



GET THE FACTS - HERITAGE INFORMATION SERIES

26. HERITAGE IS A BROAD CONSENSUS

From the onset of modern preservation, there has been universal agreement that the state and society at large have the duty to preserve heritage sites for the benefit and enrichment of all citizens. For this reason, in order for a site to be recognized and to receive special protection as cultural heritage, there needs to be consensus about its broad significance to society. In the recent past, the concept of heritage in general and of heritage sites in particular has gained widespread acceptance in all the world cultures and at all levels of society.

Heritage is no longer limited to the great iconic monuments of the past or the places where great events occurred; it now includes millions of sites that are of vital importance to sectors of society that were once invisible or even intentionally ignored by dominant cultures. These sites play an important role in fostering peaceful multi-cultural societies, maintaining communal or ethnic identities and serve as the indispensable theatre in which the ancient traditions that make each culture a unique treasure are performed periodically, even

daily. Qualitatively, too, the concept of heritage has become increasingly complex in terms of its diversity in form and nature. Without forsaking our commitment to sites where great historic events occurred or of great architectural distinction, heritage now includes places once considered ugly, trivial, negative or even unimportant.