Transboundary European World Heritage – a Topic for the UNESCO Project Schools

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'Kick-off' in Dresden on the 28th of January, 2019

Introduction

Slide 1

Dear colleagues and guests, ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to give you a warm welcome to our 'kick-off' meeting for the project, *Trans-boundary European World Heritage – a Topic for the UNESCO Project Schools*. The project ideas, goals and contents emerged during the European Year on Cultural Heritage (ECHY) and we would like to implement them accordingly. To be more specific, it is a project which

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makes use of the potentials of the World Heritage Convention and its implementation as sustainable impact on the European cultural heritage and by achieving the objectives of the 2030 Agenda.

It is therefore no coincidence that the project focus on transboundary World Heritage sites is based on the World Heritage Convention already in existence for over 40 years. Moreover, by integrating the European idea with the World Heritage Convention, the concept of heritage will be extended. World Heritage is mainly tangible; ECHY is both, tangible and intangible heritage. The project also makes it possible to put the educational mandate of the Convention (formulated in § 27) into practice. Last but not least, the project securely meets the objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by introducing World Heritage as tangible heritage and European heritage as tangible and intangible heritage. (https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment)

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The 2030 Agenda was adopted in September 2015. It extended the objectives and contents of the Millennium Declaration with 9 more objectives and implementation strategies. 17 objectives were set. Out of these, our project is focusing on Objective 4 (sustainable education) and Objective 11 (our World Heritage). Let me go further into this matter by giving you a brief introduction to the concept of World Heritage and its educational mandate, as well as the main idea behind the European Year of Cultural Heritage. You will appreciate that the selection of transboundary sites as places for implementing the project was justified given these two parameters.

Abu Simbel

Recognition for the need of an international instrument to protect tangible heritage arose in the 1950's and 60's with the construction of the Aswan dam in Egypt (1956), which threatened to flood the temples of Abu Simbel.

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At the time, the dam's construction was an expression of modernity through technological development. However, it not only threatened to drown the temples, it would also have sacrificed three millennia of cultural history in the name of progress. What followed was an outcry from around the world. In solidarity, a worldwide campaign involving more than 50

countries raised half of the $80 million needed to disassemble the temples and rebuild it on higher ground.

From what we understand today, we can most definitely say that by rescuing these temples an irreplaceable legacy was saved, and, at the same time, a change of consciousness took place in the social and cultural appreciation of tangible heritage. Furthermore, this action was integral to the writing and adopting of the 1972 World Heritage Convention.

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I would like to present some of the reasons why this convention has been adopted. They are formulated in the Preamble as you see above. I would also like to show you an implementation strategy, namely the obligation of all member states to the convention to conduct

educational programmes. Both are to this day expedient, or at least should be. As you can see in the slide, in the Preamble the first paragraph rationalizes the convention's adoption mentioning the threats to our heritage and the consequences for humanity saying that: "cultural and natural heritage are increasingly threatened with many ways of destruction" and as heritage builds the identity of human beings and their societies, the destruction of heritage is destroying identity.

The second paragraph is related to the first, focusing on the international responsibility to protect our heritage, because the "deterioration or disappearance of any item of the cultural or natural heritage constitutes a harmful impoverishment of the heritage of all the nations of the world, …." This means, the destruction of heritage is multi-dimensional. Through the destruction of their heritage, societies suffer losses to their identity. They consequently become less conscious of their affiliations. It is no wonder then why ISIS, Boko Haram and other similar terrorist organizations do what they do in many Arab and African countries; destroying monuments, historic cities etc.

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The implementation strategy pertains to the educational mission of the Convention, explained in § 27 in terms of content and target groups. Our project addresses both (see above): Article 27 can be interpreted to mean that World Heritage must be communicated across generations and institutions because this is the only way to sustainably anchor its value. Three programmes exist for the general implementation of World Heritage education.

Firstly, there is the "World Heritage in Young Hands Kit." Its objective is to involve young people in the preservation and promotion of World Heritage. This kit was developed at UNESCO's headquarters in Paris and translated into 43 languages. It offers interesting information about World Heritage. However, it is only a tool. It is neither an approach to raising

awareness of World Heritage nor a sustainable concept of education.

https://whc.unesco.org/en/youth-forum/

Secondly, there is the programme called, the "World Heritage Youth Forum," which is essentially designed to foster intercultural learning and exchange by bringing students and teachers together from different parts of the world. According to the UNESCO website, "about 40 international and regional Youth Forums have been held with an estimated 1560 young people participating"—a measurable outcome.

Quantitatively, this programme has been implemented rather successfully. However, whether schoolchildren or teachers have learned anything about the significance of World Heritage for a sustainable future has not yet been measured. They were not even defined as target groups for this programme. Similarly, on a quantitative basis, the third educational programme, the "World Heritage Volunteers Project" reports more than 3500 volunteers having taken part in 359 youth camps in 61 countries. https://whc.unesco.org/en/activities/893.

After 46 years of implementing the Convention we can conclude from the outcomes that there are still many things to do. With our project, I believe we can both improve the educational activities and return to the foundational understanding of the Convention: that heritage has an identity building function. In examining the programme of the "European Year of Cultural Heritage," we can see that it has a different message and intention. Here, it is not the safeguarding of tangible heritage that is of issue, but rather the interpretation of heritage as a holistic phenomenon—this is made out to mean: tangible and intangible heritage, formally and non-formally defined sites, a diversity of participating institutions, as well as a diversity of stakeholders etc.

A very important element of this programme is that it should not be dominated by a so-called "authorized discourse" consisting of experts exclusively appointed by institutions or often even self-appointed. Superior outcomes are determined by inclusion of various target groups thereby ensuring a diverse output.

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Europäisches Kulturerbejahr 2018 Sharing Heritage - NEWSLETTER JANUAR 2019
https://sharingheritage.de/aktuelles/newsletter-januar-2019/

Prof. Dr. Marie-Theres Albert; Professor Emerita and Former Chairholder, Chair Intercultural Studies/ UNESCO Chair in Heritage Studies

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An impression of how successful the ECHY programme was is portrayed in the collage above—it shows the diversity of activities over the past year. For us the most important reason for our involvement in this programme was that ECHY is actively focused on young generations, underscoring their understanding and perception of heritage as a source for human development that creates sustainability.

As I have explained already, understanding heritage as a process for identity building needs to be transmitted to current and future generations and this is precisely what we want to achieve with this project. Consequently, our mission is to combine the concepts of the World Heritage Convention with those of the European Cultural Heritage Year and, thereby, apply the general objectives for protection with the use of heritage. [In other words] the World

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Heritage Convention specifies the regulations and ECHY prescribes the possibilities of accessing young people. Of course, this current orientation necessitated towards Europe presents us not only with the concept of cross-border World Heritage sites but also with the sites themselves located within the parameters of the project.

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The international community's interest in conceptualizing so-called transboundary sites has arisen within the context of an imbalanced worldwide implementation of the World Heritage Convention. Since 1992, the strategy and concept for the implementation of transboundary inscriptions, alongside many other measures, has been developed and applied within the framework of the Global Strategy.
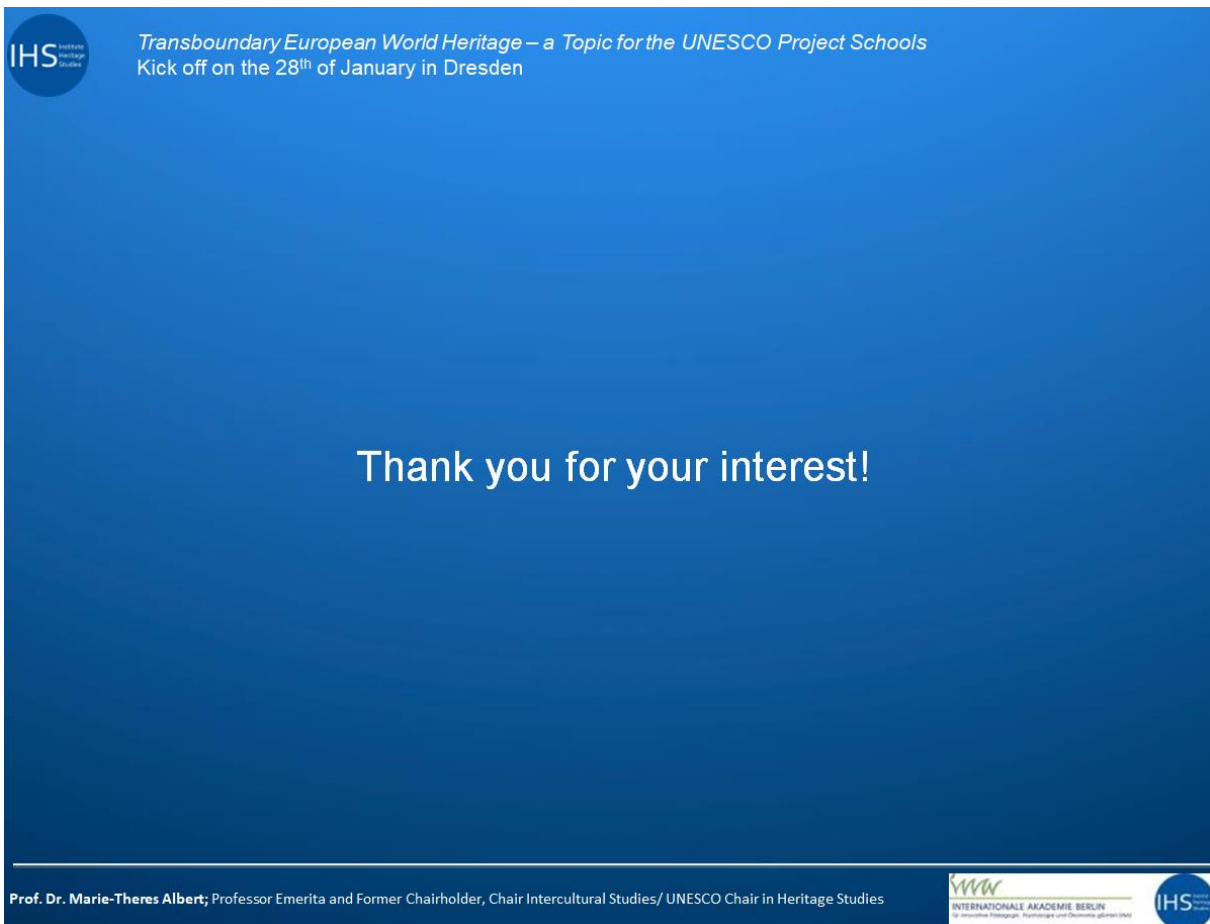
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Looking at the slide, you can see that already in the first phase of the Convention's imple-mentation from 1978-1991, Europe/North America had jurisdiction over 50% of the world's inscribed sites. By the way, not much has changed since.

To counter this imbalance the Global Strategy was developed as an active programme to bring greater balance to the distribution of sites inscribed as World Heritage. It provided a strategy to reduce regional dissonance given that almost half of all inscriptions came from Europe/North America when compared to the rest of the world, namely Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Through a revised concept it also addressed the typological imbalances exemplified by the disproportionate number of inscribed monuments versus industrial sites and landscapes. Furthermore, it presented strategies to rectify the cultural dissonance of the

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majority of monuments coming from Christian Europe compared to the monuments of other religions from across the world; it also supported the inscription of sites which were transboundary in nature and / or had a serial character.

I believe that our sites are favourable cases in point for the implementation of the Global Strategy and that, within the parameters of this project, we will not only successfully cooperate at a transnational European level but also draw closer to the educational goals of UNESCO and the World Heritage Convention.

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Images and Sources:

Slide 1:

- 1.1) Lakelands of the Old Pit Hermann near Weißwasser / O.L. / Krajobraz jezior na terenie dawnej kopalni Hermann w okolicach Weißwasser/O.L. / Foto: Peter Radke, LMBV
- 1.2) Spaziergang durch den Geopfad Alte Grube Babina bei Łęknica / Spacer po terenie dawnej kopalni Babina w okolicach Łęknicy/ Foto: Geschäftsstelle UNESCO Global Geopark Muskauer Faltenbogen / Łuk Mużakowa
- 1.3) Muskauer Park – Park Mużakowski; Foto: Stiftung „Fürst-Pückler-Park Bad Muskau"

Slide 3:

- 3.1) Tempel Ramses II. im Jahr 1865 ("Lantern Slide Collection, Façade, Temple of Ramses II at Abu Simbel. 19th Dy., n.d." Brooklyn Museum Archives, no known copyright restrictions.
(https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/2/23/S10.08_Abu_Simbel%2C_image_9930.jpg))
- 3.2) Tempel Ramses II. im Jahr 2004
"Egypt-10B-022 – Great Temple of Rameses II" by Dennis Jarvis. Licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0. (www.flickr.com/photos/archer10/2216680889)
- 3.3) Blick vom Assuan-Staudamm "Aswan Dam" by David Berkowitz. Licensed under CC BY 2.0 (www.flickr.com/photos/davidberkowitz/4058811456
- 3.4) "Per-Olow" - Per-Olow Anderson (1921-1989) [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons

Slide 4 / 5: https://www.unesco.de/sites/default/files/2018-02/UNESCO_WHC_%C3%9Cbereinkommen%20Welterbe_dt.pdf

Slide 6: Europäisches Kulturerbejahr 2018 Sharing Heritage - NEWSLETTER JANUAR 2019; https://sharingheritage.de/aktuelles/newsletter-januar-2019/

Slide 7: Quelle: http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/stat

Slide 8: Same as slide 1