

Fondazione Romualdo Del Bianco-Life Beyond Tourism

INTRODUCTION TO THE
“HERITAGE FOR BUILDING PEACE 2025”
APPEAL (H4BP.2025)

STUPORE - WONDER **BUILDING PEACE through HERITAGE**

The *Fondazione Romualdo Del Bianco-Life Beyond Tourism*¹ has chosen to celebrate the 80th anniversary of the end of World War II and the establishment of the new world order by issuing an Appeal to the International Community following the unveiling of a work of art commissioned by Paolo Del Bianco, the founder of COMI SpA, a hotelier in the World Heritage Site of Florence, on the 50th anniversary of the company starting to work in the field of **welcome** and **hospitality**, the 80th anniversary of the establishment of UNESCO and the 50th anniversary of the UNWTO.

1. Stupore - Wonder!

The bronze sculpture entitled **Stupore**, or **Wonder**², symbolically contrasts **the metal of war with the metal for peace** by translating into a universally understood textural form the vision of **Life Beyond Tourism: In World Heritage Sites for world peace, the richness of multiculturalism spawns new opportunities and non-extractive ethical activities for the ‘Culture of Encounter and of Intercultural Dialogue’**. That is why World Heritage Sites, which are naturally rich in multiculturalism, can become a fertile breeding ground of specific and replicable activities for ‘*best practices*’ for ‘*encounters with others*’.

This vision gives rise to a crucial principle: *Heritage is a builder of Peace*, thus by extension *Heritage safeguards Heritage*.

Hence the name of the sculpture, **Wonder**, because one is struck with wonder by the simplicity and the incisive strength of this planetwide idea and because it announces with “wonder” that heritage is a potential *builder of peace in those sites and an opportunity not to be missed*.

Amid the rich presence of visitors from various cultural backgrounds on holiday, thus in the same condition of amenability to listen, the initiatives’ professional nature must prove capable of turning an otherwise hasty tourist visit into dialogue, communication, knowledge and respect.

There is also opportunity here to foster the site’s entrepreneurial creativity with new ethical activities capable of turning tourism into a journey for appreciating others, thus

¹ COMI SpA founder

² The sculpture was devised, designed, executed in part and the work directed by Paolo Del Bianco, CEO of Florentine hoteliers COMI SpA and President Emeritus of the Fondazione Romualdo Del Bianco.
The sculpture was produced with the artisans of Pietrasanta (Lucca), Viareggio (Lucca), Cusona (San Gimignano) (Siena), Reggello (Florence) and Florence.

witnessing the start of quality activities designed to help visitors share in the importance **of the Culture of Encounter, Dialogue and Reciprocity with Others.**

The bronze sculpture is being unveiled today, 26 November 2025, in the Amphitheatre of the Andrzej Tomaszewski Auditorium al Duomo in Florence in order to impart visibility to the simplicity and virtuous strength of World Heritage sites where ethical activities based on intercultural dialogue, offered and run by professionals, breathe new life into the human aspect of *extending a welcome and offering hospitality*, thus allowing visitors to experience a site not only for its heritage but also for activities designed to promote *encounters for knowledge and interaction with others.*

2. World Heritage Sites, Overtourism, Multiculturalism

World Heritage Sites – UNESCO Convention 1972 – are unquestionably one of UNESCO's most important successes and initiatives, attracting numerous visitors from a large number of different countries and cultural backgrounds, thus opening up opportunities for also knowing and appreciating the UNESCO 2003³ and 2005⁴ Conventions.

The current boom in tourism is creating unprecedented opportunities for World Heritage, but it also created problems in many sites where the impact of overtourism is becoming increasingly apparent.

UNWTO figures⁵ suggest that over one billion four hundred million people travel every year. At the same time, many other sites would require a larger tourist presence to boost their economic viability and to contribute to local development.

Overtourism leads to the distortion of an area's identity and reality and to a drastic decrease in the value of its hospitality. This is a major and, unfortunately, irreversible critical issue⁶ that needs to be managed. In view of overtourism's irreversibility, we need to find in it an equally important opportunity: *we at the Fondazione see it harbouring multicultural richness*, a positive factor which is accessible but which has not yet been exploited to systematically, ethically and professionally foster the kind of intercultural dialogue, knowledge and reciprocity that the international community so badly needs.

In a world crying out for more humanity and more brotherhood, this wealth of opportunities cannot be allowed to go to waste. Ignoring the opportunities for peace offered by World Heritage would be unforgivable, given that we desire *a common future to build on our one and only planet Earth, which we all need to share together.*

3. A Model

The experience built up by the Fondazione Romualdo Del Bianco-Life Beyond Tourism offers itself today as an example with thirty years' experience in practices, initially with its hotel company and, since 1998, with a foundation expressly established by the company to pursue its research into heritage, encounter and dialogue among visitors as a contribution from heritage to the promotion of world peace.

Throughout this experience, the Fondazione has invariably found that art is a source of

³ Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage – signed in Paris on 17 October 2003

⁴ Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions – signed in Paris on 20 October 2005

⁵ UNWTO, 2024. <https://www.unwto.org/news/international-tourism-recovers-pre-pandemic-levels-in-2024>

⁶ other than in such exceptional circumstances as the Covid emergency or a state of war

attraction for many young visitors from all over the world, including from areas of conflict. In the course of their encounters, with these practices – communication, knowledge, physical human relations – art has brought them together in group encounters, it has changed them, and thus youths from warring countries have even ended up dancing together, proving that “Heritage is a builder of peace”!

In 2006 the Fondazione defined a model that it christened *Life Beyond Tourism (LBT)* with art, with the heritage that is Florence.

From the model, however, it is then necessary to move on to activities involving its practical implementation: innovative, non-extractive ethical activities that develop with the site’s determination and the creativity of its entrepreneurs, but also through new services and activities capable of bringing together the site’s rich variety of visitors from different cultural backgrounds.

The Life Beyond Tourism Glossary⁷ Life defines the certainty of the model’s message. The model proposes the achievement of *Quality Certification*⁸, where the guests themselves gauge the product or service offered in order to ensure its public dissemination. Naturally this includes interaction with residents, although unfortunately their number is currently tending to decrease in number, on account of the gentrification process triggered by a tourism-based economy that prompts members of local communities to quit their places of residence, an issue that needs to be properly managed.

*Thus the model hopes to see World Heritage Sites engaging in virtuous competition with one another on a global scale, promoting virtuous activities for the **Culture of Dialogue**.*

4. Our Mottoes Down the Years

1998 For peace in the world among young people from different countries, through culture, to meet, get to know each other and understand each other so as to develop friendship among peoples

2005 International integration, without competition, respecting individual identities

2010 Contributing from Florence to trigger feelings in young people with thoughts of use to the international community

2013 Travel for Dialogue - a past to get to know together, a common future to build together

2025 Wonder: Let World Heritage sites become workshops for dialogue and reciprocity

5. The Third Way

This is how the Life Beyond Tourism model defines *the third way, the third direction*:

- **an initial direction** from the global community towards heritage, for its conservation

⁷ Del Bianco, C., Savelli, A., 2018, Life Beyond Tourism Glossary, Life Beyond Tourism edizioni

⁸ Fondazione Romualdo Del Bianco (2018) The Certification for Dialogue among Cultures - Life Beyond Tourism® DTC-LBT: 2018, Florence, Nardini Editore isbn 978-88-404-7459-5 eng

and its enhancement, with the UNESCO Conventions of 1972⁹, followed by the Conventions of 2003¹⁰ and, we would add, of 2005¹¹;

- **a second direction**, one might say, moves from heritage towards the community, for its use and enjoyment, with the Faro 2005 Convention¹²;

- **the third direction, the “third way”** that the Life Beyond Tourism Model proposes is the path *where the gazes of all those from many different cultural backgrounds involved in heritage meet*, in full awareness of their powerful opportunity to develop dialogue-focused activities for the growth of the international community in a context of peaceful coexistence, in other words, travelling with the deliberate commitment to meet and dialogue with other cultures by choosing Sites that host *the best programmes for the Culture of Encounter*.

In this context, World Heritage Sites can play a strategic role as fully-fledged catalysts for a global change of direction: **I travel for peace**.

6. An Economy for the “Culture of Dialogue and Reciprocity”

In multiculturally rich World Heritage Sites, with *The Third Way* the local business community will proceed to devise and develop a non-extractive, ethical economy capable of redirecting creativity and financial resources towards activities that will facilitate successful choices for turning the site into a *workshop for encounters for intercultural dialogue and reciprocity*.

This way, World Heritage sites will take part in a virtuous competition at the global level that will contribute to the culture of dialogue for world peace, and develop activities operating that may well also spawn new models:

. this will make a concrete contribution to reducing the – occasionally serious – risk of intercultural incomprehension;

. *and it may also reduce the serious risk, run by certain Sites, of dependence on international tourism with development shaped within the market itself.*

7. A few references

Among the many initiatives that have highlighted the value of intercultural dialogue, it is worth underscoring two important messages from UNESCO Director General Irina Bokova:

. *International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2010)*

. *International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2013-2022).*

Nor should we overlook:

- the above-mentioned Faro Convention of Faro 2005, recognising people’s right to cultural heritage

- the ICTC International Cultural Tourism Charter, ICOMOS GA 2022 Bangkok, Thailand.

And it is also worth highlighting:

- the 18GA 2014/42 Resolution adopted by the ICOMOS General Assembly, recognising the value of travel as a tool for dialogue, supporting “*Life Beyond Tourism® – Travel for*

⁹ UNESCO, 1972, Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage – signed in Paris on 16 November 1972

¹⁰ UNESCO, 2003, Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage

¹¹ UNESCO, 2005, Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions

¹² European Council, 2005, Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (Faro Convention)

*Dialogue” and, in particular, the commitment of the younger generations in promoting peace through culture and heritage: “**supports** the notion and activity of travel to promote dialogue among international youth.”*

8. The LBT Best Practices Workshop in Florence for Dialogue and Reciprocity in World Heritage Sites

With its Best Practices Workshop in Florence, the Fondazione offers its *Life Beyond Tourism Model* on the strength of the experience it has built up within its own international network, the aim being to boost awareness of multiculturalism’s natural richness and of the resulting opportunities in the sites involved.

Life Beyond Tourism is a model that can be replicated and that is open to innovation. It is a philosophy based on tried and tested practical experience, and developed directly in a UNESCO Site, Florence¹³, well beyond service-driven and consumption-driven tourism, transcending hit-and-run rationales to restore a central role to hospitality, to human encounter with others, to knowledge and mutual respect for world peace, a necessary **insurance policy for the welcome and hospitality business**.

IN A NUTSHELL, SITES SHOULD AIM TO :

- **use the site’s rich asset of multiculturalism**
to devise, implement and manage practices designed to promote activities focusing on dialogue and reciprocity among visitors from different cultural backgrounds;
- **optimise the area’s welcome and hospitality**
by identifying them as key elements in fostering intercultural dialogue, transitioning from tourism driven by the provision of services and by consumption to regenerative thinking and practices that restore value to communities and to the environment;
- **generate an economy in support of world peace**
with welcome and hospitality activities based on the development of local capabilities and on resilience, transcending tourism driven by the provision of services and by consumption;
- **turn the sites into an example and a beacon at the global level**
in disseminating the strategic value of the **culture of encounter and reciprocity** for the development of intercultural, interpersonal and intergenerational relations in places with a strong multicultural presence;
- **impart a higher profile to less visited sites.**

The hope is that Italy may become an international model in this sense, thanks to its unique heritage and the fact that it has the highest number of World Heritage Sites.

¹³ Documented in the publications listed in the Bibliography

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to the international community, and in particular to UNESCO in its capacity as a specialist United Nations Agency, UNESCO – in keeping with its Constitution – contributes to building peace, to rooting out poverty, to sustainable development and to intercultural dialogue through education, science, culture, communication, interpretation and information and to all public and private international organisations involved in the conservation and enhancement of heritage and to all those that have recourse to heritage in the pursuit of their activities.

Context

Our appeal to *build peace through heritage* is rooted in the origins and the very foundations of UNESCO – the United Nations Organisation for Education, Science and Culture. As soon as hostilities ceased in the period immediately after the end of World War II, a conference was held in London, in the United Kingdom, in the course of which it was decided to set up an organisation embodying a genuine culture of peace. This new organisation was designed to constitute the *intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind* and, in so doing, to prevent the outbreak of another world war. At the end of the conference, thirty-seven countries founded the United Nations Organisation for Education, Science and Culture. The UNESCO Constitution, signed on 16 November 1945, came into force on 4 November 1946 after being ratified by twenty countries.

Recalling

the words of UNESCO Director General Audrey Azoulay at the most recent session of the Executive Board in April 2025, to the effect that:

"Education, science, culture and the free circulation of ideas and knowledge embody fundamental human values. They also constitute the basis for lasting peace.

Over 75 years after its establishment, UNESCO reiterates the importance of its humanist vision for guaranteeing respect for human dignity. Our world needs education, science, culture and information. Our world needs humanity".

From the Andrzej Tomaszewski Amphitheatre in Florence,
the Fondazione Romualdo Del Bianco-Life Beyond Tourism and all the signatories issue the following

APPEAL

HERITAGE for BUILDING PEACE 2025 (H4BP-2025)

**For contributing to World Peace at both the local and global levels,
in multiculturally rich World Heritage Sites,**

**promoting workshops for
the Culture of Encounter, Dialogue and Reciprocity with Others**

**co-creating, implementing and promoting
innovative and ethical activities and initiatives.**