



WORKING GROUP “UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE”

OUTSTANDING UNIVERSAL VALUES IN THE ALPS

Towards a shared identification of sites representing Alpine values and having the potential to meet the requirements for OUV set out in the Operational Guidelines of the UNESCO World Heritage Convention

1. GENERAL BACKGROUND

According to the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention State Parties are encouraged to harmonise their Tentative Lists of potential World Heritage properties at regional and thematic levels (Section II. C paragraph 73). This exercise pertains to the implementation of the UNESCO Global Strategy for a Representative, Balanced and Credible World Heritage List¹ (WHL). Consequently the Alpine Conference, the political decision making body of the Alpine Convention at the ministerial level, established an intergovernmental Working Group on UNESCO World Heritage² aimed inter alia at increasing the potential of success for Alpine sites and at improving the representation of the Alps on the WHL. This Working Group mainly focuses on transboundary and serial transnational sites³. Since 2007 it has produced a background study on UNESCO World Heritage and Alpine sites on the basis of a collection and thorough analysis of existing documentation. Furthermore the Working Group has clustered potential Alpine sites according to the themes that emerged from its analysis in order to perform a full screening of sites situated in the Alpine arc and having the potential of being inscribed on the WHL.

In 2011 the Alpine Conference entrusted the Working Group with the following key tasks:

- Contribute to the harmonisation of the national Tentative Lists,
- Identify Alpine values with the potential of being universal,
- Facilitate the elaboration of proposals for potential transboundary and/or serial properties from the Alps,

¹ See official documentation at <http://whc.unesco.org/en/globalstrategy>

² See details on composition, objectives, activities and results of the working group at <http://www.alpconv.org/en/organization/groups/WGUNESCO/default.html>

³ In its Periodic Report and Action Plan for Europe 2005-2006 the World Heritage Centre had remarked that in the Alps no transboundary or transnational site had yet been nominated and that a screening process at regional level was expected from the Alpine States.

- Exchange experiences with national administrations and with UNESCO bodies.

The **objective of this paper** is to contribute to the identification of sites representing Alpine values and having the potential to meet the requirements of Outstanding Universal Value (OUV)⁴, which is the fundamental condition for inscription in the WHL under the UNESCO World Heritage Convention⁵.

The **chapter “Methodological considerations”** recalls the general definition of OUV, clarifies the terminology and gives a brief explanation of the relationship existing between OUV and values being characteristic for a specific region, such as the Alps on the basis of the results of the Regional Thematic Expert Meeting on Potential Natural World Heritage Sites in the Alps held in Hallstatt in 2000⁶ and of the States Parties Meeting towards a joint nomination of areas of the Alpine Arc to the WHL held in Turin 2001⁷ as well as of the pertinent scientific literature.

The **chapter “Results”** presents an analysis of the single and serial properties already inscribed in the WHL and of those included in the Tentative Lists of the Alpine States. It delineates then the first results that emerged from the discussions on Alpine values within the Working Group and proposes subsequently additional elements for the identification of Alpine themes related to sites potentially meeting the criteria for OUV.

The **conclusions** of this paper sum up the key themes being specific for the whole Alpine Arc and connected with sites having the potential to meet the requirements of OUV. The findings of this paper are meant to serve State Parties and promoters of candidatures as a basis for the updating of Tentative Lists and the preparation of candidatures for the inscription in the WHL.

2. METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

2.1 Definition of OUV

The preamble of the World Heritage Convention recognises the importance of the concept of OUV by stating that *“parts of the cultural and natural heritage are of outstanding interest and therefore need to be preserved as part of the world heritage of mankind as a whole”*.

Art. 1 of the Convention limits the scope of the OUV with regard to cultural heritage: Concerning monuments (paragraph 1) and groups of buildings (paragraph 2), the

⁴ The definition of outstanding universal values in the Alps from a technical-scientific point of view belongs to the tasks assigned to the Working Group “UNESCO World Heritage” of the Alpine Convention by the Xth Alpine Conference and forms an integral part of the mandate of the Working Group renewed by the XIth Alpine Conference in March 2011. This paper is a further development of the first draft document presented by the Working Group to the XIth Alpine Conference.

⁵ Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, Paris, 16 November 1972

⁶ World Heritage Committee (2000), Report of the Regional Thematic Expert Meeting on Potential Natural World Heritage Sites in the Alps, Hallstatt/Austria, 18 to 22 June 2000, in document WHC-2000/CONF.204/WEB.2

⁷ Report of the States Parties Meeting towards a joint nomination of areas of the Alpine Arc for the World Heritage List, Turin/Italy, in document WHC-01/CONF.208/INF.6

OUV applies only with reference to the point of view of history, art or science. With regard to sites (paragraph 3), only historical, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological points of view will apply.

With regard to natural heritage (Art. 2), the OUV requires the following elements: aesthetic or scientific point of views for physical and biological formations (paragraph 1), science or conservation-points of views regarding geological and physiographical formations (paragraph 2) as well as points of view of science, conservation or of “natural beauty” applicable for natural sites and precisely delineated natural areas.

This concept is further developed in the Operational Guidelines of the Convention⁸ which define OUV as *“cultural and/or natural significance which is so exceptional as to transcend national boundaries and to be of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity. As such, the permanent protection of this heritage is of the highest importance to the international community as a whole.”* (Section II. A. paragraph 49)

OUV is thus the central concept of the Convention. The following issues are relevant in defining its meaning:

- **Outstanding:** For properties to be of OUV they should be exceptional, which should be understood to mean: “to be excellent”, “to surpass others in qualities”.
- **Universal:** The scope of the Convention is global in relation to the significance of the properties to be protected as well as its importance to all people of the world. By definition properties cannot be considered for OUV from a national or regional perspective.
- **Value:** What makes a property outstanding and universal is its “value” which implies clearly defining the worth of a property, ranking its importance based on clear and consistent standards. Defining the worth of a property is related to identifying its significance, which means establishing the themes of universal relevance that ‘build up the story’ of the place. This requires the identification of the relevant cultural-historical context (in thematic and comparative studies). Once the significance of a property has been defined, it will be necessary to proceed to the assessment whether or not it meets the requirements of OUV⁹.

According to the Operational Guidelines the conditions for inscription in the WHL consist of meeting at least one of the ten criteria for OUV, satisfying the conditions of authenticity and/or integrity¹⁰, as well as having appropriate protection and management mechanisms in place¹¹. (Section II.D, paragraphs 77 and 78)

⁸ The „Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention“ (document WHC.12/01) are quoted in the version from July 2012 in force at the time of drafting this paper.

⁹ For the definitions of “outstanding”, “universal” and “value” see ICOMOS (2008), What is OUV? Defining the Outstanding Universal Value of Cultural World Heritage Properties, pages 47 and 48 as well as IUCN (2008), Outstanding Universal Value, Standards for Nature World Heritage, page 2

¹⁰ Whilst meeting the conditions of integrity is mandatory for all properties, the condition of authenticity only applies to cultural properties.

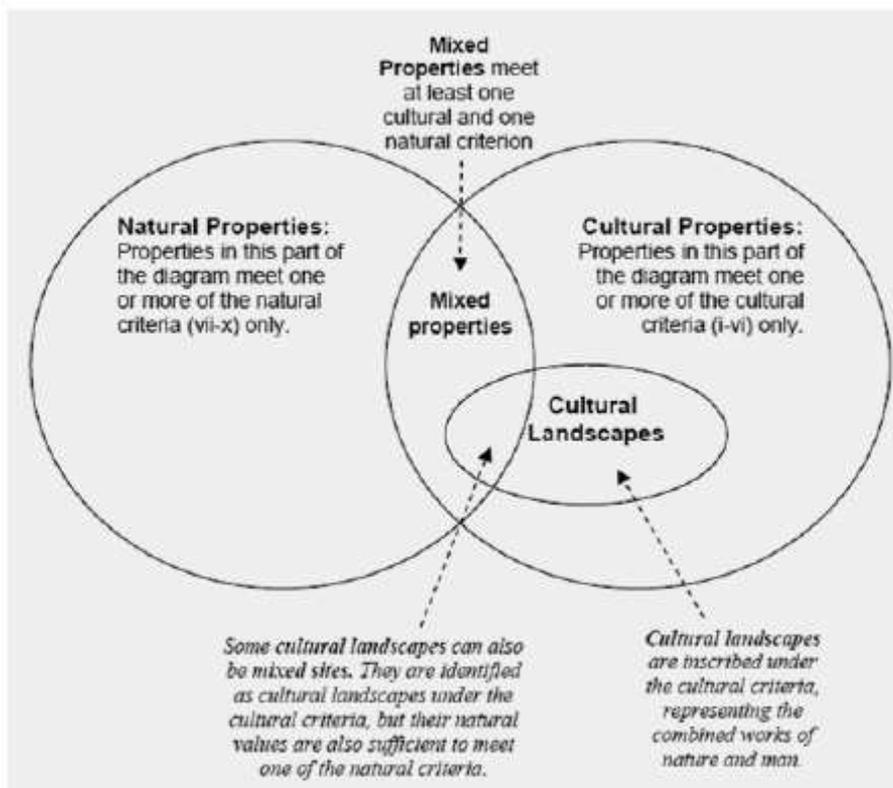
¹¹ The concepts of authenticity and integrity are specified in section II.E, paragraphs 79 to 95, the concept of appropriate management is defined in section II.F, paragraphs 96 to 119.

Nominated properties shall therefore meet one or more of the following criteria. They shall:

- (i) represent a masterpiece of human creative genius;*
- (ii) exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design;*
- (iii) bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared;*
- (iv) be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history;*
- (v) be an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement, land-use, or sea-use which is representative of a culture (or cultures), or human interaction with the environment especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change;*
- (vi) be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance. (The Committee considers that this criterion should preferably be used in conjunction with other criteria);*
- (vii) contain superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance;*
- (viii) be outstanding examples representing major stages of earth's history, including the record of life, significant on-going geological processes in the development of landforms, or significant geomorphic or physiographic features;*
- (ix) be outstanding examples representing significant on-going ecological and biological processes in the evolution and development of terrestrial, fresh water, coastal and marine ecosystems and communities of plants and animals;*
- (x) contain the most important and significant natural habitats for in-situ conservation of biological diversity, including those containing threatened species of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation.*

Properties listed under criteria (i)-(vi) are cultural properties, those listed under criteria (vii)-(x) are considered as natural properties. In case they meet both cultural and natural criteria they are called "mixed. Their respective characteristics are shown in the following graph¹².

¹² Source: IUCN (2008), Natural World Heritage Nominations: A Resource Manual for Practitioners, page 10



As stated by the Operational Guidelines cultural landscapes are cultural properties and represent the "combined works of nature and of man". They are illustrative of the evolution of human society and settlement over time, under the influence of the physical constraints and/or opportunities presented by their natural environment and of successive social, economic and cultural forces, both external and internal (Section II.A, paragraph 47)¹³.

In applying OUV to natural and cultural properties it is important to note that there are intrinsic differences between them.

¹³ Cultural landscapes fall into three main categories, namely **landscapes designed and created intentionally by man**: garden and parkland landscapes constructed for aesthetic reasons, **organically evolved landscapes**: social, economic, administrative, and/or religious imperatives have adapted to their natural environment by creating such landscapes. They fall into two sub-categories: a *relict (or fossil) landscape* is one in which an evolutionary process came to an end but its features are still visible in material form and a *continuing landscape* is one which retains an active social role in contemporary society closely associated with the traditional way of life, and in which the evolutionary process is still in progress, **associative cultural landscapes**: Their inscription is justified by the powerful religious, artistic or cultural associations of the natural element rather than material cultural evidence, which may be insignificant or even absent (Operational Guidelines, Annex 3, paragraph 10)

Key differences between cultural and natural properties (not exclusive)¹⁴	
Cultural Properties	Natural Properties
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sites tend to be fragmented, diverse and not evenly distributed worldwide. • The value or quality of sites tends to depend on things such as materials used; when and how a certain property was created; the history behind the property and the value that society may attribute to those qualities. • Values of sites are usually linked to regional cultural identity for which assessment is often subjective. • The combination of the above tends to result in a high diversity of situations, thus making cultural heritage less predisposed to evaluation through clear classifications systems. • A typological framework (based on similarities) is generally used to assess cultural heritage, which is complemented by a chronological/regional framework and a thematic framework. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most sites are discreet territorial units, are often large, and are distributed in most biomes and ecoregions of the world. • The value or qualities tend to be associated to measurable characteristics such as the diversity of species, number of endemic species, etc. (as far as that information and data is available). • The values of properties are usually linked to scientific information which facilitates objective assessment. • Scientific assessment (both in relation to geographical and biodiversity features) are reflected in classification systems. • A topological framework (based on biogeographical differences and unique characteristics) is generally used to assess natural heritage, complemented by a thematic framework.

The set of criteria for OUV applies to single properties as well as to serial properties made of two or more component parts.

According to the Operational Guidelines serial properties will include component parts by clearly defined links:

- a) Component parts should reflect cultural, social or functional links over time that provide, where relevant, landscape, ecological, evolutionary or habitat connectivity.
- b) Each component part should contribute to the Outstanding Universal Value of the property as a whole in a substantial, scientific, readily defined and discernible way, and may include, inter alia, intangible attributes. The resulting Outstanding Universal Value should be easily understood and communicated.
- c) Consistently, and in order to avoid an excessive fragmentation of component parts, the process of nomination of the property, including the selection of the component parts, should take fully into account the overall manageability and coherence of the property (see paragraph 114).

and provided it is the series as a whole – and not necessarily the individual parts of it – which are of Outstanding Universal Value. (Section III.C, paragraph 137)

¹⁴ See IUCN (2008), Outstanding Universal Value, Standards for Nature World Heritage, page 4. This table reflects the IUCN position. There might be no general agreement on the interpretation and/or implementation of the UNESCO World Heritage Convention.

A serial property can therefore be defined as a “property where two or more component parts are required to express Outstanding Universal Value”. OUV must be borne by the series as a whole, but not necessarily by each separate component.

The OUV of a property may be expressed through the metaphor of the property “telling a story”. For a serial property the component parts can be thought of as different chapters of that story. Serial properties can thus add value in relation to the option of nominating a single property when a series of distinct component parts is needed to “tell the story” of the values within a coherent region, feature or set of values.

Examples from the natural sector are:

- Origin and development of geological phenomena,
- Telling the complete story of a geological time period (community of plants, animals and the environment of a complete time),
- Representing a broad sequence of landform development,
- Representing islands within an archipelago (displaying functional integrity, complete variety of ecosystems),
- Different variations of an ecosystem/vegetation type¹⁵.

2.2 Significance of OUV for the Alps

Taking up what was said before Alpine values could simply be understood as the worth of properties located in the Alpine territory. But for the purpose of this paper, which aims at contributing to the identification of Alpine values related to sites having the potential to meet the requirements of OUV, an additional element is necessary for the definition. Alpine values are thus understood as key features being specific for the Alpine Arc in its entirety. These key features constitute themes (“stories”) distinguishing the Alps.

As regards the relationship existing between OUV and values being characteristic for a specific region it is noted in the Operational Guidelines, that the List is not intended for all properties of great interest, importance or value, but “*only for a select list of the most outstanding of these from an international viewpoint. It is not to be assumed that a property of national and/or regional importance will automatically be inscribed on the World Heritage List*” (Section II.A, paragraph 52).

This applies to Alpine properties as well. Even in case they are representative for the Alpine Arc in its entirety, Alpine properties can cross the threshold of OUV only if they meet at least one of the World Heritage criteria and the other above mentioned requirements.

For properties below this threshold there is a range of different instruments complementary to the World Heritage Convention. Natural heritage sites might for example be recognised within UNESCO’s Man and Biosphere Programme, the UNESCO Geoparks initiative or other international conventions, agreements and programmes, such as the Ramsar Convention for wetlands of international significance and, at the regional level, the European Union Natura 2000 Network. For some cultural heritage recognition through the instruments of the UNESCO

¹⁵ Engels B., Ohnesorge B. and Burmester A. (2009), Nominations and Management of Serial Natural World Heritage Properties, pages 5 and 7

Convention for the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage of 2003 or the European Heritage Label of the European Commission might be considered.

2.3 Previous discussions at the Alpine level

The Alps played for a long time an important role in the perception of mountains, as they were considered as the prototype for the scientific description of mountains in general due to the variety of phenomena encountered and to the earliness of their scientific discovery¹⁶. Geographers therefore named other mountain ranges after the Alps, such as the Australian Alps, the Southern Alps of New-Zealand and the Japanese Alps. This approach has been an obstacle to the understanding of the diversity of the different mountains in the world¹⁷.

Looking for Alpine values in the sense of finding out the themes being specific for the Alpine Arc in its entirety requires identifying the particular key features of the (European) Alps. The results of the Regional Thematic Expert Meeting on Potential Natural World Heritage Sites in the Alps held in Hallstatt in 2000 and of the States Parties Meeting towards a joint nomination of areas of the Alpine Arc to the WHL held in Turin 2001 provide a first idea of these key features¹⁸.

“The Alpine Arc as defined in the Alpine Convention represents a small area on a world scale; it nevertheless has considerable importance for humanity as a whole, not only with regard to nature and landscapes, but also as concerns culture and civilizations linked to the mountain. This is why it deserves to be listed as UNESCO World Heritage, not only because of its most exceptional elements which in themselves constitute sites of universal value, but also in regard to a number of particularly rich sites which, considered as an entity, are exemplary of the entire ensemble”¹⁹.

The natural values of the Alps can be described in this manner: They are a “veritable open-air geological museum, a relict territory of more than a thousand receding glaciers, a mosaic of very diverse natural landscapes of great beauty with exceptional biological diversity”. The following elements seem suited to specify these natural values:

- significant natural environments: persistence of ecological dominance of natural features and processes, level of endemism, globally threatened species and “alpine” species,
- characteristic ecosystems from summits to valleys and lowlands,
- outstanding geological, paleontological and geomorphological sites²⁰

¹⁶ See Debarbieux B. 2001, La montagne: un objet géographique in Veyret Y. (ed.) Les montagnes : discours et enjeux géographiques

¹⁷ See Frolova M. 2001, La représentation et la connaissance des montagnes du monde: Pyrénées et Caucase au filtre du modèle alpin in Revue géographique alpine Tome 89, pages 159 – 172

¹⁸ The following explanations represent a first approximation. Should the need arise they have to be verified and adapted on the basis of other available sources.

¹⁹ World Heritage Committee (2000), Report of the Regional Thematic Expert Meeting on Potential Natural World Heritage Sites in the Alps, Hallstatt/Austria, 18 to 22 June 2000, in document WHC-2000/CONF.204/WEB.2, page 6

²⁰ See Report of the States Parties Meeting towards a joint nomination of areas of the Alpine Arc for the World Heritage List, Turin/Italy, in document WHC-01/CONF.208/INF.6, page 3

The cultural values of the Alps lie in the “very close interaction between people and their environment: this area is shaped by seven millennia of unique agricultural, forestry and pastoral practices and thus constitutes a pattern of unique cultural landscapes on a world scale”. The following elements seem suited to specify these cultural values:

- symbolic and associative sites of the Alps (history of Alpinism, famous peaks etc.),
- specific features which reflect the exchange between cultures such as passes, pathways, routes, fortifications and itineraries (salt route),
- related intangible heritage of the Alps (diversity of languages, surviving cultures),
- adaptation of high mountains cultures to the environment which results in specific cultural (in particular rural) landscapes and traditions (transhumance, pastures etc.),
- example of mountain architectural features and complexes (e.g. mountain villages)²¹.

As regards biodiversity the Alps do not belong to the 25 global biodiversity hotspots identified by IUCN but they are listed as a regional center of plant diversity²² and they are one of the 238 ecoregions of WWF’s Global 200²³. Alpine biodiversity is also the result of cultivation and traditions and was created by human activity in the course of centuries²⁴.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Alpine properties inscribed in the WHL and sites on the Tentative Lists of the Alpine States

An analysis of the criteria on the basis of which properties located in the Alps were inscribed in the WHL and of the criteria envisaged by the Alpine States in their Tentative Lists for the sites proposed for inscription²⁵ clearly shows that the themes identified in chapter two are indeed significant for the Alpine Arc.

²¹ See Report of the States Parties Meeting towards a joint nomination of areas of the Alpine Arc for the World Heritage List, Turin/Italy, in document WHC-01/CONF.208/INF.6, page 4

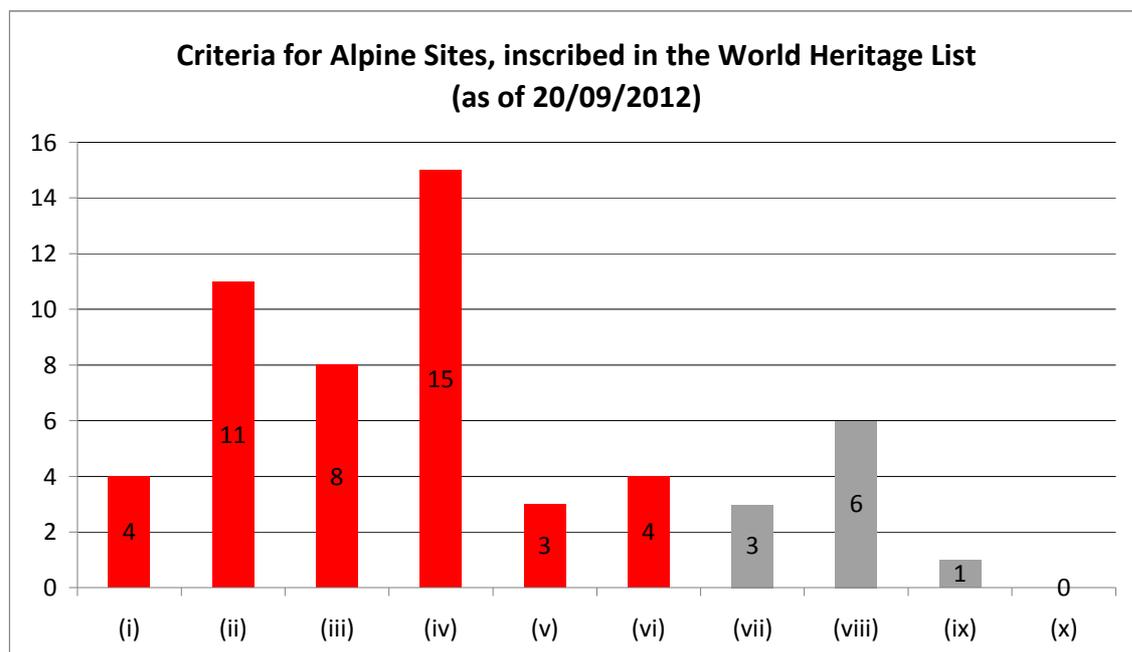
²² See IUCN (2000), A global overview of protected areas on the World Heritage List of particular importance for biodiversity, a contribution to the Global Theme Study of World Heritage Natural Sites, page 8 and table 7

²³ See <http://www.worldwildlife.org/science/ecoregions/global200.html>

²⁴ Scaramellini G. (2004), La montagna costruita: paesaggi culturali delle Alpi in Il privilegio delle Alpi: moltitudine di popoli, culture e paesaggi, page 121

²⁵ Source of the charts: Alpine Convention Working Group “UNESCO World Heritage”, Background study “Alpine sites and the UNESCO World Heritage”, page 30. This study reflects the situation as of 15 March 2010. For the purpose of this paper the charts were updated according to the information available in the WHL and in the official National Tentative Lists as published on the website of the World Heritage Centre on 20 September 2012.

Alpine properties inscribed in the World Heritage List



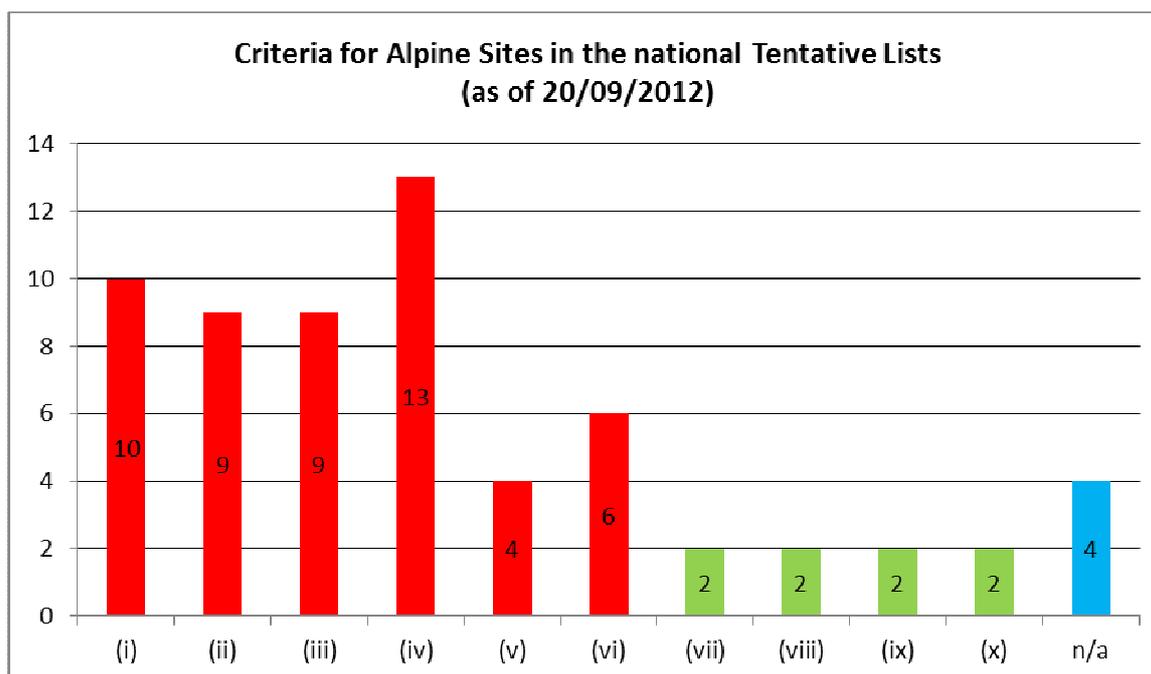
For the single and serial sites already inscribed on the WHL, concerning cultural criteria, (iv) **buildings, monuments or landscapes** illustrating an historical period and (ii) important **developments in architecture or technology, town-planning or landscape design** are proportionally better represented while (v) **vulnerable traditional practices of the human interaction with the environment** representative of a particular culture are particularly rare.

Concerning natural criteria, instead, (viii) traces of **earth's history** and exceptional **natural beauty** (vii) are at the top of the list, (ix) **on-going ecological and biological processes** are not frequent, (x) particular **natural habitats** are absent from the WHL^{26, 27}.

²⁶ Alpine sites with values in terms of ecology and biodiversity may be important just on a regional level and may not have OUV, see footnote 20.

²⁷ It is worth noting that not all inscribed cultural and natural properties have a link to the Alpine themes identified.

Alpine sites in the National Tentative Lists



For the single and serial sites present on the National Tentative Lists, regarding cultural criteria, (iv) **buildings, monuments or landscapes illustrating** an historical period are relatively frequent, while (i) **master-pieces**, (ii) important **developments in architecture or technology, town-planning or landscape design** and (iii) **testimonies to a cultural tradition** are less common. (vi) **association with events or living traditions, ideas or beliefs, artistic and literary works** and (v) **vulnerable traditional practices of the human interaction with the environment** representative of a particular culture are rather rare. All natural criteria, however, referring to (viii) traces of **earth's history**, (vii) exceptional **natural beauty**, (ix) **on-going ecological and biological processes** and to particular (x) **natural habitats** are far more rare²⁸.

The most frequent criterion in both sets of lists, criterion (iv), is apparently linked to the interaction of man and nature and/or to the diversity of cultural landscapes and confirm hereby the validity of the Alpine values/key themes identified in chapter 2.3. It should also be noted that some inscribed properties have no link to any specific Alpine theme.

The geological and geomorphological features of the Alps can be recognized directly either through inscription of properties on the WHL under criterion (viii) on their own or in combination with other natural or cultural criteria. Indirectly geological formations and processes of any mountain system can be represented as supporting biodiversity, cultural or landscape values. This is an alternative deserving further exploration²⁹.

²⁸ Please note that in the database of the UNESCO World Heritage Centre the criteria corresponding to most Alpine sites proposed by France are absent. Some Alpine States are currently updating their Tentative Lists.

²⁹ See IUCN (2005), *Geological World Heritage: a global framework, a Contribution to the Global Theme Study of World Heritage Natural Sites*, page 2

The importance of the Alps for the history of ideas and of earth sciences is obviously a valid auxiliary theme as it is closely linked to criterion (vi) **association with events or living traditions, ideas or beliefs, artistic and literary works**, which should preferably be used in conjunction with other criteria.

While the criteria (v) **traditional vulnerable practices of the human interaction with the environment** representative of a particular culture and (ix) **on-going ecological and biological processes** are relatively rare both in the set of Alpine properties already inscribed on the WHL and in the set of the sites present in the National Tentative Lists, criterion (x) particular **natural habitats**, is missing in the World Heritage List at all. This could either correspond to a particular gap in the picture of possible Alpine OUVs³⁰ or express the fact that on a global scale the values present in the Alps are in the best case only of regional importance.

3.2 First assumptions

Four themes specific for the whole Alpine Arc³¹³² emerged from the discussions on Alpine key features within the Working Group UNESCO World Heritage of the Alpine Convention:

1. The Alps are characterized by **exceptional geological and paleontological sites and by landscapes of great scenic beauty**.
2. There is a historical continuity and a mass of information, research and knowledge related to the “human presence on high lands”. This **well manifested and documented intense interaction of anthropogenic activities and the natural environment throughout time and space** makes the Alps also an early warning system for major challenges of modern societies and a laboratory for sustainable solutions to these challenges³³.
3. The mountain range of the Alps shows a **high concentration of many diverse cultural landscapes**. These landscapes testify the presence of traditional and sustainable forms of land use allowing a conservation of biodiversity³⁴.
4. The Alps were **important for the history of earth sciences and of philosophic ideas**. Geologist pioneers were the first to be captured by the beauty of the Alps and their writing, painting and photography further

³⁰ Alpine Convention Working Group „UNESCO World Heritage“, Background study „Alpine sites and the UNESCO World Heritage“, page 31

³¹ For theme 1 see Alpine Network of Protected Areas - ALPARC (2006), Gathering and analysis of existing documentation on natural World Heritage in the Alps, page 28

³² For themes 2, 3 and 4 see Alpine Convention Working Group “UNESCO World Heritage”, Draft outcomes of the Expert workshop on potential cultural World Heritage in the Alps, Trieste/Italy, 2 to 3 February 2011, document PC45/B8/6, page 4. This document is available at

http://www.alpconv.org/NR/rdonlyres/C4A5F284-6798-4847-B71A-ED3AEBA24EA0/0/A6_ResultofTriesteWorkshoponPotentialworldculturalheritageintheAlps.pdf

³³ Bätzing W. (2003), Die Alpen, Geschichte und Zukunft einer europäischen Kulturlandschaft, page 357

³⁴ See Alpine Network of Protected Areas - ALPARC (2006), Gathering and analysis of existing documentation on natural World Heritage in the Alps, page 28

underlined the aesthetic appeal of these mountains. Subsequently the Alps acquired substantial importance for the development of research in modern geology³⁵. Even if the Alpine landscape is largely a product of human activity, the idea of wilderness was developed here and it was the reference and inspiration for the establishment of US first National Parks as Yellowstone and Yosemite (Alpine “paradox”). Furthermore the Alps played a crucial role for the modern understanding of nature as they were not seen any more as a place of fear but as a place of longing (e.g. romantic literature and paintings)³⁶.

These might be the Alpine values, the themes that might constitute the structure of the story/stories to be told when considering possible single, transboundary or serial nominations from the Alps to the WHL. In order to determine potential OUV in the light of any future World Heritage nomination detailed comparative analysis at global level is essential for proving the value of the proposed sites for humanity as a whole. In this connection the comparison between the Alps and other intensively settled mountain regions such as the Japanese Alps and the Atlas Mountains will be of particular importance³⁷.

3.3 Themes and sites in the Alps potentially meeting the criteria for OUV

Within the mandate of the Alpine Convention Working Group “UNESCO World Heritage”³⁸ two expert workshops were held in order to identify the potential for inscription on the WHL of new sites from the Alpine region. These workshops aimed at performing a screening of Alpine sites included in the Tentative Lists of the Alpine States and of sites consisting of new proposals gathered in an expert consultation, which was carried out beforehand. Another objective was to make a ranking of the OUV potential of these proposals.

The workshop in Berne on 14/15 December 2010 dedicated to the natural heritage of the Alps came to the conclusion that a limited potential for new inscriptions on the WHL exists, but that global comparative studies focusing on specific topics are needed in order to better define it. Only in two cases discussed at the workshop the proposed themes and the corresponding sites were considered to have a potential for meeting the criteria for OUV. With regard to Alpine values, the following topics were examined³⁹:

Fossil sites

The Alps contain fossiliferous sites of exceptional and universal relevance. The Monte San Giorgio site has already been included in the WHL. Monte Bolca - already

³⁵ Veit H. (2002), Die Alpen – Geoökologie und Landschaftsentwicklung, page 10

³⁶ Bätzing W. (2003), Die Alpen, Geschichte und Zukunft einer europäischen Kulturlandschaft, page 14

³⁷ See IUCN (2002), A global overview of mountain protected areas on the World Heritage List, Global Theme Study of World Heritage Natural Sites, Working Paper 6, prepared by Jim Thorsell and Larry Hamilton, page 17

³⁸ See document AC11/8, point A6 available at http://www.alpconv.org/NR/rdonlyres/3B80CBA8-A3F9-454A-941E-55452C87C9F6/0/AC11_minutes_fin_en.pdf

³⁹ Alpine Convention Working Group “UNESCO World Heritage”, Outcomes of the International Expert Meeting: Natural World Heritage in the Alpine region, Berne/Switzerland, 14 to 15 December 2010, document PC45/B8/5, pages 4-6. This document is available at http://www.alpconv.org/NR/rdonlyres/2CAEE969-B138-4DD9-A9CB-2EF1D0BA806F/0/A5_ResultsofBernWorkshoponPotentialworldNaturalHeritageAlps_draft.pdf

mentioned as an internationally important site in the IUCN thematic study on fossil sites⁴⁰ - has a high potential to possess OUV according to criterion (viii) traces of **earth's history**, as it is the only important known site for the analysis of the shallow seabed marine fauna in the Eocene period and the study of the evolution of modern fish fauna.

Karst formations

Geologically, karst formations in the Alps have international relevance. The OUV of the Dinaric Karst has already been confirmed by the IUCN thematic study on the karst⁴¹. The criteria to be considered are (viii) traces of **earth's history** and (x) particular **natural habitats**. However, this phenomenon stretches beyond the Alps, as it has a wider geographical dimension.

The glacial karst

The phenomenon of the glacial karst formations is related to ice dynamics and develops in mountain areas, starting from a certain altitude. Outstanding examples of glacial karst can be observed in the Alps, where the depth and length of caves are exceptional⁴². This topic deserves further studies and a worldwide comparative analysis before being able to evaluate potential OUV, but it has medium potential to be included in the WHL. The corresponding criteria to be checked are (vii) exceptional **natural beauty** and (viii) traces of **earth's history**.

Alpine ecosystems, geological formations and glaciers

There are some sites and topics with a medium potential for inscription on the WHL, such as the transboundary sites Mont Blanc with possible OUV according to criteria (vii) exceptional **natural beauty** and (viii) traces of **earth's history** and Alpi Marittime/Mercantour with possible OUV according to criteria (ix) **on-going ecological and biological processes** and (x) particular **natural habitats**. The potential cultural OUV of both sites should be further discussed and evaluated. There are also other various sites which play an important role in the context of Alpine ecosystems with comparatively low potential for inscription on the WHL. For these natural areas - given the complexity of values and the high number of sites which may potentially represent them - a further thematic study is necessary in order to check their relevance at world level with special regard to criterion (ix)⁴³.

The experts taking part in the workshop in Trieste on 2/3 February 2011 examined the cultural heritage of the Alps. Due to a very long list of sites corresponding to many topics not covered by the expertise present no ranking of the proposals for new

⁴⁰ See IUCN (1996), Earth's geological history – A contextual framework for assessment of World Heritage Fossil Site Nominations, a Contribution to the Global Theme Study of World Heritage Natural Sites, page 35

⁴¹ See IUCN (2008), World Heritage Caves and Karst, a thematic study, page 10

⁴² The Canin plateau is a typical alpine karst plateau with extremely well developed surface karst features due to Pleistocene glaciations and very high precipitations due to the proximity of the Adriatic Sea, The concentration of vertical caves is impressive if compared to other karst areas in the world, among them has the longest vertical development in the world, featuring a single shaft of 643m. (See Cucchi F, Finocchiaro F, Zini L, Karst Geosites in NE Italy (2010) in Andreo B, Carrasco F, Duran J.J., LaMoreaux J.W. (Eds.), Advances in Research in Karst Media)

⁴³ The experts present at the workshop in Berne recommended that a potential nomination for World Heritage under criterion (ix) in the Alpine region should focus on specific ecosystems and stress outstanding examples rather than a complex series of sites which tries to cover the complete variety of sites. Such a vision for OUV could include the processes of specialization and adaptation to climate and altitude.

inscriptions on the WHL was carried out. The themes related to sites with potential OUV in the Alps were coherently rearranged as follows⁴⁴⁴⁵:

Main theme	Sub – theme
AGRICULTURE FORESTRY AND PASTORALISM	Transhumance
	Irrigation
	Terrace landscapes
	Rural settlements
	Historical sylviculture and timber transportation
ARCHITECTURE	Fortifications
	Monasteries
	Castles
	Modern Architecture
URBANISM	Alpine cities
TRANSIT Routes	Railways (see comparative analysis from Switzerland and TECHNICAL HERITAGE)
	Heritage routes/pilgrimage
	Passes (to be completed)
TECHNICAL HERITAGE	Mining
	Metal Extraction and Processes
	Salt Extraction and Processes
ARCHEOLOGY (accessible)	Drawings and carvings
	Caves
	Pile Dwellings
AESTETIC LANDSCAPES or ASSOCIATIVE LANDSCAPES (UNESCO definition)	Lake lands
	Sacred places
	Symbolic places
	Places of remembrance

Some thematic proposals seem to deserve more attention as they can be considered particularly representative of the peculiarity of the Alps. These are:

- **Pastoralism/Transhumance**, i.e. the specificities of the Alpine meadow culture with summer pasturing on high ground. Cattle-breeding in high altitude is confronted with a series of specific problems, only to mention a few like unfavorable, steep terrain for animals, short growing-periods of vegetation, non-sufficient irrigation-systems as well as long and difficult access from the valleys. Therefore, as a response to these difficulties and in order to obtain

⁴⁴ Alpine Convention Working Group “UNESCO World Heritage”, Draft outcomes of the Expert workshop on potential cultural World Heritage in the Alps, Trieste/Italy, 2 to 3 February 2011, document PC45/B8/6, pages 2-3. This document contains examples for sites illustrating the mentioned themes and is available at http://www.alpconv.org/NR/ronlyres/C4A5F284-6798-4847-B71A-ED3AEBA24EA0/0/A6_ResultofTriesteWorkshoponPotentialworldculturalheritageintheAlps.pdf

⁴⁵ The sub-themes Monasteries and Alpine cities refer to the sites entered in the Alpine Convention Working Group’s grid, which can be found in the documents PC45/B8/2 and PC45/B8/3 available at http://www.alpconv.org/NR/ronlyres/C777DE63-340F-4E58-9B90-319F5F3D7802/0/A2_thematicgrid_WG_UNESCO_WHL_TL.pdf and at http://www.alpconv.org/NR/ronlyres/C0CCD00F-4C72-4AB2-BFCF-68F389CAB9CA/0/A3_thematicgrid_WG_UNESCOWH_grid_newideas.pdf.

best results in grazing of cattle and in the production of hay as food to be used during winter, a broad range of solutions were developed and successfully implemented for thousands of years. Pastoralism and transhumance enable humans as well as animals to find and use – according to the state of vegetation – the most appropriate pastures in the Alpine region. Pastoralism and transhumance in the Alps bear witness of different, often locally unique solutions and contribute to an Alpine cultural diversity covering tangible and intangible aspects of culture. As these methods of mountain-farming are not longer implemented in several Alpine regions, even more efforts have to be undertaken in safeguarding the tangible and intangible remains and memorizing these, often already forgotten farming technologies.

- **Mining** as a trigger for the use of forests and natural resources and for urbanism. Since the Bronze Age mining activities can be traced in the Alps. The archeological discoveries allow a detailed reconstruction of the prehistoric mining techniques. However, mining not only dealt with the extraction of iron, copper and salt, but it led to far-reaching effects. “Mass employment” resulted in the foundation of settlements and influenced early urbanism. The distances between the places of extraction and of processing as well as of consumption required the construction of roads, water-channels and even resulted in the development of early railway lines. Stuff for the construction of galleries and for fuel required not only huge amounts of timber but also paved the way for early forest-management. Therefore, historic mining is crucial for the development of the civilization in the Alpine region.
- **Transit routes** with the idea of trading and cultural exchanges, and related transit landscapes. The Alps link the North and the South. The intensive exchange of persons, ideas and goods between the northern - and the southern part of Europe became manifest in many routes passing the Alps. The Alps, considered for long time as an “obstacle” to allow the free flow of persons and of goods, bear witness of many different solutions to overcome difficult topographic situations and unfavorable climatic conditions. “Roman Roads” – although rather an “invention” based on romantic ideas during the last 200 years as most of these roads date back to the Middle Ages – demonstrate the deep knowledge and the highly elaborated skills which were necessary to allow the passage through the Alpine valleys and over passes. Besides these technical and architectural remains other aspects can be traced, too: The transalpine traffic led to an enriching cultural and economic exchange not only between the North and the South, but also along the transit routes itself. These “transit cultural landscapes” reflect a specific cultural diversity benefiting from a broad range of spiritual, cultural and economic influences.

For most of the themes and sub-themes criterion (v) **traditional vulnerable practices of the human interaction with the environment** representative of a particular culture seems to be appropriate especially for sites that have both natural and cultural values. Some of the themes, such as pastoralism/transhumance and transit routes, could have manifestations linked to cultural landscapes and fulfilling the definition of continuing landscapes⁴⁶.

⁴⁶ See footnote 13

It is obvious that the field of cultural heritage in the Alps needs more in-depth analysis through comparative studies with other mountain regions in the world, in particular on the basis of existing gap analysis or thematic studies by ICOMOS. The themes and corresponding sites identified so far are just the basic material for the description of potential OUV.

4. CONCLUSIONS

In order to contribute to the identification of Alpine values related to sites having the potential to meet the requirements of OUV the following four key themes and corresponding subthemes being specific for the whole Alpine Arc were identified:

1. In the Alps there are **exceptional geological and paleontological sites and landscapes of great scenic beauty**. Fossil sites and karst formations in the Alps have international relevance. Furthermore phenomena of glacial karst and some alpine ecosystems are worth of being checked with regard to their potential for inscription on the WHL. These values relate to all natural OUV criteria. For Alpine geological formations and processes it is worth considering whether they can be represented as supporting biodiversity, cultural or landscape values.
2. The Alps are characterized by a **well manifested and documented intense interaction of anthropogenic activities and the natural environment throughout time and space**. In respect thereof the subthemes playing an important role in the Alpine Arc are: irrigation, rural settlements, historical sylviculture and timber transportation, Alpine cities, technical heritage (mining, metal extraction and processes, salt extraction and processes) and archaeology (drawings and carvings, caves, pile dwellings). In this connection the fulfilment of criterion (v) should be examined in the first place.
3. With reference to the **high concentration of many diverse cultural landscapes** in the Alpine region the subthemes pastoralism/transhumance, terrace landscapes and aesthetic landscapes or associative landscapes (lake lands, sacred places, symbolic places, places of remembrance) are of significant importance. Representing the combined works of nature and humans these cultural landscapes should above all be checked against cultural criteria, in particular criterion (v).

As regards the other identified Alpine subthemes, transit routes (railways, heritage routes/pilgrimage, passes) could go with the interaction of humans and nature or could be included in the cultural landscapes. Architecture (fortifications, monasteries, castles, modern architecture) is not really specific for the Alps and a rather standalone subtheme, for which the fulfilment of the criteria (i), (ii), (iv) should be verified.

4. The **importance** of the Alps **for the history of ideas and of earth sciences** is a matter of fact as well, but it has apparently an auxiliary function, as it is closely linked to criterion (vi) **association with events or living traditions**,

ideas or beliefs, artistic and literary works, which should preferably be used in conjunction with other criteria⁴⁷.

These themes and subthemes might constitute the main elements structuring the further discussion on the identification of potential single, transboundary or serial nominations from the Alpine region to the WHL. Even if it is representative for the Alpine Arc in its entirety, an Alpine serial property can cross the threshold of OUV only as and when the series as a whole meets at least one of the World Heritage criteria and the other above mentioned requirements. This requires precise comparative analysis at global level for proving the value of the proposed sites for humanity as a whole. In this connection the comparison between the Alps and other intensively settled mountain regions will be of particular importance.

⁴⁷ The example of the Swiss Tectonic Arena Sardona, inscribed only on the basis of criterion (viii), shows that this key theme can also be highlighted without any reference to criterion (vi) because the corresponding decision of the World Heritage Committee states that the site has been recognized as a key site for geological sciences since the 18th century.