What is the Future for the World Heritage Convention?

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Abstract

This paper considers the future of the 1972 Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (the Convention), UNESCO’s flagship international treaty dedicated to the protection and conservation of the planet’s cultural and natural heritage sites. The author explores three trends that threaten to undermine the relevance and credibility of the Convention. They are a gap in understanding between cultural and natural values, increased politicisation of the system and a subtle shift from conservation to development. The Convention has played a catalytic role in raising public awareness and engaging in its mission, all kinds of people from governments to local communities, from organisations to civil society, from Indigenous peoples to the private sector. In order to retain its credibility and leadership in the conservation field, the author suggests ways of addressing these three areas of concern and points to the positive contribution of the ‘post-2015 Development Agenda’ that is led by the United Nations.

The 1972 Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (the Convention) is one of the last global agreements to put forward a concept of universal values and international obligations in the heritage field. Rooted in the idealism and optimism of the 1960s, the Convention has adapted itself to changing circumstances over the last four decades. Although the Convention text remains constant, its application has broadened with the evolving understanding of heritage in all its human and social dimensions. This evolution has contributed to the global acceptance of the Convention by diverse cultures and most countries, making it UNESCO’s flagship international treaty. As one looks forward, some worrying trends point to an uncertain future. Three areas of concern that threaten to undermine the relevance and credibility of the Convention are an unaddressed gap between cultural and natural values, stifling politicisation of the system and a subtle shift from conservation to development.

Gap between culture and nature

In the decade prior to the adoption of the Convention, experts from both natural and cultural heritage seemed to understand the links between cultural and natural sites. In the case of natural resources, IUCN published its 1962 United Nations List of Protected Areas and Equivalent Reserves, endorsed by the UN General Assembly and a precursor to the World Heritage List. While primarily focused on natural sites, this 1962 list did in fact include several cultural parks and landscapes, including; Angkor Park (Cambodia) with Angkor Vat and other magnificent monuments built by the Khmers within a natural forest setting, Thingvellir (Iceland), a post-glacial lava plain and ‘famous meeting place of the ancient Althing, or parliament, of Icelandic
chieftains from 930 A.D. until 1261 A.D.’, and Mount Carmel National Park (Israel) with its abundant fossil beds and hill of Muhraka ‘venerated by Jews, Christians and Moslems alike’ (IUCN 1962: 5, 11, 14).

In the case of cultural resources, the 1968 proposal from UNESCO experts working on a cultural heritage convention also included both cultural and natural sites, although the latter were considered not for their importance as ecosystems but for their aesthetic, picturesque or ethnographic value. The UNESCO proposal itemised both isolated natural features like caves, rocks and look-out points, and extensive spaces like hillside, mountains and valleys. It also proposed another category of mixed sites for landscapes and setting (UNESCO 1968: 21; Cameron and Rössler 2013: 14-16).

It is often said that the genius of the Convention lies in its fundamental premise of equitable representation of cultural and natural sites. The 1978 World Heritage Committee (the Committee) reinforced this idea when it adopted the World Heritage emblem, designed by Michel Olyff of Belgium, to convey the principles embodied in the Convention. The emblem ‘symbolised…the interdependence of cultural and natural properties. The central square was a form created by man; the circle represented nature, the two being intimately linked. The emblem was round, like the world, but it was also a symbol of protection’ (UNESCO 1978: 50-3).

Yet despite the brilliance of its comprehensive scope, the Convention has institutionalised a conceptual dichotomy between nature and culture, reinforced by rigid structures that operationalise it. Barriers to a holistic approach include separate definitions, separate criteria for inscription, separate technical advisors and separate departments for culture and nature at UNESCO and within national governments. For many years, the UNESCO bureaucracy remained divided into two distinct departments for cultural heritage and ecological sciences that did not even work in the same building; to this day, the Advisory Bodies continue to operate in separate spheres. In a 2008 interview, French expert Léon Pressouyre, who was the sole author for ICOMOS evaluations in the decade from 1980 to 1990, lamented the dichotomy. He called the failure in the 1980s to inscribe Britain’s Lake District an ‘historic error’ and proof that the Convention is an archaic instrument which has a generous vision of nature and a narrow perception of culture rooted in architectural monuments. He concluded that ‘everyone knows how to protect a minaret, a steeple, a house, but no one knows how to protect a way of life, a vast landscape, a fragile ensemble threatened by globalisation’ (Cameron 2008).

Instead of fostering a holistic view of cultural and natural heritage, early implementation of the Convention emphasised the divide between monuments and archaeological sites on the one hand and a pristine view of nature as so-called wilderness on the other. It was Lucien Chabason, a member of the French delegation at the 1984 Committee session, who advanced the idea of considering and defining rural landscapes. His proposal launched a debate on landscapes within the World Heritage system that lasted for almost a decade. Chabason was thinking of places like rice terraces and vineyards where human transformation of the land over centuries resulted in ecologically balanced and culturally interesting landscapes. The term ‘rural landscape’ shifted to ‘cultural landscape’ in 1987 without any clear explanation. In an interview, Chabason attributes this shift to the dominant influence of anthropologists at UNESCO. As he quips, ‘anthropologists have the art of qualifying all human activities as cultural’ (Cameron 2012).

The term cultural landscapes enlarged the scope of this idea to include everything from urban to associative landscapes, a shift in focus to encompass living, evolving natural areas with both tangible and intangible values. In 1992, two events reinforced a more integrated approach to cultural and natural heritage: first, the Committee formally adopted cultural landscapes categories as part of World Heritage, and secondly, Director-General Federico Mayor brought together the separate UNESCO units into the newly minted World Heritage Centre (Cameron and Rössler 2013: 205-6). Nonetheless, the fact that the Committee chose to consider cultural landscapes as cultural property within the definition of Article 1 of the Convention undermined a full understanding of the indivisible links between cultural and natural sites (UNESCO 1972: 1).
Twenty years later, a challenge still exists for large protected natural areas inhabited by groups of people, often indigenous. The Committee has had difficulty in determining the exceptionality of the unbreakable bond between people and nature in such areas. Recognition of the contribution of human activities in maintaining the natural values of large protected areas remains an unresolved issue within the World Heritage framework. A good illustration of this dilemma arose at the 37th session of the Committee in 2013 in the context of an inconclusive and confused discussion about a Canadian nomination, Pimachiowin Aki. This large boreal forest site straddles the Manitoba-Ontario border in Canada and is home to several First Nations Anishinaabe communities. Witness to continuous human occupation for millennia, the site is valued for its cultural continuity, overlapping patterns of shared experience and human stewardship of the land.

While the 1992 cultural landscapes categories have facilitated the successful inscription of many heritage properties with combined cultural and natural values, a case like Pimachiowin Aki shows the limitations of these categories to capture the dynamic symbiosis between culture and nature. The inclusion of cultural landscapes within culture has inadvertently reduced nature to the role of passive partner, being neither outstanding nor well defined. The merging of World Heritage inscription criteria, recommended in 1998 and made official in 2005, has not helped. Although the criteria have been merged, their use has not. The presence of culture and nature within one property is still evaluated separately by each Advisory Body without reference to the other. In addition, there are distinctly different organisation cultures in ICOMOS and IUCN. Convergence of approaches for cultural and natural heritage is not easy. Fundamental beliefs in the positivism of science, the intrinsic value of nature and the destructive force of human beings on the environment make it difficult for natural heritage advocates to support the integration of human beings in a holistic way. In spite of pioneering work on the concept of cultural landscapes, a challenge remains to capture the cultural value of nature.

In an effort to find ways of moving forward, the 9th Montreal Round Table (2014) on Exploring the Cultural Value of Nature: a World Heritage Context examined the question of how or if the World Heritage system could recognise the cultural systems necessary to sustain natural values in large protected areas (Cameron & Herrmann 2014). This workshop focused specifically on inhabited ecosystems characterised by seamless interaction between the land and the people living there. The key outcome of the Montreal Round Table was a proposal to reframe the issue from an Aboriginal perspective which advocates convergence and indivisibility. Aboriginal cultural relationships with place do not separate culture and nature. Aboriginal landscapes include both tangible and intangible elements, remarkable for the synergy of multiple elements that define them. They are dynamic and constantly evolving, valued essentially for the relationships and activities that they embody.

To resolve this issue, an Aboriginal approach could offer models for understanding the convergence of cultural and natural values. It would entail a move away from a physical external view of large landscapes to an understanding of embodied layered activities, practices and phenomena. In other words, an Aboriginal perspective would favour process over product, collapsing dichotomies like culture and nature, tangible and intangible into an integrated whole. An encouraging development and a potential resolution of this impasse may come from the ICOMOS/IUCN ‘Connecting Practice’ project currently underway which aims to explore new methods of recognition and support for the interconnected character of natural, cultural and social value of landscapes and seascapes and their affiliated bio-cultural practices.

**Politisation**

A second worrying trend is the growing politicisation of World Heritage. The initial noble vision to protect the common heritage of humanity was a response to destruction from two world wars and from rapid infrastructure developments in the post-war period. As Sarah Titchen points out in her doctoral thesis, the 1920s and 1930s saw the emergence of concepts of common heritage and international cooperation under the auspices of the League of Nations (Titchen 1995: 11-24). This institution and its successor, UNESCO, promoted the idea that
members of the community of nations are, in the words of the 1931 Athens Charter for
restoring monuments, ‘wardens of civilisation’ (First International Congress 1931: VII). This
high-minded ideal is reflected in the preamble of the Convention which speaks about loss of
heritage as ‘a harmful impoverishment of the heritage of all the nations of the world,’ and calls
on ‘the international community as a whole to participate in the protection of the cultural and
natural heritage of outstanding universal value’ (UNESCO 1972: preamble).

What happened subsequently is a drift away from international solidarity to national self-
interest. An early sign is the change in the Committee membership from experts qualified
in the field of cultural or natural heritage, as required by the Convention (UNESCO 1972: 9),
to representation by diplomats and elected government officials. Francesco Francioni, Chair
of the 21st session of the World Heritage Committee in 1997, ruminates on what he calls
the creative tension between sovereignty and general interest: ‘the Convention has this very
interesting institutional framework combining governmental representatives with the scientific
components of IUCN and ICOMOS. I think that is the most important substantive expression
of this idea of the general interest of humanity. Obviously then, the story of the Convention is
a constant tension between this interest and the national claim, the sovereignty claims, that
States are always reluctant to relinquish’ (Cameron 2010).

An indicator of the intrusion of national self-interest can be found in the Committee’s efforts to
control advocacy. With regard to nomination proposals, the Committee initially provided gentle
guidance to States Parties but eventually hardened up its position. As early as 1983, it addressed
growing enthusiasm from countries to inscribe sites by adding the following constraint
to its Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention
(Operational Guidelines): ‘Representatives of a State Party, whether or not a member of the
Committee, shall not speak to advocate the inclusion in the List of a property nominated by that
State, but only to deal with a point of information in answer to a question’ (UNESCO 1983: 39).
This guidance remained in place until 2003 when, during the exercise to revise the Operational
Guidelines, it was transferred to the Committee’s ‘Rules of Procedure’ and expanded to include
other forms of lobbying: ‘Representatives of a State Party, whether or not a member of the
Committee, shall not speak to advocate the inclusion in the World Heritage List of a property
nominated or the approval of an assistance request submitted by that State, but only to deal
with a point of information in answer to a question’ (UNESCO 2003: 22.4). Over time, this rule
has been abused by States Parties who systematically plant questions with friendly Committee
members, thereby creating opportunities for repeated lobbying under the guise of responding
to questions. This practice hit a new low at the 34th session in Brasilia in 2010. At that session,
it became known that 18 out of 21 members of the Committee had signed a document in their
state capitals weeks before the Committee meeting in support of a specific nomination. This
endorsement was obviously made prior to hearing the technical advice of ICOMOS or IUCN.
In response, the Committee further tightened its ‘Rules of Procedure’: ‘Committee members
shall not speak to World Heritage properties in their own territories, except at the explicit
invitation of the Chairperson and in response to specific questions posed. Advocacy in favour
of a particular proposal will not be entertained’ (UNESCO 2011b: 22.6).

Despite these procedures and improved evaluations from ICOMOS and IUCN, the gap between
the Committee decisions and the recommendations of the technical advisors has grown,
especially for nominations. A 2011 external audit of the World Heritage system found that ‘the
decisions of the Committee diverge more and more frequently from the scientific advice of the
Advisory Bodies’ and characterised the situation as ‘a very worrying evolution for the credibility
of the List’ because the professionalism of the Advisory Bodies is the ‘scientific guarantee of
the value of the List’ (UNESCO 2011a: 39-40). An analysis for the years 2001 to 2013 shows
a declining number of occasions when the Committee agreed with technical advice, from a
high of 96 per cent agreement in 2001 to a low of 40 per cent agreement in 2011 (Figure 1).

Although politicisation first occurred in the sphere of nominations, it subsequently emerged
in discussions on the state of conservation of World Heritage properties. It would appear that
the Committee members are reluctant to comment on conservation weaknesses lest they be
seen to criticize another country. For conservation, the effects of political orchestration are
particularly evident in debates on whether or not to place a problematic site on the List of World Heritage in Danger. Sadly for the good of the sites, such listing is not seen as an opportunity to rally the world’s attention and assistance but is rather interpreted as a black mark against a country – a fate to be resisted at all costs. The steady increase in the total number of World Heritage Sites is not matched by a parallel increase in placing sites on the In Danger List. While the World Heritage List topped one thousand sites in 2014, the In Danger List has remained stable at about 35 to 45 sites. Since it is well-known that many World Heritage properties are faced with difficult conservation challenges, the number of endangered sites should normally keep pace with the overall size of the World Heritage List.

In his interview, Pressouyre is candid about the impact of national interests on stewardship. Noting that the intergovernmental structure of the Convention means that countries are responsible for properties within their territories, he regrets that ‘the concept of oversight of these sites by the international community, which is in theory admissible, is not put into practice.’ He observes that the international community has no real power, being limited to drawing attention to threats. As he says, ‘This means that, on the one hand, there is a generous idea that belongs perhaps to the twenty-first century to the effect that it is [the responsibility] of everyone, and a less generous idea which belongs to history which says that these are nations, these are State Parties who look after the sites that they have agreed to propose for the World Heritage List’ (Cameron 2008).

Close observers of World Heritage would pinpoint the mid-1990s as the period when political considerations began to override scientific approaches. By the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, politicisation of World Heritage became part of the public discourse. Newspaper articles like the one in The Economist with a headline “A danger list in danger” accuse the World Heritage system of being ‘infected by politics’ (no author 2010). By 2012, the Director-General of UNESCO appeared before the Committee, criticising them in diplomatic but nonetheless clear language and suggesting that they risked becoming mere accountants of the World Heritage label:

Some developments within the inscription process have weakened the principles of scientific excellence and impartiality that are at the heart of the Convention. The credibility of the inscription process must be absolute at all stages of the proceedings.
… Today, criticism is growing, and I am deeply concerned. I believe we stand at the
crossroads, with a clear choice before us. We can continue to gather, year after year,
as accountants of the World Heritage label, adding more sites to the list, adhering less
and less strictly to its criteria. Or we can choose another path. We can decide to act
and think as visionaries, to rejuvenate the World Heritage Convention and confront the
challenges of the 21st century (UNESCO 2012: 2).

The following year the Director-General again chastised States Parties, stating that ‘a number
of developments within the inscription process have weakened the principles of objectivity and
impartiality at the heart of the Convention. It undermines everything the Convention stands for,
everything we have sought for over 40 years’ (UNESCO 2013a: 2).

Despite these admonitions, the 2013 World Heritage Committee nonetheless modified the
‘Rules of Procedure’ in a way that further undermines the role of impartial scientific advice. A
new rule allows the Chairperson of the Committee to invite State Party representatives:
to present their views after [author’s italics] the Advisory Bodies have presented their
evaluation of the site proposed by the State, a report on the state of conservation of a
property on their territory or to support the approval of an assistance request submitted
by that State. After this permitted time, the State Party may be allowed to take the
floor again, but only in order to answer questions, within a limited time, that have been
asked (UNESCO 2013c: 22.7).

This change sets up a system that formalises advocacy by allowing immediate rebuttal of
technical advice. It is curious that the level of advocacy at the 38th session of the Committee
in Doha in 2014 was not noticeably different from previous years. Growing politicisation
confirms Pressouyre’s view that the World Heritage system clearly subordinates ‘scientific’
choices to ‘political’ ones (Cameron 2008). This trend is connected to the first issue, that of the
scientific shortcomings of integrating cultural and natural values. Should technical solutions be
found through the ‘Connecting Practice’ project, will such advice be heeded? In the interests
of reinforcing the credibility of the system, those engaged in the implementation of the
Convention would be well advised to review the rules, procedures and behaviours in an effort
to find a better balance between national diplomacy and science. It is worth recalling the
cautions from the Director-General of UNESCO who insists that the most pressing issue is the
question of credibility. The future of World Heritage requires that ‘we collectively carry on our
shoulders the need to respect the highest standards of integrity and it is a call to action to all
of us’ (UNESCO 2013a: 2).

Conservation and sustainable development
A third concern regarding the future of World Heritage is a recent shift in discourse from
conservation to development. It is worth recalling that the key goal of the Convention is the
post-inscription obligation to protect and conserve these extraordinary places for the benefit
of present and future generations. In the early years, the World Heritage system focussed
primarily on building up the World Heritage List. Management tools and monitoring systems
only emerged slowly as the Committee was confronted with mounting evidence that some
listed sites were in trouble. Members were confronted with the fact that inscription alone was
not sufficient to guarantee the survival and good management of World Heritage properties.

There have been some exceptional conservation successes as a result of the Convention. Particularly compelling are examples of the leadership of the Committee through decisions to
send high-level missions to endangered sites. For example, Thailand’s Adul Wichiencharoen,
Chair of the 18th session in 1994, went to Yellowstone National Park (USA) to advocate on
behalf of the Committee against a proposed gold mine upstream from the site. Despite an
openly hostile reception from local business interests, the conservation achievement was
spectacular. Responding to a well-orchestrated campaign by environmentalists decrying the
negative impacts of the proposed mine on the outstanding values of the park, American
President Bill Clinton bought out the gold mine interests, declaring that ‘Yellowstone is more
precious than gold’ (Broder 1996; Cameron and Rössler 2013: 145-7). Another example of strong personal leadership is the work of the German Chair of the 19th Committee session in 1995, Horst Winkelmann. During his mandate, he patiently and successfully negotiated with the local government in Potsdam, (Germany), to lower a proposed high-rise complex that threatened to intrude on the spectacular viewscape of Frederick the Great’s Sanssouci Palace, part of the Palaces and Parks of Potsdam and Berlin World Heritage property (UNESCO 1997: VII.47). There is also the persuasive dialogue initiated by Mexico’s Teresa Franco, Chair of the 20th Committee session in 1996, to address severe threats to the Galapagos Islands World Heritage property. At the Committee’s urging, she brokered a conservation agreement with Ecuador’s Minister of Environment that mobilised expertise and money from several countries (UNESCO 1996: VII.31 and XXI.1). In the case of the Whale Sanctuary of El Vizcaino World Heritage property (Mexico), the President of Mexico responded in 2000 to appeals from the Committee to forego an industrial salt factory in the bay where grey whales are born and nurtured. The President cancelled the proposed factory and accepted a proposal with funds from the UN Foundation for the development of ecotourism based on whale-watching (UNESCO 2000). These examples indicate the priority that the Committee placed on protection and conservation during the last decade of the twentieth century.

With the deletion of two sites from the World Heritage List in the past decade, the Committee continued to send a clear pro-conservation message to the world. The Arabian Oryx Sanctuary (Oman) was removed from the list in 2007 and the Dresden Elbe Valley (Germany) in 2009. The texts of the Committee’s decisions have identical tough statements that most countries would rather avoid. The publicly available document for the first-ever deleted site includes the following wording:

The World Heritage Committee notes with deep regret that the State Party failed to fulfill its obligations defined in the Convention, in particular the obligation to protect and conserve the World Heritage property of the Arabian Oryx Sanctuary;… [and] regrets that the entreaties of the World Heritage Committee… failed to protect the property (UNESCO 2007: 31 COM 7B.11).

Recently, the Committee appears to have changed direction, showing more support for development projects at the expense of conservation. For example, during an eight-year period, it dithered over high-rise developments near the World Heritage Site known as Kiev: Saint-Sophia Cathedral and Related Monastic Buildings, Kiev-Pechersk Lavra (Ukraine). Alerted by reports from ICOMOS, the Committee expressed concern about the negative impacts of the development on the Cathedral viewscapes and the monastic Dnieper river landscape setting. It repeatedly asked for a temporary moratorium so that an urban master plan could be developed and approved. In 2010, the situation had deteriorated to the point that ICOMOS recommended that the property be considered for In Danger listing. The Committee turned down this advice, only expressing ‘deep regret’ that no moratorium nor urban master plan had been put in place and reiterating its request for a temporary halt to the works ‘in the light of their lack of conformity with regulations and their potential adverse impact on the Outstanding Universal Value of the property’ (UNESCO 2010: 7B.103). By 2013 the Committee was faced with a fait accompli. It made a naïve and ineffectual request to Ukraine to immediately halt construction and, for one building, ‘to reduce its adverse effect by demolishing constructed levels to an appropriate scale’ (UNESCO 2013b: 7B.88). This is closing the proverbial barn door after the horse has escaped, since the towers were already built and the condominiums sold. Under the guise of justification, one Committee member remarked that it was unreasonable to expect government to buy out owners and to lower the height of buildings.

A second example is even more serious. Beginning in 2009, the Committee received reports about a plan to construct a ring road called the Cinta Costera in the water surrounding the Archaeological Site of Panamá Viejo and Historic District of Panamá World Heritage property. The historic district was listed for the exceptional quality of its 18th-century town located on a small peninsula close to islands that were used as a port and near the mouth of a river that eventually led to the Panama Canal. Concerned about the negative impacts on the relationship between the site and the seascape, the Committee tried unsuccessfully to review technical
plans and heritage impact assessment statements. It was also misled by Panamanian authorities who stated publicly in 2012 that the project was suspended. By 2013, the Committee was confronted with another fait accompli. The Committee failed in its duty to ensure the protection of the site, as required by article 6 of the Convention (UNESCO 1972: 6.1), and further lost credibility by choosing not to delete the property from the World Heritage List, even though it admitted that the new ring road ‘modifies in an irreversible manner the relation of the historic centre with its wider setting’ (UNESCO 2013b: 78.100). Instead the Committee de facto has accepted the Cinta Costera and asked for a monitoring mission and boundary changes to accommodate the new situation. Further detail can be found in a recent paper by anthropologist Lynn Meskell (Meskell 2014). This ineffectual response is a far cry from the champions of yesteryear.

These two examples – and there are plenty more – show that the discourse has shifted from conservation to development. Projects for resource extraction and infrastructure development are being accepted in and near World Heritage properties in the name of ‘sustainable development’. But the definition of this term is unclear and leans towards pure economic development at the expense of social, cultural and environmental dimensions. This change in discourse raises an ethical question. Who speaks for the interests of World Heritage properties? States Parties to the Convention ‘recognize that such heritage constitutes a world heritage for whose protection it is the duty of the international community as a whole to co-operate’ (UNESCO 1972: 6.1). Surely it is the Committee which holds this responsibility on behalf of the international community. Other groups and organisations exist to promote global development. But the Convention specifically charges the Committee with collective responsibility for safeguarding the world’s cultural and natural heritage places of Outstanding Universal Value. The discussions on the ‘UN post-2015 Development Agenda’ offer a possible way forward by re-positioning culture not as an alternative to development but as a key component of sustainability: ‘Harnessing the cultural sector, as well as cultural values and culturally sensitive approaches, can mediate and improve development outcomes in… environmental sustainability, durable urbanisation and in societies that are recovering from instability or conflict’ (UN 2014: VI).

Conclusion

Taken together, three areas of concern undermine the influence and credibility of the Convention. The current impasse on fully linking cultural and natural values is an issue that will eventually be resolved through dialogue among the various stakeholders and World Heritage experts. This follows a well-established tradition in the development of theoretical frameworks, when diverse points of view are brought to bear on an issue. The other two concerns require more fundamental change. In terms of increased politicisation of the system, arguments need fine-tuning in order to convince countries that it is in their interest to ensure that the Convention retains its credibility. World Heritage properties, not national governments, are necessarily at the heart of the system. As for weakening support for conservation, a recalibration is required to renew the leadership role of World Heritage in the conservation field. The Convention has played a catalytic role in raising public awareness and engaging in its mission, all kinds of people from governments to local communities, from organisations to civil society, from Indigenous peoples to the private sector. Such a track record of success should be sufficient to motivate positive change.

The ‘post-2015 Development Agenda’ led by the United Nations offers potential new channels to address these issues. The dialogue on culture and development re-positions culture and heritage as effective drivers and enablers of development rather than as competing public goods. The proposed ‘post-2015 Millennium Development Goals’ argue that development programmes which take into account the link between cultural diversity and biodiversity will secure greater environmental sustainability. As a counter to politicisation, the ‘post-2015 Development Agenda calls for a new global partnership involving civil society organisations, multilateral institutions, local and national governments, the scientific and academic community, businesses, and private philanthropy. This recalls Pressouyre’s insight that global responsibility for World Heritage is a ‘generous idea that belongs perhaps to the twenty-first century’ (Cameron 2008).
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