
ICOMOS DISCUSSION PAPER

Evaluation of World Heritage Nominations related to Sites Associated with Memories of Recent Conflicts

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Context for the ICOMOS Discussion Paper

In the near future

- A number of World Heritage nominations might be submitted
- Related to sites associated with memories of comparatively recent conflicts

In ICOMOS' view, there is an absence of clear parameters for how such sites relate to the World Heritage Convention, and thus how they might be evaluated.

The Discussion Paper considers

- How the World Heritage Committee has in the past considered sites associated with conflict
- What issues are raised by the evaluation of such sites in relation to:
 - The Outstanding Universal Value (OUV)
 - The idea of ‘commonality’

Sites on Tentative Lists from 10 States Parties

Two nominations have already been submitted:

January 2017 – First World War

“Funeral and memorial sites of the First World War (Western Front)”
(Belgium and France)

- ICOMOS Evaluation presented to the Committee in June 2018

January 2018 – Second World War

Les Plages du Débarquement, Normandie, 1944 (France)

- ICOMOS Evaluation presented to the Committee in 2019

Sites on Tentative Lists from 10 States Parties

First World War:

- The Walk of Peace from the Alps to the Adriatic – Heritage of the First World War, Slovenia
- Çanakkale (Dardanelles) and Gelibolu (Gallipoli) Battles Zones in the First World War, Turkey

Second World War:

- Mamayev Kurgan Memorial Complex "To the Heroes of the Battle of Stalingrad", Russian Federation

Sites on Tentative Lists from 10 States Parties

Likely to be re-submitted in 2019:

Genocide:

- “*Sites mémoriaux du génocide: Nyamata, Murambi, Gisozi et Bisesero*”
(Rwanda)

Extermination site:

- ESMA Site Museum - Former Clandestine Centre of Detention, Torture, and Extermination, Argentina

Sites on Tentative Lists from 10 States Parties

War against Apartheid

- *Site de Libération et Indépendance, Angola*

Torture sites and jails

- *Camp de concentration du Tarrafal, Capo Verde*
- *Cellular Jail, Andaman Islands, India*

Issues raised

- How might the World Heritage Committee decide on the validity of one memory of a conflict over another?
- Should the World Heritage Convention be used to inscribe sites as memorials to recent conflicts where the site might be considered divisive in 'recognising' certain factions of a conflict which has, or had, both winners and losers?
- Should sites associated with recent conflicts be considered only after sufficient time has elapsed for shared values to emerge?

Issues raised

- When conflicts involve large parts of the globe and/or the deaths of thousands or even millions of people
 - and as comparative analyses cannot be undertaken meaningfully on the tragedy and loss
- How could the World Heritage Committee refrain from inscribing all sites associated with such conflicts
 - once one site has been seen to justify inscription?

The scope and scale these potential nominations reflect

- A growing interest in sites associated with memories of recent conflicts
- High profile being given to some of them at a national level
- The tools that exist to evaluate these types of nominations are to a degree inadequate to address these many issues
- These nominations also raise questions related to the purpose and scope of the World Heritage Convention

Commonality

What sets apart the World Heritage Convention from other instruments is the idea that inscribed properties

- Are part of the heritage of humankind
- Reflect the idea of a commonality of interests

The definition of OUV reinforces this idea of commonality:

“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”

Commonality

If commonality is central to the World Heritage Convention, can OUV:

- Encompass specifically national or regional celebrations of recent or continuing conflicts?
- Celebrate the winners of recent conflicts and their version of history?

When it is widely acknowledged that:

- History is never neutral, neither are conflicts: one side wins the others loose
- Narratives associated with sites of negative memory are often partial

The issue of commonality is not a new debate

Sites associated with the memories of recent major conflicts have long been considered sensitive by the World Heritage Committee.

As illustrated by:

- “Auschwitz Concentration Camp”, Poland, 1979
- “The Hiroshima Peace Memorial (Genbaku Dome)”, Japan, 1996

Both of which raised issues of commonality

Auschwitz Concentration Camp, Poland

The property was inscribed in 1979 under criterion (vi)

- for the way it offered
“... irrefutable and concrete witness to one of the greatest crimes which has been perpetrated against humanity’.
- The Committee at that time “decided to enter Auschwitz concentration camp on the List as a unique site and to restrict the inscription of other sites of a similar nature”.



The Hiroshima Peace Memorial (Genbaku Dome), Japan

The property was inscribed in 1996
also under criterion (vi)

- as a *‘stark and powerful symbol of the achievement of world peace for more than half a century following the unleashing of the most destructive force ever created by humankind’*
- The United States of America considered that ‘the inscription of war sites [lies] outside the scope of the Convention. We urge the Committee to address the question of the suitability of war sites for the World Heritage List’



Other Instruments

The World Heritage Convention needs to be differentiated from other instruments such as:

- Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage, 2003
- UNESCO Memory of the World Programme
- Sites of Conscience
- European Heritage Label

Can the World Heritage Convention be used to celebrate sites associated with recent conflicts? And if so, when and how?

- Currently we suggest that an adequate framework that defines when and how evaluation of these sites could be done, does not exist
- In order to define such a framework, key questions would need to be addressed
- How can the idea of World Heritage properties being of relevance to the whole of humanity be satisfied
 - in relation to sites associated with memories of recent conflicts?

Other questions to be addressed

- And how might partiality be avoided as sites associated with recent conflicts are nearly always partisan in one way or another or strongly influenced by national or political ideas?
 - Things that were seen in 1979 as being “in contradiction with the objectives of the World Heritage Convention”.
- And should memories of such recent conflicts be fixed when memorialisation is now an accepted part of wider dynamic post-conflict processes?

- As the World Heritage Convention is a place or site based convention,
 - To what degree must sites of conflict reflect their memory or memories?
 - Could sites be inscribed as memorials if they were otherwise unrelated to the events and might not be seen as outstanding in any other way?
- If one or more sites associated with memories of a recent conflict are considered outstanding,
 - Would these sites symbolise the whole conflict or could different sites reflect different memories?

- If conflicts such as World Wars I and II were to be considered to have global significance,
 - Would the memories of all nations involved in those conflicts need to be reflected?
 - How might each of the many thousands of sites that reflect those conflicts be evaluated as key parts of the whole?
 - How might selections of sites be made?

ICOMOS suggests that there is an urgency to address these issues, as if one or two sites get inscribed for memories of recent conflicts

- for which there is less than a clear understanding of how their value might be universal
- and with a lack of precision as to what the places convey or whose memory is being recognised

It might become difficult to forestall many other similar sites being nominated/inscribed.

Conclusion

- Given the complexities and sensitivities raised by current and proposed nominations of sites associated with recent conflicts,
 - and the questions they raise in relation to the purpose and scope of the Convention,
- It is suggested that a period of reflection could be beneficial

Recommendation

The World Heritage Committee might wish to consider convening an Expert Meeting (or a series of meetings) on sites associated with memories of recent conflicts to allow for both philosophical and practical reflections on:

- nature of memorialization,
- value of evolving memories
- inter-relationship between material and immaterial attributes in relation to memory
- how meaningful comparisons of tragedy and loss might be undertaken, and the issue of stakeholder consultation

as a prelude to

- the development of guidance on whether and how sites associated with memories of recent conflicts might relate to the purpose and scope of the World Heritage Convention

and perhaps more widely to

- an understanding as to whether World Heritage inscription that fixes OUV at the time of inscription might sit uncomfortably with the wider complex and shifting dynamics of post-conflict reconciliation processes

ICOMOS would like to note that there is a precedent for this approach in the way the World Heritage Committee developed guidance for cultural landscapes following the difficulties faced by in the evaluation of the first two nominations of the Lake District, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, in 1986 and 1989

Thank you