

thus seeking to identify the maximum social consensus that can be reached in conservation decisions (Clavir, 2002, p. 43).

Subjective and intersubjective judgements

There are three questions when judging whether the heritage is well conserved or not and if sustainable conservation has been pursued in a given period of time: Was the significance maintained? Was the integrity maintained? Was the authenticity maintained?

These judgements cannot rely on an objective assessment since they are qualitative concepts, or ‘variables’, that cannot be ‘measured’ against defined quantitative standards. The judgement can simply state if the variables have been kept or not, or if there has been some change in the heritage, that has affected the perceptions of the values, integrity or authenticity in a positive (good) or negative (bad) way. For Viñas,

intersubjectivism in conservation can be viewed as a consequence of agreements among the subjects for whom objects have meanings. Furthermore, the responsibilities for the conservation of an object fall on the affected people – or their representatives; it is their duty to preserve or restore those objects, and it is for them that conservation is performed (Viñas, 2005, p. 153).

In practical terms, the judgement of the three main conditions for declaring whether the heritage has been well or badly conserved is the responsibility of people whose life is affected by the heritage or its meanings. This group is called the ‘stakeholders’ (Avrami *et al.*, 2002; Cameron *et al.*, 2001) because they may generate and be impacted by tangible and intangible effects, in different ways and magnitudes, depending on the degree of their involvement with the significance of the heritage.

The specialists are those who have authority over the heritage due to: (1) curatorial relations; (2) their contribution to its significance; and (3) their capacity to intervene on the material and non-material attributes because of their expertise (Michalski, 1994; Leigh *et al.*, 1994). They can be divided into two communities: local specialists, i.e. those who have specific knowledge about the site and have made some intellectual or practical contribution to its understanding; and outside specialists who have overall knowledge of the conservation of World Heritage Sites and work with international conservation institutions.

In the case of urban sites, where the number and types of heritage are large, it has been determined that residents, especially longstanding residents, are very important for the sustainable conservation of the site. They tend to maintain their properties, campaign for better urban spaces, attract other urban uses such as local commerce and services. In other words they keep community ties and local cultural traditions. They are the essential component of the *genius loci* of the urban places.

There are sites whose significance is dependent on the presence, the activity, or origin, of culturally significant groups such as religious orders at sacred sites, ethnic quarters, craft or productive workers based sites or specific cultural groups (Serageldin *et al.*, 2001).