THE WORLD MONUMENTS WATCH PROGRAM: A UNIQUE PUBLIC-AWARENESS RAISING TOOL.

Anne-Sophie Roure *

The World Monuments Watch is a global program established by the World Monuments Fund in 1995 to identify and preserve the world’s endangered cultural heritage sites. While the Watch program aims at attracting financial and technical resources, it was conceived as a tool to heighten public awareness. Informing the public of dangers that are threatening cultural heritage sites around the world is also a goal of the UNESCO World Heritage List and more specifically the List of World Heritage in Danger, as well as of ICOMOS Heritage@Risk. However the three programs have different structures and means of accomplishing their goals. Comparing them to the Watch program and looking at selected Watch case studies will enable us to understand better why the Watch program is a unique public-awareness raising tool and how it is used.

I. UNESCO World Heritage List, World Heritage in Danger & Watch List of 100

I. 1. UNESCO World Heritage List and Watch List of 100

The UNESCO World Heritage List and the Watch list of 100 share the common goal of raising awareness for heritage preservation both programs being based on the belief that heightened awareness can lead to preservation and conservation of cultural heritage. However, the UNESCO World Heritage List is a catalyst to raising awareness while the Watch program is a tool. Furthermore, both programs differ from each other on three principal levels.

First, unlike a Watch listing, UNESCO’s inscription conveys an honorific designation. The prestige of UNESCO designation is due to the fact that the UNESCO World Heritage List is conceived as a comprehensive, cumulative catalogue of cultural sites around the world that have been deemed to be of “outstanding universal value” and to the international recognition to which it is attached. Unlike UNESCO World Heritage List, the World Monuments Watch listing is not a guarantee of publicity as it is the responsibility of the nominators and sponsors to take advantage of the listing by distributing press materials and publications at the local level. Again, the list of 100 is a tool for concerned individuals and organizations to increase public awareness of an endangered cultural site and advocate for its protection.

Secondly, UNESCO inscription is permanent while sites selected for inclusion on the Watch list change with each two-year cycle. Ideally, WMF would hope to remove each site from the list within the two years of its inclusion by targeting its key problems and devising solutions. However, watch sites are automatically considered for re-listing for the next round and on average, 30% of the sites get re-listed a second consecutive time. Reasons for re-listing a site for the second or third time are various:

- Very little progress or no progress has been made at a site, which is still endangered and a second listing might give additional time/opportunity to work toward its preservation. (Beauvais, St. Pierre Cathedral; Indonesia, Omo Hada; Kenya, Thimlich Ohinga).
- Although it is unknown whether an additional listing will be beneficial, de-listing the site would send the message that the site has been preserved, while it clearly is not. (Croatia, Vukovar City Center; Yugoslavia, Subotica; Turkey, Ani; Malaysia, Georgetown Historic Enclave).
- Very positive effects have been observed at a Watch site (whether they are due to the Watch listing or not), a de-listing might break/stop the leveraging effect as the complete preservation of the site has not yet been achieved (Bosnia & Herzegovina, Mostar Historic Center; Italy, Cinque Terre; Jordan, Petra Archaeological Site; Egypt, Valley of the Kings; Mexico, San Juan de Ulua Fort).
- A new threat has occurred at the site during the past two years and the site has become more endangered than before, in spite of the nominators’ efforts. (Malta, Mnajdra Prehistoric Temples).

Reasons for de-listing a site also are multiple:

- The threats at a site have been removed, the site is no longer endangered and therefore does not need an additional Watch listing. (Belgium, Tours & Taxis).
- WMF has awarded a grant to a site, and although the site is not yet out of danger, WMF is planning on continuing to monitor the site through the management of the grant. (India, Jaisalmer).
- The Watch listing has done all it could, whether there has been progress at the site or not, a second Watch listing would not be beneficial. Another site should be given a chance to use the Watch listing. (USA, Eastern State...