



The 5th International NGO Forum on World Heritage at Risk

Ramada City Center Hotel, Manama, 22 - 23 June 2018

We, the Civil Society Organizations who have attended the 5th International NGO Forum on World Heritage at Risk organized by World Heritage Watch on 22-23 June 2018 in Bahrain, coming from 24 countries in 6 continents, as active and concerned citizens dealing with Natural and Cultural World Heritage properties at different places, would like to bring the following to the attention of the World Heritage Committee:

Resolution

On Dangers to the Upper Middle Rhine Valley World Heritage Site

The World Heritage Site Upper Middle Rhine Valley is in danger. Decisions to preserve the universal heritage are absolutely essential. The official reports presented to UNESCO deviate significantly from the actual development. It is urgent to examine the situation closely.

1st Middle Rhine bridge

So far, the World Heritage Committee has been informed that this bridge will improve regional traffic. The new expert reports show clearly that the bridge connects the motorways and federal highways on the left and on the right banks of the Rhine. It is the connection of a new east-west road axis. The bridge closes the only remaining gap for the existing supra-regional road network. In addition, all planning and expert reports submitted to the World Heritage Committee are based on false figures. The draft design of the competition winner Heneghan, Peng-architects, was based on this wrong information. The bridge is in demand by a predominantly non-World Heritage economy. The state of Rhineland-Palatinate supports this transit through the World Heritage Valley of up to 50,000 vehicles and trucks daily. It finances up to 90% of the minimum 100 million € total cost of the bridge and in addition the connecting roads.

The disadvantages for the World Heritage and people are significant. All ferries will cease operation with the construction of a bridge. For cyclists and pedestrians, for people without cars, the Rhine becomes the border. There will be considerably more road traffic in addition to the railway noise.

A traffic plan for the Middle Rhine could clarify the regional traffic needs and the effects of a bridge. This planning proposal has been denied.

2. Railway noise

The maximum load on the Mittelrhein railway lines with a regular noise level of more than

100 dB (A) is well known to all those responsible. The noise and vibration levels continue to rise. Measures to improve the situation are announced but not implemented. These measures include:

1. An alternative route is the most effective means of reducing noise. A proposal to build a new freight railway outside the Middle Rhine Valley was not taken up by the federal government. It has not been built. Reason: no urgent need! A new route is being built in the Elbe Valley although it only has one-third the rail traffic as compared to the Middle Rhine Valley. The Elbe Valley is not a World Heritage Site.
2. Reduced speeds and night driving bans which would cause significantly less noise and reduce vibration.
3. The removal of loud freight cars to reduce noise considerably.
4. The Federal Government has declared its intention to significantly improve noise abatement by banning freight trains without low-noise braking systems from 2020 onwards. Around 600,000 freight cars travel across Europe without restrictions on all railway lines. DB AG owns about 14% of them. It will change its brakes. More than 80% of all freight cars in Europe will remain without new brakes and train noise will remain.
5. The plan to build a new tunnel between Oberwesel and St. Goar on the Lorelei rock will not be built. Instead, the old tunnels will be renovated. The noise will still be present, a significant intervention in the rocks is required.

All proposed noise abatement measures will fail until 2030 due to the at least 30% increase in rail freight traffic. Every train produces noise. Every day 600 freight trains pass (every three minutes) creating continuous noise. For the people in the valley there is never any rest, day and night. The terrible and ever-increasing railway noise is incompatible with the outstanding universal value of the World Heritage Upper Middle Rhine Valley. In addition there is the street noise of the motorway connection over the Middle Rhine Bridge.

3. The Loreley

The Loreley Rock is one of the few places in the world where a myth is still concretely present. It is the epitome of Rhine Romanticism. Derived from this, the rock is today the central identification point of the World Heritage Upper Middle Rhine Valley. As one of the most prominent places in the cultural landscape, the Loreley is well-known far beyond its borders.

The Loreley Plateau is being extensively rebuilt. Studies have been carried out to ensure the visual integrity of the Loreley rock. The work and the study do not match. Far in the Rhine Valley you can now see the huge white tent roof of the Loreley scaffolding. It destroys the "postcard look" over the castle Katz to the Loreleyfelsen, which was taken up in the World Heritage List. Under construction is a landscape park with "Mythenraum" and illuminated obelisk and a huge hotel on an area of 28,000 m². To connect the two sides of the Rhine Loreley a suspension bridge has been built. The summer toboggan run, which is not a World Heritage site, completes the picture. A concept to preserve the Loreley myth has not been developed. The way to the myth, the legendary blond maiden on the Loreley rock, now leads over a suspension bridge to a myth room with obelisks.

Conclusion:

- The ICOMOS 2011 evaluation warned that "noise and vibrations are the main obstacle to the development of the Rhine Valley". The actual situation of railway noise is not being taken seriously. The World Heritage Committee should draw the

attention of the Federal Government and the European Union to the noise pollution of the railway in the Middle Rhine Valley and call for concrete measures for sustainable noise reduction. The World Heritage Committee must make it clear that the terrible railway noise endangers the property's World Heritage status

- The planned motorway connection over the Middle Rhine Bridge is not compatible with the outstanding universal value of the World Heritage Upper Middle Rhine Valley. The bridge does not contribute to the conservation of the World Heritage site but benefits the regional economy which uses the property as a transport route. The disadvantages for the World Heritage are considerable: closing of ferry services, people do not cross the Rhine, increase in street noise. The World Heritage Committee must urge the state government not to increase rail noise by interregional road traffic over the Rhine bridge. The government should develop a regional transportation plan to improve regional traffic in the short term
- The unique charisma of the Loreley myth must not be subordinated to purely economic development. It needs to be carefully developed so that the world can continue to identify with it. The tent roof of the Loreley scaffolding sends a negative signal. A suspension bridge over the Rhine is to be rejected categorically.

Manama, 23 June 2018