

## ICOMOS-UNESCO: UNITED YOUTH FOR URBAN HERITAGE

Authors: Gabriele D'amico\*, Francesca Giliberto\*\*

At its 31<sup>st</sup> Session, the World Heritage Committee clearly stated that “Heritage protection without community involvement and commitment is an invitation to failure”. This is particularly true when dealing with historical urban landscapes, defined by UNESCO in 2011 as the urban areas “understood as the result of a historic layering of cultural and natural values and attributes, extending beyond the notion of ‘historic centre’ or ‘ensemble’ to include the broader urban context and its geographical setting”. In these dynamic and challenging urban environments, public bodies have little chances to be able to preserve the site without the active involvement of local inhabitants, that, with their own values, needs and aspirations, have a fundamental role to play.

Moreover, in 2002 the *Budapest Declaration on World Heritage* stressed for the first time the importance “to ensure the active involvement of our local communities at all levels in the identification, protection and management of our World Heritage properties”. A concept reinforced in 2006 when the Tokyo Experts Meeting reached the conclusion that communities and groups must be involved in the management of sites, not “just as mere informants” but included in the decision making process “also for key decisions”.

The gap between this vision and the reality of World Heritage Sites’ management structures is vast, so vast that often academics as well as practitioners wander where to start tackling the issue.

This paper takes on board a pragmatic approach, suggesting that the most effective strategy is addressing the millennials, the generation born between 1980 and 2000 that represents the most educated and informed segment of society as a whole.

The authors will analyse three concrete practices: the Youth Committee (created by the Italian National Commission for UNESCO), the Young Professionals Section within ICOMOS Italia and the recommendations of UNESCO concerning civil society engagement and forms of cooperation “under the auspices of UNESCO”.

Methodologically, this will imply combining a discourse analysis with an empirical research conducted through interviews to the members of the Youth Committee of the Italian national Commission for UNESCO and the Young Professionals Section within ICOMOS Italia.

Based on this analysis, the paper will conclude that millennials are huge resource for the inclusiveness and sustainability of urban heritage conservation and that such potentials can be fully exploited by encouraging stronger synergies between ICOMOS- National Commissions for UNESCO and those civil society organizations already operating for or under the auspices of UNESCO.

\* **Gabriele D'amico** is an PhD candidate within the Human Rights Under Pressure program, jointly administered by the Freie Universitat of Berlin and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. His research merges international law of cultural heritage and cultural economics with human rights theory and the philosophy of development.

\*\* **Francesca Giliberto** is a PhD candidate jointly supervised by Politecnico di Torino (Italy) and the University of Kent (UK), conducting a comparative analysis of current urban management strategies in Florence (Italy) and Edinburgh (UK), within the framework of the contemporary international discourse on urban heritage conservation and management. She is member of ICOMOS Italia and of the Youth Committee (created by the Italian National Commission for UNESCO).