7 The UNESCO World Heritage 'black' list: Uses and misuses[487]

For many countries, the inclusion of cultural, natural, or mixed property on the UNESCO World Heritage List is a crucial issue, less in terms of recognition of the property's value (cultural, historical, or landscape) than in terms of the prospects for asserting identity or reaping economic and tourism benefits. In many respects, being included in the list is a geopolitical issue, particularly for emerging countries. States compete based on their ability to list national properties recognised as 'outstanding universal value'.[488] This has resulted in an exponential increase in the number of applications, and it is becoming increasingly difficult for UNESCO and the specialised consultative structures to carry out effective monitoring.[489] In 2022–2023, 42 new properties (33 cultural properties and 9 natural properties) were added to the list. As a result, the number of sites to be listed each year is now limited to 45, and each State Party to the World Heritage Convention is entitled to apply for a maximum of two sites per year. The World Heritage List has just passed the symbolic milestone of 1200 sites.

Yet this 'outstanding universal' value is not eternal! Indeed, the famous 'label' may be withdrawn under certain conditions. So, alongside the pres-

487 This text is based on the reports written by the students in class 3 of the Erasmus Mundus DYCLAM+ master's degree I supervised from 2018 to 2024. I would like to thank them all: Djimmy Edah, Maxence Bouquet, Amira Ftaita, Denise Navarro Becerra, Alexandra Egorova, Honora Rijaniaina Raveloson, Yosra Maatallah, Quentin Prigent, Gaël Goualandiangou, Boris Kougba, Anastasiia Kleshchenko, Raíssa Rangel Damiano, Marie-Line Farah, Léonie Petitclerc, Bochra Rzaigui, Océane Lesot, Martine Ndo, Mailane Messias-Sampaio. See: Robert Belot, Philippe Martin (dir.), *Patrimoine, Péril, Résilience*, Paris, Maisonneuve & Larose/Hémisphères, 2022.

488 Chloé Maurel, « Les prémices de la convention sur le patrimoine mondial de l'Unesco de 1972 », in *L'invention de la valeur universelle exceptionnelle de l'Unesco. Une utopie contemporaine*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2015, p. 43–60

489 This increase is also linked to UNESCO's will to account for the issue of representativity. In the 1990s, it was observed that there was an over-representation of one type of Western property (essentially historic towns and monumental properties with elitist architecture in Western countries). In 1994, the World Heritage Committee adopted a strategy to draw up a 'balanced, representative and credible World Heritage list'. See: Sophia Labadi (2005), 'A review of the Global Strategy for a balanced, representative and credible World Heritage List 1994–2004, Conservation and Management of Archaeological Sites', 7:2, p. 89–102, DOI: 10.1179/135050305793137477.

tigious list, there is a 'black' list of properties that are in danger of being de-listed, the 'List of World Heritage in Danger', the purgatory of World Heritage sites. As of 2024, 56 sites were included on this list. Its purpose is to inform the international community that the criteria that justified a property's inclusion on the World Heritage List are no longer met because the property is endangered. The causes may be grouped into three categories: failure to respect commitments made by the community (poor management, choice of infrastructure that affects the landscape); external circumstances (armed conflicts, wars, natural disasters, pollution, poaching, uncontrolled urbanisation, etc.); overtourism (unchecked growth in the number of visitors to the site, a victim of its success). In 2019, during its 43rd session in Baku, the World Heritage Committee reiterated that the purpose of including a property on the List of World Heritage in Danger was to mobilise international support to help the State Party respond effectively to the challenges facing the property.

However, further analysis of this little-known and little-studied system is required.[490] We propose to examine how it is implemented (or not) using practical cases to identify the threats that weigh on cultural properties. What kind of damage to UNESCO-labelled heritage would justify the implementation of such a list? Have stable criteria been set? Are the procedures efficient? How do the stakeholders, and especially the politicians, behave towards UNESCO? Can UNESCO, which is nothing more than an assembly of States, resist pressure and geopolitical challenges that can be disruptive factors?

How to define 'threats' and 'danger'?

The List of World Heritage in Danger alerts the international community in the hope that it will act to save the sites in question. UNESCO must ensure compliance with the preamble to the 1972 Convention, which stresses the need to establish 'an effective system of collective protection of the cultural and natural heritage, organised on a permanent basis and in accordance with modern scientific methods'. Typically, the mere perspective of the inclusion of a site on this list is likely to trigger the speedy adoption of her-

490 With the exception of Nicolas E. Brown, Claudia Liuzza & Lynn Meskell, 'The Politics of Peril: UNESCO's List of World Heritage in Danger', *Journal of Field Archaeology*, 44:5, 2019, p. 287–303, DOI: 10.1080/00934690.2019.1600929

itage conservation and protection measures. Some States perceive the List of World Heritage in Danger as a 'black' list and consider the inclusion of one of their properties on this list a humiliation in the international arena. The worst situation is when a property on the World Heritage List shortly thereafter finds itself on the 'black' list due to negligence and failure to honour community commitments. Such was the case of the archaeological site of Butrint in Albania. It was added to the World Heritage List in 1992 and, five years later, on the List of World Heritage in Danger until 2007 due to pillage and a lack of protection, management, and conservation of remains from the Greek, Roman, Byzantine, and Venetian periods. However, if it has identified the threat, a state can and must request the inscription of one of its properties on the List of World Heritage in Danger. This means that it can use the World Heritage Fund to help conserve the property. Every year, 4 million dollars are disbursed through contributions from States Parties and private donations.[491]

The *World Heritage Policy Compendium* identifies two main categories of threat: 'In the case of cultural properties, danger factors may be due either to nature or to human action, whereas in the case of natural properties, most of the factors emanate from human action and it is infrequent for a factor of natural origin (such as an epidemic) to threaten the integrity of a property'.

Following the bombing of Dubrovnik in 1991 and its inclusion on the List of World Heritage in Danger, the 2008 'guidelines' expanded and clarified the criteria for including a property on the List in Danger. The threat is defined by the emergence of a specific danger or by the existence of significant operations for which a request for international assistance has been issued. Consider the example of the historic centre of Shakhrisyabz in Uzbekistan, located on the Silk Road in southern Uzbekistan. It is a unique testimony to the architectural heritage of Central Asia and the Islamic world (15th and 16th centuries). UNESCO considered that the destruction of medieval buildings and the erection of modern buildings had 'caused irreversible damage to the appearance of the historic city' and decided to include the site on the List of World Heritage in Danger in 2016.

Conversely, spectacular disasters to listed properties have not always triggered the endangerment procedure. One of the most striking examples

491 Claire Thoizet, « Un site peut-il être retiré de la liste du patrimoine mondial de l'Unesco? », *La Croix*, 4 July 2018. https://www.la-croix.com/Culture/site-peut-etre-retire-liste-patrimoine-mondial-lUnesco-2018-07-04-1200952580

is the fire that almost destroyed Notre-Dame de Paris in April 2019. The 43rd session of the World Heritage Committee 'expressed its full support for the State Party (...) and congratulated the State Party for the efforts made by the competent national services to ensure the safeguarding of the property despite the difficulties encountered'. There was never any question of including Notre-Dame de Paris on the list of properties 'in danger'.

The approach is trickier when the threats are more diffuse and are not caused by a sudden event. Thus, it is necessary to distinguish between 'proven perils' (specific and established imminent threats, such as armed conflict or earthquakes) and 'endangerment', i.e., threats that could have indirect harmful effects on the integrity of the heritage (overcrowding, the passage of time, bad weather, pollution, climate change). In some instances, the threats are 'mixed', both human and environmental. This is the case for the heritage of the tropical forests of Sumatra (Indonesia). This vast area of 2.5 million hectares of national parks is one of the largest biodiversity reserves in Southeast Asia. It shelters critically endangered species (orangutans, Sumatran tigers, rhinoceros, elephants, and bears). UNESCO decided to include this natural site on the List of World Heritage in Danger to help it 'overcome the threat of poaching, illegal logging, deforestation for agriculture and plans to build roads through the park.'

A distinction is drawn between 'proven threat' (the property is threatened by a proven, specific and imminent danger) and 'endangerment' (the property faces severe threats that could hurt its essential characteristics).

For cultural property

Proven threat	**Endangerment**
severe degradation of the materials	a change in the legal status of the property which may reduce the level of protection
severe degradation of the structure and/or landscape	lack of a conservation policy
severe alteration in architectural and urban cohesion	threats from development projects
severe alteration of the urban or rural landscape or the natural environment	threats from urban planning
significant loss of historical authenticity	ongoing armed conflict or conflict about to break out
serious alteration of cultural significance	threatening impacts of climatic, geological or other environmental factors

For natural property

Proven threat	Endangerment
serious decline in the population of endangered species or other species of outstanding universal value that benefit from protection (natural or human factors)	change in the legal status protecting the property; population resettlement or development projects; ongoing armed conflict or conflict about to break out
severe deterioration of the natural beauty or scientific interest of the property, caused, for example, by human settlement, adventitious construction or miscellaneous development	lack of a management plan or system, inadequate or incompletely implemented plan
encroachment of human settlements on the boundaries or upstream of property whose integrity they threaten	threatening impacts of climatic, geological or other environmental factors.

It should be noted that the assessment is sometimes based on vague and subjective criteria. For example, the 'natural beauty' or aesthetics of a landscape. A good illustration is that of the wind turbines that were to be erected near Mont Saint-Michel (in 2011–2012). UNESCO asked the French government to extend the exclusion perimeter, considering that 'the construction of wind turbines in the vicinity and within the visual environment of the Bay of Mont-Saint-Michel presents a threat whose impact is the most negative and serious'.[492] In this case, the threat was intangible. It was, so to speak, a matter of 'perspective', in both senses of the term.

Article 11 of the 1972 Convention provided for including a site on the 'in Danger' list 'whenever circumstances shall so require' or 'in case of urgent need'. What may seem clear is much less so when it comes to implementing this chapter. We will demonstrate what has already been observed, i.e., that 'the assessment of these situations is extremely variable; in almost 50 years of existence, the World Heritage Committee has not succeeded in establishing fairly stable criteria for assessing danger'.[493]

492 UNESCO, Mission Report, 22–24 November 2011. See also: D. DEHARBE. *Les représentations imagées du paysage devant le juge administratif. L'exemple du contentieux éolien* In : *Image(s) & Environnement*. Toulouse : Presses de l'Université Toulouse 1 Capitole, 2012 <http://books.openedition.org/putc/2567>. ISBN: 9782379280122. DOI: https://doi.org/10.4000/books.putc.2567.

493 Mélanie Duval, Ana Brancelj et Christophe Gauchon, « Élasticité des normes et stratégies d'acteurs : analyse critique de l'inscription au patrimoine mondial de l'UNESCO », *Géoconfluences*, juin 2021. https://geoconfluences.ens-lyon.fr/informations-scientifiques/dossiers-thematiques/patrimoine/articles/analyse-critique-inscription-unesco.

How to assess? The role of UNESCO's partner institutions and their limitations

A relevant and regular monitoring policy should be devised in light of the ever-increasing number of World Heritage properties. The requirement for State Parties to produce a management and monitoring plan demonstrates the need for a monitoring protocol. It should be noted that the States debate and sometimes challenge this requirement because they do not wish to forfeit their sovereign right over their territory's heritage.[494] Self-assessment is encouraged. The World Heritage Committee relies on the expertise of specialised partner institutions such as ICCROM (International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property), IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature), ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites) and ICOM (International Council of Museums). These institutions play a crucial role in the implementation of the Convention through research and the publication of results. ICOMOS and ICCROM have developed guides to help the States manage their heritage and provide a framework that may later serve as a reference for assessment.[495]

These bodies have the power to trigger the alert procedure, including for properties not on the World Heritage list. The 'World Heritage Alert' process uses ICOMOS professional and public networks. The Historical Centre in Colón (Panama) is a recent example of the implementation of this process. ICOMOS International issued a heritage alert that relayed the national alert issued by ICOMOS Panama on 7 March 2022.[496] Colón is a 'historical urban landscape' that was deteriorating due to the local authorities' negligence and was at risk of demolition after a change in the law protecting the site. This law, passed in September 2021, does not incorporate the modifications suggested by heritage conservation organisations. ICOMOS issued a 'Global Heritage Alert' to raise awareness, put pressure

494 In 2019, a UNESCO workgroup produced a report on world heritage stakeholders' perception of reactive monitoring. https://whc.unesco.org/fr/suivi-reactif/. See also: Chloé Maurel, « L'Unesco de 1945 à 1974 », Thèse de doctorat, Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, 2006, p. 814.

495 B. M. Feilden & J. Jokilehto, *Guide de gestion des sites du patrimoine culturel mondial*, Rome, 1993; as well as: Herb Stovel, *Risk Preparedness: A Management Manual for World Heritage*, ICCROM, Rome, 1998.

496 https://www.icomos.org/images/DOCUMENTS/Secretariat/2022/Heritage_Alerts/ICOMOS_HERITAGE_ALERT_COLON_UPDATE.pdf

on the Panamanian government and recommend conservation measures. These alerts are mentioned on the UNESCO website.

Three types of monitoring have been identified: systematic, administrative and *ad hoc*. 'Systematic monitoring' is an ongoing process of monitoring the condition of world heritage sites. It requires periodic reporting on their state of conservation. 'Administrative monitoring' involves control actions carried out by the World Heritage Centre to ensure the proper implementation of the recommendations and decisions of the World Heritage Committee and its Bureau at the time of inscription of the properties or subsequently. '*Ad hoc* monitoring' is the presentation of reports to the Bureau and the Committee by the World Heritage Centre on the state of conservation of specific World Heritage sites at risk. This mechanism is mobilised whenever exceptional circumstances arise or works may impact the state of conservation of the sites.

ICOMOS produced the 'Heritage at Risk' programme, which was approved by the General Assembly in Mexico in 1999.[497] National and international scientific committees are invited each year to produce short reports describing the risks in their country or field of expertise, complete with case studies. This programme's reports aim to identify World Heritage properties at risk and present real-life case studies. In November 2011, ICOMOS published the 'Heritage Alert'[498] procedure to establish a reliable database for keeping an updated 'list of properties at risk'. UNESCO does not always follow these bodies' recommendations. In addition to the technical and scientific parameters, there are also non-rational or, in other words, political parameters to consider. And strategies of influence and lobbies exist in this field, as they do everywhere. Let us consider an example of the distortion of ICOMOS recommendations by UNESCO. It concerns Ichkeul Park in Tunisia.

This park, which was a hunting reserve in the 12th century, became part of the public domain in the 20th century. UNESCO listed it as a 'biosphere reserve' in 1977 before adding it to the World Heritage List in 1979. It became a 'national park' in 1980. In 1996, the site was included on the List of World Heritage in Danger due to a sharp rise in the salinity of the water (as a result of the construction of dams on upstream rivers), which posed

497 Reports and special issues on monuments and sites at risk published by ICOMOS. https://www.icomos.org/fr/notre-action/anticipation-des-risques/rapports-heritage-at-risk

498 ICOMOS, « Alerte patrimoine », ICOMOS, 15 November 2011. https://www.icomos.org/fr/simpliquer/nous-informer/alerte-patrimoine

a threat to hundreds of migratory birds. An emergency plan was devised to better manage the site's water resources. In 2006, UNESCO withdrew the park from the 'black' list. However, what Wikipedia (accessed on 10 May 2024) fails to mention is that the International Union for Conservation of Nature considered that not all the benchmarks and objectives had been achieved, in particular, the creation of an independent and permanent management structure and the development of a participatory management plan. Consequently, the organisation issued an unfavourable opinion regarding the removal of the property from the World Heritage in Danger list, which the World Heritage Committee did not heed.

Independent bodies and researchers spoke out against this decision. On 16 April 2016, the webzine 'NATURA Sciences. L'information scientifique de l'urgence climatique' published a critical analysis: 'Le parc national d'Ichkeul toujours menacé!'[499] (Ichkeul National Park is still at risk!). The webzine quoted Fathi Ayache, senior lecturer in biogeography at the University of Sousse (Tunisia), who believed that 'the removal of the Ichkeul nature reserve from the List of World Heritage in Danger by UNESCO in 2006 is an aberration', because, in reality 'the lake and marshes in the park have still not been saved'. NATURA Sciences echoed the report of the World Wide Fund (WWF) organisation published on 6 April 2016.[500] This report claims that Ichkeul Park is one of the 114 natural sites on the World Heritage list that are 'threatened by deleterious industrial activities'. The purpose was to raise awareness among the public and, more importantly, with the relevant authorities that more than half of the sites listed by UNESCO for their biodiversity (229 sites in 2016 across 96 countries and occupying 279 million hectares, or 0.5 % of the earth's surface) are facing real threats as a direct result of human activity.[501] In this report, the NGO advocated expanding the annual session of the World Heritage Committee to include organisations with practical experience in the conservation and management of natural World Heritage sites.

This touches on the limits and challenges of UNESCO's heritage policy and its constant efforts to find a compromise between the political and

499 https://www.natura-sciences.com/comprendre/parc-national-ichkeul-tunisie-menaces941.html

500 file:///Users/br78662h/Desktop/Livre%20PROJET%20Etudes%20PAT%202024/UNESCO%20Pe%CC%81rils/1602_rapport_proteger_hommes_en_protegeant_nature.pdf

501 https://www.lesechos.fr/2016/04/le-patrimoine-mondial-victime-des-activites-industrielles-206325

economic importance of World Heritage and scientific considerations. Heritage issues are an endless source of conflicts of interest and clashing of rationales. Lastly, there is a growing gap between recommendations and inscriptions.[502] This gap has not escaped UNESCO's notice, which, for the first time in 2021, lamented that in nine cases, the Committee had not followed the recommendations of the Advisory Bodies.[503]

This raises the broader issue of UNESCO's ability to ensure that States respect their commitments and the ideal behind the Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, adopted by UNESCO on 16 November 1972, to which 195 countries are signatories. One example among others. In July 2020, Turkey ignored the World Heritage Committee's recommendations by turning the Basilica of Saint Sophia Museum in Istanbul into an active mosque.[504] Despite the risk of the site being delisted by UNESCO, the political significance of this action seemed more important to the head of state, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who thereby sought to strengthen the national spirit and increase his political capital. He claimed that he meant to 'give it back to the Turkish Muslims' and open it to everyone free of charge. This change has not been without consequences for the property's governance, shared between players, each with its own rationale. Whereas it was previously the sole responsibility of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, it must now involve the Presidency of Religious Affairs (Dinyanet), the Foundation's Directorate and the Istanbul Prefecture. Maintenance work on the property will be more complex and time-consuming. Yet, the most serious issue concerns the arrangements for welcoming the public.

As the site is now used for cultural and religious purposes, the decision not to charge an entrance fee resulted in a drop in income for the Turkish state, which is detrimental to maintaining the property. This is why the Ministry of Culture decided to charge an entrance fee (a hefty €25) for foreign visitors only as of 2024. One can only imagine the organisational

502 Tim Badman (*et. al.*), « Patrimoine mondial en péril », *Études de l'UICN sur le patrimoine mondial, Union internationale pour la conservation de la nature*, Septembre 2009, p. 1–50.

503 UNESCO Archives, Comité du patrimoine mondial, Quarante-quatrième Session, « Point 8 de l'Ordre du jour provisoire : Établissement de la Liste du patrimoine mondial et de la Liste du patrimoine mondial en péril », WHC/21/44.COM/8B, Fuzhou, Chine, 2021, p.25 – 40.

504 « Sainte Sophie à Istanbul : l'UNESCO regrette la décision des autorités turques », *ONU info*, 20 juillet 2020. https://news.un.org/fr/story/2020/07/1072801

problems involved in implementing something that is obviously a form of discrimination. One likes to say that heritage brings people together; here, it is divisive and has become an arena for civilisational confrontation.

Concerned by Turkey's refusal to negotiate on this issue, UNESCO experts requested a detailed report on the basilica's current state from the Turkish government by 1 February 2022. Meanwhile, this situation, which affects not only the heritage but also the religious field, has received negative comments from the Orthodox Church of Constantinople and the Greek and Russian Patriarchates, who fear, in particular, the loss of the unique Byzantine frescoes. Hence, the religious dimension has further added to the complexity of a political issue. Ironically, given what Russia did to Ukraine in February 2022, President Erdogan assured Vladimir Putin, who at the time was very concerned about protecting Orthodox heritage, that the Christian relics of Saint Sophia would be safeguarded. This shows how the states' strategic positioning within the context of UNESCO can influence the perception of the List of World Heritage in Danger. With few means available to impose strict obligations on the States Parties, the organisation has become the scene of serious tensions and political rivalries. Conflicts of interest intersect with social and cultural issues, condemning UNESCO to impotence.

Another factor could be considered and examined, which raises the question of the Committee's neutrality. Australian researcher Lynn Meskell has pointed to changes in how the Committee's elected experts are selected: ambassadors and diplomats are increasingly replacing archaeologists, historians and scientists. State Party representatives would develop strategies for political influence in the name of heritage.[505] According to her, the Assemblies' sessions are akin to 'gifts and exchanges on a global stage' and have thus become a stage for playing out strategic political alliances.[506] Lobbying and pressure to adopt favourable measures undermine the importance of heritage expertise, UNESCO's original mission.

505 Camille Rondot, « L'Unesco au risque de sa politisation : symptômes d'une incommunication dans les relations internationales », *Hermès, La Revue*, vol. 81, 2018, p. 166–168.

506 Lynn Meskell, Claudia Liuzza, Bertacchini Enrico, Donatella Saccone, 2014, 'Multilateralism and UNESCO World Heritage: decision-making, States Parties and political processes', *International Journal of Heritage Studies,* volume 21, issue 5, p. 423–440; Lynn Meskell, 2015, 'Transacting UNESCO World Heritage: gifts and exchanges on a global stage', *Social Anthropology,* volume 23, issue 1, p. 3–21.

Why enter the 'black' list, and how to be removed from it?

What is required to have a property removed from the List in Danger and reinstated on the World Heritage List? That's the happy ending! We will also analyse the cases where UNESCO has had to launch the ultimate and unfortunate procedure: removal from the World Heritage List, i.e., delisting. It may seem obvious that any property included on the World Heritage List in Danger would automatically be included on the World Heritage List. Overall, this is the case. Yet, there are a few exceptions. While inclusion on this list may be a sanction, it can also be an opportunity. This is known as a 'simultaneous inscription' on both lists: the World Heritage List and the World Heritage in Danger List. It requires an emergency context. Three examples.

The natural and cultural-historical region of Kotor, located on the bay of Boka Kotorska on Montenegro's Adriatic coast, was hit by an earthquake in 1979. It is a natural harbour which used to be a significant trade and art centre in the Middle Ages (with a school of masonry and icon painting), and the town of Kotor is home to four Romanesque churches. Decision was taken to inscribe the city on both lists, so that UNESCO could launch a restoration programme. It should be noted that this was the first site to appear on the List of World Heritage in Danger. In 1985, following severe hurricane damage, the Royal Palaces of Abomey (Benin) site was simultaneously inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List and the List of World Heritage in Danger. A vast restoration and safety plan was devised. It received substantial funding, partly from the World Heritage Fund and partly from Japan in 2002–2003. In 2007, the site was removed from the List of World Heritage in Danger. France is returning works of art, and the French Development Agency is providing substantial support to develop the site.

The site of Ashur in Iraq, the first capital of the Akkad Empire (3rd millennium AD), has suffered from a combination of dramatic events: war, occupation by the Islamic State,[507] natural erosion, and a dam project threatening to flood the site.[508] In 2003, an 'International Coordination

507 Helga Turku, *The Destruction of Cultural Property as a Weapon of War. ISIS in Syria and Iraq*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.

508 Noam Raydan, 'How Iraq's Race for Water Security Impacts Cultural Heritage and Environment', Iraq Energy Institute, 5 May 2021. https://iraqenergy.org/2021/05/05/how-iraqs-race-for-water-security-impacts-cultural-heritage-and-environment/

Committee for the Safeguarding of Iraqi Cultural Heritage' was created.[509] The same year, this site was added to the World Heritage List and the List of World Heritage in Danger.[510] We could mention other cases, such as Chan Angkor, Tipasa, the Bamiyan Valley, the Iranian city of Bam, and Samarra. Of course, in these cases, the country concerned requested UNESCO's intervention.

Typically, there are two possible scenarios when a property is added to the List of World Heritage in Danger. Either the property is removed from the list and reinstated on the World Heritage List or withdrawn from the Heritage List altogether. Let us look at the first scenario.

A site may even be included twice on the 'black' list. It happened with the Djoudj National Bird Sanctuary in Senegal. The world's third-largest bird sanctuary, it was listed as a World Heritage Site in 1981, then placed on the List of World Heritage in Danger from 1984 to 1988, and again from 2000 to 2006.[511] The recurring problem was the proliferation of invasive species and the reduction in the amplitude of water levels, which threatened the ecological balance of the property and the survival of the birds. It was, of course, necessary to assess the causes, direct and indirect. Firstly, rice baskets had been installed around the site following the launch of the national rice self-sufficiency programme in the Senegal River Delta. Then, the construction of the Diama and Manantali dams severely disrupted the park's hydrological balance. As a result, there was a proliferation of invasive aquatic plants, as well as a decline in certain bird colonies. A large number of missions were carried out,[512] some involving the European Union, and substantial funding was mobilised. This example illustrates how difficult it is, as is the case everywhere, to find a compromise between heritage protection and economic development. It is also a way of measuring just how much effort and goodwill UNESCO invests in maintaining the label and helping countries to avoid the worst-case scenario, i.e. removal from the World Heritage List.

509 Évaluation de l'état de conservation du site d'Assur (Iraq), No.1130, mars 2003, p.1. UNESCO. Centre du patrimoine mondial https://whc.unesco.org/document/151823

510 ICOMOS, World Heritage Center, *Report on the Joint World Heritage Centre-ICOMOS Reactive Monitoring Mission to Ashur (Qal'at Sherqat), Iraq (C 1130), from 5 to 9 June 2011*, Paris, UNESCO, 2011; adopted at the 38th session of the World Heritage Committee, June 2014. Ashur (Qal'at Sherqat), Iraq, C 1130).

511 https://whc.unesco.org/fr/soc/4135

512 RAMSAR, *Rapport de mission au Parc National des Oiseaux du Djoudj, Sénégal et au Parc National du Diawling, Mauritanie du 14 au 21 septembre 2000* https://www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/ram42f_senegal_djoudj_0.pdf

Analyses have shown that the average time a property spends on the list of heritage in danger, all types of sites included, is ten years. However, there is a big difference between the minimum and maximum time spent on this 'purgatory' list. Many properties were removed from the list in less than five years: Cologne Cathedral (2 years), Djoudj National Bird Park (4 years), Tipasa (4 years), Ngorongoro Conservation Area (5 years), Iguaçu National Park (2 years), Galapagos Islands (3 years). The site which stayed the longest time on the List of World Heritage in Danger was the Natural and Culturo-Historical Region of Kotor (located on the Bay of Boka Kotorska, on the Adriatic coast of Montenegro), which suffered an earthquake, as we saw earlier: the process took 24 years (1979–2003).

Removal from the List of World Heritage in Danger concerns every area of the world with properties.

Areas	**Number of sites removed**	**% per area**
Africa	99	24 %
Latin America and the Caribbean	6	16 %
Asia & the Pacific	7	18 %
Arab States	4	1 %
Europe and North America	12	32 %
Total	38	-

We should mention a unique case of double inscription, which shows that a country's civil society may weigh on this process, including against national authorities.

This case concerns the Roșia Montană site in Romania, the largest Romanian gold mine preserved. In July 2021, Roșia Montană was added to the World Heritage List and the List of World Heritage in Danger.[513] This double listing was the result of a long political, economic and legal battle. The source of the conflict was a purely economic project to resume gold mining entrusted to a Canadian company. The Roșia Montană Gold Corporation (RMGC), also known as Gabriel Ressources, was awarded an open-pit gold mining concession in 1997.[514] This created a flagrant conflict

513 Marcel Gascó Barberá, 'Ancient Romanian Gold Mine Given UNESCO Protection', *BalkanInsight*, 2021. https://balkaninsight.com/2021/07/27/ancient-romanian-gold-mine-given-unesco-protection/

514 GABRIEL RESOURCES, 'Corporate Update – UNESCO Inscription of Roșia Montană', 27 July 2021: https://www.gabrielresources.com/site/documents/GBU_PR_re_UNESCO_filing.pdf

of interest between heritage protection and economic stakes: 300 tonnes of gold, 1600 tonnes of silver, worth 16 billion dollars, and the creation of 3000 jobs.

In the early 2000s, ICOMOS urged the interested parties to acknowledge the project's severe threats to the region's natural and cultural heritage.[515] However, the Romanian state seemed unmoved. In 2004, it gave in to pressure from the Canadian company by withdrawing the protected site status granted in 2000 to one of the four massifs that the Roman mine, the Massif Carnic, arbitrates. A year later, the Romanian courts annulled the procedure, prompting appeals from the Ministry of Culture and RMGC. The Romanian Supreme Court then referred the case for retrial to the Brasov Court of Appeal on 11 July 2006.[516] The NGOs Alburnus Maior and Pro Europe League rallied behind ICOMOS's position. A significant change occurred on 1 January 2007 when Romania joined the European Union. Indeed, the protection of cultural heritage is a critical aspect of the EU's cultural policy. Pressure in favour of preserving the site forced the Romanian government to change positions, specifically as the Court of Brasov, on 27 November 2007, overturned its decision to 'de-protect' the site. The government hesitated. The massive cost of potential compensation to Canadian society was a deterrent. However, it could not ignore the tens of thousands of people who, in 2013, took to the streets for three weeks to demonstrate against gold mining in Roșia Montană.

The government eventually dropped the project and withdrew the operating licence. This decision was challenged by Gabriel Ressources. With the help of an American pension fund, the Canadian company filed a complaint against the Romanian government with the World Bank's arbitration tribunal. The World Bank's International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes delivered its verdict on 15 March 2024, ruling against Gabriel Ressources. Pro Patrimonio, ICOMOS Romania and the Romanian Academy prepared a defence and are taking the case to UNESCO. Civil society successfully mobilising to defend its heritage is now known as the 'Rosia Montana effect'.[517] It played a decisive role in UNESCO's decision to

515 ICOMOS Romania, 'Romania: Heritage at Risk in Rosia Montana', M. Truscott, M. Petzet, J. Ziesemer, *Heritage at Risk ICOMOS World Report 2004–2005 on monuments and sites in danger*, Munich, K.G. Saur, 2005, p. 201.

516 *Ibid*., p. 129.

517 Ioana Iosa, « L'effet Rosia Montana : montée en confiance et en compétence de la société civile roumaine », Actes du colloque international « Les expérimentations

list Roșia Montană as a 'mining landscape' on the World Heritage List and the List of World Heritage in Danger.

UNESCO's ultimate weapon is the threat to remove properties from the World Heritage List. This is known as 'delisting'. Yet, the deterrent effect seems to be ineffective. To date, only four sites have been involved in this procedure. In 2007, for the first time, UNESCO's World Heritage Committee delisted a site from the List: the Arabian Oryx Sanctuary in Oman, Middle East. The reason given was the country's 'unilateral decision to reduce by 90 % the surface area of the area protecting the Arabian Oryx, an endangered antelope species, in violation of the guidelines laid down by the World Heritage Convention'.[518] The Elbe Valley in Dresden (Germany) was added to UNESCO's World Heritage List as a cultural landscape in 2004 and to the List of World Heritage in Danger in 2008. A year later, in 2009, the site was delisted following the building of a bridge (Waldschlößchenbrücke) in the heart of the protected area.[519] Bagrati Cathedral in Georgia was built in the 12th century in the town of Kutaisi (Imerethia region). It is a masterpiece of Georgian medieval architecture. It was included on the World Heritage List in 1994, along with Ghelati monastery.[520]

In 2010, the members of the 34th session of the World Heritage Committee expressed 'deep concern regarding the irreversible work being carried out on the site as part of a major renovation project launched by the Georgian State Party'.[521] The Committee, therefore, decided to place the site on the List of World Heritage in Danger, considering that the renovation project would affect 'the integrity and authenticity' of the property and that it should be stopped without delay. During the World Heritage Committee's 37th session in 2013, the State Party was asked to present a request for a

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démocratiques aujourd'hui. Convergences, fragmentations, portées politiques », 26–28 janvier 2017, Saint-Denis, GIS Démocratie et Participation, 2017.

518 UNESCO Archives, Centre du patrimoine mondial, « *Décisions adoptées lors de la 31e session du Comité du patrimoine mondial* », WHC-07/31.COM/24, Christchurch, Nouvelle Zélande, 23 juin-2 juillet 2007.

519 Bénédicte Gaillard, « Développement urbain et protection des paysages culturels du patrimoine mondial de l'UNESCO. Une étude de la désinscription de la vallée de l'Elbe à Dresde en Allemagne », *Bulletin de la Société Géographique de Liège*, 65 (2015/2) – Varia, URL : https://popups.uliege.be/0770-7576/index.php?id=4142.

520 AIRGEO, *Cathédrale de Bagrat* : https://www.airgeo.org/fr/regions/imereti/kutaisi/bagrat-cathedral/

521 UNESCO, La cathédrale de Bagrati et le monastère de Ghélati (Géorgie) inscrits sur la Liste du patrimoine mondial en péril. UNESCO Centre du patrimoine mondial. https://whc.unesco.org/fr/actualites/637/

major change to the boundaries by 1 February 2014 at the latest for the Gelati Monastery to justify the criterion on its own. In 2017, the 41st session of the World Heritage Committee ruled to remove Bagrati Cathedral from the World Heritage List and leave only the monastery, eight kilometres away from the town. It was a form of compromise. One last case: on 21 July 2021, UNESCO's World Heritage Committee removed the Port of Liverpool from its list of World Heritage sites. The reason was overdevelopment, which was robbing the building of its authenticity. Thirteen Committee delegates voted at the 44th enlarged session to delist this historic port in the north-west of England, an emblem of the industrial era that had been listed in 2004. Permanent removal from the list is extremely rare. Consensus is always given priority, even if this may sometimes be detrimental to the principles of World Heritage listing and the long-term general interest.[522]

How to avoid the blacklist? Political manoeuvring

Some, mainly Western countries, regard the 'black' list as a terrible threat. Such an infamous measure must be avoided at all costs. Given the stakes involved, heritage at this level is closely tied to the political issues of the countries concerned. Here are a few examples to better understand how this avoidance strategy can be implemented.

Spain is a good example. In 1994, Doñana National Park in Andalusia was included on the World Heritage List. Several events would threaten the property's integrity: significant pollution linked to a settling tank from a nearby mine, only four years after the site was listed; a major fire in 2007 that affected the park's surrounding area; plans to extend intensive cultivation and extraction projects. Yet the property was never declared 'in danger'. The Spanish state produced numerous reports to convince the experts of the efforts produced and the results expected.

France follows the same lines. In 2001, then in 2006–2007, the Lascaux cave suffered bacteriological attacks likely to endanger the Magdalenian paintings. An association decided to ask UNESCO to include the site on the List of World Heritage in Danger. However, the French Ministry of Culture reacted to block the procedure. In February 2009, it organised an

522 Eike Albrecht, Bénédicte Gaillard, 'Procedure for Delisting a Site from the World Heritage List: Is Delisting With Consent or Against the Wish of a State Party Possible?', *Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Management,* Vol. 3, No. 1–2, 2005, p. 15–21.

international symposium, with the support of the International Federation of Rock Art Organisations, to demonstrate that every measure was in place to resolve the problem and avoid such a listing, which would have been perceived as humiliating. In 2014, the Fondation du Patrimoine launched a national subscription campaign in support of the project to make Lascaux Hill a sanctuary. At the foot of the site, the Montignac-Lascaux International Centre for Cave Art, known as Lascaux 4, would be built: a complete facsimile of Lascaux with rooms dedicated to cave art.

The fear of being 'blacklisted' can have certain benefits. Two examples illustrate this: Saint Petersburg and Venice.

Before the war against Ukraine, Russia was keen to be an exemplary case of close collaboration with UNESCO. It was a means of making a positive impression on the international stage despite violent actions that ran counter to international law and humanist values (Chechnya, Georgia, Syria, Crimea…). Hence, the country's ongoing support for UNESCO programmes and participation in expert bodies. And Russia's determination not to question UNESCO's recommendations. For instance, in 2007, UNESCO officially asked the Russian authorities to halt plans to build a tower in the historic centre of St Petersburg because the project could threaten the site's outstanding universal value.[523] Gazprom, a very influential company in Russia close to President Vladimir Putin, had launched a project to build Europe's tallest skyscraper. At first, the company refused to move the tower's central location despite strong criticism from the people of St Petersburg. However, during an official visit by UNESCO experts to St Petersburg, officials indicated that this was only an 'architectural concept' and that Russia was prepared to look for alternative solutions. The project was immediately reviewed, and construction of the tower was moved outside the city.

Both China and Russia supported Australia in its determination to do the utmost to prevent the Great Barrier Reef from being blacklisted. Consequently, Australia succeeded in avoiding the fateful listing twice. The Australian authorities were torn between preserving the country's natural heritage and the significant economic stakes in tourism and the energy industry. Yet, IUCN had already issued alerts as early as 1985. There were three risk stages and types (in addition to site management issues): human

523 « Le Centre du patrimoine mondial de l'UNESCO confirme l'opposition du Comité à la construction d'une tour dans le Centre historique de Saint-Pétersbourg », UNESCO. Centre du patrimoine mondial: http://whc.unesco.org/fr/actualites/411/.

activities on or near the site (tourist, industrial, and agricultural activities, maritime transport, mining); climate change and pollution (storms, surface and groundwater pollution, warming of waters).[524] And finally, the threat to the Great Barrier Reef's fragile ecosystems (1500 species of fish and 4000 types of molluscs under threat). Still, Australian authorities resisted by implementing a large-scale diplomatic counter-action. In 2021, the Minister for the Environment, Sussan Ley, travelled to Europe to lobby the States sitting on the World Heritage Committee. She was in contact with 18 States.[525] Twelve ambassadors from twenty-one States went diving in the Great Barrier Reef on Canberra's dime.[526] Australia has been trying to gain support from fossil fuel-producing countries or countries that are only marginally committed to the fight against climate change. As a result, the country was able to count on Bahrain to table an amendment cancelling the site's downgrading, followed by Nigeria, Spain, China, Hungary, Oman, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Thailand, Russia, and Saudi Arabia.

On 23 July 2021, the matter was referred to the World Heritage Committee assembly. Nineteen out of twenty-one members spoke in favour of a lenient approach towards Australia. Initially, only Norway supported placing the property on the List of World Heritage in Danger. Still, it had to face the facts: the Great Barrier Reef would not be included on the List of World Heritage in Danger in 2021. However, the Scandinavian country has secured a reassessment for the 45th session of the Committee in 2022. In May 2023, the new Minister for the Environment, Tanya Plibersek, announced a 4.4 billion Australian dollar (€2.7 billion) 'investment' to 'secure the future' of the Great Barrier Reef. In 2024, UNESCO demonstrated a benevolent attitude, offering the country 'enhanced support', reassured by the new government's measures.

Another example worth mentioning is Venice.[527] The negative impact of tourism prompted UNESCO to place the city and its lagoon on the List

524 UNESCO, « La Grande Barrière », UNESCO https://whc.unesco.org/fr/list/154/

525 Amy Gunia, 'UNESCO Says Australia's Great Barrier Reef Isn't In Danger Yet. Many Environmentalists and Divers Disagree', *Time*, 27 July 2021 https://time.com/6083753/great-barrier-reef-unesco/

526 Graham Readfearn, Daniel Hurst, 'Australia to host ambassadors at Great Barrier Reef ahead of in "danger" list vote', *The Guardian*, 14 July 2021. https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/jul/14/australia-to-fly-ambassadors-to-great-barrier-reef-ahead-of-in-danger-list-vote

527 « Venise, Budapest, vallée de Katmandou : ces sites qui pourraient disparaître de la liste du Patrimoine mondial de l'Unesco », *Géo*, 24 juin 2021. https://www.geo.fr/vo

of World Heritage in Danger several years ago. In the summer of 2021, the last corresponding proposal was put to the session of the World Heritage Committee meeting in China. However, the Venetian administration did its utmost to avoid this unfavourable listing. Just before the UNESCO announcement, Italy banned large cruise ships from entering the San Marco basin. With this step in the right direction, UNESCO experts asked for an updated report on the city's conservation status by 1 December 2022.[528] The city then decided to launch a new project to regulate visitor flows and encourage slow tourism. The prospect of a property being listed as in danger can have beneficial effects: it can encourage States to react and ask for help to avoid listing. A radical measure has now been taken to regulate tourist flows: starting 25 April 2024, tourists will be charged an entrance fee of €5.

The 'blacklist', a symbolic and geopolitical weapon?

The list of endangered heritage may also be analysed as a reflection of geopolitical issues or even as a geopolitical weapon. Indeed, heritage has become a component of 'soft power'.[529] The virtues of heritage 'resilience', a current topic of UNESCO discourse, are not without their limits.

One dramatic and all too familiar case: the Old City of Jerusalem, listed as a World Heritage Site in 1981, was 'blacklisted' the following year. It is the longest-listed property on the List of World Heritage in Danger, having been continuously included since 1982. Many people overlook the fact that the Kingdom of Jordan initiated the proposal. Strangely enough, UNESCO had failed to see a major diplomatic problem there: the UN had not recognised Jordan's sovereignty over East Jerusalem, which was under its trusteeship between 1948 and 1967. Nor would the UN recognise Israeli sovereignty from the moment of its occupation in 1967. This situation and the conflicts it sparked do not mean that there is no threat to the Old City's integrity. Hence, the question remains: what is the name of the State that UNESCO can attach to the property? One would be hard-pressed to

yage/venise-et-budapest-bientot-sur-la-liste-du-patrimoine-mondial-en-peril-de-lunesco-205211

528 UNESCO Centre du patrimoine mondial. Venise et sa lagune. UNESCO. Centre du patrimoine mondial : https://whc.unesco.org/fr/list/394/documents/

529 Itamar Even-Zohar, « Le patrimoine qui attise les conflits », *Géopolitique, conflits et patrimoine*, 2017, vol. 39, no. 1, p. 253.

find it on the UNESCO website! A subsidiary question: who has jurisdiction? UNESCO now refers to 'Israel, the occupying power'. The 'danger' is bound to last a long time still.

Moreover, the problem is further complicated by the Palestinian Authority's efforts to use heritage as a diplomatic lever. Palestine has been a member of UNESCO since 2011 (even though it is not a State, legally speaking, and is therefore not a UN member). However, the Palestinian Authority has had three properties in the occupied territories placed on the World Heritage List: the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem (despite a reserved opinion from ICOMOS), the terraced hills around the village of Battir and the Old City of Hebron. Opponents of the recognition of the Palestinian State (the United States and Israel) were quick to point out the problem and criticise UNESCO. The latter is far from having found a way out of this imbroglio. Following the decision to welcome the Palestinian Authority, the United States stopped funding UNESCO but continues to sit on UNESCO's Executive Board.

The first source of conflict concerned the project 'Palestine: Land of Olives and Vines – Cultural Landscape of Southern Jerusalem, Battir'. The listing was made under the emergency procedure in response to a threat to the quality of the landscape and the lobbying of environmental associations. This listing had a direct geopolitical reason: the construction of a separation wall initiated by the State of Israel. ICOMOS' reservations failed to convince the World Heritage Committee, which voted in favour of the site's inclusion in July 2014. Three years later, UNESCO committed another offence, triggering a diplomatic explosion with the Hebron affair. On 2 July 2017, the World Heritage Committee included the Old Town of Hebron/Al-Khalil (Palestine) on the World Heritage List as a site 'of outstanding value in danger'. The town of Hebron has great emotional potential because it is home to the Tomb of the Patriarchs, where the biblical patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and their wives) are said to be buried. Muslims call it the Mosque of Ibrahim (the Arabic name for Abraham). Twelve States on the Committee voted in favour of listing the town as a Palestinian site, six abstained, and three voted against. It was a bombshell.

The Palestinian Authority's Ministry of Foreign Affairs described the event as 'a success in the diplomatic battle waged by the Palestinians on all fronts in the face of Israeli and American pressure'. The Islamist Hamas movement welcomed 'a new confirmation of our full rights over Hebron and all Palestinian land'. The Israeli government reacted by describing the

decision as a 'negation of the city's Jewish history', mentioning a 'moral smear' and 'one of the most dishonourable moments in UNESCO's history'.[530] Following this listing, the American and Israeli governments left UNESCO on 12 October 2017. A large-scale diplomatic counter-offensive was organised. On 6 December 2017, the United States decided to *de facto* recognise Jerusalem as the capital of the State of Israel. The American embassy was thus transferred from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. Christians were somewhat forgotten in this controversy. Indeed, Hebron is a 'thrice holy' city, and the three monotheistic religions have a share in its history. But it is the confrontation between the Jews and the Arabs that occupies people's minds and makes the headlines. It has been a bloody situation since the beginning of the 20th century, reaching a climax in February 1994 when an American-born Jewish settler, Baruch Goldstein, shot dead 29 Muslims during prayer inside the Ibrahim mosque in retaliation for the massacre of 67 Israelis. Since then, it has become virtually impossible to develop the site. The Palestinians feel that their heritage development policy is being blocked by the security system imposed by the Israelis. Hebron has become 'a synthesis of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict'.[531] In this specific case, heritage does not unite; it divides.

The heritage issue is inevitably affected by global geopolitical divisions. Interestingly, Russia and China shouldered part of the financial burden for UNESCO after the United States withdrew from the organisation. Russia sought to benefit from the United States and Israel's departure from UNESCO and reinforce its image as a protector of heritage-related values. The country was keen to host the World Heritage Committee's 45th session. The meeting was initially to be held from 19 to 30 June 2022. Still, it was postponed on account of Russia's war against Ukraine, a war in which heritage is particularly exposed and destroyed. China enjoys a privileged position among UNESCO members. China and Russia were given free rein, even though both countries pursue policies that violate freedoms, the rights of minorities, dominated cultures, human rights and peace: the very opposite of what UNESCO advocates.

UNESCO cannot do anything (or very little) when a heritage property is located in an area of conflict. The full context must be taken into

530 *Le Monde,* 7 July 2017.

531 Pauline Bosredon, « Le processus patrimonial à Hébron, dans les territoires palestiniens occupés ». *L'espace en partage*, édité par Yves Bonny *et al.*, Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2017, https://doi.org/10.4000/books.pur.141687.

account. Mali is a case in point. Mali was once one of the largest tourist destinations in Africa. UNESCO had initiated significant operations to value and secure this property representative of earthen architecture.[532] Yet, since the outbreak of armed conflicts in the Sahel and terrorist threats, the country has become a shadow of its former self. Tourist numbers in Mali fell drastically following the destruction of the mausoleums in Timbuktu and the inclusion of the Tomb of Askia on the List of World Heritage in Danger. This led to the local population's impoverishment. The action plans that UNESCO developed to restore and safeguard the Tomb of Askia from 2012 to 2021 could not succeed without a radical change in the geopolitical context.

Indeed, when UNESCO ventures into 'disputed areas where the various stakeholders hold contradictory values', conflict is intensified, and the UN body's mission becomes impossible. While heritage has analgesic properties and, in some cases, facilitates reconciliation and resilience, it is also a source of conflict and antagonism.

We could carry out a symmetric analysis in a wholly different context of the geopolitical instrumentalisation of world heritage and UNESCO's inability to reach a solution: the 'Medieval Monuments in Kosovo' case. In 2004, shortly after the collapse of Yugoslavia, the monastery of Dečani, located in the autonomous province of Kosovo, was listed as a World Heritage Site. Serbia-Montenegro submitted the candidacy. Two years later, Serbia requested the addition of three other monasteries and churches. However, following a referendum (2006) in which Montenegro seceded from Serbia, only Serbia applied for this addition. A new event reflecting the geopolitical instability of this region of Europe occurred on 17 February 2008: Kosovo declared its independence following a war that had begun in 1998 and highlighted the tensions between the Albanian Muslim majority and Kosovo's Serb minority. Unfortunately, this application spotlighted the existing historical links between Serbia and Kosovo, but from a Serbian perspective. In their brief, the Serbs did not conceal a nationalist point of view. They referred to 'Serbian national consciousness' and 'the magnificent monuments of Serbian culture and history'. It seems rather evident that, in this case, heritage was used as a geopolitical instrument meant to legitim-

532 Leslie Rainer (ed.), *Terra 2008: Proceedings of the 10th International Conference on the Study and Conservation of Earthen Architectural Heritage, Bamako, Mali, February 1 - 5, 2008* (International Conference on the Study and Conservation of Earthen Architectural Heritage), Los Angeles, Calif: Getty Conservation Inst, 2011.

ise Serbia's presence in Kosovo. However, Serbia capitalised on the threat posed by the Kosovars' negligence and their policy of withholding information from the Serbian cultural authorities, who had allegedly been denied access to the sites from 1998 to 2001. In 2006, UNESCO was persuaded to recognise the extension of the property, and Kosovo's medieval monuments were immediately placed on the List of World Heritage in Danger. But a new threat emerged from this affair. As a result of Serbia's failure to recognise Kosovo's independence, KFOR troops were now patrolling the area.

There is (or should be) a question for the institution: how can the nationalist presuppositions at the root of many listing requests be considered compatible with the idea of universality underpinning World Heritage? Clearly, the race to be listed has become a political tool enabling nations to support their sovereign interests by using World Heritage as a means of promotion.

Conclusion

Unfortunately, there is reason to fear that the number of properties included on the List of World Heritage in Danger will continue to rise. Several factors play a part in this: the increase in the number of properties added to the World Heritage List, given the stakes (political, economic and tourist) that these properties represent and the notoriety that their inclusion brings; the prevailing geopolitical insecurity linked to religious extremism, terrorism and territorial conflicts; the disruptive impact of climate change and pollution of various kinds.

The 'blacklist' is a warning device that helps implement prevention and safety measures to preserve a property's value and the credibility and legitimacy of its inscription on the World Heritage List.[533] UNESCO's very reputation is at stake in this matter. We saw how this 'blacklist' could be used as a tool. Is UNESCO able to resist diplomatic pressure in favour of the general interest? Indeed, such pressure means that the 'blacklist' is far

533 Duval Mélanie, Brancelj Ana, Gauchon Christophe, Malgat Charlotte, Potin-Finette Aurélie, « Un label qui ne dit pas son nom : l'inscription au patrimoine mondial. Examen critique et enjeux territoriaux d'une terminologie ». In : Philippe Tanchoux et François Priet (dir.), *Les labels dans le domaine du patrimoine culturel et naturel*, Rennes, Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2020, p. 45–70.

from including all the sites under serious threat, even though some sites on the World Heritage list deserve to be on it. Is UNESCO willing to follow the recommendations of specialist bodies without which the process would have no scientific backing and deal with the 'shortcomings'[534] of current devices in biodiversity conservation? Does it have the power and the means to do so? That is the question.

534 https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/2013-016-Fr.pdf