

World Heritage Cultural Properties and Preventive Monitoring

1. ICOMOS and Preventive Monitoring

One of the most important tasks of ICOMOS within the framework of the World Heritage Convention of 1972 is the work as an advisory body to the World Heritage Committee and UNESCO, in particular the evaluation of monuments and historical sites which are inscribed in the World Heritage List or eligible for inscription. The mandate and the role of ICOMOS as an advisory body result from articles 8 (3), 13 (7) and 14 (2) of the World Heritage Convention in connection with the Paragraphs 30, 31 and 35 of Operational Guidelines (OG).¹ The specific role of ICOMOS in relation to the Convention is described in Paragraph 35 and "includes: evaluation of properties nominated for inscription on the World Heritage List, monitoring the state of conservation of World Heritage cultural properties, reviewing requests for International Assistance submitted by States Parties, and providing input and support for capacity building activities."²

Just as article 5 of the World Heritage Convention commits the States Parties to take care of the protection and conservation of the entire cultural and natural heritage within their territories and not only of the individual World Heritage sites, the National Committees of ICOMOS have also a special responsibility for the historic buildings and sites of their country, of course in close cooperation with all institutions that deal with protection and conservation. Under these circumstances, based on the different experiences countries individual ICOMOS National Committees have developed special initiatives for the monitoring of the state of conservation of world heritage sites in their countries. Furthermore in the ICOMOS World Report Heritage at Risk, which has been published since the year 2000 they have pointed out the imminent dangers for monuments ensembles. All in all, it is about a programme of continuous observation that can be called Proactive or Preventive Monitoring. It is being further developed by Gustave Araoz, President of ICOMOS International, within the framework of the Global Monitoring Initiative. This concept of Preventive Monitoring refers not only to individual World Heritage sites but to the entire cultural heritage: ICOMOS acts a sort of general "monument watch" observing the state of the historic buildings and sites worldwide.³

The obligation of the States Parties to do Periodic Reporting results from article 9 of the World Heritage Convention, together with chapter V of the Operational Guidelines⁴. Independently of the Periodic Reporting the World Heritage Centre is to be informed within the framework of the Reactive Monitoring (OG §§ 169-176) about exceptional circumstances or work actions which hat could affect the Outstanding Universal Value of a World Heritage Site.⁵

¹Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention (OG).

²OG, §35

³cf. Michael Petzert, Conservation of Monuments and Sites – International Principles in Theory and Practice, Monumenta II, Berlin 2013, p. 38.

⁴OG §§ 199-210

⁵OG §§ 169-176

Reactive Monitoring is according to the Operational Guidelines “the reporting ... on the state of conservation of specific World Heritage properties that are under threat. To this end, the States Parties shall submit ... to the Committee through the Secretariat, specific reports and impact studies each time exceptional circumstance occur or work is undertaken which may have an effect on the state of conservation of the property.”⁶

The Reactive Monitoring requires in serious cases, a panel of experts and can lead, – as in the previously rather unique case of Dresdner Waldschlösschenbrücke – to deletion from the World Heritage List. In the conservation status of each World Heritage Site, however minor or major problems and threats can arise, which are not detected in time by the competent authorities. In particular, in extensive world heritage sites such as city ensembles, cultural landscapes or cultural routes, values that define the World Heritage can be affected by an immense number of plans and projects. This concerns an abundance of sometimes highly acute threats to the historic structures, that went unheeded in the Periodic Monitoring carried out in intervals of some years and also can hardly be resolved in time in the context of a Reactive Monitoring.⁷

Regarding the Periodic Reporting on the implementation of the World Heritage Convention⁸ the guidelines postulate: “States Parties are requested to submit reports ... on the legislative and administrative provisions they have adopted ... including the state of conservation of the World Heritage properties located on their territories.”⁹ The purpose of Periodic Reporting is to provide an assessment as to whether the Outstanding Value of the properties inscribed on the World Heritage List is being maintained over time and to provide up-dated information about these properties to record the changing circumstances and state of conservation of these sites.¹⁰

However practice has shown, that the handling of the monitoring mandate in accordance with Periodic Reporting and especially Reactive Monitoring do not always have the desired results, especially in acute problematic cases, where “the whole procedure proved to be too slow. ... Therefore in this wide area of conservation problems a continuous proactive observation has to take place, i.e. Preventive Monitoring, which takes into consideration the more general conservation concerns and the special criteria of the World Heritage justifying the Outstanding Universal Value. As far as the World Cultural Heritage is concerned, this task could only be tackled by the advisory body ICOMOS and its worldwide net of members organised in more than 150 national and international committees. The corresponding mandate can be deduced from the above mentioned articles of the World Heritage Convention together with the mandate to be found”¹¹ in § 31d of the Operational Guidelines “to monitor the state of conservation of World Heritage properties”¹²

⁶OG § 169

⁷Cf. Preventive Monitoring Erläuterungen – Preventive Monitoring als Aufgabe von ICOMOS: www.icomos.de

⁸OG §§ 199-210

⁹OG § 199

¹⁰Cf OG § 201

¹¹Petzet, pp. 38 ff.

¹²OG §31d

2. ICOMOS Germany and Preventive Monitoring

The monitoring group of ICOMOS Germany, that has been founded in 2001, has played an important role in the worldwide dissemination of the Preventive Monitoring concept. "This was confirmed by the resolution of the ICOMOS General Assembly in Quebec in 2008 : Noting the valuable initiatives, activities and experiences of many National Committees to monitor World Heritage sites and other aspects of conservation practice in their country ... the 16th General Assembly acknowledge and stress the importance of preventive actions and monitoring as key to successful protection and conservation of heritage"¹³ The monitoring group at present consists of 54 experts, among them also colleagues from ICOMOS Austria, Switzerland, Luxemburg and the Czech Republic. On the basis of on site inspections, talks with the people locally in charge and with experts, as well as the study of current plans, the responsibility of the working group is to get an overview of the present state and of possible changes to the World Heritage sites looked after by them. According to the principles of the working group¹⁴ one of the most important objectives is to contribute to conflict avoidance or conflict reduction through consultation at an early stage. In an especially problematic case the president of the National Committee may report to the International Secretariat of ICOMOS in Paris which could investigate the case and – if necessary – forward it to the World Heritage Centre of Unesco, if the above mentioned Reactive Monitoring is considered appropriate.

The monitoring group of ICOMOS Germany working successfully since 2001 watches the state of the German World Heritage sites within the framework of Preventive Monitoring. In difficult cases of conflict (see the following three examples) it has been active as advisor.



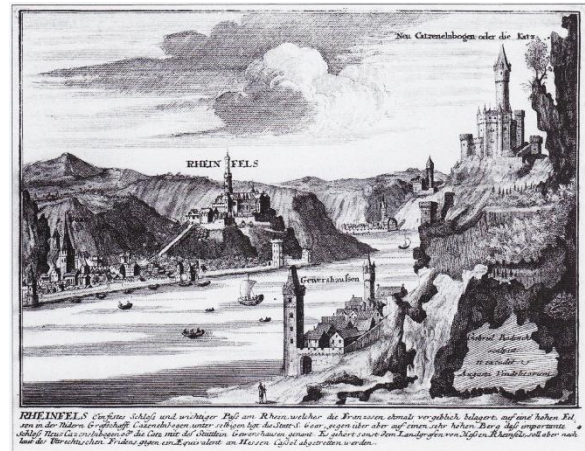
The first illustration shows Cologne, the RZVK (pension office) building during construction. The city planned a cluster of five high-rise buildings of up to 120m, which would have damaged the visual dominance of the cathedral. After the inscription of the cathedral on the List of World Heritage in Danger (2004) the project was given up and only one high-rise building already begun was erected (figure 1).

Figure 1: Cologne, the RZVK building during construction

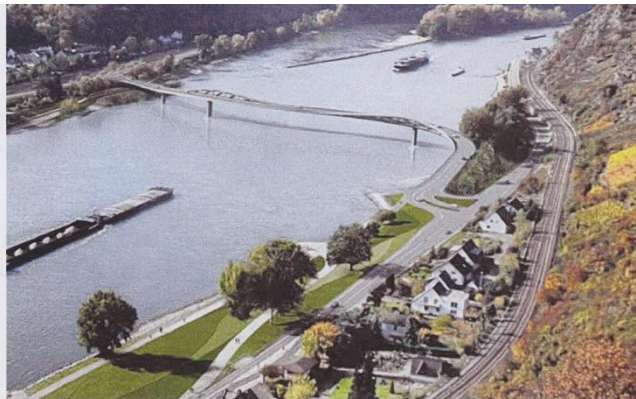
¹³Petzet, p. 40 and Resolution 27 on Preventive Monitoring. See resolutions of the 16th General Assembly (Quebec, 30 September - 4 October 2008), in: ICOMOS News, vol. 17, no. 2, December 2008, central supplement, p. 8.

¹⁴See www.icomos.de

The second image illustrates the Upper Middle Rhine Valley winning design for a bridge, computer simulation of 2009. In the meantime, the project was given up due to protests against the disfigurement of the historic landscape (figure 2).

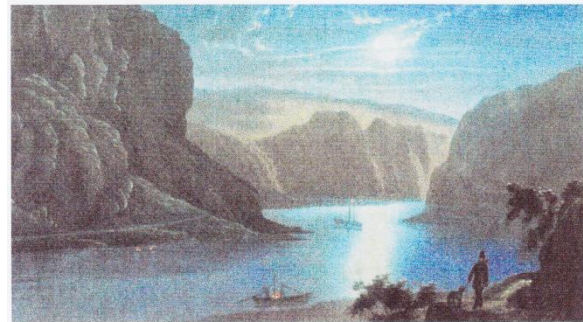


View of the romantic Rhine landscape with St Goar and St Goarshausen and the castles Rheinfels, Katz and Maus, engraving by Gabriel Bodenehr the Elder, c. 1720



Upper Middle Rhine Valley, winning design for a bridge, computer simulation of 2009. In the meantime, the project was given up due to protests against the disfigurement of the historic landscape (see also H@R 2008/10, pp. 62–64)

Upper Middle Rhine Valley with Loreley, etching from c. 1820



The project of the Waldschlösschen Bridge (in 2013 construction almost completed). As the city of Dresden and the government of Saxony rejected all proposals for a compatible solution the cultural landscape of Dresden Elbe Valley was delisted in 2009 (see also H@R 2006/07, p. 63f.)

Figure 2: Upper Middle Rhine Valley

The third figure displays the project of the Waldschlösschen Bridge (in 2013 construction completed). As the city of Dresden and the government of Saxony rejected all proposals for a compatible solution the cultural landscape of Dresden Elbe Valley was delisted in 2009. Dresden is only the second property ever to be removed from the World Heritage List figure 3). The Oman's Arabian Oryx Sanctuary was the first one to be removed from the list.

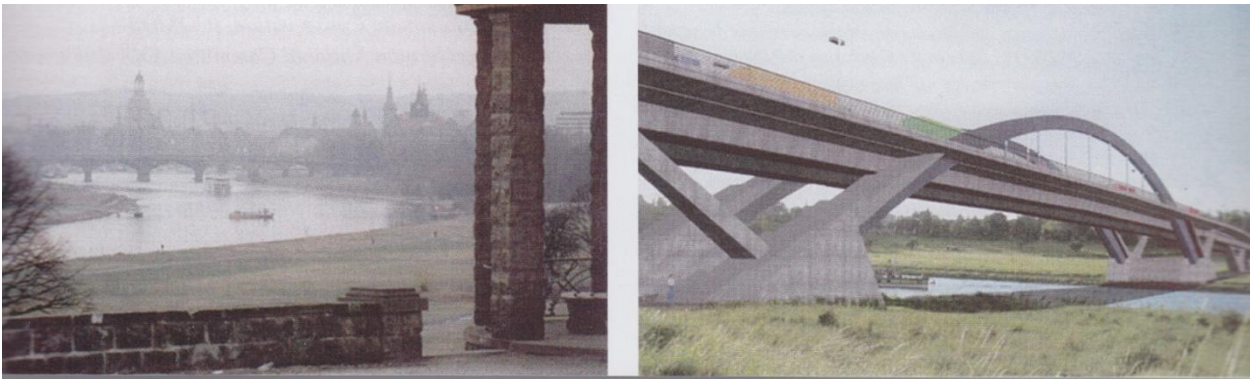


Figure 3: Ancient view of Dresden from the Waldschlösschen terrace and the bridge in 2013

ICOMOS Germany as a non-governmental organization does not make decisions, but considers his consultancy work only as a supplement to the the state heritage management that is controlled in the Länder by different preservation and conservation laws, which in Germany has a long tradition.

Unique opportunities for the concept Preventive Monitoring has been established by the investment programme "National World Heritage Sites" that has been launched in 2009 by the German Federal Ministry of Transport, Building and Urban Development a programme with more than 200 projects. All German World Heritage Sites and the respective municipalities benefit from this. ICOMOS is being involved as a consultant. A key issue in this context is the World Heritage Compatibility Check in order to avoid conflicts in the sense of Preventive monitoring in the selection and implementation of projects from the outset.

3. The system of Monitoring of World Heritage Properties in the Czech Republic

The system of monitoring is well established in the Czech Republic. The ministry of Culture entrusted the National Heritage Institute with this task and allocated the necessary funds in its budget in 2003. The National Heritage Institute created special units or at least posts for monitoring referees in all its regional offices. "At the headquarter of the Institute a special section consisting of three experienced colleagues ... was established to methodically control and coordinate the monitoring performed in the regions. This section summarizes the results and on the basis of regular meetings of all participants coordinates the field work. The appointed monitoring referees collaborate with the owners of the properties and with the concerned local authorities to get first hand information about the inscribed properties."¹⁵ There are 12 inscribed World Heritage sites in Czechia including the large historic centre of the city of Prague. (Figures 4 and 5). In spite of some serious negative tendencies (mainly the investment pressure) the Outstanding Universal Value of "all investigated properties" has not been considerably impaired and that all of them have preserved their extraordinary cultural significance. The so far achieved experience proved that it does pay to carry out the monitoring permanently and regularly.

¹⁵Josef Stulc, The System of Monitoring of Wordl Heritage Properties in the Czech Republic and its Results, in: ICOMOS, Hefte des Deutschen Nationalkomitees LVII, Unesco Welterbe in Deutschland und Mitteleuropa. Bilanz und Perspektiven, Berlin 2013, p. 117.

Apart from collecting information of vital importance for the proper management of the properties the monitoring has proved to be an efficient tool to remind the owners the Ministry of Culture and the responsible municipal ... authorities that the inscription on the World Heritage List is binding and includes duties for all stakeholders participating in and profiting from their world fame.”¹⁶

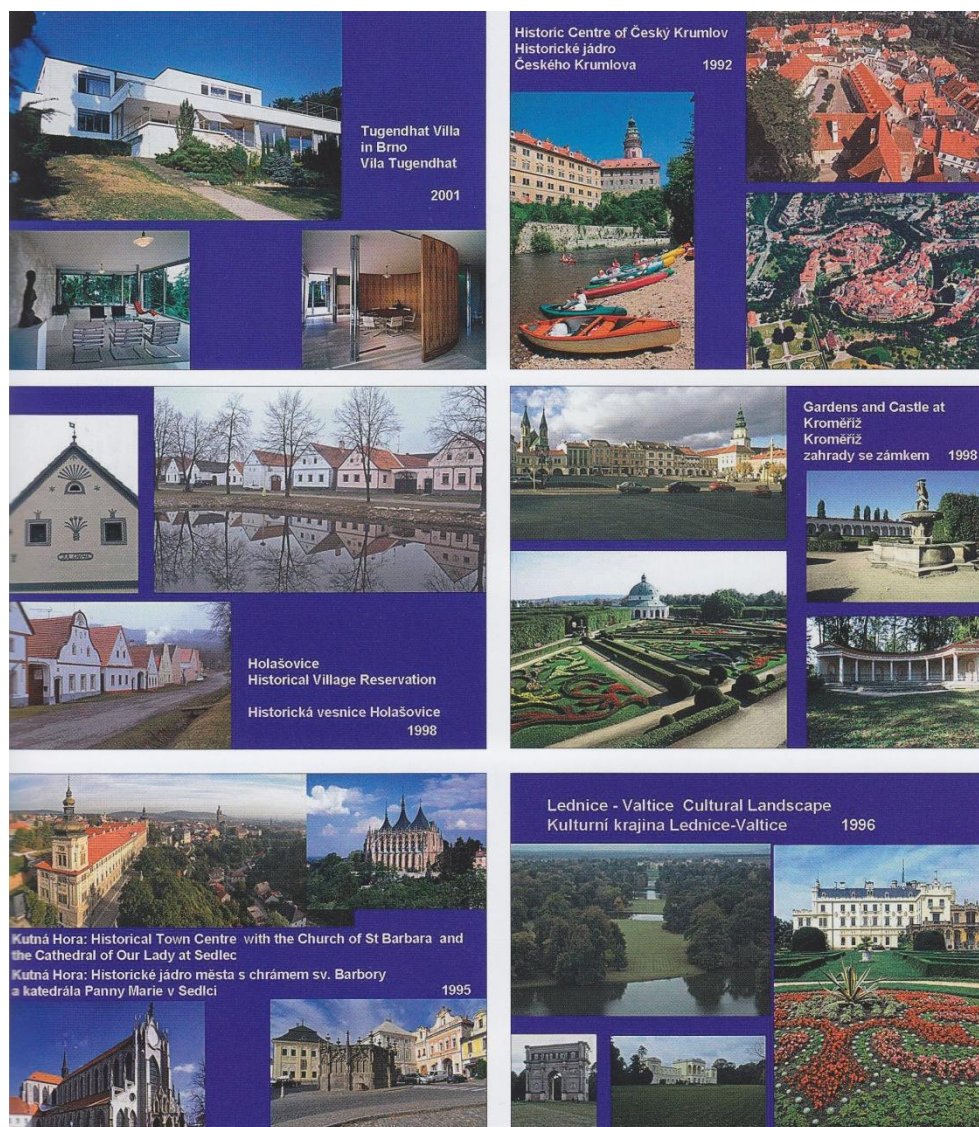


Figure 4: Czech Republic – World Heritage Sites I

¹⁶Stulc, p.118 f..



Figure 5: Czech Republic – World Heritage Sites II

4. Monitoring of World Heritage sites in Switzerland

Eleven properties, 8 cultural and 3 natural sites are on the World Heritage List in Switzerland. Up to 2013 no proper monitoring of world heritage sites in Switzerland has been undertaken and ICOMOS Switzerland was not involved except for the report on the appointment of World Heritage Sites. In 2013 ICOMOS Switzerland was asked by the Federal Office of Culture to support the Periodic Report on the implementation of the World Heritage Convention. The World Heritage Sites are each helped by an ICOMOS expert, who submit the reports to the state of conservation in these sites. ICOMOS Switzerland will create an additional and independent report in addition to the Periodic Report and together with the Federal Office of Culture an action plan will be created for the next four years. In the sense of "excellence in management" the supervision of the World heritage sites shall be improved. For example, the three 1983 listed World Heritage Sites Bern, St. Gallen and Münstair have no buffer zones. In the 1980s, these zones have not yet been requested (Figures 6 and 7).¹⁷

¹⁷Monica Bilfinger, Das Monitoring von Welterbestätten in der Schweiz, in: ICOMOS, Hefte des Deutschen Nationalkomitees LVII, Unesco Welterbe in Deutschland und Mitteleuropa. Bilanz und Perspektiven, Berlin 2013, p.



Figure 6: Old Town of Bern



Figure 7: Kramgasse – part of the Old Town of Bern

5. Preventive Monitoring in Austria

In Austria nine properties are on the World Heritage List. Because of the general dynamic of development and linked to this the pressure to change in these World Heritage sites the Austrian National Committee of ICOMOS felt soon the need for an advisory participation in planning.

The rule "a stitch in time saves nine" should be used also at World Heritage sites. Therefore permanent or preventive monitoring should be established as a lively instrument of criticism of the state of these sites. In line to examples in other states, the Austrian National Committee of ICOMOS established in 2008 a monitoring group, where an advisor is available for every World Heritage site. Through early involvement and assessment of these experts conflicts with the values of the World Heritage site should not arise respectively be avoided.

The ICOMOS monitoring experts get in contact with the authorities, the developers, and owners, planners, local and supra-local interest groups. The expertise and statements are – often after intense internal debate - submitted in writing and are integrated into the further procedure. The Austrian principle of preventive monitoring is thus based on personal contact initiatives and technically well-founded expertise. This approach has generally proven successful. Overall, one can assume that since the implementation of ICOMOS Preventive Monitoring, hundred interventions have taken place. Results, however are often compromises, which cannot always regarded as positive. The aim of Preventive Monitoring would be the institutionalization of a World Heritage Compatibility Check under central participation of the Austrian ICOMOS National Committee (figures 8 and 9).¹⁸



Figure 8: Historic centre of Vienna I



Figure 9: Historic centre of Vienna II

¹⁸See Winfried Lipp, Monitoring in Österreich: Nahaufnahmen mit Weit- und Weltblick, in: ICOMOS, Hefte des Deutschen Nationalkomitees LVII, Unesco Welterbe in Deutschland und Mitteleuropa. Bilanz und Perspektiven, Berlin 2013, p. 100 f.

Wien Mitte – Die Macht des Faktischen



Wien-Wirklichkeit



Figure 10: Historic centre of Vienna III

Dr Claus-Peter Echter

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