

## TRENDS, THREATS AND RISKS

### Synthesis

The second ICOMOS Heritage at Risk report once again utilises the expertise and experience of its extensive network of nearly 7000 members to produce a global report that identifies risks and threats to heritage conservation. From the 75 reports which were received this year from ICOMOS members, national committees, international scientific committees and affiliated groups, trends can be discerned which transcend national, geographic and cultural boundaries.

Conservation initiatives to counter these threats are also identified. Response projects, policies and practices, which might well be adaptable to a range of geographical and cultural settings are shared through the report and the ICOMOS website. ICOMOS believes that analysing these trends can assist in developing preventative actions in culturally appropriate ways.

This year, an innovative initiative is reported by Malta ICOMOS, which has undertaken a survey of its national heritage assets at risk – addressing issues such as maintenance deficiencies, insufficient conservation standards, risks from social and collective behaviour, and development pressure – so as to underpin planning for a rational and sustainable programme of management and conservation work.

Canada has also assessed its national heritage health – a federal survey found that 21% of its built heritage has been lost or destroyed in the last 30 years; in response, the government has announced a national 'Historic Places Initiative', including taxation incentives to support owners of cultural heritage property.

### Effective Protection against Risks

Protection of heritage monuments, sites and places to provide cultural and economic resources for the benefit of future generations, relies first and foremost on community commitment to the moral and physical objectives of heritage stewardship. Broad public recognition and appreciation of monuments and sites is a prerequisite to the support of conservation action and the allocation of resources that is entailed. Otherwise, physical decay and cultural loss will become certain outcomes.

Public awareness raising and professional training, therefore, need to build on the experience of previous risks and events, improving practice and anticipating action for the future. To reduce heritage at risk, we need to be proactive – in preparedness, response and recovery.

Communities worldwide, and professional conservation groups such as ICOMOS, have developed methodologies and a range of practical tools, skills and financial resources to support conservation action – from heritage legislation affording legal protection, to specific preservative treatments and promotional programmes. But legislative protection does not of itself secure good conservation results. Political will is the essential power factor. And concerned communities are the driving force for political commitment.

From nations as diverse as Cuba and Australia come reports this year that current inventory projects are making strategic progress through involving communities in identifying their own heritage places, reaching far beyond the recognition of monuments and sites by experts alone. Professional teams of conservation practitioners working closely with communities are forging new methods and opportunities for collaboration.

Advances in conservation methodology and philosophical approach have raced to keep pace with the risks that social and settlement changes have imposed on monuments and sites, let alone the everyday effects of threats from nature itself – whether dramatically in spectacular floods, bushfires, earthquakes and cyclones, or relentlessly through the predictable and daily action of water, wind and sunlight.

Active maintenance programmes and effective risk management planning for monuments and sites are the key tools in meeting this ongoing challenge. The report from Italy examines the extensive repair and retrofitting work still in progress after the 1997 earthquake in Umbria, and the report of the International Scientific Committee on Training provides recommendations for holistic risk preparedness planning.

The report on armed conflict in Macedonia provides an example of the value of international appeals, leading in this instance to the provision of expert monitoring and advice in the case of the monastery at Matejce; it also illustrates how in such conflicts, regardless of location, acts of deliberate damage to cultural property are still being used as strategic weapons in themselves, and are not occurring as the incidental, collateral impact of military activity.

The possibility of ameliorating the affects of military action is shown by initiatives such as that of Finland<sup>1</sup>, introducing heritage education and liaison into Defence force and relief worker training. Also welcomed is the active implementation of the Hague Convention, through the formation of a national committee in Iran.

The International Committee of the Blue Shield (see report page 246), formed in 1996 by ICOMOS, ICOM (International Council on Museums), IFLA (International Federation of Libraries Associations), and ICA (International Council of Archives), actively works to protect threatened heritage in culturally appropriate ways, as does the World Monuments Fund, created in 1965.

The pressures of mass tourism are perhaps more theoretically manageable threats to heritage places, where the impacts of visitor behaviour, pressure for site infrastructure and intrusive interpretative or reconstruction can be clearly assessed and managed within a framework for sustainability. Tourism impacts can be anticipated and managed, appropriate uses of sites can be planned and improved.

The financial input that tourism can deliver to host communities can be the incentive for conservation works, interpretation and educational initiatives as well as publicity. However, caution must be exercised to maintain the authentic experience and the integrity of heritage fabric – close community consultation, management planning and conservation policies are essential, as the report from the ISC on Cultural Tourism notes, and the report from Andorra exemplifies.

Tremendous strides have been made in sustainable practices by the tourism industry and by increasingly aware travellers, who shun the 'Disneyfication' of culture, seeking-out more culturally and environmentally responsive experiences, but there is still much to be achieved and learned. The ICOMOS Cultural Tourism Charter (1999) aims to establish dialogue between conservation practitioners and the tourism industry – setting-out principles to support appropriate planning and management for tourism affecting heritage places and values.

## Documenting the Threats

The second ICOMOS Heritage at Risk report draws from the same information network as the 2000 report, and seeks to update progress and responses. It is often a more qualitative exercise than a statistical analysis.

Some forms of threat to heritage monuments can well be measured physically: for example, the wear-and-tear damage of tourist pressures on the stones of the Pyramids of Egypt or India's Taj Mahal, or the damage wrought by military action in Croatia. These can be accurately documented, assessed, costed and repaired with varying degrees of authenticity. But the effects on heritage places, monuments and sites of the loss of an Indigenous language, and the traditional values, skills and knowledge that language embodies are more difficult to assess. The loss of understanding of the spiritual, intangible and cultural values of places is as difficult to document as it is irreplaceable.

Thus, this report does not claim to be an exhaustive, statistically analytical survey; rather, it identifies a representative range of circumstances and issues creating threats to the world's heritage, along with case studies amplifying these effects, and emerging solutions to counteract or manage the apparent risks.

## Global Trends

In the *Heritage at Risk 2000* report the major trends identified were:

- maintenance deficiency, lack of financial and human resources;
- economic and social changes, particularly changing State responsibilities and unsettled ownerships;
- insufficient conservation standards;
- tourism-related issues.

While these risks (and those of nature) continued to be prevalent in the 2001/2002 reports, there was recognition of increased risk due to:

- the effects of globalisation;
- military activity and political change;
- cultural displacement – forced migration;
- lack, loss or inappropriate devolution of protective heritage legislation.

These were the subject of many submissions, forcefully brought into even sharper focus by the events of September 11 and subsequent reaction.

The impact of global markets is radically changing cultural landscapes, as crops change and pastoral infrastructure becomes redundant. Financial globalisation shifts investment patterns away from local communities and social capital shifts with it.

The movement from communism to market economies has brought particular delays and confusions regarding ownership and responsibility for heritage places. Priorities in times of economic challenge are rarely focused on cultural heritage sites.

Military activity ranges from the threat of direct damage – such as that described in the Croatian, Iranian and Eritrean reports – to the looting and destruction of museums reported in Afghanistan. In the United Kingdom and Norway, the future of redundant military sites is reported this year, and the effects of air pollution on Iran's cultural heritage from burning oil wells in Kuwait are seriously affecting their conservation.

In every case, the need to influence owners, investors, organisations and corporations, the public and governments of all types about heritage at risk is the single most important factor in achieving successful conservation results for heritage places.

## What Types of Sites are Most Threatened?

### *Rural/vernacular architecture*

Modest, traditional buildings and places are especially vulnerable, because of their transient materials and unassuming character, and sometimes because of their remote location. Globalisation has brought massive change to rural economies and, consequently, to the social structure and practices that supported and maintained such places in active use – from Albania to South Africa, Lithuania to the Czech Republic.

The risks identified in this year's reports included:

- lack of recognition for simple vernacular heritage and thus lack of legal protection;
- fragility of traditional materials and loss of traditional building skills;
- ownership changes/confusion and loss of function, leading to lack of maintenance;
- redundancy, neglect, abandonment or imposed modernisation.

In particular, wooden vernacular structures struggle to face the impact of climate, pests and scavenging, from the Antarctic huts of 20th-century explorers to the pastoral homesteads of Australia, from villages in Cameroon and Cuba to the hayracks of Slovenia, to the wooden churches of Ukraine, Norway and North Dakota, USA. The report from South Africa notes the recent government commitment to researching and recording the vernacular architecture of Zululand and its traditional construction technologies. This year, Austria reports signs of new structural change as ecological and tourism interests reinforce care for traditional landscapes.

### *Twentieth-century heritage places*

Increasing mention is made in this year's reports of the dangers faced by 20th-century places – industrial, commercial, domestic and recreational – which are poorly recognised for their heritage values, and often endangered by their own experimental building materials, obsolescence or modest scale. This is an area where ICOMOS is taking important initiatives, together with UNESCO and DOCOMOMO, organising international meetings and conferences to develop conservation strategies.

The major threats faced by 20th-century heritage places included:

- lack of awareness of their heritage values;
- lack of expertise for specific materials repairs;
- pressure from urban growth and redevelopment;
- pressure from application of uniform building codes.

In order to address the rising concerns over the fate of 19th and 20th-century heritage, ICOMOS adopted the Montreal Action Plan to provide a framework for developing specific scientific initiatives within ICOMOS and co-operation with other organisations, such as UNESCO, ICCROM, DOCOMOMO, TICCIH or, in Asia, MAAN (Modern Asian Architecture Network). Co-ordinated by US/ICOMOS, ICOMOS will produce a global survey of illustrative cases to better address issues relative to technical, awareness and conservation matters for 20th-century heritage and its sources.

Encouraging responses were reported from Cuba, Australia and Canada, where strategies to identify and support such places are underway, together with public education campaigns. Major losses of 20th-century apartment complexes were reported from Germany and from Venezuela, but the redevelopment of the Munich Olympic Stadium (a case study in the *Heritage at Risk 2000*

Report) has been averted and the stadium will remain as it was. Concern for the future of remnants of the Berlin Wall, international witnesses to the Cold War, has yet to meet effective response through an appropriate conservation and management programme.

### *Industrial heritage*

With rapid changes in technology and socio-political structures, industrial complexes of heritage significance are under pressure for re-development or modification. Sites located in urban areas are particularly vulnerable, as land values, living conditions and environmental expectations and controls change. The large scale of some redundant sites is often attractive for incompatible redevelopment, and their pragmatic value as real estate is seen to outweigh their heritage values and interpretative potential for adaptive re-use.

Major issues faced by industrial heritage sites include:

- scale and complexity forcing economical rationalism to prevail in re-use decisions;
- lack of widespread vocal support constituency;
- location in prime redevelopment areas;
- environmental management (e.g. remediation) precluding heritage values.

The report this year from Poland from the national TICCIH committee focuses on these issues, and it includes a number of positive examples of adaptation in Upper Silesia.

### *Religious heritage*

Changes to religious practice and observances again prove to be major threats to heritage, identified worldwide. The complexity of the functions of religious buildings – spiritual, public, social and administrative – can support some flexibility of use, but for many the lack of congregation, or changing worship practices have led to abandonment or massive internal changes. Often the ‘jewels’ among these buildings and complexes attract the major share of support, and the modest places of local worship – the small temples or parish churches – are neglected or adapted for other functions, not always with respect for or regard to the spirit of the place.

Several reports also highlight the targeting of religious buildings during military campaigns.

Risks affecting religious buildings include:

- changing church/State relationships
- cultural displacement
- fragility of fabric and lack of maintenance
- earthquakes affecting towers, campaniles and roofs most particularly.

This year, the reports of Belgium, Slovakia, Sweden and Bulgaria focus on the threats to churches and religious complexes.

### *Archaeological Sites*

Two-thirds of the reports included in the *Heritage at Risk 2000* report recorded threats to archaeological heritage. Lack of adequate inventories to locate archaeological and rock-art sites are particularly mentioned again this year, as are increasing acts of vandalism to these sites, notably the Palaeolithic temple of Mnajdra on Malta and the Buddas at Bamiyan in Afghanistan. Illicit excavations and looting also continue to destroy archaeological evidence – from Cyprus to Guatemala, Israel to the Czech Republic.

Natural forces are also the enemy of these sites, on land and underwater – erosion by wind and water, salinity, subsidence and plant growth threaten artefacts and sites alike. Urban development poses the threat of sudden destruction, testimony being provided by the underground car parks in Bern and electricity infrastructure in Bellinzona, Switzerland, and the proposed bridge over the Bosphorus in Turkey.

Threats affecting archaeological sites include:

- illicit excavations, particularly in remote sites;
- resource extraction;
- infrastructure development, such as roads, bridges and dams;
- smuggling and the antiquities trade.

This year, we include the report of the World Commission on Dams (WCD), which independently reviews the effects of dam construction, noting that an estimated 40–80 million people have been displaced by their construction, and that advance surveys of the effects on cultural resources – especially archaeological sites – have rarely been adequate. The WCD report suggests a decision-making framework for minimising future risk from dam construction.

### *Cultural landscapes and gardens*

Frequently mentioned in the 2001/2002 reports are threats to cultural landscapes, where conservation values conflict with encroachment of lands for agriculture (deep ploughing is a noted risk) or urban settlement with attendant infrastructure demands.

The risks to historic gardens and Botanic-garden plantings are highlighted this year, with a comprehensive review from Argentina. The conflicts between redevelopment, particularly of the garden settings or contexts of houses and monuments (including cemeteries) and the cultural values of these designed landscapes and historic plantings are increasing management problems, though some welcome initiatives are reported from sites in Sweden.

The peak or passing of maturity of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>-century public parks and botanical gardens and their maintenance and horticultural needs, in an era of decreasing public investment, are also noted with concern.

The recognition of cultural values in ‘natural’ landscapes is also a matter needing practical guidance, as the fashion for ‘wilderness’ regeneration tends to disregard or remove evidence of cultural heritage. However, New Zealand reports the improved status of part of the Auckland volcanic landscape, a major centre of Maori settlement in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, which was a case study in the 2000 *Heritage at Risk* report. Australia ICOMOS has recently completed a report and policy guideline on this topic.

### *Indigenous values and places*

An ongoing challenge in all regions of the world is the appropriate recognition and conservation of Indigenous values in landscapes, sites and communities. Much work is needed to negotiate appropriate conservation protocols in diverse cultures – from the cultural and social necessity of maintaining language, to the identification and protection of rock-art sites, to recognising the intangible values in spiritual landscapes, and to the importance of specific sites of conflict or contact.

Reports from Africa and Australia foreshadow some of the Indigenous values and issues which will be debated at next year’s ICOMOS General Assembly in Southern Africa, ‘Place – Memory – Meaning: Preserving Intangible Values in Monuments and Sites’.

### *Moveable heritage and Collections*

Increasingly under-funded, often poorly stored and inadequately catalogued, the contents, interiors and documentary archival evidence relating to heritage places, monuments and sites are this year highlighted in several reports as being at certain risk. The outreach and training programmes of organisations such as ICCROM are active in the museum collection field, as is IFLA for libraries and archives.

The identification for conservation of historic interiors is often neglected in heritage listings. The Netherlands is currently extend-

ing its monument listings process to incorporate full descriptions of interiors, and examining the redefinition of financial support opportunities so that they may include important interiors.

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<sup>1</sup> The national ICOMOS and ICOM committees in Finland have recently published a guidebook aimed at Finnish Crisis relief workers abroad: 'Integration of Protection of Cultural Property into Disaster Relief Work'.