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Preservation of Cultural Heritage through Education

UN Educational, Scientific, & Cultural Organization

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Introduction

UNESCO

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, also known as UNESCO, was established on November 16, 1945 in London. It's constitution was signed by 37 countries and aimed to promote international cooperation on educational, scientific and cultural fields. At first, the organization emphasized on rebuilding schools, libraries, museums and different kinds of means that preserved European cultural heritage which were destroyed during World War II. Ever since, UNESCO has created campaigns to help member states eliminate poverty and illiteracy, protect cultural monuments around the world and aims to build peace through worldwide collaboration in education, sciences and culture.

UNESCO is the only United Nations organization that aims to cover all aspects of education. It provides "*global and regional leadership in education, strengthens education systems worldwide and responds to contemporary global challenges through education with gender equality an underlying principle*"[1]. It helps countries contact policy reviews in order to improve their educational systems. These reviews are customized for each country's needs, they usually relate to curriculum development, school principals and evaluations of teachers and students and promote dialogue, collaboration and peer learning. One of UNESCO's latest contributions are programs that will help with the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals that are part of the 2030 Agenda, as well as strategic contribution to the COVID-19 crisis, with awareness raising campaigns and all sorts of support needed that will help deal with this global health issue.

Introduction to preservation of cultural heritage

Cultural Heritage is a very significant part of each nation because it shapes the unique identity that it has and projects to the world. The term Cultural Heritage refers to old buildings, monuments, landmarks that have historical value, as well as documents, paintings, sculptures, coins of previous centuries that have formed a country's culture. As a result, every nation ought to preserve its heritage so as to benefit future generations. In order to help nations preserve and maintain their inheritance "*the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) seeks to encourage the identification, protection and preservation of cultural and natural heritage around the world considered to be of outstanding value to humanity. This is embodied in an international treaty called the*

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[1] https://en.unesco.org/themes/education

[Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage](), adopted by UNESCO in 1972." [2]

According to the Convention, Cultural Heritage consists of three categories:

a)   monuments: "*architectural works, works of monumental sculpture and painting, elements or structures of an archaeological nature, inscriptions, cave dwellings and combinations of features, which are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science;*"

b)   groups of buildings: "*groups of separate or connected buildings which, because of their architecture, their homogeneity or their place in the landscape, are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science;*"

c) sites: "*works of man or the combined works of nature and man, and areas including archaeological sites which are of outstanding universal value from the historical, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological point of view.*"[3]

a. <u>All conventions on cultural heritage:</u>

1.   The Paris Convention 1954

2.   The Hague Convention 1954

3.   The Paris Convention 1970; The Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural property

4.   The World Heritage Convention 1972

5.   The Granada Convention 1985

6.   The Valletta Convention 1992

7.   The Unidroit Convention 1995 (Rome)

8.   The Florence Convention 2000

9.   The Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage 2001

10. The Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage 2003[4]

11. The New European Agenda for Culture 2018

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[2] http://whc.unesco.org/en/about/
[3] http://whc.unesco.org/?cid=175
[4] https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/hpg/coventionstreatiesandcharters/

Interest in Knowledge

Historical Background

The preservation of cultural heritage has been an issue of international importance for a long time and today, it is one of the primary concerns for UNESCO. The protection of cultural heritage is claimed to have begun when Austria's ruler at the time, Maria Theresa, decided on regulations and the demands of the Congress of Vienna (1814 or 1815) to ensure that works of art are not removed from their place of origin during the War. This continued until the end of the 19th century when in 1874 (in Brussels), a draft international agreement on the laws and customs of war was agreed on. An international peace conference was held th 25 years later, in 1899, in the Netherlands pioneered by Tsar Nicholas II of Russia, and this conference aimed at revising the declaration (which was never ratified) and adopting a convention. The Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907 significantly advanced international law and laid down the principle of the immunity of cultural property. In 1954, UNESCO initiated signing of the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Forces. The Convention was adopted at The Hague (Netherlands) in 1954 after the destruction of many artifacts of cultural heritage during the Second World War. It is the first international treaty with a world-wide vocation focusing exclusively on the protection of cultural heritage in the event of armed conflict.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization has a vision to ensure that each child and citizen is accessible to quality education and through which they would be able to live as global citizens who are tolerant and free of hate. UNESCO promotes cultural heritage in many ways, of which education can be considered as the paramount, and this helps to strengthen ties between nations. UNESCO protects and raises awareness about cultural heritage around the world through the 1972 World Heritage Convention which explains in detail the components of cultural heritage. It states that cultural heritage comprises monuments, groups of buildings or sites that hold outstanding universal value. Aside from that, there is also natural heritage which includes naturally occurring formations. And a mixed site combines the aspects of both cultural and natural heritage. As this explains tangible cultural heritage, the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003) also recognises the intangible aspect of cultural heritage as practices, representations, and expressions of groups or a society. Thus, heritage provides societies with tangible and intangible manifestations of history and contributes to fields like archaeology, architecture, science and technology.

Furthermore, The New Urban Agenda (2016) identified cultural heritage as a key driver for sustainable development, social participation and inclusion. Hence, it is essential to realize the importance of heritage and its protection.

Current Situation

There are currently 1153 properties listed by the World Heritage List (WHL) as World Heritage sites inscribed by 167 state parties. Of these sites, 896 are cultural heritage sites, ranging across the globe from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe. However, due to several factors many of these heritage sites have been damaged and destroyed with disregard to their cultural, historical, and socioeconomic significance. From the above-mentioned 896 cultural sites, the WHL markets 36 of them as in danger from natural disasters, thieving, pollution, unrestrained urbanisation, illegal constructions and predominantly, armed conflicts and wars. A quintessential example of this situation is the state party, Syria. Since the beginning of the Syrian Civil War in March 2011, all six UNESCO WHS, including Palmyra, Bosra and the medieval buildings in the Ancient City of Aleppo have either been damaged and are now in ruins or on the List of World Heritage in Danger. While the tangible heritages suffer these indemnities, intangible heritages also face the risk of disappearance and deterioration in times of violent conflict and other challenges. The major intangible heritages at stake now are languages and indigenous cultures.

Definition of Key Terms

Cultural heritage

The use of heritage occurs in different areas and takes on significance as a vehicle for political, cultural and entrepreneurial purposes, as well as educational and for emancipation, to name just a few. How to interpret heritage in order to understand its meaning to different groups is, therefore, a very important task.

Cultural heritage is often referred to as "the legacy of possessions either tangible or intangible left to a group or society by the past generations". According to UNESCO, the term embodies several things categorized in two main types;

Tangible cultural heritage:

- movable cultural heritage (paintings, sculptures, coins, manuscripts)
- immovable cultural heritage (monuments, archaeological sites, and so on)
- underwater cultural heritage (shipwrecks, underwater ruins and cities)

Intangible cultural heritage: oral traditions, performing arts, rituals.

Preservation

The act of keeping something as it is, especially in order to prevent it from decaying or to protect it from being damaged or destroyed.

Preservation of Cultural Heritage:

The concept of Preservation of Cultural Heritage can be explained as the process of using pioneering, creative and innovative frameworks to protect the world's cultural heritage

inherited from the past for the future generation. It encompasses several practices which aim at protecting and preserving the legacies handed down by the ancestors of groups, especially in today's world where conflicts are on the rise.

Education

Education can be explained as the process of teaching or learning, especially in a school or college, or the knowledge that you acquire from them. We would define education as the process of gaining knowledge, which can be done via teaching, training, storytelling and especially visual communication. Visual Communication is the use of visual elements to convey ideas or information and these include the use of signs, illustrations, designs, among others to facilitate learning. It is a nonverbal form of education which can be considered as a powerful strategy for the preservation of cultural heritage.

Problem Identification

There are four fields that are connected with the need of cultural heritage preservation; *"scientific (research and increased knowledge) economic (attracts tourists and visitors to the region) social (sense of place and cultural identity) political (messages and symbolism)"* [5]. Cultural Heritage is the important part that stands out from the past and helps form the future in all aspects. Therefore its preservation is part of the educational system since students rely on the past in order to build the future.

As much as UNESCO's mandate is to protect and preserve the world's heritage and heritage sites, especially cultural heritage sites that take up a majority of the World Heritage List, it is essential to know and understand what exactly is the organization protecting the heritage. There are numerous factors that continue to threaten cultural heritage and these are mainly man-made dangers and environmental circumstances. The main factors identified here include; conflict and war, looting, theft and illicit trafficking of cultural properties, deterioration, and disappearance.

Conflict and war

Violent conflict is often linked with changing the current social and economic circumstances (recessions or corruption) of a particular area and during wars and conflicts; either political, ethnic or religious, one main agenda of those actively involved is the deliberate destruction of cultural heritage sites. This violence is mainly used by non-state actors, who intentionally target the local people and their cultural sites and properties in hopes of bringing attention to their objectives and to victimize groups based on their cultural and ethnic identity. The destruction of cultural landmarks are attempts to rewrite history by

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[5] http://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1224014/FULLTEXT01.pdf (p.12)

erasing places of memory. Seeing as conflicts continue to rise and more sites are lost to deliberate destruction, this is an issue that needs to be tackled.

Syria continues to be a vivid example of the threats which destroy cultural heritage sites, especially violent conflict. In recent times, non-state actors have managed to eliminate every site which is of cultural importance to the Syrian people. Daesh, the main agent in the deliberate destruction and looting of cultural sites and properties, has been targeting cultural heritage in Iraq and Syria. The destruction is often in the form of "smashing artifacts in archaeological museums, iconoclastic breaking and bulldozing of archaeological sites, dynamiting of shrines, tombs, and other sites of local communities," etc. It has been postulated that these destructions have multiple effects: "from humiliating the local communities to broadcasting a radical ideology of religious fanaticism in order to recruit new transnational militants, all the way to defying the common values attached to cultural heritage." UNESCO's Committee for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict condemned the "repeated and deliberate attacks against cultural property, in particular in the Syrian Arab Republic and the Republic of Iraq".

It is prohibited specifically in international humanitarian law, conspicuously in the 1954 Hague Convention on the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and its protocols, to intentionally target cultural and religious sites that are not military objectives, have no military function, and make no contribution to military action. In 2016, Ahmad al Faqi al Mahdi, a member of Ansar Dine, an extremist group associated with al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, was sentenced to nine years imprisonment and given a significant fine by the International Criminal Court for the deliberate destruction of cultural heritage in Timbuktu, Mali.[6]

Looting, Theft and Illicit Trafficking of Cultural Properties

One of the most offending activities which threaten cultural heritage is the looting, theft and illicit trafficking of cultural properties. Believed to be of intrinsic value, cultural heritage has been legally commissioned, displayed, bought and sold, and yet it has been and is still being stolen, looted, and trafficked illicitly for financial gain.

These are serious crimes because not only do they deprive people of knowledge about their history and cultures and eventually ruin social cohesion but the illicit financial gains which are obtained from these criminal activities are used to fuel organized crimes such as terrorism and violence.

Resolution 2234 (2018) of the Council of Europe states that illegal trafficking of cultural heritage has always been transnational and it feeds into a black market that trades in

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[6] https://www.icc-cpi.int/mali/al-mahdi

antiquities, art and artefacts. Notable in Iraq and Syria, Daesh has been profiting from pillaging the valuable archaeological sites and cultural products in these regions.[7]

The UNESCO 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property is an international treaty which was signed to face the illegal trade of cultural items, got signed on 14 November 1970, however started its effect on 24 April 1972. This Convention recommends the enforcement of the protection of cultural property in three main objectives with each being preventive measures, restitution provisions, and international cooperation. The first, known as preventive measures, states that the members signed to the treaty are obliged to enforce the security and safety of cultural property, such as taking inventory, exportation certifications, monitoring of trade, and imposition of penal sanctions. The second, which touches on restitution provisions, asks that each sovereign state is to assist one another in the case of recuperation of stolen cultural property. The third, international cooperation, attempts to strengthen international ties between signatories and to provide assistance and cooperation with one another.

Disappearance

While it is easy to grasp the extent to which tangible sites are under stress, it is also important to realize that intangible cultural heritage sites are also very much at risk of deterioration or disappearance. According to UNESCO, the importance of intangible cultural heritage is not the cultural manifestation itself but "rather the wealth of knowledge and skills that is transmitted through it from one generation to the next." Intangible cultural heritage is threatened with extinction by the upcoming introduction of contemporary products such as technology. The need to promote, protect and strengthen cultural expressions and practices of communities, groups and individuals from around the world is an area that also requires greater attention.

Climate and environmental changes

Cultural heritage and properties are being lost at a distressing rate and this not only as a result of human activities but also due to climate and environmental changes. Without a doubt cultural heritage, sites and properties need safeguarding for the future generations however unexpected natural hazards such as hurricanes, active volcanoes, coupled with the increased and frequent extremities in the weather which come as a consequence in the ever-changing climate conditions have become an added challenge in the sustainable management, preservation and protection of said heritage. In a country such as Greece, the

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[7] https://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-en.asp?fileid=25019&lang=e

Acropolis - which is one of the most-visited sites in the world and a UNESCO World Heritage Site- is suffering from the impacts of climate change as air pollution and acid rain continue to erode the walls of this ancient city. There is a need for strategies which would provide adaptation measures for this issue.

Countries & Organisations Involved

Council of Europe

The Council of Europe (CoE), and its 47 member states[8] held a Convention in 1985 for the *Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe[9]*, which was revised in 1992 in the Valletta Convention[10]. In 2001, CoE established the Convention for the protection of *Audiovisual Heritage[11]* and since then it has been adopting actions that are in favor of cultural heritage preservation. Most of the outstanding sites that need protection are located in Europe, that's why their preservation is a priority of the European Union and the Council of Europe.

United States of America

The United States of America, is one of the six observer states of the Council of Europe and has also signed in 1983, into the *Cultural Property Implementation Act (CPIA)[12]*, which is the implementation of UNESCO's 1970 Convention based on American policy and culture. The US has withdrawn two times from UNESCO. More specifically, the US was a member state from 4/11/1946 until 31/12/1984. This first withdrawal was a decision president R. Reagan made, because there seemed to be *"an ideological tilt toward the Soviet Union at the height of the Cold War"* [13]. From 1/10/2003 until 21/12/2018 The US was again an UNESCO's member state but withdrew due to "anti-Israel bias". Thus, the US has taken initiatives in order to preserve its cultural heritage such as, The Antiquities Act of 1906, which allowed the penalization of anyone who destroyed monuments or generally public land that is owned by the federal government; "*The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. § 4321-70a) requires the government to use "all practicable means and measures" to preserve important historical and cultural sites"[14]* and the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs

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[8] https://www.coe.int/en/web/about-us/our-member-states

[9] https://rm.coe.int/168007a085

[10] https://rm.coe.int/168007bd25

[11] https://rm.coe.int/168008155f

[12] https://eca.state.gov/files/bureau/97-446.pdf

[13] https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/opinion/the-conversation/sd-what-is-unesco-why-is-us-withdrawing-from-it-20171012-htmlstory.html

[14] https://smarthistory.org/cultural-heritage-risk-united-states/

which aims to build peaceful relationships between US citizens and citizens of other countries through educational programs.

Iraq

Since the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) has taken over a part of Iraq with 4.000 cultural sites, UNESCO and other initiatives such as The International Council of Museums have been trying to save Iraq's heritage from lootings and illegal removals. Despite the efforts of organizations and foreign governments, the unstable political situation of the country is helping the illicit trafficking and looting of Iraqi cultural heritage.

Syria

Syria has to deal with a similar situation with the one in Iraq. Since 2011, the on-going conflict in the country has threatened not only the monuments that are part of UNESCO's World Heritage List, but generally all kinds of Syrian heritage. UNESCO has been trying through national and international initiatives to protect the Syrian culture from illicit trafficking, looting and severe damages.

UNESCO's Member States List: https://en.unesco.org/countries/s?page=2

Addressing the Challenge

In present-day 2021, although UNESCO is doing its very best to handle the present situation, several non-profits have shown interest and have also taken it upon themselves to work towards the preservation of languages, monuments, and cultural heritage. Here are some of the main organizations leading the charge:

Cultural Survival has developed numerous programs that work towards maintaining cultural diversity and cultural preservation. They associate themselves primarily with indigenous peoples around the world, most of whom are in the Americas and Asia. Some of these programs include indigenous-run community radio programs and advocating for governing bodies and global groups like the UN to help raise awareness about the need to protect our cultural heritage. They also amplify grassroots movements' efforts by spreading the word about petitions, awareness campaigns, and human rights preservations.

The Linguistic Society of America is committed to Endangered Languages and Their Preservation (CELP). It is a key non-profit working to document and study at-risk languages in America. By working with indigenous groups and universities, CELP is helping to preserve languages while being respectful to the principles of cultural preservation.

The Global Heritage Fund is slightly different from the aforementioned non-profits. The group aims to achieve cultural preservation through historical monument reparation, restoration, and maintenance.

Aside from the above Non-Governmental Organizations, other organizations both regional and international have taken up the mandate to ensure the progress in protecting cultural heritage mainly through education;

The Council of Europe & the European Union

The European Commission raises awareness about Europe's cultural heritage through education and also maximises the impact of the Erasmus programme. This is in support of the fact that 88% of European citizens are of the view that Europe's cultural heritage must be taught in schools because it ensures that children would become knowledgeable about their history and myriad cultures. The Commission explains the basic idea of heritage education as a platform for people to engage in experiences and learn new concepts and skills. Through this engagement, learners would gain knowledge and intellectual skills and have a broader range of competences on issues such as the maintenance and protection of cultural heritage. Several initiatives and resources have been laid down to facilitate the teaching and learning of cultural heritage in schools. This not only addresses the European Union through education but also with the help of the New European Agenda for Culture adopted by the European Commission in 2018, which supports cultural cooperation and promotion and focuses on three important aspects of the challenge: the social, the economic and the external. This new agenda supports cultural research in various fields, builds missions and projects while simultaneously supporting growth and innovation.

E-twinning

This is the community for schools in Europe. Here, teachers can find an introduction to heritage interpretation along with an e-book, 'Learning from the past, designing our future'. This book includes a variety of ideas and activities of how teachers can introduce cultural heritage in their classes, projects for students to undertake as well as examples associated with cultural heritage from other eTwinning schools that are members of the UNESCO Associated Schools Network. [link]

School Education Gateway

This is Europe's online platform for school education. This platform helps to promote the inclusion of cultural heritage in education activities in schools across Europe by organizing workshops dedicated to promoting cultural heritage and also through information sharing.

Dive Into Heritage

This is a project that was developed under the European Year of Cultural Heritage and through this project, volunteers partook in training, trips and other activities where they learned to recognise the richness of culture and to also be responsible for its protection, maintenance and the transfer of cultural heritage to future generations. This particular project was funded by the European Union under the Erasmus+ project.

The African Union

Over the years, the themes for the AU have bordered on issues including ending conflict (2020) and promoting gender equality (2015, 2016) yet this year's theme focuses on African arts, culture and heritage. The official theme for 2021 is 'Arts, Culture and Heritage: Levers for Building the Africa We Want'. This theme would be the roadmap for the restitution of cultural property and heritage in Africa as well as activities in areas such as African languages, history and oral traditions. The outline of the theme for the year emphasized the role of arts, culture and heritage as agents for the socio-development of the African continent. The AU highlighted that in many countries, the tourism industries have served as educational units because many citizens have become more aware of their own heritage at a time when traveling abroad was restricted due to the pandemic.

The Great Museum of Africa

This museum is a flagship project that is part of the AU Agenda 2063. With the establishment of the Great Museum of Africa in Algeria, the AU aims at contributing to preserve and showcase the African continent's history and artefacts. With this in mind, the union hopes to educate more people about the various cultures and heritage in the countries across the continent.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations

ASEAN adopted a declaration on cultural heritage through which the organization promoted the protection of national treasures and cultural properties. For this reason, Member states of the ASEAN were encouraged to design formal and non-formal learning programmes, traditions and cultural heritage. Member states also endeavoured to set up centres for the documentation and promotion of indigenous knowledge. All of these are in hopes of aiding the protection of cultural heritage through education.

The Arab League

The Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALESCO) is an institution working under the Arab League. One of its projects is the Educational and Cultural Institutions and Their Role in Preserving the Arab Identity. The idea is to develop a training

package that helps to incorporate the Arab culture and common values into school education, specifically the social studies curricula.

The objectives of this project are to provide resources and practical examples to those who frame school curricula, textbooks and other educational tools to facilitate the aforementioned incorporation of the Arab identity into the educational process and also to improve the quality of educational materials to enable the transmission of common values through education.

World Trade Organization

The World Trade Organization(WTO) *"operates the global system of trade rules and helps developing countries build their trade capacity"[15].* As far as cultural heritage is concerned, the WTO has been helping countries such as Indonesia to protect their intangible cultural heritage from illicit trade markets.

Questions to Consider

1. How can education be used as a tool to protect and preserve cultural heritage sites?

2. What can UNESCO do in order to protect and preserve cultural heritage in potentially violent conflict and post-conflict areas?

3. What are the key factors we need to keep in mind when it comes to preserving cultural heritage?

4. How can looting and theft be stopped in order to prevent the destruction of cultural heritage?

5. What are some historical mistakes we ought to keep from repeating themselves and how?

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[15] https://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/whatis_e/who_we_are_e.htm

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