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History, heritage and localism

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Western heritage movements emerged first at the local level, with community and interest groups being the primary lobbyists for legislative protection and wider government support – even if the focus of preservations was initially almost exclusively national in focus. This article explores the Anglo-British approaches to heritage preservation over the past century which, initially, reflected a continued move towards localism, but, in recent years, has found itself at a crossroads, where, if it wants to further embrace community localism, fundamental changes are required in the basic attitudes towards, and notions of, heritage governance. Beginning with a brief outline of the heritage movement's evolution, this article then seeks to explore the issue of 'place' in shaping individual and community attachment to heritage sites and landscapes. In doing so, it explores the relative logic and problem of the local governance of local heritage.

Keywords: heritage; the 'local'; the heritage industry

Traditionally, Western heritage movements have seen themselves as decidedly pro-localism, and perhaps rightly so. After all, in almost every instance, heritage preservation has historically emerged first at the local level, with community and interest groups being the primary lobbyists for legislative protection and wider government support – even if the focus of preservations was initially almost exclusively national in focus. Local knowledge, sentiment and action have been equally crucial to the effective application of heritage legislation – a reality reflected in the typically decentralised nature of heritage administration. A more focused exploration of the evolution (some would argue de-evolution is a more appropriate word) of Anglo-British approaches to heritage preservation over the past century highlights a continued shuffle towards localism. However, in recent years, the movement has found itself at something of a crossroads, where, if it wants to further embrace community localism, fundamental changes are required in the basic attitudes towards, and notions of, heritage governance. Beginning with a brief outline of the heritage movement's evolution, this article then seeks to explore the issue of 'place' in shaping individual and community attachment to heritage sites and landscapes. In doing so, it explores the relative logic and problem of local governance of local heritage.

The evolution of the heritage movement: from national to local

In its origins, the modern preservation movement was very much a child of the times, with the Victorian gaze heavily shaped by Romanticism's enthusiasm for 'ancient

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monuments', and Nineteenth Century perceptions of the didactic value of historic monuments. Emphasising the centrality of the historic landscape to civic education and the maintenance of national and imperial values, heritage was valued as a source of inspiration and as a moral tale that built character and inspired a sense of respectability, civic duty and imperial citizenry. A natural corollary of Romanticism, the phase also saw the rise of heritage tourism, with sites especially lauded for their perceived affective power; for their historical associations; and as sites of awe and wonder.

While the state monuments were the primary tool for conveying such values, as the self-appointed moral guardians of community, social elites were more interested in historic sites and buildings, which they saw as powerful symbols of the intellectual and social hegemony of the educated middle class and their cultural values. In Britain, the implication of this was a blinkered focus on sites such as castles, monasteries and great houses, while in the colonial and 'New World' contexts it was on battlefields and sites associated with pioneers and civic and political leaders. By the beginning of the twentieth-century, rising middle-class anxieties about the flood of new immigrants similarly saw colonial societies turn to the historic landscape for its power to familiarise new arrivals to the nation's collective past and ideals, and thus attain the required social identity (Stipe and Lee 1988; Zerubavel 1997).

Rooted in concern at the pace and scale of change wrought on towns and cities by urban renewal and the rise of the modern planning movement, a second phase placed far greater emphasis on the built landscape.¹ Originated around the turn of the century, but emerged as a popular movement on the back of the enormous urban renewal projects of the late 1940s and 1950s, it culminated in the institutionalisation of heritage preservation through the establishment of national trusts and government efforts to develop legislative frameworks for preservation.² Recognition of the historic environment's fragility also saw it valued in new ways, with great stock, for example, placed in sentimental attachment to old buildings as markers of change and as cultural anchors, while a wider awareness of the social value of the historic environment saw themes of cultural capital placed at the heart of emerging heritage legislation.³

This phase, which remains at the heart of the modern heritage movement, has also very much been about the 'professionalisation' of heritage and the role of the 'expert' as adjudicator of heritage values and ideals (Smith and Waterton 2009; Smith 2004; Ashworth, Graham, and Tunbridge 2007; Tunbridge and Ashworth 1996). Far from an automated evolutionary process, professionalisation emerged as specialists became increasingly active players in heritage debates, and actively lobbied governments for greater control of access to, and authority for, heritage assets. In Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the USA, the rise of the expert archaeological voice has also been closely tied to the development of assertive indigenous political movements, one of the goals of which has been to extend preservation of, and control access to indigenous archaeological sites. Indeed, the role of the expert in many ways defines this phase of the movement's development, with one of the key mechanisms to emerge during the period – the expert adjudicated historic register – becoming a standard tool of heritage authorities in the definition and application of heritage values and assessment criteria. The growth of architectural influence has been particularly central to this development, with the architects' perspective as 'connoisseur' raising aestheticism and architectural merit to primary assessment criteria (Davison 1991). The architectural bent has been further accentuated by the professional divide between architects and archaeologists; the latter group leaving fewer public traces of their priorities owing to the nature of salvage

archaeology. Despite this, the importance of archaeology's empiricism cannot be overstated here, providing the necessary scientific image to allow heritage to become a scholarly discipline, while the wider scientific paradigm allowed the discipline to gain intellectual respectability and authority (Wylie 2002).

Heavily influenced by the wider historical perspective of social history, since the early 1980s, 'lesser' heritage sites, such as simple villas and industrial buildings, have garnered more attention, while chronological lengthening has seen art deco and early modernist items added to heritage schedules. Indeed, the vernacular now dominates heritage registers, with legislative structures having evolved from their predominantly national focus of the early twentieth century to one where the front line of preservation is now 'resource-oriented' land management and planning legislation, and the primary agencies responsible for heritage management are local and regional authorities. However, while this localisation of legislation and administration has given amateurs and communities greater power to comment on the direction of preservation and development, the listing of sites ultimately remains a process moderated by the expert, who remains the gatekeeper of 'official' heritage values.

The 1980s also saw the emergence of a third phase of preservation centred more clearly on notions of community engagement. Influenced in part by indigenous demands for active participation in heritage management, this shift has also been heavily influenced by growing emphasis on the ethical and political responsibilities of cultural heritage management, wider governmental efforts to extend citizen engagement in decision-making and a recognition of the potential value of preservation as a tool for community development (Prangnell, Ross, and Coghill 2010; Holmes 2011). At the heart of this is a recognition that heritage can strengthen community ties and community organisation and, indeed, is essential to the very identity and unique character of communities. On the ground such factors are relevant in a number of ways: Culturally, communities are seen to be richer for having the tangible presence of past eras and historic styles, with historic resources impacting perceptions of neighbourhood liveability and quality of life. Heritage is also seen to yield economic vitality and reward as the perceived attractiveness of heritage buildings see them command premium prices, while heritage tourism facilitates economic diversity and encourages urban/suburban renewal. Socially, a community also benefits when citizens take pride in its history and mutual concern for the protection of the historic fabric, with studies showing how this, in turn, establishes a climate for enhanced stability and further personal investment in the area. Such has been the impact of this 'turn to community', that Neil Silberman, the President of ICOMOS – the International Council of Monuments and Sites – has recently suggested that the heritage movement is now at a stage where the authenticity that it has sought in historical structures, must now also be sought in their social significance (*Between Home and History* 2010).

Place, the local and community identity

While the embracing of Silberman's suggestion would see a significant shift for the preservation movement, one drawing it much closer to 'the local' and local governance, it remains questionable whether it is a shift the industry is capable of making – at least in its current guise. Indeed, until quite recently the notion of 'place' that encapsulates social value has been something of a neglected area within heritage studies, while the modern historical professional was in many ways built in opposition to 'the local' which was

tarred as parochial. Although in the early 1940s the philosopher and sociologist Maurice Halbwachs recognised the power of sacred places to strengthen memory and that collective memories unfold within a spatial framework, the ‘spatiality of memory’ has been similarly neglected, with research on the link between emotion and ‘place’ having been a concern for the social sciences, far more than the humanities. To be fair, the wider explosion of interest in ‘place’ has itself been fairly recent, emerging as something of a counter-strategy to globalisation’s compression of space and time.

Nonetheless, its uptake by many disciplines has been profound. Environmental psychologists, for example, have explored how children bond emotionally with places as they grow, and how memories of childhood places remain crucial anchors throughout life, while ‘sense of place’ has been shown to be reinforced by the social networks of adulthood – the argument being that the longer a person lives in a place, the more likely the environment is to become saturated with significant memories (Valentine 2004; Sibley 1995; Pretty, Chipuer, and Bramston 2003; Tuan 1974; Proshansky, Fabian, and Kaminoff 1983; Altman and Wohlwill 1992; Steele 1981; Twigger-Ross and Uzzell 1996). As Ben Rogaly and Becky Taylor’s recent study of identity, place and belonging in English council estates forcefully demonstrates, the connoisseur’s elevation of aesthetic merit is little more than snobbery; it is place as context that ultimately defines attachment (Taylor and Rogaly 2011).

Research has also been undertaken into the emotional consequences of person–place bonds being broken, such as the grieving for a lost home that occurs among exiles deprived of their familiar environment and memory sites, or among people who remain in situ while sacred and significant sites are destroyed or profaned (Read 1996; Said 2000; Brah 1996; Rapport and Dawson 1998; Fortier 2000). Indeed, the importance of ‘belonging’ to our attachment to places cannot be overstated; geographer Gillian Rose noted that the strongest attachments are typically to places in which we feel comfortable, or at home, ‘because part of how you define yourself is symbolized by certain qualities of that place’ (Rose 1995, 81).

Sociologists and human geographers meanwhile have explored issues to do with community development, such as social capital, sense of community and citizen participation (Flora and Flora 1996; Perkins and Long 2002; Perkins and Manzo 2006). Among other things, this has shown how, through interactions as simple as everyday conversations ‘in place’, local residents transform ordinary environments into ‘storied places’, with ‘space’, as Yi-Fu Tuan notes, evolving into ‘place’, through the steady accretion of sentiment and experience. The key point here is that it is human behaviour at a specific location that turns objective space into subjective place. More importantly, while ‘famous places’ become such because of their association with significant events or individuals, it is the everyday practices of living that impart meaning to place and develop identities with places because they serve as spatial coordinates of identity. This, notes the geographer of place Edward Relph, is the essence of place (Tuan 1974; Relph 1976). Highlighting as it does the complex and contradictory nature of place, the French sociologist Henri Lefebvre puts it another way, concluding in *The Production of Space* (1991) that: ‘Space is permeated with social relations; it is not only supported by social relations but it is also producing and produced by social relations’ (Lefebvre 1991, 286).

This notion that societies shape a distinctive social space that meets their intertwined requirements for economic production and social reproduction has set much of the current direction for the discourse on space. So, the cultural critic Frederic Jameson concludes that Lefebvre’s theorisation: ‘call[s] for a new kind of spatial imagination capable of

confronting the past in a new way and reading its less tangible secrets off the template of its spatial structures' (Jameson 1991, 364–5). In respect of heritage preservation, Lefebvre's emphasis on the importance of space in shaping social production provides a useful framework for understanding the link preservation and political economy. In particular, the limiting of the economic and political rights of groups is consistently achieved by constraining social production through the limitation of spatial representation. If we also recognise the Gramscian notion of cultural hegemony, established class hierarchies can be seen to impede the ability of working-class groups to be given recognition in the development of historical and heritage narratives and heritage practices (Smith, Shackel, and Campbell 2011; Watson 2008; Wedgwood 2009; Samuel 1994; Hewison 1987; Smith 2006; Smith and Waterton 2009).

Despite the relative absence of historians and heritage experts in the development of place theory, place has, nonetheless, been a concern to historians for some time, and particularly within the French *Annales* school, which has long had a sensitivity to place beyond the simple locational. In the early 1950s, the British Communist Party Historians' Group similarly recognised the importance of place in shaping attachment, embracing local history out of the belief that the plebeian dimension of history constituted a solid theoretical basis of social movement. At the end of the decade, these ideas were placed at the heart of the First New Left's efforts to rejuvenate socialism through a refocusing on marginal identities and identity politics, at the heart of which were localism and community. Following the disintegration of the First New Left in 1961, Raphael Samuel transposed the group's ideas over to the study of History (and later heritage), leading the modern resurgence of social history that radically changed the discipline during the 1970s and 1980s. Motivated by a desire to wrestle power and authority away from the centre, and so-called 'experts', and give it back to the individual and the community, 'People's History' – as it was called – was centred on three key changes: the widening of the concept of what constituted 'valid historical sources' through the embracing of 'unofficial sources'; discarding claims that so-called 'amateur' historians had any less authority than the 'professionals'; and, most importantly, breaking from the idea of 'national' history by embracing the 'local' narrative and local history as a focus of study (Gentry 2013). Yet, far from being motivated by socialist values alone, Samuel was also drawing heavily on the logic of the local in shaping people's ideas.

While many of the more recent geographically aware interventions by historically minded scholars, such as Edward Said, Michel Foucault and Clifford Geertz, have been concerned more with the idea of 'space' than 'place', such work has been a major influence upon new historically oriented work exploring the affective and phenomenal sense of place – the most influential arguably coming from the pen of the *Annales* historian Pierre Nora (see Nora 1989). While Nora's argument is grounded in a reformulation of Halbwachs' emphasis on the separateness of memory and history, and his emphasis on the social frameworks of memory, Nora has, importantly, gone further in recognising that 'sites' of memory do not simply arise out of lived experience, but instead have to be created. Together with his highlighting of the plurality and fluidity of meaning and uses of memory sites, this idea has been immensely influential on historical consideration of place, and indeed resides at the core of academic commentary on the history of heritage in Western society that has emerged since the mid-1980s.

Nora's ideas have also been hotly contested, with particularly strong criticism levelled at his focus on 'official' places of memory. As Samuel notes, the simple problem with this perspective is that people rarely conduct themselves in the manner that national

histories and 'official' heritage suggest they should, with all manner of geographic considerations, social conflicts and economic forces creating a multiplicity of local issues which impact decisions. Echoing Samuel's contention, Tom Griffiths, Chris Healy and John Bodnar have each suggested that, in relation to the formation of identity in Australia and the USA, local, rather than national, perceptions of place and history have provided the model of historical imagination through which people have made sense of their own time in places that were still new to them (Griffiths 1996; Healy 1997; Bodnar 2000). The same can be argued of New Zealand, where, as one historian has recently observed, local communities in the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries were connected to a 'national' past through the rhetoric of public commemoration, while local and provincial identities remained dominant (Hamilton 2002). Seventy-five years later little had changed, with Erik Olssen noting that, in the process of writing his *A History of Otago* in the early 1980s: 'I quickly identified some 20 sub-regions [of Otago], most of them with different histories, which at best could be reduced to seven larger sub-regions ... [each with] distinctive characters' (Olssen 1992, 76).

As Samuel suggests, herein lays the disturbing paradox, that because local history does not have to stretch over such diverse and wide-ranging collectives, it is, in effect, more nationalistic (Samuel 1998). Because it is comprised of more personal histories, it relates the history of larger communities to a much greater extent than national history related to the local. This is not to suggest that local and national history are mutually exclusive, but that, as Samuel argues, identity is first and foremost made up of 'little platoons', rather than 'greater societies' (Samuel 1989, xvii). With this in mind, in the 1995 *History Workshop Journal* edition 'Rethinking the Idea of Place', Samuel, together with the human geographer Felix Driver, expressed the hope that a growth of interest in the idea and nature of 'place' would see new interest in local history and local approaches to heritage, and, ultimately: 'in some sense de-centre orthodox histories, offering a view of the past which was radically distinct from the view at the centre' (Driver and Samuel 1995, vi). Querying the nature of local history in a global and rapidly changing world, they recognised not only the importance of place as locale, but the connection between locale and the wider world, and the implications of this development. In her paper in the volume, the geographer Doreen Massey returned to this connection, arguing that locale is a 'product of wider contacts; the local is always already a product in part of "global" forces' or 'the world beyond the place itself' (Massey 1995, 183).

Samuel and Driver's contention that the connection between locale and place gives prominence to the 'spirit of local places' also highlights the simple reality that, despite claims about the importance of removing proximity from identity, this is an impossibility, with place being a fundamental mechanism through which humans understand their surroundings. Indeed, as the humanist Lewis Mumford wrote in 1926, the facts of locale 'become parts of a person's own life' (1926, cited in Kammen 1996, 85). Historian and champion of regional history Jim Gardner presents a similar argument, observing that:

[t]he normal ambit of the individual is regional and not national, and local rather than regional. Of course, the wider trends in events and in public opinion impinge on the individual's daily sphere, but his [or her] reaction to them is usually expressed within or through the local framework. (Gardner 1979, 183)

The notion of embodiment that Gardner and Mumford elude to here could not be, phenomenologically, more fundamental to the constitution of social identities – the basic

argument being that identities have their basis in the multiple ways in which we register and experience the world through all our senses. As the archaeological theorist Christopher Tilley describes it:

the manner in which identity is thought through relates in a fundamental way to the manner in which agency is experienced through the body at the levels of both individual and social experience, encountering and sensing persons, things and places. (Tilley 2006, 21)

Only being in place, and encountering things and people ‘in place’, can create anything other than a vicarious sense of social identity. Indeed, this is precisely why the disembedding mechanisms of globalism are seen to be so threatening to who we think we are. It similarly underlies urban historian Dolores Hayden’s recognition of the need to understand the importance of places as storehouses of social memories, and the philosopher Edward Casey’s highlighting that it is the stabilising persistence of place that makes it such a powerful container of memories (Hayden 1995; Casey 1996).

As this brief outline suggests, places make memories cohere in complex ways, with people’s material, social and imagined experiences of the landscape an enmeshing of sense of place and the politics of space. The core challenge for heritage preservation, however, is that, despite the recent shift towards more community-oriented perspectives on preservation, and, similarly, the President of ICOMOS’ recognition of the need for greater industry awareness of social significance, across the Western world the bulk of legislation relating to heritage preservation and conservation has been designed first and foremost to protect material remains, not memory or values. The dominance of hierarchical frameworks that privilege the expert only further complicates matters, especially as social (as opposed to cultural) notions of the vernacular and social value are so peripheral to the ideals of the dominant players within the heritage movement.

The profoundness of these differing perspectives is illustrated in a debate on the public meaning of built heritage that unfolded in the pages of the *New York Times* in early 1975 between the influential urban sociologist Herbert Gans and the Pulitzer Prize-winning architecture critic Ada Huxtable. While both were clearly concerned about the loss of the city’s historic sites, throughout the exchange they were unable to understand each other’s language, and struggled to appreciate the values that informed the others’ perspective. For Gans, ‘architecture’ meant the built environment more generally, while, for Huxtable, it meant buildings designed by professionally trained architects. When he said ‘vernacular’ he was referring to the social use of a building or buildings, while for her the term was a classification of architectural style. When he said ‘neighbourhood’ he meant a complex network of social and spatial ties, while for her it meant a geographically bounded space (cited in Hayden 1995, 3–5).

In the 30 years since Gans and Huxtable’s failed to understand one another, the ‘turn to community’ has seen the notion of social value gain a footing within sections of the heritage movement. In Australia, for example, State-level heritage assessments have begun to include ‘social significance’ as a key criteria of assessment, while, in the West more generally, recent decades have seen the energies of National Trusts increasingly shift from preservation to advocacy and the support of community-led preservation initiatives. Yet, such shifts have arguably done little to facilitate community engagement, with the basic failure of the existing heritage management process stemming from the narrow, and hierarchically conceived, definitions of heritage value that lay at the heart of the assessment process, and the hierarchical notion of ‘community’ that dominates the

heritage sector and excludes parity of participation. Consequently, jointly run projects tend to involve heritage work being *for* communities, rather than *with* them. Indeed, even where heritage administrators have made attempts to engage with community aspiration and wider heritage values, the existing legal framework and guidance has provided little to support this impetus, tending instead to obscure the links between place and community. A similar observation has been made of collaborative efforts between the museum sector and community organisations, the net result being that: ‘the ideas, knowledge base and specific local and cultural features of community heritage groups may be overlooked or overridden, leading to decreased community ownership, identity and, ultimately, engagement’ (Perkin 2010, 111). As local communities and groups have thus become increasingly disillusioned with their lack of voice within heritage management processes, they no longer support preservation unquestioning, and are increasingly pushing to have their own sense of heritage acknowledged and legitimised (Smith and Waterton 2009).

The most profound and effective shift in the legislative frame and heritage process has arguably emerged in Britain in the form of the 2011 Localism Act. While, on the one hand, the economic stringency that underlies the Conservatives’ decentralisation agenda has resulted in a major reduction in the number of historic environment specialist advisers in British local government, the Act represents a particularly significant shift in the frameworks around control and authority of heritage preservation and values. It provides communities with a right to bid for assets considered to be of community value and gives legislative clout to community heritage values, by treating any site on local heritage lists as a ‘material consideration’ within the planning process. Yet, in giving teeth to community-led preservation and management, the Act has made many in the heritage community nervous; perhaps rightly so. For example, as the President of ICOMOS recently concluded: ‘some communities come up with horrible ideas [for preservation] that reflect some of the worst kind of commodification’ (*Between Home and History* 2010). Perhaps it is rather that, as a professional archaeologist and historian, some community notions of value and use clash with Silberman’s aesthetic and fabric-centred perspectives?

The great irony here, of course, is also that, despite the dominance of culturally loaded values such as these within the current framework, their application in the assessment of heritage significance is far from an exact science, with every ‘professional’ heritage practitioner having his/her own subjective view on heritage values. Questioning this position would take heritage management into a distinctly uncomfortable area that not only threatened the authority of the expert, but also required a re-evaluation of the disciplines very identity and foundation. This is not to suggest that heritage experts have no place in community-led preservation – far from it – but, rather, that the relationship should be one in which, as the British archaeologist Keith Emerick has suggested, experts act less like ‘heritage police’ and, instead, adopt roles as ‘facilitators’ and ‘enablers’ (Emerick 2005). Indeed, this is something of a necessity, with community groups often having a limited focus and usually lacking expertise in planning matters. In Britain, the passing of the Localism Act has already seen the beginnings of such a shift, with the city of Bristol – to give one example – establishing a City Design Group with the express purpose of connecting the enthusiasm and knowledge of local community groups with specialist skills, while financial groups such as the Charity Bank and Architectural Heritage Fund provide avenues for the funding of community preservation.

The notion of a ‘turn to community’ in heritage preservation, of course, takes place at a time in which the theory and practice of public policy is increasingly concerned with civic engagement, social inclusion and advocating greater community consultation more generally (*Reform of Australian Government Administration* 2009). While politicians have sold the shift as embracing the fundamental principles of a democratic state, such policies have been part of a wider government recognition that engagement is economically advantageous, and that proactive engagement with citizenry maximises the flow of useful knowledge to government decision-makers (Australian National Audit Office 2009). Engagement similarly provides opportunities for a wider range of citizen voices to be heard and citizen-led identification of priorities, thereby inculcating more ownership of solutions and responsibility for implementation, while also fostering a sense of mutuality, belonging and empowerment, all of which strengthens resilience. Indeed, this is the essence of co-production. Yet, despite such statements of commitment to citizen engagement, local, state and territory governments appear to have fared better than national government in engaging citizens, with the identification of discrete ‘communities of interest’ and the ‘power of place’ seeming to be key factors in whether engagement initiatives really succeed (Stewart 2009). Indeed, in Europe, where a number of genuine attempts have been made in recent years to strengthen mainstream citizen participation in policy development and service delivery, the success of such initiatives has been recognised to generally depend on the kinds of civic traditions that are already in place (European Institute for Public Participation 2009). It is no coincidence that despite the horror some connoisseurs may express at the direction some community-led efforts take, the most successful urban preservation projects are ones that have been driven from within the community and not from the outside (Brown, Perkins, and Brown 2003).

Yet, community-led engagement with heritage preservation is not the panacea some may envisage, and there are a number of significant epistemological, cultural and socio-political hurdles to be overcome. As the Localism Bill made its way through the House of Commons, for example, English Heritage, the British Government’s statutory adviser on the historic environment, suggested that the problem with the Bill’s giving communities greater sway in neighbourhood planning was that many ‘local’ buildings, neighbourhoods and landscapes were also of ‘national’ value (Localism Bill: [Memorandum submitted by English Heritage](#)). While it is easy to simply write-off English Heritage’s response, here as an argument for the continuing precedence of national over local values (which it no doubt partly was), it equally reflects wider complexities within a more democratic and localised approach to heritage preservation and governance. To begin with, as suggested earlier, experts and those with official responsibilities might well be reluctant to share power with communities, and may be reluctant to accept the decisions of ordinary citizens. Similarly, despite the rhetoric of partnership and community collaboration, governments are typically adverse to the devolution of real power over the policy consultation process, as control over policy and programme directions is: ‘crucial ... both for political reasons (e.g. the political calculus of support and benefits from implementing promises and party priorities) and for meeting the official audit requirements for adhering to due process in public expenditure’ (Head 2011, 105).

Dealing with everyday living heritage also involves a multitude of additional issues and complexities that arise partly because living heritage deals intimately with people’s lives and their homes, and partly because the heritage movement itself has traditionally avoided direct confrontation with the uncertainties of contemporary life, instead selling heritage as jewels in a sea of mediocrity, an approach which plays upon the faux-security

of an imagined past. The significance of a site to a local community is also far more difficult to define than traditional heritage values, owing to the way that individuals and communities attach to places, with place attachment, for example, being a connection that does not depend upon actual location or geographical proximity, but rather on proximate connections in time and space. Physical and social proximities do not have to coincide. Individuals who live geographically close to a place may have little or no attachment to it, while for others with little or no geographical connection, 'imagined' links may be pervasive (Anderson 1983). An individual's network of social relations may similarly be bound to a particular place, extend far beyond it, or more probably combine aspects of both. Crucially, people within a particular locality cannot be assumed to have move in the same circles and thus to have similar conceptualisations of 'community'.

As the social anthropologist Anthony Cohen describes it:

Community exists in the minds of its members, and should not be confused with geographic or sociographic assertions of 'fact'. By extension, the distinctiveness of communities and, thus, the reality of their boundaries, similarly lies in the mind, in the meanings which people attach to them, not in the structural forms. (Cohen 1985, 98)

Community is thus anything but homogenous or monolithic. It is a mix of old and new, near and far, present and absent. The anthropologist Barbara Bender (2006, 303) sums this all up quite succinctly, noting:

The same place at the same moment will be experienced differently by different people; the same place, at different moments, will be experienced differently by the same person; the same person may even, at a given moment, hold conflicting feelings about a place. When, in addition, one considers the variable effects of historical and cultural particularity, the permutations on how people interact with place and landscape are almost unending, and the possibilities for disagreement about, and contest over, landscape are equally so.

Yet, while on the one hand this destabilises the link between community and place, it also highlights the importance of place to understanding social relations, suggesting that the particular characteristics of social relations can often only be understood in relation to place. Just as hierarchies exist in the amateur–professional dichotomy, the different and often conflicting needs and interests of different subgroups, and the exclusion of minorities, are equally part of neighbourhood politics, evidencing the need for preservation frameworks that better elicit and listen to dissident voices (Silk 1999; Clark 2009). Indeed, as the curator Corinne Perkin recently found in her work with the various heritage groups in the Victorian city of Bendigo: 'The only commonality amongst the groups was their lack of solidarity with each other and a focus on achieving the ambitions, aims or goals of their own group in isolation' (Perkin 2010, 115).

A further problem is that many places valued by communities are unknown to the wider society. These special places often contribute to the community's sense of place by reflecting the historic, scenic, recreational or social experiences common to that community and which distinguish that community and that locality from other groups and places. Communities rarely feel the need to state their feelings for such places, and often the realisation of their value only emerges when the places are threatened. Gauging social value in such instances is made all the more difficult because it is hard to distinguish between simple conservatism and more deeply rooted social ties.⁴ From the perspective of the architectural historian, better examples of a structure may exist

elsewhere, but, for whatever reason, are not part of the sense of place that the community may be striving to retain. Indeed, many places of profound cultural significance to communities will have no architectural or historical significance outside of that group or location. A 1988 Australian Heritage Commission study of the NSW town of Queanbeyan, for example, found that the community tended to value places not so much for their architecture or historical value, but as part in the ongoing life of the town, and as reminders of significant events in their own lives (Walker 1988). Regional work in the mid-1990s by the Australian Heritage Commission and Victorian Department of Natural Resources and Environment into the national estate values of the East Gippsland forest region similarly found particularly strong community attachment to both sites – such as the old Noorinbee School or the Bonang Hall and General Store, which were central to local community life – and to important symbols of the region and its history, such as Lake Tyers House and the Blacksmith's Tree (*National Estate Report* 1996). Similarly, when the local store on Waikeke Island, off the coast of Auckland, which had been an important community hub for 80 years, burned down in 2003, the local community, in large part in an effort to maintain the site's social significance, embraced the installation of a public art installation that took the form of a reconstruction of the store's frontal façade (Minutes of Waikeke Local Board meeting 21 March 2013).

Conclusion

Localism and the paradox facing the heritage industry

While there is a certain logic to the localisation of heritage preservation, the issue is also an epistemological minefield, and one which requires something of a paradigm shift within the professional heritage community and a broadening of definitions of heritage values. Challenging as this may sound, at the very least, such a shift would highlight the complexities and 'multivocality' of heritage and the different value systems which are used by a wide range of local and non-local communities to ascribe value and significance to certain sites. At its best, it could provide a new, legitimate basis for heritage preservation and administration. The price of not moving further towards such a sense of plurality is that preservation will follow a circumscribed reading of one of its basic tenets: that we preserve cultural heritage because it is valued. Indeed, as Emma Waterton has recently noted, the paradox within the heritage industry's perceived inclusiveness of 'public heritage' is that currently there is no distinct role for 'the public' within the management process (Waterton 2005). Within the existing framework, 'public heritage' and 'community' are outcomes and audiences, not inclusive parts of the preservation process. Of course, such issues lay at the heart of wider discussions of localism, with the problems facing existing heritage governance structures illustrative of many of the difficulties of integrating managerial and community localism. Indeed, when we consider the idea of 'the local' through the frames of place attachment and place identity; when we recognise how local circumstances – economics, ethnic and class structures, age distribution, and even geography – impinge on the nature of effective community localism, the gulf between managerial and community localism becomes all too clear. The key point, however, is that, while 'the local' may be the primary framework of the individual's everyday existence, and be most potently experienced 'in place', this does not necessarily mean that community localism is the most logical form of governance for dealing with community resources.

Notes

1. While this constitutes the basis of most analyses of the rise of heritage in the nineteenth century, the most significant variation on this has been the Annales historian Pierre Nora's suggestion that it was more a case that as traditions and associations lost their meaning through the rapid pace of change and social modernisation, the relationship between people and their pasts was reconstructed through social constructions of identity.
2. For example, the US National Trust was established in 1949, New Zealand in 1954; Australian state trust was established between 1945 and 1963 (while the Northern and Australian Capital Territories were the last, both establishing in 1976).
3. Legislative consideration of heritage during this period emerged within the frame of the post-war Town and Country planning legislation.
4. On the one hand, for example, preservation laws have become becoming part of the tactical arsenal available to residents as they struggle to retain a modicum of control over the character of their neighbourhoods while also being used to restrict development in pricey neighbourhoods, cementing them as enclaves for the rich and displacing poorer residents. For more, see Verrey and Henley (1991); Conde (2007)

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