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Shifting tides of world-making in the UNESCO World Heritage Convention: cosmopolitanisms colliding

Christoph Brumann

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The success of UNESCO's 1972 World Heritage Convention has made an entry into the World Heritage List a coveted distinction for tourism, nation-building and economic development. This article traces the evolution of the treaty from sharing responsibility for humanity's most prized sites to sharing the World Heritage List as an exercise in global representation. Growing North–South tensions within the World Heritage Committee are currently producing yet another shift, towards sharing the right among treaty states to have their candidate sites listed and wishes fulfilled. While formerly an especially cosmopolitan section of normally often nationally oriented heritage experts was in command, the new turn coincides with the ascendancy of career diplomats, that is people with cosmopolitan aspirations who, conversely, strive to serve national interests. They too are cosmopolitan at times, but typically for broader concerns such as world peace or global equity that transcend the focus of the Convention.

Keywords: UNESCO World Heritage; international governance; diplomats; nation states; North–South relations

The UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage adopted in 1972 has enjoyed a spectacular rise in prominence. Ratified by 190 states, it is one of the most successful international treaties. As of 2013, the World Heritage List includes 981 properties – some of which are themselves a series of many separate component sites – located in 160 states. The Convention is clearly the flagship activity of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) these days, despite this organization's educational priorities (Singh 2010). For attracting tourists and boosting national and local self-esteem, the World Heritage title can have a dramatic effect.

Books, magazines, television documentaries, websites and apps enable 'virtual visits' from around the world. World Heritage Studies programmes are opening in universities from Dublin to Tsukuba, creating a new academic sub-field. Even war has been waged over World Heritage: the listing of the ancient Khmer temple of Preah Vihear on territory disputed between Thailand and Cambodia in 2008 led to several bloody clashes between the two armies.

Clearly, World Heritage is a key arena for contemporary world-making¹ and the production of 'globality', defined by Robertson (1992, 132; see also introduction) as 'a consciousness of the world as a single place'. It must be seen as an instance of 'reaching out across cultural differences through dialogue, aesthetic enjoyment, and respect; of living together with difference', as Pnina Werbner (2008, 2) describes cosmopolitanism. World Heritage rests on the assumption that the world's most prized natural and cultural sites belong to all of us, entailing a shared responsibility for their care. Because World Heritage properties are so often included in tourist itineraries, it has taken root in the 'everyday', 'ordinary' (Vertovec and Cohen 2002, 5) or 'vernacular' (Werbner 2008, 14) cosmopolitanisms of people worldwide and is no longer reflective of an 'aloof, globetrotting bourgeois image of cosmopolitanism' (Vertovec and Cohen 2002, 21) that one might be tempted to read into it. The focus of the envisioned global sharing of the World Heritage venture, however, has changed over time. The original emphasis on the co-ownership and co-stewardship of sites by 'humanity' rather than just the respective nation state gave way to an emphasis on the World Heritage List as a shared exercise in world representation. Since 2010, a further shift has occurred: what is now shared is the right of nation states to have their candidates listed, even against conservation-related concerns, and their already listed sites kept free from supranational interference. I argue that this shift corresponds to the replacement of key personnel responsible for decision-making, which means that the guiding cosmopolitanisms have changed as well. While formerly a cosmopolitan subset of normally often nationally oriented heritage experts was in command, the new turn coincides with the ascendancy of career diplomats, that is people with cosmopolitan habituses who, conversely, strive to serve national interests. They too are cosmopolitan at times, but typically for broader concerns such as world peace or global equity that transcend the more narrow Convention goals.²

From safeguarding to List representation

World Heritage is the intellectual child of a major globalization push in heritage conservation during the 1960s, at a time when war destructions were still fresh in memory and unprecedented environmental damages threatened cultural and natural treasures across the globe. Standard

UNESCO accounts trace the Convention to the safeguarding campaigns that the organization orchestrated in the 1960s, most famously for the Nubian monuments of Abu Simbel, which were transplanted to a location outside the reach of Aswan Dam waters (Hassan 2007), but also for Borobudur, Mohenjo-daro and Venice. Together, these contributed to conceiving a global responsibility for humanity's most treasured sites. Significant too was the international conference in 1964 where cultural conservationists adopted the Venice Charter – the foundational document of modern historical conservation – and created the International Council of Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), a worldwide membership association. Yet nature conservation organizations contributed too, such as the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the US National Park Service, whose initiatives for a UN-backed register of national parks and a World Heritage Trust later were eventually fused with those of UNESCO and ICOMOS (Stott 2011). The World Heritage Convention was adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO member states in 1972. The World Heritage Committee met for the first time in 1977, and the following year, the first twelve sites were inscribed on the World Heritage List. It has expanded considerably ever since, far exceeding the around 100 sites initially anticipated (for the early history, see Titchen 1995).

The World Heritage Convention was an innovative instrument of international rights, transcending the simple regulation of bilateral interactions between sovereign nation states by postulating a supranational level of concern, the 'common heritage of humanity'. This paralleled developments in the international regulation of the high seas, outer space and Antarctica (Wolfrum 2009). It is also comparable to 'cosmopolitan harm conventions' (CHCs) (Linklater 2002) that have flourished in more recent years, such as the UN human rights conventions, except that it is spaces rather than individuals that are being protected from nation-state willfulness and negligence.

But even though a global heritage commons was formulated, responsibility for it rests with the nation-state signatories who are the operative arms of the Convention. Only they can nominate sites, which must be within their own borders, in the order they see fit. To be inscribed on the list, candidate sites must demonstrate 'outstanding universal value' (OUV) according to one or more of six cultural and four natural criteria.³ The text files produced to prove this have grown from a handful of pages to huge tomes that take years to prepare. Once nominated, the candidates are then evaluated by ICOMOS (cultural sites) or IUCN (natural sites) through a peer-review style consultation of experts and an on-site inspection. The advisory bodies then either recommend that sites are included in the list, that they be rejected, or that the decision is postponed because minor ('referral') or major ('deferral') revisions are needed.

ICOMOS and IUCN are non-state entities that are globally rather than nationally constituted, but final decisions are made at the annual session of the World Heritage Committee, a body composed of twenty-one nation states elected by all 'States Parties' (i.e. signatory states) in the biannual General Assembly. When this Committee decides to put a site on the list, it acquires the right to monitor (through ICOMOS, IUCN and the World Heritage Center, that is the Convention secretariat within UNESCO headquarters in Paris) how it is conserved and protected. The World Heritage Fund is available to support nominations and conservation measures. Yet officially, inscription presupposes the nominating state's capacity to care for the site with its own resources; only the poorest states can hope for financial aid from this limited fund.⁴ The secretariat and advisory bodies often complain that their strained budgets make meeting even core obligations a challenge, a stark contrast to the global visibility of the World Heritage brand and the significant resources that nation states spend to promote their candidacies. A true co-ownership that would transfer authority to a transnational agency with enforcement capabilities and an independent conservation budget has never been considered.

Yet if a global sharing of *sites* has remained elusive, the global sharing of the World Heritage *List* as an exercise in representing the world appeared more within reach. It was only in the last moment that the idea of a celebratory list – and not just a simple register of sites in need of urgent international support – was included in the Convention text (cf. Titchen 1995, 147–151). The first inscriptions contained quite a number of African candidates⁵ and until 1990, India – not Italy or Spain as would happen later – was the overall leader in the number of World Heritage properties.⁶ An awareness of the benefits of the title combined with the ability to muster sufficient resources to prepare the nomination, however, soon led to a preponderance of (most often Western) European listings and an implicit conceptualization of World Heritage around the typical built heritage of this world region – Italy alone had ten sites inscribed in a single year (1997).⁷ Also, while initially a balance between natural and cultural sites was envisaged, cultural nominations clearly predominate. As early as the 1980s, doubts arose about whether a list with over half of its sites located on a single continent could paint a faithful picture of humanity's cultural and natural wonders.

One countermeasure would have been to dampen the nominating fervour of the List leaders. But because these are often among the Committee members, many of which use their term of office (previously six and now four years) to promote their own candidate sites, nomination quotas or moratoriums have received only lukewarm support, often watered down on the next possible occasion. Even the crisis brought about by the USA's suspension of UNESCO dues after the acceptance of Palestine as a full member in 2011 – leading to a budget cut of 22% – could not slow down the nomination stream: the budget working group

submitted to pressure from those Committee states that have their internal nomination schedules filled for years in advance.

As a result, European states were never blocked from nominating their European-style heritage sites. The personnel that ICOMOS and IUCN entrusted with reviews and missions and who attended Committee sessions were overwhelmingly from Western European and North American states too. They usually justified this by the difficulty of finding qualified personnel from other regions with the necessary English and French language skills and only seriously started to recruit more broadly in the 2000s. What seemed normal and natural to heritage experts from a very limited part of the world thus influenced how World Heritage took shape. Yet, compared to their professional colleagues who by their training, language skills, interests and the exigencies of conservation legislation are often very much bound to a national frame of reference, the particular selection of experts becoming involved in World Heritage matters are on the cosmopolitan side, and the reform measures tackling the much-deplored Eurocentrism of World Heritage also originated with them.

Redefining cultural heritage

These reform measures, adopted mainly during the 1990s, redefined cultural heritage in more inclusive and less Eurocentric ways, by expanding its scope rather than by restricting or redefining any of its established categories. The Global Strategy for a Representative, Balanced and Credible World Heritage List,⁸ adopted by the Committee in 1994, recommended a turn away from palaces, cathedrals and town centres, to include the vestiges of ordinary people and everyday life in their full diversity. This has ‘anthropologized’ the inscriptions very much: peasant villages, technical and industrial heritage, icons of modern architecture and urban planning, prehistoric sites, and connections of all kinds such as trade and pilgrimage routes, canals and railway lines are now much more common among new inscriptions. Examples of what has alternatively been called ‘negative’, ‘difficult’, ‘dark’ or ‘dissonant’ heritage (Tunbridge and Ashworth 1996; Logan and Reeves 2008) have increased over recent years, including sites connected to the slave trade and other forms of forced migration, or with deliberate heritage destruction, such as Mostar or Bamiyan. The category of cultural landscapes (Mitchell et al. 2009), introduced in 1992 largely as the brainchild of the World Heritage Center and ICOMOS (Gfeller 2013), accounts for a large number of the nominations now. Celebrating the interaction of humans with their environment, it includes designed landscapes such as parks, cultivated landscapes such as rice terraces, and ‘associative landscapes’ of mythical or spiritual significance, of which there may be hardly any physical traces (see also Brumann 2013).

The World Heritage Committee has also grown particularly fond of sites that themselves express cosmopolitanism and the meeting of societies and cultures. Transborder nominations composed of a series of spatially separate components within two or more countries are exempted from the usual nomination quotas (currently one property and one cultural landscape per state and year). In the case of the forced migration sites mentioned above too, human movement is transnational or even transcontinental. Further cases include the Bahá'í Holy Places in Haifa and the Western Galilee (inscribed in 2008) – centre of a global pilgrimage tradition – or the Osun-Osogbo Sacred Grove in Osogbo, Nigeria (2005; see Probst 2011). Two gigantic transborder nominations for the Central and East Asian Silk Road sites⁹ and for the Qhapaq Ñan,¹⁰ the road system of the Inca Empire, await inscription in 2014.

Notions of authenticity too have been expanded and made more cosmopolitan. From the beginning, all World Heritage properties were to meet a test of authenticity, understood in the spirit of Venice Charter conservational orthodoxy, which tolerates reconstruction only in exceptional circumstances and if clearly distinguished from the original fabric. Yet, Japan's 1993 nomination of the Hôryûji near Nara, a temple complex containing the oldest wooden buildings on earth from the seventh and eighth century, kicked off a fundamental debate, given that in time-honoured Japanese fashion, these structures have been repeatedly dismantled and reassembled over the centuries, with substantial replacement of damaged material. While some European experts advocated a strict line, they eventually lost out, and instead, an expert meeting in 1994 drafted the Nara Document on Authenticity,¹¹ which authorized a whole array of additional criteria in which authenticity can manifest itself – not just material, form or design, but also fairly elusive ones such as 'traditions, techniques and management systems; location and setting; language, and other forms of intangible heritage; spirit and feeling'.¹² In essence, the Committee recognized the cultural relativism of authenticity standards since 'cultural heritage must be considered and judged primarily within the cultural contexts to which it belongs' (§81). These reforms, too, opened doors for new candidates (see also Brumann 2013).

There is therefore no doubt that the World Heritage List is less dominated by conventional European perspectives now and operates according to a more inclusive definition of heritage. This is, to a large extent, the result of the work of the more cosmopolitan-minded members of a predominantly Euro-American class of heritage experts. A Japanese participant in the Nara conference, for example, recalled how Euro-American participants brought high hopes for finding a fundamentally different conservation philosophy in Japan, almost as if seeking redemption from the confines of Western conceptions. Correspondingly, the main drafters of the Nara Document were Euro-American, not Japanese. The introduction of the cultural landscape category, too, involved major input

from Euro-Americans (see also Gfeller 2013), even when the category was devised with sites from the Global South in mind. Clearly, these conservationists were trying hard to transcend their traditional categories and arrive at something more truly global, and they did so from a largely idealistic concern to keep the World Heritage endeavour intellectually convincing.

During the 2000s, rather than instituting further programmatic innovations, the Committee systematized World Heritage, with procedures for nomination, inscription, monitoring, decision-making and documentation standardized and often substantially elaborated. It is tempting to see this as evidence of the spread of 'governmentality' (Foucault 2003) where only what is known, documented – statistically if possible – and procedurally specified can be governed, and ultimately expected to govern itself, in an economically viable way. Yet, while central value indicators for natural sites, such as biodiversity or the presence of endemic species, can indeed be quantified, a truly operational definition of OUV for the cultural sites has yet to be arrived at. What have been pursued instead are verbal rather than statistical definitions of OUV for individual World Heritage properties in the so-called Statements of Outstanding Universal Value, which have been increasingly emphasized in recent years. Moreover, new nominations must now include a comparative analysis that assesses the site within the context of other national and international sites both on and not on the World Heritage List.

There are clear limits to governmentality here: far from all the statements of OUV define the heritage value and baseline condition of conservation in a measurable way, and quite a few comparative analyses simply line up descriptions of individual sites without a clear conclusion. In session debates, reference to precedent cases is also less frequent than might be expected, with delegates missing even the obvious parallels. Notwithstanding, these exercises do contribute to the creation of a shared space of reference that the World Heritage properties inhabit, unique as each one of them is required to be, and this is certainly on the minds, if not of stressed session participants, then of the teachers and students of the specialized university programmes. Much more than before, World Heritage has become a 'global system of common difference' in Richard Wilk's (1995) sense. Creating a system that renders all individual sites comparable and commensurable, bringing them on a fundamentally equal plane, is certainly a cosmopolitan move.

Cosmopolitan too is the effect of the stream of international expert meetings that the Committee summons on specific heritage categories and Convention issues around the globe and throughout the year; the periodic reporting exercise that brings together national heritage institutions and local site managers of World Heritage properties in preparatory meetings; the training programmes offered by the third advisory body of the Convention, the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation

and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) in Rome; and the growing number of Category 2 Centers (approved by UNESCO but funded by specific nation states) that specialize in research and training on certain types and/or regions of World Heritage. These activities greatly contribute to the distribution of shared standards of site conservation, management and presentation, and the formation of a global class of heritage experts.

In sum, while not leading to a true co-ownership of World Heritage sites, the developments of the 1990s and 2000s contributed to a more inclusive conception of the World Heritage List and the formation of a set of institutions and experts strongly committed to this cosmopolitan vision. This is all the more remarkable because modern conservation took shape during, and owes a lot to, nineteenth-century high nationalism (Larkham 1996). The fact that conservation regulations must be in conversation with property rights, urban planning strategies and taxation inevitably binds much heritage administration to a national, if not provincial or municipal, frame of reference. The background disciplines of heritage conservationists too, such as art history, architectural history or archaeology, often have distinct national specificities and thematic focuses, at least in Europe, and have, in the past, provided the scaffolding for the idea of civilizational greatness where the superiority of European and other 'high cultures' is very much taken for granted. Early international exchanges and borrowings in the field of heritage conservation did occur but were largely confined to Europe and North America or were the product of colonial imposition (Hall 2011; Swenson 2013; Swenson and Mandler 2013).

This means that conservationists are not 'natural' cosmopolitans – different from, say, anthropologists for whom the symbolism of a mud hut can be as grandiose as a baroque palace. The cosmopolitan striving of the Euro-American conservationists involved in World Heritage conceptual reform has to be appreciated accordingly, not as something that comes with the trade but as a genuine effort to transcend boundaries and inbuilt biases that would not concern most of their national colleagues. We detect here the 'willingness to engage with the Other' and the 'intellectual and aesthetic stance of openness toward divergent cultural experiences' that Hannerz (1990, 239) identifies as the marks of the true cosmopolitan.

From a representative List to equal List access

These efforts have not produced the desired results, however. The push for systematization has made the application process more demanding: the nomination manual (UNESCO 2011) itself has 140 pages. The advisory bodies are more likely to pick up on inconsistencies in the nomination files, such as deficiencies in the comparative analysis or the protection and management framework. States with developed nomination appetites and resources are more able to cope with such demands and have adapted to

the new conceptual wave. Italy (six sites as of 2013) and France (five sites)¹³ lead the cultural landscape category, which, although invented for rice terraces or sacred mountains, includes a host of European wine regions now.

Countries from the Global South, by contrast, often struggle with the more stringent requirements, yet their governments are impatient to see tangible benefits flow from the World Heritage title. When the strict conservation line gets in the way of resource extraction or tourism development, it is then seen as a luxury that the rich states of the North can more easily afford and to which they should actively contribute. More than once, informants from the South invoked the Abu Simbel campaign as the true model to which the World Heritage Convention should aspire.

Mounting dissatisfaction finally erupted into the open in the 2010 Committee session in Brasilia. Starting with the debate over whether the Galapagos Islands should be removed from the List of World Heritage in Danger – IUCN acknowledged that remedial measures had been taken but they still fell short – Committee state representatives supported each other and the non-Committee states in each having their own national wishes fulfilled. The Galapagos Islands were removed from the Danger List according to Ecuador's wishes, decisions on other problematic sites were softened, and the number of new inscriptions doubled from those that the advisory bodies had endorsed. Mutual support among Committee states is not at all costly – there are quotas for nominations but theoretically, all submitted candidates could make it onto the List since OUV is believed to be an absolute quality. Instead, helping one another out among states encourages return favours in due course. Also, with close to 1,000 sites on the list, the marginal cost of additional inscriptions to the exclusiveness of the title has become tiny, and in spite of some press criticism of the recent turn (The Economist 2010; Stührenberg 2011), there have been no perceptible dents in the public traction of the World Heritage title. The new mores have persisted through the subsequent Committee meetings in Paris (2011), Saint Petersburg (2012) and Phnom Penh (2013) (see also Meskell 2012, 2013). If anything, resistance to the free-for-all has weakened: while for quite a few decisions in Brasilia, secret ballots were called – a more or less open invitation to other state representatives to breach their negotiated promises – this hardly occurred in subsequent sessions. Increasingly also, ICOMOS and IUCN are overruled almost without debate, lessening the need for the (often rather improvised) arguments still presented in 2010.

These changes were possible because of the composition of the 2010 Committee. North America was not represented at all and Western Europe was mainly represented by less powerful states such as Sweden, Switzerland and Estonia. These three delegations supported the advisory bodies' recommendations and the independence of the Committee from nation-state interests. But they could more easily afford to do so since they

had realized national World Heritage aspirations in the past: in terms of sites per population, they outperformed all other eighteen Committee members at that point. Many of the defenders of national interests, by contrast, were regional political heavyweights and/or BRIC and G20 members, such as Mexico, Brazil, Nigeria, Egypt, South Africa, Russia and China. France and Australia were also present but because they had their own nominations up for decision, they had to tread lightly for fear of reprisals from other colleagues. (State delegates readily acknowledge this special conflict of interests.) Australia, in particular, no longer acted as the champion of proper practice that it had been the previous year. Interestingly, all inscriptions made against the advisory bodies' recommendations in Brasilia were for sites outside Europe and North America, making for the least Eurocentric distribution of new listings in decades.¹⁴

Yet, while there was a clear North–South dimension to this initial breach of the fortress, in the following meetings the tendency has been to abide by all national wishes, South or North, and newly elected members such as India, Japan and Germany – which invariably arrive with their own candidate sites – have gone with the flow, rather than joining the resisters. Also, simply ignoring the advisory bodies has given way to attempts to actively re-educate them, such as by urging them to cultivate a ‘dialogue’ with the states (a euphemism for attention to their wishes).

Much of this arises as the simple consequence of nation-state delegates pursuing their national interests with whatever means at hand, either openly or through quid pro quo arrangements with their peers. This inclination had been present for a long time but had been tempered by a general reluctance to overrule the advisory bodies and their advice. Yet, the sessions since 2010 have clearly established a new culture where ignoring the ‘spoilsports’ has become commonplace, something that is denounced by some treaty states not currently on the Committee and also criticized by a recent external audit of the Global Strategy (WHC-11/18. GA/8), but nothing about which Committee delegates intent on fulfilling their orders must be too concerned. Increasingly, there is a sense that World Heritage inscription is an entitlement that should be generously shared rather than jealously guarded in the name of abstract considerations such as consistency. This means that the focus is shifting, from the List and its capacity to adequately represent and protect the world’s cultural and natural jewels to the nation states’ equal right to slots on the List.

The ascendancy of career diplomats

Orchestrating Committee support for national interests is the task of the diplomats dispatched to UNESCO headquarters where most member states are represented by a ‘permanent delegate’ of ambassador rank. While these delegates are often sent from ministries of education, science or culture in

the case of the Southern states, the Northern states prefer ordinary diplomats (see also Singh 2010, 31). They are generalists with backgrounds in fields such as law, economics or international relations who will be transferred elsewhere or back home after a few years. Those ambassadors who are not career diplomats often have a foreign-ministry staffer as deputy.

The ascendancy of career diplomats in the World Heritage arena has occurred mainly since the 2000s. Old-timers among the delegation experts still remember Committee sessions that they went to without foreign service support, meaning that the (largely Euro-American) heritage experts were among professional peers. Yet nowadays, almost all Committee state delegations are headed by the permanent delegate to UNESCO or someone even higher up in the foreign ministry, and these diplomats also speak for the delegation most of the time. This reflects the growing importance of World Heritage to national governments, themselves under pressure by provinces and municipalities that want sites under their jurisdiction listed, protected from Committee interference, and so on. Obviously, states now agree that something as important as World Heritage cannot be left to political amateurs.

Career diplomats are cosmopolitans by profession, conversant in several languages, world politics and the refined lifestyles of capitals around the globe (for a close-up ethnography, see Neumann 2012). Those dispatched to UNESCO meet frequently on a range of topics in the headquarter buildings where many have their offices. They develop first-name friendships with wide-armed hugs and cheek-kissing when meeting each other in the corridors or at the frequent social events. They exude a clear sense that it is them, not the headquarter bureaucrats or technical experts, who are in command at UNESCO. In fact, most governing boards in UNESCO are filled with such state representatives who then decide what the international civil servants in the organization's service must implement. While the heritage experts attending the World Heritage sessions may know each other for a longer time, the diplomats interact more frequently and intensely and, on average, outperform the experts in terms of self-confidence, social grace, linguistic skills and eloquence.

Yet, the diplomats are also more unequivocally committed to their country's interests, and their personal careers depend on their success in achieving favourable solutions and negotiating the hidden deals of mutual support that then smooth the way for their national plans. To a considerable degree, they are habitual cosmopolitans who use this capacity for non-cosmopolitan ends – a configuration that, as outlined above, is exactly the reverse of the heritage experts attracted to the World Heritage sessions. For Hannerz (1990, 239), the diplomats would not qualify for 'true cosmopolitanism', and they would rather fit into the 'cosmocrat' category of globally mobile but eventually self-centred rather than world-centred elites proposed by Micklethwait and Wooldridge (2003, 221–242).

Yet, the diplomats too have their cosmopolitan ideals for those matters where they are not under orders. These concern aspects other than heritage conservation, however, such as global equity and the peaceful interaction between nation states. One Western European diplomat, for example, voiced his misgivings to me when in the session, an ICOMOS representative had pointed to historical destructions in one candidate site to question its OUV. The diplomat was appalled how there was no awareness that colonial troops from that representative's own country had been the destroyers. Also, he could find nothing wrong with 'the others' (i.e. non-European states) getting their share of the World Heritage pie too.

A considerable amount of diplomatic attention also goes to the ostensibly peaceful settlements of issues around politically sensitive properties. Because discussing them openly in the sessions would lead to hours of typecast statements and hostilities, it is common practice to hold separate negotiations alongside the sessions – the so-called 'side tables'. Only the concerned parties and agreed mediators are present, with the latter sometimes shuttling between different rooms. Such special treatment has been extended to the Israeli sites on disputed ground such as the Old City of Jerusalem – nominated by Jordan and inscribed before Israel ratified the Convention – for a long time. More recent cases include Preah Vihear, the medieval monasteries in Kosovo (claimed by Serbia) and the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem (inscribed by Palestine). If such negotiations achieve their goal, the Committee is presented with a draft decision text, which the chairperson then proposes to adopt without debate.

The interesting point is that participating diplomats tend to see this as a success. In the 2012 session in Saint Petersburg, the negotiated postponement of the debate over putting the Bagrati Cathedral in Georgia on the Danger List was greeted by diplomats with relief, given the challenge that discussing a major symbol of Georgian nationalism on the territory of, and presided over by, the arch-enemy would have presented. This meant, however, that the controversial reconstruction project backed by President Saakashvili could be completed without further Committee interference. In another example, in the run-up to the 2013 session, a Western diplomat told me how pleased all his colleagues were about recent Israeli–Palestinian negotiations about the Old City of Jerusalem, not because of conservation but rather because there was, at long last, one topic over which the two adversaries were really sitting at the same table. Clearly, the individual sites take a back seat to the diplomatic cosmopolitan vision, that of ostensible harmony within the family of nations.

The rule of diplomats whose commitments are either more national or broader than simply conserving World Heritage may be coming to an end, however. Pressure is mounting, and advance deal-making is taking place not just between UNESCO ambassador peers but also between foreign ministries and heads of government. Transfer or demotion are real

possibilities if the expectations are not met. Here, the Committee decision taken on the last session day in 2011, in an exhausted and clearly inattentive hall, to live stream future sessions on the internet may become momentous. Critics of the current developments hoped for a restraining effect on horse-trading. In the 2012 session, however, informants reported that several delegations were 'on remote control' with their home ministries who were watching the broadcast and texting them detailed instructions about how to proceed. One delegate was even rumoured to have been called home right away when he did not say precisely what his national president had promised to a colleague in office. In other interventions too, the delegates' sense of being watched by their national and site constituencies was obvious. This means that the World Heritage Committee sessions, while more globally accessible than ever, encourage parochial and self-serving behaviour. If cosmopolitanism is involved at all here, it is only in the sense of according equal rights to politically and economically manifestly unequal nation states, in this case the equal right to have their favourites listed and protected from supranational interference.

Conclusion

The World Heritage Convention, now in its fifth decade, has emerged as a crucial tool for world-making and for driving forward a cosmopolitan imagination. Yet, the cosmopolitanism that has guided this trajectory has moved through several successive stages. To adequately characterize these, it is useful to distinguish between cosmopolitan habituses and cosmopolitan aspirations, and to highlight that the two do not always occur together. The Convention was initially put in place to create globally protected enclaves within national territories. Because the UN framework remains inter- rather than transnational, this was never fully implemented, as the Convention states functioned as the executive arm of the Convention. Instead, a small class of heritage experts with cosmopolitan ambitions set about to define World Heritage in a more universalist and inclusive way, thereby transcending their own often rather nationally defined training and orientation.

Yet, with attention growing and key practices of the World Heritage system – such as the nomination machinery of the nation states – simply rolling on, the tide has shifted since around the late 1990s. Now, it is people with cosmopolitan habituses but thoroughly national assignments that dominate the arena – the career diplomats dispatched by nation states to UNESCO in Paris. They excel in the art of deal-making for fulfilling the orders of the ministerial superiors, and much of what happens at the sessions is simply the result of their strategic pursuit of these priorities with all available means.

That these agendas are determined by national interests is, in my view, a consequence of the enormous success of World Heritage. Precisely by having become a global canon and gold standard of value, it provokes national and local ambitions to secure a place on the world map, as a participant from a remote island state phrased it to me after their candidate site was included in the List. As in other global competitions such as the Olympic Games, people can be both good global citizens who embrace cosmopolitan ideals and obsessed with the national medal count at the same time. In my observations of the World Heritage Commission sessions, it struck me just how normal and expected the pursuit of national interests is, even among experts and participants who are paragons of universalist ideals as long as their own national sites are not on the agenda. That the tide would turn nation-centred at some point is therefore no surprise, particularly when a profession like diplomacy, whose major task is to represent national interests, is in the driving seat.

Still, diplomats too have cosmopolitan aspirations. But their actual cosmopolitan projects sidestep the relatively humdrum concerns of individual site protection and heritage conservation and focus instead on achieving peaceful intercourse among a family of nations increasingly seen as one of equals. And since, unlike the zero-sum Olympic Games, the gold medals at the World Heritage Committee sessions (read: inscriptions on the List) can simply be multiplied, there are no obstacles to generously sharing inscriptions and making one's peers happy, even when this comes at the expense of site conservation; the workloads of the advisory bodies and the secretariat, which have to take care of an ever-growing number of properties; and the overall consistency of the List. In fact, the World Heritage Committee may be entering a post-cosmopolitan phase, if the latest trend of controlling delegates from afar by watching their deliberations online takes root. Just as computerized stock trade may sideline or at least decentralize the community of brokers, so Committee sessions conducted in this way would no longer require the presence of cosmopolitans, but rather mere mouthpieces of bilateral national strategizing.

This case illustrates that there are different ways to be cosmopolitan and global citizens and that we would do well to distinguish between them. We should not be surprised when cosmopolitan ambitions go hand in hand with national ones. The heritage experts in this account moved from national traditions to a cosmopolitan vision, while the career diplomats, who are cosmopolitan professionals sent in to achieve national goals, follow the reverse trajectory.

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Notes

1. I owe this phrase to Richard Rottenburg who after one of my presentations on the topic exclaimed 'Hier wird Welt gemacht!' (Here, world is being made).
2. My analysis rests on an ethnographic approach, combining participant observation of all World Heritage Committee and General Assembly sessions in 2009–12 and other statutory meetings and conferences, interviews with key individuals from many participating organizations, and a study of the extensive documentary record. For details of the research setting and methodology, see Brumann (2012).
3. <http://whc.unesco.org/en/criteria>
4. Expenditures in the 2010–11 biennium were at US\$6.8 million (document WHC-12/36.COM/15.Rev. 2).
5. cf. <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/stat>
6. cf. <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list>
7. cf. <http://whc.unesco.org/en/statesparties/it>
8. <http://whc.unesco.org/en/globalstrategy>
9. <http://whc.unesco.org/en/news/870>
10. <http://whc.unesco.org/en/qhapaqnan>
11. http://www.international.icomos.org/naradoc_eng.htm
12. Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention, §82; <http://whc.unesco.org/en/guidelines>
13. cf. <http://whc.unesco.org/en/culturallandscape>
14. cf. <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/stat>

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