Why Do World Heritage Sites Need Interpretation?

Carolin Kolhoff
German Commission for UNESCO
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“...since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed.”

(Preamble of the Constitution of UNESCO, 1945)

• United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
• Specialized agency of the United Nations
German Commission for UNESCO

Key areas:
- Communicating World Heritage
- Transboundary Cooperation
- Sustainable Development
- World Heritage Management
The Origins of the World Heritage Convention

- Increasing awareness for the threats to cultural heritage and the environment

- Parts of the heritage are of outstanding interest and therefore need to be preserved as part of the world heritage of mankind as a whole

- 1972 Adoption of the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (World Heritage Convention)
Obligations and Objectives

- Current situation: 193 States Parties
- 1,121 World Heritage sites in 167 countries
  - 869 cultural / 213 natural / 39 mixed sites
  - 39 transboundary or transnational sites
  - 46 World Heritage sites in Germany

- International solidarity and cooperation for the protection of heritage

- Financial assistance and exchange of knowledge
Obligations and Objectives

Article 4:
• Identification, protection and conservation of sites
• Presentation and transmission to future generations

➢ Protection, conservation and transmission are of equal importance!

Strategic Objectives – the “Five Cs”
• Credibility
• Conservation
• Capacity-building
• Communication
• Communities

Increase public awareness, involvement and support for World Heritage through communication
Article 27:

1. The States Parties to this Convention shall endeavor by all appropriate means, and in particular by educational and information programmes, to strengthen appreciation and respect by their peoples of the cultural and natural heritage defined in Articles 1 and 2 of the Convention.

2. They shall undertake to keep the public broadly informed of the dangers threatening this heritage and of the activities carried on in pursuance of this Convention.
Objectives of Communication

- Communication through in-/formal education, tourism, participation opportunities, public outreach
- Diverse target groups
  - Local communities
  - (inter)national visitors (individuals and groups)
  - Children and families, students, elderly, etc.
Objectives of Communication

• Get young people interested and involved

• World Heritage Trainee Programme
  • Young people acting as multipliers

• School programme “denkmal aktiv”
  • Bringing cultural heritage to schools
Objectives of Communication

- UNESCO World Heritage Day (UNESCO-Welterbetag)
  - Since 2005
  - Every first Sunday in June
  - Raises awareness
Objectives of Communication

- **Key objectives**
  - Raise awareness for the value of World Heritage
  - Raise awareness for threats to heritage and promote support for its protection and conservation
  - Inform about the key ideas – heritage of mankind as a whole, cultural and natural diversity, international solidarity, sustainable development
  - Enable an inclusive experience of World Heritage (accessibility)
  - Create a sense of joint responsibility for World Heritage

➤ **Objective of Communication: Influence behaviour**
Contents – Outstanding Universal Value

• Consideration for inscription on the World Heritage List: Outstanding Universal Value (OUV)

• Meet at least one out of ten possible selection criteria
• Meet requirements of authenticity and/or integrity
• Establish an effective mechanism to preserve and manage OUV and authenticity/ integrity (management plan)

➢ Why is this place special and deserves to be protected? What needs to be done to preserve it? What has that got to do with me?
Increasingly enhanced conception of World Heritage
- Natural sites, landscapes, terrestrial and marine
- Religious and secular heritage, historical buildings, residential buildings, industrial heritage
- Prehistoric and modern heritage
- Monuments, groups of buildings, cultural landscapes
- Geological formations, marine heritage, etc.
- All regions, vegetation zones, cultural surroundings
In 1994 the World Heritage Committee established the existence of imbalances on the World Heritage List.

Global Strategy:
- Broaden the definition of World Heritage
- Achieve a representative, balanced and credible World Heritage List
Currently 53 sites are included on the List of World Heritage in Danger

Justification: ascertained threat to the OUV of a site
- War damages and deliberate destruction
- Pollution
- Climate change and natural disasters
- Buildings and development
- Impacts of tourism
Contents – Sustainable Development

- World Heritage sites are places of learning for sustainable development
  - Sustainable Development Goals
  - Knowledge resources: adaption process, use of natural resources, risk management and resilience, etc.

- Tourism: Opportunity and Threat
  - Potential damage to the site
  - Displacement of local communities
  - Overtourism
• World Heritage ≠ National Heritage

• Sites have intercultural and cross-border importance
Thank you very much for your attention!

German Commission for UNESCO
Martin-Luther-Allee 42
Tel.: +49 228 604 97 110
E-Mail: welterbe@unesco.de
www.unesco.de