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MAKING A CULTURAL HERITAGE POLICY A CONTRIBUTION TO THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: AN AFRICAN EXPERIENCE

(Africa Map)photo1

The approach to culture, perceived as a program sector, consider generally three dimensions: heritage, creation and human life. Cultural Heritage is identified as the origin of all forms of arts, as soul of human life and source of creative industries. It brings together cultural aspects from the historical, anthropological, aesthetical and societal points of views, influencing creativity and hosting a number of goods, services and activities.

This short presentation will focus on the three aspects of the phenomenon and try to develop a set of tasks undertaken in this specific domain of the culture sector.

These are first the identity of a community with its origin, its history and its itinerary.

Cultural heritage is also referring to the presence of a community in the world, its immediate environment, the measures for its defense against enemies, negotiations with immediate neighbors for political understanding.

Cultural Heritage is thirdly an asset for economy, land distribution and properties development, for ensuring the growth of the communities, for trade and commerce and for economical exchanges with foreign communities.

Concrete applications will help confirm these sentences.

I-Importance of cultural heritage

1.1 Cultural heritage as a testimony of identity. (Great Zimbabwe)photo2

The Great Zimbabwe, a national monument and one of the sites of the World Heritage List is for the Republic of Zimbabwe and its inhabitants today a symbol of the grandeur of the Shona people at the time of the Monomotapa Kingdom some two centuries ago and even earlier. Its extension to Khami Ruins in the Matabele Land in Bulawayo is perceived as a demonstration of the capacity of a great people to grow and invest and extend in the region, in the neighboring Botswana and in the Northern region, the Limpopo, currently part of the South African region where the Mapungubwe seen as a duplication of the splendid monument in the complex hill of the capital and city of the King, splendid and proud. The current Republic of Zimbabwe, coming

to the time of its political independence in 1980, adopted as symbol of the country the famous birds, traditionally protectors of the King and of the people.

1.2 Cultural heritage as a demonstration of power (Bamoun palace) photo3

The Royal Palaces by themselves are eloquent to this regard. The palace of the Bamoun people in Cameroun and the power of a King, Njoya, is well known to not talk about the Pyramids in the Northern part of the continent but also in the historical City of Meroe situated in the current Sudan. Historians will confirm that the vision of the palace was not only to provide a comfortable life to the King, it was mainly to show the solidity of the people and of the cultural group, to establish on the earth what poets in this historical City of Rome, called a "monumentum aere perennius", a symbol of eternity.

But the power can also be spiritual. So the manuscripts in the Northern Mali, in the City of Timbuktu produced as early as the 12 century to record and provide learning in sciences, in technologies and aesthetics. At the last crisis with the invasion of the sacred City 3 years ago, numerous of the manuscripts were saved, not by armies (generally authors of thefts themselves of heritage objects as was the case in Irak), but by the citizen, the custodians realizing that the lost would mean their disappearance from the History, the loss of the symbol, of the argument of their power, of the respect received from the World all along the History. (Timbuktu) photo4

1.3 Cultural heritage as an economic asset.

Here the general consensus on the importance of the heritage is demonstrated by the consideration of its role in the promotion of tourism. But it can offer more.

Venue for several cultural events such as craft and arts exhibitions, music festivals and film festivals like Busara Festival happening every year in February and Zanzibar International film Festivals in July every two years in the Open Theater of the Stone Town of the Zanzibar Island, a site and monument of the World heritage list. Similarly the Mondovision during the President Senghor era in the Goree Island next to Dakar. Equally the Makonde Art Festival bringing the populations from Mayotte and from La Reunion back to their home on the Mozambican Island in the Sao Sebastiao Castel, also a monument of the World Heritage List currently also used for training and research. When you learn that the African Development Bank was intending to invest up to 18 Millions of US dollars to develop the social services for the 12.000 inhabitants on a piece of land of 3 kilometers (long) and 500 meters (large) the first Capital City of Mozambique, covered by historical buildings, beautiful beaches and a lot of souvenirs of historical meeting points of cultures from Europe, Asia, Arab World and of course from and

within African Mainland, you can realize what opportunities are there for creativity, for promotion, for enterprises to produce, to invest, to make business! (Fortaleza)photo5

2-Mechanisms for governance

For such an importance to continue to serve, there is a need for an official recognition and a formal commitment to preserve, to maintain, to promote and fructify. In other words, there is a need for a formal cultural policy to be defined, implemented and evaluated. This means a formal document designing responsibilities at all levels, action plans integrated in the national planning.

2.1 For Public Authorities, 4 aspects need to be considered

-sensitization: campaigns to organize using in particular public media, on the importance of heritage and the role this plays in history of the community

-administration: assignment of specific administrative agents to the preservation, conservation and promotion of museums, archives, sites and monuments and production of material for the campaigns and integrate the funding related in the national annual budget;

-technical management: ensure a regular evaluation of the staff and adopt a capacity building program accordingly;

-political commitment: prepare and adopt a legislation ensuring access, circulation and visits as well facilities for possible investors in the heritage filled to be exempted from taxes as is the case for manuals and education materials

-recognize merits and excellences where and when necessary and encourage candidates interested by the field

-promote the regional integration for trans boundary sites and monuments and adopt an open attitude and equal treatment in identifying candidatures for international recognition;

2.2. For professionals in conservation, restoration, exhibition and promotion to realize their responsibilities and merit the confidence demonstrated by authorities and by young candidates and be concerned permanently by the need to upgrade their skills and competences

2.3. For leaders of communities to realize that they are the owners of the monuments and sites on their land and they are responsible for sensitizing their respective populations especially in the areas of maintenance, security and other kind of assistance on voluntary base;

In return, they will be entitled to gratuity for entrance, visits and performances. Priority for their children to education, and improvement of social services and infrastructures for the all population on the land;

2.4. Partners participating in the conservation, rehabilitation and promotion of heritage including the intangible heritage, are expected to help in the selection, the presentation, the promotion, the capacity building (and ICCROM should be commended in this regard and request to consider a possible repetition of the initiative similar to the Africa 2009), the production of material and, in particular, in the improvement of social services and infrastructures for local communities on the land of the sites and of the monuments.

3-African Position

I am just coming from an international seminar organized 3 weeks ago in Maropeng, Cradle of Mankind, in the surrounding area of Johannesburg City to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the creation of the African World Heritage Fund (AWHF), an initiative of the African Union with the support of UNESCO. (AWHF)photo1bis

1. Autonomy and convergence.

For this meeting, I was assigned by the organizers to tentatively try an harmonization, as for the role and place of cultural heritage, of the two initiatives taken respectively by African Union in adopting in January 2015 the Agenda 2063, "Africa we want" and the UN Post Millennium Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals succeeding, adopted in September 2015 to succeed to the MDGs.

The statement was to take note of the convergence of concerns and solutions as for the positive role played by the heritage promotion as a facilitator for a sustainable development projects and programs to succeed. The autonomy was the difference in the approaches, methods, in the vision, in the mission statement. And that is normal. (Virunga)photo6

2. Conditions for synergy

But this was to be seen more as complementary than contradictory as far as agreement was reached for the synergy between the AU and the UN documents facilitated by the Common Africa Position (CAP) during the discussions on SDGs considering the Agenda 2063 and its foundations, the African Cultural Renaissance, as a Strategic Framework, in the following particular directions

-the centrality of culture, basis of national identity, source of legitimacy;

-the definition and the adoption of a formal cultural heritage policy integrated to the national planning harmonizing the development of economic and mineral resources and the necessary preservation of particular and recognized sites and monuments;

-the integration of cultural and creative industries-including cultural tourism- within the global industries policy of the nation and adoption of equal implementation facilities and infrastructures;

-the respect of the crucial role of cultural contribution from local communities in the implementation of projects and programs of development related in particular with agriculture, water resource, fisheries, coastal villages.

Conclusion

The importance of cultural heritage-mobile or monuments and sites-as well as intangible cultural heritage, recommends a special treatment by all, public national and local authorities, professionals, partners and friends. Proper management mechanisms will produce benefits for the countries, for business companies and for surrounding populations. Probably this is the right time to try.

The occasion of this conference offers a great opportunity and it is my pleasure to commend the initiative and the leadership of this gathering.

Maputo, 18 May 2016

Lupwishi Mbuyamba

Observatory of Cultural Policies in Africa(OCPA)