**RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE ROBBEN ISLAND SEMINAR ON THE NARA DOCUMENT, 8th -9th July 2014, CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA**

**WORKSHOP REPORT**

# From Himeji to Robben Island – the future of Nara document in Africa

## Background to the workshop

1.1.1. The year 2014 marks the 20th anniversary of both the Nara Document on Authenticity as well as the establishment of democracy in South Africa and its liberation from apartheid – a coincidence that warranted the merging of these two seemingly unrelated concepts under a single banner entitled ‘*From Himeji (Japan) to Robben**Island (South Africa); the future of Nara Document in*

*Africa*’, with the objective of reviewing and discussing the future of implementing the Nara Document on Authenticity in the context of World Heritage in Africa. The Robben Island Museum & World Heritage Site and the African World Heritage Fund (AWHF) jointly organised the seminar drawing regional and international participants.

*1.1.2.* Acknowledging the recommendations of the Himeji 2013 conference on ‘*Heritage and Societies: Toward the 20th Anniversary of the Nara Document and beyond’* held in Japan, it is important to note that after the Nara Document was developed there was too little discussion on the extent to which the determination of authenticity accommodates change over time. *Also recalling the recommendations of Himeji 2013 Conference;*

1.1.2.1. On the relationship between values and authenticity, further discussion is needed, specifically on the way in which the integration of local and global values, the combination of which can inform the determination of the statement of significance and authenticity that are key indicators for outstanding universal value in the case of World Heritage properties;

1.1.2.2. Recognising that values attributed to heritage are dynamic and may change over time (meeting evolving social needs), as recognized by the Nara Document, there is need for further discussion on the way in which varying perspectives on change and continuity affect the prioritization of values at heritage sites. More discussion is needed on the extent to which the assessment of authenticity can accommodate the evolution of heritage values over time.

1.1.2.3. Further discussion is needed to understand the intricate relationship between authenticity and integrity especially how this relates to the practice of heritage management. Further discussion is needed on ‘other internal and external factors’ (Nara paragraph 13) that are important and might be relevant in the determination of authenticity and its assessment.

1.1.2.4. Acknowledging that authenticity is based on the presence of credible information sources or understandings about attributes of heritage that support claims of its value in a given cultural context, there is need to have a discussion on how to assess the credibility of the sources used in determining authenticity.

The relative roles of experts and communities in the process of establishing authenticity also require further discussion and clarification.

1.1.2.5. Accepting that communities are invariably diverse but they all attribute values to their heritage and propose sources of authenticity to support these values, there is need to understand the range of communities that are relevant to the identification and management of heritage, and how best to involve them in this process. This should include developing processes, tools and frameworks that can enable community participation in the negotiation of integrated heritage management strategies given the conflicts arising between and among communities, governments, institutions and other stakeholders over heritage values and claims for authenticity.

1.1.2.6. The relationship between sustainable development and heritage conservation has been the focus of many conferences in 2012/13, and now there is general understanding that sustainable development can be a means to enable the conservation of heritage by addressing social and economic needs, while enhancing the function of heritage in the life of communities. However, further discussion is needed to effectively integrate the cultural dimension into the discourse on sustainability and to extend heritage management beyond traditional planning concepts and existing governance strategies for heritage. Further discussion is also required on the development of inclusive and integrated management approaches that respond to contexts of cultural diversity as recognized in the Nara Document.

1.1.3. Acknowledging that Robben Island, being one of the first three World Heritage sites inscribed by the State Party of South Africa in 1999, under the category of cultural landscapes, encapsulates the problematic nature of authenticity and integrity with regards to the inscription criteria for World Heritage Sites in Africa associated with the Human Spirit. The liberation movement created new avenues of liberation heritage in South Africa, resulting in Robben Island being declared a national monument (1994) and a World Heritage site in 1999. The site has a nomination document with an entire section dedicated to outlining the limitations imposed on post-apartheid and post-colonial African heritage by the predominantly western phenomenon of material authenticity; although applicable to post-colonial relics that take the physical form of buildings and infrastructure on the Indian subcontinent, this narrow strain of authenticity fails to acknowledge the intangible post-colonial ‘presence’ that tends to define such sites in Africa, which are unique for the traditions and events that have been layered upon them over periods of time. Therefore, deeming the contemporary criteria for authenticity in the Operational Guidelines (which were only amended to incorporate the Nara Document in 2005) inadequate for an African context, the nomination document then attempts to ‘set the parameters of authenticity within the confines of the Robben Island experience’ (UNESCO 1999, 8).

1.1.3.1. Recalling the Robben Island World Heritage site nomination file, both the built environment and the surrounding cultural landscape of Robben Island are characterised by the transformations they have undergone at the hands of the various inhabitants of and visitors to the island from the earliest times. By rule

of the original concept of authenticity, the island does not present a frozen, fully ‘authentic’ snapshot of a particular era; instead, a process of layering captures an archive of events, memories and activities that amass into the singular core of the site’s outstanding universal value – the triumph of the human spirit over adversity – and therein lies its integrity and authenticity.

1.1.3.2. It was only natural, in such an opportune year, to situate Africa’s dynamic and evolving albeit largely marginalised heritage within similarly evolving discussions of the Nara Document on Authenticity at global level.

1.1.4. A number of long-term and short-term factors have led up to this overdue discussion of authenticity in African heritage, the first of which is the absence of a timely African response to the Nara Document itself. Point 12 of the

Document requested, as a matter of urgency, that ‘recognition be accorded to the specific nature of [State Parties’] heritage values and the credibility and truthfulness of related information sources’ (Nara 1994, 12). Attempts to do so in an African context have thus far been numbered and sporadic, which is why at the Himeji 2013 conference ‘*Heritage and Societies: Toward the 20th Anniversary of the Nara Document and beyond’*, Robben Island was selected as the location for a formal discussion on the future of the implementation of the Document in the management and nomination of current and prospective African heritage sites.

### Acknowledging the African situation before Nara Document;

1.1.5.1. Before any formal discussion or integration of the Nara Document can be carried out in an African context, it is important to understand the precise nature of that context, and the issues it raises for the expansion of any kind of concept that governs heritage management on the continent. In 1994, the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (hereafter referred to as the Convention) hit a roadblock of resistance in the form of a strong Japanese management system that had existed for centuries, and was diametrically opposed to the criteria of authenticity imposed by UNESCO. The result was the Nara Document, which successfully loosened the reins on authenticity enough for the Japanese issue to be resolved, but was too vague to specifically apply to State Parties that had already forgone their own indigenous forms of management for the largely Western model of UNESCO; Africa was one such example.

1.1.5.2. This framework goes far in explaining the problematic nature of responding to NARA’s plea for locally defined concepts of authenticity; the ‘local’ in Africa has been so distorted by the colonial process, and varies so much across the continent, that the task of ‘authentically’ unifying all the different strands is monumental.

### Acknowledging the objectives and rational of the UNESCO’s Global Strategy (1994), and the discussions on authenticity thereof;

1.1.6.1. The first formal discussions that gathered a group of African heritage experts together for the purpose of analysing the African position on the World Heritage List took place as part of UNESCO’s Global Strategy, coincidentally launched in 1994. A series of meetings were held in Harare, Addis Ababa, Porto Novo and Tiwi that discussed issues ranging from the Eurocentricity of the Convention to the intangible aspect of African heritage to the nomination of cultural routes and itineraries, all aimed at expanding the concept of heritage and creating a well-balanced and more representative World Heritage List.

1.1.6.2. The First Global Strategy Meeting in Harare (October 1995), while pointing out the Convention’s focus on monumentality, being an Eurocentric approach, and the application of the criteria of authenticity, acknowledged that the recently drawn up Nara document corrected some of these misrepresentations. Although the first four meetings focused on different aspects of African heritage in varying depth, it was not until the fifth meeting of experts on African Cultural Landscapes in Tiwi (March 1999) that discussions regarding the concepts of authenticity and integrity in an African context were featured on the agenda from the outset. As the focus was on cultural landscapes, the recommendations produced focused on the consideration of authenticity and integrity in conjunction with each other.

*1.1.6.3. Recalling the Meeting on «Authenticity and Integrity in an African context» held at Great Zimbabwe National Monument, Zimbabwe, 26-29 May 2000, and resolutions thereof;*

1.1.6.3.1. To address more broadly authenticity and integrity contexts within the realm of African heritage in context of Nara. Proposals were made to include relevant paragraphs of the Nara Documentin the Operational Guidelines,merge the natural and cultural criteria, elaborate on the definition of integrity and authenticity in the glossary and clarify the role of local communities at all stages of the nomination and management processes.

1.1.6.3.2. To acknowledge that authenticity lies in the values ascribed to the site by people, and therefore can and should be best communicated through the Statement of Significance at the time of nomination by the State Party. In the process, the role of languages in capturing the intangible essence of a site, as well as in the transmission of these values through time was highlighted.

1.1.6.3.3. To widening information sources and on the particular context of the cultural heritage (not ‘heritage properties’) in the Operational Guidelines.

1.1.6.3.4. To acknowledge the problematic and under-discussed concept of integrity, with a view of defining integrity as embracing ‘cultural, religious, or customary systems and taboos that sustain the complete structure, diversity and distinctive character of natural properties and cultural landscapes’. In addition, it was recommended that the concept of integrity be applied to cultural sites as well as natural ones, which would require a further expansion of the term in the Operational Guidelines.

1.1.6.4. From an African point of view, much was discussed and recommended for the amendment of criterion (vi) of the Operational Guidelines, as it was noted that sites exist in Africa that cannot be considered under any criteria other than

(vi). For the concept of authenticity, values of African heritage lie primarily in the intangible spirit and associative powers of their site, and formal recognition of this fact is crucial for the Convention to be balanced and credible.

1.1.7. The difficulty in applying rules of authenticity in an African context lies not only in the scope of the concept, but also in its implementation for the management of such sites as there is very little elaboration on the evolution of a site’s value over time, and how this evolution affects its levels of authenticity and integrity. For example, does freezing Robben Island ‘as it was received from the Department of Correctional Services’ by minimal intervention somehow negate the ‘layered’ authenticity it was inscribed for? Or does the natural evolution of the site’s infrastructure, as it responds to the growing pressures of tourism, interfere with these layers enough to damage the authenticity of the Island experience? These are the kinds of questions can only be truly informed through a preliminary understanding of the Nara Document on Authenticity.

## Robben Island Recommendations on the Future of the NARA document

1.2.1. Recalling the objective of the Robben Island Seminar, being to review and discuss the future of implementing the Nara Document on Authenticity in the context of World Heritage on the African continent at the occasion of celebrating the 20th Anniversary of Nara Document and democracy in South Africa, with special emphasis on four broad sub-themes; (i) Impact of Nara Document on the management of heritage in Africa, (ii) Authenticity, integrity and credibility of the sources, (iii) Towards integrated heritage management strategies on the African continent and (iv) NARA +20 document.

1.2.2. Recognising that the Nara document has had a significant impact on the inscriptions of African sites onto the World Heritage List. This is based on that fact that while there were only 5 % of African sites on the World Heritage list by 1995, there are now 10% as of 2014. While this may not represent a substantial increase mathematically, it is significant to note particularly because the sites inscribed post 1995 have benefited from the NARA document.

*1.2.3. Considering the future of implementing the NARA document on the African continent, the Robben Island Seminar highlights that;*

1.2.3.1.The Nara Document is binding upon the signatories to the World Heritage Convention, especially compared to independent charters like the Burra Charter, which, despite being a popular feature in heritage legislation around the world, applies specifically to Australia. The Robben Island seminar recommends that as per point 12, the Nara Document is adopted and domesticated to an Africa context, where each country first explicitly defines the conditions upon which it adopts the Document and then includes it in national legislation to make those conditions legally binding. Anchoring the NARA document in the national legislative frameworks of State Parties will create synergy between and among local, national and international frameworks to assist with implementation.

***NB* *(Paragraph 1.2.3.1. above should be the opening paragraph for the Nara Document as a binding statement)***

1.2.3.2. The NARA document has good intentions for good practices in heritage management, but application is limited only to the inscription processes of World Heritage sites, while its application in management strategies of inscribed sites remains very low. This could be attributed to the lack of awareness on the NARA document on the continent and training programmes that are not driven from the continent itself. This seminar recommends that management strategies apply the NARA document, while awareness and training be considered a priority by the African continent. Identification of World Heritage properties that are managed by local communities and investigation of measures providing support to these properties is needed so that they end up being managed as best practice examples in the context of the Convention and beyond. Participatory planning should not just be adopted in theory but should form the epicentre of all discussions on and implementation of integrated management strategies taking into consideration the provisions of the NARA document.

1.2.3.3. In an African context, form and spirit, tangible and intangible, authenticity of the object and authenticity of the experience is one inseparable entity and must be considered in its entirety. If the Nara Document is to be truly adopted it must move away from its fixation with materiality of our sites and begin to reflect an understanding that the physical fabric is sustained by its intangible values and its spirituality. There is a need to redefine authenticity as ‘progressive’ to account for changes and evolutions in values and physical fabric over time, especially as it applies for the transmission of heritage between generations.

1.2.3.4. In as far as the credibility of sources is concerned, all values of all stakeholders should be acknowledged and woven into the narrative fabric of the site, and no source should be discredited for academic inconsistency only, as it forms part of the intangible spirit of the site. This includes acceptance and validity of multiple and contested claims to heritage, and there is a need to extend this multiplicity to facilitate the inclusive use of these contested sites. Conflict resolution should be considered a priority in the NARA document and framework. Developing bibliographies of existing studies and records of information sources with the intention of making this available as guidance during upstream nomination processes is equally important.

1.2.3.5. With specific reference to the desire and need for sustainable development within and around World Heritage sites in Africa, it is recommended that all relevant governmental, civil and independent institutions be exposed to the Nara Document and simultaneously the document be disseminated to inform future integrated management plans that work towards combining the sustainable restoration of heritage with the maintenance of dynamic and evolving communities. Build an economic case for World Heritage conservation, by: i) actively promoting best practice conservation initiatives by all role players (including communities) in the regions; ii) prioritising efforts to identify existing cases and build a database of best practice, creating best practice cases where they do not exist working in partnerships with all stakeholders, actively promoting these cases regionally and globally, and develop early warning mechanisms that will notify of challenges with these

cases before they become crises. These goals should be integrated within the wider context of the New Millennium Goals for 2015. The NARA document should integrate sustainable development in its framework. There is a need for integrated management across all heritage platforms, governmental institutions and local communities that can only be achieved with the spreading of awareness about the Nara Document, and the vast possibilities it represents. Incorporation of clear sustainable development and effective risk management planning in the upstream nomination processes is also recommended.

1.2.3.6. As recommended in the meeting at Himeji 2013, and given that the criteria for cultural and natural heritage have been merged, there are serious gaps in the application of the Nara Document to the concept of integrity. More discussion is needed on the effect of human development of globalisation and development upon the integrity of living, tangible and intangible sites in Africa.

1.2.3.7. There is a need to expand discussion on the protection of the intellectual property of communities at risk of being internationally exploited for specialist knowledge or for commercial reasons without the benefits accruing to the creators and owners of the heritage.

*1.2.4. Recommendations for the Nara+20*

1.2.4.1. A new definition of heritage should be incorporated into the NARA +20 document.

1.2.4.2. Operational guidelines for the implementation of Convention be revised to consider the Nara-linked amendments of heritage legislation.

1.2.4.3. Promotion of community based approaches to heritage management should be acknowledged. The encouraging case study is the Sukur Cultural Landscape, more such cases are needed.

1.2.4.4. Effective social consultation framework be broadly defined and be provided for in the NARA +20 document.

1.2.4.5. Promote issues of intellectual property in the NARA+20 document.

1.2.4.6. Integrate issues of culture and sustainable development, in particular providing a framework as to how present generations interact with the heritage to meet their own needs but without taking away the opportunities for future generations.

1.2.4.7. Integrate conflict resolution mechanisms into the document.