World Heritage and Ethiopian local realities

Most of the internationally recognised heritage sites had an overlap of national, local and international interests, impacting the livelihoods of local populations. World Heritage was conceived by a small network of professionals with a shared set of beliefs and a shared notion of validity – what Peter M. Haas has termed an “epistemic community” in a larger internationalist context. Haas developed this analytical concept to understand better the growing relevance of expert-knowledge in the policymaking process, in particular for global policies. While based on scientific principles and research experience, this knowledge is nonetheless normative, technocratic and far removed from actual sites and local contexts. Moreover, World Heritage was then elaborated from universalist ideas into an operational programme. As we have seen in the previous chapters, the establishment of Ethiopian national heritage and World Heritage was characterised by heavy international involvement, and by a continuous internal and external politicisation of heritage. Heritage emerged as a new political resource in a conflicted and crisis-ridden Ethiopia during the 1960s and 1970s, to underline territorial claims and cultural dominance of the political ruling class. Through UNESCO’s involvement and the presence of international experts, state heritage institutions in Ethiopia were modelled after the internationally dominating standard, encompassing more technical aspects of heritage-making (i.e. how to conserve, inventarise, etc.) as well as global norms for cultural policy. As a part of this standard, heritage has to be identified and preserved within a system of institutional governance. The attention from international researchers and conservators contributed to the commodification of heritage sites in Ethiopia. However, when looking at the impact of the internal and external politicisation of heritage as well as the impact that establishing heritage had on the ground, at the local level of the direct surroundings of the heritage sites, threats and opportunities alike arose for the population. And while a priori, local knowledge was assumed to be largely non-existent, heritage-making in Ethiopia, and in particular the making of World Heritage there, relied on locals acting as brokers and mediators of relevant knowledge. This micro-level of heritage-making suggests a degree of agency within the local communities that reflects a more multifaceted interpretation of the socio-political context of heritage-making.

366 Haas, “Epistemic Communities”, 3, 10; Lynn Meskell, “Cosmopolitan Heritage Ethics”, in *Cosmopolitan Archaeologies*, ed. Lynn Meskell (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009), 1–27.
A glimpse into the role of locals for research and conservation projects

Local actors were important for heritage-making as knowledge and cultural brokers. On location in the natural as well as cultural heritage sites, the local population served as go-betweens for researchers, foreign experts and tourists through the surroundings. In a tourist booklet for the Omo region in Southern Ethiopia, produced by the ETO in the late 1960s or early 1970s, “The Archaeologists” and the excavation sites near Kalam were listed as one of the destinations of interest for adventurous tourists. The photos showing the archaeologists at work also show a number of Black excavation workers, some in tribal attire, some in Western clothes. On one of the photos, a Black man, with tribal hair and skin decoration and without clothing, and a white man in a shirt sit opposite each other, looking down into a small wooden crate, examining its contents. The caption identifies the couple as “Archaeologist and Geleba assistant sorting through findings at work.”

As was and is common for excavation works, it seems that the archaeological excavations in Omo regularly employed local workers, among them tribesmen without a formal education.

In this regard, the foreign interest, as well as national prioritisation, presented an opportunity for the local population—they worked as assistants and guides and could trade their extensive knowledge of the surroundings and the oral history tradition regarding the sites as valuable information to the foreigners. Graham Hancock, in his popular science book on searching for the Ark of the Covenant in the late 1980s, wrote that to him, it was obvious that “everyone in Aksum knows” the history of the sites and he claimed his work was reliant to a crucial extent on the strong local oral tradition.

Gledhill Stanley Blatch, a British businessman and hobby-archaeologist who visited Axum for the first time in 1967, engaged in personal correspondence with some of the locals who had previously assisted him during his stay. In his papers, which are held the SOAS archives in London, are a bunch of handwritten air-mail letters which allow us to retrace these relationships. From letters such as those he received from H., a high-school student, it is evident that he traded for the local’s knowledge of antiquities by offering a small donation towards his staying in school. H.’s letters also reveal a perception of the visitor’s interest as a connection and resource in a situation of political turmoil and existential threat. H. insisted that writing those letters, in which he informed Blatch about the situation in Tigray regarding the

367 Ethiopian Tourist Organisation and Ted Shatto, Omo Ethiopia (Addis Ababa: Commercial Printing Press, n.d.), 18–19.
368 Hancock, The Sign, 503–4.
accessibility to the rock churches and other sites, put his life in danger in times of political unrest in the region.\(^{369}\) He explained that H. never stated his full name for safety reasons, as he reported about the situation in the area and suspected all mail to be read before being shipped abroad.

In the correspondence with Yirga Endaweke, “a simple and poor teacher”\(^{370}\) in his own words, who worked occasionally as a tourist guide in Aksum, we learn that Yirga organised the purchase and shipment of paintings from Axum to London for Blatch, and in return asked for support in the publication of a small tourist guidebook he had produced. Yirga hoped to advance his professional opportunities through this publication: “So by this booklet, I can make acquaintance with some great people like you was my hope. Then by the help of such people, I may get scholarship. [...] Your excellency, I want you to help me and to try your best for me.”\(^{371}\)

These letters provide us with a small and personal insight, and they help to illuminate the role of the particular antiquities of international interest. In this regard, maintaining and establishing the sites as international heritage was a question of securing income, at least for parts of the local population. The inhabitants of the towns of Lalibela, Aksum and Gondar particularly understood the possibility of making themselves heard, or pursuing their particular goals, and how they might connect directly from their local level to the international level while circumventing the national government. Establishing personal relationships with foreign experts, be it as knowledge providers or by assisting them in their negotiations with the local clergy in order to obtain visitor permits, would strengthen their own position and agenda, especially in the years after 1974.

**Marginalisation of traditional conservation knowledge through international standards**

Aside from these local interactions, however, the activities of international heritage experts only very selectively included local knowledge into the heritage-making process. The official goal of the UNESCO and UNDP-organised assistance projects in Ethiopia was “to build a broad platform of self-reliance and skilled

\(^{369}\) Tigray Correspondence, SOAS, Blatch papers, file no. 15.

\(^{370}\) Letter from Yirga Nedaweke to Mr. G.S. Blatch, December 25, 1974, Tigray Correspondence, SOAS Blatch Papers, file 15.

\(^{371}\) Letter January 21, 1975.
manpower” for heritage-making. The intention and attempt to put conservation and related knowledge into the hands of Ethiopians was articulated in all working plans. Officially, building capacity by training counterparts was both a requirement and a desired outcome for a technical assistance mission, but in practice this was often far from reality. Although the facilitation of national knowledge production was part of UNESCO projects, such as the training of staff in conservation techniques or the establishment of long-term training programmes, the lack of resources to properly equip and staff institutions and the political conditions in Ethiopia hampered the long-term successful outcome of such training attempts. Additionally, there was the difficulty in finding suitably trained people to start the specialised training in the first place. Regularly, the lack of skilled manpower and expertise, and the insufficient standard of academic and vocational training of Ethiopian experts, was used as an argument to raise funds for projects and for fellowships of Ethiopians to study in Europe. It was an explicit project goal of ETH 74/14 to “enhance the capabilities of the ministry in the administration and surveying of sites and monuments by practical in-service training followed by international fellowships”. The training of experts was decided on an individual basis with only a select few being allowed to continue their studies abroad. Prior to the fellowship the subsequent position of these individuals was already set, e.g. a painting restorer in Lalibela would restore a specific painting for two years; or another might become director of the IES; or another the head of CRCCH. In addition to these restrictions regarding the pre-selection of candidates, applicants for the fellowships were expected to have a good academic track record, and they had to provide medical examination records and pass language tests.

Sometimes the Ethiopian authorities were even less convinced of their capacities than the international experts themselves. In order to conduct a photogrammetric survey of heritage sites, the CRCCH requested an expert mission during the project ETH 74/014. The chief architect of the project, Erik Olsen, together with the archaeologist Francis Anfray and the photogrammetry expert Maurice Gory, assessed the situation, and concluded that the Ethiopian resources were actually sufficient. The CRCCH had several qualified employees who, in their eyes, required only further specialist training in order to be suitable to the task, a solution they deemed both cheaper and more sustainable. Yet, they had to work to convince the Ethiopian authorities of this fact, a process that

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372 Letter from Zewde Gurmu to Dr. K. King, 4.3.81, in: UNESCO 069:72 (63) UNDP pt. vii.
373 Letter from D. Najman to Mr. J.M. Saunders, 27.11.1975, in: UNESCO 069:72 (63) A 136.
374 UNDP/ETH/74/014, Terminal Report, 2.
375 See the fellowship applications in UNESCO 069:72 (63) AMS and UNESCO 069:72 A 136.
took up several months. Eventually an inter-agency cooperation was launched and both the CRCCH and the Ethiopian Mapping Agency each sent a photographer on the fellowship to Europe.\textsuperscript{376}

An additional factor inhibiting the establishment of local expertise and knowledge production was the general skills shortage which prevailed in Ethiopia during that time. Members of staff who had received specialist training in an area of conservation as part of an international assistance project were not necessarily employed in a position where they could put their particular expertise into practice. Instead, they were given other assignments within the administration. For example, out of those having received specialist training as part of the project ETH/74/014, “only one of the architects [...] trained [...] has been engaged by the Ministry of Culture [...]. The person studying as a building restorer completed his thesis work and was supposed to go to Denmark, but was assigned to administrative duties in the Project Section of the Ministry of Culture [...]”.\textsuperscript{377} In the eyes of the UNESCO consultants evaluating the conservation practice in Ethiopia, such a staff policy amounted to trained experts being wasted on unrelated jobs.

The relevance of international expert knowledge for the institutionalisation of knowledge production in general, and heritage-making in particular, was concomitant with an ignorance of knowledge production at the local level. Institutionalising Western knowledge production resulted in creating standards and systems that were impossible to sustain and grow from Ethiopian national capacities alone, especially in regards to the extensive management plans for the World Heritage sites. International involvement and training had in effect reinforced foreign control over knowledge production. An element of most expert missions was the evaluation of the national experts’ work in order to ensure that they were working according to European standards. The ICRROM experts regularly evaluated the performance of Ethiopian staff as part of their restoration missions, while on the other hand the foreign experts themselves were rarely, if ever, evaluated. It was only on the basis of complaints that particular sections of their work could be re-examined.\textsuperscript{378} Despite an occasional positive evaluation, such as ICCROM Director Harold Plenderleith’s assessment of the CRCCH conser-

\textsuperscript{376} Correspondence and notes regarding the photogrammetry fellowships, in: UNESCO 069:72 (63) UNDP pt. ixb.
\textsuperscript{377} UNDP/ETH 74/14, Terminal Report, 7.
\textsuperscript{378} Confidential letter from Erik Olsen to Tesfaye Shewaye, 21.2.1980, in: UNESCO 069:72 (63) UNDP pt. ix.
vator Mammo Mugale as “well qualified to supervise or indeed to execute”

necessary first aid restoration in Lalibela, the Western experts participating in the conservation projects in Ethiopia regularly stated that conservation would only be possible by continuing the practice of recruiting qualified and experienced technicians and restorers from abroad. In contrast to this assumed hierarchy on the part of ICCROM, the restoration works in Lalibela were met with criticism regarding the diligence and site-specific knowledge of architect-restorer Sandro Angelini.

The Ethiopian Orthodox church acted as the guardian of all church-related, religious heritage sites, yet this was only occasionally mentioned in the correspondences or reports, and not once was a concrete contact or counterpart in the church organisation referred to or named. As a result also from the separation of church and state, the conservation efforts of the Ethiopian Orthodox for her cultural and natural heritage ran parallel, but entirely separated to the national and international efforts. In Axum, for example, a 2005 UNESCO monitoring mission was surprised to find that the close proximity of church and state antiquities had led to a contested development of museum and conservation projects, infringing on each other’s protection measures so gravely that the World Heritage Committee discussed the listing of Axum on the list of World Heritage sites in danger.

Looking at the history of heritage-making institutions in Ethiopia and the role of international heritage-experts and UNESCO, in particular in the years between 1972 and 1978, makes it possible to see these years as “boom years” for heritage-making in Ethiopia. These years were simultaneously the preparatory years between the ratification of the World Heritage Convention and the compilation of the first World Heritage List, which explains the increase in activity and funds on UNESCO’s side. By then, some of the central government’s efforts to—
wards institutionalising heritage-making, which had started in the 1960s, had become manifest at a national scale. The involvement of UNESCO marked a turning point in Ethiopian heritage-making as the incipient national efforts and expertise could be merged into projects that benefited from the increased international attention and the new funding possibilities through UNESCO.

Funds, expertise and technical equipment for heritage production could have never been provided to the same extent by the Ethiopian government. In 1967, the Ethiopian Ministry of Agriculture stated that “as far as possible [wildlife protection] staff will be recruited locally in the areas concerned, since it is important that such men should be familiar with the country and its wildlife”.\footnote{Ministry of Agriculture Planning Committee, \textit{Third Five-Year Development Plan}, 7. Hans Humi expressed a similar approach towards the local knowledge of preventing soil erosion in our interview from May 12, 2015 in Berne (CH).} But even when such relevance was given to local knowledge, the requirement for the extensive mapping and inventorying of heritage sites, photographic documentation, drawings and population counts of plant and animal species would have been impossible to fulfil without the work of international experts and the funding of international technical assistance programmes. The establishment of the two government authorities, CRCCH and EWCO, with the help of foreign funds and expertise, meant that conservation practice was carried out according to Western principles. From the onset, knowledge production occurred within international expert networks, albeit under the control of the Ethiopian government. As a result, knowledge of Ethiopia circulated worldwide, contributing to the generation of an image of Ethiopia compatible with Western historiography and shaped by Western ideas of Ethiopia, with Ethiopian national heritage a foreign domain and an elite representation from the beginning.

The case of the Muslim city of Harar, which was among the sites nominated in 1978, is interesting because more visibly than at the other Ethiopian heritage sites, regional authorities acted as stakeholders. In Harar, both the government and the international experts encountered a vibrant and engaged tradition of heritage-making through local families which collected, preserved and displayed objects in historical buildings. In 1979, the Ethiopian Ministry of Culture, together with the Chief Technical Advisor of ETH/74/14, undertook a mission to Harar to promote the positive effects and intentions of NGO and International Organisation conservation efforts. The aim of this mission was to gain support for the cause of heritage-making and conservation under the ministry’s authority, but also to familiarise local leaders with the official terms and concepts of the global
heritage regime. In Harar, the participants had to acknowledge a vivid and engaged culture of heritage-making:

Prior to the mission's arrival in Harar on 26.10.1979, in the afternoon arrangements were made for all planned meetings, discussions, plus a display of the survey and a reorganization of the small museum. The latter partly improved by items borrowed from citizens in the town. [...] On the exhibition was shown the survey—some 80 maps filled-in with colour indication in accordance with observation and the valid legend—a montage of photos with the theme: “A TOWN/its people/their places/their houses/ITS DECAY”, a historical outline on Harar prepared by the Elders of the town and a remarkable study on the traditional houses, the technique and materials, with samples and indications where to be found—this study was prepared by an Hararian of the age above 85 years. The museal part covered old manuscripts, weapons, dresses, household articles etc.\(^{384}\)

Although the members of the mission positively approved the heritage activities in Harar, they were unable to negotiate a concept with the local authorities in Harar relating to how to integrate a masterplan for the conservation of Harar into the existing programmes of the Ministry. Only in 1994 did Harar become a World Heritage site, because after 1991 the government was open to a more community-based approach to conservation.

**The normative effect of internationalism and universalism**

The international heritage and conservation activities in Ethiopia from the 1960s on were shaped by a Western discourse and practice of conservation, one that was often opposed to or negated existing uses of the sites in question and practices of preserving and remembering them. The relevance of Lalibela as pilgrimage site, for example, and the practical implications for the conservation of the churches that entailed are curiously absent in the UNESCO conservation reports. Many archaeologists and conservators understood themselves first and foremost as scientists or technicians in possession of objective knowledge. Their work was not typically informed by local functions or practices connected to the heritage sites. They operated on the premise of a universal culture, a fact which in their eyes was empirically grounded in an objective reality.\(^{385}\)

Historic Monuments and landscapes and the conservation of their authentic features form the core of a nation's heritage according to this tradition, which

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384 Letter from E. Olsen to Tesfaye Shewaye, 14.11. 1979, in: UNESCO, UNESCO 069;72 (63) UNDP pt. ix.
385 Eriksen, *From Antiquities to Heritage*, 56.
emerged in the context of French and English romanticism and antiquarianism and resonated well with other European nationalist discourses from the late eighteenth century. In connection to this, scientific disciplines and specialised professions, art history, archaeology and architectural conservation, evolved and grew in relevance.\textsuperscript{386} The central premise of scientific conservation was to treat cultural values and “authenticity” as universal and empirically evident categories that could be observed and measured. For the European nation states, locating national history in heritage sites and monuments became a constituting element. The colonial expansion of European empires set off many projects for the “discovery” of treasures and sites and set off an interplay of archaeology and politics, for which the extra-European territories were explored for monumental remains of narratives that were regarded as central to the Western history.\textsuperscript{387}

Mark Mazower has argued that with the decline of the European empires and the emergence of a new international order, international organisations first emerged as imperial devices to stabilise the political world order and power asymmetries.\textsuperscript{388} They created a new frame of reference, and global genealogies. As a part of this, conceived at the pinnacle of the age of empire, the international heritage discourse can serve as an example for how the distinctions between imperialism, colonialism and universalism are important and useful, but also rarely clear-cut, and that it is important to consider relationships on a scale of inequalities and coercing mechanisms.\textsuperscript{389}

Internationalism and universalism were important ideological frameworks for the foundation of UNESCO, driving the activities and programmes of the organisation in the early years in particular. Within this framework the concept of universal heritage, understanding conservation as a common responsibility of the international community, was installed as part of UNESCO’s mandate. In connecting existing traditions and the Western discourse of heritage with the internationalist project, UNESCO provided a platform for a network of heritage-experts and created expert organisations as institutional gatekeepers of universal heritage. This aligned with the organisation’s role as knowledge producing au-

\textsuperscript{386} Ibid., 25–26; see also Astrid Swenson’s comparative analysis: Swenson, “”Heritage”, “Patrimoine” und “Kulturerbe””.
\textsuperscript{387} Charlotte Trümpler, ed., \textit{Das große Spiel: Archäologie und Politik zur Zeit des Kolonialismus, 1860–1940} (Köln: DuMont, 2008) and the essays and biographical notes in the volume.
\textsuperscript{388} Mark Mazower, \textit{No Enchanted Palace: The End of Empire and the Ideological Origins of the United Nations} (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 31–39.
\textsuperscript{389} Raymond B. Craib, “Cartography and Decolonization”, in \textit{Decolonizing the Map: Cartography from Colony to Nation}, ed. James R. Akerman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 16.
thority for the internationalist and universalist discourses, in particular historical knowledge that was constructed as part of Western historiography and a Eurocentric world history narrative.

The internationalist project behind UNESCO’s foundation was also characterised by a type of thinking which valued a well-established tradition of scientific rationality as a guiding principle for political decision-making. During the founding process, the idea that UNESCO should become a community of scientists and intellectuals developing guidelines for the future would increasingly shape the structural and programmatic outline of the organisation. The proponents of intellectual cooperation had even argued against setting up UNESCO as a member-state driven organisation, and giving leading intellectuals voting memberships equal to the political representatives in the organisational hierarchy. While this concept did not fundamentally find its way into the constitution of UNESCO, scientific experts and their knowledge were embedded in the ideological and structural foundations of UNESCO.

The internationalist and technocratic ideologies that guided the formation of UNESCO also explain the emergence of natural and cultural conservation as a goal under UNESCO’s mandate. Conservation of, and concern with, a universal world heritage was a legacy from the time of the League of Nations, and UNESCO inherited in accordance the existing international structures for conservation. Two key concepts of World Heritage—the idea of a universal, common heritage of humankind and the common responsibility to make efforts to protect and conserve this heritage—were already conceived during that time. The idea held

390 Haas, “Epistemic Communities”, 8; Speich Chassé, “Technical Organizations”, 30; Lepe

391 Hans Heinz Krill, “Die Gründung der UNESCO”, Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte 16, no. 3 (1968): 272–73.

392 On a practical level, the political debates on whether UNESCO should be set up as an intellectual cooperation or an intergovernmental organisation would later have very direct effects on the conservation activities. Ratification of conventions and financing of activities as an intergovernmental organisation had a more binding character for the member states. At the same time, both ratification and financing were also more influenced by political tendencies and subject to extensive bureaucratisation. J.P. Singh, UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization): Creating Norms for a Complex World (Abingdon, Oxon; New York: Routledge, 2011), 7.

393 Sarah M. Titchen, “On the Construction of Outstanding Universal Value: UNESCO’s World Heritage Convention (Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, 1972) and the Identification and Assessment of Cultural Places for Inclusion in the World Heritage List” (Canberra, Australian National University, 2006), 22–34; Anna-Katharina Wöbse, “Globales Gemeingut und das Naturerbe der Menschheit im Völkerbund und den Ver-
that in order to achieve the overarching idealistic goal of world unity and peace, efforts had to include a practice of heritage, and this idea prominently integrated itself into UNESCO’s founding process and was subsequently embedded in the constitution of 1946, which states that one of the organisation’s tasks was to assure “the conservation and protection of the world’s inheritance of books, works of art and monuments of history and science”.

From its foundation, UNESCO provided an important platform for the existing academic discourse and initiatives concerned with conservation, fostering the gradual development of recommendations and conventions for the protection of natural and cultural heritage. Actors from within UNESCO, namely members of the secretariat, worked on establishing new expert networks or connecting UNESCO to existing ones for natural and cultural heritage conservation, in order to position the organisation as strategically central within the several international discourses of cultural and natural conservation. The establishment of these international conservation organisations and policies served the purposes of gaining and maintaining control over the scientific principles and cultural values and ensuring an effective gatekeeping role for knowledge production.

Colonial and imperial legacies of international heritage conservation

In theory and practice, the concept of universal cultural heritage and the conservation programmes and projects executed under UNESCO’S mandate had a colonial legacy, which can be explained in part through the ideological origins of UNESCO and in part through the scientific principles which guided the practice of conservation. The universalist thinking that was woven deeply into the foundation of UNESCO was essentially Eurocentric and colonialist. When speeches, programmes, essays and other documents spoke of international or universal issues, they were first and foremost concerned with European issues and arguing from a European or at best North-Atlantic perspective, since the majority of participants and intellectual architects of the organisation were representatives of the most influential empires in North America and Europe. The founding debates took place at a time when large parts of Africa and Asia were under colonial rule and many of the founding actors had a past or present function as colonial administrators or worked as intellectuals in an academic environment that had en-

einen Nationen”, in Global Commons im 20. Jahrhundert: Entwürfe für eine globale Welt, ed. Isabell Lühr and Andrea Rehling (München: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2014), 134–35.
394 UNESCO, “Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization” (1972), Art. I, 2c.
engaged in colonialist knowledge production for decades. They conveyed, in their debates, the widely accepted naturalised notion of Europe as the place where, through progress and development, civilisation had reached its height, and the tenet that much of these accomplishments were owed to ancient traditions of empire, colonisation and white cultural superiority.\textsuperscript{395}

Since around 1900, several European countries had been in an accelerating competition for excavation rights in North Africa, the Levant and the Anatolian Peninsula. Searching for remnants of mythical sites such as the Holy Land in Palestine, Babylon and Mesopotamia in Iran and Iraq, Troy in Turkey or the Pharaonic Egypt had developed from individual curiosity and side-projects of military exploration into a matter of national prestige, imperial claim-staking, religious calling and collecting of treasures for European museums.\textsuperscript{396} This archaeological race, fuelled by the dynamics of colonial expansion, necessitated, for the first time, negotiations on cultural heritage and its conservation at an international, diplomatic level. At conferences such as the 1937 International Conference on Excavations in Cairo, delegates discussed the legal implications for archaeological excavations within the international order – over the heads of those who lived and worked in the vicinity of the heritage sites.\textsuperscript{397}

Consequently, UNESCO provided, from its foundation on, an important platform for the existing academic discourse and initiatives concerned with conservation, effectively linking them under its umbrella.\textsuperscript{398} Following the destruction caused by two World Wars, many European states were confronted with extensive reconstruction undertakings for their cities, and their cultural monuments in particular. For representatives of these states, some of them key players in the formation of UNESCO, the necessity of international cooperation on a tech-

\textsuperscript{395} Falser, Michael. “Cultural Heritage as Civilizing Mission: Methodological Considerations”, in Cultural Heritage as Civilizing Mission: From Decay to Recovery, ed. Michael Falser (Cham: Springer, 2015). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-13638-7_1., 4; see also: Nell Irvin Painter, The History of White People (New York: Norton, 2011); Debbie Challis, The Archaeology of Race: The Eugenic Ideas of Francis Galton and Flinders Petrie (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

\textsuperscript{396} Trümpler, Das große Spiel, 16 –17.

\textsuperscript{397} Charles de Visscher, “Conférence internationale des fouilles (le Caire, 9 – 15 Mars 1937) et d’Œuvre de l’office international des musées”, Revue de droit international et de législation comparée 18, no. 4 (1937): 701; I want to thank Christopher Zoller-Blundell for bringing my attention to this conference.

\textsuperscript{398} Andrea Rehling, “”Kulturen unter Artenschutz”? Vom Schutz der Kulturschätze als Gemeinsames Erbe der Menschheit zur Erhaltung kultureller Vielfalt“”, in Global Commons im 20. Jahrhundert: Entwürfe für eine globale Welt, ed. Isabella Löh and Andrea Rehling (München: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2014), 165 –66; Ana Filipa Vrdoljak, International Law, Museums and the Return of Cultural Objects (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 116 –17.
nical and practical level was apparent and this produced a very favourable cli-
mate for the existing international associations of architects and restorers to con-
nect with UNESCO. Restoration architects, archaeologists and urban planners
convened under the organisation’s sponsorship and campaigned for the conser-
vation and restoration of existing architectural heritage to formulate a counter-
position to the radical modernist movement, which argued for a demolition of
old structures and the creation of new, technologically advanced urban design.

UNESCO seemed to many an ideal platform in which to act, as an independ-
ent international institution where professionals and experts concerned with
conservation could meet government and civil society representatives in need
of larger scale actions. As a first project, the International Centre for the Conser-
vation and Restoration of Monuments (ICCROM or “the Rome Centre”) was
founded in 1959 under the supervision of UNESCO’s cultural department. The
centre’s purpose was to facilitate the collaboration of experts, and to efficiently
provide the highly specialised expertise for monuments deemed to be in need.
One the one hand, ICCROM was tasked to carry out conservation projects, and
on the other hand, it was supposed to provide an international reference point
for information, research, consultation and training. ICCROM, in the minds of
its founders, would provide and circulate the esteemed knowledge and science
of conservation in a more binding manner through the power of UNESCO’s back-
ing, in lieu of financial means to engage in concrete conservation projects of cul-
tural—and predominantly architectural—heritage. In 1964, a second organisa-
tion, the International Council for Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), was
founded as an international expert association for historic monuments. ICOMOS
was supposed to constitute, in the words of its first President Piero Gazzola, “the
court of highest appeal in the area of the restoration of monuments, and of the
conservation of ancient historical centres, for the landscape and in general of
places of artistic and historical importance”. ICCROM was supposed to act
as the executive power of the heritage regime, by providing technical expertise
and by carrying out conservation projects.

Restoration and conservation, the members of ICOMOS insisted, was a re-
ponsibility that belonged in the hands of “qualified architects” only. ICOMOS
and ICCROM were therefore to serve as guardians with an obligation to “prevent

399 Jukka Jokilehto and ICCROM, ICCROM and the Conservation of Cultural Heritage: A History
of the Organization’s First 50 Years, 1959–2009 (Rome: ICCROM, 2011), 3–10.
400 Quoted in Michael Petzet, International Principles of Preservation, Monuments and Sites 20
(Berlin: Bäßler, 2010), 11.
401 Final recommendations of the Congrès international des architectes et techniciens des
monuments historiques, Paris, May 6–11, 1957, quoted in Jokilehto and ICCROM, ICCROM, 10.
badly trained conservators from undertaking restoration of important works of
art.”⁴⁰² Upon the creation of ICOMOS, these ambitions were formulated in
more detail in the Venice Charter, an international code of conduct for restoration.
The Venice Charter, according to Piero Gazzola, presented “an obligation
which no one will be able to ignore, the spirit of which all experts will have
to keep, if they don’t want to be considered cultural outlaws.”⁴⁰³

In a parallel process to the creation of these binding standards for conserva-
tion through established experts in conservation science, the idea of creating a
“red cross” for the conservation of monuments worldwide became more impor-
tant in the cultural heritage division and among member states of UNESCO.⁴⁰⁴
Building on existing global legal instruments, such as the 1954 Hague Convention
for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, several
agreements were drafted in the following years, all written with the intention
to pave the way for a worldwide standard of protection, and the commitment
to conservation of built cultural heritage, binding for all member states of
UNESCO.

The idea of natural conservation was part of an emerging, multifaceted en-
vironmentalist discourse that was, at the time of UNESCO’s founding, prominent
but still in its early conceptual state. The belief that science could mend the ail-
ments of civilisation, a concept central to environmentalism, however, reverber-
ated strongly in the ideological debates during the founding phase of
UNESCO.⁴⁰⁵ As a part of the science mandate, ecological endeavours and natural
conservation were derived as activities for UNESCO. UNESCO’s first DG Julian
Huxley represented a vision of “man’s destiny as the new director of evolution
on earth”,⁴⁰⁶ an evolutionary humanism as a new science-based value system
that would “supply the world with a course correction consistent with the en-
hanced place of science as the source of explanation in modern life.”⁴⁰⁷ This po-
sition was controversial, because of its decidedly anti-religious approach, but
these technocratic and internationalist visions had many like-minded actors

⁴⁰² Jokilehto and ICCROM, 12.
⁴⁰³ Petzet, International Principles of Preservation, 11.
⁴⁰⁴ Titchen, “On the Construction”, 59.
⁴⁰⁵ Singh, UNESCO, 5 – 8; Wöbse, “Globales Gemeingut”, 139 – 40.
⁴⁰⁶ R.S. Deese, “The New Ecology of Power: Julian and Aldous Huxley in the Cold War Era”, in
Environmental Histories of the Cold War, ed. J.R. McNeill and Corinna R. Unger (Cambridge; New
York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 281. Deese suggests that Huxley’s idea of humans as
Zoo-Directors of the world might be related to his former position as the director of the London
Zoo, ibid. 283.
⁴⁰⁷ Paul T. Phillips, Contesting the Moral High Ground: Popular Moralists in Mid-Twentieth-Cen-
tury Britain (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2013), 157.
within the sphere of international organisations. Julian Huxley’s polarising positions, ranging from eugenics to delusional geo-engineering proposals, helped to publicise and mobilise the environmental discourse. This scientific environmentalism, arguing for separation of humans and nature, to protect the latter from the former, was boosted through the authority and networking agency of UNESCO, particularly through the foundation of the IUCN in 1949. IUCN was supposed to connect existing government bodies rather than conduct research itself, and it was charged with providing and communicating existing knowledge and the rapidly growing body of environmental research and data alike.

Despite the all-encompassing, universal claims, the environmental question during the 1960s and 1970s was divided along two different lines: that of protecting habitats on the one hand and that of conserving and efficiently using natural resources on the other hand. The idea of protection had a narrower focus on the aesthetic value of nature and therefore argued to protect nature from human influence. The idea of conservation was orientated around the scientific and empirical value of nature as an economical resource, and therefore aimed to integrate the protection of humans from natural risks with the use of natural resources for economic development. During these years, through the work of different departments, UNESCO became somewhat of a linchpin in redefining the rather narrowly-focused, strict goal of protecting isolated species of flora and fauna, towards the conceptually more open and universally applicable concept of the conservation of nature, without neglecting the aesthetic aspect. Not only was the concept of conservation more open to development and change, rather than the attempt to protect a status quo, it also permitted the inclusion of the use of natural resources, which had been a major contradiction in the concept of protection to national state economic interests.

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408 Ibid., 158; Rehling, “Kosmopolitische Geschichtsschreibung”, 380–83.
409 Kai Hünemörder, “Environmental Crisis and Soft Politics: Détente and the Global Environment, 1968–1975”, in Environmental Histories of the Cold War, ed. J.R. McNeill and Corinna R. Unger (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 257–60.
410 Martin W. Holdgate and IUCN, The Green Web: A Union for World Conservation (Cambridge; London: IUCN, 1999), 66–67.
411 Simone Schleper, “Life on Earth: Controversies on the Science and Politics of Global Nature Conservation, 1960–1980” (Maastricht, Maastricht University, 2017), 3–37; Wöbse, “Globales Gemeingut”, 140–42.
412 In particular, the notion of sustainability and biodiversity made environmentalism of interest to donors, as it presented the availability and conservation of natural resources as a basic condition for economic development and growth. UNESCO’s Man and Biosphere Programme aimed to serve as mediator between natural diversity and the economic interest of the local population, and integrated these fields in one programme, and suggested Biosphere Reserves as a
It is from this understanding that the concept of national parks serving as sites of a natural universal heritage emerged. In Julian Huxley’s view, it was the emphasis on protection over other aspects of the environmental discourse that made it possible to integrate IUCN into the existing concept of UNESCO:

Delegates asked me what seemed to me silly questions: why should UNESCO try to protect rhinoceros or rare flowers? Was not the safeguarding of grand unspoilt scenery outside its purview? However, with the aid of a few nature lovers I persuaded the Conference that the enjoyment of nature was part of the culture and that the preservation of rare and interesting plants was a scientific duty.\(^\text{413}\)

In particular, there was discussion of the role of national parks as providing much needed cultural and aesthetic education for the general public.\(^\text{414}\) The legal and conceptual framework of national parks, which dated back to the beginning of the twentieth century, presented the key conceptual link for the combination of natural and cultural universal heritage. In their final recommendations, the first international conference on national parks in 1961 connected their activities to UNESCO’s recommendation to safeguard the beauty and character of landscapes and sites, submitted at the General Conference in 1962.\(^\text{415}\)

The nature-related activities of international organisations experienced a considerable boost from the 1960s onward, when environmentalism expanded as a global discourse. Seminal works like Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring*, warning of the loss of biodiversity, or the Club of Rome’s *The Limits to Growth*, which alerted about the global impact of population pressure, had a broad public reception and rendered environmental protection as well as environmental crisis popular and effective buzzwords among policymakers.\(^\text{416}\) In addition to these new category of protected zones. In September 1968, the first Biosphere Conference took place, and was the first international conference concerned with the relationship between environmental and development problems. Schleper, “Life on Earth”, 42.

\(^{413}\) Julian Huxley quoted in: Holdgate and IUCN, *The Green Web*, 22.

\(^{414}\) Holdgate and IUCN, 41–42; Bernhard Gissibl, Sabine Höhler, and Patrick Kupper, “Introduction: Towards a Global History of National Parks”, in *Civilizing Nature: National Parks in Global Historical Perspective*, ed. Bernhard Gissibl, Sabine Höhler, and Patrick Kupper (New York: Berghahn, 2012), 10 – 11.

\(^{415}\) Recommendation No. 4 in: *International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources et al., First World Conference on National Parks: Proceedings of a Conference Organized by The International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources. Seattle, Washington, June 30 – July 7, 1962*, ed. Alexander B. Adams (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, United States Department of the Interior, 1962), 377.

\(^{416}\) Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring & Other Writings on the Environment*, ed. Sandra Steingraber (New York: Library of America, 2018); Donella H. Meadows and Club of Rome, eds., *The Limits
more theoretical and ideological positions, the Hawaiian Mauna Lao observatory’s monitoring of a global rise of atmospheric CO2, which had started in 1958, brought the concept of climate change to the debate and delivered an empirical underpinning for these concerns.\textsuperscript{417} During the global cold war, environmental concern arose as the first field of action for political international cooperation between many countries on opposite sides of the Iron Curtain. Since they seemed capable of overcoming divisions through common concern for the greater good of the whole world, consequently, the universal dimension transformed the environmental question into a subject of diplomacy in the early 1970s.\textsuperscript{418} This “quasi-religious and ethical basis of cold war environmentalism”,\textsuperscript{419} characterised by pacifism, eclectic mysticism and an integrated vision of life on earth, is an important conceptual foundation for the World Heritage Convention and the operational guidelines based on it. At that time, independent from the cultural heritage expert community, and embedded within the diversified and globalised environmentalist discourse, the idea of keeping a small, select set of sites as “protected heritage”, shielded as much as possible from human intervention and exempted from available resources for good, was evolving to include cultural heritage sites as well, eventually resulting in the World Heritage Convention.\textsuperscript{420} Hand in hand with the 1972 World Heritage Convention, it was decided to provide assistance to the Convention’s state parties to develop the necessary administrative prerequisites, which constituted a crucial element of heritage-making.

The universalist prerogative had been firmly embedded in the evolution of the academic disciplines of archaeology and art history, demonstrated by the aim to classify and categorise, to take stock of an imagined complete inventory of natural resources and cultural remains. Conservators, art-historians, archaeologists and architect-restorers saw themselves elevated to international heritage-experts and viewed UNESCO as the final destination for conservation in the Western tradition, since it ennobled scientific conservation as the provider of

\textit{to Growth: A Report for the Club of Rome’s Project on the Predicament of Mankind} (New York: Universe Books, 1972).

\textsuperscript{417} Daniel C. Harris, “Charles David Keeling and the Story of Atmospheric CO2 Measurements”, \textit{Analytical Chemistry} 82, no. 19 (October 1, 2010): 7865–70, \url{https://doi.org/10.1021/ac1001492}.

\textsuperscript{418} Hünemörder, “Environmental Crisis”, 274; Schleper, “Life on Earth”, 48–49.

\textsuperscript{419} Deese, “The New Ecology of Power”, 281.

\textsuperscript{420} Wöbse, “Globales Gemeingut”, 152; Christina Cameron and Mechtild Rössler, “Voices of the Pioneers: UNESCO’s World Heritage Convention 1972-2000”, \textit{Journal of Cultural Heritage Management and Sustainable Development} 1, no. 1 (2011): 18–19, \url{https://doi.org/10.1108/2044126111129924}. 
a “universal world knowledge”\textsuperscript{421}. Through UNESCO, conservators naturalised this scientific practice of applying their expertise to non-Western regions. Like in Ethiopia, foreign experts named, classified and analysed heritage sites and monuments in African and Asian countries, undertook standardising efforts, drafted policies and legal recommendations, and developed management and master plans – in short, their influence in defining national heritage of the new nation-states was immense, especially on the institutional and administrative level.

During the 1960s, UNESCO manifested the scope of its internationalist conceptual underpinnings through operational projects in the developing world. The development paradigm, which was quickly gaining in relevance in the post-war and post-colonial world, caused a shift in UNESCO’s role from an intellectual to an operational one, as it put the necessary funds into UNESCO’s hands.

UNESCO provided not only the institutional framework to scale the discourse of a selection of sites of universal heritage to a global dimension, but more importantly, it practically provided territory to apply the programmes and ideas, through the programme of technical assistance and later the UNDP. The conceptual parallels of heritage-making and development included continuity, in many aspects, with colonialisit efforts, that was characterised by a territorialising dimension. UNESCO’s cultural and natural heritage activities have much in common with imperial mapping practices as defined by Matthew Edney: “Imperial mapping is that of territories and polities by peoples and interests removed – emotionally, morally, and spatially – from the territories and peoples mapped, who have relatively little say in how and why they are mapped.”\textsuperscript{422} The selection criteria and the technological aspects of heritage conservation included a variety of mapping practices, such as zoning and documentation, and supported the construction of an ownership-like affiliation of the international community, or UNESCO respectively, over the site in question. Rendering Ethiopian historical remains into the legal category of antiquities also established them as sites of national interest or, in the case of national parks, even national property. To understand the politicisation of Ethiopian heritage in the context of World Heritage, this aspect is essential. In Ethiopia, like in many other developing countries at the time, the conservation of natural and cultural heritage was installed as a state domain and utilised to pursue government interests.

\textsuperscript{421} Petzet, \textit{International Principles of Preservation}, 11.
\textsuperscript{422} Matthew H. Edney, “The Irony of Imperial Mapping”, in \textit{The Imperial Map: Cartography and the Mastery of Empire}, ed. James R. Akerman (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2009), 11–46, 45.
Land use conflicts arising from claims to heritage

Responding to the first call for nominations for the World Heritage site, Ethiopia submitted a selection that represented the dominating historical narrative of the “Great Tradition” of the Ethiopian empire. The submission is exemplary for the political role of heritage-making in Ethiopia in the years leading up to 1978. The ancient monumental sites—Aksum, Gondar and Lalibela—were major sites affiliated with the narrative of the ancient and medieval Ethiopian empire as well as with the Christian tradition. The high number of nominated sites are proof of a particularly vivid and pro-active engagement with heritage-making in Ethiopia during the 1970s. In a combined effort, the Ethiopian government agencies for cultural heritage and wildlife conservation had assembled a selection of sites that illustrates how the conservation efforts were targeted at sites that would integrate well with the overall goal of delivering a spatial and visual representation of Ethiopian national identity. When looking at all eleven of Ethiopia’s submissions in 1978, and not only at the seven nominations that were successful in achieving World Heritage status, three of them were national parks. It is these parks in particular that reflect the strategic use of heritage-making and the dominance of the “Greater Ethiopia” image. The international acknowledgement acquired by achieving World Heritage status was supposed to sanction the establishment of large territories of government property in the name of natural conservation.⁴²³

The national parks, and in particular the Simien Park, due to its World Heritage status, demonstrate how heritage-making and the international claim on the land added pressure to the conflicts. International conservation experts deemed national parks to be the most appropriate instrument of wildlife conservation in Africa, as the concept was strictly top-down and necessitated complete government ownership of the protected territory in question. Rooted in a colonial and racialised understanding of African wildlife conservation, the protection of nature was underpinned by a racial distinction of “white” concern and “black” threat, or eco-racism.⁴²⁴ The establishment of national parks in African states continued in many cases the colonial practice of materialising governance over vast and undeveloped territories through conservation, a controlling mechanism that appealed to the political elites of the independent nations.⁴²⁵ The ex-

⁴²³ Blanc, *Histoire environnementale*, 81–83.
⁴²⁴ Ibid., 220; Jane Carruthers, “Africa: Histories, Ecologies and Societies”, *Environment and History* 10, no. 4 (2004): 392–93, https://doi.org/10.3197/0967340042772649.
⁴²⁵ Blanc, *Histoire environnementale*, 35; “Akama, Africa’s Tourism Industry”, 143–44.
perts of IUCN, FAO and UNESCO, in accordance with international resolutions, insisted on the legal gazetting of the park as government property, and refused support or responsibility for territories not under appropriate control.\textsuperscript{426} This argumentation probably seemed favourable to the Ethiopian government, as it justified the demand to establish National Parks as national property, with direct government control. The location of other planned parks and protected zones, as shown on the maps in the 1973 guidebook “Safari Ethiopia”, that was published by EWCO, demonstrate that installing national parks was also attempted in other politically relevant regions, in particular the South-Western border to Sudan.\textsuperscript{427}

The history of territorial conflicts is highly relevant for the impact of heritage and the meaning of World Heritage for Ethiopia in the 1960s and ’70s, as land use and ownership were such crucial and sensitive issues. The territorial claim to a “Greater Ethiopia” linked heritage-making with the internal political and military battles of the north-south conflict, and with reference to the official historical narrative, heritage turned into an instrument of land control in the hands of the government. Control over land held a critical relevance that fuelled the dynamics of heritage-making and its instrumentalisation.

The growing pressure on land use, arising from population growth and environmental crisis, presented key demands on the internal political and social conflicts. One attempt to defuse this explosive potential was the series of forced resettlement programmes initiated by the government. Under Haile Selassie I, resettlement occurred mainly as a punctual displacement of pastoral communities, because of large government-induced or approved infrastructure or agricultural developments. Yet already from 1966 onwards, large-scale resettlement schemes formed part of the development planning in Ethiopia. Introduced as a panacea for all development ailments, in a strategic colonisation effort, over ten thousand households had been resettled by the time of the revolution.\textsuperscript{428}

Following the failed attempts to mitigate the severe drought and environmental crisis, resettlement was further instrumentalised and sanctioned on a national level as well as by the international community in the context of famine relief efforts. Between 1974–1986 over half a million people were moved, including a restructuring of existing social patterns and the dispersion of existing com-

\textsuperscript{426} Walter J. Lusigia nd J.W. Thorsell, \textit{Action Strategy for Protected Areas in the Afrotropical Realm} (Gland: IUCN, 1987), 34, https://portals.iucn.org/library/node/5886.

\textsuperscript{427} Map: Ethiopia’s conservation and controlled hunting areas, in: Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Organisation, \textit{Safari Ethiopia} (Addis Ababa: EWCO, 1973).

\textsuperscript{428} Alula Pankhurst and François Piguet, \textit{Moving People in Ethiopia: Development, Displacement & the State} (Oxford: James Currey, 2009), 7.
communities, termed “villagisation”. Beyond the proclaimed improvement of livelihood for Ethiopians affected by the drought, villagisation was an act that tried to create a consolidated path to stronger governance and state authority in all regions and areas of administration, as well as demonstrating independence and ability to both the nation and the international donors. The impact of villagisation was drastic for most affected and turned the existing problematic condition of land distribution, land use and livelihood, regional development and regional affiliation into an acute crisis where the geopolitical dimension of the crisis became more serious and sensitive than ever. Most communities and individuals suffered, especially socially and culturally, as a result of being broken up and isolated.¹²⁹

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¹²⁹ Pankhurst and Piguet, 9–13.
Before the 1974 revolution, systems of land rights and land tenure had varied widely throughout Ethiopia, and the manifold nature of strong regional traditions and systems presented one of the biggest obstacles to forging centralised government control and a cohesive development politics in order to improve the livelihood of the weaker regions. After the revolution, all rural land was nationalised, and all traditional tenures abolished and replaced by a collective, government-controlled ownership structure with management of the land by peasant associations. While in the south of Ethiopia, the tenant farmers and landless peasants benefitted largely from this, at least in the first instance, the peasants and landowners of the north on the other hand largely opposed the loss of land-access and usage privileges. For them, this reform not only limited the control they had formerly held over their land, but more importantly also threatened the status and political power commonly linked to land ownership in the tenure-system of northern Ethiopia.  

The “territorialised identity” of the highland communities in Ethiopia, and their system of land tenure that relied more on a concept of relationship and hierarchy than legally fixed property rights, made the installation of a national park as government property especially difficult in the highlands. At the same time, in the light of centralisation efforts, installing government-controlled protected zones or even the legal ability to seize the property of the park in favour of the state presented a highly interesting tool of governance and imperial expansion for Haile Selassie I. This also explains Haile Selassie I’s openness towards a certain colonial-minded approach to natural conservation as championed by the former British-Kenyan game-warden John Blower and the UNESCO mission of Julian Huxley of 1963. Their recommendations supported an institutionalisation of natural and wildlife conservation as well as the selection of regions for conservation that were most likely to represent the symbolic power of the state over the various categories of natural realms.

When in 1969 the Simien National Park was officially installed as one of the first Ethiopian national parks, more than half a million people inhabiting the area were rendered a human interference threatening the existence of the park, as by definition, no human settlement was allowed in national parks. The WWF park wardens, IUCN and UNESCO experts, in particular a team of

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430 Clapham, Transformation and Continuity, 46–48, 161–62.
431 Kjetil Tronvoll, War & the Politics of Identity in Ethiopia: Making Enemies & Allies in the Horn of Africa (Woodbridge, Suffolk; Rochester, NY: James Currey, 2009), 32.
432 Huxley et al., “The Conservation of Nature”, 29; Blower, “Wildlife Conservation”, 17–19.
433 Blower, “Wildlife Conservation”, 10–11.
Swiss geographers and zoologists who served in all three of these functions (sometimes in parallel), undertook several attempts to balance out conservation requirements with a fair resettlement politics. Based on their scientific research, they analysed not only the environmental degradation, but also the living conditions and agricultural practices of the inhabitants of the Simien mountains. They emphasised the need for an approach that would integrate conservation and development planning.\textsuperscript{434} In the World Heritage nomination dossier for the Simien National Park, which was drafted by Hans Hurni, then WWF Park Warden and advisor to EWCO, this situation was elaborated in unusual length and detail (when compared with other proposals of the 1978 submission round). In the section describing the history of the park, the following paragraph was added:

The park was “planted” over existing human rights, the intention being to eliminate these rights at a later date. This was never accomplished; in fact the opposite has resulted in that over the past six years the influx of humans and their livestock has continued to the present. [The Swiss team] have supplied at their cost a succession of Swiss Co-Wardens and scientists over the past eight years and produced a detailed contoured map of 1:25,000 of the area. From this practical help, [they] hope to implement a project which, through practical demonstration of improved methods of agriculture, the people will be attracted out of the Park where their existence is extremely marginal, to a better mode of life in new outside areas.

In the section for the state of conservation, the final paragraph reads: “Work still required: of utmost importance is the fair and adequate resettlement of human inhabitants in areas outside the Park, then enforcing the law for the complete protection of the area.”\textsuperscript{435} Their proposals, however, remained fruitless. Instead, the inhabitants were met with hostility and aggression, going as far as the Ethiopian military destroying several villages and forcefully expelling over 1,200 people from the park.\textsuperscript{436}

Under the Derg government, the territory of the Simien National Park, situated at the northern edge of central Tigray, was a battleground in the fight between the Ethiopian army and the forces of the Tigrayan People’s Liberation Front (TPFL). The TPLF managed to hold control over the territory of the park

\textsuperscript{434} Bruno Messerli and Klaus Aerni, eds., \textit{Cartography and Its Application for Geographical and Ecological Problems.}, vol. 1, 2 vols, Geographica Bernensia, G 8 (Bern: Geographisches Institut der Universität Bern, 1978).

\textsuperscript{435} Simien National Park, Ethiopia, Nomination Form, date received 24.4.78, in UNESCO CLT/WHC/NOM 11.

\textsuperscript{436} Blanc, \textit{Histoire environnementale}, 69.
in the process of the ongoing civil war. However, they were not oblivious to the international interest in the park. In 1984, the TPLF Information Office in London sent an unsolicited letter to the Horn of Africa and Aden Council and to IUCN “to alleviate the worry of the [IUCN]” and stated:

The TPLF, as you know, is fighting for the right of self-determination for the peoples of Tigray, who, together with other peoples of Ethiopia have been denied basic human rights. The TPLF’s policy with regards to conservation is simple, clear and unequivocal and states that the people have the responsibility to look after their natural resources, both plants and animals, land and water. As a result, no trees are felled or animals hunted without explicit permission from the people’s own local administration. It is perhaps useful for the Union to be aware that local administration is in the hands of popularly elected councils in Tigray unlike the case with the Military dictatorship in the so-called socialist Ethiopia.437

Establishing the Simien Mountains as a national heritage site presented a threat to the larger part of the local population. All official actors involved, in particular the international experts, unanimously deemed it necessary to remove, if necessary by force, the people living within the confines of the park. Despite the demand for development schemes for the local peasants, in the correspondence between the international experts, the EWCO, UNESCO and IUCN, the park’s human population was referred to as a “problem”, endangering the integrity of the national park.438 International experts contributed with their work to the politicisation of heritage sites. Simien was already, in the early evaluations of international experts, considered one of the most endangered conservation areas because of poaching and the “encroaching cultivation” of the local population.439

For the several thousand inhabitants in the area, conservation activities resulted in forced resettlement. In addition, the restrictive ban on hunting, pasturage and agriculture in the park in effect withdrew the main means of livelihood from the region. From the first moment of international involvement, when the IUCN/FAO special project first identified the Simien Mountains as a potential national park, these restrictions were part and parcel of the concept for the park.440

Despite these demands expressed in reports and similar evaluation documents, and their far-reaching and sometimes violent repercussions, the experts involved in monitoring the park on the ground were concerned about the social

437 Letter from Girmay Asfaw to Louis Fitzgibbon, 23.5.1984 in UNESCO 502.7 A 101 WHC (63), pt. ii.
438 See the draft reports of Charles Rosetti and Ermias Bekele and the handwritten comments attached to them in UNESCO CLT/WHC/NOM 11.
439 Grimwood, “Conservation of Natural Resources”, 6.
440 Blanc, Histoire environnementale, 164.
impact of the restrictions resulting from the establishment of the national park. Proposals for resettlement schemes that would include education opportunities, or proposals for a change of the delineation of the park boundaries to exclude a maximum number of inhabitants, were among those suggested by several experts.\textsuperscript{441} The Swiss experts involved in the conservation of the park and the World Heritage Nomination process during the 1970s, geographer Hans Hurni and biologist Bernhard Nievergelt, initiated a Swiss-based, private “Pro-Simien Foundation” in order to install a boarding house in Debark, the major town of the Simien region, to enable the children of the local park wardens to visit the school in Debark.\textsuperscript{442}

The relevance of World Heritage status for national heritage sites in Ethiopia shows that, from the beginning, the impact of World Heritage appeared to have manifold effects and ostensibly extended beyond conservation. National heritage, as part of the question of national identity, became more ideologically charged in a climate of fierce civil war and internal struggles. In the contested Ethiopian setting, the social implications of the question of national heritage and identity gave particular relevance to the role of establishing official national heritage. The involvement of an international organisation, UNESCO, inevitably tied international conservation efforts to national conflicts and necessitated a positioning of the international experts and policy implementation, voluntarily and involuntarily. Foreign experts contributed to the politicisation of heritage, since to deal with heritage the acquisition of a permit was mandatory. Any attempt of researchers or foreign journalists to remain neutral or unpolitical as regards heritage would not have been possible – neither in the imperial nor in the socialist periods of Ethiopian history.

\textsuperscript{441} Report Rosetti, Report Bekele in UNESCO WHC/NOM/11. Hans Hurni explained this to me in more detail during the interview I held with him on May 12, 2015 and how it resulted in the most recent re-drawing of boundaries for the park.

\textsuperscript{442} Messerli and Aerni, Cartography and Its Application for Geographical and Ecological Problems, 1: 7. See also the correspondence regarding the state of conservation and the Pro Simien Foundation in: UNESCO 502.7 A 101 WHC (63), pt. ii.