

CHAPTER 1

Bridging the Gap between Built Heritage Conservation Practice and Critical Heritage Studies

Jeremy C. Wells

Practitioners have long criticized higher education for its “ivory tower” perspective, in which scholars appear to be far removed from the trials and tribulations of the everyday professional. From this high vantage, it may be all too easy to critique the behavior, values, and choices of others because the scholar is removed from the messy reality of the “real” world. As David Demers (2011) summarizes, universities perpetuate a system in which scholarship is published in venues that are the least accessible to those who might benefit the most from it: Most professionals do not have ready access to the refereed journals or university-press books in which academics are required to publish and are, therefore, largely unaware of theoretical developments in their own field, especially in fields that relate to the social sciences. In addition, universities often penalize researchers for adopting topics that are too applied or close to professional practice. This situation creates an environment in which scholars who wish to change practice end up talking to themselves and not the practitioners for whom their knowledge is meant to benefit.

Cultural heritage conservation is one such field where a group of academics are increasingly studying practice with the overt goal of improving how professionals relate to, understand, and benefit the public. These “critical heritage studies” scholars closely examine the practice, policies, and limitations of heritage conservation work from museum studies to built heritage conservation. Often these scholars adopt an emancipatory goal in their work, criticizing practice through the lenses of critical theory, constructivism, post-colonialism, and post-structuralism, characterizing much of the heritage conservation practice as hegemonic, top-down, positivistic, and oppressive while espousing the goal of empowerment centered on social justice (Aaroz, 2011; Cane, 2009; Harrison, 2013;

Hutchings & La Salle, 2015; Kaufman, 2009; Lixinski, 2015; Logan, 2012; Milholland, 2010; Pendlebury, 2009; Schofield, 2009, 2014; Silberman, 2016; Smith, 2006; Smith & Campbell, 2015; Sullivan, 2015; Waterton & Smith, 2010; Wells, 2010, 2015a, b; Winter, 2013; Zancheti & Loretto, 2012). Most importantly, critical heritage studies represents the largest, most cohesive group of scholars generating empirical evidence with the overt aim to improve or change heritage conservation practice to benefit larger numbers of people. While there are academics from other areas engaging in similar work, only critical heritage studies scholars have focused their emancipatory efforts under the singular umbrella of the Association for Critical Heritage Studies (ACHS). According to the ACHS, 800 people, mostly associated with institutions of higher education, attended their 2016 conference in Montreal, Quebec, and nearly 2,000 members are represented on their website (www.heritagestudies.org).

A major caveat, however, is that there is little evidence that critical heritage studies research is actually changing practice. Moreover, in their “critical” stance of practitioners, these scholars may be engaging in the same hegemonic activities that they are simultaneously criticizing and, in the process, alienating those actors who they most need to engage. This chapter will, therefore, examine the nature of the critical heritage studies movement, how it generates empirical evidence that fails to affect practice, and the ways to bridge the gap between these scholars and practitioners.

What Is Critical Heritage Studies?

Before exploring the characteristics of critical heritage studies, it is important to define “heritage studies” and how it is different from its critical variant. In particular, in the United States, heritage studies is often synonymous with public history and has few commonalities with the social science foci inherent in critical heritage studies. In its most widely adopted use in the United States, heritage studies is the teaching of local history to primary and secondary school students facilitated by field trips to historic house museums and sites. This usage differs from its definition in Europe, Canada, and Australia, where heritage studies is associated with museum studies and cultural heritage, or the meanings associated with heritage rather than (as in the United States) the facts associated with heritage.

In a US-based context, therefore, the difference between heritage studies and critical heritage studies lies in the focus on facts versus meanings, respectively. In one of the earliest explorations of this polarity, David Lowenthal (1985) exposes the impossibility of accurately recovering the complete, tangible qualities of the past through scientific principles because of the lack of objective, factual evidence, yet built heritage conservation practice assumes the opposite. Moreover, Lowenthal is emphatic that the way in which everyday people understand, use, and experience heritage is anything but objective, and has more in common with folklore and storytelling than history (i.e., facts of the past). In this way, Lowenthal’s work is very much a product of the post-modern turn in historiography that rejected the possibility of being able to objectively understand, much less to recreate or restore, the past. Realizing that knowing “history” is actually an act of interpreting *multiple possible* realities, critical approaches to historiography embraced the idea of uncertainty, especially from different cultural perspectives (Foucault, 1972; Furniss, 1999; McCullagh, 2004). Or, in more simplistic terms, history from the perspective of the conqueror is very different from history from the perspective of the conquered. Heritage studies (and its parent discipline of public history) fails to adopt this ontological perspective; however, public history remains a largely positivist endeavor that has yet to adopt the post-modern of its more theoretical peers in the academy.

One could argue that it is because the academy deprecates public history as being too applied that heritage studies in the United States retains the positivistic roots of its parent discipline's past. To be sure, public history has long focused on the collection of as many facts as possible to create simplistic, singular interpretations for mass public consumption that deny multiple interpretations of reality and extra-cultural perspectives. In the United States, one of the most public manifestations of public history is the preparation of National Register of Historic Places nominations. Keeping in mind that the goal of historical positivism is "to discover the laws ruling the temporal sequence of historical facts" (Erdmann, Kocka, Mommse, & Blänsdorf, 2005, 17), instructions for preparing a National Register nomination (National Park Service, 1997) are as follows:

A person wishing to prepare a nomination needs a thorough knowledge of the property. By physically inspecting the property and conducting historical research, applicants can gather facts such as the physical characteristics of the property, date of construction, changes to the property over time, historic functions and activities, association with events and persons, and the role of the property in the history of the community, State, or the nation.

The applicant is then instructed to assemble these facts into an objective account, organized by temporal sequence, of what "really" happened in the past; the more accurate the account (i.e., more facts), the more significant the property can become. Other forms of public history that manifest in museums and historic sites around America share similar emphases on the objective collection of facts and typically singular interpretations.

How, then, does critical heritage studies differ from heritage studies? In the literature on heritage studies, there is a general consensus that history is "the raw facts of the past" (Aitchison, MacLeod, & Shaw, 2000, 96), while heritage "is history processed through mythology, ideology, nationalism, local pride, romantic ideas or just plain marketing" (Schouten, 1995, 21). The meanings of heritage are, therefore, subjective (often emotional) and rooted in the present and are defined by social, cultural, and individual processes. In other words, the meanings of heritage can be understood through contemporary sociocultural and experiential values, not the facts promulgated by public history and its adherents. Lowenthal (1985, 410) argues that in the realm of human experience, we create heritage; to most people, heritage is, therefore, more important than history and is a product of human invention and creativity:

The answer is that a fixed past is not what we really need, or at any rate not all we need. We require a heritage with which we continually interact, one which fuses past with present. This heritage is not only necessary but inescapable; we cannot now avoid feeling that the past is to some extent our own creation. If today's insights can be seen as integral to the meaning of the past, rather than subversive of its truth, we may breathe new life into it.

Heritage is also intimately related to people's relationship with place as Laurajane Smith (2006, 75) alludes when claiming that "heritage is about sense of place." In the 1970s, the humanistic geographer Yi-Fu Tuan (1977, 194, 198) noted that the practice of historic preservation and public history essentially have nothing to do with how people are affected by place or attached to place. Not much has changed in practice since Tuan made this observation, primarily because the activities of historic preservation are largely dictated by rules and regulations, which, once established, are very difficult to change. The values associated with historic preservation practice have, therefore, become ossified

and have not adapted to the changing values of society over the many decades since these rules and regulations were originally codified (Wells & Lixinski, 2016).

It is a revealing exercise to examine the curricula and faculty associated with “heritage studies” degree programs in the United States. Upon examining courses offered and faculty specializations, these programs differ little from self-ascribed public history programs. There is no social science-based coursework that discusses sociological, anthropological, and psychological aspects of people’s relationship to heritage nor are there faculty trained in any of the social sciences. Undoubtedly, upon graduation from such a program, a student would likely have excellent skills in archival research and conventional museum interpretation but know little about the sociocultural dimensions of heritage, including stakeholders’ emotional relationship to place. Largely absent in the readings and topics of these courses are literature on folklore, critical heritage studies theory, and related perspectives from the social sciences. In comparison, a look at the heritage studies degree programs in Europe, Canada, and Australia reveals a core component of social science-based coursework and an acceptance of the multivariate nature of the meanings of heritage. Typically located in departments of anthropology and museum studies rather than history departments, students learn that facts may have rather little influence on everyday people’s understanding or attribution of the meanings and values of historical places and landscapes.

The core literature of heritage studies is also substantially different from critical heritage studies. In fact, it is difficult to evince any kind of theoretical basis to heritage studies in American practice beyond the positivistic view of history. In contrast, in its short existence, critical heritage studies has a rich theoretical base starting with David Lowenthal’s (1985) *The Past Is a Foreign Country*. Other key authors and their relevance are as follows:

- Randall Mason (2002, 2003, 2006): Built heritage conservation practice focused on the objective qualities of fabric with ignorance of other kinds of intangible values. Practice should incorporate a “values-based” approach to conservation. Many of these values can be informed through the use of social science-based methods.
- Bagnall (2003): Everyday people’s assessment of the authenticity of the historic environment is based on their ability to engage in a kind of performance with the past that generates emotionally authentic meanings.
- Laurajane Smith (2006): Introduced the concept of the “authorized heritage discourse” (AHD) in which expert practitioners control the positivistic meanings of heritage. The AHD describes a system in which the only valid way in which lay people can share meanings important to them is through the language and meanings of the expert.
- Waterton, Smith, and Campbell (2006): The values of heritage conservation experts are not more scientific, objective, or neutral than other cultural values associated with heritage. The values of experts are just another set of cultural values among many.
- Schofield (2009, 2014): Heritage consists of the “everyday” and the “ordinary” and not the monumental. Heritage is therefore not rare and unique, but rather it is ubiquitous. Because heritage is based on the meanings and experiences of everyday people, everyone is, therefore, an expert on heritage; the control of meanings should not be entirely in the hands of experts.
- Harrison (2013): Heritage conservation practice should seek to break down the artificial divide between the layperson and the expert practitioner; practice should, therefore, emphasize

a bottom-up rather than a top-down approach. Authenticity is defined by the everyday experiences of people and not historical facts. The supposed divide between natural and cultural heritage is artificial; it is instead best viewed as a continuum.

In sum, critical heritage studies fully embraces the post-modern turn in the pluralistic quality of the meanings associated with heritage and seeks to understand and balance power in the relationship between various actors. It does so by using social science research methodologies to produce data that, when analyzed, provide empirical evidence that *could* influence practice.

The Relationship of Critical Heritage Studies to the Practitioner

The literature in critical heritage studies is quite clear in that its aim is to understand and change practice and it often does so by focusing on the practitioner. But, as Tim Winter (2013, 533) acknowledges, this nascent field has a tendency to alienate practitioners because it treats them as objects of study rather than as rational actors with equal standing. In this way, the emancipatory goal of critical heritage studies is subverted by subjecting practitioners to the same kind of hegemonic practice—control of meanings by experts—that its adherents promulgate.

In the inaugural 2012 meeting of the ACHS, Gary Campbell and Laurajane Smith penned a “manifesto” for the nascent organization and invited others to respond (see www.criticalheritagesudies.org/history/). This manifesto is presented as fluid and open to discussion, but as of October 2016, remains unchanged on the ACHS website with the exception that the authors’ names have been removed. While acknowledging that this manifesto clearly does not represent the perspectives of all individuals associated with the ACHS or critical heritage studies in general, it is the closest document that attempts to articulate the value system of critical heritage studies. Because of the manifesto’s usefully articulated perspective on the practitioner, it is worthwhile to analyze its content in this light.

The manifesto begins by explaining that it is intended to be provocative and explains that just because the preservation/conservation field has been doing things the same way for many decades does not excuse us from taking a more critical approach to practice so that it is more democratic and inclusive.

This is a preliminary manifesto – a provocation – presaging the creation of the Association of Critical Heritage Studies and its initial conference at the University of Gothenburg in 2012. We want to challenge you to respond to this document, and question the received wisdom of what heritage is, energise heritage studies by drawing on wider intellectual sources, vigorously question the conservative cultural and economic power relations that outdated understandings of heritage seem to underpin and invite the active participation of people and communities who to date have been marginalised in the creation and management of ‘heritage’.

A recurrent theme, however, in the manifesto is the use of the passive voice to describe how the meanings of heritage have been marginalized. Whether deliberate or not, it clearly makes the object of its sentences—the entity that is causing the marginalization or other deleterious activities—vague, distant, and unclear. The manifesto continues in establishing its basis for existence, with a reference to Karl Marx (1844):

Above all, we want you to critically engage with the proposition that heritage studies needs to be rebuilt from the ground up, which requires the “ruthless criticism of everything existing”.

In appropriating this language from Marx, the manifesto makes clear that the orthodox values used in heritage conservation should ultimately be destroyed and entirely rebuilt. But why is such “ruthless criticism” needed, especially in light of the possibility that some existing values/systems/ideas might potentially be compatible with this inclusive vision of heritage? To be sure, because the stated aim of the manifesto is to provoke, making such a strong argument for the destruction of the existing system of heritage conservation ought to garner many divergent perspectives. But, considering that people and not abstract entities have values, how should the people who hold these orthodox values—the practitioners—be treated? The Marxist reference implies that those with divergent values ought to be held in contempt or perhaps even ignored. In its attempts to make right the perceived wrongs of heritage practitioners, is not the manifesto engaging in the same hegemonic practices that it also condemns? In other words, egalitarian language is missing from the manifesto that would reframe the argument from one of the destruction of another cultural group’s values to one of seeking balance. The next paragraph of the manifesto does explore the dichotomy of power relationships in conservation practice, however, but returns to passive language describing the way in which practitioners engage in “fetishising expert knowledge” and promote “social exclusion”:

Heritage is, as much as anything, a political act and we need to ask serious questions about the power relations that “heritage” has all too often been invoked to sustain. Nationalism, imperialism, colonialism, cultural elitism, Western triumphalism, social exclusion based on class and ethnicity, and the fetishising of expert knowledge have all exerted strong influences on how heritage is used, defined and managed.

To be sure, this paragraph is an accurate summary of a long tradition in critical heritage studies literature describing heritage as a political tool: Those who control the meanings of heritage have power. There is probably no greater example of this situation than the barbarism that ISIS and the Taliban have unleashed on Middle Eastern antiquities, which is brutally effective as a tool of political oppression. As with this example, studying aspects of the meanings and use of heritage will inevitably bring us to uncomfortable places, and the most difficult questions are the very ones that need to be asked. In fairness, the manifesto rightly indicates that we should be able to ask the question if and how practitioners are marginalizing and excluding others in their practice:

We argue that a truly critical heritage studies will ask many uncomfortable questions of traditional ways of thinking about and doing heritage, and that the interests of the marginalised and excluded will be brought to the forefront when posing these questions.

But, it is important to note that *some* areas of preservation/conservation practice are likely to be emancipatory, especially when conducted outside the bounds of regulatory requirements. There is evidence for this claim in many of the community-based archaeological studies that have been undertaken in the past couple of decades (Wells, 2015a). While not explicitly stating so, the manifesto implies that all such practice results in marginalization and oppression. The manifesto continues, stating that the orthodox values of heritage are defined and controlled through the narrow lenses of white, Western experts and positivistic art/historical meanings. Because the traditional disciplines associated with heritage conservation lack a social science background, these disciplines, as the manifesto indicates, “sustain a limited idea of what heritage is and how it should be studied and managed.” There is ample evidence for these claims in the literature (e.g., Green, 1998; Harrison, 2013;

Smith, 2006) and in the curricula of most built environment conservation degree programs, especially in the United States. Especially in built heritage, social science research methods—ostensibly, an approach quite suitable for understanding people's relationship with their heritage—are not used, taught, or considered. To be sure, public history, architecture, and art history are not particularly known for their strengths in using empirical evidence for contemporary people/place relationships or in their use of social science research methods. This observation is not intended to denigrate the role of the humanities in understanding tangible and intangible heritage, but rather to reveal that the entirety of the picture is incomplete without the social sciences.

Laurajane Smith first introduced the AHD in her book, *Uses of Heritage* (2006), and it is not surprising, as the co-author of the manifesto, that it is represented in the manifesto. The AHD is rather remarkable for efficiently encapsulating how heritage experts—e.g., historic preservationists, preservation architects, historical interpreters, preservation/conservation planners—“sideline” the values of everyday people and, instead, reinforce their own professionally taught value systems, which are often positivistic and incapable of accommodating sociocultural values. But the mention of the AHD, which is predicated on the behavior of practitioners, makes it quite clear that the target of the manifesto is not only a conservation practice but also the practitioners who are part of the system of heritage. Preservation/conservation practitioners are, in effect, the objects of study for scholars of critical heritage studies. The manifesto explains that the creation of the ACHS is to allow for a common meeting place of “critics” of heritage practice, and the implicit study of practitioners.

The manifesto then makes a list of recommendations for how to “promote existing critical innovations and interventions in heritage,” focusing on the central role that the social sciences should play in research and practice and challenge positivistic approaches and quantification. It argues for a transdisciplinary approach that “integrat[es] heritage and museum studies with studies of memory, public history, community, tourism, planning and development.” And, the manifesto argues for the democratization of heritage “by consciously rejecting elite cultural narratives and embracing the heritage insights of people, communities and cultures that have traditionally been marginalised in formulating heritage policy.” Again, the manifesto dances around the implicit agent of this marginalizing behavior—the practitioner—without whom the ACHS would fail to have a reason to exist.

In fact, the only place in which the manifesto specifically mentions practitioners at all is in recommending a “dialogue and debate between researchers, practitioners and communities.” While laudable, one wonders how effective such a dialog can be when, in essence, critical heritage studies researchers are asserting their power over practitioners by making them objects of critique and study. Out of curiosity, I have shared the ACHS manifesto with several built heritage conservation practitioners and, universally, their reaction has been one of hostility because they feel that they are being personally attacked. Admittedly, what I relate is anecdotal and I make no claim for statistical generalizability, but the fact that these hostile meanings exist is problematic. Instead of advocating for a dialog of equals in which meanings are considered from multicultural perspectives, the ACHS manifesto is arguing for the suppression of one cultural value system (that of the expert practitioner) and its replacement by another (the theories of critical heritage studies). The practitioners with whom I shared the manifesto described themselves as being motivated to help communities, not oppress them. To be sure, this response implies that these practitioners may fail to see their acceptance and promulgation of art/historical values over the values of communities as an issue, but one cannot begin to have a productive debate by marginalizing the very group of people you wish to engage.

While the ACHS manifesto fails to engage in a productive way with the practitioner, what does critical heritage studies literature have to say on this endeavor? Not surprisingly, the literature

reinforces the meanings of the manifesto. Heritage conservation practitioners are consistently painted as oppressive, marginalizing entities engaging in a kind of colonizing practice that “sidelines” the values of communities (Hutchings & La Salle, 2015; King, 2009; Smith, 2006). To this end, Neil Silberman (2016, 440) makes the claim that the positivistic, art/historical system that heritage conservation practitioners perpetuate is “an instrument of top-down social engineering on a global scale.” Frits Pannekoek (1998) characterizes heritage conservation professionals as a “heritage priesthood” who, in demanding fealty to the AHD, are engaging in the “misguided” psychological manipulation of people’s value systems. Thomas King (2009) asserts that cultural resource management professionals purposefully use language that obfuscates meaning to frustrate and disconnect the public and engage in potentially unethical behavior that privileges a “check the box” mentality in environmental impact reviews. Lastly, Siân Jones (2009, 143) charges that professionals engage in the intentional omission of the values of communities in reports, especially when they are “compelled by professional conventions and institutional constraints to write these aspects out of conservation policy and public display.”

To date, as Tim Winter (2013) alludes, critical heritage studies has largely failed to have any impact on heritage conservation practice at all. But, instead of climbing down from the proverbial ivory tower, critical heritage studies researchers—as represented in the ACHS manifesto—have instead firmly ensconced themselves in an elevated place, above the practitioner. Based on the published literature, there is little evidence that critical heritage scholars have directly engaged practitioners as equals in a dialog of change. The ACHS has not done so either and has no guidance or advice on how critical heritage studies can or should engage with practice.

Bridging the Divide

To be sure, critical heritage studies has much to offer in improving the conservation of built heritage, places, and landscapes. Because of its critical stance not only on practice but on practitioners as well, there does not appear to be an effective way to translate research into something that could usefully impact practice. To be fair, most practitioners have little or no awareness of critical heritage studies. And most students in built conservation degree programs receive little or no education in the concepts of critical heritage studies, especially the AHD, so our higher education system is complicit in perpetuating this divide. We, therefore, have an environment that is antithetical to the sharing of meanings and ideas on how practice can change. But does this necessarily have to be the case? How can this divide be bridged? I will offer several suggestions for this endeavor.

First, social scientists—especially the anthropologists who largely define critical heritage studies—need to view practitioners as allies in their mission to democratize heritage. This perspective need not require these academics to abandon critical analyses of practice, but research should be conducted in a way that respects, and ideally involves in a participatory way, professionals. The existing system of critique is inequitable in that it assumes that only critical heritage studies researchers are capable of identifying and devising solutions to the inherent problems in the current system of heritage conservation. Practitioners, therefore, need to be recognized as the primary agents of change and requires that they be attributed with value beyond mere objects of research or critique, but as active co-researchers in the overall process.

Practitioners have a responsibility as well and should seek at least a general awareness of the current state of knowledge in critical heritage studies and allied human-centered approaches to interventions in the built environment and cultural landscapes. Scholars could go a long way toward

achieving this goal by making their research more easily accessible to practitioners. Notwithstanding that the academy often fails to recognize publications in professional periodicals, academics need to be publishing synopses of their research in these venues as well as open source/access scholarly journals. Many historic environment advocacy organizations have publications of this nature that reach a wide variety of practitioners. Scholars should also take advantage of sites such as academia.edu and researchgate.net as well as their university's own digital commons sites to publish their research. Where an academic journal of press holds copyright to the final, published paper, scholars can post working preprints of their research instead, directing the reader to the final, published version ensconced behind a paywall. Practitioners and academics ought to also work more closely together in reevaluating curriculum standards for educational programs that address the conservation of the built environment.

Lastly, the role of the regulatory environment in promulgating the AHD and other critiques of built heritage conservation practice has largely been ignored by both critical heritage studies researchers and practitioners as well as policymakers. The majority of work in built heritage conservation exists because of the regulatory environment. In my own (unpublished) research, which is supported by the findings of Thomas Visser (2009), I have found that over a six-month period, about three quarters of all US-based job postings for positions in historic preservation were for work that exists because of the various federal, state, and local laws that ostensibly protect heritage. These laws have remained essentially unchanged since their implementation, which, in some cases, was fifty or more years ago. We, therefore, have a heritage system based on mid-twentieth-century meanings, values, and expectations. Fundamentally, we cannot change the existing system that conserves built heritage, places, and cultural landscapes without addressing the need to change the regulatory environment. This problematic situation, however, presents a useful place for collaboration between critical heritage studies scholars, who may have little background in law, and practitioners, as well as legal scholars.

Conclusion

I began this chapter with the stereotype of the ivory tower and the role in which critical heritage studies researchers tend to perpetuate this stereotype, especially in the way heritage practitioners are treated as objects of study rather than as co-researchers or co-collaborators. The critical heritage studies movement needs to extend its emancipatory perspective to the way it treats practitioners in a more egalitarian way. This act does not require, however, the abandonment, in any way, of the critical approaches to how heritage conservation is practiced. Rather, by engaging practitioners as co-researchers, critical heritage studies researchers may find more suitable, pragmatic ways to democratize the practice of the conservation of built heritage, places, and landscapes. And, in the process, by treating practitioners in this way, they are much more likely to want to implement the changes in which they have some sense of ownership.

The academy has a large role to play here as well, in terms of how future practitioners are educated. The National Council for Preservation Education, which represents most of the historic preservation degree programs in the United States, has specific curriculum standards that all of its members must meet. These standards, which are essentially unchanged since their establishment in 1988 (Tomlan, 1988), require member programs to have courses on historic preservation theory, documentation, and the history of the built environment along with some kind of experiential activity (e.g., an internship); no other components are required. Preservation theory, as taught in most of

NCPE's member programs, is based on a nineteenth- and early to mid-twentieth-century white male, Euro-centric, art/historical perspective, taught through the publications of John Ruskin (1907/1849), Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc (1990/1854), Camillo Boito (1884), Alois Riegl (1996/1903), Paul Philippot (1975), and Giovanni Carbonara (1996/1976), among many others. Documentation is overtly positivistic in its aims to accurately measure and describe the visual characteristics of the built environment and to research historical facts associated with specific buildings and places. Courses in the history of the built environment reinforce a positivistic art/historical method, which focus on the ability of students to accurately describe an historical style attributed to a particular building.

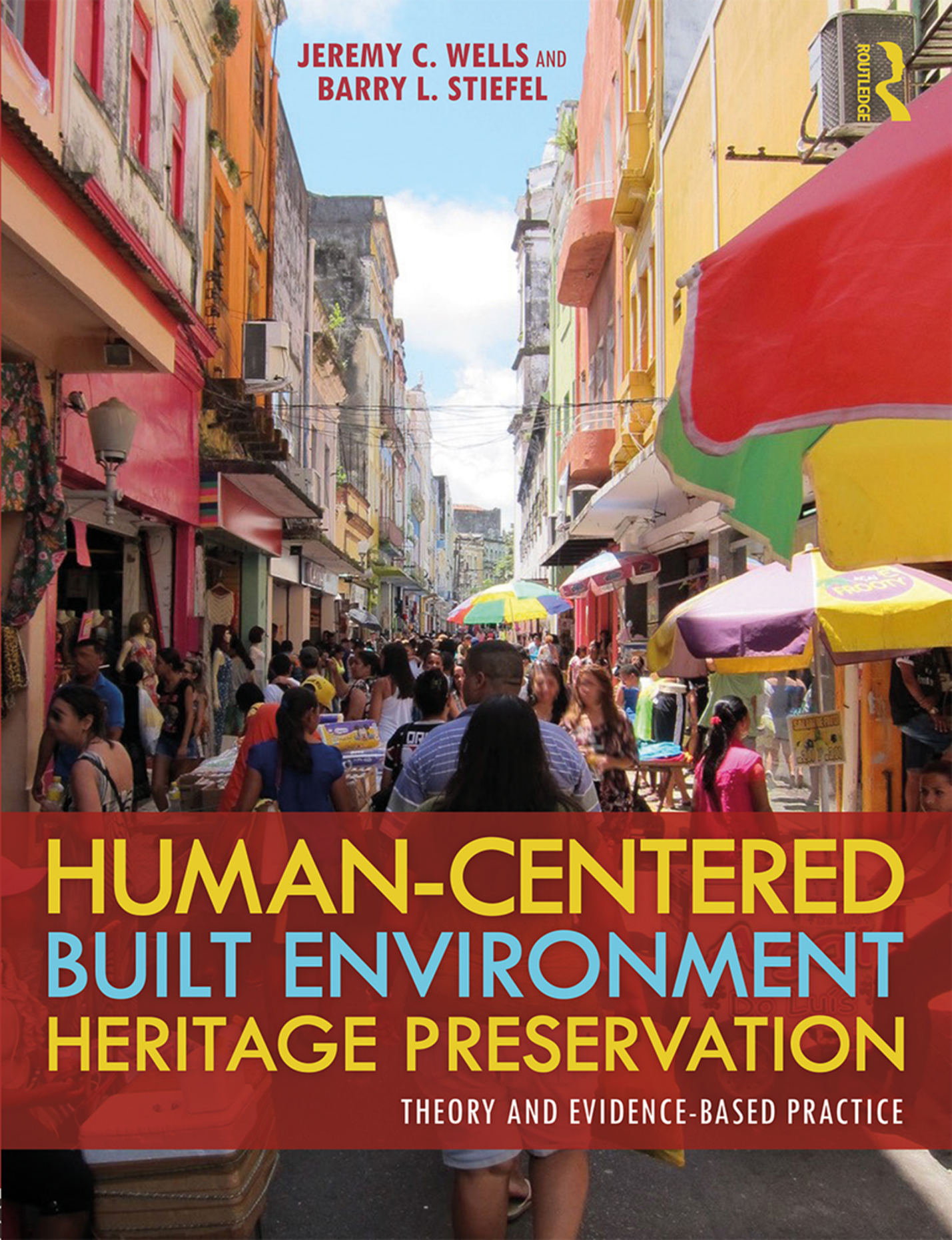
We need to change how preservation theory is taught by beginning with an emancipatory approach, based on contemporary critical heritage studies literature, and then return to the past to reflect on why we have adopted this human-centered versus fabric-centered stance. This reverse historical perspective makes it clear to students that current human-centered conservation theory is a reaction to the positivism of the past and should, indeed, be the foundation of practice. Similarly, documentation should be broadened to include understanding how various communities perceive and value their historic environment, which would mandate the use of social science methods (and associated faculty trained in their use). The history of the built environment needs to shift from an outcome of identifying building styles to understanding the social and cultural origins of the environment from the distant past to the present. Lastly, students should be taught that an achievable goal of heritage conservation is the empowerment of communities and social justice. Students trained in this way will be much better equipped to engage critical heritage studies researchers as co-collaborators and would be much more effective in working with everyday people.

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BARRY L. STIEFEL**

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