

# Towards Improving the Effectiveness of Management of World Heritage Sites

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**Abstract-** World heritage sites are very vital cultural and natural areas that need to be effectively protected and improved in order to remain relevant and be used by future generations. UNESCO went ahead and shortlisted over 851 sites across the globe as being heritage sites of global stature. This was seen as a good effort aimed at recognizing and conserving the sites. However, these efforts are not enough. There have been efforts to manage these sites locally through following certain set standards or guidelines. Many of the management of these world heritage sites have failed to meet these quality standards, while some have been seen to succeed. This paper looks at the evaluation process for effective management of the improvement efforts for these world heritage sites. It also mentions tourism as a conflicting factor in the management process. A short look at the Alhambra site as one of the success stories in managing world heritage sites improvements is also given.

**Index Terms-** World Heritage Sites (WHS), UNESCO, Effective management evaluation, Architectural conservation

## I. INTRODUCTION

The issue of first identifying the most important cultural and natural sites in the world and protecting them through better management practices has elicited the imagination as well as the commitment of many stakeholders including the public, governments, and the private sector players. This explains the origin of the world heritage convention of 1972 and the subsequent ratifications that followed in over 180 countries around the world. There has been a serious commitment from these countries towards the preservation, conservation, and management of the world heritage sites. The countries have taken it as an individual initiative to protect and conserve their endowed cultural and natural sites from the destructions witnessed from mankind. A world heritage list is in place and is always updated time after time to include new areas or sites that have been discovered. Currently, the figure on the list stands at 851 sites. Out of these 851 sites, 200 have been listed based on the natural values they hold. This inclusion of world heritage sites on the list is seen as an important step towards the protection of these sites. However, what many have failed to realize is the fact that this listing alone cannot in itself guarantee the protection of these sites. This is why management must come in to help in the protection initiatives being fronted by the international bodies such as the UN habitat among others that have shown interest in the protection and management of these

world heritage sites. Many countries have put in concerted efforts in protecting their own sites but this is still to the lower threshold and thus better management has failed to be achieved in many instances. Many of these sites thus remain under pressure from the human activities, interests, as well as long term neglect. There are benefits that are derived from these world heritage sites. For instance, the attraction they bring to tourists alone has over the years accounted for a huge percentage of many countries' GDP. In fact, there are countries that are not endowed with natural resources and thus depend solely on tourism from these sites as their only source of income and contribution to their GDP is over 70%.

The time that the world heritage sites committee is always taken up with many discussions that relate to the huge pressures being faced by the world heritage sites, looking at the many reports from monitoring and evaluations done on these sites, proposals put forward with the aim of listing new sites or de-listing some, and working with the individual countries to ensure that the sites are well protected (Sweetman, 1997). This has been lauded as the broader initiative from the global arena that helps in the conservation of these world heritage sites. These efforts are not enough and this is why individual governments as well as appointed managements for various sites across the world have been singled out as being quite strategic in realizing the goals of this committee. Many governments and international bodies have gone as far as setting up management for individual world heritage sites so that they are well cared for. However, the efforts put forward by these managements have been ineffective in properly managing these world heritage sites and this has led them to be desolate, vulnerable to destructions, and depletion. This paper takes a critical look at the world heritage sites and how they are managed by considering the improvements of the effectiveness of management being done on world heritage sites.

## II. OBJECTIVE

The main objective for this paper is to show evaluation of the effectiveness of the management of world heritage sites across the world in meeting the improvement needs of these world heritage sites. This is because many resources, including money, land and personnel have been employed in the conservation and protection measures of these sites yet there still remains a huge gap between meeting the goals of improvement and the efforts being put forward. Many observers have argued

that putting in place resources and international efforts are not enough in ensuring that these world heritage sites are well cared for and managed as expected. This is why management from individual countries has been thought of as being able to play an important role in the improvement of these sites to the required status. Whether this goal has been met or not is still not clear and this is the objective that this paper is setting out to meet.

### III. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The world heritage sites are very delicate places that could be defaced in a very short time with consistent interference with people in their human activities. Some are destroyed intentionally while others are normally depleted by people who are engaged in commercial black market activities. Some are also lost by natural forces such as flooding and soil erosion, which wash away the objects and deface the places. These are the reasons why the world heritage sites have received serious attention with calls from various corners asking for better forms of management so that the sites are improved and protected from human harm. The problem with this process has been realized with the level of managerial efforts that are being put in it and the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of management to fully meet the improvement requirements set for these sites. This is what the paper sets out to establish in this evaluation. In order to do this, the research is to conduct a literature review of the world heritage sites in general and try establishing the effectiveness achieved by the management of these sites. A case in question will be the case study conducted on a world heritage site called Alhambra Place which is found in Spain. The role that tourism play in this process will also be established in trying to see why management has succeeded or failed in the management of these world heritage sites and improving them to the required levels. Alhambra has been chosen as a case study for this research because it is listed as one of the world heritage sites on the list and thus its findings will be of use to this discussion in trying to demystify the problem.

### IV. EVALUATION

There has been a serious concern from the protected area professionals, the public, and the international bodies over the fate of world heritage sites. The argument has been that the sites are failing to live by the objectives they were meant to achieve and in many cases; these sites are fast losing the values that they were established for in the first place. Given this scenario, there has been a need to improve the management of these world heritage sites and this has been taken up as a major priority of the community across the world that is concerned with the protection and conservation of these areas. The most important step that has been singled out as being crucial to this process has been the conduction of assessments to establish the current status of things in terms of management efforts and their role in improving the world heritage sites. This assessment has always been done with the aim of shedding more light on what is thought to be the improvement process, whether it is working or not and if the objectives that were set out are actually met in practical settings. For that reason, assessing the level of success

of management in the improvement of these world heritage sites has been lauded as a major contributor to the protection of these areas and has taken a high degree of consideration by many stakeholders (Wells, 2004).

The role played by the UNESCO world heritage Centre has been very vital in the process of world heritage sites' protection process and has widely supported the development of methodology that is used in the assessment of the management's effectiveness in improving these sites. There has also been a marked increase in the demands that are put on site managers to provide a report on the status of the sites they have a jurisdiction over. There have been calls for systematic, periodic reporting as well as the reactive forms of monitoring. The aim of these reports is merely to help guide the managers in their efforts to improve the world heritage sites, but they have been misunderstood for being the tool for effective management (Hockings, et al., 2008).

The evaluation of how effective management is carrying out its improvement activities is simply an assessment of how these world heritage sites are being managed in terms of being able to protect their inherited values, and realizing the goals and objectives that were initially achieved. This effectiveness of management takes on the designs of the world heritage sites; the adequacy and how appropriate the management systems as well as processes are; and the delivery of objectives which encompasses the values of conservation. The evaluation of the effectiveness of management is driven by four purposes: leading to better management of these world heritage sites in this volatile environment, helping in the allocation of resources in a very effective manner, promoting the transparency and accountability required in the management practices, and helping in the involvement of the community, promoting these protected sites and being able to build the required level of consistency.

There have been various studies conducted on the effectiveness of management in improving the world heritage sites and the scope of these researches has included the other protected areas. Most of these evaluations were more sporadic and individual in nature based on the visits made by individuals in these places. However, this trend was changed with the commissioning of a taskforce to evaluate management effectiveness that was done by the World Commission on Protected Areas (Parrish, et al., 2003).

There are many threats to the status of world heritage sites and none seems to be safe or immune from these threats. These threats to the protected areas have been singled out as being those related to the climatic changes, regional scale problems like the fragmentation of habitats and many problems that are localized to these places such as poaching, waste disposal, and many impacts brought about by visitors. The threats that are as a result of outside forces to a protected area like pollution of the air or change in climatic conditions are not within the control of management. However, they have to be considered while evaluating managerial effectiveness because of the impact that they have on the evaluation process.

Indeed, the status of world heritage sites in terms of the improvement efforts of management has been both successful and failed in some instances. Many sites across the world are however, faced with serious problems that threaten their sustained conservation. This has made the efforts made by

management seem like a drop in the ocean and thus putting many people into a dilemma.

The evaluation process has to take into consideration various steps that are crucial in establishing the effectiveness of management in the process of improving these world heritage sites. These steps are: Identifying the values of the site and the objectives set out by the management in the first place. In this case, the evaluation tries to single out and list all the major values of the site and its relevant managerial objectives. These have the role of helping in deciding what exactly should be monitored and evaluated at the time when the process is being carried out. Identification of various threats faced by the site, where this process has the importance of helping the managers in the organization and making of any changes to the report based on the type and level of the identified threats to this site as well as being able to manage the different responses. Identification of the stakeholder's relationship with the site is another step. This one helps in finding out how effective stakeholder's management is being carried out by the management. This could also be looked at, how the management effectively handles the tourists who visit and the donor community involved in the conservation process as well as the public and the community around the site. The review of the national context is also done in order to assist in the understanding of the way the national as well as international policies related to the site, legislations and other government initiated actions are affecting the management of the site. The next step goes into assessing the management planning so that it can help evaluate the adequacy of the planning document that is being used as a guide to the management of the site (Parrish, et al., 2003).

The other step in the evaluation process is the designing of the evaluation where an assessment of the design meant for the site improvement is done. This should also incorporate the evaluation of how the size of the site, boundaries set and the location at which the site is do affect the capacity of managers to effectively improve and maintain the site. This is followed by a thorough evaluation of the management needs and the required inputs to aid in the effective management process. As such, the current staff is evaluated and compared to the needs of these staff and also the current budget is considered by comparing it to an ideal budgetary allocation.

The step that follows in this process is the assessment that is done on the processes of management where best practices are identified and the desired standards for the process of management as well as performance rates are found against these set standards. The management plan's implementation process is also evaluated. This has the capacity to show the progress made in the implementation of the plans outlined by the management in terms of general context and specific components. Output indicators for the site are then assessed and the achievement of annual site programs is evaluated in terms of targets met and other forms of indicators of output. The outcome of management processes employed is also evaluated. This stage does answer a very important question of whether the objectives that were set are being met or not in terms of improving the ecological integrity, cultural values, wildlife and landscapes of these world heritage sites. Finally, a review of the results that sought to establish the effectiveness of management in the improvement

program is done to summarize and give priority to a list of actions to be undertaken (Hockings & Robyn, 2008).

The role played by tourism in ensuring that sites are well managed cannot be ignored. There are numerous perceived benefits that tourism activities bring to a given world heritage site and thus acts as a major motivator for the management of the sites. The economic impact of sites being listed as tourist attraction locations is huge. This also helps in increasing the degree of income generated from these places during visitations done by tourists. The data available is not enough to estimate the figures in terms of financial benefits. However, it has been noted that while tourism is a good venture and quite beneficial to both the country and world heritage site, it has a serious impact on the management and conservation of these sites. This is because of the tension it creates between the large pools of stakeholders that come into play when tourism is mentioned. When such a scenario is reached, then conservation measures are thrown to the wind and economic benefits take Centre stage, thereby leading to a serious depletion of these world heritage sites. This is attributed to the fact that each and every stakeholder ends up holding a very different view of the site, sets different agendas, and prioritization becomes an issue. In such an environment of confused and conflicting stakeholders, achieving a formidable consensus on the way forward and making effective managerial decisions become a problem that might not be solved in the short run before destruction sets in. As scholars have noted, tourism and conservation or effective management of these world heritage sites normally undergoes awkward relationships due to the conflict. At this point, it has been indicated that coming into formal agreements and partnerships with stakeholders as far as the tourism and world heritage site management are concerned is not the best solution to avert the crisis. What needs to be done is to find a way in which the stakeholders will appreciate the need to have the cultural tourism boom, while at the same time being able to recognize the need for conservation of the core values of the sites that have been defined in clear terms (Ervin, 2003).

Management planning needs to be done in protected sites so that conservation measures are seen to be effective. There are supposed to be set very clear and quite appropriate objectives for the world heritage sites and this should be fully supported by the management through planning and provision of adequate resources so that effective management of these sites is achieved. As has been seen, the evaluations do seek answers to issues related to planning and the objectives set which are available for use by managers. These plans and objectives have to be updated and should address all the values of the protected sites to avoid neglecting other sections. The quality of these plans in meeting the improvement needs of the site should always be put into question and improved over time. The scope of these plans together with how practical they are is an important way of addressing the effectiveness of managerial practices. The adequacy of resources allocated for the management of these sites has to be established. This is because without enough resources, management is found in a fix and might not carry out its intended improvement programs effectively. Thus, human capacity, information, facilities, operational finances as well as necessary equipment is vital resources that have to be availed to management so that they could effectively manage. The level required by these resources

has to be established, the extent to which the resources could be made available, and the possibility of the resources being able to be utilized in the best way possible has to be known.

It is also important that benchmarking is done to find out the best managerial practices that have been effectively applied by other organizations in different countries like has been the case of Alhambra in Spain. This has the capacity to put in place guidelines that other site managers could follow in trying to effectively manage the improvement of their world heritage sites (Holling, 1978). Alternatively, the management could look at the published benchmark guidelines that are availed by conservation agencies which include policies, manuals, procedures, and other guidelines of best practice.

## V. CASE OF ALHAMBRA SITE IN SPAIN

This site was part of the Calat Alhambra site in Spain that was constructed in the middle of the 14th century by the then Moorish rulers of Emirate from Granada. It occupies the top of Assabica hill in the city of Granada. During the Reconquista by the Reyes in 1492, and the Christian rulers did use the portions of this site. This site was discovered by the scholars and travellers from Europe and restoration began. The Alhambra was discovered after many years of disrepair. Currently, it is one of the most tourist attractions in the country and shows the most important architecture of Islamic culture combined with the interventions made by the Christian settlers. The buildings have been well maintained after the discovery and restoration. However, there are instances where the site was vandalized and poorly judged because of the mixed religious aspects it shows (Jacobs & Fernández, 2009).

This site is a good example of how effective management of improvement of world heritage sites could go in ensuring that they are sustained for future generations. If the site is poorly managed, then the possibility of losing its face and values is very high. The country also stands to lose a lot in terms of tourist attraction and revenue that comes with it. This calls upon the site managers of places like this to take seriously the importance of effective management and give useful evaluation reports (Fernández & Antonio, 1998).

## VI. CONCLUSION

Effective management of the world heritage sites' improvement process is very crucial to the survival of these sites. Its contribution to the conservation process has been lauded as being more important than the international efforts being made. This is why the process of evaluating the effectiveness of the managerial measures being taken to do this is quite necessary and should be applied in all sites across the world. The benefits derived from this evaluation process are varied and the information gathered could be used in many ways. These include: managers could use the information to improve on their levels of performance by means of adaptive management. This is using information from the past with the view of making improvements in the future management of these sites. Changes may be instituted in this process of adaptive management. These changes that are implemented in the management process could

still be fed back to the system through the evaluation process. The information could also be applied in the filling of gaps of knowledge through improvements on the monitoring and evaluation processes. The first time assessments could be applied as baseline data for subsequent surveys. There is the need to sustain evaluation practices to ensure that these world heritage sites are well managed.

Standards set for the evaluation processes must be adhered to in order to ensure that the actual situation on the ground is represented in the findings made. Effective management of these world heritage sites also entails good relationships with the community around, various stakeholders and the public as a whole. As has been noted above during the discussion, the role played by tourism could be both supportive and detrimental to the management process. In many cases, the priorities set by management for effectively handling these world heritage sites' improvements are normally in direct conflict with those of stakeholders. This friction brings about poor management decisions and thus fails the effectiveness test. A balance needs to be established between the cultural tourism and conservation measures being taken so that the sites are not neglected in preference to tourism. Many world heritage sites across the world do not meet the requirements of effective management and have thus failed to effectively improve the heritage sites. The sustainability of these management measures has to be put into consideration. If the conservation measure is not projected into the future needs of the heritage site, then it risks being de-listed from the list of world heritage sites in the world. Evaluation should also be made a constant activity that gets improved over time by use of baseline survey data that had been initially gathered and analyzed. All stakeholders need to realize the importance of coming on board and putting conservation measures ahead of their agendas and priorities so that the efforts are made by the management of these sites are seen to bear fruits. Failure to do so leaves the management isolated and this lowers its effectiveness in managing these sites.

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