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UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE:  
STRIVING FOR UTOPIA THROUGH UNIVERSAL VALUE

by  
Caleb Phillips


A thesis submitted to the faculty of The University of Mississippi in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College.

Oxford  
May 2023

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## ABSTRACT

### CALEB PHILLIPS: UNESCO World Heritage: Striving for Utopia through Universal Value

(Under the direction of Nancy Wicker)

With this thesis, I take a critical look at the UNESCO World Heritage Convention and its mission to foster international unity through the creation of World Heritage Sites. The World Heritage Convention was created with good intentions, but in attempting to actualize its original objectives, the Convention has strayed from its goals. By looking at the events leading up to the creation of the World Heritage Convention, the Convention itself, and the various measures carried out by the Convention since its creation, it is clear that the UNESCO World Heritage Convention still has work to do to achieve its utopian goals. The International Campaign to Save the Monuments of Nubia in the 1960s became the cornerstone of the Convention's activities, but the international cooperation and sense of community that occurred during this Campaign should have been carried through into the Convention's activities afterward. The Convention has adopted several changes intended to better its operations and definition of "universal value," but there is still much to be desired. After reviewing the opinions of several scholars on how to make the Convention more inclusive and universal, I suggest several of my own solutions that I believe will create a positive impact on the World Heritage Convention and help return it to its original goals.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES.....	vi
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	vii
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER II: UNIVERSAL VALUE.....	4
CHAPTER III: THE ASWAN HIGH DAM CRISIS.....	14
CHAPTER IV: RETURNING TO ROOTS.....	21
CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION.....	32
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	36
FIGURES.....	39

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1	Interactive Map with Cultural (Yellow), Natural (Green), and Endangered (Red) Sites.....	39
Figure 2	Number of World Heritage Sites by Region.....	40
Figure 3	Number of World Heritage Sites Inscribed Each Year by Region.....	40
Figure 4	Aerial View of Relocated Temple of Abu Simbel.....	41
Figure 5	Dismantling Abu Simbel.....	41
Figure 6	Dismantling Monuments at Abu Simbel.....	42
Figure 7	Moving the Head of a Monument at Abu Simbel.....	43
Figure 8	View of the Structures Required to Lift the Monuments out of the Path of Flooding Caused by the Aswan High Dam.....	44
Figure 9	List of countries that contributed to the International Campaign to Save the Monuments of Nubia.....	45
Figure 10	Aerial View of the World Heritage Site at Iwami Ganzin Silver Mine.....	46
Figure 11	One of the Mineshafts Open to the Public at Iwami Ganzin.....	47
Figure 12	Blaenavon Industrial Landscape, Wales.....	48
Figure 13	Göreme National Park and the Rock Sites of Cappadocia.....	49

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
ICCROM	International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property
ICOMOS	International Council on Monuments and Sites
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources
Global Strategy	Global Strategy for a Balanced, Representative, and Credible World Heritage List
Operational Guidelines	Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention



## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is an international institution dedicated to bringing the world together through education, science, and culture. Formed in the years following two devastating world wars, UNESCO sought to be a source of peace in the midst of uncertainty. With wars just ending, and cold wars nearing, UNESCO came in at a pivotal time and promoted international unity through the World Heritage Convention and “universal diversity.”

The World Heritage Convention was UNESCO’s idea of a way to promote international cooperation through the idea of “universal value,” or that certain sites possess a heritage that is valuable to the whole world, not just the nation that contains it. This revolutionary idea forged a new sense of international unity not by political relationships, but by common heritage, a World Heritage that should be protected and shared by people from all over the world. However, the definition of “universal value” has changed over the years, and as a result, the World Heritage List is not as representative of the cultural diversity of the world as it could be.

Today, the World Heritage List contains 1,157 sites spread throughout 167 member nations (UNESCO, 2023, “World Heritage List”) (the United States withdrew its membership in 2017 under President Trump (Adams), but the Convention may never have come into existence if it were not for one major project to save certain sites in Egypt

and Nubia from the path of floodwaters back in the 1960s. It was this international project that led UNESCO to consider the prospect of the World Heritage Convention, which would take the international sense of unity generated through the project and turn it into a way for the nations of the world to designate certain places as sites valuable to all people. The Convention aimed to create a global network of sites that represented World Heritage, but in doing so, the Convention has strayed from its original intentions.

Over the years, the World Heritage Convention has adopted several measures for the purpose of broadening the scope of “universal value” and including more sites around the world—Eurocentrism has been a persistent issue—but the Convention is still not perfect. The Convention has made numerous changes to its operating practices and adopted separate legislations meant to create a List that is truly inclusive and “universal,” but in doing so, the Convention may have become *too* inclusive. While many sites are indeed universally valuable, several sites have been added to the List for no other reason than to acquire the World Heritage inscription for monetary gain.

Even when looking at the state of the World Heritage List without such sites that have little “universal value,” it is apparent that some sites with such value are not entirely inclusive, and therefore cannot be of value universally. World Heritage Sites are meant to be an international expression of a local culture, but often the local populations of a site are neglected when it comes to conservation, preservation, and tourism of a site. Further, it is imperative that all minority groups, all genders, and all people in general are included in the World Heritage Convention. Without the inclusion of everyone, the World Heritage Convention will be nothing but a curated collection of sites based on arbitrary criteria.

Despite its issues, the World Heritage Convention has been a powerful international instrument that has aided in the conservation and preservation of numerous sites all around the world. The Convention has helped give sites international attention as well, and famous sites such as the Great Wall of China, the Taj Mahal, and the stone heads of Rapa Nui National Park may not have been as well-known as they are today without their inscription on the World Heritage List. However, in addition to these famous sites, there are numerous places in the world that have a rich history that is valuable to the whole of humanity and are not inscribed on the List. I believe for the World Heritage Convention to function as it was intended to, it is absolutely necessary that all people are included, no matter their race, gender, or culture.

With this thesis, I will analyze the World Heritage Convention from multiple angles and produce my thoughts on what the Convention should do to return to its original utopian goals. In the next chapter, I will discuss the history of UNESCO's World Heritage Convention and its ever-changing definition of "universal value." Second, I will give a brief history of UNESCO's first International Campaign and how this project should have become a guide for the future operations of the World Heritage Convention. Finally, I will draw from other scholars who have studied the Convention and its problems, and I will discuss what the best solutions may be for making the World Heritage List as universal and inclusive as possible.

## CHAPTER II: UNIVERSAL VALUE

At the core of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is the idea that the world is full of a rich history that transcends national boundaries and should be preserved and protected as an inheritance for future generations. In the aftermath of two worldwide conflicts, numerous nations shared this idea that certain places or objects should be protected, especially in the event of another world war. The goal was not just protection, though, as this was only the first step in the ultimate goal of preserving said places and objects for the benefit of future generations. At its inception, UNESCO's mission seemed to be good: an international organization devoted to conserving and protecting the world's treasures—who would be against that? However, this utopian objective could not exist without some problems. If UNESCO is to protect and preserve the world's heritage, where do they begin? Not everything can be protected, so how is it decided what is important enough to protect? How can world heritage truly be “world” heritage if only certain places and objects are being preserved and protected? These and many other questions were wrestled over by the founding members of UNESCO, and in an attempt to answer them all at once, the concept of “universal value” was adopted, but its origin and definition are not exactly concrete.

Not long after the creation of the United Nations in 1945, various organizations that were created under the League of Nations came together under this new international structure to form UNESCO (Bandarin, 2007, 28). In its formative years, the only tasks of

the organization were advising Member States on their heritage site conservation, but it was not long before UNESCO began tackling international operations. The first of these international missions involved moving numerous Nubian monuments from the path of flooding caused by the Aswan dam in Egypt in 1959, and this will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter. However, after this arduous task was completed, UNESCO organized many meetings on the topic of preserving heritage, the most important of which was in Venice in 1964. At this conference, the International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites was adopted (often referred to as the Venice Charter), and this charter played a major role in the later establishment of the various other organizations that help ensure the conservation of heritage sites along with UNESCO, including the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM), and the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) (Bandarin, 2007, 27–28). The following year in 1965, the Committee for the Conservation and Development of Natural Resources in the United States proposed the concept of a “World Heritage Trust” that would combine the components of both cultural and natural heritage into one advisory body; in 1966, this idea was brought forth at the 9th General Assembly of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN), but the “World Heritage Trust” would not be recognized again until 1972 (Bandarin, 2007, 28–29).

The year 1972 was pivotal for UNESCO. A United Nations conference on the “human environment” was held in Stockholm, Sweden, and its purpose was to allow discussion on developing threats to the environment as well as to adopt legal action concerning these threats (Bandarin, 2007, 28–29). Various working groups were set up

prior to the conference, and the US, IUCN, and UNESCO worked together to draft a potential convention concerning the protection of “World Heritage.” The working groups discussed issues including how to balance cultural and natural heritage, how the convention would be funded, and importantly, the definition of “universal value.” It was decided at the Stockholm Conference that a resolution should be adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO to implement a convention on World Heritage. On November 16, 1972, after much debate between eighty-two delegations, UNESCO adopted the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, generally called the World Heritage Convention, and it officially came to power after Switzerland was the twentieth country to ratify in December 1975 (Bandarin, 2007, 29).

The World Heritage Convention was a new kind of legal framework that was based on the notion that certain sites in the world, whether cultural or natural, are of “universal and exceptional importance,” and should therefore be protected, not individually, but as the common heritage of all people of the world (Bandarin, 2007, 29). The most central part of the World Heritage Convention is the concept of “universal value,” that certain sites are of value to the whole of humanity; however, the definition of “universal value” has had a very fluid history. The 1972 Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage uses the term “outstanding universal value” several times in its definitions of cultural and natural heritage in Articles 1 and 2, but “universal value” itself was never defined in the original convention (UNESCO, 1972, 2).

The 1977 Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention gave a set of six criteria for “outstanding universal value” in cultural heritage

that somewhat clarified the meaning of “universal value,” but these criteria were far too broad for the purposes of the Convention (UNESCO, 1977). These six criteria were revised in 1980 and made much narrower, but the new version had its own problems; these criteria seemed to favor architectural and other artistic sites over other heritage that may be less tangible (Bandarin, 2007, 39). Because of this, the World Heritage Convention appeared to privilege nominated sites from Europe over those from other parts of the world—a problem that persisted for far too long. Changes to the criteria of natural heritage came in 1992 when the World Heritage Committee met, and these criteria were actually broadened to include more sites with diverse natural heritage. Realizing the shortcomings of the criteria after these changes, while also paying close attention to the concerns about the Convention’s Eurocentrism, the World Heritage Convention had to make some changes to its processes, and these came in the form of the 1994 Global Strategy.

Adopted in 1994, the Global Strategy for a Balanced, Representative, and Credible World Heritage List (simply known as the Global Strategy) was, according to Sophia Labadi (2005, 89)—Professor of Heritage at the University of Kent who has done extensive research on cultural heritage, even working directly for UNESCO at some points in her career—the World Heritage Convention’s attempt to identify and correct imbalances within the List of heritage sites (Labadi 2005, 89). This came as the result of a “Global Study” that was conducted from 1987 to 1993, which sought to find gaps in the World Heritage List in order to promote the nomination of less-represented categories by Member States. Following this study, the World Heritage Centre and ICOMOS set up a meeting of experts to review the statistics of the study and come up with new ways to

reach the goal of a balanced and representative List. The experts at this meeting determined that there were absences within the list in the categories of chronology, geography, and themes, and there was a distinct over-representation of European sites, especially of religious buildings, specifically those of Christianity. These experts also observed an under-representation of living cultural heritage expressions and the complex human-environment relationship that they display (Labadi 2005, 90). According to the experts, if sites were included on the List illustrating the themes of “human coexistence with the land” and “human beings in society,” then the public perception of cultural heritage would change to a more diversified view, which would be more aligned with the idea of “universal value,” (Labadi 2005, 91). In addition to the inclusion of these themes, the group of experts decided that for the Global Strategy to work optimally the current Operational Guidelines’ six criteria for cultural heritage should be revised. Despite these changes, the Global Strategy was not enough to encourage the changes the World Heritage Convention was hoping to achieve, and more legislation was produced not long after the Global Strategy was put in place to try to compensate for its shortcomings.

In November 1994, a meeting was held in Nara, Japan, on Authenticity in Relation to the World Heritage Convention (Bandarin, 2007, 41). Until this meeting, the Operational Guidelines judged the authenticity of a site based on setting, materials, design, and workmanship; however, the Nara Document, the result of the 1994 meeting, stated that authenticity could be shown through several attributes, not just these four, and thus cultural context should be considered when judging authenticity. The Nara Document became an essential part of expanding the limitations of “universal value” since it allowed some sites outside of Europe that did not exactly meet the previous



authenticity standards to be recognized. At the turn of the century, the World Heritage Committee held its 24<sup>th</sup> session in Cairns, Australia, and further measures were adopted to present a more balanced and representative World Heritage List (Labadi 2005, 94). The “Cairns Decisions” limited the number of nominations that the Committee would review each year, and, if the number of nominations exceeded this limit, nominations would be considered based on a priority system that first prioritized nations with no sites on the List, then nominations displaying categories under-represented on the List would be considered before all others.

Following the Global Strategy, the Nara Document, and the Cairns Decisions, one would expect to have seen very positive results and a much more inclusive World Heritage List, but this was not exactly the case. One encouraging outcome of these legislations was a rise in the number of States Parties involved in the World Heritage Convention, as well as Tentative Lists and sites inscribed on the List (Labadi 2005, 92). When the Global Strategy was first implemented in 1994, 140 nations were participants in the Convention, and ten years later in 2004, this number had risen to 178. In 1994, only thirty-three States had submitted Tentative Lists to the World Heritage Committee, but 137 States did so as of 2004. The number of sites on the World Heritage List in 1994 was 440, but this nearly doubled to 788 sites in 2004. In addition to these promising numerical increases, the List seemed to now include sites in more geographical locations, and thirty-one countries even had their first sites included on the List. Despite all these promising results, one problem in particular persisted: Eurocentrism. The main purpose of the Nara Document, Cairns Decisions, and especially the Global Strategy was to promote balance within the World Heritage List by fighting against the over-

representation of European sites (Figures 1–3). However, when the percentage of heritage sites in Europe and North America compared to the rest of the world was examined in 2004, the proportion had no change from 1994: 55% of the World Heritage List was located in either Europe or North America (Cleere, 1996, 227–233). These results were surprising considering all the work done over the previous ten years to combat this exact issue, especially since the 1996 and 1999 versions of the Operational Guidelines stressed that States should submit fewer site nominations if their cultural heritage was already well-represented on the World Heritage List, which should have made the proportion of European/North American sites to other places much more balanced. With these strategies not working as they were intended to, it was clear that there was yet more to be done to achieve a “Balanced, Representative and Credible World Heritage List.”

The World Heritage Convention’s next step to try to fulfill its original goals was the combination of the separate sets of criteria for cultural and natural heritage (Bandarin, 2007, 42). The Committee decided this was an appropriate step in 2003, and the resulting singular list of ten criteria was then included in the 2005 version of the Operational Guidelines. The idea of combining the criteria for cultural and natural heritage was first brought up at a meeting in France in 1996, but it was not seriously considered until 2003. The hope of the Convention was that a unified list of criteria would encourage under-represented cultures to submit nominations in which the values of nature and culture are inseparable. The combined list of ten criteria proved to be a success, and this set of criteria is the one that is still used to this day. To be considered for nomination a site must meet at least one of the following criteria (UNESCO, 2005, 19–20):

- (i) represent a masterpiece of human creative genius;

(ii) exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design;

(iii) bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared;

(iv) be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history;

(v) be an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement, land-use, or sea-use which is representative of a culture (or cultures), or human interaction with the environment especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change;

(vi) be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance. (The Committee considers that this criterion should preferably be used in conjunction with other criteria);

(vii) contain superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance;

(viii) be outstanding examples representing major stages of earth's history, including the record of life, significant ongoing geological processes in the development of landforms, or significant geomorphic or physiographic features;

- (ix) be outstanding examples representing significant ongoing ecological and biological processes in the evolution and development of terrestrial, fresh water, coastal and marine ecosystems and communities of plants and animals;
- (x) contain the most important and significant natural habitats for in situ conservation of biological diversity, including those containing threatened species of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation.

Following the adoption of the unified set of criteria, the World Heritage Convention made a few more decisions that it hoped would bring an increase in the inclusiveness of the World Heritage List. The Committee met for its 34<sup>th</sup> session in 2010, and in anticipation of the upcoming 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Convention, several decisions were made to improve the effects of the World Heritage Convention in the coming years (UNESCO, 2010). At this session, work was done to develop a Strategic Action Plan that would guide the execution of the Convention from 2012 to 2022 (UNESCO, 2010, section II, 16). The decisions of the 34<sup>th</sup> session also welcomed a report from an expert meeting on “Upstream processes to nominations: creative approaches in the nomination process” (UNESCO, 2010, section III, 19). The “Upstream Process” identified ways to better support nations in the nomination process by providing advice and feedback throughout the process of site nomination. This came as a result of the identification of various issues in the World Heritage Convention’s implementation, mainly the lack of serious participation of local stakeholders in all stages of the nomination process (Labadi 2014, 57).

The World Heritage Convention has come quite far since its inception in 1972. All the work done by the Convention such as the Operational Guidelines, Global

Strategy, Nara Document, Cairn's Decisions, and the "Upstream Process" have made the World Heritage List much more balanced and representative of the world's heritage and more closely aligned with UNESCO's original utopian goals for the Convention.

However, there is still much more that could be done to make the List truly "universal."

With the implementation of the unified criteria list in 2005, "universal value" has been somewhat more easily defined, but there are still many exceptions and nuances that may not fit into the current criteria. "Universal value" is the most important aspect of sites inscribed by the World Heritage Convention, and until "universal value" has a stable and truly universally inclusive definition, the List will not really reflect the goals of the Convention.

### CHAPTER III: THE ASWAN HIGH DAM CRISIS

One of UNESCO's greatest accomplishments actually happened prior to the adoption of the World Heritage Convention, but the achievements of this campaign and the collaboration that occurred to make it happen were of immense significance to the later goals of the Convention. Called "the greatest archaeological rescue of all time" by the UNESCO Courier in 1980, the International Campaign to Save the Monuments of Nubia became a twenty-year project that involved fifty countries and cost nearly eighty million dollars (UNESCO 2020, 1). This long, involved operation became a model for UNESCO to follow, and the international cooperation that was displayed during this time would be a huge influence on the implementation of the World Heritage Convention some years later.

In 1956, Britain, France, and Israel invaded Egypt in an attempt to seize control of the Suez Canal from Egyptian authority under Gamal Abdel Nasser (Meskell, 2018, 28). Britain originally controlled the canal after its occupation of Egypt in 1882, and, along with France, it financed the canal. Suez was a vital part of Britain's economy and was also an extremely important strategic point during World War II, so when Nasser took control of the canal in July of 1956, Britain saw this as a threat to its economic and military interests in the area. In addition, Lynn Meskell, former Professor in the Department of Anthropology at Stanford University, now at the University of Pennsylvania, wrote that politicians from both France and Britain noted comparisons

between the rise of European fascism under leaders such as Mussolini and Hitler and Nasser's actions in the Suez Canal situation; beyond this, Western nations also feared this situation because of the support given to Nasser by the Soviet Union. According to Meskell, Nasser was also quite sympathetic to the communism of the Soviet Union, and, similar to the situation in Vietnam that garnered US involvement, it was feared that Egypt would succumb to communism and subsequently impact its neighboring countries. However, the issue that eventually caused international intervention was the USSR's financial support to construct the Aswan High Dam, which the World Bank and United States originally promised to fund, but this support was withdrawn with the intention to obstruct the leadership of Nasser (Meskell, 2018, 28).

According to Meskell (2018, 28–29), the Aswan High Dam was a part of Nasser's grand plan to bring Egypt out of poverty and subsequently take its place in the modern world. The dam was expected to raise Egypt's profits, which was much needed, while at the same time providing electricity and more agricultural development. Meskell writes that Nasser's plan was similar to that of many other newly independent nations that were taking their place in the contemporary post-war world; he essentially combined the expansion of state power, the centralization of resource control, and the endorsement of a large infrastructural improvement project. However, in this grand plan to transform Egypt into a modern nation, the historical significance of Egypt was put on the backburner—even forgotten—by Egypt's leadership through Nasser. Thus, the Aswan High Dam was projected to have widespread negative effects on the abundance of ancient Egyptian archaeological sites, and because of this, an international campaign began to thwart the

destruction of these sites and preserve the history of Egypt while Nasser accomplished his goals.

Following the invasion of Egypt by France, Britain, and Israel, Egypt's ally, the Soviet Union, threatened to send its own military forces to Suez and even retaliate with nuclear weapons if the three nations did not withdraw their troops (Meskell, 2018, 29). The US threatened economic sanctions for France, Britain, and Egypt in an attempt to help ease the tension coming from the Soviet Union, but it was the United Nations that intervened and called for a cease-fire, the reopening of the canal, and the removal of all troops. After all military forces had been withdrawn, the UN sent its first emergency peacekeeping force (UNEF) into Egypt under the leadership of UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld. With extreme tension between major world powers, the UN seemed to be the only entity preventing the breakout of war.

Following the study of a report by international experts concerning the likelihood of saving Nubia's wealth of archaeological treasures from the path of flooding, the Director-General of UNESCO's Executive Board issued an appeal on March 8, 1960 (UNESCO 2020, 2). This appeal, issued to "governments, institutions, public and private foundations and all persons of goodwill," was a solemn request from UNESCO for any and all assistance, whether financial or technical, with the Aswan High Dam crisis. However, it would be a few years before there was international motivation to help achieve this noble cause, but an article from *Time Magazine* in April 1963 shows the urgency with which UNESCO was requesting aid and the reasons for issuing an international appeal ("Archaeology," *Time Magazine*, 1963, 68):



[F]or all its magnificence, the Temple of Abu Simbel is apparently doomed. For lack of \$22 million, the cost of a few bombers or missiles, it will soon be submerged under 200 ft. of muddy water backed up by the High Dam being built at Aswan 180 miles downstream.... The dam would probably cost \$80 million... [but the] lifting would cost \$42 million plus \$24 million for finishing the job.

But even \$42 million is not available. Last week UNESCO Secretary-General René Maheu added up what had been gathered by passing the international hat. Egypt pledged \$11.5 million. West Germany gave \$1,845,000, Italy \$180,000,000, India \$714,000, Cuba \$160,000. In all, 37 countries contributed, including Bolivia and Nepal, each of which gave \$1,000, but the total is more than \$22 million short.

Three of the world's richest nations, the U.S., the U.S.S.R. and Britain, have thus far given nothing. The Russians claim that their money is already helping Egypt to build the High Dam; someone else, they say, should take care of Abu Simbel. The U.S. apparently believes that attempts to raise the temple would destroy it. [And anyway,] \$42 million would only begin to cover the cost of jacking it up.

As they discuss the final fate of threatened Abu Simbel, the U.S. and other countries still show no sense of urgency. Even if the water starts rising on schedule in [1964,] there will be time left for some kind of action. A simple, cheap cofferdam can protect the temple temporarily while last-minute efforts are made to save it.

It is surprising that even the wealthiest nations were hesitant to give funds to UNESCO during this time, but it was because of the appeal of the Director-General, and perhaps with the push of other media such as *Time Magazine*, that UNESCO was finally able to acquire the funds necessary, and even beyond, to accomplish the task of moving the archaeological monuments of Nubia. Michael A. Di Giovine, socio-cultural researcher in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Chicago, described this feat quite succinctly in his book *The Heritage-scape: UNESCO, World Heritage, and Tourism*: “By simply raising awareness of the plight of Ramses II’s monuments, UNESCO literally moved mountains” (Di Giovine, 2009, 327). The call to action itself was quite an accomplishment for UNESCO, but it seems to me that the international awareness-raising and subsequent deployment of people to do the manual work of conserving the sites of Abu Simbel is what really paved the way for the adoption of the World Heritage Convention.

Of course, the project had to have an official name: the UNESCO International Campaign to Save the Monuments of Nubia; however, though this campaign was led by UNESCO, it was the efforts and donations of the many countries that contributed to the campaign that made it all possible (Figures 4–8) (UNESCO 2020, 2). As the various countries—fifty involved monetarily and seven technically (Figure 9)—contributed time and money to the cause, the role of UNESCO was simply as an intermediary between the governments of Egypt and Sudan and the donor countries. UNESCO functioned as a sort of control panel for the activities centered around saving the Nubian monuments, and, in addition to its role as intermediary, UNESCO facilitated conservation efforts and set up an Executive Committee and Trust Fund for the campaign. UNESCO was in charge of

the vital behind-the-scenes work, but the international cooperation that UNESCO was able to garner for the project was the most impressive aspect of the campaign.

The Campaign was not without its flaws, though. With the flood-endangered monuments being of utmost priority, other things in the path of flooding were neglected, most notably people living in the area that would become Lake Nasser. Paul Betts (2015, 119) wrote that nearly 100,000 Nubian people were displaced by the floodwaters. This aspect of the Campaign is often not included in UNESCO's narrative of a successful mission, but it is important to mention these people's struggle amidst the success of the International Campaign to Save the Monuments of Nubia. The same thing happened to people in Egypt as well, but evacuation plans had been made already, making their exodus much less problematic than the people of Nubia's (Betts, 2015, 120). It is important that the plight of these people is not forgotten, even though the saving of the monuments was a huge success.

Despite this unfortunate side effect of the Aswan High Dam, the International Campaign to Save the Monuments of Nubia became the cornerstone of UNESCO's ideals that would eventually lead to the creation of the World Heritage Convention. This was the first time that practical representation was given to the idea of cultural heritage being of importance to all people of the world (UNESCO 2020, 2). The campaign showed the feeling of international community that surrounds such heritage monuments; however, more importantly, it showed the determination to protect and conserve such monuments when under threat of damage or destruction, regardless of the nation of origin. The campaign performed one of the World Heritage Convention's main tenets, "unity in diversity," nearly ten years before the Convention even existed (Di Giovine, 2009, 327).

According to Meskell, in addition to the international sense of unity created by the Campaign, UNESCO's mission in Egypt was an attempt to counter fractures in the postwar fantasy of global peace that were already occurring. In saving the monuments of Nubia, UNESCO also hoped to end the heightening tension over the crisis in Suez, create badly needed harmony in the Middle East, and show the world that culture could be a contributing force to the notion of world peace (Meskell, 2018, 30). Describing the goals of UNESCO's Campaign, Meskell wrote, "Humanity as a whole could claim its inheritance from Egypt, thus reinforcing UNESCO's lofty ideals of world citizenship. A common humanity in the past would be paired with a common responsibility for the future" (Meskell, 2018, 30).

The above quotation from Meskell perfectly describes the attitude of the World Heritage Convention that would be created following the success of the International Campaign to Save the Monuments of Nubia. In fostering a sense of common, universal heritage across the world, UNESCO hoped to create an international feeling of responsibility to care for this heritage for future generations. This idea was coupled with the dream of global peace that so many nations shared following the aftermath of two world wars, but it gave practical intentions that could be shared by all. With the massive success of the Campaign, UNESCO was able to show the world that international cooperation was indeed possible, and further, that it could be used to promote international cooperation in the future. What started as a cry for help to save the history of an inspiring civilization became a call to action for future generations to not only preserve the rich heritage of their own, but of the whole world, and to share it with all in order to create unity and peace instead of hate and destruction.

## CHAPTER IV: RETURNING TO ROOTS

Despite the massive success of the UNESCO International Campaign to Save the Monuments of Nubia and its paving the way for the World Heritage Convention, this project was quite different than the processes involved in the creation of a World Heritage Site today. During the campaign, countries all over the world rallied together to support the sites of one nation, but for a site to be included on the World Heritage List, it must be nominated by the country in which it resides and then accepted by the World Heritage Committee. The sense of universal heritage is still present, but the process to achieve this status has become different throughout the years. Now, the international cooperation and common heritage does not occur until after a site has been both nominated and accepted, whereas during the International Campaign of 1960, the sites would not have been saved if this cooperation did not occur beforehand.

UNESCO's World Heritage Convention was founded on utopian ideals and in the wake of a hugely successful International Campaign, but, naturally, the Convention is not perfect. Since its inception in 1972, the Convention has continually made changes to its Operational Guidelines as well as adopting other legislation in an attempt to make the World Heritage List more inclusive. Stemming from accusations of Eurocentrism as discussed in the second chapter, the Convention has worked very hard over the years to create a balanced and representative List by adopting measures such as the Global

Strategy, Nara Document, Cairn's Decisions, and the "Upstream Process," but there is still much more that could be done to make the World Heritage List truly "universal."

As I discussed in my second chapter, the issue of defining "universal value" is central to the function of the World Heritage Convention. The numerous changes to the Convention's Operational Guidelines have altered the criteria for "universal value" over the years, but in the process of becoming more inclusive, perhaps the criteria for "universal value" have become too broad. Elizabeth Betsy Keough (Washington University School of Law) has noted in her article "Heritage in Peril: A Critique of UNESCO's World Heritage Program" that "the selection criteria are broad enough to include almost any site that comes across the Committee's desk" (Keough, 2011, 601). Since the ultimate decision of whether a site is accepted or rejected is up to the World Heritage Committee, the definition of "outstanding universal value" can be difficult to harness. According to Keough, this issue can lead to great misuse of the World Heritage List, as sites may be inscribed for no other reason than financial gain for the nation of origin. (Keough, 2011, 601–602). A possible worst-case scenario of the misuse that Keough (2011, 611–612) describes can be seen at Japan's Iwami Ginzan Silver Mine (Figures 10 & 11). This mining town had been abandoned for forty-five years, but it was suddenly included on the World Heritage List in 2007 as a result of vigorous lobbying by tourism authorities in Tokyo. Prior to its inscription on the List, most Japanese citizens had no idea the mining town existed, but being named a World Heritage Site, the abandoned mine became a huge tourist attraction. The Committee has justified the inscription of Iwami Ginzan saying it satisfies criteria ii, iii, and v, of the ten criteria for "universal value" and qualifies as a cultural landscape, but it seems that there is nothing

truly “outstanding” or “universal” about the mine. The criteria were irrelevant when politics, money, and business came before the ideals of “universal value.”

Following her discussion of this issue of broad criteria, Keough offered a solution that she believes will help the World Heritage Convention “realign its procedures with its goals” (Keough, 2011, 614). She suggested no longer allowing the member states to submit sites for selection, but rather entrusting submission to independent groups of archaeologists, anthropologists, and other scientists who could better understand the significance of a site (Keough, 2011, 613). This would provide an extra layer of vetting that would help stifle the political and business-oriented lobbying around sites so they can be evaluated for their “universal value,” and not their money-making abilities.

Despite Keough’s suggestion, the current guidelines of the World Heritage Convention call for submission of sites to be performed by member states, so what is to be done if the nomination process is still dependent on countries that may or may not exploit the World Heritage inscription for monetary gain? In that case, the nomination dossiers themselves are what should be called to attention.

When a state is proposing a site, or sites, to be inscribed on the World Heritage List, the state must submit a nomination dossier for that site (UNESCO, 2021). These dossiers are essentially forms that inquire about physical, geographical, and other basic information about a site with the addition of the question of which criteria of “outstanding universal value” the site meets. The nomination dossier is what the World Heritage Committee looks at to determine whether a site satisfies the criteria of “universal value.” Prior to this decision, states must prepare a Tentative List of all sites within their borders that have the potential to become World Heritage Sites (UNESCO,

2023, “World Heritage List Nominations”). Once this is complete, a state will begin completing the nomination dossier, and three Advisory Bodies (ICOMOS, IUCN, and ICCROM) independently evaluate the nominated site(s). With the nominations approved by the Advisory Bodies, the nomination then goes to the Committee, which makes the ultimate decision of whether the nominated sites should be inscribed on the List.

Though the final decision is up to the World Heritage Committee, it is the responsibility of the states to nominate sites in the first place. Because of this, examining the nomination process may be of more use than criticizing the guidelines and practices of the World Heritage Convention. Several scholars have taken this approach, and it is apparent that the issue of nomination dossiers may be the real problem behind a lack of true “universal value” in the World Heritage List. Labadi has written much on the topic of nomination dossiers, and in an article concerning the implementation of the “Upstream Process,” Labadi suggested gathering more specific information from the site’s stakeholders on nomination dossiers to better fit each site’s needs (Labadi, 2014, 57–58). Since nomination dossiers currently only require basic information and an explanation of a site’s “universal value,” this specific data would change nomination dossiers from the final step of site nomination to a jumping-off point for stakeholders to better manage and conserve sites. Labadi suggests including information such as tourism management, conservation needs, and community involvement. Including this kind of information on a nomination dossier would provide both a more accurate sense of the site for the Committee judging its value and allow more involvement from local communities who know the sites the best.



In the *International Social Science Journal*, Labadi (2005) took a critical look at the implementation of the Global Strategy from 1994 to 2004 and came up with her own solutions. As mentioned earlier, the Global Strategy did not fix the issue of Eurocentrism in the World Heritage List (Labadi, 2005, 92). The Cairns Decisions, intended to counteract the shortcomings of the Global Strategy, did not accomplish much either, other than establishing the priority system and more equitable representation in the Committee (Labadi, 2005, 94). Labadi states that in order for a site's true anthropological and social value to be represented, the local community of a site must be actively involved, and this would be best accomplished by having a dedicated section in the nomination dossier for community involvement (Labadi, 2005, 97). Involvement of local communities has not necessarily been a requirement for the inscription of a site on the List, but many countries have included details concerning the participation of local communities in Section 3 of the nomination dossier, which is intended for details related to the promotion and presentation of a site. In 2002, the Convention adopted the Budapest Declaration on World Heritage, which encouraged the active involvement of local populations from site identification to protection, but this declaration did not include a change to the nomination dossiers to include a specific section on community involvement (Labadi, 2005, 97).

According to Labadi (2005, 97), the inclusion of cultural landscapes as potential World Heritage Sites further necessitates the involvement of local communities, especially those that are indigenous to a site. Some heritage sites involving indigenous peoples fit into the description of a cultural landscape, displaying the intricate relationship between nature and culture. The local population of a site can also bring

much to the table that may not be offered by the World Heritage Convention or a state's government. People local to a site often have knowledge of the heritage site that outsiders do not, and some of that knowledge may be important for the site's protection and preservation. In addition, the inclusion of local populations may result in the subsequent protection of a people group's traditions, languages, and other intangible heritage components (Labadi, 2005, 98).

Besides the addition of a section on nomination dossiers highlighting community involvement, Labadi (2005, 98–99) also suggested that the World Heritage Convention should adopt more user-friendly language. The literature produced by the Convention since the Global Strategy has become somewhat more user-friendly, but there is definitely room to improve. Even in my own research, I found it a bit difficult to navigate much of the Convention's literature, especially lengthy documents such as the Operational Guidelines. With simpler publications the Convention would be able to better educate states on new policies and concepts, while at the same time allowing for local people who are not as involved in the process to learn more about what is going on and how to get involved.

As important as the issue of a lack of community involvement is, it is also necessary for the World Heritage Convention to include and recognize minority groups. Steven Vertovec (2010, 167), director of the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity in Göttingen, Germany, has written much on the topic of minorities, migrants, and multiculturalism. The Convention, in attempting to create a universal and multicultural World Heritage List, should strive to include all groups of people, no matter how small. Vertovec argues that ethnic minorities and migrants are

often sources of great cultural diversity (Vertovec, 2010, 175–178). He states that most new migrants relocate to areas that are already populated by previous migrants or other minority groups, and this allows for a variety of interactions that may not occur within established majority communities. Also, many individuals in the local communities of Heritage Sites that qualify as cultural landscapes are also a part of minority groups, and their knowledge of a site could help lead to more diverse interpretations of a site’s “universal value.”

One such group that is continually marginalized is that of women. In Labadi’s 2013 book *UNESCO, Cultural Heritage, and Outstanding Universal Value: Value-based Analyses of the World Heritage and Intangible Cultural Heritage Conventions*, she noted that many nomination dossiers have revealed a heavy bias towards male-centered interpretations of the past, and if women are even mentioned, they are referenced in only a few sentences, even though UNESCO has been calling for more recognition of historical women since the 1970’s (Labadi, 2013, 78). Instead of being seen for themselves, women are often portrayed in the context of history as merely the “wives, brides, or mothers or sisters of a male character,” and even as “Others,” being inferior to their male counterparts (Labadi, 2013, 79). Thankfully, these views have diminished in recent years, and there has even been an increase in the number of Heritage Sites that relate to women, such as the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape in Wales (Figure 12), which recognizes the work of working-class women in its dossier (Labadi, 2013, 80–81). Despite these positive changes, Labadi still feels it is vital that women receive representation from the start in nomination dossiers (Labadi, 2013, 83). She states that the inclusion of women on nomination dossiers matters not only for specific sites, but also

nationally. Labadi notes that women living near a site may not feel the sense of attachment and care that men may feel for a site if they are not equally represented in the site's official narratives. Additionally, for women to be truly empowered and a part of the "universal value" of a site, it is important that women have a heritage and history that is valued and recognized not only within a site, but nationally. Without this national representation, women will continue to be ostracized and seen as inferior to the historical male figures of a nation, and thus to the world.

With the inclusion of minority groups, and local communities in the World Heritage Convention, it is important that not only the people themselves are included, but also their cultures, and an important part of culture is language. Dr. Joseph Lo Bianco, Professor of Language and Literacy Education at the University of Melbourne and former President of the Australian Academy of the Humanities, believes that language, and the protection of the various languages, is an essential part of maintaining cultural diversity and therefore essential to the notion of "universal value" (Lo Bianco, 2010, 37). According to Lo Bianco, the "relentless effects of economic globalization and the still not fully understood impacts on communication of technological advancement" call for the creation of language policy-making (Lo Bianco, 2010, 39). With certain languages becoming more and more prevalent, even in places where they are not the native tongue, certain less-prevalent languages are put under pressure to compete:

The term, ["a language under pressure"], refers to a language some of whose speakers live under political, social, economic or cultural conditions that induce them to transfer to communicating in a different, dominant, language. If such pressures persist across generations languages under pressure become

endangered. They are “locally endangered” when only one or a few communities of speakers are under pressure but become “globally endangered” when all their speakers come under pressure to shift. Today most of the world’s languages may have reached some level of attrition, and many face the latter and extreme position and are on the verge of extinction. Should this come about it would represent an extraordinary and unprecedented contraction in the cultural condition of humanity. So far as we know it would be the only time in human existence during which our communicative means, whether in speech or in signs, would not be marked by immense diversity. (Lo Bianco, 2010, 39)

As Lo Bianco wrote, language represents a great deal of the rich diversity of the world, and losing any of them to the pressure of more dominant languages would be damaging to cultural diversity. If many smaller languages became extinct, it would be quite a threat to the “universal value” of World Heritage Sites, even if their legacy were still preserved in a language that survives.

Lo Bianco mentioned the threat that globalization has posed against language, and globalization has definitely had negative effects on cultural diversity. However, globalization has produced positive effects on cultural diversity as well. According to Labadi (2010, 6), the numerous legal instruments adopted by UNESCO could be seen as attempts to fight against globalization, but she does not see globalization as an entirely negative thing. Labadi wrote:

Indeed, culture does not transfer in a unilateral way. Cultural manifestations, goods and services are not passively consumed by individuals. They always involve re-interpretation, translation, mutation, and adaption as they are

understood through the prism of the receiver's own culture and value systems.”  
(Labadi, 2010, 7).

Culture is often understood as an unchanging trend that is linked to a certain place or people, but Labadi thinks of culture as fluid, changing and adapting based on many circumstances. As an example, she mentions the changing of certain cuisines to fit the tastes of a locality other than where the cuisine originated. The cuisine still exists even though it has changed, and as a result, more people may be open to experiencing this part of a culture that they otherwise may not have. Because of this fluidity of culture, Labadi states that globalization should not be deemed threatening and negative, but rather globalization should be seen as a multidimensional tool that has the ability to lead to new, hybrid forms of cultural diversity (Labadi, 2010, 8).

All these issues regarding the display of cultural diversity to maintain the “universal value” of the World Heritage List lead to one main issue: lacking representation. In a study revolving around interpretations of the World Heritage Site of Göreme National Park and the Rock Sites of Cappadocia (Figure 13), Hazel Tucker and Elizabeth Carnegie noted disparities in the interpretations given about the site (Tucker & Carnegie, 2014, 67–73). The official signage, official tours, and local tours all produced differing interpretations of the site's history. None of the interpretations were necessarily wrong, but each different interpretation focused on a different part of the site's history. Tucker and Carnegie concluded that in order for the concept of “universal value” to be truly effective, plurality must be embraced (Tucker & Carnegie, 2014, 75). Like the previously mentioned issues, the “universal value” of sites will be best represented when

all parts of the history of sites are included in the narrative, whether this is the local community, marginalized groups, or even multiple points in history of a site.

All the issues discussed in this chapter are issues that are still present within the World Heritage Convention today. Until these issues are resolved, the UNESCO World Heritage Convention will not achieve its goals of “universal value” and international community. At its current state, the inscription of a site on the World Heritage List has more value economically than universally—like the Iwami Ginzan Silver Mine, which is not necessarily of value to the whole world. Sites such as the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape have been helpful in broadening the involvement of local communities and minority groups, but there is still much to be desired. Like many of the scholars I have cited have written, it seems the main issue in achieving “universal value” lies in the beginning of the inscription process in nomination dossiers. Without initiating radical changes to the processes of the World Heritage Convention, the inclusion of more specific details regarding all aspects of a site’s history and community involvement on its nomination dossier would help bring the Convention’s original intentions back to the forefront and restore the notion of “universal value.”

## CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION

UNESCO's World Heritage Convention is a strong international force that is helping to foster international unity and cooperation through the protection of sites deemed valuable to all of humanity, but even from the start, the Convention has had its share of imperfections. What started as an idea to conserve and protect the history of the world for the sake of everyone—including the generations of the future—has become not much more than a name that people want to inscribe on their own sites for purposes that do not include everyone. Several things need to change in order for the Convention to continue to be a driving force in the arenas of World Heritage and international cooperation.

In the second chapter I discussed the tumultuous history of the World Heritage Convention and its definition of “universal value.” It is clear from the numerous changes, additions, and implementations the Convention has adopted over the years that it is difficult to define “universal value,” but the unified set of criteria produced in the 2005 Operational Guidelines has been the most successful attempt at this. Even with these clear criteria, though, nations have continued to nominate sites that are not universally valuable, and the Committee has continued to accept them. Like Keough (2011) has written, a possible solution would be no longer allowing nations to submit their own sites, but rather let independent experts do that job. However, a change such as this would be so radical that I fear it would compromise the entire Convention.



Completely changing the nomination process would be one solution to these issues, but I think that the ability of nations to nominate sites to be inscribed on the World Heritage List is an important part of the Convention's goal to include all people. Allowing independent groups to nominate all World Heritage Sites would make the Convention much less democratic than it is, which is essential to its mission. However, I believe that for certain cases—similar to the start of the Aswan Dam crisis—it should be up to the Convention's Committee (or perhaps a different group) to decide whether a site should bear the World Heritage inscription or not. If it were not for the efforts of institutions outside of Egypt, the monuments of Nubia and Abu Simbel would currently be underwater. On the other hand, sites such as Iwami Ganzin Silver Mine were nominated for the sole purpose of having the World Heritage inscription for tourism and monetary gain. In instances such as these, I believe it would be a good idea to have a separate group that determines whether a site truly has “universal value.”

Contrary to issues surrounding already-inscribed sites, I believe newly-nominated sites should be held to new standards. As several of the scholars I cited have mentioned, the World Heritage List would be much more inclusive and universal if nomination dossiers reflected the inclusiveness that a site hopes to bring. Many sites currently on the List, especially in Europe, may really only be of value to certain groups of people. Nomination dossiers should include not only which criteria of “universal value” a site meets, but also how those criteria will be of value to potential visitors from different cultures.

In addition to nomination dossiers including how a site will accomplish “universal value,” nomination dossiers should definitely include the involvement of local

communities. Without local involvement, a site can easily become just another tourist attraction that is controlled by someone far away with no attachments to the site. Local communities can bring very valuable skills and information to a site, and it is extremely important that these people are involved in every aspect of a site, all the way from the nomination process to post-inscription conservation, protection, and other activities.

Beyond the inclusion of all people in nomination dossiers, it is very important that all aspects of a site's history are noted on the nomination dossier. As the situation in Göreme National Park and the Rock Sites of Cappadocia that Tucker and Carnegie (2014) studied, it is essential that all parts of a site's history are included. When multiple narratives are available about a site, they are bound to differ and cause discrepancies that may leave visitors confused. To counter this, why not include all narratives in the nomination dossier? Even if some parts of the narratives oppose each other, this would allow people learning about a site to come up with their own opinions, and this would also open up the value of sites to more groups of people who may not agree with or identify with the traditional narrative. This issue would also be helped by the inclusion of local populations, who may have knowledge of the history of a site that is not included in the traditional or opposing narratives.

Another thing that I believe will help the World Heritage Convention return to its original goals is the adoption of more user-friendly language. I mentioned in an earlier chapter that, even for myself, navigating some of the Convention's publications can be quite difficult. The language of the Convention is quite technical and may scare off some people who really want to learn more about World Heritage. If the language of the UNESCO World Heritage Convention was clearer and simpler, it would allow for more

people to learn and become interested in World Heritage. Similar to the issue of inclusion in nomination dossiers, I believe that if the Convention provided more user-friendly literature, many more people would become interested in and involved with World Heritage, and the Convention's goals of universality and inclusiveness would be better accomplished.

All the issues I have discussed stem from one main issue, which is a lack of representation. The Convention has done so much over the years to try to include as many people and sites as possible, but in doing so, the Convention has made it harder for some to achieve representation. Starting with change in nomination dossiers is a great step for future World Heritage Sites, but beyond this, I believe simpler publications from the World Heritage Convention would create a new generation of supporters that want to keep the Convention's mission alive.

The World Heritage Convention has flaws, but I believe it is still a great international instrument. The International Campaign to Save the Monuments of Nubia may have been UNESCO's greatest accomplishment, but for the future, it should be a reminder of what the Convention is intended for: international unity. Like the nomination process, it is not the Convention's job to do everything involving World Heritage, but it is up to the people to learn about what is happening with World Heritage and produce positive changes that will allow the Convention to continue to be a source of international unity for future generations.

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## FIGURES

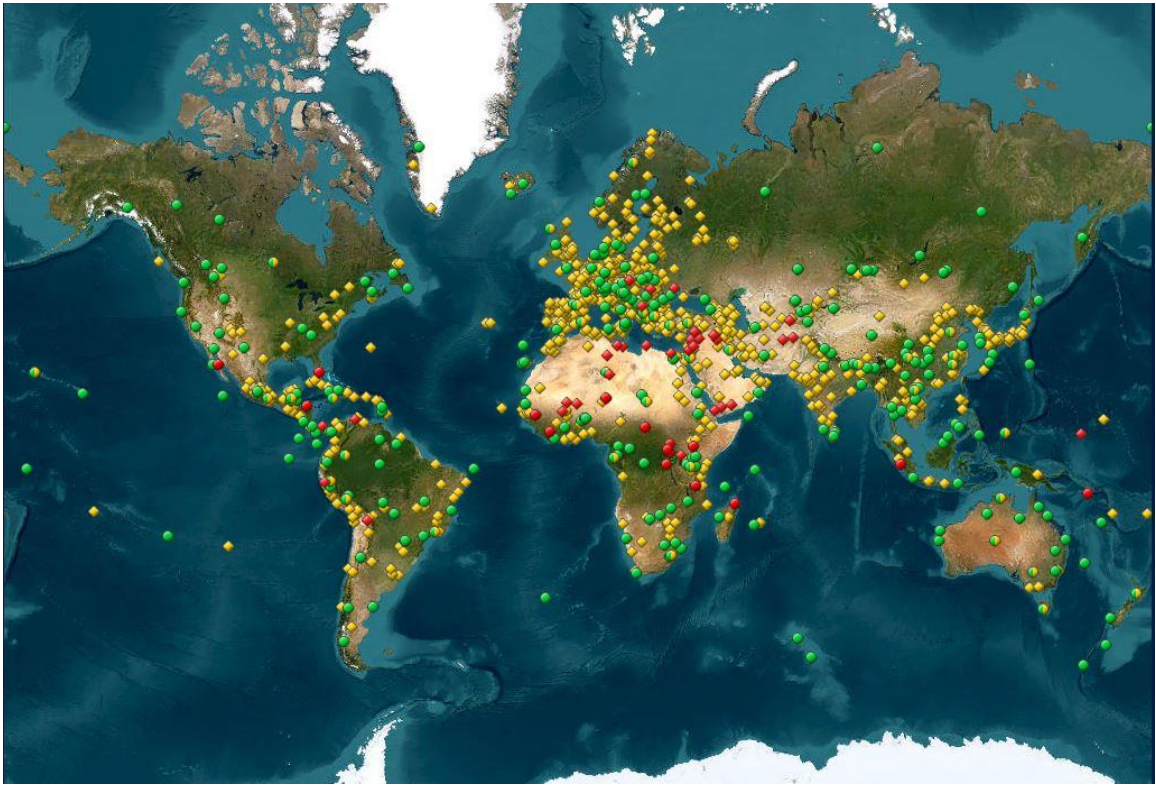


Figure 1, Interactive Map with Cultural (Yellow), Natural (Green), and Endangered (Red) Sites, UNESCO World Heritage Convention, 2023

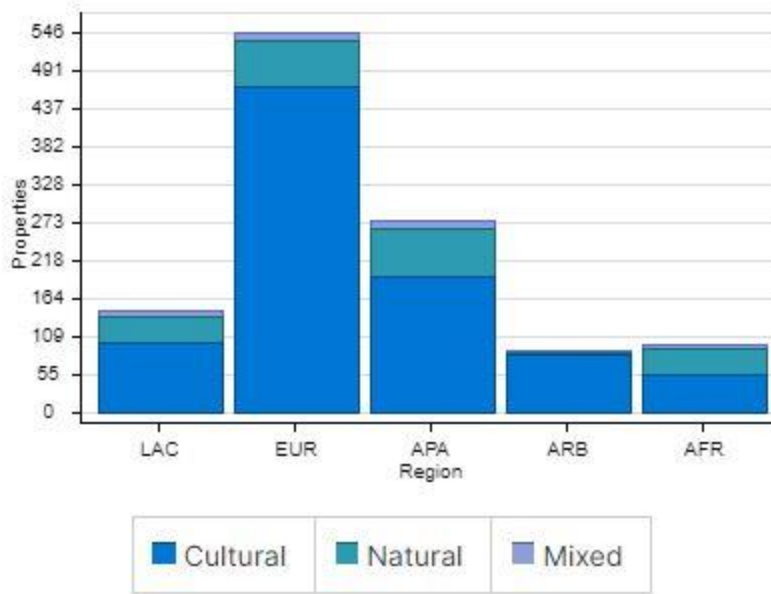


Figure 2, Number of World Heritage Sites by Region, UNESCO World Heritage Convention, 2023

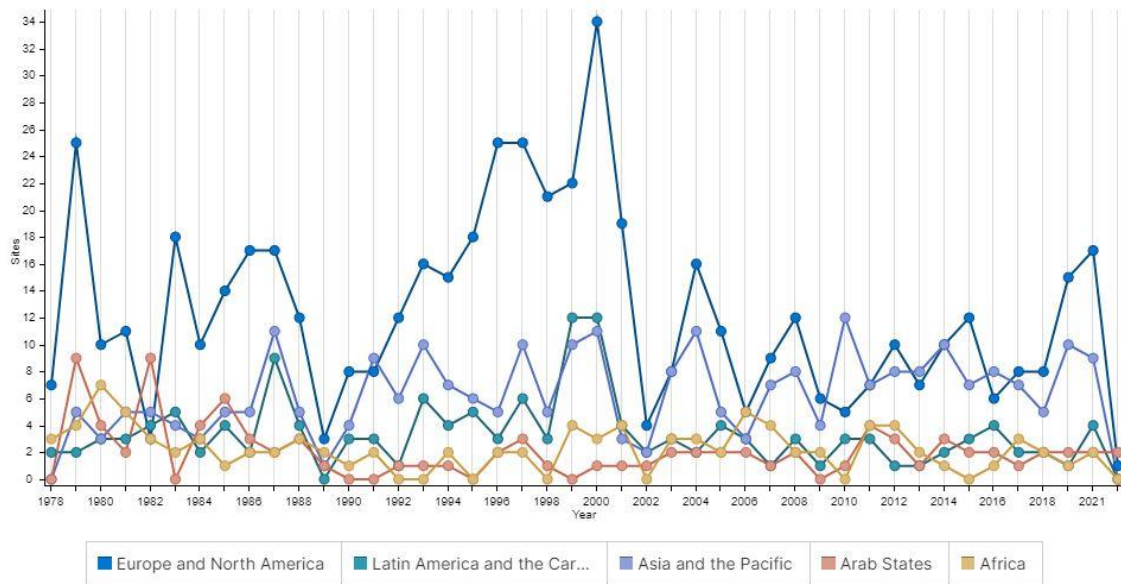


Figure 3, Number of World Heritage Sites Inscribed Each Year by Region, UNESCO World Heritage Convention, 2023





Figure 4, Aerial View of Relocated Temple of Abu Simbel, Keith McInnes, 2019



Figure 5, Dismantling Abu Simbel, UNESCO/Nenadovic



Figure 6, Dismantling Monuments at Abu Simbel, UNESCO





Figure 7, Moving the Head of a Monument at Abu Simbel, Terrence Spencer



Figure 8, View of the Structures Required to Lift the Monuments out of the Path of Flooding Caused by the Aswan High Dam, Terrence Spencer

1. Afghanistan
2. Algeria
3. Austria
4. Belgium
5. China
6. Cuba
7. Cyprus
8. Democratic Kampuchea
9. France
10. Federal Republic of Germany
11. Ghana
12. Greece
13. Holy See
14. India
15. Indonesia
16. Iraq
17. Italy
18. Japan
19. Kuwait
20. Lebanon
21. Libyan Arab Jamahiriya
22. Luxembourg
23. Malaysia
24. Mali
25. Malta
26. Monaco
27. Morocco
28. Nepal
29. Netherlands
30. Nigeria
31. Norway
32. Pakistan
33. Philippines
34. Qatar
35. Romania
36. Saudi Arabia
37. Sierre Leone
38. Spain
39. Sri Lanka
40. Sudan
41. Syria
42. Sweden
43. Switzerland
44. Togo
45. Turkey
46. Uganda
47. United Kingdom
48. United States of America
49. Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
50. Yugoslavia

Figure 9, List of countries that contributed to the International Campaign to Save the Monuments of Nubia, UNESCO, 2020



Figure 10, Aerial View of the World Heritage Site at Iwami Ginzan Silver Mine, Shintaro Sugio





Figure 11, One of the Mineshafts Open to the Public at Iwami Ganzin, Haruo Inuoe



Figure 12, Blaenavon Industrial Landscape, Wales, UNESCO/ejbaurdo





Figure 13, Göreme National Park and the Rock Sites of Cappadocia, Francesco Bandarin