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HUMAN ASPECTS OF HISTORIC URBAN ENVIRONMENTS

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Introduction

What makes an environment 'historic'? To answer this question, one needs to ascertain to whom this question is asked. For most of the twentieth century, this question was always assumed to be asked of the architect, the art/architectural historian, and sometimes the geographer. Very few people were concerned with how places could be considered 'historic' to everyday people who were not conventionally trained experts in some aspect of history, design, or aesthetics. Yet, we must recognize that the primary beneficiaries of the recognition, treatment, and protection of older places are these very people—ordinary individuals who are not assumed to be experts in any aspect of place. This assumption that ordinary people are not experts is not true: everyday people are indeed experts about the environment in which they live, work, and recreate. The issue, as it has been re-contextualized for the twenty-first century, is that we have long ignored this fact and, in the process, have been far too dismissive to local knowledge. The field of community-based participatory research has a name for this kind of 'expert': *the civil expert* (Fortmann 2008). Recognizing everyday people as civil experts—in the context of historic places—is an essential step in understanding the human aspects of historic urban environments because we need to understand what is 'historic' and 'not historic' from this perspective in balance with the perspective of conventionally trained experts. Acknowledging everyday people situated in specific old places as civil experts also requires that we respect their knowledge, and, in turn, respect these people as equals, in some cases, to conventionally trained experts.

In order to orient the reader, this chapter briefly introduces the essential characteristics of the orthodox management of historic urban places. Rather than treating this practice as grounded in objectively scientific principles, it is better understood as a kind of professional culture. I do this not to introduce a relativism between the cultures of conventional experts and civil experts, but rather to establish the importance of situational knowledge in certain contexts. I then discuss the heritage aspects of culture from the perspective of civil experts, followed by specific case studies illustrating human-centered conservation research and practice in the Asia and Pacific region.

The culture of orthodox conservation practice

There are two fundamental characteristics that define orthodox, Western built heritage conservation practice: numinism and expert rule. In the Western world, the conservation of the historic environment

is commonly understood to have its genesis in the mid-nineteenth century ‘scrape’ versus ‘anti-scrape’ debates of John Ruskin and Eugène Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc (Pappas 1985). But what often gets missed in Ruskin’s writings is his mysticism, especially as it relates to numinism, as when he discusses how the ‘washing waves of humanity,’ left an imprint *in* the fabric of a building (Ruskin 1989: 186) and created a ‘golden stain of time’ (Ruskin 1989: 187) (Figure 5.1). Indeed, it is ‘numinism’ that helps to define orthodox conservation values (Muñoz Viñas 2005), as opposed to other conservation approaches, including whether to ‘scrape’ or not. Thus, the Western practice of built heritage conservation illogically assumes that the meaning of a building is in its fabric, ignoring the sociocultural and experiential dimensions of meaning (Waterton, Smith, and Campbell 2006: 349).

The other characteristic of orthodox conservation practice is the way in which expert rule is enforced and meanings from the public are, as Smith (2006), describes, ‘sidelined’ through the ‘authorized heritage discourse’ (AHD). An important characteristic of the AHD, as it manifests in the built environment, is that rules, laws, and regulations require outside experts to educate the people *about their own local heritage* and *protect this heritage from its rightful owners and inheritors* (King 2009). As a result,

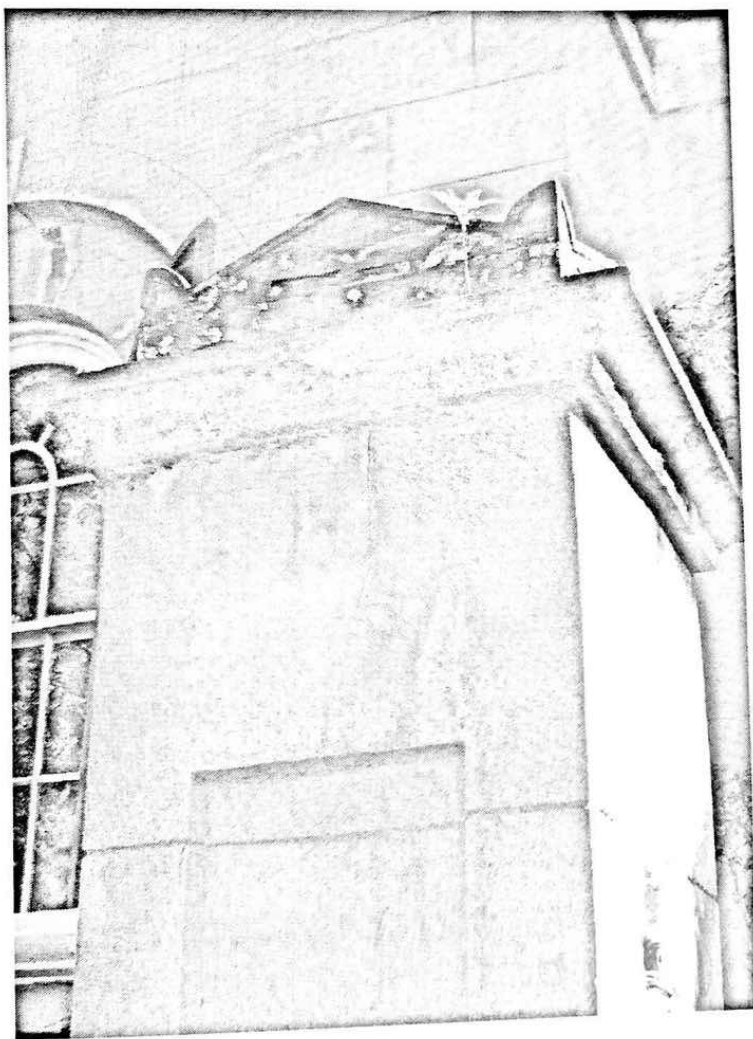


Figure 5.1 The way surfaces change over time on building materials (e.g., soiling, decay) form what John Ruskin (1989) refers to as the ‘golden stain of time.’

Source: Jeremy C. Wells

the public—and increasingly academics and reflective practitioners—brand heritage professionals not as protectors of heritage, but rather as the ‘heritage police’ (Emerick 2014).

It is, however, unfair to denigrate heritage professionals when the real problem lies in a heritage system in which ‘the bureaucracy of conservation is more important than the act of conservation’ (Wells 2017a: 32). The state is only capable of implementing systems for the management and regulation of heritage that are based in ‘simplification, objectification, and efficiency,’ while requiring forced ignorance of the richness and depth of cultural meaning (*ibid.*). In sum, rather than orthodox built heritage conservation being based on principles of scientific objectivity, it is just one of many possible cultural systems in which heritage is valued in some fashion (Waterton, Smith, and Campbell 2006). It succeeds because of its historical position and association with individuals from dominant, Western cultural groups. It should therefore not be interpreted, *prima facie*, as a superior system just because it is dominant. Yet, across Asia and the Pacific, many countries have uncritically adopted this orthodox approach, whose values remain largely unchanged since the late 1960s.

The culture and experiences of local communities

What if many more things ‘historic’ could be defined and managed through the meanings and values of the public rather than through the meanings and values of conventional experts, and in doing so, deprecate the role of doctrine, rules, laws, and regulations? This action purposely shifts the focus on conservation from fabric to socio-cultural meanings and is the premise of a more human-centric approach to the conservation of the historic environment. In this system, heritage experts are no longer ‘police,’ but become facilitators, seeking and understanding cultural meanings and then attempting to manage places from this perspective (Wells 2015).

What do we know about the relationship people have with built heritage and cultural landscapes? How do everyday people interpret, understand, and become affected by this heritage? We have some tantalizing answers from the social sciences, such as sociology, anthropology, environmental psychology, and geography, but there are still many gaps. Because of the overreliance of orthodox built heritage conservation on doctrine and because it is often associated with architecture, researching built heritage from the perspective of the social sciences is not a well-known or employed endeavor. Largely because of critical heritage studies, however, this situation appears to be changing to some extent. But literature on this subject only really begins, in earnest, in the 1990s, although there was a significant amount of research by folklorists in the 1970s that is often forgotten. This is, for all purposes and intents, a new field of research.

We do know that built heritage is incredibly important to people; so important that they are willing to die to protect it from harm. One need not venture into the dusty shelves of scholarly libraries to readily see evidence for this. In the Middle East, ISIS, Al Qaeda, and the Taliban have purposely sought and destroyed cultural heritage to demoralize certain groups of people (Jeffries 2015; Lawler 2018; Marlow 2011), because control of a group’s heritage is a way to destroy cultural identities. For instance, in 2015, Khaled al-Asaad, an archaeologist in Syria, chose to die rather than give up the location of ancient artefacts to his ISIS captors (Shaheen and Black 2015). And, Father Columba Stewart and Abdel Kader Haidara led a group of people in Timbuktu, Mali, who risked their lives to save rare and unique religious manuscripts from ISIS and Al Qaeda, respectively (Dreazen 2013; Fagotto 2017). Wars have been started over who controls built heritage and, in the case of Warsaw and Mostar, the restoration of built heritage destroyed by war has become a community rallying point, creating and fostering shared cultural ties (Gunzburger 2012; Jokilehto 1999).

The forced separation of people from their built heritage in the name of ‘protection’ and ‘conservation’ is well known, especially at World Heritage sites. In reality, these actions are often carried out to promote economic development and tourism with little sensitivity paid to their effect

on local populations. For instance, at Ayutthaya (Thailand) and Borobudur and Prambanan (Indonesia), the management plans for these World Heritage sites sideline or simply fail to recognize the values and meanings held by the local population and instead privilege conventional art/historical values. But this practice is a missed opportunity to more fully engage the visitor. Indeed, as Black and Wall (2001: 121) observe, these ignored local values 'have the potential to enhance the interpretation of the monuments and in fact make them more relevant to domestic and international visitors alike.' In effect, the meanings attributed to these sites are 'defined largely by experts who come from other places' (p. 122) who erroneously assumed that their efforts took the local community's needs into account, even though *these experts never actually talked to members of the community* (p. 131). Steinberg (1996) found similar situations where local values were either dismissed or local people were simply not consulted at all in Delhi, Bombay, Bhaktapur, Galle, Penang, Singapore, Shanghai, and Beijing. To be sure, 'forced ignorance' of local values in World Heritage management plans exist across the globe, such as in Mexico (Breglia 2006) and Iraq (Khoshnaw 2016). The theme here is an erroneous assumption that tourists want a kind of sanitized heritage, free from the realities of real people living in context with tangible heritage and that the local people would prefer to move anyway because they want to live in new buildings. Research, however, indicates otherwise. When provided with resources to repair and maintain their buildings, people often prefer to stay in their indigenous environment, close to the place from which their identity springs (Cossons 2016; Oakes 2012). Tourists also appear to be willing to not only accept the realities of people living in context with heritage sites, but sometimes specifically seek it out in the search for an authentic place experience (Kontogeorgopoulos 2003).

Indeed, heritage tourists are often deeply unsatisfied with the staid interpretive experience at historical sites. Traditionally, the assumption made by historians and museum staff is that the goal is to create an educational experience and that people visit historic sites to learn. For most people, however, an authentic visit to a historic site is one that involves 'performativity' (Bagnall 2003) and, most importantly, feeling, but not necessarily learning. People do not visit museums and historic sites to learn, but rather they go to feel and experience, and these experiences are often cathartic (Smith and Campbell 2015). And what connects these visitors to the site is the nature of the emotional experience, which is catalyzed by a phenomenon I refer to as a 'spontaneous fantasy.' To be clear, not only tourists and visitors experience spontaneous fantasies, but residents do as well.

A spontaneous fantasy is catalyzed by the appearance of decay (or, in a more positive sense, *patina*) in the built environment. This patina is what provides the authenticity of the physical age of a built environment to the person who experiences it. Patina can take the form of subtle changes in surface texture, discontinuity, and added complexity to stone, brick, wood, paint, or metal. But, when someone experiences this patina in the context of a historic environment, quite often, and in an unpremeditated, spontaneous way, a vignette of the past will appear in the observer's mind's eye. This vignette takes the form of some hypothetical event from the past and may, or may not, be related to factual events. For instance, in my work in the United States' oldest historic district in Charleston, South Carolina, people experienced spontaneous fantasies in the form of seeing Civil War soldiers marching up steps, cotton wagons being pulled in the distance, and people disembarking from carriages. All the individuals who experienced these events found them to be highly and positively emotional and it increased the level of place attachment they had to the historic district (Wells 2017b).

Spontaneous fantasies are clearly related to numinism in some way, but so little research has been done in this area that all we can do at the moment is speculate, although Siân Jones's (2009: 138) ethnographic research observes how built heritage to most people has a 'magical, almost numinous, aura.' But in my work (Wells 2010) and many others (e.g., DeLyser 1999; Inglis & Holmes 2003; Trigg 2011), the frequency of people mentioning ghosts and the 'presence' of people from the past in certain places cannot be ignored. Nor can the constant reference to 'magic' and 'charm' in relation to

ethnographic and phenomenological studies on the historic environment (Staiff 2014) be ignored, either. There is also a general trend in the increase of 'dark tourism,' especially ghost tours, that gives a great deal of credence to many Western people's belief of spirits or some kind of essence from the past that is part of the fabric of the historic environment. Similarly, in the Asia-Pacific region, such as in Thailand, various forms of ancestral worship are common, including a belief that the spirits of deceased relatives inhabit physical places (Horstmann 2011). Another example is when restoring Hindu temples, the temple deity is temporarily transferred from the idol that is worshipped to a *kalasha* (pot) and then transferred back to the idol when the work is done; in doing so, the perceived authenticity of the temple is retained because the original deity, or embedded spirit, remains with the temple (Tom 2017). Rather than venture into the supernatural, the takeaway theme here is *emotion*. For most people, the historic environment is a place that is desirable for the feelings and experiences it instils and not the objective qualities it conveys. Schofield (2009: 105) summarizes this difference between the heritage expert's experience and the layperson's experience of built heritage by referring to the former as 'allocentric,' which is characterized as 'cool,' 'intellectual,' 'detached,' and 'distanced' and the latter as 'autocentric,' which is characterized as 'hot,' 'physical,' 'primitive,' and 'expressed *de novo* on each occasion.'

Lastly, quality of life issues defines human-centered conservation, because the assumption is that conservation activities should improve overall human flourishing in comparison to other built environment activities. For instance, arguments about the role that built heritage plays in quality of life issues is an important topic in Hong Kong, starting with the loss of the Queens Pier in 2006 (Pomfret 2007). The government of Hong Kong does not officially recognize socio-cultural values in its built heritage policy (Ho et al. 2014), and as such, quality of life arguments have not featured in government decisions about which heritage is demolished and saved. Residents have become increasingly vocal in their desire to retain built heritage for its contribution to overall quality of life and to serve as a counter to the building of ever more high-rise buildings (Yung and Chan 2013). In addition to general case studies like this, other research addresses the specific intersection of heritage and well-being via social and individual effects. Power and Smyth (2016: 165) find that community-based participation in heritage conservation activities results in an overall increase in participants' 'passion, curiosity, delight, accomplishment, pride, reciprocity, and growth.' Similar findings have been found by when people participate in community-based archaeological projects (Sayer 2015). There is also some evidence from health care settings that shows that when people are in context with heritage objects, especially when they can touch and handle them, they show lower levels of pain and improved measures of quality of life (Ander et al. 2013).

In sum, human-centered conservation is defined through experiences, emotion (which is often conflated with place attachment and sense of place), and, especially, quality of life. It shifts the focus from how conservation can improve the state of building fabric to how conservation can *improve human flourishing*. And it does this by using social science and participatory research methods to gather evidence for how everyday people interact with, understand, and treat built heritage and cultural landscapes. Conservation is still the goal, but instead of conserving fabric, the aim is to conserve the *continuity of meanings* associated with a place (Zancheti and Loretto 2012).

Issues of human-centered conservation in the Asia-Pacific region

Bottom-up, community-engaged practice in heritage management

Since human-centered conservation requires an intimate understanding of the intersection of people and place, there needs to be an emphasis on bottom-up, community-engaged approaches to practice and management. The need for this approach is increasingly found in the literature that addresses heritage

conservation in Asia and the Pacific (e.g., Halim and Ishak 2017; Shakya, Takada, Morishige, and Okubo 2015; Su and Wall 2012). For instance, in Taiwan, there are many examples of community-centered conservation projects that utilize tools for participatory democracy, such as community workshops whose primary goal is to help safeguard the 'spirit of place' (Davis, Huang, and Liu 2012) (Figure 5.2). More commonly, however, are critiques of practice, such as in China, where the government claims that it is engaging in heritage planning with residents, but evidence suggests that the approach is still largely top-down (Fan 2014). Similar examples of this kind of disconnect exist for Vietnam (Jones and Nhung 2016) and Indonesia (Bhaskara 2015), as well as many other countries in the Asia-Pacific region. It should be noted that the dominance of top-down approaches and expert rule are not at all unique to this region of the world; it is the dominant practice in the United States, Canada, Europe, and Australia (Emerick 2014; Gibson and Pendlebury 2009; Harrison 2013; King 2009; Lowenthal 1985; Pannekoek 1998; Smith 2006).

Human-centered conservation also assumes that the everyday person's perspective is holistic; ordering the environment into artificial dichotomies of natural/cultural and tangible/intangible (Chapagain 2017; Dyer 2007) is symptomatic of top-down approaches that emphasize objectivity, simplicity, and the need to reduce complex meanings into a system that can be controlled by rules, laws, and regulations (Wells 2017a). This 'reductionist' perspective on heritage, which includes limiting the concept to just buildings, requires government to adopt an implicit policy of willful ignorance of the public's

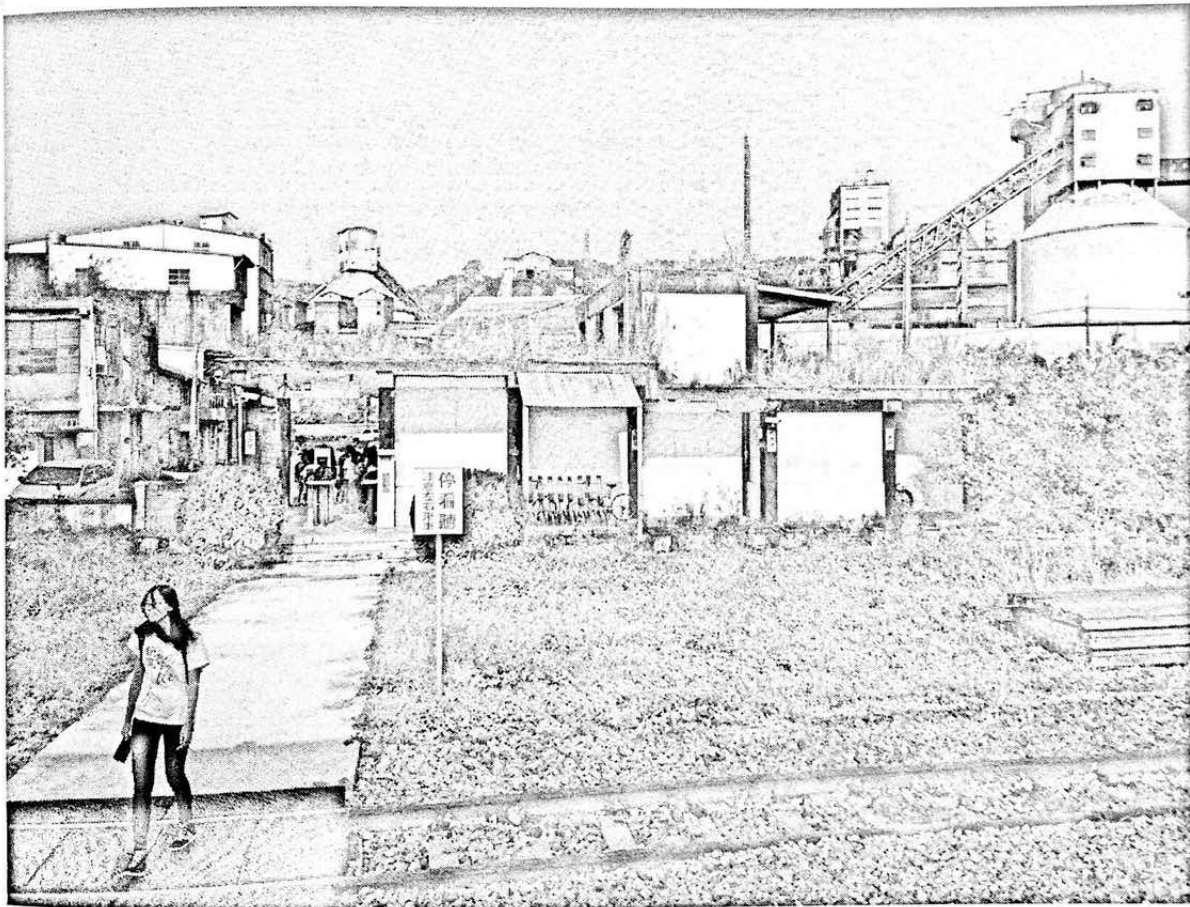


Figure 5.2 Student-led, community design workshop at a former train station and industrial site in Hengshan Township, Taiwan.

Source: Jeremy C. Wells

holistic perspective, such as can be found in the government's approach to the management of heritage in Old Hanoi, Vietnam (Sauvegrain 2001). To be sure, heritage experts, such as in India, have been promoting a self-described 'holistic' perspective on built heritage and cultural landscape management. While well meaning, their methods tend to advocate for limited engagement with the public and instead reify existing, top-down approaches and expert rule (e.g., Thakur 2007).

On the other hand, there are numerous examples of bottom-up community engagement and management strategies that embrace holistic concepts of heritage, such as the *guthi* institution in Nepal (Tiwari 2015; Weise 2015). This traditional organizational structure conserves what Tiwari (2015: 196) calls the 'lesser heritage of the weak' that embodies ordinary people and places to balance how a World Heritage management plan 'distances the local community from the major monuments.' In China, Xiaomei Zhao (2015) explains how residents manage changes to their villages to conserve their perceived authenticity, both in terms of physical features and Dong cultural traditions. Similarly, Luo, Liu, and Jiang (2015: 406, 407) discuss the '4P strategy' for 'keeping heritage living in urban renewal' that requires extensive support of the indigenous peoples in Quanzhou, China, one of the surviving points on the historic Silk Road trade route. The 4P strategy encourages people to demonstrate traditional cultural activities to 'mobilize the enthusiasm of the residents,' while local government agencies put in place policies in which management authority is partially entrusted in these indigenous peoples (*ibid.*).

Far more common, however, are failed or incomplete attempts at community engagement in which the *status quo* of expert rule remains. A desire to focus on heritage tourism for economic development is one common reason that this situation is so prevalent. Rather than conserving heritage for the benefit of the people from which this heritage originated, the goal becomes reinterpreting others' heritage for the consumption of a global market. This action leads to the inevitable alienation of residents from their own heritage, which becomes diluted, translated, and sanitized in the name of economic development. Because of this emphasis on heritage tourism, there are many examples in the literature of conservation management plans that only tangentially involve public participation much less engagement. Such an activity is hard to justify if it endangers plans that authorities have already approved. An example of this approach can be found in Old Town Bhubaneswar, India, where Chatterjee and Basu (2015) develop a method to objectively evaluate heritage values and translate these meanings into ways to grade aspects of the built environment. Their overall methodology, however, is largely based on expert opinions rather than direct community engagement; while a vaguely described 'household survey' informed the expert's recommendations, it was clear that it did not play a significant role in the outcome. Sometimes, the hierarchical, top-down power structure of heritage management is made quite clear, as in Solo, Indonesia, where it is assumed most important stakeholders are officials at the city planning authority and architectural consultants; other stakeholders, such as residents, are secondary (Agustiananda 2015).

In India, according to Pandey Sharma (2017), policy makers still operate in a 'monument-as-object conservation principle' which has been imported from its colonialist past, and as such, rejects community participation in decision-making processes. Intangible heritage and the conservation of ordinary urban places, therefore, is often not part of normal urban planning activities in India. Professionals who work in the conservation field have little opportunity to learn how to recognize and utilize intangible heritage in planning and policy endeavors; their formalized training instead positions these professionals as promoters of monumental heritage. But Pandey Sharma (2017) clarifies that traditional Indian culture has long included the concept of *jeernodharanam* (meaning 'regeneration'), which incorporates contemporary aspects of heritage conservation, yet this tradition is largely ignored both in the training of professionals and the practice of conservation in India. This lack of training in understanding how to engage with civil experts and what to do with their meanings might explain the rather common practice of attempting to include a community perspective in conservation work, but in the end, simply ignoring information gathered through this process.

A similar situation exists in Thailand and Laos where, according to Arkarapoti Wong (2015: 228), in Thailand, 'government authorities initiate most conservation activities and local communities are only allowed to participate at the implementation stage.' Where the local community has been allowed to participate in Laos, 'cultural traditions have been converted into tourism commodities' (p. 244). In these countries, a monumental heritage approach is evident in the way 'government authorities focus on authenticity and originality of heritage buildings, whilst neglecting the social dimensions as they pertain to the town's social needs' (p. 232). To be sure, when authorities focus on economic development through heritage tourism, local voices are either silenced or there is little attempt to listen to, and act upon, the needs and desires of residents (Imon 2015; Jongsung 2004; Radzuan 2015; Su 2015). Residents who are the natural caretakers of their own heritage are mined for their knowledge and cultural practices to feed the insatiable desire of tourists while given little to no agency of their own. This leads to the strong possibility that human-centered conservation is not particularly compatible with heritage tourism, at least when implemented merely as an economic development tool.

Sometimes there is an overt attempt to engage with local communities, but the result is superficial. In conservation work in the historic villages of Hahoe and Yangdong in South Korea, local authorities stated that they wanted to hear local residents' input, but residents felt their voices were ignored; in the end, the perception was that the decisions had already been pre-determined long before the public was consulted (Syahrul and Radzuan 2015). There is some evidence that one reason there may be reluctance to engage with and use the meanings of civil experts is because they may not support heritage conservation in general. At Angkor, local residents are viewed by policy makers as injurious to the historic site rather than a living part of it, which immediately serves as a prejudicial barrier to effective community engagement (Miura 2005); moreover, policy makers seem rather clueless about how to 'conserve' a living heritage site through a 'management mechanism [that] has adequately incorporated effective traditional management practices and knowledge, and local community' (*ibid.*: 15). Literature on heritage conservation in Asia includes many examples like this, where the local community is perceived as unsupportive of conservation, such as in Tansen, Nepal, where it is assumed that residents always prefer modern buildings over historic ones (Chandani 2015). In these situations, however, there is little attempt to understand tangible and intangible heritage from the perspective of civil experts so that this kind of assumption can either be affirmed or refuted. Because these kinds of assumptions are predicated on the perceived necessity of heritage tourism for economic development, in the end, it may not really matter what the public thinks because the local authorities have already made a final decision.

The natural direction of this thinking is that civil experts need to learn how to understand heritage from the perspective of conventional experts rather than the inverse. This perspective is often rather subtle. For instance, while Goetz (2015) acknowledges the need to engage with communities to help conserve Kathmandu, this process should take the form of 'cultural education' (interpreted as cultural *re*-education) in which the heritage expert re-educates civil experts about the importance of the latter group's own heritage; the unstated colonialist perspective in this assumption is that the local residents fail to understand why their own heritage is important and therefore must be re-educated by outsiders in order to have a stronger conservation/stewardship ethic (e.g., Jain and Clancy 2008; Tabassum and Tyne 2015). Such a perspective denies local stakeholders the possibility of their own agency in recognizing and acting upon their own meanings associated with their own heritage. The use of technology, such as smart phone apps, to help civil experts document their own built heritage (e.g., Routh and Shah 2015) is another example of this colonialist perspective because it forces local people to use the value systems of experts when documenting the required, objective qualities of the historic environment. Rarely do these tools incorporate an epistemological agnosticism to capture the meanings of civil experts in their own words and perspectives. Instead, local stakeholders must adopt a Western, empiricist-positivistic ontology, which is inherent to

orthodox heritage conservation practice (Wells 2007) or else their meanings are, for all purposes and intents, useless to conventional experts.

Tools for studying human aspects of heritage

There are, however, many useful tools in the literature for understanding cross-cultural perspectives and the meanings held by local people, if there is, indeed, a desire to do so. Two methodologies that deserve attention include Yang and Sim's (2013) attempt to understand different cultural understandings of landscape into an integrated assessment tool, and Silva's (2011) use of the 'city image' to map meaning. Yang and Sim combine Western and Chinese ideas to decipher cultural landscapes by fully considering intangible heritage values; landscape features, character, and patterns; and artistic conception. While much more holistic than conventional survey processes for landscape character, it suffers from a lack of methods based on direct engagement with people and instead relies largely on rationalistic processes and existing documentation. On the other hand, Silva's work is based on well-established social science methods and uses interviews of residents as a primary data gathering tool. Based on a case study of Kandy, Sri Lanka (Figure 5.3) that elucidated dimensions of the sacred, historical, aesthetic, and overall well-being of people who lived in the city, Silva shows how social science methods can move beyond purely visual and spatial interpretations of place and into understanding the meanings everyday people have for these places.

The application of social science-based methodologies has helped elucidate people's emotional connections with place that forms an essential component of human-centered conservation, with much of this literature having clear roots in environmental psychology. For instance, Shamsuddin and Ujang (2008) examined how the design of traditional streets in Malaysia influenced people's attachment to place; they found that traditional street design resulted in residents having a greater amount of emotional attachment to this place and strongly influenced group cultural identity. Helping to further elucidate how particular aspects of the Malaysian traditional street might influence place attachment,

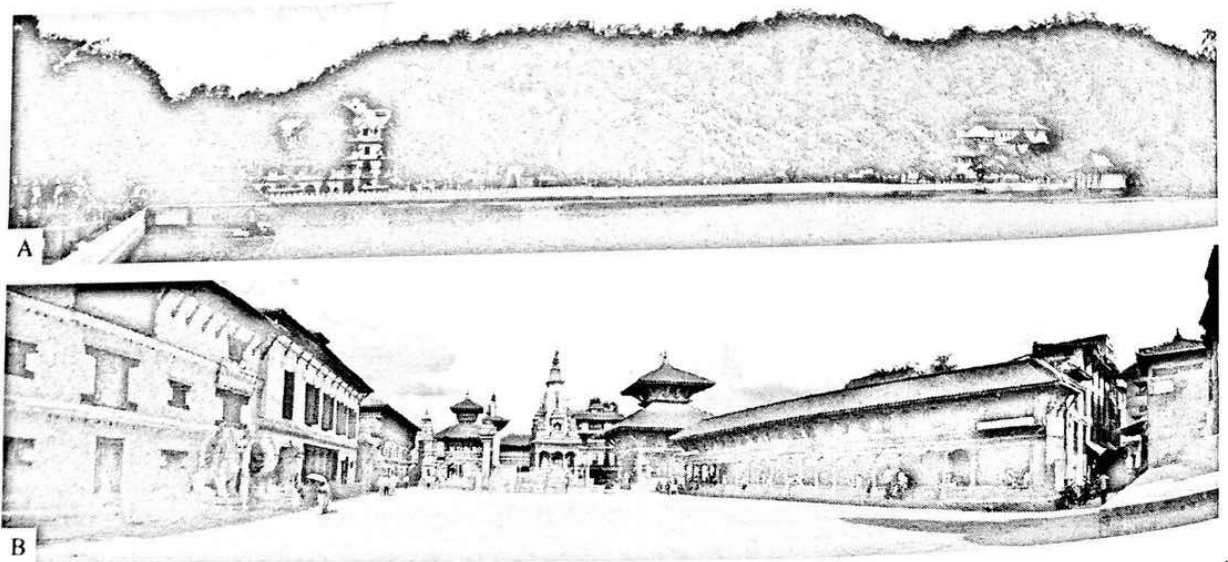


Figure 5.3 There appears to be a similar pattern to the dimensions that define sense of place for some traditional Asian landscapes. For example, the sense of place in (a) Kandy, Sri Lanka and in (b) Bhaktapur, Nepal, consists of the 'sense of sacrality,' the 'sense of community,' the 'sense of historicity,' the 'sense of serenity,' and the 'sense of well-being.'

Source: Kapila D. Silva

Askari, Dola, and Soltani (2014) used a visual preference survey to reveal specific building components of value to everyday people, which were: arches, pilasters, columns, and ornamental detailing repeated in a regular pattern with little or no contemporary design interventions. This result reinforces existing research on the subject which makes it clear that historical environments with few contemporary design interventions engender stronger, deeper, and more profound emotional attachments to these places (Wells 2010; Wells and Baldwin 2012). More specifically, there appears to be a similar pattern to the dimensions that define sense of place for some traditional Asian landscapes. Silva's (2015, 2019) work has established that in the rather disparate places of Bhaktapur, Nepal and Kandy, Sri Lanka, that sense of place consists of the 'sense of sacrality,' the 'sense of community,' the 'sense of historicity,' the 'sense of serenity,' and the 'sense of well-being' (Figure 5.3).

How, then, does one go about using social science evidence to inform and influence conservation practice? While the literature is a bit thinner in this area, there are some notable examples with relevance to Asia. Silva (2019) makes several recommendations on the management of the heritage of Kandy, Sri Lanka based on human-centered principles. Silva recommends that the dimensions of sense of place he identified in his earlier (2011) study—'sense of sacrality,' 'sense of historic solemnity,' 'sense of scenic serenity,' and 'sense of wellbeing'—be included not only in the World Heritage management plan for the city, but also should be incorporated into the city's overall development plan to inform the conservation of some of the most important features of the city, such as the central market, clock tower, and hospital (Silva 2019). Because Silva (2011) focused on intangible heritage and its relationship to sense of place, he also recommends that the management of Kandy's sense of place should include the control of inappropriate social behavior, such as drunk people that destroy the wellbeing and sacrality associated with nearby sites (Silva 2019). Silva found similar characteristics contributing to Bhaktapur's sense of place (2015) that could be used to enhance the city's overall sense of place, including a focus on intangible heritage that would include the 'active recruiting of experts on traditional belief systems' to influence the planning and decision-making process (Silva 2017: 193).

There are other relevant examples of the use of social science evidence to inform built heritage conservation. In a North American context, Jennifer Minner (2019) used human-centered principles in the development of heritage tours that incorporate an understanding of place attachment and Kimberli Fitzgerald (2019) created a local municipality's historic preservation plan using a facilitated, community-driven process that redefined conservation away from a 'police' action toward a more positive, grass-roots activity. Similarly, in Brazil, Wells et al. (2020) facilitated a community-based participatory research process in which residents led an effort to conserve a heritage botanical garden by identifying problems and designing their own conservation solutions. These examples from Asia, North America, and Brazil provide evidence that far from being a theoretical or academic endeavor, the use of applied social science research methods should and can form a core element of built heritage conservation practice.

Conclusion

Human-centered conservation is based on personal and group experiences, emotional meanings associated with place (e.g., place attachment and sense of place), and quality of life. It is also predicated on a desire to engage with local stakeholders, who are often residents, on their own terms using their own meanings. Implicit in this kind of practice is a need to use social science methods to understand the relationship between people and old places, a topic that I have written about extensively elsewhere (Wells 2014, 2019). While there is some evidence that these kinds of approaches are being used in Asia and the Pacific region—mostly in terms of research—practice in these regions appears to be much as it is in the rest of the world: top-down and driven by expert rule. On the other hand, there are examples, such as the *guthi* system in Nepal, where traditional approaches to conservation hold the

promise for a more human-centered way forward. Much of this discussion needs to be continually informed by colonialism as there is a danger that outside experts, often from entirely different cultural backgrounds, are given a great amount of power and influence over the lives of local people. On the other hand, many Asian countries lack institutions that would enable the kind of participatory democracy in which a human-centered conservation practice could flourish.

As with many areas of practice, it is much easier to change education than it is to change professional practice, much less entire governmental institutions. But even in higher education, there is a chronic lack of a research infrastructure in the conservation of built heritage and cultural landscapes. To be sure, institutions—across the globe—are resistant to legitimizing heritage conservation research and providing resources for research and teaching centered on social science approaches (Kaufman 2019). Such change would necessitate incorporating non-Western approaches to understanding heritage meanings, including the intersection between tangible and intangible heritage, training in community engagement and facilitation, the development of conflict resolution skills, and education in social science and participatory research methods. A sorely needed and immediate modification to conservation/preservation curricula would be to teach the Western theory of conservation less as received wisdom and more as a critical approach through Smith's (2006) AHD. None of this is meant to discourage the likelihood of implementing a human-centered approach to the conservation of heritage in any part of the world, but such a change will likely be akin to climbing a mountain: slow, exhausting, frustrating, but eventual. Moreover, the rewards of realizing such an endeavor and emancipating heritage conservation practice is well worth the effort.

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