long-term conservation of the cultural heritage and helps those responsible to mitigate potential conflicts at an early stage.

The final presentation on preventive monitoring in Germany was given by Frank Hesse, long-standing spokesperson for the ICOMOS Germany monitoring group. He pointed out that preventive monitoring is not part of the World Heritage Operational Guidelines. At ICOMOS Germany, it is an extremely effective monitoring tool, alongside ‘official’ periodic reporting and reactive monitoring. He explained preventive monitoring using practical examples, such as the development plan in Babelsberg Park.

In the Wrap-up Discussion, Tino Mager summed up the main statements of the presentations. According to him, the introductory contributions had shown that the official guidelines and directives for strengthening World Heritage protection were clearly defined and sufficiently available to stakeholders and those responsible. However, the actual practical implementation at the level of World Heritage sites and in the protection

of historical monuments was more complex. There is potential for improvement here and a need for active international exchange. Thus, the effort to ensure the best possible protection of the World Heritage remains an ongoing process that must continue to be accompanied, critically scrutinised and shaped by all parties involved.

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