

## **RESPECT - The UNESCO Cultural Conventions, armed conflict and the battle for peace in the minds of men**

Since WWII a series of UNESCO Declarations, Recommendations and Conventions have been drafted aimed at protection, safeguarding and promotion of cultural sites, properties and practices within national contexts but as a supranational responsibility. Their common purpose of protection of cultural heritage, is framed in a different (historical) background, refers to different tools, with different major mechanisms and institutions for their implementation, as well as separate budgets. The 1972 World Heritage Convention, designed within a perspective of political stability and peace is by far the most popular convention, followed by the 2003 Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage and the 2005 Convention on Cultural Diversity. Meanwhile the 1954 Convention and its Protocols specifically designed for the protection of cultural goods during armed conflict and in occupied territory has been ratified by far less States Parties, as is the case with respect to the 1970 Convention on illicit trafficking –an urgent problem in war situations. What do these major differences within the international legal sphere of protection, safeguarding and promotion of culture mean for the effectiveness of UNESCO, how do the Conventions reinforce or weaken each other?

In recent years UNESCO tries to establish more synergy between the normative binding instruments and to connect the programmes related to the various Conventions with other UNESCO work, for instance through the Task Team on Post-Conflict and Post -Disaster and the peace building programme, which is 'core business' of UNESCO.

My research focuses on the meaning and effectiveness of each Convention per se and of the five Conventions and two Protocols together, in situations of war and peace building. Has, for instance, the (changing) notion of 'respect' invoked in each convention any impact? Can States parties, organizations, communities make a difference in peace building by invoking UNESCO Conventions, or are they basically made for national cultural policies where there is no war or major (domestic) conflict?

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