



Call for Papers

“World Heritage and Sustainable Development”

WHS Alumni Conference, 16th-19th June 2011, BTU Cottbus

Background

In today's era of globalisation and constant change, safeguarding and promoting culture is not, and cannot be, only about preserving the past; culture is, or at least should be, a core strategy for sustainable development in the future.

Among UNESCO's numerous projects and programmes for cultural development, the World Heritage (WH) Convention has played an important role in fostering local development throughout the world by supporting projects for safeguarding heritage, be it cultural heritage, natural heritage or cultural landscapes, yet there is no explicit mention of sustainable development in the text of the Convention. Although in 2005 the concept of sustainable development was added to Paragraph 6 and Paragraph 119 of the Operational Guidelines, its translation into actual policies and procedures, and the potential of WH for contributing to environmental, social and economic dimensions is still not sufficiently recognised, both in developing as well as developed countries.

In the meantime, the concept of 'sustainability' has clearly come a long way since the word was first introduced in 1987 in the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, Our common Future, also known as the Brundtland Report, and recent trends in several United Nations (UN) level institutional frameworks, such as the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg), the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), as well as the increasing importance of sustainable development in other Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), have expanded upon the meaning and applicability of 'sustainability'.

Therefore, numerous expert meetings and public symposia organised by the WH Centre, ICOMOS and other international bodies involved in WH conservation in the last 4-5 years have especially focussed at finding ways in which sustainable development can be mainstreamed in conservation and at bringing the WH Convention closer to the recent trends in other institutional frameworks mentioned above. Some such activities include the Annual ICOMOS Symposia on Heritage and Global Climate Change (Quebec, Canada 2008), Changing World, Changing Views of Heritage: Technological Change and Cultural Heritage (Valetta, Malta 2009) and Heritage and Social Change (Dublin, Ireland 2010), 33rd and 34th Sessions of the WH Committee (Seville, Spain 2009 and Brasilia, Brazil 2010), and an Expert Meeting on the relationship between the World Heritage Convention, conservation and sustainable development (Paraty, Brazil 2010) respectively, and these have led to a better understanding of the changing role of culture and the challenges of safeguarding culture in modern times.

Moreover, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the resolution on culture and development in December 2010, which emphasises on the important contribution of culture for sustainable development and for the achievement of national and international development objectives, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and for marking the 40th anniversary of the WH Convention in 2012, the WH Committee is planning to organise activities in collaboration with State Parties and other partners which will help “to situate the real place of the Convention as a tool for preserving humanity's heritage of outstanding universal value within the current context of the world, as expressed through the 8 MDGs.” (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2010)

Conference Aims

Keeping in mind the above-mentioned context and realising that the need for conservation of the Outstanding Universal Values (OUVs) of WHSs still remains much more dominant than a holistic approach towards the wider social, economic and environmental implications, the proposed Cottbus conference aims *to examine and propose ways in which sustainable cultural development can become an integral part of successful conservation and management within the context of World Heritage Sites (WHSs).*

In order to do so, without claiming to cover the entire field, during three thematic sessions concentrating respectively on issues of building conservation, climate change and human development within the context of World Heritage Sites (WHSs), paper presentations and discussions will be held. Further information on the thematic sessions is provided below.

Additionally, this conference aims *to encourage constructive and practice-oriented debate* among World Heritage experts on key sustainable development issues and *to create a platform for exchange of best practices between developed and developing countries.* Therefore, participants are particularly encouraged *to present solutions driven papers which include case studies of best practices and/or pilot projects/new approaches to sustainable development. Participation of WHS Alumni from developing countries or other WHS Alumni presenting case studies of greater relevance to sustainable development issues in developing countries will also be given special consideration.*

Session 1: Conservation and Managing Change

In order to understand the ways in which the process of 'conservation' of WHSs can contribute to sustainable development, this session will address questions such as: What does 'conservation' in the context of WHSs mean? Is it a way of freezing the place in time so as to retain its OUV forever or is it a means of ensuring that the OUV of such sites is adequately retained while also responding to the environmental, social and economic impacts caused by the changes occurring with time? Assuming that change is inevitable, what are the acceptable limits of change for a particular site? In what manner can change, especially to built fabric, be managed sustainably at WHSs while respecting traditional conservation ethics and values? etc.

Session 2: Climate Change

Climate change constitutes a major global challenge to sustainable development in the 21st century and is already showing a visible impact on world's cultural and natural heritage. As communities have also changed their way of life, work and worship, the manner in which they use buildings, sites and landscapes (sometimes even abandoning their built heritage completely), it is gradually becoming evident that apart from physical threats, climate change will also have a great impact on social and cultural aspects of WHSs. Therefore, this session will address questions such as: How can the kind and level of change brought about by climate change in WHSs be determined? Which changes are critical to the future survival of the built, natural, social and cultural values of heritage sites – for example, if local communities have adapted their traditional lifestyle to keep up with climate change, what implications does it have for the natural and built (cultural) landscape, and vice-versa? Which threat mitigation and adaptation strategies can be adopted for conserving and managing WHSs sustainably in the face of climate change? etc.

Session 3: Millennium Development Goals

Recognising that culture is a vehicle for economic development, contributes to environmental sustainability as well as social cohesion and stability, this session will attempt to answer the question: How can World Heritage Sites become a core asset in the achievement of MDGs, especially poverty alleviation, environmental sustainability and promotion of global partnership? To do so the discussion will touch upon the potential of WHSs in seeking local solutions to global agendas; prioritising people in development processes and outcomes; promoting social justice, equity and global ethics; ensuring economic growth

without jeopardising human development; setting standards for making development strategies more socially and environmentally sustainable; and other related issues.

Abstract Requirements:

Each of the above-mentioned sessions will comprise of 4 paper presentations. Those interested in presenting a paper in any of the sessions are invited to submit their abstracts by the end of February 2011. Abstracts should be **maximum 300 words** long and submitted in **Word (.doc) format**. **The submission should also indicate the following** (not included within the specified word limit):

- a. Working title of the paper and the session in which the author proposes to present the paper;
- b. Author's full name, email address and phone number(s); and
- c. Current position, department and institution where the author is currently working.

The abstract should be **accompanied by a short five-line CV** where the author's country of origin and year of graduation from BTU's WHS programme (if applicable) should also be mentioned.

Submission and Selection Deadline

All abstracts should be sent to whs.conference2011@tu-cottbus.de latest by **28th February 2011 (midnight as per GMT+1 time zone)**. Late submissions will not be entertained. The abstracts will be reviewed by a Scientific Committee and authors whose submissions are selected will be informed by **31st March 2011**.

References

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