

# ICOMOS

international council on monuments and sites

## THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON HERITAGE

An Overview of Survey Responses by  
ICOMOS National Committees (2020)  
and Paths Forward

DECEMBER 2020  
**COVID-19 Taskforce**

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The Impact of COVID-19 on Heritage:

An Overview of Survey Responses by ICOMOS National Committees (2020) and Paths Forward.

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## Abbreviations

ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
NCs	National Committees
EPWG	Emerging Professionals Working Group
ICLAFI	International Committee on Legal, Administrative and Financial Issues
ICOFORT	International Committee on Fortifications and Military Heritage
ISC20c	International Scientific Committee on 20 <sup>th</sup> Century Heritage
ICOM	International Council of Museums
ICORP	ICOMOS International Scientific Committee on Risk Preparedness
NEMO	Network of European Museum Organisations

# Executive Summary

The COVID-19 Taskforce group was formed by the President of ICOMOS Toshiyuki Kono and the Board in May 2020. The main objective of the Taskforce was to gather information from different countries about the impact of COVID-19 on heritage and evaluate possible strategies to build a more resilient heritage conservation framework as the world is recovering from the pandemic. The Taskforce prepared a Questionnaire which was distributed, in six UN official languages, to ICOMOS National Committees, who were asked to report their observations and data about the impact of COVID-19 on cultural heritage.

This Report contains an abridged synopsis of the information collected from 45 respondent National Committees during the period of three months (from July 24 until October 24, 2020). This Report contains three major segments: (a) an overview of the National Committee responses and some of the illustrative examples for different countries; (b) observed implications on three categories of heritage (tangible, intangible, and natural); and (c) insights and recommendations for building a more resilient heritage framework. The aim of this Report is to provide a comprehensive overview of the reported impact of COVID-19 on human activities related to accessing, using, and enjoyment of heritage and to set the basis for building the Resilience Framework to help heritage communities to recover from the impact of the pandemic.

Sections 1 and 2 of this Report outline the background of the work of the COVID-19 Taskforce, the methodology of drafting the Questionnaire, and steps in collecting and evaluating the responses. The statistical overview of the responses received as well as the assessment of the generally perceived impact on human activities related to heritage are elaborated in Section 2. It should be noted that the Report relies almost exclusively on the data provided by the respondent National Committees and covers a limited period of time (from the beginning of the pandemic until the end of October 2020).

The COVID-19 Taskforce received 45 National Committee responses to the Questionnaire. 87% of the responses were from established Committees and 13% from Interim National Committees. 42% of responses were from Europe, 25% Asia Pacific, 13% America, 11% Africa, 9% Arab States; 67% of responses were submitted in English, 18% in French 11% in Spanish, and 4% in the Russian language. 53% of respondent National Committees designated one focal point, 26% designated their President, 13% National Committees designated themselves, and 8% of National Committees designated emerging professionals as focal points.

The overall majority of respondents acknowledged that COVID-19 had a profound impact on heritage. The COVID-19 Taskforce received more than 200 hundred case studies that illustrate the economic, social, physical, environmental, scientific impact on cultural heritage around the world. Those cases serve as evidence of the profound impact of COVID-19 on human activities related to heritage (access, use, enjoyment, conservation, and management). Those reported cases also should be used as a foundation for ICOMOS

to take further action to build a more resilient heritage framework as the world is recovering from the pandemic.

### **Tangible cultural heritage**

Tangible heritage has been mostly affected by the sharp decrease of tourists and visitors, budgetary cuts, closure of sites and social distancing measures. COVID-19 had an immediate negative impact on the conservation and management of sites (lack of human resources for site maintenance, conservation, and preservation as well as weakened security). Another frequently reported effect of the pandemic was the worldwide closure of sites and the disruptions and delays on restorations due to budget cuts. Seasonal workers were affected, and more heritage practitioners are expected to suffer unemployment in the future. In order to remedy such an unprecedented impact on tangible heritage, national governments introduced various financial measures to assist with site conservation and human resources. COVID-19 also affected communities that suffered from the loss of economic and commercial opportunities. The decrease in tourism also had a positive impact on some touristic places, allowing for better conservation practices and less wear and tear of materials. Mobility and social distancing facilitated the reliance on digital platforms to access and enjoy heritage. The long-term implications for its safeguarding and preservation of tangible heritage are to be further explored.

### **Intangible cultural heritage**

All the domains of intangible heritage were severely affected, revealing its significant role in the self-expression and recreation of communities, the transmission of their values and identity. The most frequently reported impact was the worldwide cancellation of festivals, followed by the emotional implications of the disruption of the everyday life of communities and the interruption of their social practices and rituals. 99 percent of the respondents acknowledged a socioeconomic impact on intangible heritage, perceived as mostly negative (81%). The positive impact reported was associated with technological and scientific opportunities for the digitization and transmission of knowledge, as well as an increased interest in local heritage, a potential driver for recovery. Policymakers should ensure the safeguarding of intangible heritage by placing it at the center of short-term cultural policies, programs, and projects directed towards the well-being and values of communities.

### **Natural heritage**

COVID-19 created challenges and opportunities in the management of natural heritage around the world. In essence, community connection and engagement with natural heritage sites were affected due to the responses – social distancing measures, total and partial lockdowns, use of face masks, etc. – implemented by governments, organisations, and individuals to address the spread of COVID-19. In Croatia, Algeria, Japan, and many other countries, there were changes in tourist experiences, breakdown of communication, and exchange of knowledge across actors involved in the management of the natural heritage sites. Many organisations such as tour operators, hotels, and research organisations reported the loss of revenues, investment, sponsorships, and donations. On the other hand, the partial or total lockdown in Japan, Algeria, and Nigeria allow for self-rehabilitation of the biodiversity and ecosystems of natural heritage sites. The various forms of impacts of

COVID-19 on natural heritage, therefore, can be addressed through i) development of skill capacity of actors involved in the management of natural heritage, ii) extension of existing and development of new government supports, iii) continuous collection of data to monitor the changes in impacts of the COVID-19 and v) retention of existing and creation of new job opportunities.

### **Impact on Communities**

COVID-19 had a profound impact on the way communities access, use, and enjoy heritage. Loss of economic and commercial opportunities together with mobility and social distancing restrictions pushed communities to adopt digital means of communication. Some governments created digital databases containing comprehensive and up-to-date information about open heritage sites and heritage-related activities. This served as a measure to soothe the anxieties of people living through COVID-19 and increasing their sense of happiness. Meanwhile, all reporters provided examples of how cultural activities shifted to the digital space. Online platforms helped communities stay connected and continue culturally significant practices remotely. Besides, online platforms allowed creating more educational content about heritage. At the same time, it was reported that the use of online platforms leads to a significant loss of authenticity and loosens the emotional bonds that used to hold communities together. National Committees also provided many examples of how communities and local stakeholders worked together to come up with creative uses of natural parks and public open spaces.

### **Recommended actions for ICOMOS**

As an overview of suggestions which came upon the role of ICOMOS (including its International Scientific Committees and National Committees) and its actions in order to help member countries deal with the ramifications of the pandemic, those could be summarized into eight focus areas: promotion of exchange and sharing of best practices, including guidelines on COVID-19-related heritage measures; a collection of empirical data on an international level and research; enhancement of online gatherings and strengthening of regional networks; support in ICTs and digital media literacy in other countries; continued advocacy for heritage in each country and ensuring the regular mandate of ICOMOS; educational initiatives and activities with communities; support in the local on-site monitoring of heritage sites; policy statements and advice to national governments on technical and financial issues, such as the need to retain the pre-COVID level of government funding for heritage-related programs. Some National Committees also suggested immediate ways forward for the continuation of the current survey.

### **Paths Forward**

ICOMOS COVID-19 Taskforce expects to continue exploring the impact of COVID-19 on cultural heritage. One of the possible targets would be to prepare a set of recommendations, action plans or toolkits for a resilient heritage framework in the post-COVID-19 world. In the next steps, the Taskforce would like to encourage ICOMOS National Committees, International Scientific Committees, emerging professionals as well as other stakeholders get involved in preparing the framework for resilient heritage.

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# 1. Introduction

The impact of the pandemic on heritage and its medium and long-term implications are far from certain. The present Report was published in the same week as the first vaccines are approved and being administered, which could be a first step towards recovery. In this regard, the National Committees provided much valuable data about the short-term effects corresponding to the initial phase of our survey (June - December 2020) and responded with concrete examples of the initial impact of the pandemic.

ICOMOS has been actively engaging in scientific debates, in developing adaptation strategies and in surveying the global situation since the beginning of the outbreak: on May 4, 2020, the President of ICOMOS Toshiyuki Kono and the President of ICOMOS Advisory Committee Mikel Landa published a Joint Statement entitled “ICOMOS and COVID-19: Heritage as a Cornerstone of Human, Social and Economic Recovery”.<sup>1</sup> The Joint Statement drew attention to the fact that the COVID-19 outbreak had a direct impact on heritage sites, thereby calling the heritage expert community to monitor the impact and to explore possible paths forward. The Joint Statement confirmed the position of ICOMOS that heritage is not only a driver of sustainable development but also a key factor in human and social recovery following disasters.

Acknowledging that a one-size-fits-all approach to fighting COVID-19 on a global scale has its limitations, ICOMOS pledged to be proactive in ensuring that heritage-related policies and measures would be implemented to mitigate the impact of COVID-19. In June 2020, the appointed members of the Board formed the COVID-19 Task Team, acting as a Reference Group to gain knowledge on the implications of the pandemic for ICOMOS NCs, Scientific Committees and Working Groups.

The COVID-19 Taskforce was formed by ICOMOS President Toshiyuki Kono to survey the impact of COVID-19 on heritage and to explore the possible ways forward as an interdisciplinary group. Led by Toshiyuki Kono, the group comprises five active professionals from different professional areas and cultural backgrounds: Olufemi Adetunji, from ICOMOS Nigeria/Australia; Paulius Jurčys, from ICOMOS Lithuania; Sanaa Niar, ICOMOS International Member for Algeria; Junko Okahashi, from ICOMOS Japan; and Virginia Rush, from ICOMOS Argentina.

The COVID-19 Taskforce would like to express its gratitude to the Board of ICOMOS for entrusting us with this important task and their continuous guidance in preparing this Report. The COVID-19 Taskforce would like to thank the ICOMOS Secretariat, especially Gaia Jungeblodt and Laura Maxwell, for their help and assistance. The COVID-19 Taskforce would like to extend its gratitude to Aistė Kiltinavičiūtė and Daniel Ali for their invaluable editing and design work. Last but not the least, the Taskforce thanks all the NCs for their cooperation and contribution in providing time and precious content in their responses to the Questionnaire, and for their feedback during the Advisory Committee meetings.

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<sup>1</sup> Available at:

<https://www.icomos.org/en/other-libraries-and-databases/77-articles-en-francais/75092-icomos-and-covid-19-heritage-as-a-cornerstone-of-human-social-and-economic-recovery> (last reviewed December 6, 2020).

## 2. The Global Impact of COVID-19 on Heritage

To draw definitive conclusions about the global impact of COVID-19 on heritage at this stage would be premature: as stated above, the Report analyses individual responses collected at a very early stage of the pandemic, which cannot be used to extrapolate its future implications due to the ongoing disruptions in the complex globalized world.

Still, some general trends have started to emerge. The major implications of COVID-19 for heritage so far have been: mobility and distance restrictions, with their manifold social and economic consequences related to the decrease of tourism, closures and cancellations; and the prioritization of budget toward public health, which may have a negative impact on heritage funding in the long-term and could lead to the use of emergency funds and subventions. The pandemic has in turn demonstrated the need to further engage and advance on digital technologies in heritage preservation and dissemination efforts more clearly than ever, showing that this shift ought to be imminent.

Finally, the increasing focus and research on COVID-19 is an opportunity for placing heritage at the center of recovery. Several countries have begun to reflect on the need to adapt to "the new normal", namely, to formulate policies for addressing the immediate social and economic impact of COVID-19, to reassess the value of heritage and its relationship to communities, including heritage touristification and commodification, and to use heritage as a resilience-building force at the center of recovery policies.

### 2.1. Methodology

In preparation for designing the Questionnaire, the COVID-19 Taskforce examined the studies conducted from March to June by other organizations, which explored how COVID-19 affected heritage-related areas of cultural and socio-economic activity in different regions. The Taskforce analyzed these surveys and reports to identify recurring patterns and omissions, with a focus on the processes of recovery and resilience, and the representation of the heritage conservation stakeholders. An online ICOMOS repository was created with a database of surveys, scholarly articles and responses, encompassing the seventeen organizations and initiatives (See Appendix 2).

Having examined the results of the work conducted by other organizations, the Taskforce identified the main themes addressed. It became clear that the majority of the previous studies focused on the following three areas: (a) high-level issues, such as human rights, (b) the impact of the pandemic on heritage in Europe, and (c) creative industries and museums. The Taskforce also assessed the different methodologies and approaches used to collect information, as well as other work done by NCs (i.e., Spain, Nepal) and Working Groups, like the Culture 2030 Goal Campaign COVID-19 Statement, which will contribute to assessing the responsiveness of NCS and to aligning our recommendations with the SDGs.

In order to offer a more comprehensive analysis, the Taskforce decided to focus on three areas of enquiry: tangible, intangible, and natural heritage. Including natural heritage in the Survey provided us substantial information that allows us to explore synergies with other

relevant areas such as the relationship between Culture and Nature and Climate action, and served to restate the absolute impact of the pandemic on culture.

Furthermore, bearing in mind that ICOMOS is an expert organization, the Taskforce decided that it was necessary to gather empirical evidence from different countries and regions, and that ICOMOS NCs would be in the best position to provide such evidence. In order to collect as much valuable information as possible, the Taskforce prepared a Questionnaire<sup>2</sup> covering five major areas on which COVID-19 had the most significant impact: (i) decrease in tourism, (ii) financial impact, (iii) impact on human resources, (iv) impact on security and maintenance, and (v) the increased use of digital technologies. The Questionnaire focused on qualitative information about the impact of COVID-19 on cultural heritage and not specific information about the categories, elements, or typologies of heritage. The Questionnaire consisted of open-ended questions that could be grouped into the following structure:

Question	Main Areas Monitored	Assessment
-	Focal point information	Establishing contact with NCs
Q1	Overall impact on heritage	Collecting data about the main areas affected
Q2-5	Example – tangible heritage Example – intangible heritage Example – natural heritage Impact on communities	Collecting empirical evidence and formulating case studies
Q6-7	Measures and recommendations for ICOMOS International	Normative suggestions for ICOMOS and stakeholders

**Figure 2.1. The Structure of the Questionnaire.**

In order to ensure the highest possible rate of responses, the questionnaire was translated into six languages (English, French, Chinese, Spanish, Russian, and Arabic). The Questionnaire was sent to the NCs on July 24, 2020. A special email service was established to communicate with Focal Points of the NCs, who were entrusted to coordinate their responses to the Questionnaire. The deadline for the submission of the responses was extended twice. During the three months of conducting the survey, i.e., from July 24, 2020, until October 24, 2020, the Taskforce received 45 responses from the NCs, 87% of which were from established NCs, and the rest from interim committees.

Designation of NCs Focal points		
<b>89% of NCs</b> designated Focal Points	<b>53%</b>	Designated one Focal point
	<b>13%</b>	Designated the NC as Focal Point
	<b>26%</b>	Designated the NC President as Focal Point
	<b>8%</b>	Designated an Emerging Professional as Focal Point
<b>11% of NCs</b> did not provide data	<b>7%</b>	Did not designate a Focal Point
	<b>4%</b>	Designated more than one Focal Point

**Figure 2.2. Distribution and profile of Focal Points. First Section of the Questionnaire.**

Immediately after the Questionnaire was distributed, the Taskforce started working on drafting the Report based on the incoming responses and data provided by the NCs. The Taskforce conducted quantitative and qualitative assessments of the data provided by

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix 1.

NCs. In particular, in drafting this Report on the impact of COVID-19 on Heritage, the Taskforce had the following objectives:

- 1) To identify COVID-19-related **factors** that had an impact on certain categories of heritage;
- 2) To identify representative **case studies** that best illustrate the impact of COVID-19 on certain categories of heritage;
- 3) To identify affected **stakeholders**;
- 4) To identify the **measures** taken and best practices adopted to cope with the impact of COVID-19 on heritage;
- 5) Based on these preliminary findings, to draft (initial) **recommendations** for a resilient heritage framework in the post-COVID-19 world. From the outset, the Taskforce was of an opinion that such recommendations could be particularly useful for national policy makers, heritage conservation and management experts, and local communities.

This research was conducted taking into account the following limitations. First, the Taskforce was mindful of the fact that during 2020, there have been several “waves” of COVID-19, and that the dynamics of the proliferation of the virus had different paces in various countries and regions. As mentioned before, this Report relies solely on the data provided by the NCs by the end of October 2020 and does not take into account the subsequent developments. Similarly, it should be noted that the responses to the Questionnaire did not address the general overview of the COVID-19 dynamics in respective countries. Hence, this Report focuses on the specific impact of COVID-19 on heritage and does not aim to address more general questions related to COVID-19.

Second, it should be noted that this Report is mostly based on the information which was submitted by the NCs. In this regard, it should be emphasized that due to the unprecedented nature of COVID-19, the degrees of responsiveness differed from country to country. The responsiveness to COVID-19 was influenced by the resources available as well as whether countries had established plans and programs to fight pandemics. This in turn reflected the impact of COVID-19 on human activities related to the access, use and enjoyment of heritage in different countries and regions. Similarly, due to the unique nature of COVID-19, the Taskforce had to assess the responses provided by the NCs cautiously and take into consideration the fact that despite their expertise in heritage, the respondent NCs may not have provided the most accurate or impartial information related to the specific impact of COVID-19.

Third, it goes without saying that due to time limitations, this Report should not be considered as providing a complete or comprehensive picture of all possible ramifications of COVID-19 on human activities related to heritage. As it was noted in the Kono Landa Joint Statement, the impact of COVID-19 on heritage will have long-term consequences. Therefore, the present Report prepared by the Taskforce should be deemed as Phase I of the impact study, and studies on the impact of COVID-19 on heritage should be continued.

Fourth, the Report relies exclusively on the information and data reported by the NCs. Hence, this Report does not cover information collected by the Taskforce from third-party sources (e.g., media publications, other scientific publications, etc.). Furthermore, due to the unequal geographical distribution of responses received (the majority being from

European states and other regions insufficiently represented), it was not possible to conduct an in-depth analysis that would focus on specific regions or continents.

**All the data collected from the NCs are publicly available here:**

<https://bit.ly/3glvzks>

## 2.2. Overview of NC Responses

The following Section presents a statistical overview of the responses to the Questionnaire provided by the NCs. To illustrate the approach taken to surveying the impact of the pandemic at the national level, Figure 2.1 offers a general overview of the responses received to the Questionnaire. Figure 2.1 provides information about the distribution of the respondent NCs by their region. It should be noted that 87% of the respondent NCs were established NCs and 13% were interim NCs.

General Overview of Responses by NCs						
Respondents	Percentage	Region	Percentage	Regional Representation	Language	Percentage
<b>45</b>	<b>34%</b> (out of 133 NCs)	Europe	42%	33%	English	67%
		Asia Pacific	25%	22%	French	18%
		Americas	13%	22%	Spanish	11%
ICOMOS National Committees		Africa	11%	14%	Russian	4%
Established NCs	87%	Arab States	9%	22%	Arabic/Chinese	-
Interim NCs	13%	<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	-	<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

Albania, Algeria, Armenia, Australia, Belgium, Canada, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Ecuador, Estonia, Ethiopia, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Honduras, Indonesia, Ireland, Israel, Japan, Jordan, Korea, Lithuania, Malaysia, Morocco, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Russia, Singapore, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tunisia, UK, USA

**Figure 2.3. General Statistics of Responses by Country (July-October 2020).**

The following Figure 2.3 represents the responses received at various phases of conducting the Questionnaire, with the original deadline extended two times to cover the period of three months:

Period for responding to the Questionnaire	Number of Responses Received	Percentage
(1) July 24 - August 31	12	27%
(2) September 1 - September 24	15	34%
(3) September 25 - October 24	18	40%
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Figure 2.4. Responses to the Questionnaire by Period.**

Next, we provide a categorization of the examples and case studies into the main areas of cultural heritage and natural heritage. In response to the answers provided, we included the subcategory of heritage communities to illustrate the profound social impact of the pandemic. Finally, we provide a list of foreseen and reported impact and a visualization of the main findings.

More than 200 examples were provided by NCs in response to Questions 2 to 5, making case studies easier to sort into categories, domains and areas of influence. These case studies are discussed in more detail in the following sections of the Report and are available for viewing as the compilation document referred to at the end of section 2.1. above.

General Overview of Case Studies			
Examples	Focus	Categories	Types of heritage reported in examples
<b>200+ Examples</b>  Basis for the formulation of Case Studies	Cultural	<b>Tangible Heritage</b>	Archaeological Sites, Historic Towns, Religious Heritage, Monuments, Museums, Cultural Landscapes, Parks, Defensive Heritage, Industrial Heritage
		<b>Intangible Heritage</b>	Performing Arts, Oral Traditions, Social Practices, Rituals and Festive Events, Knowledge of Traditional Skills, Knowledge of the Universe
		<b>Heritage Communities</b>	Local Communities, Bearer Communities, Heritage Practitioners, Heritage Custodians, Heritage Experts
	Natural	<b>Natural Heritage</b>	Natural Protected Areas, Natural Parks, Historic Forests, Caves, Coastal Sites, Archaeological Sites

Figure 2.5. Classification of Examples by Type of Heritage.

Question 1 of the Questionnaire focused on the overall impact of COVID-19 in a national context, asking the respondents to assess the effects of the pandemic by type of heritage and level of agreement.

1(a) Has COVID-19 pandemic affected the following categories of heritage in your country?							
	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Strongly Agree	Unknown	Total
<b>Tangible Heritage</b>	-	-	13,6%	31,8%	54,5%	-	100%
<b>Intangible Heritage</b>	1%	-	15%	34%	50%	-	100%
<b>Natural Heritage</b>	9%	5%	7%	49%	21%	9%	100%

Figure 2.6. Acknowledged Effects of COVID-19 by Category (Abridged from Question 1(a)).

It is worth mentioning that while the impact of COVID-19 was reported in all categories of cultural heritage, the perception of the impact on natural heritage differs from the perceived impact on other areas of cultural heritage. The inclusion of natural heritage in the Questionnaire reinforces, in this regard, the gravity of the COVID-19 pandemic for all types of heritage. The acknowledged impact of COVID-19 on natural heritage is further discussed in Section 5.

Examples	Focus	Heritage Category	Percentage
<b>Impact of COVID-19</b> (reported period: July-October 2020)	Cultural	<b>Tangible Heritage</b>	100%
		<b>Intangible Heritage</b>	99%
		<b>Heritage Communities</b>	100%
	Natural	<b>Natural Heritage</b>	77%

**Figure 2.7. Overall Acknowledged Impact of COVID-19 by Heritage Category  
(Abridged from Question 1(b)).**

The final figure illustrates the foreseen and reported effects of COVID-19 on cultural heritage. The overall impact on heritage was perceived as negative (87%), with an equal distribution of economic, financial and environmental impact (between 30-42%). The positive impact was mostly associated with the increased adoption of digital technologies (17-22%), the renewed interest in local heritage, and the recovery of traditional practices.

NATURE OF IMPACT		IMPLICATIONS
<b>FORESEEN IMPACT</b>	Decrease in tourism	
	Financial impact on heritage conservation/protection/management	
	Impact on on-site human resources	
	Impact on the security and maintenance of heritage sites	
	Increased use of digital technologies	
<b>REPORTED IMPACT</b>	<b>ECONOMIC IMPACT</b>	Budget cuts Loss of income from tourism and visitors Unemployment and loss of income Loss of human resources Loss of commercial/financial opportunities
	<b>SOCIAL IMPACT</b>	Renewed interest in heritage Revival of traditional local practices Weakening of social ties Decrease of solidarity in local communities Distortion of emotional and spiritual values Diminished sense of belonging Loss of heritage character and authenticity Diminished intergenerational bonds
	<b>PUBLIC HEALTH</b>	Social distancing Health, safety, and sanitation Emotional wellbeing
	<b>PHYSICAL IMPACT</b>	Mobility restrictions Access and closure of sites Material damage Physical adaptations due to COVID-19 measures Heritage conservation work
	<b>ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT</b>	Safety of sites Sanitation measures Reduction of human impact
	<b>SCIENTIFIC IMPACT</b>	Research related to the impact of COVID-19 Shift of scientific communities online Recording heritage in digital media
	<b>DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES</b>	Adoption of DT to access and enjoy heritage Production and transmission of heritage-related content using DT and traditional media Creation of digital content

**Figure 2.8. Foreseen and Reported Impact of COVID-19 (July-October 2020).**

# IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON HERITAGE

**Authors: ICOMOS COVID-19 Taskforce**

(T. Kono, O. Adetunji, P. Jurcys, S. Niar, J. Okahashi-Onodera, V. Rush)

A study of comments on the impact of COVID-19 to heritage sites around the globe possible measures for recovery

## ASSESSING IMPACT



The size of each dot in the map represents the aggregate impact on a specific category of heritage.

The major areas of impact represented in this infographics focus on the following areas:

### ECONOMIC IMPACT

- Budget cuts
- Loss of income from tourism and visitors
- Unemployment and loss of income
- Loss of human resources
- Loss of commercial opportunities

### SOCIAL IMPACT

- Renewed interest in heritage
- Revival of traditional traditional local practices
- Weakening of social ties
- Decrease of solitary in local communities
- Distortion of emotional and spiritual values
- Decrease of the sense of belonging
- Decrease of intergenerational bonds

### PUBLIC HEALTH

- Social distancing
- Health safety and sanitation
- Emotional wellbeing

### PHYSICAL IMPACT

- Mobility restrictions
- Access and closure of sites
- Material damage
- Physical adaptations due to COVID-19 measures
- Heritage conservation works

### SCIENTIFIC IMPACT

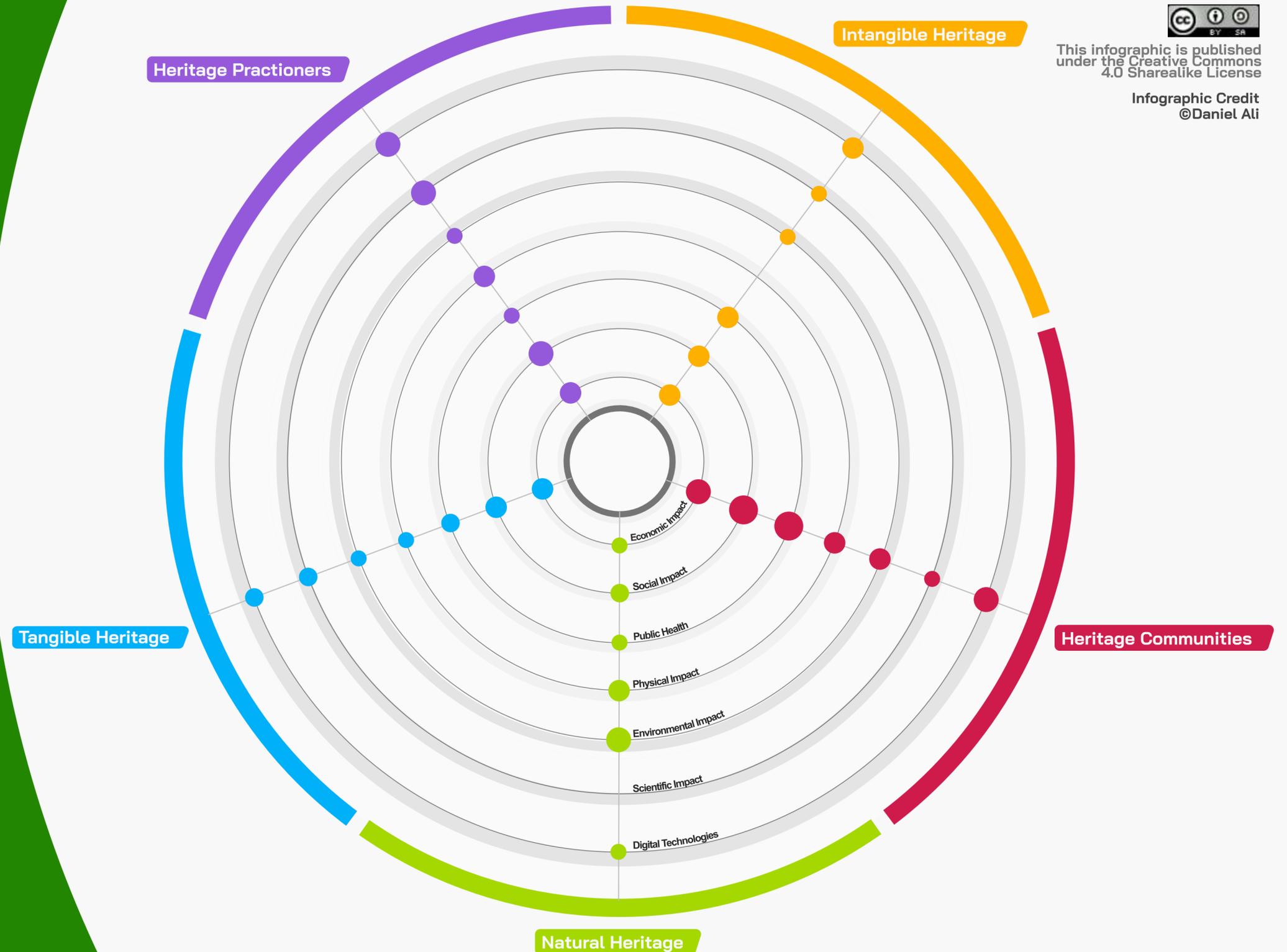
- Research related to the impact of COVID-19
- Shift to online collaboration
- Recording of heritage in digital media

### ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

- Safety of sites
- Sanitation measures

### DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

- Access and enjoyment of heritage online
- Creation of digital content
- Production and transmission of heritage-related content using traditional media



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## 3. The Impact of COVID-19 on Tangible Heritage

### Summary

**Tangible heritage suffers from significant economic losses that have affected heritage conservation and management systems. The pandemic will probably have a severe long-term impact on its safeguarding and preservation.**

**The lockdown and social distancing measures affected the management, conservation, and safety of tangible heritage sites in most countries. The long-term implications of the pandemic are yet to be identified.**

**Many NCs reported significant delays in restoration works and projects.**

**Seasonal workers were affected, and more heritage practitioners are expected to suffer unemployment in the future.**

**Local communities living around heritage properties are suffering economic loss from the decrease of tourism and visitors.**

**Many NCs reported that limited physical access to heritage properties led to the increased use of digital technologies and online experiences, but this make a challenge to communities with limited internet access and technological literacy.**

**The decrease in tourism also had a positive impact on some touristic places, allowing for better conservation practices and less wear and tear of materials.**

### 3.1. General Overview of Responses

This section focuses on the implications of the pandemic for tangible heritage and the factors affecting heritage before and since the beginning of COVID-19. The analysis of responses follows the five themes listed in Question 1. Section 3.2 provides an overview of the factors that have impacted tangible heritage. Section 3.3 outlines the main areas of impact on tangible heritage and also highlights some of the representative cases. Section 3.4 addresses some of the themes that should be taken in consideration when building resilient tangible heritage frameworks. Section 3.5 offers several recommendations.

In answering Question 1(a) of the Questionnaire, the majority of NCs strongly agreed that the COVID-19 pandemic affected tangible heritage in their country:

1(a) Has COVID-19 pandemic affected tangible heritage in your country?		
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	-	-
<b>Somewhat disagree</b>	-	-
<b>Somewhat agree</b>	<b>31,8%</b>	Belgium, China, Côte d'Ivoire, Estonia, Guatemala, Ireland, Indonesia, Malaysia, New Zealand, Nigeria, Pakistan, Singapore, Spain, Switzerland, Tunisia
<b>Agree</b>	<b>13,6%</b>	RD Congo, Canada, Algeria, Korea, Germany, Sweden, Lithuania
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>54,5%</b>	Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Ecuador, Colombia, Guatemala, Mexico, USA, Morocco, Tunisia, Jordan, Japan, Philippines, Australia, Spain, United Kingdom, Belgium, France, Albania, Greece, Netherland, Slovenia
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	

Figure 3.1. Acknowledged Effects of COVID-19 by Country (July-October 2020).

Question 2 of the Questionnaire asked NCs to provide one or two examples of tangible heritage (monuments, buildings, cultural landscapes, archaeological sites, etc.) in their respective countries and to describe the effects of COVID-19 on them. While analyzing the 45 responses of different NCs, certain patterns in the impact and consequences of the pandemic on heritage sites could be observed.

One of the outcomes of the responses to Question 2 is that the Taskforce was able to identify the scope of the short- and medium-term impact of COVID-19 on tangible heritage. Although it is not possible to fully perceive the long-term impact of COVID-19 on tangible heritage, the responses submitted by the NCs provide some important points of reference. Question 2 of the Questionnaire was an open question and provided an opportunity for the NCs to address various aspects of the impact of COVID-19 on local tangible heritage. Most NCs provided examples of heritage properties to explain the extent of the impact. The following table shows the different categories of heritage used as examples by the NCs.

Categorization of Tangible Heritage Properties									
Archeological Sites	Historic Towns	Religious Heritage	Monuments	Museums	Cultural Landscapes	Parks	Defensive Heritage	Industrial Heritage	Not Specified
21%	14,5%	14,5%	13%	9%	7%	5%	5%	2%	7%

Figure 3.2. Impact on tangible heritage by category.

## 3.2. Factors Affecting Tangible Heritage during COVID-19

The respondent NCs identified three major COVID-19-related factors that contributed to the impact on tangible heritage: (i) mobility and movement restrictions as well as the resulting decreased flow of tourists; (ii) social distancing and lockdown measures that affected the accessibility and use of heritage sites and monuments; and (iii) cuts of budget spending for tangible heritage. These three factors had significant economic and social

ramifications with regard to how tangible heritage is accessed, used, monitored and conserved.

### 3.2.1. Mobility and Movement Restrictions

Since the beginning of COVID-19, the movement of people around the world has decreased significantly, as many countries closed their terrestrial, maritime and aerial borders for several weeks and months. This led to a significant decrease in international tourism<sup>3</sup>. NCs responses show that the management of tangible heritage relies to a considerable extent on the income from tourism, such as the sale of tickets, souvenir shops, and other services, which are now affected by the reduced flow of visitors. In Ecuador, for example, the closure of the Ingapirca Archaeological Complex to visitors affected the site considerably, because due to the decreased income from visitors and tourism, it was not possible to finance the site's maintenance and management projects.<sup>4</sup>

Mobility and movement restrictions, coupled with a sharp decline in international tourism, had both negative and positive consequences. The negative effects of movement restrictions include economic losses, while the positive effects are related to the reduction of congestion in popular tourist destinations. This means that while sites might receive less income for conservation expenses, there is less wear and tear due to the decreased number of visitors. This is evident in the case of Dubrovnik, where the historic city was suffering from congestion, with heritage sites having to quickly adapt to tourist demand. In the short term, the pandemic is giving the citizens an opportunity to breathe and to take time to rethink the value of the city's heritage. But in the long term, the drastic and sudden change in the flow of income will certainly have a significant negative impact on heritage preservation.<sup>5</sup> In the meanwhile, during this international movement restriction there is also a significant growing interest toward local and national heritage sites which is also considered one of the positive sides of the impact.

### 3.2.2. Social Distancing and Accessibility Restrictions

In addition to mobility restrictions, the second major factor that affected tangible heritage during the first stages of COVID-19 was the imposition of social distancing measures (measures prohibiting gatherings in public spaces, as well as lockdowns and quarantines)<sup>6</sup>. Accordingly, heritage monuments and sites either had to close for visitors for several weeks or months or were operating at limited capacity. For example, in Japan, the Takayama-sha Sericulture School was closed from 14 April, 2020 to 31 May, 2020, and the visitor center

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<sup>3</sup> See, e.g., Armenia, Albania, Canada, China, Colombia, Comoros, Croatia, Ecuador, Ethiopia, France, Greece, Guatemala, Ireland, Israel, Japan, Jordan, Korea, Malaysia, Morocco, Nepal, Nepal, Singapore, Slovenia, Spain Tunisia, United Kingdom, NCs responses to Question 1 and 2.

<sup>4</sup> Ecuador NC response to Question 2.

<sup>5</sup> Croatia NC response to Question 2.

<sup>6</sup> See, e.g., Albania, Algeria, Canada, China, Ethiopia, Ecuador, Estonia, France, Guatemala, Germany, Georgia, Indonesia, Israel, Ireland, Ivory Coast, Japan, Malaysia, Netherland, Nigeria, Nepal, Mexico, Philippines, RDCongo, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Slovenia, UK, USA, NCs responses to Questions 1 and 2.

was closed from 29 February, 2020, until 31 May, 2020. After reopening, the number of visitors dropped to less than 25% compared to the same period of June and July last year.<sup>7</sup>

The closure of heritage sites meant that all public and cultural activities in those sites had to cease. Several NCs provided examples of how the cancellation of events at heritage sites caused a significant loss of income. For instance, in the Fairbairn Heritage Centre in Wakefield, Quebec (Canada), the number of visitors allowed to enter the museum was significantly reduced, and several cultural activities were either canceled or celebrated online, which meant a significant drop in revenue. In addition, regular maintenance was not possible for several months. As mentioned previously, depending on the phase of the pandemic, some heritage sites had to close completely, which meant that not even staff were allowed to work on-site. As a consequence, the management and preservation of tangible heritage have been affected in various ways that will be explained in detail in Section 3.3.

### 3.2.3. Budgetary Cuts

The NCs of New Zealand, Mexico, Ecuador<sup>8</sup> and some other countries reported instances where governments reduced funding to tangible heritage and allocated additional financial resources to public health and other sectors that were deemed a priority during the pandemic. Such budgetary cuts to heritage caused additional burden on tangible heritage sites that were already suffering from the loss of income from tourists and visitors. A sceptical view of this situation is that budget allocation for tangible cultural heritage might worsen in the future.

## 3.3. The Impact of COVID-19 on Tangible Heritage

As mentioned in Section 2 of this Report, the COVID-19 had a profound impact on the conservation of tangible heritage. Due to the global and protracted nature of COVID-19, it is challenging to provide a comprehensive overview of its impact on tangible heritage. One of the possible angles to assess this impact is to look at the positive and negative consequences for tangible heritage reported by the NCs. Tangible heritage suffered because of the sharp decrease in tourists and visitors, which affected the income generated, as well as lost commercial opportunities related to tourism and hospitality industries.

At the same time, some NCs highlighted the positive sides of decreased tourism. They suggested that the pandemic offered a moment of relief for places suffering from overtourism, allowing for better conservation practices, the reduction of pollution, and a renewed engagement and interest from local communities and domestic tourists. An increase of visitors to natural heritage sites and open-air cultural sites was also reported.

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<sup>7</sup> Japan NC responses to Question 2.

<sup>8</sup> New Zealand, Mexico and Ecuador NC responses to Questions 1 and 2.

## Key Figures

<b>1. NEGATIVE IMPACT</b>	56%	<b>Movement restrictions and decrease in tourism</b>
	54%	<b>Lockdown and social distancing</b>
	45%	<b>Loss of income</b>
	45%	<b>Management issues</b>
	29%	<b>Negative social impact, i.e., decreased sense of well-being</b>
	5%	<b>Digital technologies not accessible</b>
<b>1.1 Management and conservation of sites</b>	22%	<b>Lack of maintenance</b>
	13%	<b>Lack of security and protection</b>
	20%	<b>Conservation and preservation issues</b>
	20%	<b>Delay in conservation works</b>
	4%	<b>Encroachment</b>
	2%	<b>Demolition</b>
	5%	<b>Expected material procurement issues</b>
	5%	<b>No conservation issues</b>
<b>1.2. Lockdown effects</b>	47%	<b>Monuments and sites closed</b>
	9%	<b>Sites kept open, with restrictions on use and visitor numbers</b>
	22%	<b>Reopening after lockdown with new sanitary measures</b>
	27%	<b>Cancellation/decrease in activities</b>
	5%	<b>Staff not being able to work on-site</b>
<b>1.3 Economic impact</b>	32%	<b>Loss of income from visits and tourism</b>
	5%	<b>Governmental cuts to heritage budgets</b>
	8%	<b>Not specified</b>
<b>1.4. Social impact</b>	20%	<b>Economic loss in local communities</b>
	9%	<b>HR budget cuts and job losses for heritage practitioners</b>
<b>2. POSITIVE IMPACT</b>	13%	<b>Better conservation, less pollution</b>
	20%	<b>Increased interest and engagement at local and national level</b>
	20%	<b>Digital technologies</b>
<b>3. DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES</b>	27%	<b>Increased use of digital technologies</b>
	5%	<b>Difficulties to access internet</b>

Figure 3.3. Overview of the Impact of COVID-19 on Tangible Heritage.

### 3.3.1. Impact on the Management of Tangible Heritage

The structural and material conditions of heritage sites have been affected in multiple countries<sup>9</sup>, mainly because of the economic crisis and the lockdown measures, which prevented staff members and heritage practitioners from working on-site. Without regular maintenance and cleaning, the material conditions of heritage sites deteriorated. There were also reports of vandalism, mostly because heritage sites were left without protection.

The following examples illustrate the extent of the impact on the structural conditions of heritage sites. In Nigeria, the Kano City Walls and Gates were closed for almost four months without regular maintenance and protection. This resulted in considerable conservation issues, with some damage done to the ancient earthen structure by unauthorised visitors.<sup>10</sup> In Indonesia, the heritage expert in charge of the restoration of the oldest Chinese temple in Bandung was not able to visit the site due to the imposed

<sup>9</sup> See, e.g., Armenia, Belgium, Canada, Comoros, Ethiopia, Ecuador, France, Guatemala, Indonesia, Ivory Coast, Jordan, Nigeria, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, RDCongo, Singapore, Spain, Switzerland, NCs responses to Questions 1 and 2.

<sup>10</sup> Nigeria NC response to Question 2.

lockdown. Meanwhile, restoration works did not stop, and the staff who was executing the works were not heritage experts. The site managers expressed concerns about the outcome of this situation and possible negative results on the structural and material conditions of the site.<sup>11</sup>

In Jordan, heritage experts were worried about the possible negative effects of spraying sanitizing liquids directly on the monuments, since the chemical composition of the product could impact the integrity of sandstone structures. They also reported several illegal excavations in archeological sites in remote areas by people desperately looking for gold and treasures, probably due the rising unemployment and loss of income. The large number of archeological sites (over 100,000) in Jordan means that significant funds are needed for their protection. Even with governmental contribution to law enforcement on-site, the pandemic has made the situation more difficult to control.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, in New Zealand, damage to archaeological sites occurred during the lockdown period, when people were able to access them without appropriate controls or checks in place.<sup>13</sup>

In Lithuania the pandemic lockdown affected the supervision of ongoing construction work in the Vilnius Old Town World Heritage Site as well as other localities of cultural value. The lack of supervision by state officials opened the possibility to accelerate construction projects in Vilnius Old Town and elsewhere. With regard to archaeological heritage, the delays in issuing archaeological permits resulted in a situation where developers proceeded with archaeological excavations without necessary permits and supervision.<sup>14</sup>

In the Philippines, when the pandemic was at its peak, developers took advantage of the chaos to continue the demolition of the Philam Life Building, even though they had promised they would not proceed with it.<sup>15</sup>

NCs also reported examples where the fact that the site was closed to visitors was used as an opportunity to conduct conservation works. At Skellig Michael, a World Heritage Site in County Kerry, Ireland, essential maintenance and repair works were undertaken. Bird surveys, a digital survey of the landing pier and fog station, and monitoring surveys of the monastery and monastic ruins on the South Peak were carried out while the site was closed to the public.<sup>16</sup>

### 3.3.2. Delays and Interruption in Restoration Projects

20% of the NCs reported delays or interruption of restoration works and projects. The Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in Spain was affected by a decreased number of visitors, in addition to the halting and consequent delay of the restoration works.<sup>17</sup> Restoration works in the Hall of the Celestial Kings in the Lian Shan Shuang Lin Monastery

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<sup>11</sup> Indonesia NC response to Question 2.

<sup>12</sup> Jordan NC response to Question 2.

<sup>13</sup> New Zealand NC response to Question 2.

<sup>14</sup> Lithuania NC response to Question 2.

<sup>15</sup> Philippines NC response to Question 2.

<sup>16</sup> Ireland NC response to Question 2.

<sup>17</sup> Spain NC response to Question 2.

in Singapore have been delayed,<sup>18</sup> and in Ethiopia, preservation projects in Gondar and Lalibela will not go forward as planned.<sup>19</sup>

While analyzing the responses of NCs, we identified that the continuation, delay or interruption of restoration works could depend on the following factors:

1. **The nature of the works conducted and the phase of their advancement:** usually in situations where funds had been allocated to a project and no cuts had been made, the project either continued normally or was temporarily suspended during lockdown and then continued later.
2. **The ownership of a site and its source of funding:** private or public, financed by the central or local government or the income from visitors, etc.
3. **Interrupted supply of construction materials:** in the UK, for example, there are a number of major conservation projects currently underway, such as the Roman Baths Learning and World Heritage Centre, where the main risk is the possible disruption to the supply of construction materials.<sup>20</sup> Similar possibilities were also mentioned by the Nepal NC regarding the Hanumandhoka Durbar Square, a Kathmandu Valley World Heritage property which comprises a large public square with many temples, civic and royal buildings. Several of these monuments were in restoration works when the pandemic broke, which then came to a standstill for several months. With the continuation of the current situation, the procurement of materials is likely to be affected, further delaying the project and increasing its overall cost.<sup>21</sup>
4. **The status of a property:** the status of tangible heritage (whether it is a World Heritage Site, a National Cultural Interest site, etc.). In difficult economic circumstances, when exceptional decisions need to be made, World Heritage Sites and National Cultural Interest sites attract more attention than sites that do not have such statuses, not least because they usually make more money from tourism and visitors. 60% of the examples provided by the NCs in the Questionnaire are World Heritage Sites.
5. **The recognized value of a heritage site within communities and among stakeholders:** while this depends on the economic situation, usually when a heritage site has value for stakeholders, either social, religious, cultural or economic, they mobilize to ensure the protection of the site.

For example, the excavation works for the future House of Parliament in Namur, Belgium was interrupted by the pandemic and the ensuing lockdown. Then, after the resumption of construction activities, it was decided that archeological excavations should be interrupted, even though they had yielded finds of great interest and promised future discoveries. Thanks to the support shown by the

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<sup>18</sup> Singapore NC response to Question 2.

<sup>19</sup> Ethiopia NC response to Question 2.

<sup>20</sup> UK NC response to Question 2.

<sup>21</sup> Nepal NC response to Question 2.

citizens of Wallonia as well as scientific authorities, the public authorities in charge of the future Parliamentarians' House project allowed the excavations to continue.<sup>22</sup>

### 3.3.3. Adaptation to Sanitary Measures

Heritage properties are having to adapt to receiving visitors while ensuring high sanitary standards. Sanitary measures reported by the NCs are a reduction in the number of visitors, shorter opening hours and guided tours, regular indoor disinfection during the day, etc. In Japan, for example, to substitute for face-to-face guided tours, the Iwami Ginzan World Heritage Center has created audiovisual material to show at the entrance of the building. Acrylic plates have been installed at the service desk to prevent droplet transmission.<sup>23</sup>

In the Netherlands, a museum café had to be relocated to the central nave of the church and cultural activities had to be adapted for the site to reopen. In the Acropolis of Athens, more staff are needed to make visitors respect the safety measures, as the number of visitors allowed into the site was reduced and opening hours were shortened. Infrastructure modifications, such as plexiglas constructions, were necessary to comply with the new health protocols.

Adaptation to the new sanitary measures can be challenging and could affect the physical or spatial integrity of the properties. We cannot yet know the full implications of the adaptation of the properties to sanitary measures. Some properties are not sure they will be able to reopen post-COVID-19.

### 3.3.4. Impact on Heritage Communities

Mobility and movement restrictions, decrease in tourism and various COVID-19 related restrictive measures have had a direct and significant impact on heritage communities. The closure of tangible heritage sites and museums happened all around the world. This meant that in many cases, heritage professionals were not able to continue working in their area of expertise or were facing limited career prospects. In particular, COVID-19 affected the work on conservation and restoration projects, as well as seasonal work. NCs have noted that the impact of COVID-19 on heritage communities will continue to be felt in the foreseeable future.

Swedish NC explained that shortening opening hours for visitors was the primary reason for making the necessary job cuts.<sup>24</sup> Then in Jordan, for example, many daily laborers have been affected as much as seasonal employees working on archeological sites: COVID-19 put on hold thousands of jobs.<sup>25</sup> In Japan, employment opportunities have decreased for local guides working at cultural heritage sites; volunteer groups that work at various events and schools to raise awareness have been directly affected by COVID-19 as well.<sup>26</sup> In terms of building the capacity to recover from the impact of the pandemic, some NCs highlighted

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<sup>22</sup> Belgium NC response to Question 2.

<sup>23</sup> Japan NC response to Question 2

<sup>24</sup> Sweden NC response to Question 2.

<sup>25</sup> Jordan NC response to Question 2.

<sup>26</sup> Japan NC response to Question 2.

the need for more personnel and know-how with regard to the use of sanitary measures, the disinfection of sites and places after guided tours, and other site-specific adjustments.

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### 3.3.5. Tangible Heritage and Digital Technologies

Several NCs reported a significant increase in the use of digital technologies and social media<sup>28</sup> for virtual exhibitions, webinars, and courses related to heritage sites, which respondent NCs in most cases described as a positive development. Digital technologies significantly contributed to the accessibility, use, and enjoyment of tangible heritage, as much as to a wider engagement from local communities, such as in the case of Tunisia<sup>29</sup> where civil society tried to keep promoting heritage through social media in order to encourage tourism. (for a more elaborate analysis, see Section 6.3.2 below).

However, three important considerations with regard to the adoption of digital technologies deserve particular attention. First, there is a significant number of countries that have limited internet access and suffer from a relatively low degree of technological literacy. This concern was especially frequently mentioned by African and Latin American NCs in their responses.

Another concern expressed by the USA NC<sup>30</sup> was that the use of digital technologies, such as virtual guided tours for historic houses, is only possible for those who have the financial and personnel resources to plan and execute such tours.

Finally, the Lithuanian NC raised an issue related to the use of digital conferencing tools by central and local government agencies in gauging public opinion with regard to various development plans in Vilnius Old Town and other protected areas. While the idea of having online consultations with the representatives of the public and NGOs might appear appealing, their practical implementation was especially problematic. This was due to the fact that the interested parties had very limited opportunities to comment on the proposed development initiatives: i.e., the length of such conference calls was limited, and in many cases, the representatives of the public had a very short amount of time to voice concerns. The ICOMOS Lithuanian NC received many complaints that such online gatherings were conducted as a formality, without giving any opportunity for public interest groups to comment at all. Moreover, the Lithuanian NC remarked that local and central government agencies took advantage of the lockdown to organize such online meetings more frequently and to accelerate the approval of development projects in UNESCO Heritage Sites (especially Vilnius Old Town).<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Greece NC response to Question 2.

<sup>28</sup> See, e.g., Australia, Armenia, Algeria, Canada, China, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Nepal, Philippines, Singapore, Spain, Switzerland, Tunisia, USA, UK, NCs responses to Question 1 and 2.

<sup>29</sup> Tunisia NC response to Question 1.

<sup>30</sup> USA NC response to Question 2.

<sup>31</sup> Lithuania NC response to Question 2.

### 3.4. Building the Resilience of Tangible Heritage Post-COVID-19

To ensure that tangible heritage sites survive the pandemic, all stakeholders need to be involved in the process of mitigating the long-term impact of COVID-19.

The economic crisis has significantly affected the conservation and preservation of tangible heritage around the world. Hence, there is a need to find better methods, approaches and policies to handle the impact of COVID-19 on tangible heritage. Such measures, taken from 2021 onwards, should extend beyond financing tangible heritage from the income generated by tourism and the hospitality sector. Such measures and policies should ensure the physical and material preservation of heritage properties and also support local communities in recovering from the drastic economic, social, and personal losses brought about by COVID-19.

Heritage practitioners have already made many sacrifices during the pandemic. One of the most impactful testimonies we received was about the curator of the Hubei Provincial Museum in China who stayed in the museum for 80 days in order to protect its collections. We encourage the governments and policy makers to avoid cutting and reallocating heritage funding and to preserve existing jobs in the heritage sector. The heritage sector can be kept alive by providing financial and other types of support for the management and conservation of tangible heritage sites.

During the pandemic, the reliance on digital technologies has increased significantly. Various digital platforms and technologies provide an alternative method to access, use, and enjoy heritage sites. This has been viewed as a positive development by 27% of the NCs that reported organizing various online activities, virtual tours and exhibitions. However, we do not yet know what the long-term implications of the accelerated process of heritage digitization will be, not least because 5% of the NCs raised the issue of the inaccessibility of the Internet and digital technologies in some countries and communities.

In this regard, one of the most important actions to keep tangible heritage alive is to encourage the continuation of on-site visits, even if this means a reduced number of visitors. There is also a need to switch from catering for international tourists to attracting domestic visitors by offering them appropriate and engaging cultural content.

The importance of heritage is incontestable not only for the preservation of the cultural memory of nations, but also for the mental and physical wellbeing of their citizens. This should be valued above the economic potential of heritage sites.

### 3.5. Conclusions and Recommendations

At this stage, we are only able to perceive the severe short-term impact of COVID-19 on tangible heritage. Further studies are necessary to determine the long-term impact of the pandemic on tangible heritage.

Many NCs raised significant concerns about the adaptability to “the new normal” and the need to mitigate the negative consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic for tangible heritage and heritage practitioners. Some broader considerations regarding the real value of heritage before the pandemic and its extreme reliance on a steady influx of tourism revenue also emerged. Addressing the impact of the pandemic can also be an opportunity to reconsider how cultural heritage could be preserved and utilized more efficiently.

The protection and conservation of heritage sites should remain a priority, especially considering the reported cases of vandalism in World Heritage Sites left without protection. With regard to the maintenance and restoration works placed on hold, such activities should be adapted to the new conditions, in order to ensure the safety of the site.

Tangible heritage sites have considerable social, cultural and economic value, even if they are not recognized as World Heritage Sites. Budgetary restrictions affecting a number of countries may lead to a situation when choices will have to be made about which sites to fund. Such choices will probably be made based on the site’s world-wide recognition, which may leave other heritage sites in a vulnerable position. The implications of such a situation need to be addressed with great care.

## 4. The Impact of COVID-19 on Intangible Cultural Heritage

### Summary

**The COVID-19 pandemic has had a severe impact on all domains of intangible heritage, revealing its significant role in the self-expression and recreation of communities, the transmission of their values and identity, and its potential as a force for building resilient communities.**

**99 percent of the respondents acknowledged a domestic impact on intangible heritage. The most frequently reported effect of the pandemic was the worldwide cancellation of festivals and festive events, followed by the emotional implications of the disruption of the everyday life of communities and the interruption of their social practices and rituals.**

**Based on the case studies analysed, the impact of COVID-19 was perceived as mostly negative (81%), reflecting socioeconomic depreciation and losses. The positive impact reported was associated with technological and scientific opportunities for the digitization and transmission of knowledge.**

**A diminished sense of well-being was one of the reported effects of the pandemic. If permanent, it could affect the social structure of communities, their intergenerational bonds, and the continuity of traditions.**

**The increased use of digital media contributed to the mitigation of isolation and boredom, but might eventually affect the authenticity of heritage practices and their elements due to the shift in the transmission of values. For example, the use of oral traditions as a source for the mitigation and transmission of COVID-19-related information was reported as an adaptive measure. The recovery of traditional practices and the resurgence of ancestral knowledge as a collaborative tool to mitigate the effects of the pandemic were also reported.**

### 4.1. General Observations

The impact of COVID-19 on intangible cultural heritage and its bearer communities has had resonant implications for the life we live and value: the increasingly restrictive precautions taken to contain the coronavirus transmission have seriously challenged the usual modes of expressing, transmitting, and recreating the living heritage of communities.

The analysis of intangible cultural heritage in light of COVID-19 must not only reconcile the changing nature of the pandemic with the reported responses to the Questionnaire, but also take into account its complex nature as living heritage. The operational definitions and

classifications used to describe intangible heritage in this Report stem from the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage and other doctrinal texts.

The aim of this section is to survey the impact of the pandemic at an international level, and to develop specific recommendations for the safeguarding of intangible heritage based on the experiences reported. The following subsection explains the process of identifying the impact of COVID-19 on intangible heritage by treating selected responses to the Questionnaire as case studies. The responses and examples provided by the NCs are featured in Section 4.3. Section 4.4 focuses on recovery processes and the strategies for increasing resilience. Finally, in Section 4.5, we address some of the key findings and put forward recommendations on how to build recovery strategies for intangible cultural heritage.

## 4.2. Surveying Intangible Cultural Heritage

This section will explain the methodological tools used to assess the impact of COVID-19 on intangible heritage. The Questionnaire was used to survey the situation of intangible heritage and study the effects of the pandemic on the national level. The data and examples provided by the NCs were analyzed to formulate evidence-based recommendations for the recovery processes and safeguarding of intangible heritage.

The Questionnaire addresses the issue of intangible heritage explicitly in the following sections: first, question 1(a) required the respondents to acknowledge and evaluate the impact of the pandemic on the national level. Question 3 asked the respondents to qualify the impact of COVID-19 on intangible heritage in their respective countries and to provide some relevant examples. Finally, Questions 5-7 covered such issues as the access to intangible heritage and community involvement in traditional practices.

For the purposes of this study, we sorted the reported examples by country to identify the most representative case studies. The selection was made with the aim of representing as many countries as possible, choosing responses that illuminated the condition of intangible heritage in relation to at least 2 of the following indicators: (i) a concrete representation of a heritage domain; (ii) the significance, scope, or level of protection of the element described; (iii) context or background information; and (iv) the analysis of reported factors, effects, or actions in relation to COVID-19.

Next, the reported effects of the pandemic were analysed according to the initial themes of the survey (decrease in tourism, financial impact, human resources, security and maintenance, and the increased use of digital technologies) to identify the factors affecting intangible heritage and actions taken due to COVID-19. These factors were organized according to their nature (social, economic, technological, scientific, environmental, etc.) and given a value sign to indicate the condition of depreciation or value added.

Thus, the impact of the pandemic on intangible heritage could be expressed as the difference between the state of an element before COVID-19 and its resulting depreciation or appreciation. In performing this analysis, the sum of social, economic, technological and other factors affecting a particular reported example, as well as the measures and actions

taken to face the pandemic, were taken into consideration. Finally, we benchmarked the case studies to identify best practices for building resilience and developments that could drive recovery, which serve as a basis for the discussion of proposed recommendations.

## Surveying Intangible Cultural Heritage

The following example from Japan, concerning the cancellation of the Yama, Hoko, and Yatai float festivals, inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, illustrates the approach to surveying intangible cultural heritage taken in this study.

Protective health measures impeded the realisation of the festival, which was eventually reduced in character and expression and was in part transmitted live. The cancellation had a direct impact on tangible heritage: there was a shortage of funding for conservation works, such as the Machiya townhouses. The effects of the pandemic also extended to the local community, where a noticeable emotional impact was reported, since the festival had only been cancelled under exceptionally disruptive circumstances previously. There was also a decrease in the sense of solidarity and the loss of festival-related income. An increased use of digital technologies for crowdfunding and the launch of virtual reality content were also reported. Finally, potential challenges to the transmission of knowledge and traditional techniques associated with the festival due to the interruption of craftsmanship were identified.

We can thus identify social, economic, and technological implications of the cancellation. The social impact was immediate but temporary, since the detrimental factors were directly related to COVID-19 and the resulting impossibility of recreating this social practice in the customary manner. The effects reported show that the values of well-being and solidarity associated with the festival could be affected long-term if the situation continues. Therefore, it is important to track further changes and to promote the debate on how to recreate traditional social practices, maintaining their authenticity and values.

The economic implications of the cancellation and lack of tourism were estimated to amount to 18,600,000,000 Japanese Yen (approx. 180 mln. US Dollars). A crowdfunding campaign was launched to mitigate the financial impact and ensure the continuation of the festival. This shows that the responsiveness of stakeholders can help to create heritage awareness and open the way to multi-sectoral collaboration.

The technological impact was related to the potential threat of virus transmission and the lack of technological skills needed if the pandemic were to continue. Opportunities identified in the digital scenario were the digitisation of archives and the production of virtual reality content, which would increase the sources needed for the safeguarding of heritage, and the use of digital media to promote heritage awareness and share content.

Figure 4.1. Case Study Analysis.

### 4.3. The Domestic Impact of COVID-19 on Intangible Heritage

Lockdowns, travel bans, and social distancing had an immediate impact on the way communities express, recreate and transmit their living heritage. The worldwide disruption of social practices and cancellation of events forced stakeholders to quickly adopt adaptive measures. The responses provided by the NCs included valuable data for assessing the

impact of the pandemic on intangible heritage. Question 1(a) offered a general idea of the impact of COVID-19: the responses provided insight into the degree of acknowledged significance of the country's national intangible heritage in relation to tangible and natural heritage.

<b>Key Figures</b>		
<b>99% YES</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>
<b>1% NO</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>Somewhat agree</b>
	<b>15%</b>	<b>Agree</b>
<b>OVERALL IMPACT</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>
<b>IMPACT VALUE</b>	<b>81%</b>	<b>Positive impacts related to social and economic losses</b>
	<b>19%</b>	<b>Negative impacts related to digitization and the transmission of values</b>
<b>AFFECTED DOMAINS</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>Social practices, rituals and festive events</b>
	<b>10%</b>	<b>Traditional craftsmanship</b>
	<b>8%</b>	<b>Knowledge and practices related to nature and the universe</b>
	<b>6%</b>	<b>Performing arts</b>
	<b>1%</b>	<b>Oral traditions</b>
<b>TYPE OF IMPACT</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>Cancelations due to COVID-19</b>
	<b>20%</b>	<b>Social practices reduced in expression (reversible loss)</b>
	<b>19%</b>	<b>Modified and shifted online</b>
	<b>10%</b>	<b>Temporary interruption and disruption of practices</b>
	<b>7%</b>	<b>Enhanced and recovered expressions</b>
<b>NATURE OF IMPACT</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>Social (impact on heritage bearer and local communities)</b>
	<b>24%</b>	<b>Economic (loss/decrease of commercial opportunities)</b>
	<b>36%</b>	<b>Technological (transmission and continuity of practices)</b>
	<b>20%</b>	<b>Digital (increased use of digital technologies)</b>
	<b>2%</b>	<b>Scientific (continuity of traditional knowledge)</b>
<b>STAKEHOLDERS</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>Heritage bearer and local communities</b>
	<b>18%</b>	<b>Policy makers</b>
	<b>8%</b>	<b>ICOMOS and heritage experts</b>

**Figure 4.2. Overview of the Impact of COVID-19 on Intangible Heritage.**

The answers were consistent with the different circumstances of countries during the outbreak and reflected the diversity of the distinctive features of their heritage. Nonetheless, it is worth mentioning that 74% of answers focused on the short-term impact related to the cancellation of festivals, showing that the concept of intangible heritage is strongly associated with in-person encounters and physical contact or proximity, whereby the contents of intangible heritage are expressed and transmitted.

81% of responses emphasised the negative implications of the pandemic for intangible heritage, mainly related to social phenomena and consequent economic crises, whereas 26% of the impact was perceived as positive. The positive impact was related to the increased use of digital technologies, revenues from streaming, broadcasting, and crowdfunding, and increased solidarity in communities.

The following table summarizes the responses of NCs to Question 1(a) and illustrates the perception of the impact of COVID-19 on intangible heritage at the time of the initial outbreak, in contrast with tangible and natural heritage.

<b>1(a) Has the COVID-19 pandemic affected intangible heritage in your country?</b>		
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>Germany</b>
<b>Somewhat disagree</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Somewhat agree</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>Belgium, China, Côte d'Ivoire, Estonia, Guatemala, Ireland, Indonesia, Malaysia, New Zealand, Nigeria, Pakistan, Singapore, Spain, Switzerland, Tunisia.</b>
<b>Agree</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>Algeria, Canada, Ecuador, Georgia, Israel, Republic of Korea, Lithuania, Russia.</b>
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>Albania, Armenia, Australia, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Ethiopia, France, Greece, Japan, Jordan, México, Morocco, Nepal, Netherlands, Philippines, Slovenia, Sweden, United Kingdom, United States.</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	

**Figure 4.3. Acknowledged Effects of COVID-19 on Intangible Heritage by Country (July-October 2020).**

The answers to Question 1(b) reflected great consistency: on a five-point scale (from “Strongly disagree” to “Strongly agree”), 99 percent of the respondents agreed that there was a substantial impact on intangible heritage, with 15% agreeing and 50% strongly agreeing. 34 percent of the respondents agreed to some degree and only one country “strongly disagreed” that there was a perceptible impact. This might be related to the nature of examples given: the traditional craftsmanship of organs and the blue dye factories in Germany reported no impact, and the latter adopted measures for digitising content to encourage digital interactions. There was little variation in responses with regard to tangible heritage, and the overall assessment of the impact on tangible heritage did not differ greatly from that of intangible heritage. When analysing natural heritage, however, more polarity was observed in the responses with a higher incidence of disagreement.

Question 3 takes a more qualitative approach by prompting NCs to provide one or two examples of intangible heritage and illustrate how COVID-19 was affecting them at the time of answering the Questionnaire. The responses of NCs provided the information that allowed us to identify case studies and sort them by domain, factors affecting them, and their condition due to COVID-19. The following is a list of case studies categorised by domain and reported condition due to COVID-19.

<b>Country</b>	<b>Example</b>	<b>Condition*</b>
<b>Knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe</b>		
<b>Colombia</b>	<b>Traditional knowledge of the shamans of Yuruparí, UNESCO ICH</b>	<b>Endangered</b>
<b>Philippines</b>	<b>Traditional knowledge of the community of Batanes</b>	<b>Recovered</b>
<b>USA</b>	<b>Traditional knowledge of Native American populations</b>	<b>Recovered</b>
<b>Performing arts</b>		
<b>Comoros</b>	<b>Traditional dances of Sambé and Djalico</b>	<b>Reduced</b>
<b>Estonia</b>	<b>Seeto Lelo polyphonic singing tradition, UNESCO ICH</b>	<b>Interrupted</b>
<b>Sweden</b>	<b>Choir singing tradition</b>	<b>Interrupted</b>
<b>UK</b>	<b>The Morris Dancing tradition</b>	<b>Shifted online</b>
<b>Traditional craftsmanship and skills</b>		
<b>Canada</b>	<b>The traditional craftsmanship of maple syrup in Ontario and Quebec</b>	<b>Disrupted</b>

China	Traditional culinary craftsmanship, gastronomy	Enhanced
Ecuador	The traditional weaving of the Ecuadorian toquilla straw hat, UNESCO ICH	Disrupted
Germany	Blaudruck, resist block printing and indigo dyeing, UNESCO ICH Organ craftsmanship and music, UNESCO ICH	Shifted online No impact
UK	Traditional heritage craftsmanship, various skills	Endangered
<b>Oral traditions</b>		
Morocco	The Morocco Storytelling, a Youtube channel for presenting thirty stories from the heart of Moroccan heritage	Shifted online
	The "Hikayat Shahrazad" podcast of folk tales on social networks	Enhanced
<b>Social practices, rituals, and festive events</b>		
Albania	The Gjirokastër National Folklore Festival at Gjirokastra Castle WHS	Cancelled
Algeria	Annual pilgrimage to the mausoleum of Sidi Cheikh, UNESCO ICH	Cancelled
Armenia	The traditional Water festival of Vardavar and Wine Festivals	Cancelled
Australia	Dark Mofo Arts festival, Hobart, Tasmania	Cancelled
Belgium	The Folkloric Walks of Entre-Sambre-et-Meuse, UNESCO ICH	Reduced
	The Ommegang procession in Brussels, UNESCO ICH	Shifted online
	The Meyboom of Brussels, part of the Processional giants and dragons in Belgium and France, UNESCO ICH	Cancelled
China	The Spring Festival Fair, the China Lantern Festival	Cancelled
Colombia	The Lumbalu, a funeral ritual practice of the Afro-descendant community of Palenque de San Basilio	Interrupted
DR Congo	Dot, traditional Congolese wedding and marriage celebrations	Interrupted
Côte d'Ivoire	The POPO Carnival of Bonoua, the paquinou festival of the Baoule communities, and the Dipri festival of the Abidji communities	Cancelled
Croatia	The Zagreb International Folklore Festival	Shifted online
Ecuador	The Corpus Christi Festival of the Septenary in Cuenca	Shifted online
Ethiopia	Commemoration feast of the finding of the True Holy Cross of Christ, UNESCO ICH, the annual festival of Meskel in Addis Ababa	Reduced
France	Festivals and artistic performances	Cancelled
Georgia	The Betlemi District Festival in Tbilisi	Shifted online
Greece	The Athens and Epidaurus Festival	Shifted online
	The International Dance Festival of Kalamata	Shifted outdoors
Guatemala	Easter celebrations and associated living traditions	Cancelled
Indonesia	Mid-Autumn Festival celebrations	Reduced
Ireland	The celebrations of St John's and associated bonfires	Reduced
	The annual pilgrimage at Croagh Patrick in Mayo County The Galway International Arts Festival, 2020 European Capital of Culture	Reduced Shifted online
Israel	Religious celebrations, praying and elements of communal ritual	Reduced
Japan	Yama, Hoko, Yatai, float festivals, UNESCO ICH	Reduced
Jordan	The Festival of Culture and Arts in Jerash Archaeological City, WHS	Cancelled
Korea	The Gangneung Danoje Festival, UNESCO ICH	Shifted online
Lithuania	The celebrations of St John's and associated fairs and festivals	Cancelled or shifted online
Malaysia	The Eid Al Fitri celebrations of the Malaysian Muslim community	Reduced
México	The pilgrimage of the Virgin of Zapopan, UNESCO ICH	Cancelled
Morocco	The National Festival of Popular Arts in Marrakech	Cancelled

<b>Nepal</b>	<b>The Bunga Dyah Jatra festival of Patan</b>	<b>Shifted online</b>
<b>Netherlands</b>	<b>Volunteers and practitioners of ICH in organisations and natural settings</b>	<b>Reduced</b>
<b>New Zealand</b>	<b>The traditional Māori funeral rites of Tangihanga</b>	<b>Interrupted</b>
<b>Nigeria</b>	<b>The Kano Durbar Festivals</b>	<b>Cancelled</b>
	<b>The Festival of Osun Osogbo, WHS</b>	<b>Reduced</b>
<b>Pakistan</b>	<b>The Eid celebration</b>	<b>Cancelled</b>
<b>Philippines</b>	<b>Religious festivities and large-scale gatherings</b>	<b>Cancelled</b>
	<b>The tradition of solidarity of the community of Batanes</b>	<b>Enhanced</b>
<b>Singapore</b>	<b>The living heritage of Hawker Culture</b>	<b>Reduced</b>
<b>Slovenia</b>	<b>Living heritage, associated performers and events</b>	<b>Reduced</b>
<b>Spain</b>	<b>Arde Lucus Festival in Lugo</b>	<b>Shifted online</b>
	<b>Corpus Christi in Pontearreas</b>	<b>Shifted online</b>
	<b>Summer solstice fire festivals in the Pyrenees, UNESCO ICH</b>	<b>Reduced</b>
<b>Sweden</b>	<b>The Medieval Festival Week in Visby, WHS</b>	<b>Reduced</b>
	<b>Midsummer's day celebration</b>	<b>Cancelled</b>
<b>Switzerland</b>	<b>The Basel Carnival, UNESCO ICH</b>	<b>Cancelled</b>
<b>Tunisia</b>	<b>The Carthage International Festival</b>	<b>Cancelled</b>
	<b>Notting Hill Caribbean Carnival</b>	<b>Shifted online</b>
<b>UK</b>	<b>The Edinburgh Festivals, the Harvest Festival, the English Song and Dance Festivals and many other religious festivals</b>	<b>Cancelled</b>
<b>USA</b>	<b>Mardi Gras celebrations</b>	<b>Cancelled</b>

**Figure 4.4. Condition of Case Studies by Domain (July-October 2020).**

The case studies include indicators of significance or levels of protection, such as World Heritage Sites, UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage (for those listed as the Representative Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity), international, national, etc. There were no mentions of heritage in need of urgent safeguarding. The classification of case studies by condition was based on the reported effects of the pandemic and actions taken. These conditions are ranked from beneficial, such as “enhanced” or “recovered”, to endangered. We also account for “shifts” and modifications in the manifestations of intangible heritage, namely, “reductions” in their expression, pauses and interruptions, disruptions and other perceived negative shifts.

With regard to the domains of intangible heritage identified, the chosen categories and sorting decisions could be viewed as oversimplified. By contextualising the responses within the different domains of heritage, we understand that these are non-exhaustive categories of phenomena that continue to evolve. The selection in the list refers to the primary representation of these phenomena without denying that they might have contingent expressions.

After verifying the protection status of the cultural practices identified, it was noted that the number of examples listed by each country in relation to the total number of examples of intangible heritage with an official protected status was very low: many countries have several examples of intangible heritage protected and listed but did not cite any of those. This could be an indication that these examples are better protected or in a better condition, or that they may not be perceived as significant to a given community or respondent. Further studies are needed to examine these correlations at a later phase.

Having presented the case studies by domain and condition, we will now feature the responses in relation to the reported impact of the pandemic, categorized according to the type of the impact, indicating negative, uncertain, and positive developments.

Impact	Indicators	Countries
<b>Social impact</b>	(-) Loss of character <sup>1</sup> (-) Decreased sense of well-being in local communities <sup>2</sup> (-) Decrease of solidarity amongst local communities <sup>3</sup> (-) Weakening of the community's social ties <sup>4</sup> (-) Increased sense of isolation of heritage bearer communities <sup>5</sup> (-) Human loss <sup>6</sup> (+) Strengthening of the community's social ties <sup>7</sup> (-) Disruption of emotional and spiritual values <sup>8</sup> (+) Revival of traditional healing practices of aboriginal communities <sup>9</sup> (+) Revival of interest in local heritage <sup>10</sup> (-) Loss of human resources <sup>11</sup>	<sup>1</sup> Belgium, <sup>1</sup> Croatia, <sup>4,5,6</sup> Colombia, <sup>3</sup> Côte d'Ivoire, <sup>2</sup> Ecuador <sup>2</sup> Estonia, <sup>2</sup> Guatemala, <sup>10</sup> France, <sup>10</sup> Ireland, <sup>4,8</sup> Japan, <sup>2,11</sup> Jordan, <sup>1</sup> Malaysia, <sup>8</sup> Morocco, <sup>8</sup> Nepal, <sup>11</sup> Netherlands, <sup>1</sup> Nigeria, <sup>4</sup> New Zealand, <sup>5,7</sup> Philippines, <sup>2,6,11</sup> Sweden, <sup>1</sup> Switzerland <sup>2,5,10</sup> UK, <sup>9</sup> USA
<b>Economic impact</b>	(-) Loss of income for local communities and diminished commercial opportunities <sup>1</sup> , (-) Estimated loss of over \$50M AUD <sup>2</sup> (-) Estimated loss of 18,600,000,000 JPY <sup>3</sup> (-) Decrease <sup>5</sup> and loss of revenue <sup>4</sup> (+) Generation of income through online promotion <sup>6</sup>	<sup>1</sup> Algeria, <sup>2</sup> Australia, <sup>4</sup> Canada, <sup>6</sup> China, <sup>1,4</sup> Ecuador, <sup>4</sup> Greece, <sup>4</sup> Guatemala, <sup>1,3</sup> Japan, <sup>1,4</sup> Jordan, <sup>5</sup> Korea R. of, <sup>1,4</sup> Nepal, <sup>4</sup> Netherlands, <sup>1</sup> Philippines, <sup>5</sup> Singapore, <sup>4</sup> Sweden, <sup>1,4</sup> UK
<b>Technological impact</b>	(+) Online promotion of heritage <sup>1</sup> (±) Online recreation of heritage practices <sup>2</sup> (+) Digitisation of heritage content <sup>3</sup> (+) Creation of digital content <sup>4</sup> (±) Transmission of heritage content in traditional media <sup>5</sup> (±) Transmission of heritage content in digital media <sup>6</sup> (-) Threats to the continuity of traditional practices and skills <sup>7</sup> (+) Revival of traditional farming practices due to food transport restrictions <sup>8</sup>	<sup>1,2,4,6,7</sup> China, <sup>1,3,6</sup> Croatia, <sup>2,5</sup> Belgium, <sup>6</sup> Georgia, <sup>6</sup> Germany, <sup>1,2</sup> Ireland, <sup>5,6,7</sup> Japan, <sup>1,2,6</sup> Korea Ro, <sup>2</sup> Malaysia, <sup>2</sup> México, <sup>2,3</sup> Nepal, <sup>8</sup> Philippines, <sup>2</sup> Slovenia, <sup>2</sup> Switzerland, <sup>2,6,7</sup> UK
<b>Scientific impact</b>	(-) Threats to the continuity of traditional knowledge <sup>1</sup> (+) Resurgence of traditional curing ceremonies and religious healing practices <sup>2</sup>	<sup>1</sup> Colombia, <sup>2</sup> US

Figure 4.5. Reported Effects of COVID-19 on Case Studies by Nature of Impact (July-October 2020).

## 4.4. Pathways to Recovery and Building Resilience

How can we learn from the examples listed above and ensure a safe, free, and authentic expression, recreation, and transmission of intangible heritage? Since the medium- and long-term impact of the pandemic is still unclear, we identified some of the challenges that need immediate attention and some of the measures that proved favourable in adapting to the pandemic realities. After evaluating the nature of the impact of the pandemic on the case studies and the condition of intangible heritage after/resulting from COVID-19, we will now identify the paths to recovery, understood as the return of the pre-pandemic conditions favourable to heritage preservation. We will also propose strategies for building resilience, based on the best practices and data provided in the responses of the NCs.

First, we identified the main challenges and opportunities that arose during COVID-19 according to the impact assessment and proposed recommendations to operationalize some of the principles featured in the case studies. Detailed case studies featured as examples of best practices were used as a starting point for setting the base criteria for the proposed measures.

The main social challenges for intangible heritage are related to the effects of the cancellation of events and the disruption of social practices with the consequent emotional implications. There was a reported decrease in the sense of well-being and solidarity in local communities that could imply a weakening of the community's social ties if prolonged. Communities had to adapt to the developments of the pandemic immediately, sometimes responding to the restrictions with short-term solutions and quick fixes.

To address the overall socio-economic impact of COVID-19 more efficiently, we need to develop measures to generate and diversify income for heritage conservation and protection, and to confront the loss of income in local communities due to the decreased commercial opportunities related to tourism and visitors, among other macroeconomic factors.

The technological impact on intangible heritage includes the challenges of transmitting heritage practices and content, and the increased use of digital technologies for recreation and the promotion of heritage. We can learn more about the technological impact of the pandemic by promoting the debate about the impact of digitalization and the loss of authenticity in heritage bearer communities.

The main driving forces promoting the recovery and safeguarding of intangible heritage were determined based on the reported favourable outcomes. Social recovery and the transmission of practices were ensured by allowing these practices to take place in compliance with appropriate health measures, while acknowledging and discussing the shifts in practices that occurred because of COVID-19. Economic recovery was successful when resources were diversified and digitized and income was generated thanks to the collaboration of stakeholders. The technological impetus behind the recovery was the digitisation, documentation and conservation of traditional skills and crafts, and the increased interest in local heritage. Finally, the resurgence of traditional knowledge was a factor that mitigated the social impact of the pandemic amongst Native American communities.

## 4.5. Conclusions and Recommendations

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a severe impact on all domains of living heritage, revealing its significance for the expression and recreation of community values and identity, and its potential as a force for building resilient communities. Not only did communities suffer economic losses, but their everyday life and ritual practices were also disrupted, which affected their sense of community, social structure, and intergenerational bonds. Digital media contributed to the mitigation of the impact of isolation, but might threaten the authenticity and integrity of heritage practices and elements.

The importance of intangible heritage for social ties and the sense of well-being in communities became evident, as the case studies analysed reported an overall increased interest in local heritage, the recovery of traditional practices, and the resurgence of ancestral knowledge as a collaborative tool to mitigate the effects of the pandemic in the Philippines and the United States. Oral traditions were adapted to include educational messages and emphasize human values as well as to mitigate the effects of COVID-19 in Morocco.

Because the impact of COVID-19 was so sudden, responses to the pandemic were isolated, and there was a lack of coordinated efforts. What were thought to be temporary measures must be constantly adapted and reviewed. We need to think not only of the response measures for now, but also how the pandemic will affect intangible heritage and its bearer communities in the long term. The next chapters will discuss in more detail the measures developed by various stakeholders to respond to COVID-19 and the feasibility of their implementation.

## Recommendations

**1. To recognise the significant role of Intangible Cultural Heritage in the well-being and values of communities, policy makers should integrate the safeguarding of intangible heritage into short-term cultural policies, programs and projects.**

- Targeted at mitigation, reconstruction and recovery measures.
- The increased interest of local communities in their heritage could promote long-term intergenerational community bonding. Example: Philippines.

**2. To enable the safe continuation of events, rituals and heritage practices, policy makers should ensure that they happen in compliance with health measures. When this is not possible, their significance should be celebrated through alternative activities. If cancellations occur due to COVID-19, financial support and subventions should be offered to stakeholders.**

- Directed at recognising the significance of heritage practices for the communities.
- Examples: Marker events in Belgium and adapting practices in Spain and Nepal.

**3. To foster the resilience and recovery of communities, policy makers should include the affected sectors in decision making.**

- Directed at empowering heritage bearer communities by including them in decision making in line with the SDG Goals.
- To ensure the authenticity of the transmission of values in light of COVID-19.

**4. To encourage economic recovery, multisectoral collaboration between affected stakeholders should be promoted.**

- Diversification and expansion of financial opportunities for communities.
- Digitization as a tool for generating income.
- Examples: China, Japan, Singapore.

**5. To promote the debate in heritage bearer communities about the shifts in heritage expression, transmission and recreation due to COVID-19.**

- Directed at promoting awareness and detecting and interpreting shifts in values in heritage bearer communities.
- Directed at heritage experts and thematic research.

## 5. The Impact of COVID-19 on Natural Heritage

### 5.1. General Observations

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, natural heritage sites have experienced a wide range of repercussions that have not only affected the authenticity and integrity of the sites, but also the socio-economic aspects of the sites and their local communities. Key stakeholders from 42 NCs (see Figure 5.1.) illustrate the extent and nature of the impact of COVID-19 on natural heritage sites (such as caves, historic forests, natural parks, coastal sites, geographic features, etc.). They revealed the challenges to the sustainable management of the sites, the responses from stakeholders, and opportunities for improving the conservation and management of heritage sites while restrictions are easing and after the pandemic.

The findings revealed a ‘two sides of the coin’ impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the values, conservation and management of heritage sites. For instance, in the Netherlands, the pandemic resulted in the closure of businesses, cultural institutions, and leisure facilities connected to heritage sites with consequences for their protection and use. On the other hand, some of the natural heritage sites experienced increased tourism resulting in an increase of income generated through entrance fees. However, it also increased challenges in security, safety, and waste management.

The analysis of the impact of COVID-19 on natural heritage sites across Africa, Asia Pacific, Europe, and South and North America revealed the following implications: (i) community connection and engagement, (ii) economic, (iii) conservation policies and decision-making, and (iv) conservation and preservation of heritage values.

The analysis of the findings summarizes the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact during the lockdown and other restrictions (immediate impact) and the post-pandemic period when governments started easing restrictions (sections 5.2 - 5.5). Also, the responses of governments and other stakeholders to address the impact of the pandemic, and recommendations for stakeholders, such as heritage professionals, organizations and policymakers, are discussed in section 5.6.

### 5.2. Implications for Community Connection and Engagement

During the COVID-19 pandemic, governments and other stakeholders responded with restrictions and social distancing measures which included physical distancing and limiting physical access to natural heritage sites. The restrictive measures and lockdowns affected the ability of the managers of natural heritage sites to contribute to the identity, cohesion and engagement of communities. However, in some countries, such as Algeria and Georgia, COVID-19 caused an increased interest in visiting heritage sites within country boundaries due to the restrictions on international flights. In many countries, heritage sites had to reduce their tourist capacity, close partially/fully, postpone or cancel research activities, educational programs, projects, exhibitions and performances during the

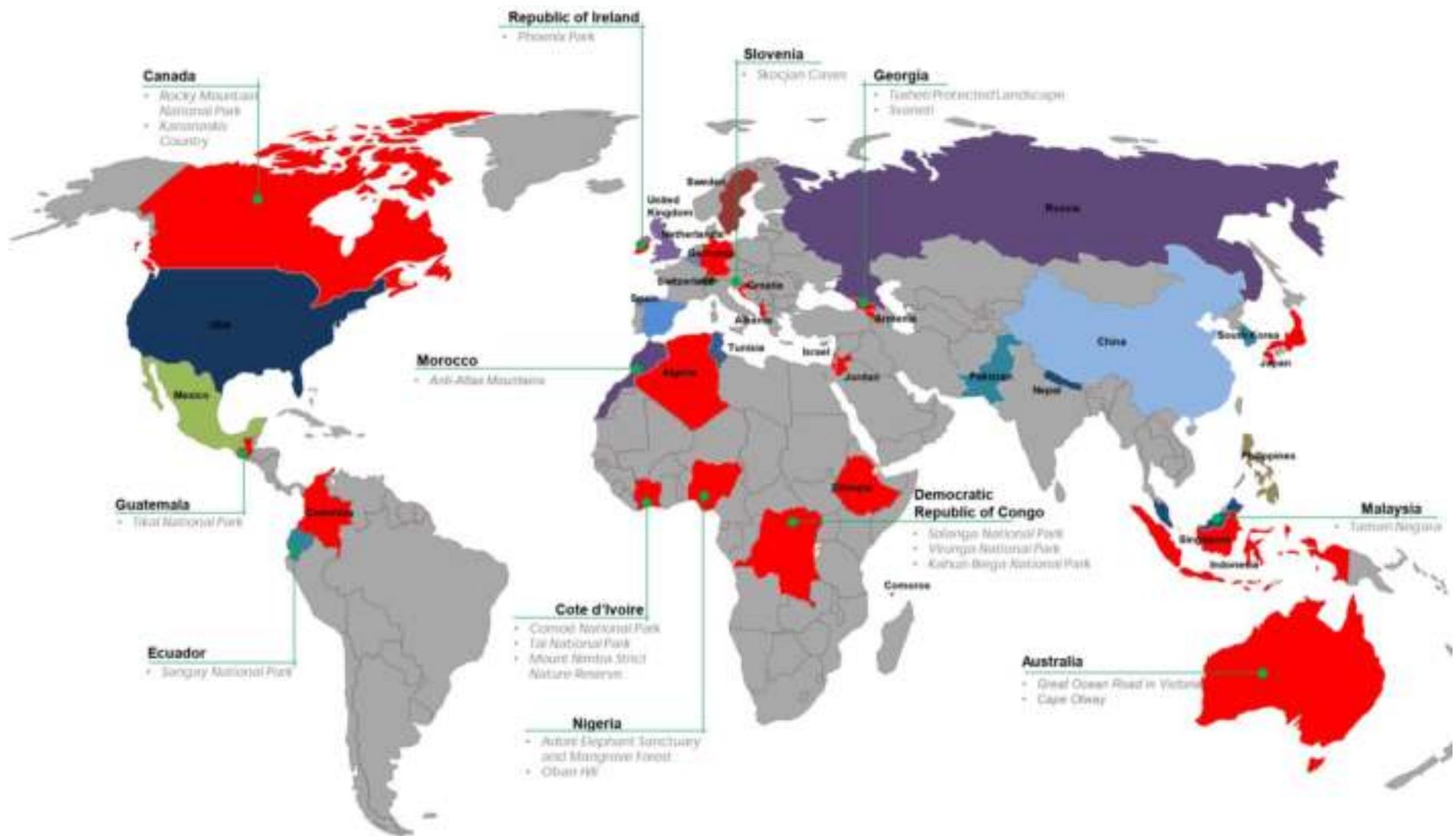


Figure 5.1. Some of the natural heritage sites referenced by respondents

pandemic (Samaroudi, Echavarria, & Perry, 2020).<sup>32</sup> In Colombia, for instance, the COVID-19 crisis affected the relationship between the local communities and the conservation managers of protected areas. The Questionnaire findings show that the restrictive measures imposed in many countries had a negative impact on relationships and social interactions between people and their engagement with places of historical significance. The immediate implications of the COVID-19 crisis and the restrictions imposed across countries are depicted in figure 5.1 above.

- i. **Changes in the experience of tourists:** as witnessed in Croatia, where before the COVID-19 crisis, the huge number of tourists constituted a burden for the protection of the biosystem in national parks. The COVID-19 crisis improved tourists' awareness, encouraging them to care for and protect heritage sites.
- ii. **Breakdown in communication between heritage managers and communities:** the employees of natural heritage sites were affected due to the 'shelter-in-place' orders barring large numbers of employees from going to work. In Ireland, for instance, offices were closed, telephones were not manned, and voicemails overflowed.
- iii. **Cancellation and/or postponement of events and exhibitions:** in the United Kingdom, for instance, the project on the operational impact of the Gough Restoration was postponed until 2021.
- iv. **Disruption in the exchange of knowledge** about natural heritage due to national and international travel restrictions.

The long-term impact of the COVID-19 pandemic could be a multi-dimensional crisis that could weaken the social, cultural and economic dynamics of communities as well as make local populations who are dependent on ecotourism more vulnerable.

### 5.3. Financial and Other Economic Implications

The pandemic has had varying degrees of economic impact on natural heritage sites. The World Travel and Tourism Council predicts that by the end of 2020, losses due to the COVID-19 crisis will amount to US \$2.1 trillion GDP and up to 75 million jobs in travel and tourism (UNESCO, 2020). This impact varies due to the different percentage of GDP contributions from tourism and related sectors to national and local economies. For instance, cities such as Edinburgh and regional areas of Western Australia experienced significant losses due to the cancellation of local festivals. On the other hand, the COVID-19 crisis encouraged local tourists to visit places of local historical significance. For instance, the reappearance of the Saharan cheetah inspired Algerians to visit the Ahaggar Cultural and National Park in the Tamanrasset region.

Moreover, the immediate implications of the COVID-19 pandemic are:

- i. **Loss of investment, revenues and income due to the postponement and/or cancellation of public events and activities and research activities:** In Côte

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<sup>32</sup> Samaroudi, M., Echavarria, K. R., & Perry, L. (2020). Heritage in lockdown: digital provision of memory institutions in the UK and US of America during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Museum Management and Curatorship*, 35(4), 337-361.

d'Ivoire, the stoppage of research activities interrupted the already planned activities of students, researchers, and village ecologists, who depend on the resources generated by these activities.

- ii. **Loss of sponsorships and donations:** Sponsors are losing interest in financing cultural and social events and are sponsoring events and activities in other sectors, such as health, infrastructure and energy.
- iii. **Loss of jobs in organizations involved in tourism and related sectors,** such as hotels, tour operators, heritage research organizations, etc., due to closures and a drastic reduction in income generated by these organizations. In Ecuador, many park rangers were fired between March and July of 2020.

The consequences of the pandemic during the period of eased restriction and long-term are:

- i. **Permanent shutdown of business organizations** in tourism and related sectors because of the increasing financial burden.
- ii. **Governments may cut budgetary allocations and other subventions** to the culture and heritage sector.
- iii. **Slow economic recovery and continuous reliance on economic 'bale-outs' for natural heritage sites:** The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a drastic decline of tourism and income generation. Many potential tourists may have lost interest in visiting natural heritage sites.

## 5.4. Implications for Decision-Making and Policies

Undoubtedly, the COVID-19 crisis threatens the enforcement of conservation policies, as well as the outcomes of conservation interventions and projects. According to Shreedhar and Mourato (2020)<sup>33</sup>, the COVID-19 crisis boosted the public interest in nature conservation, but various governments are leveraging the socio-economic impact and distractions of the crisis to weaken or eliminate protections for places of natural heritage.

In the US, for example, the geographical areas of pristine archaeological sites were reduced discreetly during the pandemic period. Also, in countries of Africa, Asia and South America, the meetings of policymakers and heritage managers were postponed and/or cancelled, while in many developed countries, face-to-face meetings were converted into virtual meetings. The adoption of virtual platforms such as Zoom, Skype, Cisco Webex, etc., for meetings was difficult in developing countries such as Nigeria, Algeria, Ecuador, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, etc., because of the poor Internet connection and inadequate ICT infrastructure in many natural heritage sites.

In the long term, weakened conservation policies may lead to the loss of value and attributes of natural heritage sites. Also, in developing countries, the managers of natural heritage sites may have difficulty using virtual platforms for meetings and adopting digital tools to engage with tourists and communities.

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<sup>33</sup> Shreedhar, G., & Mourato, S. (2020). Linking Human Destruction of Nature to COVID-19 Increases Support for Wildlife Conservation Policies. *Environmental and Resource Economics*, 76(4), 963-999.

## 5.5. Implications for the Conservation and Preservation of Heritage Values

The restrictions and closure of natural heritage sites between March and July of 2020 impacted the care and preservation of biodiversity, ecosystems and geographic formations in heritage sites. Romagosa (2020)<sup>34</sup> illustrates how the restrictions limited the capacity of natural conservators to carry out regular monitoring of natural heritage sites.

Lindsey et al. (2020)<sup>35</sup> noted that the restrictions also created positive environmental outcomes for wildlife and wildlands across many natural parks. It was noted that “reduced industrial activity and mechanized transportation lowered emissions and air pollution around the heritage sites”. The findings of this study support the idea that the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the conservation and preservation of natural heritage sites has been largely positive. However, as governments ease restrictions, the resumption of local and international flights may reverse the positive outcomes, as people begin to visit the natural sites after a long period of lockdown. In Western Australia, for instance, the partial lifting of restrictions made more people visit beaches, parks and other natural places.

Taking these considerations into account, we can say that the COVID-19 crisis impacted natural heritage sites in the following ways during the pandemic:

- i. **Increase in illegal activities such as looting, poaching, illegal mining, etc:** Many people leveraged the restricted role of park rangers and managers to perform illegal activities threatening the conservation of the biodiversity and ecosystems of natural sites.
- ii. **Increase in vulnerability to natural disaster (bush fires, flooding, etc.):** This is connected to the inability of park managers and rangers *to perform their duties*. For instance, bushfires and flooding affected different areas within the natural heritage sites in Côte d’Ivoire.
- iii. **Re-emergence of endangered species:** There were sightings of the Saharan cheetah, which is on the endangered species list, in Ahaggar Cultural and Natural Parks during the pandemic.
- iv. **Self-rehabilitation of the elements of biodiversity:** The closure of natural parks allowed *nature to breathe and recover*. The *reduction in human activities and pollution allowed for the increased ecological activity and breeding of locally endangered animals, such as the anaconda, giant turtle, elephant, hippopotamus and monkeys*.

The COVID-19 crisis has often been described as a ‘perfect storm’, and its positive outcomes are reversible. Therefore, in the long term, it is likely that (i) the loss of park ranger and manager jobs may lead to the weakening of security, the lowering of

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<sup>34</sup> Romagosa, F. (2020). The COVID-19 crisis: Opportunities for sustainable and proximity tourism. *Tourism Geographies*, 22(3), 690-694.

<sup>35</sup> Lindsey, P., Allan, J., Brehony, P., Dickman, A., Robson, A., Begg, C., Tyrrell, P. (2020). Conserving Africa's wildlife and wildlands through the COVID-19 crisis and beyond. *Nat Ecol Evol*, 4(10), 1300-1310.

conservation capacity, and increased threats to wildlife and ecosystems. (ii) Continuous reduction in budgetary provisions and subventions for natural heritage sites may further threaten the protection of biodiversity and ecosystems, and result in the collapse of wildlife-based tourism, especially in developing countries.

## 5.6. Responses and Recommendations

### **Responses**

When the WHO declared the coronavirus outbreak a pandemic, this sent shockwaves across the heritage sector. Since then, stakeholders across countries and regions have implemented various interventions to understand and mitigate the negative and to improve the positive impact of the COVID-19 crisis. Our findings revealed that governmental and non-governmental stakeholders are implementing measures in the areas of policy, practice, and management of natural heritage sites (see Table 5.1).

### **Recommendations**

Based on the expectations revealed in the ICOMOS Statement, 'ICOMOS and COVID-19: Heritage as a Cornerstone of Human, Social, and Economic Recovery' (Kono & Landa, 2020), heritage is central not only to sustainable development, but also to human, social and economic recovery from disasters. COVID-19 is a disaster affecting heritage sites and communities around the world. The following recommendations (see Table 5.2) have been developed to inform and mobilize stakeholders in order to address the problems created by the COVID-19 crisis and to advise on sustainable approaches to heritage management post-COVID-19. The recommendations are designed to support the recovery and resilience of natural heritage sites, as well as organizations and communities connected to these sites.

**Table 5.1. Responses Implemented Across Countries to Address the Implications of the COVID-19 Crisis**

<b>Response category</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>Examples of countries that implemented the response</b>
<b>Capacity development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Improving the skill capacity of natural heritage employees in the use of digital tools, such as video-conferencing, augmented and virtual reality tools, etc</li> <li>- Enhancing the skills of tour operators in creating awareness and marketing on social media, websites, etc</li> </ul>	Germany, Japan, Australia, Malaysia, USA
<b>Continuous data gathering and research</b>	Continuous collection of data to understand the changes in the dynamics of the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on natural heritage	United Kingdom
<b>Development of standard operating procedures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Review of the existing and development of new standard operating procedures to guide stakeholders during the post-COVID-19 period</li> <li>- Development of new and innovative tour packages and nature trails to attract tourists, local and international, to adapt to the new normal of the post-COVID-19 crisis period</li> </ul>	Japan, Malaysia
<b>Engagement and involvement</b>	Implementation of innovative ways to strengthen the involvement and engagement of local communities with natural heritage	Netherlands, USA, Côte d'Ivoire
<b>Government support</b>	Government support (including financial) for a rapid recovery of tourism and related organisations	Australia, United Kingdom, Japan
<b>Heritage-centred development initiatives</b>	Implementation of new and expansion of existing heritage-centred development interventions	Australia, Malaysia
<b>Information dissemination and communication strategies</b>	Review of the existing approaches to information dissemination in natural heritage sites	Japan, Slovenia
<b>Job creation</b>	Renewed focus on the retention of existing jobs and the creation of new job opportunities in the local communities of heritage sites, such as Aboriginal communities	Australia
<b>COVID-19 safety</b>	Implementation of COVID-19 safety measures and testing capacity for a quick detection of the infected, implementation of social distancing measures, etc	Nigeria, Algeria, Côte d'Ivoire, Georgia, Ireland
<b>Stakeholder collaboration</b>	Improved collaboration between heritage experts, policymakers, non-governmental organisations and local communities	USA, Australia
<b>Security and surveillance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Recalibration of safety and security measures to address the increase in illegal activities in natural heritage sites</li> <li>- Adoption of innovative surveillance technologies such as CCTV, sensors, etc. to improve security and safety in natural heritage sites</li> </ul>	Algeria, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo

**Table 5.2. Recommendations for the Recovery and Resilience of Natural Heritage Sites**

Areas for recovery and resilience	Stakeholder			
	Government	Heritage operators/ professionals	Local communities	Non-government organisations
<b>Job security and support for employees</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Enactment of legislation to protect the workers and employees of natural heritage sites against uncertainties</li> <li>- Continuation of government support to employees of natural heritage sites</li> <li>- Provision of subsistence-level income to employees and compensations to employees who lost their jobs</li> <li>- Continuous data gathering to understand the changing impact of the COVID-19 crisis on jobs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Continuous collaboration with the government to monitor and evaluate the impact of the support provided by the government</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Growing interest in local heritage sites to gradually improve revenue generation and to support local tourism operators</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Continuous collaboration with the government to monitor and evaluate the impact of the support provided by the government</li> </ul>
<b>Financial sustainability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Implementation of innovative measures to support natural heritage sites and related organisations financially</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Skill development for employees focused on innovative ways of fundraising and financial management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Encouragement of community members to donate and participate in crowdfunding and philanthropic initiatives</li> <li>- Volunteering at heritage sites to help the managers of heritage sites to reduce the wage burden</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provision of financial support to natural heritage sites</li> <li>- Volunteering at heritage sites to help the managers of heritage sites to reduce the wage burden</li> </ul>
<b>Development and implementation of conservation policies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Enforcement and review of conservation policies</li> <li>- Adoption of participatory approaches to policy-planning and decision-making</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Performance of necessary tasks defined in conservation policies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Active involvement in policy planning meetings and other stakeholders' fora</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Involvement in policy planning</li> <li>- Monitoring of policy implementation and other interventions</li> </ul>
<b>Safety and security of heritage sites and tourists</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Supporting the identification, creation and sharing of knowledge related to disaster risk management and preparedness in natural heritage sites</li> <li>- Continuous strengthening of COVID-19 safety and security strategies in natural heritage sites</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Enhancement of existing or development of new disaster risk management plans and their implementation in each natural heritage site</li> <li>- Ensuring the availability of emergency funds to manage the activities of natural heritage sites during crises</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Involvement in community surveillance mechanisms to improve the safety and security of natural heritage sites</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Enhancement of existing or development of new disaster risk management plans and their implementation in each natural heritage site</li> <li>- Provision of personnel and financial support to natural heritage sites during crises</li> </ul>
<b>Socio-cultural implications</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Development of programmes and interventions to promote community recovery and resilience through natural heritage</li> <li>- Improving ICT infrastructure and supporting the digitisation of the tasks and activities of natural heritage sites</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Improving public awareness of the benefits of natural heritage sites to communities in addressing the impact of the pandemic</li> <li>- Sustained stakeholder collaboration to address the impact of the COVID-19 crisis</li> <li>- Enhanced public access to the contents of natural heritage sites through digital tools</li> <li>- Continuous evaluation of the results and impact of digital tools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Involvement in participatory approaches to the appreciation and management of natural heritage sites</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Involvement in participatory approaches to the appreciation and management of natural heritage sites</li> <li>- Sustaining community engagement and involvement</li> </ul>

## 6. Community Responses

### 6.1. General Observations

Previous sections of this Report focused on the impact and effects of COVID-19 on different categories of heritage. The goal of this chapter is to concentrate on the impact of COVID-19 on local communities and analyze what measures can be taken to build a resilient heritage ecosystem. Question 5 of the Questionnaire asked the NCs to explain how local communities were able to access, use and enjoy heritage sites, objects or elements during COVID-19. In particular, the NCs were asked to focus on the activities of local communities and the measures that were taken by various stakeholders (mainly central and local governments and NGOs) to respond to the challenges brought about by COVID-19 with regard to different categories of heritage.

The responses by the NCs highlighted multiple issues, practices, and stakeholders involved in helping communities confront the pandemic. Complex considerations that affected how local communities were able to interact with and benefit from heritage were reported. Section 6.2 of this Report provides a high-level overview of the way COVID-19 affected communities and their interactions with tangible, intangible and natural heritage. Section 6.3 focuses on specific measures taken to ascertain that communities have access to and are able to use and enjoy heritage sites. To better illustrate these measures, we developed a taxonomy of the information submitted by the NCs. Section 6.4 is devoted to further insights and recommendations for building a resilient heritage ecosystem as the world comes out of the shadows of COVID-19.

From a methodological perspective, the focus on one special stakeholder group - local communities - leads to a better understanding of the diversity of actions and policies that could be implemented with regard to the existing practices related to the access, use, and enjoyment of heritage by communities. In this chapter, we refer to communities as networks of people whose sense of identity emerges from a shared and rooted historical relationship, centered not only in the practice but also in the transmission or other types of involvement with their heritage.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, focusing on individuals and local communities (rather than heritage objects and culturally significant practices) changes the perspective as to the normative considerations that must be taken into account when building a resilient heritage ecosystem. This is especially important in order to restore and improve the conditions for communities to interact with and benefit from heritage resources in the post-COVID-world.

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<sup>36</sup> See, e.g., Filomena Sousa, 'The Participation in the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage: The Role of Communities, Groups and Individuals' (2018), at 9.

## 6.2. The Impact of COVID-19 on Communities

The information provided by the NCs highlights the shift in how communities are accessing, using and enjoying heritage since the beginning of COVID-19. Naturally, the relationship between communities and heritage during COVID-19 varies depending on factors such as geographical location, the socio-economic state of the country, types of heritage (tangible, intangible, natural), and their general preparedness to deal with the challenges brought about by COVID-19.

With regard to tangible heritage, the closure of heritage sites to visitors not only had a direct impact on the maintenance, preservation and monitoring of heritage sites themselves, but also influenced the commercial, social and cultural practices of the local communities. The closure of heritage sites coincided with the decline of tourists and hospitality-related activities that largely depended on tourists. Some of the NCs explained that local communities began using tangible heritage sites for new purposes as a result. For instance, in the parish of Susudel (national heritage site in Ecuador since 2013), they developed an outdoor market on the esplanade of the main square. This outdoor market facilitated the development of trade and exchange activities and promoted the development of intangible cultural activities.

With regard to intangible heritage, such as seasonal festivals, gatherings and community activities (including traditional arts and crafts), the overwhelming majority of the NCs reported a major shift of such culturally significant practices into the digital space. Mobility and travel restrictions due to COVID-19 helped communities realize the potential of the digital space and to benefit from online platforms. Similarly, online platforms provided an opportunity to try out new or expand existing avenues of disseminating knowledge about heritage or distribute works by local craftsmen.

With regard to natural heritage, most of the NCs addressed the impact of COVID-19 mobility restrictions on natural sites. Halting international travel served as a catalyst for an increased interest in domestic tourism around local heritage sites. The NCs indicated that during the lockdown period, natural heritage sites were used for both traditional (e.g., visiting sites for recreation and leisure)<sup>37</sup> and non-traditional purposes. For instance, in Nepal, people began using natural heritage sites for jogging and exercise - something that did not happen pre-COVID-19.<sup>38</sup> The NCs of the US reported examples of how archaeological sites were adapted and transformed into outdoor museums.<sup>39</sup>

## 6.3. Community-Oriented Measures to Facilitate Access, Use, and Enjoyment of Heritage

Based on the responses received, the Taskforce created a taxonomy of measures utilized by different stakeholders to facilitate community access, use, and enjoyment of heritage. Such a taxonomy serves two main purposes: (a) to provide a concise overview of the

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<sup>37</sup> Dutch NC response, Lithuania NC response.

<sup>38</sup> Nepal NC response.

<sup>39</sup> USA NC response to Question 5.

variety of responses aimed to help local communities during COVID-19, and (b) to lay an empirical foundation for developing recommendations on how to build a resilient heritage framework.

The proposed taxonomy of measures was developed based on the three ways in which communities interact with heritage: access to heritage, use of heritage, and enjoyment of heritage. By “access”, we mean the availability of heritage resources that communities need to physically or virtually approach heritage. The notion of “access” has the following dimensions: (a) whether the access is granted or not; (b) whether the access is free or paid; and (c) whether the conditions of accessing heritage-related resources are easy and fair. In discussing the “use” of heritage, we focus on the actual heritage resources accessed and experienced by communities. In addressing the “enjoyment” of heritage, we aim to identify whether a particular heritage site or object gives any sort of pleasure or benefit to individual members of the community or the community as a whole. “Enjoyment” therefore refers to the ways in which communities exercise, practice, and consume cultural heritage.

### 6.3.1. Providing Information about the Accessibility of Heritage Resources

During such unprecedented times as COVID-19, one of the crucial factors in controlling the pandemic is the availability of accurate, up-to-date and reliable information. Most of the NCs reported a wide variety of measures taken by governments to prevent the transmission of the virus. Restricted access to heritage sites, mobility restrictions, and limiting the number of people that could gather in one place were among the most frequently mentioned precautionary measures.<sup>40</sup>

In the context of communities’ ability to access, use and enjoy heritage, this meant that there should be one or several reliable sources of information about the location of heritage objects, sites, and culturally important activities. Several NCs reported measures taken by government authorities to create a database (or a website) containing the information about the accessibility of heritage sites. For example, the Korean Cultural Heritage Administration created a database of 385 cultural properties located in different regions. Those heritage properties were grouped into three categories, depending on various criteria, including the physical distance between visitors. The government realized early on the importance that heritage properties play in soothing the anxieties of people living through COVID-19 and increasing their sense of happiness.<sup>41</sup>

Information about accessibility could involve various types of data. In addition to providing the location of heritage properties and the information about the conditions of accessing sites (e.g., sanitation, social distancing requirements), government agencies could take a further step in proposing guidelines that could serve as a template for individual heritage sites and properties. Such initiatives have been taken by Irish authorities.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> See, e.g., Algeria, Armenia, Belgium, Japan, Sweden NC responses to Question 5.

<sup>41</sup> Korea NC response to Question 5.

<sup>42</sup> Ireland NC response.

The lack of information about COVID-19-related infection risks and the accessibility of sites could lead to severe adverse consequences. Probably the most controversial and concerning situation emerged in the US, where native tribes living in specially designated territories and historically significant areas were negatively impacted by the visits of tourists. Native Americans naturally have several dozen times lower immune response to the coronavirus and were among the most affected social groups because of the increased number of visitors from highly populated cities. This has led to many deaths in local communities, despite the fact that the leaders of native Americans asked people not to visit those areas.<sup>43</sup>

### 6.3.2. Adoption of Digital Tools and Platforms

The biggest change in the way communities have accessed, used, and enjoyed resources since the beginning of the pandemic relates to the adoption of digital technologies. All National Committees provided illustrations of how communities adopted digital communication technologies and social networking. Digital technologies were relied upon for accessing, using, and enjoying tangible, intangible, and natural heritage. As such, digital technologies can be seen both as an interim alternative to traditional practices and a means to achieve long-term goals.

#### ***(a) Five Main Tenets of Adopting Digital Technologies***

From the rich information provided by the respondent NCs, the Taskforce was able to identify the following five scenarios where digital technologies were adopted to facilitate the access, use, and enjoyment of heritage. First, the lockdown and the resulting mobility restrictions around the world acted as a catalyst for people to search for heritage-related information online. In practice, this meant that the number of people who were searching for and accessing virtual databases, catalogs, and other forms of content increased exponentially. Lockdown measures predictably led to an increased website traffic for the most famous and popular museums and heritage sites. It should be noted that such an increased crowd of virtual visitors was largely possible because those museums and heritage sites already had digital collections in place and were able to offer virtual tours before the pandemic hit (e.g., the Australian Museum).<sup>44</sup>

Second, the increased use of the digital means of communication brought to light the need to move content into the digital format. Museums and heritage property managers who did not have digital content in pre-pandemic times were confronted with the need to create it. The organisations which had enough resources to do that were able to generate new content and facilitate the community involvement in accessing and enjoying it. However, museums and heritage property managers with fewer resources either had to secure those resources or simply were not able to create digital content.

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<sup>43</sup> See US NC responses to Question 1; and Dana Hedgpeth, Darryl Fears and Gregory Scruggs, 'Indian Country, where residents suffer disproportionately from disease, is bracing for coronavirus' available at: [www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2020/04/04/native-american-coronavirus/](http://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2020/04/04/native-american-coronavirus/) (last visited on November 16, 2020).

<sup>44</sup> Australia NC response.

Third, the NCs provided examples of digital content which, while created in pre-pandemic times, was adapted to the demands of growing online audiences. The best illustrations of this are photo catalogues transformed into video clips and accompanied by a narrative; or photo and video content supplementing three-dimensional story-telling. For example, in the UK, certain architectural treasures (e.g., the Painted Hall at the Old Royal Naval College) can be visited in a virtual tour.<sup>45</sup>

The fourth category of the use of digital technologies in facilitating the access, use, and enjoyment of heritage consists of transforming existing digital content into content that could be used for novel purposes. Most frequently, this means modifying and converting information for educational purposes. Such content adjustment usually involves tailoring the content for specific audiences based on age or social characteristics. For instance, the UK national report indicated a number of heritage-related programs that were developed specifically for local schools, toddlers, or refugees and migrants who felt especially isolated during the lockdown.<sup>46</sup>

Here, it is important to highlight three possible reasons that may have facilitated the adoption of digital technologies for educational purposes: (a) the monotonous nature of studying at home; (b) the realization that heritage-related content can provide an emotional boost and promote wellbeing; (c) the need to maintain and spread local cultural traditions and preserve local heritage.

Finally, we observed the expansive use of social media and digital communication platforms (Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, etc.) to facilitate the access, use, and enjoyment of heritage.

### ***(b) Access, Use, and Enjoyment of Heritage Online***

One telling example of how communities benefited from digital media in facilitating the *use* of heritage comes from China.<sup>47</sup> “Tomb-sweeping Day” is an important time for Chinese people to pay their respects to the dead. In 2020, the Tomb-sweeping day activities were cancelled in order to control the pandemic. As a result, all Tomb-sweeping Day activities moved online and provided a great opportunity for people to remember family members, friends, and heroes who lost their lives during the pandemic. People were posting articles and sharing how they were celebrating this important festival through online platforms. This shift to the virtual space also created an opportunity for the online marketing of products related to the rituals of the Tomb-sweeping day.

Another illustration of employing digital tools to facilitate the access and enjoyment of heritage relates to the **creation of special platforms** for sharing information about cultural and heritage events and activities. In Greece, for example, the creation of such a digital platform was curated by the Ministry of Culture and Sports in cooperation with the Ministry

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<sup>45</sup> UK NC response to Question 5; see <https://ornc.org/our-story/today/painted-hall-tours/>. See also the US NC response, which refers to the virtual guided tours of Frank Lloyd Wright’s heritage sites.

<sup>46</sup> UK NC responses to Question 5.

<sup>47</sup> China NC response.

of Digital Governance.<sup>48</sup> The content on the platform is categorized into music, theater, cinema, books, museums, archaeological sites, and educational programs. The platform is accessible to everyone and is constantly enriched with new reliable information about cultural heritage and events.

### ***(c) Considerations With Regard to the Use of Digital Tools***

Even though there is considerable added value associated with the use of digital technologies in the areas related to heritage, three important considerations should be explored further: (a) ascertaining that access to heritage is equitable and fair to different groups of people and communities; (b) exploring the avenues for using digital tools and platforms without putting authenticity at risk; (c) exploring the possibilities of respecting and maintaining cultural identities online; (d) accounting for the fact that digital technologies (e.g., Internet connectivity, necessary tools to process information) may not be available and that individuals may suffer from the lack of digital literacy.

### **6.3.3. Transformative Use of Outdoor Spaces**

Scientific evidence about how COVID-19 tends to spread among humans facilitated innovative thinking in the use of outdoor spaces. A number of NCs reported a transformation of outdoor spaces for new purposes and activities. Usually, such decisions to use public or private spaces to satisfy the needs of local communities were undertaken by government authorities (although not necessarily).

In Ireland, local convent schools were opened for local residents who could enjoy outdoor spaces; in Curragh-Kildare Heritage Center, cultural landscape book club meetings were organized.<sup>49</sup> In Canada, the City of Montreal created installations in its Quartier des Spectacles with socially distanced presentations by one or two artists.<sup>50</sup> In the US, some archaeological sites were transformed into outdoors museums.<sup>51</sup> In the Swiss region of Val Bregaglia, social events such as mini-concerts for 4-8 people and open air exhibitions were organized.<sup>52</sup>

The lesson learned from NCs that reported transformative uses of outdoor spaces is that creative and immediate solutions to unexpected challenges are both necessary and possible. With regard to COVID-19, outdoor spaces could serve multiple needs of local communities while requiring little investment. They tend to contribute to an increased appreciation of heritage sites and have multiple positive side effects (e.g., increased bonding among the members of a community during COVID-19 lockdown).

### **6.3.4. Use of Green Spaces**

The NCs reported ample examples of communities expressing the need and willingness to be in nature. During the pandemic lockdown, an increased interest in visiting natural parks

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<sup>48</sup> Greece NC response to Question 5. The platform is available at: <https://int.ert.gr/category/news/culture/>.

<sup>49</sup> Ireland NC response to Question 5.

<sup>50</sup> Canada NC response to Question 5.

<sup>51</sup> USA NC response to Question 5.

<sup>52</sup> Switzerland NC response.

and botanical gardens both in the near vicinity as well as within the country was reported (e.g., Singapore,<sup>53</sup> Netherlands,<sup>54</sup> Lithuania,<sup>55</sup> Canada,<sup>56</sup> Ireland<sup>57</sup>). A number of NCs highlighted how individuals' being in nature and feeling connected to it enhanced their wellbeing. Partly due to mobility restrictions, local communities paid greater respect to their local natural sites and appreciated them more than before the pandemic. For example, visitors to Plitvice Lakes in Croatia spent more time there and seemed to have appreciated the fact of being able to visit the place more than the experience itself.<sup>58</sup>

### 6.3.5. Economic Incentives for the Benefit of Communities

In order to assist communities during the COVID-19 crisis, governments introduced various economic and financial incentives and measures addressing the social, economic, and cultural activities of local communities. These measures were analyzed in detail in the previous sections of this Report.

In addition to fiscal stimulus packages to cover the losses from decreased tourism, a great number of other economic measures were conceived. For example, in Ecuador, in an attempt to meet the economic needs of the local community, an outdoor market on an esplanade was created. The purpose of the market was to promote the development of cultural and economic activities and to keep the communities' heritage alive.<sup>59</sup> In Albania, the government provided economic incentives to heritage sites that prioritised the right of access over economic gain.<sup>60</sup>

### 6.3.6. Promoting the Involvement of Various Stakeholders

Various other stakeholders became involved in facilitating the access, use, and enjoyment of heritage together with local communities. In particular, the NCs identified many situations where impactful actions were taken not only by governments and governmental agencies in charge of culture, but also by non-governmental organizations and private businesses.

While in Malaysia, the Department of Culture and the Department of Museums organized a great variety of virtual events, other stakeholders also showed considerable resilience. For instance, one private organization started organizing virtual events about the Melaka World Heritage site. Another private organization created an immersive experience of prehistoric time travel. As mentioned above, in Ireland, convent schools assisted local communities by providing access to outdoor areas and green space for residents without gardens ("Heritage in Your Area" program).<sup>61</sup> The Japanese NC emphasized the role played by NGOs, museums and local communities in rescheduling events in order to prevent the

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<sup>53</sup> Singapore NC response to Question 5.

<sup>54</sup> Netherlands NC response to Question 5.

<sup>55</sup> Lithuania NC response to Question 5.

<sup>56</sup> Canada NC response to Question 5.

<sup>57</sup> Ireland NC response to Question 5.

<sup>58</sup> Croatia response to Question 5.

<sup>59</sup> Ecuador NC response to Question 5.

<sup>60</sup> Albania NC response to Question 5.

<sup>61</sup> Ireland NC response to Question 5.

spread of COVID-19.<sup>62</sup> In Japan, a number of instances were reported where private organizations as well as NGOs contributed financial resources to cover COVID-19 testing expenses in areas devastated by natural disasters.<sup>63</sup> In Lithuania, communities of Vilnius Old Town residents filed petitions to government authorities reporting instances of the invasive use of public spaces (e.g., cutting trees or destroying tangible heritage) that occurred due to the lack of monitoring.<sup>64</sup>

As the examples above demonstrate, the involvement of various stakeholders in solving COVID-19-related challenges help to find effective answers to unforeseen challenges. Furthermore, such involvement in heritage-related activities promotes mutual trust and the sense of community.

IMPACT	EXAMPLES	Countries
Information about Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Providing an up-to-date centralized information resources about accessibility of heritage</li> </ul>	Greece, Korea
Use of Digital Technologies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community involvement through online exhibitions, tours, lectures, and events</li> </ul>	Virtually all countries
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Using online platforms to facilitate access, use, and enjoyment of heritage</li> </ul>	China, UK, US, Lithuania, Morocco, Nepal, Nigeria
Use of Public Spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Opening private and public spaces for community use</li> </ul>	Ireland, Singapore
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New ways of use public spaces</li> </ul>	Canada, USA
Use of Green Spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Using green spaces for variety of purposes leads to greater appreciation of natural heritage and contributes to increased sense of happiness</li> </ul>	Canada, Croatia, Greece, Ireland, The Netherlands, Nepal, Singapore, Tunisia, Lithuania
Community Involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promoting involvement of various stakeholders</li> </ul>	Ireland, Japan, Lithuania, Malaysia

Figure 6.1. Impact on Communities.

## 6.4. Measures to Build Resilient Communities

The focus on communities raises a set of considerations that should be taken into account when building a framework for resilient heritage. Due to mobility restrictions and social distancing requirements, communities have been directly impacted by the way heritage resources are accessed, used, and enjoyed. Insights could be drawn from the NC's responses, and policy recommendations could be made with regard to their shared features and best practices, in order to ensure that community voices are heard in accessing, using, and re-opening heritage sites and properties.

Bearing in mind that the reliance on digital tools and online platforms plays a major role in dealing with the negative consequences of mobility restrictions, ICOMOS should consider developing a toolkit for the use of digital technologies in various types of community activities. Such a toolkit could be based on the data collected by the COVID-19 Taskforce. Further consultations could be held with respective NCs and other stakeholders. In any case, further research is needed to discuss the possible unintended consequences of using

<sup>62</sup> Japan NC responses to Question 5.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Lithuania NC response to Question 5.

digital technologies in heritage space (especially unequal access and the risk of losing authenticity).

## Recommendations

**1. To facilitate the physical access and use of heritage sites, government agencies should create centralized, up-to-date, and easy-to-use resources about the accessibility of heritage sites (location, opening hours, mandatory precautionary measures, etc.).**

- Directed to state agencies who can then cooperate with heritage experts.
- Impact on communities: greater heritage appreciation, emotional wellbeing, reduced anxiety.
- Safety measures to prevent the overuse of resources and harm to the environment and local residents.
- Examples: Korea, Greece.

**2. To curtail the effects of COVID-19-related restrictions, digital technologies and online platforms should be used to facilitate the access, use, and enjoyment of heritage.**

- Digital technologies and online heritage platforms provide quick and easy access to heritage-related resources.
- The use of digital technologies could have some side effects (loss of authenticity, loss of intimacy, silencing community voices).
- Heritage experts should be consulted where necessary.

**3. To solve the challenges of reduced mobility and social distancing, public spaces and natural sites could be used to meet community needs.**

**4. In dealing with the unprecedented challenges of COVID-19, government entities should collaborate and encourage the involvement of various stakeholders (NGOs, local communities, private businesses) in solving problems on an ad hoc basis.**

- Open collaboration between various affected parties and stakeholders helps to build mutual trust and find efficient solutions.
- Heritage experts should be consulted where necessary.
- Examples: Japan.

## 7. The Role of ICOMOS in Handling COVID-19 Responses

### 7.1. General Observations

In response to Question 7 of the Questionnaire, 37 NCs offered a number of valuable suggestions about the possible actions to be taken by the ICOMOS, ISCs, and NCs in order to help ICOMOS member countries to deal with the ramifications of the pandemic. However, out of 45 countries that submitted responses (there were 47 responses in total, including two from Indonesia and Côte d'Ivoire), eight NCs did not respond to Question 7 and only responded to questions relevant to the situation in their respective countries.

Some NCs expressed detailed expectations with regard to the role of ICOMOS International, while other NCs shared their suggestions about the role of ICOMOS in general, without making more specific references to ICOMOS International or ICOMOS NCs. In a couple of responses, the respondent NCs mentioned that ICOMOS should accelerate the tourism sector or function as a funding agency. Bearing in mind that these activities are outside the mandate of ICOMOS, the following overview does not include these responses.

#### Question 7 of the Questionnaire

Please describe what measures, policies and programs could ICOMOS International take to facilitate the recovery of tangible and intangible heritage from the COVID-19 pandemic.

### 7.2. General Overview of the Responses

The diverse opinions expressed in relation to Question 7 were consistent enough to be categorized into the following groups:

Suggested Focus Areas for ICOMOS International			
<b>1</b> <b>Sharing</b> <b>COVID-19-related</b> <b>information and</b> <b>knowledge</b>	<b>2</b> <b>Gathering</b> <b>empirical data</b>	<b>3</b> <b>Expanding</b> <b>regional ties</b>	<b>4</b> <b>Using and supporting</b> <b>ICT platforms</b>
<b>5</b> <b>Advocating for</b> <b>heritage,</b> <b>implementing</b> <b>regular mandate</b>	<b>6</b> <b>Educational outreach</b> <b>to communities</b> <b>and youth</b>	<b>7</b> <b>Policy statements</b> <b>and calls for no</b> <b>budget cuts for</b> <b>heritage</b>	<b>8</b> <b>Expert advice &amp;</b> <b>support in local</b> <b>monitoring</b>

Figure 7.1. Categorization of Responses by Focus Areas.

1. Promotion of exchange and sharing of best practices: some of the responses stressed the relevance of the exchange of knowledge on the regional level, and there were recommendations to prepare a publication/toolkit/guidelines on COVID-19-related heritage measures that could be shared on the international level.

2. Most respondents wished to know more about COVID-19-related experiences and measures in other countries. Gathering empirical data is very effective in this respect, as it could easily lead to the sharing of trends and practices.
3. There was an expectation that ICT platforms should be used in activating and facilitating networks through online events (webinars). NCs should be invited to participate in discussions at appropriate times for different time zones.
4. With regard to digital media and digital literacy support, some NCs expressed the pressing need to have more training in using ICTs, virtual reality technologies, and virtual tour programmes in their respective countries, especially in museums and heritage sites.
5. The NCs called for continued assistance in highlighting the importance of heritage within each country and strengthening the ICOMOS regular mandate. For instance, it was suggested that NCs should be created in countries where NCs are non-existent. It was also suggested that the lockdown should be used to advance in peer-reviewing World Heritage Tentative Lists with the input on the international level, in order to facilitate the upstreaming process for World Heritage nominations.
6. It was suggested that more attention should be paid to educational initiatives which could directly target communities involving young people and children.
7. The expected role of ICOMOS included advocating to national governments about the need to retain the pre-COVID level of government funding for heritage-related programs (i.e., there should be no “budget cuts” for heritage).
8. As part of other suggestions, ICOMOS, as a professional network, was expected to call for the continued support of national and local experts for on-site monitoring of heritage sites.

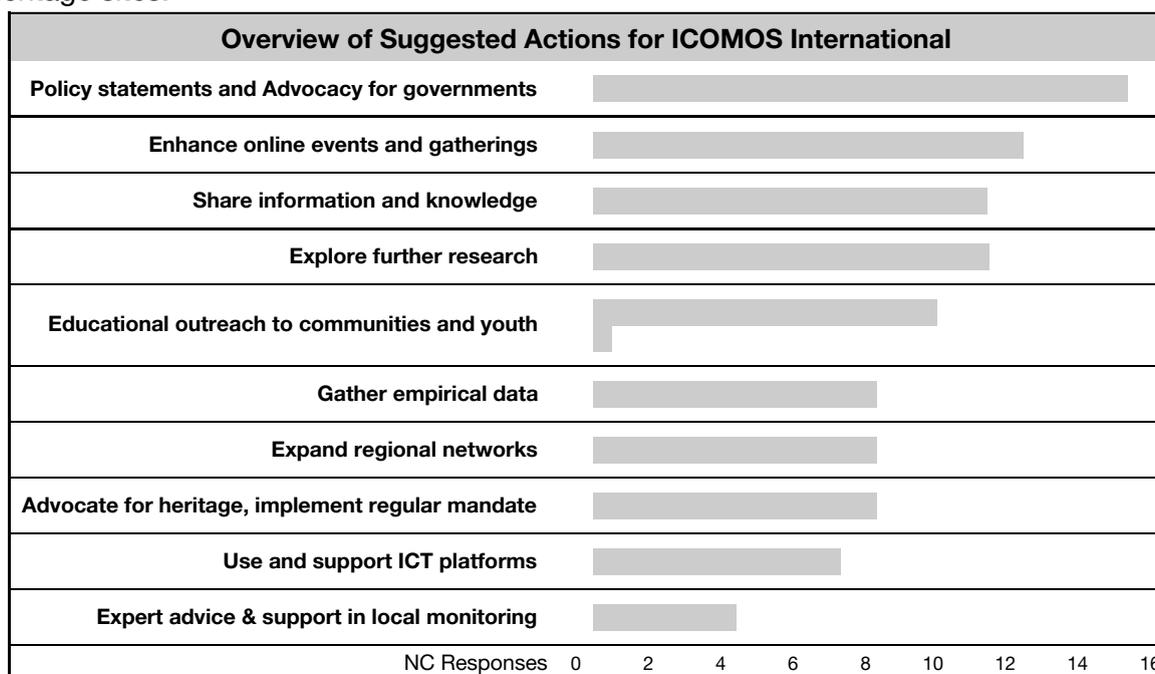


Figure 7.2. Quantitative Overview of Responses to Question 7.

### 7.3. The Role of ICOMOS on the International Level

The NCs provided many insightful suggestions about the actions that ICOMOS International could take in order to help countries deal with the ramifications of COVID-19.

Figure 7.2 illustrates the distribution of the 37 NCs that responded to Question 7 (82% of total respondents).

### 7.3.1. Sharing and Disseminating Information and Knowledge

Eleven NCs offered suggestions in this category, highlighting the role of ICOMOS in circulating information about experiences in different regions,<sup>65</sup> sharing good practices,<sup>66</sup> and encouraging dialogue between countries to build capacity necessary to cope with unforeseen challenges.<sup>67</sup>

The NCs indicated that they would expect ICOMOS to share information and knowledge by publishing a document on the ICOMOS website with a list of recommended readings, best practices, and case studies sorted by thematic areas.<sup>68</sup> The existing ICOMOS open archive aims to fulfil this expectation.

ICOMOS was also expected to issue publications on the impact of the pandemic and post-pandemic recovery<sup>69</sup> and to produce, where possible, guidelines and training material for managing a similar crisis in the future.<sup>70</sup> International guidelines were also sought in the area of the sanitization of museums and heritage sites, indicating clear procedures and sharing best practices.<sup>71</sup>

“ICOMOS could, together with the WHO and UNESCO, work out some guidelines/recommendations for the measures to be taken in the field of heritage, and make them available to all nations. It could also recommend how to support the concerned institutions financially as well as provide safety guidelines and hygiene procedures for historic sites,” suggests NC Switzerland.<sup>72</sup>

There was also a recommendation to create and share a list of COVID-19 emergency funds, grants and other resources, funded by transnational government bodies such as the EU.<sup>73</sup>

### 7.3.2. Collecting Empirical Data

Eight NCs suggested that more empirical data should be collected. Data is the basis of the information analysis and dissemination addressed in Section 7.3.1, so the two categories are closely intertwined.

More specifically, ICOMOS was expected to collect and communicate examples and case studies related to COVID-19 measures, policies and programmes from around the world,

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<sup>65</sup> Croatia NC response.

<sup>66</sup> Ecuador NC response.

<sup>67</sup> Greece NC response.

<sup>68</sup> Philippines NC response.

<sup>69</sup> Malaysia NC response.

<sup>70</sup> UK and Australia NC response.

<sup>71</sup> Jordan NC response.

<sup>72</sup> Switzerland NC response.

<sup>73</sup> Netherlands NC response.

share statistics and present trend summaries.<sup>74</sup> A mapping exercise identifying regional trends was proposed.<sup>75</sup> NCs also suggested that it was important to share best practices and case studies in order to see how others were recovering and to bring international attention to places and people seriously impacted by the pandemic.<sup>76</sup> Although the creation of intangible and tangible heritage registers is the work of states, it was suggested that ICOMOS should encourage them to record the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic period on heritage.<sup>77</sup>

Australian NC mentioned that “a survey to gather information and additional data on how the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak is affecting the cultural sector” would be useful. This survey would look at “groupings of similar places (e.g., museums, natural sites, etc.). The collected data would allow the analysis of trends relating to the crisis for the cultural sector and would help to better understand the needs of these groups in the short and long term. It may also enable the pooling of experience and resources to create international partnerships to assist institutions and other heritage organisations to get back on their feet.”<sup>78</sup>

### 7.3.3. Exploring Further Research Areas

Eleven NCs suggested that further research was needed to assess the impact of the pandemic. They identified several areas of research to which ICOMOS, as an intellectual and professional network of heritage experts and a knowledge exchange platform, could contribute.

#### ***(i) Impact of COVID-19 in Depth***

Lithuania NC suggested that a comprehensive study of the impact of the pandemic should be conducted: “It is generally understood that COVID-19 had a serious impact on economic, social and cultural activities. However, more comprehensive studies are clearly missing (e.g., how many sites closed, for how long, what was the impact on heritage management, the number of people fired/furloughed, the impact of COVID-19 restrictions on the conservation and restoration activities, whether the sanitation of streets with certain disinfectants could affect the facades of historical buildings, what was the impact of COVID-19 on looting and thefts in national parks, etc.). Such studies should not merely focus on numbers, but assess the impact on heritage.”<sup>79</sup>

The importance of recording changes and alterations in heritage sites was also mentioned. A record of heritage that disappeared together with the causes for its disappearance could clarify the actions that need to be taken in collaboration with communities and governments to achieve post-pandemic recovery.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Sweden, Armenia, and USA NC responses.

<sup>75</sup> Croatia and Ecuador NC responses.

<sup>76</sup> Canada NC response.

<sup>77</sup> Albania NC response.

<sup>78</sup> Australia NC response.

<sup>79</sup> Lithuania NC response.

<sup>80</sup> Mexico NC response.

### ***(ii) Tourism and Income from Visitors***

While examining the impact of lost tourism revenue on the management and conservation of heritage sites,<sup>81</sup> the heritage community could use the pandemic as an opportunity to re-evaluate the capacity of sites so as to develop more sustainable and responsible practices of tourism management.<sup>82</sup> A survey focusing on the financial declarations of heritage sites would clarify the need for financial aid schemes.<sup>83</sup> Regions and sites most seriously hit by the loss of tourism revenue should be encouraged to explore financial incentives and grants for which they are eligible.<sup>84</sup> Economic diversification strategies for heritage sites with excessive dependence on tourism should be designed.<sup>85</sup>

### ***(ii) Heritage and Socio-Economic Benefits***

Heritage experts often stress that heritage produces economic and social benefits. However, these benefits should be communicated much more clearly to ensure that heritage sites participate in the broader socio-economic recovery. One of the suggestions we received was to conduct a review of the existing studies on this topic to strengthen heritage advocacy.<sup>86</sup> ICOMOS was also expected to support governments in creating documents showing the trends of social and economic recovery in relation to cultural heritage.<sup>87</sup> This would allow cultural heritage to be given a place on the national and international recovery agenda.

### ***(iii) Hygiene and Environment***

Spain NC suggested that further research should be conducted on protective and hygiene products that do not harm the environment.<sup>88</sup> It was also suggested that more research was needed on the multi-purpose use of public outdoor spaces, namely, how they could be transformed for diverse cultural and economic activities that empower local communities.<sup>89</sup> Studying the impact of the pandemic on the environment would encourage further reflection on the relationship between natural and cultural (tangible and intangible) heritage.<sup>90</sup>

### ***(iv) Public Health and Well-Being***

A number of NCs highlighted the role that heritage plays in promoting the mental health of individuals and communities. It was suggested that the impact of COVID-19 on the mental health of individuals and communities should be investigated, including how heritage-related activities could benefit the mental and emotional state of individuals.<sup>91</sup> Furthermore, the benefits of heritage to mental health could be investigated in relation to

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<sup>81</sup> Israel NC response.

<sup>82</sup> Jordan NC response.

<sup>83</sup> Spain NC response.

<sup>84</sup> Lithuania NC response.

<sup>85</sup> Colombia NC response.

<sup>86</sup> USA NC response.

<sup>87</sup> Spain NC response.

<sup>88</sup> Spain NC response.

<sup>89</sup> Lithuania NC response.

<sup>90</sup> Morocco NC response.

<sup>91</sup> Lithuania NC response.

the sense of belonging and identity.<sup>92</sup> Clarifying the positive role of heritage sites in public health and well-being would lead to the development of programmes and policies that could facilitate the recovery of both tangible and intangible cultural heritage.<sup>93</sup>

#### 7.3.4. Expanding Regional Networks and Ties

Eight NCs suggested that regional networks and ties between the NCs of ICOMOS as well as the communities of heritage professionals should be expanded. ICOMOS International was encouraged to improve ICOMOS NCs professional support networks,<sup>94</sup> assist NCs and International Scientific Committees in transferring their meetings online in order to broaden access,<sup>95</sup> and to create a region-specific knowledge-sharing platform so that countries can learn from each other's practices, innovations and mistakes.<sup>96</sup> It was suggested that working at the regional level makes more sense during the pandemic and can be more impactful depending on the type of issues addressed.<sup>97</sup> It was noted that ICOMOS should strengthen and expand its strategic initiatives and governance structures to enable intercultural interactions between national and international members based in all countries of all regions and continents.<sup>98</sup>

ICOMOS international was also expected to ally with ICCROM in organising knowledge sharing sessions and in initiating discussions between National Committees and International Scientific Committees, with ISCs providing theoretical information and NCs showcasing its local applications, so that online discussions could be accessible to a larger number of countries.<sup>99</sup>

The NC of Ireland suggested that “the Africa Region should be encouraged to have a participatory if not a lead role. At least the debate and collaboration of the African Landscape Network should be showcased as an example of the use of competencies within the region (perhaps through NC agendas).”<sup>100</sup>

The theme of the ICOMOS Day this year was “Shared Cultures, Shared Heritage, Shared Responsibility”. Sharing, communicating, and cooperating beyond national borders will continue to be the spirit of future measures and policies.<sup>101</sup>

#### 7.3.5. Strengthening Advocacy for Heritage and Implementing the ICOMOS Mandate

Eight NCs suggested that ICOMOS should offer additional support for heritage advocacy. A number of countries responded that they expected ICOMOS to proceed with its regular mandate during the global pandemic. More specifically, ICOMOS should continue

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<sup>92</sup> Ireland NC response.

<sup>93</sup> Ireland NC response.

<sup>94</sup> Malaysia NC response.

<sup>95</sup> Canada NC response.

<sup>96</sup> Ecuador and Nepal NC responses.

<sup>97</sup> Nepal NC response.

<sup>98</sup> Morocco NC response.

<sup>99</sup> Philippines NC response.

<sup>100</sup> Ireland NC response.

<sup>101</sup> China NC response.

advocating for management, strategic planning, fundraising, etc. related to heritage.<sup>102</sup> ICOMOS should also draw the attention of the authorities to the effects of the pandemic on heritage in order to consider possible solutions.<sup>103</sup>

The NC of the UK mentioned that ICOMOS should “offer support to NCs with minimum or no capacity to help cultural sectors remain viable and recover in the coming months and years.”<sup>104</sup>

Algerian NC responded that ICOMOS should “continue its usual activities, and take advantage of the increased use of digital media to reach more people, while encouraging countries that do not yet have an ICOMOS NC to create one.”<sup>105</sup>

The NC of Japan stated: “If the spread of COVID-19 pandemic becomes the new normal, ICOMOS should develop its activities in such a way that ICTs are used to strengthen mutual support while acknowledging regional differences. Various methods and activity policies based on the current situation should be developed.”<sup>106</sup>

ICOMOS International was also expected to encourage NCs to develop their heritage recovery plans so that they can draw attention to the importance of the heritage sector in national economic recovery strategies,<sup>107</sup> and to draft a risk mitigation plan for both tangible and intangible heritage.<sup>108</sup>

A valuable suggestion was also expressed in relation to the ICOMOS regular mandate, namely, that a peer-review committee of World Heritage Tentative Lists should be established.<sup>109</sup> This committee would share the perspective of ICOMOS International scientific committees with NCs, thus contributing to the upstreaming of World Heritage nominations.

### 7.3.6. Enhancing Online Events and Gatherings for Professionals

Twelve NCs offered suggestions with regard to online events and gatherings for professionals. The COVID-19 pandemic forced the global population to restrict gatherings and direct contacts. Given the importance of *in-situ* work, the heritage sector was hit by the restrictions of movement and gatherings particularly severely.

However, NCs evaluated the potential of online discussions in developing networks and sharing knowledge largely positively. Many NCs voiced the opinion that ICOMOS should organize and facilitate online events (meetings, committees, webinars, workshops, lecture series, training programmes) related to the maintenance, monitoring, conservation and recovery of heritage. These events should involve multidisciplinary teams in order to find

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<sup>102</sup> Canada NC response.

<sup>103</sup> Slovenia NC response.

<sup>104</sup> U.K. NC response.

<sup>105</sup> Algeria NC response.

<sup>106</sup> Japan NC response.

<sup>107</sup> Nigeria NC response.

<sup>108</sup> Greece and Ethiopia NC responses.

<sup>109</sup> Philippines NC response.

the most appropriate solutions in COVID-19 times.<sup>110</sup> Local representatives should be invited to participate at times most appropriate for different regions. While face-to-face meetings are certainly precious occasions to travel, network, visit and discuss heritage places together, online meetings can be useful in dealing with administrative matters, voting and experience sharing.<sup>111</sup>

### 7.3.7. Using and Supporting ICT Platforms and Digital Media

Seven NCs gave suggestions with regard to the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) and digital media. It seem crucial to debate the meaning of the digital transformation of work,<sup>112</sup> on which we are heavily dependent in the times of COVID-19. Some NCs expressed the opinion that ICOMOS International could provide technical support in creating new digital content and storing it online,<sup>113</sup> or in documenting the intangible aspects of cultural heritage (subject to receiving consent from heritage communities).<sup>114</sup>

ICOMOS was also expected to support the development of virtual reality tours for World Heritage and other heritage sites in order to promote and sustain public engagement,<sup>115</sup> and for tangible and intangible heritage in heritage interpretation centers.<sup>116</sup>

Nepalese NC stated the following: “Many museums are now hastily working on digital strategies. The National Museum is preparing to launch a unique digital experience to showcase their vast collection. Same with the Patan Museum. They too find themselves in a position to seriously think about their digital presence. But the challenge here is how to navigate something they have never done. Going digital will bring multifaceted challenges. [...] Not only technical issues, but also how to present the information and whose lead to follow. There will be logistical challenges and human resources challenges that have not been seriously considered. The support and training for the capacity building of museums and museum staff is the greatest need.”<sup>117</sup>

On the practical side of visitor management, ICOMOS was expected to encourage cultural and natural heritage properties to manage tickets and reservations on-line; such an approach could reduce the negative impact of overtourism.<sup>118</sup>

### 7.3.8. Outreach to Local Communities and Youth

Ten NCs suggested increasing the outreach to local communities and youth. ICOMOS was expected to encourage capacity-building activities in local communities. Because of the multiplicity of languages and contexts of ICOMOS communities, ICOMOS International may

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<sup>110</sup> See Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Guatemala, The Netherlands, Jordan, Greece, Lithuania, and Philippines NC responses.

<sup>111</sup> Sweden NC response.

<sup>112</sup> Greece NC response.

<sup>113</sup> Comoros and Côte d'Ivoire NC responses.

<sup>114</sup> Nigeria NC response.

<sup>115</sup> Nigeria NC response.

<sup>116</sup> Côte d'Ivoire and Lithuania NC responses.

<sup>117</sup> Nepal NC response.

<sup>118</sup> Slovenia NC response.

not be able to reach out to all relevant communities directly. However, it could support NCs that empower communities to take charge of their cultural heritage in the time of COVID-19 and beyond.<sup>119</sup> ICOMOS was also expected to encourage professionals to support “community resilience” during the COVID-19 crisis,<sup>120</sup> and to encourage the continuity of intangible practices, especially by involving indigenous youth, given that they might be more likely to get involved during the pandemic.<sup>121</sup> It was suggested that ICOMOS should work with communities to document and validate community initiatives (e.g., Other Stories),<sup>122</sup> and develop programmes and policies to facilitate the recovery of tangible and intangible cultural heritage. ICOMOS should capitalise on the increased public engagement with heritage during the pandemic by promoting cultural heritage as a valuable community resource in times of need.<sup>123</sup> It was also proposed that public-facing competitions should be organised to encourage individuals and communities to share their heritage-related practices and experiences.<sup>124</sup>

Irish NC suggested that the “localisation of ICOMOS programmes is key. Grassroots experience and resilience are invaluable and should be prioritized in agendas. Great care and attention are needed at the exploratory stages of any project to establish partnerships which recognize the key role of, and give a voice to, local communities. Without this, ICOMOS will be preaching to the converted.”<sup>125</sup>

Regarding tourism restrictions, it was suggested that exceptions should be made for small cultural facilities, such as small businesses, small museums and collections, since they are able to organize individual guided tours and controlled visits in small groups.<sup>126</sup>

It was also mentioned that the importance of sanitary measures and social distancing should continue to be highlighted,<sup>127</sup> since these measures seem to be well respected in some communities and countries and not so much in others.

The importance of adapting educational resources was also emphasised. Educational programmes aimed at local populations could encourage the development of heritage-centred tourism and strengthen their identity and sense of belonging.<sup>128</sup> Teacher training in this field, from primary school to university faculty, was also raised as an important issue.<sup>129</sup> Awareness-raising among school students could happen through outings, books, interventions by specialists and teachers, games, etc.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Comoros NC response.

<sup>120</sup> Australia NC response.

<sup>121</sup> Nepal NC response.

<sup>122</sup> Ireland NC response.

<sup>123</sup> Ireland NC response.

<sup>124</sup> Lithuania and Ecuador NC responses.

<sup>125</sup> Ireland NC response.

<sup>126</sup> Slovenia NC response.

<sup>127</sup> Côte-d'Ivoire NC response.

<sup>128</sup> Spain NC response.

<sup>129</sup> Tunisia NC response.

<sup>130</sup> Tunisia NC response.

### 7.3.9. Policy Statements and Advocacy to Governments and Decision-Makers

Fifteen NCs gave suggestions with regard to policy statements and advocacy measures that ICOMOS International should adopt. The role of ICOMOS in speaking up for heritage and addressing government authorities was deemed even more crucial given the impact of COVID-19 on the heritage sector. ICOMOS International was encouraged to continue to spread its message, sharing information and advice necessary to address this global challenge.<sup>131</sup>

The NCs sought support from ICOMOS International and the Scientific Committees in putting pressure on governments in order to ensure that cultural and natural resources are treated as an important area of sustainable recovery and resilience during and after the pandemic.<sup>132</sup> ICOMOS was expected to remind governments that heritage is closely intertwined with several economic sectors,<sup>133</sup> and that heritage sites and museums have considerable socio-economic effects on local communities.<sup>134</sup> It was also stated that policies on facilitating the recovery of tangible and intangible cultural heritage could be developed, and that the damaging effects of the pandemic on heritage could be used to increase awareness of the vulnerability of such sites and the necessity of safeguarding them.<sup>135</sup> Training national and local authorities in the field of heritage was also raised as an issue.<sup>136</sup>

The NC of Lithuania said the following: “The increased support for various utilitarian theories and policies due to COVID-19 should be taken into account. Such utilitarian theories and policies are geared to “fix” a single problem - the economic condition. Governments and organizations should be reminded that economic recovery is not the only concern and that deregulation for various heritage-related safeguards should not be the only goal. ICOMOS International should emphasize that instead of focusing on short-term economic measures, governments as well as agencies and organizations should consider the multi-faceted role that heritage sites and objects play in social, economic, and cultural life.”<sup>137</sup>

#### ***(i) Advocacy for Financial Measures***

One of the urgent actions recommended to ICOMOS International was to advocate for no budget cuts for heritage. Japan NC drew ICOMOS attention to the fact that “private property owners suffered from the current pandemic and may need to give up the upkeep of heritage if left alone without support. ICOMOS International could share good practices with policymakers and encourage them to initiate or continue budgetary support to those local/private actors of heritage conservation.”<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Japan NC response.

<sup>132</sup> Nepal NC response.

<sup>133</sup> Morocco NC response.

<sup>134</sup> Canada, Korea, and Tunisia NC responses.

<sup>135</sup> Ireland NC response.

<sup>136</sup> Tunisia NC response.

<sup>137</sup> Lithuania NC response.

<sup>138</sup> Japan NC response.

It was suggested that ICOMOS should be more proactive in drawing the attention of governments to the need to devote more resources (financial as well as intellectual) to heritage sites and heritage-related activities (e.g., financial assistance to culture, artists, craftsmen and small businesses).<sup>139</sup> It was proposed that all States Parties adhering to the 1972 World Heritage Convention should consider implementing a heritage tax.<sup>140</sup> Tax-related financial incentives were also proposed in order to ensure a better protection of heritage sites and objects during public health emergencies and to address the impact of the pandemic.<sup>141</sup>

### ***(ii) Biosecurity Standards***

ICOMOS was encouraged to support national government and other institutions in adhering to biosecurity standards by sharing plans and strategies adopted worldwide that could contribute to the earliest possible resumption of activities related to tangible and intangible heritage, such as the reopening of World Heritage Sites.<sup>142</sup>

### ***(iii) Support for Cultural Tourism and Associated Industries***

Advocacy was sought in diversifying the revenue streams of heritage sites so that they are not excessively dependent on income from visitors.<sup>143</sup> It was also highlighted that additional support was necessary to promote the recovery of cultural tourism and its associated industries that shed jobs during the pandemic.<sup>144</sup> ICOMOS was also encouraged to engage with national governments and remind them that domestic post-COVID-19 recovery should include measures that promote traditional crafts, restoration work, and the safety of visitors who access heritage properties.<sup>145</sup> Although ICOMOS is not a tourism acceleration organization, it could advise national governments about inclusive and regenerative tourism practices so that the industry might come back stronger after COVID-19.<sup>146</sup>

### ***(iv) Statements and Policy Documents***

ICOMOS International was encouraged to issue statements on the importance of the cultural heritage and making good use of existing resources so that heritage is not forgotten in post-pandemic recovery and sustainable development plans.<sup>147</sup> ICOMOS could also provide national governments with written guidelines for developing policy documents.

<sup>148</sup>

### ***(v) Advocacy for Compliance with International Norms***

Notwithstanding the current COVID-19 situation, some NCs expressed the opinion that ICOMOS should continue its regular government advocacy regarding the local

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<sup>139</sup> Lithuania NC response.

<sup>140</sup> Nigeria NC response.

<sup>141</sup> Lithuania NC response.

<sup>142</sup> Colombia NC response.

<sup>143</sup> Sweden NC response.

<sup>144</sup> Nepal NC response.

<sup>145</sup> Lithuania NC response.

<sup>146</sup> Netherlands NC response.

<sup>147</sup> Sweden and US NC response.

<sup>148</sup> New Zealand NC response.

implementation of international treaties, such as the 2003 Intangible Heritage Convention<sup>149</sup> and the 1972 World Heritage Convention.<sup>150</sup> ICOMOS was asked to support NCs in implementing their current management plans, integrating emergency and safeguarding plans, and developing sustainable tourism plans, which would allow NCs to respond to emergencies at earlier stages. ICOMOS was also expected to help governments develop and apply measures necessary to prevent archaeological looting.<sup>151</sup>

### 7.3.10. Expert Support in On-Site/Local Monitoring

Four NCs provided suggestions in this category. The COVID-19 pandemic has made it difficult to conduct on-site surveys and consultations on cultural heritage, but ICOMOS members should make efforts to continue their previous activities while trying to prevent infection.<sup>152</sup> Regarding the impact of COVID-19 on heritage, ICOMOS should help to assess the degree of recovery in various sites.<sup>153</sup> ICOMOS should also increase the monitoring of illegal excavations, trafficking, poaching, vandalism and theft, which accelerated during the pandemic. More tools and systems should be developed to mitigate the negative impact of public health crises on heritage and to ensure proper surveillance of heritage objects.<sup>154</sup>

## 7.4. Ways Forward for the Current Research: Practical Suggestions

Six NCs gave suggestions on how the research results outlined in this Report should be shared and further developed.

Japanese NC said that “once the results of this Questionnaire are aggregated and supplemented with additional surveys, they should be shared with all members and used as a reference document in future activities of each National Committee.” These results “could become useful for ICOMOS as a whole in creating future policies and programs.”<sup>155</sup>

The UK NC encouraged the continuation of research with “further surveys on an annual basis for the next three years, in order to capture trends in recovery across the globe.” This research should “take into account the diverse socio-political, economic and environmental status of participants. Sharing the findings of this survey with NCs, especially lessons learnt, central policies implemented and examples of good practice, with all members would be a good starting point.”<sup>156</sup>

Australian NC encouraged ICOMOS to “share the survey information with all NCs”, and to “monitor developments and changing needs”<sup>157</sup> over time.

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<sup>149</sup> Nigeria NC response.

<sup>150</sup> Spain NC response.

<sup>151</sup> Tunisia NC response.

<sup>152</sup> Japan NC response.

<sup>153</sup> Mexico NC response.

<sup>154</sup> Jordan NC response.

<sup>155</sup> Japan NC response.

<sup>156</sup> U.K. NC response.

<sup>157</sup> Australia NC response.

NC Ireland pointed out that “appropriate partnerships with Working Groups should be encouraged, for example, Our Common Dignity/Rights-Based Approach Working Group and the Indigenous Heritage Working Group”.<sup>158</sup>

NC Sweden encouraged ICOMOS to expand the scope of research by “cooperating with other heritage and culture organizations”<sup>159</sup>, and NC Algeria asked ICOMOS to share “good practices that encourage resilience” and to listen to ICOMOS members by “organizing virtual roundtables”. Like the UK and Australia, Algeria also suggested that ICOMOS should “follow the evolution of the pandemic so as to be able to adapt quickly.”<sup>160</sup>

Lastly, NCs highlighted that international cooperation in the field of heritage conservation was forced to take a back seat “due to restrictions affecting the international movement of experts. Communication channels and digital tools are to be further utilized for sharing useful information and best practices/advice, when local and foreign actors can no longer collaborate *in-situ*.”<sup>161</sup>

The current research will be shared in the manner and spirit championed by the NCs in order to encourage mutual support and collaboration between heritage communities and networks.

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<sup>158</sup> Ireland NC response.

<sup>159</sup> Sweden NC response.

<sup>160</sup> Algeria NC response.

<sup>161</sup> Japan NC response.

## 8. Paths Forward: A Framework for Building Heritage Resilience

One of the major empirical findings of this study on the impact of COVID-19 on heritage was that heritage plays a monumental role in economic, social, cultural, and mental dimensions. Despite the loss of tourists, heritage sites and objects emerged as a non-renewable resource for human social, economic, cultural, and moral well-being. Furthermore, numerous cases reported by the NCs show that heritage has an impact on human rights, equality, accessibility, humanity, identity, and diversity.

The Taskforce proposes to the ICOMOS Board that it should continue exploring the impact of COVID-19 on heritage. This can be done by conducting follow-up surveys which should help collect more data and case studies about the best practices. This ongoing research could be especially important if ICOMOS decides to offer expert advice on the reopening of heritage sites and propose recommendations, action plans or toolkits for a resilient heritage framework in the post-COVID-19 world.

More specifically, based on the initial findings gathered from the NCs and the recommendations made in this report, Taskforce envisions the following phased steps forward (subject to the approval of ICOMOS Board):

<b>Phase I</b>	June 2020 - December 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finalizing the Survey and Submitting the Report</li> <li>• Communication of the results</li> </ul>
<b>Phase II</b>	December 2020 - End of February 2021	Drafting the Framework for Resilience
<b>Phase III</b>	February 2021- April 2021	Public and Expert Consultation (with ICOMOS Board, NCs, ISCs, and other interested stakeholders)
<b>Phase IV</b>	April 2021 onwards	Finalizing the Framework for Resilience

**Figure 8.1. Possible Paths Forward for COVID-19 Research.**

The present Report should be treated as an initial attempt to investigate the global impact of COVID-19 on heritage. Once the Report is finalized, the Taskforce suggests that its results should be communicated to the broader society, opening the recommendations it makes for world-wide discussion.

**Phase II.** We suggest that the next phase of the Taskforce activities should be focused on using the collected empirical evidence to begin drafting a “Framework for Resilience”. Bearing in mind the far-reaching effects of COVID-19 on heritage, such a Framework could contain a set of practical recommendations with regard to (a) the use of heritage resources during the pandemic, and (b) the reopening of heritage sites and the resumption of heritage-related activities.

**Phase III.** The draft Framework prepared by the Taskforce should act as a catalyst for broader discussions with the widest possible range of stakeholders within ICOMOS and beyond. Therefore, we propose opening a window of two-to-three months during which interested stakeholders could submit their comments and recommendations on how to update and improve the initially proposed Framework for Resilience. These recommendations could be assessed and incorporated into the Final Framework for Resilience (**Phase IV**).

Such a continuation of the Taskforce's activities seems to be a natural progression of the work that has been undertaken so far. Besides, it should be noted that quite a few NCs encouraged the ICOMOS to "enforce the network aspect of ICOMOS' mandate" and to continue sharing information about the impact and measures related to COVID-19 and best practices on regional and international levels. NCs also suggested that a continued exploration of the impact of COVID-19 on heritage could strengthen ICOMOS as an expert organization. It was also indicated by NCs that there is a clear need for additional surveys to continue collecting, documenting, and sharing data amidst the evolving situation of the pandemic.

# Appendix 1: The Questionnaire

## ICOMOS SURVEY “RESILIENCE+”

The Impact of COVID-19 on Cultural Heritage and Pathways to Recovery

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In this Survey, ICOMOS is calling all National Committees to share their experience and insights about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on heritage (cultural, natural, and intangible) and explore the possible ways towards recovery.

The overall objective is to gather country-specific information about the current state of heritage and the measures taken/to be taken to cope with the challenges of this pandemic.

Based on the responses received from the National Committees, the ICOMOS COVID-19 Task Force will prepare a report, identify the pertinent issues, and develop guidelines and strategies to facilitate the recovery process.

Please submit your responses to this questionnaire to [icomos.covid19@icomos.org](mailto:icomos.covid19@icomos.org) by Monday August 31st, 2020.<sup>162</sup>

Thank you very much in advance for your time and cooperation.

### COVID-19 Task Force

Prof. Toshiyuki Kono  
President of ICOMOS

Olufemi Adetunji  
ICOMOS Nigeria

Sanaa Niar  
ICOMOS International

Virginia Rush  
ICOMOS Argentina

Junko Okahashi  
ICOMOS Japan

Paulius Jurcys  
ICOMOS Lithuania

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<sup>162</sup> This deadline was extended until September 24<sup>th</sup> and then again until October 24<sup>th</sup>.

## Information about the Respondent's National Committee

Your National Committee: \_\_\_\_\_

\*If there is no national committee established yet, please identify the territory you are responding about:

\_\_\_\_\_

Focal Point for the ICOMOS Questionnaire on COVID-19 (name, email address):

\_\_\_\_\_

(The contact details will be kept confidential)

\_\_\_\_\_

### Question 1

**1(a) Has the COVID-19 pandemic affected the following categories of heritage in your country?**

Tangible heritage:

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

Intangible heritage:

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

Natural heritage:

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

**1(b) How has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted cultural heritage in your country?**

*For instance, what was the effect of the decrease in tourism on cultural heritage? Has there been any financial impact on heritage conservation/protection/management in your country? Has there been any impact on on-site human resources? Has the security or maintenance of heritage sites been affected? Did you notice the increased use of digital technologies to facilitate community engagement with heritage objects or elements in your country?*

### Question 2

**Please provide one or two examples of tangible heritage (monuments, buildings, cultural landscapes, archaeological sites, etc.) in your country and describe how COVID-19 has affected/is affecting them.**

*What have been the factors affecting these heritage properties before COVID-19 and since the beginning of COVID-19? In answering this question, you may refer to the themes listed in question 1(b) above.*

### **Question 3**

**Please provide one or two examples of intangible heritage (living traditions, festivals, cultural expressions, etc.) in your country and describe how COVID-19 has affected/is affecting them.**

*What have been the factors affecting these heritage elements before COVID-19 and since the beginning of COVID-19? In answering this question, you may refer to the themes listed in question 1(b) above.*

### **Question 4**

**Please provide one or two examples of natural heritage in your country and describe how COVID-19 has affected/is affecting them.**

*What have been the factors affecting natural heritage sites before COVID-19 and since the beginning of COVID-19? In answering this question, you may refer to the themes listed in question 1(b) above.*

### **Question 5**

**Are there any examples illustrating how local communities access, use, and enjoy heritage sites, objects, or elements during COVID-19 in your country (e.g., historical town centers, festivals, etc.)? If yes, please describe.**

### **Question 6**

**Please describe the measures, policies, programs or traditional mechanisms related to heritage, implemented to address the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the heritage sites and objects in your country and by whom (e.g., central, regional, and local government agencies, local communities, NGOs, academic institutions, museums, ICOMOS National Committee, etc.).**

### **Question 7**

**Please describe what measures, policies and programs ICOMOS International could take to facilitate the recovery of tangible and intangible heritage from the COVID-19 pandemic.**

## Appendix 2: Surveys by Other Organizations

### a) Policy Makers

- UNESCO<sup>163</sup>
- UN Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights<sup>164</sup>
- Europa Nostra<sup>165</sup>
- Europeana<sup>166</sup>

### b) Heritage-Related Organizations

- ICORP<sup>167</sup>
- ICOM<sup>168</sup>
- Organization of World Heritage Cities<sup>169</sup>
- Habitat Professionals Forum<sup>170</sup>
- Architects Council of Europe<sup>171</sup>
- Future for Religious Heritage<sup>172</sup>

### c) Other Organizations

- European Cultural and Creative Industries<sup>173</sup>
- European Creative Hubs Network<sup>174</sup>
- NEMO<sup>175</sup>
- Res Artis<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> UNESCO quickly started to map COVID-19 related initiatives and launched the “Culture & COVID-19: Impact and Response Tracker” and to monitor the closure of World Heritage Sites. There is an ongoing survey on Living heritage experiences in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

<sup>164</sup> “Protecting Human Rights during and after the COVID-19”, May, 2020, [Joint questionnaire](#) by Special Procedure mandate holders, UNCHR Special Branch, Geneva, Switzerland.

<sup>165</sup> Europa Nostra provided a collection of statements, open letters and surveys tools and launched the consultation of the impact of COVID-19 in the heritage world on March 26, 2020.

<sup>166</sup> Europeana launched “Digital Transformation in the time of COVID-19”, a special workshop series for capacity building in June 2020.

<sup>167</sup> Global Heritage Industry and Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic, Survey, March 2020.

<sup>168</sup> In April 2020, ICOM the “Museums, museum professionals and COVID-19” Survey.

<sup>169</sup> “World Heritage cities’ responses to the COVID-19 pandemic” initiative, June 2020.

<sup>170</sup> UN Habitat (HPF), A survey conducted in May 2020 on how to achieve resilient human settlements resulted in the HPF Statement on Covid-19 Pandemic.

<sup>171</sup> COVID-19: European overview - ACE Survey (March-April 2020) and COVID-19: European overview - ACE Survey#2 (May 2020).

<sup>172</sup> The impact of Covid-19 on Religious Heritage, Survey (March-May 2020).

<sup>173</sup> Effects of COVID-19 (“Coronavirus”) on the European Culture and Creative Industries, Survey, March 2020.

<sup>174</sup> COVID-19 and Workers in the Cultural and Creative Sectors (June 2020).

<sup>175</sup> Survey on the impact of the COVID-19 situation on museums in Europe (April-May 2020).

<sup>176</sup> COVID-19: Impact Survey on the Arts and Residences Field, available at: <https://resartis.org/covid-19-updates/covid-19-survey/> (last viewed December 20, 2020).

- Circo Strada<sup>177</sup>
- CULTURE 2030 GOAL CAMPAIGN<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> European Network for Circus and Street Arts, Impact Of The Covid-19 Pandemic on Circus And Street Arts, Survey (March-May 2020).

<sup>178</sup> Culture 2030 Goal campaign, 'Culture and the COVID-19 Pandemic', Statement (May 2020).

