# Bridging the Divide Between Nature and Culture in the World Heritage Convention: An Idea Long Overdue?

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### Introduction

THE DICHOTOMY BETWEEN NATURAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE under the World Heritage Convention endures 45 years after its adoption. The convention is often hailed as the leading international instrument for conservation that brings together cultural and natural heritage; however, a truly integrated consideration of these two dimensions is yet to be achieved. For most of the convention's history, cultural and natural heritage have been conceptualized and implemented as parallel but largely separate worlds. The underlying issues behind this divide reflect how cultural and natural heritage were defined from the start and continued to be interpreted over the years, and how institutional divisions reinforce that dichotomy.

This article examines how the World Heritage Convention was conceived through a dichotomous process and has been implemented as such ever since. Attempts over the years to achieve a more integrated approach to the consideration of cultural and natural heritage have never been able to fully break down the division between the two fields. This is because the ideological changes that were introduced always conformed to the dichotomy rooted in Articles 1 and 2 of the convention, which define what will be considered as "cultural" and "natural." The notion of natural heritage, in particular, has been limited by an interpretation deriving from the fact that Article 2 does not make any references to interactions between humans and nature. On the other hand, Article 1, which defines cultural heritage, does. Hence, any aspects of World Heritage related to interactions between humans and nature is interpreted as being admissible under the convention's cultural criteria. As a result, natural heritage criteria make no references to combinations of natural and cultural elements or to humans' interaction with the environment, although previously they did. These World Heritage criteria also do not reflect the International Union for Conservation of Nature's (IUCN's) protected areas definition, which recognizes cultural values across all protected area categories, including human modifications to landscape character in Category V protected landscapes/seascapes. (See Box 1.)

While the division between cultural and natural heritage is deeply embedded, there are some promising initiatives underway that could help articulate a vision where the two fields

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are not perceived as an either/or proposition but reflect the full spectrum from pristine nature to pure culture. In addition, some promising ideas for changing aspects of conservation practice are emerging.

The reflections included here are influenced by my personal experience having worked with different aspects of the World Heritage system, both in the cultural and natural heritage fields. Some of these reflections are still a work in progress and are therefore subject to change, revision, and rethinking in the future. They also build upon my experience as coordinator of the joint IUCN–ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites) "Connecting Practice" project between 2013 and 2016. This project is aimed at exploring,

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**Box 1.** World Heritage Convention, Articles 1 and 2

UNESCO
*Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage*
Adopted by the General Conference at its seventeenth session, Paris, 16 November 1972

I. Definition of the Cultural and Natural Heritage
Article 1
For the purpose of this Convention, the following shall be considered as "cultural heritage":

> 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;

> 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;

> 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.

Article 2
For the purposes of this Convention, the following shall be considered as "natural heritage":

> natural features consisting of physical and biological formations or groups of such formations, which are of outstanding universal value from the aesthetic or scientific point of view;

> geological and physiographical formations and precisely delineated areas which constitute the habitat of threatened species of animals and plants of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation;

> natural sites or precisely delineated natural areas of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science, conservation or natural beauty.

Source: http://whc.unesco.org/archive/convention-en.pdf

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learning about, and creating new methods of recognition and support for the interconnected character of the natural, cultural, and social value of highly significant land- and seascapes and affiliated biocultural practices (IUCN and ICOMOS n.d.).[1]

### The World Heritage Convention is the combination of separate initiatives, and its "architecture" reflects that

The World Heritage Convention is the result of two separate, and ultimately reconciled, initiatives: the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO's) efforts in the 1960s towards developing a Convention Concerning the International Protection of Monuments, Groups of Buildings and Sites of Universal Value, and IUCN's proposal for a Convention on Conservation of the World Heritage.[2] Both included some combination of natural and cultural heritage. The definition of "monuments, groups of buildings and sites" included in the first draft documents developed by UNESCO covered "natural sites of aesthetic, picturesque or ethnographic value or with associations in history, literature or legend" while "mixed sites" were defined as the "result of the combined work of nature and man" (UNESCO 1968: 21). The terms "natural sites" and "mixed sites" were later replaced by "sites or landscapes" since it was considered that "the former [did] not correspond to a concept common to all States and the latter [added] nothing to the idea of 'urban sites or rural sites'" (UNESCO 1969: 29). IUCN's draft referred principally to natural areas, but areas that had been changed by humans could also be considered for World Heritage (IUCN 1971: 1).

In 1972, under the leadership of UNESCO, the two proposals were merged and a new structure was created where cultural and natural heritage were given equal importance by including two definitions, of similar length and including three subparagraphs, in Articles 1 and 2 of the convention (Batisse and Bolla 2005: 75). However as Michel Batisse[3] argued,

> To be sure, the definition of World Heritage may have been worded so as to give equal value to both sides, while its implementation may have re-enforced and perpetuated a distinction, even rivalry, between culture and nature (Batisse and Bolla 2005: 35).

This distinction introduced in Articles 1 and 2 was reinforced by the decision to adopt two different sets of criteria to assess the Outstanding Universal Value of the properties to be inscribed on the World Heritage List—one for cultural heritage and one for natural heritage. ICOMOS and IUCN, as advisory bodies to the World Heritage Committee, framed the first concepts and wording for the criteria based in their field of expertise. These first drafts of the criteria made no explicit reference to interactions between culture and nature, with the exception of a small reference in relation to potential examples of the application of natural criterion (i) (UNESCO 1976: annex IV).[4]

Records of the first session of the World Heritage Committee, held in Paris, France, in 1977, show that the division between cultural and natural heritage was a concern from the beginning, leading the Committee to recommend that

> A special effort should be made to include in the World Heritage List properties which combine in a significant way cultural and natural features demonstrating the interaction, between man and nature. At the stage of nomination, where possible, natural areas should be extended so as to include cultural monuments or sites, derived from and influenced by the natural environment; similarly, areas containing cultural monuments or sites should be sufficiently extended to cover the natural landscapes or man-modified landscapes which formed their original setting (UNESCO 1977: 6).

The natural criteria were consequently modified to add a cultural dimension, including references of "cultural evolution," "man's interactions with his natural environment," "areas of exceptional natural beauty," and "combinations of natural and cultural elements."[5] Later, some of these changes were considered inconsistent with the definition of natural heritage included in Article 2 of the convention, and so were removed (Cameron and Rössler 2013: 37–38).

Based on these sets of cultural and natural criteria, the first properties were inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1978. Properties proposed under cultural criteria were considered cultural properties and evaluated by ICOMOS and those proposed under natural criteria were considered natural properties and evaluated by IUCN. Properties proposed under both sets of criteria—now called "mixed" properties, though at the time the term was not used yet—were evaluated by both ICOMOS and IUCN but separately. This division in mandates, although rooted in the expertise of each organization, added another layer to the separation between the two fields.

### How maintaining separate sets of criteria and evaluation processes reinforces the divide between natural and cultural heritage

The first mixed properties included on the World Heritage List were Tikal National Park in Guatemala in 1979, Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid region[6] in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in 1980, and Kakadu National Park and Willandra Lakes Region, both in Australia, in 1981. In 1984, the World Heritage Committee debated several problems about this category of properties. The rapporteur for that session, Lucien Chabason, considered that the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* did not give specific guidance to state parties on such properties. He introduced the notion of rural landscapes, reflecting on "the question of identification of exceptionally harmonious, beautiful, man-made landscapes as epitomized by the terraced rice-fields of S.E. Asia, the terraced fields of the Mediterranean Basin or by certain vineyard areas in Europe." Chabason considered that these rural landscapes could meet natural criterion (iii), which included references to "exceptional combinations of natural and cultural elements" and that this criterion "would have to be extended to facilitate the identification of such properties." The IUCN representative reacted by calling attention to the fact that one of IUCN's protected area categories is "protected landscapes," which consider those modified and maintained by humans. These discussions led the committee to request "IUCN to consult with ICOMOS

and the International Federation of Landscape Architects (IFLA) to elaborate guidelines for the identification and nomination of mixed cultural/natural rural properties or landscapes" (UNESCO 1984: 7).

This task force based its reflections on Articles 1 and 2 of the convention, which define what is to be considered as cultural and natural heritage. Reporting to the committee in 1985, the task force conveyed "its unexpected discovery of a serious flaw in the Committee's working tools by pointing to inconsistencies between the Convention text and the evaluation criteria" (Cameron and Rössler 2013: 62). While Article 1 identifies two circumstances where natural attributes can be taken into account in determining the significance of a property—first for groups of buildings "because of their place in the landscape" and secondly for sites that illustrate "the combined work of nature and man"—Article 2, on the other hand,

> makes no concession to cultural elements in assessing whether or not a natural property is of outstanding universal value and, strictly within the definition, it is only the natural features unmodified by human intervention which determine the acceptance of a natural property (UNESCO 1985: 3).

The task force also noted that until then only a few properties had been inscribed for both sets of criteria, and, while the convention did not consider such properties, it did not exclude them either. Hence, based on its interpretations of Articles 1 and 2, the task force considered that ICOMOS's evaluations could take into account certain natural aspects of cultural properties, but the same could not be said for IUCN's, which should assess natural properties purely on their natural attributes. Therefore it recommended that separate evaluation processes should be maintained for properties whose cultural and natural values are distinct and appear equivalent (UNESCO 1985: 3). This decision reinforced the practice of IUCN and ICOMOS conducting their evaluations in parallel rather than jointly.

Nominations concerning landscapes where neither culture nor nature are predominant were considered more difficult. The task force noted such landscapes deserved international recognition and provisions should be made for situations where culture and nature were "married." To make the cultural and natural criteria more consistent with its findings, the task force proposed changes to them. Cultural criteria were to include references to "exceptional associations to cultural and natural elements," particularly by expanding criterion (v). The wording in natural criterion (iii) was to be modified along the same lines, by having "associations" instead of "combinations" of natural and cultural elements, which in practice deliberately mirrored the revised cultural criteria, recognizing that there were areas where both cultural and natural considerations were interrelated (UNESCO 1985: 4–5).

Although these changes were not introduced at the time, they set the stage for later developments in relation to the recognition of cultural landscapes. In 1994, all references to cultural elements were removed from the natural criteria, since they were considered inconsistent with the definition of natural heritage under Article 2 of the convention. At the same time, the reference to "the combined work of nature and man" in Article 1 became the underlying definition of cultural landscapes. The cultural criteria were also changed; however, none of the changes included explicit references to interactions or combinations between cultural

and natural elements. It was not until 2005, as part of a major revision of the *Operational Guidelines,* that references to the interaction between culture and nature were reintroduced by adding "human interaction with the environment" in (cultural) criterion (v) (Leitão and Badman 2015: 79). It is interesting to note that these changes were introduced precisely under this criterion, in line with what had been suggested in 1985 by the task force working on mixed sites and rural landscapes.

In addition, the revisions made in 2005 brought together all the cultural and natural criteria into a single set numbered from (i) to (x). This was, however, mainly a renumbering procedure, with former natural criteria (i) to (iv) renamed criteria (vii) to (x), although not in the same order. While a single set of criteria makes the distinction less apparent, the underlying division remained. Properties nominated under criteria (i) to (vi)—including cultural landscapes—are still considered cultural properties and are evaluated by ICOMOS; properties nominated under criteria (vii) to (x) are considered natural properties and are evaluated by IUCN. Properties nominated as cultural landscapes are considered cultural properties and thus are evaluated by ICOMOS, with IUCN providing recommendations with respect to their natural values. Properties nominated under both sub-sets of criteria are still evaluated separately by ICOMOS and IUCN, although significant efforts to have been made to improve collaboration between the two organizations in this area, as discussed later in this article.

## Cultural dimensions in IUCN's protected areas categories

The notions of cultural and natural heritage have evolved and expanded since the World Heritage Convention was adopted in 1972; therefore, continuing to base important contemporary World Heritage concepts and processes in those original notions is inconsistent with current conservation theory and practice. Over the years, continuous revision of the *Operational Guidelines* allowed changes to the wording of the criteria, but not enough to move beyond initial limitations and divisions. To this day, natural criteria do not include references to the interaction of people and nature. This can no longer be attributed to a definition of nature as pristine areas that exclude human interaction with the environment, as illustrated in different IUCN protected areas categories. As noted by the IUCN representative back in 1994, when the World Heritage Committee discussed the problems associated with mixed properties, the organization's system of protected areas management categories did not exclude cultural considerations. Although there is also a long history of conceptualizing nature and culture as separate in protected areas (Feary et al. 2015: 103), IUCN's categories of protected areas have grown much more inclusive; some of them explicitly recognize the interaction of people and nature, that certain human modifications of nature contribute to landscape character, and that those interactions can sometimes help sustain nature and associated values (see Box 2).

The first concerted effort by IUCN to develop a categories system for protected areas dates back to 1977, coinciding with the same period when the World Heritage criteria were being developed. The new system, published in 1978, was made of ten categories, defined mainly by management objective, not by level of importance. This system included "protected landscapes," which recognized the interaction of people and nature. There was, however no definition of "protected area" and the limitations of the system soon became apparent

(Dudley 2013: 4). In 1994, the IUCN General Assembly approved a revised system of categories and the following definition of protected areas:

> An area of land and/or sea especially dedicated to the protection and maintenance of biological diversity, and of natural and associated cultural resources, and managed through legal or other effective means (Dudley 2013: 4).

In addition to the recognition of the interaction of people and nature in several of these categories, the definition of "protected area" made references to culture but only as "cultural resources." Since 1994, a number of additional changes have been made, including to the definition of a protected area, now considered as

> A clearly defined geographical space, recognised, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values (Dudley 2013: 8).

The current six categories of protected areas (see Box 2), and the guidelines for its application,[7] are the result of an intensive process of consultation and revisions led by IUCN's World Commission on Protected Areas between 2006 and 2008. The categories are based primarily on management objectives and imply a gradation of human interactions (Figure 1).

All IUCN protected area categories recognize cultural values but none of the natural World Heritage criteria (vii) to (x) do. This can only be attributed to the perpetuation of an interpretation of natural heritage under World Heritage that was determined decades ago and has not kept pace with developments in the wider nature conservation field.

**Figure 1.** Naturalness and IUCN protected area categories (Worboys et al. 2015: 20, adapted from Dudley 2008: 24).
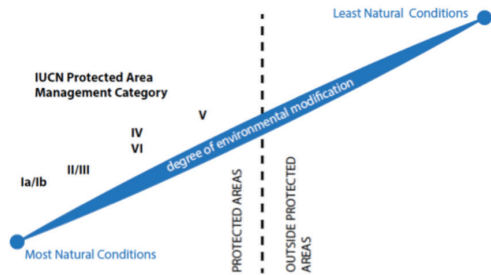


## Experiences linking cultural and natural heritage as part of the Connecting Practice project

The recognition of cultural landscapes and mixed sites under the World Heritage Convention has been a step in the right direction toward addressing the dichotomy between natural and cultural heritage, but limitations still prevail. Cultural landscapes are still recognized as cultural properties and mixed sites are defined as follows:

> Properties shall be considered as "mixed cultural and natural heritage" if they satisfy a part or the whole of the definitions of both cultural and natural heritage laid out in Articles 1 and 2 of the Convention (UNESCO 2016: paragraph 46).

This interpretation is still basically the same as discussed by the World Heritage Committee back in 1985.

At present, there are only 35 mixed properties included on the World Heritage List, representing less than 4% of the total properties inscribed. Few sites are nominated as mixed properties and even fewer are inscribed as such. Since mixed properties are evaluated separately by IUCN and ICOMOS, their recommendations might differ, which can result in the inscription of the property only for its cultural or natural values. For instance, the Central Highlands of Sri Lanka were nominated as a mixed site but inscribed only under natural criteria. Conversely, the Delta of Saloum in Senegal was nominated as a mixed property but inscribed under cultural criteria only.

In 2013, the nomination of Pimachiowin Aki (Canada) "raised fundamental questions in terms of how the indissoluble bonds that exist in some places between culture and nature can be recognized on the World Heritage List, in particular the fact that the cultural and natural values of one property are currently evaluated separately (UNESCO 2013: decision 37

COM 8B.19)." Therefore, the committee requested that the World Heritage Centre examine options to address this issue, in consultation with the advisory bodies.

Coincidently, IUCN and ICOMOS had just launched a new joint project called "Connecting Practice," which, as noted earlier, focused on new methods of recognizing and supporting the interconnected character of highly significant land- and seascapes. One of the short-term objectives of the project was to explore and define practical strategies to deliver a more integrated approach to considering nature and culture in the practices and institutional cultures of IUCN and ICOMOS as advisory bodies to the World Heritage Committee.

As mentioned before, for mixed properties IUCN and ICOMOS carry out their evaluations separately. The visit to the property as part of the assessment takes place jointly, but different professionals represent each of the organizations, working from different terms of reference and creating independent mission reports. Therefore in the first phase of the Connecting Practice project (2013–2015), IUCN and ICOMOS tested how to carry out missions that could be truly joint activities involving interdisciplinary teams. Following a "learning by doing" approach, IUCN and ICOMOS undertook fieldwork in three World Heritage properties: the Petroglyph Complexes of the Mongolian Altai (Mongolia), inscribed as a cultural property; Konso Cultural Landscape (Ethiopia), also a cultural property even if recognized as a cultural landscape; and Sian Ka'an (Mexico), inscribed as a natural property. Lessons learned from this first phase of the project were published online[8] and included in the report to the World Heritage Committee in response to its request to the questions raised on mixed properties.[9] Some of the measures suggested included joint briefing of mission teams, requests for supplementary information on nominations agreed to jointly by IUCN and ICOMOS, and joint briefing of both World Heritage panels on the results of the missions and reviews.

The second phase of the project (2015–2017) translated lessons learned into practical interventions. This phase involved only two case studies: Hortobágy National Park–the Puszta (Hungary), designated as a cultural landscape, and Maloti-Drakensberg Park (South Africa/Lesotho), a mixed property.

As coordinator of the Connecting Practice project at the time, I was deeply involved with the fieldwork in both case studies, and in particular that taking place in Maloti-Drakensberg Park, where I participated as a team member in the two visits to the property (Figure 2). One of the key elements of the fieldwork involved assessing the interconnected character of the natural, cultural, and social values of the property. This required a consideration of the wider range of values of the park, beyond its Outstanding Universal Value, the focus of the inscription of the property on the World Heritage List.

Maloti-Drakensberg Park is considered to be of Outstanding Universal Value because:

- its rock art is outstanding both in quality and diversity of subject, representing a masterpiece of human creative genius (criterion I; Figure 3);
- it bears a unique testimony to the San people, who lived in the mountainous Drakensberg area for more than four millennia (criterion iii);
- it contains areas of exceptional natural beauty, with soaring basaltic buttresses, incisive

dramatic cutbacks, and golden sandstone ramparts (criterion vii; Figure 4); and

- it contains significant natural habitats for *in situ* conservation of biological diversity and globally threatened species (criterion x).

Although the inscription focused on this particular set of values, the property has a wider range of values that are part of its natural and cultural richness and need to be equally considered by the governance and management systems in place.

**Figure 2.** (Top) Connecting Practice team during first visit to Maloti-Drakensberg Park.
**Figure 3.** (Bottom) Rock art, Game Pass Shelter, South Africa. (both Letícia Leitão)

**Figure 4.** View of the Drakensberg mountains, Didima, South Africa. (Letícia Leitão)

In order to understand the overall significance of the property, our team carrying out the fieldwork[10] adopted a three-step methodological approach for structuring the values assessment, particularly in order to be able to focus on the interconnections between the different values. First, we examined which values justified the inscription of the property on the World Heritage List, that is, the different elements of the Outstanding Universal Value of the property. Second, because the property is a mixed site, we then looked at the relationships between the natural and cultural values that justified the inscription. Third, we tried to understand what other significant cultural and natural values are part of the property's overall significance and how these are interconnected with the Outstanding Universal Value of the property.

Our findings showed that the relationships between the cultural and natural values that supported the inscription are not self-evident, but occur at a deeper level and are only revealed through detailed study using evidence from a range of sources and concepts drawn from several disciplines. Once these relationships were better understood, we could identify strong interconnections between the values that supported the inscription and other significant values for which the property is actually managed, such as, for example, water production.

This three-step methodological approach pushed team members to focus on the interconnections between values rather than separately identifying and describing those values. Doing so also helped us avoid ranking the values into different levels of significance, preventing a situation in which some values were regarded as predominant and others not requiring consideration. The interdisciplinary nature of the team was fundamental to this process. People with different backgrounds often think quite differently about a particular topic, creating

knowledge barriers that can make it difficult to understand the relationships between the natural and cultural values. Instead of looking at this diversity of viewpoints as a constraint, we embraced it. Different experiences and knowledge of particular aspects of the property, when combined, allowed us to understand interconnections that as individuals we wouldn't have otherwise considered.

While this exercise in itself was extremely helpful to gain a deeper understanding of the overall significance of the property, we also wanted to explore how it might help strengthen governance and management arrangements in ways that could potentially lead to better conservation outcomes. Because Maloti-Drakensberg Park is a transboundary property between South Africa and Lesotho, there are bilateral agreements between the two countries that add to the complexity of the management system. In the case of the portion of the World Heritage property in South Africa, it became clear to our team from our first visit that the governance and management systems in place contributed to the divide between natural and cultural heritage. The management authority in that part of the property is Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife, which is a juristic entity for the management of nature conservation. In addition, under the national system of classification of protected areas (which is based on IUCN's system of protected areas management categories), as a park the area is managed as a Category II but also comprises wilderness areas, therefore Category I.

Prior to the inscription, Ezemvelo was already managing the park, so when it was inscribed as a mixed property in 2000 the organization accumulated additional responsibilities for managing the cultural heritage. Since Ezemvelo does not have the institutional and professional capacity to do so, it entered into an agreement with Amafa AkwaZulu-Natali, a provincial heritage agency, to provide support for cultural heritage management. Initially this agreement was seen as temporary, until Ezemvelo could build its own capacity to take over the main responsibility for managing the cultural heritage as well. Collaboration between the two institutions over the years has helped, but lack of institutional capacity to manage cultural heritage within Ezemvelo persists and Amafa does not have the necessary resources on its own to provide the level of support that is needed.

When the team discussed these issues during the first visit, it was clear that changing the status quo would not be possible. After gathering a better understanding of the situation, particularly during the second visit, the team realized that the way forward was through strengthening existing institutional and planning arrangements rather than try to change them. Oscar Mthimkhulu, the site manager of the property, was instrumental in this process. He proposed using the upcoming revision of the management plan as an opportunity to define a more integrated approach to the cultural and natural heritage of the property and create a common framework for Ezemvelo and Amafa to work better together. As expressed in his own words:

> Being part of the Connecting Practice offered us a unique opportunity to realize a need to develop one all-encompassing and "genuine" Integrated Management Plan for the Park, which will allocate equal significance and equal status to both the natural and cultural values of the Park. The Park will then be managed using one plan, which seeks to align natural and cultural values and also incorporate the

inherent social values. Previously, the Integrated Management Plan was implemented as an overarching management plan, and the Cultural Heritage Plan operated as a subsidiary operational plan. Essentially, this approach was imbalanced and did not equally promote and protect all the values that the site encompasses. The former approach was conflicted theoretically although it may have thrived and balanced in practice (Mthimkhulu, personal communication).

## Conclusions

The fieldwork in Maloti-Drakensberg Park—supported by similar findings from other fieldwork carried out under the Connecting Practice project—offers several insights on how to achieve a more holistic approach to the consideration of cultural and natural heritage.

- First, *World Heritage properties have a multiplicity of values, cultural and natural, that is not fully captured in the designation since the focus is on Outstanding Universal Value.* Like any other designation, be it international or national, the inscription of a property on the World Heritage List focuses on a particular set of values. However, this should not be interpreted as excluding other values of the property, either cultural and natural, which need to be equally considered as part of the overall significance of the property.
- Second, *values assessments should emphasize the interconnections between values.* Although it is important to identify different categories of values, describe them, and even rank them, understanding how values are interrelated and even co-dependent helps to recognize them as part of a complex "whole" that is richer than the individual component parts.
- Third, *a deeper understanding of how values are interconnected can help develop management approaches that recognize and protect that complex "whole"* and overcome potential shortcomings that certain designations or listing processes might generate.
- Fourth, *addressing institutional divisions that contribute to a separation between cultural and natural heritage is as important as tackling conceptual divisions between the two fields.* Institutions are often built upon organizational cultures, interests, decision-making processes, and policies that are essentially mono-disciplinary or based on closely related disciplines, and which impede integrated conservation practices. Such institutional arrangements were developed over decades and can therefore only be changed gradually. Promoting collaboration between institutions, and carrying out joint interdisciplinary projects such as Connecting Practice, are crucial to developing a community of practice whose shared conservation interests can help lessen the dichotomy between natural and cultural heritage.

Since the adoption of the World Heritage Convention in 1972, the notions of cultural and natural heritage have evolved and expanded considerably. Despite this progress, the two fields still operate in parallel and largely separate worlds. As expressed by Michel Batisse:

> It is regrettable that the potential of the Convention to integrate culture and nature in our happy-go-lucky, mercantile civilization has not been properly explored. This

may be due to the fact that the two sides remained too isolated and even opposed when it came to the criteria of inscription on the List or perhaps because many countries and their representatives on the [World] Heritage Committee do not fully appreciate the natural dimension of the common heritage (Batisse and Bolla 2005: 37).

Additional changes to the World Heritage criteria could potentially help bridge the divide between natural and cultural heritage; however, this will always remain an incomplete task as long as cultural and natural heritage continue to be conceptualized as a dichotomy. We need to develop new concepts that build upon the full continuum of humans' interactions with nature, ranging from areas set aside to preserve nature from significant direct intervention by humans; to biocultural landscapes, representing intertwined holistic systems that have been shaped by human management over long periods of time;[11] to the isolated monument. We also need to learn more from those cultures and worldviews, including those of many indigenous peoples, that do not conceptualize nature and culture as separate.

Projects such as Connecting Practice offer hope that a more holistic approach can be achieved in the near future. When ICOMOS and IUCN launched the project in 2013, Connecting Practice was one of the few international initiatives addressing this challenge. Since then, similar efforts have spread all over the world. The Nature–Culture Journey, a subtheme also co-sponsored by IUCN and ICOMOS at the IUCN World Conservation Congress (held in Hawai'i, United States, in September 2016), featured over 50 sessions showcasing experiences from all over the world as to how professionals and organizations are working towards defining new methods for a connected approach between natural and cultural heritage. Later this year, the Scientific Symposium that will take place during the 19th ICOMOS General Assembly, to be held in Delhi, India, in December, will also include a Culture–Nature Journey as one of its subthemes.

## Endnotes

1. The opinions expressed in this article are those of the author alone and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of IUCN and ICOMOS or any other organization.
2. IUCN's proposal was based on an initiative by the United States to create a "World Heritage Trust," an idea that emerged from a White House Conference on International Development in 1965 (for further information see Cameron and Rössler 2013: 17–20 and Holgate 1999: 106–107).
3. Michel Batisse, with his colleague Gérard Bolla, working respectively in the Sciences and Cultural sectors of UNESCO, oversaw the negotiations for drafting of the final version of the World Heritage Convention.
4. This reference was made in relation to examples of the major stages of earth's evolutionary history where "[s]ites such as Olduvai Gorge in Tanzania would serve to demonstrate where natural and cultural heritage come together to illustrate the emergence of pre-man within the context of the plants, animals, climate and other factors influencing evolution" (UNESCO 1976: annex IV).

5.  These changes were introduced in revisions of the criteria between 1976 and 1980.
6.  This property was originally inscribed in 1979 as a natural property only.
7.  The most recent version of the *Guidelines for Applying Protected Area Management Categories* are available at https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/PAG-021.pdf.
8.  The final report is available at https://www.iucn.org/sites/dev/files/content/documents/connecting_practice_report_iucn_icomos.pdf.
9.  For further information see http://whc.unesco.org/archive/2014/whc14-38com-9B-en.pdf.
10. The team was composed of Letícia Leitão, the coordinator of the Connecting Practice project; Carlo Ossola, representing IUCN and with expertise on biodiversity; John Kinahan, who represented ICOMOS in the first visit; Aron Mazel, who represented ICOMOS in the second visit and is an expert in rock art; Ntsizi November, who has expertise on the legal and institutional frameworks of South Africa; Thulani Mbatha, from the Department of Environmental Affairs of South Africa; Nony Andriamirado from the African World Heritage Fund; and Oscar Mthimkhulu, the site manager of the component part of the property in South Africa. In addition, several other colleagues from the management authorities joined the team throughout the visits.
11. The definition of "biocultural landscape" presented here is the one used by the Christensen Fund. For further information see https://www.christensenfund.org/experience/biocultural-landscape/.

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