

# Managing heritage in a contested space: the case of Le Morne Cultural Landscape in Mauritius

**Karel A. Bakker**

Department of Architecture, University of Pretoria.

E-mail: karel.bakker@up.ac.za

**Francois Odendaal**

Environmental Resource Centre, Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

E-mail: francois@ecoafrica.co.za

The Le Morne Brabant Peninsula in south-western Mauritius is known for the imposing mountain of Le Morne that dominates the natural landscape. The peninsula is a contested place. During the time of slavery, the place was settled by colonisers – recently, their progeny are selling of land as real estate for high-end leisure resorts. The Le Morne Cultural Landscape has recently been inscribed as a World Heritage site - at the core of the Statement of Outstanding Universal Value (SOUV) lies the celebration of resistance against slavery and the significant role that the mountain and its surrounding natural landscape has played in that resistance. To Creole slave descendants it is a sacred site that strongly relates to their very origins and identity and that supports an alternate interpretation of the past that is considered pivotal to their ‘sense of being’. To them, but increasingly also to a wider and diverse Mauritian and international audience, the mountain is a living fortress that symbolises the quest for freedom over oppression at all costs. The current paper introduces the competing cultural constructs of place and asks whether the management system of the cultural landscape, as well as the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention, are adequate to ensure that equity and balance can be achieved in the contested landscape, and for the local carriers of the belief system of Le Morne to be adequately heard and included.

**Keywords:** Cultural landscapes; intangible heritage; cultural significance; heritage management; local values.

## **L’administration du patrimoine un lieu contesté: Le cas du Paysage Culturel du Morne a Mauritius**

Située au sud-ouest de l’île Maurice, la péninsule du Morne Brabant est réputée pour l’imposante montagne du Morne qui y domine le paysage naturel. La péninsule est un lieu contesté. A l’époque où l’esclavage était une pratique courante, cet endroit fut habité par les colons- récemment leurs descendants vendaient des propriétés immobilières a des fins de loisirs de haut niveau. Le Paysage Culturel du Morne a été, tout récemment, classé patrimoine mondial. Au centre de la déclaration de valeur universelle exceptionnelle figure la célébration de la résistance à l’esclavage et le rôle significatif qu’à jouer la montagne et ses paysages naturels environnants, dans cette résistance. Pour les descendants d’esclaves d’origines créoles c’est un lieu sacré, au centre de leur existence, qui est fortement relié à leurs origines et leur identité et qui favorise une autre interprétation du passé. Pour eux, et maintenant, pour une plus grande audience Mauricienne et internationale, la montagne est une forteresse vivante qui symbolise la recherche de la liberté sur l’oppression, a n’importe quel prix. Le présent article introduit les constructions culturelles de lieux qui y sont en compétition et questionne l’efficacité du présent système de gestion du paysage culturel, ainsi que les Orientations devant guider la mise en oeuvre de la Convention du patrimoine afin de s’assurer que la justice est l’équilibre peuvent être réalisés au sein de ce paysage contesté, ceci, afin que les transmetteurs locaux du système de croyance associé au Morne soit adéquatement entendus et inclus.

**Mots-clés:** paysage culturel; patrimoine intangible; valeur culturelle; administration du patrimoine; valeur local

**T**he Le Morne Cultural Landscape (hereafter referred to simply as ‘Le Morne’) contains rich intangible dimensions that are reflected in and sustained by a living community. In order to acquire an understanding of the often complex processes required for the successful management of such a cultural landscape, one requires a method to identify and analyse cultural systems in the landscape and their relationships – this assists in discerning those relationships that may impact on the intangible dimension, making it easier to synthesize the whole and protect it accordingly. This would require, *inter alia* a study of the content and timelines of and connections between evolving cultures or sub-cultures that today are somewhat reflected in the overall intangible heritage represented in the particular cultural landscape. When the cultural landscape is then purported to have both local and global significance,

and when it is then proposed for Inscription on the World Heritage List (WHL), additional illumination of the origins and nature of the intangible heritage may become necessary in order to assess whether the locally sustained aspects of the heritage of the site can be protected adequately in the framework provided by the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* (hereafter *Operational Guidelines* (UNESCO WHC, 2005)).

When space is contested, the protection of the heritage it contains (or propagates beyond its own border through symbolic and other meanings) becomes more difficult. Le Morne is a case in point. That this is a contested landscape is unquestionable; at the one end of the stick there are landowners and developers who's view of the landscape is high-end real estate and tourism development, some of them proposing development to the extremes of constructing a cable car for tourists to the top of the massif or selling off parcels of land for leisure developments, while at the other end of the stick there are Creole organisations who's view of the landscape is that there be no development ('no concrete at all') and that the mountain be left intact as a Holy Mountain, Temple, Fortress and Sanctuary<sup>1</sup> with its deep and special meanings intact. Whereas development takes many forms, and can impact positively or negatively, it is unquestionable that the deeply spiritual meanings of the site, as well as its 'authenticity' and 'integrity' as defined by the *Operational Guidelines* (UNESCO WHC, 2005: Section IIE Clause 79-95) will be eroded or undermined by inappropriate developments or by inequitable encumbrances on the site, some even denying access to the very people who identify themselves as 'keepers' of the intangible heritage that is at the core of the nomination for inscription on the World Heritage List.<sup>2</sup>

Le Morne celebrates humanity's yearning for freedom over oppression through the example and legends associated with maroon slaves who paid the ultimate price for this freedom. If private landowners would develop or sell off key parts of the cultural landscape to international development agencies or investors, and in so doing deny access to those who hold the mountain dear in a spiritual sense, this would to many constitute nothing less than 'adding insult to injury'. Whether the two views on the landscape, as mentioned above, represent opposite and irreconcilable positions in a greater totality of many diverse cultural associations with an attachments to Le Morne, or whether they are merely the end points of a continuum in which 'common ground' can be found mid-way, is the central question that must be answered when it comes to safeguarding the heritage on which the nomination of Le Morne rests. To answer this question it will require a measure of critical analysis through which the range of discourses that are present in the cultural landscape, be identified and understood. Such understanding may bring clarity to the issue this paper aims to address, namely whether the *Operational Guidelines* (UNESCO, 2005) provides a framework that is sufficient to safeguard the Le Morne Cultural Landscape's Outstanding Universal Value (hereafter OUV).

A systematic and thorough study of the evolution of knowledge systems from which the opposing views of Le Morne originate is certainly needed. Analysis of the intertwined layers of culture and society as they developed and interacted through time, for instance through the use of dynamic landscape mapping, will undoubtedly help to illuminate the rich tapestry of heritage that Le Morne represents. The current paper does not attempt to provide an analysis that can conclusively answer the question to what extent the opposing views can be reconciled; neither does it present the result of proper 'archaeologising'<sup>3</sup> of the site which will require much more time, resources and effort than the authors have at their avail. Instead, by presenting basic and selected views, historical facts and cultural constructs the paper introduces the debate on whether the heritage that Le Morne represents and that is sustained locally by a living community, will be safeguarded sufficiently after inscription on the World Heritage List, and if the *Operational*

*Guidelines* (UNESCO WHC, 2005) provide a suitable and sufficient framework in which this can happen.

### **The Le Morne Peninsula as a popular tourism destination and highly attractive real estate**

The peninsula of Le Morne, earlier known as *Kaap Brabant*, *Cap Brabant*, *Cape Brabant*, and *Le Morne Brabant*, is located between E57° 20' 34" to E57° 18' 50" longitudes and S20° 26' 35" to S20° 27' 57.97" latitude on the south-west side of Mauritius. Its most imposing feature is the mountain massive of Le Morne, shaped like a shoe from a distance (See Figure 1) and with its summit (556m) pointing to the west. Two spurs of low-lying land protrude out from the main body of the peninsula, the one in the north-east ending with *Pointe Marron* and *Pointe aux Pêcheurs*, and the one in the south-west ending with *Pointe Sud Ouest*. The proposed Le Morne World Heritage Cultural Landscape has long been hailed as a monument of Nature. Monolithic in appearance and surrounded by awe-inspiring cliffs, the detached mountain "rises in solitary grandeur from this little peninsula on which it stands, a spur from it forming the isthmus which unites it to the main land." (Clark, 1859: xxviii).



**Figure 1**  
**Le Morne Brabant peninsula showing the mountain and land bridge**  
**(LMHTF and MAC, 2008: Front cover).**

The mountain entirely dominates the low-lying landscape of Le Morne Brabant peninsula, which itself is a prime example of Nature's beauty. Jutting out into the Indian Ocean, the shores of the peninsula consists of sandy beaches, giving way to placid emerald lagoons lined with coral reefs with the deep blue sea in the background. All this breathtaking beauty provides the setting for the majestic mountain. Imposing in height and shape, the mountain possesses a magnetism that draws the attention of visitors from afar<sup>4</sup>.

The peninsula's beauty has attracted its share of investors, operators and promoters. With five major high-end resort hotels forming an almost unbroken lattice along much of its northern, western and southern shores, the Le Morne Peninsula can be described as a sea resort for the

rich. Well over one 100,000 people visit the peninsula each year, and many spend several days and sometimes weeks there as holiday makers. There is also a small privately owned precinct or *Morcellement* where expensive villas cling to the northern mountain slopes of the mountain massive, and a new international resort is currently being developed on the northern slopes Mount La Porte which forms the edge of the Black River Nature Reserve east of the peninsula.

To illustrate the dominance of the leisure related meaning of Le Morne, tour guides provide pertinent descriptions - The *Lonely Planet* website does not mention the mountain or the peninsula in its list of places of interest at all – it only lists the beach of Le Morne, described as a place for “surfing, paragliding and camping” (<http://www.lonelyplanet.com>). Another tourist website lists the dolphin watching area at Tamarind, nearby Le Morne, and the 18 hole golf course “at the *Le Morne* in the southwest” as the only places worthy of touristic interest, (<http://iexplore.com>). Private travel agencies focus on the water sport and fishing activities of Mauritius, with day trips on sea to sites east of Le Morne (<http://www.go2africa.com/mauritius>) - ironically, the Mauritian Tourism Agency lists places of natural and cultural interest in the Le Morne area (<http://mauritius.net>), and in mainly advising potential tourists to go deep-sea fishing ignores the slave history and Creole culture of the area and its associated eco-tourism potential.

### **An ‘other’ meaning of Le Morne**

There is an ‘other’ meaning of Le Morne that is startlingly different than the one described above. From the earliest years of colonial occupation of Mauritius the colonisers used slavery as the prevailing mode of exploitative production of resources (In Mauritius this practice occurred first in *Prins Mauritz van Nassaueland* under the Dutch from 1638, and in the *Isle de France* by the French from 1721 to 1810) – this oppressive and exploitative mode of production was defended in the Colonial epoch from a perspective of perceived culture-evolutionary supremacy. Yet, slavery has also brought forth a response to slavery that has become increasingly important to the descendants of slaves and those who take courage in the ‘triumph of the human spirit over adversity’ (this has become the slogan for Robben Island, another World Heritage Site celebrating resistance against human oppression), and the price that at least some of their ancestors were willing to pay for their freedom. The central role of Mauritius in the Indian Ocean slave trade, as well as the nature, extent and impact of and resistance to slavery in Mauritius, have received attention from eminent scholars from Mauritius as well as abroad<sup>5</sup>, with the Nomination Dossier (MAC, 2007a) providing many references to this abominable practice on the island.

It is generally accepted that as long as there has been slavery there has been resistance, and the most frequent form of resistance against slavery is known as maroonage, which occurred in various forms and degrees. The act of maroonage occurred everywhere in colonial environments where slavery was practised, including Mauritius. From various archival records it is known that maroons sought refuge at the mountain of Le Morne, and vivid descriptions of maroonage associated with the mountain has been kept alive in the minds of the present-day inhabitants of Mauritius (and increasingly beyond). Its imposing presence and vertical cliffs making it almost impossible to reach the plateau at the top, has deemed the mountain an impenetrable fortress, one that offered the maroons safety – provided they negotiated a perilous secret path across a perilous V-shaped gap to the summit. To reach freedom the runaway slaves had to confront tremendous fears in crossing this perilous gap, and legend has it that some in fact did perish in the process.<sup>6</sup>

It is at the top of the mountain, on a sloping plateau where the maroons are believed to have stayed in small dwellings or caves, where they survived by raiding livestock and produce from colonial farms below and drinking from rivulets above, and from where some may also have escaped in small crafts by exiting the coral reef through two strategic gaps, in this manner hoping to reach Madagascar and Africa ('home' to some) beyond. In the literature there is reference to the so called 'maroon republic' on Le Morne Mountain that provided the runaway slaves with a place where they were out of bondage and where they formed a new communality. Over time, once the secret of the passage was betrayed, confrontations occurred on the summit between maroons and masters, as well as colonial *militia* - various accounts tell how trapped maroons would hurl themselves from the cliffs of Le Morne rather than being recaptured, in the desperate but heroic act of escape from oppression to obtain 'freedom'<sup>7</sup>.

Rigorous historical and archaeological evidence as well as oral history reports and popular renditions all contribute to the above view of Le Morne in present-day Mauritius. But there is more. After the Treaty of Paris, *Isle de France* was ceded to Britain and became known as Mauritius – slavery continued legally until 1834, the year of Abolition in Britain. In a rendition of a legend about that period, the following is written:

It is said that when the escaped slaves who had settled on the rock saw a troop of British soldiers making their way towards them, not realizing that they had been sent to tell them that slavery was abolished, they threw themselves off the high cliffs to their deaths below. It is a simply unbearable story. (Moss, 2002: sp).

Oral history studies and the Nomination Dossier (MAC, 2007a) show how the 'Myth of Le Morne' arose and has attained great significance to the people of Mauritius, in particular the Creole population who are generally known to be the descendants of those slaves.

Le Morne as a symbol of freedom that prevailed over oppression extends well beyond the slavery era. At Le Morne, at the end of the period of Apprenticeship (1839) after Abolition, various ex-maroon and freed slave communities settled in the region in the early post-emancipation period. While historical maps indicate that most of the land was occupied by colonial landowners, and that many freed slaves lived on farms as workers, some of this land was also ceded to liberated slaves. The three historical settlements that formed around the mountain on the ill fated sugar estate called 'Le Morne' (Pike, 1873: 306-7) were Trou Chenilles (spot of an earlier maroon settlement), Macaque and L'Embrasure (See Figure 2). Still, the ex-slaves were regarded as 'other', and there are many oral accounts of how they continued to be treated in an oppressive manner, well into the last hundred years - after evictions and removals by landowners, each one of the settlements was demolished or perhaps simply allowed to degenerate to the level of the ground – only archaeological remains, planted vegetation and graves have been identified and located.

The progeny of these ex-slave and ex-maroon communities moved to, or were relocated to Coteau Raffin and La Gaulette, but mainly to Le Morne village, in the south-eastern 'shade of the mountain'. While the village has a culturally mixed population, the majority are Creole and slave descendents, many of who claim to be maroon descendants, and they have a direct bond with the legends and beliefs relating to the mountain of Le Morne. They have a close affinity to both factual historical accounts as well as a variety of aspects of intangible heritage – in fact, archival documents, archaeology and oral history, historically and recently researched in the area of Le Morne, provide an understanding of the layered and rich meaning of Le Morne to the Mauritian Creole community. Some of those meanings that are briefly mentioned below, are a small sampling of effluents of the knowledge system that has Le Morne as a spiritual focal point.



Figure 2  
 Map by M. de Salle Essoo with main places of Le Morne (Gopauloo, 2005: 88).

(i) Le Morne as a Creole symbol of resistance and liberty

In the strong collective Mauritian Creole remembrance of slavery and maroonage, Le Morne is a powerful symbol of freedom, autonomy and resistance to slavery, as illustrated through the commemoration held annually on the public beach on the west side of the Mountain. Le Morne furthermore adds strongly to the sense of identity that is prevalent in Le Morne Village - it is regarded as a symbolic and historical anchor for the identities of slaves, namely Creoles, and part of the ancestral heritage of Mauritius (MAC, 2007b: 33). The central aspects of this symbolic and historical anchor of Creole identity are captured in a belief system focussed on Le Morne:

Heritage of the Mountain is communicated primarily through the transmission of the story of Le Morne, in which their ancestors, the maroons, refused to submit to those who might wish to subjugate them and in doing so took their destinies into their own hands. Le Morne sustains its captivating power in part due to encounters and beliefs, rooted in the Maroon story that generates in Le Morne a gateway between the physical and spiritual worlds. This is a gateway that continually reminds onlookers of the fortitude of the maroons and of the resistance that they exercised at this site. The continued narration of the story of Le Morne not only conveys awe and respect for the agency of the ancestors and the value of liberty, for which they were willing to die; It is also a contemporary expression of esteem for the promise of freedom today. (MAC, 2007b: 5).

Bablee describes Le Morne as representing a Sanctuary where people can go and ‘connect/reflect with/upon’ [sic] the spirit of Freedom and Liberty (In MAC, 2007a: 65).

## **(ii) Le Morne as a place of refuge from oppression**

The role of Le Morne as a refuge holds true for maroons who found their way to the mountain refuge to escape bondage and to be free, and this view of the mountain is well substantiated by historical records as well as in oral history accounts and legends that are being propagated well beyond the borders of Mauritius. There is for instance the story of Bellaca, a famous ‘banditti chief’ or slave leader, who escaped to the summit together with other slaves to escape the ongoing torture (various documents in the National Archives of Mauritius relate to the veracity of this legend (MAC, 2007a: 19, footnote 37), as well as other leaders and their followers (eg the accounts by Wiklinsky during his stay at Le Morne during 1769-70 (MAC, 2007a: 19, footnote 38)). In this sense, Bablee describes Le Morne as representing a Fortress, protecting the idea of Freedom, Liberty and Dignity – for all the people (In MAC, 2007a: 65).

## **(iii) Le Morne as a living source of healing power**

The inhabitants of Le Morne view the mountain as a healing source. Among them the *sage femme* was the source of knowledge of healing at Le Morne: “She was a prominent figure in the village until recently” (MAC, 2007b: 88). In this healing “Specific plants are used in the rituals of passes, marks, magic and spiritual healing (MAC, 2007b: 96).

The inhabitants of Le Morne, mostly descendants of ancient slaves and maroons, are the custodians of a unique intangible heritage. This is partly reflected in their healing practices. It must be noted that over the centuries of co-habitation with people belonging to other civilizations and cultures, there has been much exchange and metissage not only in food habits and culinary traditions but also in healing practices. The belief systems have merged and a creolised culture has emerged....Le Morne being remote and secluded has been the least affected by modernisation. In fact, the inhabitants of Le Morne can be said to have in their custody the healing tradition of Mauritius in the sense that they still have recourse to traditional medicine from plants and other natural and spiritual sources compared to other places in Mauritius... (MAC, 2007b: 80-1/96).

In the post-slavery period le Morne is a representation of a Temple, a centre for the creation and enactment of rituals created to heal the wounds related to Slavery (Bablee, in MAC, 2007a: 65).

## **(iv) Le Morne as a connection to the traditions relating to the sea**

All interviewees agree that Le Morne Mountain guides them while they are in the open sea.... ‘We need to guide ourselves by Le Morne mountain. We believe in her’ .....Their relation to her is unique as they both have a special connection to liberty: on the one hand liberty at sea while fishing; on the other hand liberty was provided by the mountain to the maroon slaves. (MAC, 2007b: 62).

This spiritual connection of the sea extends to the fact that maroons seeking refuge on Le Morne may have later practised maritime maroonage, with the sea passage to other lands providing liberty.

From the local knowledge collected from inhabitants around Le Morne for the Oral History and Traditions Project (MAC, 2007b) accompanying the Nomination Dossier (MAC, 2007a), it is clear that the people of Le Morne have a belief in the sea being a natural healer.

## **(v) Le Morne as the origin of Creole music of resistance**

Sega is said to originate from the Maroons who took refuge on le Morne Mountain – “...the Sega of Le Morne is original; it is the ‘séga typique’, the mother of all segas” (MAC, 2007a: 58). Sega

is very important for healing and self expression.. “According to many eyewitnesses, sounds of sega music coming from the summit and flashes of fire light in the air above the mountain have been heard and seen by many long after the maroons died. This spiritual phenomenon cannot be explained – it is merely to be honoured and respected. Henceforth, the sega music was and still is the main stream of expression for the slave descendants” (Lamarque et al, 2007: 6). Since then Sega music and dance has been celebrated on and around Le Morne. Music gives a voice outside the system – activists have used and still use music to commemorate resistance and to state identity.

In terms of the first discussion of Le Morne as a sea and leisure oriented tourism destination in Section 2 above, it is necessary that the above stated local meanings attached to Le Morne attain their rightful and central position in the interpretation and presentation of the cultural landscape. Over the centuries, the Creole community has diligently conserved the belief system of Le Morne in their hearts and in their lives, and now offers its richness to the wider world community. In declaring the cultural landscape as a national monument, as well as in nominating the landscape as a possible World Heritage site, the universal message of Le Morne must in future become part of the integrated, heritage related development strategy for the cultural landscape, with development types that only impact positively.

### **The management of World Heritage as the guiding knowledge system**

The process of declaration of Le Morne as a national monument, and the subsequent process of research and nomination of the site as a possible World Heritage site, was one that was driven by the Government of Mauritius, through the offices of the Ministry of Arts & Culture and the Le Morne Heritage Trust Fund, the statutory body constituted to enact management of the site on behalf of the people of Mauritius. In the enquiry into the various systems of knowledge present in the cultural landscape, the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* (UNESCO WHC, 2005) is identified as the management template connected to the system of knowledge that accounts for the theoretical approach, the manner of practice and methods employed in the management of the heritage of Le Morne as future World Heritage.

The reason for the State Party’s dominant role in the process of seeking World Heritage Inscription for Le Morne, is directly forthcoming from the requirements of Section 15 (a)-(n) of the *Operational Guidelines* (UNESCO WHC, 2005: 3-4), which places the management responsibility in the hands of a State Party. If one understands the legal aspects of this process, one understands that the State Party is by definition the statutory role player, but also one that may as a result be defined by other role players as being a ‘dominant voice’ in the process. It is therefore necessary to examine whether the State Party, as statutory role player, fully understands the Outstanding Universal Value for which the site is being nominated, whether the Criterion or Criteria of Value are correctly applied, whether the statement of Outstanding Universal Value is based on a historiography that is inclusive and representative of a multi-layered historical context, and inclusive of the overarching meaning of Le Morne as held by the Creoles or slave descendents, as is briefly touched upon above, with numerous examples in the literature and in oral history (As collected in MAC, 2007a and 2007b).

Importantly, the *Operational Guidelines* also identifies a ‘partnership approach’ as a significant contribution to the protection of World Heritage properties and the implementation of the World Heritage Convention. This requires that the authors also investigate whether the Nomination Dossier, as well as the subsequent Management Plan for Le Morne, are inclusive of the voice of “individuals, local communities, non-governmental and private organisations

and owners who an interest and involvement in management of World Heritage property” (UNESCO WHC, 2005: 10, referring to Point I.I 39-40).

The State Party declared Le Morne as a national monument in January 2006 and soon thereafter, on 11 May 2007, a Nomination Dossier (MAC, 2007a) for the Le Morne Cultural Landscape was lodged at the World Heritage Committee<sup>8</sup>. The inscription was proposed under Criterion (iv), but with Criteria (iii) and (vi) added in support of the main Criterion (MAC 2007a: ix). The nominated property is in this case to:

**Criterion vi:** be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance.

**Criterion iii:** bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared;

**Criterion iv:** be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history; (UNESCO WHC, 2005: 19 - referring to Point IID.77).

The proposed Statement of Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) that was put forward in the Nomination Dossier, and that is the culmination of the knowledge base collated by the authors of the reworked Dossier, is as follows:

The Le Morne Cultural Landscape is a symbol of resistance to slavery. The history of maroonage that is linked to the Le Morne mountain with its impressive natural monument qualities and the significant role of Mauritius in terms of the slave trade, slavery and marooning, makes Le Morne an ideal focal point not only for celebrating resistance to slavery in the Western Indian Ocean but also in the world. Furthermore Le Morne is a statement of the achievement of marginalised, dominated and oppressed people, who by their human spirit and sheer determination achieved freedom, independence, dignity and respect for their values and cultures. It symbolises the birth of a people, the Creoles of Mauritius, a parallel process common to all Creole societies where slavery has played a major role in nation building and shaping. Le Morne guards the memory not only of shared suffering through the slave trade, but it also reminds us of suffering by all those who have experienced, or are still experiencing oppression of humankind by humankind such as in the trade in humans and other systems of exploitation as practised the world over. (MAC, 2007a: ix; 62).

In terms of the supportive Criterion (iii), the Nomination Dossier underscores the meaning of the cultural landscape that bears testimony to a slave-related culture – the documentation of local oral history, attached to the mountain, tells us: “It’s our Mountain: our birth place, the land of our ancestors and the sanctuary of their souls, a temple, the very anchor of our identity, the anchor of the local community” (MAC, 2007a: 59, referring in footnote 78 to Appendix 7 – the *Oral History and Traditions Project* (MAC 2007b)).

In terms of the second supportive Criterion (iv), the Nomination Dossier acknowledges the qualities of the natural landscape and the role it played as a place for maroonage – while slavery was resisted over a larger landscape, the Dossier makes the point that the monumental qualities of the landscape of Le Morne pre-destined it to be a place to celebrate resistance against slavery and to be recognized as a focal point for the celebration of resistance to slavery world wide.

It is important that the authors of the Nomination Dossier (MAC, 2007a) recognised that Criterion (iv) “lies at the core of the nomination because of the powerful intangible and complex heritage associated with the site...” and specifically that a belief system [authors’ underline] of a larger Creole society was, as mythological foundation of a rich cultural meaning, the essence Le Morne. The Justification for Inscription reads that Le Morne mountain as “centrepiece of a broader cultural landscape...is a monument...that...celebrates resistance to slavery that upholds values of humanity, liberty, dignity and human rights in the context of slavery and other forms of human exploitation. These values are the essence of an unwavering belief system that only partly relies on the tangible and intangible evidences of the impact of the history revolving around Le Morne....” (MAC, 2007a: 58). The Nomination Dossier goes to great

pains to underline the fact that the veracity of the essential part of the message of Le Morne, ie that maroons chose death over becoming slaves again, is not what is at stake, but the ongoing belief in that message – this is underlined by the inclusion of a statement by Bablee, a Mauritian Creole who speaks for Le Morne Creoles with an authoritative voice “While it is true that there are written statements that slaves sought refuge onto le Morne, and the archaeological evidence corroborates these written statements, the essential part of the message of Le Morne... is largely presented in local oral testimonies presented in various forms. These do not tell us conclusively whether there were really slaves that preferred to throw themselves off mountain cliffs because they preferred liberty. Yet the living legacy thrives in the vast body of intangible heritage spawned by the mountain and, whether it can be proven scientifically or not, the essence remains the same.....” (In MAC, 2007a: 63, referring to Bablee’s position as Chairperson of the National Heritage Fund in footnote 81). This belief system in the myth of Le Morne has been transferred to be a belief in Le Morne as the origin of Creoles, a place of rebirth, and a source of power that sustains the Creole community and heals the wounds of slavery over the generations (Bablee in: MAC, 2007a: 65). In essence, Le Morne is nominated for the continued existence of events, beliefs and traditions of “songs, music, dance, healing, religious rituals and customs linked to, or derived from the beliefs and traditions of the maroon ancestors, the much revered and truly universal resistance fighters to the global phenomenon of slavery that has spanned the ages, and these qualities bestow upon the mountain a significance that is beyond space and time” (MAC, 2007a: 58).

The substantiation offered for Criterion (vi), being in essence the essential elements of the intangible heritage related to the heritage property, rests squarely on the substantial and extensive research conducted for the Nomination. The research includes recent archaeology, recording and inventories of the cultural landscape itself, archival manuscripts, records and maps, as well as an extensive list of books and articles related to the history of the site (MAC, 2007: 103-9) – but importantly, the ‘voice’ of keepers of the belief system of Le Morne, as extracted from the *Oral History and Traditions Project on ‘Le Morne’*, is included in the Nomination Dossier (MAC, 2007b: Appendix 7), and used extensively in the Dossier as the substantiation of Outstanding Universal Value.

It is clear that that the Nomination Dossier correctly identified and explored the relevance of Criterion (vi), stressing the primacy of the intangible component of the cultural landscape. In answering whether the State Party, in being the dominant voice in the process due to its statutory position of initiator and process driver, has nominated the cultural landscape for the correct reasons, under the correct criteria, and inclusive of the values articulated by the Creoles or slave descendents, the above statements from the Dossier speak in the affirmative.

As a picturesque landscape of exotic beauty that is a playground for tourists and attracts high-end real estate, the historical layers of le Morne have become virtually invisible. The descendents of the slaves, living on the peninsula as local communities and sometimes living on small holdings obtained by freed slaves, were moved out of the area, sometimes though the alleged ‘buying out’ of the occupants and sometimes by force, before they settled on the main island such as in the villages of le Morne and Coteau Raffin. To these communities, however, the mountain has retained its tremendous significance as a symbol of freedom in spite of them having lost all ownership of land, or rights of occupation, while the land has remained firmly in the hands of Government and the private sector, some of which are openly regarded by the local communities as the descendants of colonial masters. To those who hold the mountain most dear, even the most basic access to it has been denied. Le Morne has become the playground of the rich, and an asset to be developed by powerful companies, sometimes foreign and sometimes Mauritian. At this end of the stick the prevailing view of Le Morne is one of picturesque land

to be developed with leisure resorts and a playground for the rich, including the foothills, lower slopes and even the summit, with a tourist lookout point on the top of the mountain to be reached by a cable car.

### **Does the Le Morne Heritage Trust Fund adequately provide for a partnership approach in heritage management?**

It is clear that the descendants of the maroon and slave population who made Le Morne their refuge and where they made their stand against the system that oppressed them, have a legitimate claim to be at the origin of the most significant and sacred aspects of the Le Morne Cultural Landscape. Certainly they are the ‘carriers’ of the heritage, not only in single generations but from one generation to another. Due to history they have up till very recently been denied to enter the site, or to take up this role in a legally formalised way. The final Le Morne Cultural Landscape Management Plan (MAC, 2008) provides clear channels for participatory management. The following inquiry looks into the perceived quality of participation in process leading up to Inscription and beyond.

It is noteworthy that the submission of a Nomination Dossier has to be undertaken by a State Party (even if the nomination emanates from a local community), that the rules of submission have to be strictly followed by a State Party, and that no formal relationship ever comes into being between UNESCO WHC and individuals and/or cultural associations. In the process leading up to its formulation, there was a component of the nomination process that is perceived as having been exclusive. Even though the nomination process relied on participation and was inclusive of the oral history of local communities, the process of completing and submitting the Nomination Dossier (MAC, 2007a) did not allow for those who provided their voices, to inspect the manner of representation of their voices in the completed Dossier before its dispatch to the ICOMOS World Heritage Committee by the State Party. Such inspection would have been very important, especially in terms of validating the veracity of the representation of the belief system relating to Le Morne, of which they define themselves to be an integral part. Even after submission the Dossier has remained a document with limited access and distribution to officials of Government and a few additional individuals connected to the Nomination process<sup>9</sup>, although events have indicated that commercial promoters have enjoyed access to the Dossier. This state of affairs has been strongly criticised, and notably so by representatives of those cultural associations and of the local community who have a stake in the management of Le Morne due to their slave-related connection to Le Morne. The restriction in access was described as a symptom of a larger lack of transparency in the process leading up to Nomination (see, *inter alia*, Lamarque, 2007: 10; 11). In this regard it is again useful to take note of the exclusive relationship that exists between UNESCO WHC and a State Party, and the common misconception that it does not allow for scrutiny by affected parties during the Nomination process.

The submission of the Nomination Dossier (MAC, 2007a) included a Draft Management Plan (LMHTF & MAC, 2007). In contrast to the restricted access to the Nomination Dossier, this document was released into the public domain and went through a thorough process of scrutiny by and comment from interested and affected parties, with comments to be reacted to in the content of an integrated Management Plan.

It is noteworthy that various cultural associations felt compelled to use the participation process connected to the Draft Management Plan to voice concerns about a (then) perceived mismanagement of the site in general, and also specifically as regards a perception that the Government was giving in to looming resort developments on the Le Morne peninsula.

Furthermore, because they were given no opportunity to verify the representation of the content of their knowledge system in the Nomination Dossier, this public participation process was also appropriated as a platform from which to state that the current research on Le Morne was deficient and to, in response, introduce ‘essential knowledge of Le Morne and its outstanding tangible and intangible values as well as a history of resistance to violations of human rights at Le Morne and its surroundings’ (Lamarque *et al*, 2007). This was offered in the positive spirit of putting the heritage management process on a more secure historical footing and to better control the development applications for of the site which were perceived as being uncontrolled. While it is noteworthy that the data received from the cultural associations in this participative process did alter the essential definition of the Outstanding Universal Value of Le Morne, in the process leading up to Nomination some cultural associations perceived themselves as a part of a suppressed knowledge system, with a ‘marginal voice’.

The essence of the message received from this round of the participative process was that cultural associations demanded continued public participation (for example as defined by *Les Verts Fraternels*, 2007: 1) in a process that is inclusive, accountable and transparent – and furthermore, that those cultural associations who define themselves as ‘keepers’ of the belief system relating to Le Morne want the final Management Plan and the interpretation and management of the site to subscribe to the knowledge system that underlies that definition, that they want to be seen as the ‘genuine’ owners of Le Morne, and that they personally want to be partners in its management.

The following inquiry focuses on whether the vision, aims and constitution of the Le Morne Heritage Trust Fund (LMHTF), as management structure of a national and possible World Heritage site, allows for a ‘partnership approach’ to manage and monitor the Le Morne Cultural Landscape, and to what extent?

The LMHTF Board is “the responsible authority for managing, administrating and regulating the affairs of Le Morne” (LMHTF & MAC, 2008: 31). Representatives to the Board are appointed by the Government. The Vision statement of the LMHTF Board, whose role it is to manage the cultural landscape as a living and actively engaged symbol of resistance against slavery, states that:

In fulfilling its role as a universal symbol of resistance to slavery, the Le Morne Cultural Landscape will serve as a focal point for current and future generations to celebrate resistance against oppression anywhere in the world as well as commemorate the suffering of humans through slavery and other systems of exploitation. It should be a living example of oppressed people achieving freedom, independence, dignity and respect for their values and cultures. It will do so by becoming a centre of excellence in terms of research, in particular the history of maroons in the wider context of slavery, and by playing a prominent role in unlocking cultural and economic opportunities for those who have suffered most under the system of slavery. (LMHTF & MAC, 2008: 5)

The Mission and Specific Aims (LMHTF & MAC, 2008: 6) of the Management Plan directly answer the statement of Outstanding Universal Value and the substantiation thereof, as contained in the Nomination Dossier – from this perspective all bodes well for the future conservation of the site.

The Mission and Specific Aims also address the fact that the Le Morne Cultural Landscape is a living symbol, in other words acknowledging that the progeny of the slaves are those that are living in the eastern shadow of the mountain (and as dispersed elsewhere), by means creating itself the specific task of alleviating the needs of those who were oppressed through local economic development, but also by identifying the socio-cultural [sic] Associations as Stakeholders (LMHTF & MAC, 2008: 28). While *Les Verts Fraternels* (2007) acknowledge the need for such local economic development, and questioned the ability and the credentials of the Board in directing development in the Buffer Zone of the cultural landscape to the benefit

of the ‘descendants of the slaves’, the *Platform Patriotik Pou Sov Le Morne* (Lamarque *et al* 2007: 6-7; 12) questioned the manner of historical acquisition of land by colonisers - leading to the loss of land by slave descendents - outright and call for a commission of inquiry on the matter of ownership.

At Le Morne Village, strong feelings and beliefs prevail that their ancestors owned the land at Trou Chenille, Macaque and l’Embrazure, and that these lands must be restored to their descendants ..... commit to an urgent Commission of enquiry ... concerning ownership of land from the time of slavery until now (Lamarque *et al*, 2007: 12).

In the management of the cultural landscape, the Government of Mauritius is procuring land, currently privately owned, for inclusion into the defined cultural landscape and to conserve the sites where historical settlement took place – this is also a positive development from the perspective of future co-management of land and stewardship by a range of stakeholders.

The Le Morne Consultative Forum has been conceived and proposed in the approved Management Plan as a forum in which all stakeholders “can be consulted and may represent their views on issues concerning Le Morne” (LMHTF & MAC, 2008: 29) as relates the preservation and promotion of its resources and heritage inasmuch as it meets the requirements of the Vision and Mission of the Le Morne Management Plan. The full list of Stakeholders, including the Government ministries and institutions, private landowners, hotel representatives and business promoters, as well as a total of 52 socio-cultural associations, is included in the Draft Management Plan (LMHTF & MAC, 2007: Annexure 3). Representatives from *bona fide* associations, groups and other organisations of the community are allowed if they adhere to the Vision and Mission contained in the Management Plan. The organogram of the organisation (LMHTF & MAC, 2007: 33) shows the consultative link between the Board and the Consultative Forum. It is important to note that the Consultative Forum currently falls outside the line of operational management of the site.

During the participative process a stakeholder group, also acting on behalf of others, contested the format and the constitution of the LMHTF Board.<sup>10</sup> The essence of the contestation was that the current Management Plan does not empower and does not have room for the progeny of the slaves of Le Morne in the *de facto* management of the site, but rather relegates them to the role of stakeholders that are only consulted within the confines of a predetermined structure – the essential item that the party appears to demand is a new body, with a different constitution and with a co-constructed vision and mission that is also based on the knowledge system of the people that are deemed to be the true ‘keepers’ of Le Morne, and that will empower them as partners in the management process.

Even if only one stakeholder perceives the formal management structure of the cultural landscape as not giving adequate empowerment and decision making power to those that deem themselves to be ‘of Le Morne’, even if the legal responsibility for the formal management structure lies with the State Party, how will this play out in the future? Even more so if the site is declared as a World Heritage site and when other local and nationally rooted as well as a myriad of additional international heritage stewards come into play, but following the accepted rules that were pledged to protect the authenticity and integrity of the cultural landscape? For this reason it appears that the partnership component of the LMHTF Board needs to be investigated further, and proposals made of how to strengthen the component and in which manner the legal parameters of a possible World Heritage property allows for greater inclusivity in the decision-making and executive management level of the Board, and in terms of the directed inquiry of this paper, particularly as pertaining to those who see themselves as the *bone fide* keepers of the heritage represented by Le Morne.

## **Are the *Operational Guidelines* adequate and sufficient to ensure Le Morne can be co-managed as a local and as a global cultural landscape?**

From the inquiry above it seems clear that the knowledge systems that sustains the history and memory of Le Morne – and which our summation showed is at the core of the Statement of Outstanding Universal Value - was adequately defined in the Nomination Dossier and also adequately integrated in the detail of the Management Plan. While one can say that the core values underlying the SOUV reside in the hearts and souls of all that abhor and resist slavery globally, in other words sustained by a global group of heritage stewards, it is a fact that the belief system of Le Morne is primarily sustained on a local level only, by the Creole descendents of the maroons and slaves of Le Morne. It is therefore ironic and sad that at a site commemorating resistance and freedom of the oppressed and enslaved, circumstances of the Nomination process made possible a situation in which some of the progeny of those who keep that belief should feel that their own understanding of place was not adequately heard, interpreted and projected into the present, and that they felt moved to ask for a more direct and empowering role in the guidance and management of the Le Morne Cultural Landscape as a site with local and global meaning.

In trying to undo such an irony, namely by attempting to achieve a fully participatory management of a local cultural landscape with a possible, simultaneous future role as World Heritage property, it is useful to scrutinise the World Heritage Convention's conservation approach as a means to providing possible directives. While the conservation approach followed by the World Heritage Convention is one that has been evolved over many decades by a collective of heritage specialists and bodies and that, as a heritage management system, it has successfully brought about the conservation of a vast number of threatened heritage with Outstanding Universal Value, one must of necessity inquire whether it is the World Heritage Convention management format per se that could theoretically impact negatively on a heritage site, or rather whether it is the incorrect or inadequate interpretation and implementation of the *Operational Guidelines* (UNESCO WHC, 2005) that could present problems in the management of such heritage.

In a heritage site that sustains and is in part sustained by a living local community, one must inquire if the World Heritage format may pose an inherent danger, in that the full attention of the international world is let loose on the site, in this way possibly obscuring and/or overshadowing the local community to whom the site belongs to in a spiritual and/or physical sense. For such a site, the Nomination process may pose a further danger, in that the site must first and foremost be managed by a State Party as a site of national significance, which in itself is not a monolithic concept, and then, as World Heritage site, conform to standards, management and monitoring process attached to the World Heritage system, which may differ from the values that the local stewards of the site have ascribed to it. The protocols of the World Heritage Nomination and Evaluation processes also require that the interests of a large heritage management community of global stewards, that is much wider than the local community based stewardship, be integrated and managed by the State Party during the continued management and monitoring of the site, and with the intricacies and protocols of such a process easily leading to a feeling of alienation of a local community and a perception that a State Party is controlling and non-inclusive.

There appears to be a need for a much deeper interpretation and understanding of the potential for co-management, as embedded in and intended by the World Heritage nomination, evaluation and management processes. The *Operational Guidelines* argue strongly for engagement with 'partners' (UNESCO WHC, 2005: 1 [particularly Point 3(e)]; 10 [particularly Points 39-40]), and with such partners to be engaged with the heritage management process,

on all levels (under leadership of the State Party). In rereading the *Operational Guidelines* (UNESCO WHC, 2005), one comes to the realisation that the World Heritage Convention format is inclusive rather than exclusive of the local, and that it urges any State Party to follow a partnership approach, specifically in identifying and interpreting the heritage resources for Nomination, in sustaining and protecting the Outstanding Universal Value, in enhancing the efficacy of the heritage management, and particularly also in terms of continued research and all manner of conservation processes and monitoring the state of conservation. In terms of the remaining heritage management processes at Le Morne, the *Operational Guidelines* (UNESCO WHC, 2005) offer clues for a sound integration between ‘local’ and ‘global’.

In further exploring the issue of co-management of heritage sites, one may learn from sites where alienation of local communities (real or perceived), land ownership issues and severance of ancestral bonds to a site have been overcome, and where such communities and individuals have again become managers - as part of their self proclaimed spiritual responsibility to the site, but also in partnership with a State Party who takes the ultimate legal responsibility for a site. The successful co-management of Cook Mountain- Aoraki in New Zealand is but one positive precedent where the rights and belief systems of the stewards of the indigenous spiritual values that are believed to be inherent to a site, have gained real representation in the management structure of a site that through the workings of history has previously been solely managed by a State Party.<sup>11</sup> In terms of multi-vocality and interpreting and presenting histories of conflict, the to-be ratified ICOMOS *Charter on the interpretation and presentation of cultural heritage sites* ([www.international.icomos.org](http://www.international.icomos.org)) can be attached to the management documents as a supportive and guiding instrument.

In order to equitably address the management of heritage that is both local and global in its relevance, it is necessary that those who have expressed themselves as being ‘marginal voices’, namely individuals, local communities, ethnic groupings, as well as those private or non-governmental stakeholder groups most intimately involved with the history of a site, could be included in a participative forum with a format that embraces them as co-managers, and that acknowledges and ensures that they speak with an ‘equal voice’ in the future heritage management and monitoring of the local values and the global values (ie OUV) that co-exist in that cultural landscape.

In terms of Le Morne, both the Consultative Forum (being the current participative framework mentioned in the Management Plan (LMHTF & MAC, 2008), and as linked to the defined heritage values included in the Nomination Dossier (MAC, 2007a)), as well as the *Operational Guidelines* (UNESCO WHC, 2005), provide the opportunity and mechanisms for being a robust platform in which there can be innovation and real engagement by a diversity of stakeholders in a quest to attain this ideal future state of multiparty, multivocal stewardship and co-constructed meanings of place and shared history.

### **Can one achieve equity and balance in a contested landscape through management?**

Before the proclamation as national monument and before the World Heritage nomination process, Le Morne was a cultural landscape in which the colonial legacy would definitely have been perpetuated, with the many cultural imbalances, inequalities and injustices inherent to the colonial dialectic. Under such circumstances a situation would have persisted in which the displaced descendents of the slaves and keepers of the belief system around Le Morne would have no access to the Mountain, their belief system would have no place in a reality where the descendents of the colonial masters would still own or control large tracts of the cultural landscape, and their presentation of a narrative of resistance against and liberty from

oppression and slavery would not be possible in a non-Responsive tourism industry in which the descendants of slaves would be marginal actors such as working in hotels, or being objects in cultural shows for tourists in which they would have little or no control. This situation would more likely lead to 'cultural erosion' than to the 'cultural empowerment' and persistence of the memory and beliefs of which they are the main keepers.

Fortunately, because the slave descendants never forgot and never stopped protesting against any form of injustice, this scenario was arrested. Their transmittal and sharing of oral history, in many instances supported by archival records and research, has provided a message that galvanised Mauritians into action, namely to proclaim the outstanding universal significance of the message of the place in which it came into being and in which it evolved, and to ensure that the message is protected through a rich definition of its value, through legislation, and through a management plan in which local and global stewards protect and co-manage the cultural landscape into the future.

It has been stated that the *Operational Guidelines* (UNESCO WHC, 2005) is a tried and tested management tool that also acknowledges and sustains the concept of co-management. It can also be stated that the Management Plan (LMHTF & MAC, 2008) is a robust document that has gone through a good public participation process and has been ratified by Parliament. However, given the possibility that the Le Morne Cultural Landscape could be proclaimed as a World Heritage site in July 2008, can one have absolute certainty that an understanding of place, and in this case specifically those meanings constructed from the perspective of the previously enslaved, will be allowed to be adequately heard, interpreted and projected into the present?

In terms of the development of the inherent potential of any heritage site, there is the need for avoiding negative impacts and sustaining positive impacts. There is an obligation for a State Party to act within the provision of its own Acts and within the established heritage management structures to ensure the protection of significant resources of both the bio-physical and cultural environment, and to ensure that actions are equitable and balanced. Through correct evaluation of Environmental Impact Assessment reports (Bakker (2007) participated in this process), developers have been unsuccessful in obtaining a Permit to continue with a leisure resort on Le Morne mountain. Subsequently, the Government of Mauritius has drafted a special Planning and Policy Guidance document for Le Morne ([www.gov.mu](http://www.gov.mu) – both authors were asked to participate in the drafting of this strong management tool). This PPG has already been successfully applied to guide and transform a resort development with high negative impacts, to be respectful to and better sustain the values inherent to the cultural landscape while avoiding or mitigating negative impacts. The Government has very recently also concluded various difficult and costly land acquisition and land exchange projects to ensure that currently privately owned properties on the peninsula, acquired in the colonial period, would be freed for use in the cultural landscape and their full potential released for the transmittal of the cultural meaning embedded in the cultural landscape. What is still outstanding is a local economic development strategy and policy devised to steer future tourism and any other developments to be supportive of the landscape's defined value, correct historical imbalances and to direct specific benefit to the previously disadvantaged.

Currently, after a lengthy Nomination process that included research, capacity building and public participation, the idea of the future conservation of Le Morne Cultural Landscape as a World Heritage property has wide and inclusive support – descendants of the slave owners and the slave descendants, ethnically diverse, non-Creole Mauritian societal groupings, local communities, cultural associations, international hoteliers, land developers and Mauritian citizens at large have all bought into the concept and are ready to support the process. In this

sense there is a clear indication that common ground can be achieved in the contested cultural landscape of Le Morne.

## **Conclusion**

As parties that played a part in the nomination process, either through participating in the preparation of the dossier or the drawing up of the PPG - in collaboration with the LMHTF, the NHF and government departments - the authors have taken the liberty of taking the parallel position of being critical observers of the unfolding and evolving process. By having enjoyed such a close association with the process, the authors also accepted the obligation to identify any possible detraction from fulfilling the ultimate conservation purpose, namely to protect and sustain the Outstanding Universal Value of Le Morne into the future. It is in this spirit that the authors wrote this text, and draw attention to points that may need particular attention in order to safeguard the unique and special heritage of Le Morne.

At the time of writing the paper (May 2008), the ICOMOS World Heritage Committee's (June 2008) positive recommendation to the UNESCO WHC regarding the Le Morne Cultural Landscape, had yet to be issued. Since it has come to pass that Le Morne has been inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of its phenomenal Outstanding Universal Value (July 2008), it is precisely the details and deeper meanings of the Outstanding Universal Value - as defined in the Nomination Dossier - that need to be scrutinised. If those components of the Statement of Outstanding Universal Value can be adequately protected, then the heritage embodied in the site will be safe. Considering that oral history and local belief systems are critical to sustain the heritage, as explained in the SOUV, it is only logical, fair and proper that the 'carriers' an/or 'keepers' of the heritage be afforded ample opportunity to participate in decision making on how the site is managed, and how the heritage should be safeguarded. To deny them this opportunity will not only be highly deleterious to the 'living heritage' of Le Morne, but would objectify and marginalise the bearers of heritage. In addition, clear policy and guidelines must be drafted on how to steer economic development to benefit the local 'keepers'.

The paper introduces a debate on whether the heritage that Le Morne represents will be sufficiently safeguarded, by setting the pivotal question of whether the UNSECO *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* (2005) makes sufficient provision for safeguarding the locally sustained heritage of Le Morne. The answer is 'yes', considering the emphasis on partnerships and community participation in the *Operational Guidelines*, however non-specific they may be. But the nature of the possible outcomes for now resides firmly in the hands of the State Party who, in being the legally responsible party in the nomination process, has thus far made a lot of quality decisions. If the State Party adopts a management system and process that allows for ample participation in decision-making of those who carry the 'living' and intangible heritage forward, the chances are very good that the heritage embodied in Le Morne will be safeguarded for the Creoles, the peoples of Mauritius and the world as a whole.

## **Acknowledgement**

The authors want to thank all those who read the draft and added valuable comment and advice. Also, many thanks to Ms Diana Bablee for the French translation of the abstract.

## Notes

1. These meanings ascribed to the Le Morne mountain, and so aptly communicated by Bablee for use in the Nomination Dossier (MAC 2007a: 63), are elucidated in Section 3 of the Paper.
2. It needs to be pointed out the authors do not infer that 'Le Morne heritage' belongs to a particular group only; through its involvement of the nomination process the state party has already illustrated the cultural heritage represented by Le Morne to be a national affair, and by nominating Le Morne for World Heritage listing further indicates that the heritage 'belongs to humanity'. The extent by which Le Morne heritage is accepted by the broader Mauritian society as opposed to the Creoles only, is a rich subject to be explored elsewhere. The overall observation of the authors is that the broader population is very supportive of the nomination, which indicates that Le Morne may have a role to play in addressing apparent divisions that may still exist in Mauritian society.
3. In a Foucauldian (1970: xi, xxi) sense, the idea of 'archaeology' is used to designate a 'domain of research' which endeavours to explicate the system of knowledge that accounts for the types of theories and practices present at a particular period. This method can be used as critical tool to identify the nature of and relationship between different knowledge systems involved in the future use and stewardship of the Le Morne Cultural Landscape.
4. The authors have experienced this magnetism often on accompanying visitors to the mountain – likewise, the intense experience gained by coming upon the mountain on a journey on land or viewing it from the seaward side has been the focus of many art photographs, poems and songs.
5. Maroonage and its legacy in the colonial and post-colonial world is a currently well researched study field - the Bibliography of the Nomination Dossier (MAC 2007a: 100-9 is an extensive reference guide to sources on the topic of slavery and maroonage as it pertains to Le Morne.
6. The memories of Mme A Ramalingum, supported by the oral history collected by the Maroon Slave Archaeological Investigation Project 2002-3 conducted by the University of Mauritius under leadership of A Chowdhury, refer (MAC 2007a: 10 and footnote).
7. Apart from countless archival records, songs, poems or popular writings on this supreme act of gaining freedom (refer to MAC 2007a: 36-8), the graphic account published in *Le Mauricien* of 18 February 1853 (in MAC 2007a: 20-2) serves as an excellent example – the choice for the 'kiss of death' over slavery has in recent times been poignantly expressed in the song *Le Morne* [2001] that SR Assonne composed for the Sega group Cassiya.
8. Mauritius Le Morne Cultural Landscape, ID No 1259, nominated on 11 May 2007, included on Nominations to the World Heritage List at the UNESCO WHC 31st Session Christchurch, New Zealand 23 June – 2 July 2007 - Item 8B of the Provisional Agenda (Document WHC-07/31. COM/INF.8B3 Paris, 11 May 2007) ([whc.unesco.org/download.cfm?id\\_document=8817](http://whc.unesco.org/download.cfm?id_document=8817)).
9. The authors gained permission from the MAC for quoting from the Nomination Dossier (MAC 2007a), Management Plan (2008) and from Feedback to the Draft Management Plan, in this article.
10. By Le Verts Fraternal (2007), an interested and affected party representing Creoles and the local conservation of Le Morne.
11. For the documents relating to management representation at Aroaki-Mt.Cook, see <http://www.doc.govt.nz>.

## Works cited

- Bakker, K.A. 2007. *Independent Review of the EIA for a proposed Resort Development by the Le Morne Brabant IRS Co. Ltd on a Portion of the Le Morne Brabant Peninsula*. For the Mauritian Ministry of Environment.
- Clark, G. 1859. *A Ramble Round Mauritius with some Excursions in the Interior of the Island. A Familiar description of its Fauna and some subjects of its Flora by a country school-master*. In *The Mauritius Register* Ed. Palmer & Bradshaw

- Gopauloo, N. (ed). 2005. *Report on Oral History and Traditions on Le Morne*. Report for the Morne Heritage Trust Fund.
- ICOMOS. 2007. Charter for the Interpretation and Presentation of Cultural Heritage Sites. Final Draft revised under the auspices of the ICOMOS International Scientific Committee on Interpretation and Presentation, 10 April 2007.
- Lamarque, L.C. with assistance from Smitsman, A. 2007. *Professional and Collective feedback based on expert analysis and interviews with the people of Mauritius, on Le Morne Cultural Landscape Draft Management Plan, January 2007*. On behalf of Platform Patriotik Pou Sov Le Morne, Groupman PARKE, and other Collaborative Associations, assisted by Ecological Living in Action Ltd, dated 25 April 2007.
- Le Morne Brabant IRS Co. Ltd. 2006. *Le Morne IRS Project. Environmental Impact Assessment*.
- Les Verts Fraternels. 2007. *Notes extracted from feedback on the Draft Management Plan January 2007*. Collated documents from the Public Participation Process re the Le Morne Management Plan – kept by the Ministry of Art & Culture, Mauritius.
- Ministry of Arts and Culture (MAC). 2007a. *The Le Morne Cultural Landscape. Application for Inscription on the World Heritage List*. Submitted to the WHC in Sept 2006 by the Government of Mauritius.
- Ministry of Arts and Culture (MAC). 2007b. *The Le Morne Cultural Landscape. Application for Inscription on the World Heritage List. Appendix 7. Report on Oral History & Traditions on 'Le Morne'*. Submitted to the WHC in Sept 2006 by the Government of Mauritius.
- Le Morne Heritage Trust Fund (LMHTF) & Ministry of Arts and Culture (MAC). 2007. *Le Morne Cultural Landscape Draft Management Plan*. Republic of Mauritius.
- Le Morne Heritage Trust Fund (LMHTF) & Ministry of Arts and Culture (MAC). 2008. *Le Morne Cultural Landscape Management Plan*. Republic of Mauritius. The Management Plan for the Le Morne Cultural Landscape is a collaborative effort between the Le Morne Heritage Trust Fund and the Ministry of Arts and Culture, with input from stakeholders and the public.
- Moss R. 2002. *Le Morne: Lemorn*. Port Louis: Ledikasyon Pu Travayer..
- Pike, N. 1873. *Sub-tropical rambles in the land of the Aphanapteryx*. New York: Harper & Brothers.
- Tatorio Holdings (Mauritius) Ltd. 2007. *Corniche Bay Golf Resort. Environmental Impact Assessment*.
- UNESCO World Heritage Centre (UNESCO WHC). 2005. *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention. Document WHC 05/2*.

## Websites

- [www.gov.mu/portal/goc/housing/file/lemorne2.pdf](http://www.gov.mu/portal/goc/housing/file/lemorne2.pdf)
- <http://www.lonelyplanet.com>
- <http://www.iexplore.com/dmap/Mauritius/Activities>
- [http://www.international.icomos.org/quebec2008/charters/interpretation/EN\\_ICOMOS\\_Charter\\_Interpretation\\_10-04-07.pdf](http://www.international.icomos.org/quebec2008/charters/interpretation/EN_ICOMOS_Charter_Interpretation_10-04-07.pdf)
- <http://www.mauritius.net>
- <http://www.doc.govt.nz/templates/MultiPageDocumentTOC.aspx?id=42705>

<http://www.doc.govt.nz/upload/documents/about-doc/role/policies-and-plans/aoraki-mount-cook-np-management-plan-4.pdf>

<http://www.go2africa.com/mauritius>

Karel A Bakker is Professor of Architecture at the University of Pretoria. Since completing his PhD degree in 2000 on the evolution of Archaic Hellenic architecture he has focussed his research and teaching on conservation of historic urban landscapes and heritage management. He is a practicing heritage consultant as a member of Cultmatrix cc, a heritage management company with an international reach. He has published numerous articles.

Francois Odendaal is the Director of Eco-Africa Environmental Consultants. After completing his Ph.D. Degree in 1981 on riverine ecosystems in Australia he was principal research officer in the Centre for Marine and Coastal Studies at the University of Cape Town and has done research and/or taught at Stanford University, Duke University, Connecticut State University and the Environmental Resource Centre, Cape Peninsula University of Technology. He is an internationally known specialist who specialises in tourism development, coastal management, natural resource utilisation, integrated development planning, institutional development, policy processes and protected areas development and has gained valuable experience from working in many countries of the world. He has published numerous scientific articles, has written several books and produced a many films and documentaries.