



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Information meeting for Permanent Delegations to UNESCO – States Parties to the World Heritage Convention

18 January 2021
12 pm – 3 pm





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Remarks by

Ernesto Ottone Ramirez
Assistant Director-General for Culture





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Background information and process followed

Mechtild Rössler
Director of the World Heritage Centre





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Decision **42 COM 5A** (Manama, 2018)

7. Noting the discussion paper by ICOMOS on Evaluations of World Heritage Nominations related to Sites Associated with Memories of Recent Conflicts, decides to convene an Expert Meeting on sites associated with memories of recent conflicts to allow for both philosophical and practical reflections on the nature of memorialization, the value of evolving memories, the inter-relationship between material and immaterial attributes in relation to memory, and the issue of stakeholder consultation; and to develop guidance on whether and how these sites might relate to the purpose and scope of the *World Heritage Convention*, provided that extra-budgetary funding is available and invites the States Parties to contribute financially to this end;





Decision **42 COM 8B.24** (Manama, 2018)

4. Decides to adjourn consideration of the nomination of the Funerary and Memorial sites of the First World War (Western Front), Belgium and France, until a comprehensive reflection has taken place and the Committee at its 44th session has discussed and decided whether and how sites associated with recent conflicts and other negative and divisive memories might relate to the purpose and scope of the *World Heritage Convention* and its *Operational Guidelines*;



Decision **42 COM 8** (Manama, 2018)

4. Also decides that the evaluation of “sites associated with recent conflicts” shall be undertaken once a comprehensive reflection has taken place and the Committee at its 44th session has discussed and decided how these sites might relate to the purpose and scope of the *World Heritage Convention* and its *Operational Guidelines*;



Presentations by the experts:

- Report and recommendations of the Expert Meeting (Paris, 4-6 December 2019)
- Independent Study on Sites Associated with Recent Conflicts and Other Negative and Divisive Memories
- ICOMOS' updated paper on “Sites associated with memories of Recent Conflicts and the World Heritage Convention”



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Presentation by the experts:

**Report and recommendations
of the Expert Meeting
(Paris, 4-6 December 2019)**



Conclusions of the Expert meeting on sites associated with recent conflicts and other negative and divisive memories

18 January 2021

Isabelle Longuet (Chair) and Eugene Jo (Rapporteur)

Background

- **Decision 42 COM 5A** (Manama, 2018)

- Convene an Expert Meeting on sites associated with memories of recent conflicts to allow for both philosophical and practical reflections on the nature of memorialization, the value of evolving memories, the inter-relationship between material and immaterial attributes in relation to memory, and the issue of stakeholder consultation
- To develop guidance on whether and how these sites might relate to the purpose and scope of the World Heritage Convention

- **Decision 42 COM 8B.24** (Manama, 2018)

- Adjourn consideration of the nomination of the Funerary and Memorial sites of the First World War (Western Front), Belgium and France, until a comprehensive reflection has taken place and the Committee at its 44th session (Fuzhou, China) has discussed and decided on the above

- **Decision 42 COM 8** (Manama, 2018)

- Decided that the evaluation of “sites associated with recent conflicts” shall be undertaken once a comprehensive reflection has taken place and once the Committee at its 44th session has discussed and decided on the above

Expert meeting on sites associated with recent conflicts and other negative and divisive memories

- **4-6 December 2019** (UNESCO IIEP, Paris, France)
- **29 experts**
 - from different constituencies and background, all regions
 - ABs, C2Cs, UNESCO WHC, Communication & Information, Education, Science sectors
- **Financial support** from Governments of Australia, France, Kuwait, Republic of Korea, and UNESCO, in-kind support from AWHF
- **Chair** - Isabelle Longuet (France), **Rapporteur** - Eugene Jo (ICCROM)
- **Final report** <http://whc.unesco.org/en/events/1551/>

Relevant Documents

- 1972 Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage
- 2019 Operational Guidelines
- Decisions 42 COM 5A, 42 COM 8 and 42 COM 8B.24
- Report of the International World Heritage Expert Meeting on Criterion (vi) and associative values (Warsaw, Poland, 2012)
- Wannsee Memorandum (Berlin, 2017)
- What is OUV? Defining the Outstanding Universal Value of Cultural World Heritage Properties (ICOMOS Study, 2008)
- Evaluation of World Heritage Nominations related to Sites Associated with Memories of Recent Conflicts (ICOMOS Paper, 2018)
- Guidance and Capacity Building for the Recognition of Associative Values using World Heritage Criterion (vi) (2018)
- Study on the Interpretation of sites of memory (C. Young, J-L. Luxen 2018)
- 2 ongoing studies - the Scoping Study on sites associated with recent conflicts (C. Cameron, O. Beazley); and the ICOMOS study on Sites associated with Memories of recent conflicts (ICOMOS)

Focus of meeting

- Whether and how sites associated with recent conflicts and other negative and divisive memories might relate to the purpose and scope of the World Heritage Convention and its Operational Guidelines
- Many sites on the Tentative List, which might be submitted as World Heritage nominations in the near future are related to sites associated with memories of recent conflicts.
- Absence of clear parameters/frameworks for how such sites might relate to the World Heritage Convention

Terminology

- Conflict

To cover events such as wars, battles, massacres, genocide, torture and mass violations.

- Recent

To be from the turn of the twentieth century.

.... recognized that in some cases negative memories resulting from conflicts can endure for centuries, exceeding the general timeframe of recent.

Purposes of the World Heritage Convention

- The Convention must answer to UNESCO's general mission of promoting peace and cooperation
 - *Policy for the Integration of a Sustainable Development Perspective into the processes of the World Heritage Convention (2015)*
- Operational Guidelines (paras 111b, 119)
 - guidance on incorporating into the implementation of the Convention sustainable development principles, a respect for diversity, equity, gender equality and human rights and the use of inclusive and participatory planning and stakeholder consultation processes

Past decisions

- 1979 ICOMOS advice to the Committee (CC-79/CONF.003/11)

..... sites representing the positive and negative sides of human history will only be invested with real force if we make the most remarkable into unique symbols, each one standing for the whole series of similar events.

- 1979 Committee decision on the inscription of Auschwitz (CC-79/CONF.003/13)

...to restrict the inscription of other sites of a similar nature;

Particular attention should be given.... so that the net result would not be a reduction in the value of the List, due to the large potential number of nominations as well as to political difficulties.

.... could be strongly influenced by nationalism or other particularisms in contradiction with the objectives of the World Heritage Convention.

Risks

- Fixing Outstanding Universal Value might interfere with on-going reconciliation processes and could re-ignite divisions between stakeholders.
- UNESCO could be seen as the arbitrator in deciding a singular version of a narrative associated with a conflict, whilst inscription could encourage a hierarchy of victims and create barriers between people.
- Risk of promoting selective interpretation, manipulation of messages and exclusion of alternate narratives.
- Interpretation of these sites is particularly vulnerable to being manipulated by political parties and instrumentalized by interest groups with divisive agendas.

Practical difficulties

- Aligning sites which have evolving values with the idea of immutable Outstanding Universal Value is problematic, in terms of identifying one fixed value in sites that may have multiple, evolving or contested values associated with multiple stakeholders
- Difficult to determine how sites associated with memories of recent conflicts might justify the inscription criteria as currently worded
- Ensuring authentic, broad consultation of stakeholders is difficult, if not impossible
- Problematic to compare the relative value of memories or the relative value of conflicts

Conclusion

- With regard to sites associated with recent conflicts and other negative and divisive memories, the experts consider that such properties do not relate to the purpose and scope of the World Heritage Convention and its Operational Guidelines.
- Recommend to the States Parties to consider other instruments and programmes, the UNESCO Programme Memory of the World, the network of the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience, the regional programmes such as the European Heritage Label and potential programmes in other regions as well as educational programmes as identified in the Wannsee Memorandum.

Further work needed

- Continuing from the study of Criterion (vi) 2018, to develop new in-depth guidance using case studies as illustrations to help explain how to approach associations (events, living traditions, ideas, beliefs, artistic works, literary works) with clear and consistent language, how to measure links with a place, and how to develop a robust comparative analysis.
- Further studies and research would be needed, within the scope of the World Heritage Convention, on associations in general as well as on the subject matter of sites associated with recent conflicts and negative and divisive memories and peace, inclusive narratives, educational values, interpretation and healing and reconciliation.

Alternative programmes and references

- UNESCO Programme Memory of the World
- Network of the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience
- European Heritage Label and other regional programmes
- Educational programmes as identified in the Wannsee Memorandum
- ICOM Germany and ICOM Nord Conference on Difficult Issues (September 2017)
- ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums (1986, revised in 2004)



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Presentation by the experts:

**Independent study on sites
associated with recent conflicts
and other negative and divisive
memories**





Sites Associated with Recent Conflicts and Other Negative and Divisive Memories

Olwen Beazley (Australia) and Christina Cameron (Canada)

UNESCO Information Meeting
18 January 2021



Who we are

- Olwen Beazley is an Australian heritage professional. She has a PhD from the Australian National University, focusing on the inclusion of sites with associative, intangible cultural heritage values, including sites of memory, on the World Heritage List under criterion (vi).
- Christina Cameron is an emeritus professor from the University of Montreal where she directed a research program on heritage conservation. As a former heritage executive with Parks Canada, she chaired the 1990 and 2008 sessions of the World Heritage Committee.

Research Question

Whether and how sites associated with recent conflicts and other negative and divisive memories might relate to the purpose and scope of the *World Heritage Convention*?

Presentation Objectives

- To provide an overview of the considerations that have informed the study
- To provide a rationale for the conclusion and recommendations of the study

Timeline

- 2018: World Heritage Committee asks for expert advice (June-July)
- 2019: expert meeting at UNESCO, Paris (December)
- 2019: independent study commissioned by World Heritage Centre
- 2020: draft study presented to Review Group (April)
- 2021: study presented to UNESCO Information Meeting (January)

Contents of the Study – What we researched to address the Committee's question

- World Heritage Committee decisions
- Transitional Justice
- Memorialization
- Sites of Conscience
- Public History
- Memory Studies
- Criterion (vi)
- World Heritage Convention and Operational Guidelines

Definitions

“Recent”:

- from the turn of the twentieth century
- in some cases negative memories resulting from conflicts can endure for centuries, exceeding the general timeframe of recent

“Conflicts”:

- events such as wars, battles, massacres, genocide, torture and mass violations

World Heritage Committee decisions

- 1979 Committee concerned with potential divisiveness and political/nationalist difficulties “in contradiction with the objectives of the *World Heritage Convention*”
- Rare exceptions with one site standing as a symbol for a series of similar sites
- After 4 decades, only 18 WHSs [1.6%] belong to broad category and only 4 WHSs [0.4%] belong to category of “recent conflicts.” (Appendix E)

Implications for World Heritage listing

- Principle of one site standing as a symbol for a series of similar sites

18 WHSs including 4 of “recent conflicts” (Appendix E)

- Island of Gorée – (Senegal) - 1978
- **Auschwitz Birkenau German Nazi Concentration and Extermination Camp (1940-1945) (Poland) - 1979**
- Forts and Castles, Volta, Greater Accra, Central and Western Regions (Ghana) - 1979
- National History Park – Citadel, Sans Souci, Ramiers (Haiti) - 1982
- **Hiroshima Peace Memorial (Genbaku Dome) (Japan) - 1996**
- **Robben Island (South Africa) - 1999**
- Stone Town of Zanzibar (United Republic of Tanzania) – 2000
- Masada (Israel) – 2001
- Kunta Kinteh Island and Related Sites (Gambia) - 2003
- **Old Bridge Area of the Old City of Mostar (Bosnia and Herzegovina) - 2005**
- Aapravasi Ghat (Mauritius) - 2006
- Le Morne Cultural Landscape (Mauritius) - 2008
- Cidade Velha, Historic Centre of Ribeira Grande (Cabo Verde) - 2009
- Australian Convict Sites (Australia) - 2010
- Bikini Atoll Nuclear Test Site (Marshall Islands) – 2010
- Landscape of Grand Pré (Canada) - 2012
- Blue and John Crow Mountains (Jamaica) - 2015
- Valongo Wharf Archaeological Site (Brazil) - 2017

Transitional Justice

- Refers to judicial and non-judicial measures implemented by different countries in order to redress the legacies of massive human rights abuses
- Measures include criminal prosecutions, truth commissions (to acknowledge victims and facilitate truth seeking and accountability), reparations programs (including memorialization) and various kinds of institutional reforms
- Process is complex; risk that unless inclusive of all stakeholders' memories, transitional justice mechanisms may be more divisive than conciliatory, as they may fuel divisions between victims and perpetrators

Implications for World Heritage listing

- Reparation monuments/memorials are being nominated to World Heritage List
- Dissonance may still exist and inscription on the World Heritage List may provoke disharmony and even violence
- World Heritage designation could confirm a partial version of a narrative associated with a conflict while excluding others

Memorialization

- There is an increase in post-conflict memorialization at sites of mass human rights abuses, so that victims can be recognised and society remembers what happened – a new way of representing the past in public space
- Post-conflict memorialization is a process for assisting all stakeholders to come to terms with dissonant histories; memorials are the physical remains that act as triggers of memory
- Post-conflict memorialization is a type of symbolic reparation that seeks to recognize victims and contribute to broader reconciliation processes
- Memorialization initiatives are inherently political; unless done sensitively and inclusively, through extensive community-led consultation, they risk deepening divisions in society and slowing post-conflict reconstruction
- State-sanctioned memory is almost always dissonant, especially when it is constructed by States to support national ideologies, an official memory discourse, and nation-building projects.

Memorialization - 'Never Again'

- Memorialization as a vehicle for post-conflict reconciliation requires a careful process and sufficient time if it is to contribute to guarantees of non-recurrence of human rights abuses

Implications for World Heritage listing

- nominations of sites of mass human rights abuses are likely to increase
- inscription of sites which support State-framed, State-sanctioned memories may maintain and create dissonance and conflict
- premature inscription of post-conflict sites could interrupt on-going reconciliation processes
- support of all stakeholders involved is essential in memorialization activities

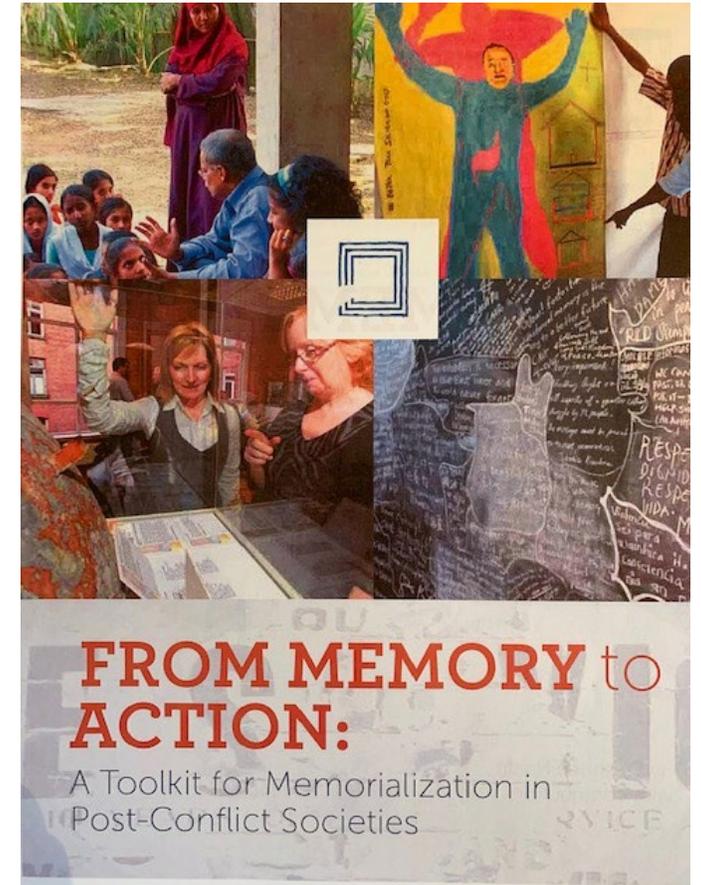


Sites of Conscience

- International Coalition of Sites of Conscience (ICSC) NGO founded in 1999
- Over 300 members in 65 states, ex. Island of Gorée (Senegal), ESMA Site Museum (Argentina) and Kigali Genocide Museum (Rwanda)
- Purpose:
 - Conscious effort to connect past with present issues; from memory to action
 - Stimulate dialogue and facilitate an understanding of contemporary issues relating to democracy, human rights and equality
 - Education and opportunity for public involvement; ‘non-repetition’ of atrocities/ human rights abuses
- *ICSC Toolkit for Memorialization in Post-Conflict Societies* identifies ‘best practice’ process for successful memorialization

Implications for World Heritage listing

- Toolkit provides a model for memorialization initiatives; an upstream action for sites prior to World Heritage nomination



Public history

- Public history makes historical research accessible to non-academic audiences; World Heritage listing and site interpretation are public history activities
- Characteristics: scholarly evidence-based process, periodic reinterpretation of the past, evolving narratives and multiple worldviews, awareness of potential bias, code of ethics (accurate, inclusive, impartial, fair, respectful)
- Approach provides a platform to address conflict and controversy in a way that encourages dialogue and development of mutual understanding

Implications for World Heritage listing

- Research should be inclusive, draw on multiple sources and perspectives and follow professional code of conduct to avoid potential manipulation of history
- Tension between fixed value statement (SOUV) and evolving understandings of the past

Memory Studies

When memory begins to be lost:

- 'Edge of Memory'; a place can be on the edge of memory for a number of years
- Fear of forgetting; in order to transmit memory, commemorations start and memorialization begins
- Compulsion to locate memory in specific places through memorialization
- Tangible places are a trigger (mnemonic) of private and collective memory and critical to the continuity of memory

Implications for World Heritage listing

- The act of inscription attempts to fix memories in a place; sites can be inscribed but associated memories are mutable and change over time
- World War I and II sites are at the edge of memory; fear of forgetting has resulted in inclusions on Tentative Lists.
- Contemporary interests need to be considered through lens of World Heritage process and policy

Criterion (vi)

Criterion (vi) requires 3 different assessments:

- Is the association(s) [idea or event] of outstanding universal* significance?
- Is there a direct or tangible link between association(s) and property?
- How does property compare with other sites with similar association(s) and links?

Implications for World Heritage listing

- Particular circumstances of each event or idea and specific place(s) makes it difficult to reach the threshold of outstanding universal significance
- Property-based *Convention* requires significant link between association(s) and site
- How to make meaningful comparison among tragedies?
- Challenge to select outstanding example to stand as symbol for group

* “historical” replaced by “universal” (1980)

Relationship to the Purpose and Scope of the World Heritage Convention and its *Operational Guidelines*

Considerations

- Outstanding Universal Value, not national value, is focus of World Heritage Convention
- World Heritage List represents a selection of sites, based on comparative analysis
- Educational mandate of UNESCO linked to World Heritage
- Peace-building mandate of UNESCO linked to World Heritage

Outstanding Universal Value

- Values associated with sites of recent conflicts and other negative and divisive memories are not stable but continue to evolve with shifts in individual and collective memories
- Values have potential to change over time both in an understanding of past events and in a willingness of affected communities to engage in shaping the narrative
- Premature designation with the World Heritage label while values are still evolving could validate one narrative associated with a conflict while excluding others

Selectivity

- World Heritage envisages a selective list of exceptional sites rather than many examples of a phenomenon or typology
- In considering sites of recent conflicts and other negative and divisive memories, 1979 session of the World Heritage Committee established the principle of exceptionality, i.e. of one site standing as a symbol for a series of similar sites; guidance for a highly selective group of cultural and natural heritage sites has remained unchanged
- Since 1978 only 18 sites [1.6%] belong to broad category and only 4 WHSs [0.4%] belong to category of “recent conflicts”
- The need for selectivity points to global comparative studies to identify the most significant events as well as the most representative sites
- By developing clear typologies and selecting key components as representative symbols that stand for a theme of universal value to humanity, the World Heritage system would remain manageable and retain its credibility

Education

- UNESCO is a trusted institution that promotes critical thinking, knowledge and education to a high ethical standard
- Global Citizenship Education program supports peaceful, tolerant and inclusive societies
- Model for World Heritage education and information programs; inclusion of multiple narratives and comparative analysis using documentary and archival sources, testimonies and material evidence
- By meeting UNESCO education standard, World Heritage has potential to teach preventive lessons and promote reconciliation
- If site values are still contested, selecting one narrative over others does not meet UNESCO education standard and could lead to exclusion and injustice and foster divisiveness, not reconciliation

Building Peace

- Reconciliation is a slow and painful process; building peace among diverse participants and stakeholders can extend over decades and sometimes centuries
- Roadmap for memorialization in the Toolkit of the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience includes processes for coming to terms with dissonant voices and conflicting memories
- It would be highly advantageous for nominated sites to have implemented a memorialization initiative
- Without time for reflection and for dissonant narratives to be resolved, World Heritage designation may arbitrarily interrupt reconciliation processes and lead to further conflict

Conclusions regarding sites of recent conflicts and other negative and divisive memories

- World Heritage List is selective and exceptional; sites stand as symbols for a series of similar sites [in this group 1.6% and 0.4%]
- Sites are particularly vulnerable to manipulation by political parties and other interest groups with divisive agendas
- Designation of sites while individual and collective memories continue to evolve could validate one narrative while excluding others
- Research on sites with evolving narratives and contested histories should follow principles, practice and professional code of conduct for public history discipline
- Without time for reflection and for dissonant narratives to be resolved, World Heritage designation may arbitrarily interrupt reconciliation processes and lead to further conflict
- Sites with unresolved and dissonant values do not meet the broader purpose of UNESCO to build the foundations of peace

Recommendation

Q: Whether and how sites associated with recent conflicts and other negative and divisive memories might relate to the purpose and scope of the *World Heritage Convention*?

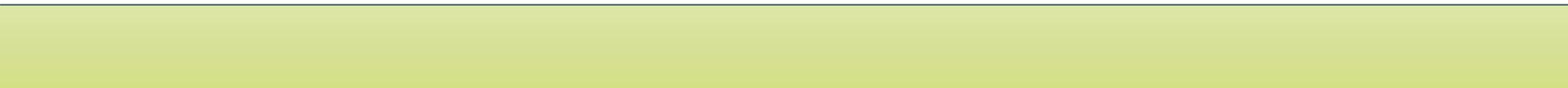
R: Sites associated with recent conflicts and other negative and divisive memories **do not normally relate to the purpose and scope of the *World Heritage Convention* and the broader purpose of UNESCO to build the foundations of peace.**

Other Opportunities

- UNESCO Memory of the World
- International Coalition of Sites of Conscience
- Potential new programs could look to the model of UNESCO's Slave Route project
- Regional meetings could be organized to discuss the content and application of the *Study on sites associated with recent conflicts and other negative and divisive memories*



THANK YOU





United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Presentation by the experts:

**ICOMOS' updated paper on
“Sites associated with memories
of Recent Conflicts and the World
Heritage Convention”**



ICOMOS DISCUSSION PAPER

Sites Associated with Memories of Recent Conflicts

WHETHER AND HOW THESE MIGHT RELATE TO THE PURPOSE
AND SCOPE of THE WORLD HERITAGE CONVENTION and its
OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES

Information Meeting
UNESCO
18 January 2021

ICOMOS



-
- In 2018, ICOMOS prepared a first discussion paper on the **‘evaluation of nominations for sites associated with memories of recent conflicts’**
 - This paper concluded that reflection was needed
 - To allow the World Heritage Committee to agree on whether and how these sites relate to the Convention

 - **Committee decision (42 COM 5B), encourages ICOMOS to further improve this paper**
 - by broadening the participation of experts in this new thematic area,
 - including from the African region

On the basis of extensive consultation, ICOMOS's second discussion paper considers:

- **Whether sites associated with memories of recent conflicts could be accommodated within the 1972 World Heritage Convention**
 - **In relation to its purpose, scope and key concepts**
- **Or whether there are doctrinal issues that might preclude the World Heritage Convention from accommodating such sites**

In reaching its conclusions, the ICOMOS second paper considers:

- 1. The purpose & scope of the World Heritage Convention and its relationship with UNESCO**
 - Scope of heritage that falls within the Convention
 - in relation to evolving ideas of heritage

- 2. Key Concepts of the World Heritage Convention**
 - Nature of recent conflicts

- 3. How sites associated with memories of recent conflicts relate to the key concepts of the World Heritage Convention**
 - Complexity of memories related to recent conflicts
 - Complexity of the memorialisation process
 - and its relationship to post-conflict resolution

1. The purposes of the World Heritage Convention and its relationship with UNESCO

a) Purposes of the World Heritage Convention

Since its ratification in 1972, the purposes of the Convention have been clarified by the World Heritage Committee in two main ways:

- Definition of criteria for justifying OUV
 - Formally defined in 1978, and slightly amended several times since
- Definition of OUV
 - Formally agreed in 2005

One area that has not been clarified by the Committee is

- **Whether OUV is a positive notion**
 - Do the Convention's purposes relate to great, positive achievements of mankind?

ICOMOS considers that there is a need to clarify the purposes of the Convention in relation to whether they relate to the great, positive achievements of mankind

1. The purposes of the World Heritage Convention and its relationship with UNESCO

b) The World Heritage Convention and its relationship with UNESCO

- **UNESCO's purposes**
 - “Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed.”
 - The Culture of Peace adopted in 1989 outlines a vision for peace that is much more than the end of armed conflicts
- **Should World Heritage be at the heart of UNESCO's Peace Mandate?**

ICOMOS considers that there is a need to confirm the purposes of the World Heritage Convention in relation to UNESCO's Peace Mandate.

1. The purposes of the World Heritage Convention and its relationship with UNESCO

c) Scope of heritage that falls within the Convention

- In relation to evolving ideas of heritage

One of the strengths of the Convention is the way it has reflected changing perceptions of heritage over time

But although the Convention describes cultural heritage in general terms in Article 1, it does not define its scope

– Or how far the Convention can respond to all evolving ideas of heritage

And nor has the Committee clarified:

- **What types of heritage fall within the scope of the Convention**
 - And whether there are some directions that the Convention cannot follow

ICOMOS considers that there should be limits and/or constraints on the scope of cultural heritage that can be seen to support the purposes of the Convention.

2. Key concepts of the World Heritage Convention and the nature of recent conflicts

a) *Key concepts of the Convention*

- *OUV and its commonality and persistence*

- OUV means 'cultural and/or natural significance which is so exceptional as to transcend national boundaries and to be of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity. As such, the permanent protection of this heritage is of the highest importance to the international community as a whole'
- Thus OUV rises above national interests and is relevant to mankind as a whole and is fixed at the moment of inscription and should be sustained over time

- *Criteria supported by comparative analysis*

- Exceptionality justified under the criteria has to be supported by detailed comparative analysis

- *Notions of integrity and authenticity*

- Relate to ideas of wholeness within boundaries and intactness

2. Key concepts of the World Heritage Convention and the nature of recent conflicts

b) Nature of Recent Conflicts

The 20th century can now be seen as a century of conflicts

- The way conflicts were enacted changed dramatically over time
- The outcomes of these civil wars, often remain poorly defined as do responsibilities for the conflicts

c) Sites associated with recent conflicts

Great complexity in relation to how:

- Narratives of memory might be defined
- Groups of people might be defined to which such narratives belong?
- Value of such memories might be determined in relation to the relative value of each conflict in global terms

2. Key concepts of the World Heritage Convention and the nature of recent conflicts

d) Memorialisation

Memorialisation relating to conflicts brings many challenges

- While it may:
 - be a fundamental need for societies after conflicts
 - honour victims, reconcile tensions, establish a record of history, speak to reparation for wrong-doing
- But it can also:
 - Support the persistence of divisions or become the focus for further reprisals
 - Be used as a national tool to promote one version of complex events that may not be objective
- Memorialisation is a fundamental part of post-conflict reconciliation processes
 - But reconciliation can be a long and difficult journey
 - And may sit uncomfortably alongside memorialisation

3. How sites associated with memories of recent conflicts relate to the key messages of the Convention

a) *Commonality of OUV*

- Key issue is whether the World Heritage Convention should be used to arbitrate in deciding the 'main' value of narrative or memories associated with a conflict
 - on what basis could such a decision be made?
- *i) National values*
 - For some sites associated with memories of recent conflicts the narrative reflects an official national view
 - But national support does not necessarily mean alignment with the World Heritage Convention
 - In this context, the World Heritage Committee's decision in 1979 when Auschwitz was inscribed noted that:
 - *'Nominations concerning, in particular, historical events or famous people could be strongly influenced by nationalism or other particularism in contradiction with the objectives of the World Heritage Convention'*.

3. How sites associated with memories of recent conflicts relate to the key messages of the Convention

- *ii) Multiple values*
 - OUV defines the way a property might be seen to have value to all humanity
 - This does not mean that OUV is the only value that a property has:
 - Indeed most properties have many other national or local value, and these mostly support OUV.
 - Sites of memory associated with recent conflicts may also have multiple values, but these might be conflictual or contested
 - If the winners' views are encapsulated as the one persistent value associated with a place, how can this value be accepted by others who hold contrary views?
 - On the other hand, it could prove very dangerous if the OUV of a site associated with multiple memories of a recent conflict accommodated many competing memories.
 - Such articulation of disputes could keep alive differences and work against moves towards peace and reconciliation.

3. How sites associated with memories of recent conflicts relate to the key messages of the Convention

- *iii) Mirrored values*

It is sometimes suggested that a site of conflict is associated not with negative memories but with positive messages that:

- Show the futility of conflict, the need to work for peace and the common dignity of human life
- Convey a moral message for humanity that such atrocities will not happen again

The difficulty is that any conflict site could be associated with positive messages

But how could it be seen to reflect in an outstanding way:

- a value associated with peace
- a moral lesson for humanity that is differentiated from similar values of any other conflict sites?

What would be the attributes? How might they be seen as authentic?

3. How sites associated with memories of recent conflicts relate to the key messages of the Convention

b) Persistence of OUV

- Many people consider that memories prompted by conflicts are never static and evolve over time
 - unless they are ‘fixed’ or adopted as a formal national message,
 - but even then they may continue by proxy means.
- Fixing memory in conjunction with OUV may force the emergence of a shared dialogue or lead to the evaluation of competing memories
- There would appear to be a fundamental incompatibility between evolving memories associated with sites of recent conflicts and the idea of fixing OUV at the time of inscription.

3. How sites associated with memories of recent conflicts relate to the key messages of the Convention

c) Criteria - Lexicon of words used

- For a property to convey OUV, it must satisfy at least one criterion and represent an outstanding response, such as
 - ‘human creative genius’, ‘an important interchange of human values (...)’, a ‘unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization (...)’
- or reflect in an outstanding way
 - ‘(...) significant stage(s) in human history’, or ‘(...) ideas, beliefs, artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance’.
- How might this lexicon of words be applied to sites associated with memories of recent conflicts?
- There remain profound questions to be addressed in relation to how sites that reflect memories of conflicts might be seen to justify the criteria, as presently worded

3. How sites associated with memories of recent conflicts relate to the key messages of the Convention

d) Comparative analysis

- How might sites associated with these conflicts be compared?
 - With conflicts or the memories of the conflict?
- If the former, do the ‘world’ wars have a higher value than regional or local conflicts?
- Comparative analysis cannot be undertaken meaningfully on the tragedy and loss of recent conflicts or on their memories, and could lead to judgmental dilemmas

e) Integrity and authenticity

- In terms of integrity, can memories be confined by boundaries?
- How can the truthfulness of narrative be assessed, in terms authenticity?

f) Place defined by boundaries

- Where the memories are main attributes - and physical attributes incidental to the conflict - how can boundaries be defined?

Ethical Responsibilities

Trying to arbitrate in terms of which sites associated with memories of recent conflicts might be seen to have OUV, could lead the World Heritage Committee into situations that might be ethically highly problematic

Human rights-based approach

Awarding World Heritage status to a site that speaks to the memory of one part of a group of people, but demeans another group cannot be seen to respect human rights, nor complementary reconciliation processes

Legal considerations

It could be argued that any decision taken by a multilateral agency, which may be perceived as political and could have diplomatic consequences, should adhere not only to the World Heritage Convention but also to principles of international law.

Summary and concluding remarks

ICOMOS has reached the following conclusions:

If the purposes and scope of the World Heritage Convention are to support social cohesion and cultural diversity as part of the fundamental objective of UNESCO to work towards world peace and security,

then memorialising memories of certain recent conflicts through World Heritage inscription of one memory and one value could be seen to work in the opposite direction.

Sites associated with recent conflicts cannot be accommodated by the key concepts of the World Heritage Convention, as currently worded,

and do not support UNESCO's Mandate for Peace, and, by implication, the purposes of the World Heritage Convention.

A specific regime for sites associated with negative memories within the World Heritage Convention?

This would mean changing the nature of OUV, in relation to commonality and persistence, as well the definition of criteria and the idea of a place within boundaries.

If such changes were made, this would radically alter the nature of the World Heritage Convention and there could be difficult repercussions for sites already on the World Heritage List.

Alternative means of recognition

It would be preferable to encourage the recognition of such sites under other instruments that could be considered more appropriate.

Thank you



United Nations
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Questions and Answers



Information meeting for Permanent Delegations to UNESCO
– States Parties to the World Heritage Convention

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