

### 2.3 Heritage conservation and sustainable development<sup>14</sup>

The previous sections (2.1 and 2.2) considered how heritage places depend on their surroundings and how, ultimately, this is a form of mutual dependence. Local communities will often depend on their heritage – whether for social identity or for their entire livelihood – but they can also deliver benefits to the heritage, its cultural values and its management. The role of cultural heritage in sustainable development can be considered the culmination of such issues and is one of the most pressing concerns of heritage management in the modern world.

To understand the contribution that World Heritage properties can make to society and to local and national economies is all the more urgent as greater importance is given to sustainable use and benefit-sharing for heritage. In recent years, as a result of major phenomena such as globalization, demographic growth and development pressure, the cultural heritage sector has started to reflect on the relationship between conservation and sustainable development. This was triggered by the realization that, in the face of these new challenges, heritage could no longer be ‘confined to the role of passive conservation of the past’, but should instead ‘provide the tools and framework to help shape, delineate and drive the development of tomorrow’s societies’.<sup>15</sup> It reflected, as well, a tendency to consider ‘living’ sites as part of the heritage, rather than only monuments. These living heritage sites are considered important not only for what they tell us about the past, but also as a testimony to the continuity of old traditions in present-day culture and for providing implicit evidence of their sustainability.

The link between heritage and sustainable development is interpreted in different ways, depending on the specific perspectives of the various players, and a certain degree of ambiguity exists. Should property management contribute to sustainable development or simply guarantee sustainable practices? Will heritage management systems also be evaluated in future on the basis of how they contribute<sup>16</sup> to targets such as the United Nations Millennium Development Goals.<sup>17</sup>

#### The concept of sustainable development

As one of the most important paradigms of our time, sustainable development refers to a pattern of resource use that balances the fulfillment of basic human needs with the wise use of finite resources so that they can be passed on to future generations for their use and development. Since the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, the paradigm of sustainable development has been broadened to include three constituent but mutually supportive elements; environmental protection, economic growth and social equity. The importance of an effective system of governance has also been stressed, including a participatory, multi-stakeholder approach to policy and implementation.

Sustainable development is today the universally agreed and ubiquitous goal of nearly all development policies at local, national and global levels. New approaches, stemming from recent research, are introducing innovative ways of expressing the concept of social

14. Boccardi, G. 2012. *Introduction to Heritage and Sustainable Development*. Paper presented at Special Module on Sustainable Development during ICCROM’s course on Conservation of Built Heritage.

15. ICOMOS. 2011. *17th General Assembly and Scientific Symposium, ‘Heritage, Driver of Development’ 27 November – 2 December 2011*. in: *ICOMOS News*, Vol. 18, No.1, p.9. Paris, ICOMOS.

16. In 2011, a number of additions were made to the *Operational Guidelines* which refer to sustainable development, notably in paragraphs 6, 112, 119, 132, as well as in Annex 5, points 4.b and 5.e. These amendments are aimed on one hand at ensuring that any use of World Heritage properties be sustainable with respect to the imperative of maintaining their OUV (thus, a narrow definition of sustainability), and on the other hand to affirm, as a principle, the idea that management systems of WH properties should ‘integrate sustainable development principles’.

17. United Nations Millennium Goals to be met by 2015, <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/bkgd.shtml>