



Forum: Environmental & Cultural

Issue: Promotion of the valuing and protection of World Heritage among youth in the context of digitalization, globalization, and the spread of mass culture

Student Officer: Yulia Smirnova

Introduction

Heritage is our legacy from the past, what we live with today, and what we pass on to future generations. Our cultural and natural heritage are sources of life and inspiration, and are priceless and irreplaceable assets, not only of each nation, but of humanity as a whole. The loss, through deterioration or disappearance, of any of these most prized assets constitutes an impoverishment of the heritage of all the peoples of the world. Many of the world's most famous places — those with unparalleled natural and cultural beauty, significance and biological diversity such as the Galápagos Islands, the Grand Canyon, the Great Barrier Reef, Mount Kilimanjaro, and the Pyramids of Egypt — have been designated as World Heritage Sites by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage Convention. These places are recognized globally for their outstanding universal value, which is defined as “cultural or natural significance which is so exceptional as to transcend national boundaries and to be of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity”. As such, the permanent protection of this heritage is of the highest importance to the international community as a whole.

Currently, there are nearly 1,100 natural, cultural, and mixed (i.e. natural and cultural) World Heritage Sites across the globe, with almost a quarter being natural sites or mixed sites. Natural World Heritage Sites, in particular, provide economic, social and environmental benefits. They provide vital resources such as food, fuel and water; perform environmental services such as stabilising soils, preventing floods, and capturing carbon; and contribute significantly to economies through jobs, tourism, recreation, and exports. More than 11 million people living in and near World Heritage Sites depend on them for food, water, medicine and jobs—more than the entire population of many countries. However, the wellbeing of communities is being put at risk by harmful industrial activities that degrade the environment,

and that compromise the ability of these places to provide economic and non-economic benefits that are so fundamental to local populations, as well as to our global community.

Definition of key terms

A World Heritage site – a landmark or area with legal protection by an international convention administrated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). World Heritage Sites are designated by UNESCO for having cultural, historical, scientific or other form of significance.

Globalization – the process of worldwide unification of economic, political, cultural, and religious systems with the formation of world one.

Digitalization – the process of transferring all types of information into digital format.

Mass culture – the culture of everyday life, entertainment, and information, that dominates in modern society. It includes the media, sports, cinema, music, literature, the visual arts, etc.

National – having a certain ethnic and cultural feature of the country, belonging to the country on certain grounds

Background information

In the late 1990s, the concept of "globalization" came into sociological use. The origins of globalization started in the XII-XIII centuries, when simultaneously with the beginning of the development of market relations in Western Europe the growth of European trade and the formation of the "European world economy" began. The process of rapprochement of States has undoubtedly taken place throughout the history of mankind. The main stages of development of this process occurred in two epochs, when the pace of rapprochement of States was revolutionary fast:

1) Turn of XIX-XX centuries

At this time, the world entered a phase of convergence through the spread of trade and investment on a global scale, thanks to the telephone, steamship, and conveyor. At the same time, the XIX century was marked by a huge and serious interest of Western anthropological science towards national cultures, including eastern Asian countries and African cultures – those regions that were colonies of the European highly developed states.

2) The end of the 70-s

This period is the second birth of globalization based on the revolution in improving the means of delivery of global action, in computer science and telecommunications. The desire

of developing countries to reach the level of developed countries automatically leads to the import of the culture of developed countries, which is more unified, free and tolerant, and carries simple and easily accessible values that call for personal enrichment and prosperity. For the majority of poorly educated people in developing countries, this culture is becoming more attractive than their own. Moreover, having an example of a better life in developed countries, they form associative links between culture and living standards. The foreign culture of the developed countries gradually passes into national cultures and destroys them. The process of globalization leads to control over the economies of individual countries and may shift from sovereign governments to other hands, including the most powerful States, multinational or global corporations and international organizations, thereby undermining national sovereignty. For this reason, globalization can make national leaders feel powerless when facing its forces. Such sentiments can easily degenerate into extreme nationalism and xenophobia with calls for protectionism, leading to the growth of extremist political movements, with the potential for serious conflicts and wars leading to the extermination and disappearance of weaker nationalities.

Major countries and organizations involved

It may be believed that the problem of preserving national cultures in the epoch of globalization affects only developing states that are trying to reach the level of the developed states. However, it should be noted that the difference between countries and cultures disappear faster when the communication between these countries happens faster and in an easier fashion. Therefore, developed countries are affected by this problem as well since it is notable that the differences between them vanish and a new global westernized culture emerges. At the same time, many countries are home to different national minorities, and they need to consider how the culture of these inhabitants may be preserved.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

A specialized agency of the United Nations founded in 1945 and based in Paris, France. Among many of the Organization's goals regional and cultural history projects, the promotion of cultural diversity, translations of world literature, international cooperation agreements to secure the world's cultural and natural heritage (World Heritage Sites) must be mentioned.

Relevant treaties and UN resolutions

There are not many resolutions on the question of protection of national cultures.

Nevertheless, there are some of notable past resolutions of the UN such as:

- 1972 – *Convention for the protection of the world cultural and natural heritage*

This convention defines the cultural and natural heritage, discusses measures of cultural heritage protection on national and international levels and other aspects connected to the discussed issue.

- 1988 – *World decade of cultural development*
- 2001 – *Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity*

A declaration adopted by the General Conference of the UNESCO at its thirty-first session on 2 November 2001. This Declaration is constituted by 12 Articles; Article 1 titled "Cultural diversity, the common heritage of humanity" states that "As a source of exchange, innovation and creativity, cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for the nature. In this sense, it is the common heritage of humanity and should be recognized and affirmed for the benefit of present and future generations." Importantly, Article 5 affirms linguistic rights as cultural rights as well.

- 2003 – *Convention for the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage*
- 2005 – *Convention on the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions*
- 2014 – *Resolution on indigenous issues*

Possible solutions

When thinking about ways to protect national cultures in the epoch of globalization, the following kinds of measures may be considered:

- Increase the promotion and support of cultural activity of citizens (the special attention should be given to young people, since they are considered to be the most flexible and influenced part of the society)
- Organize financial help to such institutions as museums that are based on the culture and history and local brands and trademarks
- Encourage public influences and politicians to support their countries' culture and use their impact on society in order to speak about the problem of cultural globalization freely and seriously and attract the attention of youth

Useful links

Globalization: <https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Globalization>

Cultural Globalization: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultural_globalization

Cultural Heritage: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultural_heritage

World Cultural Heritage In The Context Of Globalization: <https://www.ijstr.org/final-print/oct2019/World-Cultural-Heritage-In-The-Context-Of-Globalization-Trends-Issues-And-Solutions.pdf>

Heritage in the Digital Age:

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/299924369_Heritage_in_the_Digital_Age

UNESCO: <https://en.unesco.org/>

UNESCO World Report:

https://www.un.org/en/events/culturaldiversityday/pdf/Investing_in_cultural_diversity.pdf