

## World Heritage List and Cultural Properties in Serbia – The First 50 Years

### ABSTRACT

By this significant jubilee, Serbia had inscribed five cultural sites on the UNESCO World Heritage List (the List was started in 1978 – which makes an average of one inscription every nine years). Three sites are serial (Stari Ras with Sopoćani, inscribed in 1979, Medieval Monuments in Kosovo, 2006, and Stećci – Medieval Tombstones Graveyards, 2016). The latter is also a transnational property with three neighbouring states (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Croatia). Serbia has only two cultural heritage sites on the World Heritage List: the Studenica Monastery, inscribed in 1986 and the Gamzigrad –Romuliana archaeological site, in 2007. Serbia has no natural properties on the World Heritage List. On the Tentative List, Serbia has 11 cultural and natural sites, some of which have been there for over 20 years. In this article, we analyze what Serbia has achieved in inscribing its properties on the World Heritage List during the 50 years of the Convention, with a view to future activities related to the inscription of new properties.

### KEYWORDS

World Heritage Convention, World Heritage List, UNESCO, Budapest Declaration, cultural site, natural property, nomination file, Tentative List

The title of this text could have been different if Serbia had inscribed at least one natural property on the World Heritage List (from now on List), but in 50 years of the Convention Concerning the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage and 45 years of the List, the Republic of Serbia has inscribed five cultural sites. Of these, two properties are serial (Stari Ras and Sopoćani / 1979 and Medieval Monuments in Kosovo / 2006), two are individual (Studenica Monastery / 1986 and Gamzigrad-Romuliana, Palace of Galerius / 2007) and one, both transnational and serial (Stećci – Medieval Tombstones Graveyards /2016).

The General Conference of UNESCO adopted the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (from now on Convention) on November 16 1972.<sup>1</sup> The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (from now on SFRY), which included the (Socialist) Republic of Serbia at the time, ratified this Convention, which was adopted by the federal assembly on October 31 1974. By the law that was printed in the Official Gazette of the SFRY, the text of the Convention was published in its entirety in the original English and the Serbian-Croatian translation.<sup>2</sup> Under the provisions of Article 33, which provides that the Convention begins to be applied upon ratification in at least twenty signatory states, it entered into force only in 1975. In addition to ratifying the Convention in the first twenty countries of the world, SFRY is one of the first countries with a socialist system and a communist party in power (along with the Republic of Bulgaria) that also acceded to this Convention very early. Two years after the start of application, by the provisions of Articles 8 to 14 of the Convention, the World Heritage Committee (from now on Committee) was formed, which held its first session in Paris from June 27 to July 1 1977. The most important decision of the first session of the Committee was to establish the criteria specific properties should fulfil to be inscribed on the List. This formally created the conditions for the List to be found.<sup>3</sup> SFRY was a member of that body from the first to the fourth session of the Committee (1977–1980). At the first session, it was represented by Milan Prelog, an art historian and professor of the Department of Art History at the Faculty of Philosophy in Zagreb, who at the time was also the president of the Council for the Protection of Cultural Monuments of Croatia.

Interestingly, this session was attended by only 17 signatory states of the Convention, 15 as members of the Committee<sup>4</sup>, and two as observer states,<sup>5</sup> with the participation

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1 The text of the Convention itself was signed by the President of the General Conference, Toru Haguiwara, and the Director General of UNESCO, René Maheu, on 23 November 1972.

2 Off. Gazette of SFRY 56/1974, 1770–1782

3 CC-77/CONF.001/9, [https://whc.unesco.org/archive/1977/cc-77-conf001-9\\_en.pdf](https://whc.unesco.org/archive/1977/cc-77-conf001-9_en.pdf), 3–7; Convention text: <https://whc.unesco.org/archive/convention-en.pdf> (accessed September 2023)

4 As provided by Art. 8–9 of the Convention, the number of members of the Committee was 15, until the number of countries that ratified the Convention exceeded 40. Then the number of members of the Committee was increased to the current 21. The mandate of the members of the Committee lasts four years, with half of the members being replaced Committees are held every two years; <https://whc.unesco.org/archive/convention-en.pdf>, 4–5 (accessed September 2023).

5 Morocco and Norway, CC-77/CONF.001/9, [https://whc.unesco.org/archive/1977/cc-77-conf001-9\\_en.pdf](https://whc.unesco.org/archive/1977/cc-77-conf001-9_en.pdf), 16 (accessed September 2023).



Fig. 1

Southern view of  
Sopoćani Monastery,  
Stari Ras with Sopoćani

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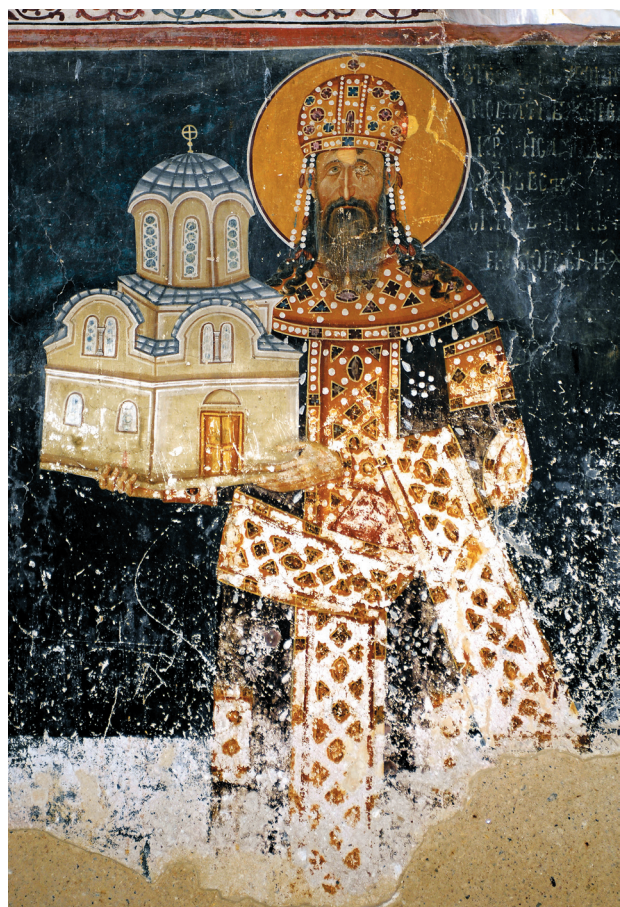


Fig. 2

Serbian King Milutin,  
Kings Church,  
Studenica Monastery

(© V. Džamić)

of advisory bodies (ICCRUM, ICOMOS and IUCN). Although the beginning was modest, the number of observers increased over the years, and for a long time, it became customary for the Committee's sessions to be attended by representatives of all signatory countries, which today total 195.<sup>6</sup> Since 1977, the World Heritage Committee has had 44 regular sessions held every year (except in 2020 and 2022, when, for various reasons, there were none) and 18 extraordinary sessions, starting in 1981, which, with certain exceptions, have been held at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris every other year since 1999.<sup>7</sup>

The List finally became operational at the Second Session of the Committee held from 5 to September 8 1978, in Washington. Then, the first 12 sites (4 natural and 8 cultural) from seven countries (Canada, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Germany, Poland, Senegal and the United States) were inscribed. Interestingly, except Ethiopia, all the countries inscribed their properties on the List at the first session were members of the Committee that decided on the inscription.<sup>8</sup> The first property to be inscribed on the World Heritage List is the Galapagos Islands in the western Pacific, which belong to Ecuador and met all four criteria for the justification of the inscription of natural properties.<sup>9</sup> At this session of the Committee, Yugoslavia was represented by the architect and urban planner from Belgrade, Branislav Krstić, a professor at several architectural faculties (Belgrade, Sarajevo, Zagreb and Split), and at that time, the president of the Federal Committee for Architectural and Natural Heritage.<sup>10</sup>

The following year, at the third session of the Committee held in Cairo and Luxor between 22 and 26 October 1979, 45 properties from 23 countries were inscribed. The SFRY entered a total of six sites on the List, namely three properties from the Republic of Croatia – Old Town Dubrovnik, the Historic Center of Split with Diocletian's Palace and the Plitvice Lakes National Park and one property each from the Republic of Macedonia – Lake Ohrid, Montenegro – The natural and cultural-historical landscape of Kotor and Serbia – Stari Ras with Sopoćani.<sup>11</sup> Due to the earthquake of magnitude seven on the Richter scale in the Adriatic Sea between Bar and Ulcinj, which occurred on April 15 of that year and which caused significant damage to historical buildings in Kotor and the surrounding area,<sup>12</sup> this property was simultaneously inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger. It was the first inscription on the List of World

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6 Of the 195 signatory states to the Convention, 191 are member states of the United Nations, two have observer status in the United Nations (Vatican and Palestine), and two are in free association with New Zealand (Cook Islands and New Zealand). Only two members of the United Nations have not ratified the Convention (Liechtenstein and Nauru). [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World\\_Heritage\\_Convention](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Heritage_Convention), (accessed September 2023).

7 <https://whc.unesco.org/en/committee/> (accessed September 2023).

8 CC-78/CONF.010/10Rev; [https://whc.unesco.org/archive/1978/cc-78-conf010-10rev\\_e.pdf](https://whc.unesco.org/archive/1978/cc-78-conf010-10rev_e.pdf), 8–9, 17–19 (accessed September 2023).

9 <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1/> (accessed September 2023).

10 <https://www.apps.org.rs/sr/2017/01/in-memoriam-branislav-krstic-1922-2016/> (accessed September 2023).

11 CC-79/CONF.003/13; <https://whc.unesco.org/archive/1979/cc-79-conf003-13e.pdf> 13 (accessed September 2023).

12 <http://www.seismo.co.me/questions/13.htm> (accessed September 2023).



Fig. 3

Western view  
of Gračanica  
Monastery,  
Medieval  
Monuments of  
Kosovo

(© B. Strugar)



Fig. 4

Western view  
of Dečani  
Monastery,  
Medieval  
Monuments of  
Kosovo

(© B. Strugar)

Heritage in Danger (at the request of the state that nominated it), which activated this mechanism provided for in Article 11 of the Convention.<sup>13</sup> Yugoslavia was again represented at this session of the Committee and at the next one held from 1 to September 5 1980, in Paris, by Prof. Milan Prelog.<sup>14</sup> The participation of SFRY in the work of the Committee would end with the session of the Committee in Paris. Interestingly, during the entire time of participation in the work of the Committee, Yugoslavia had only one representative at each session, although it was expected (as is still the case today) for a member state of the Committee to have a delegation of several members.<sup>15</sup> In the last year of participation in the Committee's work (1980), Yugoslavia also inscribed the Durmitor National Park in Montenegro, which at that time made it the first country in terms of the number of inscribed properties on the World Heritage List, together with the United States of America, which had also up to that time inscribed seven sites, followed by Poland and France, with five each, and Bulgaria and Germany, which inscribed four sites each.<sup>16</sup>

Until 1986, the SFRY did not inscribe new properties on the World Heritage List, and that year, at the session in Paris from 24 to November 28, it inscribed two more: Škocijanske jame in the Republic of Slovenia and Studenica Monastery in Serbia. However, SFRY then nominated two more properties but postponed their inscription at its request. These are Sarajevo Baščaršija in the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Brioni National Park in Croatia. As an observer, Yugoslavia had the largest delegation of all the participating countries that year, consisting of as many as seven members.<sup>17</sup> It might not be so interesting if, in the period 1981-1985, Yugoslavia had no representatives at all at the sessions of the Committee, except in 1984 in Argentina, when it was represented, probably *ex officio*, by the *chargé d'affaires* of the Yugoslav embassy in Buenos Aires.<sup>18</sup>

This modest performance of two inscribed properties and two planned ones that were abandoned is in disagreement with the ambitious Tentative List submitted by Yugoslavia the previous year (1985), which consisted of as many as eighteen cultural and natural properties. In addition to the mentioned four, there are also: in the Republic of Croatia – the Euphrasian Basilica in Poreč, the Historic Center of Trogir, the

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13 See note 12; <https://whc.unesco.org/archive/convention-en.pdf>, 6–7 (accessed September 2023).

14 See note 4.

15 CC-77/CONF.001/9, [https://whc.unesco.org/archive/1977/cc-77-conf001-9\\_en.pdf](https://whc.unesco.org/archive/1977/cc-77-conf001-9_en.pdf), 16; CC-78/CONF.010/10Rev, [https://whc.unesco.org/archive/1978/cc-78-conf010-10rev\\_e.pdf](https://whc.unesco.org/archive/1978/cc-78-conf010-10rev_e.pdf), 19; CC-79/CONF.003/13, <https://whc.unesco.org/archive/1979/cc-79-conf003-13e.pdf>, 22; CC-80/CONF.016/10, <https://whc.unesco.org/archive/1980/cc-80-conf016-10e.pdf>, 23 (accessed September 2023).

16 CC-78/CONF.010/10Rev, [https://whc.unesco.org/archive/1978/cc-78-conf010-10rev\\_e.pdf](https://whc.unesco.org/archive/1978/cc-78-conf010-10rev_e.pdf), 7–8; CC-79/CONF.003/13, <https://whc.unesco.org/archive/1979/cc-79-conf003-13e.pdf>, 11–13; CC-80/CONF.016/10, <https://whc.unesco.org/archive/1980/cc-80-conf016-10e.pdf>, 3–4 (accessed September 2023).

17 CC-86/CONF.003/10, <https://whc.unesco.org/archive/1986/cc-86-conf003-10e.pdf>, 9, 31 (accessed September 2023).

18 SC/86/CONF.004/9, <https://whc.unesco.org/archive/1984/sc-84-conf004-9e.pdf>, 30 (accessed September 2023).



Fig. 5

Remains  
of Temple,  
Gamzigrad –  
Romuliana,  
The Palace of  
Galerius

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Fig. 6

Site Mramorje  
in Perućac,  
Stećci,  
Medieval  
Tombstones  
Graveyards

(© M. Đorđević)

Kornati National Park and the Kopački rit Nature Park, in Macedonia – Lake Prespa with the mountains Pelister and Galičica, Mark's Town in Prilep and Nerezi Monastery in Slovenia – Notranjski karst, in Montenegro – Biogradska Gora and in Bosnia and Herzegovina – Stari most in Mostar, while from the Republic of Serbia – Đerdap gorge, Gračanica and Dečani Monasteries, Mount Tara with the Drina canyon and Deliblatska peščara were proposed.<sup>19</sup>

However, the inscription of the listed properties did not happen since the SFRY did not inscribe a single property on the World Heritage List until its disintegration in 1991. Later, only a few of them were on the List at the proposal of the countries that emerged from the breakup of Yugoslavia – after the formation of independent states from the former republics of the SFRY, the Republic of Serbia, together with the Republic of Montenegro, formed a union called the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (from now on FRY) on April 27 1992. Although in international law the FRY was generally considered the legal heir of the former Yugoslavia, the United Nations Security Council decided that it could not automatically continue its membership in the United Nations and that, like the other former Yugoslav republics that declared independence, it must apply to admission General Assembly.<sup>20</sup> The creation of the FRY is connected with the sanctions of the United Nations, which were introduced on May 30, 1992 and lasted until October 2, 1996.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, the FRY regained its membership in the United Nations only four full years later, on November 1 2000, and on December 20 of the same year, it also regained its membership in UNESCO.<sup>22</sup> This means that the Republic of Serbia, as a part of the FRY, formally had a break in its membership in UNESCO for almost nine full years (April 1992 – November 2000) and, therefore, could not participate in the work of the Committee, and consequently not to inscribe their properties on the List.

Despite such an unfavourable situation, in August 1993, the Federal Commission for Cooperation with UNESCO (which had not ceased its work) submitted to the UNESCO World Heritage Center (from now on WHC) in Paris a Tentative list of 11 natural and cultural sites (Dečani and Gračanica Monasteries, the archaeological site of Gamzigrad-Felix Romuliana, national parks Đerdap, Šar-planina and Tara with the Drina river canyon, the special natural reserve Deliblatska peščara and the natural

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19 CC-86/CONF.001/2; <https://whc.unesco.org/archive/1986/cc-86-conf001-2f.pdf>, 56–80 (accessed September 2023).

20 Recommendations of the Security Council of 19 September 1992, adopted at the seventh plenary session (A/RES/47/1), <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/NR0/751/29/IMG/NR075129.pdf?OpenElement>, 18. Namely, the Republic of Serbia was part of different states in the period that we are considering in this paper, namely: the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia until 1992; Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in the period 1992–2003; Serbia and Montenegro from 2003 to 2006, in order to declare its final independence on 5 June 2006 after the termination of the functioning of the state union of Serbia and Montenegro. Official Gazette of RS 18/06 of 5 June 2006.

21 Resolution of the Security Council of 2 October 1996 (S/RES/1074 (1996)), <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/1074>.

22 Resolution of the General Assembly of the United Nations of 1 November 2000 adopted at the 48th Plenary Session (A/RES/55/12), <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N00/560/14/PDF/N0056014.pdf?OpenElement>.



landscape Đavolja varoš in Serbia, as well as the Morača Monastery, the historical centre of Cetinje and the national park Biogradska Gora in Montenegro).<sup>23</sup> It also decided to immediately proceed with preparing the nomination for the Dečani Monastery. Already the following year, the nomination file was submitted to the Center in Paris, but the Committee did not consider either the Tentative List or the nomination of Dečani for formal reasons because the FRY did not have the status of a UNESCO member.<sup>24</sup>

After the FRY regained its status in UNESCO, it resubmitted its Tentative List in 2002 with identical contents to the 1993 list, which the Committee confirmed at its 26<sup>th</sup> session in Budapest.<sup>25</sup> Immediately after that came the preparation of the nomination of Dečani, which was submitted to the UNESCO WHC in January 2003, which created the conditions for the Committee to consider the decision on the inscription the following year. At its 28<sup>th</sup> session from June 27 to July 7 in Suzhou, on the recommendation of ICOMOS, the Committee decided to inscribe Dečani Monastery on the List. Although there were constant threats from local Albanians that escalated shortly before the Committee's session, in March of the same year, when more than thirty Serbian churches and monasteries in Kosovo and Metohija were destroyed and damaged, the Committee did not make a decision to place the Dečani Monastery on the World Heritage List in Danger.<sup>26</sup> Interestingly, not even the proposer, i.e., the state union of Serbia and Montenegro at the time, requested to be put on the Danger List. We must also mention that ICOMOS has largely changed the proposed statement on the exceptional universal value for the Dečani Monastery and narrowed down the selection of criteria based on which they were entered on the List.<sup>27</sup>

After the inscription, the National Commission for Cooperation with UNESCO decided to add the Gračanica and Peć Patriarchate Monasteries, as well as the Church of Virgin of Ljeviša in Prizren, to the Dečani Monastery through the process of extension of the already inscribed property. The reason for this was the concern for the physical survival of these sacral monuments in the atmosphere of great intolerance that prevailed at that time. Namely, NATO ground forces have been stationed in the territory of Kosovo and Metohija since June 1999, after which a good part of the Serbian and other non-Albanian population was forced to leave their homes permanently.<sup>28</sup> Serbian monasteries and churches, as well as other Serbian cultural heritage, were in

23 Documentation of the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments of Serbia, no. 33/121, of 12.08.1993.

24 V. Džamić, *Uključivanje srpskih spomenika na Listu Svetske kulturne baštine*, Umetničko nasleđe srpskog naroda na Kosovu i Metohiji, istorija, identitet, ugroženost, zaštita (eds.) D. Vojvodić, M. Marković, Beograd 2017, 470.

25 WHC-02/CONF.202/20 Rev, <https://whc.unesco.org/archive/2002/whc-02-conf202-20reve.pdf>, 12 (accessed September 2023).

26 WHC-04/28.COM/26, 43-44; <https://whc.unesco.org/archive/2004/whc04-28com-26e.pdf> (accessed September 2023).

27 Details on the inscription of Kosovo-Metohija churches and monasteries on the World Heritage List, V. Džamić, *op. cit.* 465–483.

28 Group of authors, *March pogrom in Kosovo and Metohija with a survey of destroyed and endangered Christian cultural heritage* (ed.) B. V. Jokić, Belgrade 2004, 5–17, 23–49.

immediate danger of destruction by Albanian perpetrators, who entirely or partially destroyed more than ninety churches and monasteries (especially in the summer/autumn of 1999 and between 17 and 19 March 2004).<sup>29</sup> Almost no Serbian Orthodox cemetery remained intact during that period. Some medieval churches were destroyed by being blown up with explosives, such as the endowment of the great convict Jovan Dragoslav, the church of the Virgin from the beginning of the 14th century in the village of Mušutište near Suva Reka,<sup>30</sup> and similar fate of destruction was also experienced by other medieval churches and monasteries such as those in Rečani, Dolac, Drsnik, Nerodimlje, Mlečani and Zočište.<sup>31</sup>

Thus, in 2005, the State of Serbia and Montenegro supplemented its Tentative List with the Patriarchate of Pec and the Virgin of Ljeviška, and at the same time, submitted a nomination for the addition/expansion of those monuments (along with the Gračanica monastery) to the Dečani Monastery under the unique name Serbian Medieval Monuments of Kosovo and Metohija.<sup>32</sup> At its 30th session from 8 to July 16 2006 in Vilnius, the Committee accepted the recommendation of ICOMOS to expand the existing property of the Dečani Monastery, with Gračanica and Peć Patriarchate Monasteries and the Church of Virgin of Ljeviša in Prizren, under the name Medieval Monuments in Kosovo.<sup>33</sup> At the same session, for the previously mentioned reasons, this property was placed on the World Heritage List in Danger, where it is still today.<sup>34</sup> This time as well, as before in the case of Dečani, ICOMOS drastically changed the proposed statement on the outstanding universal value of the property and changed the name of the group of monuments itself, removing the Serbian epithet. They also suggested that only “monastery churches” be entered on the List, and not monastery complexes with a protective zone, as foreseen by Serbia in the nomination. Due to the skilful and reasonable reasoning of the Serbian delegation, such a proposal was nevertheless abandoned. The only unknown remains how the geographical designation of Metohija disappeared from the name because ICOMOS proposed that the name of the property should be Medieval Monuments in Kosovo and Metohija. It was inscribed under the name Medieval Monuments in Kosovo, which does not correspond to the factual situation since three of the four monuments are not located

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29 Complete list in: D. Radovanović, M. Đekić, *Posle usvajanja rezolucije 1244 (1999–2017)*, Umetničko nasleđe srpskog naroda na Kosovu i Metohiji, istorija, identitet, ugroženost, zaštita (eds.) D. Vojvodić, M. Marković, Beograd 2017, 404–413.

30 The church was destroyed in July 1999 when, after several attacks, the Kosovo Liberation Army destroyed it with explosives; Group of authors, *Spomenička baština Kosova i Metohije* (ed.) S. Pejić, Beograd 2002<sup>3</sup>, 99–100.

31 D. Radovanović, M. Đekić, *op. cit.* 393; M. Marković, B. Stevanović, *The Church of St. George in Rečani*, Belgrade 2018, 12–13; G. Subotić, *Dolac i Čabići*, Beograd 2012.

32 WHC-05/29.COM/8A, <https://whc.unesco.org/archive/2005/whc05-29com-08Ae.pdf>, 8 (accessed September 2023).

33 WHC-06/30.COM/19, <https://whc.unesco.org/archive/2006/whc06-30com-19e.pdf>, 156 (accessed September 2023).

34 WHC-06/30.COM/19, <https://whc.unesco.org/archive/2006/whc06-30com-19e.pdf>, 156 (accessed September 2023).

in Kosovo but in Metohija (Dečani Monastery, Peć Patriarchate and the Church of Virgin of Ljeviša).<sup>35</sup>

Already the following year, Serbia inscribed the Gamzigrad-Romuliana, Palace of Galerius archaeological site, at the 31<sup>st</sup> session of the Committee in Christchurch, which lasted from June 23 to July 2 2007, also with a favourable recommendation from the ICOMOS advisory body.<sup>36</sup> It should be mentioned that this active period of Serbia when it comes to inscription on the World Heritage List after the return of its status in UNESCO would certainly not have been so without the wholehearted efforts of the then Serbian ambassador to UNESCO (2001–2007), lawyer Dragoljub Najman, whose his entire diplomatic career was related to the organizations of the United Nations and UNESCO.<sup>37</sup>

Three years later (2010), Serbia supplemented its Tentative List with several more properties, namely: Manasija Monastery, Smederevo Fortress, Negotin beer halls, the archaeological site of Caričin Grad – Justiniana Prima and the historical site of Bač with its surroundings.<sup>38</sup> This List was supplemented three more times: in 2011, Medieval Tombstones were added to it – Stećci (joint nomination with neighbouring countries – former Yugoslav republics: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Montenegro); In 2015 when Roman Limes – eastern sector<sup>39</sup> was added to it (joint nomination with neighbouring countries Croatia, Romania and Bulgaria); in 2017 when it was supplemented with the Ancient and Primeval Prehistoric Beech Forests of the Carpathians and other parts of Europe (joint nomination with Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Czech Republic, France, Italy, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Poland, Slovakia and Switzerland).

Despite the ambition shown by the Tentative List, which at one point contained as many as thirteen properties, Serbia has not shown excessive enthusiasm for inscribing new properties on the World Heritage List since Gamzigrad (2007). From that period, only the Medieval Tombstones – Stećci were inscribed at the 40<sup>th</sup> session of the World Heritage Committee in Istanbul, held from 10 to July 17 2016, although this time ICOMOS did not propose the inscription, but a deferral until the points that were relating to the statement of universal value. Nevertheless, the members of the Committee recognized the importance of interstate cooperation in a region that was engulfed in brutal war conflicts two decades earlier and, contrary to the opinion of

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35 2006 Advisory Body Evaluation (ICOMOS), <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/724/documents/> (accessed September 2023).

36 WHC-07/31.COM/24, <https://whc.unesco.org/archive/2007/whc07-31com-24e.pdf>, 168–169 (accessed September 2023).

37 T. Spasić, *Najman Dragoljub*, Znameniti Jevreji Srbije, Beograd 2011, 161–162.

38 The character of the preliminary nomination of Bač was changed in 2019, when the good was recognized as a cultural landscape, while in 2010 it was reported as a mixed cultural and natural property. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/statesparties/rs> (accessed September 2023).

39 The content of the preliminary nomination of the Roman Limes was changed in 2020, when the number of localities nominated for inscription was reduced from 60 to 36. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/statesparties/rs> (accessed September 2023).

the advisory body, decided to include this property in the List.<sup>40</sup> Before the inscription of Stećci in 2016, the Republic of Serbia was a member of the Committee from 2011 to 2015.<sup>41</sup>

The biggest disappointment, if that is a strong enough word to describe it, was experienced by Serbia at the 44<sup>th</sup> Session of the World Heritage Committee held in Fuzhou from 16 to July 31 2021. Namely, along with nine other countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Czech Republic, France, Italy, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Poland, Slovakia and Switzerland), the Republic of Serbia tried to include, through the process of significant modifications to the boundaries, the largest property on the List – Ancient and Primeval Prehistoric Beech Forests of the Carpathians and other parts of Europe. Five forest reserves of beech forests in three national parks (Papratski do and Ravne on Fruška Gora, Rača and Zvezda on Tara and Kozje stene on Kopaonik) were nominated.<sup>42</sup> Of the 29 components with which the Ancient and Primeval Prehistoric Beech Forests were supposed to be expanded, the IUCN proposed that for various reasons, the inscription be rejected for 14 of them. Unfortunately, among them were all five forest reserves proposed by Serbia and all of them were rejected for one reason – the impossibility of the nominating state to prevent deforestation, which is demonstrated even by the plans for the construction of new forest roads for the extraction of timber, not only in the protective but also in the core zones of the nominated reserves.<sup>43</sup> The Committee accepted the advisory body's recommendation, and Serbia was the only country that participated in the nomination process, all of whose proposed components were rejected, so it failed to add its forest reserves to the property, which today consists of 94 components of untouched beech forests in even eighteen European countries, including all our neighbours.<sup>44</sup> Last year (2022), Serbia submitted the nomination of the Bač Cultural Landscape, which is currently in the procedure, and the result will be known in the year to come (2024).

In this overview, all the data concerning the attitude of the Republic of Serbia towards the inscription of properties on the World Heritage List are outlined. The implementation of Convention Concerning the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage cannot be seen exclusively through the relationship with the World Heritage List, which represents only one of its instruments. There are many more activities carried out by the countries that are members of the Convention, which are less visible but no less critical in preserving cultural and natural heritage. However, inscription on the List is the most complex procedure of the Convention, which requires the engagement of significant resources for a particular property from a certain country to be included in that prestigious company. Although probably no one wants

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40 WHC/16/40.COM/19, 219–221; <https://whc.unesco.org/archive/2016/whc16-40com-19-en.pdf>; [https://www.heritage.gov.rs/cirilica/radovi\\_i\\_aktivnosti\\_stecci\\_upisani\\_na\\_listu\\_svetske\\_bastine\\_UNESCO.php](https://www.heritage.gov.rs/cirilica/radovi_i_aktivnosti_stecci_upisani_na_listu_svetske_bastine_UNESCO.php) (accessed September 2023).

41 <https://whc.unesco.org/en/statesparties/rs>.

42 <https://whc.unesco.org/document/181052>, 11.

43 <https://whc.unesco.org/document/189194>, 16, 20, 23.

44 Without Hungary, for understandable reasons. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1133/>.

to admit it, the List also represents a kind of competition where the very presence (and number) demonstrates not only the richness of the heritage that a country inherits but also its relationship to each natural and cultural asset it cares for.

Before looking back at the conclusions based on what has been presented so far, we must point out some important documents and events that broadly define the inscription of properties on the World Heritage List, and were not mentioned in the previous pages. The Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the Convention define the procedure and methodology of inscription on the World Heritage List.<sup>45</sup> So far, they have been changed and supplemented 27 times,<sup>46</sup> so the first one, which was adopted at the first session of the Committee in 1977, had 28 paragraphs, while today's current one, adopted in 2021, has ten times more – as many as 290.<sup>47</sup> Operational Guidelines define to the smallest detail the work of the Committee, the activities of the UNESCO WHC, the rights and obligations of the member states, the work of advisory bodies and all procedures carried out by the Committee.<sup>48</sup>

After nearly 400 properties were inscribed on the World Heritage List during the two decades of the Convention, the Committee made a decision in 1992 to introduce a new category, actually a subcategory of properties that can be inscribed on the List – cultural landscape. In addition to cultural, natural and mixed sites, since that year, cultural landscapes classified as cultural or mixed property could also be inscribed on the List.<sup>49</sup> In thirty years, 121 cultural landscapes have been inscribed on the List (which today makes up a tenth of all inscribed properties),<sup>50</sup> and the countries of France, Italy and Great Britain have the most of them.<sup>51</sup>

During the 26<sup>th</sup> Session of the World Heritage Committee in 2002 in the capital of Hungary, and on the occasion of marking the thirtieth anniversary of the creation of the Convention, the Committee adopted the Budapest Declaration on World Heritage.<sup>52</sup> It was initially named 4Cs after the initial letter C of the four strategic goals that this declaration pursues in preserving World Heritage (Credibility, Conservation, Capacity-building and Communication). Five years later, at the 31<sup>st</sup> Session of the Committee, the fifth C was added to this declaration as the fifth goal (Communities), so these goals in preserving World Heritage were renamed the 5Cs.<sup>53</sup> These goals aim at 1) ensuring the **credibility** of the World Heritage List, 2) effective **conservation** of the property on the List, 3) taking measures to ensure **capacities** (human, legislative and financial) for the preparation of nominations and understanding and implementation of the Convention, 4) raising awareness to the public about the importance of

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45 <https://whc.unesco.org/en/guidelines/>.

46 <https://whc.unesco.org/archive/opguide77a.pdf>.

47 <https://whc.unesco.org/document/190976>.

48 *Ibid.* 30-32, 44-45, 52, 122.

49 <https://whc.unesco.org/archive/opguide94.pdf>, 13–15.

50 The number of goods inscribed on the List so far is 1157 in 167 countries. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/>.

51 <https://whc.unesco.org/en/culturallandscape/>.

52 <https://whc.unesco.org/en/decisions/1217/>.

53 <https://whc.unesco.org/en/decisions/5197/>.

World Heritage through various forms of **communication** and 5) improving the role of **communities** in the implementation of the Convention on World Heritage.

In order for our insight into the World Heritage List to be complete, we also need to refer to the inscription procedure that will begin to be applied in 2027, and which has already been changed by a decision at the 44<sup>th</sup> Session of the Committee in 2021 (since the transitional period for voluntary application of the procedure). Namely, in contrast to the previous procedure in which the state first nominates the property, after which its inscription is discussed by an advisory body (ICOMOS or IUCN) that makes a recommendation so that at the end, the Committee makes a final decision, a two-stage evaluation mechanism is introduced, the first step of which represents a Preliminary Assessment. The new procedure, which lasts for a year, involves only a review of the sent documents without the evaluator visiting the site. After the opinion obtained after the preliminary assessment, within a minimum of one year and a maximum of five years, the nominating country may submit a complete nomination that will be considered again by the advisory bodies and the Committee.<sup>54</sup> With this reform, the current procedure, which took 18 months from submitting the nomination to inscription, is extended to at least four years. The goal, of course, is not to complicate the already very complex and demanding procedure but rather the desire to encourage states to abandon the proposed nomination after a negative preliminary assessment. It is estimated that this procedure will lead to greater compliance with the recommendations of advisory bodies and that the number of inscriptions will be reduced by which the Committee, contrary to the recommendation of the advisory body, makes a decision on inscription.<sup>55</sup>

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Looking at the attitude of the Republic of Serbia towards the World Heritage List as the most popular and complex mechanism of the Convention on the Protection of World Heritage, we can state the following. Serbia has five cultural sites on the List. Although comparisons of this kind are not gratifying and do not reflect the true picture, we will mention that the following countries also have five properties on the List: Ivory Coast, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ecuador, Kazakhstan, Libya, Mongolia, Oman, Panama, Slovenia, Uzbekistan, Yemen and Zimbabwe. Unlike Serbia, all of them, except for Oman and Libya, also have natural sites on the List. Of the countries of the former Yugoslavia, Slovenia – like Serbia – inscribed five properties on the List, Croatia ten, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro four each, and North Macedonia two. Of the neighbouring countries, Albania has four properties, Bulgaria ten, Romania nine, and Hungary eight, all of which also have natural sites on the List.

For better understanding, it should be remembered that the Republic of Serbia had several stages of inscription of properties on the World Heritage List. In the first phase, within the SFRY, decisions on nominations were made on a case-by-case basis

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54 <https://whc.unesco.org/archive/2021/whc-21-44com-18-en.pdf>, 429–430.

55 Which was the case with the Stećci – Medieval Tombstones. See note 39.

at the federation level, taking special care to ensure that all republics of the former state were equally represented.<sup>56</sup> Then Serbia presented itself with its medieval heritage embodied in the monumental complex in the area of medieval Ras – the place where the Serbian medieval state was formed and the Studenica Monastery – the endowment of Stefan Nemanja/monk Simeon – the founder of the Serbian medieval Nemanjić dynasty.

The second phase followed the collapse of the SFRY and the civil war that was fought on the territory of the former joint state, then the bombing of the FRY by the NATO pact in 1999, and then the return to the United Nations and UNESCO. The lousy situation conditioned Serbia on the territory of its autonomous province of Kosovo and Metohija, where it could no longer physically protect its population, let alone its cultural heritage, because in June 1999, it had to withdraw its army and police. Therefore, it was nominated and inscribed in the List its most valuable monuments in that area. Again – medieval churches and monasteries, as in the case of Stari Ras and Studenica. The fact that Serbia also has heritage from other historical periods was only shown by the inscription of an archaeological site from the ancient period – the palace of the Emperor from the period of the Galerius Tetrarchy near the town of Zaječar in Eastern Serbia.

In the third phase, which is still current, there seems to be no clear plan of what inscription strategy Serbia should implement. The initiative to enter Stećci on the World Heritage List came from Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia joined it – this time as well, nominating its medieval heritage. That is very modest because it proposed only three sites compared to 22, as many as Bosnia and Herzegovina included. The initiative to join the Ancient Beech Forest reserves did not come from Serbia but from Switzerland.

The Tentative List, which currently includes ten properties, indicates our engagement in implementing the Convention and our relationship with the World Heritage List. Half of the properties on the Tentative List have been on it since 2002, and in fact, since 1993/1985 – more than three decades. It is unnecessary to talk about the chances of their inscription. On the properties in the second half, added in the last decade, the work on preparing nominations has also not started. The fact is that, for the Manasija Monastery, Serbia requested the assistance of the UNESCO WHC through the early assessment process (Upstream Process) in 2019. After a series of online sessions, additional information and delays due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the ICOMOS evaluation mission was presented with two different concepts for potential inscription on the World Heritage List (as individual site or as a serial nomination of several Moravian sacred and profane monuments). In response, an assessment arrived, from which it is difficult to conclude anything except that the Manasija Monastery has very little chance of one day being on the List independently. I will dare to go a step

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56 This is indirectly evidenced by the nomination of Sarajevo Baščaršija in 1986, which would have represented all the republics of the former SFRY with at least one candidate on the List. It is not clear from the documents why SFRY withdrew that nomination. See note 18.

further and express an opinion – which I would leave to the judgment of time – that not a single property that Serbia currently has on the Tentative List has an objective chance that one day, in the form in which it was proposed, it would be on the World Heritage List, except, perhaps, an archaeological site of Caričin Grad.

There are several reasons for this. One is the changes the Convention is going through, and we are insufficiently involved in monitoring and analyzing them. Of course, the text of the Convention is unchanged, but the aforementioned Operational Guidelines are constantly changing, making the Convention itself a fluid and, on the other hand, a static document. I will give some examples of that. One is that we nominated (and the question is whether it will be inscribed) the first Cultural Landscape precisely thirty years after the Committee introduced the possibility for this category of property to be on the List. For example, our northern neighbours, the Hungarians, inscribed their three Cultural Landscapes, as many as they have, on the List in the period 1999–2002, in the first ten years since the concept of a cultural landscape as a World Heritage was established.<sup>57</sup> And the second, when we nominated one of our most significant and best-preserved archaeological sites – Gamzigrad, Romuliana, which is also our last nomination, we managed to produce barely fifty pages of original nomination text. The rest of the nomination document was made up of various annexes, including two original, previously published texts by Dragoslav Srejšović.<sup>58</sup> Even then, this kind of nomination preparation methodology was not very appropriate, and today, when teams of experts prepare nominations for years and nomination files often have hundreds or even thousands of pages of original text, it would be unthinkable.

All this indicates that the procedures and methodology have become more complicated over the years, so the preparation of the nomination requires significantly more expert involvement and much more time than before. The valuation method has also changed. Stari Ras and Studenica were included in the List, among others, for fulfilling criterion i (a *masterpiece of human creative genius*). Twenty years later, Kosovo and Metohija churches and monasteries couldn't be on the List based on that criterion, although it can hardly be disputed that the work of the artist who designed the unique architectural design of Gračanica is a masterpiece of human creative genius. Monitoring all these changes, and what is even more critical, understanding them and perceiving their impact in the future, is a job that no one in Serbia does studiously, and I estimate that institutional engagement in this field does not exist.

Contrary to this, our reality shows that of the 5Cs objectives from the amended Budapest Declaration, we only understand the second one (Ensure the effective Conservation of World Heritage Properties) well because, in our case, the care of the monuments usually comes down to its conservation only. In this way, the legal framework was designed to a reasonable extent, and the entire service for the protection of immovable cultural properties was also organized. Although this is a topic that goes beyond the scope of this study, we will only mention that the recently adopted Law

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57 <https://whc.unesco.org/en/statesparties/hu>.

58 <https://whc.unesco.org/uploads/nominations/1253.pdf>.



on Cultural Heritage stipulates that “central protection institutions prepare nomination files for the inscription of cultural heritage on UNESCO lists,”<sup>59</sup> which in a way legitimized a practice that existed before.<sup>60</sup> Regarding cultural properties, the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments of Serbia is the central institution. With its internal act on systematization, the Institute entrusted this work to all its conservators-researchers (art historians, historians, archaeologists and ethnologists), which would give the impression that almost twenty people are engaged in this work.<sup>61</sup> The fact that this is not the practice case was also noticed by the Ministry of Culture, which, after carrying out an extraordinary inspection at the Institute in September 2020, recommended that a “new organizational unit” be formed within the Institute, which would deal with the implementation of the Convention on the Protection of World Heritage.<sup>62</sup> Although very well argued and explained, this recommendation has not been implemented.

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Summarizing what has been written so far, we can only conclude. It seems to us that in the case of Serbia, looking at its geographical position, size and overall fund of immovable cultural (also natural) heritage, it should objectively have been expected that there would be more properties on the World Heritage List than is the case now.<sup>63</sup> Particularly worrying is the lack of activity in preparing new nominations in the last almost twenty years because such a relationship is losing step with the latest methodology and inscription procedures. The Tentative List requires an urgent revision, which would have to include a more comprehensive expert discussion and analysis of which types and which properties meet the conditions for potential inscription into the List – to show what types of heritage Serbia inherits and preserves (the first goal from 5Cs – Credibility of World Heritage List). It is necessary to work a lot on better informing and strengthening the public’s awareness of what the Convention on the Protection of World Heritage represents, first of all through the realization of the

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59 Art. 91 of the Law on Cultural Heritage, Off. Gazette of RS 129/2021.

60 All nomination files for the inscription of cultural properties on the World Heritage List have been prepared by the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments of Serbia, with the exception of the current nomination of the Bač Cultural Region – which represents the joint work of the Republic and Provincial Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments.

61 Act on the systematization of jobs in the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments of Serbia No. 11-134/2020-1 of 29 May 2020, 11.

62 Decision of the Ministry of Culture and Information No. 119-01-176/2020-02 of 20.10.2020.

63 This number of five cultural properties could be even lower if the self-proclaimed Republic of Kosovo becomes a member of UNESCO and therefore accedes to the Convention on the Protection of World Heritage. The self-proclaimed Republic of Kosovo tried to become a member of UNESCO at the 38<sup>th</sup> General Conference of that organization in 2015, but failed to secure the two-thirds majority required by the Statute for full membership (out of 142 states, 92 supported inscription, 50 were against, and 95 votes were needed for inscription). <https://kossev.info/generalna-konferencija-unesco-a-kosovo-nije-primljeno/>. In the event that the self-proclaimed Republic of Kosovo becomes a full member of UNESCO, given that the Medieval Monuments in Kosovo are located on its territory and that the Convention considers the ownership of properties to be the concern of the country on whose territory they are located, Serbia will formally remain with four sites on the List.

obligations assumed by joining the Convention (the fourth goal from 5Cs – Increase public awareness, involvement and support for World Heritage through Communication). Working with communities (local, regional, ethnic, religious) as custodians of heritage on the objectives of the Convention and how heritage can become a sustainable driver of development is an unavoidable task that must be accomplished if one wants to take a more prestigious place on the World Heritage List (the fifth objective from 5Cs – Enhance the role of communities in the implementation of the World Heritage Convention). However, the most crucial tool for achieving all these goals is knowledge. Working on the implementation of the Convention implies constant learning, understanding and application of new knowledge and techniques, harmonizing scientific and professional achievements with the principles of the Convention and the procedures prescribed in the Operational Guidelines for its implementation. In addition to encyclopedic knowledge and skills that can be acquired in educational systems and work experience on cultural sites, work on the processes defined by the Convention implies the constant adoption of new principles of protection of cultural and natural properties. Therefore, people are the only instrument that can bring a qualitative shift in our relationship with the Convention and consequently, according to its most demanding instrument – the World Heritage List (the third goal from 5Cs – Promote the development of effective capacity-building in States Parties).

Therefore, we should once again think about the justified proposal of the Ministry of Culture to achieve better results by organizing human resources better. After all, other, much more prosperous countries have found an expedient solution precisely in the activity of specialized teams that, within the framework of the protection system, have dealt exclusively with the implementation of the Convention and the improvement of the national World Heritage List.

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## ЛИСТА СВЕТСКОГ НАСЛЕЂА И КУЛТУРНА ДОБРА У СРБИЈИ – ПРВИХ ПОЛА ВЕКА

Србија је до обележавања 50 година од усвајања Конвенције о заштити светског наслеђа уписала пет културних добара на UNESCO-ву Листу Светског наслеђа. То чини просек од једног уписа на сваких девет година. Србија нема природних добара на Листи. Иако поређења овакве врсте нису захвална и не одражавају права слику, поменућемо да пет добара на Листи имају још и следеће земље: Обала Слоноваче, Конго, Еквадор, Казахстан, Либија, Монголија, Оман, Панама, Словенија, Узбекистан, Јемен и Зимбабве. Од земаља бивше Југославије Словенија је – као и Србија – уписала пет добара на Листу Светског наслеђа, Хрватска десет, Босна и Херцеговина и Црна гора по четири, Северна Македонија два. Од суседних земаља Албанија има четири, Бугарска десет, Румунија девет, а Мађарска осам добара, при чему све имају и природна добра на Листи.

Србија је имала неколико фаза уписа својих добара на Листу. Прву, у саставу СФРЈ, када су се одлуке о номинацијама доносиле по кључу на нивоу федерације, Друга фаза уследила је након распада СФРЈ и грађанског рата који се водио на простору бивше заједничке државе, све до повратка статуса чланства у Уједињеним нацијама 2000. године (које је прекинуто 1992. године). У трећој фази, која је и даље актуелна, чини се да нема јасног плана какву стратегију уписа Србија треба да примени. Иницијатива за упис Стећака на Листу Светског наслеђа стигла је из Босне и Херцеговине и Србија јој се придружила. Ни иницијатива за придруживању резерватима Древних букових шума није потекла из Србије, већ из Швајцарске, премда је 2021. због непримереног управљања одбијен покушај Србије да се придружи овом добру које се на Листи налази од 2007. године.

Прелиминарна листа на којој се тренутно налази десет добара, добар је показатељ ангажованости у примени Конвенције о заштити светског природног

и културног наслеђа и односа према самој Листи. Половина на њу пријављених добра се на њој налази од 2002. године, а фактички од 1993/1985. – дакле више од три деценије, са веома slabим шансама за њихов упис. На добрима додатим током прошле деценије такође није још започет рад на изради номинација.

Суштину оваквог стања чини слабо разумевање принципа из можда и најважнијег документа који је Комитет за Светско наслеђе усвојио током свог постојања – *Будимљешћанске декларације* (усвојене 2002. и допуњене 2007. године). Наша реалност показује да од циљева 5C' из *Будимљешћанске декларације* ми једино добро разумемо онај други (Конзервација/Conservation), јер се у нашем случају брига о споменицима најчешће и своди само на њихову конзервацију. На тај начин је у доброј мери конципиран законски оквир, а тако је и устројена служба заштите непокретних културних добара.

Посебно забрињава неактивност у припреми нових номинација у последњих скоро двадесет година, јер се због таквог односа губи корак са новом методологијом и процедурама уписа. Прелиминарна листа захтева хитну ревизију која би морала да подразумева ширу стручну расправу и анализу које врсте и која добра испуњавају услове за потенцијални улазак на Листу – како би се показало какве све типове наслеђа Србија баштини и чува (први циљ из 5C' – Кредibilitет/Credibility). Потребно је пуно радити на бољем информисању јавности шта представља Конвенција пре свега кроз спознају које обавезе су преузете њеном ратификацијом (четврти циљ из 5C' – Комуникација/Communication). Рад са заједницама као чуварима наслеђа о циљевима Конвенције и начинима како наслеђе може постати одрживи покретач развоја незаобилазан је задатак који се мора остварити ако се жели заузети престижније место на Листи (пети циљ из 5C' – Заједнице/Communities). Ипак, најважније средство за постизање свих ових циљева јесте знање. Рад на примени Конвенције подразумева непрестано учење, разумевање и примену нових знања и техника, усаглашавање научних и стручних достигнућа са њеним принципима и процедурама прописаним у Оперативним упутствима за њену примену. Поред енциклопедијских знања и вештина које се могу стећи у образовним системима и радног искуства на културним добрима, рад на процесима које дефинише Конвенција подразумева константно усвајање нових принципа заштите културних и природних добара, па су стога људи једини инструмент који може донети квалитативни помак у нашем односу према Конвенцији и последично према њеном најзахтевнијем инструменту – Листи Светског наслеђа (трећи циљ из 5C' – Капацитет/Capacity-building).

Да се у основи слабих резултата Републике Србије у упису нових добара на Листу (макар када су у питању културна добра) налази недостатак адекватних и добро организованих људских капацитета приметило је и Министарство културе које је након спроведеног ванредног инспекцијског надзора у Републичком заводу 2020. године препоручило да се у оквиру завода формира „нова организациона јединица“ која би се бавила применом саме Конвенције. Стога још једном треба размислити о овом оправданом предлогу да се квалитетнијим организовањем људских ресурса постигну бољи резултати.