

Proposed Statement of Outstanding Universal Value

Transnational Serial Nomination: Workers' Assembly Halls



BRIEF SYNTHESIS

This serial nomination includes buildings that have been instrumental in building the global labour movement, a movement of great historical importance in the rise of mass democratic societies, democracy and worker and human rights across the globe. The buildings were established or acquired by national (or local) labour movement organisations for the purpose of bringing workers together for political, social, cultural, and educational purposes. They thus bear special testimony to the daily work of the labour movement as a major force in shaping democracy and welfare states, transforming the world of work, extending concepts of rights, and providing support for important social movements, including anti-colonial struggles, across the world. Each serial component represents an element of the organisational history of the labour movement that developed independent from the states in which they were located as well as independent from employers. While the ideas and values of the organised labour movement have roots in a European tradition, their migration with the great population movements of the 19th and early 20th centuries to virtually all corners of the world means that the labour movement and its physical manifestation in the forms of these buildings is a truly universal phenomenon over an extended period of time.

Tied together through common ideological values and organisational practicalities, the buildings bear witness to the labour movement as a global phenomenon, a cultural practice and a continuous living tradition. At the same time, the diverse characteristics of the selected component buildings demonstrate how the democratic labour movement has taken different paths in different parts of the world as it has adapted to local conditions. Variations in political contexts, such as (post-) colonialism or armed conflict, have played a role in the development of buildings' architecture, structure and use. Whether they were located in urban environments and constructed to be prominent buildings equal to the town's or city's most important architectural creations, or located in rural surroundings, they offer gathering places for men, women and children of the working class. The multifunctionality reveals the extent to which the labour movement, through its buildings, sought to create a whole-of-life experience for its members, including providing for recreational, cultural, educational as well as political aspects of their daily lives. Reflecting the labour movement's core historic claim, these buildings manifest a universal longing for popular emancipation, which was done through organisation of workers in these buildings. Housing often membership-based communities these buildings and the labor movement differ from liberal, solely religious or philanthropic efforts to improve the conditions of the working class.

In their architectural composition, the buildings show their central purpose as multi-functional places for meetings and organisational work by providing assembly halls, meeting rooms, offices and other facilities under the management of the workers themselves, necessary to ensure the independence of the movement. As instruments for organisation, they communicate the immaterial qualities of the labour movement as a practice of community building from the late 19th century and far into the 20th century and in some cases even today. Each room or architectural element functioned as instruments for organisation. Although there is considerable diversity in size and layout of the buildings, they are clearly of a distinct type - a gathering place for the labour movement and its members. They differ because they each represent a trend in their time. Although some of them are no longer owned by labour movement organisations, their distinct form and the fact that they still play a role in the consciousness of local people means that their significance persists. Even if some are no longer used by the labour

movement, they often continue to serve broader cultural or educational purposes – such as museums, theatres or art spaces – that were first given to them when they served as workers’ buildings.

JUSTIFICATION FOR CRITERIA

Criteria iii: Bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilisation which is living, or which has disappeared.

Industrialisation, population increase and urbanisation in the 19th century are among the most dramatic changes in human history. Accompanying these changes were significant political, educational, social and cultural transformations, following from the great political revolutions of the late-18th Century. These transformations included the rise of mass society (including mass media), proletarianization of the rural population, major technological innovations that compressed time and space (such as steam trains and the telegraph), colonialism and imperialism, the fitful development of democracy and its challenge to class hierarchies and hereditary social structures, the growth of concepts of juridical rather than tradition-based rights. These changes, it is fair to say, brought about the basis of a truly global political economy which is still developing today. The changes did not come easily, provoking strains and stresses in many societies which manifested often in civil or international conflict. Throughout this period of change and playing a major role as protagonist – sometimes in protest, sometimes in support – has been the labour movement. Few other social institutions have played such an important role throughout such an extended period of world history. Quite possibly, it is only the labour movement that, with some exceptions, approached these changes from a universalist position, encapsulated in the famous slogan “workers of the world unite”.

Beginning in Europe and North America and later across the globe, the structure of whole societies changed, and large parts of the population were uprooted from their predominantly rural communities. Millions of people found themselves in need of a new identity, a new home, and a new place to belong. The buildings functioned as identity shaping platforms. Industrialisation brought with it tough working and living conditions for workers worldwide. It was in response to these conditions that the labour movement grew, expressing a universal longing for emancipation and dignity for workers.

The workers’ assembly halls are of historical significance because they celebrate the people behind the machines instead of the industrial sites where they worked. The World Heritage list has in recent years begun to recognise industrial heritage and other sites that reflect the commercial and industrial developments of the 19th and 20th centuries. While important, these sites provide only one aspect of these developments, tending to focus in particular on technological advances. Workers’ assembly halls are a tangible corrective to the tendency to occlude the role of the people – the workers – who made possible the industrial dreams of the factory owners and the bourgeoisie. They highlight the relationship between capital and labour where workers claimed a voice in society.

With the central universal values of liberty, equality, and solidarity, the democratic labour movement provided an ideological gathering point for a new sense of identity and belonging. Through the establishment of formal organisations, the labour movement based the struggle for workers’ rights on the power of unity and communities. The result was a highly diverse and devolved labour movement, which provided an organisational framework for many aspects of the daily life of the working class. The multi-functionality was important for mass organisation and democratic development. The workers’ assembly halls, as places for organisational, political, social, cultural, and educational activities, bear exceptional and unique material testimony to the communities and identities

shaped and maintained by the labour movement. As instruments of organisation, they had to provide a variation of activities to ensure democratic development and mass organisation of men, women and children of different back grounds, ages and job. These buildings represent a continuation of the labour movement's transformational influence on the development of societies across the world since the 19th century.

Criteria vi: To 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 organised labour movement is one of the longest-lasting, unbroken living traditions of the last two centuries; it is certainly one of the most influential, having shaped political, social, cultural and economic policies and practices across the globe for over 150 years. It rises in parallel to, as a result of, and in resistance to the negative manifestations of industrialisation, the workers' movement can trace its heritage back to the French Revolution and the great movements for emancipation from feudal social forms. The movement was vital in the rise of democracy, and in the development of an active role for the state in ameliorating the depredations of capitalism, especially in the development of the welfare state. At various times and in various places, the organised labour movement has been (and remains) vital to the defence of freedom against forces of oppression, and in advocating for the marginalised. It has been fundamental in extending the concept of economic, political and social rights, including in supporting women's rights and anti-racism and anti-discrimination.

Workers' halls explicitly and uniquely manifest this universal mass liberatory and democratic movement in their built form. Each component of the series was erected as a memorable building in which the collective interests of workers could be advanced. The buildings are multi-purpose, providing spaces not only for the industrial and political organisation of the movement, but also so that workers could enjoy and participate in social networks, access to education, leisure activities and cultural performances and production. Some also feature spaces for cooperative businesses, demonstrating the extent to which the workers' movement was determined to free itself of capitalist exploitation and to model alternative forms of economic organisation, while providing a total lifeworld for worker members. The workers' assembly halls insisted on inclusion of everyone, based on a commitment to changing workers' role in society. Highly significant political, social, and cultural events and traditions during the past 150 years have explicitly and directly drawn strength and legitimacy from their connection with communities of workers and ideals associated with the labour movement and the struggle for emancipation. Labour movement halls provide a kind of self-contained world of multiple uses but all for the purpose of organising, entertaining or enlightening workers. Partly this self-containment was because worker and socialist organising was often banned or repressed, so that worker organising was impossible in existing buildings or public spaces. This multifunctional building type was pioneered by workers' halls. Not even religious organisations provided the same scope of functions within the same building, although some churches and mosques have always served functions beyond merely the location for religious services. In the 20th century, the workers' hall became the model for similar multifunctional buildings used by political parties (often connected with the labour movement). Their influence can be seen in government-owned buildings seeking to provide accessible cultural and recreational facilities to the broad population: community centres, cultural centres, for instance. In the former socialist states, these buildings could be very large and offer many facilities, from swimming pools to cinemas and auditoriums.

The workers' assembly halls have been the scene or tangible starting point for numerous and significant events in many countries, including political movements that have gone on to become nationally or internationally

significant. They are often associated with major cultural and political figures, and with intangible expressions of cultural heritage such as banners, documents and art works. Major international social and cultural events, such as May Day, are closely associated with workers' halls. But even more importantly, they have served as the physical frameworks and instruments for the daily work of organisation, community building and identity formation of a previous unnoticed level in society and stand as landmarks for the dignity of workers. It is through their relation to these day-to-day practices that the buildings have had their most significant and lasting effect on social developments and the life of ordinary people, an effect, that continues to this day. The fundamental demands of the labour movement for emancipation and equality of workers, challenging the power of capital, were vital for the development of other claims to freedom and rights and to the development of organisations advocating for them. Workers' halls concretely manifest these living traditions, these claims to universal emancipation better than any other structures.

STATEMENT ON INTEGRITY

The integrity of the series is both tangible and intangible. Changes of the structures to fit changing needs of the labour movement reflect the fact that these buildings represent a living tradition, which is also visible architecturally where a clash of decorative styles and extensions for a cooperative or additional offices might be found. The series includes 19th century buildings – some still serving their original purpose, others adapted for new uses – and some more recent structures, especially in parts of the world where the labour movement arose in the struggle against colonialism and flowered in the post-colonial years. Although not taking the typical form of a “heritage” building, these newer structures reflect the continuing link between architectural form and the living traditions of the labour movement and demonstrate the universality of the labour movement's ideals and their physical manifestation. The central quality embodied by the series is the connection and mutual dependence of the material and immaterial heritage of the labour movement as a socio-cultural practice influenced by local conditions.

In material terms, the integrity of the buildings is constituted through the existence of physical facilities related to organisational work, meetings, education and large gatherings on a continuing, day-to-day basis. Those facilities include assembly halls, meeting rooms, offices, along with other functions supporting the role as platforms for organisation and gathering. The buildings reflect the period in which they were established in terms of architectural style and choice of materials. Several of the buildings have undergone later modifications, but these are all related to changes in their core function as assembly halls. If the buildings are not in operation in a way closely related to that of an assembly hall anymore, the architectural features and layout of the building are still intact and able to provide room for such usage.

The buildings have all been established or acquired by or in close coordination with the labour movement for use as self-organised assembly halls independent from the state. The buildings have been in use by the labour movement for most or all of their existence, and they have played a role in the organisational work of the labour movement in their country or reflect a particular development of the labour movement in a particular part of the world. The buildings in that way feature as important points of reference for the labour movement even today. The series of buildings comprise of the best representation of the monuments of the organised labour movement and illustrates a diversity in geographical location and variety of reasons for being established, which demonstrate the historic and contemporary role of workers' assembly halls.

STATEMENT OF AUTHENTICITY

The labour movement appears as part of the dramatic socio-cultural changes brought about by industrialisation and its effects on urban and rural development during the 19th and 20th centuries. Through the formal and highly diverse organisation of workers as a new group of people generally excluded from public life and political influence in industrialised societies, the labour movement achieves a position of strong and sometimes dominant influence on the development of welfare states in the 20th Century. In line with the perception that workers represented a particular class in society, defined by economic, social, and cultural characteristics and by the conviction that workers' rights could only be achieved through the unity of workers, the establishment of workers' assembly halls were both a symbolic testimony to the self-image of the labour movement and a necessary material framework for the daily work of organising workers.

With a high degree of integrity and authenticity, the buildings display in their material attributes the regionally adapted approaches to the organisation of workers and the self-understanding of a democratic labour movement.

- **Form and design**

All serial components are in good conditions and the structural elements needed for organising workers are still present. Part of the authenticity lies in the fact that the building has developed and changed in parallel with the changing needs of the activities and natural development of the labour movement. The needs of the assembly hall may have changed and therefore the buildings have adapted to this.

- **Materials and substance**

Each component is made to reflect an architectural style of the time it was built and therefore, materials will vary from building to building. They show decorative elements that illustrate values of the labour movement such as solidarity, unions, unionising of workers and different trades.

- **Use and function**

Providing meeting places for workers in which to exercise mass democratisation of education, culture and of political influence. Although the results of the labour movement were outside the buildings, the physical surroundings and their location are important sites of memory for the labour history and their existence still plays a role in the mind of people today. The assembly halls have in common that they still serve a community purpose, as a meeting place hereby maintaining the continuity of use and honouring the wish by the founders for long-lasting monuments of the labour movement. Be it a museum, theatre, conference or community centre. As they are continuously in use, the buildings need to uphold their function by adding or detracting elements when needed, as it might be the case for those components that still function as event venue.

- **Traditions, techniques and management systems**

The serial components are built inspired by a European example where the structural features such as offices, meeting rooms and main hall are predominant elements. Buildings would have been managed by workers' organisations either trade unions or political parties and the wish to maintain, preserve and manage the building would have been mirrored in the activities to provide space for organisation of the workers themselves.

- **Location and setting**

Being established or acquired out of necessity, each building is located where land was possible to buy or where existing buildings could be re-purposed. The buildings were approachable, public and resembled buildings of the bourgeois to emphasise how the labour movement deserved space on equal footing with the monuments of the upper- and middle-class. The buildings made it possible to showcase the movement, gain public visibility and become images of the assumed and aspired-for grand future of the labour movement.

- **Language and other forms of intangible heritage**

The values of the labour movement about social justice, solidarity and equality are the intangible ideas that brought to life this global cultural phenomenon that created social change throughout the world. The buildings are the physical manifestation of these.

- **Spirit and feeling**

The atmosphere of the buildings reflects the spirit and original purpose of the labour movement. The intangibility is embedded in the architecture. Visitors and users of each component will be part of history simply by visiting and the decorative elements and architectural layout are physical expressions of the intangible values.

- **Other internal/external factors**

CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT

The serial components are covered by national heritage or building protection schemes or local rules and regulations intended to secure their integrity and conservation.

The owners of the buildings are committed to making accessible the history of the buildings and finding ways in which the buildings can in time contribute as platforms for dissemination of the fundamental principles of UNESCO World Heritage, while maintaining their present-day function.

The owners of the buildings are committed to preserving the integrity of the attributes that underpin the outstanding universal value of the individual buildings. New or altering elements to the buildings may be needed in cases where the component functions in a way where new facilities might be a necessity.

A mutual monitoring and management system is set in place where all components are held responsible for upholding their end of the management plan in order to preserve the monuments of the labour movement for the future.

A committee with representatives from each component is set up and a Chair elected. The Chair of the serial property goes by turn between the State Parties of the series. The Chair country sits for a two-year period and also prepares and hosts a meeting for all components, which takes place biennial.

Revised March 2022