AMPS Proceedings Series 44.2

HERITAGES 2025

Critical Questions – Contemporary Practice

AMPS PROCEEDINGS SERIES 44.2

University of Greenwich

25 – 27 June, 2025

Heritages 2025

Critical Questions – Contemporary Practice

ARCHITECTURE_MEDIA_POLITICS_SOCIETY
Amps

EDITOR:
Jitka Cirklová

EXECUTIVE PRODUCTION EDITOR:
Amany Marey

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AMPS PROCEEDINGS SERIES 44 | ISSN 2398-9467

INTRODUCTION

Heritages 2025

Critical Questions – Contemporary Practice

A little over 25 years ago, the site of this conference, Maritime Greenwich, London, was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. Home to the first Palladian building in England, the Royal Naval College by Sir Christopher Wren, the National Maritime Museum, the Old Royal Observatory and the University of Greenwich, it is one of the UK's most important historical sites. It is home to groundbreaking projects in digital heritage, the Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, and a variety of major arts and cultural events annually. It is promoted by its 'state-of-the-art' visitor centre and ardently protected by the UK's Listed Buildings and Conservation Acts. It is a quintessential site of world heritage.

However, as a site located in the city of London, it feels the pressures of economic and urban development. It is threatened by the strains of mass tourism and can be at risk of over exposure. It is located near areas of social deprivation and its buildings and parks are in need of continual, and costly, maintenance. Managing the site for local residents, the heritage community and visitors is complex and can be contested. In this regard, Maritime Greenwich is also the epitome of the difficulties faced across the heritage sector, the world over.

Using the World Heritage Site of Maritime Greenwich as a point of departure, this conference sought to explore the critical questions for the heritage sector today from various disciplinary perspectives. This conference proceedings publication thus contains a range of case studies and theoretical readings that cross disciplinary fields, with this volume focused on issues related to socio-cultural readings of heritage, both tangible and intangible.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1
CO-PLANNING TANGIBLE AND INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE FOR SPATIAL JUSTICE 1
Federica Burini, Marta Pantalone

Chapter 2
SCAR OR SCHOOL? A NIGERIAN PERSPECTIVE ON PRESERVATION OF BRITISH COLONIAL-ERA BUNGALOWS 8
Anna Ibru

Chapter 3
PARTICIPATORY HERITAGE AS USER-LED AND DIALECTICAL: IN DIALOGUE WITH THE GRADE I LISTED NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY, LONDON 15
Constance Lau

Chapter 4
THE MUTUALITY OF HERITAGE SITES AND INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS: A CASE STUDY OF LAHORE CITY 26
Hafsa Imtiaz, Mehreen Mustafa

Chapter 5
LIVING IN FEAR AND TRUST: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE HISTORICAL CONTEXTS AND PERCEIVED COMMUNITY SAFETY IN THE BANGKOK METROPOLITAN REGION 42
Siriwan Rujibhong

Chapter 6
ASSESSING THE HERITAGE VALUES OF THE CYPRUS GOVERNMENT RAILWAY FROM THE BRITISH COLONIAL ERA 55
Kagan Gunce, Damla Misirlisoy

Chapter 7
INTERSECTIONAL IDENTITY AND URBAN PLANNING: EMPOWERING WOMEN AND GIRLS IN AFRICAN TOWNSHIPS THROUGH ON-THE-GROUND RESEARCH OF PUBLIC SPACES: INSIGHTS FROM PHASE 1 OF THE GIRLS MAKE THE CITY PROJECT IN LANGA, CAPE TOWN 64
Tiisetso Mofokeng

Chapter 8
LAYERS OF ADAPTATION: VERTICAL MOBILITY, CULTURAL IDENTITY, AND ARCHITECTURAL TRANSFORMATION IN SAMA BADJAU RESETTLEMENT HOUSING IN NUEVA ECIJA 73
Vannesa Grace Cabiedes

Chapter 9
CHALLENGES IN CONSERVATION OF HISTORIC AREAS IN BEIJING'S OLD CITY SINCE 2011: IMPACTS OF GOVERNMENT-LED APPROACHES 83
Wang Ruoyu, Huang He

Chapter 10
THE LOST STREAMS OF TE WHANGANUI-A-TARA 93
Robin Skinner

Chapter 11
CULTIVATING COMMUNITIES AND HERITAGE AT ST ALFEGE CHURCH, GREENWICH 103
Alison Fisher, Matilde Martinetti

Chapter 12
DIGITAL COMMUNITY CO-CREATION AS A CONDUIT FOR ADDRESSING SYSTEMATIC ERASURES AND GAPS IN SHARED HERITAGE 115
Daniel H. Mutibwa, Esther Shaw, Alison Clague, Amanda Hanton

Chapter 13
SACRED RIVERS: DECOLONIAL ECOLOGIES AND THE INDIGENOUS CULTURAL HERITAGE OF CAPE TOWN'S BLUE-GREEN WATERWAYS 124
Heidi Boulanger

Chapter 14
HERITAGE ATMOSPHERES, AND MINOR URBANISM: A CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE ON PATRIMONIALIZED TERRITORIES IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH 147
Barbara Gonçalves Guazzelli, Camila Ferreira Guimarães

Chapter 15
MULTISENSORY AND EMBODIED ARCHITECTURE: REDEFINING HERITAGE THROUGH A SENSORY EPISTEME, THE CASE OF KWA MAI MAI MARKET 159
Mahoati Arthur Lehloenya

Chapter 16
A DECOLONIAL APPROACH TO THE HERITAGE OF MIGRANT MAKER PRACTICES 170
Özgün Dilek

Chapter 17
DISSONANT PASTS: LACUNAE, MEMORY AND FORGETTING IN PUBLIC SPACE 180
Joern Langhorst

Chapter 18
VISION AND REVISION IN NATIVE AMERICAN HERITAGE SITES: THE LOWER SIOUX AGENCY AND FORT SNELLING 188
Robert Silberman

Chapter 19
_MPATHIC DESIGN: BROOKES (REVISTED) 202
Noma Elgin Cleckley

Chapter 20
IMPERIAL SHADOWS: ADDRESSING INDIGENOUS EXCLUSION IN LONDON'S MEMORYSCAPE 213
Sandra Gans

Chapter 21
CALLING ON GHOSTS 223
Marisa Williamson

Chapter 22
REVITALIZING HERITAGE IN DEPOPULATING REGIONS: CHALLENGES IN NORTHERN PORTUGAL 239
Laura Castro

Chapter 23
STAGING MEMORY: HERITAGE TOURISM AND THE POLITICS OF REMEMBRANCE IN GHANA 248
Nana Kwame Brobbey

Chapter 24
LATENT CONNECTIONS: HERITAGE IN COMMONS 255
Johan Voordouw, Rija Zaki

Chapter 25
SURVIVING HERITAGE: COLONIAL HERITAGE AND COUNTER-COLONIAL MEDICINE AT KINGSTON'S PRISON FOR WOMEN 266
Hadley Howes

Chapter 26
DIGITAL PERPETUATION OF INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE: A CROSS-CULTURAL COMPUTATIONAL ANALYSIS OF ACUPUNCTURE AND MOXIBUSTION DISCOURSE ON SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS 276
Meng Chen, Zhuo Guo, Jilong Wang, Xinzhu Wu, Ke Liu

Chapter 27
CHOREOGRAPHING CULTURAL HERITAGE: DANCE, FESTIVALS, AND STATE-IDENTITIES IN KHAJURAHO, INDIA 286
Mihika Banerjee

Chapter 28
UNHARNESSED RIVER: BRIDGING CULTURES ACROSS BORDERS THROUGH INTANGIBLE HERITAGE 303
Jaana Tiikkaja, Anu Soikkeli

Chapter 29
DECOLONIAL HERITAGE PRACTICES OF BLACK WOMEN IN CHILE AND COLOMBIA THROUGH TRADITIONAL AND CONTEMPORARY USES OF AFRO HAIR 312
Joseph Gómez Villar, Angie Mercado Echeverría

Chapter 30
THE ROLE AND IMPACT OF HERITAGE PRACTITIONERS WITHIN A TRIBAL STRUCTURE ON THE INTERPRETATION AND PRESENTATION OF NATIONAL HERITAGE 321
Alanood Alshaikh

Chapter 31
THE BARROW IN THE LANDSCAPE – DESTROYED, RESTORED, REDEFINED OR NEWLY BUILT 335
Søren Skriver Tillisch

Chapter 32
HERITAGE OF WADI HANIFAH: NAVIGATING SOCIO-CULTURAL COMPLEXITY IN CONSERVATION 347
Rayana Albusaili, Razan Alfaqeer

Chapter 33
RITUALS AND SOCIAL PRACTICES: THE SYMBOLISM OF TRADITIONAL CELEBRATIONS IN SAUDI CULTURE 354
Norah Almujil

Chapter 34
PRIEST OR PERFORMER: NEGOTIATING SUBJECTIVITY IN SHAOWU NUO DANCE INHERITORS 362
Jidan Cui

Chapter 35
GAME(OVER)TOURISM: WORLD HERITAGE STATUS AND NATURAL SITES BETWEEN OPPORTUNITIES AND RISKS. THE CASE OF THE DOLOMITES 371
Roberto Gigliotti, Eliana Saracino

Chapter 36
DARB ZUBYADAH: DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO CULTURAL INTERCHANGE AND THE PREADAPTATION OF INHERITED LEGACY 386
Roseann Tariq Sjieeni, Rahaf Khalid Alsubaie

Chapter 37
WHY IS IT SO HARD TO WORK WITH RELATIONS AND NOT ONLY OBJECTS IN DANISH HERITAGE PRACTISE? 394
Jonna Majgaard Krarup

Chapter 38
EL ESTALLIDO SOCIAL: COOPMAR AND THE CONTRADICTORY COLONIAL HERITAGE OF VALPARAÍSO 403
Fernando Mouta, Amélia Polónia

Chapter 39
NAUTICAL HERITAGE DIAGNOSTICS: NEW RESEARCH AND FUTURE OBJECTIVES 413
Maria Carola Morozzo Della Rocca, Claudia Tacchella, Giulia Zappia

CO-PLANNING TANGIBLE AND INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE FOR SPATIAL JUSTICE

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INTRODUCTION

With a particular focus on UNESCO tangible and intangible heritage, this paper presents a critical approach to cultural heritage studies that uses a transdisciplinary theoretical and methodological framework based on the social sciences of space.[2] UNESCO cultural heritage often falls victim to socio-territorial pathologies: Buildings and architecture, when not well managed, can face pressures related to economic development, leading to the strains of overtourism.[3] Similarly, immaterial cultural heritage can face a lack of recognition, resulting in the adoption of external knowledge and competences and thus creating an unbalanced process of local development, especially when related to tourism in the Anthropocene.[4] We explain how a co-planning approach is needed to create a new model of governance of tangible and intangible heritage, based on a networked structure and using a community-based process. Our vision is of a framework for good governance processes that is based on an enlarged triple helix model [5] and which shows universities – together with public and private stakeholders – to be drivers of spatial justice.[6] By promoting a co-planning approach to sustainable heritage management, universities can help to develop good forms of governance and the real and virtual accessibility of cultural heritage while guaranteeing spatial justice for local communities' needs. The case study of Bergamo's UNESCO tangible and intangible heritage will be considered to show how the University of Bergamo – through its three missions of education, research and public engagement – is promoting, together with private and public stakeholders, a co-planning process based on a networked structure and a community-based approach.

CULTURAL HERITAGE AS COMMONS

One of the most important frameworks inspiring our analysis is the Council of Europe's Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society – signed in Faro in 2005 and also known as the Faro Convention – because it provides a complex reading of the social importance of cultural heritage for local communities. Indeed, it explains how rights relating to cultural heritage are inherent in the right to participate in cultural life, as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, thus promoting individual and collective responsibility towards cultural heritage and asserting that the goals of sustainably using and conserving cultural heritage are human development and quality of life. In our modern world – framed by geopolitical instability and many forms of social and spatial injustice – we can thus better understand the role of cultural heritage in the construction of a peaceful and democratic society.

Cultural heritage is herein considered a form of commons, which requires a holistic approach that considers its dynamic nature and depends on the environmental, social and economic conditions by which the immaterial and material components of culture develop in time and space in a changing society. We adopt Hannah Arendt's idea of the public realm and collective memory,[7] which, though not explicitly framing cultural heritage as commons, nevertheless explores public and shared spaces and collective memory in which people come together to share and remember their collective past; it thus significantly influences the conceptualisation of cultural heritage as a common good.

The concept of commons, as elaborated by David Bollier,[8] refers to the shared resources and spaces that are managed collectively by communities rather than owned privately or controlled by the state. Thus, commons are vital for fostering collaboration, resilience, innovation and sustainability in the social, cultural and digital realms, and natural, cultural and digital commons should be recognised and protected as vital assets that support community wellbeing and democratic participation. Such commons are not just resources but also social practices that enable shared stewardship, collective governance and participatory management, contrasting with commodification and privatisation. [9]

The two theoretical frameworks of cultural heritage and commons can be very useful when considering spaces designated by UNESCO as World Heritage Sites. These places are of outstanding value to humanity and have been identified, protected and conserved by institutions and governments to be conveyed to future generations to appreciate and enjoy them.[10] Following Arendt and Bollier, the concept of commons supersedes the idea of control by a government and calls for a wider, universal concept to be adopted that considers cultural heritage to be an intertwining of both material and immaterial heritage that can support a balanced sense of living.

Considering this general framework, we adopt here an interdisciplinary approach, in which sociological and geographical perspectives are put in dialogue with each other by integrating the theoretical framework offered by the social sciences of space.[11] This is useful for analysing community involvement in the re-appropriation of the sense of cultural heritage as a dynamic resource for local development, following principles of equality and accessibility through forms of co-design and co-planning. In this sense, it is important to promote an integrated approach to heritage that focuses on the interdependence of both natural and cultural components, intertwined in a common understanding that is useful for promoting social and spatial justice.[12]

Focusing on Unesco cultural heritage in different parts of the world, we can see that it often falls victim to different kinds of socio-territorial pathologies in both its material and immaterial aspects. Material cultural heritage – buildings and architecture – can face pressures related to economic development, which, if not properly managed for the wellbeing of local communities, can lead to the strains of spatial injustice overwhelming the capacities of the place, such as happens with overtourism.[13] In the case of immaterial cultural heritage, pathologies can lead to the adoption of external knowledge and competences that are mainly driven by forms of economic exploitation or to the creation of unbalanced processes of local development, such as a lack of recognition by local communities, as in the case of local knowledge exploited for tourism. In both cases, the negative effects on cultural heritage are created by unbalanced and non-community-driven forms of tourism. These are increasingly significant, especially because contemporary international tourism flows follow the same dynamics of the impacts of the Anthropocene, creating socio-territorial pathologies – like overtourism – which occur when anthropic pressures impact physical sites and urban spaces, including the loss of green spaces, damage to local ecosystems and exploitation of the local commons.[14]

In this complex situation, we need to consider new and creative ways to govern the process of recognising and enhancing cultural heritage, focusing on the positionality of researchers and their political and cultural roles, especially as members of public universities. We suggest adopting a

critical framework in which researchers – together with public and private institutions – listen to and receive feedback from civil society to foster empowerment towards the self-reappropriation of new and creative ways to strengthen the environmental, social and economic value of cultural heritage from a sustainable perspective.

THE ENLARGED TRIPLE HELIX MODEL OF CULTURAL HERITAGE AND TOURISM

Our approach considers that the role of universities in promoting multi-stakeholder governance in their own territories and as mediators between local governments and other stakeholders has been underestimated. We suggest the adoption of an enlarged triple helix model, which has been studied for some years by the Imago Mundi Lab at the University of Bergamo, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic.[15]

The main theoretical reference for this approach positions the university within a relational system in which it cooperates with private entities, civil society representatives and public institutions, such as local governments, regarding the physical condition within its own area to achieve its three missions – didactics, research and public engagement – and to promote the co-construction of territorial regeneration processes.[16] The role of universities is thus clear: to promote adequate, flexible and interdisciplinary approaches; to be a territorial mediator alongside local governments; to activate a dialogue between private and public stakeholders; and to create a new territorial governance model (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. The triple helix model
Source: our revision of Carayannis, Barth & Campbell, 2012

In our case, we particularly focus on a socio-territorial approach that is strongly connected to an analysis of the historical–geographical features of the area in which we operate, which is itself in a network with other territories on different scales. This network serves as a primary base to promote forms of co-planning towards the regeneration of cultural heritage from the perspective of an integrated and scattered slow tourism approach, consistent with the expectations and needs of local communities.[17]

CASE STUDY: BERGAMO'S UNESCO TANGIBLE AND INTANGIBLE HERITAGE FOR COMMUNITY-BASED DEVELOPMENT

Here, we present the case of the province of Bergamo and the challenges of its UNESCO material and immaterial cultural heritage, which is located in the territorial ecosystem within which the University of Bergamo works. We seek to show that the University of Bergamo, alongside public and private

institutions and local communities, can activate virtuous governance processes – through research, educational programmes and public engagement – to address environmental and social challenges that threaten development.

The province has around a million inhabitants living in and around the city of Bergamo, which is in the Lombardy Region of northern Italy – one of the most economically productive regions in Europe, a gateway to the megalopolis of Milan, close to Italy's third airport and located between the Alpine region and the Padana plain. The entire Bergamo area also boasts a constellation of other outstanding resources, with cultural heritage sites and landscapes of national interest recognised by UNESCO. In 2017, the oldest part of the city of Bergamo was awarded UNESCO recognition for its defensive architecture, described as 'Venetian Defensive Works between the 16th and 17th Centuries. Stato de Terra − Stato de Mar'. These defensive works are also found in other cities in Italy, such as Peschiera del Garda and Palmanova, and in Šibenik and Zadar in Croatia and Kotor in Montenegro.

Another UNESCO site located outside the city is the village of Crespi d'Adda, which is one of the best-preserved workers' villages in southern Europe and was recognised in 1995. Bergamo also has a third UNESCO recognition – this time linked to both tangible and intangible heritage – as a Creative City of Gastronomy. It is the only Italian and European province with nine PDO (protected designation of origin) cheeses, demonstrating the excellence and variety of its many shapes, maturities and types of cheese. It also received the 2021 European Landscape Award, which was given by the Council of Europe to Astino, a biodiverse valley and landscape of extreme environmental value in the heart of the city of Bergamo.

Sixteenth-century Venetian fortifications: between heritage accessibility and global challenges

The fortified city of Città Alta is part of the extensive Venetian Defence System that stretches 1,000 km across Italy, Croatia and Montenegro. Its material heritage consists of six kilometres of walls with four monumental gates, which have shaped the urban landscape of Bergamo. Built in 1561 by the Republic of Venice as an innovative response to warfare in the age of gunpowder, it is an example of the advanced military architecture of its time. The site has also been the subject of a series of activities in recent years that have seen the direct involvement of the university.

Over the past year, the University of Bergamo has been among the institutions developing and implementing the UNESCO site management plan, together with the Municipality of Bergamo and other public and private institutions in the area. The university has also been commissioned by the Municipality of Bergamo to conduct a participatory revision of the detailed plan for the Upper Town and Borgo Canale – an important process involving the area's civil society and the various city users (students, commuters, tourists). The area has multiple functions – in addition to residential – which are redefining its development model and driving its dynamism; these include several university campuses and a system of hotels, shops and restaurants that attract visitors and tourists from Italy and abroad. We might therefore ask, 'Who is the UNESCO-recognised heritage for – people from the city or province of Bergamo, the university that hosts both local and distant teachers and students or international tourists?'.

An initial issue was to understand, according to the enlarged triple helix model, the level of accessibility of this universal asset and the challenges it faces today in balancing its nature as commons. We tested this within the master's course Planning and Management of Tourism Systems and in the Tourism Think Tank class, in which first-year students analysed its accessibility in a challenge-based learning experiment. This approach has been used for several years[18] and is a student-oriented method for collaborative learning that allows students to be the protagonists of their own cultural and educational paths, addressing a challenge presented by local public and private

institutions. These activities, which take place every year, focus on real-world case studies and feature living labs with stakeholders, to help develop hard and soft skills and an understanding of critical issues and the potential to enhance tangible and intangible heritage. They also consider the governance needed to implement strategic plans to ensure the accessibility of both tangible and intangible heritage, and they incorporate labs, project work, field research and visits to observe the places and their social dynamics.

The analysis we conducted with our multinational student group – in collaboration with public and private stakeholders – highlighted that this area, recognised as a universal common by UNESCO, in reality it cannot be considered commons until it is accessible to all. For instance, people with reduced mobility can access two gates thanks to ramps, but the other two are not accessible because of the morphology of the pavement, the lack of light or handrails and the presence of large cracks in the narrow and uneven stone roads. The analysis – taking a design-for-all approach – also highlighted other issues with the broader accessibility of the site, such as limited tactile paths, audio guides without subtitles or an Italian Sign Language option, the lack of braille on public signs and the presence of architectural barriers.

A second issue identified is that of an overlapping of needs coming from different categories of inhabitants. Città Alta is inhabited by around 1,800 residents and is one of the campuses of the University of Bergamo – hosting about 10,000 teaching and administrative staff and students in different historical buildings across the ancient city, and thanks to the international airport national and international tourist flows overlap with day visitors wishing to access the UNESCO site. We can thus see how the UNESCO site is at a convergence of different needs, spatial-temporal uses and challenges from different types of people.

CONCLUSION

Considering the importance of the recommendations of the Faro Convention on Cultural Heritage and after analysing the main challenges related to an example of a UNESCO site in Italy, we strongly believe that interdisciplinary university research is needed to apply the enlarged triple helix model to other case studies around the world. A connection between education, research and public engagement can have a strong impact on society, especially if young local and international students can meet different target groups in the territorial contexts around which they study to collect information and to observe those groups' needs. They would thus not be perceived as external or invading social actors but as allies of the residents, creating a common cause that can sustainably serve the place and future generations.

In recent months, the University of Bergamo has entered a new phase, actively participating in meetings, seminars and conferences organised by local associations of citizens, in which academics offer their critical analysis of the data and dynamics of the city. The university has also recently signed an agreement with the Municipality of Bergamo to create a Manifesto for Bergamo University City. We believe that this form of strong public engagement can give academics, students and staff an active role in co-planning – with other institutions and the community – the protection of cultural heritage and the landscape considered as commons.

NOTES

[1] This article is a result of a dual authorship, and we attribute the content both to Federica Burini and to Marta Pantalone in equal parts.
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SCAR OR SCHOOL?: A NIGERIAN PERSPECTIVE ON PRESERVATION OF BRITISH COLONIAL-ERA BUNGALOWS

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INTRODUCTION

In Nigeria, British colonial-era bungalows occupy a contentious place in debates about architectural heritage and preservation. In Lagos, for example, these structures, scattered across areas like Ikeja and Ikoyi, are often viewed either as scars of colonial dominance or as relics to be preserved for their architectural value and historical significance. While many have been allowed to decay—or are actively demolished to make way for infrastructural modernization—others persist, quietly transformed by generations of postcolonial occupation and adaptation. What these transformations reveal is something deeper than aesthetic preference or historical apathy: they expose the layered and hybrid nature of identity in postcolonial Nigeria, manifesting materially in the very walls, verandahs, and pitched roofs of the colonial bungalow.

This paper proposes that colonial bungalows in Nigeria should not be viewed as inert relics nor as purely colonial impositions, but rather as *hybrid architectural forms* that carry layered meanings, shaped by both their imperial origins and their postcolonial transformations. In doing so, it challenges the binary interpretation of these structures as either scars of oppression or sanctified historical sites. Instead, the bungalow is repositioned as a dynamic object, both a residue of colonial history and a canvas for postcolonial adaptation and vernacular expression.

To understand this hybridity, it is important to trace the bungalow's transregional journey. Although these buildings are often described as products of British colonialism, their origins are more complex. Anthony D. King has shown that the colonial bungalow itself emerged from a process of transcultural adaptation. Originally derived from the Bengali "*bangla*," a modest, single-story rural dwelling, British administrators in India adapted its form to their own needs, incorporating Western materials and construction techniques while retaining the spatial and climatic logic of the vernacular structure.[1] The resulting architectural typology—characterized by wide verandahs, hipped roofs, and raised plinths—was then exported across the British Empire as a model suited to tropical colonies.

This architectural transfer was not arbitrary. The climatic similarities between South Asia and Nigeria's humid regions made the bungalow ideal for replication. Its open plan and shaded spaces provided respite from heat, while elevation offered protection from floods and pests. Thus, from the outset, the bungalow was never a purely "British" form—it was already hybridized, the product of colonial necessity and vernacular adaptation.[2] When transplanted to Nigeria, it entered yet another

layer of hybridization, reshaped not only by environmental conditions but also by local labor practices, indigenous materials, and the cultural norms of its inhabitants.

This paper explores the afterlives of these bungalows in postcolonial Nigeria through the lens of hybridity, both architectural and cultural. Drawing on architectural theory, postcolonial studies, and historical policy analysis, it investigates how these buildings have been reinterpreted and repurposed in ways that reflect broader shifts in Nigerian national identity. This theoretical framework emerges from the author's architectural training and ongoing doctoral research, providing conceptual groundwork for empirical investigation that will follow. By reading these structures as living artifacts, this study proposes that they offer not only a material history of empire but also a record of how postcolonial societies reimagine and reclaim space.

COLONIAL BUNGALOWS AS HYBRID ARCHITECTURE

The colonial bungalow in Nigeria is often seen as a spatial artifact of empire—imposed, standardized, and foreign. Yet this interpretation flattens the complex genealogies and transformations the bungalow underwent before, during, and after its arrival in Nigeria. In fact, the bungalow is a *transcultural architectural form*, a product of climate-based necessity, labour adaptation, material improvisation, and cultural negotiation. It is this *hybridity*, rather than its colonial origin alone, that best defines the bungalow's architectural and cultural role in the Nigerian landscape.

Anthony D. King notes that the bungalow was not a British export in the strict sense, but a vernacular appropriation from the Indian subcontinent.[3] Originating from the Bengali *bangla*, a low, single-story rural house, the form was adapted by British colonial administrators to suit both imperial administrative needs and tropical conditions.[4] These adaptations—wide verandahs, raised plinths, overhanging eaves, and a preference for spatial separation—became the model for the "*colonial bungalow*," a typology that was subsequently replicated throughout the British Empire.

In Nigeria, the bungalow form was introduced and established during the early to mid-20th century, taking root especially in urban centers such as in Lagos. But its replication was never exact. While the tropical climate provided continuity with South Asia—encouraging the use of similar shading and ventilation strategies—local realities significantly influenced design, material use, and construction technique. Nigerian artisans often substituted indigenous materials in place of imported European materials.[5] Examples of these include laterite blocks for imported brick, palm fronds for corrugated iron in early adaptations, and local hardwoods for imported timber. Labor-intensive construction practices, including traditional joinery techniques and indigenous knowledge of tropical building methods, meant that local techniques and aesthetics fundamentally shaped the final product, creating structures with colonial blueprints but Nigerian craftsmanship.

This hybrid evolution of the bungalow aligns closely with Homi K. Bhabha's concept of *the Third Space.* In postcolonial theory, Bhabha describes *the Third Space* as a site where cultural meanings are negotiated, not synthesized, and where fixed binaries between colonizer and colonized dissolve into complex layers of re-signification.[6] Nagendra B. Bhandari explains that the third space "undermines the hegemonic colonial power's sole authority on the meaning" by acknowledging "the influence of other marginal cultures and languages in the process of producing a meaning. [7] In architectural terms, the Nigerian colonial bungalow represents this process in built form: a spatial terrain where colonial design principles were reworked, adapted, and often subverted through lived, localized experience.

These hybrid features are evident not only in materials but also in spatial use. While British Colonial Bungalows often conformed to rigid compartmentalized interiors reflecting nuclear family models and hierarchical servant-resident divisions, Nigerian households reconfigured these spaces to reflect communal living, extended family systems, and informal economies of use. Front verandahs were converted into communal lounges or storefronts; ancillary buildings were added for cooking and

washing; and interiors were made more porous through the removal of colonial-era partitions, allowing flexible use across generations. These modifications demonstrate what might be termed 'vernacular spatial agency' –the quiet reconfiguration of inherited forms to serve local social patterns.

Ola Uduku's analysis of "tropical modernist" architecture in West Africa reinforces that architectural forms in colonial periods were embedded in ideological and climatic responses.[8] Uduku argues that West African designs reflected both modernist ambitions and environmental pragmatism, producing localized imperial spatial ideology. The colonial bungalow's deployment in Nigeria similarly reflected this hybrid of strategic utility, climatic logic, and cultural resistance.

Through insights from Nnamdi Elleh's foundational work on African architecture, the British Colonial Bungalow can be situated within a broader continental context. Elleh stresses that African architecture has always been characterized by layered hybridity—a dynamic interplay of, for example, indigenous, Islamic, and Western influences.[9] Rather than drawing hard boundaries between tradition and modernity, Elleh emphasizes how African architectural expression incorporates and transforms multiple spatial and historical inputs. The British colonial bungalow, when interpreted through this lens, becomes not just a foreign residue but a living structure, continuously shaped by the people who inhabit, modify, and reinterpret it.

Thus, to understand the British Colonial Bungalow in Nigeria is to reject simplistic binaries of foreign versus local, modern versus traditional, colonizer versus colonized. It is instead to recognize a deeply layered structure—a hybridized space where power, climate, culture, and agency converge. This hybridity complicates its meaning, opens it to reinterpretation, and lays the groundwork for the arguments that follow in this paper.

POST-INDEPENDENCE ADAPTATION: USE, REUSE, AND REINTERPRETATION

In the wake of independence, British colonial bungalows in Nigeria entered a new chapter in their architectural and cultural life. No longer solely markers of colonial authority, they became integrated into the nation's evolving postcolonial realities—repurposed, modified, or, in many cases, demolished. Rather than being uniformly preserved or discarded, these buildings followed divergent trajectories, shaped by national planning agendas, local needs, and market pressures.

Initially, post-independence, these buildings were often retained for use by federal and regional governments. In Lagos, they served as government quarters, educational institutions, or medical facilities. Over time, some were transferred to private ownership or reallocated for communal use. In residential settings, these buildings were adapted to house families, both nuclear and extended, small businesses, or tenants, leading to significant spatial and functional reconfigurations.

These changes reflected not just economic need, but a deeper form of vernacular agency. Residents added rooms, enclosed verandahs, expanded kitchens to the exterior, and introduced new entry points to accommodate cultural practices and household rhythms. Reading these structures through both architectural and cultural lenses reveals how spatial modifications encode social transformations—each enclosed verandah or subdivided room representing not just pragmatic adaptation but acts of spatial reclamation. Kim Dovey describes such kinds of processes as examples of "everyday urbanism"—spatial practices that subtly resist top-down planning by transforming inherited forms from below.[10] The Nigerian case aligns with this view: through localized and often informal modifications, British colonial bungalows were absorbed into the social logic of Nigerian domestic life, no longer tied exclusively to their colonial origins.

However, alongside these acts of appropriation and transformation, many of these buildings have been systematically demolished, replaced by high-rise apartment blocks, office buildings, gated compounds, etc. This destruction is driven by real estate speculation and urban land pressures. Within

Lagos, entire clusters of colonial-era homes have disappeared within the last two decades, reflecting absent policy protections for their historical value.

This dynamic of adaptation and destruction exemplifies what Lisa Findley terms *cultural agency* in architecture. In her work on the intersection of politics and space, Findley highlights how buildings carry embedded meanings, but those meanings are not fixed—they can be re-scripted through use, memory, and performance.[11] In the Nigerian context, this means the British colonial bungalow becomes a contested canvas: a space that some reshape and inhabit, and others erase altogether in favor of architectural and economic modernity.

Over time, residents substituted local alternatives, e.g., corrugated zinc for slate roofs, and ceramic tiles for wooden flooring. These substitutions, driven by economy and availability, gradually relocalized the bungalow's aesthetic qualities. What emerged was a layered building: part colonial remnant, part local reinvention.

Asef Bayat's concept of the "quiet encroachment of the ordinary" offers a powerful theoretical frame for this process. Bayat argues that ordinary people, especially in postcolonial cities, exercise political and spatial agency not through confrontation but through incremental, everyday adaptations that slowly reshape the urban fabric.[12] In Nigeria, such quiet transformations have rendered British colonial bungalows into sites of pragmatic hybridity, changed not through policy or protest, but through the rhythms of everyday life. There is also an affective layer to this transformation. In some cases, these buildings evoke nostalgia, particularly among those who associate them with stability, familial memory, or early independence-era governance. Yet this nostalgia does not always translate into conservation. Despite their layered histories, these buildings often remain outside the scope of formal heritage recognition, making them vulnerable to demolition and erasure.

C.O. Osasona, writing on architectural conservation in Nigeria, stresses that without broader grassroots awareness and participatory policy frameworks, preservation efforts risk becoming either elitist or ineffectual.[13] In the case of British colonial bungalows, their hybrid heritage complicates efforts to designate them as formal monuments. Yet their post-independence transformations are themselves a form of cultural memory—a living archive of adaptation, deserving of documentation and recognition even if full preservation is not possible.

The post-independence trajectory of the British colonial bungalow is not one of linear decline or uncritical preservation. It is a story of re-use, reinterpretation, material negotiation, and, increasingly, erasure. This duality reflects the broader tensions of Nigerian modernity, where inherited forms are not only remade but also contested, and where architectural memory often competes with the ambitions of urban transformation.

POLICY, HERITAGE, AND HYBRID NATIONAL IDENTITY

Colonial-era bungalows in Nigeria exist in a delicate policy space, where heritage preservation intersects with issues of identity, memory, and modernization. Choices around their maintenance or demolition reflect how Nigeria negotiates its postcolonial reality through a hybrid and evolving framework. In this context, a sensitive, inclusive policy environment becomes crucial, not only for architectural conservation but also for engaging with the meanings such structures continue to hold.

One of the key tensions in the preservation of colonial bungalows lies in their ambiguous status as both historical artifacts and symbols of a difficult past. Institutions like the National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM) recognize multiple officially protected monuments across Nigeria, yet many colonial-era buildings fall outside formal conservation frameworks, leaving them vulnerable to decay or demolition amid pressures of urban growth and real estate development.[14] This analysis of policy frameworks draws from document analysis and institutional research conducted as part of ongoing doctoral work examining the intersection of heritage policy and postcolonial identity

formation. These omissions do not necessarily reflect hostility, but rather point to the complexity of prioritizing resources and memory within a nation with pressing infrastructural and social needs.

In such a setting, policy learning and institutional reflection become essential tools. What may be perceived externally as indifference or failure may, in fact, reflect deeper structural challenges inherent to postcolonial state-building, including inconsistent funding, policy discontinuities, or the absence of collaborative implementation structures.

Additionally, heritage preservation is not culturally neutral. As Lisa Findley notes, the meanings of buildings evolve, shaped by political context, community memory, and civic interaction. Rather than prescribing rigid preservation frameworks, Findley argues for an architecture of agency, where communities reinterpret space based on cultural relevance and future aspirations. The colonial bungalow, therefore, might serve as a site of negotiation: a place that holds together multiple, and sometimes conflicting, narratives of identity, power, and adaptation.

This resonates with Homi Bhabha's concept of hybridity and *the Third Space*, which he defines as a generative in-between where new cultural meanings are negotiated.[15] Rather than rejecting colonial-era buildings outright or preserving them as static monuments, this space allows for reinterpretation. In Nigeria, this can mean viewing bungalows not as frozen in the past, but as flexible vessels capable of holding new communal functions—schools, community centers, or housing—while still referencing history.

Practices advocated by institutions such as ICCROM support dialogical, people-centered approaches to heritage conservation. The organization emphasizes that heritage should be viewed as a living process shaped by the values, participation, and knowledge of communities. Its *People-Centred Approaches* framework highlights that conservation efforts are most successful when local communities have the agency to define, understand, and take responsibility for their heritage in ways that reflect local realities and aspirations.[16] In the Nigerian context, this suggests that heritage policy might be strengthened by fostering inclusive, community-rooted strategies—whether through means of oral storytelling, collaborative reinterpretation, or adaptive reuse that honors both architectural form and cultural meaning.

Scholars like Osasona (2017) have argued that grassroots engagement is critical to making conservation meaningful.[17] Too often, heritage decisions are made without sufficient community dialogue, leading to erasures that may unintentionally deepen alienation. Incorporating cultural memory and local values into decision-making processes not only ensures legitimacy but can also act as a form of narrative healing in postcolonial societies. It is also important to acknowledge that nationalist sentiments, when framed inclusively, can support, rather than hinder, architectural preservation. National pride in cultural continuity and local agency can coexist with critical reflection on colonial history. In this way, policies might reframe colonial-era buildings not as symbols of subjugation but as hybrid historical witnesses, materializing both the pain and the possibility embedded in Nigeria's postcolonial journey.

CONCLUSION: RE-SEEING THE BUNGALOW

The British colonial bungalow typology in Nigeria emerges not as a static architectural residue but as a dynamic cultural form. From its Bengali origins to imperial transplantation, the bungalow has always been marked by hybridity. In Nigeria, this hybridity deepened through localized construction techniques, evolving spatial uses, and cultural reinterpretations that blurred the boundaries between imposition and inhabitation.

The bungalow's history resists neat categorization. It cannot be reduced to a scar of colonialism, nor enshrined as an unchanging monument. Instead, its continued transformation—through domestic adaptation, partial demolition, material substitution, or informal reuse—positions it as an active agent

in the negotiation of Nigerian identity. In this way, these structures become material expressions of what Homi Bhabha terms *the Third Space*: sites where past and present, global and local, tradition and innovation meet to produce new meanings.

Such reinterpretations complicate the moral and policy binaries that often frame debates around colonial-era architecture. Preservation versus demolition, pride versus shame, memory versus erasure. These oppositions give way, in the bungalow, to more entangled realities. The same structure may carry, for one resident, memories of forced displacement, and for another, associations of family, familiarity, and home. In these contradictions lies the bungalow's power: as a medium not of closure, but of ongoing negotiation.

Moving forward, one might consider how narrative reclamation—the process of reinterpreting inherited forms through local voices, needs, and aspirations—could itself serve as a tool for postcolonial healing. This is not about romanticizing the past, nor about preserving buildings as relics of empire. It is about transforming architectural memory into living meaning, acknowledging trauma without being bound by it, and enabling communities to reimagine space as a site of both continuity and agency.

Such an approach suggests fruitful directions for future research. Regional comparative studies across former British colonies could deepen understanding of how postcolonial states navigate inherited forms. Oral histories might offer insights into how buildings acquire layered meanings. Heritage education reframed around hybridity could re-situate colonial architecture within broader cultural dialogue.

In addition, preservation policy in Nigeria might benefit from frameworks that recognize the bungalow not simply as a colonial artifact, but as a hybrid structure shaped by layered histories and present-day appropriations. Such policies would move beyond material conservation alone, and instead center social relevance, community participation, and adaptive reuse as markers of value. In doing so, they would affirm that heritage is not a fixed inheritance but a space of possibility—open to negotiation, reinterpretation, and care.

NOTES

[1] Anthony D. King, *The Bungalow: The Production of a Global Culture* (London: Routledge, 1984).
[2] King, *The Bungalow*.
[3] King, *The Bungalow*.
[4] King, *The Bungalow*.
[5] Ola Uduku, “Modernist Architecture and ‘the Tropical’ in West Africa: The Tropical Architecture Movement in West Africa, 1948–1970,” *Habitat International* 30, no. 3 (2006): 396–411, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.habitatint.2004.11.001.
[6] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994).
[7] Nagendra B. Bhandari, "Homi K. Bhabha's Third Space Theory and Cultural Identity Today: A Critical Review," Prithvi Academic Journal 5 (2022): 171-181.
[8] Uduku, “Modernist Architecture,” 396–98.
[9] Nnamdi Elleh, *African Architecture: Evolution and Transformation* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1996).
[10] Kim Dovey, *Becoming Places: Urbanism / Architecture / Identity / Power* (London: Routledge, 2010).
[11] Lisa Findley, *Building Change: Architecture, Politics, and Cultural Agency* (London: Routledge, 2005).
[12] Asef Bayat, “From ‘Dangerous Classes’ to ‘Quiet Rebels’: Politics of the Urban Subaltern in the Global South,” *International Sociology* 15, no. 3 (2000): 533–57, https://doi.org/10.1177/026858000015003005.
[13] C.O. Osasona, “Nigerian Architectural Conservation: A Case for Grass-Roots Engagement for Renewal,” *International Journal of Heritage Architecture* 1, no. 4 (2017): 713–729, https://doi.org/10.2495/HA-V1-N4-713-729.
[14] National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM). “Monuments and Sites in Nigeria.” Government of Nigeria. https://ncmm.gov.ng/monuments-and-sites/.
[15] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture.*
[16] ICCROM (International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property). *People-Centred Approaches to the Conservation of Cultural Heritage: Living Heritage*. Rome: ICCROM, 2015. https://www.iccrom.org/sites/default/files/PCA_Annexe-2.pdf.
[17] C.O. Osasona, “Nigerian Architectural Conservation: A Case for Grass-Roots Engagement for Renewal,” *International Journal of Heritage Architecture* 1, no. 4 (2017): 713–729, https://doi.org/10.2495/HA-V1-N4-713-729.

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PARTICIPATORY HERITAGE AS USER-LED AND DIALECTICAL: IN DIALOGUE WITH THE GRADE I LISTED NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY, LONDON

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HERITAGE, HISTORY AND ARCHITECTURE

Heritage is generally understood as anything that has been transmitted from the past or handed down by tradition. This evidence of the past, such as historical sites, buildings, and the unspoilt natural environment are also considered collectively as the inheritance of present-day society. Importantly, heritage is inseparable from history and belongs to everyone. The recording and recounting of history are not linear processes and all views expressed are interpretations of selected research material. This notion of authorship includes the assembly of material fragments to construct narratives that provide different readings and new meanings. Hence the methods of translating historical material must include the representation of different aspects that adopt its own contemporary relevance to ensure that notions of heritage are not static and/or absolute.

A work of architecture is significant to discussions concerning heritage because it serves as a form of memory where historical knowledge is embedded. The commonly assumed position of built forms as enclosures and shelters alter when issues concerning site studies, the processes of conservation in relation to use, and control over the presentation of the subject matter are raised. Site analysis extends beyond the physical limits and includes ephemeral boundaries alluded to in historical and design narratives. The exploration of both tangible and intangible contexts provides a landscape of different readings that contribute to existing knowledge of what a work of architecture means and represents. More importantly, this understanding of architecture changes when interventions occur, especially in relation to authorship and contests the straightforward argument that buildings are conceived, constructed and attributed to an architect and/or a singular source. This overlooks the fact that the working process in architecture is often ambiguous and the meaning of authorship changes at different stages of the project. Hence the idea of a single claim to authorship is questionable. More often than not, conservation practices edit and decide the mode and manner that buildings are presented to put forth particular arguments. Information concerning usage, decay, restoration and conservation further encourage a plethora of alternative readings that are imperative to history. For instance, the materials and construction techniques employed serve as chronological and site indicators that reflect design languages and aesthetics ranging from historical and architectural movements to vernacular approaches. In addition, the site-specific nature of most works of architecture enables the deterioration processes of building materials to document the external landscape, including the climate. The

markings left by people will enable user patterns to be reconstructed while physical alterations are able to provide information regarding changes to function and program.[1]
Here, issues of heritage associated with Historic England are explained through the architecture of the National Portrait Gallery, London. The 1971 Grade I listing is read against key moments including inception in 1890, the 2000 overhaul and 2023 major refurbishments. Notions of authenticity in relation to heritage are evaluated through historical narratives, material changes and the exhibited portraits. The qualities specific to the site, building and contents are not seen as absolutes but juxtaposed to create new readings and interpretations, especially through user contributions that are often overlooked. The participatory aspects of heritage are considered as dialectical user led dialogues that are contemporary, contingent and constantly in flux to ensure relevance now and beyond 2025.

LISTINGS AND THE NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY

Historic England serves as the government's statutory advisor on heritage matters and is a predominant means of assessing heritage and historical value in works of architecture in the United Kingdom.[2] The four main conservation principles adopted pertain to archaeological, historical, intangible and communal characteristics. Archaeological values concern evidence that reveal previous ways of life, historical values regard a building's association with past people and events, intangible values include aesthetic, sensory and intellectual qualities, and communal values define the meaning of a place in the collective memory of its users.[3]
Ewan Christian's Gallery remains an interesting case study because it has mostly operated in the shadows of the neighbouring, perceivably more prestigious National Gallery which was awarded Grade I status a year prior.[4] This peripheral existence from its inception began with the proposal of alternative locations as the current site was initially earmarked for the National Gallery's expansion, and ensuing prerequisite that prioritised the visual qualities of its larger neighbour.[5] The Gallery was opened to the public in 1896 but the current site located to the north of the National Gallery was offered in early May 1889, on condition that the unsightly blank wall belonging to the latter on the eastern elevation would be covered. A portion of the new building would sit on this narrow strip of land between the blank wall and St Martin's Place that the government would pay for. Christian's design enabled this east wing of the Gallery to appear as integral with the National Gallery's short façade, addressing the stipulated requirements through continuing the language of the first three corner windows of the National Gallery at the junction of Trafalgar Square and St Martin's Place. The Grade I status however, is contingent on this east wing that visually alludes to being part of the National Gallery despite spatially belonging to the Gallery. Hence the consequential implication that the architecture of the listed Gallery is of 'international significance' and 'exceptional interest' hinges solely on a pretence and did not reflect the ownership of the spaces.[6]

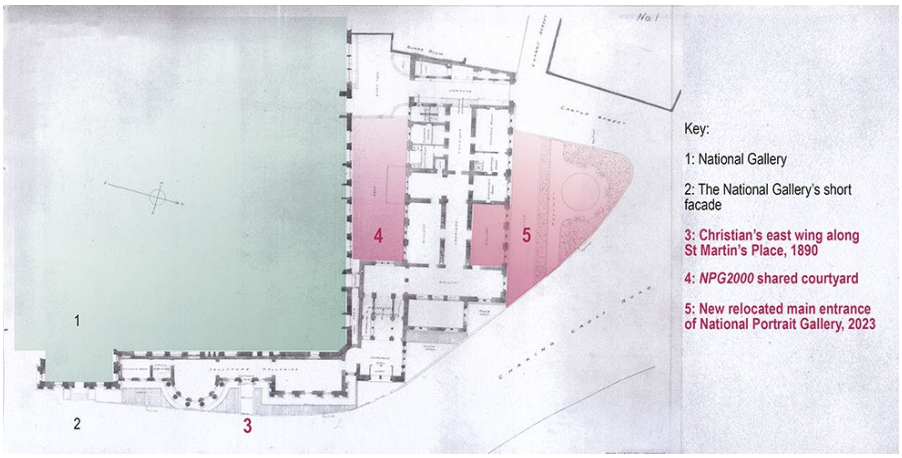
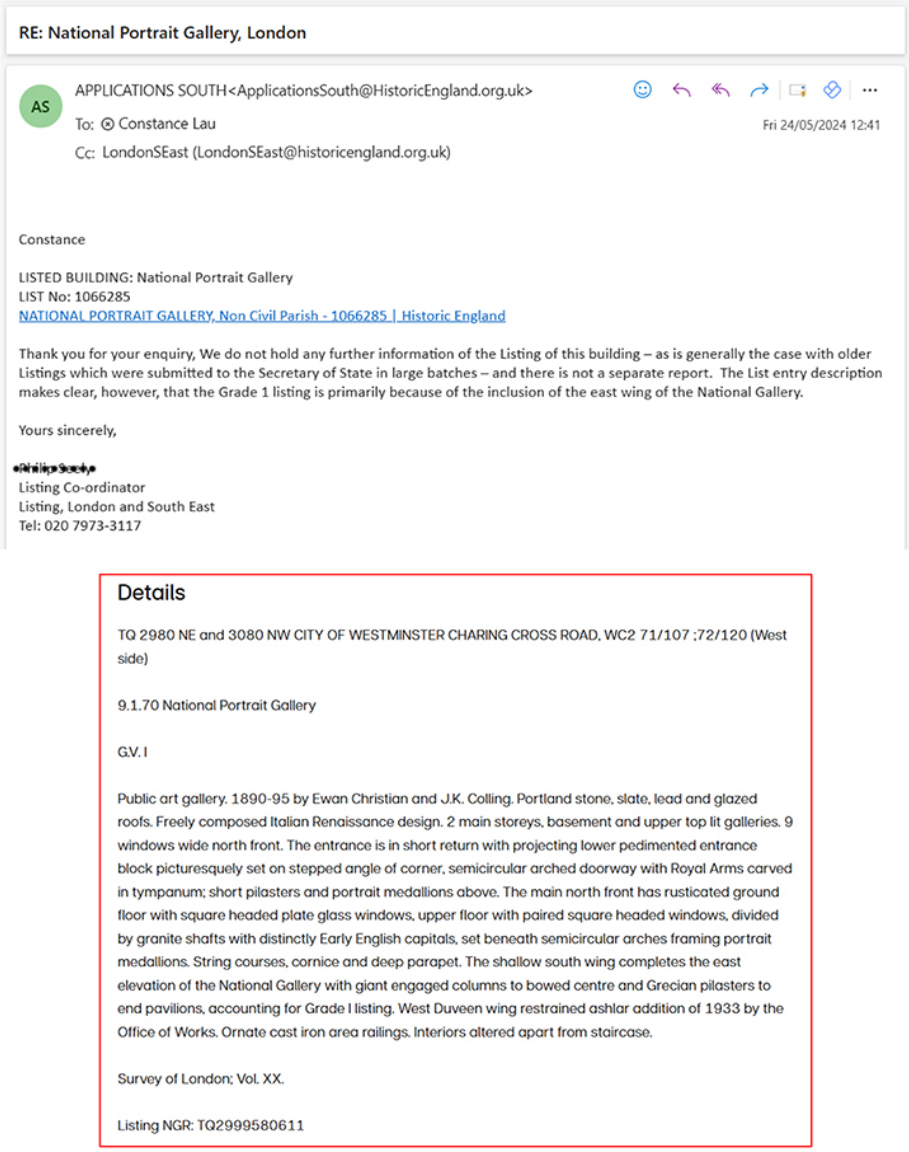


Figure 1. Site plan showing the spatial relationship between the National Portrait Gallery and National Gallery.

Figure 2. This image shows Ewan Christian's east wing of the National Portrait Gallery, London that the Grade I listing was largely attributed to. This wing was designed to blend seamlessly into the National Gallery's short facade along St Martin's Place in order that the two Galleries should appear as a single building. The success of Christian's design also meant that this east wing was commonly assumed to be part of the National Gallery. Hence this facade has remained little altered over the years despite the east wing being given over to the National Gallery during negotiations in 2000 and returned during the 2023 refurbishments.



RE: National Portrait Gallery, London

AS APPLICATIONS SOUTH<ApplicationsSouth@HistoricEngland.org.uk>

To: Constance Lau

Fri 24/05/2024 12:41

Cc: LondonSEast (LondonSEast@historicengland.org.uk)

Constance

LISTED BUILDING: National Portrait Gallery
LIST No: 1066285
NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY, Non Civil Parish - 1066285 | Historic England

Thank you for your enquiry, We do not hold any further information of the Listing of this building – as is generally the case with older Listings which were submitted to the Secretary of State in large batches – and there is not a separate report. The List entry description makes clear, however, that the Grade 1 listing is primarily because of the inclusion of the east wing of the National Gallery.

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]
Listing Co-ordinator
Listing, London and South East
Tel: 020 7973-3117

Details

TQ 2980 NE and 3080 NW CITY OF WESTMINSTER CHARING CROSS ROAD, WC2 71/107 ;72/120 (West side)

9.1.70 National Portrait Gallery

G.V. I

Public art gallery. 1890-95 by Ewan Christian and J.K. Colling. Portland stone, slate, lead and glazed roofs. Freely composed Italian Renaissance design. 2 main storeys, basement and upper top lit galleries. 9 windows wide north front. The entrance is in short return with projecting lower pedimented entrance block picturesquely set on stepped angle of corner, semicircular arched doorway with Royal Arms carved in tympanum; short pilasters and portrait medallions above. The main north front has rusticated ground floor with square headed plate glass windows, upper floor with paired square headed windows, divided by granite shafts with distinctly Early English capitals, set beneath semicircular arches framing portrait medallions. String courses, cornice and deep parapet. The shallow south wing completes the east elevation of the National Gallery with giant engaged columns to bowed centre and Grecian pilasters to end pavilions, accounting for Grade I listing. West Duveen wing restrained ashlar addition of 1933 by the Office of Works. Ornate cast iron area railings. Interiors altered apart from staircase.

Survey of London; Vol. XX.

Listing NGR: TQ2999580611

Figure 3. The correspondence from Historic England dated 24 June, 2024 regarding the lack of special reasons for the Gallery's listed status is consistent with the website entry. The vague approach raises questions about the guidelines the NPG 2000 and recent 2023 refurbishments adhered to.

A century later, lengthy negotiations with the National Gallery resulted in another design solution that also concerned spatial negotiations. This time to accommodate the 'right of light' easement in the site of the shared courtyard between both Galleries. The ensuing *NPG 2000* project was essentially a triple volume block that was inserted into this shared space in exchange for the aforementioned east wing. The proposal necessitated the bricking up of the original courtyard windows for protection due to conservation and planning laws. Consequently, this material feature of history that is completely hidden from the views of current visitors references archaeological values and the use of knowledge inferred from interpreting material finds. Architecture is part of this material culture and the concealed windows can be appropriated to assume some form of contemporary presence, simultaneously positioning the courtyard as a quantifiable space and a conduit to the past.

Figure 4. This image is titled 'High View, Construction of the Floor Slab for the Lecture Theatre' and forms part of a series of photographs that recorded the transformation of the courtyard during the construction process of the NPG 2000 project. The picture was taken by John Goto in January 2000.

Figure 5. The NPG 2000 triple volume entrance concourse by Dixon Jones Architects.

This occurrence of different interpretations also extends to the new glass and steel rooftop restaurant. This was initially refused planning permission on the grounds that its modern look when viewed from the top of a double-decker bus travelling north up Whitehall, conflicted with the more traditional surrounding buildings. A drawing depicting the National Gallery and the various roofs within its vicinity as an Italian hillside village and the new restaurant sitting comfortably as a terraced loggia' was subsequently produced to show the numerous existing visually contrasting elements.[7] In essence, the restaurant would simply become a part of this context which includes the dome of the National Gallery and Nelson's Column shown spread across an imaginary hill resembling a Tuscan landscape. This alternative allegorical reading pacified the planners and demonstrated that there are different ways to evaluate and interpret a situation.

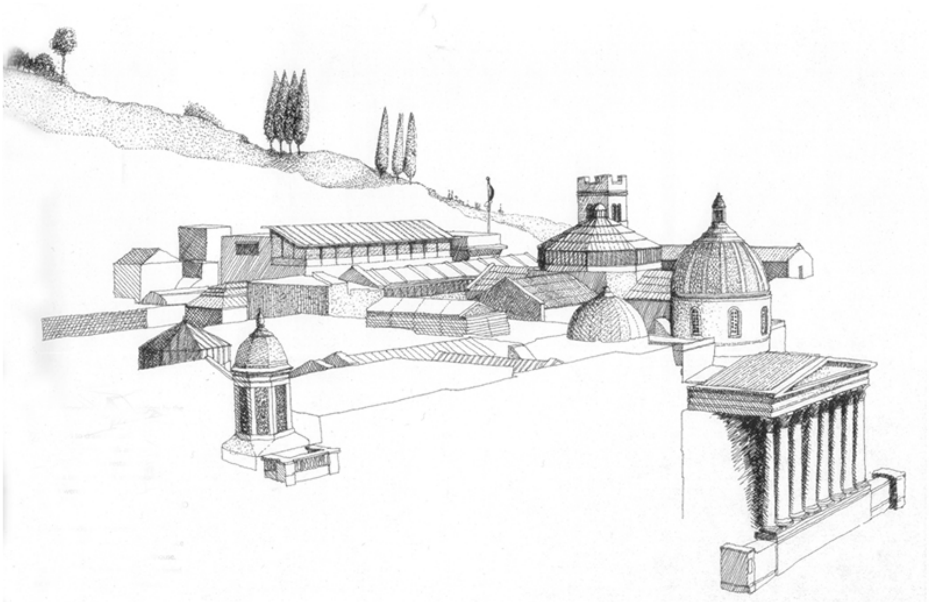


Figure 6. Illustration showing an interpretation of the view from the rooftop restaurant. This drawing by David Naessens presents the roofscape of Trafalgar Square as an imagined Tuscan landscape with the Gallery's rooftop restaurant located within.

The myth that listings do not prevent major changes is also substantiated by the most extensive upgrade to date in 2023 by Jamie Forbet Architects.[8] Most notably, three windows in the north façade were removed and converted to oversized doors in the relocation of Christian's original main entrance. While this appears to repudiate the Grade I conditions which maintain that all modifications require the use of original materials and techniques to maintain authenticity, permission may have been granted as the controversial east wing is once again part of the Gallery. This was reopened to the public as the new Weston wing and importantly, its appearance remains intact.[9]

Figure 7. The 2023 new entrance on the north façade that was previously windows by Jamie Forbet Architects. This is adjacent to Christian's original entrance block on the left at the junction of St Martins Place and Orange Street.

In this instance, despite the ambiguity concerning the means and extent of conservation policies, architecture is still predominantly presented as a fixed and static entity and listing decisions are neither time contingent nor consider contextual changes. Regardless, responses to the vastly different circumstances pertaining to each variation will certainly provide more inclusive user experiences. The integration of emergent dissemination techniques to reveal concealed and altered features includes the initial deceit of the east wing, the towering entrance concourse without elevations and external views and, the conversion of windows to the recent relocated entrance.[10] Fundamentally, as a partially Government funded public building the Gallery necessitates conversations concerning authority and use through innovative manners of communication that are manifested in new design practices.[11]

HISTORIOGRAPHY, MONTAGE AND DIALECTICS

Heritage concerning the Gallery is read within a spatio-temporal plethora of different physical and experiential configurations that are conceptual, relational, and the consequences of social, economical, cultural and political forces over its lifespan. The ensuing gaps between approaches to form, function and site have created opportunities for differences of opinions concerning meaning and use to emerge. Hence the notion of dialectics, tangible and intangible constructs of heritage are further explored through techniques of montage, and Walter Benjamin's discourse on historiography. However, the listing criteria disregards essential aspects like the urban context and building contents. The meaning of heritage in this instance must be measured against fundamental founding principles that includes the significance of the exhibited portraits.[12] This also questions whether the authenticity of the relationship between the architecture and portraits is altered by material changes. Hence, the introduction of specific theoretical constructs enables a non-hierarchical framework that accommodates issues of site, architecture, contents and users to facilitate new definitions of heritage.

Walter Benjamin's *The Arcades Project* (1999) is referenced in discussions concerning architectural dialectics and notions of plurality where new meanings are produced through juxtaposition and adjacency. To Benjamin, history is understood from the vantage point of the user and historical transformation is not progressive. Hence montage is approached as a 'philosophy of history' that focuses on the 'discontinuities separating past and present'.[13] This position was articulated through his representation and critique of nineteenth-century Parisian bourgeois society through life beneath the arcades where he deemed the most interesting and relevant depictions of the century's preoccupations occurred.[14] In this microcosm where conceptual and material boundaries dematerialise and spaces are absorbed by the city, the notion of dialectics is employed to simultaneously show the opposing 'regressive elements' and 'utopian potentials' of nineteenth-century Parisian culture.[15] Most importantly, a working system that respected the differences of the events juxtaposed within the spaces was invented to effectively capture the basic essence and characteristics of these arcades. Benjamin's interpretation was reflected in his complete disregard for research material that has been 'accredited as precious and valuable', preferring the 'dispersed and frequently arcane sources' in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. The notion of multiple interpretations is demonstrated through his technique of researching, constructing and organising the contents of the work, allowing perceived 'waste material to enter into significant connections'.[16] The principles of montage are evident in the arrangement of the six chapters of the book, designed to operate independently and enable 'the work to be continuously remade anew' by each reader.[17] The permutations ensuing from user participation and fragments of information enable new interpretations that reveal original perspectives on history. Hence seamless readings of heritage include the context of the city, this specific nineteenth-century Parisian architectural typology and the embedded activities that reflect the social and cultural milieu of its time.

Similarly, extending the narratives of the Gallery to accommodate the gaps in the different approaches to spatial alterations require a system that is non-hierarchical and dependent on innovative dissemination methods to communicate progressive notions of heritage that are understood, experienced and appreciated through occupancy. Unlike the rigid and fixed implications associated with listings, the acknowledgement of inconsistencies encourages the architectural dialogue to remain unfinished and 'available for endless revisions and appropriations' by the creative user.[18] A building is read and used differently by different people and the permanence and specificity of a particular site enables the unique qualities to be induced, recognised and applied. The spatial and intellectual qualities of montage allow heritage to be appreciated in non-linear manners and these processes can be used to highlight alternative meanings. This includes the site-specific experiential qualities embedded in a work of architecture and crucially, questions why the listing process disregards the important relationship between the Gallery and the portraits. The stance appears to prioritise certain visual aspects that are automatically associated with assumed value and privilege, with little consideration for tactile appropriation, occupancy, and especially the users' perspectives. Hence montage simultaneously enables the connections and gaps between past and present, tangible and intangible, subjective and objective to be explored in multiple ways that value all subjective and objective viewpoints. Accepting the systemic gaps and ambiguity as positive attributes encourages shared authorship and the users to become part of ongoing heritage discussions. Hence more flexible approaches to the listing system to accommodate changes and facilitate more responsive interpretations will promote permeable and inclusive definitions of heritage.

PARTICIPATORY HERITAGE: POLYPHONY AND HERITAGE BEYOND 2025

As buildings are made and used by many people, the consequence that heritage adopts different meanings is also inevitable. Hence historical material is not regarded as passive sources of information but actively prescribed within current architectural sites and reworked. Events that would otherwise be consigned to memory or totally forgotten are retold, given new meanings to ensure that historicism is not repeated. Importantly, this demonstrates that participatory actions are integral to the meaning of heritage.

This awareness of the creativity of the user and explorations of multiple contributions in author-audience relationships include writings by Mikhail Bakhtin. In *The Dialogic Imagination* (1981), Bakhtin describes the polyphonic novel as having a multi-character approach where active dialogue and multiple perspectives enables meaning to first be derived from the interactions amongst the characters, and consequently between the author, the work and the reader. This idea was developed in relation to Fyodor Dostoevsky's writings and the concept of polyphony is borrowed from music and literally means multiple voices. A key feature sees 'the narrator renouncing the right to the last word and granting full and equal authority to the word of the characters'.[19] The integration of user-led participation addresses the notion of 'polyphony', which means 'many voices', and in design practice refers 'to a relational activity between different actions'.[20] This is similar to notions of polyvocality where the inclusion of many and different 'voices' are used to shift and sustain narrative change. Similarly, in Roland Barthes' text 'The Death of the Author' (1967) shifts that occur in the meaning of the text during the process of reading are acknowledged. While Barthes does not condone the total erasure of authorship, this spontaneous transformation of the text's meaning through the active engagement of the reader should take precedence over the author's intentions and provenance. This facilitates the creation of new, multiple and individual readings where meanings are solely reliant on the users' interpretations and required to complete the work.

While listings validate material history, the role of people appears to have been overlooked even though buildings are evidence of the cultures and communities that made them over time. Hence the

validity of heritage is seriously questioned in the absence of people. Here, participation includes the conservation authorities who have influenced key decisions, the effect this has on curation and consequently, the visitors experience. Changes and intersections where the architecture, portraits, and theoretical discussions coincide create additional experiences that now include technological advances. The employment of augmented reality in phygital methods where the past, present and future are integrated through different configurations of existing material and non-existent, speculative digital experiences, remains inevitable. This consideration of dialectics will transform existing visual and tactile experiences to advance individual interpretations and acknowledge the important contributions of people.

Discussions of what actually constitute heritage in relation to the Gallery have revealed its fractured history and new working practices that integrate alternative perspectives concerning archaeological, historical, intangible and communal values. The inevitable shifts and gaps are exploited through the sharing of expertise to expand the capacity for user intervention to shape the reading of the work. The consideration of architectural provenance includes function through social integration and especially, notions of repeated use that is habitual and accomplished gradually in fragments. These shifts that occur at each iteration enable the continuous creation of individual interpretations each time the building is experienced. Heritage is time and context contingent, attributed to multiple authors and most importantly, foreground user-led and dependent actions. Hence, these ideas of multiplicity enhance polyvocality to bolster experiential dialectics and ascertain that unstructured proto-practices are advantageous to discussions of heritage. A system that encourages ideas of heritage to be questioning and unlimiting allows for history to be understood from the vantage point of the user. This ensures that the qualities of multiplicity and polyvalence through the multifaceted layering of meanings that occur at different moments in history are also conveyed to the users of the Gallery. Conservation practices must strike a balance between a desire to expect things as they are and a willingness to transform.[21] Here, the relevance of heritage and the Gallery beyond 2025 are advanced as creative processes that emphasise transitory, experiential and participatory qualities. This also presents the Gallery as a montage of fragments, establishing its own intellectual position and most importantly, allowing the users to become part of a living heritage.

NOTES

[1] Constance Lau, “Montage and Multiple Interpretations,” in *Dialogical Designs*, ed. Constance Lau (Milton Keynes: Lightning Source, 2016), 289.
[2] English Heritage started in 1984 and was renamed Historic England in 2015, accessed July 11, 2025. https://historicengland.org.uk/. Beginning with a survey of London in 1894, the 1944 and 1947 listed inventory of buildings and monuments currently titled ‘The National Heritage List for England’ also includes battlefields, monuments, parks, gardens and shipwrecks. There are regional teams and a dedicated Heritage Protection Commission to establish principles of selection for major building types, including the post-war period.
[3] Elain Harwood, “Keeping the past in England”, *Journal of Architecture*, 11 Oct., (2010): 681.
[4] The two-storey National Gallery overlooking Trafalgar Square was designed by William Wilkins in 1838, and listed Grade I on 5 February, 1970.
[5] This includes an entry in the Trustees meeting notes from 1968/69, discussing the Gallery’s possible demolition due to a 1964 agreement with the National Gallery. Hence listing status, despite being inconsistent and probably resulted in additional design costs incurred to accommodate the stipulations, did spare the Gallery from further threats.
[6] “What Are Listed Buildings?”, accessed 11 July 2025. https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/what-is-designation/listed-buildings/#grades. It is also of interest to note that only 2.5% of all listed buildings are awarded Grade I status.
[7] Ian Latham and Mark Swenarton, *Dixon Jones: Buildings and Projects 1959–2002* (Melbourne: Right Angle Publishing, 2002), 133.
[8] Harwood, “Keeping the past in England,“ 681. Additionally ‘listing in England does not bring with it any implication that a building should be opened to the public. No difference is made between listing buildings in public or private ownership’. 682.
[9] The commission was secured in 2018 and the Gallery, closed to the public in 2020 reopened on 22 June 2023. More extensive research is required with regards to the latest alterations that were accomplished with heritage consultants Purcell. As of April 2025, the Gallery’s Heinz Archive and Library has no additional information other than published material.
[10] Constance Lau, “On-site as an interdisciplinary practice,” *Il Quaderno*, #ONSITE, The International Studies Institute (ISI) Florence Architectural Series (2020): 56.
[11] The Gallery is supported by public and private funds. Hence the collection is largely held in trust for society, with an emphasis on public benefit and engagement.
[12] This is documented in the meeting notes of the Trustees, dated June 1969, with a further emphasis that the value of the sitter outweighs the artist.
[13] Margaret Cohen, “Benjamin’s phantasmagoria: The Arcades Project,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Walter Benjamin*, ed. David S. Ferris (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 200–201.
[14] Walter Benjamin, ‘The Flâneur’ in *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, trans. Harry Zohn (London: New Left Books, 1973), 37 and Howard Eiland, “Translators’ Forward,” in *Walter Benjamin, The Arcades Project*, ed, Rolf Tiedeman, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), viiii.
[15] Margaret Cohen, “Benjamin’s phantasmagoria.” 215.
[16] Michael Schwarz, “Rag Picking.” In *Walter Benjamin’s Archive, Images, Texts, Signs*, ed. Ursula Marx, Gudrun Schwarz, Michael Schwarz and Erdmut Wizisla, trans. Esther Leslie (London and New York: Verso, 2007), 252–253.
[17] Jonathan Hill, *Actions of Architecture* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 108.
[18] Jonathan Hill, *Actions of Architecture*, 108.
[19] Simon Dentith, *Bakhtin Thought, An Introductory Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 36–40.
[20] Yeoryia Manolopoulou, *Architectures of Chance* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2013), 124.
[21] Questions as to how Historic England maintain authority over changes and whether listings need to be revised and updated as appropriate remain. An example is Singapore’s Architectural Heritage Awards (AHA), established in 1995 by the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) to ‘recognise well restored monuments and conserved buildings, and the people behind them’. Besides honouring best practices in technical restoration, AHA also features projects that ‘sustain and strengthen the intangible values of heritage buildings for the community’. This is followed by the Architectural Heritage Legacy Award, open to past AHA winners with ‘at least 10 years of post-award exemplary management where the longevity of the heritage building(s), both physically and socially, is sustained for present and future generations. This includes proper maintenance of the building fabric and

creation of value for the wider community through continual investment, such as educational efforts, programming, and engagements'. "Architectural Heritage Awards", accessed 11 July 2025. https://www.ura.gov.sg/Corporate/Get-Involved/Conserve-Built-Heritage/Architectural-Heritage-Awards

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THE MUTUALITY OF HERITAGE SITES AND INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS: A CASE STUDY OF LAHORE CITY

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INTRODUCTION

Lahore is one of the oldest cities in the subcontinent, facing an unprecedented sprawl of informal settlements. Although urbanisation is the key reason informal settlements continue to grow at an alarming rate, the origin of this phenomenon is historic. These settlements were born out of the womb of partition in 1947, where many refugees were accommodated into the urban fabric of Lahore by setting various refugee camps inside and outside the periphery of the city.[1] Also, many historic buildings left behind by refugees migrating towards the west were inhabited legally or illegally by refugees from the west. Since no immediate or long-term policies were developed to address the issues, the deterioration and densification of heritage sites have resulted.

According to Awan[2] *(See Fig. 1 for details),* approximately. 283 important historical buildings are currently located in Lahore. Of these, 56 are listed, and the remaining are non-listed historical buildings. The sheer number of these buildings signifies the cultural value of the city's fabric and the intricacies woven through its built.

Figure 1. Listed and Non-Listed Buildings in Lahore

Preserving heritage is complicated in such a situation, where a city like Lahore has undergone rapid transformation due to economic, cultural, and political dynamics over time. The paper explores the present as a key to constructing the past and future. The objectives of the research are thus as follows:

- To examine and map the type of informal settlements existing around the selected heritage sites
- To identify and analyse the possible extent of the impact of informal settlements on the heritage sites.
- To study and highlight the correlation and possible factors which have facilitated the growth of such informal settlements around the urban heritage of Lahore.
- To understand the existing link between urban heritage and the informal settlements of Lahore city.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The concept of urban heritage has two meanings. First, urban heritage can refer to a range of heritage elements in urban areas, including archaeological vestiges, historical buildings, vernacular architecture, historical gardens, social practices, rituals, and festive events, among others. Second, urban heritage can refer to the city as heritage, a special cultural property mainly associated with neighbourhoods, urban centres, and historic cities. Heritage is relatively new, first coined in 1931;[3] however, the idea of historical objects like the cabinet of curiosities,[4] forts, etc, has been present longer. The treatment of historic sites, especially in the case of Lahore, has been varied. With its heritage deeply embedded in the fabric, it has often been impossible to save or preserve it due to various political, cultural, and economic scenarios. The heritage of Lahore, in this regard, can be comprehended as creative destruction, where the varied management of historical buildings has been dependent on the specific contextual issues and prevailing circumstances of housing need. The diagram (See Fig. 2) illustrates a loop where informal settlements, on a need basis, infiltrate the built heritage. However, the built environment also impacts settlement in terms of materials and envelope, as well as its cultural diversity and historical values. The economic process is coined as "creative destruction",[5] where destruction of built heritage (including informal settlements) may be part of urban renewal or development, and it also entails social and political dimensions.

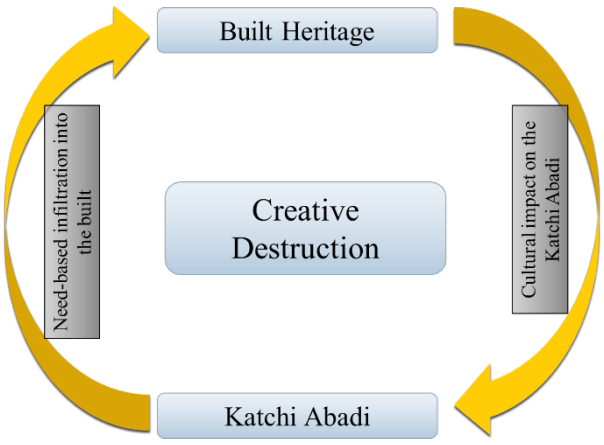

Figure 2: Theoretical Framework

METHODOLOGY

The study broadly relies on empirical methods initiated through documentation and observation of various sites. Upon selection, a detailed mapping and diagramming method was used for analysis and conclusions. The site selection criteria were similar, where a larger pool of heritage sites was identified and then, through a deductive method, categories were identified, leading to typologies as conclusions. The initial survey brought forward three main typologies, explained further with the help of two case studies based on the contextual analysis (See Table 1 for details)

Typologies	Sites Selected for the Study
Edge to Edge	Jahangir Tomb, Shalimar Garden
Extended Infiltration	Gulabi Bagh, Chuburji
Pervasive Infiltration	Mariyam Zamani Mosque, DAV Hostels

Table 1. Sites Selected Based on the Identified Typologies

TYPOLOGY 1: EDGE TO EDGE

Shalimar Garden

Shalimar Garden, commissioned by Mughal Emperor Shah Jehan, was completed in 1962. The garden site, selected outside the walled city of Lahore in an area engulfed by farmland, exhibits geometric patterns in Kashi kari (Mosaic tile) and fresco work. Landscape features, including water channels, foliage, pavilions, and monuments, have adorned the garden's formal and rigid geometric layout, which spans 17 hectares of land.[6]

The site is located in the north of the city (See Fig. 3) in proximity to the walled city on the Grand Trunk Road, one of the oldest roads connecting Delhi to Kashmir.

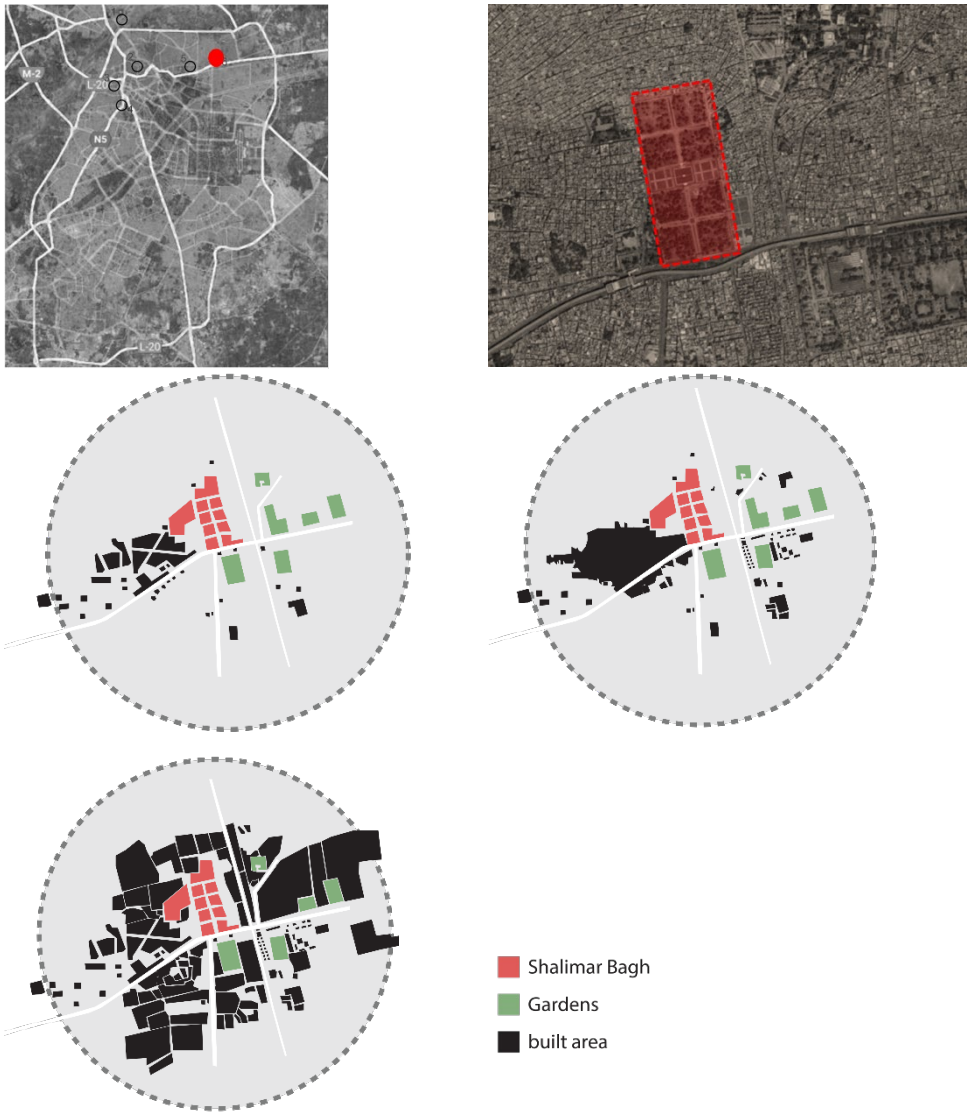

Figure 3. Location of Shalimar Garden and mapping of densification around Shalimar Garden

The case of Shalimar Garden exemplifies typology 1, where, over time, informal settlements gradually developed around the site, bordering the edges of the garden but never infiltrating it. In that scenario, the site is preserved. However, the area around it has become increasingly dense over the years (See Fig. 3). The first maps show the area's slow urbanisation around the garden, from a richly green space to the slow development of formal and informal settlements that engulf it. One of the major reasons for these developments was the GT road, a major transport route. The map also shows the latest land use, where settlements were built, and a busy road with heavy intra- and inter-city transportation surrounds the garden.

Jahangirs Tomb

Jahangir's tomb is a 17th-century Mausoleum located in Shahdara, Lahore.[7] Akbari Sarai and the Tomb of Asif Khan are also in the Tomb premises. The tomb is a UNESCO World Heritage site and is extensively decorated with traditional building crafts of the region, including fresco, pietra dura, fretwork, and marble inlay.

The second example of the edge-to-edge infiltration, the Tomb, is located on the north side of the city, across the river, now in the territory of Shahdara town. (See Fig. 4 for details.)

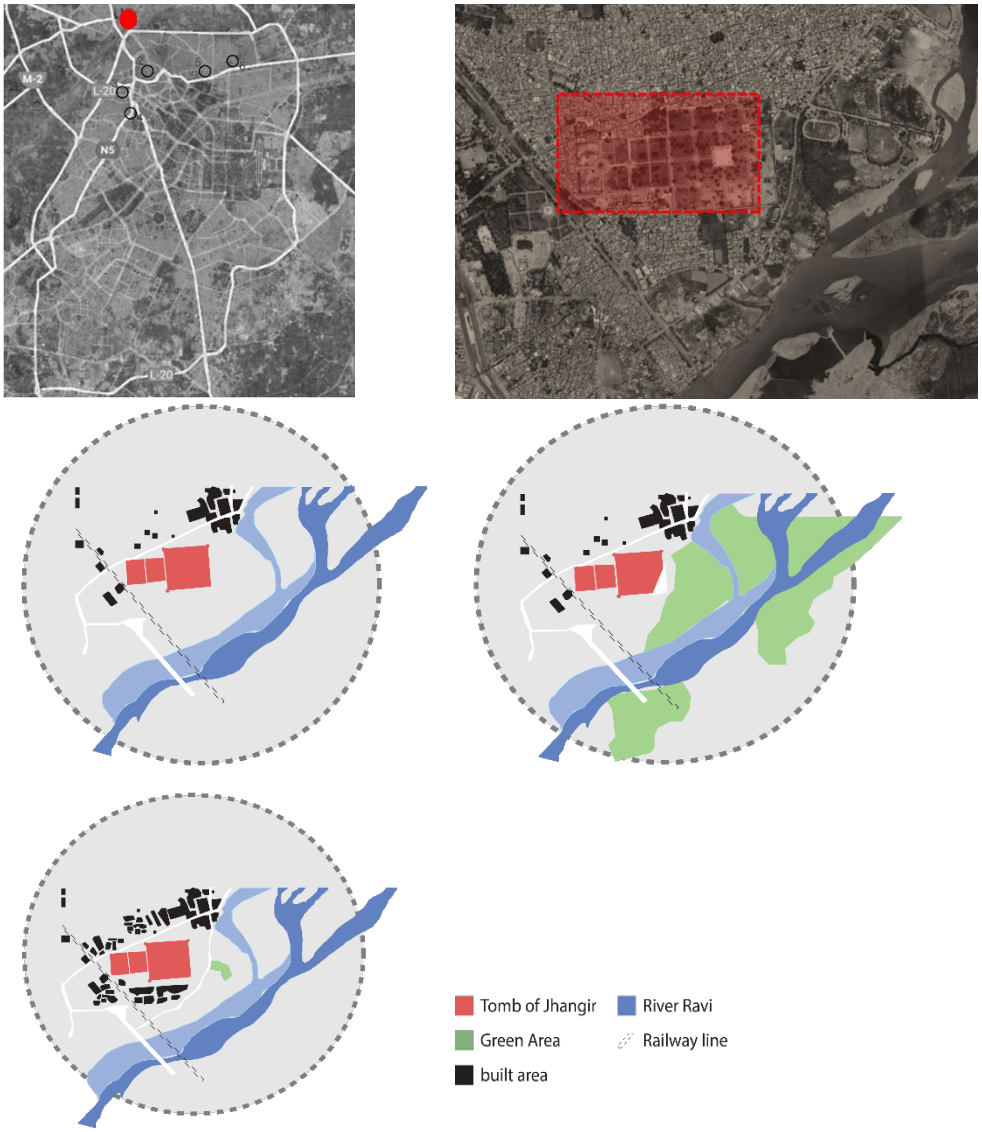

Figure 4. Location of Jahangir's Tomb and mapping of densification around Jahangir's Tomb

Jahangir's tomb is the second example of typology 1, where the densification around the periphery increased over time, engulfing the area. The first map above depicts the course of the river Ravi in proximity to the tomb and the railway line constructed during British times. The second map shows that the tomb was damaged in one corner due to flooding, the river's green beds, and the gradual spread of settlements over time. The final map depicts the site's existing condition, including the proximity of the river and the spread of settlements around its periphery.

Defining Typology 1

Restricted to the peripheries, the first typology illustrates the correlation between heritage and informal settlement through infiltration that tends to lean on the edge without penetrating. Hence, the characteristics of the typology are as follows:

1. It primarily surrounds the site.
2. The informal settlements in the proximity lean on the boundary but never cross the threshold.
3. Heritage sites act as magnets, providing opportunities and building qualities for the growth of informal settlements.

TYPOLOGY 2: EXTENDED INFILTRATION

Gulabi Bagh

The first case study of this typology is the Gulabi Bagh, located north of Lahore City. The site currently faces GT Road, followed by Mughalpura to its south, the Shrine of Khwaja Mehmud to its east, Singhpura to its north, and Begumpura, with UET to its east.

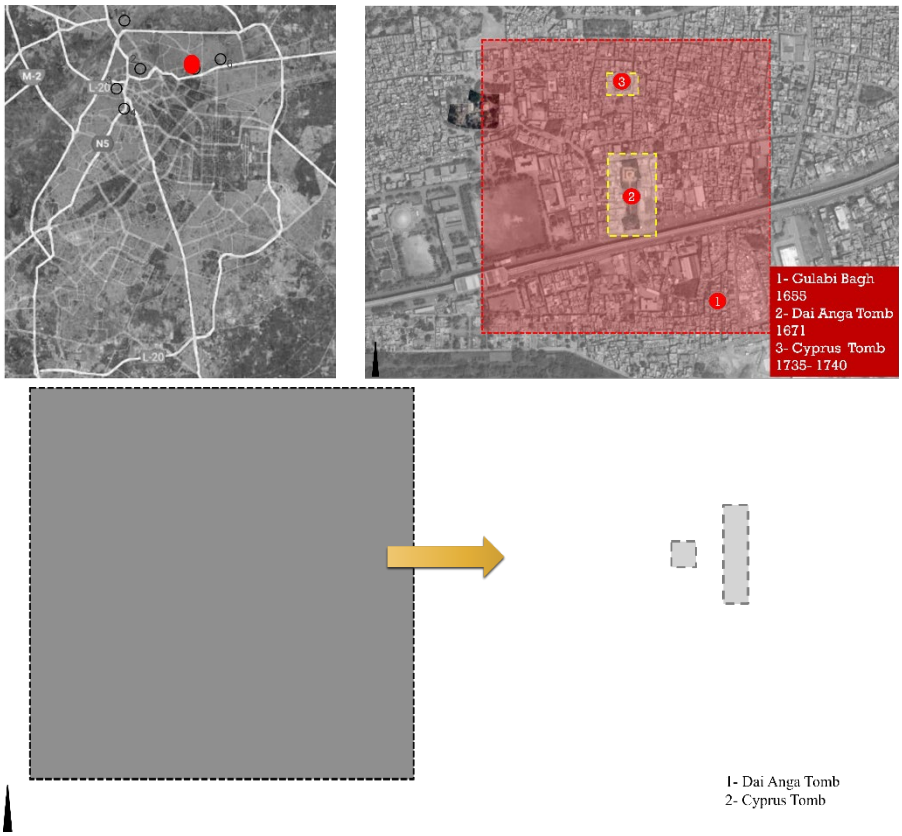

Figure 5. Location and Proximity of Site/s and the Size Comparison of the Garden to the Present Remaining Structures

Gulabi Bagh, which spans 250 Mughal yards on each side (Ebba Koch), was constructed by Mirza Sultan Baig in 1655 as a pleasure garden. In 1671, it was repurposed as the tomb of Dai Anga, a wet nurse of Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan. The tomb of Dai Anga is situated at the centre of Gulabi Bagh. Another Cyprus tomb was built north of the garden in the early 18th century.

The tomb of Dai Anga is rectangular, featuring frescoes in the interior and Kashikari on the exterior. She is buried with her daughter, Sultana Begum, in an underground crypt that is no longer accessible. To the north lies the Cyprus tomb, distinguished by its tapering tower with a pyramidal vault, surrounded by a connecting garden. During the Sikh rule in the 18th century, it was rumoured that the tomb contained treasure, leading to the plundering of Sharf-un-Nisa Begam's Quran and sword and the desecration of the site.

Over the years, informal housing has encroached on the garden, leaving only the tombs intact. Nowadays, only the structure stands alone as a testimony to the glory of the past days. The diagram below illustrates the infiltration from the outside towards the inside, resulting in a drastic reduction of the original site scale.

Chuburji

The second case study is Chuburji, located northwest of Lahore city. It faces Miani Sahab to its east, Ponch House to its south, Mayo College to its north, and the residential area of Shamnagar to its west. Recently, a metro line running north to east is dangerously passing the site nearby (See Fig. 6 for details).

Figure 6. Location of Chuburji Garden and the Reduction of Garden Scale in Comparison

The monument was originally one of the gateways to the extensive, large, lavish garden built in the 16th century. It is said that it was built by Aurangzeb for her daughter Zeb Un Nisa. After her death, Mughal emperor Aurangzeb bestowed it on his daughter Zeb. Floods destroyed the garden during the Aurangzeb and Sikh eras, and the 1843 earthquake further exacerbated its damage. In other records, the garden was built during the Jahangir Era.

It is recorded that the boundary of the Zeb Un Nisa Garden, whose remnant is now found in the shape of Chauburji, extends far towards the bank of the River Ravi at the west,[8] towards Miani Sahab at the

east, the shrine of Data Ganj Baksh at the north and Nawan Kot at the south. It demonstrates the vast scale of the garden, now reduced to a mere 0.1 sq km of area in the present fabric. The diagram above depicts the dramatic behaviour of extended infiltration, where the scale of the heritage site is reduced to more than 99%.

Defining Typology 2

Extended infiltration, as its name suggests, extends and takes over the boundary and interior areas of the heritage site to the extent that it engulfs a major portion of the site, leaving only the remnants of heritage in the form of monuments. Henceforth, the characteristics of the typology are as follows:

1. The infiltration gradually takes over the heritage site from the outside in, drastically reducing the original scale.
2. The site that has been taken over is destroyed, and the new development is woven with reassigned functions into the new fabric.
3. The remaining monuments built may or may not retain their use and function.

TYPOLOGY 3: PERVASIVE INFILTRATION

Mariyam Zamani Mosque

The first case study of the typology identified is the Mariyam Zamani Mosque, located in the walled city of Lahore. The mosques, obstructed by a commercial neighbourhood, face Masti Gate and Lahore Fort at their west, Circular Garden at their north, Moti Bazar to their south, and Govt. Fatima Jinnah College for Women is located in the east. The site neighbours significant heritage sites but is predominantly surrounded by encroachments.

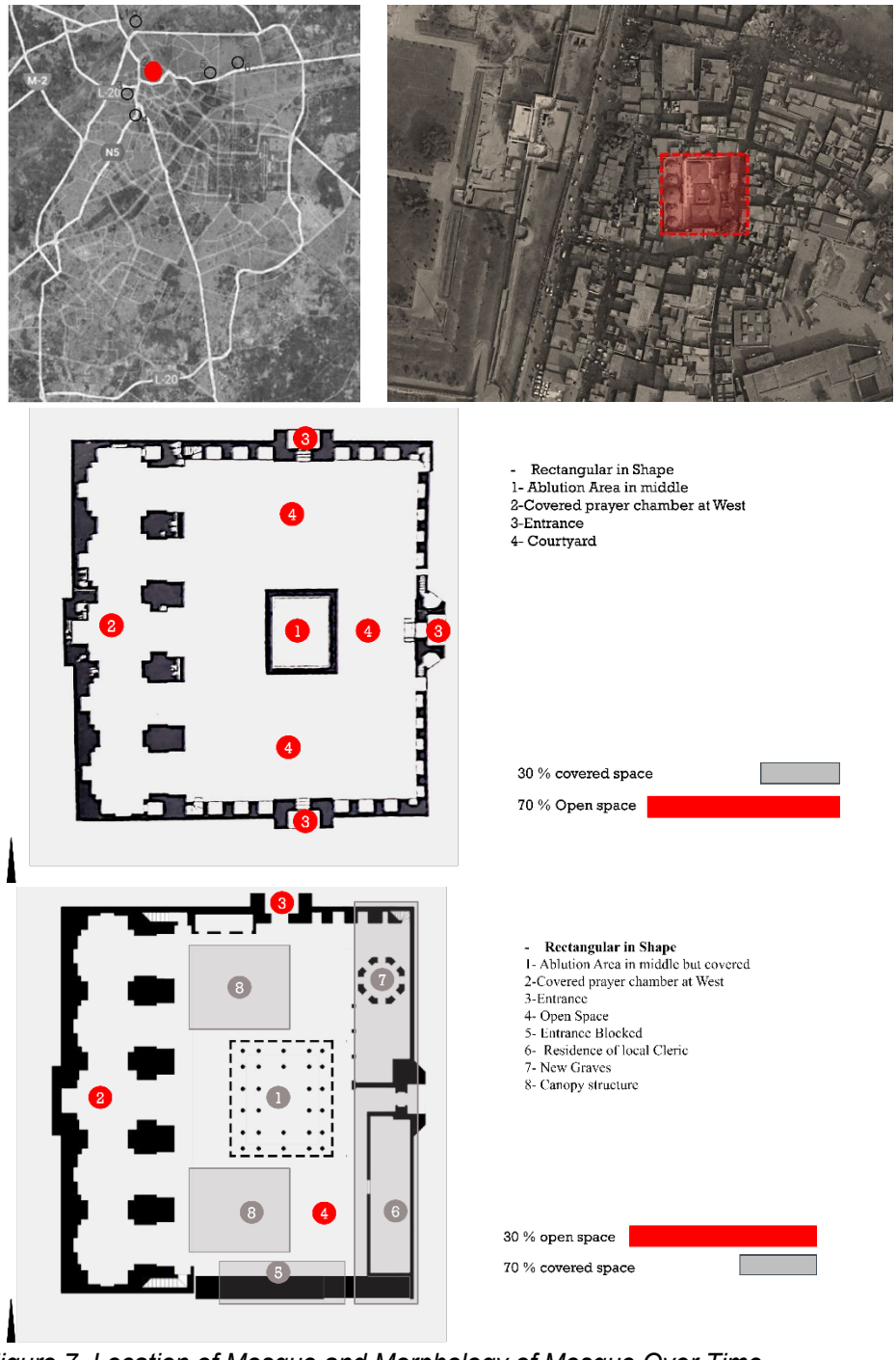

Figure 7. Location of Mosque and Morphology of Mosque Over Time

The mosque is famous for its fresco and double-domed architecture, and it has an original footprint of 18,495 sq ft (Tahkeeqat–e–Chisti). The plan of the mosque was roughly rectangular and divided into two main spaces: the covered prayer hall/chamber at the west and the open courtyard[9]. Originally, the mosque could be accessed from three sides, i.e. north, south, and east. The courtyard served as the threshold between the prayer hall and the three access points of the mosque. An ablution area, shaped like a traditional Mughal water cistern, is located in the centre of the courtyard. Originally, the percentage of covered area (in the shape of a prayer hall) and open space (in the shape of a courtyard) was 30% and 70%, respectively.

However, while the extended boundary/edge of the mosque has been retained in its original shape and scale, new structures and functional reassignments have been introduced within the interior of the mosque. A covered area entailing the residence of a local cleric and a covered graveyard has been constructed to the east of the courtyard. The water cistern is also semi-covered, and two fibre glass canopies were added to the north and south of the cistern in 2016. These canopies were built to shade those offering their prayers in the courtyard. The maps above depict the changes and additions explained.

The pervasive infiltration in this heritage site is so extreme that it has reversed the site's original open and covered ratio. In the current scenario, only 30% of the mosque's area is an open space, whereas 70% of the mosque's area has been covered with the help of a new structure within the mosque's perimeter.

DAV Hostel

Another example of pervasive infiltration is DAV Camp, Hindu Camp or DAV Hostels.[10] The DAV hostel is a pre-partition building located at the administrative hub of Lahore city on the Court Road. The camp is surrounded by important administrative and educational buildings such as Islamia College Civil Lines, former DAV College, UVAS, Evacuee Trust Property Board of Pakistan, old commissioner's office, etc.

Figure 8. Location of DAV College

Initially dedicated to the DAV School Boarding House, established in 1886 by DAV College Trust and Management Society in Lahore.[11] The Hindu Camp currently consists of two hostels, namely DAV Hostel 1 and DAV Hostel 2, occupying an area of 23 kanals, 15 marlas and 34 kanals, 5 marlas respectively. A total of 498 families were residing in Hindu Camp, as per the survey of 1992 (See Table 2 for details) Currently, the third generation of refugees reside in the camp, with many who have either given up their area on rent or sold to outsiders; thus, the number of residents occupying the hostels is expected to double by now.

Sr No	Name of Hostel	Property Number	Area	Unit
1	DAV Hostel 1 Court Street	SW-96-R-6	23 *Kanal* , 15 *Marla*	206
2	DAV Hostel 2 Court Street	SW-96-R-6	34 *Kanal*, 5 *Marla*	292

Table 2. Area of DAV Hostel 1 and 2

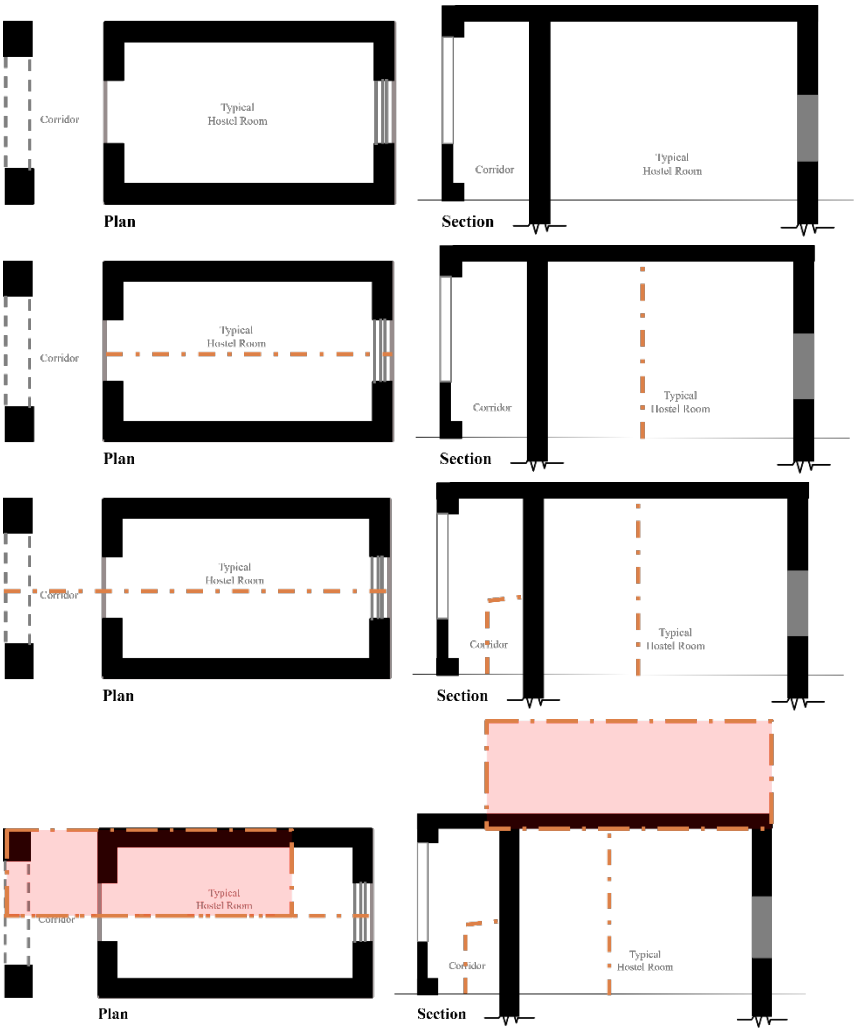

Figure 9. Typical layout plan and its Enchrochment Types

In order to cater to the growing number of occupants, the infiltration in the interior space of the Hindu Camp is exercised either by amendments carried out within the existing structure involving damaging or destroying parts of original destroying or introduction of totally new structures inside the perimeter of the DAV hostel on vacant land or land cleared after demolition of original structure.

The residents of Hindu Camp are forced to incorporate toilets, a kitchen and other facilities to serve a family unit in a room designed to serve either as a classroom or a bedroom for 2-3 students. It resulted in the creation of circulation patterns that supported the expansion of encroachments horizontally and vertically within the perimeter of Hindu Camp. In the first type of encroachment, the residents divided a single room into two separate family units to meet their needs. Since the ceiling height was high enough to cover the cost, a wall no less than 8’10’ was built to segregate the space. Those with privileges often added a false roof to secure more privacy. The type of encroachment, however, is limited to the rooms of the DAV Hostel. It started from the division of the room spilling into the verandah space and occupying half or more than half of the verandah space, leaving very little navigable corridor space. The walls built in the verandah to mark the terror were very low in height, 5’-6’, and usually served as the kitchen of the family unit. Due to a lack of available space horizontally, many residents were forced to expand vertically and construct structures of poor quality by dividing the room and, in some cases, verandahs vertically. Additional and temporary staircases installed in verandahs were used as a means of navigation and access to these additional stories.

Type of Encroachment		
Sr No		Type of expansion
1	The hostel rooms are further divided	Horizontal expansion
2	The veranda encroached	Horizontal expansion
3	Another floor added	Vertical expansion

Table 3. Types of Encroachments

Definition Typology 3

Pervasive infiltration represents the most extreme form of intrusion into heritage sites. As the term "pervasive" implies—meaning to exist in or spread through every part of something—this type of infiltration behaves like a parasite within the boundaries of a heritage site. The following points outline the key characteristics of heritage sites affected by pervasive infiltration:

1. While the external boundary or edge of the heritage site is often retained/ preserved, the interior is infiltrated and transformed.
2. The infiltration operates parasitically, feeding off the heritage site, which serves as its host.
3. It alters the physical form of the site, frequently contributing to structural and material deterioration through the demolition of original structures and the introduction of incongruent new ones.
4. New functions and activities are introduced on the occupied spaces within the heritage site's perimeter, often at odds with the site's historical or cultural significance.

CONCLUSION

In light of the above documented and analysed typologies, the table below highlights the behaviour of the types, their method to infiltrate and their overall role in the re-interpretation and identification of the heritage sites:

	Physical and Structural Decay or Transformation	Spatial and Urban Context	Socio-Spatial Vulnerability	Anthropogenic Hazards	Cultural and Intangible Factors	Environmental and Disaster-related Indicators	Changes in Use and Function	Legal and Planning Status
Typology 1: Edge to Edge	L1	L4	L5	L2	L1	L3	L1	L1
Typology 2: Extended Infiltration	L5	L5	L5	L5	L5	L3	L3	L3
Typology 3: Pervasive Infiltration	L3	L4	L5	L5	L3	L1	L3	L4

Least Change				**Major Change**
Level 1	**Level 2**	**Level 3**	**Level 4**	**Level 5**

Table 4. Comparison of Typologies

The three typologies can be represented through the diagram as follows:

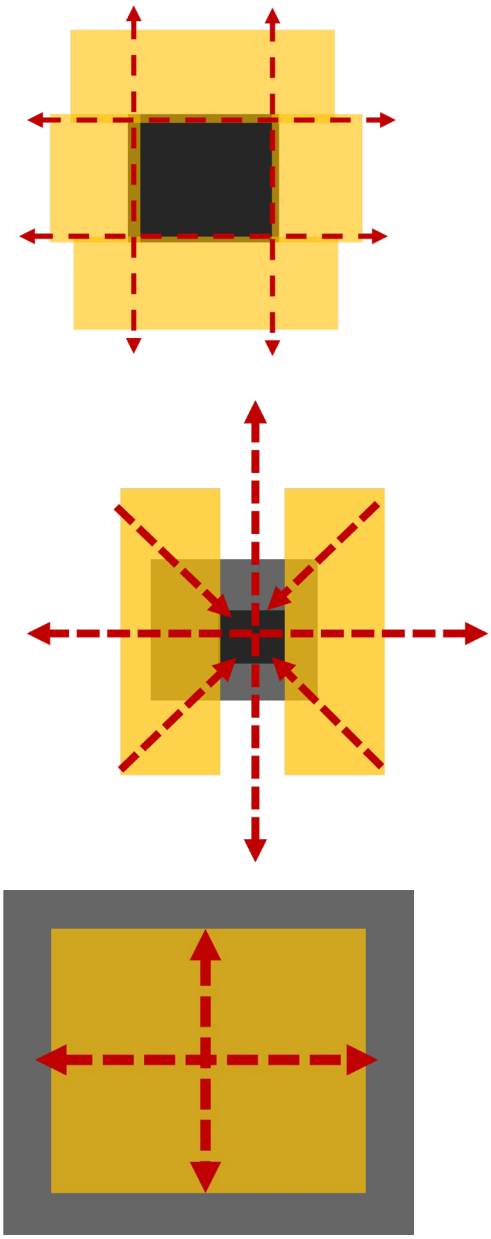

Figure 10. The Diagram of 3 Typologies

The first diagram depicts how the infiltration occurs, which is on the periphery of the historic site. It tends to lean on the site's boundary yet never penetrates it. The second diagram depicts how the infiltration takes place, which is slowly from the outside. However, it starts penetrating the boundaries to the extent that sometimes the whole site is taken over, with some remaining as a gate or the central building. The final diagram illustrates the infiltration occurring within the perimeter of the sites, slowly morphing the layout and interior structure of the building.

The historic sites of Lahore have been severely damaged, morphed, and even destroyed due to the unprecedented growth of informal settlements around and within the site area/s. The study highlights three major typologies of informal growth around the heritage sites; however, further categorisation may be developed based on this typology. It should be noted that the relationship between heritage sites and informal settlements is unique to the city of Lahore, emerging from the conditions, context, and historical events. Various factors, such as policies, neglect, and historical events such as plundering, migration, etc., have facilitated informal growth, which should be extensively considered

and studied to bring forth an educated view. Informal settlement, in this regard, acts as a force to transform the historic urban landscape of Lahore. Further neglect may lead to a serious loss of unparalleled historic gems of the city. An immediate response to this ever-changing phenomenon is required by the planners and government officials before the city faces further loss and mutilation of its heritage site.

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LIVING IN FEAR AND TRUST: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE HISTORICAL CONTEXTS AND PERCEIVED COMMUNITY SAFETY IN THE BANGKOK METROPOLITAN REGION

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INTRODUCTION

Urban growth is reshaping historic urban spaces, significantly influencing community values and residents' lived experiences. While urbanisation presents opportunities for socio-economic advancement, unmanaged development can erode local identity and fragment communal structures. UNESCO's Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) approach underscores the notion that urban centres are products of historical layering. However, rapid and uncontrolled urban expansion frequently engenders social and spatial fragmentation, alongside a deterioration of environmental quality.[1]

Similarly, the Bangkok Metropolitan Region (BMR), a complex multicultural entity moulded by historical processes, exemplifies this dynamic. Comprising six provinces—Bangkok, Nakhon Pathom, Nonthaburi, Pathum Thani, Samut Prakan, and Samut Sakhon—the BMR encompasses 7,761.60 square kilometres and, as of 2023, accommodates a population of 10,888,403 residents.[2] Like other urban centres, the BMR faces the challenge of balancing modernization and growth with the preservation of its unique historical and cultural identity, echoing the principles of the HUL approach.

This study investigates the comparative perceived levels of fear of crime (FOC) and trust in the community (TIC) amongst inhabitants of two distinct districts within the BMR: Bang Kachao, an agricultural reserve with a documented history of Mon ethnic settlement dating back to 1814, located within the Samut Prakan province,[3] and Phra Khanong, an urban area developed through maritime industrialisation from 1932 onwards, situated within the Bangkok province.[4] These two districts present unique and interesting historical layers that reveal the richness of their development trajectories. Both are critically located within two kilometres of the Khlong Toei Community, Bangkok's largest informal settlement, which contends with significant challenges, including high population density, inadequate living standards, drug trafficking, prostitution, and crime.[5] This shared proximity, coupled with their disparate historical trajectories, offers a compelling opportunity to explore how residents' perceptions of communal safety are shaped by historical context and contemporary urban realities. By examining the in-depth historical contexts and distinctive characteristics of both districts, this research aims to elucidate the intricate interplay between urban development, historical legacies, and perceived community safety within the Bangkok Metropolitan Region, highlighting both their shared issues and unique identities.

LITERATURE

Psychosocial Factors Reflecting the Quality of Life of the Population

This research focuses on examining two key psychosocial factors. The first factor, the fear of crime, is identified by the United Nations Statistical Division as a significant social indicator that adversely impacts individuals' well-being. This fear contributes to a decline in personal interactions and public engagement and negatively affects the secondary factor: trust in the community. The conclusions drawn by the United Nations align with the findings of the Project for Data and Statistics Development for Research and Policy (STAT) at the Thailand Institute of Justice (TIJ). Both sources recognise the link between the fear of crime and trust in the community. The preliminary hypothesis suggests that trust is a positive factor supporting social and economic development within communities. Furthermore, a robust social network can enhance individuals' sense of security in their daily lives.

Fear of Crime

The fear of crime is a complex psychosocial sentiment encompassing apprehension resulting from both direct and indirect threats. It involves a suspicion of one's surroundings that leads to a perceived lack of personal safety and a general insecurity in daily life.

Studies of the fear of crime in Western countries, beginning from the 1960s, primarily aimed to identify methods for managing fears related to various types of crime and to improve and develop communities, making them more hospitable and secure.[6] Numerous factors influence the fear of crime, including experiences of victimisation, perceived risk and emotional responses, personal attitudes, physical environment, and social environment.

Fear of crime has the potential to create division and undermine community cohesion, affecting neighbourly relations and rendering certain public areas inaccessible.[7] It can also have negative psychological impacts, particularly amongst populations residing in degraded physical and social environments. Those fearing victimisation may alter their lifestyles, such as spending more time at home, retreating to perceived safe spaces, or installing preventive measures like locks and alarm systems.[8]

Furthermore, past research has shown that the fear of crime and feelings of insecurity within communities lead to behavioural and environmental changes designed to mitigate these fears. Such changes include community watch schemes, assigning clear responsibilities to individuals for specific areas, and modifying physical environments through constructions like walls around residential complexes, which can help reduce littering and graffiti.[9]

Trust in Community

Trust has been defined in various ways across different academic disciplines. In 2018, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) defined trust as the belief one individual holds towards another individual or social institution, with the expectation of receiving a positive response from them. This definition by the OECD aids in understanding the multifaceted nature of trust, highlighting the relationship between the trustor or investor, the trustee (the individual or institution trusted), and the response to specific expectations (incentives or interests).[10] According to the OECD, the scope of trust encompasses two key components: 1) interpersonal trust and 2) institutional trust, which allows research on trust to be more specific and capable of addressing a broader range of research questions.[11]

The distinction between these two types of trust aligns with socio-economic studies that classify social capital into two types as well: bonding social capital, which occurs within households or kinship groups, and bridging social capital, which occurs between households.[12] Western perspectives

on social capital concur that the former type arises from strong personal relationships and involves an inward-looking perspective within households or kinship groups sharing similar socio-economic status. The latter type is cultivated through weaker personal relationships and involves an outward-looking perspective among diverse social groups coming together for decision-making.
Several factors influence trust, including attitudes towards trust, social preferences, expectations, socio-economic background, values, community involvement, diversity, the effects of digitalisation and globalisation, and government competence.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a multi-phase mixed-methods approach to investigate differences in fear of crime (FOC) and trust in community (TIC) between Phra Khanong and Bang Kachao, with a focus on historical influences.
Phase 1: Initial Qualitative Exploration involved conducting in-depth interviews with social psychology experts, organizing community focus groups, and undertaking non-participant observations to understand crime perceptions and community-specific concerns.
Phase 2: Quantitative Phase utilized a structured questionnaire administered to 205 respondents to validate and analyse the themes identified in the initial phase, providing a comprehensive statistical assessment of perceptions related to FOC and TIC.
Phase 3: Explanatory Qualitative Inquiry encompassed archival reviews and site visits to trace historical influences, offering a deeper understanding of the socio-historical contexts shaping present-day social dynamics in both communities.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

An independent samples t-test conducted during Phase 2 of the quantitative analysis revealed a statistically significant difference in trust in community (TIC) between the two areas, with Bang Kachao exhibiting higher levels at a significance level of 0.05. This finding supports the results from Phase 1's Initial Qualitative Exploration focus group, which suggested that Bang Kachao's elevated trust levels could be attributed to stronger ethnic community bonding, particularly among the Mon ethnic group, rooted in its enduring historical context. Conversely, Phra Khanong, characterised by greater ethnic heterogeneity, exhibited higher levels of fear of crime (FOC). Paradoxically, despite psychological indicators of FOC, residents of Bang Kachao reported a statistically significantly higher incidence of victimisation across all four crime categories—offences against property, aggravated property offences, crimes against the person, and sexual offences—over the past 12 months compared to Phra Khanong (See Table 1).
Correlation analysis identified strong positive relationships between TIC and factors such as household size, perceived quality of the residential environment, perceived environmental safety, and community engagement. Meanwhile, FOC showed statistically significant negative correlations with neighbourly interaction and social participation.
Furthermore, a one-way ANOVA revealed significant differences in FOC based on community roles, with residents lacking formal roles experiencing higher FOC than those in leadership or volunteer positions.

Independent Variables	Bang Kachao			Phra Khanong				
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	t	p
Age	101	43.891	18.067	101	36.069	10.695	3.744	0.000 ***
Personal Income (THB)	77	11,204	6,813	69	19,623	9,624	-6.148	0.000 ***
Household Income (THB)	83	22,205	17,019	82	34,804	25,526	-3.735	0.000 ***
Duration of Residence in Area	101	33.345	20.572	102	9.488	8.702	10.742	0.000 ***
Number of Residents in Accommodation	99	4.535	3.290	100	2.490	3.994	3.945	0.000 ***
Victimisation of Crime in the Past 12 Months	102	1.135	0.306	102	1.012	0.065	3.957	0.000 ***
Fear of Crime	99	1.5400	1.18712	104	2.4880	1.33481	-5.353	0.000 ***
Fear Of Crime Related to Property	99	1.7492	1.20571	104	2.4647	1.28842	-4.081	0.000 ***
Fear of Crime Related to Bodily Harm	99	1.7374	1.27177	104	2.5481	1.33650	-4.423	0.000 ***
Fear of Crime Related to Life	99	1.6835	1.28428	104	2.4535	1.37857	-4.113	0.000 ***
Fear of Sexual Crime	99	.9899	1.32861	104	2.4856	1.51993	-7.474	0.000 ***
Neighbourhood Relationship Level	94	2.457	0.501	101	2.010	0.505	6.211	0.000 ***
Attitude towards Personal Trustworthiness	102	3.162	0.447	102	2.500	0.480	10.192	0.000 ***
Confidence in Community Cohesion	100	1.898	0.463	96	1.735	0.421	2.564	0.011 *
Individual Trust	102	2.183	0.888	102	1.525	0.581	6.264	0.000 ***
Interpersonal Trust	102	2.074	0.932	102	1.463	0.672	5.372	0.000 ***
Trust in Society	102	2.270	0.997	102	1.478	0.798	6.261	0.000 ***
Trust in the Labour Market	102	2.203	1.042	102	1.632	0.642	4.712	0.000 ***

*** p-value ≤ .001 ** p-value ≤ .005 * p-value ≤ .05

Table 1. Results of the t-test Comparing Average Values between Bang Kachao and Phra Khanong

The convergence of results from the focus group and statistical analysis has prompted the development of further research questions to be explored in Phase 3: Explanatory Qualitative Inquiry. This phase seeks to delve deeper into the underlying factors contributing to the observed psychosocial dynamics by exploring how and since when the Mon ethnic group settled in the Bang Kachao area, contributing to its cohesive community structure, and examining how the development trajectory of the Phra Khanong area has shaped its current state of ethnic heterogeneity. To adequately address these questions, it is essential to comprehend the historical contexts of Bang Kachao and Phra Khanong. Understanding these contexts is vital for examining their present socio-economic dynamics, community cohesion, and residents' perceived safety. Each locality presents a distinctive historical trajectory that has informed its development and cultural identity. The findings from the archival and document review and site re-visits for historical contextualization have revealed the following detailed historical contexts, highlighting the historical determinants that influence their contemporary urban landscapes, socio-economic conditions, and the perceptions of safety and community cohesion within them.

Historical Context of Bang Kachao

Bang Kachao, located within the Phra Pradaeng district of Samut Prakan province, is distinguished for its verdant landscapes and historical importance. It comprises six sub-districts: Bang Numphung, Bang Yo, Bang Krasob, Bang Kachao, Bang Ko Bua, and Song Khanong, encompassing a total area of 11,818 rai, approximately 18.91 square kilometres. This green expanse, encircled by the Chao Phraya River and situated in proximity to the Gulf of Thailand, serves as a natural oasis amidst urban development.[13] Of historical interest, Phra Pradaeng is adjacent to Phra Samut Chedi, which was once termed "New Amsterdam" in 1634 during the reign of King Prasat Thong of Ayutthaya,[14] marking a period of flourishing trade with the Dutch led by Chief of Mission Joost Schouten[15] – as illustrated in Figure 1.

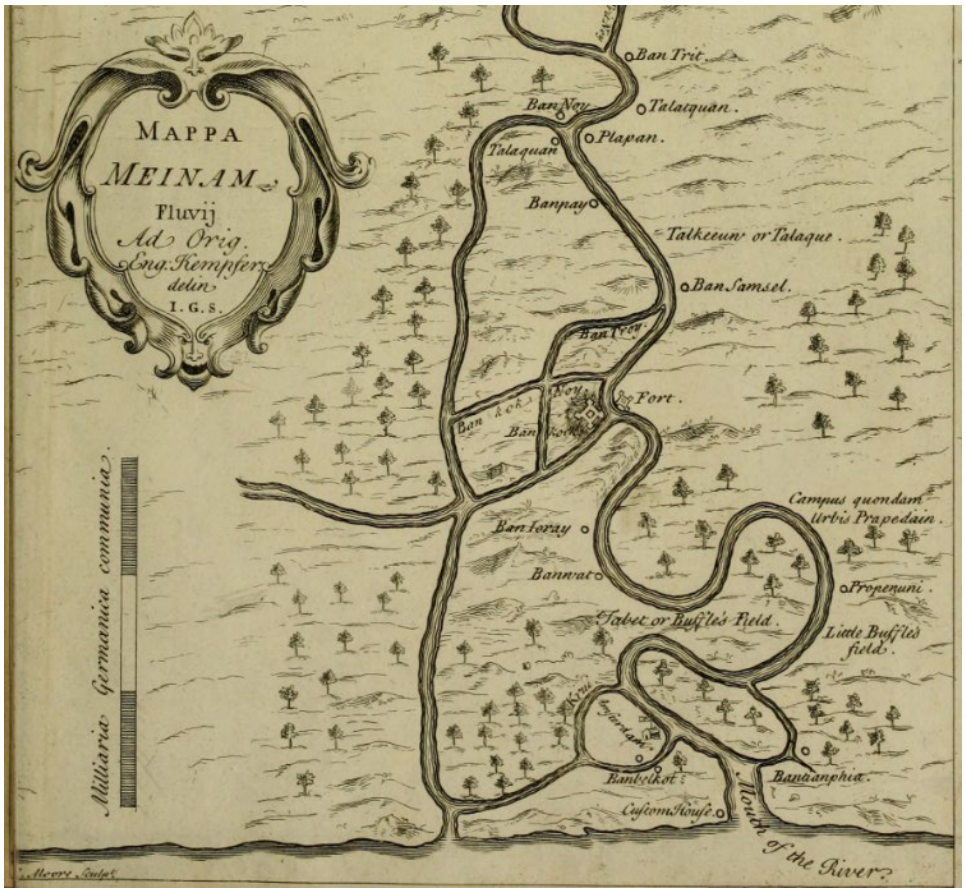

Figure 1. Engelbert Kaempfer's circa 1651 map of the Chao Phraya River ("Mappa Meinam"), featuring New Amsterdam as a Dutch trading outpost, https://flickr.com/photos/126377022@N07/14563443949

Ethnic Movement and Historical Significance

During the Ayutthaya era, between 1314 and 1369, King Ramathibodi I designated Phra Pradaeng as a strategic southern and maritime frontier. In the Rattanakosin era, King Rama I commissioned a survey of the Chao Phraya River, selecting a site near the Lad Pho canal for establishing the city of Nakhon Khuean Khan, anchored by the fort "Pom Witthayakom", which acted as a key defensive fortification. However, as the area's dynamics evolved, Pom Witthayakom was abandoned, leaving no visible ruins today, with its presence recorded only in historical documents and local lore.

Between 1814 and 1815, King Rama II solidified Phra Pradaeng's status through a city pillar ceremony and facilitated the relocation of 300 Mon families from Pathum Thani. These families,

fleeing persecution in lower Myanmar, migrated to the Thai kingdom, enriching the region's cultural tapestry. Within Bang Kachao, the village of Mon Song Khanong II is particularly notable for preserving Mon traditions and culture. The Mon people in this area are also known as Thai Raman, reflecting their historical integration into Thai society. Practices such as Mon "Saba" games, "Hae Hong Thong Takhab" ceremony, traditional architecture, and culinary arts remain vibrant. The village names, often in the Mon language, retain connections to their Myanmar counterparts, such as Song Khanong, meaning "village of the stars."

By 1915, under King Rama VI, the region was redesignated as Phra Pradaeng province. In 1932, a royal decree integrated Phra Pradaeng into Samut Prakan as a district, while Ratburana and Phra Khanong became part of Bangkok. This historical legacy continues to underpin Bang Kachao's cultural identity, providing an essential foundation for urban sustainability and heritage conservation discussions.

Ecological Significance and Biodiversity

Bang Kachao's geographic positioning as an island surrounded by the Chao Phraya River, and its proximity to the Gulf of Thailand, significantly influence its ecological system. The area experiences tidal influences that create a unique "three-water" ecosystem, comprising freshwater, saltwater, and brackish water. This has established Bang Kachao as a vast and fertile wetland, fostering a rich diversity of plant and animal life.

The Cabinet resolution of 14 September 1977 designated Bang Kachao as a conservation area, aimed at preserving it as a green space for public health, tourism, and cultural benefits. The natural wetland status of the area enhances these objectives by maintaining its ecological integrity.

In 2006, Time Asia magazine recognised Bang Kachao as the "Best Urban Oasis" in its Best of Asia edition. A 2011 study conducted by the Thailand Greenhouse Gas Management Organisation and the Faculty of Forestry at Kasetsart University revealed that Bang Kachao's green spaces absorb approximately 6,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide annually and produce up to 6 million tonnes of oxygen per day.[16] This ecological significance underscores Bang Kachao's critical role as an environmental haven within the urban sprawl of Bangkok.

Figure 2. Khlong Pae, a canal featuring a dense riparian zone dominated by Nypa fruticans (Chak palm). This habitat offers a rich ecological niche, supporting high biodiversity. https://cbtthailand.dasta.or.th/webapp/reviewTravel/content/4/

Figure 3. Si Nakhon Khuean Khan Park and Botanical Garden, a public park and botanical garden covering approximately 0.24 square kilometers, located in Bang Kachao and renowned for its diverse plant species and serene natural environment, https://www.makalius.co.th/รีวิว/bangkachao/

Historical Context of Phra Khanong

Phra Khanong, located to the east of the Khlong Toei district, encompasses approximately 3.850 square kilometres. Its southern boundary is formed by the Port of Bangkok and the Chao Phraya River, creating a natural separation from Bang Kachao in the Phra Pradaeng district. The strategic positioning of Phra Khanong has historically contributed to its role in facilitating movement and growth within the region. The Phra Khanong canal, central to the subdistrict, has been a vital transportation artery since the reign of King Rama III in 1837 and continues to serve this purpose, underpinning the area's economic activities.

Historical Maritime Pathways

Due to its location at the confluence of northern tidal flows, the Khlong Toei area's strategic significance has long been recognised. An international customs checkpoint was instituted under the reign of King Narai the Great in 1656, thereby augmenting the region's significance in global trade. By 1818, this checkpoint had evolved into a pivotal hub for international maritime commerce, fostering trade relations with countries such as England, the United States, and France.

Following the transition of Thailand's governance to a constitutional democracy in 1932, a strategic initiative to construct a state-operated port was launched to boost maritime commerce. This plan aimed to accommodate large ocean-going vessels and ensure efficient goods transfer. Experts from the League of Nations conducted surveys and recommended potential sites for the port's construction, notably identifying the mouths of the Samut Prakan River and the Khlong Toei area. The Thai government ultimately selected the Khlong Toei area for port development, leading to the commencement of official port operations in 1947 under the chairmanship of the Minister of Transport. This site is now home to the Port Authority of Thailand.[17]

Economic Growth and Transformation of Phra Khanong

During the reign of King Rama IV in 1857, an additional shortcut canal was excavated, connecting the Phra Khanong Canal to the mouth of the Chao Phraya River. The excavated soil was used to construct a road extending along the northern bank of the canal, known as "Trong Road." This development aimed to facilitate European merchants from England, the United States, and France interested in establishing trade houses south of the Phra Khanong Canal. However, after the canal and road were completed, the Europeans opted not to proceed with construction, citing the distance as a deterrent.[18]

Subsequently, during the reign of King Rama V in 1893, a railway parallel to Rama IV Road was constructed to connect Hua Lamphong Station and Pak Nam Station in Samut Prakan Province. This railway was decommissioned in 1960. "Trong Road" was later renamed Rama IV Road during King Rama VI's reign and became a major thoroughfare traversing the Phra Khanong district. Another significant road demarcating the northern boundary of Phra Khanong is Sukhumvit Road, initiated during King Rama VII's reign in 1936. Today, it is a crucial artery linking Bangkok to eastern Thailand, spanning a total length of 488.4 kilometres.

The construction of the port necessitated substantial land acquisition along the Chao Phraya River's edge, stretching from Chong Nonsi to the banks of Phra Khanong Canal. Additionally, three temples were expropriated to erect quay walls for cargo vessels.[19] In 1960, in the reign of King Rama IX, the United States requested to establish a military base in Thailand as a strategic location for the Vietnam War. The Port Authority of Thailand managed the import and export of military equipment and received the remains of American soldiers (referred to by Thais as "GI") for processing. The operation was conducted in an area that was once part of the Port Authority, which has since been transformed into the location of the Bangkok Mass Transit Authority (BMTA) Garage, Zone 4, now situated at

Kasemrat Intersection.[20] During this period, the U.S. military's demand for labour to establish and maintain the base attracted numerous workers from nearby provinces, who believed the wages offered by the U.S. military were superior to those available elsewhere. The American military presence in Khlong Toei also spurred the emergence of numerous entertainment venues catering to American soldiers.

Figure 4. In 1962, BLT 3/9 Marines, newly arrived from Okinawa, staged on the dock at Khlong Toei, Bangkok, after disembarking from amphibious ships. The USS Navarro (APA 215), USS Point Defiance (LSD 31), and the USS Valley Forge (LPH 8) transported the team from Okinawa to Thailand. https://www.usmcu.edu/Portals/218/Vietnam_Path_To_War.pdf

Figure 5. A map, created during the Vietnam War, highlights the Bangkok Port, Khlong Toei, as a key location for the Area Source Program (ASP) of the Office of Special Investigations (OSI) in Thailand. https://www.osi.af.mil/News/Features/Display/Article/2215964/the-asp-in-thailand-and-base-level-fraud-1962-1972-part-1/

In 1999, the Bangkok Mass Transit System Skytrain, or BTS Green Line (Sukhumvit Line), commenced operations.[21] Ekkamai Station, near the Ekkamai South intersection adjacent to Phra Khanong, became a focal point for economic growth and investment in high-rise commercial and residential projects, particularly along the railway line. This development has been accompanied by an influx of provincial and foreign residents seeking employment, resulting in a significant increase in land value assessments in the area.

DISCUSSION

This study explores the complex relationships between Trust in Community (TIC), Fear of Crime (FOC), and historical context in Bang Kachao and Phra Khanong, framed by UNESCO's Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) holistic approach. Utilizing a multi-phase methodology, the inferential statistical analysis from Phase 2: Quantitative Phase revealed significant differences in TIC and FOC levels between the two areas. This prompted further inquiry in Phase 3: Explanatory Qualitative Inquiry to understand the reasons behind these disparities and the distinct developmental trajectories shaped by different historical layers.

Building on Phase 1: Initial Qualitative Exploration, the study highlights the importance of *Ethnic Movement and Homogeneous Demographic Layers*, particularly involving the Mon settlement in Bang Kachao since 1814. *Ecological and Biodiversity Layers* significantly shape Bang Kachao's identity, with its positioning as an island surrounded by rivers and canals, naturally forming a closed-

gated community. This configuration supports community cohesion and trust, benefiting from its conservation status. In contrast, *Geographical Layers* in Phra Khanong underscore its role as a historical trade and migration hub. Its development was influenced by global political events, such as the establishment of an international customs checkpoint in the 17th century and later impacts from the Vietnam War, contributing to diverse populations and economic dynamics.

The examination of *Historical and Socio-Demographic Layers* reveals how Bang Kachao's homogenous social structures, rooted in ethnic kinship, foster high levels of TIC. Conversely, Phra Khanong's diverse mosaic, driven by urbanization and industrialization, results in a fragmented social fabric with increased FOC. Moreover, distinct *Economic Layers* influence community interactions and perceptions. Bang Kachao's economy centers around agriculture and eco-tourism, supporting a stable, community-oriented environment. In contrast, Phra Khanong's evolution into a high-density commercial and residential area offers diverse economic opportunities but also poses challenges for social cohesion.

By applying the HUL framework, this study highlights how these layers inform urban planning strategies to enhance community cohesion and address FOC while respecting each area's unique historical and contextual characteristics. This nuanced understanding contributes to fostering more cohesive and resilient communities.

Future research could focus on conducting longitudinal studies to observe the effects of changing political and economic conditions on TIC and FOC. Additionally, expanding the comparative framework to other regions could provide broader insights into the influence of historical and socio-economic layers on community dynamics. Investigating the role of digital technology and policy effectiveness in shaping community cohesion and crime perceptions would also offer valuable perspectives.

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ASSESSING THE HERITAGE VALUES OF THE CYPRUS GOVERNMENT RAILWAY FROM THE BRITISH COLONIAL ERA

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INTRODUCTION

The invention of railways significantly changed people's lives around the world and catalysed other changes. Before the invention of railways, transporting people, agricultural products, and goods from one settlement to another was difficult. However, after the invention of railways, it became possible to reach one continent from another in much less time than it had taken months. Furthermore, the development of railways not only facilitated economic movements such as import and export, but also social, cultural, technological, and political changes.[1]

In the first half of the 19th century, railways began to provide new opportunities for agriculture and industry. With the invention of railways, long-distance overland trade became easier, and thus cities experiencing economic activity began to grow.[2] In the 19th century, a rapid increase occurred in railway construction, particularly in England and other industrialized countries, and this trend subsequently spread to developing countries.[3] Later, with the invention of high-speed railways, particularly in the late twentieth century, the sector experienced numerous changes and transformations. Larger railway lines and station buildings began to be designed to meet current needs and meet the demands of the era. Consequently, important heritage assets belonging to previous railways began to be neglected, be forgotten, and disappear due to functional and physical obsolescence. These railway structures have cultural heritage values since they have witnessed numerous social, cultural, economic, technological, and political events.

The Railway Heritage Trust was established in 1985 by the British Railways Authority[4] to assist in the preservation of listed railway structures. Afterwards, discussion of the scientific and holistic preservation of railway heritage began in England. The world's first railway was built between Manchester and Liverpool in England.[5] England has also been a pioneer in how to preserve, preserve, and reuse railway heritage. The British have always been pioneers in the field of railways and are always remembered for their pioneering work.

The island of Cyprus was introduced to the concept of railways during the British colonial period (1878-1960).[6] Cyprus, which has a strategic location of the Eastern Mediterranean, has been in a position of geopolitical and cultural importance throughout history. Being at the intersection of the Asian, European and African continents have historically made the island an important centre for maritime trade, military strategy and intercultural exchange. This strategic importance not only

facilitated the movement of goods and ideas, but also made Cyprus a centre of attraction for successive empires and civilizations seeking regional dominance. This situation has ensured that layers of cultural, political and historical interaction have continuously shaped the island. For this reason, a rich cultural heritage has been formed on the island.

British Colonial Period is one of the most significant periods of the island. The period began with the transfer of the Ottoman Empire to England in 1878 and continued until the establishment of the Republic of Cyprus in 1960. Many public and administrative buildings and structures were built during this period. One of the most important infrastructure works of the British administration is undoubtedly the construction of the Cyprus Government Railway (CGR). The railway line began operating in 1905 and stopped in 1951 after operating for 46 years.[7] After the closure of the railway line, buildings and structures related to CGR were abandoned and left to their fate. After the division of the island in 1974, as North and South, some of the railways remained in the Northern part and some in the Southern part of the island.

The importance of the CGR has significant tangible and intangible values in terms of railway heritage. Awareness of the value of railway heritage on the island began with the new millennium. Although an attempt to take small steps on this path has begun, these steps are insufficient. However, strong steps have not yet been taken with a holistic approach to conserve this cultural heritage as common cultural heritage.

The significance of the Cyprus Goverment Railway for the island of Cyprus in the context of cultural heritage was examined based on a literature review, encompassing socio-cultural, economic, political, technological, architectural, and urban planning dimensions. The British, who exploited the concept of the first railway and introduced the first and only railway to the island, also pioneered the preservation and reuse of railway heritage. Numerous projects from the UK have been successfully implemented during the British Colonial period of the island. These studies have shed light on approaches developed for the preservation of the Cyprus Government Railway.

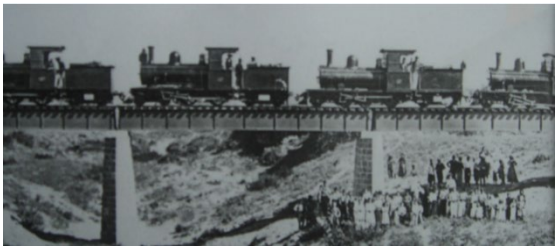
Following this in-depth literature review, field studies were conducted to observe the current state of the railway heritage. During field visits conducted by the authors, all railway structures in both Northern and Southern Cyprus were identified. Subsequently, all surviving or partially surviving railway structures along the route in both the North and South of the island were identified. All surviving and partially surviving structures were photographed and their current state has been documented.

The main aim of the research is to reveal the ‘heritage values in different meanings and dimensions’ in order to preserve railway heritage of Cyprus with the awareness that it is the common heritage of both Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot communities. As mentioned above, to achieve this goal, the study was carried out under two main sections as literature survey and field study. In the study, a holistic approach was carried out in the light of the observations, the information and documents obtained under the guidance of international organizations for cultural heritage conservation. In the light of the heritage values of CGR, conservation proposals were developed with a holistic approach. In addition, the study suggests that the heritage be preserved not only with its physical qualities but also as a part of the collective memory of Cyprus.

CYPRUS GOVERNMENT RAILWAY IN THE BRITISH COLONIAL PERIOD

The Cyprus Government Railway represented a major infrastructural undertaking of the British colonial administration, designed both to consolidate imperial authority and to advance the modernization of the island’s governance mechanisms. Functioning between 1905 and 1951 (Figure 1), the railway extended over a total length of 76 miles (122 kilometres).[8] By linking Evrychou and the port city of Famagusta, it significantly enhanced administrative efficiency, facilitated the

movement of passengers and goods, and also reinforced the integration of Cyprus into broader colonial economic networks.



Local people with the train passing at Haspolat (Mia Milia) station

The railway made its last journey on December 31, 1951 and was closed with a ceremony

Figure 1. Cyprus Government Railway as common cultural heritage [9]

Although its purpose was to transport fruits and vegetables produced around the town of Morphou and copper ore extracted from Lefka to the port of Famagusta, and this 122 km line was also said to transport both materials and people, its true purpose was to reflect British royal power on the island.[10] There are two types of trains used on railways: "steam trains" and "rail cars".[11] Steam trains and wagons are used to carry passengers and freight, while "rail cars" are used to carry letters and packages.[12] The train's speed is between 20 and 30 miles per hour, and it operates twice a day. The journey to Nicosia took approximately two hours.[13]

Considering the environmental, cultural, social, economic, technological, and political conditions of the time, the Cyprus Government Railway proved to be a very successful transportation line of the time. The British government decided to close the railway in 1951 due to a lack of budget to cover maintenance and repair costs and a resulting decline in passenger numbers. One of the ulterior motives was the increasing use of motor vehicles on the island and the marketing of British-branded motor vehicles to its users. [14] One branch of the CGR railway network was designed to serve mines leased to the Cyprus Mines Company (CMC) in Lefke. However, due to the division of the island, this branch of the network, which was permitted to transport ore operated by CMC, also ceased operations.[15]

Today, some part of the Cyprus Railway heritage remained in Northern Cyprus, while the other part remained in Southern Cyprus. Research has shown that the Cyprus Railway Heritage encompasses not only the structures themselves, but also all furniture used within them, station equipment and fittings, and archival documents.[16] The railway heritage of Cyprus should be examined under two headings: tangible and intangible railway heritage. The tangible heritage of the CGR includes station buildings, workshops, train shelters, port buildings, water tanks, windmills, stops, depots, piers, rails and bridges, locomotives, steam trains, wagons, and all other movable and immovable heritage assets. [17] The intangible railway heritage of the CGR includes production technology, data records, business culture, and the social, cultural, and economic activities and experiences of people. Both tangible and intangible railway heritage must be preserved as the island's shared heritage.

The railway heritage of Cyprus has a significant part of the island's recent history and a significant tangible and intangible cultural heritage that cannot be experienced today. During the years the railway was in operation, social, cultural, and economic developments were created in the settlements along the route from Famagusta to Evrychou. The CGR, which operated continuously for 46 years and was closed in 1951 by decision of the British colonial administration, was dismantled by its builder. The British administration first allowed the rails to be dismantled and sold to other countries.

Within the division of the island, individual conservation efforts are being carried out. Evrychou station, which is remained in the Southern part of the island has been conserved and converted into a railway museum (Figure 2). The old station was designated an ancient monument in need of protection by the Department of Antiquities of the Republic of Cyprus in 2002. In 2005, the restoration of these station structures began as the Cyprus Railway Museum. Following this positive initiative, individual, non-holistic restoration works began in Northern Cyprus as well.

Evrychou station building	Locomotive exhibited next to the building

Figure 2. Evrychou station as Cyprus Railway Museum

During the operational lifespan of the Cyprus Government Railway from 1905 to 1951, the island of Cyprus underwent many transformations across social, cultural, economic, political, technological, and spatial dimensions. The construction and operation of the railway played a significant role in shaping the island's development, acting as both a catalyst and a reflection of broader changes. This period was marked by significant shifts in urban planning and architectural practices, accompanied by evolving socio-economic structures and technological advancements. The railways not only facilitated mobility and trade but also contributed to the modernization and reconfiguration of the Cypriot landscape and society.

CURRENT CONDITION OF CYPRUS RAILWAY BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES

The Cyprus Goverment Railway, built during the British colonial period, was terminated by the colonial administration in 1951. Below is the CGR route and its Class I, II, and III station structures, stops, and side stations. A indicates Class I stations; B indicates Class II stations; C indicates Class III stations; D indicates halts; E indicates halts and sidings; and F indicates junction (Figure 3).

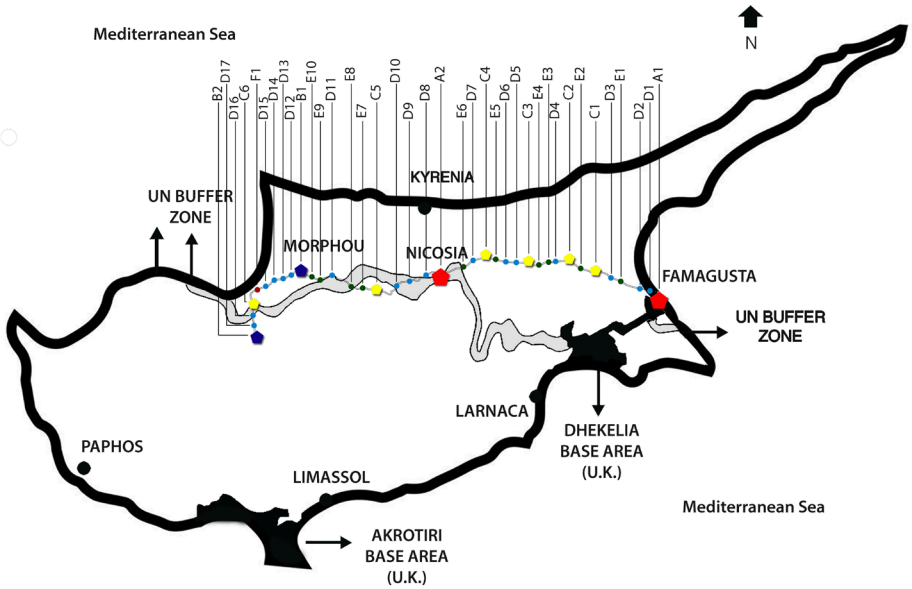


Figure 3. Stations, halts and sidings belongs to CGR [18]

As a result of archive searches and fieldwork, a total of 38 structures were identified on the railway line, 10 of them are stations and 28 are stops. Eight of these 10 stations were located in Northern Cyprus and two in Southern Cyprus, and the remaining five in the north were completely demolished. The demolished stations are Prastio, Yenagra, Angastina, Trakhoni, and Kalochorio. Unfortunately, only five station structures in the north and south of the island have survived to the present day: Famagusta, Nicosia, and Morphou (Figure 4 & 5) in the north, and Kokkinotrimithia and Evrychou in the south. None of the 28 stops exist today.

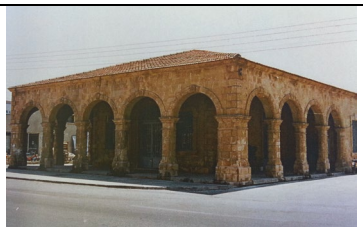
Famagusta Railway Station

Nicosia Railway Station

Morphou Railway Station

Figure 4. Three main railway stations on the Cyprus Railway route in 1950s[19]

Famagusta Railway Station



Nicosia Railway Station

Morphou Railway Station

Figure 5. Three main railway stations on the Cyprus Railway route in 2024

VALUE ASSESSMENT OF CYPRUS GOVERNMENT RAILWAY IN THE COLLECTIVE MEMORY OF A DIVIDED ISLAND

For years, the conflict and disagreement between the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities living in Cyprus has been preoccupying the international community, as well as the islanders. These two communities sharing a common cultural heritage have many grounds and opportunities for reconciliation. Cyprus Government Railway has potential to be one of the tools that can be used for reconciliation of the island. The CGR is an important and valuable legacy for both communities. It carries social and cultural significance beyond its physical existence, which operated between 1905 and 1951. This shared heritage has the potential to represent the past of the communities and their future on the path to peace.

The Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities, along with relevant international stakeholders, should work together in harmony to help preserve this shared heritage. The Cyprus Government Railway has the potential to play a significant role in achieving a better, more peaceful future. Preserving railway heritage of the island will help these communities remember who they are, help them forget their past, enable them to tell their shared stories, and help them question the present and shed light on the future.

The preservation of CGR has potential to play a crucial role in the reconstruction of collective memory. Preserving and revitalizing CGR will enhance the tangible and intangible significance of this phenomenon as a heritage, both at the individual and societal levels. Conservation of CGR requires an approach that encompasses not only the physical but also the narrative and emotional dimensions of cultural heritage and it can contribute to the development of a critical awareness of the past in contemporary societies and the establishment of a sustainable cultural dialogue.

The railway heritage of the Cyprus expresses the common identity, traditions and customs of both the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities. The railway heritage encompasses not only the physical structures but also the cultural meanings they embody. Tangible values refer to material elements (buildings, monuments, and urban landscapes) that exhibit historical, artistic, or technological significance. In other words, tangible values refer to the physical, material state of the heritage that can be seen, touched, and measured. Tangible values of CGR include historical value, artistic/aesthetic value, technological value, urban/environmental value, functional value, and scientific/research value. Intangible values include the traditions, memories, skills, and cultural practices (such as construction techniques, rituals, or community identity) associated with these structures. In other words, intangible values include non-physical aspects related to meaning, memory, and human use. Intangible values of CGR include cultural value, symbolic/spiritual value, social value, identity value, narrative value, and emotional value. All these tangible and intangible values forms railway heritage of the island, a comprehensive indicator reflecting the island's social, historical, and cultural evolution. Railway heritage is an important aspect of the island's architectural heritage, collective memory, and identity. [20]

Holistic conservation of CGR is possible through an understanding of the relationships between tangible and intangible assets. Conservation problems in historic environments arise from interruptions in the relationships between tangible and intangible values, which are often associated with intangible values, and are not realized in the living and built culture and passed on to future generations. [21] In this context, the sustainability of the relationships between tangible and intangible values is considered the most critical issue in conservation of CGR. The complex relationships between tangible and intangible cultural heritage values belonging to CGR require understanding to identify specific rules connecting the tangible and intangible values and their varied aspects for preservation. Preservation approaches related to CGR should be based primarily on the conservation

and documentation of interrupted relationships and the support or encouragement of ongoing relationships. [22]

CONCLUSION

The railway heritage of Cyprus, which lies within the scope of the Cyprus Industrial Heritage, is directly related within the architectural history and architectural conservation on the island. The railway and related structures, which reflect the historical process of the British colonial period, symbolize an era. Railways transformed the cities and other settlements they passed through after their construction, as well as the new urban and regional spaces they created. This heritage symbolizes numerous cultural, social, economic, technological, and political phenomena. In this respect, the preservation of cultural values and architectural heritage is crucial for maintaining the memory of the heritage.

This shared cultural heritage, which inherently embodies the historical and cultural dynamics of the Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot communities, is significant both locally and internationally. This shared cultural heritage, built during the British colonial period, must be preserved with both tangible and intangible values for the information it provides about a historical past. The conservation should not only concern the buildings and their immediate surroundings; it should also encompass the memories of experiences. In other words, preservation should also include the experiences and memories of those places.

Establishing the relationship between tangible and intangible values is one of the most important issues in conservation. A successful conservation approach should aim conservation of both tangible and intangible values. CGR should promote conservation approaches that reflect the complex and dynamic relationship between tangible and intangible values. While preservation efforts on the island of Cyprus have progressed in recent years, the focus remains on tangible features. Conservation efforts have neglected the intangible values, focusing primarily on the conservation of historic environments.

The railway heritage of island is a crucial cultural heritage for both communities. It is important to preserve this heritage, along with its tangible and intangible values, as part of the collective memory and transfer it for further generations. The preservation of the railway heritage, its route, structures, railway-related memory, and the sustainability of the cultural heritage in its immediate vicinity are only possible through a holistic approach encompassing both tangible and intangible values.

NOTES

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INTERSECTIONAL IDENTITY AND URBAN PLANNING: EMPOWERING WOMEN AND GIRLS IN AFRICAN TOWNSHIPS THROUGH ON-THE-GROUND RESEARCH OF PUBLIC SPACES: INSIGHTS FROM PHASE 1 OF THE GIRLS MAKE THE CITY PROJECT IN LANGA, CAPE TOWN

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INTRODUCTION

Historically, public spaces in South Africa have not adequately addressed the safety and inclusivity of women and girls. This is particularly evident in townships, where intersecting identities, such as gender, race and socio-economic status, interrelated vulnerabilities. Reports from the South African Police Service (SAPS) consistently highlight that public areas are primary sites for violent crimes, disproportionately affecting women, especially those from marginalised communities.[1] In response, the Girls Make the City (GMTC)[2] project was established to leverage architecture and urban planning, in collaboration with local communities, to co-create safer and more inclusive public spaces.

This project employs participatory, on-the-ground research methods to ensure community-driven solutions. The research phase included site visits, stakeholder consultations and immersive reflective sessions. These activities aimed to uncover lived experiences and local spatial dynamics informing effective intervention strategies. Initial results underscore the value of cross-disciplinary collaboration, blending architectural and urban planning approaches with grassroots insights. Partnerships amplify the initiative's scope by integrating creative and educational opportunities for youth. Co-design methodologies prioritize the perspectives of girls and their communities, fostering sustainable and context-sensitive outcomes. Ultimately, GMTC emphasises incorporating gender-sensitive strategies in urban planning and design practices to empower women and girls, driving equitable urban transformation. This paper emphasises addressing the intersectional identities of women and girls within urban contexts, particularly those marked by systemic marginalisation and spatial inequality, establishing the urgency of this focus.

Wetopia and Regenerative Development: Situating GMTC within Wetopia

'Girls Make the City' (GMTC) is a collaborative initiative situated within Wetopia,[3] a civic imagination movement hosted by Open Design Afrika.[4] Wetopia challenges conventional governance metaphors, reimagining the traditional umbrella of protection as a boat, representing collective agency where every individual shapes resilient, inclusive communities. It's an invitation to co-navigate urban challenges through participatory design and shared action.

This ethos is grounded in three core ‘superpowers’: the power of us (collective agency), the power of place (contextual specificity) and the power of doing (action-oriented change).[5] Aligned with this framework, GMTC draws on regenerative development and on-the-ground participatory research to co-produce contextually relevant interventions. Rather than imposing solutions, the project identifies transformation opportunities rooted in lived community experiences and the latent potential within local crises.

The initiative focuses on reimagining urban spaces for girls in township or micro-scaled neighbourhood contexts and for the purpose of this paper, Langa Township in Cape Town, highlighting gendered experiences and inclusive design. The project directly supports Sustainable Development Goals 5 (gender equality) and 11 (sustainable cities and communities).[6] Recognising Langa's rich social and cultural capital, GMTC highlights the township’s critical role in both the project and broader discourses of urban regeneration and Afro-feminist spatial justice.

Inspired by the original Girls Make the City initiative in Brussels, the Cape Town chapter was founded by five female social impact entrepreneurs. Their shared vision and commitment to social justice, gender equity and urban transformation have been central to adapting and localising the project within the South African context.

Intersectional Identities of Women and Girls

This research is rooted in a personal and professional positionality, as a woman in planning, and more specifically, as a Black woman navigating urban planning. This lens informs an approach grounded in gender-sensitive planning, drawing on critical insights from Black feminist thought to interrogate how space is produced, experienced and reimagined. Planning is not neutral; it is shaped by positionality, affecting how spaces are viewed and governed.

While institutional frameworks often centre the physical and social production of space, privileging technical expertise and policy, this research aligns with scholars like Piazzoni, who argue that public spaces' authenticity is revealed through the lived experiences, narratives and everyday practices of their users. In these daily performances, space's meaning is continually contested and reconstructed.

Recent scholarship increasingly foregrounds the gendered and racialised dynamics of public space, an emerging area within urban planning and architectural discourse. Examining how women, especially Black women and girls, engage with and appropriate space, reveals insights into how intersectional identities are accommodated or excluded within dominant planning paradigms.

Within the GMTC project, this investigation deepened through on-the-ground engagement with women and girls in Langa Township.[7] The research examined how factors like caregiving responsibilities, domestic roles, teenage pregnancy, body shaming, age, gender representation, education level and employment status influence their navigation of public spaces. These intersecting social conditions directly impact community participation, access to opportunity and overall feelings of safety and inclusion, echoing previous concerns.

Embracing the Wetopia philosophy's concept of ‘flipping the umbrella’, this research rejected top-down, inflexible intervention models in favour of community-led, situated knowledge production. This approach aimed to surface the nuanced and often overlooked experiences of marginalised groups in the urban environment. GMTC is thus positioned as both a research intervention and a practical framework for advancing safer, more inclusive and accessible public spaces, emphasising the needs and aspirations of girls and gender minorities in communities actively working toward more just, viable and liberatory public spaces for all.

Contextualising the Crisis: South African Crime Statistics

Recent local crime statistics from the South African Police Service (SAPS) continuously draw attention to pervasive safety concerns affecting women and children. While marginal decreases in reported incidents might suggest incremental progress, ongoing high-profile cases consistently expose deep-rooted systemic issues compromising women's safety in both public and institutional spaces.

Young girls remain particularly vulnerable to physical and sexual violence, which leaves lasting emotional and psychological impacts. Historical data consistently indicates a high incidence of rape among victims under 18, informing this project's focus on adolescent girls, a demographic disproportionately affected by gender-based violence (GBV)[8] and social marginalisation. For example, former South African Police Minister Bheki Cele's recent crime statistics emphasise the ongoing safety concerns for women and children in SA. Despite a slight decrease, the recent brutal attack on a female student at the University of Cape Town highlights the urgent need for change. This underscore the urgent need for interventions addressing women and girls' safety across all environments, including public spaces where they are frequently exposed to risk.

GMTC aligns with wider activist movements aimed at challenging and transforming these conditions. Among them is young activist Owethu Mahlalela, who uses poetry to highlight gender-based violence and amplify the lived experiences of girls navigating unsafe urban spaces. Her work, grounded in creative expression and community involvement, closely reflects the ethos of Girls Make the City.

This project aims to create platforms where girls and young women can safely articulate their experiences, needs and aspirations. Through participatory methods, the initiative seeks to co-create public spaces that are not only safe but also vibrant, inclusive and joyful, urban environments where girls can thrive, belong and be celebrated as active agents in shaping their cities.

Why Langa Township in South Africa

Langa, Cape Town’s oldest Black township, holds immense historical and symbolic significance. Its name, meaning “sun” in isiXhosa, evokes warmth and resilience, yet its origin is marked by systemic exclusion of Black South Africans from urban life. Established in 1927 under the Urban Areas Act, Langa was a product of racially segregative policies that deliberately restricted Black people’s access to cities, housing and economic opportunity. This legislation reinforced socio-spatial inequalities in South African urban development.

Despite this history of exclusion, Langa emerged as a significant site of anti-apartheid resistance, with its residents playing a key role in challenging structural injustice. While post-apartheid spatial planning has redressed racial inequities, neglecting gender inequality remains critical. As Totaforti notes, inclusivity in urban planning must account for gender, particularly where paradigms reflect masculine bias.

This challenge is global: male-centric urban planning and designs often overlook girls' and women’s needs, rendering public spaces sites of exclusion, insecurity and violence for gender minorities. GMTC confronts this by directly involving girls in design and planning, amplifying their voices, challenging gendered exclusions and creating safer, more inclusive public spaces.

Teenage girls, in particular, face unique challenges, including heightened vulnerability to sexual harassment, restricted freedom of movement and limited self-expression in public space. These issues are compounded in township contexts, where structural inequalities intersect with deeply rooted gender norms.

In 2022, “freedom from gender-based violence” became a collective call to action among Langa-based activists, responding to a troubling rise in GBV cases. More recently, a series of femicide incidents in Langa has intensified demands for immediate, transformative responses to the spatial and social conditions that enable such violence.

In this context, the GMTC Cape Town team undertook on-the-ground research to understand women and girls' experiences of public space in Langa. This involved collecting Langa-specific data through participatory engagements, capturing stories, concerns and community aspirations centred around girls' lived experiences. Findings expose everyday realities of gendered urban life and serve as a foundation for designing public spaces that prioritise safety, inclusion and dignity for all.

PHASE 1 RESEARCH: PARTICIPATORY GROUNDWORK

The research phase of the Girls Make the City project spanned from March to July 2023, beginning with a preliminary meeting with a City of Cape Town representative on April 13, 2023. This engagement aligned project objectives with the City's urban development agenda and explored collaboration, providing critical institutional context.

Early stages included hosting visiting Fontys University students from the Netherlands, part of an international collaboration fostering cross-cultural learning. They accompanied the team on visits to key public spaces in Langa, observing and engaging with the township's spatial and social dynamics. Their reflections contributed to the project's understanding of place-based challenges from an outsider's perspective, particularly concerning gendered urban experiences. This helped reveal preconceived ideas about townships, with Phase 2 planning to involve Langa girls directly to uncover their lived realities. Direct engagement with Langa girls was not a primary focus during this initial Phase 1, as the aim was to establish foundational understanding and gather broader community insights before directly involving the target group in co-design for Phase 2.

Site Visits, Stakeholders' Consultations and Reflective Sessions

On April 20, 2023, a second engagement session with Fontys students[9] collaborated with the Langa Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Advisory Group, a crucial community-led body. This session involved a guided exploration of various Langa public spaces, identifying potential GMTC intervention sites. The walkabout interrogated the spatial politics embedded in these environments, including how gender, power and visibility shape public space use and perception.

Site visits included an encounter with the Red Tigers girls' netball team, symbolising women's empowerment through sport in Langa. Netball holds significant social importance, offering young girls a platform for confidence-building and community visibility. The group also visited the Langa Museum, engaging with the area's cultural and political history.

Following field activities, a reflective workshop with Fontys students captured their impressions as international visitors. Discussion encouraged critical reflection on Langa's distinctiveness and how its narratives might be perceived by outsiders. These reflections grounded the project in place-based knowledge and informed stakeholder identification. This engagement underscored the importance of learning from the local about the local, essential for genuine, context-sensitive collaboration.

Stakeholder Workshop Outcomes

Following extensive research and continuous dialogue, a stakeholder workshop convened on June 15, 2023, in Langa. It gathered community-based stakeholders interested in GMTC, centring local residents' knowledge and experiences, particularly understanding spatial safety through a gendered lens.

A participatory mapping exercise was core to the workshop, inviting daily users of Langa's public spaces to identify areas perceived as safe or unsafe for women and girls. Guided discussions generated context-specific data, unfiltered by external assumptions.

The mapping sparked powerful conversations, revealing shared community concerns and priorities. These exchanges fostered strong collective ownership and community solidarity regarding changes

needed to improve safety, access and dignity in Langa's public spaces. A key outcome was recognising that gender should not be addressed in isolation; while GMTC centres girls' experiences, stakeholders emphasised including male allies and broader community networks for sustainable change.

Strong consensus emerged on the urgent need for locally embedded GBV support groups and a call for GMTC-like initiatives to remain grounded in community lived experiences. This reaffirmed participatory engagement as both a research tool and a mechanism for co-producing knowledge and advancing inclusive urban transformation.

Stakeholder Organisations: Criteria and Engagement

In early stakeholder engagement, GMTC reached out to three Langa-based organisations to identify collaborators. A comprehensive site visit with Project Playground proved instrumental in shaping participant selection criteria.

Project Playground is a well-established children's rights organisation empowering vulnerable youth in South Africa, particularly those affected by apartheid's legacy.[10] They provide holistic after-school programs for learners and individuals with disabilities, drawing participants from across Langa through sports, arts and educational initiatives.

During the site visit, Project Playground staff toured their facilities, offering insight into how young people navigate public spaces in Langa, revealing the township's socio-spatial dynamics and contextualising potential participants' lived environments.

Following this, Project Playground, along with Just Grace[11] and LoveLife,[12] were identified as key stakeholders. These organisations nominated girls for Phase 2 and acted as local partners throughout the process.

Preliminary criteria guided participant selection: girls' existing skills and interests, demonstrated passion, availability, commitment to workshops and potential for long-term engagement. Diversity across age, background and identity was prioritised with an explicit focus on intersectionality, ensuring participants reflected a broad spectrum of lived experiences.

Co-design Methodologies and Contextual Outcomes

Drawing on Mbembe and Myers, this research engages with everyday life in African cities, acknowledging that social realities often exceed conventional urban analysis. Our on-the-ground research in Langa, complemented by stakeholder insights, affirms that urban life in African contexts is characterised by continual flux, shaped by informal practices and evolving spatial imaginaries. These dynamics often remain invisible within formal planning processes, constrained by static models and Eurocentric norms.

In post-apartheid South Africa, spatial injustice persists as urban planning and design continue to marginalise Black communities. Historically, formal policies devalued Black residents' lives, particularly in townships, creating environments that fail to support inhabitants' realities. This disconnect contributes to urban inequality and exclusion, raising urgent questions about planners' roles in pursuing spatial justice.

For African planners, especially those from townships, this disjuncture is deeply personal. It demands a shift toward socially responsive design approaches that centre lived experience, local knowledge and collaborative processes. Such approaches respond to material conditions and engage the cultural, emotional and relational dimensions of urban life, promoting co-creation of context-specific, ambitious, creative solutions rooted in African cities' realities.

While increasing women's representation in planning may not immediately dismantle gendered hierarchies, it is a critical step toward reimagining spatial production through more inclusive, identity-

conscious lenses. As Kanai and Schindler argue, such interventions are essential for cultivating meaningful connections between people and place, fostering solidarity, resilience and agency in shaping African urban futures.

This research grounds its methodology in lived experience as a primary knowledge source, emphasising context-specific inquiry rooted in local communities' everyday realities. Central to this is facilitating community workshops that provide safe spaces for residents, particularly women and girls, to share personal narratives. These stories foster empathy, build solidarity and inform inclusive design. Through co-creation, the project develops interventions collectively owned and responsive to those most affected by spatial injustice.

Empowering community voices guides this work. Storytelling, participatory mapping and creative expression elevate participants' agency. Neighbourhoods are viewed as living laboratories where daily rhythms and crises hold transformative potential. The research embraces these dynamics to challenge paradigms and shift attitudes toward inclusive planning.

The project directly engages urban stakeholders; planners, architects, designers and policymakers; presenting tangible, place-based evidence highlighting girls' and women's experiences. Personal stories translate into emotional and cultural knowledge, challenging purely technical data and demonstrating embodied insights' legitimacy. Community members are treated as co-researchers, leveraging local knowledge as a core design tool, embedding care, equity and responsiveness into urban planning and placemaking.

Key Learnings and Implications

The Girls Make the City (GMTC) initiative in Langa has yielded key insights for urban practice and academic investigation. Primarily, it affirms that real urban transformation emerges when lived experiences are centralised in research and design. Grounding work in local communities' realities allows for nuanced, contextually appropriate interventions. The project also demonstrated that fostering a collective sense of identity and belonging contributes to community well-being and social cohesion, essential for sustained urban change.

Furthermore, co-creation of knowledge and shared ownership have proven vital in producing spatial interventions rooted in care, inclusion and local relevance. Trust and transparency between researchers and community members enabled authentic expression, empowering participants and enhancing process legitimacy. Approaching Langa as a living case study offered deep, context-specific insights unavailable through abstract or top-down methods. Ongoing stakeholder engagement ensured the process remained responsive, adaptive and aligned with community aspirations.

Crucially, the project reaffirms the value of local knowledge as a powerful form of urban intelligence. Non-linear, adaptive methods were essential in complex, lived contexts where rigid planning frameworks fall short. These findings demonstrate that meaningful transformation occurs when communities are actively centred throughout the process, from initial insight to final implementation. Additionally, these outcomes offer valuable lessons for academic research and curriculum development, particularly in urban planning, architecture and design, encouraging a pedagogical shift toward participatory, context-responsive learning that honours lived experience as legitimate knowledge.

Looking Ahead: Translating Learnings to New Contexts

The next phase of GMTC involves expanding to Athlone, a neighbouring community.[13] While grounded in regenerative development, it will be guided by contextual specificity, adapting to Athlone's distinct rhythms and needs without replicating the Langa experience. The process will remain flexible, attentive to on-the-ground realities and shaped by community insights.

Each GMTC iteration is designed to be place-specific, echoing Wetopia's "power of place," allowing for locally rooted, community-authored versions. This advances inclusive urban transformation and supports new planning and design models that honour difference while working toward equity.

CONCLUSION: TOWARDS REGENERATIVE, FEMINIST URBANISM

The Girls Make the City (GMTC) project demonstrates that public space interventions must go beyond surface-level inclusion. Grounded in regenerative development and feminist planning, the initiative showcases the importance of centring women and girls, not as passive recipients, but as co-creators of spatial transformation.

By grounding design in everyday life, GMTC challenges dominant planning paradigms and introduces methodologies that are participatory, intersectional and deeply context-specific. The project offers lessons not only for Langa but also for other townships and global urban settings navigating gender-based spatial injustice.

This approach has implications for urban design education, research and professional practice. GMTC proves that when planners listen deeply, respond creatively and act collaboratively, cities can become not only safer but more joyful, empowering and just.

In shaping future cities, we must ask: What might planning look like if it began with the stories of girls?

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LAYERS OF ADAPTATION: VERTICAL MOBILITY, CULTURAL IDENTITY, AND ARCHITECTURAL TRANSFORMATION IN SAMA BADJAU RESETTLEMENT HOUSING IN NUEVA ECIJA

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INTRODUCTION

In the history of the Sama Badjau, two distinct forms of mobility have shaped their cultural trajectory: horizontal mobility, which refers to movement within the same social stratum through sea-based migration, and vertical mobility, which involves altering aspects of their established identity to adapt to a new, land-based settlement. Their cultural identity has historically played a central role in how they envision their future and respond to changes in their living environment.

According to Valle-Castillo, the Sama Badjau are one of the thirteen Islamic ethnolinguistic groups indigenous to Mindanao. They are generally described as nomadic and highly mobile, often migrating from one island to another by boat in search of livelihood or food. This seafaring tradition has earned them recognition as the most maritime-oriented people in the coastal region stretching from Zamboanga Bay to the Sulu Archipelago.[1]

A central aim of this research is to demonstrate that the Sama Badjau are capable of adapting to a sedentary, land-based way of life, a condition that stands in stark contrast to their historically nomadic and water-oriented existence. This shift raises important questions about the transformation of their original identity and highlights the multiple factors influencing their sedentarization and adaptation on land.

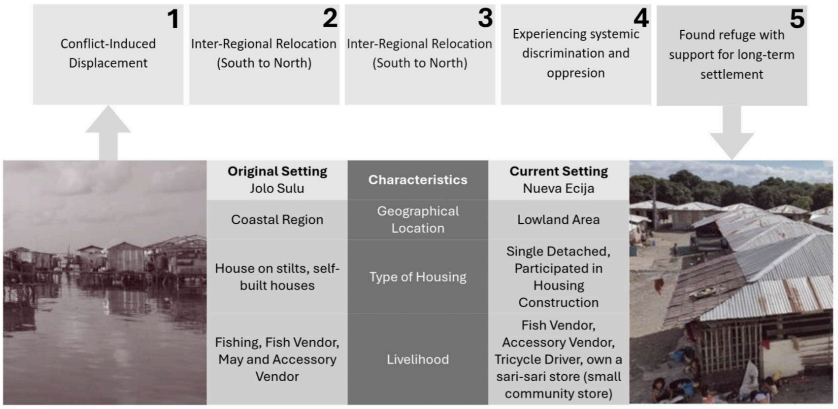


Figure 1. Context of Displacement and Cultural Shift

While previous studies have examined the socio-economic challenges of Sama Badjau resettlement, few have explored how vertical mobility within their housing affects their capacity to express and preserve cultural identity. This study addresses that gap by investigating how the Sama Badjau personalize, modify, and spatially express their cultural identity within resettlement housing that incorporates vertical mobility features.

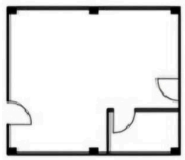
The research focuses on a single-storey socialized housing development in Barangay Bakod Bayan designed to accommodate 121 Sama Badjau households. By linking the concept of architectural mobility with cultural adaptation, this study seeks to contribute to the discourse on culturally sensitive housing design for displaced maritime communities.

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted in a government-initiated single-storey socialized housing development in Barangay Bakod Bayan, designed for 121 Sama Badjau households. Each unit measures approximately 5 m × 6 m (30 m²) and is equipped with basic utilities such as water and electricity (see Figure 1). The site layout provides setbacks at the front, sides, and rear of each house, enabling the potential for horizontal expansion. Internally, the units have an open-plan layout, with the only fixed partition enclosing the toilet and bath.

During the construction phase, members of the Sama Badjau community actively participated in building their houses and were allowed to select their units. This participation fostered a sense of ownership and provided them with basic construction and maintenance skills.

A purposive sampling approach was used to select 100 households, each represented by a household head. Household sizes ranged from 3–4 members in most cases to as many as 5–8 members in larger, extended families (see figure 2).



Single Detached House

Single-detached house for each Sama Badjau family.

- A total of 250 (30sqm) houses built for the 250 Sama Badjau
- All houses are equipped with the basic requirements.
- Each house can be personalized based on their needs.

The Sama Badjaus participated in building their houses during the construction phase.

Figure 2. Initial Occupation and Basic Shelter Use

Data Collection

Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews, architectural surveys, and on-site observations.

- Semi-structured interviews explored spatial use, cultural practices, and modification history.
- Architectural surveys documented changes to building form and layout, focusing on structural additions, reallocation of interior functions, and decorative or symbolic adaptations.

- On-site observations recorded material use, orientation choices, and community-level cultural structures.

Classification of Modification

To quantify the scale of changes, modifications were classified into three categories:
Structural Additions – Physical expansions to the original house, measured as a percentage of total possible expansion.
- Level 1 (25% modification) – Expansion on one side.
- Level 2 (50% modification) – Expansion on two sides.
- Level 3 (75% modification) – Expansion on three sides (corner-lot units only).
- 100% modifications were not possible due to site constraints.
- All additions were horizontal; no vertical interventions were recorded.

Functional Zoning – Interior reconfiguration based on activity use. This included complete reallocation of living, dining, and kitchen areas (while retaining the toilet and bath in its original location) or minimal changes limited to installing lightweight partitions for bedrooms.
Symbolic Expressions/Personalization – Cultural and decorative adaptations such as spatial orientation based on belief systems, multifunctional use of space, culturally guided furniture placement, and the integration of traditional materials (e.g., bamboo, cogon). This category also included community-level structures such as the Imam's house, built using traditional methods and materials.

Data Analysis

The extent of modifications for each category was calculated as a percentage of the total surveyed households, allowing for comparative analysis across the three adaptation types. Qualitative data from interviews and observations were coded to identify recurring themes related to cultural beliefs, functional needs, and material preferences. This mixed-method approach provided both quantitative measures of change and qualitative insight into the cultural meaning of those changes.

Ethical Considerations

The purpose, scope, and process of the research were explained to participants in a language they understood. Verbal consent was obtained from all participants, and they were informed of their right to withdraw at any time without consequence. Confidentiality was maintained by anonymizing household data. Cultural sensitivity was observed during fieldwork, with interview schedules adjusted to respect prayer times and privacy.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The survey of 100 households revealed that all respondents (100%) had made physical modifications to their homes since initial occupancy. These changes ranged from minor interior adjustments to more extensive structural alterations. Each modification varied in scale, representing different levels of change from the original government-provided core shelter. This aligns with Oliver-Smith's observation that residential satisfaction is a critical indicator of the success or failure of resettlement efforts,[2] reflecting the relationship between residents' desires, behaviors, and their current living conditions.[3] In the case of the Sama Badjau, modifications represent an ongoing process of adaptation that goes beyond survival to express preferred ways of living.

Structural Additions

No households introduced vertical interventions such as mezzanines or second floors. All structural changes involved horizontal expansions, utilizing the available setbacks in front, at the sides, or at the rear of the unit. Based on the extent of modification, structural additions were classified into three levels, with 75% expansion as the maximum possible due to site constraints.

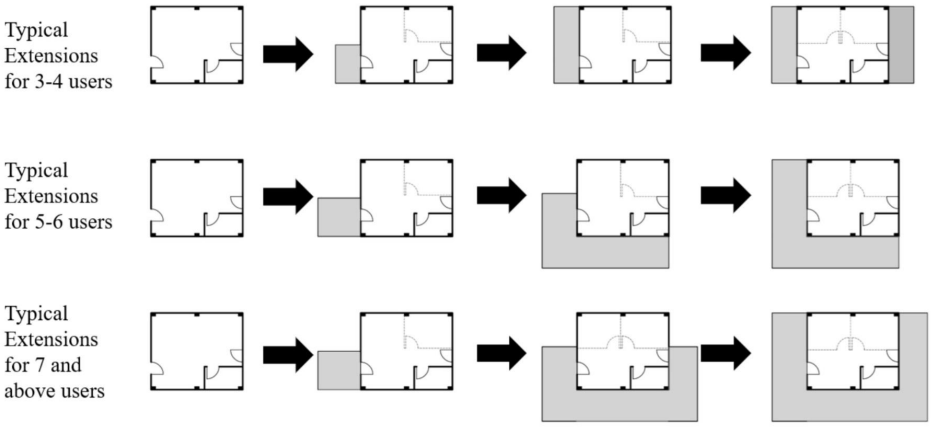


Figure 3. Evolution of internal and external modifications and extensions of the Sama Badjau houses in the resettlement housing in Cabanatuan City

Level 1 Modification (25% expansion) – 48 households (48%)

These households expanded on at least one side of the house, typically adding space either in front or at the rear. The added space was commonly used for a kitchen, a small retail store, or a shaded patio where residents often gathered during the afternoon.

Level 2 Modification (50% expansion) – 37 households (37%)

This category involved expanding on at least two sides of the house. Families with 3–4 members often converted the front expansion into a retail space, while the side or rear expansion became the kitchen. Larger families of 5–6 members frequently relocated their dining area outside to accommodate more sleeping space indoors. In these cases, the original interior was often dedicated entirely to sleeping areas, with dining, living, and kitchen functions moved into the expanded sections.

Level 3 Modification (75% expansion) – 15 households (15%)

This was only possible for corner-lot units, where three sides were available for expansion. These households, typically accommodating 5–8 members, followed similar patterns of functional allocation as Level 2 modifications but benefited from an additional expansion side. The extra space allowed for larger dining areas or additional work-related functions.

These findings resonate with Nguluma's view that housing transformation is not a foreign concept but a natural process of change that includes physical modifications, extensions, and adaptations to meet household needs.[4] Similarly, Tipple and Owusu define transformation as the modification or extension of a dwelling, often through the use of local techniques and materials, to improve comfort and reinforce household identity.[5] For the Sama Badjau, horizontal expansions fulfill these functions while allowing for cultural continuity.

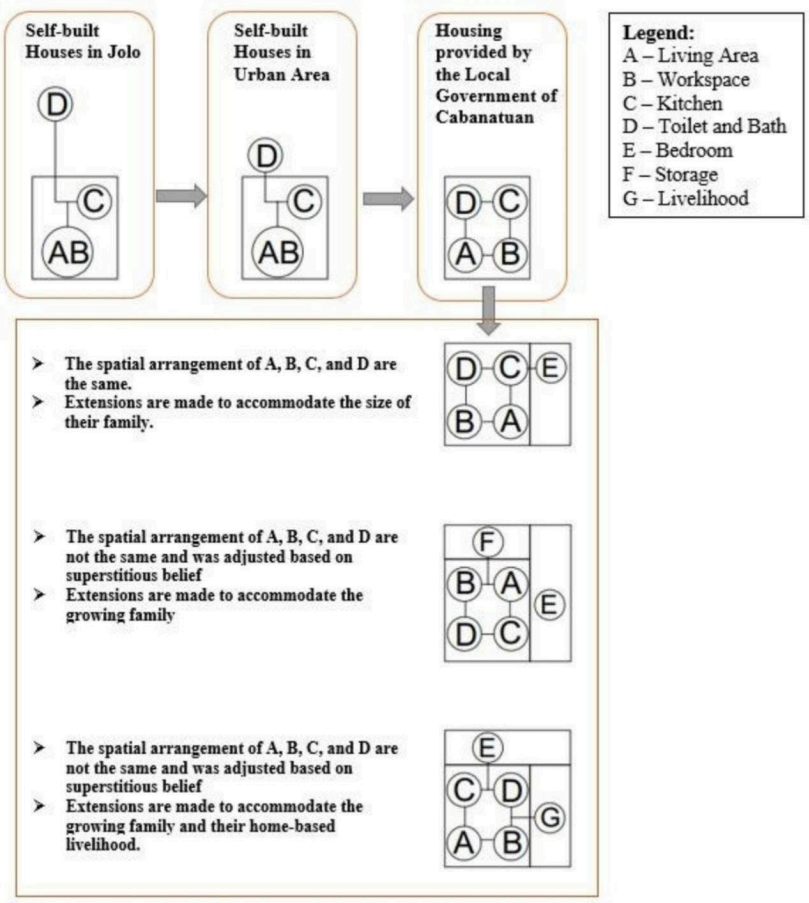


Figure 4. Evolution of space adjacency of the Sama Badjau houses

Functional Zoning

Across all levels of structural expansion, horizontal additions created opportunities to reorganize the home's interior functions. As households extended their dwellings, either on one, two, or three sides, the newly created spaces often prompted a reallocation of activities between the original core shelter and the added sections.

Analysis of interior spatial organization showed that 89% of households redefined the original open-plan layout by rearranging the placement of the living, dining, and kitchen areas. In all cases, the only space that remained in its original position was the toilet and bath, as it was constructed with reinforced concrete walls and integrated plumbing, making relocation structurally and financially impractical.

Within this majority group, households relocated cooking areas closer to expanded sections to improve ventilation and free up the main interior for sleeping or storage. Dining areas were frequently shifted to semi-outdoor spaces, allowing the interior to serve primarily as a sleeping or multipurpose zone.

The remaining 11% of households focused on material modifications rather than complete interior reconfiguration. These households installed lightweight partitions only to create enclosed bedrooms, while leaving the arrangement of living, dining, and kitchen spaces largely unchanged.

These patterns reinforce the link between adaptation and satisfaction identified by Oliver-Smith, where modifications represent not only functional necessity but also residents' aspirations for comfort and lifestyle improvement.[6] As Salama notes in his study of public housing transformation in Egypt,

such changes often occur when the original design fails to meet user needs, prompting residents to take ownership through a series of improvements and extensions.[7] The Sama Badjau's interior transformations mirror this phenomenon, reflecting both necessity and agency.

Symbolic Expression and Personalization

The core houses provided by the local government were designed with an open-plan interior, a configuration that closely resembles the layout of traditional Sama Badjau stilt houses. This familiar spatial framework allowed households to integrate cultural and symbolic elements into their living spaces without significantly altering the original structure.

Internal modifications often reflect cultural beliefs and traditions. One of the most common adjustments was orienting the kitchen toward the sunrise or the direction of the sun, a practice rooted in Sama Badjau superstition that is believed to bring good fortune and ensure prosperity. Another was the multifunctional use of the living area, serving as a workspace during the day and transforming into a sleeping area at night.

Furniture placement was also influenced by cultural beliefs, such as avoiding the alignment of sleeping mats with the main entrance to maintain privacy, ensure protection, and adhere to spiritual practices.

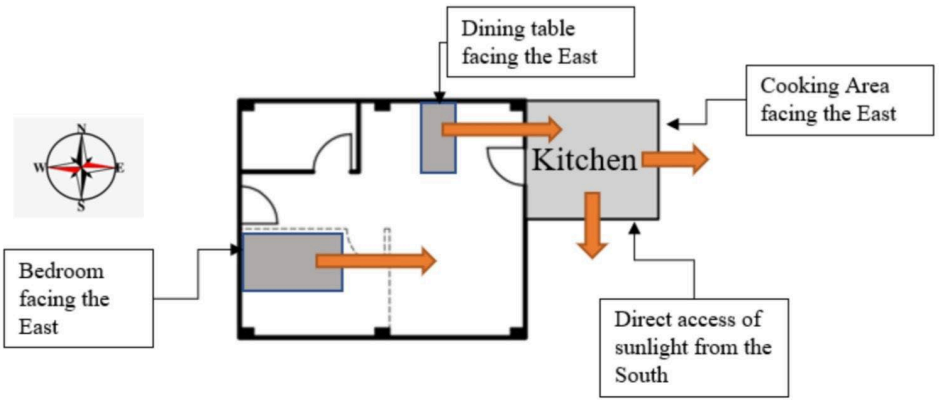


Figure 5. Modified spatial configuration of the Sama Badjau influenced by their cultural beliefs

Material choices further reinforced cultural identity. While the government-provided units were constructed from concrete, many households incorporated bamboo and cogon grass into their expansions. These locally available materials are less expensive and directly linked to the construction methods used in traditional maritime dwellings, echoing Tipple and Owusu's emphasis on local techniques as a form of housing transformation.[8]

A significant community-wide symbolic expression was the construction of the Imam's house in the center of the development. Built entirely from bamboo and cogon with permission from the local government, it replicates the style of their previous settlements. Serving as both a religious and cultural hub, the Imam's house physically anchors the community's identity in their new, land-based environment.

These symbolic and material adaptations illustrate that housing transformation is as much about cultural preservation as it is about functional change. As Nguluma and Salama argue, the process of transformation reflects user engagement with the built environment, resulting in dwellings that better align with household needs, traditions, and aspirations.[9]

DISCUSSION

This study examined how the Sama Badjau personalize, modify, and spatially express their cultural identity in land-based resettlement housing originally designed as single-storey, open-plan units. Findings show that residents engaged in extensive physical and spatial transformations through structural additions, functional zoning, and symbolic personalization. These modifications represent an ongoing negotiation between functional requirements, cultural traditions, and socio-economic adaptation, reinforcing that post-resettlement housing is a dynamic, user-driven process.

Oliver-Smith and Clark note that residential satisfaction is a primary measure of resettlement success, contingent on how well housing meets both functional and cultural needs.[10] Preiser and Seek argue that satisfaction declines when the "standard of tolerance" is exceeded, producing "housing tension."[11] In the case of the Sama Badjau, the 100% modification rate highlights a clear gap between the provided housing and the preferred living environment, consistent with Khan's concept of "unexpected transformation," where dwellings are altered to reconcile actual and desired conditions.[12]

The structural additions documented were exclusively horizontal, reflecting spatial constraints and cultural adaptation strategies. These ranged from single-side expansions to three-side developments in corner-lot units, correlating with household size, livelihood activities, and desired functional arrangements. The use of bamboo and cogon in these expansions supports Nguluma's and Tipple and Owusu's findings that transformation often integrates locally resonant materials to address practical needs and affirm cultural identity.[13]

Functional zoning changes, undertaken by 89% of households, involved reorganizing interior layouts by relocating kitchens to expanded sections for ventilation and space optimization, while retaining the toilet and bath in their original location due to fixed infrastructure. This mirrors the utilitarian spatial distribution described by Ismail in traditional Sama Badjau dwellings, where multifunctional spaces, minimal partitioning, and activity-based zoning accommodate flexible domestic routines.[14]

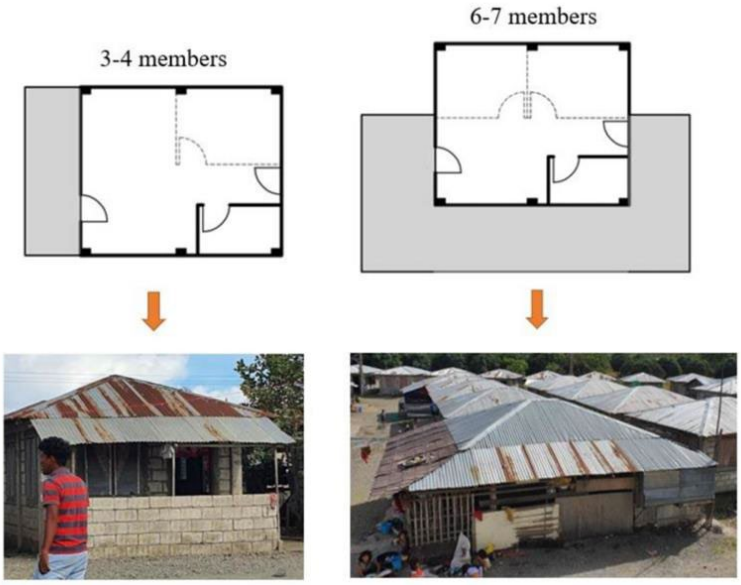


Figure 6. Housing modifications based on number of users

Symbolic expressions and personalization further illustrate the integration of tradition into a new built environment. Practices such as orienting kitchens toward the sunrise, arranging furniture according to belief systems, and constructing a centrally located Imam's house in bamboo and cogon reinforce

social cohesion and maritime heritage. These findings align with Saat's and Warren's framing of vertical mobility as a process of identity consolidation, where permanent settlement signifies a shift in social status while preserving cultural markers.[15] While no vertical structural expansions occurred, the principle of vertical mobility persists as a cultural logic shaping spatial hierarchies and symbolic separations within the household.

CONCLUSION

The adaptation of the Sama Badjau to resettlement housing demonstrates that transformation is both functional and cultural. Modifications serve as strategies to resolve mismatches between the original housing design and lived realities while embedding traditional spatial logic into a fixed, land-based typology. These findings affirm the importance of designing resettlement housing as an adaptable framework rather than a static product.

Policy and design approaches should integrate flexibility in site planning, allow modular expansions, and accommodate culturally significant communal structures. By incorporating locally resonant materials, spatial orientations based on cultural beliefs, and provisions for multifunctional space use, housing provision can better align with residents' socio-cultural needs.

In the context of the Sama Badjau, adaptation is not simply a process of assimilation but a negotiated synthesis of inherited traditions and imposed built environments. Enabling such adaptability within housing policy ensures that the transition from maritime to terrestrial living strengthens rather than diminishes cultural identity, creating sustainable, culturally aligned living environments that go beyond basic survival to foster long-term community resilience.

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CHALLENGES IN CONSERVATION OF HISTORIC AREAS IN BEIJING'S OLD CITY SINCE 2011: IMPACTS OF GOVERNMENT-LED APPROACHES

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INTRODUCTION

Historic areas in old cities vary in urban fabric, each with a distinct spatial logic, providing a unique layout and street character. However, similar social and economic challenges emerge when examined more closely. The deterioration of the built environment, aging infrastructure, and limited spatial capacity raise social concerns. Meanwhile, the highly commercialized and media-driven tourism following regeneration often results in an overemphasis on economic return. Balancing public interest and economic return through a sustainable mechanism in the conservation and regeneration of historic areas is a challenge widely discussed.

Apart from being the capital of China, Beijing is also one of the first designated historic and cultural cities. Therefore, in addition to common challenges, the Old City also faces unique difficulties in balancing government and market forces. In recent years, deeper issues, including fragmented social structure, long payback cycle, and unsustainable economy, have gradually become obstacles that cannot be ignored.

The emergence of these issues has led to discussions on a sustainable operational mechanism for the conservation and regeneration of historic areas. These mechanisms are often discussed across multiple fields, yet persistent gaps between these perspectives need to be connected. With Beijing Old City as an example, this research aims to put forward a theoretical sustainable operational mechanism from an interdisciplinary perspective, and to generate a property-based tiered model enhancing both social and economic values.

LITERATURE REVIEW: DISCUSSIONS ON OPERATIONAL MECHANISM

The discourse surrounding regeneration mechanisms encompass multiple dimensions, including urban planning and architecture, economics, and management.

Urban planning and architecture perspective

The urban planning and architecture perspective focuses mainly on the effectiveness of the socio-spatial system in the conservation and regeneration of historic areas, especially on the interactions between social and spatial dimensions. Different levels of community trust,[1] distinct social structures,[2] and geographic locations[3] present varied socio-spatial characteristics, thereby giving regeneration policies diverse feedbacks.[4] In addition, excessive implementations that prioritize large-

scale demolition or construction, and over-commercialized development predominantly occur at the expense of inclusive stakeholder engagement, thereby severing the continuity of established social networks in this interwoven socio-spatial environment.[5]

Economic perspective

The economic perspective examines the interplay between socio-economic factors, institutional settings, and operational mechanisms.

New institutional economics emphasizes property rights, arguing that they are central to institutional design. Researchers reveal that the ambiguity and malfunction of property rights lead to the deterioration of historic areas,[6] hinder regeneration efforts,[7] and obscure their potential economic benefits.[8] Studies also demonstrate that a reasonable division of property rights among stakeholders enables more efficient resource allocation, which in turn facilitates capital investment, cost recovery, and regeneration efforts.[9]

In parallel to new institutional economics, scholars further explore the dual economic attributes of historic areas. In particular, the possession of both public-goods attributes and market-commodity characteristics, often gives rise to the contradiction and complexity between social values and market values.[10]

Management perspective

The management perspective centers on multi-stakeholder involvement, with a focus on government and market dynamics. It analyzes the evolution from unilateral governance to multi-stakeholder collaborative models,[11] examining how a hybrid government-market model balances public interest with private sector efficiency, along with researches on the role of semi-government and semi-market institutions.[12]

Identified research gaps

Existing studies reveal persistent interdisciplinary gaps. A comprehensive understanding of the conservation and regeneration of historic areas remains elusive, particularly regarding the overall effectiveness of conservation and regeneration within the socio-spatial system, its relationship to the property-based institutional settings, and the underlying operational mechanisms.

SUSTAINABLE OPERATIONAL MECHANISM CONSTRUCTION

Based on the theoretical groundwork, this study proposes an operational mechanism framework comprising institutional settings, social structures, and spatial resources as three constituent elements, aiming to fill the gaps mentioned above (Figure 1).

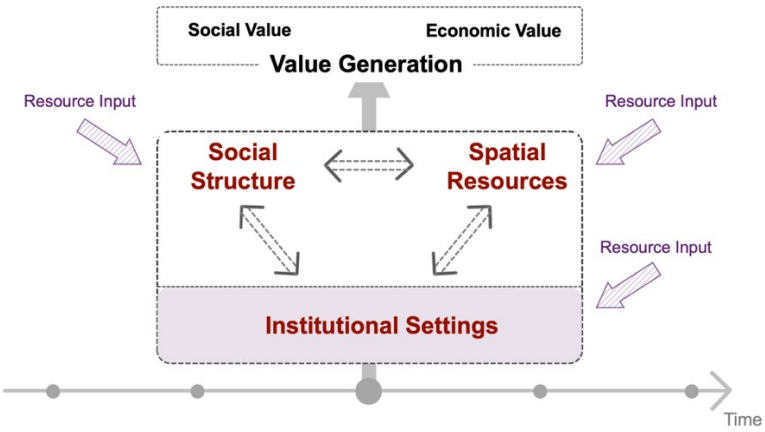

Figure 1. Framework of sustainable operational mechanisms of historic areas

Institutional settings serve as the foundation of this framework, interacting with social structures and spatial resources during conservation and regeneration. Social structures consist of stakeholders participating in the regeneration, such as government entities, market entities, and residents. Spatial resources constitute the physical space of blocks, courtyards and buildings, along with the functions they accommodate.

Stakeholders such as government entities and market entities, participating in the conservation and regeneration, drive the process by channeling targeted resources into one or several of the core elements. For example, in Beijing's case, the government offers the residents a certain amount of compensation to facilitate the residents' relocation. Another example is when the market entities invest in building and courtyard renovation, so as to drive the building repair and functional upgrades. Ideally, the aim is to enhance both social and economic values, ultimately creating a self-sustaining regeneration cycle.

INTRODUCTION OF BEIJING'S CASE

Beijing Old City is selected as a research case because of its prominent typicality and complexity.

Typicality

Compared with other historic areas in old cities of China, Beijing Old City demonstrates clear typicality. To start with, it has undergone two development stages similar to those of other historic areas: the socialist transformation and public ownership reforms in the early years after the founding of the People's Republic, followed by a shift towards market-oriented mechanisms following the Reform and Opening-up policy.

Secondly, it shares similar challenges with other old cities in China, particularly a complex property ownership structure and an ambiguity in property rights. Also, due to historical issues, a considerable amount of public housing has unclear ownership, with their documents lost. Over time, family division and the selling or leasing of school district housing fragmented buildings and courtyards, hindering the conservation and regeneration process.

Finally, in terms of the regeneration mechanism, Beijing Old City has gradually adopted a typical government-led mechanism and has encountered representative difficulties. Since 2011, Beijing Old City has embarked on an initiative led by the government to decrease population density and relocate non-core functions, in which state-owned enterprises (SOEs) act as implementing entities, operating as an extension of the government to carry out its regeneration agenda. In some cases, SOEs are involved in the entire process, while the government only provides resettling housing, illustrating preliminary attempts with SOEs seeking to address funding constraints.

Complexity

Beijing also represents the high complexity of old cities in terms of spatial resources, social structures, and institutional settings.

Firstly, the whole area of the old city is vast, covering approximately 62 square kilometers, of which the historic areas occupy about 25.5 square kilometers. With high population density and low floor area ratio, it is difficult to ensure an adequate living quality. The average dwelling size usually fails to meet the requirements of modern lifestyles; therefore, it is common to construct unauthorized structures in the courtyard, encroaching on public spaces and damaging traditional urban fabrics. Moreover, the function of some historical areas is repetitive, especially after regeneration, problems such as commercial disorder, destruction of historical and cultural resources often occur.

Secondly, due to the lack of infrastructure facilities and the deterioration of physical spaces, a group of original residents leave voluntarily when financially able, seeking to improve living standards elsewhere. As a result, vulnerable groups with low average incomes and shared marginal social status are relatively concentrated in the area, including elderly residents, minors, migrant workers and mobile populations.

Finally, the area is dominated by public ownership of property rights, with a significantly higher proportion than in many other historic areas in China. The public ownership of property rights consists of various types, such as government-owned public housing and work-unit-owned housing. It is common to find different forms of public ownership, and sometimes alongside private ownership, within a single courtyard. This ambiguity imposes substantial costs for the unification of fragmented ownerships, thereby creating significant obstacles to conservation and regeneration process.

The government-led initiative since 2011

Integrated courtyard and clear property rights are the foundation of an effective conservation and regeneration process; therefore, in response to the issues mentioned above, Beijing launched a government-led initiative to decrease population density, clarify ambiguous public property rights, and reintegrate fragmented courtyards. This initiative began in 2011 and has gone through three phases (Table 1).

Common implementation patterns include off-site relocation and on-site replacement. Off-site relocation serves as the standard pattern; residents participate voluntarily and are provided with the option of compensation in the form of allocated housing or a money grant. The allocated housing is regularly situated in the suburbs, with better infrastructure facilities and a larger floor area, which is sufficient for a modern daily life. After the relocation, both fully and partially vacated courtyards will be reused.

Another pattern is the on-site replacement, which is built on the standard off-site relocation pattern. When a courtyard is largely vacated with only a few households remaining, these remaining households are relocated to other courtyards, thereby creating more consolidated and integrated courtyard spaces. Integrated courtyards are more suitable for adaptive reuse and offer greater economic benefits; therefore, on-site replacement offers a greater chance to conserve and reuse the vacated spaces.

Phase 1	Registration-Based Off-site Relocation	2011-2013
Phase 2	Courtyard-Based Off-site Relocation	2013-2018
	Application-Based Off-site Relocation	2015-2018
Phase 3	Application-Based Off-site Relocation/ Application-Based On-site Replacement	2019-
	Courtyard-Based Off-site Relocation	2024-

Table 1. Three phases of the relocation initiative

Additionally, it is necessary to explain why the initiative was chosen to be government-led despite certain difficulties. The area is located in a strategically central position within the city, and its stability is a crucial factor to be considered. The public ownership housing in this area formerly served as work-unit dormitories and was rented out at low cost; therefore, it fulfilled certain public welfare functions and still houses a large number of low-income residents. The lower living costs, compared to high external housing expenses, combined with key place-based benefits, such as access to preferred schools, the convenience of local services, employment opportunities and long-established social networks, collectively reinforce residents' reluctance to relocate. Thus, the conservation and regeneration of this area require careful consideration and are likely to proceed more smoothly if led and carried out by government entities.

Certain outcomes demonstrate its effectiveness; so far, from January to April 2024 alone, the initiative completed the relocation for 1,300 households.[13] And in 2025, the government plans to operate another 2000 households of application-based off-site relocation and 1200 households of the following renovation and maintenance.[14]

ISSUES FACED UNDER THE CURRENT GOVERNMENT-LED INITIATIVE

The land property rights system in China

The institutional settings of the initiative led by the government consist of three components: land use planning and management policies, property rights administration, and fiscal and financial management policies. Among them, property rights administration is the core element, as shown in Figure 2.

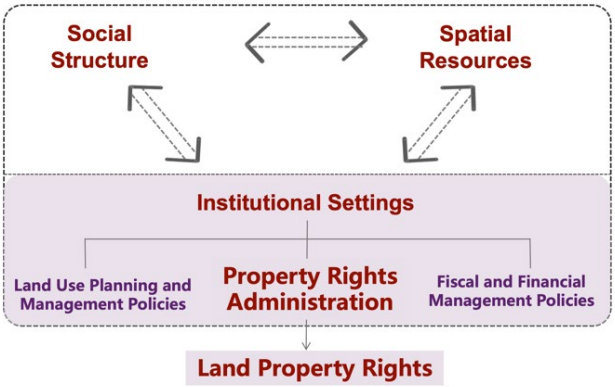

Figure 2. Institutional framework based on land property rights

The land property rights system, as established in the legal framework, forms the basis for property rights administration, and governs all the division and transfer of property rights. Land property right consists of land ownership and land use rights.[15] Land ownership is held by the state, since all land in mainland China is either state-owned or collectively-owned. As shown in Figure 3, building ownership comprises building use rights and building operation rights, land use rights and building ownership are legally bound through the real estate registration system; therefore, any change in one must be processed simultaneously with the other.[16] Compliance with this legislation prevents conflicts between land and buildings due to independent ownerships,[17] which is of great significance for real estate transactions, mortgage financing, and dispute resolution in historic areas of old cities.
In the context of Beijing Old City, the primary analytical focus is on the transfer of land use rights, building ownership, and building use rights across different stakeholders.

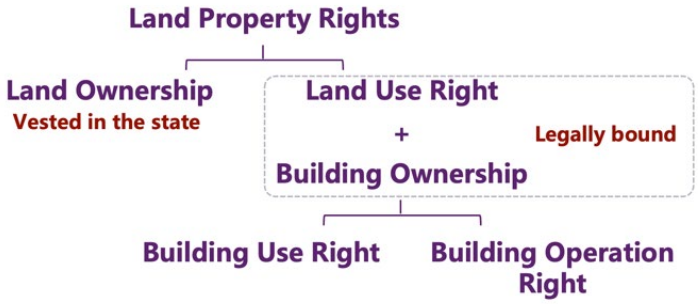

Figure 3. Land property rights composition tree diagram

Key to the issue: clarifying land use rights and building ownership

Beyond serving as the foundation of the institutional settings, the land property rights system also influences the allocation of spatial resources and the relationships among social stakeholders. For example, entitlements such as access to education are embedded in land property rights that are closely related to location; therefore, off-site relocation might result in residents losing their entitlements. In addition, living in the center of the city implies easier access to medical services and elderly care services, which are given careful consideration, and allocating houses far from the city center may restrict access to these facilities.
Consequently, the design of certain legislation for the conservation and regeneration of historic areas in Beijing Old City is centered around land property rights, and clarifying land use rights and building ownership are the key focus, influencing all stages of clearance, repair, and reuse.
To elaborate, in a regular process to relocate residents originally living in government-owned public housing, once they have signed a contract and received compensation, the building use rights will be transferred from the residents to the implementing entity (e.g. SOEs). Subsequently, after paying the land transfer fee and relevant taxes, the implementing entity would, in theory, obtain both land use rights and building ownership from the government, and receive an official certificate. This certificate serves as collateral for securing loans and commercial registration, thereby securing funds to cover part of the substantial upfront costs, including resident compensation.
However, in practice, due to multiple reasons, the implementing entities have not paid the required land transfer fees and taxes. Therefore, as Figure 4 demonstrates, the implementing entity typically fails to obtain an integrated building property. Instead, it only holds building use rights, while ownership of the building and the land use rights remain with the government. This constitutes the primary bottleneck in the current process.

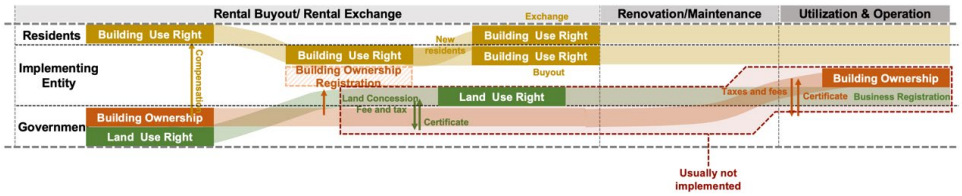

Figure 4. Property rights transfer progress diagram

As mentioned above, it is clear that during the actual process, implementing entities can only participate at the use-right level; therefore, the potential economic value of land use rights and building ownership remains unclaimed. For implementing entities, resident compensation dominates the cost structure, which also includes renovation expenses and taxes. However, based on typical cases in Beijing, income mainly derives from rentals, which is relatively low compared to the high initial investment, making cost recovery difficult. Moreover, the lack of clear and integrated property ownership blocks access to mortgage financing, cutting off a key funding resource. Also, it constrains the ability to adjust the courtyard layout, thereby perpetuating a traditional layout unfit for modern and economically viable functions.

Therefore, to achieve a sustainable operational mechanism, it is essential to address the allocation of land property rights, building ownership rights and building use rights, as well as their connection to a viable financial model.

SUSTAINABLE OPERATIONAL MECHANISM BASED ON TIERED PROPERTY ARRANGEMENT

The proportion of government funds and their primary objectives are set according to different social and economic goals. Government entities prioritize public welfare functions and aim to improve social value, while economic values are enhanced through market-oriented operation and circulation. The tiered property management model is as follows (Figure 5):

Public welfare model

In which land use rights, building ownership, and use rights are all held by government entities. Funding is provided entirely through public finance. This model lowers the difficulty of long-term operation and maintenance. It is suitable for specific scenarios including historic site protection, public services, and municipal infrastructure improvements. However, it places a significant financial burden on the government and restricts the circulation of resources, which might hinder adaptive reuse and the realization of potential economic interests.

Collaborative operation model

In which land use rights and building ownership may conditionally participate in market circulation, while building use rights are fully tradable. Funding is provided jointly through public and market finances. This model alleviates financial burdens on both the public and private sectors, and is applicable across a wide range of contexts. However, specific property rights administration requires careful regulation.

Fully liberalized model

In which land use rights, building ownership, and use rights are all transferable on the market, and the funding is provided entirely through the market. This model allows for a high degree of circulation; however, its application requires case-by-case assessment and is not suitable for widespread application.

	Public Interests		Economic Interests
	Public Welfare Model	Collaborative Operation Model	Fully Liberalized Model
Building Use Right	Held by the Government Entity	Attend the Market Circulation	Attend the Market Circulation
Building Ownership	Held by the Government Entity	Partly Held by the Government Entity + Partly Attend the Market Circulation	Attend the Market Circulation
Land Use Right	Held by the Government Entity	Partly Held by the Government Entity + Partly Attend the Market Circulation	Attend the Market Circulation

Figure 5. Tiered property management model for market circulation

In the context of the dual mandate of preserving its historic and cultural heritage while simultaneously safeguarding the essential functions of the capital, the public welfare model imposes a substantial financial burden on the government, while the fully liberalized model is currently difficult to implement. Consequently, the collaborative operation model emerges as the most applicable approach in Beijing's current situation.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the analysis of the conservation and regeneration process in Beijing Old City, the government-led mechanism demonstrates both notable strengths and clear limitations. Its advantages include well-defined objectives, stability, alignment with public interest goals, and high coordination efficiency, which have produced considerable results over time. However, limitations are also equally apparent: the mechanism struggles to balance social and economic benefits, allows limited market participation, and faces challenges in investment recovery and long-term economic sustainability. This underscores the need to select leading entities according to specific circumstances.

Grounded in the framework of land property rights, this study examines financial models derived from different combinations of property structures, proposing a sustainable operational mechanism composed of three elements: institutional settings, social structures, and spatial resources. It further advances a tiered property management model for market circulation.

Given the unique conditions of Beijing, the recommendation approach is a collaborative operation model that fosters partnerships between the government and the market. For other historic areas in China, it is advisable for the government to lead the regeneration in public-welfare components, while enabling the market and residents to take the lead in other aspects – thereby establishing a balanced and sustainable operational mechanism.

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THE LOST STREAMS OF TE WHANGANUI-A-TARA

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INTRODUCTION

Rising in Bromley as the Kyd Brook, the River Quaggy passes through south-east London to join the meandering channel of the River Ravensbourne to flow into the Thames at Greenwich. Concrete channels and culverts have reshaped the Quaggy to become an engineered river. Two hemispheres away, at Greenwich's almost exact antipodes, urban streams have been engineered out of legal existence. Flowing into Te Whanganui-a-Tara (Wellington harbour), colonization saw the urban watercourses of the settlement culverted out-of-sight, to be soon forgotten. The first wave of European settlers to Wellington valued the streams' fresh water, but ensuing pollution and the need for town sections and the revenue that they would generate saw the streams disappear within a generation. This has been to an extent far exceeding the degradation of the Quaggy and the upper reaches of the Ravensbourne tributaries.

Today, Māori and Pākehā (European) researchers work to uncover knowledge of the now lost awa (streams). Forgotten names – such as Waimapihi, Waitangi, Kumutoto and Pipitea – are re-entering the citizens' consciousness. The catchments and their still-culverted watercourses are increasingly valued as heritage sites in a contested urban environment. New understanding of these awa allows insight into Te Ao Māori (The Māori World) and the ensuing colonial processes. Strategies to decolonise the engineered landscape and to increase ecological awareness now weave together. This appreciation of the environment reveals and dismantles the overt and hidden forces that have established and maintained colonial power relations. It not only allows people to connect to Te Ao Māori, it enables people to engage with a global project to connect with the natural world.

WELLINGTON – TE WHANGANUI-A-TARA

When I open discussion on the lost streams in Wellington with students in New Zealand, I often talk of the rivers of London and how walkers, armed with one of the numerous guidebooks that have appeared in recent years, trace the paths of the tributaries of the Thames. Historic maps of the London area show many streams passing, successively, across a primaeval murky swamp, through shaped channels, dam-formed ponds and canals, and into subterranean pipes. As many of the students may work in London for a period during their careers, I tell them that when they are there, they could note the culvert gates of the Rivers Walbrook and Effra feeding into the Thames, and that they should look out for the nineteenth-century cast iron conduit carrying the River Westbourne high above the rail track at the Sloane Square Tube Station. However, I alert them that they don't need to go to London for this experience, because here in Wellington we also have our own our own awa that have been largely obfuscated through the engineering works of the nineteenth-century.

Aotearoa New Zealand has been settled by people for less than 1000 years. Eastern Polynesians arrived about 1350CE, later developing an indigenous culture that we understand as Māori. The pre-contact Wellington Harbour area, Te Whanganui-a-Tara (The Great Harbour of Tara), was populated with successive waves of Māori from different iwi (tribes). Accounts of these people come to us through a strong, reliable, oral tradition of indigenous knowledge. The original vegetation comprised native trees, and low-level vegetation: scrub, flaxes and rushes. The area was crossed by an extensive network of human pathways connecting various pā (fenced villages), and kāinga (smaller settlements).

Throughout the harbour basin many watercourses flowed from the hills draining runoff to the sea. These streams were sources of tuna (eels), kōura, (freshwater crayfish), ika (fish) and kōkopu (a variety of smaller fish), and provided good places to catch to snare bird life. The Waitangi Stream formed a prominent wetland which was a source of abundant food, close to large Te Aro Pā which existed in central Wellington through the first four decades of Pākehā settlement.

Colonisation and the watercourses

Colonisation on a large scale came to Te Whanganui-a-Tara in 1840, when a private company, the New Zealand Company, sent administrators, surveyors and settlers to the site of the proposed settlement of Wellington. In the previous year, for £100 investors and prospective settlers could purchase an acre in town, and 100 acres in the country. With land value sure to rise, the scheme attracted many Britain-based investors who had no intention to immigrate. Those who did travel to the colony included wealthy landowners, farmers and a large body of labourers who saved to buy land and build homes. In this way, the scheme would create a cross-section of Britain's stratified society. Edward Gibbon Wakefield, who formulated this venture, described it as "systematic colonisation".[1]

In the early 1840s, New Zealand Company settlements were developed at Wellington, Nelson, New Plymouth and Whanganui. At the same time, independently of the company, the British government established its capital at Kororāreka in the Bay of Islands and later at Auckland in the north of the North Island. In August 1840, a town plan for Wellington was developed by the New Zealand Company surveyor, William Mein Smith.[2] Figure 1 shows the earliest map of Wellington to survive. It shows the streams prominently; in the settlement without formed street the watercourses were one of the few aids to wayfinding and identified the sites of the purchased town acres. By this time, many of the settlers had already been in the colony for over six months and were impatient to access to the land that they had purchased a year earlier.

Surveyor Smith's task was a formidable one. After the initial site envisaged for the settlement was found to be vulnerable to flooding, the settlement was re-sited to the west in the areas that became known as Thorndon and Te Aro. Smith was required to find 1,100 town acre sections in a location with far fewer habitable sections. Steep and boggy land was designated to be fit for sale, with no flat land left over for recreational use.

The official map published in London reassured the officials and investors there of the success of the colonising project.[3] While streams were shown crossing the site, there were no riparian reserves ribboning the flow path. The large Waitangi wetland was not marked on the map, and instead a proposed canal, which appeared as a novel urban feature, would operate as a drainage channel. Because demand for town acres was so great, surveyors ignored stream paths which should have been a feature of the layout of the town. Effectively, these awa were expunged. The canal never eventuated; in 1855 a large 8.2 magnitude earthquake raised the settlement by approximately 1.2 metres, which helped drain the site.

Figure 1. Charles Heaphy, "Plan of the City of Britannia in Lambton Harbour, Port Nicholson, New Zealand." 1840. Te Papa CA000433/001/0001.

Without any piped water supply, initially proximity to the watercourses was a desirable asset. Early plans suggesting that landowners may have moved watercourses to their advantage. However, in time the water was fouled by domestic pollution and developing industries such as this dye works and butcheries. Inevitably, poor drainage infrastructure triggered typhoid outbreaks in the 1880s and 1890s.[4]

The Streams of Te Whanganui-a-Tara

Principal streams that pass through the area of Wellington city include:

- The Waitangi Stream has an extensive urban catchment. Historically the stream drained the settlement's western slopes, before passing to the sea via a large wetland. This area proved inhospitable to settlement and was not inhabited by Europeans until the 1870s. Today it is largely culverted below streets and sections, and passing under the city's cricket ground, the Basin Reserve. Higher tributaries circling the suburbs of Newtown and Mount Cook remain open to daylight.
- The Waimapihi Stream rises in high country to the west of the town flat. It takes its name from a pool formed near the stream head, where Mapihi, a woman of importance in the Ngāi-Tara and Ngāti-Mamoe iwi bathed.[5] The stream flowed from a steep upper catchment, through what would become an urban valley, before flowing across the Te Aro flat towards the sea. In the 1850s, planks along town footpaths bridged the stream. This stream was the principal water supply for the 300 people of the Ngāti Haumia and Ngāti Ruanui iwi who lived at Te Aro Pā.[6]
- The Kumutoto Stream is a smaller, steep catchment, that passes through steep terrain before journeying to the sea. Liz Mellish (of the Te Ātiawa, Taranaki, Ngāti Ruanui iwi) has described how this was the location of the sacred birthing pool which was used by women from various pā and kāinga in the Te Whanganui-a-Tara region.[7] In time, Māori would be allocated land closer to the sea, and a string of desirable town acres would dot the stream's path. In 1854 the settlement's first brick bridge would be created across the stream. The upper reach (at the site of Victoria University of

Wellington's Kelburn campus) has been severely modified, filled-in to create building sections and playing fields. Lower down, in the 1960's the city's principal motorway would be constructed along the historic stream path. Today, only a small reach – midway along the stream path – remains open to daylight.

- Apart from 60 metres of open stream passing through the city's Botanic Gardens, the Tutaenui and Waipiro Streams are largely culverted, following along paths that avoid the footprints of prominent buildings in the government centre.
- Over 100m metres of the Pipitea Stream is open to the air in the Botanic Gardens before passing through an extensive network of pipes running to the sea. This stream was the principal water supply for the 150-200 people who lived at the Pipitea Pā.[8]

The Streams of Greenwich

Returning to the point of departure of this paper, it is useful to consider the treatment of the Quaggy and Ravensbourne Rivers near the site of this conference. Rising in Bromley as the Kyd Brook, the Quaggy passes through south-east London to join the meandering channel of the River Ravensbourne to flow into the Thames at Greenwich.[9] Concrete channels and culverts fashion the Quaggy into what has been described as "one of Britain's most heavily engineered rivers."[10] In the 1960s to alleviate flooding, parts of the River Quaggy were channelized into long straight concrete culverts. Nevertheless, since the 1980s, people and government have worked to restore the urban river as a wildlife habitat and place for people. Formed in 1990, the Quaggy Waterways Action Group has argued that flooding is best alleviated by water storage. This is now commonly accepted: plans for full river restoration have been published and some reaches restored.[11] Many citizens now engage with the river that had been lost to previous generations.[12]

Figure 2. "Drainage, Woodward Street," May 12, 1961, Wellington City Archives, 969-c (sheet 2005a).

In Wellington, the awa had been degraded to an extent beyond that in south-east London. Streams were largely culverted with little trace of the watercourses remaining as can be seen in Figure 2. This can be seen as an outcome of the 1840s project to maximise the number of sellable town acres, at the expense of recreational parks, riparian environments and other spaces that would engender well-

being. Nevertheless, as with the Quaggy, many individuals and groups meet to highlight the importance of the now lost streams.

In 2005-06 an urban park, Waitangi Park, was created near the outflow of the historic site of the Waitangi wetland that extended across Te Aro.[13] Designers, Wraight Athfield Landscape Architecture, created a modern wetland, where water was lifted from of the Waitangi Stream stormwater drain, in order to pass through grasses and gravel on its journey to the sea.

Artworks that have been created by Māori artists. Shona Rapira Davies (Ngāti Wai ki Aotea iwi) (1991), Rā Vincent (Te Atiawa iwi) (2017) and Isobel Joy Te Aho-White (Ngāti Kahungunu and Kāi Tahu iwi) (2023) have created works that sit above the underground flow path of Waimapihi stormwater pipes. These works recall Mapihi connection with the awa, amplifying her presence as fundamental to the area. Rā Vincent's sculpture was constructed from bricks salvaged from the stream's nineteenth century culvert. Shona Rapira Davies' earlier work, Te Aro Park, with over 30,000 hand-crafted tiles is – arguably – the city's most substantial and successful urban artwork, restoring Mapihi and a wider Māori presence to the inner-city site of the Te Aro Pā a century earlier.[14]

In addition, the Wellington City Council has commissioned artist, Len Hetet (Ngāti Tūwharetoa, Ngāti Maniapoto, Te Ātiawa, Ngāti Apa iwi) to mark where urban pathways cross the underground culverted stream using traditional tukutuku patterns as shown in Figure 3.[15] Near the site of the 1854 bridge mentioned earlier, the public art sound installation "Kumutoto Stream" of 2014 by multi-media artist, Kedron Parker, recreates the sound of the stream passing below a street underpass along the line of the Kumutoto Stream. This walkway lies immediately below the site of the kāinga and its adjacent birthing pool, described by Liz Mellish.

Figure 3. Markings showing where the Whakahikuwai stream crosses Thorndon Quay by Len Hetet, 2024. Robin Skinner photographer.

Figure 4. Ngā Mokopuna building, at Te Herenga Waka Marae, Victoria University of Wellington. The steel channel forms a rill that collects water at the headwaters of the Kumutoto stream as a tangible reminder of the stream passing below the ground surface. Robin Skinner photographer.

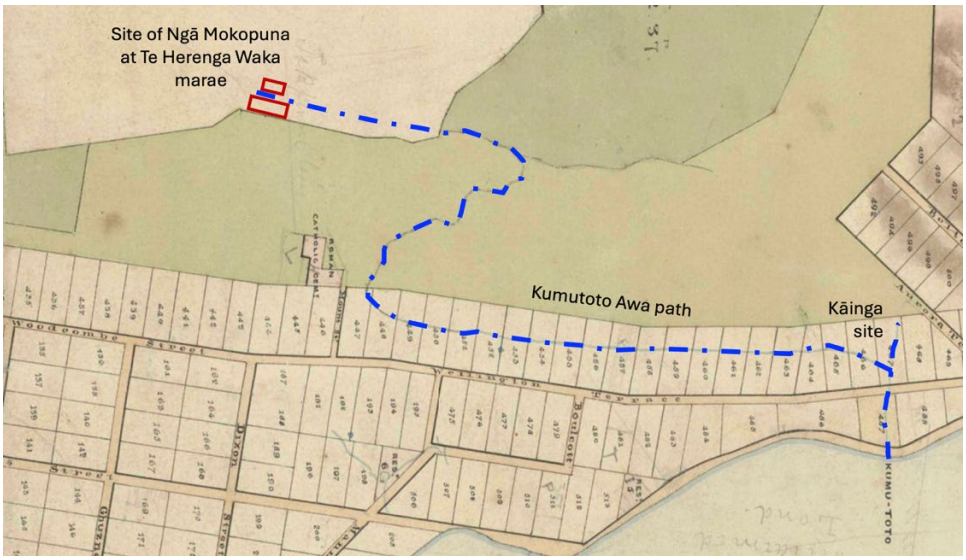

Figure 5. Kumutoto Awa (Stream) path annotated on map "Town of Wellington" 1848 (detail). Archives New Zealand AAFV WT3 Box 132.

Most recently, on the site of the headwaters of the Kumutoto Stream, the designers of the Living Building Challenge, the Ngā Mokopuna building, Tennent Brown Architects, incorporated a steel rill channel to intercept water at the stream's source as shown in Figures 4 and 5.[16] This building is part of the university's marae, a complex of structures surrounding the marae ātea (a traditional Māori meeting ground). The rill reminds people that they are at the headwaters of the sacred stream.

Numerous moves are being made to restore the remaining stream courses. There are some thirty groups in the Wellington area that typically focus on individual catchments, and who collect here under the umbrella of Te Hononga ki te Upoko (the Wellington Catchments Collective). People work together at weekends, seeking to improve the health of the watercourses and their biota, restoring healthy, resilient freshwater ecosystems. In the small area of the Kumutoto that remains as an open

stream, between the area of sports facilities, and a length of the principal urban motorway, a group work to rehabilitate the channel.

Earlier this year, this area was recognised by the national heritage organisation, Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga, as a Wāhi Tūpuna – "a place important to Māori for its ancestral significance and associated cultural and traditional values."[17] This is a landscape that embodies the relationship of mana whenua (the recognised local Māori iwi) and their culture and traditions with their ancestral lands, water, sites, wāhi tapu (sacred places), and other taonga (treasure).[18] This foregrounds a unique Māori way of experiencing the world, which can be described as Mātauranga Māori (often translated as "Māori knowledge").[19] This worldview provides the basis for the New Zealand government's Vision Mātauranga policy that aims to unlock the science and innovation potential of Māori knowledge, resources and people. It is out of this context that the heritage stream environments in Wellington are being created. Useful comparison could be made with other initiatives being undertaken in other postcolonial situations where indigenous people have been colonised in past centuries, notably in Canada; however, this is outside the bounds of this study.

CONCLUSION

The Wellington situation is very different to that of the River Quaggy. Although the streams of Te Whanganui-a-Tara have had less than 200 years of modification, the impact has been far greater and more destructive than in south-east London. Apart from the headwater reaches, few of the Wellington streams see any daylight along their length. Legislation deems that these subterranean channels are drains, losing any status as "rivers". Nevertheless, as with the Quaggy, there is strong grassroots activity to improve things. Numerous groups in the Wellington area work to maintain the health of individual catchments. Along with visits to old buildings and town precincts, walking tours of the river paths are now a part of the annual Heritage Week programme. Forgotten stream names are re-entering the citizens' consciousness. The catchments and their still-piped watercourses are increasingly valued as heritage sites in a contested urban environment. Significantly, the Kumutoto has been recognised as a Wāhi Tūpuna. The drive to recognise the lost rivers and to bring them up into the cityspace, physically and virtually, indicates much about people's and their communities' priorities and desires, and an appreciation of the shifting parameters of heritage today. Through art practice and urban design initiatives, and heritage classification, people are revisiting and seeking to overturn the colonial practices in the Great Harbour of Tara.

There are many initiatives to improve stream condition throughout the world; however, working to improve the condition of the city's watercourses not only allows people to engage with a global project to connect with the natural world. Appreciating the streams as part of the city's spatial heritage, also helps decolonise this urban environment and its 185 years of development. It talks of the past, and restores Te Ao Māori to a central position in the city space. There is strong support for this from the community. The restoration of the streams of Wellington, not only aims to improve the health of the watercourses, it seeks to reconnect people to an environment before colonisation, by partly returning to a pre-European landscape. Through the artistic and advocacy initiatives described in this paper, the city space has become a heritage stream environment. Appreciation of the awa and the role they once held, provides wider insight into Te Ao Māori and to a value system that many had lost sight of. This can only increase.

GLOSSARY

awa	stream
ika	fish
iwi	tribe

kāinga	smaller settlement
kōkopu	a variety of smaller fish
kōura,	freshwater crayfish
marae	a complex of structures around a traditional Māori meeting ground
marae ātea	the traditional Māori meeting ground
Mapihi	an important woman of the Ngāi-Tara and Ngāti-Mamoe iwi
Mātauranga Māori	often translated as “Māori knowledge,” relating to a Māori worldview
pā	fenced or fortified village
pākehā	a person of European heritage
Te Ao Māori	The Māori World
Te Hononga ki te Upoko	The Wellington Catchments Collective
Te Whanganui-a-Tara	“The Great Harbour of Tara,” Wellington Harbour
tuna	eels
wāhi tūpuna	a place of ancestral significance

NOTES

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[2] John Martin, *Empire City: Wellington Becomes the Capital of New Zealand* (Wellington: Te Herenga Waka Press, 2022), 23-24, 39–40.
[3] William Mein Smith, “Plan of the Town of Wellington, 14 August 1840.” (London: Smith Elder and Company, 1841).
[4] W.A. Chapple, Prevention of typhoid fever, 28 May 1892. Wellington City Council Archives, Town Clerk's correspondence 1892/740. https://archivesonline.wcc.govt.nz/nodes/view/32327#idx523551.
[5] James Cowan, “Old Wellington,” *Evening Post* [Wellington], June 8, 1912.
[6] Rhys Richards, *First Pakehas Around Wellington and Cook Strait* (Porirua, Wellington: Paremata Press, 2020), 152.
[7] Liz Mellish (Te Ātiawa, Taranaki, Ngāti Ruanui iwi) and Robin Skinner, “Ngā Awa Tini o Te Whanganui-a-Tara/The Many Rivers of Wellington Harbour," Broad Media Ltd, November 4, 2023, https://vimeo.com/879550897/632f68e850.
[8] Richards, *First Pakehas Around Wellington*, 152.
[9] Peter Ackroyd, *Thames: Sacred River* (London: Vintage, 2008), 47-48; Nicholas Barton, *The Lost Rivers of London: A Study of their Effects upon London and Londoners, and the Effects of London and Londoners upon Them*. (London: Historical Publications, 1992), 71.
[10] Quaggy Waterways Action Group, “The River Quaggy,” Quaggy Waterways Action Group, December 10, 2022, https://qwag.org.uk/river-quaggy/.
[11] Environment Agency, A *River Reborn: Restoring the Quaggy River and Tackling Flooding*, (Bristol: Environment Agency, 2008), 6–10.
[12] Quaggy Waterways Action Group, “Restoring the River,” Quaggy Waterways Action Group, December 12, 2015, https://qwag.org.uk/river-quaggy/restoring-the-river/.
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[14] Geoff Park, “First Signs of Life: Nature and the Genius Loci in the Austral City,” in *Theatre Country: Essays on Landscape and Whenua* (Wellington Victoria University Press, 2006) 44-46; Niki Partsch, “A journey through time and transformation at Te Aro Park,” Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga, August 1, 2024, https://www.heritage.org.nz/news/stories/a-journey-through-time-and-transformation-at-te-aro-park.
[15] Wellington City Council, “Thorndon Quay pavement designs honour hidden awa,” Wellington City Council. July 16, 2024, https://wellington.govt.nz/news-and-events/news-and-information/our-wellington/2024/07/thorndon-quay-pavement-designs-honour-hidden-awa.
[16] Ewan Brown, Architect, text message to author, December 6, 2024.
[17] Niki Partsch, “New to the List: Central Wellington’s Kumutoto Recognised as Wāhi Tūpuna,” Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga, August 01, 2025, https://www.heritage.org.nz/news/stories/new-to-the-list-central-wellington-s-kumutoto-recognised-as-wahi-tupuna.
[18] Dennis Ngāwhare, “New Zealand Heritage List / Rārangi Kōrero – Report for a Wāhi Tūpuna Kumutoto, Kelburn (List no. 9078),” (Wellington: Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga, 2025). https://hnzpt-rpod-assets.azureedge.net/ lswpwhix/kumutoto9078listingreport.pdf.
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CULTIVATING COMMUNITIES AND HERITAGE AT ST ALFEGE CHURCH, GREENWICH

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INTRODUCTION

In 1941, incendiary devices landed on the roof of St Alfege Church in Greenwich. The resulting fire destroyed the roof and most of the interior. Our paper charts the restoration and reinvention of this church between 1949 and 1953, and shows how this reflected contemporary developing ideas about both the eighteenth-century architect, Nicholas Hawksmoor (1661-1736), and building heritage nationally. The restoration architect, Professor Albert Richardson (1880-1964), focussed on enhancing the architectural heritage value of the church building and celebrating the craftsmen involved in its recreation.[1] The church interior they created is largely the interior on view today and formed the springboard for recent projects.

Richardson was a prestigious architect and material from the Richardson Archive demonstrates how he remodelled the church and positioned the restoration within the larger debate surrounding the restoration of bombed churches in London. His focus on Hawksmoor's authorship and the eighteenth-century church design conveyed his conservation ideology and anticipated the church building's heritage appeal. The restoration project took over four years to complete during a time of shortages and political change, but succeeded in transforming the church and its historical status.[2]

Research into the post-war restoration was carried out between 2017 and 2020, while St Alfege Church carried out an improvement project titled "Heart of Greenwich: People and Places" with the assistance of a grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NHLF).[3] New interpretation aids and activities at the church developed its engagement with the local community and the general public. Exploration of the church archive produced further research opportunities, particularly into the 1718 Pew List and the roles of women at St Alfege Church, and partnerships established during the NHLF funded project have led to further collaborations. St Alfege Church benefits from its location within the UNESCO Maritime Greenwich World Heritage Site and the associated international attention, whilst remaining an active local parish church. It is a place where spiritual, cultural and heritage activities coexist and the church is valued by a variety of different communities.

POST WAR RESTORATION (1946 – 1953)

The catastrophic damage caused by the 1941 fire was photographed shortly afterwards recording the extent of the damage in some detail. This was a familiar scene in many churches across London and the UK, prompting political and architectural discussion about appropriate restoration measures.[4]

Figure 1. Interior of St Alfege Church, Greenwich, 1941

These new, post-war ideas about heritage were reflected in the development of national legislation concerning the preservation of buildings. Richardson's restoration occurred within this changing national framework. The Ancient Monuments Act of 1913 had instigated the first schedules of historic monuments by the Office of Works, but it was the Town and Country Planning Act of 1944 that introduced the current listing convention and statutory framework. This was the first time that the government had recognised the historic value of post-medieval buildings and applied development controls to their alteration.

A national building survey, the 'Salvage Scheme', was carried out to compile the lists of notable buildings. Local authorities were required to consult the Ministry of Works about any alterations to these listed buildings. In parallel to the Salvage Scheme, the National Buildings Record was started in 1941. Initiated by the RIBA and supported by the Georgian Group, the NBR was a photographic database of historic buildings. Both these projects were nationally-instigated and aimed to save historic, sometimes damaged, buildings following the physical and cultural impacts of the second world war.[5]

Thomas F Ford FRIBA

At St Alfege Church, local architect Thomas F Ford FRIBA had organised a temporary metal roof to protect what was left of the church from the weather. In 1943, the churchwardens also asked him to advise on the potential restoration of the church. His report and marked up floor plans, found in the St Alfege Church archive, describe a scheme that constitutes a pragmatic approach that assumed the church could not or should not be fully restored.[6] His suggestions seem controversial today.

They included the relocation of the organ to the east end and the narrowing of the side galleries to "lateral passages" because they were no longer required for seating. He suggested replacing

Hawksmoor's idiosyncratic tapered gallery columns with "oak columns of usual classic design". The four eighteenth-century staircases had survived the fire, but Ford suggested removing one staircase from both the north and south porches. Two new rooms could then be created on each of the ground floor and gallery levels (for a cleaner's cupboard, WC, music room and small chapel). Ford suggested that a different ceiling design would be desirable, such that "the flat ceiling might be broken up by raising the central portion to a curved section running from east to west". Finally, he thought the remaining stained glass should be replaced with clear glass and the apse would benefit from the introduction of "gilding and colour". There was no mention of restoring James Thornhill's eighteenth-century decorative paintwork in the apse. Ford's scheme saw no inherent value in re-establishing the church interior's historic past and instead prioritised affordability for the local parish.

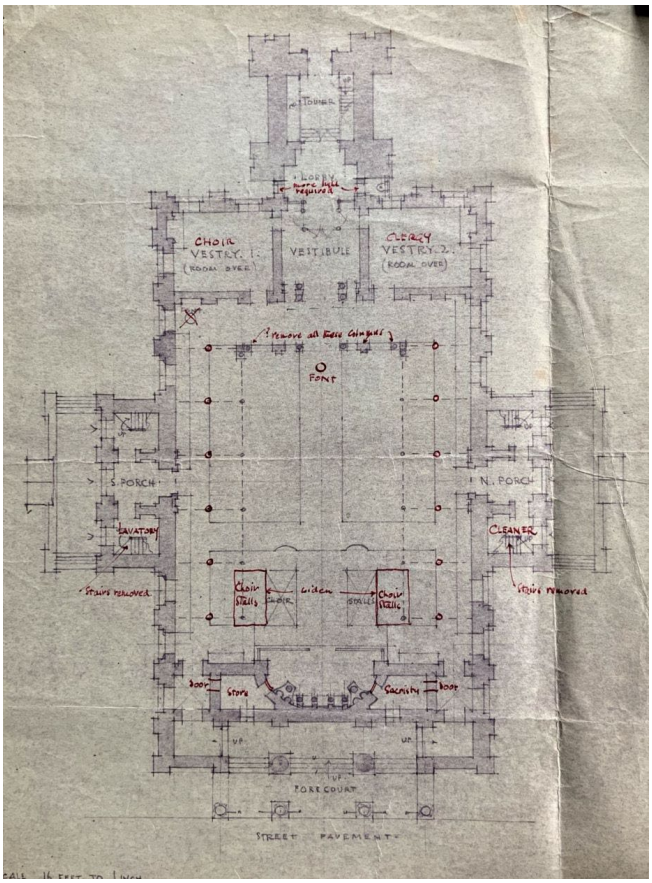

Figure 2. Thomas Ford, St Alfege Church floorplan with suggested alterations

Professor Albert Richardson

Three years later, in 1946, the Bishop of Kingston asked prominent architect Professor Albert Richardson to carry out the restoration of the church. At the time, they were visiting St Alfege's with the Southwark Diocesan Committee to inspect the damage.[7] The congregation were then using a "church within a church" installed beneath the south gallery. Richardson was 66 years old and had been Professor of Architecture at the Bartlett school of Architecture at UCL since 1919. He later received the RIBA gold medal in 1947 and a knighthood in 1956.[8] He was passionate about Georgian architecture and had published two influential books on architectural history.[9] Richardson embarked on an ambitious restoration of St Alfege Church, bolstered by Hawksmoor's growing reputation amongst architectural historians.

Hawksmoor's London churches had been praised by John Summerson in his 1945 book *Georgian London* and this had prompted a new academic appreciation for these churches.[10] Hawksmoor's work (and Richardson's restoration) was further celebrated in Elizabeth and Wayland Young's 1953 book *Old London Churches*, which supported their campaign to restore Hawksmoor's Christchurch, in Spitalfields.[11] Richardson's celebration and memorialisation of the eighteenth-century version of the church building, which eschewed all previous Victorian alterations, promoted the restored church as a historic landmark. His reinterpretation of the church interior strengthened St Alfege Church's affiliation to Hawksmoor's wider oeuvre, which include the national monuments of the nearby Greenwich Hospital and St Paul's Cathedral.[12] Photographs of Richardson's newly restored St Alfege's featured in Kerry Downes' authoritative 1959 monograph on Hawksmoor.[13]

The War Damage Commission

In 1949, construction work started amid a complex system of post-war controls on building materials and funding, which Richardson expertly navigated. The restoration of St Alfege Church was largely funded by the War Damage Commission (WDC). After the Second World War, the War Damage Act (1941, amended 1942 and 1943) established the WDC and its processes of operation.[14] The Church of England assembled dedicated committees to negotiate with the WDC about the assessment of war-damaged churches.[15] They were successful and, in May 1944, the WDC published a statement refining their policy regarding the repair of damaged churches. They estimated that nearly 14,000 ecclesiastical buildings had been damaged in enemy raids, so there was a large amount of building work at stake.[16] The revised process for allocating costs for repair or reconstruction of churches would be assessed in one of three ways: the reasonable cost of "plain repair" of the war damage or the reasonable cost of building a "plain substitute church." A third category allowed exceptions where the war-damaged church was of 'special importance' for 'architectural, historic or other reasons', and 'exact reinstatement' was desirable.

Richardson asserted that St Alfege Church fell into the third category, and tenaciously pursued funding from the WDC. As a result, by April 1953, the WDC had contributed the entire cost of the project (approximately £72,000). By 1956 this amount had risen to £97,572, while the parish had contributed £10,428.

Construction

Richardson's architectural practice produced detailed survey drawings that recorded the surviving building fabric, as well as detailed construction drawings coordinating the old and new building materials. Over one hundred drawings survive in the Richardson and Houfe archive and the RIBA Drawings and Archive Collection.[17]

The post-war shortage of building materials was managed by the government through the mechanism of building licences, issued by the Ministry of Works. Until 1954, building licences were required to purchase certain materials, notably hardwood and steel. The Diocese of Southwark had an annual allocation of building licences, which were shared between their construction projects. The flow of these licences was a challenge throughout the restoration project and Richardson's efforts to maintain the supply is well documented in the correspondence files.[18]

The first phase of the restoration comprised the reconstruction of the roof and windows fulfilling the important practical task of making the church weathertight. The construction of the roof was carefully engineered; eight lightweight roof trusses were constructed, formed from a combination of timber and steel, which made efficient use of the building licenses.[19] The ceiling plasterwork was later added to this contract and was suspended from a steel frame. Externally, the roof was covered with copper, rather than lead, because it was a lighter-weight and available metal.

The second phase of the restoration commenced in 1951 and focused on the interior, particularly the wood carving. Expert craftsmen were employed and surviving fragments of woodcarving were incorporated into the new woodwork.[20] This was laborious work that took two years to complete, but ensured an authentic recreation of the historic woodcarving.

Figure 3. St Alfege Church Interior 1953

Modernisation

Whilst carrying out the careful restoration of these elements, elsewhere Richardson modernised the church. He reversed all the Victorian alterations to suit mid-twentieth-century taste and installed new heating and lighting. As mentioned, the roof construction benefitted from twentieth-century structural engineering, but bore no resemblance to the massive timber roof trusses constructed by Hawksmoor and John James in 1712. Smooth limestone flooring replaced the aged stone floor and was laid over underfloor heating pipes connected to a new boiler in the crypt. New oak pews were built, but fewer were installed compared to the pre-war layout and their positioning allowed greater flexibility for the interior layout. Richardson designed unique electric light fittings for the church: standard lamps were attached to the pews in the nave (now removed) and theatrical "torchieres" were attached to the walls in the gallery (recently restored). He removed or relocated many of the stone memorials to clear the walls at gallery level. These steps contributed to the post-war reinvention of the church.[21]

The re-dedication service on 18th April 1953 marked the return of the congregation to the whole church interior.[22] The parish continued the restoration work to the church tower and the western churchyard. In 1956, the slate memorial stone to St Alfege was installed in the floor in front of the altar and the restoration was complete.

Figure 4. St Alfege Church 2021

RECENT HERITAGE DEVELOPMENT

At St Alfege Church, new activities and audiences were introduced during the *Heart of Greenwich, Place and People* project 2017-2020, as required by the NLHF. Since the end of that project, the heritage work at St Alfege Church has continued to evolve and diversify. After the formal project funding ended, the church endeavoured to continue developing heritage access to the church building and grounds. Continuing the legacy of the earlier project and providing a rounded history of the Church (including its building fabric and the people it served) with the reduced funding, was a challenge. During the past two years, two streams of activity unfolded; the first focuses on exploring the social history, while the second is predominantly about audience development.

Social History: the 'Pew List' and 'Untold Stories: Women in St Alfege'

Hawksmoor's St Alfege Church opened its doors to the local community in 1719. The church archive holds an original eleven-page document, dated 29 September 1718, which lists the allocation of the pew seating and describes how this seating arrangement was agreed. This document is a rare primary source that provides intriguing information about the eighteenth-century Greenwich parishioners. The list suggests that the church was densely occupied, and the inhabitants were carefully arranged within the space 'for the avoiding of Disorder and Confusion which must otherwise necessarily arise in so numerous an Assembly, composed of Persons of so different and unequal a Condition and Character'.[23] In 2023, we started a research project with a group of volunteers to investigate some of the 903 names on the pew list, following its initial analysis.[24] We held public events as part of our Heritage Engagement Programme and The Pew List went on public display at the neighbouring Old Royal Naval College (ORNC) within their exhibition '*Chocolate House Greenwich'*.[25] These activities proved popular with the local volunteer community and the general public. Important outcomes of this research included: provision of access to the Church archive, which is usually inaccessible despite being relevant to the local community; creation of a sense of ownership over the uncovered stories; encouraging participation and cohesion in the volunteer community; and making the social heritage of St Alfege Church more tangible. Finally, the 'Social History Researchers: The Pew List' volunteer group won the Best Team at the London Heritage Volunteer Awards 2024.[26]

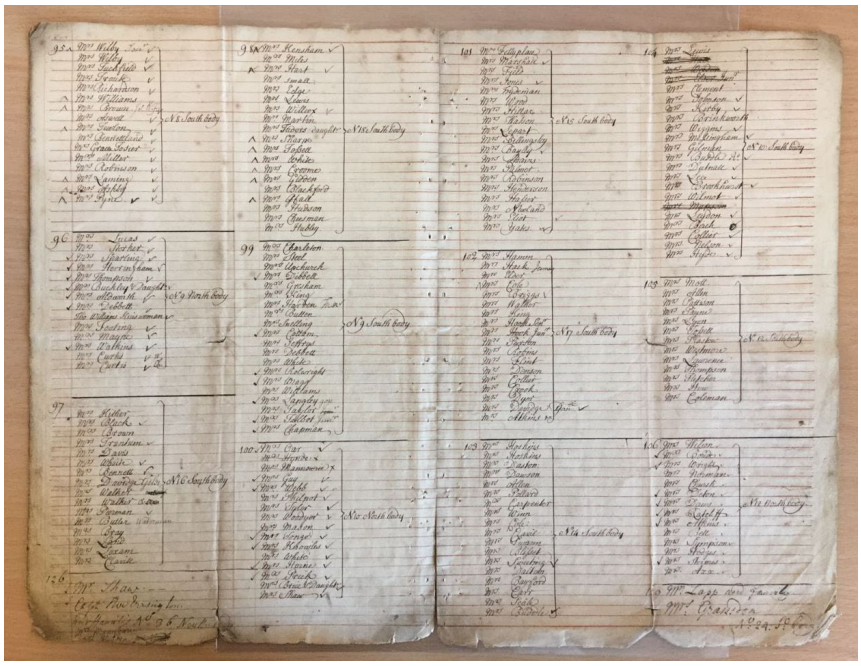

Figure 5. The 1718 Pew List

Building upon the knowledge gained through the Pew List research, particularly the seating distribution of men and women within the 1719 church, a new tour titled *Untold Stories: Women in St Alfege* was launched in March 2024. This celebrated Women's History Month and the thirtieth anniversary of women's ordination in the Church of England. The tour highlights the less-known stories of women connected to St Alfege and their roles over the centuries – from organists to bellringers, from scientists to suffragettes. This project contributed to 'Women of Greenwich', a collaborative research project between local historians Claire Eustance (Senior Lecturer in History at the University of Greenwich), Ann Dingsdale and Lynne Dixon, which aimed to discover overlooked histories of local women.[27] This local history initiative continued the positive partnership with the University of Greenwich.

Audience Development: 'New Wave' and 'Reclaiming Narratives'.

In 2024, St Alfege Church won a National Trust grant to fund participation in the 'New Wave' youth engagement project.[28] A cohort of fifteen organizations participated in a structured programme to develop new and innovative 'Heritage Open Days'(HOD) events. HOD is England's largest festival of history and culture, bringing together over 2,000 organisations and many volunteers to create free heritage events.[29] The programme was designed to help attract and engage a younger demographic (18-25) with HOD events. The training programme, led by the HOD team and industry professionals, included individual support and fostered a peer network. The programme particularly stressed the importance of producing outputs with, and not just for, this target audience. 'New Wave' enabled the recruitment of Charlotte Harding, our first Volunteer Young Creative Producer. Working alongside the Heritage Engagement Manager and the team, Charlotte created a project called 'Sensing St Alfege: The Flavourful Histories of St Alfege Church', which comprised a small exhibition and two workshops. She used unique stories from the church to demonstrate how food connects eighteenth-century individuals with people today. This successful project offered Charlotte valuable professional experience, while also encouraging more young people to visit the church. The 'New Wave' project opened up fresh approaches to the church archive and history, and provided the opportunity to work with a group of national arts/heritage organizations.

Figure 6. Sensing St Alfege: The Flavourful Histories of St Alfege Church 2024

In 2025, we embarked on a project funded by the Royal Borough of Greenwich as part of their Black History 365 initiative.[30] Our project is called 'Reclaiming Narratives: commonly called by the name of Esther Smith' and took inspiration from a document at Lambeth Palace Library (LPL): 'Petition from Esther Smith, a slave, to Archbishop Secker, 19 July 1760'.[31] In this petition, Esther asked to be baptised, however her enslaver opposed her baptism. The Petition continues: 'The humble Petition of a poor negro woman, commonly called by the name of Esther Smith, of about the age of 24 years.' Advice was sought from Philip Yorke, 1st Earl of Hardwicke, who confirmed that 'a slave brought to England is still a slave' and baptism would not change this status; he had consulted the Vicar of St Alfege Church. The parish records of St Alfege Church contain records of baptisms, marriages and deaths of Black people in Greenwich and sometimes also mention their employment. It was not unusual for adults to be baptised, and baptism could provide some parish protection for enslaved people.

Taking the story of Esther Smith as a springboard for conversation and reflection, the project invited two local writers, with lived experience of Global Majority backgrounds, to each lead a two-day creative writing workshop. Workshop participants produced original poems, to be published in a booklet and presented in a final event in September 2025. As part of 'Reclaiming Narratives', participants and writers visited LPL and viewed primary source documents, including Esther's petition. Black History Studies historian, Charmain Simpson, talked about archival silences, decolonizing the archive and Baptism as a form of resistance for the enslaved.

The 'Reclaiming Narratives' project helped St Alfege Church increase diversity in its workforce and become more reflective of the local area. This project represented a completely new form of creative engagement for the church and introduced an under-represented audience to the organisation. It was

beneficial to the church leaders, whilst also engaging with a local government community history initiative.

CONCLUSION

This post-war restoration and modernisation of St Alfege Church was an early ‘heritage’ project that extended the potential audience for the church and updated the building fabric, both practically and ideologically. However, attitudes towards the preservation of the built environment and theories about heritage have developed over the seventy years since Richardson’s restoration. Heritage can be thought of as an experience and a dynamic process of ascribing meaning to a place, through shared memories and experiences.[32] The heritage team at St Alfege Church endeavour to instigate projects that extend and excite the many communities that have an interest in the church.

NOTES

[1] Church of St Alfege Greenwich, *Greenwich Parish Church, St. Alfege. A memoir of the restoration. [With illustrations.]* (London]: Henry, Richardson, 1953).
[2] Alison Fisher, 'Greenwich Parish Church, Memorialisation and Community c. 1700 to the Present Day' (University of Greenwich, 2021), 196–264, https://gala.gre.ac.uk/id/eprint/37539/.
[3] Launched in 2015 by the Rev. Chris Moody and Gill Moody, the project aimed to 'create a step change in how audiences experience the church that is enduring in the long term'. The successful bid for support from the Heritage Lottery Fund attracted a grant of £1,836,800.
[4] John Summerson, *Heavenly Mansions and Other Essays on Architecture* (New York and London: W W Norton & Company, 1963); Peter J. Larkham and Joe L. Nasr, 'Decision-Making under Duress: The Treatment of Churches in the City of London during and after World War II', *Urban History* 39, no. 2 (2012): 285–309; P J Larkham, 'Developing Concepts of Conservation: The Fate of Bombed Churches after the Second World War', *Transactions of the Ancient Monuments Society*, no. 54 (2010): 7–34; *Bombed Churches as War Memorials* (Cheam, Surrey: The Architectural Press, 1945).
[5] Simon Thurley, *Men from the Ministry: How Britain Saved Its Heritage* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2014), 196–215.
[6] The St Alfege Church Archive partially catalogued and referenced simply as Boxes 1-10. Ford's typed report with two floor plans is titled 'Summary of points for consideration in connection with any proposals for restoration after the war', dated 1.2.43 and in Box 7.
[7] Church of St Alfege Greenwich, *Greenwich Parish Church, St. Alfege. A memoir of the restoration. [With illustrations.]*, 3; Fisher, 'Greenwich Parish Church, Memorialisation and Community c. 1700 to the Present Day', 210.
[8] Simon Houfe, Alan Powers, and John Wilton-Ely, *Sir Albert Richardson 1880-1964* (London: RIBA Heinz Gallery, 1999), 72.
[9] Albert Edward. Richardson, *An Introduction to Georgian Architecture*, Introductions to Architecture (London: Art and Technics, 1949); Albert Edward. Richardson, *Monumental Classic Architecture in Great Britain and Ireland during the Eighteenth & Nineteenth Centuries*, with Getty Research Institute (London, B. T. Batsford, ltd.; New York, C. Scribner's sons, 1914), http://archive.org/details/monumentalclassi00rich.
[10] John Summerson, *Georgian London* (London: Pimlico, 1991), 57–72.
[11] Elizabeth Young and Wayland Young, *Old London Churches* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd, 1956), 203–5.
[12] Owen Hopkins, *From the Shadows: The Architecture and Afterlife of Nicholas Hawksmoor* (London: Reaktion Books, 2015), 194–232.
[13] Kerry Downes and Johannes Wilde, *Hawksmoor*, Studies in Architecture, v. 2 (London: Zwemmer, 1959).
[14] England, *War Damage Act*, vols 4 & 5 Geo 6, chap.12 (1941).
[15] Andrew Chandler and David Hein, *Archbishop Fisher, 1945–1961: Church, State and World* (Routledge, 2016), 31–32.
[16] War Damage Commission, 'War Damaged and Destroyed Churches: Scheme for Rebuilding and Repair', *The Builder*, 19 May 1944, 400; War Damage Commission, 'War Damaged and Destroyed Churches: Scheme for Rebuilding and Repair', *Architect and Building News*, 19 May 1944, 111.
[17] Bedfordshire Archives and Record Office (hereafter BA): RGH2/356/1-142 and RGH2/356B/1-6; a total of 153 drawings. Correspondence files are all numbered RGH4/120 and are labelled Contractors (2), Consultants, Diocese, Vicar, War Damage Commission, Various and Miscellaneous (8 files in total). RIBA Drawings & Archives Collection, London (Greenwich): Church of Saint Alphege, design for alterations & additions [Dove, Shelf VIII/63-65].
[18] BA, Richardson Archive, St Alphege Church, Greenwich, RGH4-120, Diocese file, letter from Richardson to the Secretary of the Diocese of Southwark Reorganisation Committee, 28 Sept 1950; letter to Richardson from the Secretary (Rev. L. A. Brown) 11 Dec 1950.
[19] G. J. Howling, 'Restoration of St. Alfege's Church, Greenwich; Architects: A. E. Richardson & E. A. S. Houfe. Original Architect: N. Hawksmoor', *Builder*, 14 March 1952, 401–5.
[20] David Braithwaite, *Building in the Blood: Story of Dove Brothers in Islington, 1781-1981* (London: Godfrey Cave Associates Ltd, 1981), 90–109.
[21] Fisher, 'Greenwich Parish Church, Memorialisation and Community c. 1700 to the Present Day', 230–45.
[22] Greenwich Parish Church, 'Service of Re-dedication', Saturday, 18th April, 1953 at 3.0 pm. Greenwich Heritage Trust archive, reference G270.

[23] St Alfege Church Archive, Box 6, 'Allocation of pew seating 1718', letter addressed to Francis, Lord Bishop of Rochester, 12.
[24] Fisher, 'Greenwich Parish Church, Memorialisation and Community c. 1700 to the Present Day', 333–35.
[25] https://ornc.org/news/welcome-to-the-tosier-chocolate-house/
[26] https://heritagevolunteeringgroup.org.uk/; award ceremony held 4th Dec 2024, accessed 2 Aug 25.
[27]https://www.gre.ac.uk/articles/ach/its-time-to-bring-us-your-women-the-history-of-women-of-greenwich-project, accessed 2 Aug 25. With Carolyn Ayres, from the Royal Greenwich Heritage Trust, local historian Dr Ann Dingsdale and Lynne Dixon.
[28] https://www.heritageopendays.org.uk/get-involved/new-wave.html, accessed 2 Aug 25.
[29] https://www.heritageopendays.org.uk/about-us.html, accessed 2 Aug 25.
[30]https://www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/news/2024/celebrate-black-history-all-year-round-2024-2025-black-history-365-programme, accessed 2 Aug 25.
[31] 'The Humble Petition of a Poor Negro Woman, Commonly Called by the Name of Esther Smith', Petition, 19 July 1760, MS 1123/2, Lambeth Palace Library.
[32] Laurajane Smith, *Uses of Heritage* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006); Sian Jones, 'Wrestling with the Social Value of Heritage: Problems, Dilemmas and Opportunities', *Journal of Community Archeology & Heritage* 4, no. 1 (February 2017): 21–37, https://doi.org/10.1080/20518196.2016.1193996.

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DIGITAL COMMUNITY CO-CREATION AS A CONDUIT FOR ADDRESSING SYSTEMATIC ERASURES AND GAPS IN SHARED HERITAGE

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INTRODUCTION

This article discusses how an ongoing, progressive, innovative, academic-policy engagement partnership[1] in the UK between Leicestershire County Council (LCC) as a local authority and the University of Nottingham (UoN) as a higher-education provider is addressing systemic erasures and gaps in the collection, interpretation, representation, and (re)telling of queer and colonised histories in museum collections under LCC's stewardship. The article explores this through the lens of a prominent heritage project titled *Villiers Revealed*. The article is structured as follows. First, it provides useful context for *Villiers Revealed* — tying this to LCC's overarching objective of opening up Leicestershire Museum Collections (LMC)[2] to local communities and the wider public. Second, it discusses the co-creation approach undertaken to redress underrepresentation in the collections of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities, people with disabilities, and people from the LGBTQIA+ communities. In doing so — and third, it highlights the learning gained, the ethical considerations negotiated, and the community agency cultivated for storytelling while situating these in interdisciplinary theory, method, practice, and policy.

ENSHRINING CO-CURATION AND DIVERSE REPRESENTATION IN LEICESTERSHIRE MUSEUM COLLECTIONS' COLLECTING PROCESSES

In 2019, Leicestershire Museum Collections — henceforth abbreviated to LMC — updated its Collections Development Policy,[3] which is a document that defines how LMC adds to and rationalises its collections. This is a requirement of Arts Council England's Museum Accreditation scheme.[4] Having this document is considered best practice across the museum sector nationally. As such, LMC uses the document to (a) guide the planning of its work, (b) inform resource allocation, and (c) support decision-making on and around what to collect or areas that need rationalisation. In the updated Policy, LMC committed to developing its collections to reflect people who are currently underrepresented. These include LGBTQIA+ people, people living with disabilities, and people of Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) heritage. The Policy stated that where possible, collections will be developed via targeted co-curated projects with these communities, representing the views and voices of local people as part of the collecting process.

However, it was not immediately clear how these stated aims would be achieved with the limited capacity and resourcing at LMC's disposal. LMC comprises a small team of curatorial and collections management professionals within LCC but has neither the capacity nor the expertise to meaningfully engage with new audiences. This is unsurprising considering that "Leicestershire remains the lowest-funded county council in the country with greater risks to service delivery as a result."[5] The collaborative work discussed in the remainder of this article is best read with this context in mind as there appears to be a duty for policy to intervene. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 did inspire investment in targeted digital engagement with collections. In addition to an existing social media presence on Instagram (@leicestershire_collections), a museum collections microsite was commissioned to showcase some of the objects LMC cares for and the work that LMC does with them.

"Queering the Collections"

In 2023, Culture Leicestershire (abbreviated to CuL) — which constitutes the Museum, Heritage, Libraries, Collections, Learning and Participation services at Leicestershire County Council — became an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation (NPO).[6] The funding that came with this NPO status meant that there was more capacity for CuL and LMC to work collaboratively with under-served communities and a commitment to working with creative practitioners. This provided an opportunity to advance the LGBTQIA+ strand of work by drawing on CuL's vast experience and track record of working with various marginalised communities to develop exhibitions and responses to museum displays such as *Do you see what I see?* in 2019.[7] This was the first time LMC looked specifically at its museum collections in this way, prompting the realisation that the experiences of LGBTQIA+ people are currently underrepresented in LMC services, resources and venues. In 2022, two of the co-authors of this article — Alison Clague (Senior Curator, LMC) and Esther Shaw (Community Participation Worker, CuL) — collaboratively developed a project titled "Queering the Collections" to explore LGBTQIA+ histories within LMC. Because it was not yet known what shape the project would take at the time of development, inspiration and best practice were sought across the museum sector and found at a study day at Queer Britain.[8] As a result of this, Jon Sleigh[9] was commissioned as a trusted, experienced learning consultant and curator to help LMC and CuL to explore the existing collections offer through an LGBTQIA+ lens.

The commission tasked Jon Sleigh with (a) identifying potential project activities including options for projects co-curated by LBGTQIA+ people, (b) identifying potential partner organisations and groups that LMC and CuL could work with to achieve project aims, (c) providing guidance around the role and parameters of the LCC staff and team involved in the project, and (d) co-developing a plan for how to take this work forward, with a focus on LMC digital access routes. Jon visited one of LMC's collections facilities dispersed across the county — the Collections Resource Centre — where he interrogated the collections on-site, talked to staff, and explored the collections that were shared online. From this, Jon produced a final report that, among other things, listed 30 objects from LMC that could be linked to, and/or associated with, queerness in some shape or form.[10] That association ranged from clear links to LGBTQIA+ stories (for example, Roman coins of Hadrian or a portrait of George Villiers, 1st Duke of Buckingham) to body image (for instance, personal grooming or shapewear from the LMC Symington archive of corsetry and shapewear) to gender (such as toys made by Palitoy of Coalville, including explicitly gendered toys like *Girl's World* and *Action Man*) to evoking feelings of camp and/or style (like fashion collections and Care Bear toys).

Trialling an Inclusive, Curatorial Approach to Engagement with LGBTQIA+ Histories

LMC staff then worked with Jon to look at how these objects could be grouped into themes that would not only provide a basis for discussion and further exploration but also inform the approach to LMC's inclusive, curatorial practice. Jon also emphasised the importance of any project including a digital element to maximise inclusivity for people who may be unable to engage with LGBTQIA+ content in a public space for fear of being outed or being unable to express their identity freely. In addition to enabling LMC to think about its collections in new ways, it also gave staff confidence and inspiration to develop collections in ways that engage LGBTQIA+ audiences.

To this end, LMC worked with University of Nottingham student volunteers to test how effective the object groupings were as a starting point for conversations about LGBTQIA+ histories. The student volunteers (a) selected objects from these artefacts, (b) undertook further research on the selected objects, (c) digitised the objects using either photogrammetry (a method of producing high resolution digital 3D versions of objects using studio photography) or 3D laser scanners, (d) crafted responses to the objects, and (e) offered their own interpretation of how the objects could be understood and interacted with. More on this follows later in this article.

A Contemporary Co-curation Approach Underpinned by Historical, Conceptual Ideas

The inclusive, curatorial approach described above is contemporary and innovative in its conception and, as such, contributes helpfully to the growing body of interdisciplinary knowledge on and around effective collaborative partnerships in digital heritage. It also provides us with a better understanding of the factors that enable those partnerships to succeed and thrive as we shall see in the discussion presented later in this article. However, the principles and theoretical perspectives underpinning the approach are not entirely new. Already in the 1980s and 1990s, prominent scholars advocated taking a bottom-up approach to incorporating a multiplicity of accounts, perspectives and actors — including the lived experiences of ordinary people — into the processes of collecting, interpreting and (re)telling the histories captured by artefacts from the past. To the British social anthropologist — Paul Connerton, this approach benefits society because we experience our present differently in accordance with the different pasts to which we can connect that present.[11]

Building on this, the late British sociologist — John Urry — heralded what he viewed as the proliferation of ordinary people who, through their enthusiasm, strove to preserve aspects of "their" history in defiance of the essentializing, grand narratives perpetuated by memory institutions to reinforce conservative, elitist and selective views of the past.[12] To the Israeli speech communications scholar and cultural anthropologist — Tamar Katriel, those essentializing, grand narratives constitute a kind of "historical facticity"[13] characterized by authority, power and privilege[14] that foreground "a monolithic heritage that underrepresents numerous communities, groups and publics in society."[15] As we shall see below, inviting a multiplicity of accounts, perspectives and publics to participate in, and contribute to, discourses on and around LGBTQIA+ histories was at the heart of *Villiers Revealed* whose overarching purpose was to animate, represent, and (re)tell LGBTQIA+ histories in ways that queer publics (a) have a say in, (b) can relate to, and (c) are able to identify with.

VILLIERS REVEALED

Of all the objects selected by Jon Sleigh, the portrait of George Villiers became the centrepiece of the conversations and discourses about LGBTQIA+ histories and narratives. Developing collections with queer association to engage LGBTQIA+ audiences and spark LGBTQIA+ conversations and storytelling was never intended to produce an exhibition as an outcome, but it did. It did so because the story of George Villiers, 1st Duke of Buckingham, was irresistible. One of the most written about and well-known LGBTQIA+ characters in British history, George has become something of a gay

icon. Tall, handsome and with enviable legs, he was born in Leicestershire where he spent his childhood. It is suggested that George's looks and charm led him to become the favourite and probable lover of King James VI/I. LMC had a large portrait of George Villiers which had been acquired in 1938 and while it had been on display for most of that time, the existing interpretation did not explicitly acknowledge the LGBTQIA+ aspect of his story.

Co-curating the *Villiers Revealed Virtual Exhibition*

LMC recognised that the painting's condition, location and glazing made it inaccessible and so invested in conservation treatment and reglazing. Following restoration, the painting was made the focus of an exhibition co-curated with Jon Sleigh, thereby taking centre stage in showcasing LGBTQIA+ histories in LMC sites. Jon's approach gave LMC the confidence to be honest about, and reflect on, why this had not been done before. Displayed at Melton Carnegie Museum, one of LMC's facilities, George Villiers' painting enabled LMC to facilitate the start of conversations with LGBTQIA+ communities. Proceeding this way marked an important commitment and first step for LMC services that were, until that point, not accustomed to working in this way. Inevitably, unexpected challenges arose that LMC addressed decisively.

For instance, LMC knew that there were limitations to telling the Villiers story in ways that were relatable to various publics considering that George was a white, privileged man. His connections to figures of authority, power, and royalty would appear to make him elitist — potentially attracting mixed feelings and sentiments of fascination from some people, repulsion from others, and ambivalence from yet others. This is picked up again below. There was also the more practical aspect of the limited physical space that was available to LMC. To address this, LMC organised a second phase of the exhibition that involved bespoke community-led interventions and responses facilitated by a creative practitioner. In what follows, the article discusses the various strands of collaborative work that characterised the co-curation approach that developed *Villiers Revealed* while generating broader impact in a multi-layered way.

QUEERING AND DECOLONISING COLLECTIONS THROUGH COMMUNITY-LED DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT

Villiers Revealed emerged as a strategic response to the well-documented and longstanding exclusion, silencing, and misrepresentation of the lived experiences, identities, and contributions of marginalised communities[16] — including people of BAME heritage and LGBTQIA+ people. It developed a model of digital co-creation that brings underrepresented voices into dialogue with public heritage. Led by CuL and LMC at LCC in partnership with the University of Nottingham, the project formed part of a wider institutional commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI), supported by Arts Council England (ACE) through the NPO status mentioned earlier.[17] As hinted at earlier, CuL's groundwork and track record were essential to this process — featuring (a) staff training in EDI, (b) development of an EDI group, (c) revisions to interpretation language, and (d) physical improvements to accessibility across LMC sites. These actions have helped to create a foundation for more open, ethical, and community-centred curatorial practices.

CREATIVE PRACTICE AND THE POWER OF COMMUNITY CO-CREATION

The inclusive, curatorial approach underpinning *Villiers Revealed* involved further collaboration with multidisciplinary artist and facilitator Aaran Sian (they/them),[18] whose curatorial practice is grounded in community engagement and queer intersectionality. The portrait of George Villiers, 1st Duke of Buckingham introduced earlier, offered a gateway into broader conversations about queer visibility and historical suppression. Villiers' speculated queerness, historically omitted from dominant

narratives, was used to frame a wider interrogation of colonial legacies and the violent imposition of binary gender systems and anti-queer laws. The resulting exhibition, *We Have Always Been Here*,[19] expanded the scope of inquiry to examine how queerness, gender fluidity, and resistance have existed across cultures and time, even when absent from, or denied by, traditional collections.

This brings us back to John Urry's useful conceptualisations on and around the connection between artefacts from the past, cultural memory, and lived experiences.[20] He argued that engagement with lived experiences on one's terms can be personal (focused on one's locality) or collective (focused on a broader shared interest or marker of belonging and identity such as class, gender, generation, and ethnicity). In contexts where lived experiences have been subjected to systemic marginalisation and subordination, John Urry noted further that seeing certain scenes or artefacts relating to those experiential realities functions to reawaken repressed desires and opens up possibilities of reminiscing about what might have been and how events or relationships could have turned out differently — including what that might reveal about the future. This thinking helped us to make sense of how power was reclaimed through collective agency, something we elaborate on below.

The Shift from Passive Representation towards Active Authorship

Within the inclusive, curatorial approach discussed so far, community workshops were central to shaping *Villiers Revealed* and the resultant virtual exhibition. These included (a) collaborative tapestry-making with LGBTQIA+ South Asian participants, (b) collage workshops with LGBTQIA+ youth, (c) online sessions during which self-defined collage portraits were created by participants, (d) and poetry-writing that generated a collective poem embedded in the final installation. These sessions allowed participants to reflect on their own identities while reconnecting with a broader queer lineage often obscured in mainstream historical accounts — as John Urry observed thirty years ago.

Importantly, these co-created contributions were integrated directly into the exhibition as core interpretative content. Rather than relegating community voices to the margins, this approach centred lived experience as vital to LMC's narrative work. It marked a shift away from passive representation toward active authorship — reimagining how stories are told, who has the right to tell them, and with what motivations. In support of the logic behind this shift, key commentators have observed that although marginalized publics generally inherit histories which position them in a certain (often unfavourable) way — they can deconstruct those histories and displace them on their own terms, if given the opportunity and support to do so.[21] This is precisely what *Villiers Revealed* did.

A Virtual Museum for Queer and Decolonized Narratives?

As briefly noted earlier, a further strand of the co-curation approach developed for *Villiers Revealed* involved a contribution from the University of Nottingham student volunteers. The students were trained in collections care, museum co-curation, and LGBTQIA+ awareness and allyship to enable them to contextualise their work within both heritage practice and LGBTQIA+ studies. The students were further encouraged to identify and respond to the objects listed in Jon Sleigh's report mentioned earlier.[22] The students enjoyed the freedom of selecting objects that had personal, familial, activist, communal, political, or historical resonance in relation to LGBTQIA+ experiences before digitising those objects using 3D photogrammetry and 3D laser scanning to enable the co-curation of the *Villiers Revealed Virtual Exhibition*. Visits to LMC sites provided further context and a space for exchange between students, heritage professionals, and community contributors. Student contributions have proven invaluable in supporting the expansion, reach, and interpretation of the physical collection,[23] demonstrating how digital media can democratise the (re)telling of, and access to, stories often left untold in traditional gallery, libraries, museums and archives (GLAM) spaces.

In offering an immersive, navigable space for audiences unable or unwilling to access physical museum sites, *Villiers Revealed Virtual Exhibition* responds to the many barriers that prevent people from engaging with heritage spaces in person: geographic distance, access costs, a lack of representation, concerns around safety, and a discomfort being "out" in (unpredictable) public settings.[24]

CONCLUSION

Villiers Revealed provided an accessible environment where LGBTQIA+ stories were explored, validated, and celebrated. Beyond the exhibitions and digital platforms, it catalysed lasting institutional culture change. New interpretive strategies have been embedded in LMC displays; inclusive design principles have informed physical improvements across LMC sites; and partnerships between cultural institutions and queer communities have been strengthened. While the project was successful in its outcomes, there were challenges. Timelines were tight — particularly around student availability — and required flexibility and commitment from all partners. The importance of strong foundations became clear: investing in clear ethical frameworks; policy statements; and relationship-building allowed *Villiers Revealed* to proceed with care and confidence.

For others aiming to undertake similar work, the key recommendations for success are: (a) beginning with internal reflection and training, (b) creating space for communities to shape direction, (c) avoiding assumptions and tokenism; and (d) being honest about limitations. Above all, being kind is crucial because this work is relational, emotional, and requires trust. This is particularly important in supporting marginalized communities and publics in achieving sustained engagement with "the continued deconstruction of prevailing frames for the purpose of creating new ones: each attempt resisting odious and dominant world views and creating fresh meanings, identities, and fairer ways of life."[25]

NOTES

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SACRED RIVERS: DECOLONIAL ECOLOGIES AND THE INDIGENOUS CULTURAL HERITAGE OF CAPE TOWN'S BLUE-GREEN WATERWAYS

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INTRODUCTION: THE LOSS OF SACRED RIVERS

Cape Town is a city shaped by water. Before colonisation, the region was defined by an abundance of freshwater networks[1] and the riparian landscape shaped migratory navigation and transhumance patterns, nurtured seasonal grazing lands, informed ritual and cultural practice and established deeply ecological worldviews among local Indigenous groups.[2] Rivers, estuaries, wetlands, and coastlines held profound spiritual and cultural significance for the Indigenous Khoi and San peoples and were revered as spiritual, social, and ecological lifelines.[3]

For millennia, Indigenous communities lived in reciprocal balance with these waterscapes. Colonisation ruptured these relationships through violent dispossession: land was seized, languages suppressed, rituals interrupted, and access to sacred river systems systematically denied.[4] Over time, colonial land conquest, mechanistic modernisation, and the later spatial violence of Apartheid planning severed Indigenous communities from ancestral waters.[5] River infrastructure replaced ecological reverence, and ecological worldviews were overwritten by extractive logics and rapid urban development policy.

Today, the legacies of this disconnection are visible across the city. Wastewater treatment plants (WWTPs) line major rivers and estuarine edges, discharging untreated or partially treated effluent directly into rivers and coastal zones.[6] Rivers that once sustained the cultural and ecological lives of the First People are buried in underground channels, severely polluted, or rendered invisible beneath the infrastructure of the contemporary city. The degradation of these waterways is not only an environmental crisis but reflects a continuation of deeper historical violence: The erasure of intangible heritage, Indigenous knowledge systems, and the spatial memory of the pre-colonial Cape.

In an era of escalating climate crisis and biodiversity loss, there is an urgent need to reimagine ecological landscapes not merely as resources to be managed (or exploited), but as sacred cultural heritage deserving of formal recognition, reverence, and legal protection. This paper positions Cape Town's rivers as Indigenous landscapes, inseparable from Indigenous culture, identity, memory, and resistance. It asks what it would mean to regenerate and conserve rivers not only as ecological assets but as ancestral corridors and cultural commons, and argues that ecological restoration, when grounded in Indigenous knowledge, can be an act of decolonial restitution.

Research Overview: Routes and Rivers

In pre-colonial times, the land was a communal resource to be shared and occupied seasonally,[7] with rivers guiding migration routes across the Cape. Colonial and modern paradigms reframed rivers and landscapes as resources to be possessed, parcelled, exploited and sold. In contrast, Indigenous Khoi epistemologies regard rivers, coastlines, estuaries, and mountains as sacred landscapes, interwoven with spiritual cosmologies, ceremonial practice, and ecological custodianship. The desecration of rivers is thus inseparable from the dispossession of Indigenous culture and the silencing of Indigenous worldviews, and the recognition of (pre-colonial) ecological land- and waterscapes as tangible cultural heritage becomes an act of spatial decolonisation.

Theoretical and Methodological Framework

This study reframes ecological conservation, restoration, and coexistence as cultural heritage, grounding its approach in Indigenous worldviews and Knowledge Systems. Critical heritage studies[8] and landscape urbanism[9] provide complementary theoretical lenses. A mixed-method framework combines narrative inquiry, digital ethnography, legal discourse analysis, archival research, and critical cartography.[10] Narrative and ethnographic methods explore relationships between Indigenous worldviews and waterscapes, while discourse analysis examines the limitations of current heritage and legal frameworks. Archival research traces the historic relationships of the Khoi to Cape Town's rivers, and counter-mapping overlays historical transhumance patterns onto contemporary hydrological data to reveal enduring spatial relationships.

Significance

While scholars have advocated for the recognition of Indigenous landscapes, this is the first study to use critical cartography to foreground the cultural significance of Cape Town's rivers and estuaries in relation to Khoi seasonal transhumance. The findings highlight the urgent need for legal protection, ecological restoration, and cultural recognition of riparian landscapes, advocating a dual approach that integrates environmental stewardship with Indigenous cultural heritage. Ecological conservation is positioned as a decolonial act, marking a return to Indigenous ontologies rooted in relationality with nature, and a reclamation of sacred landscapes erased by colonial spatial development.

Limitations

A key limitation is the absence of in-person fieldwork with Khoi communities—a central principle of IKS research. The study relies on digital ethnographic sources, published literature, oral history archives, and secondary data to assemble its account. Future research should incorporate community co-design, fieldwork, and cultural mapping with Indigenous custodians.

THE DESECRATION OF RIVERS: ACTS OF SOCIO-ECOLOGICAL ERASURE

Despite Cape Town's designation as a biodiversity hotspot,[11] most urban rivers remain unprotected,[12] heavily polluted, and disconnected from larger blue-green networks essential for biodiversity and migratory species. Many wetlands have been lost, and existing biodiversity corridors are fragmented or destroyed. The siting of major wastewater treatment plants (WWTPs) at or near estuarine mouths[13] and degradation of rivers constitutes both ecological and cultural violence: these facilities disrupt aquatic ecosystems and cause severe river pollution, while at the same time signalling a disregard for the sacred significance of riparian landscapes in Indigenous cosmologies.

Across the City, public access to useable waterscapes is often limited or non-existent, with prime riverside sites privatised or used for sewage treatment or industrial purposes. During the Apartheid era, waterscapes such as rivers, wetlands, WWTPs, and conservation zones were often employed as

physical buffers to enforce racial segregation.[14] People were also forcibly removed from ecologically-rich areas and relocated further away from Cape Town's mountains, rivers and coastlines.[15] This spatial logic endures in the contemporary city, where affluent, majority-white suburbs border protected greenbelts and coastal reserves, while many Black and working-class communities live alongside polluted waterways, WWTPs, and fenced-off, inaccessible green spaces. This enduring "ecological segregation" reinforces both spatial inequality and environmental injustice.[16]

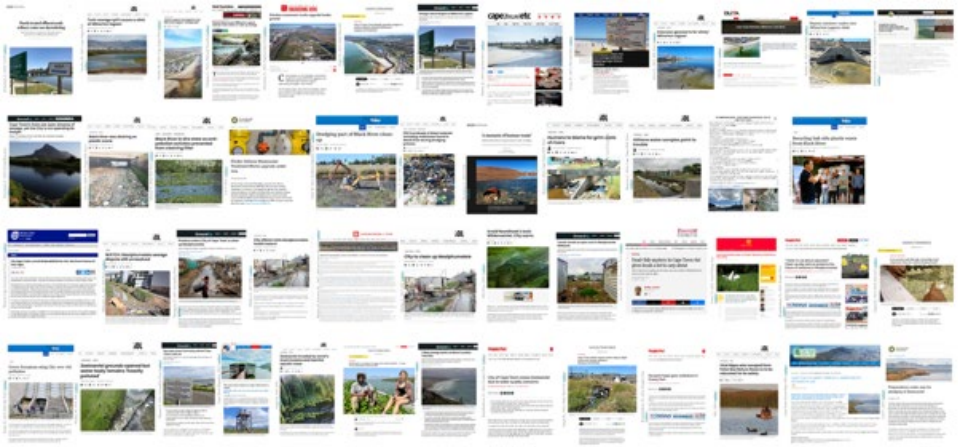

Figure 1. The Desecration of Rivers: An Archive of news events marking WWTP, Estuarine, River or Coastal Pollution in Cape Town's Waterways[17]

Beyond visible pollution and urban injustices lies a deeper loss: the erosion of intangible water heritage. In Khoi cosmology, water is a sacred presence, integral to seasonal migration routes, ritual cleansing, and spiritual practice. These waterscapes formed the foundations of identity, memory, and survival. Colonial urbanisation, privatisation, pollution, and ongoing insensitive development have ruptured this continuity, severing Indigenous groups from ancestral water territories.[18] Despite their significance, Cape Town's rivers, wetlands, and estuaries are rarely recognised as heritage in planning, conservation, or legal frameworks, leaving them vulnerable to further erasure.

The contested Amazon development at the confluence of the Liesbeek- and Black Rivers exemplifies these failures. As a historic Khoi grazing pasture, sacred landscape, and the site of the first recorded Khoi-Dutch conflict, the site is recognised by Khoi leaders as a landscape of immense historical and spiritual significance.[19] However, it has never been formally protected. The absence of "material tangible heritage" was used to justify its exclusion from legal safeguarding, exposing it to privatisation and irreversible transformation.[20] This case highlights the inadequacy of existing heritage legislation in recognising dynamic, intangible, and Indigenous relationships to land and water.

As long as heritage policies, ecological conservation strategies, and spatial planning practices fail to meaningfully integrate Indigenous knowledge, decolonial frameworks, and ecological restoration, Cape Town's rivers will remain open to further degradation and development, leading to the loss of the region's water memories and Indigenous spiritual landscapes.

There is a critical need to reimagine riparian corridors, estuaries, and WWTP-adjacent landscapes as inclusive 'ecological commons'- spaces that regenerate biodiversity, restore lost cultural functions, and heal fragmented urban fabrics. Through integrated spatial design and community-led engagement, these transformations hold potential to advance both spatial decolonisation and ecological justice.

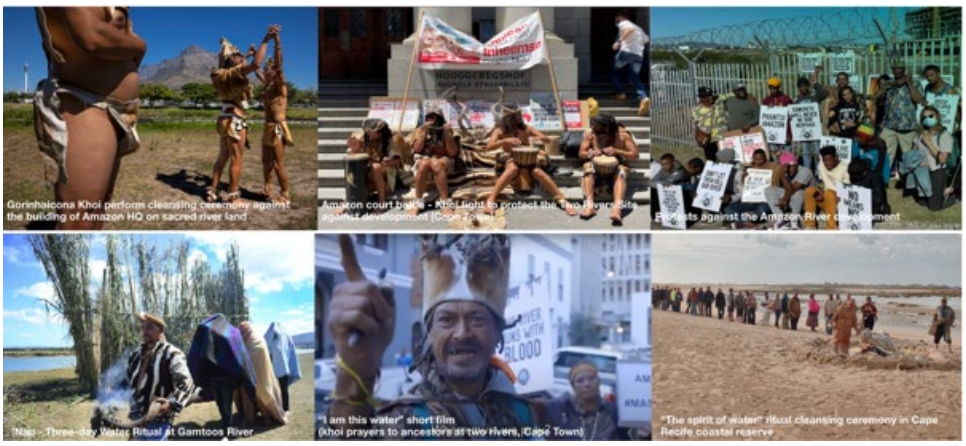

Figure 2. Contemporary Khoi Relationships to Sacred Rivers – Ritual Cleansing Ceremonies and Protests for River Preservation.[21]

CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES: HERITAGE BIAS IN COLONIAL PROTECTIONS

Despite growing scholarly recognition of intangible cultural landscapes, South Africa's heritage frameworks continue to prioritise colonial-era architecture, monuments, and material artefacts over pre-colonial cultural memory and spiritual landscapes. This reflects a persistent bias in legal and institutional systems, where tangible, European-style heritage is privileged while Indigenous cultural landscapes remain marginalised.

Recent scholarship calls for the formal recognition of intangible heritage—particularly water heritage and Indigenous ecological landscapes—as integral to cultural heritage. Minguzzi,[22] Boswell,[23] Steenkamp,[24] and Wilkins[25] all argue for shifting beyond Western-centric frameworks toward approaches grounded in Indigenous knowledge systems, spiritual worldviews, and ecological stewardship. Boswell's work on marine intangible cultural heritage (MICH) reveals the absence of legal recognition for Indigenous oceanic and spiritual knowledge, noting how these omissions perpetuate exclusion from decision-making processes. Together with Thornton, [26] she critiques the South African government's failure to meaningfully involve Indigenous voices in marine governance despite its commitments under international heritage and Indigenous rights conventions.. Wilkins highlights the ecological consequences of Indigenous land dispossession, linking the erosion of cultural autonomy with biodiversity loss and environmental degradation.

Steenkamp advocates for counter-heritage frameworks that validate memory, place, and Indigenous identity outside colonial definitions, citing the Amazon site in Cape Town as an example of entrenched colonial logics in post-apartheid heritage practice. Minguzzi challenges the enduring 'terra nullius' myth, documenting Khoi movement routes, rituals, and sacred landscapes as evidence of long-standing custodianship.

A recurring question emerges: *whose heritage counts?* Current legislation overwhelmingly protects built colonial infrastructure while ignoring or misclassifying Indigenous cultural landscapes. While some riparian zones, wetlands, and coastal areas are recognised within ecological policy as "nature reserves" or "biodiversity corridors," they are stripped of their cultural meaning and spiritual dimensions. Such designations may shield these landscapes from development, yet they often impose strict access controls that prevent Indigenous communities from free movement across these sites or the ability to conduct spiritual and ceremonial practices on ancient ancestral lands. In effect, landscapes deeply embedded in Indigenous cosmologies are reframed through a Western conservation lens that prioritises wilderness preservation over lived cultural significance.

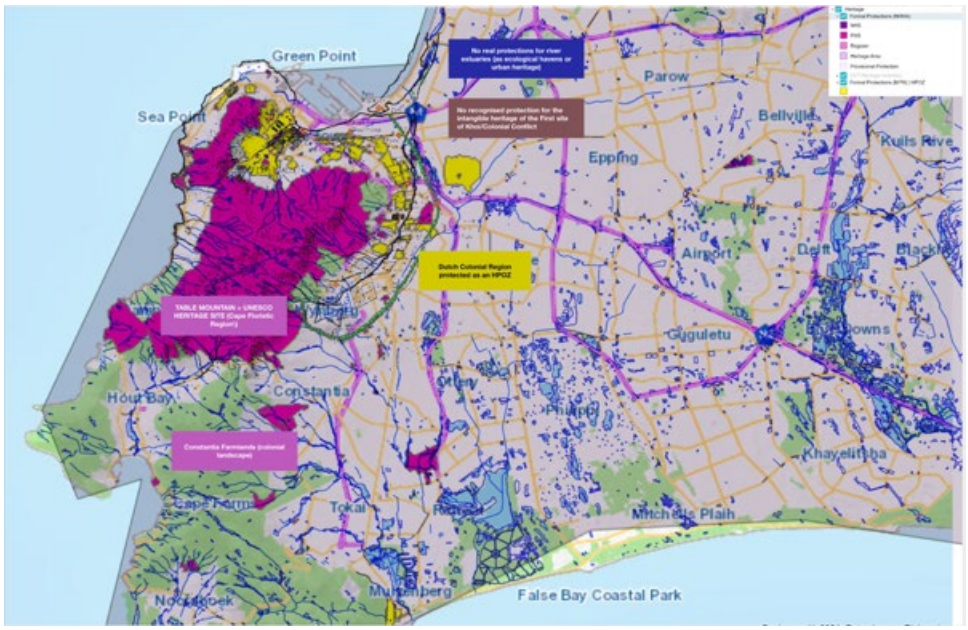

Figure 3. Heritage Bias? Relationships between formal Heritage Recognition and Rivers. Yellow portions indicate colonial architecture and urban heritage zones, while pink zones (mostly table mountain) are recognised as provincial heritage sties. Rivers, estuaries, wetlands and other corridors (blue) enjoy little to no formal heritage protections[27]

INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVES: SACRED LAND AND THE SPIRIT OF WATER

Narrative enquiry into Khoi and San worldviews reveals a deeply relational ontology in which water is both a practical necessity and a sacred presence. Beyond its material value, water is woven into the spiritual, social, and ecological fabric of life. It sustains subsistence, shapes ritual practice, guides seasonal mobility, and grounds cosmological understandings. In this worldview, rivers, coasts, estuaries, and wetlands are living entities with agency, deserving of respect, reciprocity, and protection.[28]

San oral traditions speak of water spirits and cyclical conceptions of time where the movement of water mirrors the rhythms of all life. Khoi traditions connect water to cattle herding, settlement patterns, and communal belonging, viewing rivers and grazing lands as interdependent. These traditions regard water as a sacred element that binds human, animal, and ecological systems in a web of mutual reliance. Riparian landscapes are frequently used for ritual cleansing, healing, and ceremonial gatherings, underscoring their role as sites of both spiritual renewal and social cohesion.[29]

The Camissa spring system (*//ammi i ssa*, "the place of sweet waters") is one of Cape Town's most enduring cultural and ecological landmarks.[30] Flowing from the slopes of Table Mountain to the sea, Camissa has been a source of drinking water, spiritual sustenance, and cultural identity for millennia. Contemporary Indigenous voices, such as Patric Tariq Mellet and the Camissa People Digital Archive,[31] frame Camissa as a site of resistance and revival, symbolising the persistence of Indigenous presence despite centuries of displacement. The city changes, but the river remains. Mellet positions rivers as sites of anti-colonial solidarity, linking Khoi histories with those of enslaved, displaced, and dispossessed peoples in a shared struggle to reclaim the sacredness of land and water.

Scholarship on water mythologies reinforces these perspectives. Joseph's[32] work on South African water spirituality highlights how aquatic spaces are layered with contestation and meaning. Water serves as a lens through which identity, memory, and landscape are entangled across pre-colonial,

colonial, and postcolonial histories. It holds political as well as spiritual significance and is at once a source of life, a boundary marker, a site of conflict, and a vessel of cultural resilience.

These perspectives are vividly echoed in Indigenous creative expressions, whether in rock art depictions of aquatic animals and ritual scenes (see Figure 4), Indigenous storytelling,[33] mythology,[34] or documentary film. In the short film 'I Am This Water',[35] which documents Khoi resistance to the Amazon development at the Liesbeek-Black River confluence, a protestor captures the essence of this relational worldview by declaring: "I am this water. I am this river. If you kill the river, you kill me." This statement captures the indivisibility of land, water, and identity, and the existential stakes of river degradation for Indigenous communities.

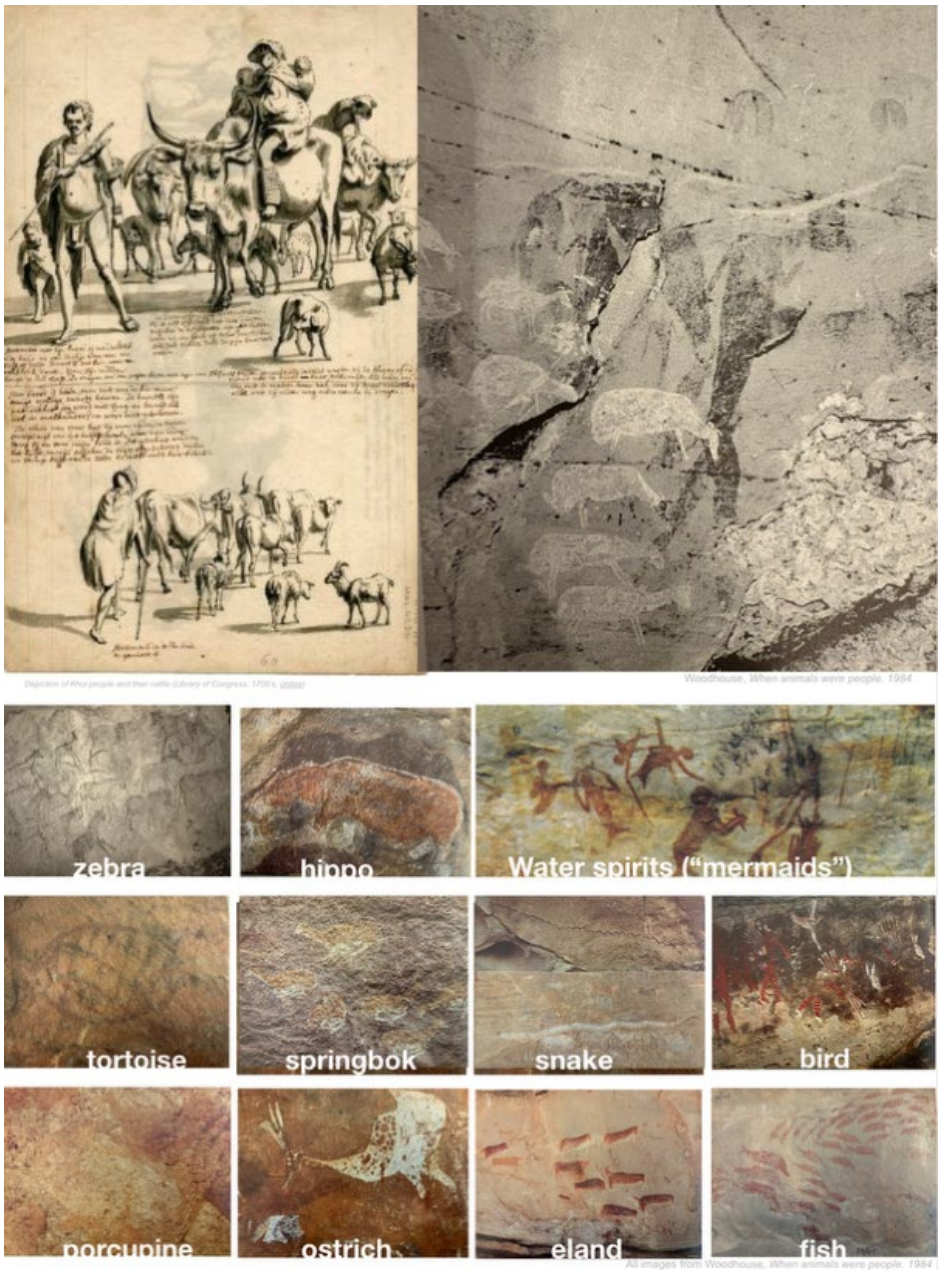

Figure 4. Indigenous Perspectives: Colonial representation of the Khoi (top left) depicting their nomadic lifestyle and the importance of cattle vs Khoi representation of their own identity (top right), also with cattle. (below) Indigenous (Khoi and San) rock paintings depicting various 'spirit animals', showing a deep connection ecological worldview and spiritual connection to nature [36]

READING THE LANDSCAPE: TERRA NULLIUS AND INTANGIBLE TRANSHUMANCE

While legal scholarship and Indigenous perspectives reveal the significance of intangible water heritage, there is also substantial tangible evidence of sustained Khoi presence across the Cape's landscapes. Archival enquiry exposes both the mechanisms of Indigenous erasure and the persistence of the colonial myth of *terra nullius*—the false notion of an "empty land."

Some colonial maps intentionally omit any reference to Indigenous presence, portraying vacant, pastoral scenes devoid of human life (Figure 5, top left), or depicting cattle and sheep in the landscape while omitting depictions of the Khoi pastoralists who owned and tended them (Figure 5, top right).

Yet fragments of archival truth persist: Colonial-era drawings depict extensive Khoi settlements along Cape Town's shorelines (Figure 5, centre), while other maps record established settlement sites and toponyms identifying various Khoi tribes across the Cape landscape.

RIVERS AND ROUTES: TRACING INTANGIBLE LANDSCAPES

The divide between sedentary European models of private land ownership and the Khoi system of seasonal stewardship is stark. Contrary to archival myths of "empty landscapes," Khoi nomadism and transhumance were not random wanderings but highly organised seasonal movements along ecological corridors—often guided by the courses of rivers and the locations of estuaries. These routes evolved over generations, likely following the paths of major rivers and estuaries along the Cape landscape to ensure access to regular refreshment and grazing pastures despite seasonal hydrological changes. Continued access to water also allowed for ceremony and ritual.

To examine these relationships, archival Khoi migration routes documented by Andrew Smith (Figure 6, top row) were digitally overlaid onto present-day GIS hydrology datasets (Figure 6, bottom row). The results reveal strong correlations between historic transhumance routes and the Cape's major riparian landscapes. Rivers such as the Diep River, Black River, Berg River, Eerste River, and Liesbeek River emerge as key guiding lines in Indigenous spatial memory, each linked to significant estuarine "nodes" including the Diep River Estuary, the now-lost Salt River Estuary, Wildevoelvlei, Zeekoevlei, Zandvlei, the Eerste River Estuary, the Berg River Estuary, and the Langebaan Lagoon.

Together, these rivers and estuaries form a network of *waterscapes of memory*—a sacred hydrology used for generations of Indigenous migration. (Figure 7) Yet, despite their historical, ecological, and spiritual significance, almost none fall within formal ecological conservation zones or hold recognition as cultural heritage sites. This absence of protection leaves them vulnerable to ongoing degradation and development, perpetuating the erasure initiated under colonisation.

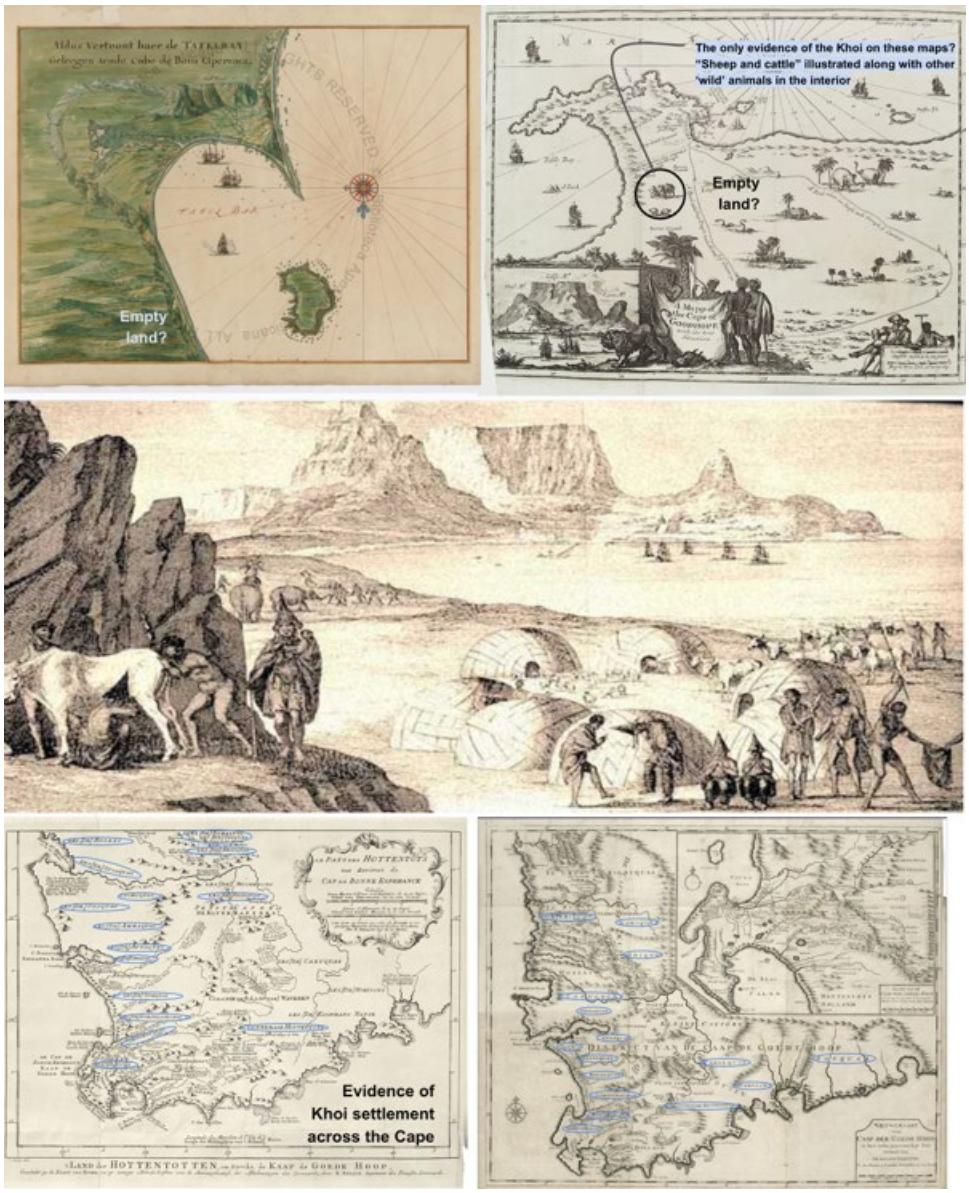

Figure 5. Terra Nullius? Archival research on Khoi Groups in the Landscape shows varying degrees of Khoi representation – or omission - in the landscape.[37]

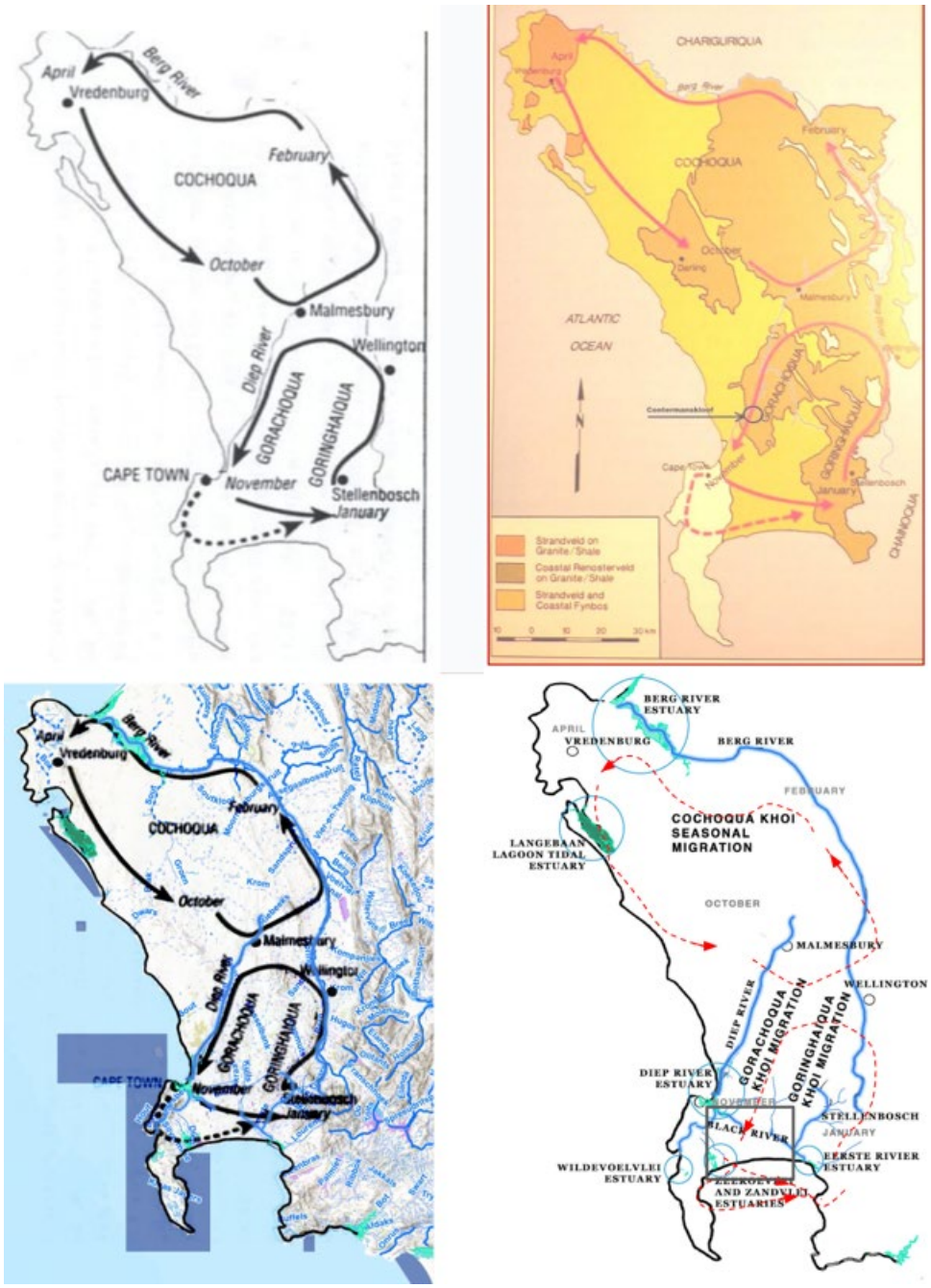

Figure 6. Rivers and Routes: Countermapping Khoi migratory patterns against contemporary rivers reveals a deep connection between rivers, estuaries and migratory routes.[38]

Figure 7. Rivers and Routes: Countermapping Khoi migratory patterns against contemporary rivers[39]

CASE STUDIES: THREE RIVERS, TWO ESTUARIES, TWO WWTP

This study focuses on two riparian case studies (Figure 8) that reveal the intertwined ecological and cultural degradation of Cape Town's waterways.

Case Study 1: Diep River / Diep River Estuary / Potsdam WWTP

The first case study (Figure 9), examines the Diep River and its estuary at Milnerton Lagoon. The waterscape was once a vital migratory corridor for the Gorachoqua Khoi (who travelled Southwards following the Diep river and paused at the estuary around November annually, (Figure 6) likely to use the fertile grounds around the estuary as seasonal grazing pastures and ceremonies). Today, the river and estuary are severely polluted and no tangible evidence remains of the once-active Khoi migration route. Effluent discharged from the Potsdam Wastewater Treatment Plant has contributed to biodiversity loss and extreme river and estuarine pollution.[40] The lagoon is a contested site, with residents and civic action groups protesting the degradation of water quality.[41] However, public discourse rarely, if ever, acknowledges the site's deeper cultural significance or its role in historic Indigenous seasonal migration routes.

Case Study 2: Diep River / Diep River Estuary / Potsdam WWTP

The second case study (Figure 10) examines the Black River corridor, which guided historic seasonal migration of the Gorinhaiqua Khoi. The tribe likely travelled between the Salt River Estuary/Two Rivers Confluence following the paths of the Liesbeek river, Black River and Kuilsriver towards Eersteriver Estuary and Stellenbosch. (Figure 6) The convergence of the Liesbeek and Black rivers, located near the former the Salt River Estuary[42]—a site of profound Khoi cultural significance. The confluence is both a literal and symbolic battleground: It is the site of the first recorded Khoi-Dutch conflict over contested riparian landscapes and, in recent years, a landscape of intense Indigenous resistance to the Amazon commercial development on the site.[43] Despite strong opposition from Khoi and civic action groups seeking to preserve the area as a sacred site,[44] construction has proceeded and is steadily erasing this sacred cultural landscape. Further upstream, the Athlone WWTP continuously discharges effluent into the Black River,[45] compounding ecological degradation and eroding what remains of its ancestral and spiritual associations.

Rivers and Routes: Establishing cultural-ecological commons corridors

These rivers are cultural landscapes and living archives of Indigenous memory. Their protection should not be determined solely by ecological metrics but also by their role in shaping identity, sustaining heritage, and enabling Indigenous cultural restitution and spatial decolonisation across Cape Town. Recognising these sites as both ecological corridors and cultural heritage landscapes would open pathways to legal protection, community stewardship, and ecological restoration guided by Indigenous cosmologies. Across Cape Town, broader ‘spiritual-ecological’ corridors could be established along historic migration routes – and their rivers – to connect currently-fragmented estuaries via blue-green cultural corridors. These waterscape corridors should be regenerated as collective cultural-commons, allowing both for biodiversity and ecological regeneration and cultural practice, ceremony and ritual.

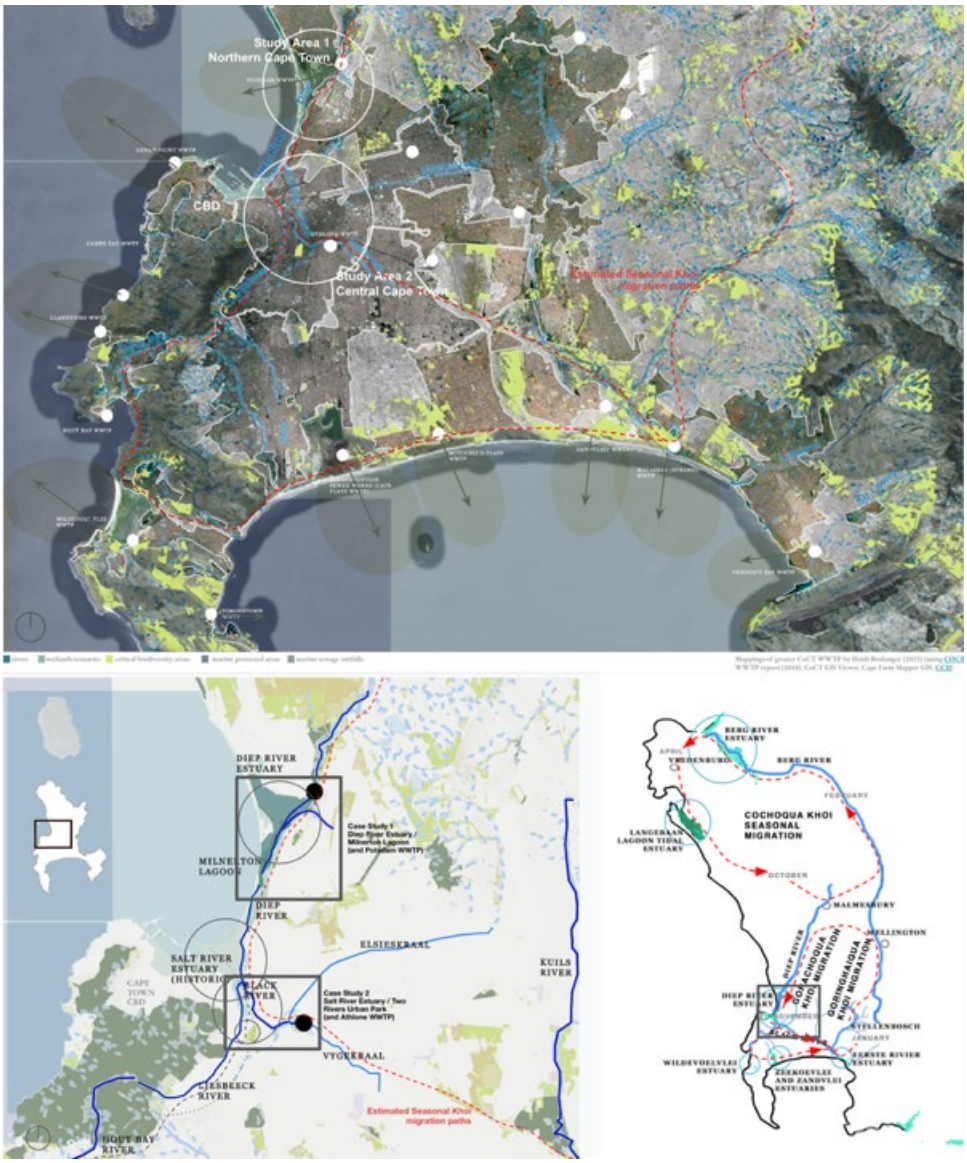

Figure 8. Two Case Studies: Three Rivers, Two Estuaries– Diep River / Black River Relationships. Composite map showing Case Study sites in relation to rivers, WWTP sites and Khoi transhumance patterns.[46]

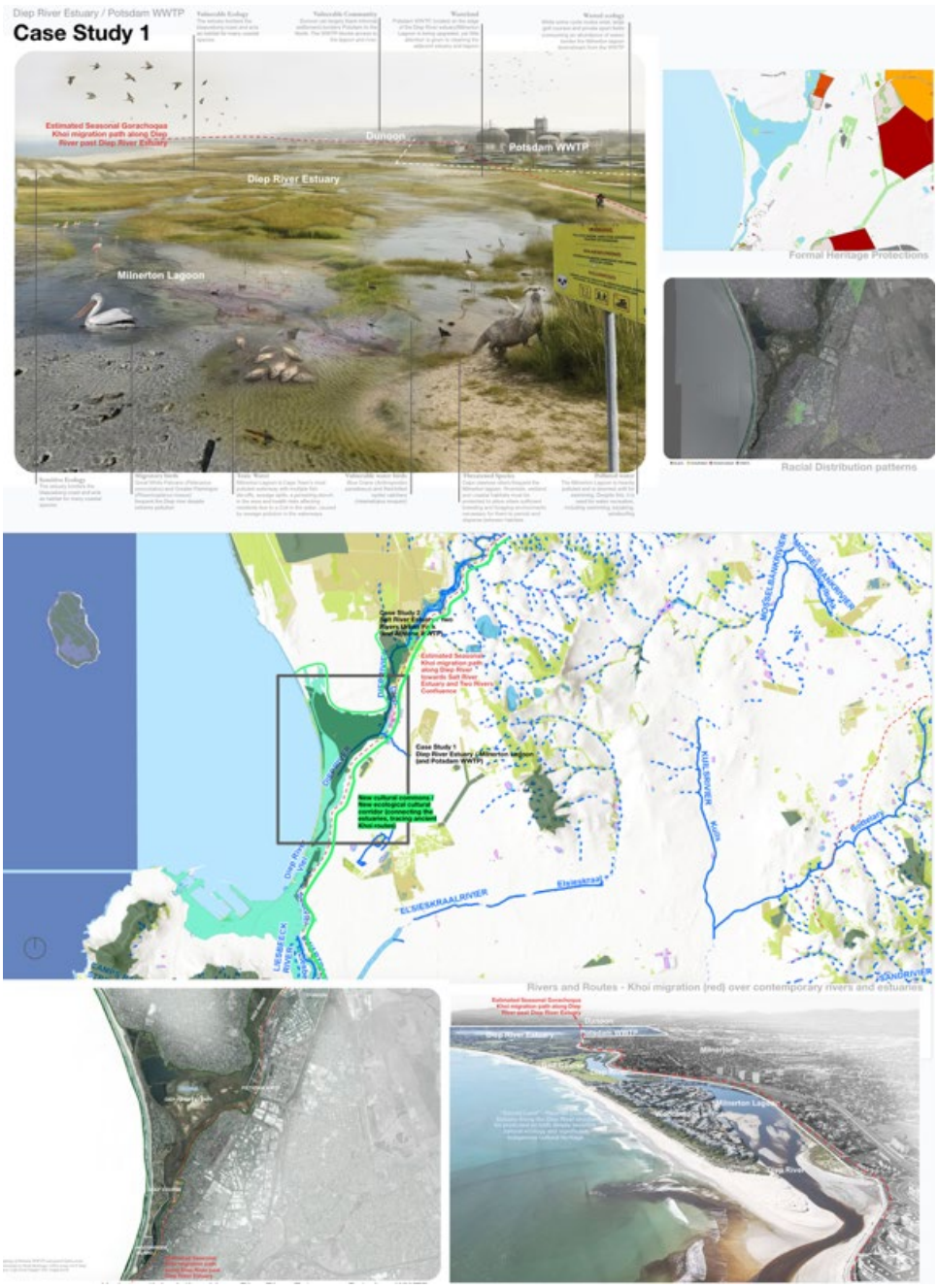

Figure 9. Case Study 1 – Diep River / Potsdam WWTP / Diep River Estuary. (Top left) Composite collage visualisation showing Case Study Site conditions as an imaginary landscape. (Top right) Maps of Case Study site showing formal heritage protections (CoCT) and Racial Demographics (Census 2011). (Centre and bottom) Mapped relationships between Rivers, Estuaries, WWTP, biodiversity corridors, conservations zones, landmarks and historical boundaries [47]

Figure 10. Case Study 2 – Black River / Athlone WWTP / Salt River Estuary. (Top left) Composite collage visualisation showing Case Study Site conditions as an imaginary landscape. (Top right) Maps of Case Study site showing formal heritage protections (CoCT) and Racial Demographics (Census 2011). (Centre and bottom) Mapped relationships between Rivers, Estuaries, WWTP, biodiversity corridors, conservations zones, landmarks and historical boundaries[48]

CONCLUSION: TOWARDS AN INDIGENOUS WATER HERITAGE?

This research reveals a deep misalignment between heritage policy and Indigenous spatial realities, which represents both a legal failure and a lost opportunity for reparative conservation.

To address this, Cape Town requires the development of an Indigenous Water Heritage framework that integrates ecological and cultural values, centres Indigenous voices, and expands heritage definitions to include relational, spiritual, and landscape-based connections. Such a framework would reframe conservation not as neutral preservation, but as a decolonial act of cultural resurgence.

There is also an urgent need to recognise the city's rivers and estuaries not as infrastructural challenges or peripheral ecological assets, but as sacred commons—living archives of Indigenous movement, memory, and meaning. Restoring these waterscapes under Indigenous stewardship offers a transformative opportunity to decolonise Cape Town's spatial logic, embedding rivers at the heart of ecological health, cultural heritage, Indigenous justice, climate resilience, and equitable urban futures. *"I am this water. I am this river. If you kill the river, you kill me."*[49]

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[46] Figure 8: Composite map by Author (2025) showing Case Study sites in relation to rivers, WWTP sites and Khoi transhumance patterns. Adapted from Google. *Google Earth* (web application). Accessed August 4, 2025. https://earth.google.com/web/; Andrew Smith, photograph in Nigel Worden, Elizabeth van Heyningen, and Vivian Bickford-Smith, Cape Town: The Making of a City (Cape Town: David Philip, 1998, reproduced in Caron von Zeil, “Water – Our Heritage and Our Future,” Reclaim Camissa (blog), September 24, 2018, https://www.reclaimcamissa.org/blog/water-our-heritage-and-our-future; Western Cape Government, Cape Farm Mapper – GIS Datasets (Water Resources; Conservation: Cape Nature; Conservation: Other; Conservation: 2023 WC Biodiversity Spatial Plan; Topography; Vegetation), https://gis.elsenburg.com/apps/cfm/; City of Cape Town Corporate GIS – Open Watercourse Dataset, https://odp-cctegis.opendata.arcgis.com/datasets/f87a9f89ba0140ac9fd141f593ee437d/explore?location=-33.974249%2C18.496223%2C11.72; City of Cape Town, *Sewer Catchment Map: Where Does My Wastewater Go?* (Cape Town: City of Cape Town Utility Services or relevant department, n.d.), accessed August 10, 2025, https://resource.capetown.gov.za/documentcentre/Documents/Maps%20and%20statistics/Where%20does%20my%20wastewater%20go_sewer%20catchment.pdf.

[47] Figure 9: (top, left) Composite collage visualisation by Author (2025) showing Case Study Site conditions as an imaginary landscape. Image by author, compiled from AI-generated images created using ChatGPT image

generation (OpenAI DALL·E, 2025), edited and composited in Adobe Photoshop by author; (top, right) Author. Maps of Case Study site showing formal heritage protections (CoCT) and Racial Demographics. Compiled by Author using Adrian Frith, “Dot Map of South Africa,” interactive web application using Census 2011 dot density methodology, developed September 2013. Accessed April 10, 2025. https://dotmap.adrianfrith.com/?lat=-28.6728&lon=24.6708&zoom=-0.15; City of Cape Town. CoCT Map Viewer – GIS Heritage Overlay. 2024. Accessed April 10, 2025. https://citymaps.capetown.gov.za/EGISViewer/; and Google. Google Earth (web application). Accessed April 10, 2025. https://earth.google.com/web/.
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(bottom, left) Composite map by Author (2025) showing Case Study site in relation key river landmarks. Adapted from Google. *Google Earth* (web application). Accessed May 25, 2025. https://earth.google.com/web/; (bottom, right) Jean Tresfon (photographer), “Milnerton Lagoon, among the City of Cape Town’s most polluted water bodies, empties into Table Bay,” in Tamsin Metelerkamp, “City of Cape Town Finally Launches Project to Restore Heavily Polluted Milnerton Lagoon Environment,” *Daily Maverick*, August 1, 2023, accessed August 8, 2025, https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2023-08-01-city-of-cape-town-finally-launches-project-to-restore-heavily-polluted-milnerton-lagoon-environment/, adapted by Author (2025)

[48] Figure 10: (top, left) Composite collage visualisation by Author (2025) showing Case Study Site conditions as an imaginary landscape. Image by author, compiled from AI-generated images created using ChatGPT image generation (OpenAI DALL·E, 2025), edited and composited in Adobe Photoshop by author; (top, right) Maps of Case Study site showing formal heritage protections (CoCT) and Racial Demographics. Compiled by Author 2025 using Adrian Frith, “Dot Map of South Africa,” interactive web application using Census 2011 dot density methodology, developed September 2013. Accessed April 10, 2025. https://dotmap.adrianfrith.com/?lat=-28.6728&lon=24.6708&zoom=-0.15; City of Cape Town. CoCT Map Viewer – GIS Heritage Overlay. 2024. Accessed April 10, 2025. https://citymaps.capetown.gov.za/EGISViewer/; and Google. Google Earth (web application). Accessed April 10, 2025. https://earth.google.com/web/.
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https://odp-cctegis.opendata.arcgis.com/datasets/f87a9f89ba0140ac9fd141f593ee437d/explore?location=-33.974249%2C18.496223%2C11.72; City of Cape Town, *Sewer Catchment Map: Where Does My Wastewater Go?* (Cape Town: City of Cape Town Utility Services or relevant department, n.d.), accessed August 10, 2025, https://resource.capetown.gov.za/documentcentre/Documents/Maps%20and%20statistics/Where%20does%20my%20wastewater%20go_sewer%20catchment.pdf. (bottom, left) Composite map by Author (2025) showing Case Study site in relation key river landmarks. Adapted from Google. *Google Earth* (web application). Accessed May 25, 2025. https://earth.google.com/web/; (bottom, right) Image adapted by author (2025) from Heidi Boulanger, “(re)tracing the Hedge across Contemporary Cape Town (2024): Two Sites for Acupunctural Memory,” in *Retracing van Riebeeck: Unearthing Tacit Histories and Decolonising Space in Cape Town’s Landscapes of Memory*, in *AMPS Proceedings Series* 40.3 (2025), chap. 36, 383

[49] Words of Indigenous protestor, captured in "I am This Water", short documentary (South Africa: 2022), directed by Mia Pentz; produced by Kirsten Gobey; cinematography by Lwando Makasi; animation by Ashlin Winkler; composer Robin Faull, 24 minutes; screened at South African Film Festival, accessed August 8, 2025

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HERITAGE ATMOSPHERES, AND MINOR URBANISM: A CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE ON PATRIMONIALIZED TERRITORIES IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH

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INTRODUCTION

The conceptual construction of heritage involves complex layers that go beyond classical definitions, encompassing both its physical and symbolic dimensions. In this article, we adopt an expanded notion of heritage, understanding it as a dynamic process related to the construction of meaning and the negotiation of collective memory. From this perspective, we question how the concept of heritage generates tensions when confronted with other territorial and cultural realities, particularly in the Global South.

We propose a critical analysis of heritage through two interrelated concepts: heritage atmosphere and minor urbanism. The notion of heritage atmosphere allows us to go beyond the material–intangible dichotomy, incorporating layers of complexity — from physical and symbolic constructions to social dynamics and everyday practices that shape experiences of belonging or exclusion. Including symbolic elements in the production of urban identities opens space for alternative epistemologies to interpret and produce heritage in historically marginalized contexts.

Grounded in the debate on minor urbanism—understood here as spatial practices of resistance carried out by communities and linked to identity-making processes—we analyze how heritage atmospheres, emerging from multiple understandings and appropriations of heritage, offer a critical lens for reading patrimonialized territories.

This article is based on the outcomes of the international research project "On the Atmospheres and Intermediations of a Minor Urbanism: Epistemologies of (Another) Architecture,"[1] and presents two case studies that explore patrimonialized spaces in Brazil: *Praça Tiradentes* (Tiradentes Square), in the city of Ouro Preto, and the *Capela dos Índios* (Chapel of the Indians) and *Praça do Forró* (Forró Square), in the Eastern Zone of São Paulo. While both cases are examined through the same conceptual framework, the analyses are developed by different authors within the research team.

Conceptual Dimension: Expanded Notion of Heritage

We work with an expanded notion of heritage when thinking about the city — one that goes beyond classical definitions to include both material and symbolic dimensions. Rather than being understood as a static object or a fixed legacy from the past, heritage is approached here as a dynamic process, shaped by practices of selection, representation, and meaning making. [2]

Following Laurajane Smith,[3] we adopt the perspective that "heritage is a cultural process" — something that is actively constructed and continually negotiated. It is not simply what has been handed down, but what is claimed, appropriated, and sometimes contested in the present. What is remembered, and what is silenced, reflects specific power relations and affects the way communities position themselves in relation to their territory and their history.

To investigate this, we adopt a methodology that integrates theoretical reflection with empirical observation. These studies are complemented by the development of critical cartographies, which serve not as neutral representations of space, but as interpretive tools that reveal layers of use, conflict, memory, and meaning.[4] These cartographies are informed by direct field observation, documentation of everyday spatial practices, and an analysis of how urban form intersects with affective and symbolic dynamics.

Rather than aiming for universal conclusions, this methodological approach seeks to bring attention to the micropolitics of space, the situated production of meaning, and the multiple ways in which heritage operates as a lived and contested experience — especially in contexts located at the margins of urban visibility and institutional centrality.

HERITAGE ATMOSPHERE[5]: BETWEEN THE MATERIAL AND THE IMMATERIAL

The notion of heritage atmosphere allows us to approach patrimonialized spaces beyond the binary of material and immaterial heritage. Instead of isolating monuments from cultural practices or lived experiences, the concept highlights the affective, relational, and temporal dimensions of heritage in the urban environment.

Atmospheres are not fixed, nor can they be fully designed or measured. They emerge from the encounter between people and space, shaped by light, sound, texture, rhythm, memory, and socio-spatial dynamics over time. Applied to heritage, this approach reveals how different temporalities, symbolic layers, and uses coexist and interact — producing a shared (or contested) sense of presence.

In this context, the idea of atmosphere is rooted in phenomenology, especially perspectives that stress the embodied and emotional experience of space. Drawing on Peter Sloterdijk, we consider heritage atmospheres as a kind of spatial immunology, where groups create protective and meaningful environments through symbolic and material strategies. These atmospheres function as networks of belonging, offering shelter not only physical, but also affective, historical, and cultural.

Understanding heritage atmospheres involves recognizing the porous, dynamic, and plural nature of patrimonialized space, as well as acknowledging that conflict, exclusion, and negotiation are inherent to how heritage is lived and produced. By shifting the focus from object to relation, monument to environment, and permanence to experience, the concept enables a more nuanced and inclusive reading of how memory, identity, and spatial practices intersect in the urban fabric.

Based on the conceptual framework of atmospheres and Peter Sloterdijk's spherology, we propose mapping the heritage atmosphere in three phases. The first refers to the idealization of heritage as a single, homogeneous atmosphere, linked to formal patrimonialization processes aimed at consolidating a collective and compartmentalized identity. Sloterdijk associates this idealized form with the image of the Globe — a large, symbolic, protective sphere.

However, upon entering this atmosphere, we find it composed of multiple layers and interactions that disrupt the notion of unity — the second phase. Instead of a coherent globe, various bubbles emerge, revealing the complex uses, meanings, and appropriations shaping patrimonialized space.

This complexity intensifies in the third phase, marked by spatial disputes and fragmentation caused by tourism and broader economic, social, and cultural dynamics. This multifaceted condition evokes Sloterdijk's notion of Foam — spaces of multiple, coexisting life spheres, at times overlapping, at times in tension.

In this context, groups inhabiting patrimonialized spaces establish immunity systems — networks of symbolic and material protection. These operate relationally: some align with the dominant heritage logic, while others are excluded and must develop alternative strategies to preserve their memories, meanings, and sense of belonging.

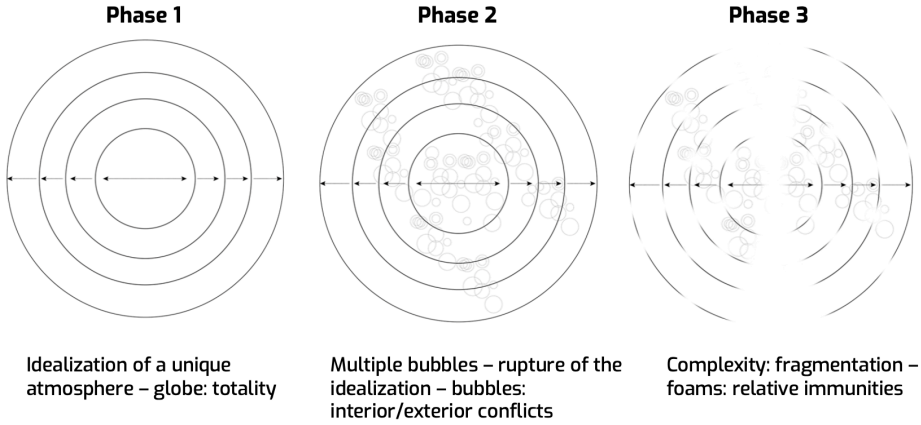

Figure 1. Diagram – Mapping of heritage atmospheres. Source: Camila Guimarães, 2025.

Case Study: *Praça Tiradentes* in Ouro Preto-MG, Brazil

Located in the historic center of Ouro Preto (Minas Gerais, Brazil), Praça Tiradentes is one of the most emblematic public spaces in the city. It concentrates several monuments recognized by national and international heritage institutions and functions as the main stage for tourism activities. Its visual composition, anchored by colonial buildings and symbolic landmarks, projects an idealized image of the city's past and plays a central role in reinforcing official narratives of national identity and memory.

Figure 2. Aerial view of Praça Tiradentes. Source: Google Earth, 2025.
Figure 3. Praça Tiradentes. Source: Camila Guimarães, 2022.

When observed through the lens of the heritage atmosphere, however, Praça Tiradentes reveals a much more complex spatial condition. The square is not experienced in the same way by all who pass through it. While tourists may perceive it as a coherent and picturesque environment, aligned with expectations of historical authenticity, local residents — particularly those engaged in informal commerce or service work — navigate a daily reality shaped by negotiation, adaptation, and contested access.

This layering of meaning reflects a process of atmospheric fragmentation, in which different social groups attribute distinct values and uses to the same space. The architectural ensemble may evoke a sense of permanence and cohesion, yet the atmosphere of the square is also shaped by ephemeral and situated practices: religious manifestations, political demonstrations, artisanal markets, and informal gatherings. These practices often operate in tension with preservation norms or the aesthetic logic of tourism promotion.

Drawing from Peter Sloterdijk's spherological theory, the atmospheric condition of Praça Tiradentes can be interpreted as moving from the idealized image of the Globe — a totalizing and protective spatial form — toward the dispersed and porous structure of Foams. In this configuration, multiple micro-spheres coexist: some aligned with formal heritage policies, others emerging from everyday life and informal cultural production. These overlapping bubbles of meaning and use generate relative immunities, which offer groups temporary forms of spatial and symbolic protection, even in the face of institutional exclusion or commodification pressures.

Figure 4. Collage - Bubbles that compose the heritage atmosphere of Praça Tiradentes. Source: Camila Guimarães, 2023.

The cultural and religious manifestation of Congado, represented in the cartographic collage, forms a network of immunity and resistance by the Black population of Ouro Preto against segregation and cultural trivialization driven by tourism's commodifying logic. This stands in sharp contrast to the atmosphere of Praça Tiradentes — a central, highly visible space — which aligns with capitalist spatial production. The opposition reveals tensions between different ways of inhabiting, experiencing, and assigning meaning to the patrimonialized territory.

Thus, the heritage atmosphere is not fixed, but a space of continuous exchange, where new meanings emerge through everyday life. It evokes not only the past but also expresses the present and anticipates possible futures.

Figure 5. Sensitive cartography - Congado in Ouro Preto. Source: Camila Guimarães, 2023.

The acts of resistance observed in local cultural expressions — such as Congado — can be understood as manifestations of minor urbanism: an urbanism that emerges from the ground up, rooted in community practices, and activates alternative ways of using and appropriating space. These actions generate hybrid spatial atmospheres, weaving together the materiality of the territory with symbolic elements.

FROM THE ORDINARY TO THE POLITICAL: FOUNDATIONS OF MINOR URBANISM

The notion of Minor Urbanism offers a conceptual tool for understanding urban dynamics that unfold beyond formal planning, state control, or hegemonic discourses of urban development.[6] Rather than referring to the scale of intervention or the physical dimensions of the built environment, the "minor" is a strategic and analytical position — one that makes visible spatial practices grounded in everyday life, informal arrangements, and collective creativity, often in territories marked by exclusion, precarity, or marginalization.

Inspired by the idea of minor literature as developed by Deleuze and Guattari,[7] Minor Urbanism is characterized not by its form but by its function. It politicizes the individual, deterritorializes dominant structures, and produces meaning through collective assemblages. In urban terms, this means shifting the analytical focus from large-scale, centralized interventions to bottom-up, embedded, and affective forms of spatial production — those carried out by residents, cultural agents, community leaders, or informal networks operating within or against dominant urban logics.

A key aspect of Minor Urbanism is the process of deterritorialization, understood not simply as displacement, but as a rupture from fixed spatial identities or institutional frameworks. Deterritorialization allows for the emergence of hybrid and fluid territorialities, where new configurations of meaning and belonging can take root. In this sense, Minor Urbanism is not about creating alternative cities but about revealing and amplifying the multiplicity of cities that already exist within the dominant urban fabric — cities made of memory, improvisation, affect, and resistance.

Equally central is the idea of collective enunciation, through which space is narrated, claimed, and re-signified by a plurality of voices. These voices do not speak in unison, nor are they necessarily aligned, but they articulate shared experiences and conflicts that shape how urban space is understood and used. Minor Urbanism foregrounds these enunciations not as noise to be managed, but as vital expressions of urban citizenship and spatial justice.

By highlighting these practices, Minor Urbanism challenges conventional notions of urban order, value, and visibility. It calls into question what counts as legitimate urban knowledge, who defines the use of space, and how memory and identity are spatially anchored. In doing so, it opens space for the recognition of urban experiences that are often rendered invisible — particularly those arising from peripheral territories or marginalized populations.

As a conceptual approach, Minor Urbanism does not romanticize informality or resistance. Instead, it offers a critical framework for interpreting how power operates through space, and how alternative spatial practices disrupt, negotiate, or reconfigure dominant territorialities. It situates the analysis of the urban in relation to lived experience, local knowledge, and symbolic construction — making room for voices and places that are not always heard or seen in traditional urban narratives.

Case Study: *Capela dos Índios* and *Praça do Forró* in São Paulo, Brazil

Located in the Eastern Zone of São Paulo, the *Capela dos Índios* and *Praça do Forró* form a heritage nucleus embedded within a territory marked by urban inequality, socio-economic vulnerability, and institutional invisibility. The contrast between the preserved chapel and its dense, precarious surroundings — characterized by informal construction, limited infrastructure, and fragmented urban planning — reveals the complexity of heritage dynamics in peripheral urban areas. Far from being an isolated monumental enclave, this site represents an active process of meaning-making and community belonging, grounded in everyday spatial practices.

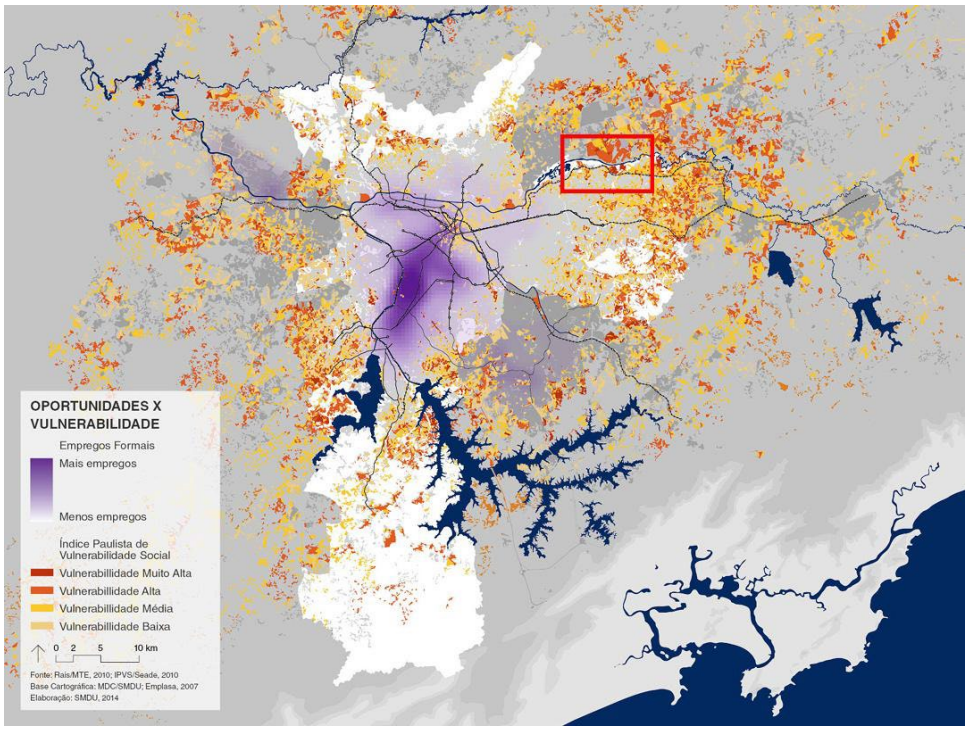

Figure 6. Spatial distribution of opportunities and vulnerabilities in São Paulo. The specific area under analysis is delineated in red. Source: São Paulo Municipal Secretariat for Urban Planning and Licensing, 2014.

The *Capela dos Índios* is considered the oldest standing church in São Paulo. Built in the 16th century by *Guaianases* Indigenous groups and Jesuit missionaries, it is a symbol of the layered and often silenced histories that shaped the early formation of the city.[8] Despite being listed as national heritage since 1938, the chapel remains relatively disconnected from the official narrative of São Paulo's urban identity. Its continued presence owes much to the efforts of local residents, parish leaders, and cultural agents, who have mobilized around its preservation through activism, education, and cultural programming.

Adjacent to the chapel, *Praça do Forró* functions as a central gathering space for the neighborhood. Although its official name is *Praça Padre Aleixo Monteiro Mafra* — in honor of a priest who served the chapel for over two decades — it became popularly known as *Praça do Forró* in the 1980s, reflecting the cultural identity of the area's significant Northeastern migrant population. The square has long hosted *forró* music events, religious festivals, and political demonstrations, reinforcing its status as a space of collective memory, cultural resistance, and everyday celebration.

Figure 7. Aerial view of Praça do Forró, surrounded by the buildings of the São Miguel Paulista neighborhood in the Brazilian city of São Paulo. Source: Google Earth, 2025.

Figure 8. View of the main façade of the Capela dos Índios. Source: Barbara Gonçalves Guazzelli, 2025.

From the perspective of heritage atmosphere, the chapel and the square form a porous and affective territory, where memory is not confined to preservation policies, but activated through uses, narratives, and symbolic practices. The square's open layout, shaded areas, and public infrastructure contrast sharply with the surrounding built environment, which is characterized by low-rise, unplanned structures and limited urban investment. Yet it is precisely this spatial dissonance that generates a distinctive atmospheric condition: one that brings together historical permanence and contemporary improvisation.

The perspective of Minor Urbanism allows us to recognize how the community's engagement with the space constitutes a form of situated resistance. The care for the chapel, the use of the square for cultural events, and the appropriation of the site by diverse actors reflect a politicization of everyday life — not through direct confrontation, but through the affirmation of presence, identity, and memory in a space often overlooked by official urban narratives. These actions deterritorialize the dominant

meanings of heritage by transforming the site into a living environment of hybrid identities: Indigenous, Northeastern, peripheral.

Figure 9. Sensitive cartography developed during the research, highlighting the contrast between preserved heritage and its urban surroundings. Source: Barbara Gonçalves Guazzelli, 2025.

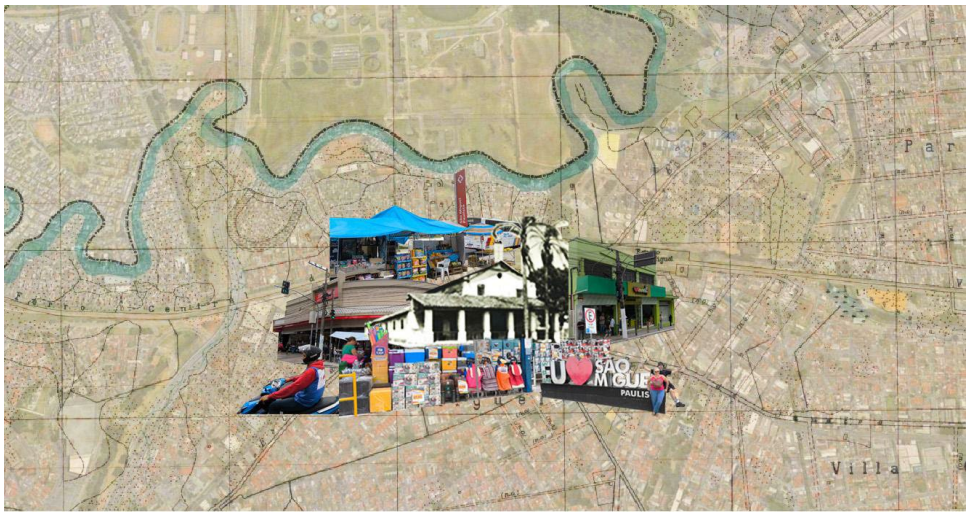

Figure 10. Sensitive cartography developed through research, highlighting the contrast between preserved heritage and surrounding urban environment. Source: Barbara Gonçalves Guazzelli, 2025.

Moreover, the collective enunciation present in this case is not organized through institutions or formalized discourse, but through shared practices: commemorative masses, music performances, local festivals, and informal dialogues that keep the memory of the place alive. These expressions generate a heritage atmosphere that is not imposed from above but produced from within, rooted in relationships, repetition, and everyday use.

In this sense, the *Capela dos Índios* and *Praça do Forró* exemplify how heritage can be reimagined through minor urbanism. They challenge the notion that heritage belongs only to monumental, centralized, or visually sanitized spaces. Instead, they show that heritage can emerge from the margins, shaped by communities whose spatial practices give meaning, continuity, and vitality to the urban fabric — even when they operate outside formal recognition or visibility.

CONCLUSION

This article explored how heritage can be understood beyond institutional definitions and monumental narratives, focusing instead on lived experience, spatial practices, and symbolic processes embedded in everyday urban life. Through the theoretical lenses of Heritage Atmosphere and Minor Urbanism, we examined two contrasting yet complementary case studies: *Praça Tiradentes* in Ouro Preto and *Capela dos Índios* with *Praça do Forró* in São Paulo. While both sites are officially recognized as cultural heritage, they embody complex spatial dynamics that cannot be fully captured by conventional preservation frameworks.

In *Praça Tiradentes*, the coexistence of tourism, local practices, and historical preservation reveals a layered and contested atmosphere, where visibility doesn't ensure inclusion. The square's centrality masks peripheral heritage expressions that resist commodification and challenge dominant spatial logics.

Conversely, in São Paulo's Eastern Zone, the *Capela dos Índios* and *Praça do Forró* occupy a marginal territory where heritage persists through informal care, community events, and symbolic reappropriation — sustained not by visibility, but by affective presence and collective engagement.

In both cases, what we identify is a dissonant, hybrid condition — a heritage atmosphere that is at once material and immaterial, fragile and persistent. The concept of Minor Urbanism enables us to recognize these practices as forms of resistance and reexistence: not spectacular or disruptive, but subtle, grounded, and deeply political. These spatialities challenge the rigid boundaries of heritage policies and call for more situated, relational, and inclusive approaches to how we understand and preserve urban memory.

Ultimately, by listening to these marginal voices and observing their practices, we are invited to rethink heritage not as a finished object, but as a living process — one that unfolds in the cracks, thresholds, and overlaps of the contemporary city.

NOTES

[1] This article is based on the outcomes of the international research project “On the Atmospheres and Intermediations of a Minor Urbanism: Epistemologies of (Another) Architecture,” in which both authors participate. Barbara Guazzelli is a postdoctoral fellow within the project funded by the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development of Brazil (CNPq), and carries out her research at the University of Seville.

[2] Natalie Heinich, La fabrique du patrimoine: De la cathédrale à la petite cuillère (Paris: Éditions de la Maison des sciences de l’homme, 2009);José Reginaldo Santos Gonçalves, “O patrimônio como categoria de pensamento,” in Memória e patrimônio: ensaios contemporâneos, org. Regina Abreu e Mário Chagas (Rio de Janeiro: Lamparina, 2009), 19–33;Leonardo Barci Castriota, Patrimônio cultural: conceitos, políticas, instrumentos, 1ª ed. (Belo Horizonte: IEDS; São Paulo: Annablume, 2009), 379;Daniel Fabre, “L’ordinaire, le familier, l’intime... Le patrimoine loin du monument,” in Patrimoine et diversité (Paris: CRDP de l’Université de Paris, 2013);Ulpiano Toledo Bezerra de Meneses, “O campo do patrimônio cultural: uma revisão de premissas,” in I Fórum Nacional do Patrimônio Cultural: sistema nacional de patrimônio cultural – desafios, estratégias e experiências para uma nova gestão, coord. Weber Sutti (Brasília, DF: Iphan, 2012), 25–39.

[3] Laurajane Smith, *Uses of Heritage* (London: Routledge, 2006).

[4] Eduardo Rocha, “Cartografias Urbanas: método de exploração das cidades na contemporaneidade,” in *Cartografia Social. Investigación e intervención desde las ciencias sociales, métodos y experiencias de aplicación*, ed. Juan Manuel Diez Tetamanti e Haydee Beatriz Escudero, vol. 1 (Comodoro Rivadavia: Universitaria de la Patagonia, 2012), 109–134.

[5] The concept of “heritage atmosphere” was developed by Camila Ferreira Guimarães in her doctoral thesis titled *Heritage Atmospheres: Heritage-listed Public Spaces in Minas Gerais*, 2023.

[6] The notion of the “minor” was previously explored in architectural discourse by Jennifer Bloomer and Jill Stoner in relation to Minor Architecture. Regarding Minor Urbanism, the concept was further developed in a doctoral dissertation by Ida Sandström. Jennifer Bloomer, *Architecture and the Text: The (S)crypts of Joyce and Piranesi* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993) ; Jill Stoner, *Toward a Minor Architecture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, March 9, 2012), 184 pp.; Ida Sandström, *Towards a Minor Urbanism: Thinking Community without Unity in Recent Makings of Public Space* (Lund: Department of Architecture and Built Environment, Lund University, 2019).

[7] Gilles Deleuze et Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Pour une littérature mineure* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1975).

[8] Patrícia Freire de Almeida, org., *Territórios de Ururay* (São Paulo: Movimento Cultural Penha, 2016).

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MULTISENSORY AND EMBODIED ARCHITECTURE: REDEFINING HERITAGE THROUGH A SENSORY EPISTEME, THE CASE OF KWA MAI MAI MARKET

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INTRODUCTION

The heritage sector has traditionally privileged the tangible, visible and visual dimensions of cultural sites. This ocularcentric bias continues to dominate mainstream architectural heritage discourse.[1] Often underrepresented or neglected are the intangible, unseen, multisensory and spiritual dimensions that could offer a holistic appreciation and embodied experience of place, especially those rooted in Indigenous knowledge systems.[2] Current heritage practice, management and production of cultural sites frequently marginalise Indigenous epistemologies despite growing research indicating that Indigenous knowledge systems (IKS hereon) could address many of the challenges faced by Africa today.[3] The marginalisation is compounded by the long-standing victimisation of IKS through mythology, Western stereotyping, colonisation and romanticisation.[4] As a result, a false dichotomy between 'tradition' and 'modernity' is perpetuated, effectively excluding indigenous methods from contributing to contemporary knowledge and societal development.

The study foregrounds Bungoma philosophy—an Indigenous Southern African divinity healing practice—within architectural heritage discourse. Bungoma offers an alternative epistemological lens that emphasises the multisensory and spiritual dimensions of heritage while simultaneously critiquing the limitations of visually dominant approaches. In doing so, the study challenges authorised heritage paradigms and re-centres a marginalised knowledge system, proposing a more inclusive and holistic heritage model.

At the core of this paper lies the question: *How might a sensory and spiritual epistemology, informed by Bungoma philosophy and praxis, expand the reading of heritage practice in South Africa*? By examining the Kwa Mai Mai heritage site in Johannesburg, this study offers insights into its rich cultural richness and context. The site serves as a focal point to explore the spiritual and multisensory ways knowledge is derived and framed within the complex and contested urban narratives of Johannesburg. Methodologically, this research draws on exploratory research, outlining the sensory and embodied theoretical lenses central to rethinking heritage through Bungoma. Due to its conceptual stage, I employ an on-site experiential process through immersive site visits while grappling with sensory ethnography guided by the anthropology of the senses.

Context

Cultural heritage sites serve as crucial bridges between past and present, acting as physical repositories of collective memory and cultural identity. However, the conventional approach to heritage preservation has primarily focused on the visible and tangible[5] a practise Lyn Meskell[6] refers to as "symbolic violence" which neglects the rich multisensory dimensions of cultural experience. The ocularcentric bias narrows the scope of heritage engagement to the visual realm, diminishing the potential to engage with the full spectrum of human sensory experiences.

Juhani Pallasmaa critiques the overreliance on vision in architectural discourse, arguing that architecture and cultural spaces should be experienced through multisensory modalities, including touch, smell, and sound.[7] Sensory heritage studies recognise the body as central to the experience of space, positioning senses as vital tools for articulating the past.[8] In the Southern African context, colonial legacies have reinforced Eurocentric frameworks of heritage that prioritise sight over other modes of knowing. This sensory hierarchy marginalises Indigenous ways of experiencing and understanding space.[9]

This study critiques the ocularcentric dominance in architectural heritage and proposes a decolonial approach that integrates sensory and spiritual epistemologies. Drawing on Bungoma philosophy, a Southern African divinity healing practice characterised by drumming, rhythmic movement, spiritual communication and dream mediation, this research explores how such practices might expand the understanding of heritage architecture and practice. The Kwa Mai Mai market serves as a case study to examine the complexities of heritage preservation amidst rapid urban development, socioeconomic disparities and tourism.

KWA MAI MAI MARKET AS A SPIRITUAL ARCHIVE

This research highlights Kwa Mai Mai Market as the principal site where daily healing practices, ancestral communication and sonic rituals provide the foundational and spiritual knowledge of the Bungoma practice. The site is key for spiritual pilgrimage, healing and multisensory engagement. Kwa Mai Mai is thriving urban precinct of healing where spiritual practices animate everyday life. It is a living archive, resilient to external forces and pressures. The site has been systematically excluded from formal heritage recognition by its refusal to conform to ocularcentric, material domains. Metaphorically, the locality of the site also sits tucked and hidden away from the purview of the high capitalist skyscrapers that are the backdrop of the site, nestled and thriving in a vibrantly loud and ailing city – Figure 1.

Figure 1. Kwa Mai Mai Traditional Market nestled under the highway bridge

Early cartography reinforced who belonged and who did not, drawing racial and economic boundaries that still shape the city's cultural life. Born from gold mining in 1886, Johannesburg's urban fabric evolved into a spatialised, racially stratified landscape of labour and privilege – as illustrated in Figure 2. Yet, from its edges, a persistent rhythm of improvisation and resistance challenged the city's exclusionary order. Johannesburg's oldest traditional medicine market, established in the 1920s on former horse stables, is a spiritual and cultural sanctuary for migrant communities—isiZulu, seSotho, Xitsonga, among others. Tucked beneath a bridge and shielded from the gaze of gentrification and capital speculation, it resists neoliberal urban transformation. What makes Kwa Mai Mai remarkable is its resident-led organisation: a living site where heritage, healing, and autonomy intersect. One might invoke Marx's idea of 'man as producer,' as a once-subordinate migrant class has reclaimed agency by owning and controlling the means of production.[10] The site has two demarcated entrances – one for food vendors in market stalls and hosts to weekly social events – Figure 4. The other, the entrance where the residents reside and produce medicinal herbs and plants, affording the space high spiritual significance over the tangible qualities of the site – Figure 3.

Within dominant heritage discourse, value is frequently anchored in the built fabric and its associated aesthetical and historical significance. In this instance, however, such conventional frameworks, despite being well developed, fail to apprehend the primary locus of heritage value. Rather than built form, what is pronounced is the Zulu heritage, expressed through material cultures and embodied practices. Craft traditions such as leatherwork, handmade sandal production, spear making and cow hide processing constitute a vibrant socio-economic ecosystem initiated and sustained by the community as a strategy for both urban survival and cultural reproduction. This strategy proves to spearhead their relevance in a contemporary and often described schizophrenic, ailing Johannesburg city, where people infrastructures far surpass material infrastructures. Their practices operate within a self-determined heritage economy, wherein most goods are circulated to community members, Johannesburg residents from diverse origins and visitors seeking medical plants, ritual objects or culturally resonant mementos.

Here, heritage is not merely preserved but actively reconstituted through process of commodification grounded in local epistemes. This reframes heritage as a living practice that blurs the boundaries between sacred and secular, challenging binary logics embedded in Eurocentric methods. The site's religious and cultural plurality thus emerges not as fixed but as the product of community agency, asserting an alternative mode of heritage making that privileges continuity, adaptability and self-definition over static preservations.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is part of my PhD in Heritage Studies at the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa. The research is in its preliminary phase and employs on-site immersions (as opposed to site observations), in depth analysis of theoretical concepts and exploratory qualitative research of understanding Bungoma practice vis a vis the contextual analysis of site. Further, a sensory ethnography, as elucidated by Sarah Pink[11] is explored as a departure from the classical observational approach. This aligns to the refusal of the ocular and a reimagination of space understood through listening and *exposing* oneself in a space, as propositioned by Robert Thornton's *Healing the Exposed Being*. I take a stand that as the researcher, especially in doing research surrounding *spirit*, that I am not outside the inquiry but instead implicated. This positionality is in support of Pink's definition of ethnography which reads, 'a process of creating and representing knowledge that is based on ethnographer's own experiences' which should be as loyal as possible to the context and undergo 'negotiations and intersubjectivities'. This ongoing study looks critically at sites of spiritual significance in the provinces of Gauteng and Free State, South Africa.

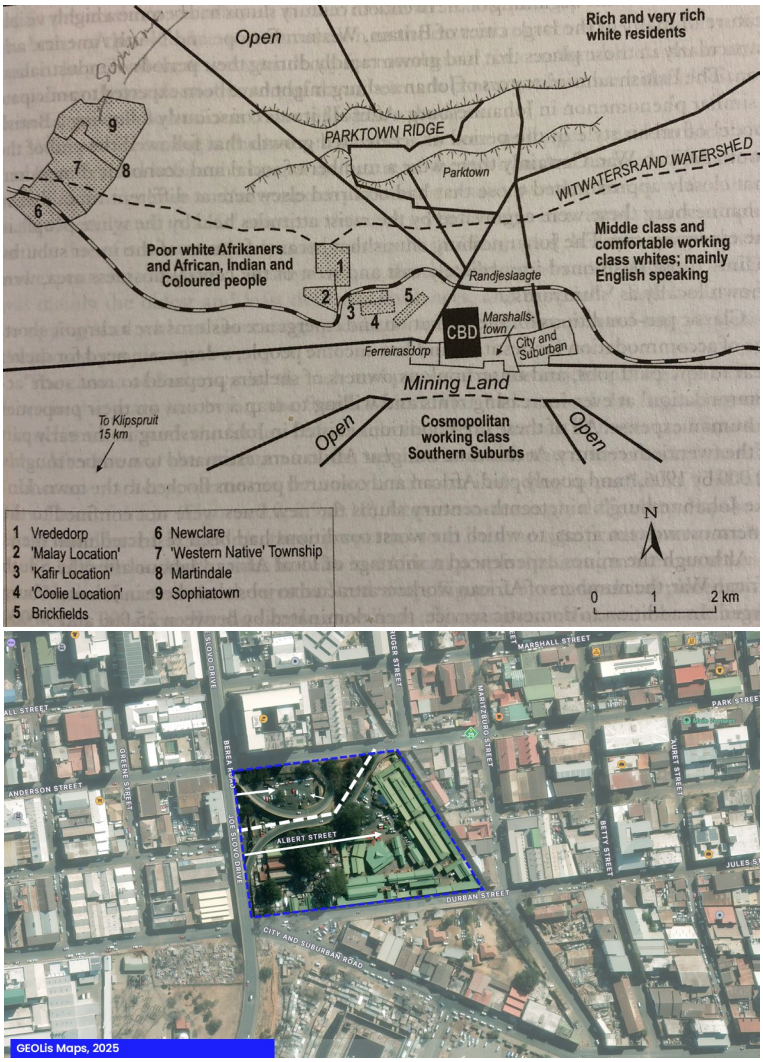

Figure 2. Beavon's 1904 Map showing racialized landscape centered around the mining belt and Figure 3. Kwa Mai Mai Aerial View with two demarcated entrances.

Figure 4. Weekly Social Events at Kwa Mai Mai Traditional Market (by SowetanLive- Antonio Muchave).

THEORETICAL LENSES

This study is anchored in three key theoretical frameworks, namely sensory heritage, decolonial heritage studies and Bungoma philosophy.

Sensory heritage

Sensory heritage studies and sensory perception are a growing topic in the field of humanities, social sciences and the arts.[12] They explore the material production of sound, noise, and silence within societies, drawing from various interdisciplinary strands such as the anthropology of the senses.[13] These studies recognise that sensory perception is culturally contingent, with each community interpreting and responding to the world in distinct ways. This paper proposes an expanded interpretation of heritage through the lens of sensory perception, engaging with the senses as tools for understanding culture and architecture. The contestations surrounding the sound of the *adhan* (Muslim call to prayer sound) in Cape Town serve as an example of how sensory experiences, such as sound, can shape cultural practices and public space.[14] This highlights the ability of sensory studies to sharpen our understanding of how culture (including people and places) is both socially and individually experienced.[15]

Juhani Pallasmaa[16] critiques the visual dominance in architectural discourse, arguing that the atmospheric quality of a space is not necessarily one in formalistic (forms and shapes as a governing method of making architecture) ways but through an interplay of sensory modalities. The body's multisensory engagement with space allows for an embodied, tacit form of knowledge that transcends conscious thought. This understanding becomes particularly significant when applied to Bungoma practices, where the senses (as polysensorial or extrasensorial in this case)[17] are used to create a holistic 'multisensory existential experience' that engages memory, spirit and place. In cultures such as the Cashinahua of Peru, they exemplify this notion by the recognition of a sixth sense—conceived as "forms of sentience", in other words, forms of indigenous intelligences.[18]

Bungoma practice itself boasts various elements that are imbued with sensorial modalities, that enable their heritage, as codified ways of knowing and practising the 'language of the spirit'.[19] By this, I mean to say a set of codes, systems, technologies, and philosophies that define the practice and its existence. The purpose of Bungoma is to communicate with ancestral spirits through frequencies and communicative channels that are a product of kinaesthesis, trance states, and song-dance. This can be evidenced in the name, Bungoma, derived from 'ngoma', meaning *drum*, which is played and performed with the rituals that take place. Apart from the sonic or auditory dimensions accessed, the olfactory is equally important, typically situated by way of medicinal herbs that are used by sangomas. Ingo Lambrecht[20] articulates his experience in the field

'[The] comforting repetition of singing and drums, is beguiling and capturing in its call... you are trapped and held, embraced and pushed forward to that threshold. Over and over it allows you to enter an inner, transitional space…a threshold that suddenly opens you up to the landscape of visions or the whispering of ancestral voices. The sangoma trance states cannot be separated from aesthetics.'

The sensory heritage of African practices is rich with evocative elements, such as the ancestor-communicating whistle. Cultural beliefs often intertwine with these sounds, demonstrated by the childhood prohibition against nighttime whistling to avoid attracting snakes, a creature that symbolises spirit guides in sangoma practice. Similarly, ritualistic actions like ground stomping, ancestral vocalisations (eructation), and hand clapping accompanied by the articulation of the word "*thokoza*" are crucial in summoning ancestral presence and the wisdom they bring. Other cultures also employ sensory-altering methods. For instance, Amazonian practices involve ingesting plants to enhance perception, leading to visions and auditory experiences.[21] This intersection of sensory

experience and spiritual connection is particularly compelling in the context of sangomas, who act as intermediaries between ancestors and the community, facilitating healing and individual well-being within the social structure.

This raises the question of whether a similar understanding could be applied to architecture. Could ancestral approval guide architectural practices to heal not only individuals but also their relationships, enabling architecture to play a more active role in this process? Furthermore, could we perceive the spiritual dimension of a city as a living entity, allowing us to reconsider built structures as entities capable of being reconstructed? To explore these ideas, a decolonial perspective is necessary to incorporate extrasensory perception into an architectural discourse that challenges dominant narratives.

Decolonial heritage studies

The term *decolonial* has gained significant traction in recent years, yet often misused or applied superficially.[22] Decolonisation involves restructuring the epistemological foundation of knowledge production and reclaiming indigenous perspectives. This involves epistemic disobedience—a conscious delinking from modernity's hierarchies and entanglements of power, and the repositioning of 'our modernity' within 'ex-colonised epistemic sites'. The study engages with the works of decolonial scholars like Walter Mignolo, Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, and Sylvia Wynter, who call for the decolonisation of both knowledge and being. For instance, Ndlovu-Gatsheni [23] argues for the *deprovincialisation* of Africa, which he defines as "an intellectual and academic process of centring Africa as a legitimate historical unit of analysis and epistemic site from which to interpret the world" This call for epistemic reclamation is particularly relevant within the domain of indigenous heritage, where there is a growing scholarly and cultural interest in spirituality, ancestral knowledge, and a return to African philosophies as a means of dismantling colonial frameworks.[24] Walter D. Mignolo and Catherine E. Walsh conceptualise these colonial frameworks as "colonial matrices of power"[25]—Eurocentric structures that define space, time, beauty, spirituality, and the human experience—while Sylvia Wynter extends this critique to what she terms the "colonial matrices of being,"[26] referring to the deeper psychological effects of colonialism that dictate what constitutes knowledge and who is recognised as fully human. Decolonising heritage involves a rethinking of how we engage with cultural sites, moving beyond what Mignolo and Walsh call the colonial matrices of power that position Indigenous practices as peripheral and illegitimate.

Bungoma practices are not only a form of colonial resistance but also a contemporary and relevant practice that challenges the erasure of African knowledge systems. By viewing through this canon, we offer an opportunity for a once mystified and criminalised system to be understood and explored as a multidisciplinary discipline. As the Sangoma acts as an epistemological agent and the embodied ethnographer, this study positions Indigenous spiritual practices as legitimate contributors to contemporary knowledge production, advocating for a relational, rather than extractive approach to research, inviting a critical reflection on what it means for indigeneity in a productive landscape and when indigeneity becomes a tool of resistance. Perhaps important too to revise terminologies such as indigenous knowledge *systems* to indigenous knowledge *technologies,* as a conceptual shift that positions indigeneity en par with the global technological trends, that legitimates it in advancing heritage (somewhat seen as 'old; and *of* the past) and development (future-driven initiative) and making it usable.

Such a reorientation also reconfigures the politics of research opacity. It challenges the assumption that all knowledge must be rendered transparent and accessible in academic contexts. It affirms that some knowledges, particularly sacred, spiritual and relational forms, must remain protected, partially

concealed. In this way, the study advances a decolonial research ethos grounded in respect, reciprocity and relational accountability.[27]

Introducing Bungoma Philosophy as an Epistemology

Bungoma refers to the broad philosophy, practice, and art associated with the knowledge and expertise of sangomas, commonly referred to today as traditional healers, practitioners, shamans, healers and prophets, with its knowledge transmitted orally over the written form. Knowledge derived from Bungoma practice is carried in the body and enacted through ritual, movement, rhythm and sensation. While the practice is historically rooted in rural communities across Southern and Central Africa,[28] particularly in South Africa, it has increasingly gained presence in urban areas and metropolitan contexts. The term varies across linguistic and cultural groups, with alternatives including *sangoma, izangoma, and lethuela*, among others.

Healing is deeply rooted in African cosmology, emphasising the importance of ancestors and spirit communication through dreams (cosmic conversations), spirit mediumship (consented possession of spirit), animals and bones. Typically, sangomas use divining bones whereby they become a medium for the ancestor's message to be transmitted, a part of the intelligence in understanding the relation of objects to human life/ condition.[29] Their communication practices and their reading thereof operate as legitimate technologies of knowing, through a process of transmitting ancestral memory, and ethereal patterns. The philosophy, expressed by Robert Thornton,[30] is that the practice centres on relationality and vulnerability.

'As people create other people, they also retain lasting influence over each other. The ancestors (emadloti) are necessarily part of 'humanity', that is, ubuntu. Because of their humanity – and not withstanding their immateriality – they are both the source of misfortune and disease and the source of the power to heal these... Each person is therefore an 'exposed being'.

Framing Bungoma, as outlined in the excerpt, is an invitation to recalibrate the heritage discourse. It enables an approach to heritage that is not based on legibility, full disclosure and knowing, or even a full reading of the dimension, an antithesis of Eurocentric epistemologies and its persistence to extract, know, quantify and claim. Instead, the practice is based on relational atmospheres and attending to a different set of indigenous research ethics. When applied to a site like Kwa Mai Mai Market, through the practice, we can read the space not merely as structures but as an ecology functioning on the spiritual, encompassing a dynamic field of ancestral energies, sounds, smells and that resist translation into dominant modes of heritage discourse and taxonomies.

Colonial and apartheid led legislation, such as the Witchcraft Suppression Act (3 of 1957), cast these practices as superstition, magic, systematically criminalising and mystifying African cosmologies. These colonial frameworks constructed reductive and mythologised understandings of African cosmologies. However, scholars such as Robert Thornton, John Janzen, and Jo Wreford have demonstrated that these are not irrational beliefs but sophisticated systems of healing and being. As Thornton has argued, Bungoma is less about curing than restoring balance and relational vitality, emphasising vulnerability and spiritual epistemology. To engage with Bungoma then is an act of epistemic disobedience, to refuse to render African spiritual systems and thought through secular colonial logics.

This relational, multisensory approach offers new pathways for thinking about architecture and spatial justice, demanding new tools of engaging with heritage sites through the lenses presented above.

CONCLUSION

The heritage field has long focused on what we can *see* – buildings, monuments and architectural edifices. The visual bias continues to shape how we define and protect cultural heritage. What is often excluded are other senses, that are far-enriching and sensuous to human consciousness. These intangible and multisensory dimensions are central to how many indigenous communities understand and relate to place.

In the work above I have attempted to provide a glimpse into a body of work that sets to pose and answer critical questions; what does it mean to sense with the spirit; what if the body, especially of the (sa)ngoma is itself an archive to remember and hold history; what does it mean for the way we historicise; lastly, what kind of architectural language could hold or translate this knowledge, picking up from what Sather Wagstaff calls, 'feeling the past through embodied presence'? Through an analysis of theoretical canons, the heritage field is afforded an expanded and refreshing reading of the architectural landscape.

The study explored how the worldview and practice of the sangoma, a spiritual healer, can offer new ways of thinking about architecture. One that is rooted in ancestral connection, sensory awareness and spiritual presence. A site such as Kwa Mai Mai with its layered history and migration of people to the metropolis is a testament to urban survival that veers from dominant heritage discourses. In summation, I have aimed to unpack the architecture of the ethereal; a way of reading space not through structures, or form, or function, but through energy, memory and spirit. In doing so, opening architectural heritage to be inclusive, embodied and decolonial in its ways of thinking, making and representing.

NOTES

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A DECOLONIAL APPROACH TO THE HERITAGE OF MIGRANT MAKER PRACTICES

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INTRODUCTION

Migrant maker culture, which transmits traditional craftsmanship skills and knowledge within both local and global communities, serves as a conduit for both tangible and intangible cultural heritage in all over the world. While there have been recent studies on the migration dimension of maker culture, including the materiality of migration,[1] migratory aesthetics,[2] migrant women's maker practices,[3] and migrant creativity,[4] these studies can be further enriched by adopting a decolonial lens to fully appreciate the heritage encapsulated within these practices.[5]

Considering the critique of Authorized Heritage Discourse (AHD)[6] important to understand how heritage discourses exclude marginalized narratives and perpetuates dominant power structures, this paper aims to create a theoretical framework by reviewing heritage studies literature to understand migrant makers' cultural heritage in a way that differs from the AHD. The paper engages with critiques from decolonial theory that challenge dominant paradigms, practices, and narratives that frequently prioritize Western aesthetics, values, and technologies. Finally, this article discusses how the perspectives of migrant makers can provide new insights for addressing power imbalances in the heritage making of migrants through decolonial lens. This re-evaluation aims to dismantle the enduring impact of imperial perspectives within academic and institutional frameworks, which frequently constrain the agency of migrants and perpetuate exclusionary dynamics in research and heritage preservation.[7]

Migrant Maker Practices

Migrants bring unique cultural traditions, techniques, and craftsmanship from their home countries. Combination of these practices with the current production technologies can introduce new materials, methods, and aesthetic sensibilities, forging a connection between the old and the new. Migration dimension on maker culture would support different cultural ways of being and promote alternative ways of living, thinking and doing in society. This dynamic interchange not only enriches the cultural landscape of host nations but also allows for the redefinition and renewal of cultural heritage, delineating future epistemic, ethical, and political obligations regarding shared cultural commons.[8]

The exploration of migration's dimension within maker practices necessitates a nuanced understanding of how mobility, displacement, and diaspora influence the evolution and transmission of artisanal skills and creative production.[9] This approach moves beyond viewing migrants solely as recipients of aid or subjects of integration policies, instead recognizing them as active agents in

shaping cultural landscapes and economies through their embodied knowledge and creative expressions.[10] This perspective emphasizes the reciprocal relationship between migration experiences and the development of unique making traditions, often leading to hybrid forms of cultural production that blend diverse influences. This dynamic process underscores the importance of acknowledging the situated knowledge of migrant makers, whose experiences often involve navigating multiple cultural frames of reference and adapting traditional practices to new contexts.[11]

Accordingly, this paper will question the AHD which holds the dominant paradigms, practices, and narratives that often prioritize Western perspectives on heritage making. It will address these critiques by questioning how the practices of migrant makers might be incorporated into heritage studies through decolonial lens. By bringing decolonial approaches to design[12] into the critical heritage studies discussions, I will suggest a framework to discuss the heritage of migrant makers.

Heritage of Migrant Makers

The concept of migrant heritage, therefore, necessitates a re-evaluation of how cultural legacies are defined, preserved, and transmitted, moving beyond state-centric or essentialist paradigms. Migrant heritage can be understood as the political, cultural, and social process of representing and preserving migratory experiences, encompassing the temporal and spatial dimensions of mobility, as well as its emotional, familial, and community aftermath, both tangible and intangible. Migrants' heritage is often vulnerable due to social and economic pressures; however, intangible heritage can provide a sense of ontological security for minorities in societies where other citizens have distinct characteristics, beliefs, practices, religions, and languages.

Heritage of migrant maker practices can reveal the history, memory, and culture related to displacement, adaptation, resistance, and identity formation across borders.[13] Intangible heritage can serve as a crucial source of ontological security for minorities within societies characterized by distinct physical traits, cultural beliefs, informal customs, religions, and languages.[14] These practices often carry embedded narratives of home, belonging, skill transmission, and cultural hybridity, highlighting how migrants creatively negotiate their past and present in new socio-material environments. For example, Arpilleras (Figure 1)—hand-sewn textiles created by Chilean women during and after the Pinochet dictatorship—embody personal and collective memories of political violence, exile, and survival. As these textiles traveled with migrants, they became powerful artifacts of testimony, resilience, and cultural identity, challenging dominant historical narratives.

Although states have long sought to control and regulate human mobility, immigrant-receiving countries only began implementing 'multicultural' policies in the late twentieth century to manage and police internal diversity. The emergence of 'migrant heritage' is a direct response to these policies, initiating a dynamic process where cultural diversity is both valued at the state level and strategically engaged with or contested by groups seeking cultural, social, or economic recognition.[15]

The concept of diaspora has traditionally been used to describe dispersed groups that maintain a shared identity through collective memory and a sense of connection to their ancestral homelands. However, the use of "diaspora" as an analytical tool, arguing that it often presumes a fixed relationship with nation-states, overlooks the fluid and global nature of contemporary mobility, and underestimates the active role individuals play in shaping their identities through present and future-oriented practices, rather than solely through the past.[16] Understanding heritage as a dynamic performance, constantly evolving and adapting, allows for a move beyond the limitations inherent in the historicized and bounded concept of diaspora. Furthermore, as global mobility increases and European nation-states become more 'multicultural,' traditional ideas of national heritage are being challenged. While there have been efforts to include migrant heritage in official spaces like museums and festivals, these attempts often stay superficial. They tend to focus on less complex aspects.

Cultural theorist Ien Ang cautions that heritage initiatives designed to acknowledge migration, such as immigration museums, may inadvertently oversimplify the complex, lived realities of diasporic experiences. These initiatives can reduce the diasporic subject to a static and simplistic representation: the 'immigrant'.[17]

Figure 1. Arpileras that represents the storming and bombing of the presidential palace, La Moneda, on September 11, 1973. Source: https://molaa.org/arpilleras-online-sept-11

CRITICAL HERITAGE STUDIES AND LIMITS OF AHD

The emergence of critical heritage studies in the 2000s marked a significant shift from traditional heritage conceptualizations, broadening temporal boundaries and recognizing a wider network of agents involved in heritage formation.[18] This interdisciplinary field scrutinizes the power dynamics inherent in heritage processes, challenging the authorized narratives typically presented by state and institutional bodies.[19] It critically examines how heritage is selected, interpreted, and managed, often revealing underlying political, economic, and social agendas that shape what is deemed worthy of preservation and public display. It further posits that heritage is not a neutral or objective representation of the past, but rather an active and performative process through which meanings are continually negotiated and remade to address contemporary needs and cultural shifts.[20]

Critical heritage studies consider heritage as a political, social, and cultural phenomenon, challenging normative heritage through questions on contested histories and underserved and excluded communities.[21] Harrison[22] draws attention to 'rebalancing' interests, where groups come together, allowing minorities to be better represented and providing a space for new forms of knowledge to emerge and contribute to academic or institutional knowledge. Expanding on this, Graham and Vergunst[23] highlight the importance of communities exploring and actively creating their own heritage and actively enacting different kinds of knowledge through doing heritage. This approach, therefore, necessitates a re-evaluation of established heritage frameworks to accommodate the dynamic and often fluid nature of cultural practices, particularly those associated with migrant communities.[24]

Smith and Campbell point out that heritage is not a nostalgic attempt to save or preserve the past but a way of refocusing the present and the future through the active process of heritage making.[25] Furthermore, a consideration of emotion has had great utility in critical heritage studies, encouraging scholars once again to move beyond the Eurocentric and materialist, beyond a tangible/intangible

heritage divide, and towards a socially mediated and historicised understanding of personal and collective engagements with and manifestations of heritage processes.[26]

The processes of making, negotiating, and refocusing heritage are tied into dialogic models of heritage as identified by Harrison, Silberman and Smith.[27] Smith,[28] in Uses of Heritage, describes heritage as an act of communication and meaning making, as something that is experiential. Indeed, 'Heritage is not so much a 'thing' but a cultural and social process, which engages with acts of remembering that work to create ways to understand and engage with the present'. It offers ways of understanding heritage through practice and practical processes. To further elaborate on dialogic models, Harrison[29] concentrates on three interlinked themes—connection, materiality, and dialogue—as ways of thinking about heritage and how it works in contemporary global societies. The relationships between people, objects, places, and practices is where heritage emerges. The ways that humans and non-humans are linked, 'by chains of connectivity and work together to keep the past alive in the present and for the future'. Similarly, Silberman[30] sees cultural heritage as 'a dialogic medium for promoting discussions about social justice and cultural creativity in the present'. These dialogic models emphasize heritage as a dynamic and ongoing process rather than a static entity, fostering inclusive approaches to its interpretation and safeguarding. This understanding permits a deeper exploration of how migrant maker practices, often characterized by adaptation and syncretism, contribute to and challenge established heritage paradigms.[31] Recognizing heritage as a "shifting interaction between past, present, and future" and not merely a static "material to be preserved" becomes crucial for understanding the complexities inherent in migrant cultural expressions.[32]

Laurajane Smith says that the 'official' idea of heritage, called the Authorized Heritage Discourse, comes from 19th-century nationalism. This view focuses on protecting beautiful monuments and places for future generations to learn from. It sees heritage as something solid, unchanging, and universal, based on a shared sense of identity from the past, instead of being questioned or reinterpreted today. However, this approach often fails to acknowledge the dissonant nature of heritage, particularly in postcolonial contexts where colonial pasts are selectively interpreted and often downplayed by official narratives.[33]

AHD has limits to understand the heritage of maker migrant practices because its produced by the authorities, mostly through nationalistic perspectives that can identify the migrants either as minorities or as diasporas. AHD is criticized for identifiying communities through nationhood[34] and western hegemonic gaze that decides what should be protected or not. This framework, often associated with a "top-down" approach, struggles to encompass the nuanced and often informal heritage practices of migrant communities, which frequently prioritize intangible aspects and community-led preservation over monumentalization.[35]

AHD is also heavily criticized for its limitations. These limitations stem from its often-exclusionary nature, which tends to privilege a fixed, immutable view of history and culture, frequently overlooking diverse perspectives and the dynamic, contested nature of heritage.[36] It tends to prioritize Western perspectives, nationalistic viewpoints, and the values of elite social classes, often overlooking or misrepresenting the heritage of marginalized groups, including migrants.[37] Furthermore, affective engagements with heritage are often dismissed within the AHD, leading to a de-emphasis on the emotional and embodied experiences that are central to many migrant maker practices.[38]

This perspective aligns with decolonial approaches by challenging the imposition of singular, often Western-centric, narratives of heritage and instead validating diverse, co-existing interpretations and practices.

DECOLONIAL APPROACH TO THE HERITAGE STUDIES AND MAKING

Decolonial thought is based on the criticism of western-centric knowledge and modernity project that creates exclusions by the ontological duality. This framework critiques the binary oppositions—such as civilized/savage, modern/traditional—that underpin much of Western intellectual tradition, including established heritage practices.[39] This critical stance extends to the very conceptualization of heritage, arguing that dominant narratives frequently erase or marginalize non-Western forms of cultural transmission and memory-making, thus perpetuating epistemic injustice.[40] Consequently, decolonial approaches advocate for the recognition of diverse epistemologies and the centering of voices historically excluded from heritage discourse, fostering a more inclusive and representative understanding of cultural legacy.[41]

Coined by Aníbal Quijano,[42] coloniality refers to the enduring patterns of power, knowledge, and social control that originated with colonialism and continue even after formal empires have ended. This persistent influence manifests in various domains, including the economic, political, and cultural spheres, often naturalizing Western perspectives as universal while subjugating alternative knowledge systems and practices.[43] Within heritage studies, decoloniality prompts a re-evaluation of how heritage is defined, managed, and interpreted, pushing beyond Eurocentric frameworks to acknowledge and empower marginalized communities' understanding of their past and identity.[44] It includes how race, labor, subjectivity, and knowledge are organized globally. This framework highlights how the classification and hierarchy of knowledge, particularly within colonial contexts, have systematically disadvantaged non-Western epistemologies, leading to a profound disjunction in global knowledge production.

The coloniality of making thus manifests as a geopolitical divide between the metropolitan world and the colonial world.[45] The historical suppression of artisanal and craft practices in formerly colonized regions, often replaced by industrial design paradigms imposed by Western powers, exemplifies this coloniality.[46] This dynamic perpetuates a global division of labor where intellectual capital and design authority reside primarily in the Global North, while the Global South is often relegated to the role of raw material provider and manual producer.[47] Thus, a decolonizing design approach seeks to sever the ties between design and the Western modernity project.[48] Instead, it endeavors to foster design practices that are rooted in diverse cultural contexts, acknowledging and valorizing alternative epistemologies and modes of production, aiming to incorporate diverse epistemologies, theoretical standpoints, and economic frameworks beyond Western perspectives.[49] This entails a deliberate shift towards valuing diverse modes of knowledge production and consumption, particularly those rooted in indigenous practices and migrant experiences.

AHD	**Decolonial Heritage Discourse**
Multiculturality	Interculturality
Nationalism	Multiple Worlds
Top-Down	Down-Top
Institution	Community
Single Reality	Relationality
Representative	Affective
Things	Processes
Hierarchical knowledge	Situated Knowledge
Globalization and homogeneity	Locality and Multiplicity

Table 1. Comparison of AHD and Decolonial Heritage Discourse

From a decolonial perspective, design is situated within a framework historically shaped by Western modernity and colonial power structures. As argued by Walter Mignolo[50] and Arturo Escobar,[51] this dominant epistemic positioning marginalizes other ways of knowing, being, and making. Decolonial design emerges as a political and epistemological project that actively rejects coloniality and centers ontologies and knowledge systems that lie beyond the Western conception of the human. Within this framework, migration, displacement, and forced mobility are not only consequences of colonial and imperial histories but also continue to be governed by the global inequalities these histories have produced. Table 1 further illuminates how a decolonial approach fundamentally shifts the ontological and epistemological foundations of heritage studies, moving from static, object-centric views to dynamic, relational, and pluriversal understandings.

CONCLUSION

This paper has argued for a decolonial approach to understanding the heritage of migrant maker practices, critically examining the limitations of the AHD in capturing the dynamic, multifaceted nature of migrant cultural expressions. AHD, rooted in 19th-century nationalism and characterized by its focus on fixed, often monumental, and predominantly Western-centric narratives, inherently struggles to accommodate the fluid, processual, and relational aspects of migrant heritage. Its exclusionary tendencies, which frequently privilege elite perspectives and nationalistic viewpoints, have historically marginalized the rich cultural contributions and lived experiences of migrant communities.

By integrating decolonial thought into critical heritage studies, this framework provides a lens to re-evaluate existing methodologies and theoretical assumptions that inadvertently perpetuate colonial power dynamics and epistemic injustices within the field. While AHD often reflects a focus on multiculturality, nationalism, top-down institutional approaches, and a single, representative reality that objectifies cultural elements, the Decolonial Heritage Discourse emphasizes interculturality, a recognition of multiple worlds, community-led initiatives, and a focus on relational, affective, and process-oriented understandings of heritage. This contrast highlights a move from hierarchical, generalized knowledge towards situated, local, and diverse knowledge systems, underscoring the necessity of adopting a decolonial lens to fully appreciate and authentically engage with the complex and fluid heritage of migrant maker practices.

Ultimately, adopting a decolonial perspective allows for a deeper and more authentic engagement with the agency of migrant communities, acknowledging their active role in shaping and transmitting their cultural heritage. By embracing pluriversality—the idea that many worlds can coexist and contribute to our understanding of heritage—we can foster an inclusive environment where the heritage of migrant maker practices is not merely "integrated" but celebrated in its full complexity, offering new insights for addressing power imbalances and fostering a truly representative global heritage discourse. This re-evaluation is crucial for building a future where heritage is understood as a living, interwoven practice, continually shaped by diverse voices and experiences.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The author used AI tools to assist with language refinement and citation checks. All theoretical arguments, interpretations, and conclusions are the author’s own.

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DISSONANT PASTS: LACUNAE, MEMORY AND FORGETTING IN PUBLIC SPACE

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INTRODUCTION

Walter Benjamin famously stated that the "great accomplishments of any civilization – its monuments – inevitably further the interests of the victorious at the expense of the vanquished."[1] Many of our public spaces are de facto monument themselves, the subject of preserving cultural heritage, but equally the location of diverse, often conflicting and contested reifications and spatializations of a society's past, present and future.

In uncertain times, such as the current one, characterized by sociologist Zygmunt Bauman as "liquid modernity" and "liquid fear", the apparent "solidity" of the build environment, in particular those parts of it that we may consider "monuments", built with the notion of permanently inscribing a particular version and vision of an – often ideal – past or future provides a sense of predictability, reliability and permanence. Such monuments are of course mostly associated with authorities and hegemonic power that have the ability to engage in what de Certeau calls "spatial strategies."

Conversely, there has been increasing attention to public open spaces that are very temporary and malleable. And even the permanent open spaces that are funded and managed by governments and private landowners, there have recently emerged a range of impermanent, more-or-less-public spaces and more or less permanent forms of occupation and use that are facilitated by other actors.[2]

There is a flow of constant actions that create, maintain or transform the relationships between the various actors that constitute such spaces and the rituals of use and meanings they hold for various and diverse groups. Public space may be "loose",[3] they are dynamic, opportunistic, thrown-together, trends that have become more prominent in the context of de-industrialization and growing local participation in more and more heterogeneous and diverse communities and societies. These approaches are messy, and constantly evolving to take tactical advantage of shifting, localized resources and opportunities.[4] I draw here, in addition to deCerteau's "spatial tactics,"[5] or Massey's conception of places as "thrown together"[6] to emphasize that non-human objects and forces, like people, have their own trajectories (or 'aims'), and that public spaces may highlight the nature of all places as the result of continuing acts of conflict, negotiation and alignment among these actors.[7]

In an era of increasingly extensive, intensive, and rapid changes across the globe[8] reflecting on the past can elicit many complex and deeply bewildering sentiments, among them nostalgia, denial, hopelessness, loss, grief, and hope.[9] Perceptions of the state of the world, and the future, are far from static, changing from moment to moment, person to person, and place to place, often in surprising and unpredictable ways.[10] In reflecting on the past, incomplete and shifting knowledge coupled with the

dynamics of memory can cause uncertainty as how to best plan, design, and act now for the future. In acknowledging that our very existence as a species necessarily involves transformation of the world around us, we might ask: What are the impacts we want to have? How do we shape the world today that we pass on to future generations? A view of the past reminds us that "the future is not predetermined"– it is something that we are creating every day.[11]

Framing Urban Public Space and Memory

In the following I will try to critically interrogate how urban public spaces act as intentional records and unintentional repositories of memory, as locations where histories are remembered, reproduced, enacted, and contested.

Beyond locating complex sentiments and responses that are central to reflecting on the past in uncertain times, among them – as mentioned before - nostalgia, denial, loss, hopelessness, and hope, urban spaces both construct and reconstruct memories over time and through collective experiences, and thus are places where meanings are shaped by various actors.

How do such spaces become battlegrounds for competing narratives of history, identity, and belonging? How are they contested, symbolically and materially, by different social groups, governments, and political movements? Whose histories are materialized and celebrated, and whose are excluded, forgotten and de facto erased?

Urban Public Space as Ruin

The first of three frames that may be useful here is to look at urban space as a "ruin", as something that (in the words of photographer Clarence John Laughlin) is shaped by the interplay of "simultaneous presence and absence," of something that used to be there and the physical manifestations of former presence and current absence. In literary terms this absence is the lacuna(e). An inventory of the lacunae, of what and who is absent, missing, hidden, invisible, or unseen in public space may guide a reflection on how urban spaces act as living archives, where collective memories are continuously built, erased, and renegotiated, and counteract a hegemonic manufacturing of idealized and idolized pasts as a method of creating particular identities and exclusive forms of belonging. An interesting and potent example is Christian Boltanski's "Missing House" in Berlin, calling attention to and annotating the gap left behind by a tenement house bombed and destroyed in WWII.

Urban Public Space in Liquid Modernity and Liquid Fear

The second frame are the concepts of "liquid modernity"[12] and "liquid fear"[13] established by Polish sociologist Zygmunt Bauman who describes "the dominant sentiment is the feeling of uncertainty – about the future shape of the world, about the right way of living in it, and about the criteria by which to judge the rights and wrongs of one's way of living. Uncertainty is not exactly a newcomer in the modern world, with its past. What is new, however, is that it is no longer seen as a mere temporary nuisance which, with due effort may be either mitigated or completely overcome. The postmodern world is bracing itself for life under a condition of uncertainty which is permanent and irreducible."[14]

His concept of "liquid modernity"[15] describes our current "liquid society" as characterized by instability and ambiguity and by the erosion or altogether disappearance of what appeared to be stable or solid categories of identity. This liquidity affects the very concepts and practices of territoriality and belonging, and their spatializations. Rapid change is operating at a speed and scale that social patterns and institutions, and even place itself, no longer have time to respond and provide solid and meaningful bases of human identity and collective action.[16] Even systems of power are perceived as less stable and often elusive when one tries to engage them. As Manuel Castells suggested, "the flows

of power generate the power of flows, whose material reality imposes itself as a natural phenomenon that cannot be controlled or predicted… People live in places, power rules through flows".[17] While power has concentrated in elusive and largely inaccessible global networks ("spaces of flows"), the actions of people and groups that are not closely associated with hegemonic power are increasingly circumscribed in localities ("spaces of places").[18]

Bauman sharpens this point by stating that "power rules because it flows, because it is able (beware ever forgetting it!) to flow – to flow away".[19]

Speaking truth to power, holding hegemonic and elusive systems accountable or counteracting their policies and actions then needs to return power "to its foundations in substantive landscapes, and (…) that the political is practiced in places, counteracting the capacity of power to disengage from place and people and generate fear and uncertainty."[20] Liquid fear is generated by endemic uncertainty and severely impacts our ability to engage in meaningful social action to produce a viable future. Liquid fear is without obvious source, derivative and based in an internalization of "a vision of the world that includes insecurity and vulnerability.[21]

Liquid fear has been used by state actors and other hegemonic elites to ensure compliance and social passivity from its citizens, as the state is not able to deliver on its promise to protect people. The social stability on which the state's claims rely has been worn away by the uncertainties of global capitalism, and the inherent inequities of this system have generated a milieu of physical threats to personal safety, for example "in the form of so-called terrorist violence."[22] Hegemonically designed public space then may be – beyond the pragmatics of surveillance and crowd control – be designed to symbolize and reify a prescribed meaning, a sense of security and belonging that is impossible to achieve in the reality of contemporary heterogeneous societies.

Urban Public Space as Memory

The third frame is investigating the ways spaces are socially produced, negotiated, and reproduced through memory-work and identity-work, highlighting the tensions between various interests, users, agents etc. How are these spaces contested, both symbolically and materially, by different social groups, governments, and political movements. How do social movements attempt to reclaim or redefine urban spaces through memory-work to advance their political agendas? How do these spaces become battlegrounds for competing narratives of history, identity, and belonging?

Viderman et al state that "Humans build urban space in a permanent effort to settle stable and safe environments. Yet, urban space continues to be experienced as uncertain, troubled, imbued with challenges and perpetually under pressure. It can be inspiring and motivating for some and suffocating and distressing for others. This contingent notion of urban space reveals its intrinsic tension, between settling and unsettling. There are moments when tendencies to settle prevail and urban space is perceived to be solid, permanent and safe, and there are times when urban space appears in turmoil, when routines are broken, time accelerates and changes are sudden and disruptive. The moments in which tendencies to unsettle prevail are tainted by painful experiences and threats of elimination or destruction. However, these are also moments of anticipation and struggle in which radical social transformations are likely to occur, for urban space is also imagined, claimed, appropriated and lived differently."[23]

The design of public space then needs "[…] to grasp the profound changes such moments produce, reminding that diseases, violence, exploitation, social divides and polarization, fear, authoritarianism and poverty have always been entwined in urban experience, as have scientific advances, emancipation, dialogue, solidarity and care, protection, hard-won and fought-for opportunities." [24]

RE-FRAMING PUBLIC SPACE: REVEALING THE INVISIBLE, THE HIDDEN AND THE UNSEEN

The discourse on memorials, counter-memorials and monuments may have insights to offer here:
Robert Musil wrote in 1932 – in the wake of WWI memorials, mostly in the form of sculptures on pedestals, designed to be looked at - that "traditional Monuments become gradually invisible – a consequence of a dying constituency, outdated symbolism and what he called the semantic overcrowding of the public realm." Beyond, traditional, history-laden public space is often – much like the monuments, intentional or accidental it is made up of – engaged in the manufacturing of a past, of a shared (and equally manufactured) memory with the intent of manufacturing a sense of belonging for those who share the underlying values and ideological positions, and to exclude all those who don't. They question of who (and what) such spaces are for – and who not – looms large but is barely ever explicitly addressed or debated, despite Benjamin's contention that the "…great accomplishments of any civilization – its monuments – inevitably further the interests of the victorious at the expense of the vanquished."[25]
So what happens to the vanquished? The forgotten? The intentionally forgotten? The disappeared? The hidden, invisible and unseen? To the stories, memories, histories and narratives that challenge the historically and currently dominant discourses and hegemonic positions? Is the (an-)aesthetication of public space, the clean-up towards a current portrayal of historic accuracy with a pc bend a solution to the problem?
Benjamin's contention that aesthetics is experimental and projective because the aesthetic – or experiential - dimension is not an explicit agenda but a political driver can be extended to space and spatialization. Langhorst, in his framework for landscape democracy, suggest that there are two conflicting processes, strategies and tactics: The first being the "spatialization (aesthetization) of politics (with the aim to conceal and naturalize power relationships), the second being the "politization of space (aesthetics)" aiming at revealing, exposing, and acting in response to systems of power. The aesthetic (or experiential) dimension of public space is critical to achieve Mitchell's goal that "to be effective, politics must be made visible in public space."[26]
Or, as Young argues in the ongoing discourses on memory, memorialization and monuments:
"Contemporary memorials "aim not to console but to provoke, not to remain fixed but to change, not to be everlasting but to disappear, not to be ignored by passers-by but to demand interaction, not to remain pristine but to invite their own violation and not to accept graciously the burden of memory but to drop it at the subject's feet"[27]
All these perspectives foreground the aesthetic, experiential dimension of urban public space and its capacity to embody, reify, materialize and spatialize narratives in both effective and insidious ways - as Goldhagen Williams states "space is always already there" and "our relationship to the built environment differs from that of any other art. It affects us all the time, not only when we choose to pay attention. What's more, the built environment shapes our lives and the choices we make (….). It affects our moods and emotions, our senses of our bodies in space and motion.
It profoundly shapes the narratives we tell ourselves and construct out of our daily lives." [28]
More than public space just being a reflection of societal values at the time of building public space is an active agent in changing such values: "And contrary to what has been assumed for centuries, we now know that all our lives, our minds are changing and quite literally being shaped by our experiences in the physical environments in which we live."[29] The embodiment of values, of explicit or implicit narratives increases the already immeasurable role of narratives in the shaping of cultural tenets, values, and by extension, systems of power and control: "... narrative [has the] power to reframe the past so as to include certain events and people, exclude others and redefine the meaning of landscape accordingly" [30]

Central to enacting the "right to the city"[31] in heterogeneous, democratic societies entails the right to narrative and counter-stories: Homi Bhabha situates a "right to narrative"[32] as a key dimension of a community's or individual struggle for identity. A core method of cultural erasure, deracination, displacement and disempowerment is to tell stories about a place and its people – instead of letting they themselves invent and tell those stories. The uncovering of such stories – and the empowerment to tell them and have them inform, influence and shape the next socio-spatial imaginaries is critical for just and equitable futures. And these are not merely histories and narratives – they are parts of larger mythologies and cosmologies that reveal the values that make a community and its landscape[33] – and often provide a potent counter-narrative to the neoliberal-capitalist past and future. As such, the dissonance and discordance inherent in the past (the space of reflection), and conclusively in the present (the space of action) and the future (the place of aspiration) is invariably being played out – and should be played out in the built environment, and in particular in public space.

CONCLUSION

Participating in multiple, heterogeneous, conflicting narratives and counter-narratives, attempts to "make sense" of the past, with view at determining actions in the present towards a better future, discourses between memory and forgetting, presence and absence, and paying attention to what (and who) is hidden, invisible or unseen, is central to the function of public space as "public" and to the creation and maintenance of a sense of belonging.

Learning how to "read" dissonant pasts by way of public space, both by increasing the methodical (and methodological) arsenal (such as counter-mapping, counter-narratives, landscape forensics etc.) but simultaneously to make public space and its inherent and intrinsic lacunae more visible are the big challenge – one that is not new and likely will stay with us – much like Donna Haraway's "trouble"[34] – and we need to stay with it instead of trying to make its sources – the difference between us and "the other" - disappear by design.

Futures will be invariably and inevitably dissonant as well – the challenge is to "live with" that dissonance, live with it well, and to create / co-create / co-design the spaces in which that "living with" can occur – in an inclusive manner that facilitates belonging for every "other". This is the challenge to do in a present that is shaped by liquid fear and modernity, conflicted, contentious and contested.

For meaningful action in the present (in fact the only space/time of action), knowledge of (and empathic understanding) of "the pasts" in any location are a necessity – unless one wants to fall into David Lowenthal's "those who don't understand the past are bound to repeat its mistakes".

NOTES

[1] Walter Benjamin “On the Concept of History.” In Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften I:2*. Frankfurt a. M.: (Suhrkamp Verlag, 1974), np.
[2] See Quentin Stevens, *Activating Urban Waterfronts: Planning and Design for Inclusive, Engaging and Adaptable Public Spaces.* (London: Routledge, 2022).
[3] See Karen A. Franck and Quentin Stevens. *Loose Space: Possibility and Diversity in Urban Life*. (London and New York: Routledge, 2007).
[4] See Jeffrey Hou, *Insurgent Public Space*. (London: Routledge, 2010) and Lydon, Mike and Anthony Garcia. *Tactical Urbanism: Short-term Action for Long-term Change.* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2015).
[5] See Michel De Certau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*. (Berkeley: University of California, 1984).
[6] See Doreen Massey, *For Space.* (London, UK: Sage Publications, 2005).
[7] See Quentin Stevens, 2020, 1.
[8] See e.g. Erle C. Ellis & Navin Ramankutty, “Putting people in the map: Anthropogenic biomes of the world.” Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment 6 (200) (8), 439–447. https://doi.org/10.1890/070062 and Peter Vitousek et al. “Human Domination of Earth’s Ecosystems.” Science, 277 (1997) 5325, 494-499.
[9] See e.g. Richard J. Hobbs, “Grieving for the Past and Hoping for the Future: Balancing Polarizing Perspectives in Conservation and Restoration.” Restoration Ecology, 21 (2013) (2), 145–148 and Laura J. Martin, *Wild by Design: The rise of Ecological Restoration.* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2022).
[10] See Torgeir Bangstad & Pétursdóttir, Þóra, “An Ecological Approach to Heritage.” In *Heritage Ecologies* edited by Torgeir R. Bangstad & Þóra Pétursdóttir, (London: Routledge, 2021), 3-24; Richard J. Hobbs, “Grieving for the Past,” and Marc Treib, *Spatial Recall: Memory in Architecture and Landscape.* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2009).
[11] See Laura J. Martin, *Wild By Design* and Nadia Bartolini Caitlin DeSilvey, “Landscape futures: Decision-making in Uncertain Times, a Literature Review.” Landscape Research, 46 (2021) (1), 8–24. https://doi.org/10.1080/01426397.2020.1861228 and William Cronon, “The Trouble with Wilderness: Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature.” Environmental History, 1 (1996) (1), 7–28. https://doi.org/10.2307/3985059.
[12] See Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*. (Cambridge, MA: Polity Press, 2000).
[13] See Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Fear*. (Cambridge, MA: Polity Press, 2006).
[14] Zygmunt Bauman, *Cultural Identities and the Politics of Anti- Racism*, edited by Prina Werbner and Tariq Modood, (London: Zed Books, 1997), 50-51.
[15] See Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*.
[16] For a detailed analysis of the relationships between space, place, belonging and identity see Joern Langhorst, “Situating Landscape Citizenships: Borders, Margins, Hybridity, and the Uncanny.” In *Landscape Citizenships* ed. Tim Waterman, Jane Wolff, and Ed Wall, E. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2021), 109-129.
[17] Manuel Castells, *The Informational City: Information, Technology, Economic Restructuring and the Urban Regional Process*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), 349.
[18] Manuel Castells, *The Power of Identity*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997). He adds that localizing state discourses and strategies, under conditions of advanced globalization, have intensified the disjuncture between global elites and local activists.
[19] Zygmunt Bauman, “City of Fears, City of Hopes”, Critical Urban Studies: Occasional Papers, (2003), 14
[20] Langhorst, *Situating Landscape Citizenships*, 116.
[21] Langhorst, *Situating Landscape Citizenships*, 116-7
[22] Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Fear.* (Cambridge, MA: Polity Press, 2006), 3.
[23] Tihomir Viderman et al. “Urban Space Unsettled: The Unraveling of Routines, Temporalities and Contestations in Urban Studies” in *Unsettled Urban Space: Routines, Temporalities and Contestations,* ed. by Tihomir Viderman et al., (New York, NY and London: Routledge, 2023), 1.
[24] Viderman et al. „Urban Space Unsettled”, 1.
[25] Benjamin, “On the Concept of History,” ibid.)
[26] Donald Mitchell, *The Right to the City: Social Justice and the Fight for Public Space.* (New York: Guilford Press, 2003), 211.
[27] James E. Young, “The Counter-Monument: Memory Against Itself in Germany Today,” Critical Inquiry, 18 (1992), 2: 277.
[28] Sarah Goldhagen Williams, *Welcome to Your World: How the Built Environment Shapes Our Lives.* (New York: Harper, 2017), XIV.
[29] Goldhagen Williams, *Welcome to Your World*, XXXI.
[30] Cronon, “A Place for Stories,” 1364.

[31] See Henri Lefebvre, “Right to the city”. In *Writings on Cities*, edited and translated by E. Kofman and E. Lebas, 63–177. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1996).
[32] See Homi Bhabha, “On Writing Rights”. In *Globalizing Rights*, edited by M Gibney (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 162–182.
[33] See Cronon, “A place for stories”, 1375-6.
[34] See Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble.* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016).

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VISION AND REVISION IN NATIVE AMERICAN HERITAGE SITES: THE LOWER SIOUX AGENCY AND FORT SNELLING

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INTRODUCTION

Indigenous heritage sites around the world have been transformed in recent decades because of changes in historical knowledge, values and attitudes, funding, and the political situations governing the sites. In general, there has been a shift toward a less biased, more balanced perspective, one that incorporates and sometimes grants priority to an Indigenous point of view. This essay discusses two Minnesota historical sites to indicate some important revisions while also addressing ongoing, unresolved issues surrounding the presentation of Native history and heritage.

In Minnesota, if we go beyond the first contact between Native peoples and Euro-American settlers, the key historical episode in the relationship between the two groups is arguably the armed struggle in 1862-1863 referred to as the Sioux Uprising, the Dakota Conflict, the U.S.-Dakota War, and by other names.[1] The fighting led to the deaths of hundreds of Dakota and the forced displacement and exile of thousands more, along with around six hundred settler deaths and upwards of 40,000 settlers fleeing the area. Two sites that have important relationships to the conflict and illustrate recent efforts to change the presentation of history and heritage are the Lower Sioux Agency, where the first major fighting in the war took place, and Fort Snelling, where in the wake of the fighting more than 1,600 Dakota, mainly the elderly, women, and children, were taken and held in inhumane conditions before being forcibly removed to distant locations outside Minnesota. The situation at the fort has become a touchstone of revisionary historical interest, second only to the execution of 38 Dakota men in Mankato on December 26, 1862, as a focus of continuing efforts to come to terms with the war, its causes, and its consequences.

THE LOWER SIOUX AGENCY

Figure 1. The Lower Sioux Agency Interpretive Center. Photograph by the author.

The Lower Sioux Agency, established in 1853 approximately 100 miles from Fort Snelling, is a much smaller and less visited historical site than the fort, but still a significant one. When the Dakota, through a series treaties ceded virtually all the land in what became the state of Minnesota in 1858, they were finally limited to a narrow strip of land along the Minnesota River.[2] The Lower Sioux Agency was a principal site for the annual disbursement of food, goods and funds from the federal government to the Indians. Following a preliminary incident near Acton, a small town in the area, in which five settlers were killed, the initial fight in the war took place at Little Sioux with an attack by the Indians, who were angry because of a refusal to provide food on credit when the funds were delayed, and because of a history of mistreatment, corruption, and massive problems caused by displacement from their traditional living places and hunting grounds as a result of the treaties. The attack led to the destruction of all the buildings except a stone warehouse, which was acquired in 1967 by the Minnesota Historical Society (MNHS). The Interpretive Center opened in 1970 and has been collaboratively operated and managed by the MNHS and the Lower Sioux Tribal Community since 2015. Ownership transfer of the Interpretive Center began in 2021 and is in its final stages; when complete only the warehouse building and five acres will remain under MNHS auspices.[3]

Language Matters

The most obvious change in the latest major revision at the Interpretive Center, in 2012-15, is in the language of the signs, historical markers, and exhibition didactic panels. They now incorporate Dakota so that they are bilingual, at least in part. If English is still the principal language for the didactic texts, that is presumably a practical rather than political matter.[4] In one of the display panels, language—terminology— becomes the explicit focus of attention: the heading is "Uprising, Conflict, War?" What was at first usually referred to as "the Sioux Uprising," and later as "the Dakota Conflict" is now most often referred to as "the U.S.-Dakota-War," which avoids the idea that the Dakota were the aggressors and the settlers merely defending themselves. The reflexivity involved in such a display heading and text is an important revisionary move. It acknowledges the issues posed by the exhibition content and treatment, including the challenge of finding appropriate language, and indicates what is at stake in any particular choice. The language used can reveal a point of view, even a world view. The language issue also raises the question of audience. The Interpretive Center must

accommodate a wide range of visitors from local tribal members and non-Native residents to foreign tourists, from students on a field trip with little knowledge of the history bound up with the site to adult history buffs who may have formidable expertise in Native, military, and Minnesota history, as well as other subjects.[5]

Museum and historic site display styles change. The original presentation at Lower Sioux featured primarily artifacts in glass cases, with some dramatic use of large-scale illustrations and text. One wall featured a large image of Little Crow, a principal leader of the Dakota during the fighting (though a reluctant one at first), and a dramatic label: "Attack." Another section began with "Vengeance."[6]

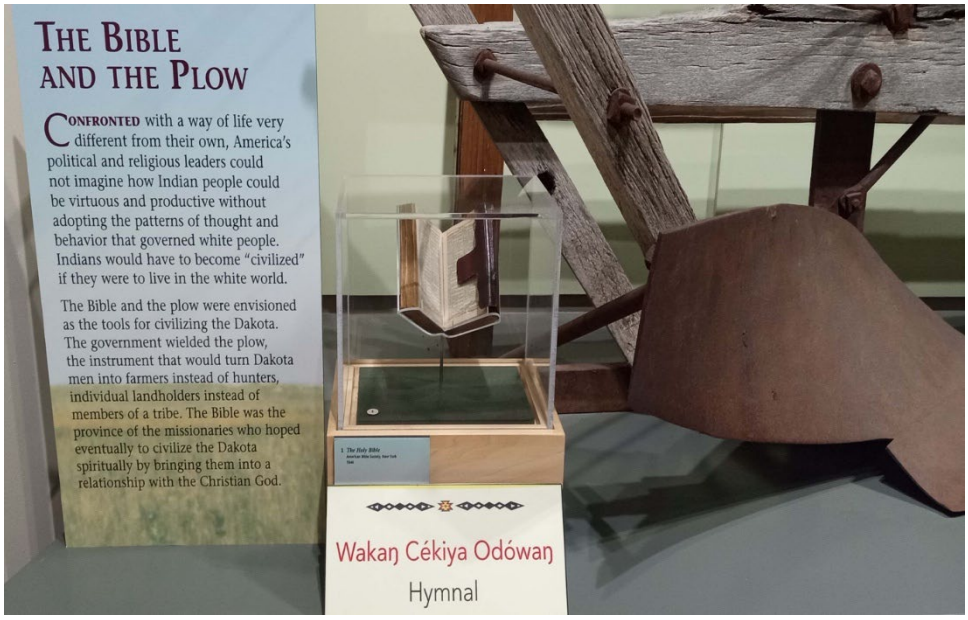

Figure 2. The Lower Sioux Agency Interpretive Center. The Bible and The Plow Display. Photograph by the author.

One section in the current display features a hymnal in Dakota which suggests how historically language could serve political purposes, with the Native language an instrument of conversion to Christianity as a key element in assimilation. The hymnal is presented alongside a plow, an icon of another major focus of efforts to convert Natives to the white settler way of life. It was not only that farming crops in plowed rows was different than traditional Native methods or that prairie was to be converted to farmland on a large scale. Farming as promoted rested upon individual rather than communal property ownership, a fundamental difference between the two ways of life and an all-important motivating factor behind the treaties, land grabs, and feverish speculation they produced. Other aspects of the assimilation efforts such as clothing and hair style also were important and feature in the exhibition, as do elements such as hunting, fishing and other rights, and boarding schools as institutional instruments of transformation.

Figure 3. The Lower Sioux Agency Garden. Native mounds in foreground, plowed rows behind, with the original warehouse in the background. Photograph by the author.

The emphasis in displays can show concerns current at the time of initial creation or subsequent revision, and that is evident at Lower Sioux in the presentations on the grounds outside of the Interpretive Center. They demonstrate an effort to reveal Native customs and the significance of changes proposed or enforced by the settlers; they also seize upon contemporary environmental and ecological concerns. Lower Sioux has a garden plot that demonstrates the difference between Native and white settler approaches to raising crops; it also has areas of prairie restoration.[7]

Figure 4. The Lower Sioux Agency. Gender Roles Marker. Photograph by the author.

The garden opens up another important area of contemporary concern: gender. A marker that is another revisionary addition explains that the conversion to plowing meant a shift in gender roles, since traditionally women were in charge of planting and tending the crops, while the men were hunters. Making the men farmers shifted gender roles in a crucial way.

FORT SNELLING

Figure 5. Fort Snelling, 2025. Photograph by the author.

Fort Snelling is on the edge of the Twin Cities (Minneapolis-Saint Paul) metropolitan area, at the confluence of the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers. It was established in the 1820s as an outpost on the Western frontier of settler expansionism, to stake a claim in what was then the Dakota Territory and guard against encroachment by the British. When the frontier continued to move west and the British threat waned, the fort became less important and was in fact sold before being reclaimed because of the outbreak of the Civil War. Rededicated primarily as an enlistment and logistical center rather than a fortified military garrison in an area where actual fighting might take place, it served that role during World Wars 1 and II before being closed in 1946. The fort proper, reduced to ruins and all but invisible except for a round tower that survived as a kind of relic, was declared a national historic site in 1965. After restoration and reconstruction, it (re-)opened as a Minnesota Historical Society site in 1977. The initial perspective was defined primarily by military life in the 1820s, with costumed employees as interpreters, many of them military academy students in period uniforms. The choice of period and focus largely avoided addressing Dakota-settler relations before, during, or after the Dakota War.

From the Military to Militant Protest

Originally the fort was primarily presented as a white settler military site, uncritically viewed, with an emphasis on a perspective that accepted the fort's value as an outpost of progress and manifest destiny.[8] That changed because of general changes in American society that might be suggested by the shorthand label "The '60s" and changes in the Native community represented by the founding of the American Indian Movement in 1968 in Minneapolis only a few miles from the fort. In 2010 there were protests that included a call to tear down Fort Snelling. Now, however, the MNHS has an Indian Advisory Committee, consisting of appointees from the tribal groups and educators, as well as a Native American Initiatives Department. The most recent major changes at Fort Snelling, with a new

visitors' center opened in 2021 and its permanent exhibition in 2023, everywhere reflect a different perspective, one significantly shaped by the Dakota Community Council, a partnership with community leaders. The exhibit, entitled "Many Voices, Many Stories, One Place," begins with the acknowledgement of the pre-contact, pre-military importance of the site as "Bdote," a sacred area and meeting place for Indigenous people. The opening panels present this idea and suggest a special proprietary Native status. Yet there is also an insistence that all are welcome, with inclusiveness emphasized throughout."[9]

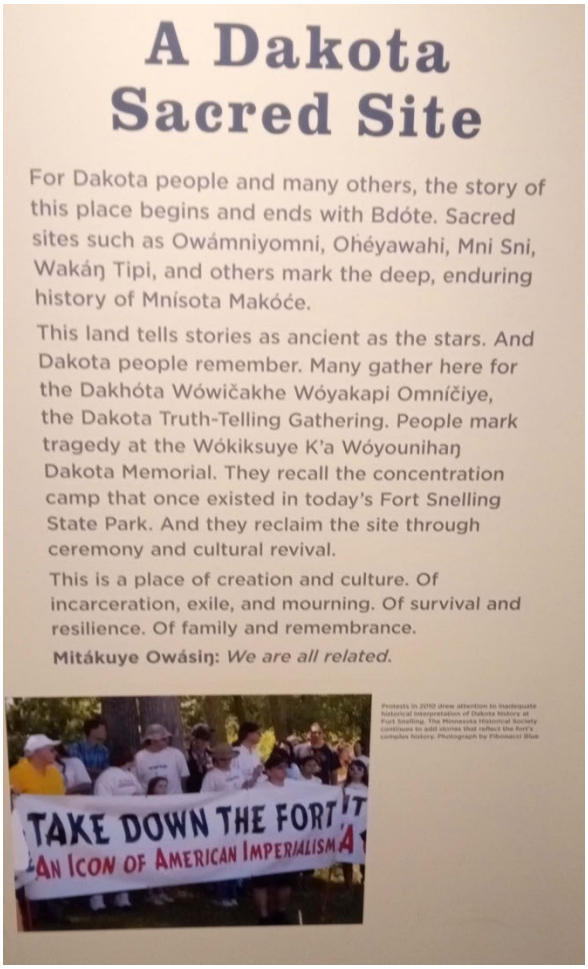

Figure 6. Fort Snelling. "A Dakota Sacred Site" Exhibition Panel. Photograph by the author.

The changed presentation of Native history and life is evident in many ways, but perhaps most notably in the image of a protest incorporated within a display panel. Under the general heading of "A Dakota Sacred Site," the fine print note alongside the image of the march with the "TAKE DOWN THE FORT" banner states—in an extraordinary example of reflexivity—that the protests "drew attention to inadequate historical interpretation of Dakota history at Fort Snelling."[10] The general historical exhibit also now emphasizes the Natives brought to the fort at the end of the 1861-62 conflict. That has been another point of linguistic-political tension, since what was originally often described as an internment camp is now more often referred to as a concentration camp, with the term genocide also used, as it is now in the display. Although historian Patricia Limerick has with reason cautioned against the use of the term in relation to governmental policies toward Native Americans, Minnesota Governor Alexander Ramsey did say on September 9, 1862, "The Sioux Indians of Minnesota must be exterminated or driven forever beyond the borders of the state."[11]

Figure 7. Fort Snelling. "Slavery on 'Free Soil'" Display (with Dred and Harriet Scott). Photograph by the author.

The choice of the 1820s as the focal point of the historical presentation at the fort avoided the Dakota-U.S. War. It also avoided another element from the fort's past that is telling in terms of revisionary history and the current display: slavery. Dred Scott, an African American, was at the fort from 1837 to 1840 as the slave of the base surgeon. That period, which included Scott's marriage to Harriet Robinson, another slave, in a civil ceremony, provided the basis for what may well be the most famous--and infamous--case in United States Supreme Court history. Back in Missouri, a slave state, after the doctor returned there, Scott filed suit in 1846 to claim his freedom because he argued that he would automatically become a free man while in the north. But the court rejected the claim in its 1857 ruling by insisting that as a slave he was not a citizen and had no rights; he was still subject to Missouri law. This ruling influenced the Emancipation Proclamation; the 13th Amendment to the Constitution, which abolished slavery; and the 14th Amendment, which established birthright citizenship. In addition to an expansive treatment of the Scotts and slavery at the fort, the exhibition now also includes a large section on four companies of Buffalo Soldiers, African Americans based at the camp during the 1880s.[12] In other elements as well, such as the handling of the Japanese American Language School at the fort during World War II, which trained interpreters for the war and Occupation, and the multiple roles played by women, the visitor center exhibition suggests an overall approach in line with ideas of multiculturalism and inclusiveness, yet one that does not lose sight of the traditional military emphasis.[13]

Revisionary History, Reconciliation and Truth

The concern with Dakota history defines the main changes in the overall presentation at Fort Snelling, and several other recent additions underline the nature of the revisionary work as well as the ongoing challenges. Outside the main walled enclosure but nearby is a group of stone blocks arranged in a circle with a marker describing it as A Place to Remember. Like several text panels inside the visitors' center devoted to memory and healing, which relate in part to the role of a military hospital at the fort that specialized in rehabilitation, and to trauma, associated with the effects of the U.S. Dakota War, this installation follows a popular therapeutic model for engagement with personal and collective history. This model's emphasis on trauma and recovery is often linked to truth and

reconciliation.[14] The problem, as Limerick observed in her essay "Haunted America," which focuses on the Modoc War of 1872-73, but extends to the broader history of Indian-white settler conflicts, is that we can know the basics of the Indian-white story in terms of who is to blame for causing the conflict beyond the immediate situation surrounding the outburst of violence, and we know who ultimately dominated, but the actual conflicts were hellish affairs not easily forgotten or forgiven, so that those on each side tend to have their own version of events and judgments about them. Something along those lines can be found in texts in the visitor center and at the Place of Remembrance as well as in the conclusion of an excellent recent history of the fort, Peter DeCarlo's *Fort Snelling at Bdote*. DeCarlo notes that the site has a complex past and may always be a contested space. But he then adds, "It can become a place where Minnesota's diverse peoples learn from each other, remember, heal, and build bridges of mutual respect."[15] As Limerick suggests, this is where the historical enterprise becomes uncertain. What relationship is being suggested between past and present? How is the conflict of 1862-63, and the entire colonial enterprise symbolized by the fort, to be redeemed? With episodes where the "darkest and grimmest dimensions of human nature are revealed," Limerick writes, "Historical lessons are hard to come by. Morals to the story that lift the spirit and inspire hope simply do not appear." She adds that "earnest declarations of faith in the value of historical knowledge" also are inadequate. A more complete, less partial and partisan approach can and should be used. But meditation and a spirit of reconciliation, truthfulness, and cooperation cannot change the history of the treaties and the war, the post-war treatment of the Dakota at the fort, and other inequities and injustices such as Dred Scott's legal defeat.[16] The basic land issues arising from the site as Bdote, the U.S.-Dakota War issues, and the broader history of the fort as a military base home to many activities not related directly to Native history and heritage are not easily kept separate—or neatly brought together.

Figure 8. Fort Snelling. Treaty of 1805 Public Art Installation. 10 X 10 Studio. Photograph by the author.

The Place of Remembrance promotes remembrance and reconciliation. The desired effect of another major new outdoor installation, a dramatic work devoted to the treaties, is perhaps less clear. It is a semicircular construction with sections alternating between natural light-colored wood and black, with lettering running across it with a quotation from a major treaty promising Native rights. The words are easily legible against the light background but difficult to read against the black.[17] The gaps

in the structure are described on a marker as representing the gaps in understanding what the treaty really meant—a curiously neutral way of describing the way many treaties and their language were used to defraud the Natives of their land and their rights, because the treaty language seems intended to be ambiguous enough to be manipulated or simply ignored. The work is challenging and does provoke an awareness of the many treaties' key role in Native-white relations. Its complexity may help account for the presence of several nearby markers with images and texts that in a sense frame it and offer a less ambiguous, more clearly positive message.

Figure 9. Fort Snelling. Display Panels. Photograph by the author.

These markers provide a clearcut message of harmony and healing. One presents a picture of a Native Marine veteran wearing his uniform shirt and veteran's cap, surmounted by his statement: "Bring races together and begin the healing." The image below shows the man, whose ancestor was executed at Mankato, embracing a woman whose ancestor was a soldier serving at the executions. The other marker has an image of the Mankato commemorative ride—which the man rode in-- capped with the term "Hope." This is an undeniably well-conceived and moving display in favor of the idea of reconciliation. Yet there remains an underlying tension between these images and texts and the treaty installation, between historical remembrance and contemporary reconciliation.

EPILOGUE

Figure 10. Jim Denomie, "Attack on the Fort Snelling Bar and Grill," 2007. Oil on canvas, 35 x 49 in. Collection of the Weisman Art Museum at the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis. The Francis M. Norbeck Fund. 2007.14.

The Native artist Jim Denomie's painting "Attack on The Fort Snelling Bar and Grill" is an epic satirical representation of Native-white relations in Minnesota that shows the fort as a White Castle restaurant, complete with crenelated roof and an interior scene that pays tribute to Edward Hopper's "Nighthawks." In the upper left the painting takes on what was then the state seal of Minnesota and its image of a Native on horseback riding toward the sunset and a settler working in the field with a gun leaning against a nearby barrel, no doubt for personal protection, not game hunting. In Denomie's version, the Native "moons" the settler, which may not be uplifting poetic symbolism, but makes the painting's point of view more than clear. In terms of the subject at hand the key element appears center-right: a man with a mouth full of something green. The figure represents Anthony Myrick, a trader at the Lower Sioux Agency who was asked to provide food on credit to the Natives, who were starving because they had not been paid their annuity. He replied, "Let them eat grass." When the attack came, he was killed, his body mutilated, and his mouth stuffed with grass. Denomie's painting suggests in a manner as harsh as it is humorous that there are events which perhaps cannot be calmly remembered and meditated on, resulting in a peaceful spirit of reconciliation. A shared sense of history and common ground—taken literally or figuratively—can be difficult to establish. Sometimes anger remains part of the mix, although it might be argued that humor offers its own form of truth-telling and possible healing. In its own way, with art and humor, Denomie's painting offers another revisionary point of view on Native history and heritage, another way of bringing together the past and the present.[18]

NOTES

[1] On the Dakota war see Anderson (2019) and Carley1976). On the execution in Mankato, see Berg (2012), Layli Standing Soldier's extraordinary poem "38," and the film version in Jan Troell's *The New Land* (1972). On the Dakota at Fort Snelling, see Monjeau-Mar (2006), as well as DeCarlo (2020) and Smith (2021). Beginning in 2002, a bi-annual commemorative march between the Lower Sioux Reservation and Fort Snelling honored those forcibly removed to the Fort in the aftermath of the war and the warriors taken to Mankato. There is a Reconciliation Square in Mankato, with a memorial installed in 1997 including a scroll listing the names of the executed and a buffalo statue paying tribute to the Dakota Way of Life. An earlier monument that stated "Here Were Hanged 38 Sioux Indians" was installed in 1912 and removed after protests in 1971; it then mysteriously disappeared. An annual run from Fort Snelling to Mankato started in 1986 to commemorate the 38 warriors executed in Mankato and two executed later at Fort Snelling; the run was later combined with a ceremonial-memorial horseback ride from the Lower Brule Sioux Reservation in South Dakota to the site in Mankato. In 2012 the artist Sam Durant, who had done a remarkable work on Native American-settler monuments (2005), created a large-scale outdoor work, entitled "Scaffold," which related in part to the executions in Mankato. It was first shown at Documenta (13) in Kassel, Germany and acquired by the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis for installation in the museum's sculpture garden in 2017. Neither the artist nor the museum consulted the tribal community, however. As a result, the work caused an uproar and was removed, with the wood ceremonially buried, not burned. The museum director resigned before the end of the year.
There are many other important Native sites in the state, including the Pipestone National Monument, established by Congress in 1937 (the quarry that is its centerpiece is a Minnesota State Historic Site), and several sites that are, like Lower Sioux Agency and Fort Snelling, linked to the Minnesota Historical Society, including the Mille Lacs Indian Museum and Trading Post and two sites also related to the events of 1862-63, Fort Ridgely and the Birch Coulee Battlefield. The Mille Lacs site is based on a trading post run by a white couple, who donated it and their collection of Native artifacts to the Minnesota Historical Society. The site, with a new museum that was created through a joint effort of MNHS and the tribe, is a major example of the complex issues of control and presentation. It is the subject of three notable studies: an essay by Joselyn Wedll, the museum's director (in West, 2000); a dissertation by Jennifer Stampe (2007); and a chapter in the book *Decolonizing Museums* (2012) by Amy Lonetree, who was a participant-observer when the museum was being created. It is also important to note that the Native American Gaming Act of 1988, which transformed Native gaming in many cases from small-scale bingo games to large-scale casino operations, has had an enormous impact on Native museums and interpretive centers because funds earned by the tribes have been used in many cases to support heritage sites, museums, and interpretive centers.
[2] Traverse de Sioux, the site of perhaps the decisive and most questionable of all treaty signings, is also an Historical Society site. A painting of the treaty signing hung in the Governor's Reception Room in the State Capitol until removed from view in 2016 after complaints from Native groups. My thanks to Kaitlyn Miller for sharing her knowledge of this important episode.
[3] The MNHS has a schedule for reviewing and changing exhibitions at the historical sites. Next on the list is Fort Ridgely, but preliminary planning is being done for Lower Sioux even with the handover to the tribal community (the funding process has presumably changed—but such makeovers are always contingent). The next major update for the Fort Snelling Interpretive Center exhibition is scheduled to open to the public in 2031.
[4] The addition of Dakota was a result of insistence from the Lower Sioux community. As a general observation, I would say that the issue of bilingualism or multilingualism in museum and site signage, wall labels, gallery guides, etc., has changed dramatically in recent years but is still being worked out in terms of when and how languages other than English are used. That also can include technological aspects; see the bottom of the panel shown in Figure 4.
[5] I regret that I cannot present a detailed discussion here of the original displays at the two sites as well as a more complete walk-through description and analysis of the current displays. The tipi near the entrance to the Interpretive Center (see Figure 1) serves as a useful icon and teaching element because of its familiarity. The stuffed buffalo head that is at the start of the indoor exhibition, while not exactly accurate in relation to Native experience at and near the site in the period around 1862, nevertheless also provides a basic symbolic association with Dakota life in general. Even if it hints at the tendency in popular culture and among non-Natives to identify all Indians with Plains Indians, the buffalo, like the tipi, provides a kind of familiarity that can be used to open up a more nuanced, complex approach to the varieties of Dakota and Native experience.
[6] The iconography of Little Crow (Taoyiateduta) deserves its own study. There is one famous photographic portrait of him in Western garb, with an imposing formality and dignity appropriate for a leader and diplomat, and

another in Native garb, holding a staff in a dramatic pose, a classic warrior (that is the one used in the original Lower Sioux Agency display, and also provided the pose and accoutrements for a "Timeless Collection" Indian doll that deserves comparison with Disney's Pocahontas doll, American Girl's Kaya, and the Native American Barbies). Little Crow, after the decisive defeat of the Dakota at the Battle of Wood Lake, left the area but later returned; he and his son were killed by a settler farmer and his son when discovered in a field picking berries. The father was paid a bounty of $500, the son $75 for Little Crow's scalp. The scalp was made the subject of a stereoview card by a St. Paul photographer that is as shocking and horrific an image in its own way as the lynching photographs from the American South or the images from the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps. Little Crow's scalp and partial remains were on display at the main Historical Society building through 1917 and only returned for burial in 1971.

[7] Fort Snelling has a similar garden/farming demonstration, as well as areas of prairie restoration. At Lower Sioux the settler part of the garden features legacy plants appropriate for 1862; the Native side features the mounding approach, with beans, corn, and squash, "The Three Sisters," planted together, with the corn stalks providing support for the beans and the squash providing ground cover for moisture retention and weed suppression. Unfortunately, my visit was too early in the season to show that and so Figure 4 suggests only the rudiments of the contrast. When I commented on the prairie restoration to the site manager, John Robertson, he responded, "There's a whole lot less mowing going on!" The old (American-Eurocentric) idea of a grass lawn as a basic landscaping requirement no longer applies, although that is not entirely a Native perspective-related change: for economic and other reasons there is a lot less mowing going on alongside interstate and other highways and elsewhere. For Robertson, lawn mowing aside, the prairie restoration is an attempt to return the site around the Interpretive Center as closely as possible to its existence as an oak savannah circa 1862 and resist the recent encroachment of native but non-savannah plant species found on the edge of the site along the river. The site also contains trails around the property to support hikes that can be both recreational and educational, with distance and difficulty indicated, and other historical elements such as a graveyard and the ferry site on the river that was the location of a major incident in the initial fighting that involved the flight of settlers and a troupe of soldiers. A map in the interpretive center indicates the location of plants that were and are used for medicinal and spiritual purposes.

[8] In 1970, a commemorative U.S. stamp honoring "The Great Northwest" and the 150th anniversary of the fort offered a peaceful pastoral view, with the fort magisterial on the heights in the background, two tipis on the far riverbank below the fort in the middle ground, and in the foreground a river boat being propelled gracefully upriver.

[9] The "Tear Down the Fort" protests followed protests concerning a spring, Mni Sni, on the fort site that had been transformed by the military to serve basic water needs as well as Western-style decorative ones in the form of a shallow walled pool. It was ultimately returned to a more natural state but threatened by highway expansion that would affect the site and limit access. The protests caused the plans to be changed and public access restored, although a study that concluded it met the criteria for Traditional Cultural Property was ignored.

I must also express my regret that I cannot provide a thorough report on the entire planning and development process for the new Visitor Center and overall presentation of the fort site, from consultation and discussion—sometimes contentious—through compromise and reformulation, to final decision-making and completion. Hampton Smith, in his fine history of the fort, *Confluence: A History of Fort Snelling*, discusses the general issue of historical perspective before briefly touching on recent matters, including a controversy over adding "Bdote" to the sign at the fort's entrance (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2021), 231-239.

[10] In Waziyatawin's forcefully argued *What Does Justice Look Like?: The Struggle for Liberation in Dakota Homeland*, she writes, "we . . . realize we must pursue a campaign to "Take Down the Fort," both literally and metaphorically. While this phrase applies most tangibly to historic Fort Snelling . . . it also applies to all monuments, institutions, place names, and texts that continue to celebrate the perpetrators of genocide or the institutions and systems that facilitated the implementation of genocidal and unjust policies" (St. Paul: Living Justice), 12.

[11] Ramsey, quoted in DelCarlo, *Fort Snelling at Bdote* (St. Paul, Minnesota Historical Society Press), 53; Limerick, *Something in the Soil* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2000), 51-52; see also pp. 67-68, where she comments on the simplistic treatment of Native-white relations in college-level history textbooks.

[12] The Dred and Harriet Scott story is told in part through a separate video. I cannot discuss at length the role played at the two sites by technology, which now often plays an important part in revisionary efforts. Lower Sioux does have an introductory video and some materials available through smart phones; there is also a VR tour used for off-site presentations. Fort Snelling's main film presentation is upstairs in the Visitor Center, removed from the main exhibition displays, which as noted include some video presentations. "Living Legacies" videos

feature descendants of individuals with strong associations with the site such as Little Crow as well as Dred and Harriet Scott; these feature personal storytelling over impersonal historical narration, an important trend in museum and heritage site displays. There are also online materials. Both sites still rely heavily on trained tour guides; I witnessed a presentation to a school group in the presumed living quarters of the Scotts (below the camp surgeon's family quarters), with the guide carefully explaining the Dred Scott Case and its significance.

[13] The website features the exhibition title "Many Voices, Many Stories, One Place," and says the site is "Dakota homeland, known as Bdote, with history spanning 10,000 years," with the fort and surrounding area "home to a wide history that includes Native peoples, trade, soldiers and veterans, enslaved people, immigrants, and the changing landscape" [https://www.mnhs.org/fortsnelling]. Among the individuals singled out for special attention are a Tuskegee Airman, a Native American member of the Women's Reserve Marine Corps, a gay male clerk, a Japanese-American member of the Women's Army Corps, a Norwegian American member of the so-called "Viking" battalion, and a Mexican-American paratrooper. Even though the base is no longer active, it continues to host many military-related events, not least because of the presence of the Fort Snelling National Cemetery.

[14] Writing about the Fort Snelling internment in a book published in 2006, Corinne L. Monjeau-Marz wrote of "this Era of Reconciliation." *The Dakota Indian Internment at Fort Snelling, 1862-1864* ((St Paul, Prairie. Smoke Press, 2006), 15.

[15]That book includes a small image of Dred and Harriet Scott on its cover along with images of Japanese American participants from the WW II Military Intelligence Service Language School, of a much earlier military band, of a troupe of marching soldiers and—to show the recreational side of the site—of a canoeist on the river. The text reflects a revisionist view by using "Concentration Camp" and "Holocaust" (with reference to a definition from the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C.) to discuss the Dakota kept at the fort after the war. *Fort Snelling at Bdote*, 54-58.

[16] DeCarlo, *Fort Snelling at Bdote*, 94; Limerick, *Something in the Soil*, 34, 35. Dred Scott, it should be noted, was ultimately freed, not long after the Supreme Court judgment, by the son of his original enslaver.

[17] The words on the monument, with / to indicate the division between the light and dark segments are: The United States/Promises / On Their Part / To Permit / The Sioux / To Pass, Bypass, Hunt / As They Have Formerly Done.

[18] The original seal was replaced because of Native objections to the politics, both in the settler-Native portrayal and in the possibility that the Indian riding into the sunset was a dangerous metaphor, i.e., was symbolically a member of a vanishing race shown in the process of vanishing. The new seal took effect on May 11, 2024 and replaces the original Indian-settler image with one of a loon, and the old state label, "Le E'toile du Nord" ["The Star of the North"] with the Dakota term "Mni Sota Makoce" ["Land of Clear Water" or "Land Where the Water Reflects the Sky"].

I would like to dedicate this essay to the memory of Jim Denomie.

I must thank John Robertson, Historic Site Manager at Lower Sioux Agency Interpretive Center; Travis Zimmerman, Site Manager at Mille Lacs Indian Museum; Bill Convery, Director of Research & Macmillan Fellow at MNHS; and Kate Roberts, Senior Exhibitor Developer at MNHS, for their great help and infinite patience. Any errors of fact and judgment are mine alone. I would also like to thank Michelle Andrews and especially Tessa Cicak for help with the images.

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_MPATHIC[1] DESIGN: BROOKES (REVISTED)

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INTRODUCTION

British abolitionists used architectural techniques (scale, plan, section, section elevation, and model) to depict the conditions on the Liverpool-based Brookes Slave Ship (1781-1804) in the iconic drawing *Stowage of the British Slave Ship "Brookes" Under the Regulated Slave Trade Act of 1788*. The drawing depicts the forced spatial arrangement of *ancestors* (this term will be used instead of slaves) during an imagined voyage reflecting the enforcement of the 1788 Act. Yet, the fine print in the upper right corner states that the drawing is a graphic underrepresentation of what occurred on the ship. (The trading family name of Brookes is also incorrect on the drawing - the correct name is Brooks).[2] The fine print states the ship was allowed to carry 454 captured ancestors but carried up to 609 on its fourth voyage (the drawing also does not indicate that the vessel also had 740 on its third voyage), that owners seldom followed the intended space allotted in the 1788 Act, and to carry as many captured ancestors as possible, they would be locked "spoon wise — within the distended legs of the other."[3]

_mpathic design: Brookes (Revisited) revisits the *Stowage* drawing, using the same architectural techniques, employing an _mpathic design methodology with accurate information from slave trade databases. The project asks, "Can an _mpathic design methodology, melding architecture, art, history, educate an international public of this vital narrative?" The project also asks, "Can _mpathic design connect us to the humanity, memory, and diasporic influence of the ship's 5,122 ancestors?" This paper will answer these research questions while sharing the project's background and _mpathic design methodology, noting outcomes and impacts.

Background

In *Blind Memory, Visual Representations of Slavery in England and America 1780 – 1865*, author Marcus Wood states that the Brookes was first selected by the Plymouth Society Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade as a "fitting subject for an illustrated broadside" in the drawing *Description of a Slave Ship (1788)*, and later published in 1789 by the London Committee in the *Stowage* drawing "with more detailed facts and measurements".[4] Wood states that the drawing's precision "is only possible because the design obeys very closely the techniques for depicting a naval vessel set down in late eighteenth century naval architecture guides", and the drawings' print "was the most famous and widely adapted image representing slave conditions on the Middle passage ever made."[5] In both drawings, ancestors as rendered as ciphers, bodies lying flat with no movement, impossible with the volatility of the ship. The realities of what it would have been like in the hull – the sounds, smells, compression, and body effluence – are a condition beyond our imagination – again, not depicted. The drawings read as technical, almost clean, even in their horror.

The *Stowage* Drawing

Royal Museums Greenwich's National Maritime Museum displays an original *Stowage* drawing in its Atlantic Worlds Gallery, in the eyeline of where a version of Brookes (Revisited) was permanently installed in 2024 by the architect and design team.[6] Standing in front of the drawing, you note how the human hand drawing every line transports you to think of the fabrication of the ship, and the design thinking underpinning this architecture of inhumanity.[7] You can see the shackles drawn holding ancestors on the lower and upper deck plans matched with the crisp sense of an architectural drawing, in longitudinal and latitudinal ship section elevations.[8] The drawing marries Enlightenment principles of precision to empathically tell the ship's narrative by connecting us to the drawings' use of the human form. The *Stowage* drawing became an architectural product distributed worldwide as a broadsheet, with two scale models requested by abolitionist Thomas Clarkson – one for Compte de Mirabeau, and one used by William Wilberforce, which he used during slavery speeches in Parliament.[9] The drawing and models enforce what Marcus Wood considers the Brookes as a "memorial to a disaster" - not a representation of what ever happened.[10] Wood's comment ushers in the need to revisit the drawing in an experiential, architectural sense.

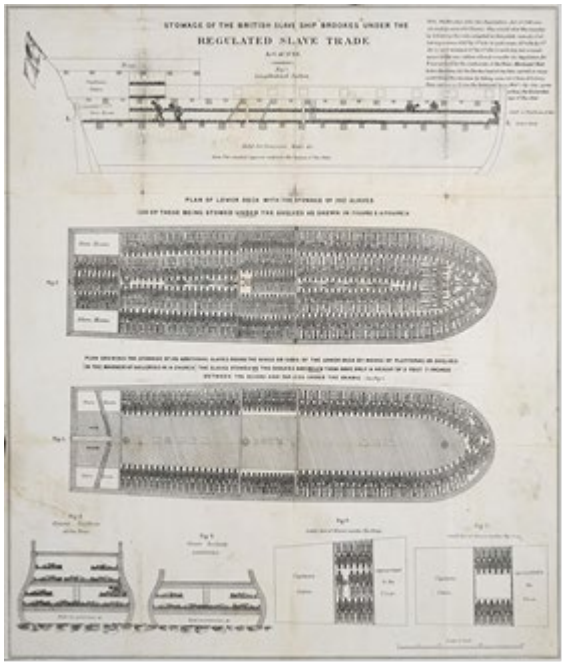

Figure 1. Stowage of the British slave ship "Brookes" under the Regulated Slave Trade Act of 1788. Library of Congress.[11]

_MPATHIC DESIGN METHODOLOGY: CONCEPTUAL TO REPRESENTATION

Figure 2. Cleckley Family Quilt, Cloth, Fiber, and String. 1978. Photo by the Author.

The project's _mpathic design methodology starts with a cultural design influence (conceptual), data collection (research), studies / translations of ancestors through form, color, and abstraction (representation), followed by scaled experimentations producing architectural interventions (implementation + dissemination).

Conceptual

An African American quilt, created by the designer's family in the late 1970s, is the foundational concept of Brookes (Revisited)'s _mpathic design methodology. The quilt, created from familiar family items of clothing and household fabrics, is hand stitched together in a graphic language that evokes an urban fabric's street grid, symbolizing the endpoint for family members who took part in the Great Migration north to New York City. In the quilt and the project, each patch of color holds memories. The quilt's threads, symbolic and real, extend from the architects family roots in Orangeburg, South Carolina to ancestorial connections at Charleston's Gadsden's Wharf, the location where approximate 40% of African ancestors arrived, considered the "most important disembarkation point" for ancestors in North America.[12] In Brookes (Revisited), the quilt reads as a designed multigenerational storytelling text, where difficult and good memories are held in color and geometry. Brookes (Revisited) uses color to connect the viewer to the life and the generational diasporic life of an ancestor. Is green linked to a farmer? Yellow to a healer? Pink to a mother? The project's use of color references the meanings of color in West African fabrics, and their diasporic connection to the African American quilt, generating the definition by empathy by social researcher Karla McLaren:

(empathy is) a social and emotional skill that helps us feel and understand the emotions, circumstances, intentions, thoughts, and needs of others, such that we can offer sensitive, perceptive, and appropriate communication and support.[13]

In Kalenna Sales' book *Centred: People + Ideas Diversifying Design*, Stephen Child and Isabella D'Agnenica note about the significance of quilts in Black culture, that with aesthetic power and artistry, they reflect and transform while archiving life.[14]

The quilt is a portal to the untold Brookes narrative and the lives of the ancestors.

Research

The quilt's empathy helps us understand the accurate data of each of the Brookes' voyages. The Brookes had 11 planned voyages (1 voyage failed as the ship began taking on water, requiring repair), leaving from Liverpool to Africa's Gold Coast, capturing ancestors to embark on the Middle Passage across the Atlantic to deliver ancestors to the Caribbean, Uruguay, and Guyana. Using the data from Slave Voyages' Slave Trade Database, quilt–like models were created for the 11 voyages, representing the moment captured ancestors left the Gold Coast of Africa.[15] The following list indicates the records used in the project.

1	650	(646)	60	1781-1783
2	619	(586)	45	1783-1784
3	740	(635)	43	1785-1786
4	609	(596)	51	1786-1788
5	432	(408)	47	1791-1792
6	450	(396)	59	1792-1793
7	453	(384)	48	1796-1797
8	487	(446)	?	1797-1798
9	0	0	0	1799
10	360	(324)	?	1800-1801
11	322	(320)	62	1804

The first column is the number of the Brookes' voyage, the second column is the number of captured ancestors as the Brookes disembarked from Africa's Gold Coast, and the third column is the number of ancestors arrived at the end of the Middle Passage.

The fourth column is the number of days the ship took on the Middle Passage, and the fifth, the total voyage from Liverpool and back. An accurate count of ancestors on all the Brookes' voyages over its 23 active years would be 5,122 ancestors.

Representation

The fine print in the upper right-hand corner of the 1788 *Stowage* drawing contains details on the space allowed by gender in the ship, as well as the method of which ancestors were arranged.

The Brookes, after the Regulation Act of 1788 was allowed to carry 454 slaves. She could stow this number by following the rule adopted in this plate, namely allowing a space of 6ft by 1ft 4 in to each man, 5ft by 1ft 4in to each woman, 5ft by 1ft 2 in to each boy, but so much space as this was seldom allowed even after the Regulation Act.

It was proved by the confession of the slave merchant that before the slave merchant that before the above act the Brookes had at one time carried as many as 609 slaves. This was done by taking some out of irons and locking them spoonwise (to use the technical term) that is by stowing one within the distended legs of the other.[16]

Figure 3. Left, cardboard volumes depicting the size allotment for Men, Women, and Boys as indicated in the text provided in the upper right corner of the Stowage drawing. Middle, the zig–zag cardboard Memory Marker. Right, Image of Spoonwise. Photos by the Author.

The allotted space for each man, woman and boy were fabricated with cardboard, referencing the research of Dr. Jane Webster of Newcastle University's visualization of "spoonwise" – where ancestors are arranged from head to toe.[17] As shown in Figure 3, an abstracted zig – zag of cardboard, with folds marking from head to hip, hip to knee, and knee to foot, evoke the spoonwise arrangement, leaving space to imagine an ancestor's body. Cardboard is symbolically used as a material, globally understood as common material for shipping. The break lines in the cardboard also resemble the ridges of skin upon closer inspection, which can be understood in the scale models of the *Stowage* drawing and later full-scale interventions. Paint colors match the colors of both quilt references of Africa and the Americas, lightly coating the cardboard so that the transparency again reads as skin. This methodology allows for the viewer to see outside of themselves, and for the abstractions to act as a voice.

In the development of the _mpathic design methodology, much thought was put into the abstract representation of ancestors, first considered to use hand drawings or photographs of real people. This type of representation was considered in response to the in-person recreations of people either lying down in the same horizontal manner or on large full-scale printouts of the *Stowage* drawing in the United Kingdom during the 250-year commemorations in 2007 with school children at Durham Cathedral Palace Green and a recreation with the public of the Brookes at York Castle Museum.[18] During the design process, the power and effect of the abstraction was tested in artist residencies throughout the country, with feedback being that the form forces you to read the voids created by questioning them, allowing you to take in the color, and imagine what is shown, and what is missing.[19] This abstraction _mpathically creates the feeling of presence and absence coursing through the narrative. Artist Charles Gaines interviews artist Howardena Pindell for *Negotiating Abstraction*, in Pindell's *What Remains to Be Seen* exhibition catalogue, where a seminal principle helps frames the approach:[20]

Black aesthetics for me, means being conscious of African art. I think using aggregates is African, like mixed media putting a lot of different substances together…the kind of surface that I used in the late 1970's when I was adding paper and paint (was African). I think one can use abstraction and have a black aesthetic because of the way abstraction has been handled through the use of geometry and patterns.[21]

By deconstructing the *Stowage* drawing and cutting out the lower, upper, and poop deck plans and section elevations to make the eleven voyages, the more accurate number of ancestors at the point of departure from Africa is depicted in three dimensions.

Figure 4. Left, the Brookes 11 Voyages, depicted with accurate data from Slave Voyages' Slave Trade Databases. Right, The Brookes Third Voyage (720 ancestors), Lower and Upper Decks (poop decks not shown). Photos by the Author.

The *Stowage* drawing contains a scale in the bottom right, a tool for the viewer to assess the understanding of the space allotted – again, an Enlightenment technique to understand space. The memory markers, once built in three dimensions, fit to scale, meld the architecture / spatial operations of the drawing with the quilt and more accurate historical facts. Scale becomes key in implementation – with drawings and models shifting from the original scale of the *Stowage* drawing to full scale, all using color and the abstraction of the memory markers to transport you out of your embodiment, to that of the ancestors.

_MPATHIC DESIGN METHODOLOGY: IMPLEMENTATION + DISSEMINATION

Brookes (Revisited) is a series of architectural interventions, shifting in scale, centering the 11 voyage models in a traveling exhibition with experiential plans, sections, drawings displayed since 2024 at The University of New Mexico Albuquerque School of Architecture and Planning, The University of Virginia School of Architecture, and Toronto Metropolitan University's Creative School (School of Interior Design). The traveling exhibition has several new locations planned for the next few years. A fixed scaled ship model was installed at Royal Museums Greenwich's National Maritime Museum (NMM) in 2024, and full-scale interventions are planned for the Charles Wright African American Museum in Detroit and NMM in 2028 and 2029.

Implementation + Dissemination

The traveling exhibition makes viewers feel as if they have entered the architect's studio, with the work supported by laser-cut text panels. The collective aspects of quilt making are referenced here. A linear table, evoking the width of the ship, and its wood structure, holds all 11 Brookes Voyages for viewers to experience at their own pace. The number of captured ancestors from Africa is etched on support panels that have each voyage, with the ship's structural hull from the *Stowage* drawing laser cut underneath. Feedback from viewers expressed that the horizontal format, familiar in the drawing, shifting into three dimensions, is a powerful experience that helps re-engage with the drawing, as the memory markers' colors, visible in the compression of the ship (with the accurate data), are impossible to ignore.

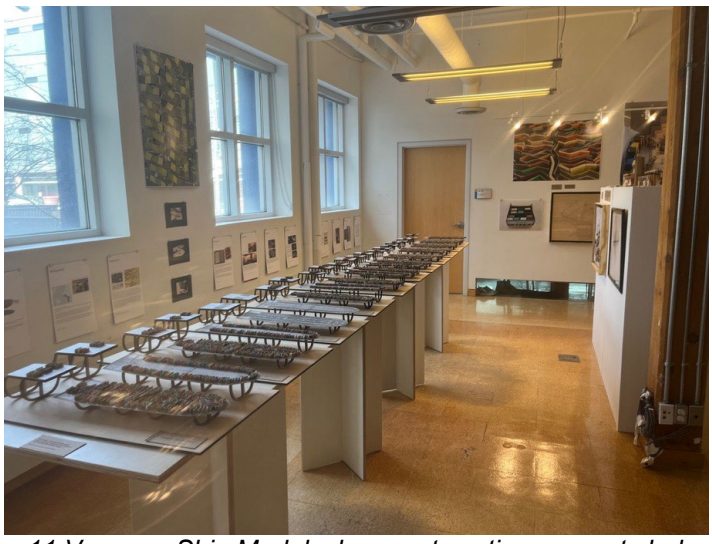

Figure 5. Brookes 11 Voyages Ship Models, laser cut section supports below, with numbers of ancestors shown on etched panels on top of extended viewing table. Context panels aligned on wall behind. Exhibition at Toronto Metropolitan University, The Creative School, School of Interior Design, spring 2025. Photos by the Author.

The cross section provided in the Stowage drawing is built as a volumetric section in a displayed model, allowing for the ship's depth, and the 5'ft – 8" inch height from the lower deck to the top of the upper deck (the ship's main deck) to be _mpathically understood. Peering into this volumetric section allows for shadow to be integrated, and the reality that being in the interior of the ship would be an experience of hours of darkness, rolling with the motion of the sea. Future concepts include a full–scale cross-section placed at diasporic locations, such as Liverpool's waterfront near the International Slavery Museum, and the graving and canning docks where the ship left and returned from its journeys.

Figure 6. Proposed Full- Scale Cross Section Model, Liverpool, UK waterfront. Site and Model photos by the Author.

Drawings are all done by hand, and often are in perspective, an additional technique to increase _mpathy. These drawings allow for one to see the hand of the architect, with the residue of the movement in the drawing evoking the realities of the ship, and with the colors muted as they are in the models. The drawings remove the static and technical sensibility of the *Stowage* drawing, with elements rendered and not rendered, again asking the viewer to imagine what is not seen.

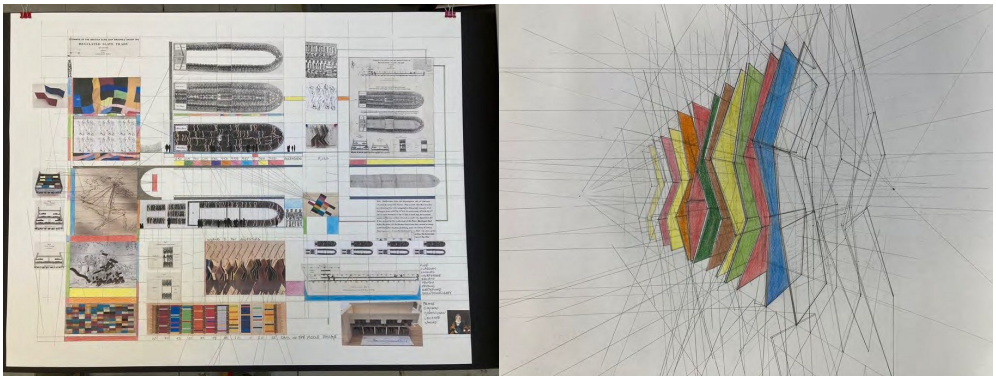

Figure 7. Hand Drawings, Left, Research connections to the Stowage Drawing, Right, Memory Markers Drawing within the Brookes. Photos by the Author.

For a commission with Royal Museums Greenwich, National Maritime Museum, the classic idea of a ship model is recreated with a larger-scale model, deconstructing the architecture rendered in the *Stowage* drawing. The Brookes' Third Voyage is presented along with the plans and section elevations, allowing viewers to compare what was drawn to the model with enlarged scaled memory markers. As the model holds space in the Atlantic Worlds Gallery with the original Brookes drawing, viewers are re-educated. This re-education continues with the work becoming part of the City of London's field trip curriculum, with students responding to provided materials from the museum, as shown in Figure 8.

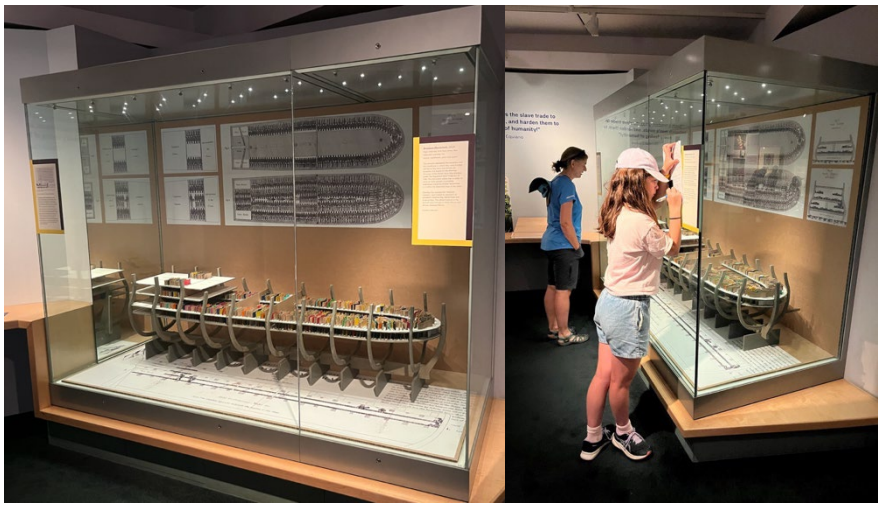

Figure 8. Left, Brookes Ship Model, Third Voyage. Royal Museums Greenwich, National Maritime Museum, Atlantic Worlds Gallery. Right, City of London student using an NMM Educational Resource to document the model. Photos by the Author.

The traveling exhibition will continue the _mpathic design process by allowing the in-progress sense of the work to shift with each community. As shown in Figure 9, the study model for a full-scale section was created by students at the University of New Mexico's School of Architecture and Planning. Innovations such as this are a goal of the work: to allow for direct feedback as the narrative is all of ours. As shown in Figure 10, future goals of the work are to immerse viewers in an architectural experience of the entire ship.

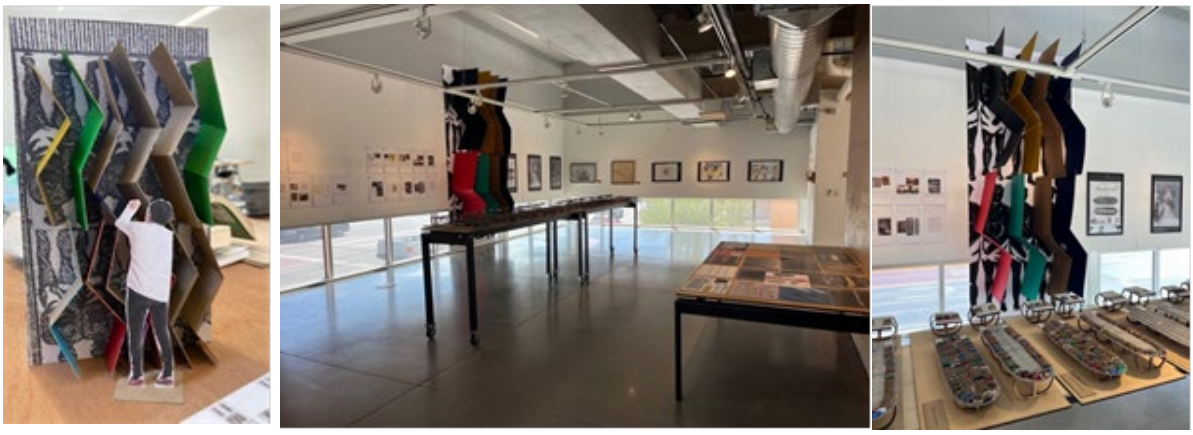

Figure 9. View of the exhibition at the University of New Mexico's School of Architecture. Left, study model of a full-scale section of the drawing with memory markers. On the right, a full-scale section of the drawing/memory markers created with UNM students. Photos by the Author.

Figure 10. Full Scale Interventions of the Brookes Third Voyage (740 ancestors), Left, Upper and Lower Decks, Middle, Lower Deck, Right, Plan. Photos by the Author.

CONCLUSION

Extremely positive feedback, and the continuing opportunities to share the work around the world proves that the project's _mpathic design methodology, melding architecture, art, and history, continues to educate an international public of this vital narrative. Thousands in North America have experienced the work, and with its permanent installation at Royal Museums Greenwich, the work will be seen by over 2.5 million a year.[22] Feedback is consistent that the color, abstraction, and studio-like experience of the work, driven by _mpathic design, tells a more empathic story. Viewers easily connect with the humanity, memory, and diasporic influence of the ship's 5,122 ancestors in a way they never have before.

With the changes in climate regarding sharing fuller narratives in the United States connected to diversity, equity, and inclusion, the project focuses on connecting with organizations committed to presenting a full view of history. Future collaborations are confirmed in the States and Greenwich for a full-scale version of the Men's portion of the Brookes, allowing visitors to understand the scale of the lower and upper decks, contrasting their form with the memory markers.

Feedback from past display locations confirms that the _mpathic design implemented has a transformative impact on diverse audiences of mixed age and backgrounds. The work will continue with the aims of new interpretations that expand the use of _mpathic architectural design techniques to ensure that this narrative continues to be told, and the ancestors are respected.

NOTES

[1] _mpathic design is a multi–award–winning initiative, pedagogy, and design practice directed by architect Elgin Cleckley, NOMA. The missing e symbolizes the removal of ego in the design process, and the underscore symbolizes space. _mpathic design operates in global contexts, with its methodology detailed in a book, "Empathic Design: Perspectives on Creating Inclusive Spaces (Island Press)." The author of this paper is the architect of Brookes (Revisited)

[2] This fact of misspelling was discovered by the architect on site while researching in Liverpool, also living for over a week at the site of the Brooks former house, which is located at Brooks Alley in central Liverpool. The Brooks family was part of Liverpool's Slave Trading elite. Felix Quarcoo, "Guest Blog: The Sinister History Behind Liverpool's Buildings & Monuments – Independent Liverpool," n.d., accessed July 29, 2025, https://independent-liverpool.co.uk/blog/guest-blog-the-sinister-history-behind-liverpools-buildings-monuments/.

[3] "Print of the Slave Ship Brookes | The American Yawp Reader," n.d., accessed July 29, 2025, https://www.americanyawp.com/reader/slave-ship-brookes/.

[4] "Description of a Slave Ship, c.1788. Understanding Slavery Initiative," accessed August 6, 2025, https://understandingslavery.com/artefact/description-of-a-slave-ship-about-1788/.

[5] Marcus Wood, Blind Memory: Visual Representations of Slavery in England and America (New York, NY: Routledge, 2000),17.

[6] "Atlantic Worlds Gallery at the National Maritime Museum," accessed August 6, 2025, https://www.rmg.co.uk/national-maritime-museum/attractions/atlantic-worlds-gallery.

[7] "The Slave Ship 'Brooks' | Royal Museums Greenwich." Accessed July 29, 2025. https://www.rmg.co.uk/collections/objects/rmgc-object-254938.

[8] This passage is also from a first-person account, seeing the "Brookes" drawing in person, by the artist / architect during the collaboration with Royal Museuns Greenwich, National Maritime Museum.

[9] Robert Stephenson, "Brookes Ship," Hull Museums and Galleries, UK, accessed August 6, 2025, https://www.hullmuseums.co.uk/homepage/141/brookes-ship.

[10] Wood, Blind Memory, 32.

[11] Printed Ephemera Collection (Library of Congress) DLC, "Stowage of the British Slave Ship 'Brookes' under the Regulated Slave Trade Act of 1788," still image, 1788, British, https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/98504459/.

[12] The author / architect has visited Gadsen's Wharf, the location of the International African American Museum by Pei Cobb Freed and Moody Nolan Architects, where a work by Walter Hood Associates uses the Brookes image of ancestors where the Wharf once existed.

[13] Karla McLaren, The Art of Empathy: A Complete Guide to Life's Most Essential Skill (Boulder, Colorado: Sounds True, Inc, 2013), 4, ix.

[14] Kaleena Sales, ed., Centered: People and Ideas Diversifying Design, First edition (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2023).

[15] "Voyage Information," accessed August 6, 2025, https://www.slavevoyages.org/voyage/80666/variables.

[16] Printed Ephemera Collection (Library of Congress) DLC, "Stowage of the British Slave Ship 'Brookes' under the Regulated Slave Trade Act of 1788," still image, 1788, British, https://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/cph.3a44236.

[17]Dr. Jane Webster, "Underwater Archaeology: Slave Ships and the Slave Trade." Paper presented at Newcastle University Archaeology Schools, Date not provided on digital materials.

[18] "The Brookes - Visualising the Transatlantic Slave Trade." Accessed August 6, 2025. https://archives.history.ac.uk/1807commemorated/exhibitions/museums/brookes.html.

[19] Brookes (Revisited) was supported by design residencies at MacDowell, Anderson Center at Tower View, Loghaven, Art Omi, and Good Hart. The work was tested for feedback from participating artists, as well as public studio open houses to a diverse audience.

[20] The artist / architect worked in the same studio as Howardena Pindell at MacDowell.

[21] Howardena Pindell et al., eds., Howardena Pindell: What Remains to Be Seen (Chicago, IL: Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, 2018), 143.

[22] "National Maritime Museum | Visit Royal Museums Greenwich," accessed August 6, 2025, https://www.rmg.co.uk/national-maritime-museum.

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IMPERIAL SHADOWS: ADDRESSING INDIGENOUS EXCLUSION IN LONDON'S MEMORYSCAPE

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INTRODUCTION

In 1906, a photograph was taken outside Euston Station of four Indigenous men from British Columbia, Canada [figure 1]. Author Thrush discusses this image in his analysis of London's hidden Indigenous histories[1] but overlooks a crucial detail: it was taken just steps from where the celebratory statue of Matthew Flinders, a settler colonial figure famous for naming Australia, currently sits [figure 2].[2] Erected in 2014, prior to Thrush's exploration, the statue actively prioritizes imperial narratives and, as Thrush argues, helps obscure the historical presence of these Indigenous travellers.

Figure 1. (left): Statue of Matthew Flinders outside Euston Station. (by author)
Figure 2. (right): Four travellers outside Euston Station 1906. (Source: London Daily News 1906)[3]

Histories as told through landscapes shape a city's cultural and collective memory, creating its memoryscape—a landscape that evokes memory and tells the story of a place and its people.[4] Unlike individual monuments, a memoryscape reflects a broader historical and cultural context. London itself functions as one, expressing a complex identity through monuments, memorials, and architecture that uphold Britain's imperial legacy. This simultaneously overshadows marginalized accounts of those who suffered under British settler colonial expansion, including the Indigenous peoples of Canada, whose stolen wealth and resources, along with other colonized peoples, paradoxically enabled the architectural grandeur celebrated in the cityscape. London's memoryscape notably omits the

contentious attributes of its settler colonial past, erasing difficult histories and perpetuating selective remembrance in the former imperial centre—reinforcing a historical amnesia that impedes decolonization and reconciliation.

This research combines site visits, photography, and critical analysis of memorials in London and elsewhere, to examine the persistence of colonial narratives in the metropole's landscape, the absence of Indigenous memory, specifically the Indigenous Peoples of Canada, in the city's memoryscape, and considers alternative methods to support decolonial memorial interventions.

IMPERIAL LONDON

Rooted in notions of racial superiority and civilizing missions, British imperialism justified the expansion, exploitation, and control of settler colonies like Canada, and their Indigenous populations.[5] By the late 19th century, imperial ideologies had quietly shaped London's public consciousness and landscape—a legacy that, as Jacobs notes, still upholds narratives glorifying empire.[6] As Young argues, these forms of commemoration "concretize particular historical interpretations" often at the expense of acknowledging the injustices and underpinning imperial rule.[7]

Exploring Canada Through London's Landscapes

The Victoria Memorial is a stark example of such a monument. Unveiled in 1911, it was the first enhancement to London's urban fabric to celebrate the achievements of the Empire.[8] Funded largely by colonial contributions—Canada the largest[9]—the memorial celebrates Queen Victoria, while materially affirming Britain's imperial glory. Opposite to the memorial stands Canada Gate, a gift adorned with royal insignia and each colonial provinces' coat of arms, hereby reinforcing a version of Canada defined entirely through its relationship to Britain, omitting all Indigenous presence [figure 3].[10] Contrastingly yet still steeped in overwhelming imperial undertones, the facade of the former Hudson Bay House, built in 1926, does physically showcase 'Indigenous' elements within the metropole's landscape, however, their characterization is filtered through appropriative colonial perspectives. The stylized "North American" carvings meant to suggest ties to Indigenous communities, but set within a neoclassical facade, romanticize and distort the relationship—obscuring the Hudson's Bay Company's role in Indigenous displacement and colonial exploitation [figure 4].[11]

Figure 3. (left): Canada Gate featuring provincial coats of arms across from the Victoria Memorial and Buckingham Palace. (by author)

Figure 4. (right): "North American" motifs on the façade of Hudson Bay House. (by author)

Across London, Canada and other former colonies are continually represented through these imperial frames—whether in monuments, like the Canada War Memorial, or developments like Canada Water, to more general colonial figures like Cook, Clive, and Flinders that stand proud and uncontextualized

within the landscape. These sites reproduce a memoryscape where colonial formation is celebrated, and the histories of the colonized remain conspicuously absent or appropriated.

Challenging Imperial London

In recent years, London's monuments—once celebrated as symbols of imperial pride—have faced growing criticism. In line with this shift, some initiatives have sought to challenge dominant narratives. The National Windrush Monument, despite criticisms, brought attention to the overlooked histories of Caribbean migrants and sparked broader conversations about racial identity in Britain.[12] Similarly, explanatory plaques added to statues of Sir Robert Clayton and Thomas Guy provide important context about their links to slavery, reshaping their stories within the city. However, not all efforts have succeeded. The removal of the Robert Milligan statue in 2020,[13] initially seen as a step toward reckoning, remains unfinished. Its empty plinth and plaque remain outside the Museum of London Docklands, now partially hidden behind tape and plastic, lacking any explanation or interpretation. As James Young argues, monuments are most meaningful when they provoke dialogue rather than simply doing the "memory-work" for viewers.[14] As such like the dialogue inspired by the aforementioned decolonial monuments, this site fails to confront Milligan's legacy or fully address the violence behind it, limiting the impact and subsequent dialogue that may stem from this symbolic gesture [figure 5].

Figure 5. Plinth of the removed statue of Robert Milligan covered in plastic and tape on one side. (by author)

Yet, these interventions, regardless of their outcomes, signify a growing willingness to challenge inherited narratives and open public spaces to contestation. For instance, the Mayor of London's Commission for Diversity in the Public Realm (CDPR) has funded over seventy projects to diversify London's landscape[15], however none engage with Indigenous Peoples' histories, including those of the Indigenous Peoples of Canada—despite Canada's Commonwealth status and the Indigenous presence in the metropole. While recent initiatives have expanded decolonial representation—primarily through memorials to Black and Asian Britons and figures linked to the Trans-Atlantic slave trade—Indigenous histories and the settler colonial structures underpinning the British Empire remain largely excluded from this shift.

Indigenous London

Overarchingly, Indigenous figures are rarely commemorated in London. Their presence only appears not in monuments but in graves—often unmarked, peripheral, or belatedly acknowledged. Unlike statues that assert identity or invite dialogue, graves honour individual loss, not collective lives or belonging. Their memorial function is mourning, not celebration.

The graves of Bripumyarramin and Mahomet Weyonomon offer a striking example of this. Bripumyarramin, a member of the 1868 Indigenous cricket team representing colonial Australia, died shortly after arriving in London. His grave remained unmarked until 1988, when a plaque was placed in Meath Gardens Park in commemoration [figure 6].[16] The site has since been neglected: the original dedicated tree died from lack of care, its replacement stands vandalized, and the plaque has sunk into the ground, making it nearly invisible. A 2018 interpretative sign added nearby focuses on cricket—framing his story almost solely through the colonial sport—rather than his Indigenous identity or the broader injustices faced by the Indigenous Peoples of Australia at the hands of the British, including during these Imperial cricket tours.

Similarly, Mahomet Weyonomon, a Mohegan Chief who died in London in 1736 while petitioning King George II to address his tribe's land theft, was buried outside the City walls, in what is now the courtyard of Southwark Cathedral [figure 7]. His fragmented memorial, comprising a boulder, faded plaque, and separate interpretive sign beside, which awkwardly admits to settler wrongdoing but remains peripheral covered in overgrown shrubs, and struggles to convey a coherent narrative. Moreover, the formal ceremony unveiling this memorial in 2006, led by Mohegan Tribe members, and attended by the British monarch and other local officials, became more spectacle than meaningful remembrance.[17] While Mohegan representatives conducted a traditional smudge blessing before Queen Elizabeth II, the ceremony was steeped in colonial overtones—emphasizing U.S.–U.K. relations over Mohegan sovereignty, and invoking unity "under one God".[18] What began as an Indigenous-led tribute became a public performance with royalty and schoolchildren, trivialized further by UK media headlines like "Wigwam Ma'am".[19] Rather than provoking dialogue, the ceremony reinforced imperialist narratives under the guise of reconciliation.

Figure 6 (left): Bripumyarramin's grave in Meath Gardens Park, London. (by author)
Figure 7 (right): Mahomet Weyonomon's grave in Southwark Cathedral's courtyard. (by author)

Both sites, including their ongoing treatments and reactions, highlight how Indigenous histories in London remain marginalized. These sites register absence rather than belonging or acknowledgement and their peripheral status underscores Britain's ongoing difficulty in reckoning with its settler colonial past within London's commemorative landscape.

RETHINKING IMPERIAL REMEMBRANCE

This treatment points to a broader challenge within London's memoryscape: the need not only to recognize Indigenous histories in a celebratory manner, but to actively centre them in ways that foster understanding, dialogue, and a genuine reckoning with the legacies of Empire. Addressing these profound gaps requires a deliberate and thoughtful reconsideration of how Indigenous histories and presences are memorialized in the city—moving beyond superficial gestures toward memorials and practices that meaningfully honour the complexity, resilience, and ongoing contributions of Indigenous peoples. Such a shift invites reflection on the purpose and impact of Indigenous commemoration in a metropolitan setting: What role should these memorials play? Who stands to benefit? And what outcomes should they ultimately seek to achieve?

Unangax̂ author Tuck and scholar Yang assert that decolonization "is not a metaphor," but demands the actual repatriation of Indigenous land and life on settler colonial land[20]—posing unique challenges in metropolitan contexts like London, which Thrush identifies as also a site of colonialism.[21] While physical land repatriation may be unfeasible in London, Dakota scholar Waziyatawin argues that truth-telling is a necessary foundation for decolonization and any possibilities of repatriation.[22] Cree writer McLeod expands on this, emphasizing that public recognition—particularly in Britain—of colonial violence against Indigenous peoples of Canada is essential to reconciliation. He calls for a UK initiative to educate the British public on these atrocities and critiques Queen Elizabeth II—who reigned during the height of Canada's Indian Residential School system—for failing to acknowledge Britain's colonial legacy and complicity in what is widely regarded as cultural genocide.[23] For McLeod, such awareness is vital to understanding the need for reparations, also aligning with the ultimate goal of decolonization outlined by Tuck and Yang.

Understanding how truth-telling and decolonial aims might be realized in commemorative practice requires examining how different societies confront difficult histories. Memorial strategies vary some made for education or centre survivor testimony, others preserve atrocity sites as living evidence, while counter-monuments and participatory projects reject fixed narratives and invite public engagement. These diverse approaches provide a useful framework for thinking about how memory is shaped in the landscape, offering insight into both the limits of existing practices and possibilities for future interventions.

A Perpetrator Led Monument

The Monument to the Murdered Jews of Europe (MMJE) in Berlin offers a compelling example of how a former perpetrator state can embed truth-telling within its commemorative landscape. Designed by Germans, the MMJE seeks to educate the public and confront national responsibility for the Holocaust.[24] Although critiqued for emphasizing German national guilt over survivor testimony,[25] it attracts over half a million visitors annually,[26] standing as a powerful memorial integrated into the city's core, dedicated to education and reckoning with genocide. London's memoryscape offers few such opportunities for engagement with the British Empire's role in displacing and culturally erasing Indigenous communities. Instead, it continues to sustain celebratory imperial narratives, including those examined earlier. However, the MMJE or any other perpetrator led monument, cannot be transplanted wholesale into the British context, largely due to its lack of survivor input. As Tuck and Yang caution, symbolic gestures that do not centre Indigenous desires risk reinforcing paternalistic narratives and diverting attention from material reparations.[27] For London, truth-telling must arise not from guilt alone but from dialogue and a willingness to engage Indigenous perspectives. While Berlin offers a model of national self-confrontation, London's commemorative future must chart its own path—one that centres Indigenous participation and fosters sustained dialogue. In doing so, it may

begin to challenge the imperial narratives embedded within its landscape and move toward a more honest memoryscape and British collective memory.

Counter-Monuments in Competing Contexts

However, physically commemorating the Indigenous Peoples of Canada within London requires grappling with a landscape already saturated with imperial symbolism.[28] The challenge is not only what to memorialize, but how—and whether any new monument can truly resist the gravitational pull of London's dominant imperial memoryscape. The ceremony honouring Mahomet Weyonomon, though shaped by Mohegan values and described as a celebration of survival, nonetheless unfolded within imperial structures—a church ceremony framed by British monarchical emphasis in the press.[29] This example highlights the difficulty of breaking free from commemorative norms that continue to centre colonial power, even when Indigenous voices are included.

This tension echoes in Young's analysis of Hamburg's Monument Against Fascism by Jochen Gerz and Esther Shalev-Gerz. As a counter-monument, it rejects the critiqued 'fascist attitude' of traditional memorials' fixed narratives by placing memory's burden on the community and prioritizing participatory remembrance.[30] Designed to evolve rather than remain static, it exemplifies both the possibilities and limits of memorialization.[31] A similar counter-monument in London could challenge dominant colonial narratives by amplifying diverse perspectives on Empire, including those of Indigenous peoples of Canada—especially if grounded in participatory engagement that reflects London's contemporary diversity.

That said, the effectiveness of any counter-monument in London would depend heavily on how it is received by the public. In a society where the understanding of Britain's colonial violence remains limited or ambivalent,[32] such a monument risks being misinterpreted, ignored, or co-opted. Without accompanying educational efforts and critical public discourse, even the most well-intentioned gesture may struggle to fulfil its truth-telling potential. For a counter-monument to succeed, it must be embedded within a broader commitment to confronting imperial history—ideally situated within a landscape that, like the evolving reception of the Milligan monument, encourages reinterpretation rather than static commemoration.

In settler states like Canada, Indigenous-led memorials have offered more meaningful pathways toward truth-telling and reclamation. Cooper-Bolam argues that projects such as the proposed Indian Residential School memorial in Ottawa provide survivors with opportunities for renewal and agency, supporting healing while challenging dominant narratives.[33] Yet in a metropolitan context like London, where the harms of colonialism are geographically and temporally distanced, a joint initiative between Indigenous and non-Indigenous collaborators may be more effective in fostering dialogue. One model for such a project is Official Denial: Trade Value in Progress, a participatory artwork by Anishinaabe artist Jaimie Isaac and Jewish artist Leah Decter. The piece—a reimagined Hudson's Bay Company blanket—incorporates public responses to Prime Minister Stephen Harper's denial of colonial wrongdoing.[34] By engaging both Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants, the work resists closure and opens space for ongoing reflection and relational memory-making. A similar approach in London's landscape could balance Indigenous autonomy with institutional collaboration, ensuring that commemorative practices resist reproducing the colonial structures they seek to critique.

A Case Against Monuments

While monuments or counter-monuments can serve as tools for truth-telling and contribute to a more diverse concretized collective memory in the metropole, their educational efficacy remains contested. Young, drawing on philosopher Nora, critiques monuments for potentially diminishing viewers' sense of memory responsibility[35]—an observation particularly relevant given many Londoners' limited

awareness of atrocities against Indigenous peoples of Canada. Applying Young's critique to London, any new monument risks becoming part of what Siblon terms the city's "monument mania," where memorials proliferate but fail to foster genuine collective engagement or impact memory meaningfully.[36]

To counter this, Young proposes alternative memorial forms to continue to foster memorial dialog such as Yizkor Bikher (memorial books), which function as symbolic tombstones requiring active engagement from readers throughout the landscape.[37] This model suggests that effective remembrance, particularly in a context like London, depends on more interactive and participatory memorial practices rather than static monuments. This approach aligns with the idea of counter-movements however, could exist without a fixed physical site, allowing acts of remembrance to transcend the constraints of a single location and fit fuller into the metropole.[38] A comparable example is the Survivor's flag, created by Indian Residential School survivors of Canada. Rather than being tied to one place, the flag transforms any space where it is displayed into a meaningful site of remembrance, amplifying the survivors' stories and resilience across a broader landscape.[39] Such flexible, participatory memorial practices underscore the potential of active engagement to create more impactful and inclusive forms of commemoration. In a metropolitan setting like London, these strategies hold particular promise for permeating the imperial memoryscape and fostering sustained dialogue about reconciliation.

Ultimately, these examples illustrate that successful commemoration in London must transcend traditional imperial monuments by centring Indigenous perspectives and fostering sustained public engagement. Such approaches are crucial for challenging entrenched imperial narratives and creating a memoryscape that embraces historical complexity and diversity.

CONCLUSION

This research underscores the urgent need to reshape London's memoryscape toward a more inclusive and truthful historical narrative—an essential step in advancing decolonization and reconciliation. Canada's presence in the city remains predominantly framed by imperial and settler colonial narratives that marginalize Indigenous histories. Even where Indigenous figures are recognized, they are often situated within colonial frameworks that do little to contest dominant historical narratives.

Addressing this imbalance requires more diverse, participatory, and truth-telling commemorative strategies that centre Indigenous perspectives and acknowledge the atrocities inflicted on their communities. Reinterpreting existing monuments and introducing new forms of memorialization—rooted in dialogue, education, and engagement—can disrupt colonial narratives and foster a more representative public memory. Contextualizing imperial monuments does not diminish their historical significance; rather, it reframes them to foster a deeper, more inclusive understanding of the shared histories of the former empire, transforming them into catalysts for reflection and connection.

A transformed memoryscape does more than alter physical space; it shifts cultural identity and collective consciousness. By embracing a fuller range of histories, including those of Indigenous peoples of Canada like the four travellers presented by Thrush within the same space as the Flinders memorial, London can model how metropoles might confront colonial legacies and move toward equity, empathy, and restorative justice.

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CALLING ON GHOSTS

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INTRODUCTION

This paper examines Charlottesville's psychogeography as a backdrop for a series of research-based art performances. These performances engage persona and narrative in a monumental landscape. I draw particular attention to the role Thomas Jefferson plays as a symbol of white racial identity in the choreography of conflict.

Background

Guy Dubord describes cities as having "psychogeographical contours, with constant currents, fixed points and vortexes that strongly discourage entry into or exit from certain zones." The psychogeographic choreography is therefore a score, a set of plays and manoeuvres—effort to make connections where they have perhaps been discouraged. We use it to mark the field, set the stage, and explore the terms of engagement in the urban space structured historically by plantation industry, primitive accumulation, and slavery. Psychogeographic choreography maps battle lines on the ground using bodies.

This paper explores practical tools for engaging in conflict over the authority of *memory* (held by those present for the event), the authority of *memorials* (erected soon after or even during the event i.e. street shrines and shout outs), and the authority of *Monuments* (erected a generation later, when perhaps the event is *in danger* of being forgotten).

About two hours south of Washington, D.C., Charlottesville, Virginia, has become synonymous in the mainstream with the Unite the Right rally of August 11th and 12th, 2017. A harbinger of national tensions on the rise, this high-profile assertion of white supremacy shook and still rattles the left-leaning community of this historic college town. The process of taking down Confederate monuments in Charlottesville was so eruptive that it seemed to trigger other violences, specifically, the January 6th, 2021, attack on the capitol building in D.C.

Neo-Nazis, white supremacists, and right-wing para-militia men came together in protest of the removal of monuments to Robert E. Lee, Stonewall Jackson, and fallen confederate soldiers. They marched on University of Virginia's campus and around Charlottesville over the course of two days. Counterprotestors met them. Local clergy and peace activists mobilized. Police stood by. A counter-protester, Heather Heyer was killed, and others were injured.

The reckoning around monuments in Charlottesville was not isolated. Monuments to contested figures were challenged around the world in conjunction with the protests around the killing of George Floyd by police officers in Minneapolis, Minnesota. A link had emerged in collective consciousness between confederate and other slavery-related monuments and the history of racialized policing in the

US. When Black people were considered property, slave catchers, overseers, patrollers were deputized to reclaim ‘lost’ property. The early police state aimed to limit the loss of property through self-emancipation (escape of the enslaved) and mitigate any danger to property holders that would be posed by a slave revolt. The Confederacy was formed to preserve states’ right to enforce this policing.

As an artist in Charlottesville, this history is an ever-present throughline in my visual processing of the landscape. I frequently take dérives in my downtown neighbourhood, past the courthouse, through Emancipation Park (once Lee Park), and to playgrounds with my child. “The methodology of psychogeographical observation is still in its infancy,” Dubord wrote in his 1958, *Theory of the Dérive*. For the white supremacist protestors, the Charlottesville confederate monuments became psychological projections of self and identity. Big bronze Lee and Jackson mounted on their horses, Traveller and Little Sorel respectively, atop a thick hard granite base were manifestations of ‘The Lost Cause’. The term was coined by Edward A. Pollard, an 1849 graduate of the University of Virginia in his 1866 book, *The Lost Cause: A New Southern History of the War of the Confederates*.[1] The Lost Cause recharacterized the origins of the Civil War as a war of northern aggression; a defence against the theft of a way of life in the South. Middle school history teachers would be advised to teach that the Civil War was about states’ rights and not slavery. The Lost Cause was a mythogenesis that emerged decades after the Civil War’s end.

There were Lost Cause monuments planted throughout downtown Charlottesville. Industrialist, Paul Goodloe McIntire, promoted and funded Charlottesville’s ‘City Beautiful Movement,’ establishing several parks, many on former plantations. He commissioned four monuments, including Lee in Lee Park and Jackson’s in Court Square. Towering monuments guarding the courthouse and others public spaces marked them as white.

A plaque in the sidewalk marking the site of Charlottesville’s slave auction was all that recognized human trafficking in the area around the county courthouse. It has since been supplemented by an official state history marker: ‘Sale of Enslaved People in Court Square.’ A paragraph of text includes the fact that “After Thomas Jefferson’s death, thirty-three enslaved people from his Monticello estate were auctioned at the Eagle Hotel in January 1829 to satisfy his debts.” Until just five years ago, there were Confederate monuments feet from this new plaque; the monument to Stonewall Jackson, “Johnny Reb,” and a cannon and statue of cannonballs. The Black community of McKee Row was razed to make the courthouse-adjacent park where Jackson was erected. Crowds gathered for the monument’s dedication in 1924; a Confederate flag waved from the courthouse annex’ window.

Not all the statues were civil war related. Some dealt more broadly with settler colonial narratives. I drive down main street and see the empty plinth from which a Lewis and Clark statue, commissioned by McIntire and designed by Charles Keck (who also designed the Stonewall Jackson Monument), was removed. It also featured Sacagawea crouched at the men’s sides. The plinth was brilliantly repurposed by artist Meesha Goldberg in 2024. To look at the plinth with Goldberg’s figures on it is to regard and revise one's relationship to ‘manifest destiny,’ captivity narratives, ‘cowboys and Indians,’ and even the Disneyfication of ‘the good’ Indian. A statue of George Rogers Clark 'Conqueror of the Northwest’ (commissioned by McIntire) was removed from a UVA-owned triangle of greenway in 2019. It will be replaced by a garden featuring works by Indigenous artists. They have renamed George Rogers Clark elementary school and Venable Elementary, named for Charles Venable, on whose property Lee Park was built.

Unite the Right rallied together people who felt that to lose the monuments would be a personal and political loss. The monument landscape has changed. I can see how someone who sees their whiteness embodied as greatness in the monumentalization of these historical figures, might feel that their ‘greatness’ that is, their ‘history’ is being erased.

Figure 6. Lewis & Clark monument The First View of the Pacific, Charles Keck. 1919

Figure 7. Raised Up & All Embraced, Meesha Goldberg. 2024

Figure 8. Graffiti on lamppost at Court Square, Charlottesville, 2021 (Courtesy of the author)

Interchangeability

Bronze Confederate monuments, especially of Johnny Reb, were largely manufactured in the North. They were virtually interchangeable with stereotypical monuments that would be installed in Connecticut, New York, Philadelphia, and other northern cities in honour of Union dead.[2] I use the word 'stereotype' in the figurative sense and literal sense as the single set of plates for printing a

book. The manufacture of narrative requires the author to get his story in line, carry it with him, get it printed, and spread the word wherever and whenever he has the chance.

"You will not replace us!" "Jews Will not replace us!" "The South Will Rise Again!"–the Unite the Right protestors shouted while circumambulating the Thomas Jefferson statue in front of the Rotunda. The Jefferson statue at the University of Virginia went up in 1910, a generation after the Civil War. Jefferson, and everyone who knew him were long dead. It was a smaller copy of one in Kentucky.

The *Thomas Jefferson Monument* was designed by sculptor Moses Ezekiel. His largest work is the Confederate Memorial at Arlington. The sculpture was removed from Arlington National Cemetery in 2023 but, as of this writing, is slated to return to honour the Confederate soldiers buried at the National Cemetery.[3]

Ezekiel's *Virginia Mourning Her Dead* is a Confederate monument honouring his Virginia Military Institute classmates. Ezekiel was one of two-hundred-and-forty-seven Virginia Military Institute cadets who fought in the Battle of New Market. Sixty boys and men died in the battle. VMI's New Market Day ceremony began in 1887 as a memorial to the Corps of 1864. Their names, which can be found written on the monument around which the ceremony occurs, are called. "Died on the Field of Honor, Sir," someone shouts from the present-day companies of the dead men. Shots are fired.

Born in Richmond, Virginia in 1844 in a racially and ethnically diverse section of the city, Moses Ezekiel's family were early settlers in the Virginia colony thanks to Jefferson's Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom allowance for religious diversity. He fathered a child at thirteen with a mixed-race servant who worked in his family's home. Ezekiel was VMI's first Jewish cadet. Robert E. Lee is said to have suggested Ezekiel become an artist. He lived his post-war years in Rome with a male companion. He flew a confederate flag in his studio where, between throwing parties, he created Jefferson monuments, busts of various figures, and memorials to fallen fellow soldiers. For the Jewish, queer, Confederate, artist, Thomas Jefferson was a hero who might be cast in bronze to watch over and watch out for his rebel sons with a father's protective and possessive gaze.

Ezekiel remembers the Civil War first hand. It is his *memory*. He participates in *memorial*, memorializing his classmates. He crafts *monuments* to pass along and preserve his values. I invoke these moments in the life and work of Moses Ezekial to underscore the terms in which Thomas Jefferson functions as a symbol around which a sense of white racial memory, memorial, and monument revolve and could have become crossed for someone like Moses Ezekiel.

Jefferson remains. And, Johnny Reb, a proverbial standard-bearer for the Confederate Dead remains in the University of Virginia Cemetery and Columbarium where one-thousand-ninety-seven CSA soldiers are buried. UVA's Johnny Reb was designed by Bohemia-born, Caspar Buberl. Buberl also designed a Civil War monument in Buffalo, New York honouring fallen Union soldiers. I see Ezekiel's name in the roster of sculptors who designed part of the Civil War Memorial in my hometown of Philadelphia. The Lee statue was designed by Henry Merwin Shrady, best known for his DC monument to Union General and President, Ulysses S. Grant. Whatever their personal politics, these artists accepted work where they could get it. As a result, their audiences were eclectic.

Inverted Monuments

The University Cemetery also includes an enslaved workers' burial ground, rediscovered in 2012. Alluded to in oral history accounts in the 19th century it had, at some point, been forgotten. Whatever marks had been made to recognize the resting places of loved ones, had faded. There is also, across campus, the Katherine Foster burial site. Marked now by a raised grassy plateau with sunken spots where shafts contained bodies. The 'shadow catcher,' designed by landscape architect Walter Hood, is a three-dimensional steel outline of the house where Foster, a free Black woman, and her family lived

from 1833 to 1906. It was discovered when the history department broke ground on a new building in the 1990s.

I spent a semester at UVA in 2018 doing research and making work as an artist-in-residence. I joined the UVA Faculty in the Department of Art in 2021. Soon after, I was recruited to the UVA president's task force on the digital contextualization of statues and monuments on campus. "The first psychogeographical attractions discovered by dérivers may tend to fixate them around new habitual axes, to which they will constantly be drawn back," Dubord observes. I tried to get a better sense of the extent to which the campus was littered with bodies. I learned about body snatchers and wonder if the illegibility of some burial sites was historical. To defend their loved ones' peaceful rest, could historic Black communities have disguised their graveyards? Should their burial grounds be contextualized if these other monuments are going to be? If so, how?

In the archive, I discovered another burial ground in ruin. The Anatomical Theatre, located west of the Rotunda beyond the chapel, was a burial ground, barely marked. Four, foot-square stones marked its four corners. Two of the stones were buried in the grass and two flush and integrated with the brick pathways that crisscross the campus. An almost indecipherable carved stone marker in the centre of the forty-four by forty-four foot footprint of the disappeared building reads:

Site of Thomas Jefferson's
Anatomical Theatre
1826 to 1939
The first building devoted solely
to medical instruction at the University of Virginia.

Almost directly underneath the plaque is Special Collections, a warren of subterraneous storage areas with reading rooms and galleries. You can browse materials by appointment. Many photos are viewable online, including images of students posing with cadavers outside the Anatomical Theatre, up into the 1920s. A child's corpse is cradled by a grinning young man. When I asked a librarian about the holding, she offered up that in the Victorian era people were more macabre. Memento mori is a tale as old as time, I agreed, and one that squared with the classical revival vibes of the place. These bodies belonged to Black people, however, stolen from graves throughout Virginia. Culpeper, an hour's drive north of Charlottesville is the childhood hometown of my paternal grandmother. Her six-year-old brother died of influenza in 1920. Could *this* have been his body in the Anatomical Theatre photographs from that year onward?

The Useful Corpse

Among other observations in his notes on the state of Virginia, Jefferson describes crumbling the desiccated skull of a Monacan infant in his fingers.[4]For his amateur excavation of a Monacan Indian burial mound on his property, Jefferson is designated the 'father of American archaeology.' Doing more digging in Special Collections, I found the scrapbook of Frederick Pilcher Jr., class of 1926. In his scrapbook, along with wedding invitations and ribbons from various Ribbon Societies, is a newspaper clipping: "Two Human Bodies, Dissected And Cooked, Found in Creek."

County and city police believed they were confronted with one of the most mysterious murder cases in this section of Virginia for years...remains of two humans, hacked and cooked and placed in a lard tin, on the banks of the Swift Creek…They were bodies brought home from the University of Virginia Medical School by Frederic Pilcher Jr. and his cousin, John A Pilcher, Jr. medical students at the university. The students had brought all but the torsos of the bodies home for dissection and study while on vacation. They tried to take all the flesh off by burning them in the tin near Swift Creek, but were…unsuccessful.

Scrapbooked with the article is a snapshot of Pilcher propping up a Black man's cadaver. It is captioned, "Hambone and I". Pilcher's memento shares similarities with photos from Abu Ghraib in which soldiers posed with cadavers.[5]

Figure 9. Frederick Pilcher scrapbook, Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library, University of Virginia Library.

In his *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Jefferson[6] plants a seed of suspicion for generations to come, about the potential for science to reveal fundamental differences between races of people. "I advance it therefore as a suspicion only, that the blacks, whether originally a distinct race, or made distinct by time and circumstances, are inferior to the whites in the endowments both of body and mind. To justify a general conclusion, requires many observations, even where the subject may be submitted to the anatomical knife, to optical glasses, to analysis by fire, or by solvents." At Jefferson's university–'autopsy'–to see for oneself, was a core practice of enlightenment education. Thus, he designed and championed (and, at great expense to Black life) an Anatomical Theatre which would become a burial ground for the ashes of stolen people. Their bodies were used to learn about human anatomy, even as they were considered less than human by white society. The seeds of this grisly work produced a powerful eugenics movement in Virginia. The Anatomical Theatre is the only Jefferson-designed building to have been dismantled. While eugenics is largely considered a racist pseudoscience today, it can still be detected in much the same way the Theatre itself can, by evidence of burial (underground and in archives) and where traces of the original remain.

Memory Vessels

In West African funerary traditions that survived the Middle Passage, a memory vessel is a jar or pot adorned with objects belonging to the deceased. It commemorates the dead while holding water for their journey to the afterlife. An 1850 image of John Hartwell Cocke (1780 –1866) peers out from the archive. A wizened old white man in a daguerreotype, Cocke's life spanned a pivotal era in the country. His, seems among the oldest photographic images in Special Collections. Cocke was friends with the aging Jefferson in the final decades of his life.

Similarly, the Delevan Church spans a pivotal era. The brick building on West Main Street in Charlottesville is a monument to the passage of all things in time. A hotel, called the Mudwall or Delevan Hotel[7] used to stand on the site, student housing before the Civil War. The building became a Confederate hospital. Abraham Lincoln had just passed the Emancipation Proclamation when Black

residents petitioned the city for their own church. They had been sitting in the balcony of the white, First Baptist Church for decades. They bought the shuttered Confederate hospital. It was knocked down in 1876 and the First Coloured Baptist Church of Charlottesville opened in 1884. Black people were gaining power and representation in the United States. Over the next thirty years, Confederate monuments sprung up in Charlottesville's Black community's back yard, marking the end of Reconstruction. If confederate monuments were the embodiment of Black Laws, Jim Crow laws, armed militias, and the KKK, the First Coloured Baptist Church was a monument to entrepreneurs, educators, and folks just getting used to being free.

"It is here that the study of maps comes in," Dubord reminds us. "Ordinary ones as well as ecological and psychogeographical ones — along with their correction and improvement." Sanborn maps are another favoured artifact through which one can see the effects of time on space. These insurance maps, created periodically between 1886 and 1937, capture Main Street, the train station, churches, shops, houses, and the University's early years. We see the Rotunda, the Pavilions and Lawn Rooms, The Anatomical Theatre followed by the Anatomical Laboratory, and the hospital much later. The fraternity houses are everywhere, from very early on. There was never enough housing for the students. In Sanborn maps you can see the erasure of Black neighbourhoods: Vinegar Hill, Gospel Hill, and Katherine Foster's 'Canada' to make way for the University's expansion. We have John Hartwell Cocke to thank for the steep increase in enrolment. Cocke started a Christian preparatory school in Amelia County that fed UVA. Thomas Jefferson appointed Cocke to the University's Board of Visitors. Cocke managed the buying and rental of enslaved workers to construct and maintain The Grounds.

The Rotunda is at the heart of the Academical Village that Jefferson designed in the 1830s, on land sold to him by James Monroe. A Greek Revival palace on a hill: "An academical village, instead of a large & common den of noise, of filth, & of fetid air."[8] Jefferson modelled The Rotunda after Andrea Palladio's Villa La Rotonda, and the academic village after Monticello, five miles southeast as the crow flies from the school. To build *his* plantation, Cocke used the same Irish builder that Jefferson used for Monticello. Their plantations were meant to operate as self-sustaining homesteads. They were deeply networked, however, through extended families, enslaved, free, and indentured living in Charlottesville and beyond. There were schools, gathering spaces, churches (fifty years later, a synagogue), civic buildings, bars, and businesses. By 1830, this downtown was physically and psychically squeezed between the two elevated psychogeographies. Together these non-contiguous sites, the University and Monticello, share a UNESCO World Heritage Site designation.

The design of the Academical Village, meant to be open, yielding gently in the south to vistas of distant hills, was enclosed in 1898 by Cabell Hall, built to obscure a view of Kitty Foster's Black community. The effect, activist Angela Y. Davis observed in 2009[9], was both palatial and carceral. Ultimately, UVA students produced their own "noise,' 'filth,' and 'fetid air.' "It was in the conflicts between the students and the recently emancipated negros that the most turbulence of action was displayed," describes Philip Alexander Bruce in *History of the University of Virginia, 1819-1919.* "In March, 1869, a prominent collegian was summoned for court for beating a freedman who had been insolent to him; and three years afterwards, there was a sudden interruption of a negro ball by the young men, in which numerous pistols were fired off, and a forest of sticks wildly flourished,--the commotion ending, as was probably designed, in the hasty dispersion of the sable pleasure-seekers."[10]

In the late 1800s, before DNA testing led contemporary historians to revisit what had been dismissed as Black folklore, John Hartwell Cocke wrote candidly in his diary about his friend Jefferson's 'slave mistress.' It was to this 'slave mistress,' Sally Hemings, the mother of four of Thomas Jefferson's children who lived to adulthood, I was initially drawn. I staged performances, choreographies as Hemings in psychogeographic locations throughout the art world. The real Sally Hemings lived at

Monticello and in downtown Charlottesville after being ‘given her time.’ Her burial site is unknown. Between 2013 and 2017, I made performance works, installation, and video inspired by the persona.

Figure 10. Police State Image from 2024 student protest and state police occupation (Courtesy of the author)

Bag Lady

“One can dérive alone, but all indications are that the most fruitful numerical arrangement consists of several small groups of two or three people who have reached the same level of awareness, since cross-checking these different groups’ impressions makes it possible to arrive at more objective conclusions. It is preferable for the composition of these groups to change from one dérive to another”

– Guy Dubord

I first ran the ‘Bag Lady’ class in the fall of 2021 after returning from maternity leave. It was conceived as an interdisciplinary art course focused on embodying the archive. The first cohort made an unbound course textbook of activities, topics, readings with no fixed order. A recurrent theme has been, ‘go bags’: material and intellectual prep and protection for possible emergency scenarios. A perennial voice is that of poet, audre lorde: “The master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house,”[11] she warns us. The 2023 cohort read Jia Tolentino’s *We Come from Old Virginia.* An essay about sexual assault and the complex blend of myth, fact, racial and sexual violence that undergird UVA culture in relation to it. A student shared Hunter Schafer’s online posting–an infographic sketch titled: ‘to be consumed.’ An excerpt reads “To never know a world without misogyny is to never know yourself without it [misogyny] as we are all mirrors.” For Schafer (a trans woman), the master's house is gender, his tool: misogyny. We wondered how we were seeing ourselves through it, reflecting it, eating it up unconsciously. Tolentino’s essay also introduced us to the ‘unreliable narrator.’ If you have a true story to tell, what strategies might you tap into to be believed? Who is your audience? What is their idea of a ‘perfect victim’? We made ours ‘The Man.’ We staged a dissection of an edible effigy of Thomas Jefferson near the site of the Anatomical Theatre. The *Theater of the Anatomical Theatre* was a short performance and installation artwork in which we three, in historical and gender drag, consumed, regurgitated, and examined the legacy of Jefferson as represented by his body. As part of my monuments committee work, I taught a seven-week course to thirty-six, first-year students in the fall of 2023. I asked them to add to the cast of characters. Characters could be drawn from research and the student’s personal histories, interests, and ideology. It was challenging, in part, because it was so ambitious and new for *everyone*, and because

experimental collaborative work requires trust–which only moves so fast. I had time afterward to reflect and work on the project while on sabbatical.
I made a connection between Moses Ezekiel and Oscar Wilde, a surprising confederate sympathizer a student had brought to the table. A student was drawn to Rachel Berry, a character from the cursed TV show, *Glee*, for some of the same reasons I had been drawn to Monica Lewinsky in my past work. I mashed up these messy women. Medusa, like the many-headed Hydra,[12] opposed colonizing forces. we find her affixed to Athena's shield; a stone-making tool. A student forwarded me a New York Times profile[13] of an enslaved man who was tortured by a white doctor to see how his Black skin and body responded to pain. Thus, Black John Brown was added to the trio of John Browns. The classroom experience was hard to assess, but one student, Reuben Spencer really seemed to enjoy it. Reuben is an expert on Aaron Burr. He joined the Spring 2025 Bag Lady cohort.

Rest/Unrest

The Bag Lady cohort of spring 2025 got oriented, built trust, and learned about the UVA by way of the textbook-bag. “The spatial field of a dérive may be precisely delimited or vague, depending on whether the goal is to study a terrain or to emotionally disorient oneself,” we were reminded. The group was interested in something spiritual and beautiful, involving ritual scattering, burial, and burning. “It should not be forgotten that these two aspects of dérives overlap in so many ways that it is impossible to isolate one of them in a pure state.” There was consensus around crafting something grounding, worth pilgrimaging to and around. After a dérive on campus, we decided to propose a new memorial monument for the Anatomical Theatre veiled as a performance tour. How do you smuggle a particular experience into this world that can continue and develop? How do you use dérive to discover ‘exits’ and ‘defences?’

Figure 11. Stills from Rest/Unrest Performance 2025. Photos by Adele Park

The first psychogeographic choreography to emerge was in a secret garden. Practical tools would be laid out here. Students, Daisy and Luke, teamed up on a milkweed and monarch dissection. The butterfly consumes the caterpillar’s lifeblood to increase its own toxicity for self-defence. Daisy observed that it seems cruel as a living thing to cannibalize one's own offspring. But maybe this is a valuable metaphor, she wrote: “taking the elements of what people have built up, laid down, taught, studied–and consuming in order to arm ourselves.” Luke was interested in the useful corpse. He cited AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (known as ACT UP) activists’1992 staged a die-in on the lawn in front of the Capitol building in Washington, DC. Consequently, after hunting for milkweed and participating in a printmaker’s interpretation of a monarch dissection, we moved from the garden to the Whispering Wall for a die-in.
“Frank Hume, to whom the Whispering Wall at UVA was dedicated, was born in Culpeper in 1843.” Thus began a countdown-like reading of events and their dates. “April 12th, 1861, the U.S. Civil War

begins. Virginia secedes on April 17th. Frank Hume enlists on July 2nd, fighting with the Volunteer Southrons in the Confederate Army. In May his brother, Major Charles C. Hume dies ‘a Brave Young Hero in the Army of Northern Virginia’”

Figure 12. Stills from Rest/Unrest Performance 2025. Photos by Jolinna Li and Adele Park

Figure 13. Still from Rest/Unrest Performance 2025. Photo by Jolinna Li

Like John Haskell Cocke’s, a timeline of Hume’s life and work, keeps time for a white supremacist battle march. Hume receives a thigh wound at the Battle of Gettysburg in 1863. John Hartwell Cocke loses his son, Phillip St. George, a brigadier general in the Confederate Army, to suicide by gunshot wound to the head.

Non-verbally, we invited the audience to participate in the die-in at the Frank Hume Whispering Wall. “In 1865, the Civil War ends. In 1889, Frank Hume serves his first term in the Virginia House of Delegates.” In 1891, Hume sells his Arlington, Virginia property to the county for $250 for the creation of a public school. In 1900, Hume concludes his second term in the Virginia House of Delegates. That same year, Virginia enacts its first Jim Crow law, mandating railcars separated by race.

Performers dropped to the ground. We took inspiration from artist Valie Export’s Body Configurations (1972-1976). Now it is 1902. “The Virginia state Constitution disfranchises ninety percent of African Americans through poll taxes and literacy tests. The state calls for the segregation of schools.”

We traced the fallen bodies in chalk, but with each ‘tick’ of the clock the bodies reanimate and relocate. “Frank Hume dies on July 17th, 1906. In 1910 UVa erects its statue of Thomas Jefferson north of the Rotunda. In 1912, residential segregation is mandated by the Virginia Constitution. In 1914, Albemarle County Board of Supervisors clears Black landowners from the McKee Row neighborhood of Charlottesville. A Stonewall Jackson monument is erected there in 1921. The Robert E. Lee statue is dedicated during a reunion of Confederate veterans in 1924. The Whispering Wall is erected in 1938. The wall reads: ‘A memorial to the honorable Frank Hume — a devoted Virginian who served his native state in Civil War and Legislative Hall.’”

Hume was a wholesale grocer in Washington. Bottles of Hume’s line of whiskies— “for the sickroom or the sideboard” —are collected today. He had nine children. Two, attend UVA and funded the memorial to their father who otherwise, had no affiliation with the University. Following the 1954 Supreme Court's Brown v. Board of Education decision, white Southerners engaged in a Mass Resistance to desegregation. They closed schools, enacted laws, and resort to violence against African Americans to block desegregation. In 1958, The Hume School is closed. In 1960 the building is deeded to the Arlington Historical Society. In 2022, The Hume memorial’s engraved stones were replaced with plain stone at the recommendation of the UVA Naming and Memorials Committee and student activists.

We continued to Shannon Library (Formerly named ‘Alderman,’ for the university president who promoted eugenics research and now named for the president under whom women were admitted as undergrads and from whom a multiracial coalition of student and workers demanded and were granted equal rights). In the government documents reading room participants found and assembled the ‘repurposed bricks’[14] of the Anatomical Theatre along with more devastating facts.

In 1778, Jefferson proposed a law calling for the bodies of executed traitors and certain murderers “to be delivered to the anatomics to be dissected.”[15] The black market in stolen cadavers would thrive until at least 1884 when Virginia legalized making bodies available for medical study.[16] The two-story, forty-four-foot square building had skylights to illuminate the octagonal surgical theatre. There were tiered seats for observation. The second floor housed a museum of specimens. In the basement was a charnel for the storage, preparation, boiling, and incineration of cadavers. Enslaved women cleaned the theatre after classes.[17] Anatomical Lewis was an enslaved man whose owner was paid one-hundred dollars a year for him to process and prepare cadavers for dissection. Bodies arrived in barrels. Other enslaved men had done the job before him, all ostracized by the community for their perceived and perhaps actual role in sources bodies for dissection. After the Civil War, the job fell to free Black men including, the record shows, Fossett and Frank. In 1997 the site was excavated by archaeologists. They found bones from a hand, foot, forearm, and ribs. The existing plaque was installed at this time. Before leaving the library, we wrote postcards to people we felt needed to know what we knew.

My students and I had created a twenty-five-by-twenty-five-foot painting on a canvas tarp; a map and gameboard featuring the four sites we visited as four quadrants of play. We designed this to lie on top of the Anatomical Theatre site, with a square opening in the centre for the current stone plaque. To this map, boardgame, and provisional monument we now returned. We traced a body onto the board. We scattered milkweed. We make offerings. What did we want to leave behind moving forward? We let these sentiments go in an origami sailing ship, back to wherever we could not follow. The performance was breaking open with exhaustion. We flipped over the giant tarp revealing the sprawling garden we had painted on the underside. We made a big, fragile, clumsy tent. And, under the cover of the tent, we planted sunflower seeds—which are known to purify contaminated soil.

Figure 14. The Anatomical Theatre and Alderman Library ca. 1929-1940. Francis L. Berkeley, Jr. Charlottesville and the University of Virginia, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Va.

Call and Response

We propose a garden of healing plants at the site of the Anatomical Theatre, a re-marking of the low stone marker. It should include a new framing of the existing historical plaque. Decrypt the crypt. Explicitly mark and de-code the context in which the Anatomical Theatre operated, did harm, and to whom. We demand support from the UVA Medical School and library where the offending images are housed. We need benches and places to rest, to encourage loitering. There should be trees, a drinking fountain, and a water feature. ‘Come here to connect’ it should say when the community sees it—a sentiment very few sites on campus convey. There should be information and ways for people to get involved. The school can do right and do better by the victims of the Anatomical Theatre and their descendants. The Anatomical Theatre Garden Monument could be a gathering place, a haunted shelter in which we score a choreography of conflict that helps us work through stubborn inner violences with courage and outer violences with truth. Audiences, welcome. This garden could serve as a memory vessel for anyone. Here, like Hume’s tomb, Cocke’s visage, the First Coloured Baptist Church, and Sanborn maps, a person can sit and be studied--can sit and study the self. Meditating on anything. what am I a vessel for? What can I hold? Information. People and institutions accountable for harm.

In the choreography of conflict Lee, Jackson, McIntire, Hume, Ezekiel, Buberl, Shrady, Keck, Cocke are proxies: people doing Jefferson’s work. And Jefferson, in his manufacture of state, was doing work for them. In 1817, an aging Jefferson delegated the task of resolving the legal issues with polish general Tadeusz Kościuszko’s will to John Haskell Cocke. Kościuszko had willed his US Army pension to Jefferson with whom he was friends with the express purpose that this money be used to

buy the freedom of Jefferson's slaves. Kościuszko, unfortunately, had several wills. Knowing that Cocke was theoretically opposed to slavery while being, like himself, a lifelong and serious practitioner of it, Jefferson gave Cocke the legal and fiscal management of the case. The case was tied up in the courts until 1856. After hearing the case three times the US Supreme Court granted the pension to Kościuszko's Polish family members.

Jefferson was an architect of palaces and prisons where choreographies of state violence, racial violence, and gender violence have been routinely reenacted. Thomas Jefferson is a symbol of white supremacy. Those who, sustain those efforts today, Jefferson's most loyal fans, will forever remember, memorialize, and monumentalize him as a good white man. But theirs is a dark journey. Their vessels are empty, without substance. This paper examines the role that Jefferson's vision-as-architecture and his body-as-site-consecrator play in keeping alive the staggering undead monster of the Lost Cause, a useful corpse. We had postponed *Rest/Unrest* from earlier in the week because of a gun death on the steps of the Rotunda, self-inflicted. One person's landmark, pitstop, living history, is someone else's suffering, site of grief, shame, withdrawal. It forced us to slow down. Notice how and where collision recurs. Acknowledge the new ghost with whom we cohabited. We reevaluated our performance of 'search and rescue' around what would be a freshly buried history.

"The body archive is an attunement," Julietta Singh writes in *No Archive Will Restore You*. It is "an assembly of history's traces deposited in me." This garden could be a place of broken clocks. For stealing back our time. A backdrop for performances of rest. A place of no master time but many centres upon which the sun casts long shadows, changing seasonally. The body archive is "a hopeful gathering, an act of love against the foreclosures of reason." Singh writes, "It is a way of knowing the body-self as a becoming and unbecoming thing, of scrambling time and matter, of turning toward rather than against oneself. And vitally, it is a way of thinking-feeling the body's unbounded relation to other bodies."

Making this room for myself in my imagination, I walk through the reconstructed Fiske Kimball portico doorway entrance of the Anatomical Theatre Garden Monument at UVA. I am a Bag Lady with tools and vessels, settling her things on a bench. What I want to mirror, I think, massaging my neck and shoulders, mindful of my swollen feet, is timeless, a multitude, timelines. Charlottesville's psychogeography hums around me. My work is informed by the energy and expertise of collaborators. A different type of interchangeability. We are all proxies for those to come. Alone, the work does not get done. What we co-create and perform is a pedagogy inspired by the place that holds us, the archives we find, and the archives we carry forward, what we leave behind. A performance monument can be a powerful storytelling tool and perhaps operate outside the master's house, below the master's radar. Wandering in and looking inward, like the women on Meesha Goldberg's plinth, I reflect on how my body has served me. I see a flower, and am completely absorbed by its colour, radiance, and distinct shape against the dark foliage. I think of nothing else. I am completely myself momentarily; present, self-possessing and alive.

Figure 15. Performance stills from Rest/Unrest, 2025. Photos by Adele Park and Jolinna Li.

NOTES

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REVITALIZING HERITAGE IN DEPOPULATING REGIONS: CHALLENGES IN NORTHERN PORTUGAL

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INTRODUCTION

One of the most pressing contemporary issues in heritage studies is the impact of mass tourism on both tangible and intangible heritage, including monuments, sites, traditional events, and ancestral crafts. Conservation, accessibility, gentrification, the commodification of places and traditions, are some of the key issues faced by heritage managers, local communities, and visitors alike.

This paper shifts focus to address a different but equally important set of challenges affecting heritage: the desertification of territories, population aging, neglect, abandonment, and the loss of cultural transmission. Drawing on data from the northern region of Portugal, where large rural areas are experiencing depopulation, this paper explores the role of heritage in regions grappling with what has been termed the demographic challenge, the erosion of the social fabric that supports heritage, and the consequent decline in its symbolic value.

At a time when people-centred and participatory approaches to heritage are at the forefront of theoretical frameworks, it is crucial to ask: with whom should we engage in these areas? How can we recover or reinvigorate processes of heritage valorization and revitalization?

Initiatives from the north of Portugal, ranging from spontaneous citizen mobilization in associations to contemporary art projects, institutional cultural transmission programs and new management models, will be examined as exploratory cases that can help tackle a difficult and challenging situation.

NORTHERN PORTUGAL – DEMOGRAPHIC AND HERITAGE OVERVIEW

From an administrative point of view, the Northern region of Portugal is organized into eighty-six municipalities and 1,426 parishes. The municipalities are organized into eight intermunicipal entities. Although the country does not have a regional governance structure, there are entities responsible for implementing public policies on the environment, planning and development, education, culture and heritage, and for managing European Union funds for regional development. In Northern Portugal, these responsibilities fall to the Northern Portugal Regional Coordination and Development Commission (CCDRN). The demographic and heritage characterization of this region in this paper is primarily based on strategy documents and reports from this organization and data from the Portuguese National Statistics Institute.

Demography

With a population of around 3,6 million, the North region accounts for almost thirty-five percent of Portugal's total population, making it the country's most populous region. However, population distribution is highly uneven, with the majority concentrated along the coastal area. The interior, which borders the Spanish regions of Galicia to the north and Castile to the east, has been gradually losing population. The Porto Metropolitan Area, located in the coastal strip, accounts for around forty-nine percent of the total population of the North region.

Due to the uneven distribution of the population, the region is dominated by extensive low-density areas – as illustrated in Figure 1. Despite the absence of a legal definition of the concept of low-density, the government has adopted various criteria to guide positive discrimination measures aimed at promoting territorial cohesion and facilitating access to European Union funds. The main factors considered include population density, settlement patterns, accessibility and income levels. Under these criteria, low-density areas are defined as those with fewer than one hundred inhabitants per km² and a per capita GDP of less than seventy-five percent of the national average. Of the eighty-six municipalities in the northern region, only thirty-four do not fall within this definition. These areas are predominantly rural, with low levels of urbanization, "urban areas account for about seventy-four percent of the population but occupy only eleven percent of the land area. Moderately urban areas represent about seventeen per cent of the resident population while predominantly rural areas account for roughly nine percent (...)."[1]

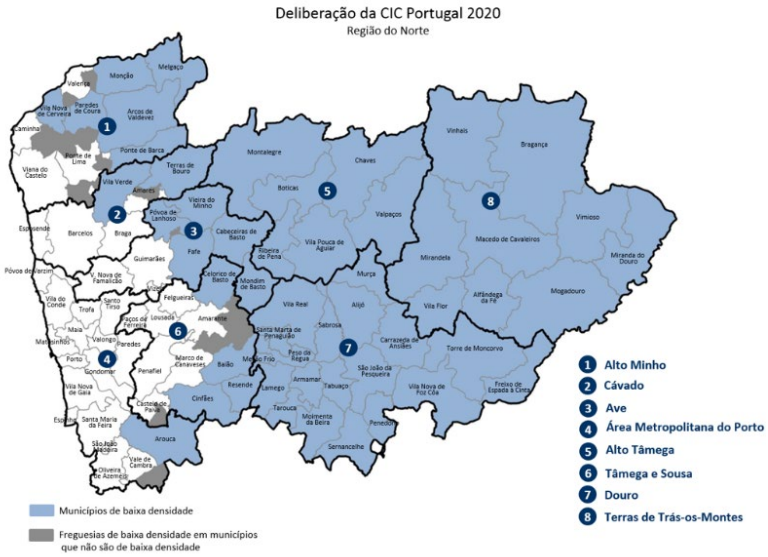

Figure 1. Low-density areas in the Northern Region of Portugal, marked in blue and grey. *Plano de Ação Regional para a Cultura Norte 2030,* CCDRN, 2024, 24.

The distribution of the population, along with the presence of vast, sparsely inhabited areas, poses significant challenges for regional planning and management bodies. Low-density areas face high emigration rates, ageing populations, low levels of entrepreneurship, limited job opportunities, and critically underdeveloped infrastructure and services.[2] The strategic document of the CCDRN highlights the structural trend of ageing and demographic decline, particularly in border and inland areas."[3] Since 2009, the Northern region has experienced continuous population losses. Only eight of the eighty-six municipalities have avoided demographic losses, and all of them are located on the coast.[4] According to 2019 data, the ageing index for the North "stood at 165.8 (compared to 163.2 nationally), ranging from 148.0 in predominantly urban areas to 362.5 in predominantly rural areas."[5]

Heritage

Heritage plays a significant role in the cultural fabric of the northern region, which is home of a large number of classified assets across various categories including monuments, cultural landscapes, archaeological sites, and intangible manifestations.

The region hosts five of the sixteen UNESCO World Heritage Sites, making it the Portuguese region with the largest UNESCO-classified area. These include the Historic Centre of the Cities of Porto and Guimarães, the Prehistoric Rock Art Sites in the Côa Valley, the Alto Douro Wine Region and the Sanctuary of Bom Jesus in Braga.

In terms of national heritage, the Northern region had 1,468 classified cultural properties as of 2023 – the highest number in Portugal. This represents approximately fifty percent of the total number on the mainland and about thirty percent of the national total, including the Azores and Madeira – as shown in Figure 2. Among these, 294 are designated National Monuments, 1,025 as Properties of Public Interest, and 149 as Properties of Municipal Interest.[6]

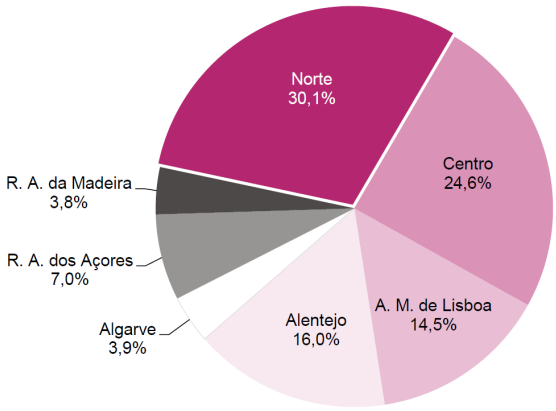

Figure 2. Distribution of immovable cultural heritage in the regions of Portugal. The northern region accounts for 30.1% of classified heritage.
Instituto Nacional de Estatística. *Estatísticas da Cultura: 2022*. INE, 2023, 118.

Of the five hundred Portuguese archaeological sites listed as open to visitors, 145 are located in northern Portugal. The majority of archaeological interventions in the country between 1974 and 2014 took place in this region, resulting in the formation of extensive heritage collections.[7]

Northern Portugal is also home to sixty-nine of the 110 items registered on the national platform dedicated to intangible cultural heritage. Of the forty-four items listed in the National Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage, fifteen are from the north.[8] These encompass a wide range of expressions, including religious manifestations – such as processions, festivals, and solemnities – as well as traditional crafts like ceramic production, shipbuilding and repair, filigree work, and the construction of the *cavaquinho*, along with winter festivities. Currently, seventy national manifestations are under review, fifty-four of which originate from the Northern region. Notably, the Podence Carnival and the manufacturing process of Bisalhães black pottery are included in UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Several studies indicate that low-density areas possess historical, cultural, and natural heritage of great symbolic value that distinguishes these territories.[9] However, the richness of this heritage contrasts sharply with the fragility of the region's social and cultural dynamics. This tension – particularly evident in northern Portugal – raises specific challenges that are central to the discussion in this paper.

HERITAGE IN REGIONAL STRATEGIES AND PUBLIC POLICIES

In rural areas with low levels of urbanization and sparse populations, heritage has gained increasing importance in regional strategies and public policies. It is regarded as a defining feature of the territory – closely tied to authenticity, identity, and collective memory – and as a key element of regional development. Heritage is often positioned alongside tourism, which has become one of the most significant employment-generating sectors in Portugal. In 2024, the north of the country led national tourism growth, recording 14,1 million overnight stays, an increase of 6,4% compared to 2023, surpassing the national growth rate of four percent.[10] As a result, since the second decade of this century, the rhetoric of regional and municipal authorities has increasingly linked heritage and tourism. As official discourse states: "The heritage area is particularly conducive to the creation of cultural routes and itineraries, the structuring of historical and cultural tourism offers, and the creation of distinctive tourism development strategies. Culture and tourism must join forces to improve and promote existing offers."[11]

According to the CCDRN, one of the core principles of its Smart Specialization Strategy for the 2021–2027 period is the valorization of territory-intensive resources, including cultural, creative, and endogenous assets.[12] Among its strategic objectives is the "economic enhancement of territory-intensive assets and resources,"[13] explicitly encompassing heritage. Similarly, access to EU funding provides for tourism-related indicators, directly linking heritage rehabilitation projects to an increase in the number of overnight stays and visitors and their integration into a tour route or itinerary.

Encouraging the parallel development of heritage and tourism policies is understandable and, in many cases, desirable. Tourism can diversify funding sources—drawing from both the cultural and economic sectors—and contribute to the revitalization of local economies, particularly around small historic centres, monuments, archaeological sites, and intangible heritage expressions. Simply demonizing the tourist exploitation of heritage does not serve the interests of communities. However, when tourism is anchored in transient and superficial experiences, it fails to foster a lasting connection to place. A meaningful relationship with heritage cannot be built on a brief guided tour or a one-day visit alone. The survival and continued relevance of heritage depend on deeper social and cultural practices, ones that extend beyond legal frameworks and strategic plans, and which also stem from the will and initiative of local populations.

APPROACHES TO HERITAGE IN DEPOPULATED REGIONS

Given the demographic challenges facing many regions, it is critical to adopt a heritage approach that prioritizes people over buildings, sites, and objects – an approach that values the diverse voices of society rather than privileging only expert discourse. In depopulated areas, the monumental heritage of the past may not reflect the immediate concerns or needs of local communities. Although the shift from objects to values and people, central to critical heritage studies,[14] has been widely acknowledged in theory, it has yet to be fully embraced by the institutions responsible for heritage management, has not been internalized by the organizations that manage heritage. A significant gap remains between theory and practice. Heritage professionals often adopt these perspectives slowly, hindered by inertia, established routines, limited human resources, or the bureaucratic complexity of the systems in which they operate. Nevertheless, there are initiatives that embody a more socially engaged approach to heritage. These will be explored in the following sections.

Citizens' associations

In 2022, on the twentieth anniversary of the Alto Douro Wine Region's designation as a World Heritage Site, the Northern Regional Directorate for Culture (DRCN) organized a gathering of heritage-related associations active in Northern Portugal. This day of presentations and debates

offered a valuable opportunity to explore the motivations behind citizens' engagement with heritage causes. Ten associations representing three monasteries, a convent, a castle, four archaeological sites and a cultural landscape were present. The event was titled *For the Love of Heritage*, drawing inspiration from a statement by André Chastel: "no element of heritage has meaning outside the affection of the societies concerned, an affection or, why not say the word? a love, which manifests itself instinctively in the consciousness of territories, and in an enlightened way in approaches to knowledge.[15]

The oldest of these associations dates back to 1886, while the most recent was established in 2021. They are formed by students and teachers, people interested in heritage, amateur historians and individuals from all professions and define themselves as cultural and scientific associations or civic projects. Their activities include promoting restoration campaigns, establishing interpretation centres, publishing materials, offering courses and conferences, organizing historical re-enactments, exhibitions, walks, and guided tours. Amigos do Convento (Friends of the Convent) – whose website is shown in Figure 3 – is one of the most recent associations with activities inspired by the monastic complex formed by the Church of São Francisco, the Mausoleum of São Frutuoso and the Convent of São Francisco de Real, in Braga. Some of these activities consist of the installation of public artworks, participatory artistic commissions, the organisation of online exhibitions on the association's website, and citizen mobilisation for the preservation of the intangible memory associated with the site.

Figure 3. Screenshot of Amigos do Convento's website, one of the newest associations operating in northern Portugal. © Amigos do Convento. https://www.amigosdoconvento.pt/n%C3%A3o-%C3%A9-este-s%C3%B3-um-lugar/mem%C3%B3ria-somos

It is true that some associations may replicate the mindset of state institutions, partly due to the background of their founders, and that others may become exhausted by activism, their local role remains indispensable. The gesture of an official heritage management body to bring them together acknowledges both the "social and experiential dimension without which heritage becomes inert" and the "testimonies that allow us to understand what heritage does to people and what people do to heritage when they feel it is theirs."[16]

The artists' initiative

One of the heritage uses that has seen significant growth over the past two decades is contemporary creation, which draws inspiration from, takes place within, and is applied to heritage settings. *The Mapping Contemporary Art in the Heritage Experience 2017-2020* project, developed by Newcastle University,[17] exemplifies the potential of this trend.

Between 2020 and 2022, the young artist collective *Interferência* collaborated with the DRCN on an initiative in Northern Portugal called *Sons de Bolso* (Pocket Sounds). The project aimed to transform "the street into a concert hall, connecting new music to a geographical space […] as an unconventional and unprecedented way of exploring Portuguese cultural heritage, offering exclusive artistic content that enables the public to interact with their surroundings in new and immersive ways."[18] Figure 4 shows the implementation of the project at the Roman archaeological site of Tongobriga and at the Monastery of S. Martinho de Tibães.

Site-specific musical creations, that bridge past and the present, are made available through a mobile application. The project reinterprets places, revitalizes the visitor experience, and broadens cultural engagement. In Portugal, there has been an increase in the hosting of heritage-based artistic residencies in heritage properties or based on intangible manifestations, underscoring their importance for the resignification of heritage for younger generations.[19]

Figure 4. Listening to music from the Sons de Bolso *project on a walk through the Roman ruins of Tongobriga and around the grounds of Tibães Monastery.*
Photos by Camila Menino. © Interferência.

Institutional memory

Disinvestment in the public cultural sector in Portugal following the 2008-2013 crisis, resulted in a lack of professional renewal and disrupted the transmission of knowledge and experience in the field. In this context, DRCN developed *Crónicas da Cultura* (Chronicles of Culture) project which aimed to collect testimonies and insights from former directors of the institutions that preceded the current entity.[20] Through a series of five interviews, these former professionals, born between 1941 and 1951, recounted pioneering experiences, pilot projects, and legislative initiatives. Their contributions helped recover institutional memory that had been interrupted by the discontinuity of public policies.

The project could not continue due to the dismantling of the DRCN. In its place, two centralized bodies were created, and powers were transferred to the CCDRN, which, however, does not directly manage heritage. This reform was incomplete, failing to truly strengthen regional entities and conflicting with the need for localized policies and decision-making. Unlike previous projects, *Crónicas da Cultura* originated within the public administration and underscores the importance of giving heritage professionals a voice, aiming to rebuild the continuity of political action from a renewed perspective.

Joint management

Arguably the project with the greatest structural impact is the one implemented at the Monastery of Arouca: a joint management model for this significant monument, established through an agreement signed in 2022 between the DRCN, the municipality of Arouca and the Brotherhood of Queen Santa Mafalda – a religious institution with civic and cultural purposes, created at the end of the nineteenth-

century and responsible, by law of 1930, for the movable heritage existing on the site. Although all three entities share a common interest in protecting and revitalizing the monastery, the contract negotiations spanned several challenging years. The difficulties stemmed from mutual mistrust between private institutions and the state, as well as tensions between central and local government bodies.

This agreement established a unique model in Portugal, whereby the State's partners are not merely consulted or involved in specific actions but are directly engaged in strategic decisions and management options for the monument. The responsibilities of the three entities cover human resources, space management and most museum functions, with clearly defined tasks allocated to each partner. The intention was to extend this model to other monuments and sites across northern Portugal; however, the closure of the DRCN prevented its wider implementation.

The ongoing experience with joint management demonstrates that this approach is the only viable way to align interests and maintain a balance among the various regional and local actors, while fostering lasting commitment.

CONCLUSION

According to Cornelius Holtorf "After decades of research and debate in the field that today is known as heritage studies, it has become clear that cultural heritage is best understood as a set of social practices and processes, valued in specific circumstances for their implications and outcomes. […] As a result, the most important question in studying cultural heritage is now not what it *is*, but what it *does*."[21] This perspective guided the selection of heritage cases presented, given their emphasis on the centrality of social dynamics, uses, and impacts. The mobilization of citizens and artists, the transmission of knowledge by professionals, and the meaningful participation of communities in heritage management all contribute to building new networks of sociability centered around heritage.

Because these projects are located in sparsely populated areas, they tend to be small in scale, reflecting social contexts weakened by demographic decline. Their persistence – often requiring long periods of implementation and complex negotiations – is a defining characteristic, as is their intergenerational dimension. Just as heritage relies on values and social recognition on one hand, and administrative acknowledgment on the other, the absence of collective engagement and a supportive civic context reduces opportunities for recognition, devalues heritage, and threatens its social sustainability. While the projects briefly presented show how this sustainability can be ensured, two final challenges point to other forms of social engagement in the field of heritage.

The first challenge relates to tourism, driven by a more than fifty percent increase in rural tourism in northern Portugal.[22] Could these alternative accommodations – distinct from traditional hotels – promote heritage in similarly innovative ways? Might they serve as ambassadors for local heritage, including symbolic and remote sites, helping to build new agendas and networks?

The second challenge concerns migration. In 2024, the number of people residing in Portugal increased for the sixth consecutive year due to migration flows. Although migrants are mainly concentrated in urban coastal areas, their presence in rural areas has been increasing.[23] How can these migrants connect with a heritage that may feel foreign to them? What dialogue can be fostered between this legacy and their own cultures, especially within a context shaped by millennia of influences and exchanges? How might we encourage them to engage with heritage spaces, contributing to a renewed cultural calendar through the performativity of diverse memories?

NOTES

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[3] *NORTE 2030.Estratégia de Desenvolvimento do Norte,* 41.
[4] *NORTE 2030.Estratégia de Desenvolvimento do Norte,* 92.
[5] *NORTE 2030.Estratégia de Desenvolvimento do Norte,* 93.
[6] Instituto Nacional de Estatística, *Estatísticas da Cultura: 2023.* (INE, 2024), 69, https://www.ine.pt/xurl/pub/439486173
[7] Comissão de Coordenação e Desenvolvimento Regional do Norte, *Plano de Ação Regional para a Cultura Norte 2030* (CCDR-N, 2024), 33, https://www.ccdr-n.pt/storage/app/media/uploaded-files/PlanoAcaoCultura_NORTE2030.pdf
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[11] *Plano de Ação Regional para a Cultura Norte 2030*, 26.
[12] Comissão de Coordenação e Desenvolvimento Regional do Norte, *S3 NORTE 2027. Estratégia de Especialização Inteligente da Região Norte 2021-27*, (CCDRN, 2023), 57, https://www.ccdr-n.pt/storage/app/media/uploaded-files/S3%20NORTE%202027_Book%201_Publish_WEB.pdf
[13] *S3 NORTE 2027. Estratégia de Especialização Inteligente,* 82-83.
[14] Kate Clark, "Ten Principles of Values-Based Heritage Practice", in *History and Approaches to Heritage Studies*, eds. Phyllis Mauch Messenger and Susan J. Bender (University Press of Florida 2019), 150-153.
[15] André Chastel, "La Notion de Patrimoine", in *Les Lieux de Mémoire*, ed. Pierre Nora (Paris: Gallimard, 1984, vol. 2) 446.
[16] Laura Castro, Introduction to *Por Amor ao Património*, ed. Rui Maia (Porto: DRCN, 2023), 7.
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[19] Ana Gago, "(Re)criar o Património – Caraterização de problemáticas e tendências para a curadoria de residências artísticas em Portugal" (PhD diss., Universidade Católica Portuguesa, 2025), http://hdl.handle.net/10400.14/53669
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[23] Instituto Nacional de Estatística*, Estimativas de população residente em Portugal 2024* (INE, 2025), 1, file:///C:/Users/laura/Downloads/18ESTIM.%20POPULA%C3%87%C3%83O2024.pdf

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STAGING MEMORY: HERITAGE TOURISM AND THE POLITICS OF REMEMBRANCE IN GHANA

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INTRODUCTION

The global relevance of Ghana's historical sites dedicated to slavery was officially recognized by UNESCO when it included them in the World Heritage sites. The three castles and fifteen forts along the "shopping street" of West Africa are part of the World Heritage sites. Two of the three castles, Elmina and Cape Coast Castles, excluding Christianborg Castle, are the focus of this paper. Elmina Castle and Cape Coast Castle were inscribed on the World Heritage list in 1979. As two of the most significant trading centers during the triangular trade, both Elmina and Cape Coast Castles are integral to UNESCO's Slave Route Project (SRP). UNESCO's SRP was launched in 1994 with the mission of breaking the silence surrounding slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. Coinciding with national government efforts, root tourism strongly emerged, calling upon the African diaspora to return home, to visit these sites where their ancestors were ripped from their homes, imprisoned, before being forcefully sent to the new world. This pilgrimage took shape, with Elmina and Cape Coast castles at its center, representing crucial places of collective memory for African Americans, while they remain integral to the everyday lives of Ghanaian communities living around these sites.

Root tourism characterises Ghana's reverberating heritage tourism. Ghanaian cultural brokers have since marketed slave heritage sites for the international market, particularly African Americans. According to Peterson et al, heritage is a political mode of organization where relics of the past are revisited, repackaged, and valued as commodities. Heritage work in Ghana, much as in other parts of Africa, "is an act of consolidation, a means of taming cultural diversity and organising diverse rituals, behaviours, and objects into a regimented routine."[1] Ghana's castles are tangible heritage, where materiality serves as evidence of the legacy of slavery, visible, available to touch, and experienced with all the senses. These tangible heritage sites embody the intangible legacies of slavery—the memory of bodies that thickened the castle walls with blood, tears, and suffering. Just like sky-piercing monuments of Cape Coast and Elmina Castles, Finley asserts that memory is active and fluid as in the performative, human function of re-membering."[2] The tangible heritage, including castles, and the intangible heritage, which they house, become a political mode of memory-making that serves different agendas of remembrance of slavery.

This paper examines the palimpsestic nature of Elmina and Cape Coast Castle, situating them within Pierre Nora's lieux de mémoire (sites of memory) and lieux d'histoire (sites of history). Nora asserts that sites of memory appear where there has been an erosion of milieux de mémoire—living environments of memory. Sites of memory become active memory-making sites, sustained by rituals

and commemoration, and are integral to identity formation, as seen in the case of African American tourists who embark on root tourism. In contrast, for locals, they are historical landmarks embedded in daily life, valued more for their economic function and architectural significance than for emotional or commemorative purposes. This paper also critiques the dominant heritage tourism narratives that frame the history of transatlantic slave trade through a binary lens; Europeans as culprits, African Americans as victims, often omitting or marginalizing African participation in trade. I argue for the need to recognize the nuanced and complicated history of African agency, acknowledging the "victim society,"[3] and narratives of resistance during the slave trade. Ultimately, this paper examines the politics of remembrance in postcolonial Ghana, emphasizing how historical sites are interpreted and engaged with across cultural, geographical, and historical boundaries. This analysis reveals that memory is not inherent to Elmina Castle and Cape Coast Castle, but rather socially constructed, shaped by factors such as proximity, position, and purpose.

THE PALIMPSESTIC NATURE OF THE CASTLES: LIEUX DE MÉMOIRE AND LIEUX D'HISTOIRE

Finley and MacGonagle have situated the Elmina Castle and Cape Coast Castle within the theoretical conception of Pierre Nora's lieux de mémoire—where memory crystallizes, secretes itself, and embodies a sense of historical continuity.[4] I contend that the castles are both sites of memory and sites of history for African diasporic tourists and affected communities around the castles, respectively. Memory and history fundamentally oppose each other in the sense that real memory is social, untainted, exemplified, but also retained as a secret by societies, while history is how forgetful contemporary societies organize the past. How the past is organized in contemporary heritage works is a marker of positionalities. In this paper, I focus on two types: tourists of African descent from the diaspora, particularly African Americans, and affected Ghanaian communities around these edifices.

A core characteristic of sites of memory is the intention to remember. Without the will to do so, lieux de memoire would be no different from lieux d'histoire.[5] African Americans who embark on heritage pilgrims to the castles do so as an effort to not only connect to ancestors but also as an active act of remembrance of the atrocities meted out to them within the castles' walls, as well as the resilience they portrayed. The public memory of slavery is more evident among African Americans. Oguibe asserts that the memory of slavery is permanently present and fresh in the diaspora imagination.[6] The vividness of these memories lies in the aesthetics, social, and political identity of black people in the diaspora. Root tourism has become an extension of that act of remembrance.

On the other hand, Ghanaians. The history of the castles is shrouded in silence, buried under guilt and shame,[7] the sheer magnitude of trauma they experienced during slavery, and the need for a homogenizing and pan-African national identity after independence.[8] This silence is what births the assertion that Ghanaians are not concerned about slavery.[9] Amidst slavery's haunting presence, of which the monumental castles are some, locals living around the castles do not seek to remember that part of their history. This lack of intention transforms the castles into sites of history—spaces that comprise of testimonies an epoch that historians have left to historians.[10] The fundamental function of sites of memory is to block the act of forgetting, which locals are committed to. This is the crux of heritage tourism in Ghana, the tension that rises between a community willing to forget amidst a national and international agenda of remembrance.

The castles are transformed into sites of memory for African American tourists through how they invest symbolism in these sites and construct them as "objects of rituals." Commemorative rituals are performed in select parts of the castles, imbued with symbolism that makes these pilgrims spiritual and more meaningful for them. For instance, the "Door of No Return" is one of the most important signs in the castles. On the opposite side of the door, "Door of Return" has been inscribed for African

diasporic tourists to reclaim that part of history into a victorious and healing redemption. Schramm states that "to re-enter the Door of No Return means to (positively) reconnect with the past, it is a way of giving testimony of survival."[11] This act embodies what Nora calls the "capacity for metamorphosis"[12] that characterises lieux de mémoire. Thus, an endless recycling of their meaning over time. Another ritual that is more popular but owes its origins to the commemorative performances by the One Africa Production in the 1990s[13] is the ritual of prayer and commemorative minutes of silence for the past ancestors. Ordinarily, a group of African Americans assembles in the dungeon, where they hold each other's hands, with lit candles between them, pray, and usually cry together. In cases where Ghanaian or European tourists are part of the group, they are called to commiserate with their "brothers and sisters." The African Americans are directed by tourists to be in the middle, while others stretch their hands to them in prayer.

Ghanaian tourists experience the castles relatively devoid of heavy symbolism and commemorative rituals. As Macgonagle posits, these sites serve as empty signifiers for Ghana's past.[14] Before heritage tourism focused on slavery, these castles served multiple functions. Elmina Castle, after independence, served as the home of Edinaman Day Secondary School, the office of the Ghana Education Service, the District Assembly, and a police training academy.[15] Reed states that in the local imaginary, Cape Coast Castle is a building that housed a post office or a place in which they played hide-and-seek as children.[16] Simply put, the castles, in all their meanings and implications for locals living around them and Ghanaians in general, are not a transient portal where identity formation is constructed.

VICTIM AND PERPETRATORS: BEYOND THE BINARY HERITAGE NARRATIVES

Root tourism is a means of historical production, and silence is inherent in the production of history.[17] The history recounted during tours of the Elmina and Cape Coast Castles focuses particularly on the dungeons. These narratives treat these bodies that once occupied them as if their lives began in the dungeons and their essence lies only in their forceful migrations into the new world. The focus on the dungeons emphasizes Europeans as operators and diasporic blacks as victims,[18] while Africans take a passive or even absent role in this history. Scholars have drawn attention to this "half history," often highlighting the absence of African complicity in the slave trade.[19] In addressing this complexity, Bruner stated that from the African American perspective, Ghanaians were also their oppressors.[20] I suggest that these narratives should extend beyond complicity to include resistance and victimization. African complicity and the need to include it in historical narratives of root tourism has been quite established by available scholarship, hence why I shift my gaze to the other roles that are absent or rarely ever included.

At the height of the triangular trade, not all Africans participated; some resisted it. Therefore, no discussion of African agency is complete without acknowledging both participation in and resistance against the trade. When the door of no return is swung open by the tour guides during the commemorative ritual of re-entering it, one encounters a stark contrast: the shores, unlike the castles, are vibrant, and the people are not somber but actively going about their days. This apparent indifference further reinforces the idea that Ghanaians do not care about the history of slavery. However, that view risks isolating the castles, removing them from the culture and societies they are part of. Still, landscape and culture are inseparable because you cannot separate culture from the environment that sustains it.

The attitude of coastal populations toward the Atlantic slave trade during its peak has not received much scholarly attention, but Inikori offers speculative insights into the likely hostility and resistance of coastal residents toward European slavers.[21] For example, in 1766, the cargo of Ann, a slave ship captained by Irving of Liverpool, was stolen, and the crew members were made slaves. In another

case, Mathew, a slave shipwrecked on the Gold Coast, and although all the crew survived, they were stripped naked by the inhabitants of the coast. These stories, though they do not represent all those living in such communities, challenge reductionist narratives that depict Africans as having no agency in their history. In both castles, black cannons face the sea to attack other European invaders. However, in Elmina Castle, some face toward the community. What threat lay inland that the Europeans needed to protect their cargo from? Could this have possibly prevented rescue attempts by the communities? Even when the signs seem to point to complete historical certainty, recognizing them keeps the history of slavery open-ended. Opoku-Agyemang argues it is essential not to seek closure on the story of slavery but to keep it open for debate and discussion so that future generations can learn from its lessons.

The most powerful heritage of the transatlantic slave trade is perhaps the millions of African Americans who are constantly subjected to systematic racism every day.[22] And an attempt to discuss Africans as victims is not to dispute that fact or engage in a needless trauma Olympics. Rather, it is an attempt at understanding legacies of slavery beyond tangible heritage. Giblin et al argue that such heritages should not only be thought of in terms of tangible remains but must also consider their psychological effects on individuals and communities as a form of intangible inheritance, affecting understandings of self, place, and ultimately belonging.[23] Hardly mentioned in literature in general is the "damned who survived," perhaps the most horrendous experience of the victim society. Opoku-Agyemang defines this group as the relatives of the captured Africans who were left with graves without bodies, a loss that can not be mourned, all amidst a violent quest for survival. According to Opoku-Agyemang, the society that endures this age of trauma becomes pathogenic, and unless critically examined to heal it, the disease would be passed from generation to generation.[24] Hence, the "damned who survived" must be included in commemorative healing rituals.

The castles remain hunting legacies of the slave trade that are engulfed in silence within Ghanaian communities. Yet they are not removed from it. In some ways, they live in its mnemonic presence every day of their lives, unlike tourists who experience these sites on their pilgrimages. That perhaps explains their distant posturing toward the castles. One will be mistaken to think these communities do not live with the haunting legacies of slavery. Memories of the violent slave raids, loss, and other traumatic experiences have always existed within the affected communities.[25] Rituals, cultures, landscapes, naming of towns all speak to the traumatic legacies of slavery. The current hegemonic narratives in marginalizing local memories and coastal communities as active actors of this heritage enact an exclusionary form of silencing. Including these other parts of history may be unpopular, as it may decenter African American tourists as the main audience of root tourism. However, it is also necessary to develop African, indigenous, and local understandings of these heritages and their significance.[26]

Successive Ghanaian governments have used heritage tourism as a means of economic progression, with the help of international aid aimed at managing heritage sites like Elmina and Cape Coast Castles. The recent and seemingly most successful national initiative is the Year of Return, launched in 2019 by President Nana Akufo-Addo. The program was linked to the 400th anniversary of the first arrival of enslaved Africans in the United States. It was promoted as an opportunity for pan-African union between continental Africans and the African diaspora, and to invite black brothers and sisters abroad to invest "home." According to the Minister of Tourism at the time, the Year of Return had injected about £1.5bn into the economy.[27] Ghana's tourism sector recorded an 18% rise in international arrivals from the Americas, Britain, and the Caribbean. The travel and tourism industry added 770,000 jobs in 2019.[28] Engman observes that "since the 1990s, global capitalism and Pan-Africanism have not been regarded as incompatible by Ghanaian presidents, governments, citizens, and international non-governmental agencies."[29] A closer look at successful heritage initiatives like

the Year of Return reveals that what keeps this economic machinery running is the continual sustenance of heritage sites like the castles as sites of memory where hegemonic narratives create sacred spaces for the African diaspora, marginalizing local intangible heritage. Eventually, as many African Americans return "home," a group of people highly conscious of the history of slavery meets a group of people seemingly detached from such sensibilities. How then can the ideal pan-African unity of all black people be achieved when a wedge of silence stands between the two groups? Extending heritage tourism to include memories and healings of both parties can go a long way in addressing feelings of betrayal, borne out of African complicity during the slave trade.

CONCLUSION

Elmina and Cape Coast Castles are traces of the transatlantic slave trade, and as Trouillot states, the production of traces is also the creation of silence.[30] Transforming these traces into tourism narratives renders them palimpsestic sites where memory and identities are contested. Through Pierre Nora's concepts of *lieux de mémoire* and *lieux d'histoire*, this paper has demonstrated how the castles, through a deliberate curation of heritage tourism, carry different meanings for both African Americans and Ghanaians. For African Americans, these sites are emotionally charged spaces, invested with symbolism of mourning, ancestral connection, and healing. In contrast, the castles represent historical sites woven into the everyday life of Ghanaians. They do not carry the commemorative significance that characterises the diasporic experience. This duality underscores the relational positionalities of heritage in postcolonial Ghana and how memory is interpreted along such lines. Ultimately, the paper shows that tangible heritages, even when their traces to history are poignant, remain a canvas on which history is reproduced and retold.

Also, this paper has argued for a more nuanced historical narrativization of history, pushing beyond the binary of Europeans as oppressors and Africans as victims. This narrative, even though it resonates with tourists, risks silencing the multifaceted and complicated roles of Africans during the slave trade. Rather than solely portraying African actors as complicit, this paper advocates for a more inclusive narrative that captures the complexities of African agency during the trade. Marginalizing local memories and heritage in hegemonic narratives performs an exclusionary silence that further pushes African positionality from its organized past. The politics of remembrance at Elmina and Cape Coast Castles reveal whose story is being told and what suffering is deemed narratable. However, a more inclusive and nuanced heritage practice must reckon with both inherited and contemporary engineered silences, embracing a memory landscape capable of holding nuances and shared vulnerability.

NOTES

[1] Derek R. Peterson et al., eds., *The Politics of Heritage in Africa: Economies, Histories, and Infrastructures*, 1st ed. (Cambridge University Press, 2015), 2–3, https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781316151181.
[2] Cheryl Finley, "Authenticating Dungeons, Whitewashing Castles: The Former Sites of the Slave Trade on the Ghanaian Coast," in *Architecture and Tourism* (Berg Oxford, 2004), 114.
[3] Victim society consisted of the ordinary members of the community, neither slaving chief nor warlord, who were the object of capture. See Kwadwo Opoku–Agyemang, "Cape Coast Castle: The Edifice and the Metaphor," *Matatu* 21–22, no. 1 (2000): 25, https://doi.org/10.1163/18757421-90000300.
[4] Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire," *Representations*, no. 26 (1989): 7, https://doi.org/10.2307/2928520.
[5] Nora, "Between Memory and History," 19.
[6] Olu Oguibe, "Slavery and the Diaspora Imagination," *Facing Up to the Past: Perspectives on the Commemoration of Slavery from Africa, the Americas and Europe. Kingston: Prince Claude Library*, 2001, 96.
[7] See Anne Caroline Bailey, *African Voices of the Atlantic Slave Trade: Beyond the Silence and the Shame* (Beacon press, 2005).
[8] Oyeniyi Okunoye, "Pan-Africanism and Globalized Black Identity in the Poetry of Kofi Anyidoho and Kwadwo Opokwu-Agyemang," *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature* 40, no. 1 (2009): 1.
[9] Edward M Bruner, "Tourism in Ghana: The Representation of Slavery and the Return of the Black Diaspora," *American Anthropologist*, JSTOR, 1996, 292.
[10] Nora, "Between Memory and History," 19.
[11] Katharina Schramm, "The Transatlantic Slave Trade: Contemporary Topographies of Memory in Ghana and the Usa," *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana*, no. 9 (2005): 138.
[12] Nora, "Between Memory and History," 19.
[13] Edward M. Bruner, "Tourism in Ghana: The Representation of Slavery and the Return of the Black Diaspora," *American Anthropologist* 98, no. 2 (1996): 296.
[14] Elizabeth Macgonagle, "From Dungeons to Dance Parties: Contested Histories of Ghana's Slave Forts," *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 24, no. 2 (2006): 252, https://doi.org/10.1080/02589000600770007.
[15] Bruner, "Tourism in Ghana: The Representation of Slavery and the Return of the Black Diaspora," 292.
[16] Ann Reed, "The Commemoration of Slavery Heritage: Tourism and the Reification of Meaning," in *The Cultural Moment in Tourism* (Routledge, 2012), 138.
[17] Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Beacon Press, 2015), 26.
[18] Bruner, "Tourism in Ghana: The Representation of Slavery and the Return of the Black Diaspora," 295.
[19] Rachel Ama Asaa Engmann, "Narrating the Slave Trade and Slavery Heritage in West Africa and Its Diaspora," in *Routledge Handbook of Critical African Heritage Studies*, 1st ed., by Ashton Sinamai et al. (Routledge, 2024), 112, https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003025832-11.
[20] Bruner, "Tourism in Ghana: The Representation of Slavery and the Return of the Black Diaspora," 296.
[21] See Joseph E Inikori, "The Unmeasured Hazards of the Atlantic Slave Trade: Sources, Causes and Historiographical Implications," in *From Chains to Bonds: The Slave Trade Revisited* (Berghahn Books [u.a.], 2001).
[22] Ishanlosen Odiaua et al., "Part 2 Introduction. Heritages of Slavery," in *Routledge Handbook of Critical African Heritage Studies*, 1st ed., by Ashton Sinamai et al. (Routledge, 2024), 1, https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003025832-10.
[23] John Daniel Giblin et al., "Introducing Critical African Heritage Studies," in *Routledge Handbook of Critical African Heritage Studies*, 1st ed., by Ashton Sinamai et al. (Routledge, 2024), 7, https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003025832-1.
[24] Opoku–Agyemang, "Cape Coast Castle," 26.
[25] Katharina Schramm, "The Slaves of Pikworo: Local Histories, Transatlantic Perspectives," *History & Memory* 23, no. 1 (2011): 97.
[26] Giblin et al., "Introducing Critical African Heritage Studies," 10.
[27] Reality Check Team, "African Diaspora: Did Ghana's Year of Return Attract Foreign Visitors?," *BBC*, January 30, 2020, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-51191409.
[28] Abdul Razak Bello, *What Made Ghana's Year of Return the Most Powerful Diaspora Movement? - Diasporapulse.Com*, February 12, 2025, https://diasporapulse.com/what-made-ghanas-year-of-return-the-most-powerful-diaspora-movement/.
[29] Engmann, "Narrating the Slave Trade and Slavery Heritage in West Africa and Its Diaspora," 114.

[30] Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 29.

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LATENT CONNECTIONS: HERITAGE IN COMMONS

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INTRODUCTION

On the east coast of Newfoundland and Labrador, not more than sixty-five kilometers apart are two UNESCO World Heritage sites which expand the historical narrative of present-day Canada. While geographically proximate, these two sites remain worlds apart.

Separated by the Strait of Belle Isles, they are the products of distant cultures, from different periods of time, with varied intentions of extracting the rich terrestrial and maritime resources. Both were seasonal, and short-lived.

L'Anse aux Meadows is an exposed spit of ground. Dug into the earth, it bears the only confirmed site of Norse occupation in North America. Here, remnants of buildings hug and are tucked beneath the earth in protection from the wind and water. Historically named Vinland (wine land), it was an exploratory base for future expansion, used to collect necessary goods such as dried cod and timber, and desired supplies, including eiderdown[1] and grapes for wine[2] - the product that inspired its name. Today, these buildings have been carefully reconstructed, a testament to what once was.

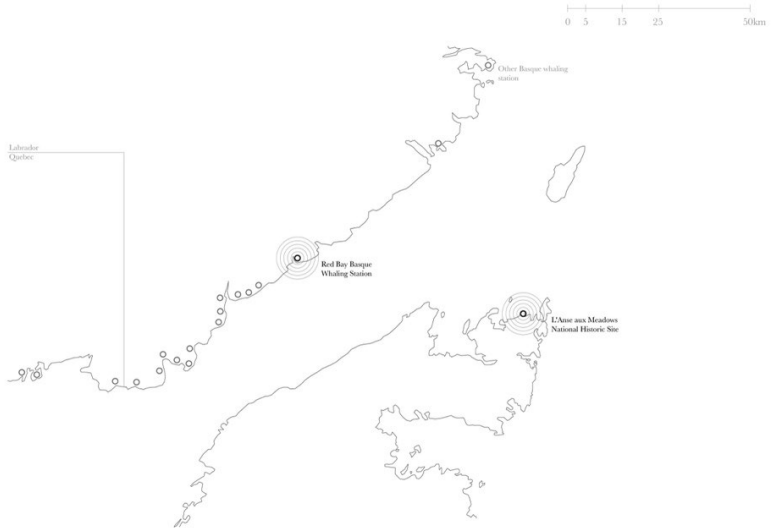

Figure 1. location of Red Bay (left) and L'Anse aux Meadows (right)

Red Bay[3] is protected by a series of small islands that stand watch over the hostile coastline. Here, evidence of a Basque whaling station comes from a series of submerged boats scattered along the sea

floor.[4] In this large site, the colonial population was temporary, called to water for the whales that frequented the area in two distinct hunting seasons. Today, Red Bay hosts a smattering of houses and community buildings scattered along a windy coastal road. The Basque whaling ship lies in shallow waters of the bay, a lost relic of the modern ships that sail daily into the strait.

Canada was a founding member of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 1946. Since its founding, it has inscribed twenty-two heritage sites on to the World Heritage List. Eleven sites are designated natural heritage, ten sites are cultural heritage, and one is mixed.[5]

L'Anse aux Meadows National Historic Site was inscribed onto the list in 1978 as Canada's first world heritage site. Red Bay Basque Whaling Station followed 35 years later. These two cultures shared the same waters five hundred years apart. The priority of this research is to describe a common thread that understands them in tandem – simultaneously separate and together.

Figure 2. A map of the twenty-two UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Canada.

To do this, we look outside the finite boundaries of their respective heritage sites at the larger environmental systems and cultural infrastructures in which they were constructed. In many instances, these systems and infrastructures are adjacent to our conventional understanding of what constitutes heritage and external to the power associated with heritage status and its protection.

To situate them within the larger contexts, we simultaneously expand and narrow the geographic, typological and chronological scale to see how these sites connect to places both near and far away. It is this expanded context that problematize Canada's colonial narrative which predominately focuses on the English and French at the exclusion of other groups, and therefore, other relations. In the past, this small pocket of water was occupied by peoples from Portugal, the Basque region of present-day Spain and France, and from across Scandinavia. Invariably, these communities interacted to some degree with existing Indigenous communities.

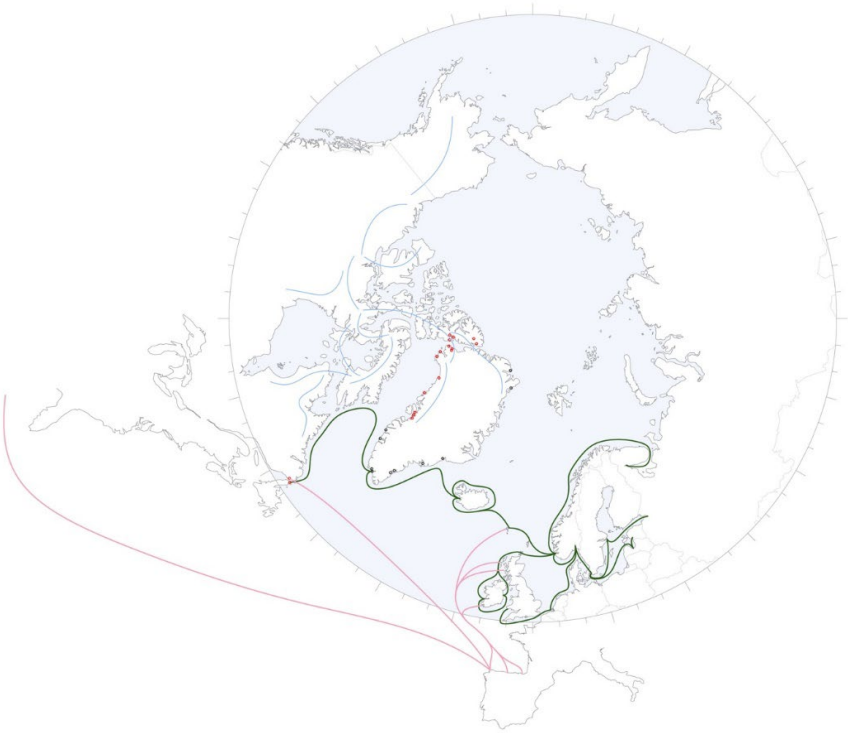

Figure 3. A map as seen from the Arctic showing the movements of Paleo-Inuit (light blue), Norse (forest green) and Basque peoples (magenta). Norse settlements are dots along the Greenland coast.

Today, this history stops at the present-day border of so-called Canada ignoring that at the time, many different flows, territories, and peoples interacted across this land and with these places. Of note, both these sites were seasonal, and the archeological evidence suggests that they were not intended for long-term occupation.[6] Both speak to the incredible long-distance movement of humans to pursue arduous, complicated, and on-going acts of exploitive resource extraction. Extraction that continues to define Canada's primary industries today.

To conclude, we consider these two sites, and their associated plurality of environmental systems and their related cultural infrastructures through a novel, alternative cartographic technique. This research creation work applies multiple scalar layers to weave a fabric of relations – a new way to see heritage sites in both space and time. This visual work is not a form of storytelling or parafiction.[7] It is very much linked to specific geographical and historical information. We must contend, however, that this record is fragmented and that these gaps offer exciting opportunities for further, open-ended interpretation.

We partake in this work because in a period of increased nationalist sentiment, when cultural history is becoming narrowed and reified, it is important to describe methods and disciplinary lenses that visually and textually articulate culture as shared, plural and on-going. To consider heritage a communal domain. This domain forms a collection of disparate, at times contradictory mini-narratives that do not describe a singular group of people, but one that binds to neighbouring places and enriches through both its unique, and shared characteristics. It matters to understand heritage within a wider, messier context that broadens to include those other sites that support the milieu of a place and time.

When heritage is defined as a set of fixed, disparate sites, these individual sites can be easily coopted and pushed towards a singular meaning and purpose. When the boundaries of heritage are expanded, they leave more paths uncharted, offering more opportunities to make heritage relevant to many individuals and groups. It acknowledges this reality of history. That it is experienced, written and

interpreted by many peoples simultaneously. People with different interests and motivations, and while a lot of history is known, most of history is lost to time, and this loss prevent us from ever fully knowing our communal past. In the face of that acknowledgement, it is incumbent to move with curiosity and humility as we explore the plural, contradictory, partial view of our shared past.

CONTEXT – UNESCO AND DEFINITIONS OF HERITAGE

This research is within the discipline of critical heritage.[8] However, in order to understand the inequities of power and the institutional mechanisms that define national and international definition of heritage we underpin the larger structures that define heritage up to the present.

As Christina Cameron writes about the various standard setting instruments and international organizations associated with heritage that, "the conceptual frameworks underpinning these international instruments are being re-evaluated in light of present-day values and perceptions of fairness. Today's holistic approach to heritage conservation makes UNESCO's achievements appear fragmented and only partially effective."[9]

Writing about the reinterpretation of the term 'authenticity' Cameron continues that in 1992 the definition was modified with the addition of the phrase "in the case of cultural landscapes their distinctive character and components" to reflect the presence of people living in such landscapes.[10] The definition of 'Cultural Landscapes' helped bridge the gap between culture and nature.[11]

Two years later, as part of an effort to expand the concept *Outstanding Universal Value*, *The Global Strategy* document (1994) shifted towards an anthropological perspective that sought to express cultural exchange and human experience.[12] Further important developments were the *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* (2003), and the *Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions* (2005).[13]

A critique articulated by scholar Geneviève Susemihl is that the "cultural heritage representing people's movements needs to be considered more thoroughly." This includes, but is not limited to work migration, slave trade, human trafficking, and ethnic cleansing."[14] As Susemihl notes, North America is particularly important for migration studies.[15]

We would argue that these migrations are deeply connected to non-human and environmental factors as they have long formed the impetus for exploration, settlement, and human and non-human displacement – particularly along the east coast of what is Canada today.

In considering these two sites, the wild grapes, eiderdown, timber, cod, and whales, that brought Norse and later Basque peoples to Canada's east coast is now all but forgotten or depleted. This makes the underlying contextual purpose of these sites difficult to comprehend and further isolates these places from the larger routes, environmental forces, and relations that link history to land, land to people, and people to each other. Through the categorization of Norse/Viking and Basque, we forego any further relationality between varied people, the transfer of ideas, the role of other-than human processes.

With so much missing, with so much in the distant past, and with no on-going community to bring this history to the present, what remains imperative, is to tease open the finite enclosures that define these sites, to erode their boundaries and to keep the sites open to natural history, as much as to cultural history. This runs counter to seeing history in the past, and the past as fixed.

This openness to history is inspired by the writing of Jorge Otero-Pailos. In his article "The Contemporary Stamp of Incompleteness", Otero-Pailos writes that the old is always open for interpretation, and that this interpretation cannot finish.[16]

We are using this theoretical frame to articulate the resultant mini-narratives and lay bare the gradient between presences and absences of the two sites, both separate and together. This is not an attempt to arbitrarily fill the gaps, but an opportunity to overlay the multiple presences to establish a relational

interpretation of place and time. It is an acknowledgement that these two distant cultures might possibly have seen and used the same parcel of land. Where one stepped over a sapling, the other cut down a mature tree. In travel, they used the same winds to sail on the same currents. They drew from similar food sources, fished for the same cod, and sailed past, or harpooned the same whales. In coming to the eastern shores of Canada, they were both limited and afforded a world of interrelated environmental systems that situated and constrained their imported cultural expressions.

ALTERNATIVE CARTOGRAPHIES

It is this afforded world which we aim to visually express through our alternative cartographic technique.

The impetus for this on-going work stems from an earlier cartographic project which sought to connect the natural heritage of Wood Buffalo National Park, Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks, Waterton Glacier International Peace Park with the cultural sites of Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump, and Writing-on-Stone / Áísínai'pi, extended further, to Yellowstone and other sites throughout the United States through the lost movement of bison.

Intellectually, it considers the scholarship of Matthew Wilson and his book *New Lines: Critical GIS and the Trouble of the Map.* In it he writes,

"To draw a line is to make a difference. A line can create left from right, inside from outside. Expressed directionally, a line can indication motion forward and backward. A line takes on significance through its milieu, its relationship to context, the history of lines past, and the urgency of lines yet drawn. The question of what to call the drawing of such lines is a subject of intense investment: mapping, cartography, geographic information science, sketching, drafting, depicting, doodling, representing."[17]

Figure 4. An alternative cartograph illustrating the axis of Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump and the diminishing bison population in Canada to other key World Heritage Sites in western Canada.

To give added weight to this practice, we use document and content analysis to understand how our lines might bear significance within its milieu. This analysis forms the overlapping multiplicities, and three-dimensionalized vectors that open the latent, temporal, and spatial places, practices and migrations that typically fall to the periphery of established heritage characteristics. To prevent these lines from spinning off in wayward directions we ensure they remain anchored through conventions without being too burdened by their institutional heft.

To move from the abstraction of the line, towards the messiness of the land, we consider Kristi Cheramie both spatial and temporal argument that,

"Landscapes, have the capacity to absorb remarkable amounts of residue from complicated forms of imagination. Landscapes are reservoirs of both evidence and erasure, of growth and decay, of calcification and emergent potential. Landscapes archive and are archives of change. Coded into the geological strata and ecological vibrancy of any landscape are traces of both stories that have long since unfolded and others still unfolding."[18]

Here we consider a historic limitation of cartography, that maps read as surface or cross section. Our procedure aims to be simultaneously geographical and archeological. To stitch the warp and weft of natural processes, and cultural practices; of surface features and thick ground into a comprehensive fabric. This is an aggregate of map, diagram, and timeline. The confluence of these varied modes of representation teases out an enriched understanding of many places through many durations of time.

How these varied scales are captured remains fraught. Laura Kurgan points out that maps are inherently distorted due to a lag of time between recording and publication, and because they collect many sources of data which they collate and present as a uniform whole.[19]

In our work, the varied distortions are retained, the cartographs are a tool to open up the work for further exploration and interpretation. The resultant distortions, of data, or technique, of interpretation offer space for the mini-narratives to pool and dissipate.

At a basic level, both cultures came from distant worlds and utilized the sites as a gateway to supplies of need and want. Both were deeply entrenched in an early capitalist system of exploration for exploitation that saw their settlement as seasonal and short-lived, using an imported workforce to extract the required resources in quick time.

But in a more expanded view those vectors of thought and action connect to a myriad of places. It is not just that the Norse linked to Greenland, Iceland, Norway, Denmark and Sweden – where other world heritage sites are located. They had influence through the Rus' States that stretched from the Baltic southeast to the Black Sea. They held a tentative foothold in what is now Tunisia, Sicily and the south of Italy.[20] Like the Basque, they linked to Northern France, Spain and Portugal. Their cultural interests extended to various types of flora and fauna, trees and shrubs, fish and whale. They link to wind patterns, ocean currents, seasonal migrations and the punishing winter.

They connect to other sites of heritage that are not protected and therefore do not form part of a more nuanced colonial narrative of Canada. To Norse sites on the western coast of Greenland and the associated evidence of conflict and possible interactions at Inuit sites further north along the coast of Labrador.[21] They link to dozens of nearby fishing stations on the Gulf of St. Lawrence in Canada and the northern United States.[22]

L'Anse aux Meadows and Red Bay are not discrete, isolated sites on a bleak frontier. They are deeply intertwined with the environmental systems and cultural infrastructure of their time and of their past.[23] One that stretches back to Europe, and into the hinterlands of Canada and the Arctic.

Figure 5. An alternative cartograph of migration of fish, whales and peoples in eastern Canada. Made with a series of printed and laser cut drawings. The map is layered with (a) the ranges of key marine species, (b) fish statistical zones, (c) Economic Exclusion Zones (EEZ), (d) Paleo-Inuit, Norse, Basque and whale migration patterns/routes, and (e) the archeological map of L'Anse aux Meadows on the right.

CONCLUSION – HERITAGE AS A COMMONS

Each heritage site is therefore a mini-world. A connection of multiples sites, that might, just maybe form a commons.[24]

The difficulty of this conception is finding the right balance. On the one hand, one might anguish how the cartographs counters modernity and its drive to reproduce activity to its most universal, hegemonic, institutional desire to categorize, catalogue and exploit everything and rope the natural and cultural world into separate spheres of neo-liberal, late capitalism.

On the other hand, one might simultaneously contend that it counters post-modernity and its determination to dismantle this hegemony and atomizes all relations, bifurcating multiplicities with more multiplicities, until they are concentrated to their most intersectional specificity problematizing any overarching narrative or common thread.

This plays out in questions of scale.[25] At one end there are again, the rigid institutional scales that broadly define the consciously established political bodies of the nation state, region, urban conglomeration, neighbourhood, home, in discrete units of time and territories of space. This however is overlayed with actions and objects, some of which were fleeting or by chance, others willfully defying categorization and slipping between scales.

The commons therefore, offers a compelling conceptual premise. First, it is an existing and aspirational ethic and method of thinking and working. Second, it is space to explore a set of relations

that undermine existing power structures, and third, it is a place where individually, as academics, we might intellectually share, borrow, and most importantly give back.

The articulation of heritage as a commons undermines the enclosure of current heritage practices. This is not an aim to universalize the human experience. It is very much the opposite. It sees heritage as places of contestation that continually strives for representation and compromise. It further elaborates on Otero-Pailos' notion of 'openness for interpretation'. It aims to share power and represent an expanded field, including the other-than human, to implicate those that otherwise have little agency, and therefore little history.

My focus on the commons is not so much about questions of capitalist labour – although they are implicated.[26] My interest is about using research creation methods to represent an expanded and shared community, one that acknowledges and accepts the multiplicities of time and space but seeks to configure sites of heritage not only through unique difference, but also through shared systems and flows. Flows of people, geology, climate, plants, animals and ideas.

L'Anse aux Meadows and Red Bay represent different starting points of what, in time, led to the incredible colonial exploitation and on-going environmental carnage that is Canada today. The resultant cartographs do not aim to strip and sanitize, to forgive or to let back into the fold. They aim to share an expanded view. One that understands the rampant misuse of our environmental systems as pre-industrial and a continued legacy of our so-called cultural progress. It is an acknowledgement that all heritage sites are invariably connected and stretch back into deep time to collectively shape our shared, plural humanity, and it worries that to reify and narrow our past, is to shortchange and stifle our common future.

NOTES

[1] Paul Ledger, Linus Girdland-Flink and Veronique Forbes, “New horizons at L'Anse aux Meadows.” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 116 (2019): 15341
[2] Birgitta Wallace, “L'Anse Aux Meadows, Leif Eriksson's Home in Vinland,” *Journal of The North Atlantic* 2 (2009): 119.
[3] Originally named Butus (or Buteres) in the land of Terranova.
Judith A. Logan and James A. Tuck. “A Sixteenth Century Basque Whaling Port in Southern Labrador,” *APT Bulletin: The Journal of Preservation Technology* 22, no. 3 (1990): 65.
[4] Robert Grenier, Marc A. Bernier and Willis Stevens, eds., *The Underwater Archaeology of Red Bay: Basque Shipbuilding and Whaling in the 16th Century* (Parks Canada, 2007).
[5] “World Heritage List: L’Anse aux Meadows National Historic Site,” UNESCO World Heritage Center, accessed March 15, 2025.
“World Heritage List: Red Bay Basque Whaling Station,” UNESCO World Heritage Center, accessed March 15, 2025.
[6] Evidence that L’Anse aux Meadows was temporary is based on archeological findings. The site lacks structures for animal husbandry and suggests a predominately male workforce, with little evidence of family groups. This is reinforced by the Vinland Saga, which states the the site was predominately maintained for economic reasons, as a base for exploration and exploitation, not colonization; Wallace, 117; In relation to Red Bay, it notes that each whaling season was seen as a singular event, and no provisions were made to return the following year.
Logan, 66.
[7] Kristi Cheramie and Matthew Seibert talk extensively towards the end of this lecture about parafiction, and the difficulty of port-truth research creation work.
“Kristi Cheramie + Matthew Seibert,” UVA School of Architecture, 2019, accessed March 21, 2025, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mxSsRqkIDQU
[8] Key to the definition of critical heritage in this paper is to, “challenge [the] previous core function as a bedrock of monocultural nation-building projects, a continuation of elitist cultural canons, and as upholding Eurocentric cultural values.” The text continues, “A range of communities, defined either geographically or by cultural, social, economic, ethnic, religious, or linguistic experiences, have increasingly asserted the legitimacy of their collective identities and of their heritage as this identity’s manifestation.”
Laurajane Smith, *Uses of Heritage* (London: Routeledge, 2006) as referenced from: Tuuli Lähdesmäki, Suzie Thomas and Yujie Zhu, “Introduction. Heritage and Scale,” in *Politics of Scale: New Directions in Critical Heritage Studies*, edited by Tuuli Lähdesmäki, et al. (New York: Berghahn Books, 2019), 1-18.
[9] Christina Cameron, “UNESCO and Cultural Heritage: Unexpected Consequences,” in *A Companion to Heritage Studies*, ed. William Logan, et al. (London: Wiley, 2015), 323.
[10] Cameron, 324.
[11] Cameron, 325.
[12] Cameron, 323-24.
[13] Geneviève Susemihl, “Transnational and Transcultural Movements and World Heritage,” in *World Heritage and Cultural Diversity*, ed. Dieter Offenhäusser, et al. (Bonn: German Commission for UNESCO, 2010), 50-51.
For a critique of the UNESCO World Heritage List see: Bruno S. Frey and Lasse Steiner, “World Heritage List: Does It Make Sense?” *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 17, no. 5 (2011): 555–73.
While focused on heritage reconstruction after natural disasters, Giombini writes about an “intangible web of meaning” and articulates heritage from a local, bottoms up perspective see: Lisa Giombini, “Reconstructing Heritage: Places, Values, Attachment,” *Contemporary Aesthetics* 18 (2020): 5.
[14] Susemihl, 50.
[15] Susemihl, 50.
[16] Jorge Otero-Pailos, “The Contemporary Stamp of Incompleteness,” *Future Anterior: Journal of Historic Preservation, History, Theory, and Criticism* 1, no. 2 (2004): ii–viii.
[17] Matthew W. Wilson, *New Lines: Critical GIS and the Trouble of the Map* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 25.
[18] Kristi Cheramie, “Almost, Not Yet, and Always Archiving: Design Tactics for So Many Landscape Futures,” in *Multiplicity: On Constraint and Agency in Contemporary Architecture*, ed. Pari Riahi, et al. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2024), 129.
[19] Discussion of maps as an aggregated uniformity by: Laura Kurgan, *Close Up at a Distance: Mapping, Technology, and Politics* (Brooklyn: Zone Books, 2013) as references from: Jill Desimini, “Cartographic Grounds:

The Temporal Cases," in *Mapping Landscapes in Transformation: Multidisciplinary Methods for Historical Analysis,* ed. Thomas Coomans, et al. (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2019), 17.

[20] For a history of Viking expansion see: Peter Sawyer, "The Viking Expansion," in *The Cambridge History of Scandinavia*, ed. Knut Helle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 103–20.

[21] Dugmore, et al. note that the Norse in Greenland disappeared due to a range of factors which included conflict with the Inuit, Paleo-inuit and Thule populations. Although some trade is noted, the authors state that the Norse did not pick up any Inuit technology which would have helped them to subsist in the extreme polar environment. Andrew J. Dugmore, et al., "Norse Greenland Settlement: Reflections on Climate Change, Trade, and the Contrasting Fates or Human Settlements in the North Atlantic Islands," Arctic Anthropology 44, no. 1 (2007): 13–19. For literature related to Indigenous, and Inuit relations with Basque settlements see: Vincent Delmas, "Indigenous Traces on Basque Sites: Direct Contact or Later Reoccupation?" *Newfoundland & Labrador Studies* 33 (2018): 20-62.
Peter E. Pope, "Bretons, Basques, and Inuit in Labrador and Northern Newfoundland: The Control of Maritime Resources in the 16th and 17th Centuries," *Études/Inuit/Studies* 39, no. 1 (2015): 15–36.

[22] See map in: Brad Loewen and Vincent Delmas. "The Basques in the Gulf of St. Lawrence and Adjacent Shores," *Canadian Journal of Archaeology / Journal Canadien d'Archéologie* 36, no. 2 (2012): 215 - 226.

[23] For a mediation on the map and a history of how it might record and express time see: Stephen Boyd Davis, "History on the Line: Time as Dimension," *Design Issues* 28, no. 4 (2012): 4–17.

[24] Andre Pusey, "From Enclosure to Commoning," in *Postcapitalist Countrysides: From Commoning to Community Wealth Building,* ed. Nick Gkartzios, et al. (London: UCL Press, 2025), 43-62.

[25] Tuuli Lähdesmäki, et al. 1-18.

[26] Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Climate of History: Four Theses," *Critical Inquiry* 35, no. 2 (2009): 197–222.

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SURVIVING HERITAGE: COLONIAL HERITAGE AND COUNTER-COLONIAL MEDICINE AT KINGSTON'S PRISON FOR WOMEN

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INTRODUCTION

The administration of heritage and development in Canada contributes to the broader project of erasing the lives of criminalized people and advancing colonial logics. Meanwhile, cultural heritage that forms in resistance to colonial narratives thrives without the recognition of official heritage status. The commercial redevelopment of the Prison for Women (P4W) in Kingston/Ka'tarohkwi, Ontario is an example of a site where state administration of heritage exposes itself as serving carceral-capitalist demands.[1] In stark contrast, cultural practices (also known as "Intangible Cultural Heritage") that claim the same site as their origin are powerful sources of healing for people who survive, and continue to resist, the violence of the colonial heritage of Canada.

The Colonial History of Heritage

According to Rodney Harrison, the historical concept of heritage begins in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as part of the project of nation-building, controlled and defined by nation-states.[2] The most recent phase of heritage extends national identity to the concept of "world heritage" and the idea of "universal heritage values."[3] The original World Heritage Convention (WHC) text from 1972 is underpinned by modernist, universalizing views of heritage based on earlier Euro-American (i.e., colonial) values. Harrison claims that since 1972, the ways the WHC text has been practically applied has exposed it to constant criticism, forcing it to adapt and transform over time to incorporate a wider range of values. For example, Harrison considers how "the Indigenous critique of the separation of nature and culture" and the development of the concept of "cultural landscape" contributes to UNESCO's definition of 'intangible heritage' and the creation of the 2003 "Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage."[4] This recent understanding of "global heritage" (or the designation of "cultural assets" that belong to the "global cultural commons") accommodates an increasing number of objects and places, along with practices and the landscapes in which these take place, opening the definition of heritage to 'intangible' expressions of culture and tradition.[5] As I will demonstrate with the example of the P4W site, despite changes in the WHC notions of heritage, the earlier, more limited values associated with Euro-American narratives remain prevalent in municipal and provincial discussions of heritage as it pertains to property.

Cultural assets and the value of heritage

Intangible Cultural Heritage extends the commodification of heritage to include 'visitable' spectacle.[6] Heritage has come to designate value added as "cultural assets," like tourism, to the spaces in which intangible heritage is or was performed – protecting them from disappearing by naming them as potential generators of income.[7] While it was operational, P4W contributed to Kingston's notoriety as a destination for penal tourism, driven primarily by the Kingston Penitentiary (located just south of P4W). Molly Goddard, who was imprisoned in P4W in the 1980s, remembers with anger the realization that the city was profiting from her incarceration:

That trolly, that friggin' tourist bus, they would go in front of Prison for Women and say, "there's where we house 115 of Canada's most violent women." …The City of Kingston benefited from the tourists, right, they benefited from coming by and seeing the prison.[8]

In their critique of penal tourism, Justin Piché and Kevin Walby warn that

When captives are dehumanized, while captors are humanized in site displays and narratives, … there is a risk of producing social distance between tourists and the incarcerated …in ways that deepen public support for punitive approaches to responding to social conflicts and harms we call 'crimes.'[9]

They are referring specifically to tours of the Kingston Penitentiary, which proved immensely popular (and lucrative) after the institution was officially closed in 2013. As Goddard witnesses, however, the city has long benefited from tourism related to its designation as the "birthplace of the Correctional Service of Canada," where Canada's Penitentiary Museum is housed in the former residence of the wardens of Kingston Penitentiary. Even before P4W was designated a heritage property, and Kingston Penitentiary was designated a National Historic Site, these places (along with the people held inside) were exploited as spectacle available for profits from tourism. This exploitation of incarcerated people in support of the national narrative inflects notions of heritage, and its associated value, in decision-making about the future of (former) sites of incarceration.

Colonial Heritage Properties

Decisions made in a municipal committee meeting can have a long-standing impact on the landscape of a place, including how the public remembers its own local history. In a meeting of the Heritage Committee of the (small, Canadian) City of Kingston, September 16, 2020,[10] Mike Keene, a designer for Siderius Developments, outlined the Fotenn report – a planning rationale and community improvement plan for the Prison for Women (P4W) which had been shuttered since 2000.[11] The report seeks approval from the Heritage Committee for the developer's plan. In his presentation, Keene failed to mention any "intangible assets" such as the social history of P4W as a place where women from across Canada lived and died.[12] Instead, he spoke only to the conception of heritage values rooted in colonial notions of property, use-value, and civility, as laid out in the (provincial) Ontario Heritage Act. The Fotenn report relies on a number of settler colonial assumptions that erase and devalue the generations of prisoners whose lives are entangled with this site. It is an example of how violent tools of colonial conquest remain essential ingredients for the everyday workings of property and capital.

Site, survival, and ceremony

The report states that "for eighteen years the [prison] property has remained vacant and unused."[13] This is simply untrue. Since her release from P4W in 1989, Fran Chaisson has remained dedicated to hosting annual gatherings to honour women who died on its grounds (see Figure 1). These healing circles, which occur annually on Prisoners' Justice Day, August 10th, follow Indigenous protocol to support healing from, and resistance to, colonial violence as it is deeply intertwined with carceral

power and capitalism. They are powerful gatherings for people who are living with the wounds of carceral experience and with the grief of having lost loved ones to colonial violence. Fran says,

I felt obligated to do these healing circles right at the prison right in front of the doors. And it's always been that way … It feels really good just to know that the people in circle are there for the same reason we're all there: to remember the women that died in the Prison for Women.[14]

Hundreds of people with prison experience have gathered with their friends, family and supporters on the lands of the former prison, to speak the names of those whose lives were lost and to foster their connections with one another. Throughout the year, women visit the site to remember, pay respects, and offer prayers and tobacco for their "fallen sisters."[15] The site of P4W is active and alive with the spirits of its survivors. According to the Canadian Commission for United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) includes (but is not limited to) oral traditions and expression (including storytelling and song), social practices, rituals, events and ceremony,[16] all activities which flourish on and in relation to the site of P4W but are never mentioned in the developer's rationale.

Figure 1. From Tightwire *23, no. 2, (1989).*[17]

COLONIAL STORYTELLING

Instead of acknowledging the authority of those with lived experience, the Fotenn report focuses on the designation of the P4W property as a heritage site according to the Ontario Heritage Act, which acknowledges the building's possession of "cultural heritage value in in all three categories: physical/design value, historical associative value, and contextual value."[18] The absence of any mention of intangible cultural heritage considerations reveals the paucity of heritage designation rubrics and their exclusion of certain communities from consideration.

Physical heritage attributes

For example, "physical/design value" is represented by elements of "interior heritage attributes" which are no longer "functional" and now have value as objects for "display in the Prison Museum or integration in the Kingston Penitentiary tours."[19] In other words, the elements of the site that reference its history as a place of confinement are now made useful to the tourism economy. The Fotenn Report (in accordance with the Ontario Heritage Act) measures the value of these "heritage elements" as objects of learning and fascination for a community who engages in carceral tourism – people who have time and interest to engage with both the museum industry and (a representation of) the carceral industrial complex by their own free will. Nowhere does the report refer to another community of people who have direct experience of these architectural elements as material parts of the apparatus that has held their bodies captive and played a direct role in taking the spiritual, psychological, and corporeal lives of people they love.

A cell with a view

Absurdly, the Fotenn Report represents the "contextual values" of the P4W site as the "views towards Portsmouth Olympic Harbour and Portsmouth Village and as part of a cultural heritage landscape of prison life within Kingston."[20] These "views" do not reflect the perspectives of the thousands of people who were imprisoned on this site from 1934 to 2000. Again, this foregrounds the open secret that the community at stake in the report is limited to those who can afford to buy a room with a view, painting a sickening picture of what "a cultural heritage landscape of prison life within Kingston" means to the developer. The Fotenn report's interpretation of "contextual values" only makes sense if prisoners are erased from cultural heritage, and from the site itself, like so much toxic soil that also, according to the Report, must be eradicated from the yard of the former prison to make it suitable for public use.

Valuable bodies

The multiple references in the Report to the rehabilitation of "environmentally compromised land"[21] and "the remediation of soils or groundwater" on the grounds of P4W, given that the "vacant, contaminated lands may present health and safety issues to the public"[22] points yet again to the absence of former prisoners from the developer's conception of "the public," "the community," or even humanity. If the lands pose a potential health hazard now, with no recent activities involving industry, dumping, or other forms of contamination, then does this not mean that people who once regularly played baseball, jogged, gardened and visited with family in the prison yard did so on contaminated soil?[23] The persistent calls in the Report for financial assistance to assess and clean the site as an act of community improvement expose the prison as a site unfit for human habitation. The only way one could tolerate the confinement of thousands of people to this building over 66 years of its operation, when it does not meet "minimum occupancy standards,"[24] is if one does not apply the same standards to their well-being as one does to other members of the public.[25] Occupancy standards are only up for consideration now that there is a proposal to transform the grounds and building into living spaces conducive to the demand of bodies who participate in the market exchange of property.

COUNTER-COLONIAL STORYTELLING

In a gathering at P4W on August 10th, 2020, about thirty of us form a circle. We pass a bundle of papers around the circle and take turns reading aloud the names of hundreds of people who have died in prisons across Canada, including the names of seven women, six of whom were Indigenous, who died while at the Prison for Women in 1988-1991 and are intimately remembered by people present in the circle. A small group concludes the ceremony by singing the Strong Women's Song. We gather on

the grass under the Black Pine and people who spent time at P4W tell stories about their experiences. Fran Chaisson shares her story of the Strong Women's Song:
That song, always was and always will be, it's a song for the P4W women. It's about and for them ... I don't think there's one woman that's ever been inside that hasn't sung it or heard it.[26]

Anthem of collective memory

The Strong Women's Song's legacy has spread across Turtle Island, sung at ceremonies, gatherings, demonstrations, in courtrooms, on stages and in the streets. Most significantly, it has become an "anthem" for the hundreds of Indigenous women who have gone missing or been found murdered.[27] The song was performed at events across Canada in association with the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) and appears numerous times in the transcripts of hearings contributing to the Final Report (2019).[28] For example, in a public hearing for MMIWG held in Moncton, New Brunswick, after the hearing had been officially adjourned, the final official transcription of the hearing reads "CROWD GATHERS AROUND FAMILY FOR THE STRONG WOMEN'S SONG."[29]

"A song for all those who need it"

Michelle Robinson, National Vice-Chair of Membership and Organization for the Indigenous Peoples Commission and witness for MMIWG, refers to the song in the transcript of her public hearing for the MMIWG inquiry recorded in Calgary, Alberta. She says:
I sang the Strong Women's Song in the court and that felt pretty good. And I just – it's a song for all those who need it and call upon it. And it came from the Kingston Prison for Women which was considered a dungeon. … I was re-gifted the rights to sing that song at a gathering at Vancouver's Downtown Eastside.
Gaining the rights to sing that song is important to all Indigenous people because we have to tell our stories and the rights of how we can sing that song before singing. So I sang that song thinking of Janel [Squirrel] being forced into her last moments of this world... that song helped. It's supposed to help us heal, and I sang it and it felt good to sing it. [30]
The history of this song is passed on not just orally but through intimate relationships. The rights to sing the song are gifted to individuals through direct relation with the song's story, life and power, which is carried by living voices. As Nancy Stevens notes, the song originated at the site of P4W and "emerged as a way of staying alive,"[31] as a counter-narrative to the prison narrative, as a form of women's empowerment and Indigenous resurgence. The song is medicine that was created as a way of supporting each other in that hell hole. Many women in P4W lost their lives because of the horrendous conditions there. We sing this song to honour them, and all women.[32]
Counter to the colonial narrative, the song remembers a tradition of resistance and resilience. The song itself does not need heritage status designated by the World Heritage Convention to be preserved in collective memory.

"Creating opportunities for healing"

The MMIWG report refers to the necessity of song, ceremony, and relationships for processes of healing. In the report, the value of cultural heritage, grounded in Indigenous kinship and tradition, is directly bound to its role in "creating opportunities for healing."[33] In an interview with lawyer Myrna McCallum, Chief Commissioner of the MMIWG Inquiry Marion Buller recalls how necessary ceremony and song were for everyone involved in the Inquiry process: "at the end of every day, we had a drumming circle and singing… and that was to get rid of, as much as we could, the pain and the hurt – all the vicarious trauma."[34] The "intangible cultural value" of the Strong Women's Song is not

its "asset" as spectacle, nor its property as belonging to the "world cultural commons" – the Strong Women's Song is medicine that belongs to a community of resilient survivors of colonialism and contributes to the long process of healing.

CLEANSING HISTORY, SELECTING HERITAGE

According to the Fotenn report, the P4W site is contaminated, indeed "stigmatized… due to the challenging history surrounding the experiences and events which took place within the Prison for Women."[35] The developer's solution to the site's stigma is to remove contaminants – erase all witnesses and tangible or intangible evidence of the prison's "challenging history." The Fotenn report amounts to a proposal to cleanse Canadian history of a "challenging" carceral-colonial past and present by focusing on a conception of heritage designed to uphold the same colonial values. The erasure of heritage associated with the stories of survivors is part of the Canadian state's denial of its historical investment in the violence of the carceral industrial complex and its ongoing role in colonial oppression.

Creating collective forgetting

In an article about the status of so-called "Residential Schools"[36] in Canada and the various methods under consideration for the transformation, destruction, or preservation of "this dissonant piece of our built heritage," Geoffrey Carr suggests that the government's repeated denial of applications to designate the institutions as heritage or national historic sites amounts to extending "the foundational logic and culture of silence upon which these places were erected."[37] In other words, acknowledging these sites of incarceration as part of Canadian heritage would be to recognize cultural genocide as an integral strategy of the Canadian colonial project. The same logic applies to P4W: to acknowledge the experiences of people imprisoned at this place amounts to acknowledging the inextricable relationship between carceral violence, colonial oppression, and the development of the nation state of Canada.

In Harrison's critique of heritage, he warns that just as conservation contributes to collective remembering, the removal of or refusal to value cultural traces is an active process of creating collective forgetting. If the intangible heritage of P4W contributes to its cultural value as a site of what Harrison calls "'dark,' 'dissonant,' or 'conflict' heritage,"[38] like other sites that memorialize the overthrow of political regimes or architectures of genocide, for example, then it would be incompatible with Canada's version of history, and worthless to a real estate developer.

CONCLUSION

According to the Canadian Commission for UNESCO, Intangible Cultural Heritage is important because of its role in the promotion of "tolerance, peace and reconciliation; fostering community and individual well-being; [and] promoting human rights and sustainable development."[39] The process of choosing which heritage values to uphold and which to ignore is a power given to the municipality, the state, and their capital interests. This includes the power to include or exclude peoples and cultures from consideration within the colonial state's definitions of "reconciliation," "heritage" and "sustainable development." Neither inclusion in nor exclusion from a definition of heritage is satisfying from a counter-colonial perspective, since, as Dene scholar Glen Coulthard has shown, recognition by the state is a colonial strategy of assimilation that denies Indigenous sovereignty on its own terms.[40] However, to understand the prison as a site of 'conflict heritage' enmeshed with the colonial project of Canada, and represent it as such, is a step toward the collective remembering of the ongoing violence of colonial occupation. As Harrison writes, "It is only through active engagement with the present that we can produce the collective memories that will bind us to the future."[41]

Community members who hold first-hand knowledge of P4W and continue to occupy the site and share their experiences of inside the prison, passing on the memories of those who died within the prison system, have been making their presence known and actively seeking the support of the City of Kingston, the Heritage Committee, and the developer to share their valuable cultural knowledge with the broader public.[42] This generous offer of Intangible Heritage Value is a gift that those invested in the development of the P4W site cannot, spiritually, afford to ignore. As elder Joey Twins warns, the survivors of P4W are not victims any longer[43] and they have a healing medicine more powerful than the "cultural assets" of colonial heritage:

Maamawi. . .mashkogaabawiyang
Together we stand strong[44]

NOTES

[1] P4W was ascribed “cultural heritage value” in 2008 under the Ontario Heritage Act. See: P4W Memorial Collective, “A Brief History of the Prison for Women (P4W),” *P4W memorial Collective website*, December 6, 2023. Accessed August 20, 2024. www.p4wmemorialcollective.com/2023/12/06/a-brief-history-p4w/.
[2] Rodney Harrison, *Heritage: Critical Approaches* (Routledge, 2013), 114.
[3] Harrison, *Heritage,* 114.
[4] Harrison, *Heritage,* 118.
[5] Currently, UNESCO lists a total of 730 elements (from 145 participating countries). This list is expanded every year when the Committee of States Parties to the Convention meets to review proposals. See: Canadian Commission for UNESCO, “Understanding Intangible Cultural Heritage,” October 10, 2019, https://en.ccunesco.ca/blog/2019/10/understanding-intangible-cultural-heritage.
[6] Harrison, *Heritage,* 115.
[7] Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage.* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998). Cited in Harrison, *Heritage*, 114.
[8] Helen Margaret Goddard (Molly), Anishinaabe, Moose Clan. Quoted in Sara Wylie, director, *The Garden Collective* (Kingston: 2019), film. (22:27).
[9] Justin Piché and Kevin Walby, “Kingston Penitentiary tours send wrong message,” *Toronto Star* (June 13, 2016),https://www.thestar.com/opinion/commentary/2016/06/13/kingston-penitentiary-tours-send-wrong-message.html.
[10] I attended this meeting on behalf of the P4W Memorial Collective (P4WMC) to gather information about the City and Developer’s intentions for the site of the former Prison for Women and advocate for P4WMC to have a voice at the table. This experience influenced an article I wrote in collaboration with members from P4WMC which is the original inspiration for this paper. See: Hadley Howes and members of P4W Memorial Collective, “Developers and City of Kingston Aim to Erase Memory of the Prison for Women,” *Spring Magazine*, February 6, 2021, https://springmag.ca/developers-and-city-of-kingston-aim-to-erase-memory-of-the-prison-for-women.
[11] FOTENN Planning + Design, *Planning Rationale CIP Development: 40 Sir John A. MacDonald Blvd,* prepared for Siderius Development Ltd., Kingston: September 25, 2018.
[12] Introducing Keene’s presentation, Andrea Gummo (Manager, City Planning) mentioned the importance of recognizing the value of both the material and “intangible assets” of heritage sites when assessing developers’ requests to make changes to local “properties,” which include (former) sites of confinement. (See: “Heritage Committee of the City of Kingston Meeting,” online, September 16, 2020, Kingston, ON.)
[13] Piché and Walby, “Kingston Penitentiary tours.”
[14] Fran Chaisson, “interview,” November 25, 2020, video, private collection of Lisa Guenther, Kingston, ON.
[15] The term “fallen sisters” is commonly used by people with lived experience in the P4W Memorial Collective when speaking of the seven women who died at the prison in the years 1988-1991. See David Rockne Corrigan, “Honouring the ‘fallen sisters‘ of Kingston’s shuttered Prison for Women,” *tvo today*, tvo.org, August 10, 2018. https://www.tvo.org/article/honouring-the-fallen-sisters-of-kingstons-shuttered-prison-for-women; and Ian MacAlpine, “Garden Would Honour ‘Fallen Sisters,’” *Sprucegroveexaminer*, July 18, 2018, https://www.sprucegroveexaminer.com/news/local-news/garden-would-honour-fallen-sisters.
[16] Canadian Commission for UNESCO, “Understanding Intangible Cultural Heritage.”
[17] The journal *Tightwire* was published and edited by people imprisoned at P4W from 1974-1994. Image: “Prison Justice Day,” *Tightwire* 23, no. 2, (1989), public domain.
[18] FOTENN, *Planning Rationale*, 27.
[19] FOTENN, *Planning Rationale,* 14.
[20] FOTENN, *Planning Rationale,* 28.
[21] FOTENN, *Planning Rationale,* 12.
[22] FOTENN, *Planning Rationale,* 12.
[23] These concerns were brought to the author’s attention by Ann Hansen, formerly imprisoned at P4W and member of the P4W Memorial Collective.
[24] FOTENN, *Planning Rationale,* 11. One of the criteria for new Community Improvement Plans that the Rationale highlights is the “the presence of building stock or housing units that do not meet minimum occupancy standards as set forth in the City’s Property Standards By-law.”
[25] An oft quoted statement by the MacGuigan Commission from 1977 echoes these unequal standards writing that P4W is “unfit for bears, much less for women.” See: “Regional Facilities for Women Offenders 1995,” *Correctional Service Canada*, n.d., website, https://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/text/pblct/rht-drt/14-eng.shtml

[26] Fran Chaisson, “Untitled,” August 10, 2020, audio recording, private collection of the author, Kingston, ON.
[27] Myrna McCallum, host, “Indigenous Women and Girls Continue to Call for Justice: A Conversation with Chief Commissioner Marion Buller,” *The Trauma-Informed Lawyer,* podcast, June 7, 2021.
[28] National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, *Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls,* Canada, 2019. Web Archive. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <www.loc.gov/item/lcwaN0028038/>.
[29] Barbara Bernard et al., “Truth-Gathering Process Part 1 Public Hearings Volume 45(a),” National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, February 14, 2014, 57.
[30] Michelle Robinson and Bonnie George, *National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Truth-Gathering Process Part 1 Statement Gathering*, vol. 582, (Holiday Inn Airport, Calgary, AB: 2018), 33.
[31] Nancy Stevens, “Strong Women’s Song,” Ojibwe.net, https://ojibwe.net/songs/traditional/strong-womens-song/, 2016.
[32] Stevens, “Strong Women’s Song.”
[33] “We have been honoured with the support of Elders and Knowledge Keepers across the nation who offered their guidance, knowledge, wisdom, prayers, traditions, and ceremonies to the National Inquiry at our hearings, statement-gathering events and other community events. In sitting with us, tending to the qulliq and sacred fires, offering ceremonies, songs, prayers, and words of wisdom, you have helped us navigate through the very challenging task of engaging in a legal inquiry process, while incorporating distinctive First Nations, Inuit, and Métis cultures, languages, spirituality, and creating opportunities for healing. You remind us that every step in our process had to be with heartfelt intention and purpose and grounded in relationships and reciprocity.” *Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.* Canada, 2019, 3. Web Archive. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <www.loc.gov/item/lcwaN0028038/>.
[34] Marion Buller qtd. in McCallum, “Indigenous Women and Girls Continue to Call for Justice.”
[35] FOTENN, *Planning Rationale,* 14
[36] Erica Violet Lee, “Yes, the term Indian ‘residential school’ or ‘boarding school’ is inadequate, despite the fact that many of us understand schools themselves to be violent institutions of assimilation and colonization. These ‘residential/day schools’ were prisons. They were forced labour camps.” *Twitter*, June 26, 2021, 8:01 PM, https://twitter.com/ericavioletlee/status/1408938409712750594.
[37] Geoffrey Carr, “Educating Memory: Regarding the Remnants of the Indian Residential School,” *Journal of Social Science and Culture,* vol. 34, no. 2 (2009): 97-8.
[38] Harrison, *Heritage,* 167.
[39] Canadian Commission for UNESCO, “Understanding Intangible Cultural Heritage.”
[40] Coulthard also warns that, “colonial recognition politics serves the imperatives of capitalist accumulation by *appearing* to address its colonial history through symbolic acts of redress … thus off-loading Canada’s responsibility to address structural injustices that continue to inform our settler-colonial present.” Glen Coulthard, *Red Skin White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014): 155.
[41] Harrison, *Heritage,* 202-3.
[42] In this paper I focus on the Strong Women’s Song as a powerful collective memorial practice instead of the Memorial Garden proposed by P4WMC, which is also a grassroots heritage project, because the song is protected by Indigenous protocols from co-option by Civilizational (colonial, racial, capitalist) forces while the Garden is not (for more about the Memorial Garden and the P4W Memorial Collective, see: P4W Memorial Collective, “Memorial Garden,” *P4W memorial Collective website*. Accessed July 26, 2025, www.p4wmemorialcollective.com/memorial-garden/). Now that the developer has committed to including the Memorial Garden (proposed and designed by P4WMC and the reason I attended the meeting in 2020) in the Union Park development (what it has named the grounds of the former site of P4W), it uses it as a selling point for the “live-work-play-age” community, adopting the “healing garden” into its image of caring capitalism while maintaining control of the property (see: Union Park Kingston, “Our Vision,” Unionparkkingston, website, accessed August 26, 2024, https://unionparkkingston.ca/vision). This focus on the P4WMC healing garden still avoids naming the site as one of “conflict heritage” (see: Harrison, *Heritage,* 202-3).
[43] Qtd. in Wylie, *The Garden Collective.* Joey Twins is documented by Wylie playing the drum and singing the Strong Women’s Song on the lawn of P4W where she is also interviewed by Wylie about her experience inside the prison.
[44] First words of the Strong Women’s Song, (translated from the original Ode’min Kwe Singers). Stevens, “Strong Women’s Song.”

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DIGITAL PERPETUATION OF INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE: A CROSS-CULTURAL COMPUTATIONAL ANALYSIS OF ACUPUNCTURE AND MOXIBUSTION DISCOURSE ON SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

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INTRODUCTION

Over recent decades, traditional and complementary medicine have garnered increasing global attention, moving from the periphery of healthcare discourse to a more central position in the public's discussions about holistic well-being.[1] Among these, Chinese medicine, with its intricate theoretical foundations and millennia-old history, stands as one of the most prominent and widely practiced systems outside its cultural origin.[2] Now it has been recognized worldwide as a living, evolving tradition that continues to serve the health needs of millions worldwide.[3] Besides, its integration into national healthcare systems in multiple countries and its growing body of scientific research have also underscored its significance as a major global cultural and medical practice.[4]

Within the broad spectrum of Chinese medicine, acupuncture and moxibustion (A&M) have achieved particular international adoption and recognition. Acupuncture refers to the practice of inserting fine needles into specific points on the body to alleviate pain or treat various health conditions.[5] Its efficacy, especially in pain management, has been supported by a growing number of clinical studies, yielding endorsements from institutions like the World Health Organization (WHO) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH).[6] Moxibustion, often accompanying acupuncture, refers to the therapy involving the burning of mugwort (Artemisia vulgaris) on or near the skin's surface to warm and invigorate the flow of Qi.[7] A&M has recently drawn wide attention from practitioners, patients, researchers, etc. To map the global discourse of this practice, the present study undertakes a systematic computational analysis of A&M-related conversations across digital platforms.

Social media platforms now serve as the primary places for people to seek information, form communities, and express opinions.[8] Unlike traditional media or official promotional channels, the unsolicited discussions on social media, including personal testimonials, anecdotal experiences, questions and debates, offer an unfiltered reflection of public attitudes towards these practices.[9] Therefore, it provides an authentic window into public sentiment regarding A&M. At the same time, the information flown on these platforms, regardless of its origin, accuracy, or quality, exerts a profound influence on user perceptions and understanding.[10] Therefore, learning how A&M is discussed on social media is essential for us to learn its digital representation, identify gaps in public knowledge, and then develop strategies for its sustainability as a valued intangible cultural heritage.

This current study seeks to employ a computational approach to provide a broad, comparative portrait of A&M discourse across two major yet culturally distinct social media platforms: the Western discussion platform Reddit and the Chinese question-and-answer platform Zhihu. By analyzing a large corpus of posts from these platforms, we aim to move beyond isolated case studies to identify more macro-level trends by examining differences in thematic emphasis, sentiment, and framing devices between these two digital communities. By using natural language processing techniques, we examine differences in thematic focus, emotional tone, and discursive framing between these two platforms.

METHOD

Data Collection

To gather data on public perceptions of A&M, we sourced text from two online platforms: the international forum Reddit and the Chinese knowledge-sharing platform Zhihu. We queried both platforms using a combination of English ("Chinese Medicine", "TCM") and Chinese ("中医", "中药", "中医药") search terms to retrieve relevant discussion threads. Our collection method involved scraping all questions matching these terms and then aggregating every associated reply, following a precedent set in prior literature. This initial data crawl produced a raw collection of 10,074 items (7,434 from Reddit and 2,700 from Zhihu). Subsequently, we performed manual data cleaning to ensure the integrity of our dataset. After this filtering process, we established a finalized dataset of 9,713 comments (Reddit: 7,031; Zhihu: 2,682) ready for analysis.

Topic Modeling

To identify and extract latent thematic structures from our corpus, we employed topic modeling using the BERTopic framework. Specifically, we leveraged the all-MiniLM-L12-v2 pre-trained sentence-transformers model to generate dense vector embeddings of our texts. We selected the BERTopic model since it represents a current best practice in the field, offering several key advantages over traditional methods (e.g., LDA).

Sentiment Analysis

To perform sentiment analysis on our corpus of user-generated text, we employed a pre-trained multilingual model.[11] Note that the A&M corpus is characterized by an abundance of specialized terminology and unique expressions that are often misclassified by models trained on generic data. To mitigate this inherent bias and ensure the analytical validity of our results, we implemented two optimizations to the model's framework.

We firstly refined the model's input to provide essential domain-specific context by carefully crafted instructional prompts pre-pended to each text segment, "You are a professional assistant for sentiment analysis of traditional Chinese medicine. Please analyze the sentiment tendency of the following A&M-related texts, paying special attention to the professional terms within the A&M context." The second optimization step involves the structure of the model's output. The original five-class sentiment schema ("very negative", "negative", "neutral", "positive", "very positive") was identified as suboptimal for our dataset. Given the relatively focused nature of A&M discourse and the potential for data sparsity across five divided categories, maintaining this granularity risked fragmenting the data, reducing statistical power, and introducing noise.

RESULTS

Word	frequency	Word	frequency
herb	1,947	patient	527
qi	1,013	yang	522
body	915	symptom	514
acupuncture	865	deficiency	477
blood	683	liver	477
practitioner	657	treatment	473
yin	628	pain	384
feel	559	cold	371
heat	550	water	343
formula	534	spleen	321

Table 1. Frequency of Top 20 Word for Reddit platform.

Word	frequency	Word	frequency
治疗	5,210	作用	2,111
西医	3,569	临床	2,009
疾病	3,060	针灸	1,938
问题	3,060	学习	1,906
人体	2,622	医学	1,866
气血	2,584	患者	1,848
医生	2,420	科学	1,769
身体	2,377	穴位	1,725
方法	2,321	刮痧	1,708
医院	2,230	养生	1,700

Table 2. Frequency of Top 20 Word for Zhihu platform.

Topic Modeling

The optimal number of topics (K) was determined through a combination of quantitative metrics and subjective assessment. As illustrated in Figures 3 and 4, the coherence score, which measures the semantic similarity of words within topics, reached its maximum for both models at K=3. It suggests this value yields the most interpretable topic clusters. Furthermore, the rate of improvement in perplexity, a measure of model predictive power, diminished significantly beyond this point. Given the convergence of high coherence, marginal perplexity gains, and clear interpretability, K=3 was selected as the most appropriate number of topics for the final analysis.

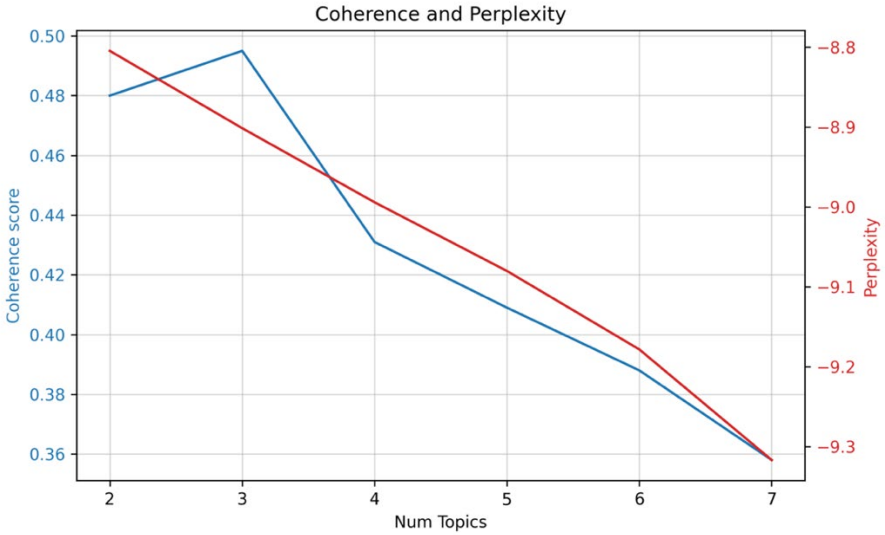

Figure 1. Coherence & Perplexity for Reddit.

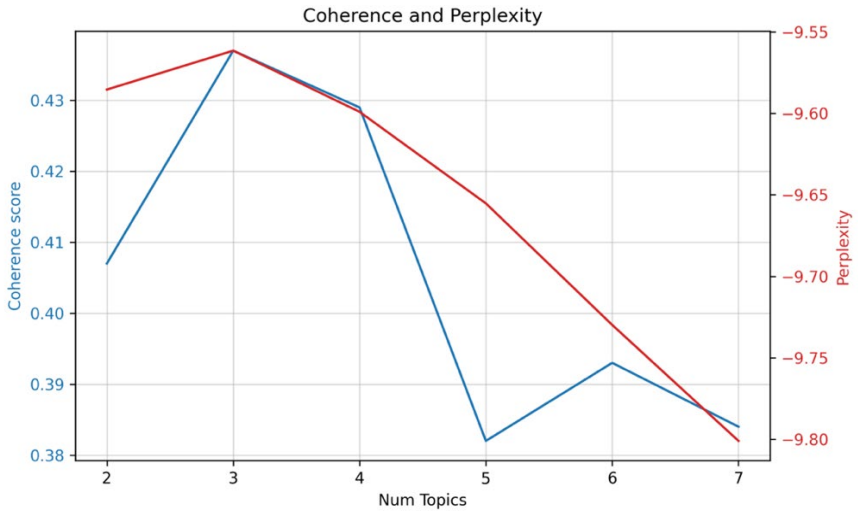

Figure 2. Coherence & Perplexity for Zhihu.

The topic modeling analysis revealed three primary themes of discussion within the online A&M community on Reddit. The largest and most central theme is "Diagnosis, Treatment, and Health Preservation" (69%), which encompasses core A&M practices, as indicated by high-frequency words related to therapeutic methods ("acupuncture", "formula") and A&M-specific diagnostic principles ("symptom", "qi", "deficiency"). A second, distinct theme labeled "Qigong and Health Practice" (17%) focuses on the practice and professional aspects of Qigong, blending terms about its learning process ("qigong", "book", "practice") with those concerning its professional integration ("science", "career", "school"). Finally, the smallest theme, "Creative Sharing" (13%), captures the community's informal and social dimension, where words like "link", "moxa", and "sharing" denote the exchange of content, and terms such as "awesome" and "nan" contribute to a lighthearted, community-driven tone that blends A&M with personal interaction and humor.

Topic	Key words	Proportion
Diagnosis, Treatment, and Health Preservation	Herb, acupuncture, body, formula, practitioner symptom, qi, deficiency, heat, feel	69%
Qigong and Health Practice	Qigong, book, qi, practice, school, books, practitioner, science, career, read	17%
Moxibustion and Creative Sharing	Link, moxa, awesome, sharing, luck, nan, idea, answer	13%

Table 3. Topic Modeling results for Reddit.

For Zhihu, the predominant theme is the "Comparison between A&M and Western Medicine (86%)". This primary discourse explores diagnostic and treatment processes within clinical settings, utilizing fundamental A&M terms like "qi-blood" and "human body" to critically contrast the procedural approaches and clinical outcomes of the two medical systems. A significantly smaller yet distinct theme is "Preventive Medicine and Traditional Health Preservation" (8%). This theme shifts the focus from clinical treatment to personal wellness, emphasizing the regulation of bodily functions through daily practices like diet and self-care, rooted in the management of core A&M substances such as "qi-blood" and "body fluids" (jinye). Finally, the most niche theme, "Characteristic Therapies of A&M" (6%), zooms in on the application and efficacy of external techniques like cupping and gua sha, analyzing their mechanism of action on surface tissues from a comparative perspective and highlighting their unique clinical value in addressing physical ailments.

Topic	Key words	Proportion
Preventive Medicine and Traditional Health Preservation	fluid, Qi and Blood, health, diet, food, treatment	8%
Characteristic Therapies of A&M	cupping, skin, Gua Sha, body, therapy, problem	6%
Comparison between TCM and Western Medicine	Western medicine, disease, doctor, hospital, function	86%

Table 4. Topic Modeling results for Zhihu.

The discussions on Reddit and Zhihu show great differences. On Reddit, topics like "Diagnosis, Treatment, and Health Preservation" (69%) focus on A&M's core theories and practices, while Zhihu's dominant topic is "Comparison between A&M and Western Medicine" (86%). We speculate that the difference may stem from two reasons. First, Reddit's international user base, often with a general interest in A&M's unique concepts, drives exploration of its traditional theories (e.g., qi, acupuncture). In contrast, Zhihu's predominantly Chinese audience, immersed in a medical landscape where TCM and Western medicine coexist, naturally compares the two systems in clinical and practical scenarios. Second, while Reddit encourages niche, in-depth dives into specific themes (like Qigong practice); Zhihu, as a Chinese platform, fosters discussions rooted in local medical realities, where integrating or contrasting TCM with Western medicine is common due to China's medical system context.

Sentiment Analysis

As shown in Figures 5 and 6, on Reddit, the cross-distribution analysis of topics and sentiments revealed that around 60% of posts across all topics conveyed a neutral sentiment. Notably, within the "Diagnosis, Treatment, and Health Preservation" category, posts exhibited a marginally higher

proportion of negative sentiment when compared to other topics. On Zhihu, 90% of posts displayed a neutral sentiment across the three identified topics.

It is understandable that, for Reddit users, A&M is often a "foreign" or "alternative" medical system. When discussing "Diagnosis, Treatment, and Health Preservation", if users encounter concepts that are difficult to understand (such as "qi", "Yin-Yang balance") or therapeutic effects that are not in line with their expectations, it may lead to negative emotions. For example, some Western users may find it hard to accept the concept of "qi" in TCM theory, and if they have had unsuccessful experiences with A&M treatments, they are more likely to express doubts or dissatisfaction in related posts. In contrast, Zhihu functions as a knowledge-sharing platform with a strong emphasis on rational discussion. Users often turn to it to seek objective information, exchange professional insights, or have in-depth academic style conversations about A&M. When discussing topics such as "Preventive Medicine and Traditional Health Preservation" or "Characteristic Therapies of TCM", they tend to present facts, experiences, and professional viewpoints in a calm, objective manner. For example, in discussions about TCM therapies like cupping or *Guasha*, users may focus on sharing operational methods, clinical effects, and scientific verification, rather than expressing extreme emotional positions.

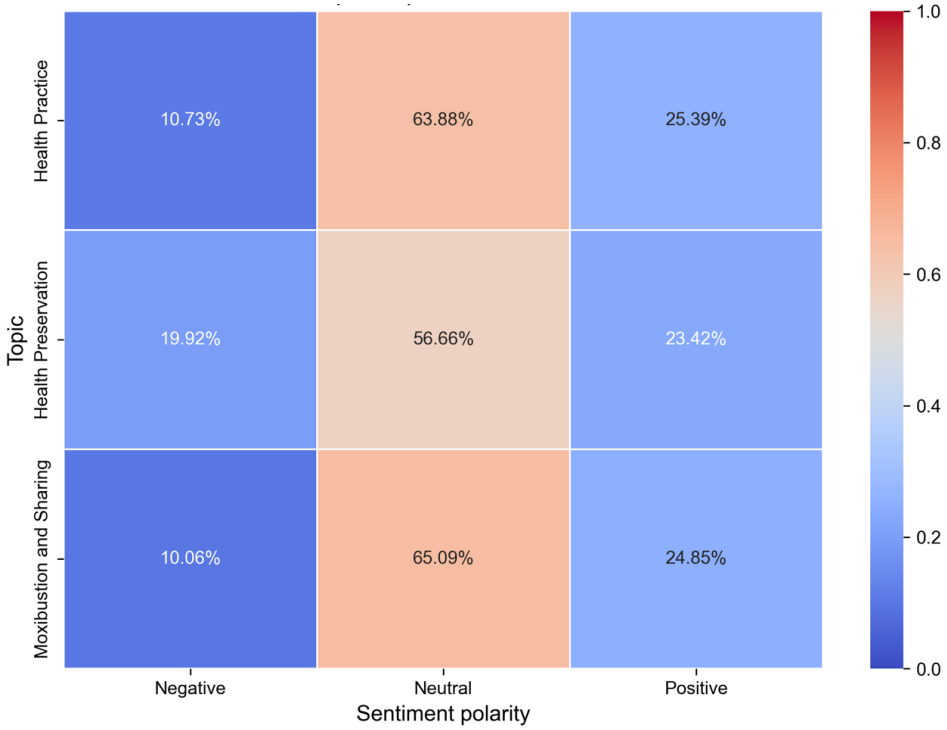

Figure 5. The heatmap of topic-sentiment distribution for Reddit.

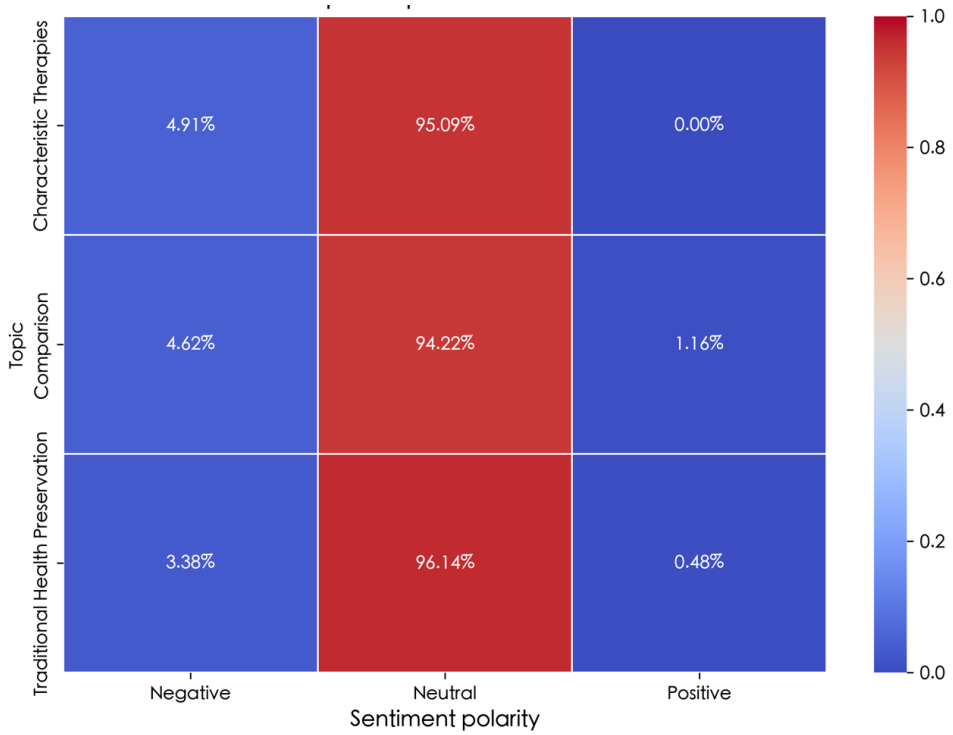

Figure 6. The heatmap of topic-sentiment distribution for Zhihu.

DISCUSSION

This study employed a computational approach to map and compare the discourse surrounding A&M across the international platform Reddit and the Chinese platform Zhihu. The analysis revealed divergences in how A&M is conceptualized and discussed in at least three areas. Specifically, the examination of high-frequency words indicated that Reddit's lexicon was deeply rooted in the unique, internal theory of A&M itself, with words like "herb," "qi," and "yin-yang" indicating an audience exploring A&M as a distinct alternative medical system. In contrast, Zhihu's vocabulary, including "治疗" (treatment), "西医" (Western medicine), and "疾病" (disease), framed A&M within a modern, comparative medical dialogue. Finally, sentiment analysis revealed that Reddit exhibited some extent of negative sentiment within treatment discussions, potentially reflecting the challenges of engaging with a culturally foreign system, while Zhihu discourse was neutral (90%), indicating a knowledge-sharing platform focused on rational and academic exchange.

Implications of Topic Modeling and Sentiment Analysis Results

The differences observed between these two platforms regading A&M may carry profound implication regarding the cultural positioning of TCM. Specifically, we argue that the definition of TCM is very context-dependent. In the West, it is often constructed as a complementary/alternative medicine (CAM), valued for its difference. In its country of origin, it is constructed as a form of national medicine that must constantly prove its modern relevance and scientific worth against a global biomedical standard.[12] Second, we argue that the observed differences cannot be attributed to culture alone; they may be amplified and shaped by the distinct architectures and intended audiences of the two digital platforms. Specifically, Reddit's structure fosters niche, community-driven exploration. Organized into subreddits (e.g., r/TraditionalChineseMedicine, r/ChineseMedicine, r/acupuncture), it allows for the formation of echo chambers where enthusiasts, practitioners, and patients can dive deep into specific interests away from mainstream scrutiny.

In contrast, Zhihu is designed as a knowledge-sharing and opinion-forming platform for a broad, educated domestic audience.[13] Its core function is Q&A, which naturally fosters comparative, analytical, and often debate-driven discourse. Users are not necessarily self-selected TCM enthusiasts; they are students, professionals, and curious individuals seeking information and opinion within a Chinese socio-cultural context.

Lastly, the sentiment analysis results provide a crucial emotional dimension to these findings. We found that the sentiment within Reddit's treatment-related discussions is marginally negative. For many Western users, TCM is a complex, foreign system encountered without the deep cultural scaffolding that explains its concepts. This distance can lead to frustration, misunderstanding, and unmet expectations. Conversely, Zhihu's overwhelming neutral sentiment is a direct function of cultural familiarity and platform norms. For Chinese users, TCM is a part of their cultural heritage and daily life. They debate its merits not from a place of foundational unfamiliarity, but from a place of ingrained knowledge. The discussion is therefore more analytical and less emotional. Furthermore, Zhihu's culture values objective, rational discourse. Users are incentivized to provide balanced, evidence-based (or tradition-based) answers rather than emotional testimonials.[14]

Study Limitations

Several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the findings are based on data from only two digital platforms. Although Reddit and Zhihu are highly representative of international and domestic Chinese discourse respectively, they do not capture the full spectrum of A&M discussions online. Second, despite our efforts to optimize the pre-trained models through prompt engineering and sentiment category consolidation, inherent biases remain. Finally, this study focused on macro-level discourse patterns and did not account for the demographic variables of users (e.g., age, gender, professional background as a patient or practitioner).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study seeks to contribute a novel, data-driven framework for understanding the cross-cultural transmission of traditional knowledge systems in the digital age. It moves beyond anecdotal evidence to provide a macroscopic map of how A&M is perceived, debated, and valued across cultural boundaries. We observed that digital discourse around A&M is not monolithic but is profoundly shaped by cultural context and platform ecology.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This research was supported by the Philosophy and Social Sciences Program of Guizhou Province, China [Grant Number 21GZGX24], under the project "The Communication of Traditional Chinese Medicine Culture on New Media."

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CHOREOGRAPHING CULTURAL HERITAGE: DANCE, FESTIVALS, AND STATE-IDENTITIES IN KHAJURAHO, INDIA

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INTRODUCTION

The Khajuraho Dance Festival in India commemorated its fiftieth anniversary in February 2024. The cultural event is hosted annually within the temple premises of the Khajuraho Group of Monuments, a UNESCO World Heritage Site (WHS).[1] This paper aims to elucidate that the Dance Festival was inaugurated in 1975, while the Temple Monuments were subsequently inscribed as a WHS by UNESCO in 1986, eleven years after the festival's debut. I surmise that the traction following the launch of the dance festival positively influenced the global recognition of the heritage and touristic value of the monuments. The Khajuraho Dance Festival, despite its long-standing reputation, has not received much critical scholarly attention.[2] This essay will unpack what is deemed as "heritage" within Khajuraho, and additionally emphasize that the tangible and intangible heritage of/at Khajuraho are not discrete concepts; instead, they interact, intersect, and impact each other repeatedly, as evidenced in the festival settings.

The following paper is divided into four sections: The first contextualizes the site of Khajuraho in India. The second offers a framework for imagining dance within Khajuraho, chiefly in relation to the archaeological monument of the temples. The third expands on the dance festival set-up to suggest how cultural heritage is advanced using the festival choreographies.[3] The fourth raises critical questions about the ambivalence of heritage in Khajuraho. It concludes by drawing an example of how heritage is continually reproduced, thereby allowing such categories to be reimagined, negotiated, and revised through festival performances.

Site, Sight, and Location: The Khajuraho context

"The frescoes, sculptures and figurines
In love and relationship,
I could not avert the gaze
From seeing,
Sometimes saw them voluptuously,
Sometimes felt ashamed of
The terracotta work,
The art-pieces in stone
On the outer walls decorating

Or inside the temples
Designing artistically.
Though erotic
It connotated, denoted something
Of Indian philosophy,
Dharma, *Artha*, *Kama*, *Moksha*,[4]
Worldliness and spirituality to deliverance,
Something must be reined in,
Sex should be controlled
If one wants to attain
The heights of *sadhna,*[5]
But many understand it not
The presentation,
Vatsyayana's Kamsuttras
In decoration."

- Bijay Kant Dubey, *At Khajuraho*, 2015.[6]

This poem describing the Khajuraho Temples, as written by Indian poet and scholar Bijay Kant Dubey, encapsulates the contradiction between celebration and censorship that plays out within the monumental site.

Figure 1. Side view of Chitragupta Temple at Khajuraho, displaying the sculptural abundance of the temple monuments. Photograph by the author.

Khajuraho is a village situated in present-day Chattarpur, in Madhya Pradesh (Central India). The name of this place has derived from the presence of date palm trees (called *Khajur)*, which served as a natural ornate entrance to the cluster of temple monuments built between 950-1100 AD under the reigning Chandela dynasty. These early medieval Hindu temples find prominence in many Indological accounts, as well as is mentioned in the travel accounts of foreign pilgrims and historians like the Chinese pilgrim, Xuanzang in the 7th century, Rihan-al-Biruni, the Persian historian in the 11th

century, and Morrocon traveller Ibn Battuta has also jotted memoirs of his stay in Khajuraho during the 14th century.[7] However, a couple of centuries later, British official T.S. Burt is said to have "discovered" Khajuraho while traveling across Central India. As reported in 1839 in the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Burt is said to have found this group of magnificent but deserted temples enshrouded under large trees and dense jungles.[8] In another report (1864-65) by Major Alexander Cunningham, varied factors of time, lack of patronage, and foreign invasion (in this case, they insinuate the Mughals) are factored in for the desecration of the site.[9] On one hand, these colonial claims of discovering the site need to be complicated. Burt himself notes the presence of locals who objected to his wearing boots inside the temple.[10] Additionally, during my field visit to the site, tour guides and indigenous scholars strongly argued that the site has maintained its continual relevance among the local inhabitants. Some of the temples at Khajuraho, for instance, remain active sites of worship. On the other hand, such colonial rediscovery also led to a renewed interest and concomitant scrutiny towards the monument, especially concerning the erotic sculptures surrounding the temple walls. Colonial as well as conservative nationalists found these images 'obscene', thereby discrediting the importance and even the necessity to conserve and protect the temple.[11] Out of the 85 temples constructed initially, only 25 survive today [Figure 1].[12]

Figure 2. (Right) Sculptural effigies at Khajuraho, including temple deities, celestial dancers, and auspicious animals. (Left) A maithuna (amorous couple) at Khajuraho. Photographs by the author.

It is pertinent to highlight that erotic sculptures constitute only a section amongst other leitmotifs that one observes at Khajuraho [Figure 2]. Further, critical and scholarly works have defended the presence of erotica as being part of the spiritual imaginary, where worldly pleasures like sex and desire (i.e, *kama*) are understood as a 'test' of a devotee who must disengage with these distractions to offer their true obeisance.[13] Some other accounts also suggest an open and celebrated dialogue regarding sex in ancient India.[14] Art historian Tapati Guha Thakurta charts the oscillation from "looking away" to "looking closely" at erotica during the second half of the twentieth century, which

eventually began to be accepted as part of traditional knowledge and the nation's art heritage.[15] Notably, this era is marked by India's independence from British rule and the fervor for sovereignty and postcoloniality gained firm ground within the country.

The cultural heritage of Khajuraho, especially, takes central stage with Khajuraho Temples being recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1986. While Khajuraho has been a well-documented site over time, as observed, a study by Devendra Kumar Jain claims that resources and tourist infrastructures only began to be developed in Khajuraho during the 1960s and 70s.[16] In his research, Jain reports almost a 38% increase in the tourist inflow between 1974 and 1976.[17] However, Jain does not factor in the reason/s why such proliferation took place at all. It is crucial to note that the Dance Festival in Khajuraho was launched in 1975. The '75 Festival was a star-studded event, and esteemed dancers, musicians, artists, and scholars were associated with its name [Figure 3]. To date, the Khajuraho Dance Festival invites renowned and celebrated artists in the field, making the event one of the most sought-after within the country. My essay proposes that the attention and traction that the dance festival procured after its inauguration significantly led to a recognition of the site (and by extension, the region and the nation) across the global map. Subsequently, international organizations like UNESCO qualified the Khajuraho Group of Monuments as a "World Heritage Site" in 1986, eleven years after the festival was launched and running. Amongst the plethora of scholarly and documentary works surrounding Khajuraho, its annual dance festivals, despite its long-standing repute, have not been thoroughly considered. In a recent report by Jhilik Som et al., the significant role that the Khajuraho Dance Festival plays in fueling tourism and fostering revenues for the region has been studied.[18] In addition, I would like to highlight that Dance Festivals as yearly occurrences successfully establish cyclical and networked transactions across the tourists, publics, art enthusiasts, and local inhabitants with/at the site. A popular tourism tagline for Madhya Pradesh declares in Hindi, "*Jo aaya, so wapas aaya, yeh MP ki maya*" (One that visits this place, shall return to it, such is the illusory attraction of Madhya Pradesh, i.e., Central India). Annual episodes like dance festivals facilitate such "return" to the site. While the economic returns of the Khajuraho Dance Festival have been evaluated, these reports hardly acknowledge how cultural heritage is annually regenerated through festival renditions.

Figure 3. "Sahitya Sangeet Group", Facebook, 21 December 2024, posted by Nandini Vaishnav Chudasama.https://www.facebook.com/groups/1501106000195024/posts/3529263087379295/ (accessed on 3 May 2025). The photo taken during the 1975 Khajuraho Festival features celebrated percussionist Zakir Hussain driving a rickshaw, with Kathak master Birju Maharaj holding him behind. Other personnel are difficult to identify, even though the social media post claims them to be Odissi danseuse Sanjukta Panigrahi, Santoor expert Shiv Kumar Sharma, and flute maestro Hari Prasad Chaurasia.

Imagining Dance with(in) Khajuraho Temple

The Khajuraho Temples are a splendid depiction of the Nagara style of architecture, a prevalent style across North and Central India. Abiding by the traditions of religious and aesthetic philosophies, the temple walls at Khajuraho are full of auspicious sculptural motifs and décor. The presence of celestial bodies like *apsaras* (courtesans of heaven)*, surasundaris* (heavenly maidens)*,* and *nayikas* (damsels) is projected through the temple architecture.[19] The stylized depictions of these figures have often been adopted in dance performances and repertoires. Further, the relevance of music and dance is quite clearly displayed in the panels across temple walls with sculptures showcasing dance practices and pedagogies [Figures 4, 5 and 6]. However, no historical records of dance being performed within the Khajuraho Temples have thus far been obtained.

Figure 4. Sculptures representing a dance school. The central figure represents a master (acharya), surrounded by his disciples playing different musical instruments and practicing different dance poses. Photograph by the author.

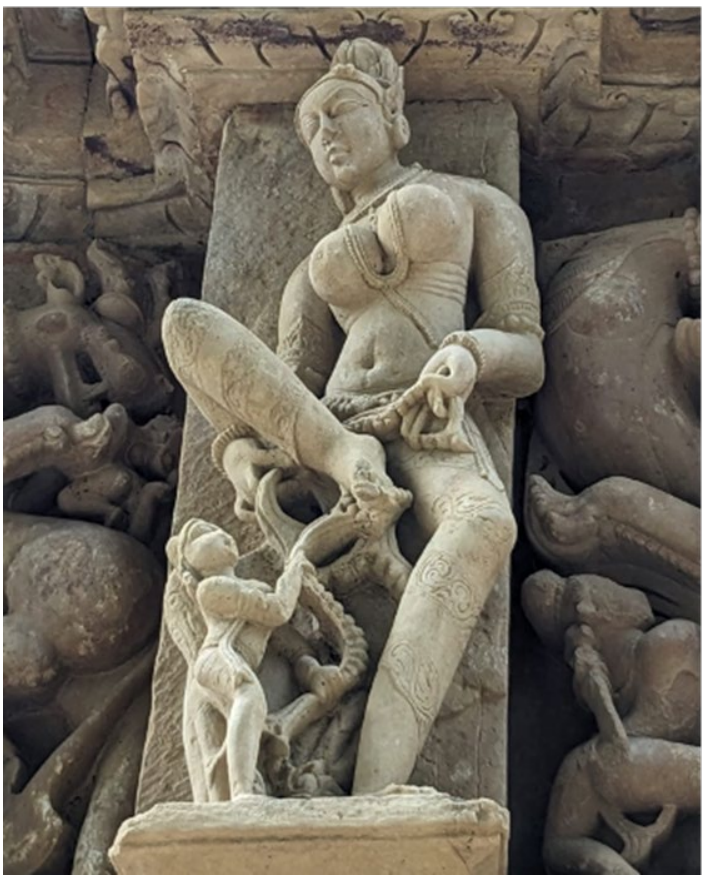

Figure 5. A female figurine is seen wearing her anklets. These anklets, called ghungroos, are typically worn by dancers in India. Photograph by the author.

Figure 6. Sculptural depiction of musicians posing with drums and cymbals at Khajuraho. Photograph by the author.

Temple dancing as ritual performances was quite prevalent in many temples of East and South India, between the 7th and 19th centuries. The temple dancers called *devadasis* enjoyed high social and ritual status within society. However, by the end of the 19th century, the public performance of *devadasis* was marred as equivalent to prostitution, and thus existed outside and against colonial-national

domesticity imposed on women.[20] Consequently, the *devadasi* system was criminalized and subsequently abolished in 1947, the same year that brought India its independence.

How, then, is dance put 'back' into the temples using the formatting of modern dance festivals, without producing some discomfort, discordance, and/or detest? In other words, what does it mean to re-imagine dancing at the temples? Sovereign India encompassed thorough processes of reform and revival of dance, whereby the emerging middle-class 'pure' bodies were encouraged to train in the lost and now defunct art form of the *devadasis*[21]. Consequently, dance was disembodied and distanced from its historical practitioners and transferred (additionally transformed) into its contemporary aesthetics that align with hegemonic caste, class, gendered, religious, ethnic, and heteronormative identities. These processes, we witness, are carried forward in the festival settings. In a newspaper article published on February 22nd, 1986, by The Times of India, the headline describes the festival "a feast for the gods" and the write-up further mentions "after almost a thousand years the superb temples sprang to life with the return of dance…"[22]Yet despite these prevalent claims, no historical trajectory of ritual dance at Khajuraho temples have been established. Such an allegory, we shall note in the following section, has instead been choreographically advanced by positioning the modern dance within the temple framework applied through the modern festival format. Therefore, the "return" of dancing at temples in Khajuraho does not denote continuity; instead, such connections have been devised.

Furthermore, most dance forms currently performed at the festival stage, such as Bharatanatyam, Kathak, Odissi, and Manipuri, among others, which broadly come under the category of "classical" dance in India, have also gone through serious modifications.[23] Several scholars have opined that these supposed lineages drawn between the modern "classical" dance and its ancient precursors are therefore contrived[24] Hence, I propose that it is not the interlinkages that allow for dance to return to the temples, but, on the contrary, it is the very separation that fosters dance to be re-placed in the temple settings. The contemporary dance forms, already sanitized and sanctified, are separated from their historical practices or practitioners.[25] Further, in the context of Khajuraho, there is also a spatial distinction, as dance was not previously practiced in these temple venues. Thus, at these sites, they posit no direct association between temples and ritual dances, and along with it, no supposed apprehension. Although the trope of the temple and dance of the past are applied, they do not (co)exist in the same sense. Resultantly, they construct an idealized (and often romanticized) ancient heritage without resolving much of its historical deracination. These narratives represent cultural heritage in terms of what Arjun Appadurai describes as "nostalgia without memory".[26]

Staging the Festival: Choreographies at Play

Figure 7. 50th Khajuraho Dance Festival, 2024
Photograph by the author.

The festival set-up in Khajuraho is aesthetically compelling and politically redolent. The festival choreographs a juxtaposition between the temple body and the body of the dancer. For instance, the archaeological monument serves as a material as well as a metaphorical framework for the dances at the festivals to be staged [Figure 7]. These correspondences are further corroborated when in the review of Khajuraho Dance Festival published on February 22nd, 1986, by The Times of India, it is stated that "It seemed almost as if a dancer had descended from heaven or one of the nymphs come to life".[27] As iterated, the festival choreographs a semblance across the temple and the dances, although these categories are separated in the historical and spatial context of Khajuraho. To further elaborate on this point, an archival video from the Khajuraho Dance Festival 1992 rendition becomes relevant. In a snippet from this video, one first finds a Kathak dancer performing at the festival stage, followed by an abrupt cut to show her dance continuing within the temple precinct. The movement, the costume, the music, and the dancer purposefully seem to remain the same, even though the performance space and the time of day when each of these clips is shot are prominently different [Figure 8]. Thus, through this transition, the physical, temporal, and historical separation between the

temple and the festival dance has been deliberately edited and totalized as one whole narrative. Other examples from promotional videos and advertisements also use a similar choreographic formula where the modern dancers emulate the temple sculptures, further instituting an interrelation between the temple body and the dancers' body.

Figure 8. Screenshots from an archival video of Khajuraho Dance Festival in 1992.
Source: Prasar Bharati Archives, Doordarshan, Delhi, India, repurposed with permission.

Figure 9. (Left) A female effigy in the mirror pose. Photograph by the author. (Top) Dancer depicting the mirror pose. Source: Video archives of Prasar Bharati, Doordarshan, Delhi, India, repurposed with permission. (Bottom) Cover Page of Khajuraho Dance Festival Brochure, 2016. Source: Kala Parishad, Bhopal, India, repurposed with permission.

In Figure 9, one can find parallels across the sculpture, the dancer, and the brochure of the dance festival- each strikingly depicting poses that hold a mirror. In each image, one of the hands has palms stretched out with fingers held together symbolizing the *darpan* or the mirror, the face turned sideways facing this palm, and the other hand is seen curling on top of the head to display the bedecking of oneself. Yet despite the similarities, this act of transfer —from the monument to the dance to the festival —cannot be a literal or straightforward process of mirroring or mimesis. This is because, in the past, both the cases of the erotic temple sculptures and the ritual dances at temples were already disregarded as 'vulgar'. Yet in the present times, the festival choreographs a return to these discourses, renewed in its meaning and symbolism. Thus, I suggest, the contemporary dance festival does not merely choreograph a "nostalgia without memory" but also memory here is replaced by nostalgia. Echoing Eric Hobsbawm, "invention of traditions" has taken place within Khajuraho.[28] Furthermore, this invention has also resulted in an inversion- by which means one can look 'back' at the erotic sculptures, sanitized and legitimized now through the lens of the 'classical' heritage.

The Ambi'valence' of Heritage

According to UNESCO's definition, as adopted in the convention of 1972, heritage is "legacy from the past that we live with today and what we must pass onto the future generations".[29]While unpacking legacies of the past, dance historian Janet O' Shea has, especially within the context of Indian dance and art, identified them to be of two kinds: classical or *shashtra,* and traditional or *Parampara.*[30] The classical or *shastras* are based on ancient treatises, and the logocentric bias often undermines the pliability and plurality of oral and living traditions that would fall under the category of the *parampara*.[31] Several scholars have highlighted that postcolonial India deliberately sought out

an antique past that was culturally distinct and arguably superior to the foreign imperial culture[32] To this end, a shastric or textual tradition was subsequently extrapolated and extolled. The "classical" paradoxically is a contemporary construct, and within the garb of the classical, only specific legacies of the past have been honed as "heritage".[33] On the other hand, it is crucial to note that traditions of dance called *kala* and traditions of sculpture and craft-making called *shilpa* have for most of history been orally and corporeally transmitted and carried forward as embodied knowledge systems within India.[34]

This brings us to another set of categories for historical record-keeping: the archive and the repertoire. Performance studies scholar Diana Taylor has argued that archives are often relegated to the textual and the tangible, i.e., the documents, the maps, the letters, the records. In short, anything that "remains" and is mainly set apart from the repertoire, which includes the dance, the music, the rituals, the social practices broadly termed as performances, and further understood as that which "disappears".[35] Taylor's pivotal argument is that the archive and the repertoire interact. The archive is constructed through bodily engagements- based on who documents what, who accesses it, how they interpret it, and so on. Similarly, the repertoire is also understood as a body of archive, transmitting information, cultural knowledge, collective memory, and social identities across generations and time.[36] The dance festival is a site where archives and repertoire repeatedly interact. As we have observed, the tangible monument and the intangible dances are put into dialogue through the festival set-up. At this point, I would also complicate the association of dance with something intangible, for they are very much made tangible through bodily labor and expressions. At Khajuraho, the ontological ideation of the body expands from the performing body of the dancer to the observing bodies (and in myriad ways participating bodies) of the technicians, audience, tourists, locals, and researchers, including me. The body also denotes the body of the sculptures, which act as choreographic motivations, as well as the architectural body of the temple, which formulates a material background for the festival to be staged. The interaction and intersection of these plural bodies, in their diverse materialities and multi-temporalities, generate a body of knowledge regarding cultural heritage that the festivals choreographically collate and further annually renew.

This essay has highlighted that the purported cultural heritage at Khajuraho has not remained consistent over time. The Khajuraho temples have faced allegations of obscenity, which later evolved into a celebration of traditional art and knowledge. These (re)evaluations gained renewed enthusiasm within the postcolonial nation, and these processes have been sustained through modern dance festivals. At the tail end of this paper, I would like to draw attention to how creative liberties and experimentation have taken place within the cosmopolitan landscape of festival performances. Such enterprises simultaneously result in negotiating, revising, and re-generating what qualifies as "heritage" in Khajuraho.

Figure 10. Screenshots of Bhoomika Dance Troupe performing at Khajuraho Dance Festival in 2006. Source: Video archives of Prasar Bharati, Doordarshan, Delhi, India, repurposed with permission.

In 2006, a New Delhi-based dance troupe called Bhoomika performed Indian Ballet as an homage to the sculpturesque Khajuraho. The choreography was experimental and arguably radical for projecting four dancers in a sensual play of erotica and lovemaking [Figure 10]. While motifs of love and beauty are common themes in most Indian dances, Bhoomika's portrayal of the sensual and sexual, encompassing leisurely and flowy movements and based on an instrumental music setting, is indeed a rare sight. Their use of 'Ballet' – a western classical form, could possibly offer them the grammar to imagine a passionate play between the dancing bodies, that otherwise would undergo scrutiny and socio-cultural censorship within the Indian socio-political context. However, the so-called western modalities are well balanced with their use of Indian costumes of blouse (called *choli*) and stitched pants (like *dhoti)*, along with their hair, jewelry, and makeup, all signaling the dancers to be figuratively Indian. Ultimately, within the spatial and ambient arrangement of the Khajuraho Dance Festival, the dance doesn't feel quite out of place. Thus, even when the festivals tend to uphold an apparent choreographic neatness, they simultaneously hold space, literally and discursively, for diverse and often divergent narratives to be played out.

In conclusion, I propose that dance festivals are heterogeneous spaces that offer powerful tactics as

well as tactile power to dynamically re-imagine and re-produce nation-state heritage and cultural imaginaries. Dance festivals continually shape and choreograph cultural traditions that involve myriad processes of negotiations, separations, re-placements, and inversions, encapsulating the duality of censorship and celebration playing out at Khajuraho. Over its fifty years, the Khajuraho Dance Festival has actively re-constructed public interest, community engagement, tourist inflow, global relations, and national/regional pride. As noted throughout this essay, the "returns" of the dance festival are manifold: economic, diplomatic, socio-cultural, political, historical, semiotic, and discursive.

NOTES

[1] UNESCO stands for The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, a specialized organization set up by the United Nations in 1945. India adopted the UNESCO conventions in 1977 and currently hosts 43 UNESCO WHS. See: UNESCO. World Heritage Convention, State Parties. https://whc.unesco.org/en/statesparties/in (accessed on October 11, 2024).

[2] Only a handful academic works is available on Khajuraho Dance Festival. This includes: Purnima Shah, "National Dance Festivals in India: Public Culture Social Memory and Identity" (PhD Diss, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2000); Jhilik Som, Sandeep Chatterjee, and Paramita Suklabaidya, "Stakeholders' Perspective on Tourism Infrastructure at Khajuraho Dance Festival," *Global Journal of Enterprise Information System* 12, no. 2 (2020).

[3] I apply choreography in its usual sense of bodily movements arranged in a space.
In this essay, choreography refers to the arrangement of a dance but also broadly to arrangement of bodies in a performance space; here, the festivals. Broadly, the term "choreography" has been used to communicate design, curation, and orchestration (even ornamentation).

[4] *Dharma* means duty, *Artha* means economics, *Kama* means desire and *Moksha* means liberation. In Hindu philosophy, these four elements are considered crucial towards a holistic life.

[5] *Sadhana* stands for practice.

[6] Bijay Kant Dubey, "At Khajuraho," *Poem Hunter*, 2015, https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/at-khajuraho/.

[7] Devangana Desai, *Khajuraho*: *Monumental Legacy* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000).

[8] "Notice of an Inscription on a Slab discovered in February, 1838, by Capt. T. S. Burt, Bengal Engineers, in Bundelkhund, near Chhatarpur." *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 8, No. 87 (1839): 159-184.

[9] Alexander Cunningham, *Four Reports Made During the Years 1862–63–64–65*, Vol 2 (Simla: Government Central Press, 1871).

[10] "Notice of an Inscription on a Slab," 159–84.

[11] Devangana Desai, *Erotic Sculpture of India: A Socio-Cultural Study* (New Delhi: Tata McGraw-Hill Publishing Co., 1975); Shobita Punja, *Divine Ecstasy: The Story of Khajuraho* (New Delhi: Viking Penguin Books India, 1992).

[12] Desai, *Khajuraho*.

[13] Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, *The Dance of Śiva: Essays on Indian Art and Culture* (New York: Dover, 1985), first published 1924; Dennis O'Donnell, *Temples & Erotic Art of Khajuraho* (New Delhi: Rupa Publications, 2025).

[14] Stella Kramrisch, *The Hindu Temple*, 2 vols. (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1946)

[15] Tapati Guha-Thakurta, *Monuments, Objects, Histories: Institutions of Art in Colonial and Postcolonial India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 253.

[16] Devendra Kumar, "Khajuraho Tourism: A Study in Tourist Traffic and Patterns," *Tourism Recreation Research* 3, No. 1 (1978): 17–21.

[17] Jain notes, "Over 1.27 lakh tourists visited the place during 1976. To be in Khajuraho is now a craze". This "craze" of visiting Khajuraho, I argue, was fueled by the Dance Festival initiated in 1975 and the buzz it subsequently produced.
Jain, "Khajuraho Tourism", 17.

[18] Som, Chatterjee, and Suklabaidya, "Stakeholders' Perspective on Tourism Infrastructure."

[19] Punja, *Divine Ecstasy*; Desai, *Khajuraho*.

[20] Avanthi Meduri, "Nation, Women, Representation: The Sutured History of the Devadasi and Her Dance" (PhD diss., New York University, 1996); Davesh Soneji, *Unfinished Gestures: Devadasis, Memory and Modernity in South India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012); Ratnabali Chatterjee, "Prostituted Women and the British Empire," *ANTYAJAA: Indian Journal of Women and Social Change* 1, No. 1 (2016): 65–81.

[21] Uttara Asha Coorlawala, "The Sanskritized Body," *Dance Research Journal* 36, No. 2 (2004): 50–63

[22] Sumita Paul, "Feast for the Gods: The Dance Festival at Khajuraho" *The Times of India*, February 22, 1986, ProQuest.

[23] Pallabi Chakravorty, "Hegemony, Dance and Nation: The Construction of the Classical Dance in India," *Journal of South Asian Studies* 21, No. 2 (1998).

[24] Anita Cherian, "Institutional Maneuvers, Nationalizing Performance, Delineating Genre: Reading the Sangeet Natak Akademi Reports 1953–59," *Third Frame: Literature, Culture and Society* 2, No. 3 (2009): 32–60; Purnima Shah, "State Patronage in India: Appropriation of the 'Regional' and 'National,'" *Dance Chronicle* 25, No. 1 (2002): 125–41; Anurima Banerji, "The Epistemic Politics of Indian Classical Dance," in *Performance Cultures as*

Epistemic Cultures, Vol. II: Interweaving Epistemologies, ed. Torsten Jost, Erika Fischer-Lichte, Milos Kosic, and Astrid Schenka (New York: Routledge, 2023).

[25] Usha Asha Coorlawala, "Classical and Contemporary Indian Dance: Overview, Criteria, and a Choreographic Analysis" (PhD diss., New York University, 1994).

[26] Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 78.

[27] Paul, "Feast for the Gods".

[28] Eric Hobsbawm, "Introduction: Inventing Traditions," in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 1-14.

[29] UNESCO, "World Heritage," https://www.unesco.org/en/world-heritage (accessed on 3 May 2025).

[30] Janet O'Shea, *At Home in the World: Bharata Natyam on the Global Stage* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2007); Kalpana Ram, "Being 'Rasikas': The Affective Pleasures of Music and Dance Spectatorship and Nationhood in Indian Middle-Class Modernity," *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 17 (2011): S159–S175, http://www.jstor.org/stable/23011430.

[31] Kapila Vatsyayan, *Some Aspects of Cultural Policies in India* (Paris: UNESCO, 1972); Anurima Banerji, "The Laws of Movement: The Natyashastra as Archive for Indian Classical Dance," *Contemporary Theatre Review* 31, No. 1–2 (2021): 132–152, https://doi.org/10.1080/10486801.2021.1878507; Nrithya Pillai, "Re-Casteing the Narrative of Bharatanatyam," *Economic and Political Weekly* Vol 57, No. 9 (February 26, 2022), https://www.epw.in/node/159485/pdf.

[32] Chakravorty, "Hegemony, Dance and Nation"; Coorlawala, "The Sanskritized Body"; Cherian, "Institutional Maneuvers, Nationalizing Performance, Delineating Genre"; Banerji, "The Laws of Movement".

[33] Shah, "State Patronage in India"; Banerji, "The Epistemic Politics of Indian Classical Dance".

[34] Kapila Vatsyayan, *Bharata: The Natyasastra* (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1996); Ananya Chatterjea, "Training in Indian Classical Dance: A Case Study," *Asian Theatre Journal* 13, No. 1 (1996): 68–91; Banerji, "The Epistemic Politics of Indian Classical Dance".

[35] Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003).

[36] See also: Inge Baxmann, "The Body as Archive: On the Difficult Relationship between Movement and History," in *Knowledge in Motion: Perspectives of Artistic and Scientific Research in Dance*, ed. Sabine Gehm, Pirkko Husemann, and Katharina von Wilcke (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2007): 207–218; André Lepecki, "The Body as Archive: Will to Re-Enact and the Afterlives of Dances," *Dance Research Journal* 42, No. 2 (2010): 28–48.

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UNHARNESSED RIVER: BRIDGING CULTURES ACROSS BORDERS THROUGH INTANGIBLE HERITAGE

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INTRODUCTION

Technological advancements in the 20th century enabled the development of modern hydroelectric power. Especially from the mid-1930s onward, the construction of hydroelectric plants significantly transformed landscapes and had a profound impact on local populations. Since the 1970s, increasing awareness of sociocultural and environmental consequences has led to growing criticism of river harnessing.[1]

Following World War II, Finland experienced a significant expansion in dam and hydropower construction, particularly in the 1940s and 1950s, to support industrial and societal development.[2] These projects disrupted local livelihoods, including fishing, farming, and reindeer husbandry in northern Finland, weakening traditional village structures and community cohesion and sense of place. Today, Finland has approximately 250 hydropower plants.

In the 21st century, research on the socio-environmental impacts of large hydropower projects has expanded, with a particular focus on environmental and psychological trauma.[3] Studies indicate that hydropower-related changes can lead to solastalgia—a form of environmental anxiety—first introduced by environmental philosopher Glenn Albrecht in 2005.[4] While originally used to describe emotional distress caused by landscape alterations, the concept can also be applied to transformations in the built environment. According to Slariya,[5] while hydropower has provided electricity and economic benefits, it has also resulted in psychological distress for affected communities.[6]

This article examines the cultural landscape and spatial identity of Kukkola village, located along the unharnessed Tornionjoki River—one of Finland's last three salmon rivers. The study seeks to understand how the built environment's values are reflected in a village that has remained untouched by hydropower. What is identity of the village and the values of the built environment? Have traditional livelihoods associated with fishing and agriculture been preserved, or has the economic structure evolved in other ways? How do the villagers perceive their place and its history? Additionally, this article explores the reasons why the river remains unharnessed. The focus is on the built environment and intangible cultural values.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

The study was conducted in collaboration with the City of Tornio, the Torne Valley Museum, and the villagers of Kukkola. The research team comprised researchers and master's students, totalling seventeen members. During two field visits in autumn 2023, the site was analysed. The village

environment initially appeared to students as a typical northern settlement, making it challenging to distinguish its unique cultural values during the first visit. To address this, a range of qualitative methods was applied in parallel, including interviews with villagers, local entrepreneurs, and members of the village association. Archival materials provided additional context, including previous inventories and planning documents related to the built environment.

In the first phase of the study, groups of at least three participants reviewed existing materials, such as old planning documents. They then conducted a detailed on-site analysis and inventory of both the built and natural environments, examining roads, buildings, the river, and vegetation. Each group focused on a specific theme: history, land use, fishing, or tourism.

In the second phase, the study aimed to identify the village's key values in terms of its milieu, cultural-historical significance, and identity through documentation and inventory. Previous inventories, evaluations, and literature were incorporated into the analysis. The objective was to define the essential elements that contribute to the village's identity. Both the material and intangible values of the place were examined and discussed with residents.

Throughout the study, methods for analysing and inventorying the village environment were refined. The research identified the area's values in terms of its milieu, cultural-historical and sociocultural significance, and the identity of its building stock. Additionally, the groups explored the area's history, land use, fishing traditions, and the role of tourism. In the later stages of the research, the focus expanded to include future scenarios and environmental management strategies. The primary goal was to develop approaches for guiding future changes in the village in a way that would support its identity and promote positive development.

The study's findings were published and presented at a public event for the city's residents, the museum, and the village community in April 2024.[7]

A VILLAGE ON THE NATIONAL BORDER

The village of Kukkola, home to approximately 200 inhabitants, is situated along the Tornionjoki River, about fifteen kilometres north of Tornio City. It is a ribbon-like village, with buildings aligned along the river and the old road, located between the river and the newer highway. The village features a diverse range of buildings, dating from the 1800s to the 2000s.

Europe's longest free-flowing river features a 3.5-kilometer-long stretch of rapids with a drop height of 13.8 meters. Kukkola is renowned for its rapids and historic fishing field, which includes old log cabins. The field remains an active site for traditional fishing, with catches including whitefish, river lamprey, burbot, and salmon. Due to its rich cultural and historical significance, the village and its surroundings have been classified as a nationally significant cultural environment.[8]

History of Kukkola

The Kukkola rapids area was permanently inhabited on both sides of the river in the 1030s, when the region was part of Sweden. Fishing was a crucial livelihood, and the traditional dip net fishing method is known to have emerged before the 1400s. The region suffered from wars between Sweden and Russia throughout the 1700s. Following Sweden's defeat, Finland became an autonomous Grand Duchy of the Russian Empire in 1809.[9] The newly established national border divided the village, separating what had previously been a unified linguistic and cultural region into two states. However, aside from times of crisis, the border between Finland and Sweden remained open. Although the national border physically divided the village, social connections persisted, and traditional fishing practices continued. Livelihoods and family ties played a crucial role in maintaining connections between the two sides of the village.[10] The proximity of the border has provided economic, cultural, and social benefits, and today efforts are made to promote an open-border identity.

In Finland, the Great Partition of land was carried out in Kukkola in 1841. During this process, the village's communal forests and fields were transferred to private ownership.[11] According to oral tradition, current fishing rights date back to this period. A house that received fishing rights was allocated only half the land compared to a house without fishing rights.[12] This highlights the significance of fishing: it was not merely a secondary livelihood but equally important as agriculture. However, fish stocks began to decline in the 1900s. On the Swedish side, the fishing cooperative was dissolved, and fishers began commercial fishing. In Finland, however, the predecessor of the current fishing cooperative was established in 1925 and remains active today.[13]

Post-World War II urbanization and rural migration impacted traditional livelihoods in the region. Structural changes in agriculture were significant throughout Finland. In Kukkola, agriculture, forestry, and fishing remained the dominant industries until the 1960s.[14] Today, traditional fishing is no longer a primary livelihood, but it continues to serve as an indirect source of income through tourism.[15]

The number of buildings in Kukkola has increased since the 1950s, while agricultural fields have diminished, and the river landscape has become more forested.[16] The division of land plots is historically linked to fishing and land ownership, with narrow plots extending to the riverbank. While most houses are occupied year-round, the area also features holiday homes. The construction of Highway 21 diverted traffic away from the village centre, yet buildings continue to be located along the old road in a traditional manner. Despite different periods of construction, the scale of buildings has remained consistent, preserving the village's historic character.

Attempts for harnessing

Post-World War II industrialization in Finland necessitated increased electricity production, leading to the harnessing of rapids, from the 1950s onward.[17] The Kukkola rapids were considered for hydropower development in both the 1930s and the 1970s. In 1917, the village transferred its rapids rights to a businessman, who attempted to acquire land for the construction of a power plant in exchange for free electricity. Eventually, he sold his holdings to the state. [18] Following this, locals began advocating for a state-built hydroelectric plant.[19]

A 1927 plan proposed partially damming the river while maintaining the water level on the Swedish side.[20] This plan would have significantly modified the river channel, and the design for a two-turbine power plant proceeded. Although construction would have impacted fishing, proponents argued that since the entire river would not be dammed, aspects of the traditional way of life could be preserved.

In the 1950s, the Nordic Hydropower Committee proposed constructing six hydropower plants along the Tornionjoki River, starting with Kukkola. As discussions on river harnessing intensified, opinions became increasingly divided, although the potential impact on tourism was downplayed. The villagers, however, did not support the power plant, suspecting that the disadvantages would outweigh the benefits. They understood that decision-making was in the hands of external authorities and that the primary benefits of the project would extend beyond the village. It was well known that constructing a power plant would significantly deteriorate fishing conditions.

While many other dam projects faced local opposition, in the post-war era such resistance had little effect, and most projects proceeded. However, Kukkola's geographical location ultimately provided additional time and eventually prevented the construction. A major challenge for harnessing the river was the requirement for approval from both Finland and Sweden.[21] Sweden, which had more free-flowing rivers, did not rush its decision. By the 1960s, critical perspectives on power plants gained prominence. [22] By the 1970s, Sweden had taken steps to protect the river,[23] influenced by the growing environmental conservation movement. As a result, the significance of tourism and traditional fishing

methods increased, attracting visitors and media attention. [24] In a way, nostalgia also played a role in preserving the river.

Fishing and intangible values

Fishing remains an essential part of life in the village, even though most residents earn their living elsewhere. While fishing is no longer the primary livelihood or main source of income, the fishing tradition serves as a strong cultural reminder of a way of life that has been displaced by hydropower construction in many other regions. It holds significant meaning for both the identity of the place and its inhabitants.

In Kukkola, traditional whitefish fishing is reserved exclusively for members of the joint property management association. [25] The right to fish using the dip netting method is inherited along with land ownership, although outsiders can acquire fishing rights by purchasing land in Kukkola. Fishing rights tied to land ownership exist elsewhere in Finland as well, but outside of Sámi areas, these rights are not connected to traditional fishing practices. Shareholders bear the responsibility for maintaining the fishing area and ensuring the continuation of its traditions. They are tasked with maintaining old log cabins in the fishing field, constructing wooden pier-like fishing structures, and organizing events. Additionally, they manage fishing schedules and the distribution of catches.

Fish distribution follows an old tradition based on the tax burden a household carried on in the 1500s, though estimating each share is a complex process.[26] Sharing the catch remains an engaging and communal event, reinforcing the village's sense of togetherness.

In addition to whitefish, lamprey is caught in late autumn, and burbot in winter, following the designated fishing rights. Salmon fishing occurs in early summer and is also open to tourists. In the 2000s, declining fish stocks prompted local associations to take action to preserve the whitewater fishing culture through various efforts and projects.[27] This ongoing engagement illustrates that the community continues to uphold collective responsibility, safeguarding both the fishing traditions and the fundamental conditions necessary for their continuation.

VILLAGE ANALYSIS

Kukkola cultural landscape and values

In Kukkola's cultural landscape, low floodplains transition into rolling fields, interspersed with small forests and residential buildings. The decline of agriculture has led to a reduction in arable land and the afforestation of coastal areas. The village follows a ribbon-like settlement pattern, where new constructions are integrated alongside older buildings, preserving an idyllic village scale with relatively small structures. Since the 2000s, views of the river have been restored to attract tourism, marking a shift in focus from agriculture to visitor-driven activities.

Kukkola's unique characteristics include its location spanning two states and its deep connection to the river, which, along with traditional fishing practices, has profoundly shaped the region's culture. The most culturally significant areas include the historic fishing field with its old buildings and the landscape along the old road. Buildings along this road are evenly spaced, maintaining a consistent scale and architectural style, regardless of their time of construction. The old log cabins in the fishing area remain in use, with some also relocated there. This continuity in usage reflects how living cultural heritage continues to shape the built environment.

The river, its rapids, and the riverside buildings form the most visual and culturally valuable elements of the landscape, creating a distinctive environment. However, economic changes have left many old farms uninhabited, and some buildings have deteriorated over time. The most valuable structures—small log buildings—are concentrated around the fishing field, serving as a testament to the village's fishing heritage.

Despite the varying ages of its buildings, Kukkola has retained a uniform spatial scale. Many residents have long-standing family ties to the area, and there have been no major external pressures, such as hydropower development, forcing emigration. Although young people often seek employment opportunities elsewhere, the village continues to attract returnees and seasonal residents. New buildings blend naturally with the older structures, ensuring that modern construction does not overwhelm the traditional village landscape.

Identity

The fishing culture and built environment play a crucial role in shaping the village's identity. The river and rapids are central elements, influencing both the visual landscape and the soundscape. Fishing defines the village's life cycle and serves as a connecting force across national borders. Interviews with residents emphasize the deep cultural significance of the river, fishing traditions, and the village's heritage.

Kukkola is a unique area whose value stems from its rich history, geographical location, and strong identity. Preserving the village's distinctive spatial identity and cultural-historical significance requires a thorough understanding of its uniqueness in planning and development, building maintenance, and guiding new construction.

The residents have deep roots in the area and a strong sense of community. Community is an integral aspect of place identity, just as place shapes the identity of its inhabitants. Each villager seems to have a meaningful role within the community, and this sense of belonging has contributed to the preservation of traditions. The villagers are committed to protecting their cultural environment and heritage. The continued practice of traditional fishing has played a key role in allowing the community to maintain its ancestral lands.

While fishing is no longer a full-time livelihood for most residents, it retains significant social and cultural value. A project has been initiated to recognize the river's fishing tradition as UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage. Finland and Sweden plan to submit a joint application to UNESCO in 2025. [28] Living heritage is defined as an intangible cultural heritage with a long historical continuity. Kukkola village exemplifies a vibrant cultural phenomenon that remains deeply meaningful to its community, playing an active role in both daily life and celebratory traditions.

DISCUSSION

In Finland, hydropower research has emphasized its ecological and socioeconomic effects, highlighting losses of traditional livelihoods and cultural practices. While studies on free-flowing rivers often focus on ecology, less attention has been given to sociocultural and landscape aspects. This article examines an unharnessed river and a village, focusing on place-based traditions and communal practices that sustain cultural identity.

In Kukkola, nature continues to shape human activity, preserving connections to traditional livelihoods. Though fishing practices have evolved, they remain active and meaningful beyond tourism. Had the rapids been dammed, whitewater fishing would have likely ceased, disrupting generational knowledge and weakening the community's cultural fabric.

The rapids have historically provided food and fostered community cohesion through cooperative fishing. Kukkola's cultural landscape includes intangible elements like seasonal fishing rhythms, knowledge transmission, and local social structures. These non-material values complement the built environment in shaping place identity.

While certain changes—afforestation, building deterioration—might have occurred regardless of river damming, the continued presence of fishing traditions sustain shared memories and local bonds. The river is protected across the Finnish Swedish border, reflecting a collective sense of responsibility.

Although hydropower is often seen as green energy, the restoration of natural rivers raises complex issues. There is no return to the pre-dam landscape; rather, current environments anchor new generational experiences. Dam removal could introduce further cultural disruption and solastalgia—emotional distress tied to landscape loss.

Strong communities are essential in maintaining cultural landscapes, but dam construction often undermines them by eroding both physical structures and shared practices. The visual and ecological effects of hydropower are documented, but the cultural costs—loss of identity and knowledge—are more elusive.

CONCLUSION

Planning tends to emphasize physical structures and land use, yet this case shows that intangible heritage is equally vital. Sustaining traditional livelihoods, social networks, and generational knowledge strengthens cultural identity and community cohesion. Kukkola demonstrates that built environments are inseparable from lived traditions and historical continuity.

The study raises wider concerns about rapid landscape transformation and its overlooked community impacts. Infrastructure planning, such as for hydropower, often prioritizes economics and ecology, while social dimensions remain secondary. Kukkola illustrates how identity is deeply rooted in historical land use and social systems, which must be considered in planning and conservation.

Future planning should adopt holistic approaches that integrate cultural and environmental sustainability. Hydrosocial frameworks—emphasizing the connections between water, people, and place—offer valuable tools for navigating riverine change. Participatory planning is essential to ensure that local communities remain active agents in decisions affecting their heritage and way of life.

Ultimately, protecting cultural landscapes requires more than structural preservation. It calls for valuing the traditions, livelihoods, and social bonds that give meaning to place and bolster community resilience in times of change.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We thank the Interreg Aurora program for funding the RE-Hydro project and the Kone Foundation for their valuable financial support.

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DECOLONIAL HERITAGE PRACTICES OF BLACK WOMEN IN CHILE AND COLOMBIA THROUGH TRADITIONAL AND CONTEMPORARY USES OF AFRO HAIR

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INTRODUCTION

This article analyses the heritage values and uses of Afro hair among Black groups from Colombia, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Mexico, Venezuela and Brazil. It describes the historical and contemporary context of discrimination against Black people and the current situation of Black migrants in Chile. It addresses strategies of resistance through the body as a subject of heritage. It highlights how the 'Embodied Heritage Transition' from colonial to decolonial condition is expressed through hairstyles and turbans. It concludes that these arrangements are not a fashion, but an inter-temporal and intergenerational heritage with lasting identity, socio-visual and political implications.

Blackness in the Chilean historical context

Historically, issues related to Blackness in Chile date back to the colonial period and the enslavement of people from Africa (1536–1823). The enslaved population settled primarily in northern Chile, in the Arica region, near the borders with Peru and Bolivia. This location had negative consequences: during the War of the Pacific (14 February 1879 to 20 October 1883) against the Peruvian-Bolivian Confederation, the Black population of the area was regarded by Chileans as Peruvian, and therefore as traitors and enemies. People of African descent were persecuted—their houses were marked with crosses, many were forced into exile, and those who remained in Chile experienced rapid mixing with the non-Black local population. This historical process consolidated a nationalist pigmentocracy,[1] a phenomenon that continues to shape discrimination in Chile today, with skin pigmentation acting as a powerful trigger, establishing "the affirmation of whiteness as an identity position even among the 'mestizo' population".[2]

The denial of the existence of Chilean Afro-descendants delayed the recognition of this community. It was first represented at the Pre-Durban 2000 conference in Santiago, Chile, mainly through its dance and culinary heritage. In 2007, the community demanded that an Afro-descendant category be included in the national census, but this was unsuccessful. In 2015, the inclusion of Afro-Chileans was considered, but within the migrant category. Ultimately, the category was not included in the 2017 census and was instead subsumed under "other." Despite these processes of denial, with the support of the NGO Oro Negro and pressure from the Afro-Arican community—led primarily by women—Law 21.151 for the "Chilean Afro-descendant tribal people" was passed in 2019.

Xenophobia and racism against current migration in Chile

In 2010, a wave of migration to Chile began, through a special visa granted to citizens of Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Migrants from Colombia, Venezuela, and Cuba joined them, bringing the total to 945,660 people.[3] This figure could increase by a third when accounting for undocumented immigrants who have entered Chile since 2019. This explosive growth in migration has led to cultural clashes with the local urban population. The press has reported multiple crimes committed by migrants, creating a general feeling that migration is the root cause of insecurity.[4] This climate has had a particular negative impact on the Black population, who are socio-visually stigmatized due to their skin colour and bear the brunt of aporophobia, xenophobia, classism, and racism in public spaces.[5] Institutional negligence and labour exploitation have also been documented, including the case of Joane Florvil[6] as well as the enslavement of eight Haitians in Chilean Patagonia.[7]

Afro hair in the face of oppression and liberation

Numerous studies highlight the importance of hair across most cultures. “It is a fact that hair grooming is a widespread feature of ritual behaviour, and anthropological attempts to generalise this fact have a long history”.[8] In traditional African villages, headdresses and hairstyles are symbols that connect hair to gender roles, social status, power hierarchies, occupations, rites of passage, and stages of life. Hair is also believed to possess magical properties: it can invoke deities, confer strength, bring good luck, ensure fertility, cast spells, and increase sexual attractiveness.[9] Similarly, the traditional practice of combing has special meanings in communities of African origin. The act of combing involves the comb as both an artistic and emotionally charged object. Combing and being combed are considered acts of affection, trust, and healing.[10] By contrast, during colonisation, Afro hair came to symbolise submission, dishonour and punishment: “This ill treatment included having ‘had her hair entirely cut off her head’ while sentenced to a house of correction for alleged disobedience to her master and mistress”.[11] Very short hair and turbans were mandatory in nearly all slave enclaves. For example, the 1789 Tignon Law[12] in Louisiana, enacted by Spanish governor Esteban Rodríguez Miró, even forced free Black women to cover their hair with a scarf. This law of racial and social control aimed to stigmatise and diminish the perceived allure that women of African descent held for white men. But it did not work; Black women transformed the *tignon* into turbans, headscarves and elaborated headdresses that further accentuated their beauty.

With the abolition of slavery, Black populations were forced to integrate into predominantly white societies and underwent an intense process of cultural whitening.[13] The most visible expression of this assimilation into white aesthetic and social norms was the use of caustic soda for hair straightening — a process commonly called “conking”. Sarah Breedlove, owner of Madame C.J. Walker Manufacturing Company, made a fortune selling such products. Public figures from the arts and politics such as Josephine Baker, Nat King Cole, and Malcolm X adopted this practice to emulate hairstyles that were fashionable among white people. Over time, this intervention led to scarring alopecia in those generations. However, Black women today continue to use chemical, mechanical, and thermal techniques to change the natural texture of their curly hair. As British singer Paigey Cakey demonstrated, her hairstyle left her bald. This is known as traction alopecia and is also very common among Black women who wear very tight extensions with excessively heavy long hairpieces.

The first political call for Black people to wear their natural curly hair came from Marcus Garvey, who urged them to reconnect with their African ancestors.[14] Thanks to their advocacy work, Afrocentric, Black nationalist and Pan-Africanist movements were born. One of the earliest cultural and religious hairstyles of resistance for Black people was the use of dreadlocks, which began with the Rastafarian movement in Jamaica in the 1930s and later became an international fashion trend.

During the civil rights movement in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s, activists from the Black Panther Party, such as Angela Davis, and the Black Power movement began to wear their hair in natural, voluminous Afros. For these activists, the hairstyle was not a fashion statement but a symbol of struggle. However, the style soon spread among the elite as "the Afro" and became fashionable. During the hippie movement, some white individuals adopted the style, lending it a certain countercultural status within the popular culture of the time. From that point on, the creative space surrounding Afro hair opened up to a wide range of intercultural possibilities. Today, the use of synthetic hair and temporary dyes enables a broad spectrum of styles, disseminated globally via the internet. The history of resistance and playfulness rooted in Afro hair culture has become both a political and personal matter, ranging from the serious to the superficial.[15]

DECOLONISATION THROUGH AFRO HAIR IN COLOMBIA AND CHILE

Racial and gender issues surrounding Afro hair persist throughout Latin America. In everyday speech, it is common to hear phrases such as "If you marry a Black woman, your children's hair will be ruined"; "She married a white man, and her daughter was born with 'good hair'"; "It's a good thing he was born a boy —you can just keep his hair shaved"; "Undercover Black woman" —a term used to describe a Black woman who straightens or relaxes her hair; "The white grandmother doesn't know how to comb her granddaughter's 'steel wool' hair"; or "Anyone with ugly curly hair must have Black blood".[16] Across much of Latin America —as well as in North America—, very curly hair and Afro-textured hair are often referred to as "bad hair".[17] This label carries a wide range of negative connotations, including associations with being ugly, dirty, unkempt, or coarse. At the same time, it implies practical challenges in daily life. For many Black people, this type of hair is perceived as difficult to style, maintain and keep "presentable". Some mothers today do not know how to style their Black daughters' hair because the tradition of caring for and styling Afro hair was lost due to slavery and racism. Some Black women argue that straightening hair "improves" it by making it easier to manage for everyday life. As one scholar notes: "These assessments of hair reflect racially motivated beauty standards that work against Black women".[18] Of Cuban origin, Roberto Álvarez is a singer and hairstylist who specialises in Afro hair. He criticises hairism and colorism through his songs. In his hit song *Cabello Bello*, he declares: "Mind decolonization… Who told all those people that my hair is bad? As if my hair were a criminal. My hair hasn't stolen, killed, swindled, or raped anyone. I declare it innocent" —See Figure 2.

Colombia stands out as a prime example of decolonisation through aesthetics and the use of Afro hair. Research conducted there has explored the history, culture and health of Afro hair. One particularly compelling finding is that, during colonial times, Black maroons used their hair to transport seeds, send messages, and mark landmarks, paths and escape routes —creating veritable maps woven into braids on their heads as a means of fleeing to the *palenques.*[19] This history has become a powerful source of motivation in the political struggles of Afro-Colombian women and serves as a founding symbol for AMAFROCOL, the Association of Afro-Colombian Women. In Colombian departments such as Valle del Cauca, Bolívar, Nariño, Chocó, and Antioquia, both traditional hairstyles and contemporary recreations remain vibrant. Among the most common braids include Sunken, Burgeon, Moon, Colombia, Grape, Calabash, Butterfly, Beautiful Maiden, Harts, Centipede, Little Flowers, Mesh, and Farrowing Sow[20] —See Figure 1. Afro-Colombian braiding has been nominated for recognition as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, and its influence has extended across many Latin American territories. Emilia Eneyda Valencia is the founder of the "Weaving Hopes" initiative —an annual event organized by the Association of Afro-Colombian Women focused on Afro hair in the city of Cali, Colombia. It has become a regional benchmark for decolonization through hairstyle heritage. As Emilia recalls: "The practice of Afro-Colombian braiding is not just an aesthetic issue,

but a political, social and educational one. It gave me hope to advance academically and pursue formal education, and that's what's happening to many women today".[21]

In northern Chile, The Daughters of the Azapa Valley Organization is a highly influential collective. Azeneth Báez tells us: "It wasn't until 2000, thanks to the NGO Oro Negro, that I began to accept my roots and stop feeling ashamed… It wasn't until I turned 50 that I dared to let my Afro hair grow naturally."[22] Another important collective based in Santiago de Chile is Negrocentricxs. Paola affirms: "Wearing your hair natural is a revolutionary act —a political statement. It dismantles oppressive structures, challenges hegemony, and declares: this is me. I refuse to conform to imposed standards; I will embrace my true self".[23] Bemba Colorá was one of the first and most influential anti-racist educational initiatives in Chile, led by Colombian activist Juliette Micolta. Thanks to migration, Colombian examples have had a significant impact in Chile. Several groups, such as Mata e Pelo, work toward the social integration of Black people, educating new generations about the decolonization of their bodies and hair. At *Peinetón* (a "hairstyle marathon"), Raiza stated: "If we empower Black children, we help eradicate all forms of violence, discrimination, racism, and rejection among them".[24] Project *Rag Children*, led by Cuban activist Michele Montano, emphasises the need for Black body representation in children's toys. The initiative encourages children to create narratives that include Black characters, fostering inclusivity and cultural awareness through play. Yet in workshops with Black girls in Chile, despite the use of anti-racist pedagogy, "most girls under the age of eight still express a desire to resemble a white, blonde woman with long hair when asked about their future aspirations".[25] This reflects the early internalization of fairy tale princess beauty ideals, particularly the myth of Rapunzel. The need for strong, idealized representations of Black pride is crucial to bridging this psychological gap and countering discriminatory beauty standards.

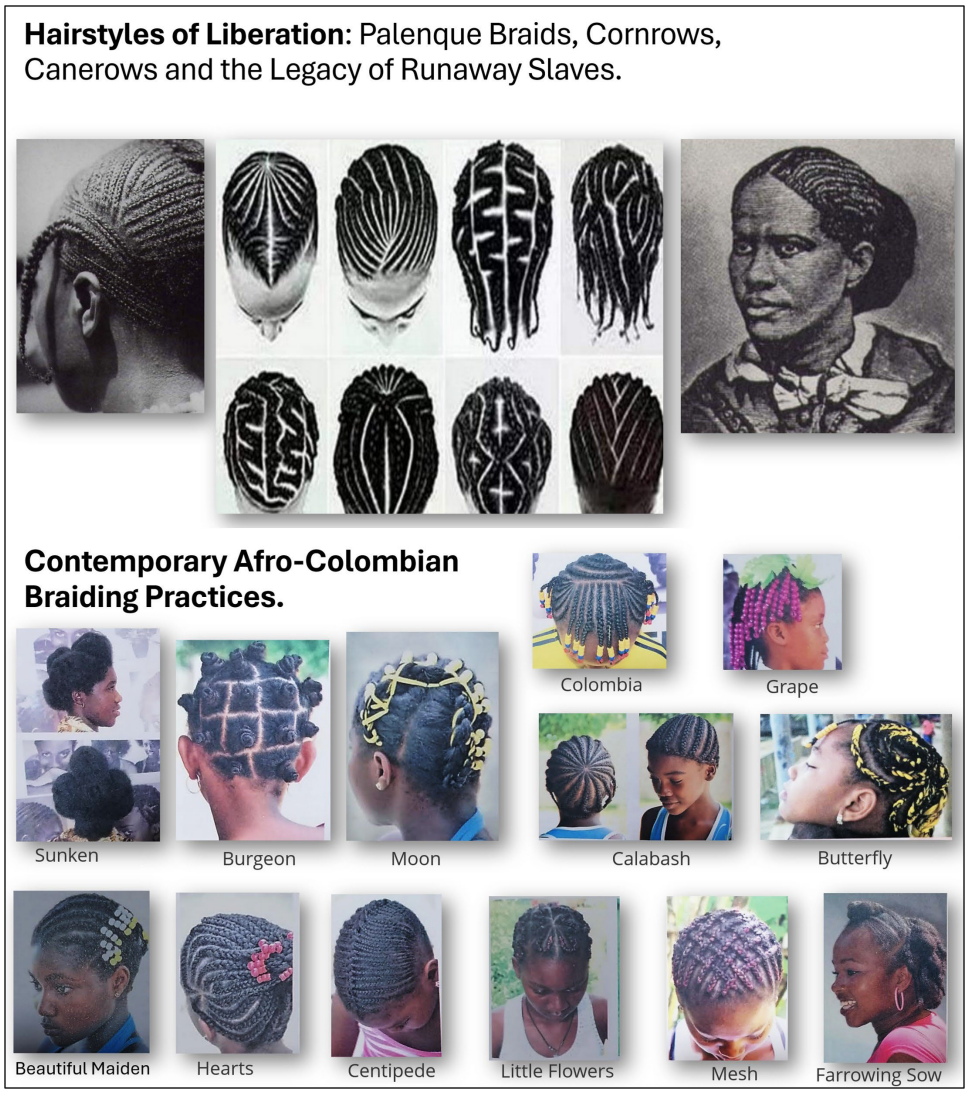

Figure 1. Traditional braids of the Black, Afro-descendant, Raizal and Palenquera populations and their contemporary recreations.[26] Photos: David Manuel Britton Barros.

Not only hairstyles but also turbans play a crucial role in decolonial resistance. Angélica Machado, psychiatrist and turban artisan in Argentina, states: "The turban is more than just a piece of cloth we wear on our heads. It represents identity, history, and memory. It has allowed me to connect with other Black, white, and Indigenous women. The turban is an identity we can share".[27] Soyalmadenegra is a project platform in Chile that merges research, creative practice, and the exploration of Black heritage and bodily aesthetics. It also actively promotes the economic development of Black women. Its executive director declares: "A turban is a nonverbal language that speaks to identity, aesthetic expression, and heritage".[28] In Colombia, the Afro turban serves as a powerful political symbol, representing identity, resistance, and cultural pride. Black Colombian women are often highly engaged in political and cultural activism. Turban March is one such demonstration, organised in defense of their ancestral territories. Black women miners marched to the Colombian capital in 2014. The use of turbans and traditional hairstyles is not merely an aesthetic choice; it represents the historical depth and contributions of Afro-diasporic communities to the shaping of Colombian territories and the ongoing struggle for territorial recognition and rights.[29]

Figure 2. Heritage Day in Chile. Cabello Bello event, 2025, against the insult 'bad hair.' Afro-descendant migrant and Chilean women participated. Special guests were Cuban singer and hairdresser Robe L Ninho and Colombian journalist Edna Liliana Valencia. Photos by the authors.

CONCLUSION

After four years of collaborative work with 32 Afro-descendant collectives and 163 collaborators in Chile and Colombia —using the PAR (Participatory Action Research) and after organising, through the Soyalmadenegra platform, five major community events (*The Black Woman's Body as Heritage* in 2022, *Festival of Afro Bodies* in 2023, *Black Carnival* in 2024, *Heritage in Rebellion* in 2024 and *Beautiful Hair* in 2025), it can be said that a heritage transition process is underway. This process has a high symbolic content yet materialises through something very embodied and tangible: the use and reclamation of Afro hair. To summarise this process, the concept of Embodied Heritage Transition is proposed. Although this concept refers to a physical, corporeal dimension, for those who practise it, it involves a profound shift in their mindset and their relationship with society, as well as a powerful sense of liberation —See Figure 3.

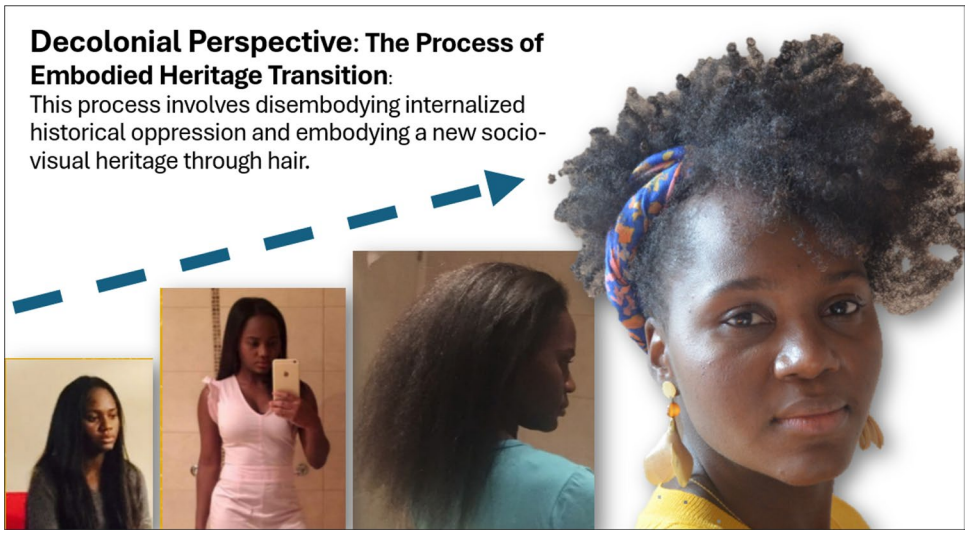

Figure 3. Black women refer to the change from chemically and thermally straightened Afro hair to natural Afro hair as the 'Transition Process.' Although it is a concrete and individual process that may appear to be a simple change in appearance, in reality it involves profound and very difficult psychological and social support for the women who undertake it. Photos by the authors.

The Embodied Heritage Transition from a colonial condition to a decolonial one synthesises the imaginaries, practices and discourses on hair documented throughout this research. It refers to a decolonial process that seeks to disembody the historical legacy of racism and internalized racial oppression, while re-embodying a positive heritage that affirms and dignifies Black bodies in everyday spaces. This is why the use of natural Afro hair with headdresses, hairstyles and turbans that redefine African, Afro-diasporic and Afro-Latin American traditions.

Within the academic field of heritage studies, scholars such as Rodney Harrison,[30] Hua Yu and Jiaoyin Mei[31] and Marina Svensson[32] have explored the relationships between heritage experiences and various forms of embodiment. However, the concept of Embodied Heritage Transition does not merely concern bodily experience, it positions the body itself as heritage. This implies that each individual must engage in arduous psychosocial work: unlearning negative embodied legacies while simultaneously developing a new bodily and capillary heritage that reflects a transformed mindset. Although Paul Dash[33] has suggested a kind of global dissolution of the heritage power of the Afro hair movement, this is not the case among the groups and individuals we worked with in Chile and Colombia. On the contrary, there is evidence of serious motivation and an inter-temporal and intergenerational impact. These communities have developed lasting heritage-based strategies of action. By harnessing the presence, plasticity, care, and visibility of Afro hair, they have transformed it into a transmissible and expandable tool for decolonial education. In summary, the expected effects of these practices include:

- Dismantling internalised racial oppression
- Rebuilding a sense of identity
- Strengthening a sense of ancestry
- Recovering a sense of belonging
- Reincarnating non-racialised representations of blackness
- Fostering unity between diverse origins and territories
- Empowering political, educational and healthcare action.

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THE ROLE AND IMPACT OF HERITAGE PRACTITIONERS WITHIN A TRIBAL STRUCTURE ON THE INTERPRETATION AND PRESENTATION OF NATIONAL HERITAGE

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INTRODUCTION

Heritage interpretation—the practice of communicating the meanings, values, and significance of cultural and natural heritage to diverse audiences—plays a pivotal role in shaping public understanding and engagement with the past.[1] As a professional and academic field, heritage interpretation has increasingly moved beyond didactic transmission towards more inclusive,[2] dialogic,[3] and participatory approaches.[4] However, in contexts of rapid modernisation and strong governance involvement, such as the United Arab Emirates (UAE).[5] This research interrogates these dynamics by examining how heritage interpretation is constructed, negotiated, and contested in the UAE, particularly through the lens of intangible heritage that are affiliated with tribal knowledge[6] systems.[7] It aims to highlight the role of tribal heritage practitioners in safeguarding what they perceive as local traditions. Employing a qualitative methodology, this study includes case studies from the UAE, supported by fieldwork, observations and document analysis of the topics discussed in this study. Findings reveal complex tensions and hierarchies in the context of national heritage interpretation, including those between formal and informal narratives, internal and external expressions of identity, and top-down versus bottom-up approaches.

THEORETICAL APPROACH

Understanding the dynamics of heritage interpretation in the UAE requires understanding cultural heritage context in the Arabian Gulf region—a region characterised by distinctive coexistence of tangible and intangible heritage but is also subject to geopolitical challenges, cultural homogenisation, and rapid urbanisation.[8] Such dynamics constantly negotiates traditions and modernity which necessitates a clear conceptual grounding in the intersecting notions of intangible heritage, tribal systems, local communities, nation-building, and heritage-making processes. Each of these elements plays a distinct yet interconnected role in the meaning-making and institutionalisation of heritage, particularly in rapidly modernising states such as the UAE. In addition, this approach illustrates the dynamics of heritage interpretation as shaped by interactions between the government sector and tribal communities, including informal practices of staged heritage and heritagisation. This section provides definitions for and background relevant to issues related to heritage interpretation based on these evolving concepts and issues.

Intangible Heritage as Living Heritage

Intangible heritage, as defined by UNESCO[9] 2003 Convention,[10] refers to practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, and skills transmitted from generation to generation. Unlike tangible heritage[11] intangible heritage is inherently dynamic and adaptive, often evolving through lived experience.[12] In the Arabian Gulf region, intangible heritage encompasses oral poetry,[13] falconry, maritime knowledge, traditional dance performances and ceremonial practices.[14] These traditions are not static remnants of the past, but forms of living heritage—a concept that emphasises continuity, community relevance, and transformation over time.[15] The framing of intangible heritage[16] as living heritage situates it not merely as cultural inventory, but as an active and continues process of identity formation and heritage interpretation, particularly in societies undergoing rapid economic and infrastructural change.[17]

Tribal Structure as a System

Tribal structures have historically functioned as foundational socio-political systems across the Arabian Peninsula, predating the formation of modern nation-states.[18] Tribes in the Arabian Gulf region are not simply genealogical entities, but intricate systems of governance, resource sharing, and cultural transmission.[19] Many of today's Arabian Gulf communities (within the borders of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, Kuwait),[20] retain strong kinship ties, shared dialects, and ritualistic traditions that trace back to tribal organisation.[21] In the UAE, coastal villages, desert settlements, mountain dwellers, and oasis inhabitants are shaped by historical affiliations to particular tribes, which continue to influence communal roles in socio-heritage customs and/or practices such as crafts, festivals, weddings, oral storytelling, among others.[22] Within these communities are the heritage practitioners who occupy crucial custodianship and intermediary roles[23]—both custodians and interpreters of living heritage, but their agency is often overlooked in state-led heritage narratives. The link between tribal systems and local communities is thus critical to understanding who participates in heritage interpretation[24] and how authenticity is claimed and performed.[25]

National Identity as Nationalism

Scholars such as Fox[26] and Antonsich[27] remind us that everyday nationhood is also articulated through the needs, values, and cultural preferences of ordinary people. In the context of the Arabian Gulf region, living heritage has been instrumental in crafting cohesive national identities amidst rapid socio-economic transformation and demographic plurality.[28] In the UAE, national identity is increasingly constructed through curated heritage narratives that align with state visions of modernity and unity.[29] This often manifests in the selective elevation of certain tribal histories, crafts, and values as emblematic of Emirati culture, while marginalising others.[30] Such practices are not neutral; they reflect a form of heritage nationalism wherein intangible heritage becomes a tool of soft power and legitimacy.[31] Hence, the role of interpretation within this context becomes politically charged, as it shapes how the nation is imagined, remembered, and performed.[32]

Heritagisation as Heritage-Making

The process of *heritagisation*—the transformation of cultural practices into recognised 'heritage'—is a contemporary form of heritage-making that involves selective recontextualisation, often driven by state interests and global heritage policies.[33] In the Arabian Gulf region, this is evident in the staging of historic spaces, and traditional practices from the past, which are curated for both local and international consumption.[34] Heritagisation thus mediates between lived cultural practice and its institutional representation, often leading to the commodification and consumption of local traditions.[35] However, local actors (including heritage practitioners) also engage in their own forms of

heritagisation, reasserting agency over how their traditions are framed, particularly in community-led festivals or informal storytelling events.[36] This dual dynamic reveals heritagisation as both a top-down and bottom-up phenomenon, central to the politics of heritage interpretation.

Interpretation as Meaning-Making

Heritage interpretation—defined as the communication of heritage significance[37] to audiences[38]—is increasingly viewed as a process of *meaning-making*[39] that involves negotiation, translation, and contestation.[40] In the Arabian Gulf region, interpretation is not simply about transmitting factual narratives, but about negotiating cultural meanings across generations, languages, and political contexts.[41] For example, the revival of *sadu*[42] in national celebrations simultaneously communicates national pride and tribal belonging. Interpretation in this context must be understood as a plural, affective, and performative act[43]—one that reflects tensions between community-based knowledge and institutional heritage frameworks.[44]

Together, the above-mentioned conceptual framings illuminate the layered complexity of heritage interpretation in the Arabian Gulf region. They demonstrate that interpretation is not merely a communicative act, but a site of negotiation involving power, identity, memory, and belonging. This choice allows for a deeper understanding of the nuanced aspects of heritage interpretation within processes of selection in a specific context, enabling us to capture the social and political dynamics associated with it.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The findings of this research are derived primarily from fieldwork observations, supplemented by data gathered from relevant dossiers and documents. Taking the UAE as the focus of this study, heritage interpretation is often institutionalised through state-led initiatives that prioritise international recognition frameworks, notably UNESCO's heritage conventions. While these efforts seek to consolidate a cohesive national identity, they also tend to privilege commodified and curated expressions of heritage over embodied and community-driven forms of meaning-making.[45] Such processes can narrow the scope of interpretation, reducing it to heritage display rather than fostering a deeper understanding rooted in community values and lived experience.[46] This section uncovers research results into threefold discussions: heritage interpretation as a process of selection, who determines heritage interpretation, and the different forms of heritage interpretation in the UAE.

Heritage Interpretation as a Process of Selection

Placing heritage interpretation in a chronological context, it includes a broad array of intangible and living cultural expressions such as poetry, crafts, social practices, music, and storytelling, constructing techniques, among others which serve as the foundation of their cultural identity, space, and memory in the 1960s and even before. In 1971, the UAE emerged a united nation-state—a significant political transition from a tribe system to a country. Between 1970s and 1990s, tribal, local, and wider national characteristics contextualise Emirati social structure and its political dynamics in relation to the growing tensions between safeguarding traditional practices and modernity. During the 2000s and onwards, heritage interpretation became selective and often institutionalised through state-led initiatives that prioritise heritage elements affiliated with international recognition frameworks, notably UNESCO's heritage conventions. Today, an urgent need to community-led heritage interpretation emerged in response to the impacts of modernisation and what the Emirati people consider to be local heritage practices.

Emiratis who belong to tribal roots have greatly influenced the preservation and presentation of Emirati intangible heritage that we are aware of today. Those practitioners are often the bearers of

living heritage; specifically relying on the local dialect and the common practice of customs in the transmitting process of socio-cultural practices including traditional performances and crafts. The continuity of this process is key to the meaning-making, or the interpretation of their heritage in both practices and presentation. Tribes provide not only the context in which intangible heritage is embedded, but also the informal organisational frameworks through which heritage is stewarded and communicated Hence, outward influences (such as policies) rarely make a different to similar heritage practitioners. To illustrate how this notion is practiced in the UAE, the example of *Bait al-Qufl*, or 'The House of the Lock', can be discussed, demonstrated in Figure 1 and 2.

Bait al-Qufl is a distinctive architectural and living heritage practice deeply embedded in the mountain and mercantile traditions particularly within the UAE and Oman. Traditionally constructed by mountain-dwelling communities, *Bait al-Qufl* is notable for its fortified entrance, often featuring a complex locking mechanism that signifies not only physical security but also social exclusivity. Importantly, *Bait al-Qufl* is more than a physical structure; it stands as a compelling example of informal heritage interpretation as perceived and practised by Emirati *Shihuh* tribe—the bearers and practitioners of this heritage, who actively reclaim and reinterpret such traditional structures in ways that resist dominant, state-driven heritage interpretations often centred on political or economic agendas.

On a broader scale, the institutionalisation of intangible heritage strengthens the meanings and values of selected traditional practices central to national identity. Supportive frameworks—such as cultural policies, registries, training centres, and participatory programmes—facilitate funding, research, production, and engagement with private and international sectors. However, this selective approach risks marginalising other heritage elements valued by local communities. This selection often entails a process of heritagisation—transforming traditional heritage elements and meanings into commodities for commercial, educational, or tourism purposes, with their production becoming closely tied to the creative economy.[47]

Figure 1. Traditional constructing method of Bait al-Qufl, AlShaikh, 2024.

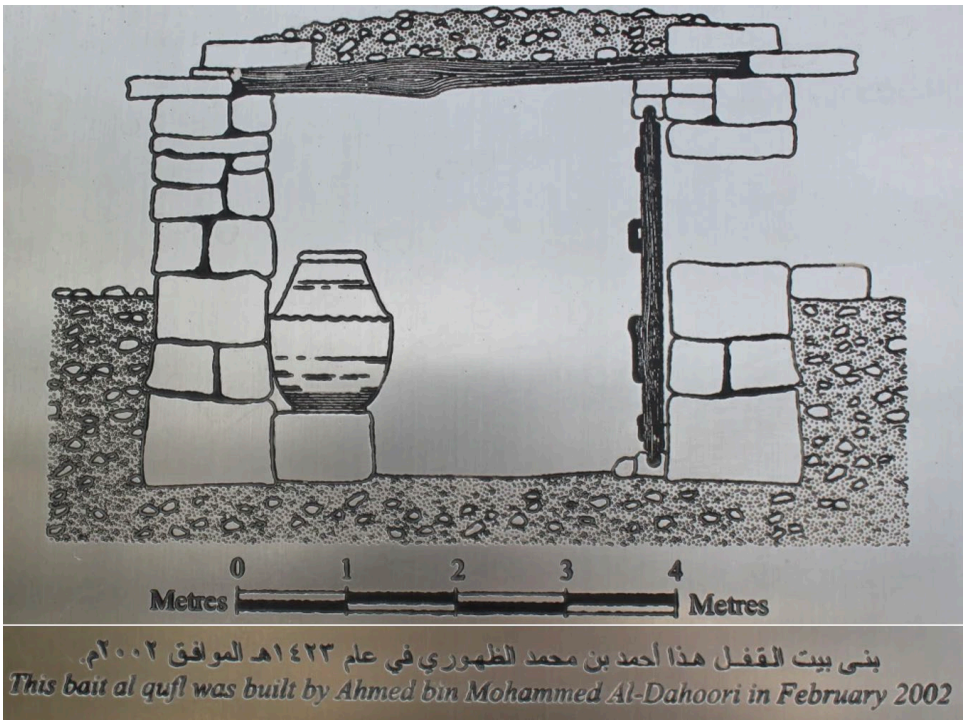

Figure 2. Schematic of Bait al-Qufl, AlShaikh, 2024.

Whose Interpretation?

In the Arabian Gulf region, heritage interpretation reveals how living traditions—such as language, tribal affiliations, oral traditions, and religious practices—function not merely as relics of the past, but as dynamic expressions through which cultural identity is interpreted, represented, and experienced in daily life. These practices shape national identity through ordinary, lived experiences, aligning with the concept of *everyday nationhood,*[48] which examines how individuals engage with, contest, or even disregard national identity in routine[49] acts such as attending heritage festivals, wearing traditional attire, or using dialects and idioms imbued with local meanings.[50]

Drawing on Hobsbawm and Ranger's[51] theory of 'invented traditions', it is evident that Arabian Gulf region strategically deploys heritage interpretation to bridge the gap between abstract nationhood and the diverse cultural realities of their populations. Brubaker[52] observes that nationhood is often reinforced through selective construction of narratives—with symbols such as pearling, falconry, and desert life institutionalised through curriculums, museums, cultural districts, and national celebrations across the region. In these contexts, heritage operates as both a cultural resource and a political instrument, fostering unity amid modernisation and demographic diversity.

To illustrate the constructed and context-dependent nature of cultural practices, the example of *nose pressing* provides a compelling case of how similar embodied gestures can hold different meanings across cultural contexts, thus challenging the notion of universal cultural identity. Among Bedouin communities in the Arabian Peninsula, this act is referred to in the local dialect as *Limwayah BelKhushoom,*[53] and is traditionally used as a greeting signifying mutual respect and tribal recognition.[54] As demonstrated in Figure 3, this greeting is deeply embedded in Bedouin codes of honour and reconciliation, often performed by men during formal or social encounters.[55] Across the globe, a similar cultural gesture exists among the Māori of New Zealand, where the *Hongi*[56]—a greeting involving the pressing of foreheads and noses—symbolises the spiritual sharing of breath,

peace, and unity—performed by both men and women and reflects a sacred exchange between individuals.[57]

Figure 3. Left to right: Limwayah BelKhushoom, Hongi. AlShaikh, 2024

At first glance, these gestures might appear to indicate a shared cultural practice, suggesting the presence of a universal or translatable meaning. However, as Light and Prentice[58] argue, the interpretation of heritage—particularly intangible practices—is intrinsically tied to questions of ownership, identity, and meaning. This aligns with Tunbridge's[59] foundational concept of *"whose heritage?"*, which highlights how heritage is not an objective or shared product, but one that is deeply politicised and localised. Heritage elements derive their cultural significance from the sociolinguistic, symbolic, and historical frameworks of the communities that practice them. Thus, while both *Limwayah BelKhushoom* and *Hongi* involve the touching of noses, their meanings, values, and emotional resonances differ greatly, shaped by distinct geographies, social systems, and language particularities.

This example underscores a central argument of this study: that cultural distinctiveness is not defined by external similarities in form, but by internally produced meanings. What may appear outwardly as a shared custom is, in fact, anchored in specific localised interpretations. In other words, a shared practice of distinctive communities verifies that *whose heritage* is by itself *whose interpretation*. Nationhood, in this context, is not simply inherited—it is continuously interpreted, enacted, and reproduced in the rhythms of everyday forms of cultural resilience and ownership. As Nic Craith[60] notes, the narrative of shared or universal heritage is often promoted through nationalist agendas that seek to essentialise cultural expressions to fit within a unified national or global identity. Consequently, what emerges is a curated vision of culture, one that flattens difference in the name of unity and selectively interprets intangible heritage to serve political imaginaries.

Forms of Heritage Interpretation in the UAE

Heritage in this context is not simply a reflection of the past, but a dynamic resource mobilised through state planning, cultural institutions, and community practices to generate meanings and identities that are relevant to modern nation-states. The UAE presents a compelling case in which heritage interpretation functions across three interconnected domains: *representative*, *contemporary*, and *practice-based* forms. These forms reflect different interpretive meanings, mechanisms, audiences, and objectives, but collectively contribute to nation-building and reproduction of a united Emirati cultural identity.

Representative forms of heritage interpretation focus on heritage elements that gained international visibility and formal recognition—particularly those inscribed on UNESCO's lists of intangible cultural heritage. Examples of inscribed elements in the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage—shown in Figure 4 (left to right) include *Talli*—traditional embroidery technique, *Majlis*—space of social gathering, and *Ayyala*—a traditional dance performance. These heritage practices are institutionalised[61] and presented through national events, social ceremonials, and cultural diplomacy, projecting a unified cultural identity internationally while fostering pride and continuity domestically.[62] This approach reflects Hobsbawm and Ranger's notion of 'invented traditions', wherein selected cultural elements are formalised to create an impression of historical continuity and coherent heritage interpretation.

Figure 4. Talli, Majlis, Ayyala.

In parallel, *contemporary* heritage interpretation in the UAE involves the integration of heritage into artistic, educational, commercial, and symbolic domains. This includes heritage-infused curricula in schools, creative reinterpretations in fashion and design, and the strategic deployment of heritage in branding by both state and private sectors. Art fairs and commissions such as Art Dubai serves as a global platform for contemporary and modern art from the Global South, with a special focus underrepresented artists including heritage artisans from the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia (MENASA) region. Festivals such as *Qasr Al Hosn*[63] illustrates how heritage is used to generate affective resonance with the public and to articulate a modern Emirati identity that bridges tradition and innovation. This form of interpretation, as shown in Figure 5 (left to right), allows heritage to remain relevant to contemporary society, especially among younger generations and expatriate communities. It also underscores the performative nature of heritage—not merely a set of fixed symbols, but a constantly evolving set of practices and meanings shaped by changing social, political, and economic contexts.

Figure 5. Customary social gathering; arranged staged heritage for commercial use.

Perhaps the most under-recognised but socially embedded form of heritage interpretation in the UAE is *practice-based*, rooted in the lived experiences and oral traditions of local communities—particularly those of tribal affiliation. This includes smithing, traditional games, maritime skills, and desert-based knowledge, as shown in Figure 6. Often transmitted through informal networks of kinship and apprenticeship, these practices operate outside the institutional frameworks of UNESCO or state-driven heritage programming. While lacking global recognition, practice-based interpretations are integral to the everyday cultural fabric of Emirati society. They reinforce community bonds, intergenerational continuity, and a sense of belonging rooted in place, ancestry, and shared experience. Importantly, these forms of heritage interpretation reflect the agency of communities in maintaining and adapting their own cultural expressions, often in tension with or parallel to state narratives.

Figure 6. Everyday traditional practices performed by Emiratis

Taken together, these three forms of heritage interpretation demonstrate how nationhood in the UAE is not only imposed from above through symbolic narratives, but also enacted from below through the everyday actions, choices, and values of individuals and communities. The interplay between state-led representation, creative reinterpretation, and community practice produces a multifaceted national identity—one that is continuously negotiated and made meaningful through heritage. This process underscores that heritage in the UAE is both a cultural and political project. It is a means of legitimising the state, articulating shared values, and enabling citizens to experience a sense of continuity and distinctiveness in an increasingly globalised world. In this sense, heritage interpretation in the UAE functions as a mechanism of cultural cohesion, national distinction, and everyday nationhood.

CONCLUSION

This study centres on the interpretive contributions of tribal heritage practitioners—individuals embedded within indigenous knowledge systems—who actively shape, safeguard and interpret intangible heritage in ways that frequently diverge from official narratives. These practitioners offer distinct interpretation approaches to recognising, practicing, safeguarding and presenting intangible

heritage, influenced by the tribe's environmental, cultural, and historical resources, as well as social and linguistic particularities. In the UAE, the state's active role in framing these elements as representative of the nation underscores heritage's function as a political discourse—a tool for nation-branding and cultural legitimisation. Ultimately, this research calls for a rethinking of professional standards in heritage interpretation to better incorporate grassroots knowledge, lived experience, and community agency. It advocates for an expanded interpretive paradigm—one that is sensitive to informal and indigenous modes of meaning-making, and capable of navigating the complex interplay between national identity, cultural policy, and local heritage practices. As such, it offers a valuable model for inclusive, context-aware interpretation that is responsive to the realities of contemporary heritage landscapes.

NOTES

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THE BARROW IN THE LANDSCAPE – DESTROYED, RESTORED, REDEFINED OR NEWLY BUILT

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INTRODUCTION

200 years ago the Danish landscape was dominated by barrows and mounds. Estimates run at 25,000 to 50,000 megalithic barrows and at least 40,000 bronze age mounds. Today 2,800 barrows and about 10,000 bronze age mounds remain in varying states of preservation.[1]

Many of them disappeared in the agroindustrial revolution among other reasons due to the need for shards for roadbuilding. In one example walking the road from Roskilde to Frederikssund on Zealand, Magnus Petersen (1827-1917), a draughtsman specializing in archaeological drawings, observed 400 barrows and mounds in 1847, but only 50 in 1909.[2]

Parallel with their destruction the barrows and mounds became integral parts of Danish culture to such a degree that they have received their own place in Danish romantic paintings from the 1800s onwards (fig.1), and have been used as templates for state monuments and burials. They now dot landscapes, city parks and castle grounds across the country (fig.2).

They come in four different types:

1. Ideological imagined new barrows or mounds referring to the State
2. Archaeological sites excavated and restored (or at least not disturbed) according to scientific approaches (but almost always retaining romanticized landscape elements).
3. Newly constructed barrows to persons
4. Reuse of old barrows to new burials or monuments

IDEOLOGY, BARROWS AND MOUNDS

As in many other West European countries the formation of the 'Danish' identity took place from the second half of the 18th Century to the early part of the 20th.[3] This is, among other phenomena, reflected in fake and/or refurbished barrows and mounds around the country.

Here I will focus on three examples: ”Forblommet Antique” (”Veiled Antiquity”) from 1764 at Fredensborg, a Bronze age mound cum memorial at Egen Church on Als from 1920, and ”Mindehøjen” (”Memorial Mound”) from 1924-25 at Søndermarken in Copenhagen (figs.3-5)

”Forblommet Antique” (”Veiled Antiquity”) was erected in 1764 in the gardens at Fredensborg Palace. It was designed by Johannes Wiedewelt (1731-1802) according to ideas of Frederik V (1746-1766). The monument consists of a foundation with five layers of roughly hewn boulders mounted by cut slabs forming a 'gate' into a 'cave'. On the lintel we find Wiedewelts name in runes. In front of the monument there is a Roman bust on a column and the same on top of the lintel. The two busts are actual Roman portraits from the 1st Century BC taken from the Royal Collections. The meaning is

unknown, but could well be to connect the Roman Empire to the present conglomerate 'empire' of the 18th Century, i.e. the double kingdom of Denmark-Norway.[4] Many of the same themes were repeated by Wiedewelt both at Julianehøj by Jægerspris (1776) and nearly forty years later when designing the memorial mound for the seamen lost at the Battle of Copenhagen April 2nd 1801.[5]

Figure 1. Carlo Dalgas. The Little Shepherd's Boy. Statens Museum for Kunst.

Figure 2. Map of Denmark with the main sites mentioned in the text. Map by author.

The monument at Egen Church, Als is singular. In 1864 Denmark and Prussia fought the 2nd Schleswig War over the question of whether the duchies Schleswig and Holstein should belong to Denmark or the German Bund. Prussia in alliance with Austria won a decisive victory, and both duchies were 'liberated' from Denmark, including the predominantly Danish speaking northern areas of Schleswig. This war was the first of three wars that ultimately led to the creation of the German Empire at Versailles in 1871 after the Franco-Prussian War.[6] After World War I a referendum was held in Schleswig-Holstein under the auspices of the Versailles treaty concerning national 'rights to selfdetermination', and North Schleswig (in Danish Sønderjylland) was returned to Denmark.
Als was thus German 1864-1920. At Egen Church on Als there is a mound, probably from the bronze age, inside the cemetery. This is not unusual for Danish churches. What is unusual is, however, that in the Medieval period a wooden bell tower was placed on top of it, and that after World War I it was chosen as a memorial for the 66 young men from the parish who fell for Germany in the war. Each one remembered by a plaquette at the foot of the mound (figure 4). It thus became both a local and a national symbol and memorial.[7]
”Mindehøjen” (”Memorial Mound”) in Søndermarken, Copenhagen sits at the top of a slope whose bottom is at one of the entrances to Søndermarken at the crossroad Vesterbrogade/Pile Allé/Roskildevej. It appears as a mound with a triangular entrance corridor bordered by midsized rough stones. There is a simple doorway and inside a domed chamber in whose centre a statue of 'Mother Denmark' is placed on a fivepointed star. On the walls twelve reliefs illustrating the story of Danes emigrating all around the world. Indeed this memorial mound was financed by emigrated Danes, especially from the USA, to confirm their connection to the 'motherland'. This is also the reason for the fivepointed star inlaid in the floor, designating the five continents to which Danes had emigrated. It was built 1924-25 and designed by Anders Bundgaard, who some years earlier had created another important 'Nordic' monument in Copenhagen, the Gefion Fountain,[8] It was inaugurated in 1925 with the presence of the royal family and 50,000 spectators, but the interest quickly faded, and today it is little known, probably due to the lack of rituals/meetings associated with it since it is only open to the public on the 4th of July.[9]

MODERN RESTORATIONS

Modern restorations of old barrows and mounds dot the landscape around Denmark. Regularly along the road one may pass the sign signifying 'ancient monument', and usually a small parking spot will be provided. Sometimes one will have to walk for a bit to reach the site. Here I will describe two examples (figs.6-7)
Birkehøj (Birch Hill) in North West Zealand is a passage grave from the 4th Millenium BC. It was exavated and restored according to the best available knowledge in 2003. As can be seen you can enter the actual burial chamber or enjoy the view of the landscape. Note the small trees covering part of the barrow.
Not far from Birkehøj we find Syvhøje (Seven Hills). Today only six of the seven original mounds remain. They are thought to be from the Bronze Age but have never been excavated. Again we note the placement in the landscape and the presence of trees on or about the mounds.
Thus we find that the Romantic ideal, expressed in paintings of the 19th Century, to place a tree or a bush at or near the ancient mound real or not, is pervasive even in purportedly 'correct' restorations in the 21st Century AD.

NEWLY CONSTRUCTED MOUNDS FOR MODERN BURIALS

The best known example in this group is the mound built for countess Danner at Jægerspris Slotspark in 1872 (fig.8). The mound is fronted by a stairway in triangular shape going down to a simple entrance gate closed by metal fencing behind which the sarcophagus of countess Danner is visible. On top of the mound a large triangular boulder with inscription. We know that countess Danner, who were of citizen descent and thus could not become queen, specifically wished to be buried in a fake mound to commemorate her husbands' love for archaeology.

REUSE OF OF OLD BARROWS AND MOUNDS TO NEW MONUMENTS

Kongenshøj (King Hill) on Samsø, in the middle of Kattegat, is the highest point on the island, 33 metres above sea level, with a bronze age mound on top refurbished as a memorial for Frederik VII in 1864 (fig.9). In a bronze relief he is presented as a laureated victor. It was erected right after the loss of Schleswig and Holstein and thus the accompanying inscription is notable: ”Hvad Danmark engang var, kan Danmark atter bliver” (”What Denmark once was, Denmark may be again”). Thus this is a clear example of using an ancient monument in a period of national crisis to hark bark to a heroic past and provide hope in a time of sorrow. 10 Since its creation it has received several more memorial stones, including for the reunification of Sønderjylland with the rest of Denmark in 1920. Paradoxically these stones have been plundered from barrows around the island.

Figure 3. Johannes Wiedewelt. ”Veiled Antique”, Fredensborg Palace Park, 1764. Photo provided by Fredensborg Historical Archive.

There are quite a few such sites with memorial stones in Denmark, often around ancient monuments. One of the largest is found at Glavendrup in Funen centred on a stone with the longest runic inscription in Denmark, which was found in 1806, but only raised to its present position, on a very low hill at the end of a stone ship in late summer 1864. Yet another example of wishing Denmark to rise again in a state of utmost crisis, and it is in such states of crisis that culture may be preserved through rites to keep the groups selfidentity afloat, such as raising monuments and perform special rites related to them.[10]

Alike and yet very different is ”Ole Olsens Gravhøj” (”Ole Olsens Mound”) in Odsherred on Sealand. This mound is sitting on the top of a ridge originally crowned with at least five mounds. Only three of them are preserved today. To the left of ”Ole Olsens Gravhøj” we find Estershøj with a memorial stone to the reunification in 1920.[11] On the right another mound, completely broken down since, once a mill was placed on top of it. Once again we note the deliberate placement in the landscape with a magnificent view in all directions, but especially across Sejerøbugten (fig.10).

Before turning to the mound itself a short note on Ole Olsen (1863-1943). He was the son of a poor carpenter in Odsherred but founded Nordisk Film, the largest movie corporation in the world in the decade 1905-15. This earned him a large fortune. He was very aware of the perceived importance of leaving a mark, and he did this through the mound. Actually it was not planned that he should be buried in a mound, but the story goes that the urn of his late wife once disappeared for a short while from the cemetery where it was held, and as a reaction he had the idea to be buried in a reused mound. He also stipulated that once closed the burial chamber was not to be opened again before 200 years after his death.

The National Museum did not fancy the idea of a burial inside an ancient mound. They vetoed it, but were overruled by juridical shenanigans in 1935, and interestingly the case was part of the reason for a law from 1937 still in effect protecting ancient monuments from such creative ideas.

Still ”Ole Olsens Gravhøj” is the only one of the three mounds were an actual excavation took place. When construction of the burial chamber took place two burials, a male secondary, and a female central burial from the early Bronze Age, was found and excavated by the National Museum, summoned by Ole Olsen himself.[12] The clause about the closing of the burial chamber had to be waived in 2023 as restoration was needed due to crumbling concrete.

The mound today is surrounded by a metal fence. The entrance to the burial chamber is a triangular dromos with walls of midsized boulders and is very like the entrance to 'Mindehøjen' in Søndermarken. The entrance is in the Doric style with a triangular pediment. On the bronze door the logo of Nordisk Film has been embossed.

Inside the chamber there is a skylight and on the far wall a shelf with the urns of Ole Olsen and his wife. There are small paintings of Dragsholm Slot and Vallekilde Church, two local landmarks, and the walls are filled with glass mosaics by Arne Meyer (1905-1969) depiciting Danish landscapes and major infrastructural achievements of the 1930es, notably the Lille Bælt Bridge built in 1934. Further there are four frames with mosaics showing a pilot and his plane, people working in a lab, film makers and a family by the radio, accompanied by the following inscription written by the Danish writer Knud Sønderby:

”Ole Olsen gave this burial in an ancient mound to himself and his wife, and let his time into all the ages that had passed. Man liberated himself from the Earth, the sound went live, images became alive and one sought the innermost core of things. Our time. The age of flying, the movies, radios and nuclear explosions”.[13]

Ole Olsen had a mission with his unusual burial. According to his autobiography:

Figure 4. The monument to the fallen in the 1st World War. Egen Church, Als, Denmark.

Figure 5. Mindehøjen. Søndermarken. Photo by author.

”I built this mausoleum in an old Warrior grave to give an image of our time. When my ashes have been buried here in a few years, the mound will be walled in, and may not be opened save for 200 years. Then men of that age shall come and see what we saw in our time, what we created in the arts and in technics, this is the cultural mission of my mound!”[14]

This is oddly similar to the great Danish philosopher, Kierkegaard's statement:
”Old is the scissors with which you cut away what you shall not use, even it is under the most intense review of memory. Oblivion and memory are thus identical, at the artistically created identity the Archimedean point, with which you raise the world. When you say that you are writing something in the 'forget-me-not' you after all indicate that it may well be forgotten but that it is still recorded.[15]
Thus the decoration of the burial chamber and the closing until AD 2143 makes the monument strangely akin to the messages onboard Voyager 1 and 2 hurtling through interstellar space with messages to possible aliens in the future.
Our final example is Hagenshøj by Skive in northern Jutland. It is (probably) a bronze age mound. In front of it the burial site for the star trotter Tarok (1972-1981) and the urns of the breeder Karl Laursen (1906-1995) and his wife Elisabeth (1908-2005). Just like Ole Olsen's burial site it is placed in scenic countryside in a group of bronze age mounds. The horse was buried with his bridle, his blanket for winning the Danish championship 1980 and the victory wreath from his last victory.[16] Thus the horse was laid out like the horses of ancient elite horse burials. In Denmark the best known example are the 11 horses from the Ladby Burial (early 10th C AD).[17] According to the son of Karl Laursen, Jørn, the burial was placed there because it could be seen from the kitchen window of the farm and was one of the fields in which Tarok had lived during his life time. There was thus no actual intention to mimick the past.

CONCLUSION

The idea of using a newly constructed barrow or reusing an old barrow for a modern burial seems uniquely Danish. In Sweden and Norway it is quite common to restore old barrows and use them in the landscape as at the bronze age sites of Kivik and Haga in Sweden and the Viking age mounds of Oseberg and Gokstad in Norway, but the only momnument akin to the Danish examples is Haraldshaugen with an obelisk on top of a fake barrow from 1872 commemorating the mythical unification of Norway a thousand years earlier. Also memorials to archaeological finds seems to much more common in Denmark,[18] reinforcing the point that the past may be a different country or a 'kultureller Erschöpfung',
All the described examples belong to the 'realms of memory' and use the barrow or as a way of expressing unity. All of them reflects an understanding of 'deep time' and continuity, which is even explicit in Ole Olsens own (half-baked) thoughts on his burial mound. There are many more examples than these, and it serves to underline the point: that this imagined landscape is integral to Danish selfconsciousness. It may be considered irrelevant, but we are still obsessed by it.[19] Thus the early modern and present use reuse of barrows and mounds in the Danish landscape approach being a legendary landscape evoking the imagined heroic past, oddly similar to the actual ritualized landscapes of Neolithic barrows and Bronze Age mounds in their own time.[20] They have become ”part of a particular ethnic or regional landscape, an inseparable component and memorial of older civilisations absorbed by the flow of time into their natural habitats”.[21]

Figure 6. Birkehøj. Passage grave. North West Zealand. Photo by author.

Figure 7. Syvhøje (Seven Hills). North West Zealand. Photo by author.

Figure 8. Countess Danners tumulus. Jægerspris Slotspark. 1872. Photo by author.

Figure 9. King Hill, Samsø. Monument to Frederik VII.

Figure 10. ”Ole Olsens Gravhøj” and Estershøj. Photo by author.

NOTES

[1]Jørgen Jensen. *Danmarks Oldtid – Stenalder 13000-2000 f. Kr.* Gyldendal, 2001; Jørgen Jensen. *Danmarks Oldtid – Bronzealder 2000-500 f. Kr.* Gyldendal, 2002

[2] J. Magnus Petersen. *Minder fra min virksomhed paa Arkæologiens Omraade fra 1845 til 1908.* H.H.Thiele,1909.

[3] Anthony D. Smith. *National Identity.* Penguin Books, 1991.

[4] Claus M. Smidt. ”Et kongeligt landslot” in Fredensborg – en skildring af slotsbyen gennem tiderne. Udgivet i anledning af Regentparrets sølvbryllup den 10.juni 1992, edited by Godfred Hartmann. Fredensborg, 1992.

[5] Søren Skriver Tillisch. ”The Nordic Past in the City Scape of Copenhagen” in *AMPS Proceedings Series 40,3: Urban Futures – Cultural Pasts*. Barcelona, 2025.

[6] Michael Embree. *Bismarck's First War*. West Midland Press, 2006. Christopher Clark. *Iron Kingdom – the Rise and Fall of Prussia*, 1600-1947. Penguin Books. 2006.

[7] Inge Adriansen. *Erindringssteder i Danmark. Monumenter, Mindesmærker og Mødesteder*. Museum Tusculanums Forlag, 2010.

[8]Søren Skriver Tillisch. ”The Nordic Past in the City Scape of Copenhagen” in *AMPS Proceedings Series 40,3: Urban Futures – Cultural Pasts*. Barcelona, 2025.

[9] Inge Adriansen. *Erindringssteder i Danmark. Monumenter, Mindesmærker og Mødesteder*. Museum Tusculanums Forlag, 2010.

[10]Inge Adriansen. *Erindringssteder i Danmark. Monumenter, Mindesmærker og Mødesteder*. Museum Tusculanums Forlag, 2010. Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis : Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen*. Verlag C. H. Beck. 1997.

[11] Arne Hedegaard Andersen. ”Esterhøj og Ole Olsens Høj” in *Fra Holbæk Amt*, 2000.

[12] Arne Hedegaard Andersen. ”Esterhøj og Ole Olsens Høj” in *Fra Holbæk Amt*, 2000.

[13] Poul Malmkjær. *Gøgler og generaldirektør. Ole Olsen – grundlæggeren af Nordisk Film.* Gyldendal, 1997.. In Danish: ”Ole Olsen gav sig og sin Hustru denne Grav i en Kæmpehøj fra Oldtiden og lukkede sin Tid ind til al den Tid, der svandt. Mennesket frigjorde sig fra Jorden, Lyden blev frigjort, Billeder blev Levende, og man søgte Tingenes inderste Kerne, Vor Tid, Flyvningens, Filmens, Radioens og Atomsprængningens tid”.

[14] Ole Olsen. *Filmens Eventyr og mit eget.* Jespersen & Pios Forlag, 1940. ”Jeg rejste dette Mausoleum i en gammel Krigergrav for at give et Billede af Tiden hvori vi Lever. Naar min Aske om faa Aar er begravet her, mures Højen til, og saa maa den ikke aabnes før om to Hundrede Aar. Saa skal den Tids Mennesker da komme og se, hvad vi oplevede i vor Tid, hvad vi skabte af Aand og Teknik. Det er den kulturelle Mission med min Gravhøj”

[15] Søren Kierkegaard. *Enten/Eller.* 1843. In Danish:. ”Glemsel er den Sax, med hvilken man klipper bort, hvad man ikke kan bruge, vel at mærke under Erindringens allerhøieste Opsyn. Glemsel og Erindring ere saaledes identiske, og den kunstneriske tilveiebragte Identitet det archimediske Punkt, med hvilket man løfter hele Verden. Naar man siger at skrive Noget i Glemmebogen, saa antyder man jo paa eengang at det glemmes og at det dog opbevares”.

[16] Aiko Sho Nielsen. *Tarok – Hesten hele Danmark forelskede sig i*. Lindhardt & Ringhof, 2013. Jørn Laursen, personal information.

[17] Anne Christina Sørensen. *Ladby : A Danish Ship-Grave from the Viking Age,* Ships and Boats of the North 3, Roskilde, 2001.

[18] Jes Wienberg. ”Kanon, mindesmærker og oldtidsfund” in *Kanon och Kulturarv. Historia och samtid i Danmark och Sverige* edited by Lars Eric Jönsson, Anna Wallette & Jes Wienberg. Makadam Forlag, 2008.

[19] David Lowenthal. *The past is a foreign country*. Routledge. 1985.

[20] Kate Prendergast. ”Caves of the winter sun. Synthesizing the evidence for astronomical orientation at the Boyne Valley passage tombs” in *Riocht Na Midhe* 15.

[21] Anthony D. Smith. *National Identity.* Penguin Books, 1991.

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HERITAGE OF WADI HANIFAH: NAVIGATING SOCIO-CULTURAL COMPLEXITY IN CONSERVATION

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INTRODUCTION

Wadi Hanifah, a long-inhabited valley that runs through the landscape of Diriyah, *remains a site of adaptation*.

Native tribes have settled along its seasonal watercourses as sedentary farmers for centuries, and once Diriyah rose as capital of the First Saudi State, the valley's spatial and social order reconfigured, and continues to do so to this day.[1] These shifts accelerated dramatically after the 1950s: rapid, oil-fueled expansion weakened intergenerational knowledge transmission and disrupted inherited practices, as construction increasingly relied on materials incompatible with local environmental conditions and unable to integrate with earlier building fabric. At the same time, planning and conservation approaches were introduced through formal frameworks that tend to privilege permanence and material primacy.

International conservation frameworks offer important guiding principles, including the Venice Charter's emphasis on material integrity (1964), the Nara Document's broader understanding of authenticity (1994), and the Burra Charter's articulation of cultural significance (1979; revised 2013). Yet in Wadi Hanifah, these frameworks require careful interpretation in a context where meaning is shaped as much by cultural and spiritual practice as by physical fabric; meaning is continually remade.[2]

How might frameworks oriented toward permanence engage thoughtfully with forms of heritage that endure through ongoing change?

This paper responds to this question by proposing a practice-informed reorientation of conservation in Wadi Hanifah, one that shifts attention from material fabric alone to the cultural and spiritual practices inseparable from it. The discussion draws on repeated site exposure, a review of decision-making standards (including what is prioritized and what constitutes "acceptable" change), and direct project involvement with practitioners responsible for the valley's care. Its aim is to offer clearer framing and a concise set of operational principles that enable context-responsive decisions without reducing the valley to a static display.[3]

CONTEXT AND HERITAGE DEBATES

The heritage of Wadi Hanifah is shaped by centuries of interaction between environment and belief, a dynamic in which desert ecology, spiritual practice, and more recently, oil wealth have functioned as determinants of cultural form. This section situates the valley within broader debates on heritage

conservation, tracing how its history and socio-cultural complexity challenge the systems embedded in international frameworks and point toward alternative and values-based approaches.

Historical and cultural foundations

The valley runs through the historic landscape of Diriyah and lies on the northwestern outskirts of modern-day Riyadh, in the Najd region of central Saudi Arabia (historically al-Yamāmah). It's marked by seasonal watercourses and microclimatic variations that have supported settlement for centuries. Banu Hanifah, a prominent tribe of the al-Yamāmah region spanning the pre-Islamic and early Islamic eras, established agricultural communities along the wadi corridor.[4] By the eighteenth century, Diriyah had emerged as the capital of the First Saudi State, and the valley became a site where governance, commerce, religious reform, and education have been inscribed onto the built environment.[4]

Yet the valley's heritage extends beyond visible structures, and into the analytical framework proposed by Al-Ruwaiti', the culture of Najd (and by extension Wadi Hanifah), has been shaped by five interacting determinants: desert, tribe, religion, oil, and communication.[5] However, this paper will focus on three: desert, religion, and oil. The desert imposed scarcity that in turn paved way for adaptive strategies around water management and resource-sharing, while Islamic principles of vicegerency (khilafah) and moderation (wasatiyyah) framed ethical imperatives governing how land, water, sustenance, and built form were used and maintained.[6] Knowledge was transferred through embodied practice and oral tradition (craftsmanship, stories, proverbs) that encoded understandings of the environment and the collective obligation to care for it.[7]

This transferred knowledge produced a built environment in which architecture was inseparable from the social and spiritual practices it enabled. Earthen structures are humble and renewable material assemblages that were remade periodically as part of seasonal maintenance cycles. Mosques mediated prayer, teaching, devotional retreat, and communal deliberation. Wells and irrigation channels operated within customary water-sharing ethics that blended Islamic law with locally recognized rights. Their maintenance was understood as both a practical necessity and a moral duty.[8] In this context, heritage resided in the continuity of the practices and cultural frameworks through which the valley was remade, until the oil-fueled transformation of the region began to unsettle this continuity. Once this continuity was destabilized, heritage increasingly had to be articulated through formal conservation language, often borrowed from international charters that are influential, but not always calibrated to practice-based earthen landscapes like Wadi Hanifah.

Limits of international conservation frameworks

International conservation principles have provided valuable tools for heritage management globally and have evolved over time toward greater sensitivity to cultural values. The Venice Charter (1964) emphasizes material integrity and advocates minimal intervention in historic fabric.[9] The Nara Document (1994) broadens the understanding of authenticity to encompass cultural diversity, recognizing that "judgements of value and authenticity… may differ from culture to culture.".[10] The Burra Charter (2013) further incorporates social and spiritual dimensions alongside aesthetic and historical significance, defining cultural significance as encompassing "aesthetic, historic, scientific, social or spiritual value for past, present or future generations". [11]

While these frameworks have contributed to a more inclusive understanding of authenticity and significance, their application to earthen landscapes still raises important questions; particularly regarding how practice-based value is identified, who is positioned to recognize it, and how continuity is supported when heritage is sustained through use, maintenance, and routine repair. As Mahdy notes, prevailing conservation standards still tend to foreground material authenticity, even though in

many Arabic-Islamic contexts the central value of heritage is realized through the intention of ongoing practice and the relationships that bind communities to place.[12] Repairing a mosque, for example, is understood not merely as maintenance but as a spiritual responsibility, an expression of human stewardship, rather than a conventional heritage intervention. Its significance rests first in the living practices of worship and community that animate the space, long before it resides in the preservation of original materials.[13]

In such settings, the Venice Charter's emphasis on minimal intervention can become difficult to operationalize if authenticity is read as original material retention alone, rather than as continuity sustained through maintenance and cyclical rebuilding, with material evidence treated as one dimension of that continuity rather than its sole measure.[14] While the Nara Document's flexibility on authenticity offers a promising opening, it often remains material-focused in practice, treating the embodied knowledge as secondary to assessments conducted by external specialists.[15] Similarly, the Burra Charter includes social and spiritual values in its definition of significance, yet these are frequently treated as supplementary considerations, rather than as primary dimensions, through which heritage should be understood and managed in similar contexts to Wadi Hanifah.[16] The result is a familiar imbalance: decision authority consolidates around professional assessment, while local practice is acknowledged but rarely allowed to structure the terms of conservation.

Heritage amid oil transformations

The discovery of oil transformed social and spatial life. In Al-Ruwaitea', the resilience shaped by scarcity "the bitter colocynth" now confronts the sweetness of material abundance "the honey."[17] Urban expansion and the influx of new construction materials began to overwrite earthen architecture, accelerated by the decline of inherited building skills as modern education and wage labor displaced older modes of knowledge transfer. The search for modernity, particularly during the oil boom, intensified this shift: concrete, steel, and imported aesthetic ideals were embraced as symbols of progress, even as they hastened the erosion of traditional building practices and the oral knowledge that sustained them.[18] Many earthen structures replaced in this period became muted markers of the tension between the promises of material modernity and continuity of earthen practice.

Simultaneously, oil wealth enabled new institutional approaches to heritage, recasting it as a resource for national identity and economic development.[19] This institutionalization introduced a further dilemma: would conservation efforts freeze heritage in time, treating it as a static object of display, or allow it to evolve through context-responsive governance?[20]

The challenge for Wadi Hanifah lies in developing governance models that recognize the interplay between continuity and change without defaulting to a model in which value is defined centrally and local practice is merely consulted. Such models must read the valley as a working landscape shaped by water, labor, and earthen practice, not as isolated assets against a scenic backdrop to urban expansion.[21] This approach aligns with emerging values-based conservation paradigms that prioritize context-responsive management over universal templates.[22] It requires (1) institutional humility, acknowledging that expertise is shared rather than centralized, and (2) intervention strategies that sustain, rather than sever, the relationships through which value is carried.

TOWARD VALUES-BASED RELATIONAL CONSERVATION

Although international standards emphasize authenticity and integrity, Wadi Hanifah shows that heritage value must be renegotiated in context: its significance is sustained less by static fabric than by the practices and obligations through which communities keep the landscape in being.[23]

Emerging values-based conservation frameworks align with this perspective: UNESCO's Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity emphasizes that heritage must be preserved and handed on "as a

record of human experience and aspirations, so as to foster creativity in all its diversity."[24] The Nara + 20 reflection (2014), twenty years after the original document, acknowledges that despite conceptual advances, implementation gaps persist regarding the integration of intangible heritage and inherited practices into standard conservation practice.[25] Ultimately, values-based heritage management in Wadi Hanifah would require iterative processes in which conservation priorities emerge from negotiation rather than top-down imposition, where the goal is to enable continuity beyond fabric. The following implemented Diriyah Gate Development Authority (DGDA) case shows how this shift can be applied through a restrained intervention that prioritizes continuity of use alongside material care.

Operationalizing values-based relational conservation through an implemented DGDA case

To ground this reorientation in practice, this section draws on an implemented intervention delivered under DGDA in Wadi Hanifah, where a deteriorated historic well was assessed, protected, then re-enabled as part of ongoing heritage management and public-facing use (2023-2024). DGDA Asset 01 (hereafter, the As-Sraihah well), located in the As-Sraihah Historic District, was selected due to its significant location in the buffer zone of At-Turaif (WHS), and its physical deterioration, the emerging safety risk, and future role within the district's activated landscape, positioning it as more than water infrastructure. The intervention avoided reconstruction, introducing a controlled approach that preserved surviving fabric while restoring safe proximity and social use.

A well becomes compromised, through gradual desertion, erosion, and ultimately, partial collapse. In earthen settings, this is rarely a single event, as it often begins with surface wash and loss of sacrificial layers, followed by local undercutting as runoff concentrates, fine particles migrate, and small failures accumulate, until a larger break exposes degraded material and voids. A second cycle then follows: informal foot traffic tests weakened ground and minor slips dislodge more material; what was once a stable point of approach becomes a hazard zone. In the case of the As-Sraihah well, this condition was not only material, as it directly altered how the place could be approached and used.

A material-first response (aligned with minimal intervention) was adopted as the baseline: to stabilize what survived and document change. This sequence is defensible, especially where evidence for earlier configurations is incomplete and where rebuilding would risk conjecture, yet in Wadi Hanifah, a well is as much a social node as it is a waterpoint, gathering people routinely because water and movement structured daily life. When proximity is removed entirely, it may remain present in the landscape while its significance is functionally suspended, and in this instance, retaining the well as a purely visual feature would have preserved "presence" while stripping the conditions that historically made it meaningful as a place: water and people.

The adopted design response re-enabled the As-Sraihah well as a place, without enforcing a false past. *The intervention created a limited, controlled area for safe gathering around the well: a modest conversation pit with stepped seating arrangement set back from vulnerable ground, designed to control debris loads and reduce the impulse for people to stand on fragile remains. With one half of the well surviving, the other collapsed, and the shaft infilled (no open throat), the design avoided any suggestion of reinstating an "original" well condition. Where new surfaces were introduced, they were intentionally distinguishable and proportioned to the existing scale, avoiding a false sense of completeness.* Here, technical detailing became part of the ethic, a shallow foundation to minimize excavation, careful separation from earthen fabric, and drainage that diverts runoff away from the well so the intervention does not intensify the same failure mechanism it is meant to manage.

As expected, the main objection was framed through authenticity: introducing new work interrupts visible continuity of old fabric and risks turning the site into a curated set-piece, but the dilemma was resolved by clarifying what authenticity is allowed to register in an earthen heritage landscape: (1) If

authenticity is treated as original material retention alone, enabling design will always read as dilution; and (2) if authenticity is also allowed to register continuity sustained through care and use, then minimal intervention can be understood as conservation rather than invention. Now, the practical question becomes more precise: "Did we restore a safe relationship to the well while preserving its material character and avoiding conjectural rebuilding?" and not reduced to, "Did we add new work?" While activation remains in progress, the As-Sraihah well already demonstrates the shift this paper argues for: conservation that protects fabric without freezing meaning, and that measures authenticity in the survival of relationship as much as in retained material.

Proposed reorientation: relational authenticity in earthen heritage landscapes

Here, relational authenticity refers to the degree to which conservation decisions sustain the practices and ethical obligations that bind communities' relationship to place, rather than the degree to which original material fabric is retained.

1. *Treat maintenance cycles as continuity, not loss.* In earthen settings, renewal is often how a place stays itself. The test is whether the work follows inherited material understanding and keeps the place readable.
2. *Make stewardship an assessment criterion.* In Wadi Hanifah, care *is* the heritage condition. If a decision weakens responsibility and restraint, it weakens significance, even if the fabric is technically stabilized.
3. *Make expertise plural by design*. Material behavior, social use, and meaning sit with different actors: farmers, residents, engineers, and planners; decisions should be structured so one lens cannot overrule the rest.
4. *Protect function where function carries the meaning.* If a well historically worked as a social threshold, freezing it as display preserves material while stripping role. Assess interventions by whether they sustain continuity of use and care, without misrepresenting what survives.

CONCLUSION

The heritage of Wadi Hanifah, shaped over centuries through negotiation between environment, community, belief, and material practice, reveals the complexity of conservation where meaning resides in intangible dimensions as much as tangible ones: earthen architecture, agrarian networks, inherited knowledge, spiritual obligation, and collective responsibility. Conservation here is the relationship between people and place, and between tangible form and the values and practices that animate it. A more responsive approach recognizes that authenticity in earthen landscapes can emerge from sustaining these relationships, not from preserving physical fabric alone.

NOTES

1. Yaqut al-Hamawi, Muʿjam al-Buldan, entries on “Al-Yamama” and “Hajr,” 13th century.
2. Venice Charter (Venice: ICOMOS, 1964), arts. 9–11; Nara Document on Authenticity (Nara: ICOMOS, 1994), art. 11; Burra Charter (Burwood: Australia ICOMOS, 2013), art. 1.2; Hossam Mahdy, “Is Conservation of Cultural Heritage Halal? Perspectives on Heritage Values Rooted in Arabic-Islamic Traditions,” in Values in Heritage Management (Los Angeles: Getty Conservation Institute, 2016), 189–216; Badriya Al-Bishr, نجد ما قبل النفط: دراسة سوسيولوجية تحليلية للحكايات الشعبية (Beirut: Jaddawel, 2013), 95–100.
3. Hossam Mahdy, “Is Conservation of Cultural Heritage Halal? Perspectives on Heritage Values Rooted in Arabic-Islamic Traditions,” in Values in Heritage Management (Los Angeles: Getty Conservation Institute, 2016), 197–200; Abdullah Al-Ruwaitʿ, الشخصية السعودية: ما بين الحنظل والشهد، الجزء الأول (Riyadh: self-published, 2008), 473–476; Yaqut al-Hamawi, Muʿjam al-Buldan, entries on “Al-Yamama” and “Hajr,” 13th century.
4. Abdullah Al-Uthaymin, The Life and Works of Muhammad Ibn Abd Al-Wahhab (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 1972), 19–21.
5. Abdullah Al-Ruwaitʿ, الشخصية السعودية: ما بين الحنظل والشهد، الجزء الأول (Riyadh: self-published, 2008), 473–476.
6. Hossam Mahdy, “Is Conservation of Cultural Heritage Halal? Perspectives on Heritage Values Rooted in Arabic-Islamic Traditions,” in Values in Heritage Management (Los Angeles: Getty Conservation Institute, 2016), 195–200.
7. Saad Abd Allah Al-Suwayan, The Arabian Desert: Its Culture and Poetry Across the Ages, An Anthropological Reading (Beirut: Arab Network for Research and Publishing, 2010).
8. Badriya Al-Bishr, نجد ما قبل النفط: دراسة سوسيولوجية تحليلية للحكايات الشعبية (Beirut: Jaddawel, 2013), 29–108; Hossam Mahdy, “Is Conservation of Cultural Heritage Halal? Perspectives on Heritage Values Rooted in Arabic-Islamic Traditions,” in Values in Heritage Management (Los Angeles: Getty Conservation Institute, 2016), 195–200.
9. Venice Charter (Venice: ICOMOS, 1964), arts. 9–11.
10. Nara Document on Authenticity (Nara: ICOMOS, 1994), art. 11.
11. Burra Charter (Burwood: Australia ICOMOS, 2013), art. 1.2.
12. Hossam Mahdy, “Is Conservation of Cultural Heritage Halal? Perspectives on Heritage Values Rooted in Arabic-Islamic Traditions,” in Values in Heritage Management (Los Angeles: Getty Conservation Institute, 2016), 189–191.
13. Hossam Mahdy, “Is Conservation of Cultural Heritage Halal? Perspectives on Heritage Values Rooted in Arabic-Islamic Traditions,” in Values in Heritage Management (Los Angeles: Getty Conservation Institute, 2016), 193–200.
14. Venice Charter (Venice: ICOMOS, 1964), art. 9; Badriya Al-Bishr, نجد ما قبل النفط: دراسة سوسيولوجية تحليلية للحكايات الشعبية (Beirut: Jaddawel, 2013), 85–95.
15. Nara Document on Authenticity (Nara: ICOMOS, 1994), preamble; Hossam Mahdy, “Is Conservation of Cultural Heritage Halal? Perspectives on Heritage Values Rooted in Arabic-Islamic Traditions,” in Values in Heritage Management (Los Angeles: Getty Conservation Institute, 2016), 201–205.
16. Burra Charter (Burwood: Australia ICOMOS, 2013), art. 5; Hossam Mahdy, “Is Conservation of Cultural Heritage Halal? Perspectives on Heritage Values Rooted in Arabic-Islamic Traditions,” in Values in Heritage Management (Los Angeles: Getty Conservation Institute, 2016), 203–205.
17. Abdullah Al-Ruwaitʿ, الشخصية السعودية: ما بين الحنظل والشهد، الجزء الأول (Riyadh: self-published, 2008), 473–476.
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RITUALS AND SOCIAL PRACTICES: THE SYMBOLISM OF TRADITIONAL CELEBRATIONS IN SAUDI CULTURE

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INTRODUCTION

Traditional celebrations and their associated social practices play a crucial role in shaping cultural identity and promoting social cohesion within communities. These rituals are deeply rooted in the history, values, and accomplishments of societies, thereby representing a living heritage that maintains intergenerational connections and a sense of collective belonging. In Saudi Arabia, these practices vary across regions, showcasing unique expressions of intangible cultural heritage and providing opportunities to preserve local customs and traditions that have been passed down through generations.

UNESCO defines traditional social practices, rituals, and celebrations as activities shared by multiple members that impact the lives of groups and communities. These activities are relevant to the community and are important in shaping the identity of their practitioners as a group. Depending on the cultural context, these rituals might be performed in private familial settings or as large public gatherings, reflecting their layered significance.[1]

Several studies have emphasized the significance of these celebrations in promoting community engagement. For instance, one study explored the impact of local festivals on social interaction and the shaping of public spaces. The researcher used the example of "Historic Jeddah" to illustrate how heritage symbols and elements can revive collective consciousness.[2] Another study demonstrated that festivals in Saudi Arabia play a crucial role in fostering social cohesion by creating interactive environments for different segments of society.[3] A third study examined the use of modern events, such as the seasonal festivities that take place in Diriyah, to showcase heritage in a contemporary context that combines entertainment and identity. This not only enhances cultural presence locally but also globally.[4]

Despite the historical and cultural significance of these practices in Saudi Arabia, communities may face certain challenges considering the impact of globalization and rapid social change, which raises fundamental questions about their social and symbolic functions today. With modern factors increasingly reshaping cultural expressions, there is a need to understand whether these traditional celebrations still fulfill their original roles or are gradually losing their meaning.

This study aims to explore the social and cultural roles of traditional celebrations in Saudi Arabia, particularly in the face of modernization and global influences. It also seeks to examine how these practices contribute to the construction of cultural identity and the reinforcement of social cohesion. Through a case study approach, the research investigates a specifically selected traditional celebration to understand its symbolic dimensions and its impact on the community.

This study began by conducting semi-structured interviews with several employees from the Heritage Commission affiliated with the Ministry of Culture. These individuals are directly involved in organizing and overseeing cultural festivals and events. The interviews were carried out face-to-face and in Arabic, which allowed participants to speak freely and express their experiences openly. All participants gave their written consent beforehand, and the interviews were later translated into English. In addition, this study drew on a range of reliable academic sources and relevant literature to support and expand on the findings.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

1- The role of traditional celebrations in reviving Saudi heritage

The role of traditional celebrations in reviving Saudi heritage is a topic of great importance. According to the UNESCO Convention (2003), social practices, rituals, and celebrations are considered to be forms of intangible cultural heritage.[5] These practices and celebrations not only reflect the identity of their practitioners but also serve as a vital part of their history, culture, and achievements, as well as those of their ancestors. They are a means of reviving past events and carry symbols and values that are passed down through generations. They are diverse in nature, ranging from religious ceremonies to those with national and historical significance that promote national unity and belonging among members of society. In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, cultural celebrations play a powerful role in enhancing a sense of belonging and pride in identity, especially in the face of social and cultural changes. Traditional festivals and celebrations have become an effective means of strengthening the relationship between cultural identity and place.[6] Several employees from the Heritage Commission were interviewed in the field. They expressed that these celebrations are an effective way to revive heritage and promote community participation and belonging. This is especially true when the celebrations are organized in interactive ways that involve members of the local community in both the preparation and the implementation of events. Some employees also mentioned that the rituals associated with popular celebrations hold significant meaning in society's collective memory. These rituals carry symbols and values that connect generations to their cultural history, providing a sense of identity and belonging. One participant further explained that holding events in historical sites strengthens the spatial connection to identity and transforms the celebration into a shared experience that promotes social cohesion and the transmission of heritage to future generations. These activities have a tangible impact on society, as noted by one participant based on their experience in the field.

The Historic Jeddah Festival is a prime example of how traditional rituals and customs are being revived in the old city's neighborhoods, fostering a stronger connection to the residents' history.[7] Additionally, the "Hawama" is a beloved tradition in the Kingdom where children roam around on the night of Eid al-Fitr to receive gifts or money.[8] This cultural heritage has recently been revitalized, serving as a source of pride for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Another popular festival is the "Hareed" Festival, held annually on the Farasan Islands, located forty km off the coast of Jizan in the Red Sea. This event celebrates the gathering of "Hareed" fish, which bear a striking resemblance to parrots in their appearance.[9] The "Al-Jawf Olive Festival" also serves as a unique celebration of a local agricultural product, showcasing the region's identity and boosting its local economy.[10] Similarly, the Date Festival in Al-Qassim highlights the significance of date palm trees in Saudi culture through a variety of heritage events.

Through these rituals and heritage events, old cities are revitalized, thereby strengthening the residents' connection to their history and consolidating their cultural identity. This aligns with the view that festivals play a crucial role in strengthening the relationship between cultural identity and geographic location.[11] Additionally, these celebrations promote social cohesion by bringing

community members together for shared experiences and fostering a sense of belonging and collective identity. Interviews with Heritage Commission employees further revealed that cultural events increase awareness of local heritage, instill pride in individuals, and promote principles and values within the community, while also showcasing its unique culture to the world.

2- The continuity of traditional practices and celebrations in Saudi Arabia: between the pressures of globalization and strategies of cultural modernization

In much of the literature on modernization, globalization is often portrayed as a threat to local traditions, as it imposes standardized cultural models. This can lead to the erosion of the symbolic significance of traditional practices. For example, in Brazil, the Rio de Janeiro Carnival has transformed a popular event that once expressed cultural identity and social protest to a highly commercialized entertainment spectacle aimed at tourists, all due to the effects of globalization.[12] This shift occurred largely due to economic motivations, including the desire to boost tourism revenue and promote Brazil's global image, which led to reshaping traditional rituals into marketable spectacles. Similarly, in Japan, the Hanami festival, which was once a symbolic and contemplative ritual reflecting the philosophy of impermanence, has now become a commercialized event focused on photography and seasonal consumption, again as a result of globalization.[13]

Globalization is a multifaceted phenomenon that can have both positive and negative effects, depending on how it is approached. In order to maintain the integrity of local cultures, there must be a delicate balance between preserving authenticity and embracing openness, which requires sustained efforts from both society and institutions. While some societies experience significant changes in their cultural dynamics due to globalization, others are able to adapt and remain flexible.[14] In contrast to many other contexts where modernization has led to the erosion of traditional practices, Saudi Arabia presents a counterargument. Rather than being a force that erases cultural heritage, modernization has actually served as a mean of revitalizing it. Significantly, globalization has the potential to positively impact local cultural customs by preserving and adapting them in the face of global influences.[15]

In recent decades, Saudi Arabia has undergone significant transformations at the social, cultural, and economic levels. These changes have been accelerated by the launch of Saudi Vision 2030, which aims to modernize the country while also preserving its cultural heritage.[16] These rituals are no longer just symbols of the past but have been revitalized and incorporated into a national project that connects heritage, identity, and development. Unlike cases where globalization diluted the original meaning of cultural rituals, such as in Japan or Brazil, Saudi Arabia's approach is supported by formal heritage governance. The Heritage Commission, as a national body, ensures that traditional elements are safeguarded and practiced by their communities, aligning modernization efforts with the safeguarding principles of intangible cultural heritage. The modernization efforts that have taken place in Saudi Arabia, such as government support for heritage festivals, the use of social media, and the development of tourism infrastructure, have helped to spread and raise awareness of these celebrations. The Saudi cultural seasons, including Riyadh Season and Al Ula Season, are a prime example of this integration, showcasing traditional folklore through large-scale entertainment events that attract both Saudis and international visitors.[17]

The events have played a significant role in promoting Saudi heritage on the global tourism stage. The Diriyah Season, for example, attracts attendees from various nationalities, showcasing the success of the Saudi vision in utilizing heritage as a tool of soft power and cultural marketing.[18] By incorporating historical sites, such as the At-Turaif neighborhood in Diriyah, into public events, a sense of national belonging was fostered among visitors, particularly young people, by providing a modern and interactive connection to their historical roots.[19] During interviews with several employees of the Heritage Commission involved in organizing cultural events and seasons, it was found that

globalization did not pose a direct threat to the continuity of traditional practices but rather contributed to their widespread visibility. Participants noted that the state has implemented cultural policies that strengthen national identity and present heritage in a modern and appealing manner, while still preserving its symbolic essence and social value.

The interviews also indicated that modernization efforts, such as the use of digital media and social media promotion, have not weakened traditional celebrations, but rather have helped to revive them and enhance their popularity among various segments of society. Although one participant noted that some officials still find this integration difficult, believing it may not adequately highlight heritage, she, in turn, expressed the importance of developing heritage through contemporary methods that ensure its continuity and effective presence. Another participant noted that the Saudi Cultural Seasons have added an institutional character to heritage events, which were previously organized on a limited scale. This aligns with the Kingdom's 2030 Vision, which aims to preserve cultural identity within a modern framework.[20]

In line with this vision, the Ministry of Culture has implemented funding programs to bolster local festivals and has enlisted the help of event planning experts. Additionally, digital platforms have played a significant role in documenting rituals and showcasing them to a global audience.[21] The enhancement of transportation infrastructure and the introduction of seasonal events in previously unexplored cities have also sparked interest from both local and international audiences, further solidifying the significance of Saudi rituals as active contributors to the preservation of cultural heritage.[22]

The Ministry of Culture has made significant efforts to revive traditional practices associated with identity and social events. One of the most prominent efforts is the launch of targeted initiatives, such as naming specific years after cultural elements that represent key components of Saudi heritage. One notable example is the "Year of Saudi Coffee 2022" initiative, which celebrated the cultural significance of coffee and its role in social customs and hospitality. This initiative included a range of cultural, documentary, and exhibition events. Similarly, the "Year of Arab Poetry 2023" initiative organized literary festivals in different regions of Saudi Arabia to revive the country's poetic traditions. Additionally, the "Year of the Camel" initiative for 2024 aimed to promote the cultural importance of camels. In 2025, the focus shifted to national handicrafts, with the "Year of Handicrafts" initiative showcasing these traditional elements through contemporary documentary and interactive events. [23] According to an employee of the Heritage Commission who was interviewed for this study, these initiatives serve as strategic tools to preserve and promote national heritage within the modern Saudi cultural landscape. The Ministry of Culture is committed to ensuring that these legacies remain relevant and are presented in a way that is in line with contemporary times, while still preserving their essence.

3- Saudi Founding Day: Strengthening National Identity Between the Realms of Authenticity and Modernity

Saudi Arabia celebrates its annual Founding Day on February 22nd, a national occasion that marks the establishment of the First Saudi State by Imam Muhammad bin Saud nearly three centuries ago.[24] This celebration was officially designated by royal decree in 2022 as a day to strengthen national identity and reinforce citizens' connection to their historical and cultural roots.[25] Founding Day holds great historical and symbolic significance; it commemorates the beginnings that paved the way for the modern Kingdom and provides Saudis with an opportunity to reflect on the origins of their state, and its values, and to take pride in the shared heritage that unites them.

The tangible and intangible aspects of heritage are showcased during this occasion through a variety of activities and popular traditions. Many people wear traditional clothing that reflects the diversity

and authenticity of the Kingdom's regions, featuring vibrant colors and intricate embroidery. Women and children adorn their hands and feet with henna patterns in celebration of the day.[26] The festivities also include the serving of traditional dishes such as jareesh, a meal made of crushed wheat, meat, and spices, along with Saudi Arabian coffee infused with cardamom and saffron, which symbolizes hospitality and authenticity.[27] The atmosphere is further enriched by performances of traditional folk arts, including the Saudi Ardah sword dance, which is a type of folkloric group dance, accompanied by drums and chants – which is considered an integral part of Saudi Arabia's intangible cultural heritage and is included in UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.[28]

In its modern era, the Kingdom has sought to balance preserving the authenticity of its cultural heritage with embracing modernity and development. Founding Day is a vivid example of achieving this balance. Commemorating this occasion aligns with the Saudi 2030 Vision, which has made preserving heritage and strengthening cultural identity a core priority. Within the framework of the strategic vision, the Ministry of Culture has paid great attention to protecting national heritage in all its tangible and intangible forms and integrating it into contemporary life, ensuring the continuity of this legacy for future generations. In this context, the Ministry of Culture has devised contemporary events to celebrate Founding Day in a way that enhances the value of historical heritage.

For example, the 2023 celebrations included the "Sahil" epic in the historic Turaif district of Diriyah (a UNESCO World Heritage Site). This is a musical theatrical performance that showcases the story of the founding of the first state, its leaders, and their sacrifices, highlighting the richness of the Kingdom's historical and cultural heritage and the role of various segments of society in its construction.[29]

Riyadh also hosted the "Founding Day Parade" a large celebratory procession featuring artistic sculptures embodying Saudi cultural values and elements, heritage performances, and a procession of purebred Arabian horses to evoke the founding scene three centuries ago in a joyful and modern way.[30] One of the participants of this research explained that virtual reality (VR) technology is being used in Founding Day events across the Kingdom. It has contributed to providing interactive experience for visitors, enabling them to learn about the heritage of their regions in both a direct and engaging way, thereby enhancing audience engagement and increasing the event's reach. A notable feature of Founding Day is the inclusiveness of community participation. All members of society, young and old, men and women, celebrate this occasion, each expressing pride in their heritage.[31] This national event successfully combines the celebration of historical authenticity with keeping pace with modernity, while serving as a model for balancing heritage and innovation.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Traditional heritage events in the Saudi Arabia play a crucial role in strengthening national identity and reviving the social values associated with cultural heritage. The findings from interviews, contrary to some international contexts, globalization has not weakened the presence of these practices. Instead, it has contributed to their reintroduction in modern formats that align with the aspirations of younger generations without compromising their symbolic essence. The results also highlighted an increasing awareness among organizing bodies and local communities of the importance of safeguarding these practices, along with a strong desire to develop them in ways that are compatible with contemporary life while preserving their core meaning. The study emphasized that cultural events, such as Saudi Founding Day, represent a successful model of balancing authenticity and modernity. This is achieved by employing cultural symbols in contemporary forms within a national strategy aimed at reinforcing identity and promoting social cohesion.

Recommendations:

1. Enhance the digital documentation of heritage events by creating a comprehensive digital archive that records local celebratory practices across the Kingdom's regions. This will contribute to their preservation and transmission to future generations.
2. Expand the use of modern technologies, such as virtual reality and interactive digital media, in presenting heritage. This will make it more appealing to younger audiences.
3. Encourage community participation in the design and implementation of events to foster a sense of belonging and strengthen cultural ownership.
4. Establish annual awards for outstanding heritage practices at the regional level and across the whole of Saudi Arabia.

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PRIEST OR PERFORMER: NEGOTIATING SUBJECTIVITY IN SHAOWU NUO DANCE INHERITORS

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INTRODUCTION

China's Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) safeguarding movement emerged in the early 21st century as a critical response to the crisis of cultural diversity under globalization. The country's accession to UNESCO's Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2004 marked the formal launch of its national protection framework. This initiative transcends mere cultural preservation, constituting a significant domain of national cultural governance.[1] Since China's ratification of UNESCO's 2003 Convention, state-led "productive protection" policies have promoted the transmission of living heritage like Nuo Dance.[2] While institutional intervention expands cultural survival space, it intensifies the deep-seated tension between authenticity and innovation.[3]

Shaowu Nuo Dance was included in the second batch of the National Intangible Cultural Heritage List in 2008. Nuo is a cultural and social phenomenon with a long history that holds significant religious and artistic implications among the Han ethnic group. Nuo Dance is a distinctive form of Nuo cultural practice that developed from primitive witchcraft dances and is rooted in superstition and witchcraft. Shaowu Nuo Dance, an ancient dance form originating in Shaowu, Fujian Province, has a history of over a thousand years. Shaowu Nuo Dance is an amalgamation of Central Plains culture, Chu culture, and ancient Yue culture. Besides, it incorporates Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism and folk beliefs, as well as being influenced by various religions like Manichaeism, Wuwei religion and Maitreyan religion.[4]

In the process of becoming intangible cultural heritage, Shaowu Nuo Dance also faces tensions between tradition and modernity, leading to emerging divisions within its inheritor community. Based on different views about Nuo Dance's core nature and modern development, they can be broadly categorized into traditionalist and adaptationist factions. Traditionalist inheritors insist on preserving Nuo Dance's original ritual essence. They most come from Heyuan Village, Dabugang Town—the birthplace of Shaowu Nuo Dance—and now belong to the Shaowu Nuo Dance Cultural Association (SNDCA). This NGO, founded in 2019, is dedicated to protecting traditional practices. Adaptationist inheritors advocate innovating Nuo Dance for contemporary audiences. They mainly work at the Shaowu Sanjiao Opera (Nuo Dance) Folk Culture Research Center (SSO-NDRC), an official institution. When the sacred masks of ritual enter national heritage inventories, how do inheritors construct their subjectivity between the dual identities of "priest" and "performer"?

Existing research focus on semiotic systems of Nuo Dance,[5] artistic form of Nuo Dance,[6] and the dissemination of Shaowu Nuo Dance in the New media environment,[7] yet rarely examines the logic of

Nuo Dance inheritors' subjectivity construction. This study aims to address this gap by examining how inheritors negotiate their cultural subjectivity during the state-led ICH process. Through bodily praxis, spatial adaptations, and authority struggles, they navigate between "dancing for deities" and "performing for audiences" to establish their own cultural roles. This study further explores how traditionalist and adaptationist factions differ in these negotiations, using an interpretive approach to analyze their threefold negotiation mechanisms: body-space-authority.

METHODOLOGY

This research operates within an interpretive philosophical paradigm, prioritizing the lived experiences and subjective meanings that Shaowu Nuo Dance inheritors ascribe to their roles within China's ICH framework. Data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews with six purposively selected inheritors (Table 1):

• Three traditionalist inheritors (coded T-1, T-2, T-3) affiliated with the SNDCA, who prioritize ritual authenticity.

• Three adaptationist inheritors (coded A1, A-2, A-3) from the SSO-NDRC, engaged in stage-oriented innovations.

Participants were identified through referrals by local cultural department officials and community gatekeepers, ensuring access to key stakeholders with direct inheritance experiences. Interviews averaged 90–120 minutes, conducted in person to capture nuanced expressions and contextual insights. All sessions were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and anonymized to protect participant identities.

Code	Status		Faction	Affiliated Entity
T-1	Municipal-Level Inheritor	Representative	Traditionalist	SNDCA
T-2	Municipal-Level Inheritor	Representative	Traditionalist	SNDCA
T-3	Non-representative Inheritor		Traditionalist	SNDCA
A-1	Provincial-Level Inheritor	Representative	Adaptationist	SSO-NDRC
A-2	Municipal-Level Inheritor	Representative	Adaptationist	SSO-NDRC
A-3	Non-representative Inheritor		Adaptationist	SSO-NDRC

Table 1. Interview Participant Profile

Thematic analysis followed Braun and Clarke's six-phase reflexive framework,[8] using NVivo 14 to facilitate iterative coding. Initial codes were generated inductively from interview transcripts, with subsequent theme development guided by patterns in the participants' negotiations of subjectivity across ritual and performance domains. Reflexivity was maintained through journaling researcher positionality and peer debriefing to mitigate bias. Ethical approval was obtained prior to fieldwork, with informed consent secured from all participants, emphasizing voluntary participation and data confidentiality.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Embodied Negotiation: Ritual Body and Performative Body

The transmission of ICH, as a living tradition and living history, is fundamentally contingent on the human body as its existential medium.[9] Dancing bodies are influenced by the socio-cultural background a person comes from and by their life experiences and beliefs.[10] Nuo Dance inheritors' cognition fundamentally depends on bodily experiences, which arise from a body with specific sensory and motor abilities.[11] Therefore, Nuo Dance generates from the dynamic interplay between body and world, is a form of embodied knowledge. From this perspective, bodily praxis emerges as a vital modality for subjectivity negotiation among Nuo Dance inheritors.

"Put on the mask, he is a deity; take off the mask, he is a man." This Nuo ritual proverb reflects the Nuo mask's function as a liminal medium bridging human and divine realms. By facilitating the practitioner's ontological transformation from mortal to deity, the mask materially manifests Nuo's sacredness. Building upon the Central Plains Nuo ritual tradition, Shaowu Nuo Dance incorporates elements from the local "Sanfo Zushi" folk belief system. *"The Nuo Dance is based on the belief in the 'Sanfo Zushi'... Nowadays, it is called the Nuo Dance Cultural Festival, but locally we still call it 'Welcoming the Sanfo Zushi'." (T-2).* Since its introduction to Heyuan Village, Nuo Dance has been intrinsically linked to the "Welcoming the Sanfo Zushi" ritual. Local practitioners perform it to venerate deities and petition for favorable weather conditions and abundant harvests.[12] Therefore, for local Nuo Dance practitioners—now termed traditionalist inheritors—performing Nuo Dance constitutes a ritually significant undertaking demanding solemnity and meticulous execution.

For Nuo Dance traditionalist inheritors, the ritual body's solemn engagement manifests not only during the dance performance itself, but pervades the entire ritual process. *"We who worship the 'Sanfo Zushi' approach all this with deep devotion—starting a day before the ritual, we abstain from meat and only eat vegetarian meals until the ritual ends completely." (T-2)*. At the beginning of the Nuo ritual, *"Even before our Nuo Dance troupe arrived, every household set up tables along the village road to welcome us. Each table had three kinds of fruit, with candles and incense already lit. As soon as we showed up, they started setting off firecrackers." (T-3).* During the formal ritual,

"While we danced, villagers followed us street by street, setting off firecrackers right at our feet. Wherever the deity appeared, villagers set off more firecrackers—and we would dance right there amid the explosions. Honestly, those firecrackers were blasting all around us—it made for a spectacular sight!" (T-1). Such painful bodily memories become paradoxically sanctified by traditionalist inheritors through ritual embodiment. *"Through generations, my elders imprinted this belief: reaching this age, you must learn Nuo Dance—it is the path to physical well-being and safeguarding your family's safety." (T-2).* Hence, this blessing-seeking ritual functions as a deep-seated social norm that subtly governs inheritors' bodily practices through invisible regulatory mechanisms.

As previously noted by traditionalist inheritor, contemporary Nuo rituals are gradually being replaced by so-called "Nuo Dance Cultural Festivals". This shift forces inheritors to negotiate the challenging transition from ritual embodiment to performative display. A traditionalist inheritor described that during cultural performances, *"the movements all fall apart, that sacred feeling is gone." (T-1).* At this stage, Nuo Dance ceases to function as bodily praxis mediating human-deity communication, instead becoming commodified discipline upon inheritors' bodies. In contrast, adaptive faction inheritors embrace this shift. They harness Nuo Dance performances to rework movements and connotations, innovating to align with aesthetic discipline, transforming their bodies into vehicles for cultural consumption. *"I feel the adapted staged performances of Nuo Dance connect better with our times." (A-1). "The original Nuo Dance had no musical accompaniment—just drumbeats. Honestly, it was not very visually engaging." (A-2).* Besides, they also modified the material of masks—core ritual

tools in Nuo Dance—shifting from traditional Paulownia wood to modern plastic or paper alternatives. *"It is not innovation but practical necessity. Paulownia wood masks were too heavy for dynamic movements, so we switched to lighter materials for better mobility." (A-2).* This functional material shift redirects inheritors' bodily praxis toward stagecraft techniques, enhancing performance efficacy while consolidating their "performer" identity, and then ultimately constructing adaptationist inheritors' subjectivity as cultural providers.

Indeed, hybrid positions exist. A traditionalist inheritor conceded that adaptationist efforts *"to make Nuo Dance more visually appealing through innovation is commendable,"* but insisted: *"When performing externally, they must not claim to represent Shaowu's authentic tradition. They should only present it as an adapted dance piece based on Shaowu Nuo Dance." (T-2)*. Notably, when asked about divergent bodily experiences in ritual and performance contexts, an adaptationist inheritor said: *"Traditional Nuo Dance feels too serious for me, I cannot loosen up like on stage. I imagine being in ancient Central Plains, picturing sacrificial scenes, so I perform every move with strict precision. But on stage? I totally free myself because the stage demands it, that is how the moves flow naturally and feel right." (A-3).* This reveals that ritual and performative embodiment are not fully dichotomized. Inheritors agentively modulate bodily states across contexts through situated embodied negotiation.

Spatial Negotiation: Liminal Sacred Spaces and Cultural Showscapes

As Nuo Dance inheritors' bodily praxis becomes torn between mediating divine communication and fulfilling aesthetic demands, the spaces hosting these bodies undergo parallel transformation—from incense-permeated liminal ancestral halls to spotlit performance frontstages. This embodied negotiation dilemma ultimately roots in the fundamental conversion of spatial properties.

A ritual exemplifies the transition of an individual from one state to another.[13] According to Turner, the ritual subjects are often secluded from everyday life and have to spend some time in a liminal situation.[14] During this phase, the ritual subjects receive new designations reflecting their "no longer/not yet" status.[15] They are considered neither male nor female, deprived of rank, status and property. Nuo Dance practitioners in Heyuan Village are not religious devotees but primarily farmers in their daily lives.[16] *"My grandfather and father both are Nuo Dance practitioners. After the busy farming season, when the time came (the first day of lunar July for Nuo Dance rituals), the village would mobilize them to perform." (T-1).* However, when putting on Nuo masks to perform, their identities transcend secular farmerhood. Other villagers *"lined the road with altars to welcome us dancers. Wherever we danced, that is where the deities showed up." (T-1)*. Their movements mapping divine presence onto the landscape. *"Why do we have to go to the Daofeng Mountain for rituals every year? Because the worship site of the 'Sanfo Zushi' is located on the Daofeng Mountain." (T-3)*. Daofeng Mountain, a renowned mountain near Heyuan Village, hosts a Taoist temple enshrining statues and ancestral tablets of the "Sanfo Zushi". Upon its altar tables, ritual offerings stand alongside candles and incense burners, materializing sacred presence through tangible devotions. *"We perform Nuo Dance in procession from the village to Daofeng Mountain's summit." (T-1).* Local villagers sharing communal faith and cultural background around the temple's entrance, immersed in the grand Nuo ritual spectacle. Within, Nuo Dance practitioners perform ancient, raw, and powerful dance steps before sacred statues to drumbeats, collaborating with the temple's solemn aura to create a sacred space of divine-human coexistence.

The liminal sanctuary of ancestral halls preserves Nuo Dance's ritual essence yet strains under "ICH industrialization" pressures.[17] As profane transformations dissolve sacred thresholds, Shaowu Nuo Dance extends into an alternative existence in the secular realm—cultural showscape. Performance spaces like theater stages serve as cultural consumption sites. The shift in space combined with the physical presence of inheritors creates new spatial relationships. When Nuo Dance transitions into

staged performance art, the gaze from cultural others becomes a critical issue. *"We (traditionalists) are dancing Nuo, they (adaptationists) are just dancing." (T-3)*. As ritual practice, Nuo Dance is performed for deities to witness. While as staged performance, it is presented to external audiences as cultural others. It is evident that the former reflects an emic perspective of local practitioners, while the latter constitutes an etic gaze.[18] Theater stages construct contexts distinct from Nuo rituals, reshaping human interactions and blurring role boundaries between inheritors and audiences. Inheritors transition from ritual priests to authentic performers, while audiences shed their sacred veil as ritual participants and reposition themselves within new contexts to construct mundane spatial identities. *"Traditional Nuo Dance was kinda boring, so we added more artistic elements to make it visually engaging. You know, so audiences can enjoy watching it." (A-3).* The "artistic elements" mostly involve spatial tech upgrades, such as using stage sound systems to *"add music instead of just drumbeats" and "using theater lighting effects to make Nuo Dance performances more dramatic." (T-2)*. Transitioning from "divine entertainment" to "human entertainment", adaptationist inheritors utilize decontextualized stage performances to cater to market logic and audience expectations.

In short, the spatial negotiation between liminal sacred spaces and cultural showscapes reconstruct cultural essence of Shaowu Nuo Dance. This transition is not merely physical but embodies a profound transformation of purpose—from communing with the divine within ritual space to performing cultural difference for external audiences under theatrical spotlights. The very spaces become active agents in negotiating inheritors' subjectivity, pulling it between numinous tradition and commodified spectacle.

Authority Negotiation: Genealogies and Official Accreditation

After experiencing dual shifts in bodily practice and spatial context, what outcomes has this negotiation process achieved for Shaowu Nuo Dance inheritors? *"Traditionalist inheritors rarely get to perform outside their home region, because audiences from other provinces or countries only understand the stage version of Nuo Dance." (A-3). "When the government needs to promote Nuo Dance internationally, they mainly come to us (adaptationists)." (A-2).* Despite traditionalist inheritors' commitment to preserving the authenticity of Nuo Dance, the dissemination of indigenous Nuo culture remains crucial amid China's flourishing ICH initiatives. Yet currently, traditionalists receive significantly fewer promotion and exposure opportunities than their adaptive counterparts. Why do the performative practices of adaptationist inheritors secure more official resources? Superficially, this results from the artistic appeal and market selectivity discussed earlier. Fundamentally, however, it stems from the institutional structuring of China's official ICH accreditation system.

Cultural heritage protection has carried strong nationalistic undertones from its inception.[19] The designation of ICH can be regarded as a form of "political construction" by the state in its gaze of local cultures.[20] Through state power, local cultures undergo sorting and selective adoption. Hence, when brought into the national system, these traditions essentially become state-managed ICH.[21] China's ICH movement operates through a strong state-led governance model.[22] The current ICH theoretical framework in China emerges from a power-knowledge dynamic between government officials and scholars.[23] In the process of nominating local cultures like Shaowu Nuo Dance for national ICH lists, local cultural elites strategically employ "re-naming" tactics, disembedding traditions from their local contexts to align with state categories of "political artistry".[24]

As mentioned before, adaptationist Nuo Dance inheritors are all employed by the SSO-NDRC, which is an official agency. The distinctive nature of their positions enables them to consolidate administrative resources and dominate discourse in ICH safeguarding initiatives. *"Before we (traditionists) even understood national ICH policies, they (adaptationists) had already prepped all*

the application materials. They had been nominating individuals for representative inheritor status years in advance." (T-1). It is evident that the adaptationist inheritors' positional advantage in policy interpretation creates a structural information imbalance between them and community-based traditionalist inheritors. A traditionalist inheritor invoked the National Representative Inheritor Accreditation and Management Measures for ICH (2019), arguing: *"To apply as representative inheritors, they should have a clear line of teaching passed down locally. They (adaptationists) are not even from our village, and they learned Nuo Dance from outsiders." (T-2).* While traditionalist inheritors dismiss the adaptationists' cultural legitimacy, the latter substantiate their transmission efforts with documented evidence and have secured state accreditation as representative inheritors through procedurally compliant applications. *"The application needs your teaching videos to show you are inheriting the Nuo Dance, plus photos and clips of Nuo Dance performances to prove you regularly promote it. You also need award certificates...All my materials met every single requirement for becoming a representative inheritor." (A-2).* It is worth noting that the status of representative inheritor is intrinsically linked to institutional capital. Accredited individuals gain preferential access to official cultural resources, securing enhanced funding and discursive authority. Then, a self-reinforcing "accreditation-resource-reaccreditation" cycle is formed. It warrants reflection: does the "representative inheritor" status granted by the current official accreditation system actually represent "institutional agents"?

Nevertheless, community-based traditionalist inheritors demonstrate proactive agency through strategies of "resistance", they refuse to pursue higher-level representative inheritor accreditation. *"Many people ask me to apply for provincial inheritor status. But after failing twice in a row, I am disheartened and have quit trying. Now I have made peace with it: even without official recognition or funding, I will keep inheriting Nuo Dance. Because what I am doing is preserving our local heritage, continuing what our ancestors handed down through generations. That's my duty." (T-2).* For traditionalist inheritors, transmitting Nuo Dance transcends cultural continuity and embodies bloodline inheritance. *"We possess inheritance genealogies dating back to the Qing Dynasty," (T-2)* which is sufficient proof of their legitimacy as inheritors. Moreover, they established the SNDCA as an NGO, comprising both representative and non-representative inheritors alongside local entrepreneurs supporting Nuo Dance development. Traditionalist inheritors employ genealogies to establish a parallel authority system, sustain ritual practices through the grassroot association, and thereby construct their own negotiated subjectivity.

CONCLUSION

This study argues that the construction of subjectivity among Shaowu Nuo Dance inheritors unfolds as a dynamic tripartite negotiation process within China's state-led ICH framework. As cultural agents embodying dual identities as both "priests" and "performers", they navigate structural tensions between sacred tradition and secular commodification through the dialectical interplay of bodily praxis, spatial reconfiguration, and authority contestation. In the bodily dimension, traditionalist inheritors sanctify the physical suffering of ritual firecracker to safeguard ritual authenticity through corporeal commitment, while adaptationists reconstruct bodily techniques through aesthetic discipline, such as lightening mask materials for stage mobility and refining movements for contemporary spectatorship. Significantly, this bodily politics transcends binary opposition, evidenced when traditionalist (T-2) conditionally accepts innovative elements and adaptationist (A-3) contextually reactivates ritual solemnity. This demonstrates that priestly and performer identities exist as fluid situational manifestations.

More fundamentally, spatial transformation catalyzes ontological shifts. The liminal sacred space of Daofeng Mountain processions where villagers set up altars with incense burners and greeted deities

with firecrackers, constructed a numinous field of divine-human coexistence, with inheritors' movements inscribing sacred presence onto cultural landscapes. When Nuo Dance migrates to theater stages, this decontextualized showscape reconstruct power dynamics: the faith community transforms into consuming audiences, "etic gaze" replaces "emic participation", and inheritors employ lighting/sound technologies to manufacture visual spectacle. Such spatial transposition accelerates the alienation of Nuo Dance from spiritual medium to cultural commodity.

Against this background, struggles over authoritative legitimacy expose institutional biases. Adaptationists utilize their affiliation with official institutions to secure representative inheritor status through compliance with state accreditation criteria, forging a self-reinforcing "accreditation-resource-reaccreditation" cycle. Traditionalists establish grassroots legitimacy through Qing Dynasty genealogical records, constructing a parallel authority system by withdrawing from higher-level accreditation and founding SNDCA as community-based organization. When Nuo Dance's transmission depends on administrative resource allocation, traditionalists adhering to ritual authenticity become marginalized for resisting political repurposing, while adaptationists skilled in institutional compliance emerge as the cultural agents.

These negotiation mechanisms advance ICH scholarship in three critical aspects: First, the body-space-authority triad transcends the simple authenticity debate, recasting inheritors as negotiating subjects navigating multiple forces. Second, state ICH accreditation system enhances heritage visibility but risks manufacturing "institutional agents" rather than true cultural inheritors. Third, traditionalists' resistance demonstrates the significant value of grassroots initiatives in rectifying top-down governance imbalances. Policy reforms need establish two-way empowerment: incorporating ritual transmission competence into accreditation criteria, conserving emic transmission space, and integrating grassroots organizations into decision-making structures.

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GAME(OVER)TOURISM: WORLD HERITAGE STATUS AND NATURAL SITES BETWEEN OPPORTUNITIES AND RISKS. THE CASE OF THE DOLOMITES

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INTRODUCTION[1]

The inclusion of the Dolomites in the UNESCO World Heritage List (2009) has, on one hand, brought international recognition to the region's exceptional geomorphological and cultural value; on the other, it has triggered complex dynamics at the intersection of conservation needs and the pressures of human activity. This contribution examines the consequences of overtourism in UNESCO-listed natural sites, using the Dolomites as a critical lens through which to reflect on the fragile balance between landscape, infrastructure and tourism, between conservation and development.

Mass tourism profoundly alters ecosystem equilibria and generates a range of environmental and social challenges. By adopting an interdisciplinary approach (most of the literature on the topic originates in fact from the tourism studies), interweaving spatial practice, landscape ecology and tourism sciences, the consequences of overexposure are analysed, highlighting the risks of reducing the natural landscape to a consumable, and ultimately exhaustible, global commodity. It raises critical questions about UNESCO's protective status. Does it safeguard or instead jeopardise environmental heritage? Does it call for a radical rethinking to prevent natural sites from being exploited? Furthermore, the potential of World Heritage status is examined, considering the opportunities represented by innovative governance models and integrated territorial management policies.

In this regard, the Dolomites represent a timely and compelling case for rethinking the role of natural heritage in the twenty-first century, between conservation and transformation.

THE UNESCO PARADOX

UNESCO was established in the aftermath of the World Wars with the aim of promoting peace and security through culture and universal values. Its involvement in the protection of monuments – particularly in the context of armed conflict – began in the late 1950s. In response to shifting political and cultural climates, the notion of protection[2] gradually expanded to include both cultural and natural heritage, understood as a legacy to be transmitted to future generations. In the early 1990s, the concept of World Heritage (henceforth WH) was further broadened to encompass cultural landscapes and intangible assets,[3] thus recognising not only exceptional achievements but also everyday life.

Today, the UNESCO World Heritage List (henceforth WHL) comprises 1,248 sites located in 170 of the 196 countries that have ratified the *Convention*. These include 972 cultural sites, 235 natural sites

and 41 mixed sites. Italy has the highest number of listed sites (61),[4] six of which are natural sites, including the Dolomites, which are the specific focus of this study.
To be inscribed on the WHL, a site must possess Outstanding Universal Value (henceforth OUV): that is, it must be considered as extraordinarily representative of the planet's cultural and natural wealth, and thus worthy of preservation for the benefit of all humanity. To qualify for inscription, a site must meet at least one of ten selection criteria[5] (Table 1).

WORLD HERITAGE CONVENTION | SELECTION CRITERIA		
Cultural criteria	**(I)**	to represent a masterpiece of human creative genius;
	(II)	to exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design;
	(III)	to bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared;
	(IV)	to be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history;
	(V)	to be an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement, land-use, or sea-use which is representative of a culture (or cultures), or human interaction with the environment especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change;
	(VI)	to be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance. (The Committee considers that this criterion should preferably be used in conjunction with other criteria);
Natural criteria	**(VII)**	to contain superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance;
	(VIII)	to be outstanding examples representing major stages of earth's history, including the record of life, significant on-going geological processes in the development of landforms, or significant geomorphic or physiographic features;
	(IX)	to be outstanding examples representing significant on-going ecological and biological processes in the evolution and development of terrestrial, fresh water, coastal and marine ecosystems and communities of plants and animals;
	(X)	to contain the most important and significant natural habitats for in-situ conservation of biological diversity, including those containing threatened species of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation.

Table 1. World Heritage Convention: selection criteria

Once granted WH status, the host State is obliged to uphold the principles set out in the *Convention*[6] and to introduce appropriate measures to safeguard the site. In order to retain its listing, a site must maintain long-term protection, proper management, authenticity and integrity. UNESCO also supports sites in danger and promotes international cooperation for the preservation of global cultural and natural heritage.

Compliance with these conditions is monitored through a continuous process of supervision. However, UNESCO's sole operational power lies in its ability to delist a site when it considers it to be at risk—whether due to invasive development, climate change, mismanagement, or unsustainable tourism flows. It may issue a "moral" recommendation[7] – advisory, but not binding – and initially threaten to move the site to the List of World Heritage in Danger.[8] If the host State fails to take corrective action, the reclassification follows. In extreme cases,[9] UNESCO may revoke WH status and remove the site from the List altogether.

While the underlying purpose of the List is commendable, the UNESCO system and its role have long been the subject of criticism. Since the 1950s, numerous studies have highlighted a range of issues—including management shortcomings, lack of impartiality in selection and delisting processes, unequal geographical distribution reflecting a Eurocentric and colonial approach to protection, the sheer number of listed sites, disproportionate attention and investment in certain areas at the expense of others, the commodification of heritage, and the opaque origins of funding.[10]

Inscription on the List confers international visibility and instantly transforms a site into a tourist destination. While it signifies the recognition of something as unique on a global scale, it simultaneously exposes this uniqueness to global scrutiny, positioning the site as a premium product in the tourism market.[11] By raising the profile of a territory and enhancing its attractiveness,[12] UNESCO recognition is widely believed to generate economic returns, making it a highly coveted status, even among public actors.[13]

However, inscription can trigger a number of unintended consequences detrimental to the heritage itself. While tourism has long been seen as a driver of local economic development, its negative impacts are now increasingly apparent, especially where excessive visitor numbers disrupt local ecosystems and social balance, ultimately undermining the very qualities that earned a site its status. The phenomenon of overtourism[14] is evident in urban settings,[15] but its effects are indeed even more precarious in natural environments, where excessive anthropogenic pressure can lead to the irreversible degradation of the very assets intended for protection.

UNESCO BRANDING AND NATURAL SITES: THE CASE OF THE DOLOMITES

The Dolomites are a mountain range located in north-eastern Italy within the Alpine system (Figure 1) and were inscribed as a natural site on the UNESCO WHL in 2009. Universally recognised as one of the most spectacular mountain landscapes in the world, they have been a popular tourist destination since the nineteenth-century (Figures 2-3).

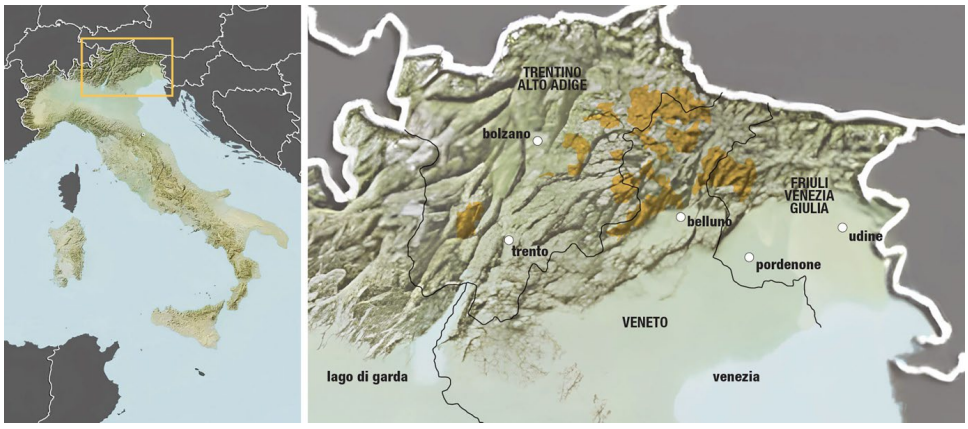

Figure 1. Dolomiti UNESCO World Heritage Site: geographic location

Figure 2. Dolomiti UNESCO World Heritage Site: Paneveggio, Pale di San Martino. Source: wikimediacommons/Carlo Albino Turra

Figure 3. Dolomiti UNESCO World Heritage Site: Alpe di Siusi. Source: pexels/Robert Hrovat

The Dolomites World Heritage Site (henceforth DWHS) spans administratively 137 municipalities, five Provinces and three Regions, each with distinct administrative frameworks and legislative capacities.[16] The DWHS is a serial site (Figure 4), comprising nine non-contiguous areas, referred to as "Systems",[17] that share a common set of characteristics. This serial configuration was a decisive factor in the success of the nomination.[18] Each of the nine sites is made up of a "core area", covering the exposed rock formations, and a "buffer area", including upland pastures and forested slopes that contribute to the protection of the core areas.

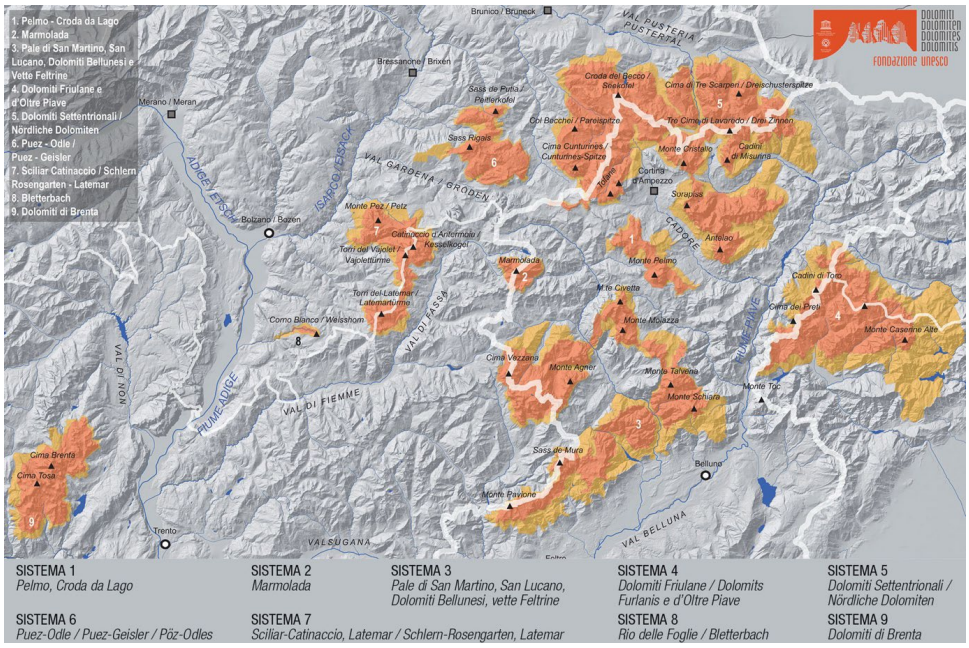

Figure 4. Dolomiti UNESCO World Heritage Site: the nine Systems of the Dolomites. Source: Fondazione Dolomiti UNESCO

The Dolomites were inscribed as a natural site on the basis of two of the *Convention*'s criteria:[19] the Criterion VIII, which concerns outstanding geological features, scientific significance, and physical formations relevant to the history of the Earth, and the Criterion VII, relating to exceptional natural beauty. The latter, rooted in an Anglo-Saxon tradition of landscape conservation, emphasises aesthetic and perceptual qualities of the "dolomitic landscape", in contrast to the *European Landscape Convention*, which stresses the interrelationship between natural and human factors.[20]

The DWHS is a highly complex system,[21] which complicates the formulation of a unified vision and common policies due to several factors. There is certainly a dimensional and morphological issue: the site is vast[22] and heterogeneous. Its fragmentation gives rise to a high level of complexity, not only institutionally – both in terms of territorial administration and the different areas of heritage[23] – but also in terms of identity and culture.[24]

Paradoxically, despite this fragmentation, the Dolomites are commonly perceived – both externally and by local inhabitants – as a cohesive whole. For UNESCO, however, the serial site operates as an archipelago and the protection applies only within the designated perimeters, effectively displacing negative anthropogenic impacts associated with WH status outside the protected boundaries and revealing the need for an intermediate zone.[25] The Dolomites have always been inhabited mountain areas,[26] yet the nomination as "natural site" excluded all anthropized zones in the lower slopes and valleys. Human presence and use form an integral part of the region's ecological cycles and have helped shape the landscape over time, making it difficult to separate its natural and anthropogenic components. Moreover, the protected areas border directly on settlements, without formally including local communities, who nonetheless claim an active role in management and development strategies. The nine Systems also differ widely in their levels of economic and tourist development: some encompass famous, overcrowded areas, while others lie in marginal zones characterised by undertourism, depopulation, and ecological rewilding.

When UNESCO inscribed the Dolomites on the WHL, it issued a set of conditions, particularly regarding the formulation of an overall management and tourism strategy.[27] The various public institutions involved responded by developing an innovative governance model designed to overcome

territorial and administrative fragmentation. This strategy is built around three main pillars, the Foundation, the Management Strategy, and the Operating Networks.

Established in 2010, the Fondazione Dolomiti-Dolomiten-Dolomites-Dolomitis UNESCO[28] serves as the coordinating body for the entire site and as the official reference point for UNESCO. Its role is to harmonise the efforts of the various authorities responsible for managing the DWHS, though each retains its respective administrative powers. The Foundation ensures political and technical coherence via the Management Strategy and oversees the activities of the Operating Networks, tool which operationalise the concept of network-based management.

The Management Strategy is articulated within the Overall Management Strategy (OMS), which also incorporates the Tourism Strategy (TS).[29] Its aim is to ensure the site's integrity in relation to landscape and environmental quality, while promoting the involvement of local communities in the pursuit of sustainable economic development. The OMS rests on a shared long-term strategic vision for the entire area, essential for coordinating actions in the fields of tourism and landscape planning.

The Strategy is structured around three main axes – *Conservation*, *Communication*, and *Promotion*[30] – with short-, medium- and long-term goals, and is implemented through the Operating Networks,[31] each of which addresses a specific theme. In addition to technical staff and experts, the working groups include a range of local stakeholders – such as Parks, Universities and community representatives – who, through participatory processes, help to define concrete actions and projects.[32]

BETWEEN RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES

The Dolomites are among the most visited tourist destinations in the world, even prior to their inscription on the WHL. Tourist flows have seen a marked increase over recent decades.[33] However, there is still no objective methodology for estimating the impact of WHL inscription on tourism trends, and even sectoral studies provide conflicting assessments.[34] Moreover, tourism is a complex phenomenon, highly influenced by exogenous variables[35] that may affect visitor flows more significantly than WH status itself. In the case of the Dolomites WHS, available data and on-the-ground experience confirm a rise in attractiveness following inscription, especially in certain areas[36] that have already reached – or exceeded – their maximum sustainable carrying capacity.[37]

WHL inscription undoubtedly brings benefits.[38] It fosters intercultural understanding and raises awareness around the protection of shared global heritage. It often leads to improved infrastructure and services, and can spark a renewed sense of pride among residents for their local identity. In natural sites, UNESCO presence can support the creation of protected areas, the safeguarding of specific species, and the adoption of measures for ecosystem conservation. International visitors may bring economic prosperity to communities that previously lacked it, generating local economic momentum and creating employment opportunities beyond the tourism sector. In marginal territories such as mountain regions, this can help ensure survival and prevent abandonment.

Nonetheless, inscription may also generate significant negative consequences, many of which arise from mass tourism, which risks undermining the environmental, social, and cultural balance of the territory.[39] Excessive visitor numbers can erode traditional practices, transform cultures into commodities for tourist consumption, and gradually sever the local population's sense of belonging. Town centres lose their resident populations, replaced by tourist accommodations and second homes, leading to increased housing costs and a loss of services for citizens. Public space may become privatised, congestion and traffic intensify. The growth in tourism attractiveness often coincides with a decline in the quality of both offerings and experiences, and generates discontent among local communities, which may develop forms of dissent and tourismphobia.[40] Employment becomes gradually insecure and seasonal, while local economies tend to grow overly dependent on tourism alone. Destinations, increasingly designed to meet the expectations of the global tourist, risk losing

their distinctiveness and turning into replicable scenarios and standardised non-places.[41] The term "UNESCOcide"[42] has even been coined: in the name of conservation, UNESCO designation becomes a mechanism of museification, freezing places in time and depriving them of growth and transformation.

In natural and protected areas, extractive practices may threaten ecosystem integrity and destroy the irreplaceable resource underpinning the tourist experience. In addition, the impacts of deforestation, trail erosion, water and energy consumption, air, water and soil pollution, the loss of natural areas to tourism-related construction, biodiversity loss, environmental degradation, and difficulties in waste management must be added to the known costs of overtourism. Many natural sites lack the necessary infrastructure to support heavy visitor loads during peak days or seasons. Promoting mass tourism often entails making destinations easily accessible: congestion, noise, land-use change, new infrastructure, visual intrusion, and landscape degradation (Figures 5-6). The fragile alpine ecosystem is furthermore threatened by additional critical issues as the climate change. The retreat of glaciers alters both the landscape and the functioning of mountain environments, rendering them unstable and unsafe. Mass tourism attracts inexperienced and unprepared visitors, who lack awareness of the territories they are entering and are unable to manage the inherent risks of the mountain.

UNESCO is aware of the risks associated with WHL inscription,[43] and its position is inherently inconsistent. On the one hand, the goal is to preserve natural and cultural heritage for future generations; on the other, to promote both conservation and development.[44] Tourism is a powerful driver of economic growth, but it does not always align with the sustainable development of the territory. Only since the mid-2000s has UNESCO begun to acknowledge the tensions between WHL inscription and the tourism industry, and to address the fundamental dichotomy between development and protection. Increasingly, its documents have begun to include terms such as "sustainable tourism," "sustainable development," and "communities."[45]

There is no form of tourism that is entirely impact-free. The pandemic disrupted certain neoliberal mechanisms within the sector, opening space for debate around a "new normal" and the notion of degrowth tourism,[46] advocating a deliberate downsizing of the tourism industry. Sustainable tourism appears to be the only viable, if not necessary, path forward: a form of tourism that makes the visitor more conscious of the experience they are engaging in, while enabling local stakeholders and communities to valorise their territory without compromising its resources, and in doing so, to generate long-lasting, meaningful added value.

Figure 5. Dolomiti UNESCO World Heritage Site: traffic congestion at the Misurina access point. Source: Fondazione Dolomiti UNESCO/Moreno Geremetta

Figure 6. Dolomiti UNESCO World Heritage Site: overcrowding at the Tre Cime di Lavaredo hotspot. Source: Fondazione Dolomiti UNESCO/Josef Hackhofer

STRATEGIC VISION AND TOURISM EDUCATION

Although each natural site has its own characteristics and specificities, the case study examined makes it possible to draw some general considerations regarding UNESCO's role and approach to World Heritage. In many WHS today, we are approaching a critical threshold of irreversibility. While in the case of monuments and urban areas it is generally possible – through appropriate policies and strategies – to restore the status chosen for preservation, natural environments, once depleted or damaged, cannot be reproduced. Their deterioration may result from exogenous factors and/or human

behaviour. Experience shows that prohibitions and restrictions alone are insufficient policies to ensure protection.[47] A change of mindset is required.

So, what real contribution can UNESCO offer, particularly in the context of natural sites? If UNESCO's power is primarily moral, then it must invest in this dimension and act as a lever for building a new tourism consciousness involving all actors, not only tourists, but also tourism operators and local communities.

An operational tool such as the Fondazione Dolomites UNESCO represents good practice, blending traditional systems of territorial management with more innovative approaches. Similar structures, operating "above the asset" and beyond particular interests, yet remaining highly specialised and territorially rooted, can take on the task of defining and coordinating the implementation of a long-term strategic vision. Such a vision should be defined upstream of the nomination process, taking into account the impacts on areas beyond the immediate perimeter of the protected zone, and be sufficiently flexible to accommodate the environmental, cultural, and social changes inherent to living landscapes.

More broadly, UNESCO must realign its procedures with its objectives. Beyond improved processes and practices,[48] it is necessary to overcome a "heritage fetishism"[49] that regards the landscape not as an inhabited space, but as a static backdrop[50] often serving the tourist market alone. Just as UNESCO provides clear directives on the physical conservation of heritage assets, it must also offer increasingly explicit guidelines for promoting sustainable enjoyment of natural sites and strategies to prevent the commodification of WHS.

On the other hand, UNESCO holds considerable media power. Through strategic communication and marketing, it can help define new narratives – more ethical and territorially compatible – that foster greater awareness of the value of WHS and encourage changes in behaviour. Only in this way can long-term and structural results be achieved.

To ensure the success of such initiatives, it is crucial to work on the shared development of strategies with local communities and stakeholders,[51] involving them in decisions that affect them, aligning intentions, and ensuring the rights of diverse groups. One of the main risks of WHS designation is the exclusion of local communities from planning and management processes, leaving places in the hands of external actors and interests, with few positive returns for the territories concerned.

Finally, UNESCO must prioritise education and training for all stakeholders in the sector,[52] both those providing the supply and those shaping the demand:[53] raising awareness of conservation issues; promoting tourism not only as a driver of economic development, but also of cultural and social growth;[54] building skills and professional competencies for the effective management of OUV; and sensitising tourists to the risks and impacts of climate change, as well as to local customs.

By placing quality of life at the centre and not only the integrity of the asset, the real challenge lies in fostering a sense of responsibility in the younger generations. They must understand that the landscape represents a core value for sound socio-economic development, to be enhanced and protected without being consumed. And UNESCO has all the tools it needs to help achieve these goals.

NOTES

[1] This study was funded by the European Union – NextGenerationEU, in the framework of the iNEST – Interconnected Nord-Est Innovation Ecosystem (iNEST ECS00000043 – CUP H43C22000540006). This essay is the result of the joint development of the two authors. In particular, the paragraphs “The UNESCO Paradox” and “UNESCO Branding and Natural Sites: The Case of the Dolomites” was written by Roberto Gigliotti, while the paragraphs “Between Risks and Opportunities” and “Strategic Vision and Tourism Education” were authored by Eliana Saracino. The paragraph “Introduction” is common to both authors.

[2] It is defined in the *Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage*, the international treaty adopted by UNESCO in 1972 (https://whc.unesco.org/en/conventiontext/).

[3] Cultural landscapes, defined as the joint creations of humans and nature, were added to the *Convention* in 1992. In 2003, UNESCO adopted the *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* (ICHC), which includes oral traditions, performing arts (music, theatre, dance), rituals, festivals, traditional ecological knowledge, and artisanal craftsmanship (https://ich.unesco.org/en/convention).

[4] Additional 16 intangible cultural heritage assets are also recognised. All data referenced here are up to date as of 2025. For future updates, refer to https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/.

[5] Six of the ten inscription criteria relate to cultural heritage and four of them to natural heritage. The criteria are outlined in the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*, which, alongside the text of the *Convention*, represent the main working tool on World Heritage. The criteria are regularly revised by the Committee to reflect the evolution of the World Heritage concept itself.

[6] From the UNESCO’s official website: “By signing the *Convention*, each country pledges to conserve not only the World Heritage sites situated on its territory, but also to protect its national heritage. The States Parties are encouraged to integrate the protection of the cultural and natural heritage into regional planning programmes, set up staff and services at their sites, undertake scientific and technical conservation research and adopt measures which give this heritage a function in the day-to-day life of the community.”

[7] Francesco Bandarin, former director of the World Heritage Centre and Assistant Director-General of UNESCO for Culture until 2018, concedes that UNESCO only has “[…] moral power. We advise and recommend action, but these are light guns,” which do little to scare governments into taking the actions sought by the program. In Simon Usborne, “Is UNESCO Damaging the World’s Treasures?,” The Independent, April 28, 2009.

[8] The World Heritage in Danger List currently includes 53 sites, of which 16 are natural (https://whc.unesco.org/en/danger-list/).

[9] Since the establishment of the WHL in 1972, status revocation has occurred only three times. The Arabian Oryx Sanctuary in Oman was delisted in 2007 due to severe poaching and the Omani government’s decision to reduce the sanctuary by 90% following the discovery of oil. In 2009, the Elbe Valley, near Dresden, lost its status following the construction of a controversial bridge. Most recently, in 2020, Liverpool’s historic centre was delisted due to a redevelopment project deemed by UNESCO to severely compromise its historical authenticity.

[10] See especially: Mary Evelyn Blagg, “UNESCO: Product of Contradictions,” The Southwestern Social Science Quarterly 32, no. 2 (1951): 79–85; Anna Leask and Alan Fyall, eds., *Managing World Heritage Sites* (Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2006); Elizabeth Betsy Keough, “Heritage in Peril: A Critique of UNESCO’s World Heritage Program,” Washington University Global Studies Law Review 10, no. 3 (2011): 593-615; Bruno S. Frey and Lasse Steiner, “World Heritage List: Does It Make Sense?,” International Journal of Cultural Policy 17, no. 5 (2011): 555-73.

[11] Richard Butler and Stephen W. Boyd, eds., *Tourism and National Parks. Issues and Implications* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 2000); C. Michael Hall and Rachel Piggin, “World Heritage Sites: Managing the Brand,” in *Managing Visitor Attractions: New Directions*, ed. Anna Leask et al. (London: Routledge, 2003), 221-37.

[12] Leask and Fyall, *Managing World Heritage Sites;* Frey and Steiner, *World Heritage List*; Rabah Arezki et al., “Tourism Specialization and Economic Development: Evidence from the UNESCO World Heritage List,” Working Paper 176, no. 9 (2009): 1-22.

[13] In addition to prestige, WHL inscription enables access to competitive funding calls and to the World Heritage Fund for site-related projects such as restoration, conservation, and tourism development.

[14] Rachel Dodds and Richard Butler, eds., *Overtourism: Issues, Realities and Solutions* (Berlin-Boston: Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2019); Harald Pechlaner, Elisa Innerhofer and Greta Erschbamer, eds., *Overtourism: Tourism Management and Solutions* (Abington: Routledge, 2020); Hugues Séraphin, Tatiana Gladkikh and Tan Vo Thanh, eds., *Overtourism: Causes, Implications and Solutions* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2020).

[15] Consider, for instance, the emblematic cases of Venice, Barcelona, and Amsterdam, where attempts are made to balance tourism benefits with its inevitable drawbacks.

[16] The DWHS includes 137 municipalities, five Provinces (Trento, Bolzano, Udine, Pordenone, Belluno), and three Regions (Trentino-Alto Adige, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Veneto). In addition to territorial fragmentation, the governing bodies have different legislative and administrative powers. Trento and Bolzano are autonomous provinces; Pordenone and Udine are part of an autonomous region; Belluno operates under ordinary status. Among the three regions, Veneto is of ordinary status, while Trentino-Alto Adige and Friuli-Venezia Giulia are granted special autonomy.

[17] Each site varies in terms of size and characteristics, collectively contributing to the overall Outstanding Universal Value of the property. The nine systems are classified in the nomination dossier as follows: 1) Pelmo, Croda da Lago; 2) Marmolada; 3) Pale di San Martino, San Lucano, Dolomiti Bellunesi, vette Feltrine; 4) Dolomiti Friulane / Dolomits Furlanis e d'Oltre Piave; 5) Dolomiti Settentrionali / Nördliche Dolomiten; 6) Puez-Odle / Puez-Geisler / Pöz-Odles; 7) Sciliar-Catinaccio, Latemar / Schlern-Rosengarten, Latemar; 8) Rio delle Foglie / Bletterbach; 9) Dolomiti di Brenta.

[18] An initial, unsuccessful nomination was submitted in 2004. It included a much larger territory (22 sites) and was proposed under all four natural heritage criteria.

[19] For a description of the criteria, see Table 1. The *Report of Decisions* of the World Heritage Committee (https://whc.unesco.org/document/102372) provides the following justification for Criterion (VII): "The Dolomites are widely regarded as being among the most attractive mountain landscapes in the world. Their intrinsic beauty derives from a variety of spectacular vertical forms […]. The distinctive scenery of the Dolomites has become the archetype of a 'dolomitic landscape.' Geologist pioneers were the first to be captured by the beauty of the mountains, and their writing and subsequent painting and photography further underline the aesthetic appeal of the property." And for Criterion (VIII): "The Dolomites are of international significance for geomorphology, as the classic site for the development of mountains in dolomitic limestone. The area presents a wide range of landforms related to erosion, tectonism and glaciation. The quantity and concentration of extremely varied limestone formations is extraordinary in a global context […]. Taken together, the combination of geomorphological and geological values creates a property of global significance."

[20] The *Council of Europe Landscape Convention* (https://rm.coe.int/16807b6bc7), adopted in Florence in 2000, states in Article 1: " 'Landscape' means an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors" and further clarifies in the preamble: "The landscape has an important public interest role in the cultural, ecological, environmental and social fields, and constitutes a resource favourable to economic activity [… and] contributes to the formation of local cultures and that it is a basic component of the European natural and cultural heritage […]."

[21] Beyond the wide-ranging multidisciplinary bibliography on the Dolomites, for a comprehensive overview, see the nomination dossier *Nomination of the Dolomites for Inscription on the World Natural Heritage List UNESCO*, 2009 (https://whc.unesco.org/uploads/nominations/1237rev.pdf).

[22] The site covers a total area of 231,169 hectares, of which 141,903 are core areas and 89,266 are buffer areas.

[23] Most of the land (rocks, glaciers, lakes) is state-owned property, managed by regional and provincial authorities. Productive areas (forests, pastures, meadows) are largely collectively owned and managed by various public entities.

[24] Within the DWHS area, four language communities coexist (Italian, German, Ladin, and Friulian), each with its own cultural specificity and varying degrees of autonomy.

[25] Mauro Varotto, "Oltre il 'recinto' UNESCO: le sfide del territorio dolomitico," in *Di chi sono le Alpi?*, ed. Mauro Varotto et al. (Padova: Padova University Press, 2012), 284-93.

[26] The distinctive geomorphological structure of isolated groups makes the Dolomites unusually accessible. They represent one of the most densely inhabited mountain areas in the Alps and host the highest number of permanent settlements in any alpine region of Europe.

[27] See the 2009 *Report of Decisions* of the World Heritage Committee (https://whc.unesco.org/document/102372). Experts from the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) carried out a first technical evaluation in 2011.

[28] The Foundation's name includes the term "Dolomites" in all four official languages of the region. For further details on the governance and activities of the Foundation, see the official website: https://www.dolomitiunesco.info/en.

[29] https://issuu.com/fondazionedolomitiunesco/docs/def_fd4u-oms_final_rev.2016.04.01_en.

[30] The primary aim of *Conservation* is the protection of the site's landscape and geological heritage. This translates into harmonising administrative and legislative tools with those already in place, as well as physically monitoring the territory. The function of *Communication* is to coordinate existing and new tools with the specific goal of engaging local communities in the construction of new awareness around the protected asset. *Promotion*

focuses on the development of practices aimed at fostering a critical awareness capable of self-preserving the site.

[31] There are currently five active Operating Networks (originally seven, but reduced through merger in 2015), working in the following areas: Geological Heritage; Education and Scientific Research; Development, Sustainable Tourism and Mobility; Landscape Heritage and Protected Areas; Promotion of Sustainable Tourism. Each working group is coordinated by one of the Provincial/Regional Administrations participating in management of the property and brings together relevant technical experts.

[32] The participatory process #Dolomiti2040 specifically addressed locally relevant issues and involved all stakeholders (public administration bodies, municipalities, mountain communities, collective ownership organisations, alpine sports clubs and associations, ski resort management companies and infrastructure providers, refuge owners and managers, farmers and breeders, cultural organisations and tourism industry operators, among others.)

[33] Due to various factors – including increased prosperity, progress in transportation infrastructure, more accessible visa systems, and digitalisation – international tourist arrivals have risen dramatically. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), global tourist arrivals increased from 25 million in 1950 to 1.1 billion in 2024 and may reach 1.8 billion by 2030. A recent McKinsey study estimates an annual growth in tourism flows of 3%. The tourism market currently accounts for 10% of global GDP.

[34] One critical issue is access measurement. For natural heritage sites – especially those with free entry – monitoring is extremely challenging due to the multiplicity of entry points. This is even more problematic in the Dolomites due to the lack of harmonised data collection among the various local authorities. See: Bailey Ashton Adie, C. Michael Hall and Girish Prayag, “World Heritage as a Placebo Brand: A Comparative Analysis of Three Sites and Marketing Implications,” Journal of Sustainable Tourism 26, no. 3 (2018): 399-415; C. Michael Hall "World Heritage, Tourism and Implementation: What Happens After Listing?," in *Managing World Heritage Sites*, ed. Anna Leask et al. (Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2006), 20-34; Elisa Panzera, Thomas de Graaff and Henri L.F. de Groot, "European Cultural Heritage and Tourism Flows: The Magnetic Role of Superstar World Heritage Sites," Papers in Regional Science 100, no. 1 (2021): 101-23.

[35] In both the short and long term, factors such as economic crises, climate change, public health emergencies, geopolitical instability, war and terrorism may all affect tourism dynamics.

[36] Estimates suggest an overall 10% increase in tourist presence across the WHS area, with surges reaching up to 90% in certain hotspots.

[37] Robert E. Manning, *Parks and Carrying Capacity: Commons Without Tragedy* (Island Press, 2013).

[38] Maria Ana Borges et al., *Sustainable Tourism and Natural World Heritage: Priorities for Action* (Gland: IUCN, 2011); Yu-Fai Leung et al., *Tourism and Visitor Management in Protected Areas: Guidelines for Sustainability* (Gland: IUCN, 2018).

[39] Among the extensive literature on the subject, see in particular: Maria Ana Borges et al., *Sustainable Tourism and Natural World Heritage;* Yu-Fai Leung et al., *Tourism and Visitor Management in Protected Areas;* Ralf Buckley, “Tourism and Natural World Heritage: A Complicated Relationship,” Journal of Travel Research 57, no. 5 (2018): 563-78; Marilena Vecco and Josephine Caust, “UNESCO, Cultural Heritage Sites and Tourism,” in *Overtourism: Tourism Management and Solutions*, ed. Harald Pechlaner et al. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020), 67–77; Marie-Theres Albert et al., eds., *50 Years World Heritage Convention: Shared Responsibility – Conflict & Reconciliation* (Cham: Springer Nature, 2022).

[40] Claudio Milano, Marina Novelli and Joseph M. Cheer, eds., *Travel and Tourism in the Age of Overtourism* (London: Routledge, 2021).

[41] Marc Augé, *L’impossible voyage: le tourisme et ses images* (Payot & Rivages, 1997).

[42] Marco D’Eramo, “UNESCOcide,” New Left Review 88 (2014): 47–53. D’Eramo describes UNESCO as a "serial killer," claiming that its label embalms places, subtracting them from the passage of time and obstructing their natural evolution. This implies freezing sites in an arbitrary moment, transforming them into stage sets and compromising their authenticity. Had the UNESCO seal existed earlier, it would likely have prevented, for instance, the transformation of the Athenian Acropolis or the construction of Baroque Rome.

[43] Kishore Rao, “Editorial,” World Heritage 71 (2014): 3.

[44] In the *Budapest Declaration on World Heritage* (https://whc.unesco.org/en/decisions/1217/), adopted by UNESCO in the 2002. Pascale Marcotte and Laurent Bourdeau, “La promotion des sites du Patrimoine Mondial de l’UNESCO: compatible avec le développement durable?,” Management & Avenir 34, no. 4 (2010): 270-88.

[45] According to the UNWTO and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), “the sustainable tourism should: make optimal use of environmental resources […] maintaining essential ecological processes [...]; respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities […]; ensure viable, long-term economic operations

[…].” See the document *Making Tourism More Sustainable – A Guide for Policy Makers*, 2005 (https://www.unwto.org/sustainable-development)

[46] On post-pandemic “new normality”, see: Dimitri Ioannides and Szilvia Gyimóthy, “The COVID-19 Crisis as an Opportunity for Escaping the Unsustainable Global Tourism Path,” Tourism Geographies 22, no. 3 (2020): 624–32; Daria Habicher et al., “Beyond the COVID-19 Crisis: A Research Note on Post-pandemic Scenarios for South Tyrol 2030+,” Technological Forecasting and Social Change 180 (2022): 121749. On degrowth tourism, see: special issue “Tourism degrowth*,”* Journal of Sustainable Tourism 27, no 12 (2019); Konstantinos Andriotis, ed., *Issues and Cases of Degrowth in Tourism*, (Wallingford: CABI, 2021); C. Michael Hall, Linda Lundmark and Jundan Jasmine Zhang, eds., *Degrowth and Tourism* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2021).

[47] Overtourism is typically addressed through restriction policies: limiting access, reducing private transport, implementing reservation systems, charging tourist or environmental taxes, introducing bed stops, or deploying demarketing and flow-redirection strategies. These approaches – besides not being fully effective – raise broader issues of democracy, access to public goods, and social equity. They may end up excluding visitors based on economic capacity. See in particular: Dalia Perkumienė and Rasa Pranskūnienė, “Overtourism: Between the Right to Travel and Residents’ Rights,” Sustainability 11, no. 7 (2019): 2138; Szymon Kielar and Anna Scuttari, “Moratoria as Possible Governmental Regulations for Degrowth: A Critical Discourse Analysis of the Bed Capacity Limit in the Local Media of South Tyrol (Italy),” in *From Overtourism to Sustainability Governance: A New Tourism Era*, ed. Harald Pechlaner et al. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2024), 90–107.

[48] For example, it is necessary to make nomination processes more transparent, strengthen operational tools, insulate them from business interests, verify donation origins, build networks with other groups, and improve monitoring systems.

[49] Françoise Choay, *Del destino della città* (Firenze: Alinea, 2008).

[50] David Harvey and Timothy J. Wilkinson, “Landscape and Heritage: Emerging Landscapes of Heritage,” in *The Routledge Companion to Landscape Studies*, ed. Peter Howard et al. (London: Routledge, 2018), 176–91.

[51] All components of the local community must be engaged: civil society, non-profits, businesses, workers, and schools. See: Takamitsu Jimura, *World Heritage Sites: Tourism, Local Communities and Conservation Activities* (Wallingford: CABI, 2019); Arthur Pedersen, *Managing Tourism at World Heritage Sites: Practical Manual for World Heritage Site Managers* (Paris: UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2002).

[52] Hugues Séraphin and Anca C. Yallop, eds., *Overtourism and Tourism Education. A Strategy for Sustainable Tourism Futures* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2021).

[53] Since 2001, UNESCO has proposed the *World Heritage Tourism Program* to integrate conservation and development, created the *Sustainable Tourism Toolkit* (https://whc.unesco.org/en/sustainabletourismtoolkit/), and in 2012 adopted the *World Heritage and Sustainable Tourism Programme* (WH+ST) to equip site managers with the tools to develop sustainable strategies. See: Arthur Pederson, “The World Heritage Tourism Program: Lessons Learned,” in *Tourism and Protected Areas: Benefits beyond Boundaries. The Vth IUCN World Parks Congress*, ed. Robyn Bushell and Paul Eagles (Wallingford: CABI, 2007), 115–28.

[54] This also means encouraging sustainable, community-based tourism practices that reflect local identities, fostering experiential tourism that respects the traditions and values of place.

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DARB ZUBYADAH: DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO CULTURAL INTERCHANGE AND THE PREADAPTATION OF INHERITED LEGACY

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INTRODUCTION

The World Heritage Convention, adopted in 1972 by UNESCO, establishes a global framework for defining, protecting, and managing cultural and natural heritage of Outstanding Universal Value.[1] Central to this framework are the ten criteria, which are developed to function as evaluative tools that translate cultural, historical, and social values into assessable categories.[2] The criteria, (i)-(vi) structure heritage significance around creative achievement, human values interchange and historical continuity, while (vii)-(x) relate to natural heritage, focusing on exceptional nature beauty and biodiversity.[3] While the convention intended to provide a universal framework that celebrate and recognize shared heritage, the criteria have been widely critiqued for favouring specific understandings of heritage —particularly tangilbe forms —thereby shaping how culutral value is defined, represented, and legitmized within the world heritage system.[4] This paper starts with an analysis of Criterion (ii)'s historical evolution, tracing how the criterion reveals imprints of colonial European thought. In the early drafts, the criterion emphasized the dominance of one culture over another, positioning certain cultures as originators and others as receivers.[5] Furthermore, within the context of Criterion (ii), heritage continues to be valued primarily through tangible monuments, a perspective that echoes the dominance of a European Authorized Heritage Discourse.[6] This paper then contextualizes the ritual of Islamic pilgrimage "Hajj," examining both its pre-Islamic and Islamic practices as a reflection of cultural interchange. The call for the pilgrimage emphasizes the abundance of benefits—spiritual, economic and intellectual. Following the contextualization of Hajj as both a religious and social tradition.[7] This paper turns to the case study of the Abbasid infrastructure project known as the Darb Zubaydah Hajj route, highlighting how its facilitation enriched the cultural interchange that existed in the practice itself. Throughout the centuries, Abbasid rulers commissioned different developments and maintenance to provide secured routes, ensuring safe passage and equipping the roads with facilities to accommodate pilgrims' needs.[8] These included water infrastructures, caravansaries, mosques, and markets, among others, which collectively supported both spiritual and material dimensions.[9] Finally, this paper concludes by looking at how the facilitation of pilgrimage has continued into present times, where the intangible ritual of Hajj persists, but the tangible facilities have evolved to meet the pilgrims' needs in modern times. This continuity and adaptation echoes not only endurance but also a form of cultural interchange, as practices of hospitality, infrastructure and organization adapt to contemporary times while remaining rooted in the ritual of Hajj.

The evolution of Criterion (ii):

Interchange of human values, as described in Criterion (ii), restricts validity to tangible evidence, privileging material traces of culture that can be identified, documented and researched. This focus on materiality reveals a broader colonial narratives and Eurocentric worldview embedded in the Criterion, which assumes that cultural innovation originates in specific "core" civilization and spreads outward to others deemed less advanced.[10] The Trajectory of Criterion (ii), as mapped by Semina An, reflects clear traces of European heritage assumptions.[11] Particularly in the first draft of the criterion, as outlined in the 1976 ICOMOS report, stated: "Properties of outstanding importance for the influence they have exercised over the development of world architecture or human settlements (either over a period of time or within a geographical area)."[12] This formulation reflects how influence is one sided, where one civilization impacts another in a nonreciprocal manner, which echoes the European notion of "core" civilizations. Over the years, from 1976 to 1994, the descriptions shifted around "influence" and "developments," while broadening the types of features that embody these influences. In the 1977 working document of the Committee's first session, the wording in Criterion (ii) was revised to include "should be of outstanding importance owing to its influence," underscoring the role of cultural impact exerted over other cultures, while also highlighting influence as the measure of significance. Another addition is the word "subsequent," which narrowed the influence to be either on specific moments of time or on later stages of development, and continuing to frame influence as largely one-sided. Further revisions took place in the Operational Guidelines draft in the same year, substituting "should be of outstanding importance owing to its influence" with "exerted considerable influence," shifting the focus towards noting historical impact rather that evaluative influence significance. In 1978, the revision of the Criterion during the Operational Guidelines for The Implementation of The World Heritage Convention removed the word "subsequent," expanding the temporal scope of influence to include the progress and evolution of developments. From 1980 to 1994, "considerable influence" was replaced with "great influence," while the remained unchanged, continuing to indicate a hierarchal, one-sided flow of influence from dominant civilizations to subordinate ones. It was only in 1996, owing the revision to the Expert Meeting on Global Strategy and the development of the Nara document in 1994, that the word "great influence" was replaced with "exhibit an important interchange of human values" which aimed to represent cultural influences as reciprocal processes, rather than one that is rooted in cultural dominance.[13]

While the changes in Criterion (ii) aspired towards inclusivity, it still limits the evidence for "interchange of human values" solely to tangible aspects, bypassing the diversity of heritage perceptions and experiences. In *UNESCO, cultural heritage, and outstanding universal value*, Sophia Labadi engages with the theory of reiterative universalism to interrogate whether "Outstanding Universal Value (OUV)" operates as a universal standard, or if it can be interpreted heterogeneously by State Parties, thus challenging the dominance of a one-size-fits-all model of heritage.[14] Her use of reiterative universalism exposes how 'outstanding universal value' is framed within the European Authorized Heritage Discourse (AHD), which shapes the parameters of what counts as universal heritage by privileging tangible, monumental features separate from intangible aspects.[15] Labadi's investigation calls for a critical pursue of the premises of OUV, investigating what is deemed "outstanding," how it came to be considered "universal," and in what way "value" is constructed, exposing how these terms are not intrinsic, but rather are historically and culturally situated.[16] While State Parties still interpret and challenge the parameters, they do so from within the European AHD template.[17]

Building on this critique with a focus on Criterion (ii), particularly how the Criterion implies that cultural interchange is only valid and evident "on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design," claiming this to be universal perspective

assumed to be intrinsic and accepted by all. Laurajane Smith also challenges this framing by suggesting to de-center materiality in heritage and emphasizing the intangible heritage practices and values that are overlooked by UNESCO's AHD.[18] She argues that by recognizing heritage as a process of remembering, interpreting, and assigning meaning to the past and present, attention shifts from static, tangible remains to the social meanings and practices people attach to them.[19] In this lens, the tangible and intangible become inseparable—a view this paper adopts to argue the interplay between the material infrastructure of Darb Zubaydah and the Hajj ritual.

The next section will contextualize Hajj as a ritual throughout history, and how cultural interchange is embedded in the practice itself, from reciting poetry in pre-Islamic era, to arguing the accuracy of Hadiths (textual reports of prophet Mohammad PBUH say and action) in Islamic periods.

THE ISLAMIC PILGRIMAGE (HAJJ):

{وَأَذِّن فِي النَّاسِ بِالْحَجِّ يَأْتُوكَ رِجَالًا وَعَلَىٰ كُلِّ ضَامِرٍ يَأْتِينَ مِن كُلِّ فَجٍّ عَمِيقٍ (27) لِّيَشْهَدُوا مَنَافِعَ لَهُمْ وَيَذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللَّهِ فِي أَيَّامٍ مَّعْلُومَاتٍ عَلَىٰ مَا رَزَقَهُم مِّن بَهِيمَةِ الْأَنْعَامِ ۖ فَكُلُوا مِنْهَا وَأَطْعِمُوا الْبَائِسَ الْفَقِيرَ (28) ثُمَّ لْيَقْضُوا تَفَثَهُمْ وَلْيُوفُوا نُذُورَهُمْ وَلْيَطَّوَّفُوا بِالْبَيْتِ الْعَتِيقِ}(29)

[And proclaim to mankind the pilgrimage. They will come to you on foot and on every lean camel, they will come from every deep and distant pass (27) That they may witness benefits for themselves and mention Allah's Name during the appointed days—over what he provided for them of [sacrificial] animals. So eat of them and feed the suffering poor (28) Then let end their untidiness and fulfill their vows, and circle the Ancient House (29).][20]

To provide context for the ritual of Hajj in relation to the concept of interchange of human values, this paper highlights two points. First is the call to Hajj, as described in Surah Al-Hajj (22-27) addresses believers from all races and background, calling on them to come at appointed place and time.[21] This shows how this ritual cultivates cultural interaction and exchange, as people from diverse communities come together and participate in a shared ritual. Second is in the nature of the practice itself, which combines sacred rituals and everyday secular benefits. Verse 28 mentions "that they may witness benefits for themselves," which include spiritual growth, intellectual reflection, economic activity, and social connection, echoing Islam's historically blended view of religious and everyday life.[22] Thus the practice itself, as described in the Qur'an, emphasizes the benefits of this journey in all dimensions.

The ritual of the pilgrimage origins traces back to Prophet Ibrahim, his wife Hajar and their son Ismail. It incorporated practices like Al Sa'y, which means striving, reflecting the story of Hajar search for water between the two hills Safa and Marwah. And Prophet Ibrahim's (PBUH) sacrifice, when his faith was tested in a revelation to sacrifice his son, prepared to obey with his son's consent, Allah intervened and replaced his son with a ram, affirming their surrender and establishing the legacy of sacrifice in Islam. These practices, along with other rituals that have been subsumed under Islam, are still practiced today, albeit within modern infrastructure and means of transport such as cars and planes, paved roads, air-conditioned facilities.

Peter Webb researched pre-Islamic Hajj through poetry, highlighting the continuity of pre-Islamic Hajj activities into Islamic period.[23] He argued that Hajj was already preformed in the generation before Prophet Mohammad (PBUH), while elements of it evolved, the core rites remained consistent.[24] He notes in pre-Islamic accounts the mention of core rites related to Hajj, such as the word *hijaj* (pilgrimages), *hijjat al-bayt* (pilgrimage to the holy land), *mu'tamir* (describing a pilgrim) and others literary evidence, which demonstrates how aspects of the ritual were common and existed before Islam.[25]

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and Islam have formalized and unified Hajj rituals, which takes place annually on the first ten days of the last month in the Hijri lunar calendar. It is one of the five pillars

of Islam, a required practice, at least once, to those who are physically and financially capable. The rituals are marked with a high level of specificity; each practice is linked to certain days and location—between Makkah, Mina, ‘Arafat, and Muzdalifah—requiring pilgrims to move together at specific times, creating a collective rhythm. These time-bound movements create synchronicity and unity among diverse pilgrims, fostering cultural exchange and producing a shared temporality of sacred experiences that reinforces a collective Islamic Identity.

The continuity of the hajj rituals – from pre-Islamic foundations to their Islamic refinement and into contemporary practices–has enabled Hajj to operate as a sustained mechanism of interchange of human values across centuries. As pilgrims from across the world come annually to perform the same rites, the Hajj facilitates the exchange of ideas, traditions, and social practices within a shared ritual framework. This framework has preserved despite changing political, social and technological contexts, highlighting the role of the Hajj as a living tradition that transcends time and continuously generates interchange of human values.

The following section will present the case study of the Drab Zubaydah Route, as an infrastructure project that supported the ritual of Hajj during the Abbasid era. Expanding on how the act of facilitation continued, highlighting the evolution of the legacy and inherited values that are still practiced today in different means.

Case Study: Darb Zubaydah: The Hajj Pilgrimage Routes

The Darb Zubaydah pilgrimage route, extending roughly 1,400 km from Kufa, Republic of Iraq to Makkah, Saudi Arabia, illustrates the historical and cultural significance of Islamic pilgrimage infrastructure.[26] Developed in the Abbasid period (132–320 AH / 749–932 CE), yet the route existed since before Islam as a known trade route.[27] The Darb Zubaydah route contains a rich mix of archaeological remains including mosques, settlements, caravanserais, and advanced water management systems such as *birak* (water cistern, plural), canals, wells and storage tanks.[28] This case study shows how Darb Zubaydah was more than a pilgrimage route, it was a carefully planned road that adapted to diverse environments and was strategically located to accommodate pilgrims’ needs, ensuring safe travel and nurturing lasting cultural exchange among pilgrims.

The development of Darb Zubaydah was framed by the religious duty of hospitality and service, aimed to ensure safety, comfort, and accessibility. Practices of hospitality and service were integral to the infrastructure through birak supplying water, caravanserais providing shelter, markets sustaining trade, and rest stops ensuring that pilgrims travel between stations without exhausting their provisions. Beyond infrastructure, these facilities brought diverse travelers into regular interaction, through not just trade, but also exchange of oral traditions and historical events, and growth in religious learnings. Collectively, the route operated as a vibrant corridor of cultural, economic and educational exchange, with social practices and knowledge flows continue to resonate today.

Although the physical use of the Darb Zubaydah route is no longer active for Hajj, its legacy of application through advanced planning, architectural knowledge and attending to pilgrims’ needs continues to live on in Makkah, where the Hajj takes place annually in the same Hijri month, bringing together the pilgrims from all over the Islamic world to take part in the ritual. The legacy of facilitating the Hajj today is evident in the act of facilitation for this journey, through the practices that makes travel possible, hospitality, shared religious guidance, and communal organization, echoing the communal practices that have long defined the Hajj.

After the Abbasid era, many following rulers commissioned different routes and large caravans that gathered pilgrims from across the Islamic world to perform the Hajj.[29] Hajj related practices continued to evolve, several aspects were added to guide and support the journey. Examples include ritual textiles; pilgrim guides and devotional manuscripts; the *Mahmal* tradition (ceremonial practice

associated with the hajj caravan); pilgrims' maps; and practical items such as the *matara* (water flask), bells, and watches.[30] These materials and practices show that Hajj traditions continued to evolve beyond the route, sustaining networks of exchange, learning, and devotion that converge each year in Makkah. The Abbasids facilitated the pilgrimage journey from Kufa to Makkah by developing infrastructure along the route. This legacy was carried forward by later generations of rulers throughout history, who continued to support and enhance the pilgrimage experience.

Today, these traditional values are expressed through cutting-edge infrastructure and technology. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia continues this legacy by investing in modern transport networks, such as the development of Al-Mashaer Al-Mugaddassah Metro—a dedicated rail line connecting Mina, Muzdalifa and Arafat—to ease pilgrims' movement between sites.[31] These transport investments are complemented by new initiatives like the Masar electric bus network in Makkah, which aims to improve mobility.[32] In addition to transport, the Kingdom has built extensive rest and cooling infrastructure along key pilgrimage pathways, including shaded walkways, cooling mist fans, and camps with cooling amenities to mitigate heat.[33] Shaded spaces covering tens of thousands of square meters in both Mina and Arafat reflect a broader effort to improve the comfort of the pilgrims. Furthermore, Saudi Arabia's investment in Hajj water infrastructure is another critical component of the Hajj legacy, relaying on advanced desalination, huge reservoirs, and distribution systems capable of delivering a million cubic meters of water daily to pilgrims.[34] To ensure safety and health, the Kingdom operates extensive medical services and emergency clinics, including field medical centers, and digital health platforms such as Seha Virtual Hospital that provides telemedicine support to serve the needs of pilgrims.[35] Together, these technological, infrastructural and service-oriented investments demonstrate how the core values of serving the pilgrims and hospitality are preserved and enhanced through contemporary systems. While the physical infrastructure has evolved from Darb Zubaydah to meet new needs, the core Hajj rituals have remained constant, with the gathering of pilgrims, which still enables rich economic, cultural, and educational interactions. In this sense, the cultural interchange persists most evidently in the enduring traditions of hospitality, where services—whether in medieval routes or modern infrastructure—epitomize the same spirit of care and accommodating that have always enabled human connections, fostered intercultural exchange, and sustained the spirit of communal care that has always defined the pilgrimage experience.

CONCLUSION

Cultural Interchange is manifested in the intangible practices of the Hajj and facilitated by the tangible infrastructure of the route. In the context of Darb Zubaydah, heritage is a continuous process of reinterpretation and preadaptation of the inherited legacy of facilitation while carrying the same spiritual essence. The Darb Zubaydah case study challenges the restrictions present in Criterion (ii) on three fronts. First, it exposes the limitation of heritage to tangible features, rooted in the European Authorized Heritage Discourse of UNESCO's framework. Second, it questions the assumption that interchange of human value is evident only in physical developments, echoing Eurocentric assumption of static tangible features that represent the interchange of human value. Third, it demonstrates how the Darb Zubaydah route represents a dynamic interplay between the tangible and intangible heritage. While the physical infrastructure—such as wells, birak, cistern, water channels, and caravanserais—was continuously adapted to meet the pilgrims' needs across the centuries, the intangible values of hospitality, guidance, and service remained constant. These enduring practices illustrate that heritage is not static, but it evolves in response to social, environmental, and technological changes while preserving the spiritual core. Recognizing the dynamic relationship between tangible and intangible demonstrates the limits of Criterion (ii) and urges for a reassessment of the OUV Criteria to embrace broader values that reflect communities lived experiences. Darb

Zubaydah challenges conventional heritage frameworks by demonstrating that the interchange of human value is seen not only in material infrastructure but in how that infrastructure facilitated cultural exchange. It underscores that heritage should be understood as living cultural system in which the tangible and intangible elements are inseparable and mutually reinforcing.

NOTES

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[7] Saad A. Al-Rashid, Medieval Routes to Mecca, rev. Peter Webb (London: Gilgamesh Publishing, 2018), 25.
[8] Al-Rashid, 45.
[9] Al-Rashid,
[10] Semina An, "Study on the Recognition and Interpretation of the World Heritage Criterion (ii) 'an Important Interchange of Human Value,'" (2023).
[11] Semina An.
[12] Semina An.
[13] Semina An.
[14] Labadi, "UNESCO, cultural heritage, and outstanding universal value," 19.
[15] Labadi, 19.
[16] Labadi, 19.
[17] Laurajane Smith, Uses of Heritage (London: Routledge, 2006), 87.
[18] Smith, 87
[19] Smith, 87.
[20] Qur'an, Surah Al-Hajj 22:27-29.
[21] Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAẓīm*, commentary on Qur'an 22:27–29, accessed December 2025, https://quran.ksu.edu.sa/tafseer/katheer/
[22] Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, on Qur'an 22:27–29.
[23] Peter Webb, "The Hajj Before Muhammad: The Early Evidence in Poetry and Hadith," *Millennium* 20, no. 1 (2023): 33–63, https://doi.org/10.1515/mill-2023-0004.
[24] Webb, 37.
[25] Webb, 37.
[26] Saad A. Al-Rashid, Darb Zubaydah: The Pilgrim Road from Kufa to Mecca (Riyadh: King Fahd National Library Cataloging-in-Publication (CIP), 2018).
[27] Peter Webb, "The History and Significance of the Meccan Hajj—from Pre-Islam to the Rise of the Abbasids," in Hajj and the Arts of Pilgrimage: Essays in Honour of Nasser David Khalili, ed. Qaisra Khan (London: Gingko, 2023), 28–46.
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[29] Andrew Petersen, "The Archaeology of the Syrian and Iraqi Hajj Routes," World Archaeology 26, no. 1 (1994): 47–56.
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WHY IS IT SO HARD TO WORK WITH RELATIONS AND NOT ONLY OBJECTS IN DANISH HERITAGE PRACTISE?

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INTRODUCTION

Aarhus University (Fig. 1) is the result of an exemplary collaboration between a landscape architect and architects in the 1930s. The result is not only a well-functioning and aesthetically pleasing university campus, but a masterpiece of Danish functionalist architecture and landscape design. Since its inception, the university has expanded with new buildings, many of which have respected the original landscape plan by landscape architect C. Th. Sørensen.

Figure 1. Aarhus University image by the author

In 2019 the university was nominated for preservation.[1] Following a heated debate, some of the buildings and part of the original landscape park were listed. However, the final preservation decision permitted new constructions within the park, reducing it to a future development site—jeopardizing the architectural and aesthetic unity of buildings and landscape.[2]

The case of Aarhus University exemplifies a broader practice where the relationships between landscape, and buildings are often deprioritized. In preservation cases, landscape designs are rarely valued on par with individual buildings or monuments.

This paper focuses on landscape and urban spaces in preservation practices. In light of current polycrises—climate change, biodiversity loss, and resource scarcity—it argues for a shift from the current Danish object-oriented preservation model toward an integrated approach. In such a model, landscape designs and open spaces are to be treated equally with buildings and seen as essential in tackling contemporary challenges.

To understand the origins of the current system, this paper begins with a brief history of Danish agricultural reforms and the industrialization process prior to the first Danish Preservation Law of 1917. This is followed by an account of the evolution of Danish preservation discourse and tools. The final sections examine current debates, including examples from two recent PhD –theses which illustrate what happens when preservation tools and valuable open spaces meet real-world practice, economics, and competing agendas.

BACKGROUND

Prior to industrialization, the land and forest reforms of the late 1780s initiated a sweeping transformation of the Danish landscape. The reforms allowed tenants to purchase land from landlords, fostering a class of independent farmers open to modernization and technological innovation. This led to a broader rationalization of farming practices.[3]

Crucially, these reforms also dismantled traditional rural structures, such as common land, by relocating farms from villages to individualized, privatized plots in the countryside. The spatial organization that emerged still shapes the Danish landscape today.

These profound changes became a source of artistic and public reflection. Many Danish artists of the time documented the disappearing old landscapes, forming a genre later termed" The Golden Age" of Danish painting.[4]

The Golden Age paintings became more than artistic expressions—they came to symbolize a yearning for a lost national identity and were instrumental in shaping early 20th-century preservation thought.[5]

In 1917, the Danish Nature Preservation Law was passed. Its aim was to protect the distinctive and beautiful features of the Danish landscape. The law was initiated by natural scientists and a citizen's association (now the Danish Nature Conservation Association, DNCA), in collaboration with the Danish Tourist Association, with a shared focus on nature and recreation.[6]

Efforts were made to create a unified law for both nature and building conservation, but this vision was never realized. Instead, legislation and institutions developed separately. The advisory council created under the law consisted mainly of natural scientists and DNCA members—lacking representation from the aesthetics and from landscape architecture. This absence left decisions regarding cultural and scenic qualitative values open to interpretation or neglect and triggered public critique.

Critique and debate

The early critique of the preservation law evolved along two main lines. One was polemical and personal, aimed at the DNCA's role and its perceived lack of aesthetic and ecological competence. This line was initiated by art historian C. V. Petersen in 1911. The other was more analytical and professional, primarily conducted through specialist journals. Landscape architect G. N. Brandt worked behind the scenes with architect P. Henningsen on the first strand and was a central figure in the second.

The critiques focused on fundamental questions: How should nature be understood in a modern society? Is it a static object or a dynamic process? Critics also questioned the DNCA's reliance on childhood memories and idealized Golden Age imagery in selecting landscapes deemed worthy of preservation. C. V. Petersen wrote:

'Isn't the point that this entire movement (DNCA) is based on a strangely spiritless and narrow perception of nature, of man, and of their mutual relationship? That, just as it seeks to turn our country into a museum, it sees nature in advance as a lifeless and passive museum object, humanity as a mere museum camera, and their relationship as nothing more than a mechanical process of documentation?'[7]

Architect P. Henningsen echoed this sentiment:

'I do not question my opponents (DNCA) affection for nature, but I contend that this is not the driving force behind their efforts at protection. (…) The 'rarity lovers' always have emotional cards to play. They can appeal to national sentiment, childhood nostalgia, to the art and culture of previous generations – works that were once original and vital but have since become merely refined and conventional.'[8]

The Dear Park Controversy

The second strand of critique emerged through public outrage: Was a forester merely doing his job—or destroying a cherished landscape?

Figure 2. Dyrehaven, Copenhagen. Image by the author

G. N. Brandt analysed the case and, perhaps for the first time in Danish landscape architectural writing, identified three distinct conceptions of nature:

- Vital: nature as a living, evolving force
- Biological: nature as an ecological and scientific system
- Aesthetic: nature as a cultural and visual experience,[9]

He illustrated how these conceptions influenced both public debate and aesthetic preferences. Instead of privileging one perspective, Brandt proposed a spatial solution: to divide Dyrehaven (Fig. 2) into separate zones—some governed by forestry principles, others by aesthetic values. This compromise allowed differing views of nature to coexist, and Dyrehaven remains zoned this way today.

While Dyrehaven was about landscape preservation, Brandt addressed the relationship between landscape and buildings in his article 'Christiansø' of 1924.

He argued that the legal and institutional separation in Danish preservation law hindered a holistic understanding of sites as integrated aesthetic and functional wholes: ’A manor house can be protected as a building, and its garden can be protected as a natural reserve – provided that each part meets certain conditions. But the aesthetic value of the entity as a whole – the house and garden – their interaction and interdependence – cannot be preserved for its own sake, no matter how significant and acknowledged that value may be.’

Brandt continued: ‘The natural features of the islands are not, strictly speaking, so beautiful, so distinctive, or pristine – nor so scientifically interesting, that they clearly qualify for protection under the Nature Conservation Law. Likewise, only a few of the buildings possess sufficient artistic or historical merit to fall within the scope of building preservation, even when the criteria are generously interpreted. The true value of the islands for Denmark lies not solely in their natural landscape, or in their architecture. Rather, it lies in the picturesque contrast and interplay between nature and culture – a unique and evocative quality that current legislation is not equipped to protect.’[10]

Over time, these concerns faded from focus as the discourse shifted toward broader terms like ”cultural heritage” and ”cultural environments”, as well as to social and scientific priorities—especially biodiversity. As a result, aesthetic and landscape architectural dimensions were, and often still are, overshadowed.

DANISH PRESERVATION TOOLS – POST-1917

During the 1960s and 70s, a wave of conservation associations emerged in Denmark in reaction to the functionally driven industrialization of construction and cities. This movement led to the development of the Survey of Architectural Values in the Environment (SAVE)—a system designed to evaluate pre-1940 buildings and map urban and rural areas for preservation.[11] SAVE was partly a response to Jane Jacobs’ critique of modernist urban planning[12] and to Denmark's adoption of the Granada Convention in 1987, emphasizing building preservation:[13] which implied an extra focus on building preservation.

Following SAVE, additional tools were developed[14]

- Cultural History in Planning: Aimed at identifying and managing culturally significant areas at a regional level.
- The Cultural Environment Method: An interdisciplinary planning tool for municipalities, integrating cultural considerations into land use planning with clearly defined map boundaries.
- Screening of Cultural Environments: Supports municipalities in identifying and evaluating cultural environments during the planning process, often incorporating historical narratives.

These tools reflect a shift from a focus on individual buildings or artifacts to broader, contextual landscapes—what is now referred to as "the cultural environment".

This shift, ‘The Third dimension of environmental policy’,[15] also mirrors a deeper societal tension: between the need for continuity and rootedness, and the accelerating pace of social and environmental change.[16] It acknowledges that conservation is not only about safeguarding physical artifacts but also about maintaining continuity in collective memory and identity within a dynamic social context.

In 2019 concept, ’The Green Cultural Heritage,’ continues this evolution.

‘We aim to understand cultural heritage within a more contemporary framework, viewing it as a meaning-creating resource. From this perspective green cultural heritage encompasses all types of landscapes, ranging from urban parks and suburban residential areas to dikes in the open countryside.[17]

The concept aims to keep focus on spatial, tangible green heritage—especially landscape architectural works that, despite being eligible for protection under a 2010 legislative revision, are still treated as secondary.

THEORIES AND TOOLS IN PRACTISE

This section explores what happens when preservation tools and theoretical frameworks meet real-world practice. The following cases reveal how concepts like "the green" or "cultural environments" are interpreted and negotiated—often under pressure from competing agendas such as urban development, economics, and regulatory frameworks.

Example 1: Negotiating 'the green' in an urban development project

In the context of an ongoing urban development project, G. Askehave analysed in her PhD-thesis how "green features" at the site became subjects of multiple interpretations and negotiations between developers and local authorities:[18]

'In practice, 'the green' comes into being through negotiations and site-specific translations within the local plan process. As Dewey argues, value propositions are rendered visible in fields of conflict, as when different versions of 'green' clash. The quality of 'the green' is constantly morphing and taking new shapes: a colour on a map, a measurement, a dream, recreative areas, green plastic, biodiversity, multispecies relationships, untouched nature, etc.'

A developer noted,

'What I mean is that developers have a dream about creating a super cool city to live in. But it's hardcore being accused of not wanting the green. Of course we do, but it needs to be balanced.'[19]

This quote highlights how the "green" must be negotiated, as other (often more profitable) priorities compete for space.

The concept "the green" is evidently not operational in practice—its vagueness leaves it open to selective interpretation and "greenwashing."

Example 2: Copenhagen University – Rolighedsvej

Figure 3. Maps of Rolighedsvej. Maps by S. Sjökvist

S. Sjökvist's analysis of the redevelopment of Copenhagen University's former campus on Rolighedsvej (Fig. 3) in his ongoing PhD-research illustrates what happens when a preservation-worthy open green space meets a densification agenda: 'A former university enclave reimagined as a dense mixed-used district combining student housing, an international school, public functions and preserved heritage. Despite efforts to maintain its 'campus-like character', increased density has altered its defining qualities. Open lawns have been replaced with a much smaller park, while smaller, freestanding buildings have given way to larger, continuous structures, fundamentally reshaping the spatial character of the area.'[20]

New programs introduced to the site led to reductions in green space, reclassification of public areas as semi-public or fenced (e.g., schoolyards), and significant alterations in building heights, structure, and form—affecting both neighbours and the broader urban fabric.

Example 3: Aarhus University (revisited)

The Aarhus University case, introduced in the beginning of this paper, demonstrates how the conceptual and legislative advancements discussed earlier are still difficult to implement in practice: 'Fundamentally, the new conservation proposal severs the vital connection between buildings and landscape – the very quality that defines the architectural quality of Aarhus university.

1. Fragmentation of the park
2. The campus identity becomes diluted in its interface with the city
3. Separation of buildings from their surrounding landscape
4. Adoption of a landscape architectural concept that is ill-suited to the site

The revised conservation proposal resembles a battlefield where both sides may feel victorious: some buildings have been preserved, yet the integrity of the landscape has been compromised and diminished.'[21]

Originally, the preservation proposal aimed to protect the unity of buildings and landscape as an aesthetic whole.[22] However, after public consultation, a moderated version was adopted—prompting the resignation of the responsible architect at the Danish Palaces and Properties Agency.[23] The final plan designates parts of the park for possible future development, despite its function as a public green space in a dense urban area.

THE BATTLE FOR M2

Given these cases, key questions arise: Who decides how interests are balanced—and what does "balance" even mean? As S. Sjökvist dryly notes: 'There are potential conflicts between competing sustainability paradigms.'[24]

These conflicts often occur:

- Between concept and practice
- Between quantitative and qualitative values
- Between landscape and buildings

Overlaying all of this is the polycrisis: climate change, biodiversity loss, and resource scarcity—a systemic, interconnected crisis. Many of the strategies to mitigate these challenges rely on open urban and rural space. If all green areas are viewed as vacant development plots, where will we allocate space for: Stormwater management? Non-human species? Human recreation and well-being?

Philosopher Bruno Latour argued for a return ″down to Earth″[25] a shift not only needed in political thinking but also in planning and preservation practices. The building industry, in particular, must reduce its vast consumption of land, energy, and non-renewable resources (e.g., gravel). Greater emphasis on re-use and preservation is not just ideological or philosophical—it's common sense. To support biodiversity and coexistence with other species, spatial access must be provided—for movement, food, shelter, and survival. Preservation-worthy open spaces, whether urban or rural, can accommodate these needs while also holding cultural value for human communities – for us.

CONCLUDING

Based on the analysis of Danish preservation history and the contemporary cases presented, it is evident that the historical divide between building preservation and nature conservation—administratively, institutionally, conceptually, and practically—continues to shape and constrain current preservation practices in Denmark.

This divide remains especially detrimental to the recognition and protection of landscape architectural works and cultural landscapes and urban spaces, making it difficult to work with the relations between buildings and their contexts.

Moreover, the historical absence of professional landscape architectural competencies within both administration and practice continues to influence how preservation decisions are made. Terms like "the green" function as empty signifiers, vulnerable to greenwashing and open to interpretation, while broader concepts such as "cultural environments" tend to focus mainly on human-centred narratives—leaving spatial, sensory, and aesthetic qualities underarticulated or ignored.

The concept of beauty, understood both as formal aesthetics and lived sensory experience, remains a vital but largely neglected aspect of landscape architectural works within preservation practise. Without a shared vocabulary and adequate professional expertise, it becomes challenging to argue convincingly for these values—especially to a public and political system unfamiliar with the discipline's language and logic.

As the discourse has shifted from "the peculiar, the old, and the beautiful" toward broader but vaguer terms like 'cultural environments' and 'cultural heritage', legibility in practice has diminished.[26] The lack of conceptual clarity and operational tools makes it difficult to determine which qualities hold the greatest preservation value—leaving landscapes, methodologies, and decisions vulnerable to competing agendas.

However, the paper also concludes that landscape architectural works and cultural landscapes—whether preserved or not—hold vast potential to support:

- Climate adaptation
- Biodiversity
- Regeneration of ecosystem services and natural resources
- Public well-being
- Cultural identity

This potential exists across rural and urban contexts and includes both currently protected and non-designated open spaces. These areas represent precious square meters (M^2) that should not be automatically viewed as vacant land for future construction, but as active, dynamic components of both environmental resilience and cultural continuity. To address the multiple overlapping crises we face today, reuse and preservation in the building industry must become a norm rather than an exception. This requires not only a shift in political and planning practice, but also a reorientation within preservation itself—one that values relations, spatial coherence, and aesthetic integrity, and that is equipped to articulate and safeguard landscape architectural qualities on equal terms with buildings.

NOTES

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EL ESTALLIDO SOCIAL: COOPMAR AND THE CONTRADICTORY COLONIAL HERITAGE OF VALPARAÍSO

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INTRODUCTION

Heritage is never neutral. As Falser and Juneja[1] have noted, the past and its material remains are subject to contested interpretations, often shaped by actors who seek to appropriate memory for political, economic, or cultural purposes. The proliferation of heritage industries,[2] the expansion of international organisations such as UNESCO, and the entanglements of heritage with tourism and urban redevelopment have rendered heritage a field of tension. This is particularly evident in port cities — spaces of circulation, hybridity, and social inequality.[3]

The Chilean port city of Valparaíso vividly illustrates these tensions. Once a prominant node in Pacific commerce, Valparaíso's urban core is defined by dramatic topography, steep hills, and a dense network of houses, staircases, and funiculars. In the 19th century, the city flourished as an entrepôt for European and North American merchants, whose magnificent houses and business institutions symbolised Chile's integration into global capitalism. This era has been selectively memorialised through heritage policies that prioritise elite merchant architecture while marginalising other urban experiences.

In October 2019, a widespread mobilisation erupted across Chile — *El Estallido Social* (Social Outbreak) —, rejecting neoliberal policies and structural inequalities. This pivotal moment coincided with the arrival of the CoopMar team of scholars in Valparaíso for a planned week of institutional and academic engagements. In Valparaíso, the mass demonstrations not only denounced economic injustices but also contested heritage policies seen as exclusionary. This paper situates Valparaíso's protests within broader debates on colonial legacies, heritage governance, and community agency. It argues that the protests constitute not merely a challenge to economic structures but also a mnemonic counter-narrative to the commodification of the city's past. From this perspective, heritage emerges as both a site of contestation and a space for reimagining collective identities.

VALPARAÍSO AS HERITAGE AND PALIMPSEST

Valparaíso, located on Chile's central coast approximately 120 kilometers northwest of Santiago, is a port city of profound historical and cultural significance. Founded in the 16th century, it developed from a modest colonial anchorage into one of the most important maritime hubs on the Pacific coast of South America during the 19th century. Its hillsides, covered with a dense patchwork of colorful

houses, stairways, and funicular elevators, create a distinctive urban landscape that has inspired generations of artists, poets, and travelers. Known as *La Joya del Pacífico* — the Jewel of the Pacific — Valparaíso has embodied a dual identity: at once a locus of cosmopolitan commerce and migration, and a city marked by social inequalities and periodic decline. Its port was a critical node in the global circulation of goods and ideas, linking Chile to markets as distant as Liverpool, San Francisco, and Yokohama, and attracting waves of European immigrants who left a lasting imprint on its architecture and civic institutions. Valparaíso's Historic Quarter was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2003 as an exceptional example of late 19th-century urban development intimately tied to maritime trade and the emergence of a global economy. Its neoclassical buildings, elegant residences, and imposing warehouses built by foreign entrepreneurs are valued for their aesthetic and symbolic status as testimonies to Chile's historical insertion into international commerce.[4]

However, as Stoler[5] has argued, colonial urban legacies must be understood as forms of "imperial debris" — material sediments of historical domination whose meanings are far from uncontested. In Valparaíso, official heritage valorises the contributions of foreign mercantile elites while side-lining the histories of port workers, artisans, Afro-Chilean communities, and indigenous groups who contributed decisively to the city's development. This reflects what Curtis[6] described as global cities constructed through selective narratives privileging elites.

This pattern is not unique to Valparaíso. As Benavides[7] observed, Latin America Latin American heritage policies often "sanitize" histories of colonialism and class, reframing them as cultural hybridity. This "heritagisation" process can obscure the unequal exchanges and exclusions behind built legacies. Indeed, heritage in Valparaíso has operated as a palimpsest, layering official narratives over complex and sometimes traumatic histories of dispossession. UNESCO designation brought international funding, expert attention, and tourists, but also governance frameworks that often-bypassed local participation. For many residents, the transformation of central neighbourhoods into heritage districts implied not collective recognition but rather alienation and external imposition to the lived experience of the city.

Heritage Governance and the Discontents of Global Recognition

Heritage designation is frequently presented as an unalloyed good, promising conservation, economic revitalisation, and international prestige. Yet a growing body of scholarship highlights the frictions and unintended consequences of heritage governance when it is imposed from above. Hoyle[8] has noted that urban waterfront revitalisation often risks alienating local populations by transforming functional or residential spaces into enclaves designed primarily for tourists and investors.

In Valparaíso, initiatives such as the "Valuable Place" campaign in 2001 and subsequent conservation projects generated visible changes in the urban landscape. New building regulations, restoration incentives, and aesthetic guidelines were introduced to maintain the appearance of the Historic Quarter. While these interventions contributed to preserving architectural heritage, the economic benefits were unevenly distributed and frequently bypassed residents of the hills and working-class quarters.

These experiences are emblematic of a broader critique of top-down heritage policies. Parkinson et al.[9] argue that conservation strategies must be grounded in participatory processes that genuinely include affected communities. In the absence of such inclusion, heritage initiatives can provoke what Jones and Shaw[10] term "damnatio memoriae," whereby certain histories are erased or delegitimised in favour of curated narratives aligned with elite or external priorities. Such processes are not simply symbolic; they frequently intersect with processes of gentrification, rising rents, and the displacement of vulnerable populations.

In Chile, this dynamic has been particularly acute because neoliberal economic policies have long intersected with heritage commodification. The transformation of heritage sites into tourist attractions has often been justified through a language of entrepreneurial development, where culture is reframed as a commodity whose primary value lies in its capacity to attract external capital.[11] This approach risks reducing heritage to a branding exercise, disconnected from the daily struggles and aspirations of residents.

Valparaíso thus demonstrates the inherent ambivalence of heritage as an instrument of governance. On the one hand, international recognition validates local pride in the city's distinctive architecture and maritime identity. On the other, it imposes regulatory and symbolic frameworks that can undermine local agency, alienate residents, and contribute to the commodification of collective memory.

EL ESTALLIDO SOCIAL: A REVOLT AGAINST ECONOMIC AND SYMBOLIC DOMINATION

The Social Outbreak that erupted in October 2019 was sparked by a modest rise in Santiago's metro fares but rapidly escalated into a mobilization against systemic inequality rooted in the Pinochet era. Protestors opposed the privatisation of pensions, education, and health care, stagnating wages, and deep disparities in wealth and political representation.[12]

In Valparaíso, protests featured both confrontation and a reclaiming of public space. As institutions closed to avoid damages, citizens occupied streets and plazas to express grievances. The closure of much of the World Heritage zone to ostensibly protect it from vandalism underscored its detachment from everyday life, reinforcing the perception that official heritage serves tourism, not residents.

Figure 1. Examples of contestation. Author: Fernando Mouta.

Field observations during this period confirmed that many inhabitants viewed the World Heritage district not as a collective patrimony but as an alien imposition. Graffiti on monuments and façades vividly expressed contempt for official narratives. Slogans such as “Monument to the WC — World Heritage” and “The heroes of the people are us,” displayed on the statue of naval officer Carlos Condell “dressed” as a protester, combined sarcasm and defiance to repudiate a heritage regime perceived as glorifying colonial and oligarchic legacies while ignoring the contributions and struggles of ordinary Chileans.

This symbolic insurgency echoed the economic demands of the protests, suggesting that inequality in Chile is not merely material but also mnemonic. The right to memory — and to participate in defining which histories are celebrated — is intertwined with broader questions of citizenship and justice. The recurrent references to colonial privilege and foreign appropriation of local wealth illustrate that, for many, the built environment remains a material trace of exclusionary processes that continue today.

Vernacular Heritage and Neighborhood Pride

While institutional heritage sites became targets of contestation, the hills and neighbourhoods of Valparaíso revealed a contrasting phenomenon: vibrant vernacular heritage rooted in local artistic practices and community pride. The city is renowned for its urban art, including expansive murals, mosaics, and installations that transform humble streets into open-air galleries.

Interestingly, even at the height of the protests, these artistic interventions were rarely defaced. Unlike official monuments, they appeared to command respect among residents and activists alike. This contrast highlights divergent understandings of what constitutes legitimate memory. Oliveira and Guerra[13] argue that urban art can serve as a vehicle for asserting collective identities and resisting exclusionary narratives. In Valparaíso, the flourishing of neighbourhood art demonstrates how communities produce alternative commemorative landscapes that celebrate local histories, solidarities, and aspirations.

Figure 2. Political messages on the walls of Valparaíso (“They took everything, even our fear. Power to the People. Insist. Resist. Persist. Never surrender”). Author: Fernando Mouta

Moreover, the content of these artistic works frequently references local experiences — depictions of workers, indigenous motifs, feminist messages, and allusions to Chile's history of political struggle. Unlike the neutralising aesthetics of officially preserved façades, this vernacular art insists on the presence of conflict and resistance as constitutive elements of the city's past and present.

Interviews and informal conversations with residents revealed a common sentiment: while they might not identify with the institutional narratives inscribed in the World Heritage district, they were intensely proud of their neighbourhoods, their creativity, and their capacity to transform neglected spaces into expressions of beauty and meaning. This vernacular heritage stands as a counterpoint to the commodified past valorised by tourism, representing an authentic, if often precarious, form of memory-making.

This tension between vernacular and institutional heritage can be read as a form of mnemonic resistance: a refusal to accept the hegemony of state and international frameworks in defining what is valuable. Whereas the monumental buildings of the Historic Quarter are maintained through external funding and official designations, the murals and interventions in the hills are typically produced by residents and local collectives, with little or no institutional support. Their persistence and respect among the community suggest that heritage legitimacy is not solely a matter of formal recognition but of emotional resonance and shared ownership.

The respect shown for vernacular art during the protests demonstrates that alternative forms of heritage can command collective care even in the absence of regulatory protection. This observation calls into question the assumption that heritage conservation necessarily requires formal designation or external validation. In Valparaíso, it is precisely those unofficial sites of memory that have remained most vital to local identities.

Figure 3. Example of urban art in Valparaiso's neighborhoods. Author: Fernando Mouta

COLONIAL HERITAGE, GLOBAL TOURISM, AND LOCAL ALIENATION

Port cities occupy an inherently ambivalent place in the history of modernity. As nodes of circulation, they facilitated the exchange of goods, ideas, and populations. Yet they were also sites of exploitation, dispossession, and profound inequalities. In Valparaíso, the built environment bears witness to these contradictions. The grand edifices erected by foreign merchants coexisted with precarious housing for dockworkers and waves of migrants drawn by the port's opportunities.

The heritage policies promoted by international organisations such as UNESCO often foreground the cosmopolitan dimensions of port cities while downplaying their entanglements with colonial and extractive economies. As Luco[14] has shown in the context of Angkor, communities living amidst heritage sites frequently experience a loss of control over their environments. In Valparaíso, the transformation of central neighbourhoods into heritage enclaves has produced analogous experiences of alienation.

These policies frequently rely on simplified narratives that elide conflict and inequality in favour of celebrating "multicultural exchanges". While such language appeals to international audiences, it can obscure the asymmetries of power that structured those exchanges historically and continue to shape their legacies. For many residents, the everyday experience of living near the Historic Quarter has not been one of cosmopolitan belonging but of material marginalisation and symbolic exclusion.

Tourism, while a source of revenue, has exacerbated these dynamics. As the OECD[15] notes, the commodification of culture can deepen social inequalities if benefits are captured by external actors or concentrated among a narrow elite. In Valparaíso, residents expressed frustration that tourism development was accompanied by rising property values, increased costs of services, and heightened police presence — all of which contributed to a sense that the city's identity was being reshaped to serve outsiders rather than those who had long called it home.

These concerns resonate with global critiques of heritage-led urban regeneration. Hoyle[16] and Beaven et al.[17] have shown that waterfront revitalisation often involves an implicit "cleansing" of working-class or marginal communities to produce sanitised spaces suited to consumption. The contrast between the polished façades of renovated buildings and the deteriorating conditions of the surrounding neighbourhoods is not only aesthetic but also profoundly political, reflecting priorities that systematically favour external consumption over local habitation.

Heritage Diplomacy and the Politics of Memory

Tim Winter[18] has characterised heritage as a domain of "heritage diplomacy," wherein states and multilateral institutions construct shared narratives as a basis for cultural and political cooperation. In Latin America, the revalorisation of colonial architecture has frequently been presented as a project of reconciliation and cosmopolitan identity-building.[19]

However, such initiatives often remain grounded in selective histories that privilege the experiences of colonial elites. In Valparaíso, the attempt to market the city as a heritage destination foregrounded the narratives of European and North American merchants while marginalising the contributions of subaltern groups. The 2019 protests exposed the limits of this approach, revealing that mnemonic legitimacy cannot be constructed solely through international frameworks or expert-driven narratives.

Indeed, as Stoler[20] has argued, the legacies of colonialism are embedded not only in material ruins but also in the epistemologies that shape heritage discourses. The framing of Valparaíso's Historic Quarter as a symbol of "universal value" reflects an implicit hierarchy of histories: one that celebrates mercantile success while relegating the experiences of dockworkers, indigenous peoples, and Afro-descendant communities to the margins.

In practice, this hierarchy reinforces broader inequalities. The selection of which buildings to preserve and which to neglect is not a neutral process but a form of cultural politics. The investment in the

façades of merchant houses has often been accompanied by disinvestment in the public infrastructure of poorer areas. This duality underlines the reality that heritage, while often discussed in the language of shared humanity, can operate as a mechanism for reproducing historical and contemporary exclusions.

The Social Outbreak rendered these contradictions visible. The defacement of monuments and the occupation of public squares can be interpreted as acts of mnemonic reappropriation — interventions that contest who has the authority to define the city's past and its meanings. Far from a nihilistic rejection of history, such actions can be seen as demands for more inclusive narratives that recognise the plurality of experiences that have shaped Valparaíso.

Towards Participatory Heritage Policies

The events of the Social Outbreak underscore the need for heritage policies that are participatory, pluralistic, and sensitive to the diversity of historical experiences. Parkinson et al.[21] advocate for bottom-up governance models that engage communities from the outset of heritage projects. Such approaches require not only consultative processes but also meaningful decision-making power for residents.

Multidisciplinary teams — comprising sociologists, urban planners, heritage managers, and mediators — are essential for facilitating dialogues that bridge the expectations of communities and the regulatory frameworks of heritage institutions. These processes must also recognise the importance of intangible heritage: the memories, practices, and affective ties that communities maintain to place. In Valparaíso, the flourishing of urban art and neighbourhood pride offers a compelling example of how vernacular heritage can coexist with, and sometimes contest, institutional narratives. Embracing these expressions as legitimate forms of memory-making can help create a more inclusive and democratic heritage regime.

Importantly, participatory heritage is not simply a procedural requirement but a substantive one: it implies questioning which histories are celebrated, whose voices are heard, and who benefits materially and symbolically from heritage recognition. This process involves a willingness to confront uncomfortable pasts, including colonial violence and persistent inequalities.

As Curtis[22] observes, cities that aspire to global status must also grapple with the responsibilities that come with global visibility. In the case of Valparaíso, this means acknowledging that the very assets that attract international admiration were built through processes of dispossession whose effects linger in the social fabric. Heritage policies that fail to reckon with this reality risk perpetuating the exclusions they claim to overcome.

CONCLUSION

El Estallido Social was not merely a revolt against economic injustice; it was also an insurgency against the symbolic domination embedded in heritage policies that privilege elite narratives. The disdain for institutional heritage and the simultaneous celebration of vernacular artistic production illustrate the contestation of memory in urban space.

For heritage practitioners, policymakers, and scholars, the lessons from Valparaíso are clear: heritage governance must move beyond top-down frameworks and embrace participatory processes that acknowledge the multiplicity of memories. Only by incorporating the perspectives of local communities can heritage policies avoid reproducing inequalities and achieve genuine social legitimacy.

In a context where heritage is increasingly commodified, the experiences of Valparaíso remind us that the right to memory is inseparable from the right to the city itself. Ensuring that heritage serves not

only as a resource for tourism but also as a foundation for inclusive citizenship is among the most urgent challenges facing contemporary heritage governance.

These were the challenges faced by the CoopMar interdisciplinary team, a project funded by CYTED (Ibero-American Program of Science and Technology for Development), encompassing scholars from six Ibero-American countries (Portugal, Brazil, Chile, Cuba, Spain, and Panama), focused on contributing to the delineation of public policies, with scientific diplomacy and community engagement, and to formulate concrete proposals with socio-economic impact.[23] Though it concluded in 2022, the call remains urgent: communities must be sustainably involved in defining their meaningful heritage.

NOTES

[1] Michael Falser and Monica Juneja, eds., *"Archaeologizing" Heritage? Transcultural Entanglements between Local Social Practices and Global Virtual Realities* (Berlin & Heidelberg: Springer, 2013), 1.
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[3] Brad Beaven; Karl Bell and Robert James, eds, *Port Towns and Urban Cultures: International Histories of the Waterfront c. 1700–2000* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).
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[5] Ann Laura Stoler, ed., *Imperial Debris: On Ruins and Ruination* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013), 2.
[6] Simon Curtis, *Global Cities and Global Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 1.
[7] O. Hugo Benavides, "Working/Touring the Past: Latin American Identity and the Political Frustration of Heritage", *International Journal History and Archaeology* 17, no. 2 (2013): 245–260.
[8] Brian Hoyle, "Urban Waterfront Revitalization in Developing Countries", *The Geographical Journal* 168, no. 2 (2002): 142.
[9] Arthur Parkinson; Mark Scott and Declan Redmond, " Revalorizing Colonial Era Architecture and Townscape Legacies: Memory, Identity and Place-making in Irish Towns", *Journal of Urban Design* 22, no. 4 (2017): 504.
[10] Roy Jones and Brian J. Shaw, "Palimpsests of Progress: Erasing the Past and Rewriting the Future in Developing Societies — Case Studies of Singapore and Jakarta", *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 12, no. 2 (2006): 122–138.
[11] OECD, *Tourism*.
[12] O. Hugo Benavides, "Working/Touring the Past: Latin American Identity and the Political Frustration of Heritage", *International Journal History and Archaeology* 17, no. 2 (2013): 245–260.
[13] Ana Oliveira and Paula Guerra, "Urban Spaces Between Culture, Margin and Intervention", *Cities, Communities and Territories* no. 32 (2016): 118–131.
[14] Fabienne Luco, "The Angkorian Palimpsest: The Daily Life of Villagers Living on a World Heritage Site", in *"Archaeologizing" Heritage? Transcultural Entanglements between Local Social Practices and Global Virtual Realities*, edited by Michael Falser and Monica Juneja (Berlin & Heidelberg: Springer, 2013), 251-262.
[15] OECD. *Tourism*.
[16] Hoyle, "Urban", 141–162.
[17] Beaven, Bell and James, *Port Towns*.
[18] Tim Winter, "Heritage Diplomacy", *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 21, no. 10 (2015): 997–1015.
[19] Curtis, *Global Cities*.
[20] Stoler, *Imperial Debris*.
[21] Arthur Parkinson; Mark Scott and Declan Redmond, " Revalorizing Colonial Era Architecture and Townscape Legacies: Memory, Identity and Place-making in Irish Towns", *Journal of Urban Design* 22, no. 4 (2017): 504.
[22] Curtis, *Global Cities*, 1.
[23] Cátia Miriam Costa, Fernando Mouta and Amélia Polónia, eds., *Boas Práticas para Políticas Públicas de Memória, Ciência e Património* (Porto: media XXI, 2018). Amélia Polónia, Cátia Miriam Costa and Fernando Mouta, "*Damnatio Memoria* or *Damnatio Consensus*. Conflicting Colonial Heritage in Latin American Port Cities. A Project in Motion: CoopMar—Transoceanic Cooperation, Public Policies and Ibero-American Sociocultural Community", in *International Relations and Heritage: Patchwork in Times of Plurality*, ed.y Rodrigo Christofoletti and Maria Leonor Botelho (Cham: Springer, 2021), 19-35.

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NAUTICAL HERITAGE DIAGNOSTICS: NEW RESEARCH AND FUTURE OBJECTIVES

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INTRODUCTION

In Nautical Heritage, craftsmen remain closely connected to traditional skills, particularly in wooden boatbuilding. Fortunately, this cultural inheritance has ensured the preservation, over the years, of the intangible cultural heritage of boatbuilding tradition. On the other hand, it has encountered reluctance in applying technological advancement to preserve historic boats. This approach has led to the use of some innovative technological advantages, but only where it was already rooted in experience from other fields. Where there was no established experience, the traditional practice of manual survey diagnostics rarely left room for new experimentation. Today, a crucial step in the nautical restoration process is assessing the state of preservation. This evaluation is typically performed by the restoration designer or boatyard manager using traditional tools; however, it is worth noting that in other areas of Cultural Heritage, technological advancements significantly aid designers in restoration projects.

In these fields, digital technologies provide a broad, comprehensive overview of the state of preservation of the asset, detailed studies of critical elements or those not easily visible to the naked eye and thus guarantee the possibility of complete analysis while limiting the removal of samples, the dismantling of parts or the risk of damage through more invasive analysis.

Considering the emerging innovative solutions and the significant potential, the paper aims to establish a foundational framework for research focused on designing novel tools for non-invasive diagnosis in historical wooden boats.

THE NAUTICAL HERITAGE IN ITALY

For approximately a decade, the Nautical Heritage research group at the University of Genoa has been investigating this domain from multiple perspectives. Initially perceived as a singular trajectory, the research has since diversified into key areas, cataloguing Italy's nautical heritage by comprising the number, types, and affiliations of vessels, and developing methodologies for their restoration.[1]

In 2019, the publication "Per un Portale del Nautical Heritage"[2] synthesised findings from the first research strand. Italian nautical heritage reveals unique traits when compared to other historic maritime nations such as Spain, France, or the UK. Its resurgence began after twenty years of institutional neglect and public disinterest. From the 1950s to the 1960s, the introduction of new materials such as plywood and fibreglass led to a rupture with traditional wooden boatbuilding. This fracture caused a historical void, filled only by a few shipyards and shipwrights who preserved artisanal methods, forming a vital cultural reservoir of conventional knowledge.

By the late 1980s, wooden vessels returned to Italian waters, repurposed for participation in vintage and classic regattas. The work also identifies year 1991 as pivotal in this revival,[3] coinciding with Italy's first historic nautical gatherings and the creation of associations dedicated to preservation of historic boats.

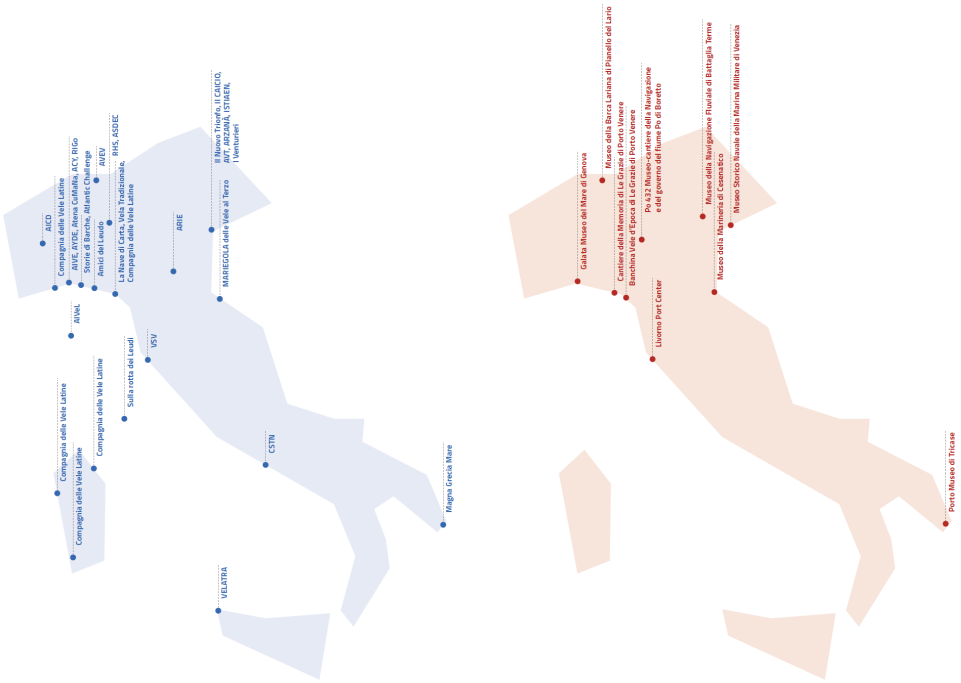

Figure 1. Two maps of Italy showing the diffusion of Associations (on the left) and Museums (on the right) dealing with Nautical Heritage in Italy. By Maria Carola Morozzo della Rocca, Per un Portale del Nautical Heritage (Genova: Genova University Press, 2018), 308-309

Today, these associations are the primary custodians of nautical heritage in Italy, which is categorised into vessels preserved in museums and privately owned boats. Although museum conservation often appears as a suitable solution, it poses challenges. Boats are usually kept on land, which eliminates their navigational function and compromises intangible heritage, such as the art of sailing. Conversely, most historic vessels are privately owned and registered with associations. This reality has profound implications: far more boats have been saved than museums can accommodate, and continued navigation ensures ongoing maintenance. This proves that good conservation practices in nautical field occasionally diverge from professional restoration standards applied to cultural assets.
Ensuring the sustainable preservation of this heritage necessitates an evolving role for the nautical restoration designer. The latter represents a figure who bridges traditional craftsmanship and modern digital design, capable of guiding owners through historically informed maintenance choices that respect both the material and immaterial value of the vessels.

NEW TECHNOLOGIES AND CULTURAL HERITAGES

Recent advancements in digital technologies offer new possibilities for preserving and enhancing cultural heritage. Their applications can have an impact on two different aspects: conservation and diagnostics. On the one hand, a digital record of an object can produce a virtual replica with variant levels of fidelity, defining what is called a "digital twin".[4] This detachment from physical space enables a conservation of the information possibly forever, also allowing a virtual experience of the virtual copy from everywhere. Recognising that all physical objects have a finite lifespan, the creation

of a digital reproduction allows for the preservation of the essence and concept of the object. Doing so, it extends its existence beyond the limitations of the physical world. Still, critical questions arise. Do digital twins have the same value as their real counterparts? Is there no risk that digital conservation will become more significant than physical preservation? Should that be the case, will we reach a stage in which future heritage is preserved exclusively in digital form?
On the other hand, still far from this scenario, digital technologies have shown us the other side of the coin. And so, while creating an increasingly wider virtual world, where fantasy, industrial process, economics, heritage, and much more are uploaded, positive impacts on the physical world are happening. In the cultural heritage field, innovations in combination with new technologies are offering digital diagnostic tools for physical restoration. The strong point is the possibility of having non-destructive ways to analyse the object's condition.

Non-invasive diagnoses

Already, in architecture and fine arts restoration, some tools enable precise and non-invasive diagnoses. For example, ultraviolet and infrared rays can analyse the layering of works of art and their material composition, [5] and, in architecture, thermal cameras can distinguish the response of different materials to thermal variations; this allows the reading of the internal structures of monuments.[6] These and other practices allow the investigation of the internal structures of artworks and monuments possibly without removing any parts. More specifically, a digital diagnostic does not involve physical contact with the object because the analysis of the material response to different stimulations happens in the digital space. Then, after this first shift to the digital space, results and information can be used by traditional conservators to guide the physical restoration.
Thanks to this process, the physical intervention on the object to preserve is postponed until the intervention of curators directly for the conservation phase. Operating in this way, the potential for damage caused by traditional diagnosis is avoided. Few or no samples need to be taken; only very small parts need to be removed. The importance of having a non-invasive tool to investigate the conditions of a subject is clear when dealing with heritage preservation. This becomes even more evident when the alternative, meaning the traditional methodology, produces a significant invasive impact on the object to conserve. This is the case of the wooden nautical heritage. Nevertheless, this field is still far from taking advantage of the new potentiality of non-invasive digital diagnosis.

NEW TECHNOLOGIES AND NAUTICAL HERITAGE

Nowadays Nautical Heritage benefits from the advantages of new technologies as well, even if mainly used for the conservation and dissemination rather than the diagnostic aspect. Considering this last, depending on the expected goals and the type of material, technologies yield benefits of varying degrees. For example, one of the few materials on which digital investigation methods generate high benefit in terms of time and results is metal. The use of ultrasonic sensors to detect the thickness of the iron hull allows precise mapping of the thickness of the metal and thus its degree of deterioration, enabling the designer to define which areas to replace and which to maintain precisely (Figure 2).

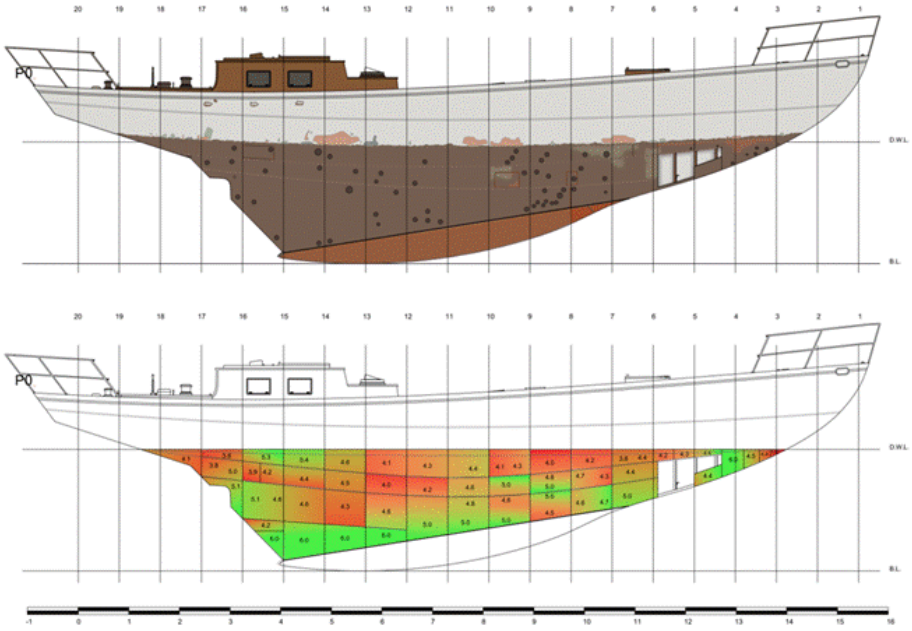

Figure 2. Mapping of iron hull damages of a private owner's yacht by students of Vessel & Yacht Design, University of Genoa, 2023-24

The same is not true when we work on wooden boats. In this case, in fact, new technologies are not used for the diagnosis of the state of preservation, but rather for the representation of the state of conservation of the boat and its shape. Concerning that point, the phases of the nautical restoration process[7] in which the new technology is generally employed are two: the geometric survey phase and the design phase. The first one - although traditional tools such as the metre and plumb line remain a valid, indeed often necessary, alternative - can be carried out using devices that utilise laser scanner technology. These emit a laser beam and measure the return time of the beam, thus defining the affected surface. The result of this procedure is a point cloud showing the texture of the object.[8]To transform the point cloud into a useful tool for the designer, it must be reworked by specific software to transform it into a 3D surface model (Figure 3).

Only at this stage, designers use the 3D model for subsequent design studies. In this way, preliminary design proposals can be tested virtually and shown to the client in the digital world before being brought back to the real world, facilitating dialogue between designer, owner and shipyard and optimising each decision-making phase. Moreover, 3D model itself, or two-dimensional drawings derived from the survey are the basis for degradation mapping, a graphic way of illustrating and clearly defining the damaged parts of the asset, the degree of damage and the type of damage or the cause of deterioration (Figure 4).

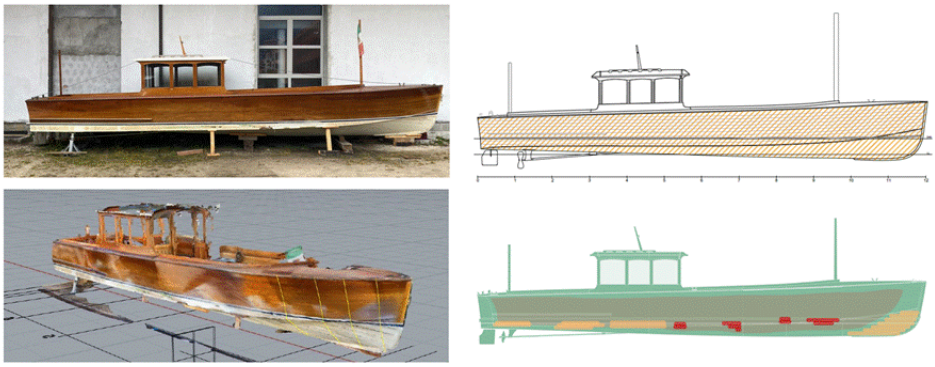

Figure 3. Boat Ancilla, Officine dell'Acqua Association, Italy; its point cloud made by laser scanner technique (on the left) and mapping of damages on digital drawings (on the right) by Maria Carola Morozzo della Rocca, Claudia Tacchella, Giulia Zappia, and the students of Vessel & Yacht Design, University of Genoa, 2022-23

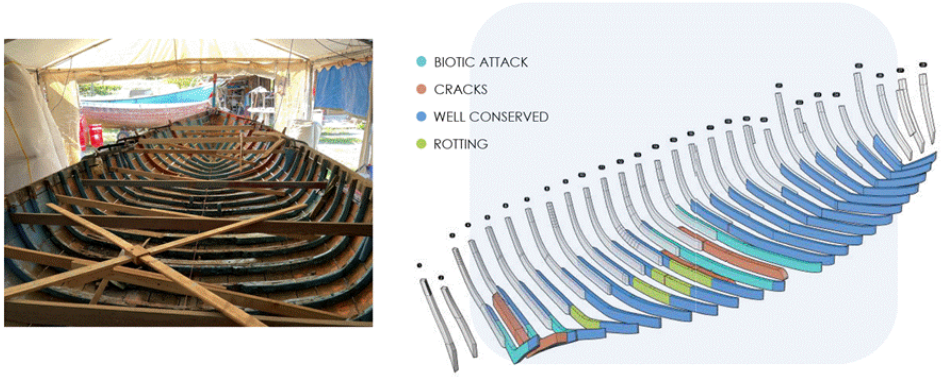

Figure 4. Boat Gian Orietta, Vela Tradizionale Association, Italy. Mapping of structures damages on the 3D model of the boat by the students of Vessel & Yacht Design, University of Genoa, 2021-22

State of the art: diagnostic in nautical restoration of wooden boats

Currently, non-invasive diagnostics primarily rely on visual inspections. In contrast, more detailed investigations often necessitate disassembling significant parts, which can produce invasive impacts. Typically, the designer begins with a preliminary visual diagnosis based only on what can be seen from the outside or by removing easily detachable components. This process heavily depends on the designer's experience in making accurate predictions about potential damage. To achieve this, the designer identifies specific visual cues, such as metal nail corrosion that affects wooden structures, resulting in black stains, or hull deformation caused by improper support positioning when a boat is on land (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Metal nail corrosion that affects wooden structures and hull deformation by Leonardo Bortolami

The next stage involves discussions with the shipowner. We are still in the process of understanding the scope of work required, including its economic implications. As mentioned earlier, a significant portion of nautical heritage is owned by private individuals, making this dialogue phase crucial for the proper conservation of Italian nautical heritage. Once the designer is selected for the job, being finally allowed to disassemble the boat, they will conduct more thorough surveys to investigate all the supposed damages. Innovative or digital tools for wood diagnostics do exist. This is the case of some wood testing systems, such as the IML Power Drill.[9] Its goal is to study the resistance of the wood at different depths. A useful but very punctual analysis. Another option is using a thermal camera to test the humidity of wood. However, in the context of wooden boats, this method may encounter challenges due to the shape of the hulls, which bring water to accumulate at the bottom of the boat, distorting the measurements. Additionally, the environment where boats are typically found already has a high level of humidity, making accurate measurements more difficult. As a result, nowadays the only tools commonly used to understand the real status of the boat are traditional, manual tools, as awls, used to break parts already identified in the previous phase to better understand the consistency and depth of the damage. Nevertheless, this manual and invasive approach has two main weak points: further damage to the analysed part, and local diagnosis. It means that to avoid further damage to sections in apparently good condition, a designer will tend to conduct invasive inspections only in cases with evident problems for deeper investigations. On the other hand, local diagnosis does not allow a general understanding of the whole boat's status.

Critical questions

Usually, at the end of the study of the conservation state of the boat, another meeting with the shipowner is needed to report its real status. And usually, thanks to the diagnosis, after having acquired more detailed information, the quote rises. This leads the shipowner to a decision point: continue the restoration process, spending what is necessary to save and well conserve the boat or stop the work for lack of economic support? The question highlights a critical issue that could be remedied by having tools capable of immediately and accurately defining the physical consistency of the boat. Tools that could give the designer a general, yet precise view of the boat's state of preservation.

Moreover, in the future, these tools could be included in an appropriate methodology for historic boats' restoration, ensuring the best quality of preservation over time.

In conclusion, that context raises critical questions that need to be addressed. Could new technologies offer non-invasive diagnostic tools for wooden boats? Could existing tools be applied to Nautical Heritage? If so, how? To answer these questions and others, interdisciplinary research is needed to explore related and distant sectors and lead to innovative solutions for the nautical field.

DEFINITION OF THE PROJECT

As aforementioned, historic wooden boats, which often feature complex elements and are exposed to harsh environmental conditions, present unique diagnostic challenges. Traditional diagnostic methods can be invasive or lack precision, risking further deterioration of these vessels. This highlights the urgent need for tools that can enhance the diagnostic phase of wooden boats through the integration of digital technology. To address this issue, two fundamental questions arise: What are the actual diagnostic needs in the context of historic wooden boats? What flexible approaches can be developed to address these needs?

To explore this research field, the project employs a six-step methodological framework guided by design thinking[10] – as illustrated in Figure 6. The first phase focuses on understanding the project's features and the current state of the art, divided into two steps: first, defining diagnostic needs through case studies and expert consultations; second, broadening the scope to examine technologies and methodologies from related disciplines like architecture, fine arts, and engineering. Following this, the project will explore the potential of new tools, leading to the conceptualization of diagnostic instruments that align with identified requirements. Next, initial models will be prototyped and tested for feasibility. The final phase involves applying these prototypes to selected case studies to evaluate their performance and refine them for integration into conservation workflows. This process is iterative; new insights can prompt revisiting earlier steps, ensuring that developed tools are not only technically effective but also contextually relevant for heritage applications.

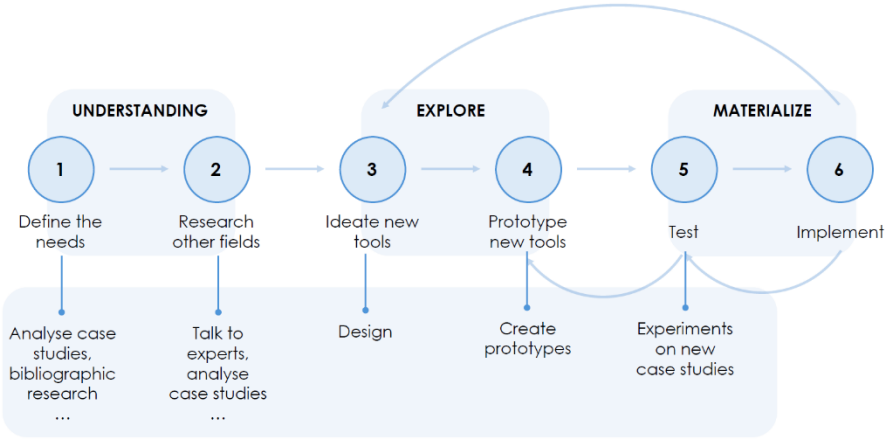

Figure 6. Schematisation of the project methodology approach by Maria Carola Morozzo della Rocca, Claudia Tacchella, and Giulia Zappia

Currently, the project is in its early stages, focusing on defining needs and conducting exploratory research. The first step has been to identify the key characteristics required for the new tools. As stated, the primary goal is to design tools that can detect damage without compromising the integrity of the artefacts. This crucial aspect must align with two other key considerations. Firstly, the tools must be tailored to the unique conditions of boat restoration. Secondly, the tools need to be designed to detect specific types of damage in wooden structures. While some tools may investigate multiple issues, others could be specifically focused on a single type of problem.

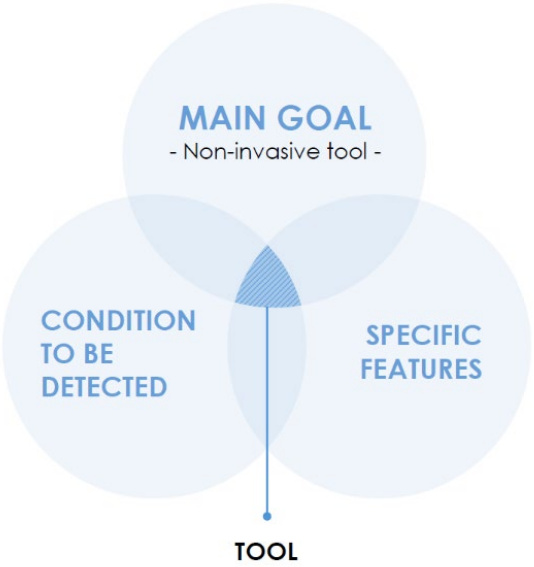

Figure 7. Three fundamental aspects for the definition of innovative non-invasive diagnostic tool for historical boat restoration by Maria Carola Morozzo della Rocca, Claudia Tacchella, and Giulia Zappia

Initial investigations have also focused on identifying the most common and critical forms of damage that the research will concentrate on. They include moisture infiltration, often caused by cracks or faulty joints, which can lead to rot and structural weakening; biotic degradation of wooden components, both mechanical (e.g., insect galleries) and chemical (e.g., microbial activity consuming lignin and cellulose); metal corrosion, affecting nails, fasteners, and structural reinforcements, which can compromise the connection between wooden and metallic elements. Visual inspections and previous case studies have revealed recurring patterns of infiltration, rot, and corrosion, particularly at structural junctions such as deck-hatch connections and ceiling supports.[11] These areas are often difficult to access and monitor, underscoring the need for compact, adaptable diagnostic devices. It is important to notice that these forms of degradation are not isolated; rather, they form a circle of damages. Moisture infiltration can trigger biotic decay and corrosion, which in turn reduce hull stiffness and cause structural deformation, further exacerbating the problem.

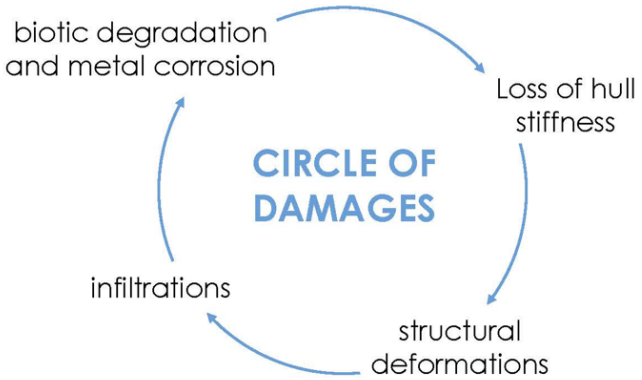

Figure 8. Circle of damages showing that all critics aspects are linked and bring to others, exacerbating the problem, by Leonardo Bortolami, Maria Carola Morozzo della Rocca, Claudia Tacchella, and Giulia Zappia

A new generation of non-invasive diagnostic tools has the potential to identify damage in historic boats before visual signs become apparent, which often occurs too late for effective intervention, and break this cycle. This advancement promises to enhance the longevity and integrity of these vessels, ensuring their continued relevance for future generations.

CONCLUSION

With this paper, the research group of the Nautical Heritage of the University of Genoa opens a new line of research. Following the established methodology of design thinking, the research group is currently at the initial stage of understanding. The paper, therefore, represents a declaration of intent, an opening towards new frontiers in nautical restoration that have been little explored to date and are certainly innovative for the sector.

The conservation of nautical heritage demands a delicate balance between technological innovation and historical sensitivity. To respect this principle, the project emphasises the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration. Insights from conservation experts, shipbuilders, and engineers inform the design process, ensuring that the tools developed are grounded in both technical feasibility and historical relevance. Considering this aspect, among the actions planned for the near future, of central importance is the search for external collaborations as well as the interdisciplinary study of the subject. This methodology will facilitate the exploration of diverse domains that, owing to their extensive experience, can offer both cultural and methodological support. The process will establish a valuable foundation for our future initiatives, ultimately aiming to identify transferable and adaptable tools for non-invasive diagnosis within the realm of nautical heritage, with a specific focus on historic wooden boats.

Ultimately, the project aims to contribute to the definition of a more sustainable and informed approach to nautical heritage preservation. Through a structured, interdisciplinary methodology, it seeks to bridge the gap between technological innovation and historical preservation. By enabling early detection of structural vulnerabilities, the proposed tools can support preventive conservation strategies and reduce the need for invasive interventions.[12,13]

NOTES

[1] Giulia Zappia, Restauro Nautico e Design. Strumenti e metodi per il recupero delle imbarcazioni storiche (Genova: Genova University Press, 2020).
[2] Maria Carola Morozzo della Rocca, Per un Portale del Nautical Heritage (Genova: Genova University Press, 2018).
[3] Morozzo della Rocca, 34.
[4] Soheil Sabri, Kostas Alexandridis, Newton Lee, edited by, Digital Twin: Fundamentals and Applications (Cham: Springer-Verlag GmbH, 2004).
[5] The Institution ARTEnet – Artistic Techniques of Restoration and Diagnostics offers many interesting examples of what innovative tools can offer in the field of fine arts restoration. To further research: “Artistic diagnostics”, Artenet, accessed August 05, 2025, https://artenet.it/en/diagnostics/
[6] Marco Francesco Funari et al. "A Parametric Scan-to-FEM Framework for the Digital Twin Generation of Historic Masonry Structures," Sustainability 13, no. 19 (2021): 11088. https://doi.org/10.3390/su131911088.
[7] Giulia Zappia, Restauro Nautico e Design. Strumenti e metodi per il recupero delle imbarcazioni storiche (Genova: Genova University Press, 2020), 166–179.
[8] Maria Carola Morozzo della Rocca, Claudia Tacchella and Giulia Zappia, “Il Design per il recupero del Nautical Heritage,” in *IDEA: Innovation Design Application 2024 edition*, ed. Gaia Leandri (Genova: Genova University Press, 2024), 173–176.
[9] IML, accessed August 05, 2025, https://www.iml-service.com/product/iml-powerdrill/
[10] Tim Brown, “Design Thinking. Thinking like a designer can transform the way you develop products, services, processes and even strategy,” in Harvard Businnes Review, Paperback Series (Brighton: Harvard Business School Publishing Corporation, 2008).
[11] Maria Carola Morozzo della Rocca and Claudia Tacchella, Ancilla & Santa Teresa: Quaderni di Restauro Nautico e Design (Genova: Genova University Press, 2024).
[12] The paper is the result of a joint effort. The specific contributions of each author to this work are as follows: Introduction And The Nautical Heritage In Italy – Maria Carola Morozzo della Rocca; New Technologies And Cultural Heritages And Definition Of The Project – Claudia Tacchella; New Technologies And Nautical Heritage And Conclusion – Giulia Zappia.
[13] This paper was made possible thanks to funding PRA 2023 “Studio di metodologie innovative per il progetto di restauro nautico” and PRA 2024 “Studio di metodologie innovative per il progetto di restauro nautico: test e sviluppo” del DAD – Dipartimento Architettura e Design della Scuola Politecnica dell’Università degli Studi di Genova.

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AMPS PROCEEDINGS SERIES 44

Front cover image: Colin Lloyd

University of Greenwich

25-27 June, 2025

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