A Critical Assessment of the Impact of World Heritage Site Designation

in Sub-Saharan Africa

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Abstract

Archaeological associations and development agencies alike are celebrating the recent effort by the World Heritage Committee to inscribe as many African sites as fast as it can onto its List recognizing the heritage with the highest universal value to our collective human history. While it seems an obvious move of equality, in reality, this flurry of inscription is doing untold damage to African sites. Issues of local involvement in site management have not been resolved or streamlined, so site designation exposes communities to degradation of their traditions and values. Likewise, traditional management practices have not been institutionalized, often stripping sites with WHS protection of their historical guardians. The inscription process diverts limited international heritage funds to a few sites—specifically, to the nomination materials for inscription of those site on the List—and away from empowering African professionals to participate equally in the world archaeological and conservationist dialogues. This is denying cultural protection on the African continent the same right to self-determination that most other regions enjoy. In addition, archaeological inquiry the world over continues to lack the diversity of perspective that is required for accurate interpretation. The Committee needs to turn its priorities away from inscription to supporting solid and community-based systems of management throughout Africa. Only when the continent has the foundation to decide the fate of its own heritage should the Committee return its attention to site inscription.

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Introduction: Change Lies Ahead

To start with what's easy to see: the African continent is severely underrepresented on UNESCO's World Heritage List. The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization created this List in 1972 as part of the *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage* to protect sites that the World Heritage Committee deems to be "of outstanding value to humanity."[1] In all, Africa boasts 74 World Heritage Sites, far fewer than any other region, although there are few who would suggest that Africa simply lacks the universal cultural heritage found the rest of the world over.[2] On the contrary, as Africa's history and archaeology is often read as the history of all humankind. Like Classical archaeology draws professionals to unearth the roots of Western civilization, the appeal for archaeological inquiry in Africa purportedly stems from the desire to see the very birth of our human species.[3] Despite this arguably universal and innate interest in the continent, to the present day it has received less attention from The World Heritage Committee than any other region."[4]

UNESCO realizes this gap and is taking vigorous measures to represent the entire world's diversity in its cultural heritage site protection. In 1994 the World Heritage Committee

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[1] World Heritage Center. *About World Heritage.* [updated 23 November 2007; cited 23 November 2007]. Available from <http://whc.unesco.org/en/about/>.

[2] UNESCO. World Heritage Committee. General Assembly of States Party to the Convention. *List of States Parties to the World Heritage Convention, Distribution of World Heritage Properties in State Parties and Composition of the World Heritage Committee since 1976.* Sixteenth session, 2007.

[3] Jean-Paul Descoeudres. Interview by Lauren Blacik. 12 November 2007. Department of Classical Archaeology, Candolle Building, University of Geneva, Geneva, Switzerland.
At points in the history of archaeological and anthropological inquiry, pegging Africa as the birthplace of all mankind has downplayed and disregarded the importance of all other African civilization since prehistory. This is not the intent of the author. This paper is written with a view of the importance of all African culture to collective human history. The reference to Africa's interest as the birthplace of our species was only meant to highlight a pervading argument about the importance of the continent.

[4] Hervé Barre. Interview by Lauren Blacik. 7 November 2007. UNESCO International Headquarters, Fontenoy Building, Paris, France.

adopted the Global Strategy for a "representative, balanced, and credible World Heritage List."[5] The goals of this strategy are "ensuring representation on the World Heritage List of properties of outstanding universal value from all regions" as well as "ensuring that key bio-geographical regions or events in the history of life are reflected in the World Heritage List." This is a clear move to expand the List and create stronger inclusion for the currently underrepresented African continent.[6] The representation of Africa has been pursued even more explicitly since the initial adoption of the Global Strategy. The Africa Regional Programme was developed in 2003 to train professionals in conservation and management of cultural heritage as well as in the preparation of preparing nomination dossiers for cultural property.[7] In May 2006 the World Heritage Committee created the African World Heritage Fund to "support the effective conservation and protection of natural and cultural heritage of outstanding universal value in Africa."[8] The Fund will provide support in the form of grants for preparatory and technical assistance as well as capacity building programs for current or potential WHS on the African continent.

The wealth of new legislation and programming makes it probable that in the coming decades the composition of the World Heritage List will see a shift, with more African sites gaining protection. This move towards equality will likely see celebration from voices in the international community as varied as archaeologists and conservationists to experts on tourism

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[5] UNESCO. World Heritage Committee. *Expert Meeting on the "Global Strategy" and thematic studies for a representative World Heritage List*. Eighteenth session, 1994. Available from <http://whc.unesco.org/archive/global94.htm>.
[6] UNESCO. World Heritage Committee. Assembly of State Parties to the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage. *Progress in the Implementation of the Global Strategy for a Representative, Balanced, and Credible World Heritage List*. Sixteenth session, 2007.
[7] *Progress in the Implementation of the Global Strategy for a Representative, Balanced, and Credible World Heritage List,* 2007.
[8] UNESCO. World Heritage Committee. Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage. *Progress Report on the African World Heritage Fund.* Thirty first session, 2007.

and development, in addition to the normal world citizens wanting to see a planet that appears more just.

The aim of this paper is not to temper the voices that celebrate world equality, as this author celebrates that goal just as strongly, but to take a critical look at the dangers that will accompany the accession of more African sites onto the World Heritage List. Using case studies from sites that have already made the List or will be nominated soon, this paper will argue that World Heritage Site (WHS) protection actually carries with it significant risks to culture, both intangible and material. As a result of WHS protection, local culture has been altered, sites have been damaged, and the archaeological history of mankind lays open to the perils of Western-centric interpretation. The intensity of these words is not meant as undue alarmism, but rather a genuine call to recognize the gravity of the situation. Not every site has suffered these adverse consequences. Quite on the contrary, as the 1972 UNESCO Convention and the World Heritage List have doubtlessly saved countless treasures of human history from falling victim to war, urban development, or the other risks delivered on the shoulders of our modern society. As we move ahead in our awareness and protection of the remains of our human past and, specifically, as UNESCO intensifies its inclusion of African sites in the umbrella of international protection, we must be aware of the risks we are facing and the damage we have done so we can look to the future with a different perspective on protecting our past. Ultimately, the varied problems at UNESCO World Heritage sites will demonstrate that the World Heritage Committee needs to abandon its frenzy to inscribe African sites. Resources should instead be directed towards creating site-specific management plans for heritage of all level of importance, valuing the traditional knowledge and culture that sustains many African sites, and building a solid and equal foundation for African professionals.

The storm of recent UNESCO action in the continent makes the need to access past action and find effective changes for the future particularly urgent. Speaking simply of finances, the use of the significant increase in funds flowing to heritage protection in Africa needs to be spent in a way that can avoid the problems of the past. Institutionally, the process of World Heritage Site inscription and management needs a new direction for the future. After explicitly outlining the current problems with the World Heritage system in Africa, including the adverse effects on local culture, the damage to the sites themselves, and the potential for Western-centric archaeological interpretation, this paper will propose some suggestions for the future function of World Heritage funds and institutions. Funds need to go to empowering local and regional professionals in the international sphere, thereby bringing the African continent to an equal level with the rest of the world archaeological community, to the benefit of the entire archaeological field. In addition, World Heritage Sites should not consume all national and international funds for cultural heritage protection, as sites of local and regional significance are in just as much need of protection from a historical as well as socio-economic perspective. World Heritage institutions need to change to give local communities a clearly defined and powerful role in the inscription and management process. In fairness, UNESCO and non-governmental efforts to correct past problems of site inscription and management will be presented as well and their results discussed.

Research Parameters

Often "Africa" jumps off the page like a glaring example of the sociological tendency to generalize difference into a uniform "other." The intent of this author is neither to gloss over the diversity among the countries and cultures of the continent nor to simplify their heritage to such an extent that single problems and solutions can be ascribed to the entire vast region. Any

grouping as inclusive as "Africa" demands some justification. First, UNESCO itself uses this classification in its studies. The African region is considered to be essentially Sub-Saharan Africa, making it important to note that the particular cultural preservation history of Egypt is excluded from this study.[9] As many of UNESCO's policies are directed at the entire Sub-Saharan region, rather than a particular country, it was deemed more prudent to study World Heritage policy through such a frame. However, an attempt was made to represent the diversity of the continent through cases. Many individual sites were considered in this research, and, at the very least, they are geographically scattered throughout Africa, ranging from Tanzania to Mali. Lastly, while they are extremely diverse in culture and history, many African countries are experiencing similar heritage management problems.[10]

The decision was also made to focus on cultural heritage sites above national ones.[11] The current distribution of natural World Heritage Sites is fairly balanced. At the most recent General Assembly of States Parties to the World Heritage Convention, there was recognition that the trend for future inscription in Africa will likely be nomination of cultural and mixed sites.[12] In a 2007 statistical analysis it was the only region of the world with more natural sites than

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[9] The African World Heritage Fund, however, encompasses the entire continent, including Egypt.

[10] In his article "Advocacy, international development and World Heritage Sites in sub-Saharan Africa" Colin Breen describes the "hierarchy" of cultural heritage management in Africa. South Africa is the leader in legislation and technical provision, with Tanzania and Kenya following. "The majority of the remaining countries, however, lack the expertise, financial ability and political will to engage fully with developing sustainable and energetic programmes of research, management, and conservation." Colin Breen. "Advocacy, international development and World Heritage Sites in sub-Saharan Africa." *World Archaeology.* 39 (3), The Archaeology of World Heritage, edited by Gabriel Cooney. (Oxon, UK: Routledge Journals, Taylor & Francis, 2007), p. 364. In addition, in his article "Traditional and Customary Heritage Systems," Webber Ndoro acknowledges the significance of his research on other sites in Africa. "Although much of the discussion is based on experience in southern and to some extent eastern Africa, I think that many other countries in Africa and even beyond are facing the issues raised here." Webber Ndoro. 2004. "Traditional and Customary Heritage Systems: Nostalgia or Reality? The Implications of Managing Heritage Sites in Africa." *World Heritage Papers 13: Linking Universal and Local Values.* UNESCO World Heritage Centre.

[11] Sites nominated to the World Heritage List must be grouped into one of three categories: natural, cultural, or mixed based on the nature of the area for which protection is desired.

[12] *Progress in the Implementation of the Global Strategy for a Representative, Balanced, and Credible World Heritage List,* 2007.

cultural ones. This study will concentrate on cultural sites as the efforts, and money, of the

World Heritage Committee will likely favor these sites as well.

While a critique of the impact of the World Heritage List in Africa, this paper is still

written from the perspective that the African continent will continue to participate in the system

of inscription, rather than nations ending their efforts to get on the List all together or even

withdraw from the Convention. In his unique assessment of World Heritage inscription in Sub-

Saharan Africa, Colin Breen argues that perhaps WHS inscription is not the best conservation

and management approach. He asserts that the stronger course of action would be to integrate

site protection into existing international frameworks of development, including the increasing

role of non-governmental organizations.[13] While he makes excellent points about the drawbacks

of WHS inscription on heritage protection, this author believes it is possible to mitigate those

drawbacks within the current World Heritage framework. By arguing for changes in the

institution and its goals, this paper will demonstrate that inscription can still be a useful tool in

protecting cultural property. From a global perspective, the World Heritage List is a means to

foster cultural understanding and awareness among peoples. While it will eventually be argued

that the decision and execution of site protection should develop in the local community, it is

nevertheless important to maintain the international recognition of heritage sites to acknowledge

the cross-cultural significance of cultural property.

Lastly, the particular method of research for this work demands some elaboration.

Certainly much of the material comes from published sources, academic works as well as

documents produced by relevant international organizations, most notably UNESCO.

Regrettably, it lacks the inclusion of first hand field-work by the author. However, the research

is significantly enriched by the personal interviews that guided and augmented the published

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[13] Breen, 2007.

work. The author was fortunate enough to speak with representatives from international decision-making bodies, such as UNESCO, ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites), and ICCROM (International Center for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property), as well as archaeologists and government officials. The "field experiences" of these people, whether at an archaeological site or at the General Assembly of State parties, was invaluable to the finished product. They allow this paper to present unique, current, and diverse perspectives on a currently relevant and evolving issue. They all spoke as individuals and should not necessarily be taken to represent the policy of any particular university, organization, or nation.

Local Culture in Danger

The most apparent and discussed impact of World Heritage Site designation is the effect on the people living in and around a site. They are affected by the new protection measures that often accompany inscription, by the increased academic attention on their neighborhood, and by a significant increase in tourism. The particular local impact varies from site to site, but the most significant challenges are relocation, barred access from traditional lands, and increased competition for resources. This section will outline the negative impacts that World Heritage Site inscription has had on local communities as well as the consequences those impacts have on the site itself and the cultural diversity of our planet. A discussion of the institutional causes of problems with local communities is pertinent as well. Papers could be, and have been, written on any one of these impacts in any one place. The objective here is to give an overview of the costs of World Heritage Site inscription in Africa to show that all the negative consequences are part of the same institutional problems and misplaced values. Through these issue-studies it is important to consider what current World Heritage policy values: is it material cultural or human

culture? Likewise, it is only fair to recognize the actions that the World Heritage Committee has already taken to mitigate the negative consequences of inscription on locals and turn inclusion on the World Heritage List into a community benefit. In the future these efforts may impact the cases that follow, and their value will be considered.

Supposedly, the mindset of conservationists, site managers, and policymakers has changed drastically in the past twenty years. In the late 1980s and early 90s conservation was still a very procedural field. By the mid-90s the recognition that site protection involves communities and cultures rather than just technique began to solidify as a central idea in heritage protection.[14] For ICCROM, the formal creation of the Africa 2009 Programme in 1998 reinforced the new ideas of participatory-based planning. Leaders of the program Baba Keita and Joseph King both feel that heritage management had changed considerably for the better with the mainstreaming of this new strategy.[15] However, both also acknowledge the difference between rhetoric and action. "People talk a good game. Everyone will tell you that participatory-planning is important and that they're doing it. The question is how much do they live up to it?"[16] The research findings presented in this paper suggest there is a definite gap between intent and real action. Even if the theories of site management have changed in the last two decades, and even if the management of sites has become more participatory during that time, there are still numerous recent examples to suggest that the problems of site management, especially those created within the World Heritage framework, continue today.

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[14] Joseph King. Interview by Lauren Blacik. 26 November 2007. ICCROM International Headquarters, Rome, Italy.
[15] Baba Keita. Interview by Lauren Blacik. 26 November 2007. ICCROM International Headquarters, Rome, Italy; King, 2007.
[16] King, 2007.

Relocation

The most obviously jarring impact of World Heritage Site protection on a local population is the relocation of the group altogether. At some sites various groups have been occupying the area for hundreds or years, yet their proximity to the site can seem to pose a risk to the cultural or natural heritage. This situation is prevalent on the African continent because, in general, sites in the developing world have much larger human populations.[17] Later, this paper will address how relocation of indigenous populations actually *threatens* the preservation of the monument, but, for now, the focus will be the damage relocation does to the living culture.

In 2001 Tsodilo was the first World Heritage Site inscription in the nation of Botswana. Even before it became a WHS, the area was a protected national monument known primarily for its outstanding rock art. The monument is home to the San and Hambukshu ethnic groups, both of which were relocated with WHS designation.[18] Both groups subside on goat and cattle keeping, and one reason for their relocation was that the livestock rubbing against the rocks disturbed the art. The San and Hambukushu people were both moved to another ancestral land about three kilometers from the foot of the hills and were compensated for their previous farmland.[19] This relocation is a disturbing consequence of World Heritage Site protection on a living people and culture.

Phillip Segadika, head of the Archaeology and Monuments Division at the Botswana National Museum, argues for stronger protection of the intangible heritage as well as the

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[17] "OECD countries, with one exception (Canadian Rockies), have few humans living in their World Heritage Sites while the majority of World Heritage sites in less-developed countries have resident populations (with the exception of India);" Jim Thorsell and Todd Sigaty. "Human Populations in World Natural Heritage Sites: a global inventory." *World Natural Heritage and the Local Community,* edited by Hans D. Thulstrup. (Hanoi, UNESCO, World Heritage Centre: 1999), 48. This particular statistical analysis was only produced for natural World Heritage sites; however, the data suggests that developing countries face greater pressures from human populations at cultural sites as well.

[18] Phillip Segadika. 2006. "Managing Intangible Heritage at Tsodilo." *Museum International.* 58 (1-2): 31-40.

[19] Phillip Segadika. Email Correspondence and Interview by Lauren Blacik. 4 November 2007.

physical monuments at Tsodilo and all heritage sites. Part of Tsodilo's initial nomination to the World Heritage List was its significance in the third criterion for inscription, which stipulates that "sites may be inscribed which are directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas or with beliefs of outstanding universal significance."[20] The relocation of the San and Hambukushu makes it clear that, at least in this case, World Heritage Site management actually placed protection of intangible heritage behind what is perceived as the protection of material heritage. This is to the detriment of the indigenous populations as well as global human interest. The local population lost its home and the rituals, beliefs, and economy that are tied to it. The international community witnesses a further decline in cultural diversity, as culture is so intricately tied to place.

In this case World Heritage List inscription provoked the relocation of a local population, but relocation is not necessary action to protect archaeological heritage. Professor Eric Huysecom has led an excavation project in the World Heritage Site of Dogon County for over twenty years and has never encountered the need to relocate a local population. In fact, his perspective is quite the opposite. "It is very bad when you have to take away a people to protect a monument. Archaeology has to do with the living people."[21] The idea that to protect World Heritage monuments, or any heritage site, the people need to be moved away from it is beneficial to neither the archaeological conservation nor the protection of the living culture which is just as important as the culture preserved in the protected artifacts.[22]

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[20] Segadika, 2006.
[21] Eric Huysecom. Interview by Lauren Blacik. 13 November 2007. Department of Anthropology and Ecology, University of Geneva, Geneva, Switzerland.
[22] Professor Huysecom had experience with relocation from a project in West Africa. The government wanted to make a national park "pure," so they relocated all inhabitants, some of whom had lived on that site for centuries. In addition to losing the rich culture that had become a part of that natural site, the local inhabitants suffered severely from the move. At the new site they lacked the means to gather water and find other necessities. Huysecom, 2007.

Finally, any relocation of a native population strips the site of its authenticity. The foremost goal of World Heritage Site protection is maintaining the authenticity of cultural and natural places, yet with any relocation of people, material authenticity is valued over cultural authenticity.[23] This preferential action does no favors to the conservation of important pieces of human history. A method of conservation that values the human population of a site in addition to the stone or art needs to be streamlined into the accepted international protection practices to truly preserve the authenticity of the world's most important places. Places have a non-visible quality that is perceived just as strongly as any examination of material culture, or, as Dr. Gutscher, Director of ICOMOS Swiss and the Department of Archaeology in Bern, put it, "You feel the history; you don't have to be an art historian."[24] The spirit of place, the feel of history, the sense of culture springs from living people. Material culture is important as it relates to the lives of real people, so any relocation strips away the importance of the material culture and the human spirit that gives it life. World Heritage protection should be a force that opposes this damage at all costs. Unfortunately, as evident from Tsodilo Hills, it has not always been so.

Site Access

Banned access from a site for local populations is a problem on par with relocation and, unfortunately, all the more common. In receiving World Heritage designation the traditional practices of local peoples are sometimes considered too great a risk to the monument to allow them to continue. Likewise, in courting inscription management is concerned with preserving the site in such a way that it conforms to the management standards of the Committee. As much as relocation, this banned access is truly a threat to the preservation of the physical monument,

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[23] Hervé Barre stressed the importance of maintaining the authenticity of sites in the World Heritage system. Hervé Barre. Interview by Lauren Blacik. 7 November 2007. UNESCO International Headquarters, Fontenoy Building, Paris, France.

[24] Gutscher, Daniel. Interview by Lauren Blacik. 5 November 2007. Personal residence, Bern, Switzerland.

but this section will address only the anthropological destruction wrecked by banning traditional customs from World Heritage Sites.

Great Zimbabwe National Monument gained inscription on the World Heritage List in 1986. In addition to meeting the first and third cultural criteria, it also has significance in the sixth cultural criterion: "It is associated with events of living traditions and beliefs of outstanding universal significance."[25] Like the dismissal of intangible heritage protection with the relocation of the indigenous people at Tsodilo Hills, protection of the sixth criterion was not a management priority at Great Zimbabwe World Heritage Site. "After Great Zimbabwe became a World Heritage site, its management was brought in line with 'universal standards', but regrettably this was at the expense of local interests," meaning the traditional, spiritual ceremonies were prohibited at the site.[26] In September 1991 the local elders addressed a petition to site authorities stating their disappointed with the management of the site; "We feel it is necessary to tell you what pains us most with regard to the keeping of tradition customs with respect to Great Zimbabwe…"[27] After a Global Strategy Meeting was held at Great Zimbabwe in October 1995, a co-management body was created between site authorities and the local community that regulated some traditional practices on the site. However, as Dawson Munjeri explains, conflicts are only solved on an ad hoc basis, that is, when they arise, so there is never a sustained end to conflict between locals and site authorities.[28] The management of World Heritage Sites needs a change in values to create sustainable cooperation between all parties involved in site protection and ensure the continuation of the traditional practices that give cultural life to a material site.

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[25] UNESCO. World Heritage Centre. Intergovernmental Committee for the Protection of the World Natural and Cultural Heritage. *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention.* 2005.
[26] Dawson Munjeri. "Anchoring African Cultural and Natural Heritage: The Significance of Local Community Awareness in the Context of Capacity-Building." *World Heritage Papers 13: Linking Universal and Local Values.* UNESCO World Heritage Centre. p. 76.
[27] Chief Zephaniah Charumbira cited in Munjeri, 2004, p. 76.
[28] Munjeri, 2004, p. 77.

The situation in Zimbabwe is by no means isolated; as another example, an indigenous group has been similarly banned from practicing their traditional rituals at the proposed World Heritage Kondoa Irangi rock-art site in the United Republic of Tanzania. Like the community near Great Zimbabwe, the shelters at Kondoa have been tied to local belief systems since "time immemorial."[29] Sacrificing goats to ancestor spirits is an integral part of healing ceremonies performed at the site; however, this ancient practice is in danger of abolition because the millet spatters are considered a detriment to the conservation of the rock-art.[30] This ban puts an ancient culture and its traditions in jeopardy of extinction. Again, it is a problem with the World Heritage system that allows, or even encourages, site protection practices that devalue the culture of local communities.

Tourism Pressures

Tourism is the last of the three major dangers facing local communities through WHS designation that will be addressed in this paper. When a site is added to the list, its popularity increases significantly. Sites can expect roughly a 30% increase in tourism in just the first year.[31] A few examples will show that such an increase in tourism puts severe obstacles in the way of local communities trying to maintain their cultures on or near protected land. It is the responsibility of the World Heritage Committee to address this situation, as it is an international duty to protect living culture in addition to the material.

In Zanzibar Stone Town, added to the List in 2000, the increase in tourism has accompanied a torrent of urban renewal and development projects catering to foreign interests. The residents of the Stone Town have had little input on this development and are struggling to participate in the new economy. Much of the tourism development took place in anticipation of

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[29] Ndoro, 2004, p. 83
[30] Ndoro, 2004, p. 83.
[31] Barre, 2007; the increased level of tourism after inscription is also mentioned in Breen, 2007, p. 360.

the inscription, so that significant demographic change had already taken place by 1990.[32]

Foreigners, particularly Italians, flocked to jobs in the newly created market and were in a better

position to afford homes in the changing economy than Zanzibar locals. In fact, by that year,

foreigners outnumbered locals in the allocation of land leases.[33] In planning for World Heritage

site management, the danger that the financial power of foreigners could squeeze out a local

culture warrants serious consideration as protecting the human population is essential to

conserving the site itself. If locals had more decision-making power in tourism planning they

would be in a better position to defend their cultures against new development.

Even more disturbing than a foreigner-driven tourism economy taking over the culture of

a site is the fact that Heritage Site management policy would directly endanger an indigenous

culture. To return to the example of Tsodilo Hills in Botswana, another reason for Hambukushu

relocation from their farmlands was to make room for a tourism facility.[34] This example

certainly suggests that the World Heritage Site management plan placed little value on local

populations. By moving the indigenous population to make room for a tourist facility, the

interests of foreign visitors were valued over the cultural preservation of a local people.

Efforts at Local Involvement

Fortunately, the problems of local involvement have not escaped the notice of the World

Heritage Committee, and they have made some effort to bring greater benefits to local

communities. For example, in 2003 UNESCO launched the LEAP program in Asia and the

Pacific to provide a channel for local communities to take stewardship over their heritage

property, recognizing that "when local communities are removed from a site, a site dies, or, if

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[32] Hitchcock, Michael. 2002. "Zanzibar Stone Town Joins the Imagined Community of World Heritage Sites." *International Journal of Heritage Studies.* 8 (2): 153-166; The inscription campaign started in 1988.
[33] G. Cameron cited in Hitchcock, 2002, p. 164.
[34] Segadika, 2007.

preserved, is preserved only for the benefit of visiting tourists." This is a program for Asia, but, being one of the first of its kind, it may become a model for the goals of community involvement on the African continent. The goal of the program is to empower the local community so that the inhabitants can "understand and advocate the long-term conservation of monuments and sites; play a leading role in the actual work of protecting, conserving, presenting and managing the monuments and sites; benefit financially from the enhanced conservation of the monuments and sites while keeping their social and spiritual traditions intact."[35] The program identifies four dimensions by which to involve the local community in site protection: local community ownership, the home-owners' manual, development of and training of neighborhood-based geographical information mapping and management systems (GIS), and establishment of information networks among site managers.[36]

While the approach called for in this program is supposedly "bottom-up rather than top-down, so that the projects reflect the needs of each local community," it does not give the community any solid institutional power in the protection of their cultural and material heritage.[37] As this program is simply an initiative handed down from national governments, it cannot have a sufficient impact on local community empowerment. It may increase community involvement, but it does not give locals the necessary legislative power to make decisions regarding the site that is their home.

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[35] Perers, Maria. "The Leap Project." *World Natural Heritage and the Local Community,* edited by Hans D. Thulstrup. (Hanoi, UNESCO, World Heritage Centre: 1999), p. 125.
[36] The example given by UNESCO of community ownership is revitalized production of traditional crafts. The home-owners manual is a preventative conservation manual that can allow native populations to keep living in their historic homes. The last two dimensions encourage the managers of a site to use technology as a basic management tool and share information and experiences with other site managers.
[37] The quote is from Perers, 1999, p. 128

Physical Sites in Danger

The previous section illustrated the high toll WHS designation is having on local communities through relocation, barred access to sites, and increased tourism pressures. These three consequences put a living culture—its economy, traditions, and rituals—in danger to the detriment of that group and the cultural wealth and diversity of all humankind. However, these consequences do damage further than solely in the anthropological realm. They risk the material protection of the site, the very physical monuments that List inscription was designed to protect. Local populations can benefit tangible sites through traditional methods of conservation that ensured the preservation of the site to the present day. By diluting the culture of the native community, or by shutting it out, a site loses its most diligent and knowledgeable guardians. Further, a local community's understandable antagonism towards what they perceive as mismanagement of a site or dismissal of their traditions has the potential to erupt in site vandalism or destruction.

"In sub-Saharan Africa, the tendency has been to think that heritage management started when Europeans colonized the continent."[38] Indeed, it is not hard to draw out this assumption by asking questions as simple as 'why are there so many African sites on the list of sites in danger?'[39] It is a common believe that heritage protection and historical memory are products of the European imagination. Perhaps this results from the inclination to believe that Europeans view history as a linear chain of unique events and "tribal" peoples view history as a cycle of repeating happenings. Regardless of its origin, the idea that site conservation is an endeavor of

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[38] Ndoro, 2004, p. 81.
[39] When discussing differences in heritage protection in the North versus the South, a program specialist at UNESCO asserted that the idea of site conservation in Europe is much older. He also likened the differences in protection to differences in culture; "In some cultures in doesn't mean anything to keep the old building," although in that remark he did not draw a distinction between North and South as such. Personal interview. 7 Nov 2007.

European creation is a misplaced notion that results in the exclusion of a site's strongest protector.

The worth of local conservation methods has been proven. For instance, at Tsodilo Hills "unnecessary and frequent visits to the hills are seen as disrespectful of their sacredness."[40] Limiting human traffic at the site for spiritual reasons has proven an effective way to limit site damage. Or, rather, it had been until the Jun and Hambukushu people were relocated. Conservation specialist Valerie Magar explains that traditional conservation techniques are linked to maintaining the authenticity and continuity of a site. In addition, traditional techniques for the construction and maintenance of physical sites are often the most durable.[41]

Although markedly less common, there are examples of protected sites, even World Heritage sites, which incorporated traditional management techniques into the core of site policy. The Kasubi Tombs in Uganda are one of the most celebrated examples of effective traditional site management. In 2001 the site was one of the first nominated with primary importance in the sixth criterion, or intangible significance, demonstrating the World Heritage Committee's expanding recognition of the importance of living culture at monuments.[42] It seems that the recognition of a site's intangible importance to world heritage results in a site management system that values local protection practices as, "The Kasubi Tombs survive on the strength of the idiom and traditions of Baganda, which go back to the thirteenth century."[43] The native clans around the tombs carry out regular maintenance including thatching the tomb houses and

[40] Segadika, 2006, p. 32.
[41] Valerie Magar. Interview by Lauren Blacik. 26 November 2007. ICCROM International Headquarters, Rome, Italy.
[42] The site description of the World Heritage Center's website stresses that, "The site's main significance lies, however, in its intangible values of belief, spirituality, continuity, and identity;" "Matobo Hills." *World Heritage List*. World Heritage Centre. [updated 21 November 2007; cited 21 November 2007]. Available from <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/306/>.
[43] Munjeri, 2004, p. 77.

wrapping bark cloth on support poles that are a part of their traditional activities.[44] Astonishingly, local traditions have managed to protect the site against one of the gravest dangers to heritage property the world over: urban development. While the site is in the center of the modern city of Kampala, a series of taboos has so far staved-off modern encroachment and the accompanying possibility of site desecration.[45] The success of this site, inscribed valuing intangible qualities and managed valuing local traditions, in protecting the physical heritage demonstrates the possibility that lies in local and traditional management. WHS are losing this vital tool when they shut out a native culture or lack sufficient channels through which local communities can make decisions about a site.

To return to the case of Great Zimbabwe, the decision of site management to dismiss the sixth criterion for inscription, traditions and beliefs of outstanding value, and exclude the local community in protection did actually cause physical damage to the site. Since the inclusion of the site on the List, the cases of poaching and vandalism increased.[46] If native populations are prohibited from maintaining the ritual bonds that connect their culture with the fate of a monument, they will have little incentive to protect that site.

In fact, the risk of damage that local exclusion opens on a site is not limited to loss of traditional protection but can include deliberate acts of backlash. The rock-art sites of Domboshava and Silozwane are part of the Matobo Hills site in Zimbabwe, inscribed in 2003. Throughout the 1990s before the site's inclusion on the List, it witnessed numerous clashes between government regulations and local desire for traditional use. The clashes culminated in a

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[44] With the 1967 army occupation of the royal palaces, burial sites were neglected. Under the control of Idi Amin beginning in 1971, all burial sites fell under national control and many traditional practices were banned from the sites. "This had disastrous results for the Kasubi tombs. The resources allocated were never sufficient and certain practices were introduced that prevented traditional clans from pursuing their traditional role." The traditional laws of kingdoms were restored in 1993, and cultural property, including the Kasubi tombs, was returned to local control; Ndoro, 2004, p. 84.
[45] Ndoro, 2004, p. 84.
[46] Munjeri, 2004, p.76

horribly destructive incident in 1998 when some rock-art panels were doused with brown oil paint. "The message seemed to be: 'If we cannot conduct our ceremonies, then you won't have your scientific specimens.'"[47] A similar incident occurred a few years later at Silozwane. A policeman opposed to current management practices at the sacred shrine organized a group of other locals to clean the rock shelter floor. The floor was cleaned down to bedrock, removing all the archaeological deposits in obvious violation of the country's Heritage Act.[48] The dramatic actions of local communities in these situations are not surprising. Despite the fact that the site was central to their belief systems and protection of it had long been a culture norm, they were denied access supposedly for the sake of the physical monument. Understanding the past disenfranchisement of local communities is vital to developing World Heritage policy for the future. No group of people would react kindly to barred access by outsiders from their religious place, be it a church or a pagoda; site protection necessitates, at the very least, the cooperation of the locals.

However, the World Heritage Center claims that site inscription and the resulting management plan have significantly resolved antagonism between site management authorities and the local community at Domboshava and Silozwane. The Matobo Hills site description on UNESCO's website includes that, "The Matobo Hills continue to provide a strong focus for the local community, which still uses shrines and sacred places closely linked to traditional, social and economic activities."[49] The management plan presented to the World Heritage Center in December 2004 following inscription recognizes the institutional bias of the previous

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[47] Ndoro, 2004, p. 82
[48] Ndoro, 2004, p. 82
[49] "Matobo Hills." *World Heritage List*. World Heritage Centre. [updated 21 November 2007; cited 21 November 2007]. Available from <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/306/>.

management plan and the isolation of local communities and affirms that the local villages will be educated on the importance of the site and included in future management.[50]

Despite the recent cooperation, the World Heritage Committee placed too much priority on inscription without considering the local community. This property was first presented to the 27th session of the World Heritage Committee in 2003. At that time ICOMOS recommended deferring the nomination until a management plan that provided for stronger coordination between locals and site officials was prepared. The Committee inscribed the site anyway, though requested the establishment of a committee to develop an effective management plan.[51] This action highlights that, while mentalities may have changed since the 80s, the World Heritage Committee is still not placing enough importance on local community involvement. Mechanisms for local control should be in place *before* a site is inscribed. It seems that in this case the management plan of 2004 will soothe tensions between site authorities and locals. However, the World Heritage Committee should not claim too much credit in that achievement, as it failed to act when considering the site's nomination, the point at which it had the most influence.

Ultimately, for the most effective protection of physical sites, the World Heritage Committee needs policies that recognize the wisdom of local communities, rather than reverting back to the adage that conservation is a creation of Europe. As Gaia Jungeblodt, Director of the ICOMOS International Secretariat, so clearly put it, "There's not a difference of will or love for their heritage."[52] Traditional management techniques may differ from the techniques that comprise the norm in the academic and political world of conservation today, but that difference

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[50] UNESCO. World Heritage Committee. *Examination of the state of conservation of World Heritage properties*. Twenty-ninth session, 2005, p. 55-56.
[51] *Examination of the state of conservation of World Heritage properties*, 2005, p. 55.
[52] Gaia Jungeblodt. Interview by Lauren Blacik. 7 November 2007. ICOMOS International Secretariat, Rue de la Federation, Paris, France.

does not degrade their validity. Every community takes the actions it believes will be most effective in protecting its most important places, and every community should be given the opportunity to do so. And, to the benefit of us all, that local knowledge is a key component of ensuring the monuments most significant to our human past will endure indefinitely into the future.

For A Fair Interpretation of Human Archaeological Heritage

Arguing that World Heritage Site designation causes Western-centric interpretation of history is harder to illustrate because, unlike the weakening of local culture and site damage, there aren't case examples that clearly demonstrate, for instance, that a group of German archaeologists interpreted the origin of a particular pottery type in a different way than their Namibian colleagues and won out for ethnic, rather than academic, reasons. However, because the danger is less evident it is all the more potent. As previously demonstrated in this paper, the World Heritage Committee has made effort to include local communities in site conservation. The Western hegemony over archaeological research, though, is little mentioned. The efforts to train excavators, conservators, and managers in Africa are usually argued from a development angle, rarely from an academic one.[53] Truly, the world is lacking the multitude of perspectives that contribute to the fullest possible knowledge of our history. While this deficiency is the result of complex factors traversing colonial history to current economic policy, the World Heritage List has played a part in maintaining the Western-dominated site conservation ideology.

Gaining Access to the Network of Professionals

It is first necessary to understand the structure of archaeological research in the global context. The field is certainly international; for most archaeologists a key component of

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[53] In ICCROM's Africa 2009 Programme, for example, the donors are development agencies, not heritage foundations; King, 2007.

education and research is travel and fieldwork abroad. It is through exposure to different and diverse sites that archaeologists learn methods of research as well as participate in international dialogues of archaeological interpretation. These dialogues take place through networks of professionals specializing in various nations, terrains, and historical periods. Archaeologists generally find projects and excavations through personal connections, as opposed to national or international coordination. For example, Professor Huysecom got started on a 25 year project in Mali because some people he knew asked him to come. At that point he was fairly new to African archaeology, and now he is a recognized expert.[54] Professor Descoeudres went through similar channels to arrange an upcoming project in Albania.[55] A major reason for the existence of ICOMOS is to build networks like these among archaeological professionals, and its membership structure is a testament to the individual exchange that characterizes the field of archaeology, as individual archaeologists belong to the organization, not nations.[56]

Archaeology is a discipline that requires coordination and exchange to ensure the most thorough interpretation. In addition, it's fueled by interest in the lives of people often living in cultures very different than one's own. International archaeological conversations among professionals are the foundations of research. Moreover, these networks protect the archaeological heritage as professionals have a network of colleagues to help them defend their own sites against risks ranging from environmental degradation to careless government policies.

African professionals have been largely shut out from these networks and conversations. Certainly there are fewer trained archaeologists in Africa due to limited means for education in many countries, but people that are professionally trained are still isolated from the rest of the global archaeological or conservationist community. Holding conferences, trainings, and

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[54] Huysecom, 2007.
[55] Descoeudres, 2007.
[56] Jungeblodt, 2007.

seminars is a major networking, as well as educating, technique of ICOMOS and ICCROM.

Unfortunately, professionals from Sub-Saharan Africa and other developing regions often cannot

afford to participate in these events and exchanges.[57] Valerie Magar says the lack of

representation from Africa is obvious at international conservation conferences. For non-

governmental organizations there are large contingents from North American and European

countries, with a few individuals representing the developing world. This is a grave loss for the

field; leaders and experts recognize that a diversity of world perspectives "is fundamental" to

accuracy and best-practice in both archaeology and conservation.[58]

Even more noticeably than international conferences, African archaeologists and

conservationist are absent from the personal exchanges similar to the experiences of Professors

Huysecom and Descoeudres. It is extremely rare for African professionals to work outside of

Africa, even though research in a foreign country is typical for professionals from the rest of the

world.[59] Because the horizon of academic research for African archaeologists does not extend

beyond the continent, they are excluded from full participation in the international archaeological

conversation. Again, this problem is a question of means. When researchers from European,

North American, or other developed countries go abroad to research, it is usually through

funding provided by their national or state government or a university. Sites in the developing

world court the participation, and even leadership, of "Northern" experts because those people

bring significant funds to the project. Indeed, project participation is not based on academic

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[57] Jungeblodt, 2007. Ms. Jungeblodt gave the example of a recent conference held in South Africa. Despite the fact that the conference was help on the continent, only two out of the seventy-five African members could afford to go.
[58] Magar, 2007.
[59] Descoeudres, 2007. He explains that there is very little representation of developing countries at Classical archaeological sites, even though sites in Greece and Italy have groups of archaeologists from several European counties and the United States.

merits alone or even for the greater part.[60] Regardless of their academic merits, archaeological research the world over loses the perspective of African archaeologists because their states cannot afford to sponsor their participation abroad.

Lastly, African professionals are excluded from one of the major drivers of academia: publishing. "Anglo-Saxon" countries have a history of publication, but African countries have been unable to join that community because of limited funding.[61] Without the opportunity to publish their work, the research and perspectives of African archaeologists are even further excluded from international dialogue.[62]

The lack of African representation in the international archaeological dialogue is clearly an issue of means on all three accounts: participation in conferences and seminars, personal exchanges for work on foreign sites, and publication of research findings. While this dire concern for the accurate interpretation of human archaeological heritage is certainly not the fault of the World Heritage List alone, the World Heritage inscription system has drained resources from supporting international participation for African professionals. The focus of international aid has been on helping African countries prepare nomination documents and get sites in their nations inscribed on the List. The World Heritage Center as well as other non-governmental organizations promote training of professionals in Africa too, but that training is generally to work in a local, or national at most, capacity. The protection and research of the archaeological heritage is indeed a concern that justifies wanting to employ as many African professionals at

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[60] Huysecom, 2007. Professor Descoeudres shared the same sentiment about projects in the developing world. Archaeologists in the developing world are "almost always interested in collaborations because we have more money than they do." Descoeudres, 2007.
[61] Magar, 2007.
[62] Jungeblodt, 2007. ICOMOS had made some creative efforts to ease this inequality. For instance, they will soon launch an open access archive. This archive will allow members to upload their finished and finalized papers to the web, giving researchers in developing countries international exposure for their work and giving members in developed countries a chance to learn from these pieces.

African sites as possible, but African archaeology cannot become an equal part of the discipline until African professionals participate on an international level.

A Western-Driven Research Agenda

The World Heritage List and the nomination process allow Western values of cultural significance to dominate research agendas globally. The UNESCO World Heritage Center and Committee decide what sites are important through the List designation, and those sites get dramatically more attention in the form of research and funding than non-World Heritage sites. In continuing and expanding the World Heritage List, we need to consider, "Who then is producing the concept of national heritage and what agencies are driving heritage agendas?"[63] To repeat, it is only recently that sites with intangible heritage values have been recognized as important in their own right. Many of these sites are in Sub-Saharan Africa. Despite this change the World Heritage List is still dominated by grandiose tangible monuments. Certainly the WHS designation dictates the research and conservation agendas in all countries, as there are only limited resources for cultural protection allocated anywhere. However, the problem is exacerbated in Africa as a result of the severely limited nature of national funding for protection.[64] Further, the World Heritage Committee exercises a "double layer" of control over African site designation. For developed countries the power of the World Heritage Committee is limited to inscription and possible inclusion on the List of Sites in Danger.[65] These countries can choose their own sites for the tentative list and develop their own nomination applications.[66]

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[63] Breen, 2007, p. 365
[64] Breen, 2007, p. 364.
[65] The mandate to publish a list of sites in danger comes from Article 11.4 of the *Convention*. The Committee is obligated to establish and update a list of World Heritage properties for which major conservation operations are necessary; UNESCO. General Conference. *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage*. Seventeenth session, 1972.
[66] State parties are encouraged to submit lists of sites in their boundaries that they think might eventually deserve nomination to the World Heritage List; UNESCO. World Heritage Centre. Intergovernmental Committee for the

The World Heritage Committee and other governmental agencies and non-governmental organizations of Europe and North America have strong power in African protection and research priorities because they provide the funding and technical assistance with the preparation of tentative lists, nomination documents, and eventual management plans. The Committee provides grants and expert assistance to developing countries because, as previously discussed, its leading priority is a more balanced List.[67] The result of this reasonable ambition, though, is that "Western" forces dictate the African research and management agenda. By aiding in the preparation of tentative lists, outside experts can influence what sites will be privileged nationally and internationally, rather than deciding based on what is most valued by the local or national populations.

Though their priorities are not necessarily negative, the influence of donors does influence the agenda as well. For example, the Scandinavian counties contributed significant financial resources to ICCROM's Africa 2009 Programme. The goals of the program are to ensure that African sites, with WHS or just national designation, are well conserved and to increase the number of African sites on the World Heritage List.[68] The countries that contributed were all supporters of the participatory-planning that ICCROM encourages. However, their influence resulted in a stronger emphasis on gender equality and AIDS prevention in management plans.[69] These are worthy priorities, but that isn't the point. The donor countries were able to exert a level of influence over the management plans of African sites that would not be possible in a fellow developed nation. Not only does this prevent equality

Protection of the World Natural and Cultural Heritage. *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention.* 2005.
[67] Edouard Planche. Interview by Lauren Blacik. 7 November 2007. UNESCO International Headquarters, Bonvim Building, Paris, France.
[68] Keita, 2007.
[69] King, 2007.

in the right of a people to decide the future of archaeological and intangible heritage in their country, but it opens archaeological research and conservation to the risk of destructive forms of foreign intervention.

Recommendations

The previous discussion is meant to show, en masse, the damage and potential danger of World Heritage Site designation on the people, culture, and tangible heritage in Sub-Saharan Africa as well as the detriment to the accurate interpretation of archaeological heritage the world over. As stated in the introduction of this article, the solution is not to scrap the World Heritage system as the system fosters cultural understanding and knowledge and creates international awareness of the importance of cultural heritage. Institutional change would be the most concrete and assuredly effective way to improve the World Heritage system. However, this author recognizes the implausibility of institutional change and will discuss less drastic measures as well.

Wishing for Institutional Change

A protocol to the 1972 Convention to mandate the involvement of the local community in the preparation of nomination documents for sites with indigenous populations would be the most effective means to mitigate the negative impacts of site designation. As providing or creating a management plan is part of the nomination process, local communities could protect themselves from relocation or banned access that fall under the guise of protection. Their influence in tourism planning would ensure that they benefit from the industry rather than suffer cultural loss at the hands of foreign competition. Having the community committed from the start assures that they will be a force protecting the site rather than resisting what could be perceived as an invasion of their land. The operative way to utilize traditional management

techniques as well is to integrate them into the management strategy at the beginning of site development.

Ultimately, this fundamental institutional change is unlikely to occur. UNESCO is an intergovernmental organization, and the Convention is clear that the State maintains sovereignty at the site.[70] Parties have the freedom to put together their tentative lists however they want, with or without community involvement. The 1972 Convention is one of UNESCO's most popular, with 184 parties as of October 2006. It is improbable that all these states, or even a majority of them, would agree to a change in the Convention.[71] The criteria for inscription are demonstrated universal value and a sustainable management plan, nothing else. States are unlikely to insist on any further criteria with which they would have to comply in the future. Lastly, like most international legislation, there are few mechanisms for enforcement of community involvement, even if it was mandated in the Convention. The Committee has only inscription and the List of Sites in Danger to impose its priorities. After inscription there are virtually no institutional means to control the management plan. The List of Sites in Danger is a powerless enforcement tool as only one site has ever been deleted, and it was by the state party's own request.[72]

More Plausible Solutions

Positive change in the World Heritage system will have to come through softer means. "The key is encouraging local participation through the World Heritage system because there's nothing you can do to enforce it."[73] Many of UNESCO's key non-governmental partners are

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[70] "Each State Party to this Convention recognizes that the duty of ensuring the identification, protection, conservation, presentation and transmission to future generations of the cultural and natural heritage…and situated on its territory, belongs primarily to that State;" Section II, Article 4; UNESCO. General Conference. *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage.* Seventeenth session, 1972.
[71] King, 2007.
[72] King, 2007. The one deleted site is in Oman.
[73] Keita, 2007.

pushing for change. IUCN (The World Conservation Union), ICCROM, and ICOMOS try to

prioritize participatory site development in all their development projects. Programs like Africa

2009, that value community participation at all stages of planning, should be streamlined into all

of UNESCO's activities in Sub-Saharan Africa. Frankly, this is a time for radicalism. Lip

service is not good enough. It's scary for professionals to put decisions in the hands of the

community because they fear that locals will make the wrong decisions.[74] This is a risk. For

real change, some decisions need to be conferred to the local level, and the decisions of the local

community need to be accepted, whether site managers agree or not.

While the World Heritage Committee doesn't have any solid measures of enforcement,

they can use some influence within the existing system. One of the two criteria for inscription on

the List is a sustainable management plan. This paper has shown that the only sustainable

management plan is one that involves the local community at every step of the planning and

management process. Without that involvement living culture risks extinction and the physical

strength of sites is stripped away with its traditional guardians. Unlike at Matobo Hills, the

Committee should insist that local involvement is a key component of a management plan before

inscribing the site. In fact, that action is required to fulfill the condition of a sustainable

management plan. The Committee needs to abandon the goal of inscribing African sites so

quickly that it allows the dismissal of the sustainable management plan requirement of

inscription criteria.

The rush to inscribe African sites has resulted in a misuse of funds as well. The

allocation of international resources needs immediate change. There is entirely too much money

going to World Heritage Site designation when it could be spent on conservation at other sites

and the participation of African professionals in international conferences and foreign exchange

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[74] King, 2007.

to increase the diversity of perspectives interpreting our archaeological heritage. Perhaps to achieve this end, the focus of the World Heritage Committee should move away from site designation for awhile. It seems in a frenzy to create a balanced List, while overlooking changes that could actually make the conservation of cultural heritage an endeavor representative of the diversity of the globe. By using funds that would be spent on inscription to develop sustainable management plans at sites throughout the continent (not just potential WHS) and by empowering African professionals to participate equally with the rest of the international archaeological community, the continent can build the foundation it needs for sustainable protection of all its heritage and the knowledge of the world archaeological community will increase its depth with a new influx of perspectives that have been regrettably missing. After this strong base of academic and conservationist equality is in place, the nations of Sub-Saharan Africa can use the World Heritage List to highlight the cultural assets that are the most valuable to *their* people.

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