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UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL
ORGANISATION

CONVENTION CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF THE WORLD CULTURAL AND
NATURAL HERITAGE

World Heritage Committee

Eleventh session

(Unesco Headquarters, 7-11 December 1987)

Note on rural landscapes and the World Heritage Convention.

1. It is recalled that the matter regarding landscapes and the World Heritage Convention first arose in 1984 when the Committee recognised the difficulty of States Parties which were densely populated and had a long history of human occupation in identifying truly "natural" sites for nomination to the World Heritage List. In such countries however, man had modified the natural environment and in certain instances had created ecologically balanced, aesthetically beautiful and culturally interesting landscapes. Could such properties be considered under the World Heritage Convention? The Committee at that time requested that a Task Force be established to study this question.

2. The Task Force met in October 1985. There was a consensus of opinion that, while the Convention was unique in bringing together culture and nature which had hitherto been considered separately by the international community, it seemed desirable to make provision for sites where the two elements were harmoniously "married" together. Such seemed the case of certain rural landscapes. Accordingly, the Task Force made recommendations to accommodate such sites by proposing some alterations and additions to the "Guidelines" while keeping in line with the text of the Convention. The Bureau, meeting in 1986, felt that it was premature to adopt these changes at that time. It recognised, however, that no landscape had as yet been nominated to evaluate the applicability of the Operational Guidelines.

3. Since that time, the United Kingdom nominated the Lake District National Park for inscription on the World Heritage List as a mixed cultural/natural site. This nomination reopened the debate. The Bureau of the World Heritage Committee, at its 11th session in June 1987, requested the Secretariat to

consult with ICOMOS and IUCN to present a list of questions to the Committee regarding rural landscapes.

4. At the occasion of the General Assembly of States Parties to the Convention on 30 October 1987, representatives of ICOMOS, IUCN and the Unesco Secretariat were able to discuss this matter further. It was agreed that it was in the general interest of the Convention to develop the notion of "mixed properties". Indeed, the Convention aimed at the protection of both cultural and natural and in many ways the protection of one served to reinforce the long term protection of the other. Specifically, the main threat to natural sites come from man's activities and hence it is of vital importance to consider the human and cultural aspects in order to ensure the protection of a natural site. Vice versa, cultural properties can best be protected when taking account of their environment including its natural elements. The notion of "mixed" properties therefore is also of practical significance in terms of protection.

5. The question of "mixed" cultural/natural sites can perhaps be illustrated by the attached figure.

a) when the property meets both cultural and natural criteria for inscription on the World Heritage List, it is clearly a mixed site;

b) when the property meets either cultural or natural criteria and has at the same time natural or cultural elements which enhance considerably its value it is also considered as a mixed site;

c) when the property meets either cultural or natural criteria and happens to have also some interesting natural or cultural elements, it is considered as a cultural or natural site;

d) when the property has both cultural and natural elements of considerable value which however do not meet criteria when considered separately, the exceptional combination of these elements could qualify the property as a mixed site;

Rural landscapes appear to fall in this last category when they possess both cultural and natural attributes which, by their combination, offer something exceptional and of universal value.

6. The questions which can be raised by the nomination of such properties are given below, with some suggested answers.

6.1 Can landscapes, as representing nature modified by man, be considered as falling under the definitions of the Convention?

Article 1 of the Convention identifies only two circumstances in which natural attributes can be taken into account in assessing whether a cultural property is of world heritage significance. First it provides for "groups of separate or connected buildings which, because of... their place in the

landscape, are of outstanding universal value". Secondly, it provides for "...the combined works of nature and of man...which are of outstanding universal value...". Natural features which provide an important setting for a group of buildings can thus be taken into account in the assessment of a cultural property, as also can suitable natural features modified by man.

Article 2 defining natural heritage makes no concession to cultural elements in assessing whether or not a natural property is of outstanding universal value and, strictly within the definition, it is only natural features unmodified by human intervention which determine the acceptance of a natural property.

6.2 Do the "Operational Guidelines" as they are at present make any provision for landscapes?

Partially, yes. The 1985 Task Force highlighted the inconsistency which exists between the definitions of Articles 1 and 2 of the Convention and the criteria for inscription of cultural and natural properties in the "Operational Guidelines". Indeed, while Article 1 (cultural heritage) refers to natural aspects of cultural heritage the criteria themselves make no allusion to these aspects. On the contrary, Article 2 (natural heritage) does not refer to cultural aspects of a natural property although criterion (iii) refers to "...areas of exceptional natural beauty or exceptional combinations of cultural and natural elements". The idea of "mixed" cultural-natural properties seems however to have been in the mind of those who drafted the Convention and the "Guidelines" since specific mention is made in paragraph 15 of the latter in which States Parties are invited "...to include in their submissions properties which derive their outstanding universal value from a particularly significant combination of cultural and natural elements".

6.3 What types of landscapes might be considered as having outstanding universal value?

There is no definitive answer to this question. Obviously the World Heritage Committee would only wish to consider the very "best" types of landscape and avoid any dilution or devaluation of the significance of the Convention. In October 1987, an International Symposium on Protected Landscapes was convened by the Countryside Commission at Grange-over-Sands in the United Kingdom for which a special report was prepared by IUCN entitled "Protected Landscapes: Experience around the world". This volume provides data sheets for 140 sites in 26 countries which fall into one of the IUCN categories of protected areas recognised by IUCN known as "protected landscapes". The objective of this category of protected area is defined as: "to maintain nationally significant natural landscapes which are characteristic of the harmonious interaction of man and land, while providing opportunities for public enjoyment through recreation and tourism within the normal lifestyle and economic activity of these areas". The list in the IUCN publication is not exhaustive, nor does it give any rating which could correspond to the "outstanding universal value" of the sites.

It does however provide a starting point giving examples of protected landscapes, particularly for States Parties which are not yet familiar with this concept.

6.4 What conditions would have to be met to ensure the integrity of landscapes nominated to the World Heritage List?

Two conditions appear to be necessary. The first is to obtain some assurance of security under protective legislation, coupled with an effective management system which would bring together the relevant institutions and individuals which are landowners and/or managers of the site concerned. Here, it is important to note the difference between a rural landscape, which could be any piece of farmland, and a protected landscape, which, following the definition of IUCN is a recognised form of protected area of value for the conservation of biological diversity. Its size and legal protection must be adequate in order to meet this objective.

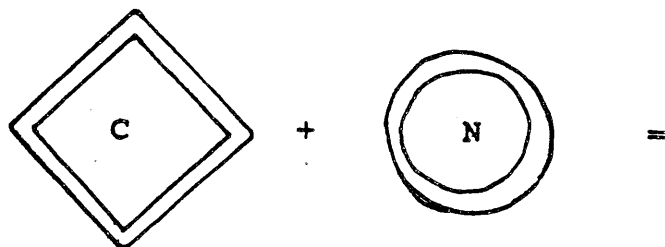
The second condition is linked to the first since it is necessary to adequately control the rate and the scale of developments and agricultural practices which may take place in a landscape. Here, it is recognised that the Convention cannot be used to "fix" a landscape and convert it into a static open air museum. It is the responsibility of the management authority to ensure that care is taken to conserve the harmony and significant values of the landscape in a dynamic, evolutive context.

7. Taking account of the above elements, the informal ICOMOS, IUCN, Unesco group suggested that in future the evaluation of landscapes nominated to the World Heritage List be prepared jointly by both ICOMOS and IUCN. On its part, IUCN felt that "exceptional natural beauty" as mentioned in criterion (iii) for natural properties is a subjective concept: this element should be considered by ICOMOS in the joint evaluation. In all cases however, both organisations would be very strict in applying World Heritage criteria to such landscape nominations and in ensuring that the conditions of integrity were adequately fulfilled. It was felt that this procedure would avoid any changes in the Operational Guidelines but would leave open the possibility for States Parties to nominate specific landscape properties which would be considered as "mixed" sites while at the same time avoiding any devaluation of the Convention.

8. The Committee is invited to indicate whether it is in agreement with the approach and procedure described above, and in particular whether it considers that certain rural landscapes could qualify for World Heritage listing as mixed sites because of the combination of their attributes as stated in paragraph 5 d).

"MIXED" CULTURAL AND NATURAL PROPERTIES UNDER
THE WORLD HERITAGE CONVENTION

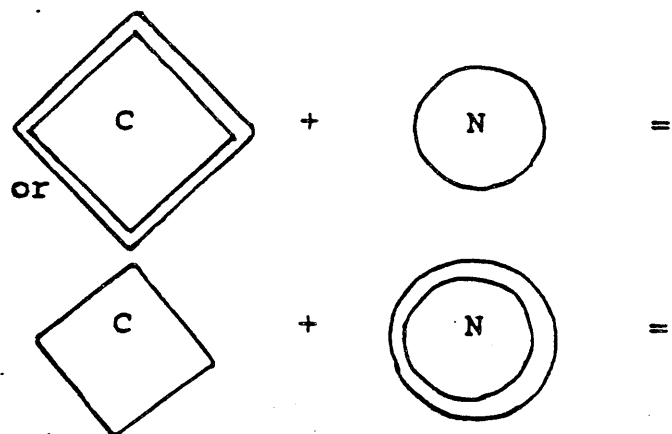
Case 1:



property meets both natural and cultural criteria. It is a mixed site.

Ex: - Göreme (Turkey)
- Machu Picchu (Peru)

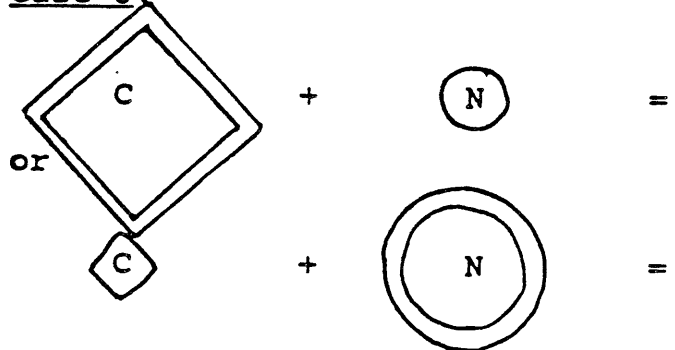
Case 2:



property meets cultural (or natural) criteria and has natural (or cultural) elements which enhances considerably this value, while in itself not meeting the criteria for natural (or cultural) heritage. It is a mixed site.

Ex: - Mont St-Michel (France)
- Ohrid (Yugoslavia).

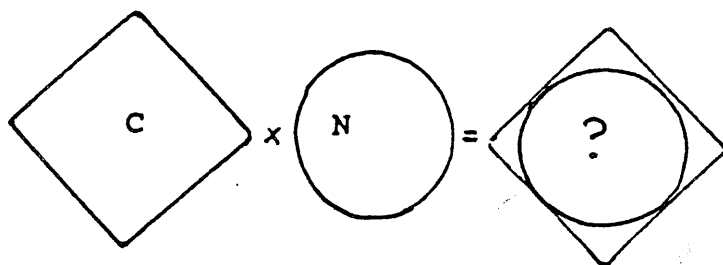
Case 3:



property meets cultural (or natural) criteria and has some natural (or cultural) elements. It is a cultural (or natural) site.

Ex: Tikal (Guatemala)

Case 4:



Property has natural and cultural elements of considerable value which separately do not meet criteria, but their combination could qualify the property as a mixed site.

Mr. Michel Batisse is thanked for this diagram.