

The System of Monitoring of World Heritage Properties in the Czech Republic and its Results

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The system of monitoring is well established in the Czech Republic. The Ministry of Culture entrusted the National Heritage Institute (NPÚ) with this task and allocated the necessary funds in its budget in 2003. The NPÚ created special units or at least posts for monitoring referees in all its regional offices in charge of the World Heritage properties in their territories. At the headquarters of the Institute a special section consisting of three experienced colleagues, one of them in the position of contact person on a national level, was established to methodically control and coordinate the monitoring performed in the regions. This section summarises 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.

There are 12 inscribed World Heritage properties in Czechia (Fig. 1) including the large historic centre of the city of Prague. Their present state of preservation, the work on management plans and other relevant data put into the annual monitoring reports can be summarised as follows (in alphabetic order):

1. **Brno, Tugendhat House** (Fig. 2). This masterpiece of Ludwig Mies van der Rohe was very considerably conserved in the years 2008–2012 with expert participation of distinguished DOCOMOMO members whose help proved to be extremely useful and expedient. In April 2012 the house was reopened to the public. The property is reliably run by the Museum of the City of Brno that strictly controls the great number of visitors. A management plan has not yet been prepared. However, due to the type, use and current management of the property this is actually not needed.

2. **Český Krumlov**, historic centre of the city (Fig. 3). A most picturesque and valuable historic urban ensemble with a magnificent castle open to the public. The present state of conservation of individual parts of the ensemble is rather diverse. The huge castle complex looked after by the National Heritage Institute is in very good condition after a rather demanding conservation of most of its buildings (two Europa Nostra awards won in the category of conservation). The situation of the historic city centre is much more complicated. It suffers from a total gentrification, most of its houses being converted into hotels and guesthouses and some of them rather ruthlessly modernised in their interiors in the course of the last twenty years. There is investment pressure on the area around the historic centre threatening to impair

the extremely impressive setting of the city in the surrounding beautiful landscape. The Vltava riverbed was recently regulated in a not very considerate way.

The not yet completed management plan may perhaps improve the coordination and reconciliation of individual and public interests for the benefit of the city's artistic and historical values. The problem of a monstrous so called Revolving Theatre Auditory built on the territory of an extremely valuable Baroque castle garden has not yet been solved in spite of repeated promises made by the Czech state party to the World Heritage Committee of UNESCO.

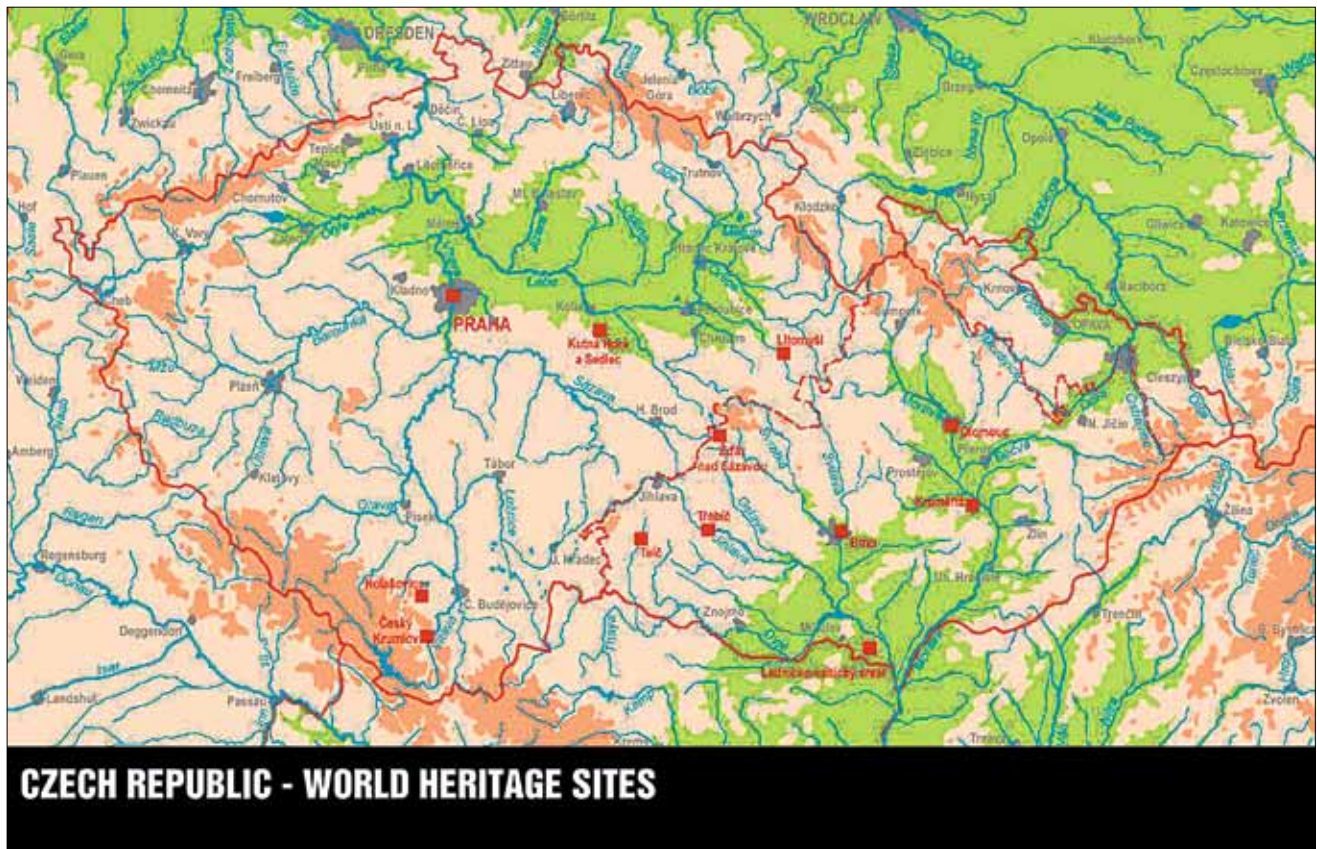
3. **Holašovice**, an ensemble of south Bohemian village architecture (Fig. 4). The property as a whole is in a good state of conservation; no considerable problems have been indicated. The preparation of a management plan is in progress.

4. **Kroměříž**, country palace and gardens (Fig. 5). An ensemble consisting of a magnificent archiepiscopal summer residence with an extensive landscape garden and a detached rare formal 17th-century garden of sophisticated composition (so-called Flower Garden).

The state of conservation of the palace and its gardens is satisfactory; no serious problems are indicated. The house and gardens are run by NPÚ. The demanding conservation of the formal Flower Garden is in progress. The management plan was updated in 2011.

5. **Kutná Hora**, historic centre of the city with St Barbara votive church and Sedlec Cistercian monastery church (Fig. 6). On the whole the property is in a good state of conservation. The magnificent medieval St Barbara church was considerably restored in the years 2005–2011 as well as the interior of the Gothic and Baroque Sedlec monastery church. Much work has been put into the stone plastering and general improvement of the city's public spaces. The restoration of the former Jesuit Convent, now the seat of the Art Museum of Central Bohemia, was finished in 2012. There is some development pressure on the territory of the buffer zone of the property that might endanger its so far very impressive skyline and links to the surrounding landscape. The management plan was completed and adopted three years ago.

6. **Lednice – Valtice Cultural Landscape** (Fig. 7). A large complex of two Lichtenstein country palaces open to the public, their gardens, lakes and a number of secondary historic buildings, pavilions and local dominants scattered in an intentionally composed picturesque landscape.



The monitoring of Lednice – Valnice Areal (LVA) shows a number of problems. On the one hand, both country palaces run by NPÚ are in a very good state of conservation, some parts like the splendid Lednice Horse Stables by J. B. Fischer von Erlach being in the process of conservation. On the other hand, the extensive areas of the palace gardens are really only well kept in the parts surrounding the palaces, in their formally composed parts and in the principle views. In other landscape parts of the gardens there are problems of maintaining the streams and alleys, sometimes even for reasons of nature conservancy (damages caused by protected beavers and some protected species of insects living in the wood of fallen trees, etc). Some projects of highway construction crossing the area will cause considerable problems.

The management plan was updated in 2011.

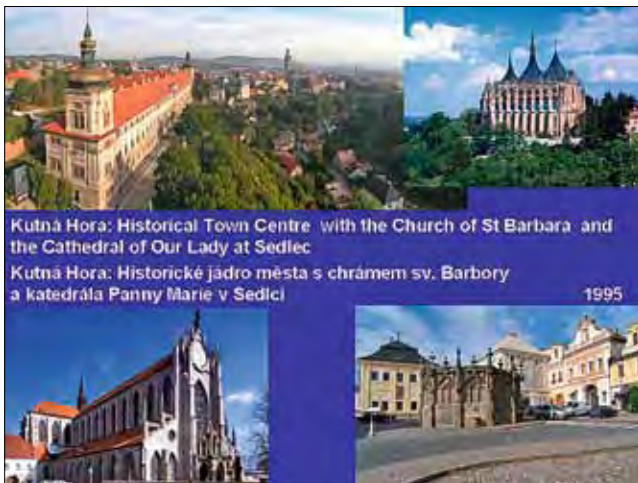
7. **Litomyšl** (Fig. 8), arcaded country palace with rich sgraffito facades. The deteriorating condition of the palace's sgraffito facades badly needs timely conservation. Recently they were very profoundly investigated as to their iconography, art value and state of preservation (the results were published in 2012). The start of conservation/restoration works is blocked by a lack of funds in the NPÚ budget. Simultaneously the town Litomyšl is wasting large sums of money on a doubtful project co-financed by the EU called Revitalization of the Castle Hill. Its implementation has a negative impact on the cultural values of the ensemble (8000 m² of valuable archaeological terrain will be lost forever after rescue investigations, incompatible new buildings and structures being under construction, etc).

The management plan is in the process of preparation.

8. **Olomouc** (Fig. 9), the Baroque Holy Trinity Column, the tallest and most monumental structure of its kind in Europe. After profound and sensitive conservation/restoration performed ten years ago the monument is in good condition, stabilised for a long time. The monitoring indicates no problems.

A management plan was issued in 2010.

9. **Prague** (Fig. 10), the historic core of the city. One of the largest properties inscribed on the World Heritage List consists of five historic cities and a castle area. In its complexity of natural, town-planning, architectural, artistic and spiritual values the ensemble reflects the best traditions of central European multi-ethnic cultural development. In the course of the last ten years, much has been achieved in the field of conservation of Prague's monumental churches and palaces, including the large area of Prague Castle. The historic parks, gardens and greenery are much better kept than in the past and the city reintroduced the traditional stone paving and historical cast-iron candelabras into the streets of the historic centre of the city. On the other hand, as the country's capital and most important centre of commerce and industry the historic core is under permanent investment pressure. Gentrification, massive traffic, influx of tourists are incompatible with the values and character of the place. Projects for new buildings, first of all the high-rises at the horizon of the protected area are the biggest threats. They have been the reason for two reactive missions of ICOMOS-UNESCO. Due to the recent pressure of UNESCO on the Czech state party the city administration along with the Ministry of Culture speeded up the work on the management plan. Quite recently the city council established a special administrative unit within its

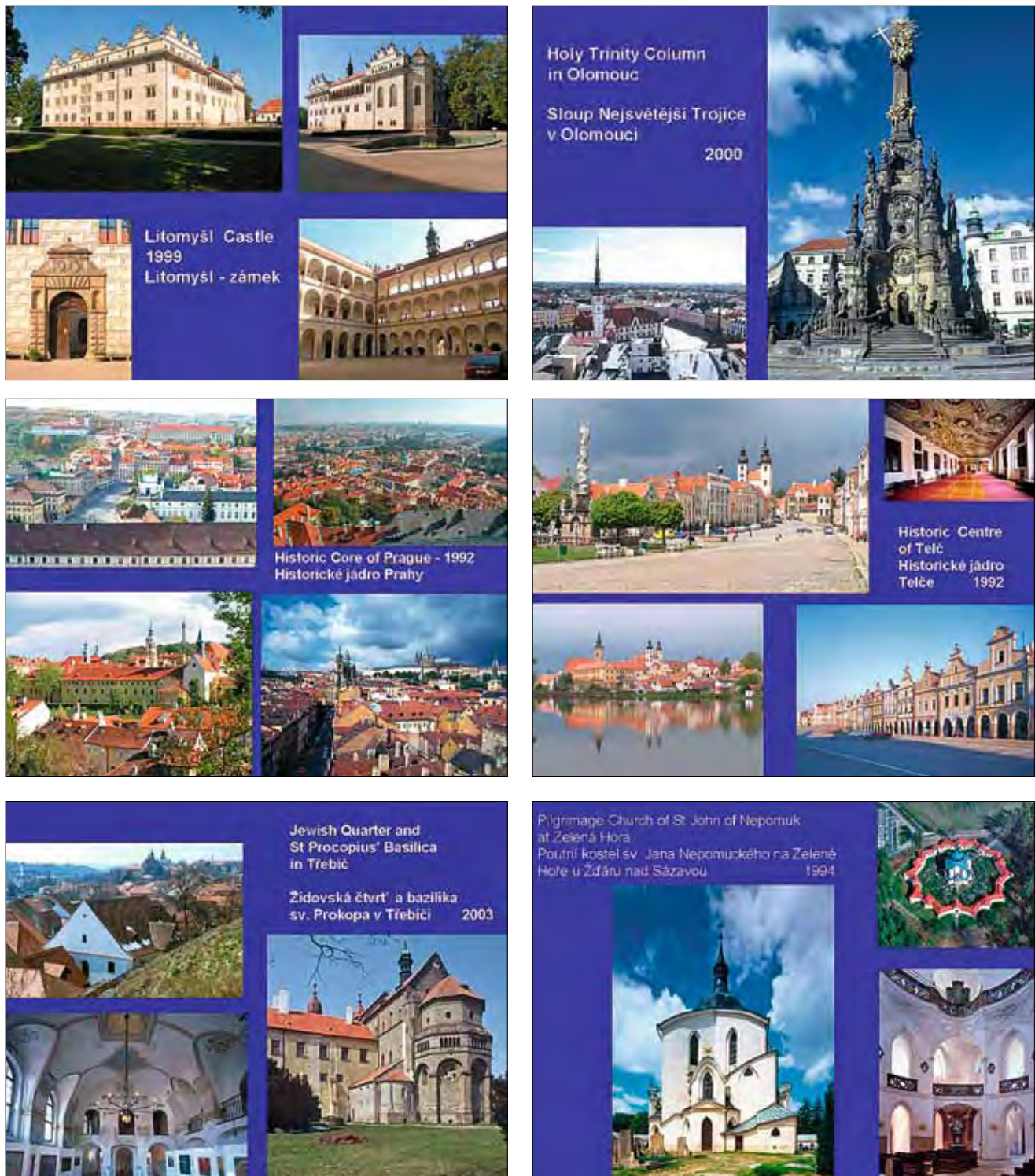


magistrate for World Heritage issues and created its new technical advisory body, the city's World Heritage Council (steering committee) chaired by the Czech ICOMOS National Committee president.

10. **Telč** (Fig. 11), historic centre of the town. The monitoring doesn't indicate any considerable changes that might have an impact on the property's OUV. There are some signs of possible pressure to convert attics into flats and thus impair the extremely picturesque roof landscape of the town. Only one case of brutal facadism was recently registered and reported to ICOMOS International.

The management plan was completed and adopted in 2010.

11. **Třebíč** (Fig. 12), Jewish Quarter and Basilica of St Procopius. The property with an extremely well preserved former Jewish ghetto and a magnificent Benedictine monastery church and buildings symbolizes the peaceful coexistence of Jewish and Christian faiths, typical for Moravia throughout the centuries. The state of the property is good and stable; nearly all buildings and objects are in very good condition after recent repair or restoration. The only problem is the relatively massive traffic that ought to be solved in the near future.



An update of the existing management plan is in progress.

12. **Žďár nad Sázavou** (Fig. 13), Pilgrimage Church of St John Nepomuk. A masterpiece of Johann Blasius Santini-Aichel representing his unusual, rather original style that combines Baroque principles of general composition with Gothic architectural forms and details.

The monitoring indicates no threats or risks as far as the property's OUV is concerned. The complex underwent a very considerate conservation performed step by step in the years 1996–2008. Its physical condition is therefore very good in spite of the very exposed landscape situation vulner-

able to wind and other natural impacts. At present the process of restitution of the property, so far in state ownership and in the care of NPÚ, to the Catholic Church is under way. The management plan was completed and adopted in 2010.

Conclusion

The monitoring of the Czech World Heritage properties performed by the National Heritage Institute shows that in spite of some serious negative tendencies (first of all the investment pressure) the Outstanding Universal Value of all inves-



tigated 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. 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 and local 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.