

The Himeji Recommendations

Preamble

We, the experts assembled in Himeji (Japan), welcome the initiative of the Japanese authorities in organizing this expert meeting as a first step toward celebrating the 20th anniversary of the Nara Document on Authenticity in 2014.

During 2012, the 40th anniversary year of the 1972 Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, the international heritage community has held a number of events, conferences and workshops to examine achievements and identify challenges in heritage management, with a particular focus on World Heritage, sustainable development and the role of local communities.

The Himeji expert meeting built on the important work begun by the Nara Document and started the process of revisiting the concepts and principles to accommodate current thinking on heritage and new challenges facing societies today.

The Nara Document recognised cultural diversity, expanding the appreciation of the nature of heritage by clarifying the inextricable connection of its tangible and intangible attributes in the understanding of authenticity.

In the twenty years since 1994 all regions in the world have benefited from new opportunities and technological change but have also been facing increased pressures of globalisation, urbanization and social change, in some cases exacerbating conflict based on cultural difference, in others fostering creativity and dialogue.

There has also been an evolving discussion of the relation between heritage and society. Today, we recognise more than ever that heritage is about people, and not just about places or objects.

As in the Nara Document, we propose the examination of alternative approaches for better understanding cultural diversity and heritage, including Japanese concepts like '*Fûdo*', that have been developed in different cultural contexts. *Fûdo* is a concept that expresses the convergence of subjective human experience, history and environment.

Reflecting on these issues, the participants in the Himeji meeting identified the following areas of discussion:

Values and authenticity

The attribution of values to heritage is a social rather than a scientific or technical process involving multiple individuals and groups. **Further discussion is needed on the relationship between values and authenticity, and specifically on the way in which the integration of local and global values can inform the authenticity and significance of heritage and, in the case of World Heritage properties, the determination of outstanding universal value.**

Values attributed to heritage are dynamic and may change over time, as the Nara Document recognized. Certain categories of heritage are particularly dynamic, meeting evolving social needs. **There needs to be further discussion on the way in which varying perspectives on change and continuity affect the prioritization of values. More discussion is needed on the extent to which the assessment of authenticity can accommodate the evolution of heritage values over time.**

Defining authenticity and integrity

In the context of heritage management, authenticity is based on the presence of credible information sources or understandings about attributes of heritage that support claims of its value. **More discussion is required on the relationship between authenticity and integrity and how this relates to the practice of heritage management. Further discussion is needed about what 'other internal and external factors' (Nara para 13) might be relevant in the determination of authenticity.**

Credibility of sources

The Nara Document offered new ways of understanding authenticity in diverse cultural contexts, and the range of narratives through which heritage can acquire meaning. Authenticity depends both on the cultural context in which claims are made, as the Nara Document recognized, and also on who makes these claims. **More discussion is needed on how to assess the credibility of sources used in determining authenticity. The relative roles of experts and communities in the process of establishing authenticity also require further discussion and clarification.**

Involving communities

Communities attribute values to their heritage and propose sources of authenticity to support these values, as acknowledged in the Nara Document. Communities can however be identified in different ways. **Further discussion is needed on how 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.**

Since society is becoming more diverse, conflicts are emerging which lead to disputes within and between communities, governments and other stakeholders over heritage values and claims for authenticity. **This reaffirms the need for greater emphasis to be placed on developing processes, tools and frameworks that can enable community participation in the negotiation of integrated heritage management strategies.**

Heritage and sustainable development

Sustainable development and heritage conservation are not mutually exclusive: 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.

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.

The way forward

The participants of the meeting in Himeji recommend further discussion on these as well as other issues of heritage, authenticity and cultural diversity raised by the Nara Document in order to arrive at practical measures for safeguarding and managing heritage in a complex and changing world, and thereby fostering social wellbeing.

We invite communities, experts and other stakeholders working within different disciplinary and geo-cultural contexts to contribute to this debate in working towards the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the Nara Document.