

Connecting Practice Project

Progress Report – Year One

prepared by ICOMOS, April 2019

With the generous support of The Christensen Fund, ICOMOS and IUCN launched a third phase of the Connecting Practice project, which aims to explore, learn about and create new methods of recognition and support for the interconnected character of the natural, cultural and social values of World Heritage Sites. Phase III of Connecting Practice focuses on biocultural practices, agricultural sites and management of changes at sites.

Concept Paper

As part of the preparatory work for Phase III, a concept paper has been developed with the aim to consolidate the learning from the project and to identify current questions. It serves as a framework that has been continuously updated throughout Phase III, allowing early sharing of outcomes and issues.

The paper is intended as an **open document** and a basis for further development – for example, allowing some deeper consideration of the issues for particular contexts (agricultural landscapes, seascapes, etc.), and resilience factors in relation to specific challenges such as climate change and extreme weather events.

Fieldwork in Year One

During Phase III, four pilot cases are examined with one field visit per site. The field visit is an opportunity to gather information in order to provide a holistic analysis of the interconnected natural and cultural values of the site as well as to develop a better understanding of how to strengthen the resilience of the site by studying the changes affecting it.

The first field visit was to the World Heritage site of **Cultural Sites of Al Ain** (Hafit, Hili, Bidaa Bint Saud and Oases Areas) in the United Arab Emirates, which is also partly designated as a Globally Important Agricultural Heritage System (GIAHS) under the name of Al Ain and Liwa Historical Date Palm Oases. The field visit took place from 18-22 November 2018. Two international experts from ICOMOS and two international experts from IUCN participated in the field visit with one ICOMOS research assistant and one GIAHS expert.

Following the field visit, the team of experts developed a list of suggested recommendations for consideration by local stakeholders. The experts recommended that the local stakeholders increase their opportunities for collaboration regarding the site, and that the GIAHS designation be integrated into current management frameworks, policies and the existing site management plan. Further, the team suggested that the site would benefit from the increased inclusion of environmental groups, and that various tools could be used to develop further the importance of natural heritage at the site. Regarding the resilience of the site, the experts recommended that the oases agro-ecosystems be improved through better water collection and management, the introduction of high value crops and the integration of ecotourism in the farming process. They concluded that the oases are the best guarantee for the survival of this traditional farming system.



Falaj and date palms of the oases (Al Ain, UAE)
(© Leanna Wigboldus)

The second field visit was to the World Heritage site of the **Saloum Delta** in Senegal. The field visit took place from 10-14 December 2018. Two international experts from ICOMOS and two international experts from IUCN participated in the field visit with two ICOMOS/IUCN local experts and the project manager.

The team of experts, working closely with the local stakeholders, proposed recommendations to be taken into consideration at the site. Beyond a general recommendation to use a holistic evaluation of the values as the basis for any site-related action, the experts suggested the development of an integrated management plan that would take into account the cultural and natural values of the site as well as their interconnections. They felt that the management of the site could be improved by bringing together the different actors to work in synergy for better planning and pooling of the available resources. Regarding the resilience of the site, the experts recommended strengthening local activities related to ecological programs and environmental education, particularly concerning water and waste management (collection, sorting and composting), to counter the increasing pollution of the site, and they suggested reinforcing the connections between women and young people with the site to maintain the transmission of traditional knowledge.



Oyster garlands in the mangrove (Saloum Delta, Senegal)
(© Cosme Kpadonou)

Workshop at ICOMOS Headquarters

During Phase III, two jointly convened workshops, attended by site managers, stakeholders and experts from various relevant organisations, provide an opportunity to review collectively the results of the case studies. The **first workshop** took place during Year One of Phase III, and the second workshop will be held in Year Two in early 2020 at IUCN Headquarters.

The first workshop was held at ICOMOS Headquarters in Charenton-le-Pont (France) on 7-8 February 2019. Site representatives and experts presented the outcomes of the fieldwork at the Cultural Sites of Al Ain (UAE) and the Saloum Delta (Senegal). Alibek Otambekov presented The Christensen Fund's initiatives to support biocultural landscapes, and Yoshihide Endo provided an overview of the GIAHS programme at the Food and Agriculture Organization. A representative of the Stockholm Resilience Centre presented on the concept of resilience from a nature perspective.

A **questionnaire for World Heritage site managers** was launched at the workshop on the understanding and integration of cultural and natural concepts into the management of World Heritage sites and how to strengthen their resilience. The participants broke out into groups and exchanged their ideas on how to develop and improve the draft questionnaire. During group sessions, the participants also worked on a **draft annotated glossary** of concepts and terms that is being created as part of Phase III.



Participants of the Connecting Practice workshop
(© Alibek Otambekov)

Related Events

University of Girona Seminar, October 2018

A seminar on connecting natural and cultural heritage was held at the University of Girona (Spain) on 4-5 October 2018. The participants discussed the Connecting Practice project and examined case studies from the previous two phases. Some of the recommendations of the seminar include the use of interdisciplinary approaches based on the view of heritage as complex systems; the engagement with local people and fostering inclusive processes; and the acknowledgement that heritage is an evolving, changing, living concept and that adequate dynamic approaches should be adopted for its conservation.



Plenary Session at the University of Girona
 (© University of Girona)

US/ICOMOS Symposium, November 2018

The 2018 US/ICOMOS Symposium entitled “Forward Together: A Culture-Nature Journey” was convened by US/ICOMOS in partnership with IUCN, UNESCO World Heritage Centre, National Trust for Historic Preservation, Presidio Trust, Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy, Golden Gate National Recreation Area, and U.S. National Park Service. The symposium featured professionals from 6 continents and more than 15 countries who shared their knowledge in different fields in order to strengthen the integration of culture and nature in heritage conservation. Kristal Buckley, World Heritage Advisor for ICOMOS and Tim Badman of the IUCN World Heritage Programme participated in a facilitated panel discussion addressing “The Goals, Challenges and Future Trajectory of the Culture-Nature/Nature-Culture Journey”.

Website: <http://www.usicomos.org/symposium-2018/>



Panel discussion addressing “The Goals, Challenges and Future Trajectory of the Culture-Nature/Nature-Culture Journey”, featuring left to right: Jon Jarvis, Executive Director, Institute for Parks, People and Biodiversity, University of California, Berkeley; Stephanie Meeks, President and CEO, National Trust for Historic Preservation; Kristal Buckley, World Heritage Advisor, ICOMOS; and Tim Badman, IUCN World Heritage Programme
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