

Keynote Address
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Heritage Changes: Preserving our Past and Shaping a Sustainable and Just Future

Abstract

Our heritage is the legacy of the past, inherited by successive generations, protected and passed onto future generations. It is a source of identity and values providing an invaluable tool to understand the past and a platform for shaping the future. Our understanding of heritage has been evolving for years, but the concept of Heritage Changes has become increasingly relevant in recent years. We have witnessed tumultuous social, economic and cultural transformation including a global pandemic, climate emergency, conflict, redefinition of community and personal identities, economic hardships and social justice movements that have impacted our way of life and our values. Heritage played a role at every turn – on the one hand influencing our response to these changes, while, on the other hand, being influenced and altered by them. Heritage Changes includes complex and interdependent themes, which we need to explore and better understand to engage with heritage and improve our ability to create a more sustainable and just future and to mitigate and adapt to challenges that face our communities at the global level. Three themes will be addressed: the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on heritage and the role of heritage in building social cohesion and enabling communities to adapt to changes; the climate change crisis and its profound threats to cultural heritage as well as the role of heritage, traditional and Indigenous knowledge in building creative solutions to the climate crisis; and thirdly heritage and communities, bringing people-centered rights-based approaches to engagement in and around heritage.

The experience of the Petra National Trust and its evolution over the past 30 years in programmatic development focused on heritage preservation, awareness, youth engagement and community development provides an example of the evolution of our understanding of heritage and the practice of heritage preservation and continuity of heritage.