

## 2 Context: managing cultural heritage

sustainability, and terms such as ‘well-being’, ‘good-life’ or even ‘happiness’, are finding their way into governmental policies and statistics, focusing on subjective and qualitative indicators, rather than on purely quantitative ones.<sup>18</sup> This fundamental principle was recognized in paragraphs 30, 58 and 134 of the outcome document of Rio+20, ‘The Future We Want’.<sup>19</sup>

### The relationship between cultural heritage conservation and sustainable development

In relation to cultural heritage, the issue of sustainable development can be understood in two ways:

1. As a concern for sustaining the heritage, considered as an end in itself, and part of the environmental/cultural resources that should be protected and transmitted to future generations to guarantee their development (intrinsic).
2. As the possible contribution that heritage and heritage conservation can make to the environmental, social and economic dimensions of sustainable development (instrumental).

The first approach rests on the assumption that cultural heritage and the ability to understand the past through its material remains, as attributes of cultural diversity, play a fundamental role in fostering strong communities, supporting the physical and spiritual well-being of individuals and promoting mutual understanding and peace. According to this perspective, protecting and promoting cultural heritage would be, in terms of its contribution to society, a legitimate goal per se.

The second approach stems from the realization that the heritage sector, as an important player within the broader social arena and as an element of a larger system of mutually interdependent components, should accept its share of responsibility with respect to the global challenge of sustainability. In the current context of mounting pressure from human activities, reduced financial and environmental resources and climate change, the contribution of heritage protection to sustainability and sustainable development could no longer be taken for granted, but should be demonstrated on a case-by-case basis through each of the three ‘pillars’: the social, the economic and the environmental dimensions.<sup>20</sup>



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**‘World Heritage is a building block for peace and sustainable development. It is a source of identity and dignity for local communities, a wellspring of knowledge and strength to be shared.’**

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18th General Assembly of States Parties  
to the World Heritage Convention.*

18. An example is the the Royal Government of Bhutan’s Commission for Gross National Happiness, <http://www.gnhc.gov.bt/mandate/>

19. Accessible online at: <http://www.uncsd2012.org/content/documents/727The%20Future%20We%20Want%2019%20June%201230pm.pdf>

20. Boccardi, G. 2007. *World Heritage and Sustainability; Concern for social, economic and environmental aspects within the policies and processes of the World Heritage Convention*. London, M.Sc. dissertation, UCL Bartlett School of the Built Environment.