

Marie-Theres Albert (Institute Heritage Studies)

50 Years World Heritage Convention: Shared Responsibility - Conflict & Reconciliation



Heritage creates identity. This is the message of the critical sociology, mainly of Norbert Elias, one of the most important scientists behind UNESCO's founding ideas. Based on this it is consequent that individuals and societies are responsible for the sustainable safeguarding of their heritage. The choice of the theme "50 Years World Heritage Convention: Shared Responsibility - Conflict & Reconciliation" is therefore to reflect on the identity-building function of heritage.



The destruction of heritage is multidimensional. And even though, in the course of time, heritage has continuously been destroyed through war and terrorism, climate change,

technological change, modernisation, commodification, international policies and/or urban transformation processes etc, the effects of those processes on the identity of peoples and societies have always been the same. The destruction of heritage is destroying identity.

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Bamiyan Valley, Afghanistan

Norbert Elias

Reconstructed Old Town of Warsaw

Surviving Herero (1907)

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Consequently, the project firstly aims to identify the various forms of destroying heritage and to analyse their causes. Only knowledge about reasons, backgrounds and intentions of heritage destruction processes allows us to define short-, medium- and long-term responsibilities and to develop and implement sustainable protection strategies. Thus the second aim of the project is to develop conflict avoiding and solving strategies which are thirdly based on integrating heritage into an overall human development strategy, the Agenda 2030.

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World Heritage inscriptions, in total 2019

Regions	Cultural	Natural	Mixed	Total	%
Latin America and the Caribbean	96	38	8	142 *	12.67%
Europe and North America	453	65	11	529 *	47.19%
Asia and the Pacific	189	67	12	268 *	23.91%
Arab States	78	5	3	86	7.67%
Africa	53	38	5	96	8.56%
Total	869	213	39	1121	100%

Source: <https://whc.unesco.org/en/stats>

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Today 1121 sites in 167 countries are inscribed in the World Heritage list. Out of these nearly 50% are in Europe and the US. The other 50% are shared by the rest of the world. You find this unbalanced distribution also in the inscription of cultural and natural heritage; reasons why the inscription procedure defined in the Operational Guidelines and mainly the consciousness of the international community has to be changed. In the course of time some improvements – like the global strategy, the 5 C's, mainly the initiative to involving communities – have been implemented, however the conflicts have not been avoided or even resolved.

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World Heritage in Danger, in total 2019

Regions	Cultural	Natural	Mixed	Total
Latin America and the Caribbean	4	2	-	6
Europe and North America	3	1	-	4
Asia and the Pacific	4	2	-	6
Arab States	21	-	-	21
Africa	4	12	-	16
Total	36	17	-	53

Source: <https://whc.unesco.org/en/ris/stat>

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If you look at the sites inscribed on the list in danger, the reality is contrary. Most of the sites in danger are in Arab States (21 cultural sites) and Africa (12 natural sites), that is to say in developing countries. This means, the future perspective of World Heritage has not only to include the analyses of the causes of heritage in danger but has also to provide strategies to overcome this unbalanced distribution of sites inscribed in the World Heritage list and the World Heritage list in danger.



However, the project does not focus only on the sites, which are currently on the list in danger. As the perception is the future, we need to reflect upon the overall and worldwide social, cultural, economic and ecological developments that the heritage of humanity faces currently. And based on the concept of identifying conflicts, developing resolving strategies and perceiving the future through the integration of heritage into the Agenda 2030, we will carry out the project through thinks tanks, a conference and a book.

In the thinks tanks from 04 – 11 March 2021 we will identify problems and reflections on solving strategies

Global Governance



In a globalizing world the system of the United Nations is the most important institutional arena for developing global standards that provide universal guidelines for national cultural policies including World Heritage protection. Today, this form of international cooperation is challenged by a reinvigorating sense of national unilateralism and increasingly antagonistic geopolitical powerplays. As a consequence, the ability of UN-organizations such as UNESCO to manage conflicts and promote reconciliation in heritage issues is likely to weaken considerably in the long term.

Urban Transformation



Urban Transformation has been happening since the 19th century, when the rural population in many parts of the world led to migration to the cities, resulting in many changes in both their habitats and living conditions. Today, due to the facets of modernization, urbanization is a phenomenon that encompasses both cities and rural areas in many different – positive and negative ways. This chapter examines some of the impacts on the transformation of urban heritage and develops strategies to go further.

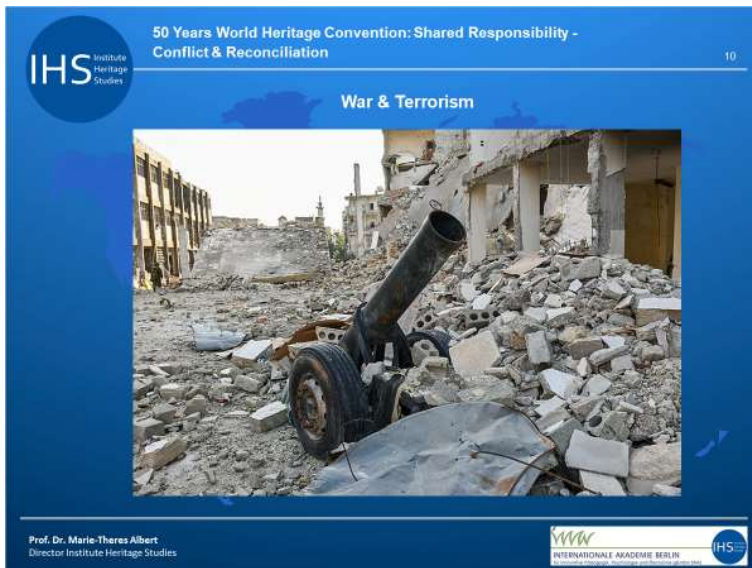
Technological Change



The urge for technological progress is an integral part of the human being and thus closely linked to the history of humankind. Many World Heritage Sites bear witness to the impressive technological achievements of different eras. On the one hand, there is a danger of abandoning structures and relics that have grown over centuries and therefore losing important parts of the world heritage. On the other hand, technological change always opens new possibilities and perspectives. The chapter is therefore dedicated to understand

technological change as both as a threat to the world heritage and as a perspective for its preservation at the same time.

War and Terrorism



Heritage destruction resulting from acts of war and terrorism has become one of the key problems of the 21st century. By destroying monuments and other tangible heritage, terrorists aim to destroy cultural identity and recruit followers to their revisionist ideology. However, the destruction of heritage for purposes of destroying identity is not a new phenomenon; on the contrary, it can be seen throughout the history of the human being. Therefore, this chapter reflects upon the different aspects of heritage destruction in times of war as well as with terrorist interest.

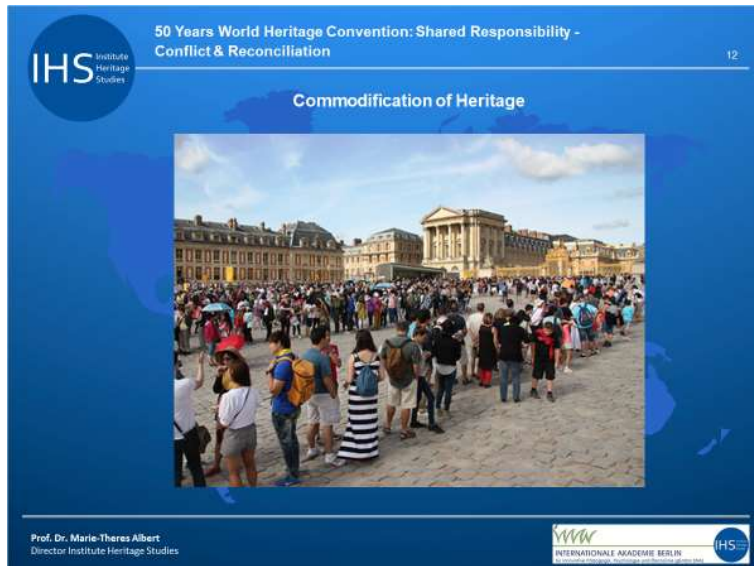
Climate Change



The phenomenon of climate change is as overarching as the previously presented phenomena. This means that it would be presumptuous to assume that all of the effects of

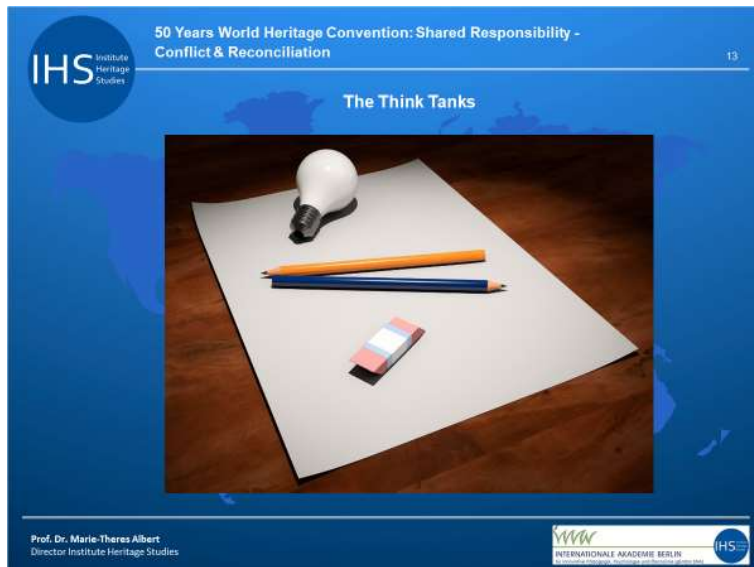
climate change on the tangible, intangible or natural heritage of people and their societies are already known fully. This includes reflections on the endangerment of cultural heritage and habitats as a consequence of natural catastrophes, the threatening of monuments and other tangible heritage sites through damages caused by heavy rains, water flooding or by different forms of storms with impacts on built heritage etc.

Commodification of Heritage



In the course of time, the value of tangible and intangible heritage in peoples' minds has changed fundamentally. This can be seen mainly in the change of values of heritage from a cultural good to a product, or in other words, the commodification of cultural heritage values in contrast to the goals defined in the cultural heritage conventions. Today, regrettably neither the benefits of the commodification processes nor the disadvantages are known, they are not reflected at all. Therefore, the variety of impacts of commodification processes on people and on the heritage of humankind itself have to be investigated.

The think tanks



Through the six think tanks from 04 - 11 March 2021 we want to mobilize the heritage community to submit, present and discuss their concerns on heritage conflicts, avoiding or resolving strategies and develop strategies to sustainably protect and use the heritage of humankind. The think tanks are organized thematically. This means, a scientific community meet and share their topics related to a conflict area. Those who best fit into the goals of the project will be invited to prepare a paper for the conference.

The conference



The virtual conference on the 21 and 22 June 2021 is one of the very important events to prepare the 50th anniversary of the World Heritage convention in 2022. Based on the presentations selected from the think tanks, the international community is invited to take part in the discourse on **50 Years World Heritage Convention: Shared Responsibility - Conflict & Reconciliation**, and, together with the presenters, think about prospects and outlooks.

The book



The book will present the results of the reflections, discussions and the outlook:

Future Perspectives of World Heritage (SDG 11) – Responsibility, Sustainability and Reconciliation

1. **Responsibility** based on the ESD concept: Reactivation of the identity building function of World Heritage through education in all formal and non-formal, institutional and private, capacity building, training and empowerment etc. programmes. This include disciplinary as well as inter-, - trans- and multidisciplinary curricula at all educational levels, concepts of digital learning strategies, vocational training as well as corresponding concepts of empowerment (SDG 4)
2. **Reconciliation:** Promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies (SDG 16) and their heritage, community involvement in all processes of heritage protection and use (16.7), as well as revitalizing Global Partnership for Sustainable Development (SDG 17)
3. **Sustainability:**
 - Changes in the interpretations of economic values of World Heritage development from profit optimization to sustainability through intelligent, sustainable and socially compatible actions and promotions (SDG 8) including the strategy of entrepreneurship as an innovative approach for economic development, instead of traditional commodification (SDG 12).
 - Changes and challenges of technological changes for preserving and conserving material heritage including sustainable concepts of authenticity, integrity, conservation and restoration (SDG 11) as well as implementing technological innovations for further management strategies

- Raising awareness for stopping the climate change and implementing corresponding strategies. Transformation of lifestyles, transport and traffic, agriculture, industries from fossil to regenerative energy etc. (SDG 13)

Prospects: The World Heritage Convention – The Day after Tomorrow

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The World Heritage Convention – The Day after Tomorrow



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Thank you for your attention!

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