



I'm pleased to be asked to open this seminar titled "Cultural heritage – a base for development?"

Cultural heritage plays an important role in nation building all over the world. It was not a coincident when the first Cultural Heritage Act in Norway was approved in 1905, the same year as Norway became independent from Sweden.

Riksantikvaren, (today the Directorate for Cultural Heritage), was established shortly after, in 1912.

Cultural heritage is a unique resource for sustainable development - both in the South and the North. Cultural heritage is a resource for every people and every nation. It defines who we are and our history. For me this is universal.

Who's heritage?



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Cultural heritage is not a static sector. The concept of heritage constantly changes, both in the North and the South.

These shifts are universal, and at times controversial.

Who defines? And whose history are we representing?

The Norwegian Government has designated 2009 as the Year of Cultural Heritage, focusing on the heritage in everyday life.

A variety of new sites, from ski jumps to urinals, have been listed - causing quite a lot of debate.

African traditional architecture



The Great Mosque of Djenné in Mali is the largest mud brick in the world. It represents an obvious African cultural heritage monument. Along with the "Old Towns of Djenné", it is inscribed on the World Heritage List.

The colonial powers introduced measures to protect archaeological findings in Asia and Africa. They established heritage institutions, legal frameworks and research. People living at the sites were often chased away and excluded from their cultural resources.

Heritage plays an important role in the post colonial era. Buildings from the colonial era are still listed as national monuments.

However, today the focus is more on genuine African and Asian heritage: rock art, the history of slavery, trade routes and intangible heritage, like music and dance traditions.

Robben Island



All over the world cultural heritage has a unique value as a resource for identity and dignity and has proved to be a powerful tool for reconciliation.

As a member of Parliament, I visited South Africa and experienced the importance of heritage sites for African people today.

This picture shows a little boy looking at a picture of Nelson Mandela and Walter Sisulu at Robben Island.

Robben Island served as a place of banishment, isolation and imprisonment. Today it is a World Heritage Site and a museum.

It is also a moving reminder to the newly democratic South Africa of the price paid for freedom.

It is a crucial example of how important cultural heritage is for peoples identity and as elements in reconciliation process, nation 4

Slave fort Christiansborg, Ghana



Young Africans often take a keen interest in the history of their continent.

Regaining pride and confidence after the painful history of slavery, colonisation and civil wars is crucial.

The Slave fort Christiansborg in Accra, Ghana, shown at this picture, is a monument over this history.

Heritage contributes to the restoration of identity and self esteem, not only the restoration of sites and monuments.

Cultural heritage tourism



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The interest for cultural heritage tourism is growing. Here we see visitors at a rock art site in Kimberly, in South Africa.

When properly managed, cultural heritage is a valuable resource, which can generate new socio-cultural and economic development.

However, it has proved necessary to regulate the most visited heritage sites, in order to avoid stress and damage to the values people come to see.

Local business



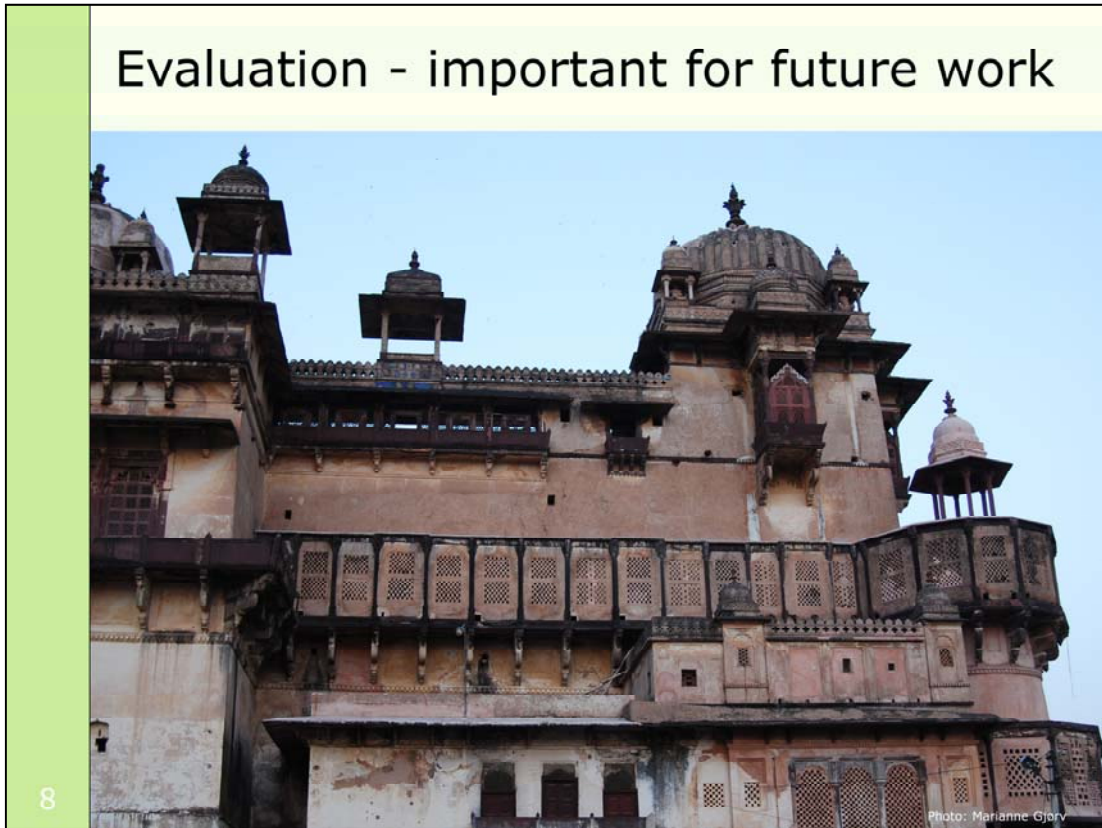
Here we see local business at the rock art site Kimberly, in South Africa.

Heritage management requires traditional knowledge, practical skills, theoretical insight, institutions and legal frameworks.

However, this will be of little use if you are not able to engage and empower local communities living nearby the sites.

Properly managed heritage tourism can bring substantial income to nations and individuals.

Evaluation - important for future work



[The picture is from an old palace of a majahara in India].

We very much welcome the evaluation of Norwegian support to the protection of cultural heritage.

I would like to thank the Nordland Research Institute and the Christian Michelsen Institute for the report "Evaluation of Norwegian Support to the Protection of Cultural Heritage".

The recommendations of the evaluation are certainly useful, and will guide us in our work for the future.

We would also like to draw lessons from other relevant projects. Based on this, we will develop strategies for further action.

Capacity and institution building important



The picture is from an old settlement in the Bandiagara Cliffs in Mali.

In general, I support the success criteria formulated in the report;

- Broad partnerships of different kinds of expertise is needed.
- Research and education sectors are central for capacity building and development of projects.
- The institutions in charge of cultural heritage in the South are still fragile, and a stronger emphasis on institution building is needed.

I welcome a broader Norwegian engagement, based on dialogue and partnership with institutions in the South. Research and management should go hand in hand.

Local communities/civil society/NGOs have, and will have, a role to play in the conservation and use of cultural heritage.

Involving different stakeholders



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Photo: Inger Helda

As mentioned in the report, local involvement and ownership is crucial for success. Good results have been achieved in the Norwegian cooperation, thanks to the many stakeholders. Here we see a stakeholder meeting in Zambia (at Chishimba Falls).

Africa 2009 is a unique example of a successful capacity building program. Since 1999 more than 500 heritage professionals have upgraded their skills in heritage management and conservation. Regional institutions in Kenya and Benin have played important roles in implementing the program.

Africa World Heritage Fund was established in 2006 to strengthen the world Heritage in Africa. Nordic World Heritage Foundation has played a very positive role in the start-up period, and Riksantikvaren is cooperating closely with the fund.

These institutions will certainly play a crucial role in the years to come and Norway would like to continue this cooperation

Future engagement



Here we can see rock art in Niger. The rock is surrounded by sand dunes in the Sahara desert. The carvings of animals, tell us that this area once has been covered by trees and vegetation, and that the climate has changed. Such old traces of history need to be preserved, so future generations also can learn from the past.

Norway's contribution to cultural heritage projects is substantial. To ensure best possible results in the future, the funds have to be spent strategically, based on well informed decisions. The Norwegian Government wishes to strengthen the cooperation and bring cultural heritage back on the development agenda.

As I've already mentioned, cultural heritage is unique resource for sustainable development. The findings and recommendations in the evaluation report, combined with