

# 2 Context: managing cultural heritage

Part 2 defines heritage and the need to manage it. It attempts to set heritage management in a broader context (Part 2.2), looking particularly at its relationship to sustainable development (Part 2.3). It then considers the nature of heritage management systems, and describes what are the two most common approaches to the conservation and management of heritage: what is termed here the 'conventional' approach and an alternative, values-led approach (Part 2.5).

## 2.1 What is heritage? Why manage it?

### Broadening definitions of heritage

Heritage is of increasing significance to each society. Why this is so is not entirely clear but probably it has to do with the increasing speed of modernization and the scale of change in society. In such circumstances, evidence of past societies can provide a sense of belonging and security to modern societies and be an anchor in a rapidly changing world. In many societies, too, heritage can be an important definer of identity. Understanding the past can also be of great help for managing the problems of the present and the future.

The range of what is regarded as heritage has broadened significantly over the last half-century. Heritage properties tended to be individual monuments and buildings such as places of worship or fortifications and were often regarded as standalone, with no particular relationship to their surrounding landscape. Today, there is general recognition that the whole environment has been affected by its interaction with humanity and is therefore capable of being recognized as heritage. It becomes even more necessary to make judgements about what has significance and what does not.

Inevitably, this expansion of the concept of heritage has meant in turn an enormous expansion in the range of types of structures and places treated as heritage. The World Heritage Convention recognizes that heritage can be defined as 'monuments, groups of buildings and sites'. In practice, a broad set of typologies has developed that includes: urban centres, archaeological sites, industrial heritage, cultural landscapes and heritage routes. This greatly increases the range of places and landscapes that has to be managed by heritage managers and thus widens the range of skills required. It also greatly increases the type and number of threats that can have an adverse impact on heritage places. Apart from direct threats to the fabric or components of the heritage place itself, it is much more common for places to be threatened by adverse developments in their surroundings. In these circumstances, decisions taken for wider economic or social benefits must be compatible with the well-being of the heritage place.

The recognition that heritage places are not isolated has led to their surroundings being addressed both as a physical setting and as a series of social, economic and environmental threats and opportunities (see Part 2.4). What happens in those surroundings can have an impact on the heritage place and its significance. This means that a heritage management system and all those involved in it must have the capacity for influencing decisions about what takes place there (see Part 2.5). Change in the surroundings is probably inevitable but it should not damage the values (in the case of a World Heritage property, the OUV) of the heritage place. It can in fact be a catalyst that unlocks new forms of support, in turn affecting significance.