

INTRODUCTION

The *ICOMOS World Report 2016-2019 on Monuments and Sites in Danger (Heritage at Risk)* is the latest volume of what is already a whole series of World Reports started in 2000 and followed by the volumes *H@R 2001/2002*, *H@R 2002/2003*, *H@R 2004/2005*, *H@R 2006/2007*, *H@R 2008-2010*, *H@R 2011-2013* and *H@R 2014/2015*. The series has also been complemented by four special editions: *H@R Special 2006 Underwater Cultural Heritage at Risk/Managing Natural and Human Impacts*, *H@R Special 2007 The Soviet Heritage and European Modernism*, *H@R Special 2008 Cultural Heritage and Natural Disasters / Risk Preparedness and the Limits of Prevention*, and the new *H@R Special 2020 Heritage Under Water at Risk: Threats, Challenges and Solutions*. The continuation of the successful series, also widely disseminated via the internet, is related to Resolution 26 of the 16th General Assembly of ICOMOS in October 2008 in Quebec, which resolved to “request the Heritage at Risk Series to be continued and that actions be taken to enhance its communication and impact so as to support protection and conservation of the cultural heritage world-wide and to better serve ICOMOS and its Committees to define priorities and strategic goals”.

The new *World Report 2016-2019* consists of contributions from 23 countries, among them reports from national and international scientific committees of ICOMOS, but also, as usual, reports by individual experts, complimented by short information on the World Heritage Watch network, founded in 2014, and by press releases on the Europa Nostra programme “The Seven Most Endangered Heritage Sites in Europe” launched in 2013.

Natural impact on cultural heritage

Very welcome is yet another report from the International Polar Heritage Committee IPHC (pp. 140 ff.) on global warming, the greatest threat to the polar regions, because the diminishing sea ice produces coastal erosion by rising sea levels. Among the mitigation attempts digital documentation but also satellite technology for monitoring are mentioned (see also the UK report on pp. 163 f., which suggests that ICOMOS should consider establishing an ISC on Space Heritage). Similar threats caused by rising sea levels, for example floods or shore erosion are reported from the San Francisco Embarcadero Historic District (p. 124), the Tidal Basin of Washington D. C. (pp. 126 f.), or from Turkey (pp. 121 f.). Serious impacts of the global climate change (already subject of a special focus in *H@R 2006/2007*, pp. 191-227) on the natural and cultural heritage are extensive droughts and forest fires, reported from the Mediterranean, e. g. from Greece (2008) and Turkey (pp. 121 f.), or the devastating bush fires of 2019 in Australia (pp. 18 f.). Other impacts are storms or cyclones, like the back-to-back hurricanes of late 2017 in Puerto Rico (pp. 125 f.), which damaged 11 of 12 historic zones. Several earthquakes (from Izmir 1999 to Istanbul 2019) are reported from Turkey, some followed by tsunamis and floods (pp. 121 f.), from San Francisco (p. 124),

Mexico 2017 (p. 89), Romania (pp. 110 f.) with damages caused by repeated seismic activities, and finally from Nepal (pp. 95 f.): The latter is a follow-up report on the post-disaster rehabilitation process after the earthquakes of April and May 2015, confirming that a reconstruction of the settlements and the cultural sites will only be possible by ensuring cultural continuity – through knowledge and skills of the community being passed on from generation to generation.

War and inter-ethnic conflicts

An analysis of the reports shows that, apart from the general risks to heritage from natural disasters and physical decay of structures, there are certain patterns in human activity that endanger our heritage, such as risks from war and inter-ethnic conflicts, as documented in the previous volume *H@R 2014/2015* where reports focussed on the situation in the Near East (pp. 63-101) and Yemen (pp. 141 f.). Unfortunately, the conflicts persist and the ICOMOS Working Group for Safeguarding Cultural Heritage in Syria and Iraq, established in 2012 and validated in November 2014 by resolution of the General Assembly in Florence, is continuing all the activities of monitoring, research, formation and training courses for cultural heritage professionals. A precarious and vulnerable situation of the heritage is reported from Kosovo (pp. 82 ff.), resulting from the consequences of the armed conflicts of 1998/99, where due to lack of maintenance and improper management a significant number of sites are at risk of being completely ruined. Professional and technical training in the various fields of cultural heritage preservation is necessary as well as a reform of the responsible institutions.

Development pressure

Human-made risks from development pressures caused by population growth and progressive industrialisation are reported from all parts of the world, resulting in ever-greater consumption of land and destroying not only archaeological evidence, but entire (even protected) cultural landscapes. Examples of such development pressures are the various dam projects, some of them already mentioned in previous *Heritage at Risk* editions, e. g. Alliano and Hasankeyf, both in Turkey (*H@R 2011-2013*, p. 150), or Belo Monte, Brazil (*H@R 2011-2013*, p. 52). From Mexico five dam projects from different parts of the country are reported (pp. 88 f.) which will cause the displacement of thousands of indigenous people. But also the opposite might happen, as we learn from the report on the Estonian Watermills (pp. 29 ff.), where the Environmental Board of Estonia demands the unconditional demolition of the historic dams to restore the spawning grounds of fish (part of the EU water policy since 2000)! And a water infrastructure project is threatening the historic town of Rassawek, Virginia (pp. 130 f.). As already mentioned in previous editions, large-scale mining projects continue to threaten cultural

landscapes, like the open-cast gold mining in the archaeological zone of Xochicalco (World Heritage Site) in Mexico (pp. 87 f.), or the silver mining, forestry, tourism and drug trafficking activities in the Sierra Tarahumara (state of Chihuahua) in Mexico (pp. 90 f.). Other projects are threatening cultural landscapes as well, like the annexation of 2.200 acres of land by the city of North Charleston inside the protected historic landscape of the Ashley River (pp. 124 f.), the recently started oil-gas-development by drilling hundreds of new wells that will produce oil through fracking inside the Chaco Culture National Historic Park (pp. 130), or the transmission line built in 2018 across the James River inside the protected Colonial National Historic Park (pp. 130 f.).

Tourism

Often it is also the political will that is missing, for instance if the extant legal regulations and structures are not put in use, are weakened or even changed, as happened with the Bears Ears cultural landscape in Utah, designated a national monument in December 2016 by President Obama, but revoked in December 2018 by President Trump. The original protected area was replaced with two much smaller areas, one million acres of land with thousands of archaeological sites thus being unprotected and exposed to looting, vandalism and incompatible use (pp. 128 f.). Less dramatic but with possible serious impact on the cultural heritage is the governmental modernisation project of the Zhinvali-Larsi traffic road through the Khada Valley (pp. 48 ff.) in Georgia. And the planned “Mayan railway” in South-Eastern Mexico (p. 89), which aims to connect different tourist points between Yucatan and Campeche to boost tourism, will cross not only the ecological reserve of Calakmul (World Heritage Site), but also vast archaeological remains that might be affected by the construction of this railroad project. Tourist development facilities are planned inside the Sintra cultural landscape (World Heritage Site) in Portugal, including a palace of the 19th century that is to be converted into the new Quinta da Gandarinha hotel project (p. 108), while the eastern cloister of the Alcobaça Cistercian monastery (World Heritage Site) has been granted to a private holding group for transforming it into a luxury hotel (p. 107). And from the historic centre of Porto (World Heritage Site), severe threats to the property are reported (pp. 108 f.), all characterised by façadism, a result of depopulation and tourism pressures, explained in the thematic report on “Airbnb Reshapes Historic Cities” (pp. 138 f.). The problems described in this report can also be applied to many other cities worldwide.

Lack of use and maintenance

Neglect and/or lack of use and maintenance are very often the source of possible deterioration or destruction. It applies to industrial buildings, like the Roundhouse in Berlin-Pankow (pp. 59 f.) or the ‘Tobačna tovarna’ (Tobacco factory), the mixed-use Kolizej building and the Bežigrad stadium, all in Ljubljana, Slovenia (pp. 112 ff.), the Esplanade Mansion of Mumbai (pp. 69 ff.) or the Mitchell Park Domes in Milwaukee (p. 124), but also to places of worship, like the remains of the Temple Synagogue in the Neustadt of Hamburg (pp. 52 f.) or the monastic building complexes in Albania (pp. 12 ff.) and the David Gareji monasteries in Georgia (pp. 44 ff.); for both documentation initiatives are reported. Unfortunately, very important church buildings may be damaged either by lack of political will, as the illegal destruction of the

interior of Berlin’s St. Hedwig’s Cathedral shows (pp. 57 f.), or by fire, as happened on April 15, 2019 to the famous Cathedral Notre Dame in Paris (pp. 36 ff.). And on 12 November 2017, the archaeological World Heritage Site of Ventarrón, Peru (pp. 104 ff.) was also seriously damaged by fire.

Threats to urban districts

Even historic urban districts all over the world suffer from neglect, lack of maintenance or careless, often totally unplanned renewal processes, like the demolition of urban residential neighbourhoods in Uzbekistan’s cities (even those in World Heritage Sites) (pp. 132 ff.), projects to ‘contemporise’ the sacred town of Varanasi (pp. 73 ff.) or Chandni Chowk, the Mughal Ceremonial Avenue of Shahjahanabad (pp. 76 ff.), both in India, or the plan to build five skyscrapers in the historic harbour area of Batumi, Georgia (pp. 39 ff.). Visual impacts caused by planned or already erected high-rise buildings are reported from Prague (pp. 26 ff.), from Amsterdam, where the city administration is planning the new residential area of ‘Sluisbuurt’ with 14 high-rise buildings at slightly more than two kilometres distance, just outside the buffer zone of the World Heritage canal ring area (pp. 101 ff.), and from Vienna (pp. 21 ff.), where six high-rise towers are planned within the buffer zone already on the List of World Heritage in Danger. There the problems inside the core zone concern the illegal practice of converting empty roof spaces into apartments. And the core zone of Amsterdam (p. 100) is faced once again with giant advertisements on scaffolding, as already reported in H@R 2008–2010 (pp. 215 f.).

Focus: 20th century heritage

In this volume, special attention is given to reports focussing on the built heritage of the 20th century, with the International Scientific Committee on 20th Century Heritage (ISC20C) presenting examples of the “Heritage Alert” process, which provides a method for assessing and publicising a range of modern risk cases to focus international attention on alternative conservation solutions. Launched in 2009, it has been quite successful for the conservation of many modern heritage sites, but there are losses as well, as reported from the Palacio de Bellas Artes in San Sebastian, Spain (pp. 117 ff.) or the Y-Block in Oslo, Norway (pp. 143 ff.), as well as unresolved cases like the Viking Ship Hall in Roskilde, Denmark (pp. 145 ff.).

Other reports from members of the ISC20C committee present either losses, like the ‘Hall of Nations Complex’ from 1972 in New Delhi, demolished in 2017 (pp. 148 ff.), the Kala Academy building in Goa under threat of demolition (pp. 151 ff.), or threats of ‘redevelopment’, as faced by the Central Vista of the British Imperial Capital, New Delhi (pp. 156 ff.). These reports are an appeal to change the attitude towards our recent heritage.

A good example for the problem of attitude is the Buzludzha building from 1981, a monument to praise the glory of the Bulgarian Communist Party, abandoned after 1989 and suffering from vandalism and decay, as already reported in the previous volume H@R 2014/2015 (pp. 32–34). After the reassessment of this most iconic and significant building of post-war modernism in Bulgaria an international team of experts started in 2019 to develop a conservation and management plan (pp. 24 f.). Similar problems are reported from Chemnitz, former Karl-Marx-Stadt, GDR (pp. 62 ff.), where of the ensemble of the bus station of 1968, an outstanding example of Eastern Modernism (and con-

sidered the most modern bus station in Europe), today only the suspended pylon roof is protected. More delicate are the problems reported from Peenemünde, Germany (pp. 65 ff.) concerning the remains of the former experimental plant, part of the Army Research Centre (from 1939 until 1943). And the Malmi airport in Helsinki (pp. 32 ff.), built from 1935 to 1938, an icon of Finnish modernism (see DOCOMOMO catalogues of 1991 and 2017) is under threat, because the city of Helsinki is consistently working on transforming the ensemble into a residential area. In Germany, in the year of the Bauhaus centenary the city administration of Bad Neuenahr decided to demolish the spa buildings from 1937 (pp. 54 ff.), while in Berlin two iconic buildings of – not yet protected – brutalist architecture, the Institute for Hygiene and Microbiology (1966–74) and the Central Animal Laboratories (1967–81), nicknamed Mouse Bunker (Mäusebunker), are still under threat of demolition (pp. 60 ff.).

All these reports on threats (not only to World Heritage Sites) can be considered as the result of continuous proactive observation, a preventive monitoring of the state of conservation, which lies in the responsibility of the National Committees of ICOMOS (article 4 of the Statutes), and, as explained in the Introduction to the previous edition on p. 10, such preventive monitoring for the World Heritage Sites is part of the responsibilities of the advisory bodies ICOMOS, IUCN and ICCROM. Despite the positive results of some preventive monitoring groups for World Heritage Sites organised at national level a couple of years ago (e. g. in Germany, Austria, and Hungary) and published in the H@R editions since 2006/2007 (including this volume), further definition and improvement under the guidance of ICOMOS will be

welcome, as Resolution no. 31 of the GA 2017 resolved: *Development of an ICOMOS Methodology on Preventive Monitoring*. Let's hope we have it soon!

At the moment, all of us are suffering from the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic, which affects all kinds of activities, including those related to the conservation of cultural heritage and all the people involved, indifferent of their speciality or social status. ICOMOS has started a long-term survey on the impacts of the pandemic on cultural heritage conservation, and, as our president of ICOMOS suggested in his foreword, this might become a special issue in our H@R series.

With this volume of *Heritage at Risk* we hope to have succeeded in giving a certain overview of the threats, problems and trends regarding the protection of monuments in different regions of the world in the period 2016–2019. We are well aware of the gaps in our work and of the limits of what we can do. Thanking all colleagues who have contributed to this publication and made their pictures available to us, we would also like to note that, in line with ICOMOS policy, the texts and information provided for this publication reflect the independent view of each committee and the different authors. Our special thanks are addressed to Gaia Jungeblodt, our director at the International Secretariat, who over the last years has collected all the relevant information for our editorial work. At the secretariat of ICOMOS Germany in Berlin we would like to thank John Ziesemer who was in charge of the editorial work and the English translations, and Dörthe Hellmuth for her administrative work. Finally, we wish to extend our thanks to the German Federal Government Commissioner for Cultural Affairs and the Media who once again provided the necessary financial and organisational framework for this publication.

Christoph Machat