

Other recent developments in heritage approaches

While ICCROM initiated the Living Heritage Sites programme, UNESCO adopted the *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* (ICH) in 2003 and it came into effect soon after. This became an increasingly popular instrument and soon incorporated the theme of living heritage into its activities. However, the intangible heritage approach has also been criticized for its lack of a holistic view on heritage by only emphasizing the intangible aspects (Wijesuriya, 2010). There are many parallels between the ideals being promoted between intangible heritage and the ‘living heritage approach’ but no formal links have been established. The focus on living heritage, which is also acknowledged in the intangible heritage, can in fact effectively address the above-mentioned criticisms of intangible heritage. Community as a central theme is the most obvious aspect of the two approaches.

Conservation as the ‘management of change’ is another view that has become increasingly popular over the last two decades. The central theme of continuity is invariably linked to change, and therefore conservation is about the management of continuity and change and there is little or no contradiction with the new idea.

It was also during this time that the UNESCO programme on historic urban landscapes was born and developed, with some input from ICCROM. The final result came in the form of UNESCO recommendations, which also have some parallels to what has been developed in the Living Heritage Sites programme.

Hence, the Living Heritage Sites programme has evolved in response to some major criticisms of conventional heritage conservation and management approaches (Wijesuriya, 2010) and it also incorporates some of the recent developments in heritage discourse. It should be mentioned here that the Living Heritage Sites programme was developed within the context of immovable heritage, indeed it advocates avoiding compartmentalization between tangible and intangible and movable and immovable. The ‘living heritage approach’ therefore, is not necessarily a substitute for earlier approaches,³ but it is a complementary development to contemporary heritage management approaches. As the participants of the Bangkok meeting in 2009 agreed, the ‘living heritage approach’ is an improvement on the two existing approaches, namely, fabric-based and values-based, and can be adapted to deal with any category of heritage. Indeed, it was the experience of the Living Heritage Sites programme that generated the interest for ICCROM to develop a general programme for promoting a ‘people-centred approach to conservation’ in which the beneficiaries are both the heritage and the community.⁴