

# Museum & Place

Editors

**Kerstin Smeds and Ann Davis**



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# Intro- duction



This book of essays explores concepts of museum, place, memory and landscape. It is inspired by the 2016 ICOM General Conference in Milan, the topic of which was Museums and Cultural Landscapes. The organizers of the Milan conference proclaimed that museums should become *musei diffusi*, extended museums to protect and interact with the cultural and natural heritage outside their walls. This idea was based on the Siena Charter of 2014, which proclaimed that “Involving the museums in the management and care of the cultural landscape means to develop their natural vocation, by extending their responsibility from their collections to the cultural heritage and surroundings: their local towns, villages and communities.” How should museums react? And what relations do museum, big and small, have to place?

Essays here examine aspects of the place of museums in an environment and the role the environment should or could play on museums. They deal with places made into museums, preserved landscapes and heritage sites in general – from a critical point of view; museums in place; place in museum, ecomuseum ideas. Some ask what role does the concept of collective memory and identity as well as the materiality of memory play in processes directed to making place a museum – or making a museum in a specific place? Others question the power of a museum to effect the desired changes. These papers address both museum/musealization and place/landscape, however these terms are defined, with a sustainable future as the goal.

Should museums take responsibility for cultural and environmental heritage and support its preservation, as well as knowledge and communication about it, as was suggested in Milan? Should museums become centres of interpretation for the places and communities in which they belong? Should museums be active in the preservation not only of their collections, but also of the tangible and intangible, cultural and natural heritage that surrounds them? While different societies have divergent definitions of museum and place, each considers aspects of the ongoing creative process of preserving objects, places and nature as well as the very real reverse, disintegration. This book opens with essays that help define the limits of these questions and discuss the topic from a more general perspective.

Jette Sandahl, in a piece that was first presented in Milan as a photo essay for a joint session of ICOFOM, MINOM and CAMOC, asks whether museums in the twenty-first century will develop dynamic concepts of identity that point to collective, global futures. Or will museums persist in what she calls a static ideal of exclusionary rootedness, hijacked by nationalism and xenophobia, entitlement and legislation less permeable than medieval city walls? Sandahl is particularly concerned with migration, massive global displacement. Using rich examples of museums that have a strong social agenda, she lauds meaningful mediation between preservation and innovation, museums as participatory platforms where disagreement, social conflict and political movements can find articulation.

Jennifer Harris also wants heritage production to be free from the Western focus on monumentality, the masculine, and European narratives. To do so,

she contends that heritage turns toward place and visitors. But the concept of place poses challenges because it is understood in a variety of ways. Much of the paper strongly delineates this multi-theoretical, complex and contested nature of place. It does so through an examination of a dark heritage site, Rottneest Island, Australia, where contradictory texts serve to disorient. The paper concludes that in heritage production there is a troubling gap between the theorizing of place and different curatorial conceptions of place which confuse the active visitor.

The third paper in this book considers the very real problems of frozen-in-time museums and historic sites, the need to evolve with natural and cultural conditions. Ann Davis argues that, while museums have acknowledged for some time the importance of context for a good understanding of artifacts, the contents of the museum, we have only infrequently considered context to include the physical place of the museum itself. Or, put another way, we have not necessarily seen and understood city attributes as possible museum attributes. Starting from the larger, the city, this essay examines Jane Jacobs' theories of what makes a successful city and then superimposes these ideas onto the museum to see if they resonate. Are there viable connections between cities and museums and might Jacobs' ideas to improve cities also work as ways to improve museums?

Kerstin Smeds' essay is dealing with the roots of what a museum is all about, at a primary, local level of society. It is about our tight relations to things as a means of keeping memories alive. Objects tie us to the soil and place where we live and have lived. There we create and live our heritage, transmit our traditions and memories – with the aid of the museum and the objects in it. Can all this be uprooted and moved to another place? Smeds' essay is a dialogue with Siegfried Lenz's novel *The Heritage (Heimatmuseum, 1978)*. The focus of the story is a privately founded local museum, a homeland museum, in East-Prussia. After WW II, the idea of "homeland" and homeland museums fell into disgrace, but, from the 1980's, homeland, as well as homeland museums, experienced a renaissance. An explanation given is the increasing interest in roots, family and "new-tribalism" in a world that through globalization and cyber-culture many feel increasingly insecure.

Another consideration of place problems in site-specific heritage is that written by Torgeir Rinke Bangstad. Here, concentrating on open-air museums and "buildings on the move", Bangstad discusses the displacement of objects, whereas Sandahl was interested in the displacement of people. Can a place be moved? Or can a building from a place be moved to another place, without losing its identity? The practice of collecting buildings from different and varied places for open-air museums produces tension when the building leaves a familiar domain to enter a new territory. By looking at Olderfjord in Norway, the author suggests a mutability of place, arguing that buildings on the move is a suitable metaphor for the restlessness of all places. Furthermore, this relational perspective can be transferred into relational museology such that museological writing can be a practice implicated in performing place.

Who's place, who's heritage, who's museum, and who has the explanation prerogative to our past, are questions discussed in the next few papers. Performance or fabrication is central to Bruno Brulon Soares' discussion of landscape as a cultural encounter. Using the urban landscape of Rio de Janeiro, Brulon recognizes landscape as a sign, a representation that can be appropriated in specific narratives as a genre of performance. Museums create and sustain particular regimes of value in which certain objects circulate as museum objects. As an attitude towards reality that establishes a communication creating images and social experiences, musealization is an act of creation, in the sense of the magical act that establishes a new order in the social world. It creates the museum performance transmitting cultural enunciations that work only on the basis of previously constituted dispositions, and, therefore, it fabricates places and landscapes instead of merely reproducing them.

Karen Brown and Jamie Brown also discuss social and economic sustainability and how to assist in creating a local development plan to mitigate against the disintegration of local community and ecomuseums. The paper focusses on Costa Rica's oldest ecomuseum, the *Ecomuseo San Vicente*, and on creativity in Boruca and Rey Curré. The project will create an internet community map of local artisan workshops and significant sites in the landscape including those where traditional pigments are gathered, ancestors buried, and cleansing or religious rituals performed. A website will be developed in collaboration with the local community as part of a strategic plan to increase sustainable tourism, using the physical eco/community museum as the administrative hub.

Such insecurity certainly often characterizes Indigenous sites. In a transdisciplinary paper Elizabeth Weiser, John Low and Kenneth Madsen examine the conflicting perspectives of the Newark Earthworks, the largest set of geometric earthen enclosures, located in Ohio, USA. For 100 years this was a limited-access golf course; now geographic mapping reveals a history of both destruction and preservation common to settler communities. Given this contested history, how should this heritage space accommodate the memories, beliefs, and expectations of native peoples, archaeologists, local businesses and townspeople, and visitors?

These problems are very real to Beverly Sandalack, who considers another Indigenous site, Head-Smashed-In-Buffalo-Jump, in southern Alberta, Canada. The site, used almost continuously for approximately 6000 years, is both the story and the experience. But what story and what experience? These are complex issues for here we are dealing with not just a place, but with many activities that occurred on that place, several cultures that inhabited the region as well as conflicts among those cultures. Sandalack regretfully concludes that this dramatic place has gone from being an active, dynamic and dangerous site where life, death and spiritual matters were worked out in partnership with the landscape to a safe, frozen-in-time museum where it is difficult to have any existential experience at all.

Sustainability rather than fabrication is the subject of the final article written by Saphinaz-Amal Naguib intertwined with a photo essay by Stein Farstadvoll,

in their wander through the fishing village of Vardø, north Norway. Using the trope of *flânerie*, they investigate the strategies used to prompt, stage and shape affective atmospheres in heritage productions. In this case the strategies included the commissioning and building of large monuments, the restoration of old emblematic buildings, and the holding of arts festivals where, in the first of them, international street artists created about fifty works of art on the walls of abandoned buildings, thus giving them a new life. The result is a positive change in the atmosphere of the town, such that Vardø is transformed into an emergent, diffuse museum with touchstones of local culture and memory.

These ten articles all agree on the vital connections between museum and place. The true nature and worth of these connections vary. Some may be positive, as is noted by Sandahl and Davis; despite best efforts, some may be problematic, as Harris, Sandalack, Weiser, Low and Madsen detail. Small museums generally seem to be more flexible, be more attentive to individual, community and local culture, Smeds' point. Larger bodies, for Brulon the city of Rio de Janeiro, find it harder to accommodate or integrate varying points of view. Perhaps integration is part of the problem: colonialism has damaged both Indigenous institutions and post-colonial societies. What becomes clear is that when museums work in partnership with communities, their culture and their environments, as Brown and Brown recommend, when visitors can participate with a meaningful social agenda, such as Smeds' story or Naguib's telling of the revitalization of Vardø, or when the displacement of buildings is done sensitively, as Bangstad recommends, the joining of museum and place makes a strong, meaningful statement.

Ann Davis and Kerstin Smeds

# Papers



# Topographies of Hope, Fear and Anger<sup>1</sup>

*Jette Sandahl*



*Embeddedness in land and territory.* Photo: Jette Sandahl.

## What place does to us

I know what place means and what places does to a person. I know what it is like when I cross the bridge into the unique landscape where I grew up. I know how my breath quickens and deepens at the same time, and how my hand steadies on the steering wheel. I become both alert and calmer, both lighter and heavier at the same time, my hunger satiated. My eyes find rest when the horizon is always far away and at the exact right height in my field of vision. I know how I took form and was shaped by a landscape. I know my body leans out of the

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1. The themes in this text were developed for a couple of different conference presentations, and have appeared in a shorter digital version, as Jette Sandahl, “Home-town and other ambiguous constructs”: [http://network.icom.museum/fileadmin/user\\_upload/minisites/camoc/PDF/Newsletters/Milan\\_sandahl.pdf](http://network.icom.museum/fileadmin/user_upload/minisites/camoc/PDF/Newsletters/Milan_sandahl.pdf). From these contexts there is a subtext of an implicit and explicit dialogue with two important documents for museums and for ICOM (the International Council of Museums), the *Siena Charter. Museums and Cultural Landscapes. A document proposed by ICOM Italy at the International Conference in Siena, July 7<sup>th</sup> 2014*: [http://icom.museum/fileadmin/user\\_upload/pdf/News/Carta\\_di\\_Siena\\_EN\\_final.pdf](http://icom.museum/fileadmin/user_upload/pdf/News/Carta_di_Siena_EN_final.pdf); and the *Unesco Recommendation concerning the protection and promotion of museums and collections, their diversity and their role in society*, 17 November 2015: [http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=49357&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=49357&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html). Accessed May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

wind as do the trees, and how it makes sense that the term is to grow up in a place, and have it be part of you forever. I know what sunrise sounds like, how snow smells, and how one is compelled to go stand by the sea when it is really angry. I know how soil glistens when the plough has just cut through it. I know how home is where opposites melt and relax into unity.

So I do not question people's love of land or embeddedness in landscape and territory, nor the accompanying sense of belonging, of home and of identity. I am, as Francis Meyers says, 'born knowing that the place itself runs through me like rain soaking into sand'.<sup>1</sup> But still I have a need to critically examine these emotions. Do they encourage tender protection of the natural and cultural landscapes? Are they respectful of the needs of others to equally worship this land or landscape? Are they ready to share with others the responsibility of continuously and painstakingly nurturing it? Or is it a jealous and possessive love, obsessed with ownership only, scorching and consuming its object in the process?

Can museums develop a critical perspective which supports love of the specificities of space, land and landscape without perpetuating and disseminating the exclusionary mechanism of nationalism and xenophobia? Can we adapt our historic concepts of identity to include processes of globalization, rapid changes and increased migration, and to support the realities of shared, global futures?

## **Museums and the geopolitics of love of place in times of displacement**

In their dramatic variety and diversity, my home territories shaped me for multiple attachments. As good parenting prepares one for new and other loves, having been embraced by one landscape, I learned to trust the land and landscape to receive and nurture me. I, for one, could not wait to get away from the place, which I so did love, and celebrate the liberation from the serfdom shadowed in my genetic memory. I, and millions like me, migrate happily, lightheartedly, on the wings of globalization, with multiple places having become home.

The migration from the rural to the urban settings continue in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Urban cultures are constituted in constant additions of people, of people finding their way into new lives and new choices. The sense of identity opens up in and to transitions. Metaphors of identity shift, from the single tap root to a myriad of other rooting systems and bases for growth and well-being. 20<sup>th</sup> century's concepts of identity were rooted almost solely in the vertical and historical, in personal and collective memories, in the past. 21<sup>st</sup> century concepts begin to dissolve these, or to differentiate into an acknowledgement of the impact and importance of also the horizontal connections, contemporary connectivities and communities.

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1. Frances Meyers, *Under Magnolia. A Southern Memoir*, (New York: Broadway Books, April 1, 2014).

Can we learn to talk about the complex and contradictory mix of movement, of mobility and displacement of the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Learn to talk in one breath, respectfully, of both the desire to experience what is new and different, the jubilant liberation of being free to leave, and, and, on another hand, the boundless sense of loss of being forced to leave one home, one's ancestral land? Can we let these multiple narratives coexist as opposing truths? But truths nonetheless?

These years, an estimated 44,000 people are forced every day to flee their homes due to conflict and persecution. In total an estimated 68 million people, half of whom are children, were driven away from their homes, home towns, home lands over recent years. 85 % of the world's displaced people are hosted in developing countries.<sup>1</sup> And while the wars, changing climates and economic exploitation causing this flight are in essence globally connected and generated, there is little willingness to engage in global responsibility, accountability or solidarity. Denying blatantly the interconnectedness of one continent's wealth and other continent's poverty, forgetting conveniently the great exodus from Europe in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century caused by local inequality, exploitation and consequent poverty, disowning colonialism and imperialism and the conflicts generated by arbitrary drawing of post-war national borders, and willfully ignoring that most displaced people are already hosted by neighboring areas, the rich West is enacting at times bizarre versions of the battles of primogeniture, of claiming rights to place and privilege based on birth. The shocking images from 2015 of masses of people, men, women, the pregnant, children walking the highways of Europe as roads to nowhere, are overlaid in 2018 by images of toddlers isolated in cages by US authorities, by national border reinforced, by increased profiling for faith, ethnicity and language, by refugee boats denied entry into European ports, echoing, unthinkably a decade ago, the ghostship Voyage of the Damned of the St. Louis in 1939.

I distrust the false notion of scarcity which has us believe that our territory can nourish only a few. I have never been able to make the leap of faith from the attachment to the particulars of a local landscape into the construct of a more or less arbitrarily delineated country, or the even more abstract construction of nationhood? Our professional vigilance is called for in museums, if our concepts of cultural heritage are not to be easily annexed or hijacked by nationalism and xenophobia - a xenophobia so mainstream that it governs major political parties, but extreme enough to have lead the country where I live rapidly to the wrong side of human rights, with immigration legislation less permeable than medieval city walls. I do not believe that museums can celebrate local cultural landscapes in innocence, in ignorance or in denial of the massive current global displacement. I lament the absence of reactions and response by museums at the velocity and radicality with which the callousness and contempt for human lives have become an accepted part and norm of everyday life.

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1. <http://www.unhcr.org/figures-at-a-glance.html>. Accessed May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

As the international humanitarian and political organization created to prevent a repeat of the atrocities of WW2 are unable to intervene or solve what must be recognized as a permanent – and permanently increasing global condition as climate change becomes a stronger factor in ruining larger territories for human habitation, can museums make relevant contributions?

## Museum case

The Baksi Museum<sup>1</sup> in Turkey, rises, magically, unexpectedly, on the hillside, in the farthest corner of Anatolia. It is, however, far from a mirage. Solidly anchored to the ground with concrete and local boulders, and through its founder's personal narrative of topographic belonging and love for a territory, the museum explores the radical potential of a museum, when rooted equally strongly in a commitment to serving a community, to strong museological principles, and to high artistic aspirations.



*The Baksi Museum appearing, magically, unexpectedly, on the hillside.*

Photo: Jette Sandahl

The Baksi Museum provides more than 4000 m<sup>2</sup> of public areas, exhibition halls, workshops, conference facilities, a library, open depots, a museum shop, a cafe as well as guest houses. Impeccable, minimalistic aesthetics provide a structure and clarity around the many different artistic and social narratives that interweave in the museum. The eclectic mix of the collections, spanning contemporary art to local folk culture, is a defining features of the museum and supported by an active collecting process. Production, however, is as important a dimension of the Baksi Museum as are collecting and exhibiting.

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1. A longer version of this text about Baksi has appeared as "A Museological Model of Hope", in *Regional Museums as Generators of Development*, (Baksi Art Foundation, 2015).

In spacious workshops local women reclaim, learn and relearn the skills of spinning and weaving. The sound of busy looms and smiling concentration surfaces a story of secluded women enticed out of their homes into paid employment, and of their daughters' entry into the educational system. There is a continuous creation of contemporary art, through the nurturing of children and young local talents, and through an art intern program. Established as well as up-and-coming artists from the capital come to take part in workshops and exhibitions at Baksi. The art speaks for itself, layer by layer, with sparse interpretation, while the strong social agenda appears between or behind the lines, never as heavy-handed didactic positioning.

The Baksi Museum sits on the furthest fault lines of European migration and places itself at the core of the center/periphery dichotomy, which mars Europe as a whole as well as the individual nations within Europe. The urban centers grow continuously, while the rural areas depopulate correspondingly, to a level where local cultures are left vulnerable, threatened and depleted. The Baksi Museum disrupts and counteracts the dependencies of the urban centers, both in artistic and economic terms. It sees itself as both a 'cultural interaction point' and a 'cultural resistance point', where the rural meets the urban; where traditional craft, art and culture meet contemporary art and lifestyles and the slow, complex, and difficult cultural *metis sage*. Turning the artistic, social and emotional concepts of tradition and modernity inside out, the Baksi Museum breaks new museological ground and radically democratizes access to culture in an almost absolutely disenfranchised region.

## Topographies of power and inequality

When I contemplate the profusion of equestrian statues, the statues of kings, bishops, noblemen on the streets and plazas of Copenhagen<sup>1</sup>, and think about the absence of monuments to the infants who never got a voice, the mothers whose lives were lost, the unknown poor who left behind as little as they had had in life, I empathize with the rage of the people who day by day see their own subjugation celebrated in buildings, streets, plazas and monuments proudly commemorating the names of the oppressors. As people across the world demonstrate and protest how continued oppression – not least racial - is built into the materiality of physical spaces, memorializing, supporting and legitimizing slavery, segregation and apartheid, the official, facile response tends to be that one cannot revise history, while, obviously, the intention of the protest is not to change history as such, but to begin, in the present time, to address and to right historic wrongs. I believe that even for cases less straight forward than Rhodes in South Africa and confederate generals in the US, the cultural sector and the

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1. During the 2010's, on the mornings of March 8<sup>th</sup>, International Women's Day, male statues in Copenhagen would wake up dressed up in pink tutus, see for instance <https://www.flickr.com/groups/pinkpatriarken/pool/>. Accessed May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

agencies responsible for heritage conservation have to come up with new and better answers than that.

In Denmark, national museum legislation obliges local authorities, in urban planning, to reflect and protect the narrative qualities and the cultural historical values and significance of a building, of a cluster of buildings or of a neighborhood.<sup>1</sup> The Museum of Copenhagen is a formally recognized agency in the public hearing processes conducted by the Municipality of Copenhagen concerning urban planning and decisions about changes in the built environment. As the museum sector has pointed out, this advisory position for museums could be much stronger and much more formalized, but my main issue in the current context is really whether we, as museums, are actually making the best possible use of this platform and potential influence on the future of our cities?

Do we have the motivation, and do we use the right methods and tools to translate historic knowledge into addressing the dilemmas of the present and the future, and to meaningfully mediate between preservation and innovation? As expert on material cultures and on how physical environments translate into social structures and social patterns, and vice versa, should we, in the face of increasing urban inequality and socio-spatial conflicts, still have preservation as our core and defining value? Or should we rather be advocating massive change to urban landscapes which have carried and continue to carry the material underpinnings of the splits, divisions and hegemonic social structures of our history and heritage? Can we develop other, concrete, socially more just and more sustainable visions for our city, our region or country?

When one crosses the 100 meters of the Queen Louise's Bridge in Copenhagen, one loses almost seven years of one's life. Or phrased less sensationally and more precisely, the life expectancy between two adjacent neighborhoods varies by almost seven years, from 79.4 to 72.7 if one is male, from 83.7 to 77.4 if one is a woman, in this small capital.<sup>2</sup> And if one continues north, to the rich coastal suburbs, one can of course regain those years again and more. Up past any average for the city, and up past the national average.<sup>3</sup>

Longevity or life expectancy are not the worst indicator of quality of life, and certainly function as tangible evidence of the inequalities marring contemporary societies, even those that have been known as model welfare states. Behind these figures lie an abyss of structural differences in income, gender, levels of education, general health and wellbeing – modified or exacerbated, of course, by some personal choices. The municipality of Copenhagen publishes its own documentation of core inequalities in a series of 'socio-economic maps', dynamic, interactive maps, with data back to 1995, coupling demographic and geographic

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1. The Danish Museum Law: <https://www.retsinformation.dk/Forms/R0710.aspx?id=162504#Kap8>. Accessed May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

2. [https://www.kk.dk/sites/default/files/2015\\_middellevetid.pdf](https://www.kk.dk/sites/default/files/2015_middellevetid.pdf). Accessed July 7<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

3. <https://www.dst.dk/da/Statistik/emner/befolkning-og-valg/doesfald-og-middellevetid>. Accessed May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

data into a comprehensive overview of the parameters and composition of urban inequality as it plays out year by year in a rich European capital. 'Copenhagen has had its share of topographic conflicts, of shifting policies of urban renewal, of politically motivated slum clearances, of gentrification, of violent, and never forgotten or forgiven, battles and evictions of squatters, of inadvertent ghettoization. The socio-economic maps are supposed to aid the Municipality of Copenhagen in identifying problem areas and in directing municipal initiatives to counter these inequalities to the right areas, and aid residents in understanding their neighbourhood or choosing the neighbourhood in which they decide to live.'<sup>2</sup>

Maps like these, with their simple, colour-coded intersections of topography, socio-economics and demographics, could be essential tools for museums in their core planning and definition of priorities, and in earning a relevant role 'in the social system and as a factor in social integration and cohesion' and the services we can provide to also 'the most fragile and alienated populations'.<sup>3</sup>

Layer by layer, frame by frame, the basic maps document the history and patterns of what I think of as the topography of class, the segregation, polarization and gentrification of a city, through parameters such as levels of income, level of education, size and quality of living quarters, access to or exclusion from the labor market, across the city. A series of maps show the topography of race, in terms of the segregation of the population and distribution of Western or non-Western residents in various sections and neighborhoods. Segregation in city planning and in the built environment is one of the most efficient strategies in producing and maintaining racism. The forcible move of millions of people in South Africa as part of the destruction of black communities and the implementation of apartheid is well known. In the US, the use of city zoning, of public housing and mortgage policies as deliberate strategies of racial discrimination, is under renewed scrutiny<sup>4</sup>, and legislative proposals requiring a documentation of patterns of segregation as a prerequisite for receiving federal housing funding are being developed.<sup>5</sup>

Maps like these are produced by most major cities, often even in greater and multiple details, showing the stable and the shifting patterns of education, employment, affluence, deprivation, gentrification, increasing polarization, segregation and ghettoization.<sup>6</sup> The Copenhagen maps also include a map of where

1. <http://kbhkort.kk.dk/spatialmap?&profile=sociokort>. Klick "Udenfor arb. Markedet" (only in Danish). Accessed May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

2. <http://brugstedet.dk/eksempel/bedre-byplanlaegning-med-socioekonomisk-kort/>

3. Unesco, *Recommendations concerning the protection and promotion of museums and collections, their diversity and their role in society*, 17 November 2015: [http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=49357&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=49357&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html). Accessed May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

4. Ta-Nehisi Coates, "The Case for Reparations," in *The Atlantic*: <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/06/the-case-for-reparations/361631/>

5. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/07/08/us/census-race-map.html>. Accessed May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

6. "America is more Diverse than Ever – but Still Segregated", in *Washington Post* (May 10, 2018):

residents feel safe and unsafe, a topography of fear, which interestingly, at a time where other metropolises work intensely<sup>1</sup> with shaping cities more to the needs of women and the safety of women and girls, remain genderless, and thereby picks up the nightlife, drugs and gang warfare arenas for male fear of male violence, rather than female fear of male violence, of dark areas, parks, desolate streets.

### **Museum case**

Can we see beyond the divisions, splits and dichotomies of current geopolitics, and create museums as participatory platforms, where disagreement, social conflicts and political movements can find articulation? Do we ensure that the fears, angers and hopes of people's everyday lives are part of our core business? Do we allocate funding where our democratic rhetoric is? The Museum of Copenhagen, in the late 2000's, shifted its focus away from the closed, physically or metaphorically, walled city to a focus on continuous exchange with the surrounding world as a precondition for urban growth and development, and on the heritage of the capital as rooted way beyond its own geographical area in absorbing, transforming and passing on the multifarious and hybrid cultures of the many people migrating, domestically and internationally, to the city.

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[https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2018/national/segregation-us-cities/?utm\\_term=.5da0a2c813ec](https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2018/national/segregation-us-cities/?utm_term=.5da0a2c813ec).

See also the study of the patterns of socio-spatial inequalities by Antoine Fleury & Jean-Christophe François & Hélène Mathian & Antonine Ribardièrre & Thérèse Saint-Julien, "Les inégalités socio-spatiales progressent-elles en Île-de-France?", in [www.metropolitiques.org](http://www.metropolitiques.org) : [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/284446124\\_Les\\_inegalites\\_socio-spatiales\\_progressent-elles\\_en\\_Ile-de-France](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/284446124_Les_inegalites_socio-spatiales_progressent-elles_en_Ile-de-France). Both accessed May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

1. Vienna was one of the first cities to transcend the initial ridicule of 'wanting to paint the streets pink?' and work seriously with gender issues in city development, see for instance *Gender Mainstreaming in Urban Planning and Urban Development*, Werkstattbericht 130A. MA 18 – Urban Development and Planning, (Vienna 2013): <https://www.wien.gv.at/stadtentwicklung/studien/pdf/bo08358.pdf>; and Eva Kail, "How Vienna planned a city for women", *Apolitical*. August 23, 2017: [https://apolitical.co/solution\\_article/vienna-designed-city-women/](https://apolitical.co/solution_article/vienna-designed-city-women/). Both accessed May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019.



*The Copenhagen Museum Wall, an interactive, experiential mapping of the city. Photo: Allan Smith.*

As part of a more future-oriented and dynamic interpretation of the cultural heritage, the Museum of Copenhagen developed a number of participatory platforms. On the digital Copenhagen Museum Wall people explore the historic and contemporary landscape of Copenhagen, contributing their own personal experiences and subjective landmarks, mapping an experiential cityscape of past and present memories and emotions, of the secret places and sacred places, the quirky, the pompous, the forgotten, the demolished, the divisions and conflicts, the violence and battles of urban neighborhoods. These participatory principles were extended also into exhibitions and into collecting of contemporary objects.

A series of core projects, within research, archaeology, collecting, outreach and exhibitions, under the shared heading of 'Becoming a Copenhagener' reflect this dynamic concept of identity and history, an up-close-and-personal approach, where migration is seen as old as the city itself, and urban identities as fluid processes rather than fixed entities, and shaped as much through hopes and aspirations for the future as by memories or obsession with the past. The chronological glorifications of the city's founding fathers of the permanent displays were replaced by thematic exhibitions on themes from migration to sustainability and waste management to sexuality and to urban nature. The museum committed to creating platforms for cultural participation, also for people who have not traditionally been represented or heard as active voices in a museum setting.

However, bringing a critical perspective and these personal, narrative and participatory methods into the museum's role as a public hearing partner for the municipal planning department, raising a much needed quality of life discussion, remained an unmet challenge. The museum was burnt, once, by flying too close to the highly politicized area of profitable demolition and urban planning, and never recovered to come unstuck from a deeper groove of a conservative default

position, with its clichés of safe and facile historic references, or to define new positions integrating the values and significance of a cultural historical approach with a perspective of empowerment, participation and social justice.

## **Topographic and socio-spatial conflicts and socio-spatial protest movements**

### **Socio-spatial conflicts and socio-spatial protest**

This is the highest ideal of democracy – that everyone can participate in making their own life and the life of the community – and the street is democracy’s greatest arena, the place where ordinary people can speak, unsegregated by walls, unmediated by those with more power. A lot of history has been written with the feet of citizens walking through their cities. Such walking is a bodily demonstration of political or cultural conviction and one of the most universally available forms of public expression,’ says Rebecca Solnit.<sup>1</sup>

I am interested in the parliament of the street, and how people express their anger and excavate the beach of their hope underneath the pavement, as the expression goes, when they feel other democratic processes fail them. I am interested in the specificity with which socio-spatial conflicts generate socio-political movements, and how these movements of protest and resistance are embedded in the cultural landscape, and are enacted spatially, in street marches, picket lines, sit-ins, occupations of urban spaces.

Occupy Wall Street initially, as the name implies, targeted the headquarters of financial capital, in protesting the consequences of the most recent financial crisis and the increasing concentration of global wealth with fewer and fewer people. Occupy Wall Street grew rapidly into a global movement, involving hundreds of thousands, disputing the increasing economic inequality and the measures of austerity, which, since they invariably hurt the most among the most vulnerable parts of the populations, also activated and involved professional groups like psychologists.

‘We no longer want a system where the selfishness of a few limit the lives and opportunities of the many’, said the placards of the Nuit Debout, at the Place de la République in Paris.<sup>2</sup> Street movements are mostly amorphous and non-hierarchical, and often expand into larger issues of life. Urban space is often not just the venue for expressing dissent, but is in itself part of the claims or the rights that are being articulated or fought for. Like the Taksim Gezi Park (in Istanbul) protest, they may originate in protecting a specific urban space, and evolve into

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1. Rebecca Solnit, *Wanderlust*, London 2014.

2. John Lichfield, “New Paris protest has no plans and no leaders... but still 1,000 protesters turn up every night to call for change”, *The Independent*, (Friday 8 April 2016): <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/new-paris-protest-has-no-plans-and-no-leaders-but-still-1000-protesters-turn-up-every-night-to-call-a6975686.html>.

defending the rights of assembly and the public use of public space, against an increasing international trend towards privatization of urban public spaces.

Segregation, the racialization of urban spaces, and racialized violence by urban authorities have generated a long tradition of street protests and revolts. After Ferguson, Black Lives Matter, following by the deaths of unarmed people of colour at the hands of police officers, mobilized massively against these patterns of killings and the systems that allow and encourage and depend on them. Using, as did Reclaim the Streets, the unofficial and raw places of the city, marches and sit-ins have shut down highways, staged encampments outside of police departments, lie-ins or die-ins in public places like shopping malls. In *Take back the night walks*, as part vigil, part protest, part celebration, women since the 1970's, as a reaction to series of violent crimes against women, have defied and transcended their fear, and walked, defiantly and collectively, the streets on which they are continuously, as individuals, at risk.

When Arab Spring came to Cairo, kick-starting a new life, with both a physical and a symbolic spatial pivot points and pivot points in the Tahrir Bridge and Tahrir Square, in the cross field of the new and the old, of liberation and repression, sexual harassment and sexual violence against women became a public, rather than a private issue. Young women invented new digital technologies, such as the HarassMaps<sup>1</sup> to re-negotiate and navigate the gendered city, to map and report, to keep each other updated and to anticipate sexual attacks – inventing technologies which have since found use in a number of other cities and countries to create greater safety.<sup>2</sup>

### **Museums and the rights to the city**

These diverse manifestations of a continued battle, are, of course, about the Rights to the City, as Henri Lefebvre said. To whom does the city belong? Who owns public space? Who owns the city? Are we, as museums, conscious and active participants in this battle? Or do we, in our passivity dressed up as neutrality, serve to confirm the powers that be? Or are we, at least as a very minimum, out there, with our ears to the ground, trying to pick up and understand the grievances, the methods and the messages? When we advise our cities or regions on the cultural landscape, how and where do we find guidance for where our responsibilities lie as individual professionals, and on where to position our museums, in these times and sites of conflicts, in contested cases and areas?

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1. <https://harassmap.org/en/>, accessed May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

2. See for instance also <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/dec/12/india-sexual-assault-women-safety-apps>, accessed May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019.



*The roof garden of the European Solidarity Centre overlooking religious and industrial cityscape of Gdansk. Photo: Jette Sandahl*

### **Museum case**

The European Solidarity Centre in Gdansk in Poland is a museum embedded in a larger context of an educational, research and academic centre, an archive, a library and multimedia library, a conference centre and home to a number of NGO's, in a monumental new building, situated in the symbolically significant neighborhood of the Gdansk shipyard district, the site of the origin of the Solidarity movement, with its entry still through the narrow, anonymous looking but locally meaningful and well-known Lenin gate #2. The permanent displays compose a rare and evocative narrative, dense with information and charged with emotional content, of personal agency and empowerment through solidarity, a movement starting from below, deepening and widening, turning into a social and political movement, which vast gained international recognition and importance and proved resilient enough to make one of the world's toughest political systems stumble. It is an exciting story line – not least for being actually true. One is not often in museum presented, as here, with 'ordinary people', workers and working class intellectuals in their physical and social work environment, and as agents in a significant historical moment.

Confidently rooted in the site and detailed knowledge of places and processes of work, the exhibitions show an original, seamless integration between innovative multimedia, large scale projections and photographs, and a captivating use of symbolic three-dimensional objects. The political message is carried by collections of a unique complexity and depth, secured, preserved and protected by individuals and organizations who understood the need to document vital social and political currents and undercurrents for the future.

Striking workers compiled their demands on large plywood panels. After the strike they were collected and moved to the Solidarity headquarters, and in 1981 donated to the Maritime Museum. The museum made copies and stored the originals away, so when martial law was introduced it was the panels from the exhibition which were confiscated and destroyed by the Security Services, while the originals were removed and hidden for protection by a museum staff. In 1996 they were returned to the museum, and in 2014 these original panels were deposited with the Solidarity Museum.



*'Donating blood is the highest act of humanitarianism, telling of great social solidarity'. Photo: Jette Sandahl*

The bullet-ridden leather jacket belonged to 20-years old shipyard worker killed in the December 1970 protests in Gdynia. The jacket was given to the museum by his mother. In the pockets was, among other things, a blood donors card, carrying the motto: Donating blood is the highest act of humanitarianism, telling of great social solidarity.

In its manifold activities of research, collecting, exhibitions, educational programs, local community work and national and international conferences, the European Solidarity Centre translates the knowledge and experiences from the Solidarity movement into an active commitment to the cultural, social and poli-

tical situation of the present time. It is ‘a place where history meets the future’, and a meeting place for people who want to explore the meaning of democracy, open society, social justice.

## Topography of sustainability

When, in 1982, artist Agnes Denes created *Wheatfield – A Confrontation*, a paradoxical installation of sowing two acres of wheat field on a stony landfill in Lower Manhattan, two blocks from Wall Street and the World Trade Center, with a yield of 1000 pounds of wheat, it was a rare and early critique of the misplaced priorities symbolic of Wall Street and urban life<sup>1</sup>, and the concerns with how, in contemporary urban environments, people are supposed to live without nature.

In the decades since then, rapid climate change and dramatically shifting weather patterns have forced urban authorities to address, through a plethora of new strategies and technologies, the challenges of combining urban growth and long term sustainability. Sustainable solutions need to develop new models which go beyond the dichotomy or polarization between rural and urban, between nature and culture, which has been characteristic of the previous centuries, and they seem best developed through a very close dialogue with the residents of a given area. Sustainable solutions tend to share, under very diverse conditions and in very diverse shapes, the principles of ‘re-naturing’ cities, as it is often conceptualized, and share principles of re-integrating elements of hand-labour into fields which have been fully industrialized or mechanized.

## Participatory architecture and collaborative practices

Working closely with local traditions, Chinese architects Wang Shu and Lu Wenyue are developing practices which serve as models globally, and which, in addition to historical preservation or demolition for new construction, experiment with ways of letting ‘new and old, past and present, handcraft and industrial construction coexist.’<sup>2</sup> Their extensive and detailed research documents how the use of ancient and traditional techniques is environmentally, socially, and culturally most sustainable, and how rural life and village life continue to carry models of social harmony and respect for nature that are relevant also for larger city development today. They let the countryside and the city influence each other, preferring series of smaller individual buildings to fewer larger ones, preserving the essential balance between building mass and inner courtyards,

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1. See Agnes Dene’s works: <http://www.agnesdenesstudio.com/works7.html>. Accessed May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

2. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ctQwsSRODFQ>, *The Annual Architecture Lecture, 2016, Royal Academy of Arts – Wang Shu, Pritzker Architecture Prize, (2012)*. Accessed May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019; Rowan Moore, “Wang Shu: the architect challenging China’s obsession with scale”, *The Guardian* (Sun 16 Dec 2012):

“<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2012/dec/16/china-architecture-wang-shu-rowan-moore>; and Rab Messina, Wang Shu and Lu Wenyu in Bordeaux,” *TL Magazine*, (June 15 2015): <https://tlmagazine.com/wang-shu-lu-wenyu-arc-reve/>. All accessed in May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

and developing a series of prototypes to create variety in expression, in materials of wood, brick, basalt stone.

They question whether urbanization is the only route to development. They recycle, and experiment patiently with handmade materials, like tiles. Engaged to design the large new Fuyang museum-, gallery- and archive complex, they insisted with the authorities that this be embedded in a restoration of neighboring Wencun villages, in close consultation and cooperation with local residents, using their labour, knowledge of materials and techniques, and staying within the specific local vernacular. As the migration from country to city continues, and as half the world's population now live in cities, building cheap affordable housing is universally seen as the major challenge for the coming period, to maintain or to re-establish even a minimum measure of social balance and sustainability in the fabric of the city.

Chilean architect Alejandro Aravena<sup>1</sup> claims that out of 3 billion people living in cities today, 1 billion lives in poverty, and projects that of the 5 billion people living in cities in 2030, 2 billion will live under the line of poverty. He identifies a growth rate so profound that we need to build what corresponds to a new city for one million people per week over the next 15 years. He sees the responsibility of architects as serving the public good and as giving people 'tools to escape poverty', and tools which can 'subvert the forces that privilege individual gain over collective benefits.' Taking a model from the energy, initiative and skills which make the habitations of favelas and slums possible, albeit illegal, he builds good 'half houses', using the sparse and never sufficient available funding for a frame, a basic structure in several stories, with an infrastructure of plumbing and electricity installed, which the residents can then, over time, double or triple in size, using local materials they know and skills they already possess.

Blueprints for these houses are made freely available on-line to whoever wants to initiate similar building processes.

The only way or only strategy to even contemplate the enormous need for housing is to 'channel people's own power to build, people's own building capacity', and to bring together and synthesize all available funding by building 'bridges of trust

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0oIoPoe3qlg>, TED- talk, Alejandro Aravena, Pritzker Prize, 2016, My Architectural Philosophy? Bring the Community into the Process; See also Rowan Moore, "Alejandro Aravena, The shape of things to come", *The Guardian*, (Sun 10Apr 2016):

<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2016/apr/10/architect-alejandro-aravena-pritzker-prize-elemental-housing-iquique-constitucion-tsunami-defences>;

Oliver Wainwright, "Alejandro Aravena's Venice architecture biennale: 'We can't forget beauty in our battles'", *The Guardian*, (Thu 26 May 2016):

<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2016/may/26/venice-architecture-biennale-alejandro-aravena>;

Britta Nagel, "Wir müssen weltweit eine Milliarde Häuser bauen", *Welt*, (28.5.2016): <https://www.welt.de/finanzen/immobilien/article155775272/Wir-muessen-weltweit-eine-Milliarde-Haeuser-bauen.html?wtrid=onsite.onsitesearch>. All links accessed in May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

between citizens, governments, businesses'. These two, much published and much awarded, 21<sup>st</sup> century examples reflect well-known 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century scales of urban development. They mirror precisely the worker's cooperative settlements from the 1880's in Copenhagen, which offered gradual buy-in to ownership and gradual expansion from within.



*June Sunday in the 'Potatorows', as this 1880's housing area is affectionately nicknamed after the marked gardens that preceded it. Photo: Jette Sandahl.*

Condemned as slum in the 1970's then saved by resident petitions, these humble houses, with their small gardens back and front, have now become prime real estate for a wealthy elite. The obvious quality of life of this kind of build has caused them to be copied in a number of new neighborhoods in Copenhagen - unfortunately, however, without copying the essential model of user participation, which could be a road to affordability, allowing privacy, ownership, empowerment and gardens, for also the less than rich.



*The Magical Tower Garden shifted one's whole perception and perspective.*  
Photo: Jette Sandahl.

### ***Re-naturing the urban and playing with the alchemy of fertility***

Irish gardener Diarmuid Gavin's Magical Tower Garden, created for the Chelsea Flower Show 2012, broke up the usual horizontal format and showcased new models in stacking a small area densely and intensely. The Magical Tower Garden had 5000 plants and trees, distributed and planted over the seven floors according to the successive conditions of light and shade and wind and water from bottom to top. It had playful garden features like a Japanese pavilion and an American caravan, but also functional elements like solar panels, cold-frames

and greenhouse, useful and needed when attempting to re-localize food-growing into the urban and sub-urban areas. He asks,

*Can we in the future plan in an innovative way to have gardens in an increasingly urbanized society? Can we make every use of our space, make every use of our resources, to create gardens that make the most use of light, make gardens that are on top of each other, drip through everything, allow plants to grow up and to hang down, to create escapes for people? With the pressure for more and more housing, how can we provide garden space and environment?'*

The re-naturing of cities is not or no longer a question of making cities more beautiful or more pleasant to live in by increasing the number of parks, gardens or green areas as in previous centuries. Urban nature is about understanding a city as a large ecosystem, as part of a landscape and natural environment, and developing ways of working, respectfully, with 'the regulations and balances of nature, which we have once – mistakenly – thought we could disregard.'<sup>2</sup>

As with the exponentially increasing need for housing, the need for increase in food production has been estimated to between 70 and 100% by 2050, while at the current rate an area of arable land the size of Italy is lost annually, on top of the third of arable land on the planet which has disappeared because of erosion, exacerbated by the rise of industrial agriculture and artificial contaminants in the soil since the 1960s. New models and methods are sought in examples like the intensive marked gardens of large conurbations like Paris and New York of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which allowed the 1 million population of New York to source its food from a radius of 10 kilometers, and allowed Paris to be self-sufficient with vegetables produced inside the city limits, and with a surplus to export to London.<sup>3</sup>

Across the world small farms and experimental micro-agriculture like the Bec-Hellouin biological Farm<sup>4</sup> conduct practical and theoretical research, experimenting with re-intensifying food production. A huge increase in fertility and yield is demonstrated, when production reverts away from the logics and methods of mechanized, industrial agriculture to traditional, labor intensive, models, based on the newest techniques of mixed crops, dense interplanting, raised beds and hotbeds, permacultures. Figures as low as 370 square meters are cited as sufficient to yield all the food needed by a person for a year on a

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1. Diarmuid Gavin's Westland Magical Tower, Chelsea Garden Show, 2012: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uMUXQZFXRo>, episodes 1-10. Accessed in May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

2. *La Ville Fertile. Vers une nature urbaine*, (Paris, Education au DD – Exposition, lundi 11 avril 2011) : <http://cdurable.info/La-Ville-fertile-vers-une-nature-urbaine-exposition-cite-chaillot-architecture-Paris,3389.html>. Accessed in May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

3. Perrine and Charles Hervé-Gruyer, Forword Eliot Coleman, *Miraculous Abundance: One Quarter Acre, Two French Farmers, and Enough Food to Feed the World*, (Published March 23<sup>rd</sup> 2016 by Chelsea Green Publishing Company: London).

4. <https://www.fermedubec.com/english/>. Accessed in May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

vegetarian diet as well as compost needed to maintain fertility. The point, of course, is to move away from the extractive practices of preying on non-renewable resources, consuming organic resources without returning or contributing an equal amount of resources to the cycle of fertility. The point is to feed and replenish the soil – not just the current crop of plants - rather than to deplete it. Playing with the vertical and with the alchemy of fertility, to use the language of Hervé-Gruyer's *Miraculous Abundance*, summarizes a number of the new bio-intensive approaches.<sup>1</sup>

Focusing on sustainable solutions, as individuals, institutions, organizations, cities, or nations seems to be the fundamental, current version of the questions of what it means to respect, nurture and love a place and a cultural landscape. 'To plant trees,' said gardener Russell Page, 'is to give body and life to one's dreams of a better world.'<sup>2</sup>

### **A final Museum case**

A number of museums begin to address the issues of climate change – interestingly, with greater frequency and intensity in natural history museum than in cultural history museums, as if climate change is nature's problem rather than culture's?



*Open, edible Urban Garden in front of the Museum of Copenhagen, designed by landscape architect Jonas Schul. Photo: Museum of Copenhagen.*

The Museum of Copenhagen created exhibitions on waste and waste management and organized events focused on sustainability. It entered the theme of urban nature and the process of urban gardening in partnerships with the City of Copenhagen, which was Green Capital of Europe in 2014, with local, established and guerrilla urban gardeners, and with an international artist-and-gardener

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1. Hervé-Gruyer, 2016, *op.cit.*

2. Russell Page, *The Education of a Gardener*, (London: The Harvill Press Random House, 1995).

in residence. A series of interlinked exhibitions throughout the whole building focused on different aspects of urban nature and historic and current sustainable urban planning, including a floor dedicated to interactive spaces where children could build their own dream of a city. All museum grounds were transformed from forbidding dead and paved areas into open, inviting, playful and beautiful public gardens.



*Growth and life continue behind the closed museum building, in the Inner Garden, designed by artist Barbara Cooper. Photo: Jette Sandahl.*

While the museum is currently closed, and in the process of opening in a new building, the gardens have gained a life of their own. For a while they literally became 'living vital spaces', as Unesco says, as school groups took over part of the maintenance and people strayed in off the street to forage for dinner. Then gates were closed and locked and weeds took over. Among the weeds, the fascine continues to absorb the overflow of rain, the perennials, the roses, the fruit bushes and apple trees live, grow and mature, unperturbed, calmly 're-wilding', as they say, and offer their yield, to the winds, the bees and the birds.

# Juxtaposed Concepts of Place

*Jennifer Harris*

As heritage production continues to free itself from the Western focus on monumentality, it turns not only towards intangible cultural heritage and histories salvaged from masculine, European narratives, but towards place and visitors. Heritage production thus mirrors much of the turn to place in the wider humanities. The concept of place poses challenges to researchers because it is conceptualized in a variety of ways. The strictly geographical has long been by-passed in critical analysis, in its stead place is regarded as polysemic, for example, as produced<sup>1</sup>, as event-like<sup>2</sup>, as material form accompanied by cultural expression<sup>3</sup>, multiple in its meanings<sup>4</sup>, as a bounded meeting zone<sup>5</sup>, as characterized by edge<sup>6</sup>, as an organizer of memory<sup>7</sup> and fluid in its encounter possibilities.<sup>8</sup> It is multi-theoretical, complex and contested argue Corsane, Convery and Davis<sup>9</sup>, but so ubiquitous, says Malpas, that we scarcely notice it.<sup>10</sup>

This paper launches from the philosophic flux of the pondering of place. It examines an extreme, dark heritage site where different conceptions of place have framed the construction of heritage texts in disorienting ways. This paper looks at a group of conceptually different memorial places as an example of the complexity and contradiction of memory places produced in heritage discourse. Although curators and researchers share the ideal of the active visitor in a place, there is a troubling gap between theorizing place at the academic level and its appearance in much curatorial work. What are the meaning effects and visitor

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1. Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, (Maiden, MA: Blackwell, 1991).

2. Doreen Massey, *For Space*, (London: Sage, 2005).

3. Ian Convery, Gerard Corsane and Peter Davis, "Introduction: Making sense of Place", 1-10, in Gerard Corsane, Ian Convery and Peter Davis, eds, *Making Sense of Place: Multidisciplinary Perspectives*, (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2012). Ebook Library.

4. Lyn Leader-Elliott "Cultural Landscape and Sense of Place: Community and Tourism Representations of the Barossa", 207-218, in Corsane *et al.*, *op. cit.*

5. Vaike Fors, "The Empty Meeting Place – Museum Metaphors and their Implications for Learning", *Designs for Learning*, Vol 5 no 1-2, 130-145, 2012, 140. doi: org/10.2478/dfl-2014-0007

6. Edward S Casey, "Place and Edge", 23-38, in Jeff Malpas, ed, *The Intelligence of Place: Topographies and Poetics*, (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015), 33. Ebook Library.

7. Carole Blair, Greg Dickinson and Brian Ott, "Introduction: Rhetoric/Memory/Place", 1-54, in Greg Dickinson, Carole Blair and Brian Ott, eds, *Places of Public Memory: The Rhetoric of Museums and Memorials*, (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2010), 24.

8. Fors, "The Empty Meeting Ground", *op. cit.*, 142.

9. Convery *et al.*, "Introduction: Making Sense of Place", *op. cit.*, 6.

10. Jeff Malpas, "Introduction – The Intelligence of Place", 1-10, in Jeff Malpas, ed, *The Intelligence of Place: Topographies and Poetics*, (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015), 2. Ebook Library.

possibilities when curatorial assumptions about place vary widely, although positioned side-by-side and apparently having the same memory aims?

The production of the visitor as a witness via place is a significant shift in heritage production, one that is linked integrally to tourism and its preoccupation with place branding. Cole observes, in his review of Holocaust literature, that memory is understood as having a source and that that source is being transferred from people to places.<sup>1</sup> This is partly because there are ever fewer living survivors of the Holocaust, but also because being present in a place is a powerfully different type of memory – or witnessing – from reading historical accounts. Jacobs says that visiting “memorialsapes” ... turns visitors into “witnesses to the atrocities of the past”<sup>2</sup>. Previously, concepts of past and present were understood to be highly differentiated. Now they are drifting together as anxiety about authenticity and verifiable fact are becoming less important than personal experience evoked by embodied place encounters. Links to visitors within the wider practices of tourism, however, raise concerns about the ethics of leisured visits to dark memory places.<sup>3</sup> Sites associated with human rights abuses are visited, or consumed, in a tourist flow which encompasses shopping, dining and other light-hearted activities which, by comparison, appear disrespectful.

This paper does not pin down a definition of place, but works from the position that place – as experienced, remembered and embodied – is one of the structuring elements of memory. Blair, Dickinson and Ott<sup>4</sup> describe the crucial organising memory role that place has in their discussion of the Rosenzweig and Thelen survey on Americans’ uses of the past. Among the most striking results of this research is that “Americans put more trust in history museums and historic sites than any other sources for exploring the past”<sup>5</sup>. Rosenzweig and Thelen explain that this includes putting more trust in historic places to explain the past than in witness accounts. This is consistent with Cole’s<sup>6</sup> observation, noted above, that place is supplanting memory and witness accounts as people’s preferred way of encountering the past. Blair *et al* attempt to explain why this should be so. They start with place as a signifier of desire.

*The signifier – the place – is itself an object of attention and desire. It is an object of attention because of its status as a place, recognisable and set apart from undifferentiated space. But it is an object of special attention because of its self-nomination as a site of significant memory of and for*

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1. Tim Cole, “Landscapes of Holocaust memory”, *Journal of Jewish Identities*, Vol 4 no 2, 2011, 71-75. doi.org/10.1353/jji2011.0011

2. Janet Jacobs, *Memorializing the Holocaust: Gender, Genocide and Collective Memory*, (London: I.B. Taurus), xxii. Ebook Library.

3. See, for example, Richard Sharpley and Philip Stone, eds, *The Darker Side of Travel: The Theory and Practice of Dark Tourism*, (Bristol: Channel View Publications, 2009).

4. Blair *et al*, *op. cit.*, 25.

5. Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen, *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 25.

6. Cole, *op. cit.*, 71.

*a collective. The signifier commands attention, because it announces itself as a marker of collective identity. It is an object of desire because of its claim to represent, inspire, instruct, remind, admonish, exemplify, and / or offer the opportunity for affiliation and public identification.<sup>1</sup>*

Thus place can be understood as encompassing memory in triggering a collective experience of the past, but Blair *et al* extend the idea of the signifying role of place by describing it as demanding a certain touristic performance by visitors.

*Memory places are destinations; they typically require visitors to travel to them. This has created a unique context for understanding the past, one that is rooted in touristic practices. The touristic context is rooted in projected or desired departure from the ordinary in a set of expectations... Those expectations are formed, in part, because memory places fashion themselves directly to distinguish themselves from the everyday.<sup>2</sup>*

A vacation is a significant departure from the everyday. This paper illustrates its discussion with a tourist resort, Rottnest Island, a former penal island for Indigenous prisoners in Western Australia. In contrast to its holiday fun, the island contains a group of memorialization places. Early in the twentieth century, the island became a holiday destination with a rhetoric of accessibility for all classes, and a ban on private land ownership. The idea of holiday democracy has dominated for decades and only recently has the need to memorialize the Indigenous past been an acknowledged issue. Some of the worst of human experiences are now presented incongruously beside the most enjoyable.

After a brief discussion of the background of Rottnest Island, three curatorial approaches to the construction of memorial place are examined. The first is evident in the museum, where place is understood implicitly as bounded and container-like. The second is place as embodied encounter and the third is place as hyperreality.

## **Wadjemup / Rottjest island background**

Wadjemup / Rottnest Island is separated by 20 kilometres of shark-infested ocean from the Perth metropolitan coast in Western Australia and is one of few close holiday destinations for a city of two million. The island is almost carless; visitors walk or cycle. A ferry ride of a mere 30 minutes is attractive to those who want a rapid change of scene. These short times and distances are important for understanding the strong local affection for Rottnest and begin to explain the reluctant acknowledgement of the shameful penal history.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Blair *et al*, *op. cit.*, 25-26.

2. *Ibid.*, 26.

3. The island has other histories also, as a boys' reformatory in the early twentieth century and a defense post and internment camp in World War II.

For the local Noongar people, the island is Wadjemup, “land over the sea where the spirits of the dead go”. Indigenous artefacts on Wadjemup date from 20,000 years ago, but the island appears not to have been inhabited or visited by Indigenous people after separation from the mainland 7000 years ago. The existence of the island was known to the Noongar people of the coastal plain, but only ever visited by European explorers.<sup>2</sup> The island is called “Wadjemup” by Indigenous people and “Rottnest Island” by the coloniser. Today the names are twinned in museum and heritage work, but “Wadjemup” is used rarely by tourism promoters. In this paper the two names, “Wadjemup” and “Rottnest Island”, or simply “Rottnest”, will be used interchangeably.

Shortly after colonisation in 1829, transportation of Indigenous offenders commenced, with the first Indigenous prisoners arriving in 1836. The “Rottnest Native Establishment” continued until 1931 by which time 3,700 men and boys had been incarcerated in cruel conditions. Some were transported in chains from more than 1000 kilometres away, across several climatic zones, cultures and language groups. The effect was, of course, culturally catastrophic and physically brutal. Many prisoners died from harsh treatment and winter cold. Green sums up the position of the Rottnest Native Establishment.

*By 1883, 179 prisoners, mostly from the north, were... so shockingly overcrowded... that more than 60 died in one influenza epidemic... During its long existence the role of the Establishment... changed from [a] vision of a training institution to a prison with a record of death, horror and despair unequalled by any other Aboriginal prison in the Australian colonies.<sup>3</sup>*

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1. Wadjemup <http://wadjemup.blogspot.com.au/> Accessed 2 November 2016.

2. The name “Rottnest” is derived from the Dutch “Rottenest”, that is, “rats’ nest”, a description from the visit by the Dutch in 1696 and their misrecognition of the island’s chief marsupial. The quokka was mistaken for a large rat.

3. Neville Green, *Broken Spears: Aborigines and Europeans in the Southwest of Australia*, (Focus Education Services, 1984), 172.



*Tourists' bicycles are parked around the airless prison cell in the nineteenth century sea wall. Here Indigenous prisoners were often incarcerated on their arrival on the island before being marched to the prison. Visible behind the cell is the white balcony of a tourist bungalow. The Indigenous penal past and the pleasure of a contemporary beach holiday appear, ironically, side-by-side. Photograph by the author.*

Cultural dislocation was embedded in the work performed by Indigenous prisoners. They were forced to build the island's penal architecture, including a crenulated governor's residence with its reference to English castles. The residence was used for summer vacations, 1858-64; the holidays took place during the worst of the penal period. Indigenous prisoners also built their own prison, called in English slang, "the Quod". Today the island's architecture is celebrated by tourism promoters who refer to it euphemistically as "colonial architecture"<sup>1</sup> with the implication that it was constructed by free colonists.

In 1911 the cramped, suffocating Quod cells, in which so many had died, were remodelled into holiday accommodation and continue to be used for that purpose at the time of writing. Ironies abound on this island, holiday makers also party and sunbake in the vicinity of the former gallows site, while the tourist myth of Rottnest as a holiday paradise is countered by three Reconciliation Action Plans outlining ways to bring Indigenous and non-Indigenous histories and people together.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Government of Western Australia, "Rottnest Is Exploring our Colonial Buildings", n.d. Pamphlet.  
 2. Rottnest Island Authority, <http://www.reconciliation.org.au/raphub/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Rottnest-RAP.pdf>. Accessed 1 November 2016.

Behind the Quod, a wooded area was a popular camping site until the discovery in 1985 of at least 369-370 bodies of Indigenous prisoners by Ground Probing Radar. Generations of campers have, therefore, holidayed in a mass graveyard. Place and memory should have broken out into broad, public historical consciousness in 1985, but the camp did not close until 2004.

In 2018 the hotel lease on the Quod expires and the Rottnest Island Authority will take control with the expectation that the old prison will be included in Reconciliation projects. If the Quod is interpreted as a memorial after 2018, it will be more than 30 years after the Indigenous island tragedy entered public consciousness with the revelation of the bodies under the camp site. The island museum and heritage staff grapple with a growing challenge to a long cherished idea of place – a romantic desert island for all. Drawing on Blair *et al*'s concept of place as the locus of desire is especially apt for Rottnest; the island as a place of desire is an embodied reality in sensual beach holidays. The island also presents historic place as desire because here is the place of the worst deaths in custody disaster in Australia; ten percent of prisoners died.

Desire for pleasure and desire for encounter with a dark tourist place are in relentless conflict on the island thus creating uncomfortable ironies and moral challenges. Wadjemup / Rottnest Island has experienced a “slow motion” eruption of memory over several decades. The collision of different types of memorial and tourist place produce the puzzling text that is Wadjemup /Rottnest. The belated recognition of the shocking penal past has resulted in the curatorial activation of several different types of place and implicitly, therefore, problematic visitor concepts.

## Place as contained, but with thresholds

Rottnest Museum is the first heritage place examined in this paper. Its exhibits are constructed from a version of place as contained. The museum occupies the Hay Store, one of the oldest buildings on the island. Its staff works with the implicit assumption of “museum” as conventional and bounded. Its metaphoric boundaries are highlighted by its thick, whitewashed walls. The visitor is invited to enter and leave, seemingly without having any impact on meanings. This short section argues, however, that this museum place achieves high moral and political impact despite its conventional positioning of the visitor as a disembodied eye.<sup>1</sup>

Typical of the work of many small museums, the exhibits survey the major features of tourism interest. For many years, Rottnest Museum explained – with apparent equality of moral and political emphasis – the architecture, fauna, flora and history, both of the penal and holiday resort pasts. Similar space was given to each broad topic and, therefore, Indigenous suffering appeared in a flow

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1. For discussion on the disembodied eye, see, for example, Fors, *op. cit.*, 130-145, 2012, p.140. doi: org/10.2478/dfl-2014-0007 and Helen Leahy, *Museum Bodies: The Politics and Practices of Visiting and Viewing*, (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2012).

with other histories. It was a familiar musealizing approach in which objects and ideas were detached from their lived realities and exhibited within the new reality of the museum.<sup>1</sup>

Fors describes the function of the disembodied eye in a museum. “When looking into a conventional exhibit area in a museum you see people usually strolling around rather silently looking at things.”<sup>2</sup> Fors explains the detachment as deriving from a time when museums were regarded as primarily educational and civilising.<sup>3</sup> Using Fors’ words, here, in Rottne Museum, the performative turn<sup>4</sup> appears not to have arrived. There are no interactive exhibits. Some reading material, however, is provided and includes a book of photographs showing European Australians camping in the area now known to be the mass grave. This ghoulish item, somehow escapes undermining completely the museum work on the penal past, although it is very disturbing to contemplate especially when the museum does not comment on the irony of including it.

Recently, half of the museum display area has been dedicated to an exhibition on the penal past which is entitled provocatively and powerfully, “Back Prison White Playground”. The exhibition follows the familiar constructivist representational method, but in this exhibit, the museum seems to come to the heart of the tragic past and its ironic, dichotomous overlay by tourism.

How does the museum become powerful despite being container-like and without the dynamic meaning possibilities that emerge from the performative turn? The museum itself is a strictly demarcated place. In affective terms, nothing seems to stick to visitors because the flow of images and facts rushes on pulling the visitor from one exhibit to another. In light of the performative turn, a heritage place that is locked into representation could appear disempowered and reactionary. But why is it not? Part of the answer lies in the exhibition of original objects with aura – chains used for shackling Indigenous prisoners, a prison cell door... Beyond the idea of aura, however, the concept of thresholds offers an answer which emphasises the place-ness of museums.

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1. For a discussion on musealization see Jennifer Harris, “Our Sadness, Our Fragile Courage”: The Museum and the New Museology, *ICOFOM Study Series* 38, 2009, 209-222.

2. Fors, *op. cit.*, 131.

3. For extended discussion on the civilizing aspects of museums, see Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1995).

4. Fors, *op. cit.*, 142.



*Rottneest Museum in the Hay Store of penal days.* Photograph by the author.

A physical threshold marks the passage between a building and the outside world, or the end of one room and the beginning of the next. There is not a point at which one room can be said to stop and the next to start. A threshold is, therefore, a transition point. Using the concept of the threshold, Dean and Millar conceptualize place beyond the idea of the bounded and contained. They argue that to insist on the idea of place as having boundaries is to misrecognize place and to think of it, instead, as a site.

*Both place and art might be said not to contain – and be contained by – boundaries, then, but rather an innumerable series of thresholds, which extend far beyond physical limits of either the site or the art object, and across time also, remaining even when the particular place or work of art may no longer exist.*<sup>1</sup>

Dean and Millar argue that thresholds are not to be mistaken as sites of permeability in a boundary that separates elements, “but rather as things that bring these elements together, perhaps in the manner of the bridge”<sup>2</sup>.

It is not, then, that Rottneest has an emotionally moving museum because it exhibits an odious history. Looking at the museum through Dean and Millar’s concept of thresholds, one can see that the museum is powerful because it opens out to link us to other places. In “Black Prison White Playground” visitors can

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1. Tacita Dean and Jeremy Millar, *Place*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 2005), 20.

2. *Ibid.*

watch interviews on difficult topics, view Indigenous art work on the dark past and read about the slow recognition of penal days. Compelling, recorded interviews link us to contemporary Indigenous issues – disproportionately high incarceration rates, alcoholism, domestic violence, unemployment and early mortality. The interviews also link us to Indigenous achievement. The museum, therefore, becomes a metaphoric threshold.

The museum also has a disturbing physical threshold with morally challenging views to the Quod and its incongruous vacation accommodation. Only 100 metres away is the narrow, arched prison gate. Visitors in bright bathing suits stroll through its opening to their rooms. Thus the museum opens physically onto other places of barely acknowledged Indigenous suffering. If curators understood and developed museums as places of thresholds, there would be potential for political and moral links to be made across time.

*...a process of interpenetrations and superimpositions, whose scale, force and rhythm are engaged in an ongoing movement of shifts, rolls and waves, all of which generate new senses of place, or new senses of the same place.<sup>1</sup>*

These groundswells push and tug us over thresholds of one place into another. They permit us to see anew and escape the restrictions of the rigid boundedness of a museum that has not developed embodied possibilities.

## **Place and embodied encounter**

People inhabit place. They move through it, form it and are formed by it. This is the second discussion of versions of memorial place on the island.

Widdop and Cutts<sup>2</sup> observe that analysis of cultural consumption has focused on demographic aspects and ignored the role of place. Cole notes the same scholarly neglect and says that although place often remains unproblematized, it can be crucial in anchoring oral histories. It can also permit place and people connections that did not take place in reality, but are, nevertheless, powerful in imagination.

*The stories that people tell about place can be both stories that they tell about themselves and others and also a way of telling those stories.<sup>3</sup>*

As noted above, the centrality of place as a structuring element of memory is a frame for this paper. Place activates our minds and our bodies, it becomes embodiment in encounters in time. It prompts memory, both personal and

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1. *Ibid.*

2. Paul Widdop and David Cutts, "Impact of Place on Museum Participation", *Cultural Trends*, Vol 21 no1, 47-66, 2012 47. doi.org/10.1080/09548963.2012.641775.

3. Tim Cole, "(Re)Placing the Past: Spatial Strategies of Retelling Difficult Stories", *Oral History Review*, Vol 42, no 1, 30-49, 2015, 31. doi: org/10-1093/ohr/ohv003.

collective. Place becomes a structure that allows an encounter and is also constituted by the encounter. Dubow argues that it needs to be understood as both spatial and temporal.

*The temporality implicit in place is unsecured by the comforts of sequence and chronology. When we speak of place, then, we evoke a condition that is both joyously and distressingly displacing: we not only recollect past events and monitor the present passing but are also figured by times which have been forgotten or resisted and which therefore remain unthinkable.<sup>1</sup>*

Beyond the walls of Rottneest Museum attempts are made to bring the island's memorial places up to date theoretically by employing ideas about place which prioritize the movement of visitors. In this conception of place, an embodied flow is imagined implicitly between material reality and the encounters of visitors. The Wadjemup Indigenous mass grave is produced as a memorial place which attempts to cut itself off from the rest of the island. It is a work in progress and, at the time of writing, the separation is achieved by a circuitous path, winding through trees and native grasses, creating a boundary to the mass grave. Markers provide information and explain that conversations continue about enhancements to the memorial.

By contrast to the constructivist approach of the museum, the memorial follows the performative turn described by Fors.<sup>2</sup> At the mass burial ground, the curatorial understanding of place is that it is embodied, but this understanding pivots. It pivots and begins to fall, first, towards the silent mystery of Indigenous sacred place. Here is a place of moral and historic resonance with grass, trees and dappled light. The bodies resting below confirm the murderous fact of a penal settlement that ripped apart cultural groups, families and individual lives for almost a century. Contemporary Indigenous groups have contributed to all decision making, therefore, the memorial is one of the markers of vast change in the theory and ideal of Australian coloniser-Indigenous relationships.

In the pivot, meaning also begins a second fall, towards a western memorial place. Had the burial ground been sacralized in the mid-twentieth century, it is probable that it would have reflected the prevalent approach of the time and attempted to cut off the past from the present. The visitor would have been conceptualized as a disembodied eye, detached from meaning. In the early twenty-first century, however, the visitor is embodied in the memorial. The attentive visitor is invited to walk meditatively through the forest and contemplate the appalling past. In this place the ideal visitor is enveloped in the trees and the silence as s/he moves through the landscape, her respectful body movements contributing to the solemnity.

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1. Jessica Dubow, "Place and Loss", 39-50, in Malpas, *op. cit.*, 39. Ebook Library.

2. Fors, *op. cit.*, 143.

Finally, in the pivot, meaning falls towards a third curatorial understanding of memorialized place and refers us back to place as focus of desire and the distressing ever present dichotomy of sensuous pleasure and memorial. Beyond historic memory, as argued by Blair *et al*<sup>1</sup>, the burial ground is haunted by the old camping site which for decades was on top of the grave. Tents, bathroom blocks, flimsy cabins and campfires were constructed over the bodies.



*A path winds around the mass grave on Wadjemup and through the former camp site of Rottnest Island. Photograph by the author.*

Despite widespread knowledge of the desecration wrought by the superimposition, the island today remains robustly a pleasure zone, its short distance from the metropolitan area seeming to guarantee that it will never become solely a memorial. A sign on the memorial path announces that the country club and golf course are nearby. Just off the path, drying beach towels flap from holiday cottage fences; beer cans and surf boards are visible. The visitor looks into the burial centre, but also outwards to the resort. Salt-crusted swimmers laugh as they pass through the memorial, hurrying towards the bakery. The reality of the 369-370 bodies stamps this place as the actual marker of a punitive colonial regime. The bodies have become facts at the heart of a holiday place. Observing behaviours in the burial ground on 19 November 2016, I saw that this place is both respected and ignored. Silent visitors read information plaques and walked the memorial path while others laughed and chatted.

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1. Blair *et al*, *op. cit.*, 25-26.

This place is problematic. Clearly, bodies are meaningful, their corporeal reality continually marks out a different place, but how can we discuss a place that contains such grating, colliding differences? Leader-Elliott<sup>1</sup> observes that landscape can have multiple layers and it can be several landscapes at the same time. Difference can, therefore, inhabit the same physical space and result in embodied experiences being wildly divergent. Leader-Elliott re-states what has been concluded by other commentators.<sup>2</sup>

*Both cultural landscapes and places... are constructed by groups and individuals, for whom the meaning of the place or landscape will reflect their own connections and relationships with it. Both can be read in many different ways. Both place and landscape have multiple layers of meaning which depend on their cultural and natural history and the history and expectations and perceptions of different individuals or groups... Several cultural landscapes may exist at the same time in the same spatial area: different social groups or individuals will interpret them in different ways and focus on different time scales, depending on their interests and points of view.*<sup>3</sup>

Divergent responses to a place are to be expected even in a place that is produced specifically for collective memory. Leader-Elliott argues that respecting the complexity of the different layers is the challenge for tourism development. The museum is only 250 metres away from the mass grave. Memories of the museum photograph book seeped into my mind as I walked among the graves. The book of camping photographs celebrates the fun times. Camp fires, drinking and carousing were the norm under these trees and over the mass grave. The multiplicities of place in what appears to be one place are vivid and confusing.

Overlapping experiences of place suggests that there are also overlapping times in many heritage places. Place as paradise and place as distressing post-colonial reality invoke different times and different political orientations. One of the great strengths of heritage production is its ability to present multiplicities of time and place. Fluidity of these experiences, therefore, appears to be an emerging characteristic of heritage places.

Place as the locus for two discrete desires is the reality at the mass grave. For some visitors, the place is the locus of desire as a place of coloniser-Indigenous Reconciliation. For many others, however, it remains the island paradise, utterly disconnected from its disgraceful history. The dichotomous nature of Wadjemup / Rottneest Island is pinpointed in Cultural Heritage Plans of the island managers.

*It is little wonder, given its wretched post-contact history, that many Aboriginal people find it impossible to reconcile the two faces of the*

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1. Leader-Elliott, *op. cit.*, 208.

2. See, for example, Stephanie Taylor, *Narratives of Identity and Place*, (London: Taylor and Francis, 2009).

3. Leader-Elliott, *op. cit.*, 207.

*island.... They find it understandably difficult to come to terms with the fact that predominantly white tourists continue to relax and have fun apparently oblivious to that fact that in the not-too-distant past, little more than a century, the ancestors of Aboriginal people were imprisoned, brutalised, suffered and died; and that the Quod – considered to be the largest deaths in custody site in Australia – is slept in by tourists, while those who died in those same rooms lie nearby in almost forgotten, unmarked graves.*

*...For the first peoples of Western Australia and their descendants, the present is routinely compared to Alcatraz, Robben Island and even Auschwitz... a constant reminder of a painful history which many white people remain largely oblivious of and ambivalent about.<sup>1</sup>*

The memorial mass grave will no doubt change in the near future as the dichotomous nature of the island becomes increasingly morally and politically awkward. This embodied place will need to project itself strongly to surface among the sensual pleasures of a desert island. Place as embodied, multiple, temporal and spatial is the reality as the memory and practices of the old camp site continue to flare among the dead.

## Place as hyperreality

Despite the abundance of historic material evidence on Wadjemup, hyperreality has been constructed in Rottneest's heritage discourse. This is in contrast to place as bounded, as seen in the museum, and place as multiple and embodied as discussed above at the burial ground.

Reference to the pastoral dream of an English village has erupted among the penal architecture through the planting of a lawn and the naming of it "Heritage Common". The politics of the English pastoral are well documented.<sup>2</sup> At Rottneest, the explosion of the pastoral reference functions as it did in eighteenth century Britain; pastoral has the effect of erasing the realities of unequal power by layering a new place over the old and thus re-making the landscape.

Hyperreality sits at the heart of the historic penal settlement because there is no historic referent in the creation of a central lawn although the space is associated with the Indigenous past. Heritage Common is the same geographical place which was traversed by chained prisoners as they were coerced up the short path from the beach landing to the prison. Thousands of prisoners, therefore, were marched across what now is presented as a picnic area. The appearance of the lawn in recent years was surprising in the context of the island's move towards memorialisation. It was also surprising given the ecological principles promul-

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1. Rottneest Island Authority. "Rottneest Island / Wadjemup Cultural Management Plan", (2015), 29. <http://ria.wa.gov.au/policy-and-reports/management-plans-and-legislation>

2. See, for example, Ann Bermingham, *Landscape and Ideology: The English Rustic Tradition 1740-1860*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).

gated by the Rottneest Island Authority which led to the removal of non-native species of flora. An exotic lawn contradicts these principles and is out of step with the island's low rainfall. The decision to name the lawn "Heritage Common", however, is the most disturbing aspect because the new name results in the loss of the referent to the penal settlement. An English style "common" was never found in the middle of a penal settlement.

The spectre of postmodern hyperreality has haunted heritage and museum production for decades; early critics include Hewison<sup>1</sup> and Walsh<sup>2</sup> who describe the routine loss of authenticity in heritage production. Likewise, Baudrillard, theorises that the pre-condition for the production of a hyperreal text is the loss of the referent.<sup>3</sup> This is a serious and common accusation in the heritage field, although many curators continue to think that they are insisting on authenticity in the Western tradition. Although the Nara Document on Authenticity<sup>4</sup> encourages different culturally specific approaches to authenticity, it does not suggest that hyperreality is a suitable replacement for original fabric. The presence of hyperreality, therefore, is a sign that a heritage place is losing touch with its historic referent.

High culture heritage texts in the Western tradition attempt to put the subject in direct visual and/or bodily contact with the authenticated artefact. This is underscored by Jacobs's<sup>5</sup> work, noted at the beginning of this paper, in which she argues that the subject can become a witness at a later date by being physically present at a historic place. At Heritage Common, however, the idea of place leading to performative possibilities for the witnessing subject is subverted. This is textually odd given the embodied and performative possibilities of the mass grave memorial and suggests curatorial confusion.

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1. Robert Hewison, *The Heritage Industry: Britain in a Climate of Decline*, (London: Methuen, 1987).

2. Kevin Walsh, *The Representation of the Past: Museums and Heritage in the Post-Modern World*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1997).

3. Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*. Trans, Paul Foss, Paul Patton and Philip Beitchman, (New York: Semiotext(e), 1983); *The Evil Demon of Images*. Trans, Paul Foss and Paul Patton, (Sydney: Power Institute Publications, 1984), 3.

4. ICOMOS, "Nara Document on Authenticity", 1994. <http://www.icomos.org/charters/nara-e.pdf>

5. Jacobs, *op. cit.*, xxxii.



*“Heritage Common” on Wadjemup /Rottnest Island. A reference to an English village appears on a penal desert island in the southern hemisphere.*

Photograph by the author.

The words, “heritage” and “common”, require analysis in this context in order to understand the meaning effects of the naming process. “Heritage” is the term used to refer in general to artefacts and sites and also to their protection and interpretation. It refers not to specific places, but to the discourse of conservation and representation of the past. To use the term, “heritage”, as the name for a place on the island leads to the blocking of historic realities of that place. It leapfrogs over the specific history of the island and makes links to the general idea of the representation of the past. The word “heritage” has the effect of linking the history of this penal island to a broad, generic idea of encounters with the past. The precise history is subsumed by connotations of the wider heritage industry itself. The historic reality of the island is almost lost. The word “common” poses problems because it is almost never used in Australia; it is an inter-text derived from lush, green, romanticized English villages. The connotations of “common” could not be further from the painful reality of a penal desert island.

Blair *et al* argue that place organises memory.<sup>1</sup> A key organising and political aspect of any place is its name. Naming is an interpretative act; curators have the power to orient visitors to particular meanings via naming. By choosing to name the central lawn area “Heritage Common”, the island curators have shifted the island’s meanings away from the material evidence of the penal past and towards the romanticized pastoral associated with the traditional representation of the

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1. Blair, *et al.*, *op. cit.*, 1-54.

English village. Hyperreality thus emerges via the curatorial naming process. The name creates a new place that is layered over the historic, verifiable past. It is completely out of touch with the physical reality. Significantly, the material aspects of the site are not interpreted, for example, the low limestone retaining walls visible in the photograph. The visitor is encouraged to look beyond the walls to the unusual lawn and its connotations of an English village, a strange site / sight on the dry island.

The hyperreal at Heritage Common is at odds with the other curatorial work. Most of the memorial work on Rottnest is derived from high culture heritage activity, by which I mean that there is strong adherence to authentic, material referents both inside the museum building and in the burial ground. By comparison, at “Heritage Common” there is a slip away from material evidence into the hyperreal. The term, “Heritage Common”, shifts the island unwittingly into the rhetoric of general heritage production. Unexpectedly, therefore, Heritage Common has the meaning effect of challenging the places of the sober museum and mass grave. This lawn, purporting through its name to be about heritage and memory of the past, has the opposite meaning effect. It undermines the specific heritage values associated with the museum and memorialization of the burial ground. It gestures instead to a generalized past.

This might seem like a harsh critique, given that the Rottnest staff seems to use the word “heritage” in relation to the Indigenous past to encompass mourning and remembering. It is evident that “Heritage Common” was produced as a heritage place in good faith. Meaning effects, however, can elude curators; at Heritage Common the place is self-referential and, textually, denies the reality of the island’s history.

The actual location of Heritage Common is significant because people need to pass through it or around it as they move between their accommodation and the shops. By comparison, deliberate choices need to be made to enter the container space of the museum and to walk through the memorial mass grave. The two places that are most firmly anchored to the historic referent of the Indigenous penal past, therefore, are the places that visitors are most likely *not* to see. Heritage Common, however, is experienced by almost everybody thus suggesting, alarmingly, that the most likely visitor experience of this Indigenous penal place is via hyperreality.

The move into hyperreality suggests that this central place on the island has been subjected to the effects of intertextuality in popular culture identified by Collins almost thirty years ago. In contrast to the idea of place as self-evidently and geographically simply there and not calling attention to itself, he describes the post-modern text as characterised by aggressive self-awareness. This is consistent with the use of the word “heritage” to name a heritage place, rather than the use of an historic name because “heritage” is self-referential, gesturing beyond to heritage production itself.

Collins notes also that discourse differentiation has increased and discourses compete “for the same status, for fulfilling the same or similar functions for a given culture”<sup>1</sup>. Intertextuality in the postmodern popular text offers a “perpetuate – transgress dynamic”<sup>2</sup>, pulling the text in opposing directions, simultaneously affirming and reworking previous texts.

Collins’ insights suggest that the hyperreal place of Heritage Common has become popular culture, in opposition to the high culture places of the burial ground and museum. Usually, high culture heritage places highlight their unique qualities, but popular culture places are heavily inter-textual. Similarity of place, of course, is the opposite of what a high culture heritage site seeks to make prominent. High culture heritage insists on rarity and the specific. Heritage Common, by contrast, at the very heart of the island, functions to undermine the nearby high culture places.

Heritage Common is troubling. For those familiar with the English countryside, perhaps a colonial meaning link is evident. In Australia’s multi-cultural immigrant society, however, meanings are murky. Perhaps there is no obvious meaning here, the lawn is simply a convenient picnic ground. With no touchstone to historic authenticity, Heritage Common appears to erase the violent past as it offers a soothing, hyperreal place. It presents itself as historic even as it is, itself, ahistoric.

## Ethics and place

The juxtaposition of different conceptions of place and the dichotomy of Wadjemup / Rottneest Island as both memorial and holiday resort create intractable problems in place branding. Sevin<sup>3</sup> argues that place branding is not understood widely as having an ethical dimension, but that it can be so powerful that it can change a place. It seems “to be focused on creating competitive advantage and providing short-term answers in order to generate economic outcomes”<sup>4</sup>. This is familiar in tourism and poses fundamental problems for heritage. Whereas most heritage places need to fight against reductive tourism branding, the situation at Wadjemup is more complicated because of the varieties of place created to acknowledge the penal past. The final section of this paper indicates some of the ethical dilemmas.

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1. Jim Collins, *Uncommon Cultures: Popular Culture and Post-Modernism*, (New York and London: Routledge, 1989), 6.

2. *Ibid.*, 46.

3. Efe Sevin, “Thinking about Place Branding: Ethics of Concept”, *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, Vol 7 no 3, 155-164, 2011, 162. doi:10.1057/pb.2011.15.

4. *Ibid.*, 156.

Although Ireland and Schofield<sup>1</sup> argue that heritage production is inherently an ethico-political problem, Colwell and Joy<sup>2</sup> say that heritage approaches to ethics have been weak. Part of the problem, they argue, is that contemporary heritage production springs from a European Enlightenment ideal of universal humanity<sup>3</sup> and that Indigenous and ethnic groups tend to be subsumed under national identities.<sup>4</sup> It can be a struggle to exhibit specific histories and discourses in the context of the heritage discourses of universality and national communities.

Discursive confusion surrounds place at Wadjemup / Rottnest Island as the Indigenous past is incorporated under a tourism banner of island attractions and the implicit idea of a united Western Australian community. The varieties of memorial place further the confusion. On disembarking from the ferry, arriving visitors see a sign on the jetty, “Rottnest Is Welcoming You to Wadjemup”. There is a play on words with the abbreviation for Island, “Is”, being used also as a verb. Throughout the island, the two names are used as if there is equality in the naming process and as if the different histories are comparable.

The appearance of the two names can be interpreted in at least two ways: as a sign of good faith and, also, its shadowy opposite, an unintended clawback of meaning by the coloniser. Evident good will can sometimes have unexpected meaning potentials. The frequent use of “Wadjemup” has the effect of pacifying this unsettling place because the name is used as if it were an equal in history to “Rottnest Island” but, clearly, it is not.

The jolly tone of the welcome to – of all terrifying destinations – a penal island, and the sign’s play on words, can operate as warnings that there will be something out of kilter, but it is easy to miss the unintended irony. In the tourist process of branding the island as both the European “Rottnest Island” and the Indigenous “Wadjemup” an unwanted meaning effect occurs. “Wadjemup” loses its specific history through the process of being made an apparent equal. That is, the twin place naming has a dehistoricizing effect. This is confirmed in tourism web sites where Indigenous suffering is sucked into all other histories, for example, in the quotation below it is reduced to a “rich heritage”.

*Historical Rottnest. A guiding light, a defender of the peace, hunting ground and prison. Rottnest boasts an incredibly rich heritage.*<sup>5</sup>

“Light” and “peace” refer to the light house and the defence role of the island in World War II. Even the web site of the Rottnest Island Authority avoids details

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1. Tracy Ireland and John Schofield, “The Ethics of Cultural Heritage”, in Tracy Ireland and John Schofield, eds, *The Ethics of Cultural Heritage*, (New York: Springer, 2015), 2. Springer ebooks

2. Chris Colwell and Charlotte Joy, “Communities and Ethics in the Heritage Debates”, in Lynn Meskell, ed., *Global Heritage: A Reader*, (London: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 2015), 122. Ebook Library Central.

3. *Ibid.*, 113.

4. *Ibid.*, 114.

5. Rottnest Express. <https://www.rottnestexpress.com.au/rottnest-island> accessed 1 November 2016.

of the penal past, with “hunting ground”<sup>1</sup> taking precedence over “prison”. The section on Indigenous history commences with the scarcely understood occupation of the land thousands of years before it became an island, rather than with the horrific penal years. In the section on penal history, there is no mention of post-colonial Reconciliation. The name “Wadjemup”, however, is used in a normalizing and clawback manoeuvre to name a walking trail which

*will greatly enhance the Rottnest Island experience and become a major environmental, cultural and tourism showpiece for Western Australia.*<sup>2</sup>

These examples illustrate how the moral position of Reconciliation and the universalist ideals of heritage have been blurred and incorporated by tourism in a process of place branding. The exploitation of the penal past as colourful heritage is masked by broad good faith to remember Indigenous suffering. The twin naming of this place has the effect of causing a collapse of history and its specific facts.

The twinning prompts questions about the reason for two names, but also encourages us to glide over the past.<sup>3</sup> The heritage discourse on the island has had the tragic effect of re-making place into something morally and politically safe.

## Conclusion

Visitors are tossed into the island’s meaning maelstrom with no guidance. It is place that people encounter and desire, therefore, the reality of dealing with place ought to be of primary concern for museum and heritage staff. In heritage production, place should be theorized and explained. Multiple and conflicting histories should be made clear. Multiplicities of place, expressed through meaning, need to be recognised in memory work in order to support ethical outcomes.

The varieties of place produced in the heritage discourse on the island are dizzying and disorienting. If such vast textual differences were encountered in an art gallery, there would be written assistance for visitors, but in heritage discourse such assistance is almost non-existent. We need to hear loudly the voices of those who have been simultaneously marginalized in place production and devoured by a place branding process which drags all pasts and peoples into a soothing tourism rhetoric.

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1. Indigenous prisoners were freed on Sundays and permitted to hunt for food.

2. Rottnest Island Authority <http://www.rottnestisland.com/the-island/about-the-island/our-history> accessed 1 November 2016.

3. I have argued elsewhere that underlying celebratory narratives can pacify the specific history of Indigenous suffering. At the atrocity site of Pinjarra in Western Australia, for example, a narrative of community progress has been invoked which has the effect of minimizing historic trauma. See Jennifer Harris, “Pinjarra 1834”, *op. cit.*, 36-57, in Mick Broderick and Antonio Traverso, eds, *Trauma, Media, Art: New Perspectives*, (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010).



# The good city and the good museum

*Ann Davis*

*“Everything that happens in the world happens at some place.”  
Jane Jacobs*

This essay will probe connections, specifically those between city and museum. While museums have acknowledged for some time the importance of context for a good understanding of artifacts, the contents of the museum, we have only infrequently considered context to include the physical place of the museum itself. Or, put another way, we have not necessarily seen and understood city attributes as possible museum attributes. Starting from the larger, the city, this essay will examine Jane Jacobs’ theories of what makes a successful city and then superimpose these ideas onto the museum to see if they resonate. Jacobs talks about disorder, movement, change and diversity. Are there viable connections between cities and museums and might Jacobs’ ideas to improve cities also work as ways to improve museums? What makes a good museum? To address this question, this paper will also discuss some of the provocative theories put forward by Elizabeth Weiser.

## Jane Jacobs’ cities

Jane Jacobs, at the time of her death in 2006, was “widely recognized as the most influential urban thinker of her time.”<sup>2</sup> Her big book, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, has become what Witold Rybczynski, in *Makeshift Metropolis: Ideas about Cities*, called “the dominant book about city planning in the second half of the twentieth century - perhaps the entire century.”<sup>3</sup> Defining urban life as an “intricate ballet”<sup>4</sup>, she wanted everyone to play a part in the city dance, to live a local life close to the power of the streets, stoops and stores. Concerned that cities were in trouble, she found optimism in identifying them as a living human ecosystem. To Samuel Zipp and Nathan Storrington, who recently published Jacobs’ essays, she was

*always idiosyncratic and unorthodox, often surprising, often willing to risk being wrong if it means reorienting stale conventional wisdom,*

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1. Jane Jacobs, *Dark Age Ahead*, (Toronto: Random House Canada, 2004), 88.

2. Witold Rybczynski, *Makeshift Metropolis: Ideas about Cities*, (New York: Scribner’s, 2010), 88.

3. *Ibid.*

4. Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, (New York: Random House, 1961), 65.

*she pushes beyond the familiar alarms to see urban transformation as a source of radical possibility and opportunity, not nostalgia and loss.<sup>1</sup>*

Jacobs was a thinker and writer, untrained in architecture or urban planning, who blurred the lines between disciplines. She was a “city naturalist,” keen to discover how the varied elements of her surroundings were linked and interwoven into broader patterns. Her interest was in what her editor Jason Epstein called the “dynamics of civilization”.<sup>2</sup>

By 1958 Jacobs was clarifying her ideas about the qualities that make an exciting, healthy city. In her article for *Fortune*, “Downtown is for People” of that year, she put forward the radical idea that cities are made by people, not buildings. She identified Boston as having a downtown she praised for its “excellent fundamentals of compactness, variety, contrast, surprise, character, good open spaces and a mixture of basic activities.”<sup>3</sup> In *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, published three years later, she expanded on a successful city’s order in disorder, diversity, movement and change:

*Under the seeming disorder of the old city, wherever the old city is working successfully, is a marvelous order for maintaining the safety of the streets and the freedom of the city. It is a complex order. Its essence is intricacy of sidewalk use, bringing with it a constant succession of eyes. The order is all composed of movement and change, and although it is life not art, we may fancifully call it the art form of the city and liken it to the dance - not the simpleminded precision dance with everyone kicking up at the same time, twirling in unison and bowing off en masse, but to an intricate ballet in which the individual dancers and ensembles all have distinctive parts which miraculously reinforce each other and compose an orderly whole. The ballet of the good city sidewalk never repeats itself from place to place, and in any one place is always replete with new improvisations.<sup>4</sup>*

Cities are vital to civilization. Without cities we would not have had the Renaissance or the Industrial Revolution. For ideas to develop best, we need a large number of people in fairly close quarters. More and more people are moving out of the countryside into cities, something that is causing concern in both locations for farmers, needed to produce food, are leaving to settle in cities that are suffering, ill-equipped for increasing immigration. Jacobs was very clear in linking cities and culture:

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1. Samuel Zipp and Nathan Storrings eds., *Vital Little Plans: the short works of Jane Jacobs*, (New York: Random House Canada, 2016), xviii.

2. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, “Introduction”, xii.

3. *Ibid.*, 128.

4. *Ibid.*, 65-66.

*Cities have long been acknowledged as primary organs of cultural development; that is, of the vast and intricate collection of ideas and institutions called civilization, and I have no intention of laboring that point.<sup>1</sup>*

Cities are also vital to museums, for museums need visitors and lots of them. Villages and towns simply do not have the number of people who have leisure, time to explore the museum, to maintain, and to fund a substantial museum. This is not to say, of course, that all museums are located in cities, because there are many, small, fascinating museums outside cities, but these tend to be local in scope and often amateur in presentation and research.

Richard Florida is another American urban analyst transplant to Canada who examines cities in detail. An avowed follower of Jane Jacobs, Florida is passionate about place and about what factors make some cities great and others average or worse. He challenges the notion that, in this high-tech world, place is irrelevant. Rather he posits that talent, innovation and creativity are concentrated in specific locations, what he calls the *clustering force*.<sup>2</sup> An additional thinker who focused on the massing of people is Robert Lucas. Lucas, the Nobel Prize-winning economist, recognized that the value of cities could not be tabulated simply in economic terms. As land is far cheaper outside cities than in, why would businesses and people not move *en masse* out to where costs are considerably lower? In response he observed “What can people be paying Manhattan or downtown Chicago rents for, if not to be around other people?”<sup>3</sup> Here, then, Lucas brought place to the fore. “He identified the underlying economic power of the *clustering force* - the clustering of people and productivity, creative skills and talents ....”<sup>4</sup>

## The marvelous order of disorder

Jacobs was adamant that cities were about people, not buildings, and that people need social space. Her eureka moment occurred in 1955 after she had written a complementary article about the proposed new projects in Philadelphia. Later she went to visit that city and was given a tour by the town planner in charge, Edmund Bacon. What she saw horrified her. The impact of this emerging urbanism seemed to be all about clean, pretty and new, aesthetics, but not about how people interact. Jacobs recounts how she was shown the “good, new street” and, as a contrast, the “bad, old street.”

*[T]he “bad” street was “just crammed with people, mostly black people, walking on the sidewalks and sitting on the stoops and leaning out of*

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1. Jane Jacobs, *The Economy of Cities*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1970), 6.

2. Richard Florida, *Who's Your City? How the Creative Economy is Making Where to Live the Most Important Decision of Your Life*, (Toronto: Random House Canada, 2008), 9.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 61; Robert Lucas, “On the Mechanics of Economic Development”, *Journal of Monetary Economics*, 22, 1988, 3 - 42.

4. Florida, *op. cit.*, 61.

*the windows,” while the “good” one, a recent patient of urban renewal, sat empty except for a lone little boy, idly kicking a tire in the gutter.<sup>1</sup>*

The next year, 1956, Jacobs honed her message even more and, fortuitously, was given an unexpected forum when asked to deliver a brief ten-minute speech at a Harvard design conference. Here she presented what she was learning in East Harlem, as well as in middle-class Stuyvesant Town: that the “new scheme of things,” the architectural and planning notions of the post-war period were wiping away real neighbourhoods and replacing them with places that were uniform, inflexible, and inhumane. She sought to keep the community aspect of a urban neighbourhood and not build a “mere dormitory” with no “creative social activity.”<sup>2</sup> Soon she was organizing grassroots efforts to protect existing neighbourhoods, including her own Greenwich Village, from slum clearance. Eventually she was instrumental in successfully protesting the proposed Lower Manhattan Expressway and, once living in Toronto, the Spadina Expressway. Jacobs was a firm believer in the participatory city. How might this work in museums?

The “good” street was one that was intensely used, that attracted people because it had been created by everybody. Democracy at work.<sup>3</sup> This democratic creativity is also aspirational in museums today. The cold exhibition, uniform, inflexible and inhumane, is being rejected. Rather than the erstwhile theme of classification, a concentration on the object and telling the factual “truth” impartially, now museums have a more heuristic purpose. For the modern museum Jennifer Harris and Bruno Soares expose vital affective goals and performative actions.<sup>4</sup> Sophia Psarra talks of

*the transformation of museums from universally accepted facts to socially constructed themes and contents, from displaying certainties to shaping individual means and contexts, from science to narrative, and finally from social reform and cultural improvement to the complexity of the visitor’s experience.<sup>5</sup>*

Alissandra Cummins also emphasizes the ability of museums to promote social reform:

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1. Samuel Zipp and Nathan Storrington, 51, quoting an interview Jacobs gave with Eleanor Wachtel, Writers & Company, CBC Radio, August 6, 2002.

2. *Ibid.*, 70 - 73. “The Missing Link in City Redevelopment”.

3. *Ibid.*

4. Ann Davis and Kerstin Smeds, *Visiting the Visitor: An Enquiry into the Visitor Business in Museums*. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2016.

5. “Spatial Culture, Way-Finding and the Educational Message, in Suzanne MacLeod, ed., *Reshaping Museum Space: Architecture, Design, Exhibition*, (New York: Routledge, 2005), 81. Quoted in Elizabeth Weiser, *Museum Rhetoric: Building Civic Identity in National Spaces*, (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2017), 16.

*The sense of place, the local community and the sites connected to events that have transpired function together to engrave on the minds of new peoples the lessons to be learned from the past, not to emboss resentment on spirits, but to forge new tools for understanding and dialogue, to find peaceful means to resolving conflict, and to build the bases for sustainable and responsible cultural development.<sup>1</sup>*

It is these ambiguous, affective displays that Elizabeth Weiser trumpets. This idea that production in museums should be and can be shared and transformed by all is also one championed by rhetorical theorist Elizabeth Weiser. Her fascinating book *Museum Rhetoric: Building Civic Identity in National Spaces* builds on the ideas of rhetorical theorist Kenneth Burke and his contention that identification and division must be ambiguously put together. Weiser clarifies this notion by explaining that “Love/unity/identification is of course to be strived for, but without strife/diversity/division we cannot know the Other as Other....”<sup>2</sup> She contends that “national museums use their spaces to promote *antithetical*, *semiconscious*, and *means-to-an-end identifications* between individuals and their societies.”<sup>3</sup> While Weiser is discussing national museums and countries, I suggest that this argument has considerable validity when discussing large museums in cities. Ambiguity is key here. Weiser looks at the “ways museum spaces attempt to persuade toward a communal identity that is ambiguous, embracing multiple perspectives and critical dialogue.”<sup>4</sup> It is this disorder, or ambiguity, complex and intricate, it is movement and change, and it is diversity, including multiple perspectives that are at the core of this paper.

Weiser investigates the power of the artifact in an “experiential landscape,” recognizing the need for the object to have a narrative and display, but warns against too many facts which overwhelm values. Like Jacobs’ messy street, for Weiser, “To be moved intellectually and emotionally, visitors need the existential space to contemplate multiplicities of meaning” in museums. Calling on rhetoric, Weiser suggested that objects as acts could be understood under what Burke called “*poetic naming*, an aesthetic perspective on the world in which multiple ideas coexist in the same term (or object)....” Burke contrasted poetic naming with “*semantic naming*, in which a single idea is made to correspond to a single idea.” Instead of simplifying and eliminating ambiguity, poetic naming heaped up the emotional factors and played them off one against the other. Here is an alternative to the scientific, the pure, the neutral language of earlier museums.<sup>5</sup>

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1. Alissandra Cummins, PPG-PMUS Inaugural Address, on academic.edu, accessed 12 November, 2017.

2. Weiser, *op. cit.*, 1. Emphasis in original.

3. *Ibid.*, 4 Emphasis in original.

4. *Ibid.*, 11.

5. *Ibid.*, 75. Emphasis in original.

## Diversity

Growth for Jacobs and Florida was not just increasing the volume of economic output, but also doing something new, something innovative. And innovation, they contend, is generated by a diverse pool of resources. Jacobs, for example, lauded New York's "enormously rich variety of people and activities."<sup>1</sup>

*All that we have in New York of magnetism, of opportunities to earn a living, of leadership, of the arts, of glamor, of convenience, of power to fulfill and assimilate our immigrants, of ability to repair our wounds and right our evils, depends on our great and wonderful criss-cross of relationships.*<sup>2</sup>

Museums have been slow to recognize the value of this criss-cross of relationships, the very great strength of diversity. John Falk has long determined that the primary purpose of visiting a museum is "building personal identity,"<sup>3</sup> an idea which does not mesh with the long-held museum staff goal of crafting a single, highly focused and persuasive message. The result, Lisa Roberts points out, is that each visitor "will come away with an individually unique experience and interpretation because every visitor is engaged in constructing a narrative about what he or she sees."<sup>4</sup> In literature and in life Mikhail Bakhtin called this the polyphony of multiple competing voices.<sup>5</sup> Thus the "official culture" of the institution and the "vernacular culture" of the visitors are often competing, pushing against each other and, in the best case, mutually influencing and informing each other.

Museums are only slowly accepting the idea that peoples' constructions are more important than collections, just as Jacobs pressed for people before buildings, and for ordinary people to build cities rather than architects or developers. Jacobs reminded us that it is the little things that matter. In museums we want good seating, not just in the restaurant, but also in the lobby and certainly in the galleries. Sadly, many museums seem to have eliminated chairs from their budgets. We want to know the layout of the space, how to navigate the exhibitions, where the exits and washrooms are, to say nothing of the shop and the café. We want engaging material in the shop and interesting, appropriately priced food in the restaurant. And most of all we want quality exhibitions that are meaningful, relevant and innovative.<sup>6</sup> The failure of most starchitect designed museums clearly demonstrates that having an outlandish building is not an adequate substitute for substantive, affective contents that are the result of innovation and promote the building of personal identity, criss-cross relationships. Sandra Dudley parses the current shift in museums away from a total concentration

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1. "A Living Network of Relationships", Speech at the New School of Social Research, New York, April 20, 1958, in Samuel Zipp and Nathan Storring, 131.

2. *Ibid.*, 133.

3. Quoted in Weiser, *op. cit.*, 47.

4. *Ibid.*, 46.

5. *Ibid.*

6. See Davis and Smeds, *op. cit.*, 2016.

on the collection to a more nuanced, subjective view involving the visitors' own stories and interpretations:

Museum objects constitute material 'facts' and evidence for stories to be told, and at the same time are now understood, in our postmodern world within a frame of subjectivity - that is, we know that they mean different things to different people.<sup>1</sup>

## Perpetual change

When Jacobs talks of repairing and rebuilding the city, something that was very prominent in the post-war years, she was firm in her belief that change was and should be perpetual, that the city would never be finished. Jacobs declared that

*it is pretty exciting to think of repairing and rebuilding the city in such a way that its people will continue to have freedom and opportunity to make thousands of intricate, big and little adjustments; to repair it in a way that new needs, as they come along, new uses, new opportunities, new relationships, new immigrants' orientation clubs, new New Schools will find scope to grow and turn around in, instead of a massive set of masterminded straitjackets. It is pretty nice to think of people coming along in the future, who will have opinions and notions and plans and problems of their own, very big problems no doubt, but will take it for granted that the most alive, exciting, interesting, challenging, various place in the world is New York City.<sup>2</sup>*

This could and should apply to museums. Florida was especially interested in defining what features of cities made people happy. He identified three: place as a source of excitement and creative stimulation, which includes stimulating cultural offerings; second, place as a location where people can be themselves, where they can cultivate their individuality; and third place as something to which we can belong, providing a sense of pride and attachment.<sup>3</sup> He then asked what do people need and, following the psychologist Abraham Maslow, identified five major categories of needs: physical and economic security, safety and availability of jobs; basic services such as schools and public transportation; leadership, including the opportunity for public and local engagement; openness, tolerance and acceptance of diverse demographic groups; and aesthetics, physical beauty and cultural offerings. Of these, the first, safety, and the last, aesthetics, were deemed to matter most to Americans.<sup>4</sup>

Despite Florida's research, aesthetics in our society today is not seen to be highly valued. When compared to facts, truth, data, aesthetics is often considered soft, untrustworthy. Yet museums must confront competing expectations, must manage to negotiate the potentially conflicting intellectual communities of scientific

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1. Quoted in Weiser, *op. cit.*, 68.

2. "A Living Network of Relationships", in Samuel Zipp and Nathan Storrington, 144.

3. Florida, *op. cit.*, 158 - 159

4. *Ibid.*, 163.

inquiry, artistic assertion, historical and societal expression. They must therefore be both pragmatic and idealistic, seeking both the doable and the desirable. Elizabeth Weiser argues for combining the pragmatic and idealistic, for uniting “the logical and the emotional into thoughtful, action-oriented persuasion,”<sup>1</sup> that very rhetorical idea. This, she contends, would provide both stability, history, and flexibility, freedom. The former is needed for security; the latter for action. Museums, after all, want to educate citizens in tolerance and cosmopolitan values. Weiser highlights Burke’s efforts to bridge the gap between politics and culture by insisting on the efficacy of aesthetics. Burke wrote that “The future is really disclosed by finding out what people can sing about.”<sup>2</sup> For Weiser

*[t]he song ... is not reaching for one answer but for several at once, not masquerading as logic but embodying the human complexity that manifests itself less in numbers than in attitudes that lead one to action.*<sup>3</sup>

Action, of course, may be physical. A different feature of perpetual change in museums is the recognition that, in walking through an exhibition, the visitor is constantly changing his physical position. More and more we are told that movement is good for us, for it stimulates not only our muscles but also our brains. In museums we want people to experience the narrative, to be moved both physically and emotionally, so that, as Liz Weiser describes it, visitors co-create with the museum staff the reality they are experiencing.

*...the polyphony of narratives - vernacular and official - might also inform one another, for either support or critique, so that both responses feature a meeting of engaged museum and engaged visitor at the point of the symbols that are both sensed and made sense of.*<sup>4</sup>

Sandra Dudley explains that affect, as opposed to logic, is “fundamentally embodied and inseparable from the materiality of the body and the sensation of the material by sensate experience.”<sup>5</sup>

## Four museum examples

Can Jacob’s attributes of good cities be used to evaluate museums? She provocatively concluded that a successful city has disorder, freedom, movement and change.<sup>6</sup> Might these qualities also help make a museum or an exhibition successful? Can we find Jacobs’ ballet and Burke’s song in museums today? Three examples would suggest yes, and one example would open it up to question.

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1. Weiser, *op. cit.*, 33-34.

2. *Ibid.*, 34

3. *Ibid.*

4. *Ibid.*, 48.

5. *Ibid.*, 49

6. Jacobs, *The Death and Life*, *op. cit.*, 65 - 66.

Until Jacobs walked the sidewalks and put out her garbage in Greenwich Village, city planning was focused on buildings, some of which were landmarks. Cities have always been interested in inspired architecture, fuelled by prosperity, civic ambition, confidence in the future and overwhelming hegemony. Nationalistic interests and the growing power of commerce all contributed. Jacobs complained that developers and architects “first envisioned the spectacular project, and little else, as the solution to rebuilding the city.”<sup>1</sup> The first post-WW II building to achieve iconic status was the Sydney Opera House, followed shortly by the Pompidou Centre. With this lead, museum buildings became prime candidates for the grandiose expression, showcase architecture.

## The Pompidou Centre and the Matisse Pairs and Series exhibition

In the 1960s Paris city planners decided to move the much-loved food markets of Les Halles and replace them with a multicultural complex. The Centre Georges Pompidou, commonly known as the Pompidou Centre in English, was the result. Designed by the architectural team of Richard Rogers and Renzo Piano and opened in 1977, the building was initially reviled: comments included “love at second sight” and “Paris has its own monster, just like the one in Lock Ness.”<sup>2</sup> But the public loved it. Attendance was five times what was predicted. One reviewer suggested that “It has claims to be the most significant single building since the war.”<sup>3</sup> Eventually an architectural jury declared that the Pompidou “revolutionised museums, transforming what had once been elite monuments into popular places of social and cultural exchange, woven into the heart of the city.”<sup>4</sup>

Given Jacob’s concern about buildings, it is important to consider why the Pompidou Centre has been so very popular. Surely it is its emphasis on people, on place and on things French. Rowan Moore, reviewing the building at age forty, commented:

*It wasn’t supposed to be a monument but an event, a happening. Piano now also describes it as “not a building but a town where you find everything – lunch, great art, a library, great music”. The point was, as Rogers puts it, that “culture should be fun”. “After decades of museums being dusty, boring and inaccessible,” says Piano, “someone had to run away, to do something different, have a sense of participation. Someone had to express that rebellion. Putting this spaceship in the middle of Paris was a bit mad but an honest gesture. It was brave but also a bit impolite, for sure.”<sup>5</sup>*

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1. “Downtown is for People”, *Fortune*, April 1958, reprinted in Samuel Zipp and Nathan Storrington, 124.

2. *National Geographic*, October 1980, 469.

3. Rowan Moore, “Pompidou Centre: a 70s French radical that’s never gone out of fashion”, *The Guardian*, 8 January, 2017, [theguardian.com](http://theguardian.com), accessed 19 April, 2018.

4. Robin Pogrebin, “British Architect Wins 2007 Pritzker Prize” *New York Times*. 28 March, 2007..

5. Moore, *op. cit.*

Here crowds gather in the piazza to view street performers and entertainers. The concept is celebratory, bringing energy into the centre of the city. This sense of participation and energy is carried through to a number of important art exhibitions mounted on the sixth floor, many of which feature French artists. One such was *Matisse: Paires et séries/Pairs and series*.<sup>1</sup> The show was so popular that visitors sometimes stood in line for hours to get in. Luckily mounted on the wall that flanked the line of waiting visitors was an very effective time line detailing Matisse's chronology, including the location of his Paris studios, the dates of his trips around France and abroad and the names of his major paintings, many of which were included in the exhibition. Once inside the show, visitors were treated to a feast of French creativity, a carefully curated display of multiples, hung in such a way that, standing in one spot, you can see both pictures in a pair. Extended labels, written in clear, non-technical language provided lots of information on each piece and suggestions for considering the contrasted works. The visitors' reaction was palpable. People would stop at each groupings, first to look and read, then to discuss and analyse. There was no sense of hurry. Families and friends would look attentively at one pair, then perhaps circle back to reexamine a previous section, or stop, sit on an appropriately placed bench, and continue to talk.

This emphasis on social values is what both Jane Jacobs and Richard Florida deemed important in successful, happy cities. For Jacobs locals sitting chatting on stoops defined her belief in the relaxed timelessness of meaningful social interaction. For Florida place as excitement and creative stimulation, place where people can be individuals, and place as something to which one can belong were fundamental to thriving cities. The Pompidou Centre and the Matisse exhibition well fulfill these social requirements.

## The Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao and the Bilbao effect

In 1991, when Frank Gehry was given the commission to design the new Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain, he was asked to design a hit: "They needed the building to do for Bilbao what the Sydney Opera House had done for Australia."<sup>2</sup> At its inauguration, the billowing titanium clad museum was instantly praised for its "mercurial brilliance."<sup>3</sup> Herbert Muschamp, in *The New York Times Magazine*, opined that "The Bilbao Guggenheim is an object, of course,... Still, inside and out, it's a spectacular embodiment of the tension between objects and the world beyond them."<sup>4</sup> Before Bilbao, Gehry was known more as

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1. *Matisse: Paires et séries/Pairs and series*. Exhibition catalogue. Centre Pompidou. 2012. The exhibition ran from the seventh of March to the eighteenth of June, 2012.

2. Jencks, *op. cit.*, 12. The city, the forth largest in Spain, was seriously suffering from a loss of manufacturing. Once open the new museum did become a Sydney-like icon, although one must not assume that all the new activity was simply the result of Gehry's iconic sculptural mass, for the city of Bilbao simultaneously embarked on expansive redevelopment, including a new airport and a footbridge.

3. Herbert Muschamp, "The Miracle in Bilbao", *The New York Times Magazine*, September 7, 1997.

4. *Ibid.*

a “maker of sculptures than a maker of buildings.” Perhaps he never changed. Locals call the building the silver artichoke.<sup>1</sup> The connection with the city where it is located is still to be determined.<sup>2</sup>

18 years after the satellite Guggenheim Museum opened in Bilbao, in April 2015, Chris Michael returned to that post-industrial city to assess the museum’s effect, what has become known as the famous Bilbao effect.<sup>3</sup> He found that the city now had a well-recognized landmark, that visitor spending had jumped, recouping the cost of the building within three years, and that more than one million people annually visit the museum. He saw a clean city centre, with lots of expensive retail shops. But he noticed as well that the city “seems strangely quiet.” “Where are” he asked, “the local galleries, the music, the skateboarders” Seeking the twentysomethings, he wondered:

*Does the Guggenheim actually encourage creativity in the city, as advertised, or is it a Disneylandish castle on the hill with a fancy name and an expensive entrance fee for tourists and the well-heeled? Is the Bilbao effect to spread culture, or just to spread money?<sup>4</sup>*

The vital question here is who is culture for, just the rich, an elite group of professionals, the sophisticated few, or for everybody as Jane Jacobs would wish. Can culture be a part of everyone’s lives, as at the Pompidou Centre? Which is the better way for cities - bottom up cultural movements or big ticket imports? Seeing the financial success of Bilbao, many other cities have tried to emulate the Bilbao effect with flashy architectural imports. However, as Rybczynski has acknowledged, “the Bilbao Effect might better be named the Bilbao Anomaly, since it has proved difficult to replicate.”<sup>5</sup> Numerous cities in the United States, Canada, and Europe have tried. One of the first was Seattle, hiring Gehry to reproduce his magic with the rock-and-roll museum, the Experience Museum Project. Unfortunately that “much anticipated building turned out to be a dud, a jumble of forms, material and colours... [filled with ] lackluster contents....”<sup>6</sup> Soon the building was repurposed into a Science Fiction Museum and Hall of Fame. Other architectural firms have not fared better. The new addition to the

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1. Rybczynski, *op. cit.*, 134.

2. While some would argue that it is easier to establish place in a city or history museum than in an art museum, the Pompidou Centre suggests it can be done.

3. Chris Michael, “The Bilbao effect: is ‘starchitecture’ all its cracked up to be? A history of cities in 50 buildings, day 27”, *The Guardian*, April 30, 2015.

4. *Ibid.* Some of the prices quoted on the web for activities in that Basque city are eye-popping. A 90 minute small group tour of the museum in May 2018, with the tour company Viator, would cost you an unbelievable \$173.00 Canadian per person. Viator Inc, <https://www.viator.com/tours/Bilbao/Bilbao-Architecture-and-History-Tour/d4485-19459P6?eap=visitacity-92145883-14055&aid=vba14055en>, accessed 5 May, 2018.

Prices on another site were more reasonable, \$48.00. <https://www.getyourguide.com/guggenheim-museum-bilbao-l4720/tours-tc1/?categoriesNavigationId=1>, accessed 5 May, 2018.

5. Rybczynski, *op. cit.*, 137.

6. *Ibid.*

Denver Art Museum, designed by Studio Daniel Libeskind, was expected to bring in one million visitors yearly, but, even the first year it opened, that did not happen and staff was laid off. Another Libeskind museum addition fared no better. At the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto a new director determined to add zing to his staid, Victorian building, so, with considerable difficulty injected the Libeskind Michael Lee-Chin Crystal into a main wall. Pursuing novelty with surprising spacial and structural forms, again the aim in Toronto seems to have been to increase the number of visitors. It was not a success. Form did not follow function. Even before the Crystal opened, Torontonians were placing bets as to how soon it would be torn down. Now, two directors later, “the Royal Ontario Museum subtly, finally is acknowledging its Crystal centerpiece is flawed.”<sup>1</sup> To make a museum or a city exciting, an idiosyncratic building is not enough. There must be other connections, with contents and with people, as there is with the Pompidou Centre.

Part of the disquiet with the Bilbao museum is the frequent striking absence of any examples of the unique culture of the region. This is in sharp contrast to what goes on in the Pompidou Centre, where there is lots of local support as well as French content. The day I was in Bilbao no artist on exhibition was Basque, or even Spanish. All the exhibitions and the permanent installations were not only organized by the Guggenheim in New York, but were also materials from New York. There was no indication of local cultural productivity. Visitors could detect no sensitivity to place, no recognition of the specificity of Balboa and the Basque region. Quite the opposite. It was as if all the individuality had been poured into the architecture of the museum with nothing left over for the contents. The art, admittedly often wonderful, but having no connection to the Spanish city, seems simply relegated to whatever New York had that was surplus to use elsewhere.

The Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao and especially the Bilbao effect seem to be primarily focused on consumerism, on attracting the maximum number of people to spend money and suggest that culture is a marketable commodity.<sup>2</sup> In fact the museum of today might be getting closer and closer to the concept of an arcade or mall. However, there is push-back in the museum world from the spectacular building project, the Bilbaos, with a new focus not on the grand statement but on the nuts and bolts of making places that work. In Helsinki, chosen for the Guggenheim Museum’s next effort to replicate the Bilbao effect, advocates for better methods launched an alternative design competition in 2015, and, the next year, published essays by some of the leading urbanists, architects and artists: *The Helsinki Effect: Public Alternatives to the Guggenheim Model*

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1. Alex Bozikovic, “Crystal CLEARer: With its ‘Welcome Project’ The Royal Ontario Museum is subtly, finally acknowledging its Crystal centerpiece is flawed”, *The Globe and Mail*, May 12, 2017.

2. André Desvallées constantly rails against the increasing consumerism of today’s museums, their tendency to pay a great deal of attention to marketing, branding, the shop and the restaurants all at the risk of losing focus on the exhibitions, artifacts, research and education. *Quai Branly : un miroir aux alouettes ? À propos d’ethnographie et d’“arts premiers”*. (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2007).

of *Culture-Driven Development*.<sup>1</sup> Attention was directed at the commodification of artistic achievement and the ensuing failure to foster local creativity. Authors did not hold back in decrying how

*through the ‘Bilbao Effect,’ art becomes a luxury commodity, the museum becomes an exclusionary enclave of private enjoyment, and the city becomes a speculative playground for global capital, embellished through architectural extravagance.*<sup>2</sup>

The social engagement of locals, so evident in the Pompidou Centre, seems absent. Yet they suggested alternatives, “the vision of the urban as commons - produced, shared and transformed by all”<sup>3</sup>, that very Jane Jacobs’ ideal, one shared by Richard Rogers and Renzo Piano in Paris. In the end Helsinki turned down Guggenheim and decided not to proceed with the Bilbao model.

## The Apartheid Museum

The Apartheid Museum in Johannesburg, which opened in 2001, is a large, complex institution which aims to “present a balanced account of 20<sup>th</sup> century South Africa. It recounts the political upheavals beginning in the last century and moves on to the transformation from a racist state into Africa’s beacon of hope ....”<sup>4</sup> Such clean, crisp language, that does not hide problems, is evident throughout. “Tragedy and heroism. Tyranny and freedom. Chaos and peace. The Apartheid Museum is a journey ... to understanding, freedom and equality.”<sup>5</sup> You are introduced to segregation, how race was classified. Directional arrows lead you on a predetermined path through themes such as the Sharpeville Massacre, black consciousness, political executions, to Mandela’s release and the transition to democracy. While much of the content is dark, considerable care has been taken to keep hope in view. Lettering on external pillars proclaims “Democracy, Equality, Reconciliation, Diversity.”

One strength of the presentations here is the museum’s requirement to visitors to take on the role of participant, not simply observer. The journey starts right at the front door, where you are randomly assigned a race, white or non-white, so must enter through the door appropriate to your race. This underlined the prominence of racial classification as well as suggesting the randomness of such classification, the arbitrary nature of apartheid categories.<sup>6</sup> Participation is further encouraged in the section containing individuals’ stories. But the museum does not aim to simply talk to the victims of apartheid. A statement by Nelson

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1. Terike Haapoja, Andrew Ross and Michael Sorkin, eds, (New York: UR, 2016).

2. Neil Brenner, jacket copy for *The Helsinki Effect: Public Alternatives to the Guggenheim Model of Culture-Driven Development*.

3. *Ibid.*

4. Apartheid Museum folder.

5. *Ibid.*

6. Weiser, *op. cit.*, 109.

Mandela is prominently featured at the entrance - "To be free is not merely to cast off one's chains but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others." In this way, as Liz Weiser concludes, the profound message of the museum is "less one of oppressor and oppressed than of everyone in chains, caged together by arbitrary racial separation and then, together, freed."<sup>1</sup>

Jacob's good characteristics abound here. First the museum indubitably relates immediately and very strongly to place, to the specific horrors perpetuated in Johannesburg and around the country. South African visitors would quickly recognize local and historic references. At the same time, in the sweep of material covered, broad patterns emerge, those "dynamics of civilization." Variety, contrast, and surprise are evident, with judicious use of film, photographs, and artifacts; small objects, such as decommissioned weapons and memory boxes, compared to Casspir, an immense yellow truck; and the surprise and relief of the Veld garden. Recognizing the huge amount of material presented, the museum brochure outlines a one hour tour, including suggestions as to what to skip, and a two hour tour, which notes that in this amount of time, you "should be able to engage briefly with all the installations...."<sup>2</sup> Movement and change is also well accommodated. Like Jacobs and the Matisse exhibition, the museum encourages visitor participation. Ironically, where the museum does less well is in freedom. Visitors are required to travel a predetermined path, one forced on them by architecture as well as the chronologic story line, although it is deemed acceptable to skip certain sections. All-in-all, based on the characteristics of good cities, this is a very good museum.

## 1812: One War, Four Perspectives

A rather different production is the exhibition *1812: One War, Four Perspectives*, mounted by the Canadian War Museum in Ottawa. This unusual exhibition did not present a single story, a single historical truth.<sup>3</sup> Rather it gave us what Weiser would call polyphonic chronology, where multiple voices are juxtaposed throughout the narrative. The curatorial problem was that there was no one clear, correct narrative, despite efforts by the then Canadian federal government to impose a dubious one.<sup>4</sup> The War of 1812 was fought by the British against the Americans in an attempt by each to conquer territory: the Americans wanted

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1. *Ibid.*, 110.

2. Guide to the Apartheid Museum.

3. The show hung from June 2012 to January 2013 and then a smaller version toured nationally. I am indebted to Ruth Phillips for reminding me of this important exhibition and for her exemplary research. Ruth Phillips, "Swings and roundabouts: Pluralism and the politics of change in Canada's national museums", in Philipps, Schorch and Conal McCarthy eds., *Curatopia: Museums and the Future of Curatorship* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, forthcoming).

4. Phillips notes that the official website declared that "the War was instrumental in creating Canada's armed forces...laid the foundation for Confederation and established the cornerstones of many of our political institutions" despite that fact that there was no "Canada" at the time. <http://1812.gc.ca/eng/1305743548294/1305743621243>

the British colonies in Canada while the British hoped for the return of their newly lost American colonies. Neither side succeeded. Two other groups also participated: Canadian settlers and Native Americans. Instead of one contested interpretation, the curator, Peter MacLeod decided to recount the war four times, giving each of the four participant groups equal voice. The exhibition designer, Glen Ogden, followed suit, creating an introductory room replete with multi-screen montage and text panels. Then came a “hub” or circular space from which four spokes or galleries radiated, each telling the story of the war from the perspective of one particular group, British, American, Canadian settler or Aboriginal. The exhibition was an overwhelming and unexpected success, with many visitors reading everything and staying longer than usual.<sup>1</sup> As in the Matisse exhibition, there was lots of social interaction.

The effects of this type of exhibition are considerable. This form of narrative evokes in the visitor a more complex dialectical stance towards the subject. Objects no longer are fully hegemonic, projecting an unambiguous historical truth. The visitor has new freedom to explore in any one of four directions, without any push one way or the other. Viewing is slowed down, allowing the visitor time to think, feel and discuss, as in the Matisse exhibition. The curator now has a new neutrality, presenting four narratives without any priority. But the curator also has given up his subjective, dominant power, a power transferred to the visitor who has new responsibility to discuss and decide on her own. Finally the show also gently questions the veracity of history, highlighting the curator’s inevitable subjectivity in other exhibitions. Weiser contends that artifacts “are not necessarily forensic proofs of *fact*, evidence of the whole historical truth, but are instead epideictic proofs of *values*, selected to evoke emotions and correspond to particular present-day concerns.”<sup>2</sup> This shift is very evident in *1812: One War, Four Perspectives*.

*1812: One War, Four Perspectives* scores unusually high in Jacob’s list of desirable city characteristics. The order was clear and, most importantly, reinforced the multi-vocal nature of the show. Freedom was evident in that each visitor decided which interpretation to explore with no overriding instruction or direction, unlike the Apartheid Museum. The wheel-like design, spokes radiating from a hub, ensured and caused movement, while the novelty of multi-perspectives provoked dialectical interaction. In one way perhaps this exhibition wobbles a bit in respect of place. It does not occur where there were major battles in 1812, although it is mounted and shown in the national War Museum. However, given the then Canadian government’s interest in burdening this war with all sorts of nation-building attributes, erroneously according to most historians, perhaps it is fitting that the show would be in the capital. All-in-all, *1812: One*

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1. Visitors stayed for an average of forty-five minutes, in contrast to the twenty minute average for other exhibitions, and 61 % stayed for close to an hour, in Ruth Phillips, “Swings and roundabouts: Pluralism and the politics of change in Canada’s national museums”, in Schorch and McCarthy eds., *Curatopia*, np.

2. Weiser, *op. cit.*, 69, italics in original.

*War, Four Perspectives* is a strong and creative example of a museum turning its back on one unchallenged history. Instead it used objects to underline the current Canadian values of tolerance to various differing points of view and to reject an imposed imperial narrative. This stance reinforces the connections between Jacobs' city attributes and museum attributes.

What makes Jane Jacobs' ideas about good cities so engaging is her deeply intuitive understanding of what people want. She recognized that citizens did not want super highways destroying established neighbourhoods or developers and city planners, driven by money, building cold, inhuman lodgings. But most of all she realized that people need a say in their surroundings, in the development and continuation of their communities. In this paper I have suggested that peoples' needs and desires in cities are similar to their needs and desires in museums. Museum visitors want the marvelous order of disorder, movement, perpetual change, and diversity. In both museum and city, given these characteristics, people can build personal identity. Most of all museum visitors want to be listened to and respected. They want to have a hand in what the museum is, what it shows and how. Unfortunately, many museums in North America and Europe still do not understand that visitors want to co-create with the museum. Good museums, like Jacob's good cities, are an intricate ballet that responds to the dynamics of civilization; they are Burke's soulful song that pulse with participation and emotion. The Pompidou Centre and the Apartheid Museum do this well; the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao less so. In both *Matisse: Paires et séries/Pairs and series* and *1812: One War, Four Perspectives* the visitor is challenged to build her own understanding. Here is poetic naming, uniting the logical and the emotional, the visitor's contribution to remaking the museum. The full application of Jacobs' good city attributes makes museums into authentic, dynamic people places. The good museum resonates strongly with the good city. The opposite is surely also true: good museums can be fine examples for good cities.

# On the Borders of Heritage – In Dialogue with a Text

*Kerstin Smeds*

In this paper, I will discuss senses of place, of loss and nostalgia, and of preserving and memorizing life through things in a place. I will also ponder the question: can a place and its things, embodied in a museum, be moved somewhere else? My co-discussant and partner in this exploration is Siegfried Lenz, or rather his *alter ego* Zygmunt, in his rich novel *Heritage*.<sup>1</sup>

So what is a place, in the first place...? Where there is place, is also where there are borders, verges, boundaries, frontiers. Borders are deeply rooted in human existence, culture and endeavours. We have an almost genetically inherited tendency to construct borders and boundaries around us; it's "us and the others" in a mental sphere, and "our place" in a physical sphere – and this place is the center of our world.<sup>2</sup> At times, the formal borders such as political ones, are consistent with the informal ones, at times they are not. A place is a center for intentions, activities and actions, but also a center for past activities and actions, memories and traumas. A place is where people experience things that give life meaning and identities are formed. Events and actions occur in a context of place(es), and are coloured by them and their history through time.<sup>3</sup>

This essay is about a very specific place, Lucknow in former East Prussia, Germany, and what happens when its inhabitants try to move not only their things and memories, but the place itself, to another place. It is about the concept of loss and memory, and the connection between losses and memories of events and places, territories and things. The sense of loss is crucial when we talk about life and death. Time passes, life passes, and we do everything to stop this process. Among the most significant actions in this struggle is to save and preserve objects, to build museums, to assign events, things and places as heritage. Only then we can be sure that we leave something behind for future generations.

*But now I see someone beckoning to me, my uncle Adam Rogalla, the self-styled local historian, the gently agitated mole grubbing through our Masurian past.*

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1. Observe that those parts which are quotations from Lenz, are through the book marked in *italics* and not indented. Quotations from research literature are marked only with indentions, no italics. Siegfried Lenz, *The Heritage*, Translated from German by Krishna Winston. (London: Faber and Faber, 2011). German origin's title: *Heimatmuseum* (Hamburg 1978).

2. With inspiration from the Prologue of the book *Territoriets gränser*. Red. Ingemar Karlsson, (with contributions by: Gullan Gidlund, Janerik Gidlund, Börje Johansson, Sverker Sörlin, Gunnar Törnqvist. Stockholm: SNS Förlag, 1997).

3. Edward Relph, *Place and Placelessness*. (London: Pion Limited, 1976) 1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1976.

*He invites me to delve into the abundant bog with my blue and yellow shovel; he teaches me, if not reverence, then awe for the eloquent relics of our early times; and in his house, which he in the course of years of fanatical collecting has transformed into a museum of regional history, I learn that any understanding of the world must begin with learning what homeland is – and end with it. Since he died without issue, one fine day I inherited the house and the collection.<sup>1</sup>*

*(Uncle Adam] carried not a crowbar but a wooden spade...as well as a trowel, a scraper, and even brushes. All these implements came handy for his tenacious work in the bog, at the foot of the Castle Hill. You want to know what he was up to? He was excavating our past, the most industrious mole ever to unearth early history.... I dug (too). The little shovel grubbed and poked in the peat as if it were intent on uncovering our entire past one day.<sup>2</sup> What past, where? This particular past was situated in Masuria (Mazyr), a territory by God abandoned, a corner of Europe that I had never heard of until I, in the beginning of the 90's, came upon Siegfried Lenz's rich novel *Heritage* (in German *Heimatmuseum*, which actually means Homeland). I have never forgotten the deep impression it made on me – this marvelous, colorful portrait of a *Heimat*, homeland, and of life in and around the small city of Lucknow by the Masurian lakes in East Prussia, near the Polish border.*

*Pardon me?, he said. Yes, the ancient Prussians were our ancestors, and they were related to the Sudauese, gatherers of honey and remarkable hunters... It is to them we owe the discovery that one can capture a drunk bear more easily than a sober one. Bowls of brandy mixed with wild honey accounted for the better part of their success at the hunt.<sup>3</sup>*

Lenz's novel is a flooding of Masurian childhood and adolescence, of the two World Wars and what then happened, of a family named Rogalla; the mercilessly mean grandfather Alfons, steward of the old manor, and uncle Adam, an amateur archaeologist and collector who built up the local *Homeland museum*, in German *Heimatmuseum*. Not to mention the father (of the fictive narrator) Jan Rogalla, a homemade, grandiose pharmacist who, in the small white-plastered house by the river, mixed the most horrendous Sulphur stinking tinctures which he, by horse and carriage clattering around the village, and, with the aid of the viper Ella, tried to sell to the villagers, until he one fine day during the First World War galloped over a mined bridge and evaporated in the air in a cloud of blue, yellow and green smoke. And Ella, well, she got her name from "a sister to my mother, who talked with an incomprehensible hissing sound". Wiper Ella used to lie peacefully rolled up in her cage until Rogalla had teased her enough, so she buried her poisonous teeth in his arm, whereafter he, in front of the amazed villagers, cured himself with his own tinctures. And it was this way – when Ella

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1. Lenz., *op. cit.*, 10. Observe that here I have just slightly changed the translation according to the German origin. In all other quotations (if not told otherwise), I follow the English version accurately. (German edition *Heimatmuseum*, Hamburg 1978).

2. *Ibid.*, 13, 14, 15.

3. *Ibid.*, 17.

in an unguarded moment had hooked her teeth in the neighbor's son's cheek and dangled there as some eel in a fishing rod – that the narrator Zygmunt Rogalla got to know Conny Karrash, and hand in hand they wandered through life.

Then they meet Sonja Turk the magician, "greatest Masurian weaver ever"<sup>1</sup>, who one day rescues the almost drowned little Ziechmunt from the river, where he had ended up when the boys had raced over the floating timber on their way to swim in the lake. Shortly after that, Sonja had engaged him as her only very talented pupil in the art of weaving. After the drowning incident, as an unexpected gift together with a wish for recovery, Ziechmunt's grandfather Alfons gave him his most precious vest, made of the processed and skillfully sewn skin of his favorite dog Hoggo, which (the vest, that is) always bristled as soon as a notable danger approached.

*Heimatismuseum* or *Heritage* is a marvelous piece of literature, a cultural record of everyday life in a forgotten corner of Europe at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. But it is also a record of our time, where a micro perspective turns into a macro perspective and becomes universal. The small town of Lucknow really exists, even if it nowadays is called Lyck (or Elk in Polish). Siegfried Lenz was born there in 1926. Masuren exists, too, and very much so. Today, the Masurian lakes are a destination of pilgrimage for urban Polish tourists. And I have tracked down a family, a certain August Rogala, even if it is far from certain that this man has anything with Lenz's family novel.<sup>2</sup>

*Heimatismuseum* is Lenz's fourth book on the development of Germany before and after World War II. His breakthrough came with *Deutschstunde* – in English *The German Lesson* – in 1960, where he settles account with Nazism and the ideological and political twists behind the movement. The book sold a million and a half copies.<sup>3</sup> The end of the war in 1945 destroyed the German people's ability and will to remember, to mourn and to tell stories, since all memories were contaminated.<sup>4</sup> *Deutschstunde* was one of those great literary works that detangled the traumas of German History.

In *Heimatismuseum*, Lenz readdressed and restored German identity – which had been dropped as a non-issue after World War II. At last a German could,

1. *Ibid.*, 151.

2. Rudolf Neumann, *Ostpreussen unter Polnischer und Sowjetischer Verwaltung 1945-1955*. (Berlin, 1955), 8.

3. See Winfried Bassmann, *Siegfried Lenz: Sein Werk als Beispiel für Weg und Standort der Literatur in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1976), 159-164 concerning how *Deutschstunde* was received. See also the chapter 'Heimat Past and Present – a Land fit for Youth', as well as 'Lenz's *Deutschstunde*, Emil Nolde and Heimatskunst' etc., in *Heimat. A German Dream. Regional Loyalties and National Identity in German Culture 1890-1990*, ed. Elisabeth Boa & Rachel Palfreyman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

4. David Morley and Kevin Robbins, "No Place Like *Heimat*: Images of Home(land) in European Culture", in *Space & Place. Theories of Identity and Location*. (London: Lawrence & Wishart Ltd, 1993), 17.

without shame and dishonour, say the word "Heimat" (Homeland). Lenz weaves a rich and exuberant "Masurian web" of local, regional and national identities and memory; of geo-politics and high politics; of border making, local patriotism and people's strong albeit feckless ties to their roots. He tells about flight and exile and desperate attempts to reestablish those lost roots and memories, and recreate Home. The novel has never lost its actuality. Still today, and even more than before, the story gives a lively illustration of the debate on growing regionalism, new-ethnicity and new-nationalism in the wake of globalization.

## On roots, memory and "musealization"

"Recently everyone has been harking back to his or her origins – you have noticed it, I suppose?", Julia Kristeva wrote already in 1993. She went on: "The values crisis and the fragmentation of individuals have reached the point where we no longer know what we are and take shelter, to preserve a token of personality, under the most massive, regressive common denominators: national origins and the faith of our forebears".<sup>1</sup>

Kristeva's small book *Nations Without Nationalism* was an early warning before the slow breakdown of the ethics of European humanism in the wake of Neoliberalism and introduction of New Public Management in global economy and society. Kristeva's "cry" was a strong apology for cosmopolitanism and for the Enlightenment tradition of equality, democracy, tolerance and universality in a world that risked falling apart, into "tribe communities". Kristeva wanted to give Europe a chance as a political, intellectual and cultural community, in spite of our deeply rooted unwillingness or inability to live with strangers.<sup>2</sup>

One thing is sure, economic and cultural globalization and inequality has, for the individual, led to a severe loss of orientation; it has confused identity related to both the future and the past. Alvin Toffler warned us almost fifty years ago; we would become afflicted by "the disease of change", which in turn would evoke a need for peace of mind and permanence. In this situation, the norm is a return to roots, a romanticization of the past and a search for geographical and existential hideaways, where peace and quiet reigns. Pierre Nora, one of the leading figures of the *Annales*-school in France, has linked the late 1900's obsession with the past to roots, memory and memory work, and to the speed of change in society:

The acceleration of history: let us try to gauge the significance of this phrase. An increasingly rapid slippage of the present into a historical past that is gone for good, a general perception that anything and everything may disappear-these indicate a rupture of equilibrium. The remnants of

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1. Amazingly far-sighted at the time! Julia Kristeva, "What of Tomorrow's Nation?", in *Nations without Nationalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 3.

2. , *Étrangers à nous-mêmes.*, (Paris: Sciences humaines, Fayard, 1988). (Eng. *Strangers to Ourselves*. European Perspectives: A Series in Social Thought and Cultural Criticism (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991).

experience still lived in the warmth of tradition, in the silence of custom, in the repetition of the ancestral, have been displaced under the pressure of a fundamentally historical sensibility. ...We speak so much of memory because there is so little of it left. <sup>1</sup>

In Nora's book series *lieux de memoire*, memory crystallizes and secretes itself at a particular historical moment, a turning point where the consciousness of a break with the past is bound up with the sense that memory has entirely been torn apart. If memory could only be embodied and placed in certain sites, then a sense of historical continuity would persist.<sup>2</sup> Memory, he says, has been taken over by history, organized in books and institutions and thus has lost its living, changeable and social character. Memory, to regain life, has to be connected to some kind of site, be it a geographical place, a home, photo-albums, or any location. And, more importantly to Nora, memories should also be *told*.

An important part of memory work is nostalgia, which, at times, has been conceived as an illness.<sup>3</sup> And this illness is caused by loss – loss of home, homeland, country – or by the fact that life is coming to an end and past events cannot be regained. Nostalgia is a phenomenon, connected to the acceleration of time. Susan Stewart says in her work *On Longing* that the past is always absent, therefore it is conceived as lost, which creates a longing for it – a nostalgia, perhaps never actually cured. Again and again we need to re-experience the past in a form of resurrection, which is gained through the creation of new *lieux de memoire*, sites of (or for) memories and remembrance such as museums and heritage sites.<sup>4</sup>

We certainly live in an “Era of Commemoration”, as Nora put it. He notes that the large work that Nora himself edited, *Realms of Memory* I-III, originally intended to be a counter-memorative type of history, was overtaken by commemoration.<sup>5</sup> The process is in full swing and has been accelerating for two or three decades by now. People long not only for history and memory, but for nostalgia itself, for the good stories on identity and history, for stability, permanence and traditional values, for finding communions, kinship and togetherness. In a global world, local communities and family create the “natural” territorial and social frames for all this longing. There, the individual establishes her existential base. A person's “being” and “to-be” is spatially and culturally anchored. “Homeland” is a

1. Pierre Nora, ‘Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire’, *Representations*, No. 26, (Spring 1989, Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory. University of California Press), 7-24.

2. *Ibid.*

3. Karin Johannisson, *Nostalgia. En känslas historia* (Stockholm: Bonnier Essä, 2001), 159.; See also *Reveries of Home: Nostalgia, Authenticity and the Performance of Place*, ed. By Solrun Williksen and Nigel Rapport. (UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), 128.

4. Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993).

5. Pierre Nora, “The Era of Commemoration”, in *Realms of Memory. The Construction of the French Past*, Vol. III: Symbols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998). 17.

territorial imperative. More than ever, people seem to need a place, a “home”, where security is provided.

Lucknow is not only a very special place with its very special history and memories, but it is also where Uncle Adam, in his very special museum, tucks away and stores all memorabilia he can find. At first, Zygmunt finds it a bit awkward to settle down with his parents in the museum. *So we moved into our rooms, both looking out of the river and somewhat cramped, it must be admitted, for the entire house was filled with the relics and remains Uncle Adam gathered with such passion. Whatever we could not fit into our quarters we stored away, partly in the shed, partly in the attic. I had to adjust to the collection of old Masurian wedding costumes in my room, threadbare, limp garments slightly fragrant of camphor, which hung with their sleeves lifted a little, so that many a bad night I imagined they were reaching out to grab me. I must not forget the bed, with its stout spherical feet, or the painted blanket chest, or the carved washboards and mangles stacked in corners, while a shelf over my bed held historic kitchen implements: cabbage slicers, herb crushers, wooden molds shaped like blossoms or sixpointed stars... Have you ever slept in a museum, or lived in one? So there!*

*...You may well assume, dear boy, that every bit of the place was given over to relics, so much so that when you took a swallow of buttermilk, you might be drinking out of a Sudanese funerary urn.<sup>1</sup>*

Lenz's novel is like a living illustration of Kristeva's concept of "tribe community", where the collection and preservation of cultural signs and material is ever more important. Tribe community or not, today we cannot close our eyes to the fact that Europe, over the last couple of decades, keeps musealizing itself. French sociologist Henri Pierre Jeudy noted years ago that this is due to the collapse of 200 years of progressive thinking and positivist futurism.<sup>2</sup> And there are no new ideologies in sight as to how to organize a future society. On the contrary, the final (climate or other) catastrophe seems to be getting closer every day.

In a German context, the interest in homeland /Heimat and research in local history, has increased since the 1980's. Already then, the German Homeland-museums had more visitors per year (12 million) than the art and history museums combined.<sup>3</sup> Today, the visitor numbers, as well as the number of Homeland museums, has increased by thousands. Utz Jeggle sees the Heimat movement as a sign of a civilization crisis:

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1. Lenz, *op. cit.*, 119.

2. Henri Pierre Jeudy, 'Die Musealisierung der Welt oder die Erinnerung der Gegenwärtigen', *Ästhetik und Kommunikation*, Heft 67/68. Jhrg. 18, (Berlin 1986).

3. says Ina-Maria Greverus, quoted by Utz Jeggle, 'Subjektive Heimat – objektive Musealität. Zum Verhältnis von subjektiver Erlebnisfähigkeit und objektiven Ereignissen', in *Heimat im Museum*. (Koblenz 1984), 20.

It is perhaps also a symptom of crisis that the big questions about life, do not find their answers anymore in the different forms of global change. Suddenly it is obvious that everyday life, small settings, subcultures and lifestyles are playing a role – something that in the years after 1968 certainly has been seen as revisionist if not kontrarevolutionary.<sup>1</sup>

In Germany, the number of Homeland-museums has long since exceeded the number of all other museums combined.<sup>2</sup> The full-blown museum and heritage boom in Europe – and actually all over the world – is perhaps not only due to the search for roots and nostalgia, but also to the fact that a nation is no longer considered a dynamic force, creating its own future, but as a spent and mature entity, which only remains to be preserved. It is hard to say whether the gigantic “mummification“ that is going on today is a reaction, not only to the “high speed society“<sup>3</sup> but to modernity itself, which during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century would have dumped all “heimats“ and local identities in the garbage bin of history. Maybe the trend back to roots is a reaction against *all* that is included in the concept of modernity, this metaphysical loss of “home“? To be modern, says Marshall Berman, is to be in a place promising adventure, power, happiness, growth and transformation, and, at the same time, threatening to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are:

Modern environments and experiences cut across all boundaries of geography and ethnicity, of class and nationality, of religion and ideology; in this sense, modernity can be said to unite all mankind. But it is ... a unity of disunity, of perpetual disintegration and renewal, of struggle and contradiction...a male stream of homelessness.<sup>4</sup>

*Perhaps I was beginning to recognize that Uncle Adam was engaged in a contest with time, with limp oblivion and silent decay. What he wanted of these particles of the past was testimony, unimpeachable testimony, as he called it, whose purpose was to sustain us in difficult times, as well as to strengthen our desire for something lasting. ... he hoped the viewer (in the museum] would develop a personal relationship to the objects, a sense that they were his, too, and would realize: that was how we used to live.<sup>5</sup>*

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1. *Ibid.* Translation K. Smeds from: „Es ist vielleicht auch ein Krisensymptom, dass nachdem die grossen Fragen des change Lebens ihre Antworten nicht in den globalen Veränderungsentwürfen fanden, plötzlich der Alltag, das kleine Milieu, die Subkultur, die Lebenswelt eine Rolle spielen, die in den Jahren nach 1968 sicherlich als revisionistisch wenn nicht konterrevolutionär geegisselt worden wäre.“

2. Joachim Meynert & Volker Rodekamp, *Heimatmuseum 2000. Ausgangspunkte und Perspektiven* (Bielefeld: Verlag für Regionalgeschichte, 1993), 15.

3. See Hartmut Rosa, William E Scheuerman (eds), *High Speed Society. Social Acceleration, Power, and Modernity* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania University Press, 2009).

4. Marshall Berman, *All That is Solid Melts Into Air. The Experience of Modernity*. (London: Verso Editions, 1983), 15.; See also Peter L. Berger, Birgitte Berger and Hansfried Kellner, *The Homeless Mind. Modernisation and Conciousness*. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974).

5. *Ibid.*, 120.

Was Kristeva perhaps right in her prediction that what is going on today is a return to a time *before* Enlightenment with its ideas of citizenship and civil rights? Such Enlightenment left us alone with our existential problems and concentrated on science and political negotiations. Such aparliamentarism has surrendered under the weight of global economy and thus betrayed us and our ideas of freedom and common wealth? Is this the reason why we, today, witness a resurrection of *Blut und Boden* – blood-and-soil-ideology – and neo-nazism, this extreme manifestation of a corrupt identity and *Volksgeist* (folk-spirit)? I think so.

Nevertheless, all indications point to our need for roots, for living memory, for geographical and cultural identity and "home". *Well, if you really believe that the idea of homeland is a product of arrogant narrow-mindedness, my own experience suggests that it is an outgrowth of melancholy. Our sense of transitions makes us want to impose some sort of permanence on the traces of our own existence. And there's only one place where that can be done, our homeland...*<sup>1</sup> This done with the help of the museum, which preserves the homeland. This is interesting to compare this with a statement on the specific character of regional museums in Scandinavia:

A regional museum has an obligation to make the own landscape's character known to its inhabitants, to make them feel safety and communion, and to give them a foothold in life...The regional museum should give people perspectives on their own lives, to create bonds to the outside world and between different epochs in history.<sup>2</sup>

## The authentic feeling of place

Place, identity and memory are concepts tightly tied to one another. Cultural and human geographers have a saying about "authentic" feelings of place, of roots and "being-in-place", those forces and environments which create individual and collective memory. Edward Relph, in the French tradition of human geography, notes that „places" in our life cannot be defined as any detached, easily defined entities that could be as easily described.<sup>3</sup> Instead, the role that the "original place" – be it "homeland", place of origin – plays in our lives, should be described as an aggregation of mental and physical positions in time and geography, in landscapes, climate, rituals, home, family, other people, care, personal and collective events, experiences and memories. To this, we should

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1. Lenz, *op. cit.*, 105.

2. Sten Rentzhog, Kommentar, *Kulturarvet, museerna och forskningen: rapport från en konferens 1-14 november 1997*, red. Annika Alzén & Magdalena Hillström (Stockholm: Riksbankens kubi-leumsfond, 1999), 118-119.

3. Relph, *op. cit.*, 29.; *See also dwelling, place and environment. towards a phenomenology of person and world*, ed. David Seamon and Robert Mugerauer (Malabar, Florida: Krieger Publishing Company, 2000).

add traditions, customs and practices, which forms what we today would call intangible heritage. As UNESCO defines place:

... the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills- as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage (Article 2.1.).<sup>1</sup>

To analyze all this, we have to dive into every single bit of that multifaceted experience. Only then, “the essence of place” would be uncovered. We cannot escape, as Edward Relph says,

an awareness of the persistence of place through time, or the fact that there is a *here* where we know and are known, or where the most significant experiences of our life have occurred. To be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognized need of the human soul. It is one of the hardest to define. A human being has roots by virtue of his real, active and natural participation in the life of the community, which preserves in living shape certain particular expectations for the future.<sup>2</sup>

However, Relph observes that a “place-identity” does not necessarily, not always, have positive connotations. “Home”, and one’s origins can, at worst, provoke painful memories of chaos, violence or alienation. But, Relph goes on,

if we really are rooted in this place, if the place is our home, then all these factors are important and inseparable. This is where we, on an existential level, learn what it is to be “included” versus “excluded”, and learn how to deal with it.<sup>3</sup>

*You want to know what I have in mind?, asks Zygmunt, I can feel you smiling, but I would answer your smile this way: to me, the homeland is not just the place where your dead are buried; it is the place where you have your roots, where you are sheltered, in your language, in your feelings, yes, even in your silence. It is the place where you are always recognized. And that’s what everyone wants, in his heart of hearts, to be recognized, to be welcomed without question....*<sup>4</sup> In the small museum of Lucknow, everything is summed up:

*... there came the night I was lying in bed...when I suddenly spied the largest column of ants I had ever seen...Each had his own destination, one heading for a historic flour sifter, others swarming over rolling pins, mangles, straw crowns, even bridal dresses.... I watched them for a long time at their business*

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1. The UNESCO World Heritage Convention, Article 2; see Shina Erlewein, ‘Sustainable Development and Intangible Cultural Heritage: Integrating Culture in Development’, in: *Perceptions of Sustainability in Heritage Studies*. Heritage Studies Vol. 4. Ed. Marie-Theres Albert (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2015), 73.

2. Relph, *op. cit.*, 38.

3. *Ibid.*, 41 and 49-55.

4. Lenz, *op. cit.*, 91.

*and visualized how much they could destroy, how many tokens of past existence, and with the tokens also the meaning and significance they contained... In the course of that night, I once more came to the conclusion that all the threatened objects belonged to the meaningful continuity of the past. They had helped overcome the transitory quality of life. They had smoothed misery and given happiness; they must not be allowed to perish, to dissolve in acids. We were obliged to preserve this past from total oblivion. Why? Because these objects have been preparing our life!*<sup>1</sup>

Reading Lenz, one can hear the echo of human geography as well as the French school of historiography, *Annales*. Human geography seeks to put human experience of places as the main concern of geography – closely connected to memory and lived life. *Annales* sought to identify a regional personality, “genre de vie”, expressed in the landscape through time. They gave priority to long perspectives of time, economic and social circumstances and mental processes tied to geography, places, landscapes and regions. A landscape is shaped by a social organization and reflects its beliefs, practices and technologies. Both *Annales* and human geography have very close links to phenomenology and historic hermeneutics, with the concepts of cultural and social context, deep existential roots of person and memory; Hans-Georg Gadamer’s concepts *Horizont*, *Leben* och *Zuhörigkeit*. One of the founding fathers of human geography, Eric Dardel, wrote:

Before we can make any choices (when born), we are in a place which we have not chosen; where the very foundations of our earthly existence, and the preconditions for being human, are established. We can shift environments, we can move, but even then we have to look for a place to stay, because it is essential to us to find a base where we can “anchor” our Being and calculate on our opportunities. We need a “here” to which the world opens up, and a “there”, where we can go and where we can return.<sup>2</sup>

“Home-making is a continuous work, and there is a continual relationship between home and time”, say Solrun Williksen and Nigel Rapport in their book *Reveries of Home*. And the continuity of home-making expresses itself in the form of a continuous *emplacement*.<sup>3</sup> These include rituals of a personal or collective kind, played out in city streets and country locations, taking the form

1. Lenz, *op. cit.*, 183-184. (*I took the liberty here to change and complement a few words to the translation, according to the German original*).

2. Eric Dardel, *L'homme et la terre. Nature de réalité géographique* (Paris: Press Universitaires de France, 1952), 56 (my brief translation). As for Dardel’s ties to *Annales*, I am consulting a Finnish thesis on Dardel: Kaisa Pennanen, *Ihminen ja maa. Eric Dardelin maantieteestä*. Joensuun yliopiston maantieteen laitos, Julkaisuja no 2 / Joensuu University Publication no 2, (Joensuu 1997); See also one of *Annales*’ founders, Lucien Febvre, *La Terre et l'évolution humaine: Introduction géographique à l'histoire*. Series: L'évolution de l'humanité. 4 (Paris, 1922).

3. *Reveries of Home: Nostalgia, Authenticity and the Performance of Place* (UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), 3.

of ceremonial revivals and mundane routines... Home is the achievement of a nostalgic mood, it is a hoped-for future, and it is a sense of continuity:

Home is performed in the head and body as much as on the land, in the past and future as much as the present, by way of absent landscapes as much as present ones, by way of doubts and longings as much as certainties and achievements, through the constructed offices of others as well as by the self.<sup>1</sup>

Nothing would fit more perfectly into a description of the extension of home – which would be the homeland-museum.

## The good and the bad

However, if we start speaking of a “return to the roots”, it is important to distinguish between on the one hand, our existential, social and cultural bonds to a *place* and its memories, and, on the other, a political and ideological exploitation of those bonds for other purposes – for excluding “the other”, for self-praise and self-assertion at the cost of others who do not belong to “us” and our place and should be removed. The *Heritage* succeeds in balancing between the “good” forces as in the feeling for homeland and identity, and the “bad”, as in Blood-and-soil-ideology.

*Pardon me? A detestable word?, Zygmunt says in the 1930's. A word (Homeland) with a dark history?... That's just what my son Bernhard said: he said this word meant nothing to him; he could not do anything with it, but when others spoke it, all he could think of was terrible things.... I know that you, like Bernhard, see the idea of homeland as tied up with a certain kind of narrowness, with prejudices, with an ignorant, dull spirit that cannot perceive the humanity of people from other backgrounds. ... I realize that the word has a bad reputation, that it has been abused, so seriously abused that one can hardly use it nowadays. ... But for that very reason, could we not try to rid the word of its bad connotations? Give it back a sort of purity?<sup>2</sup>*

The political/ideological right-wing aspect of the Homeland-movement comes slowly creeping into Lucknow in the 1920's and -30's. Which brings along all kinds of territorial demarcations, on both a mental and geographical level. Lenz refers to real events, when writing about a referendum in the region, in which East-Prussians had to choose whether they wanted to belong to Germany or to Poland. The Polish part of the population, who had lived for centuries in Klein-Grajewo just on the other side of the lake, voted naturally for Poland, which caused bullying and harassment from their former friends and neighbours in Lucknow, who voted for Germany (in reality, 97,8 %).<sup>3</sup> ... *we listened with strong emotion to former officer Bilitza, who brought out in jerky phrases what*

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1. *Ibid.*, 4.

2. Lenz, *op. cit.*, 90-91.

3. Neumann, *op. cit.*, 11.

*everyone wanted to hear: sometimes national differences had to be underlined again...teaching people a lesson, however rough, was a necessity... Even if we'd gotten used to them, that didn't mean we liked having the Polacks here.<sup>1</sup>*

When the war approached, Zygmunt, the skillful rug weaver and custodian of his uncle's heritage, his Homeland-museum, takes a neutral position and brings forward the genuine love for Homeland, roots and identity. He will never choose sides. If anything, he is critical of the Nazis. For him, the most important thing is to go on with his uncle's work, to secure all traces and preserve the historical records of life and activities in this region, never mind to which "culture", "nationality" or "people" these records belonged.

Right in-between the neutral feeling for homeland and the surging racial ideology with its demand on *Lebensraum*, stands Zygmunt's friend Conny Karrash, who becomes a journalist and a radical opponent to Nazism, but also an ideological opponent to the excessive enthusiasm for Homeland. Conny works in the small printing house in the city and as a writer, and together with his employer Weinknecht they also print anti-Nazi posters. Later, Master Weinknecht is brutally murdered, a murder of which the old neighbors, the Poles in Klein-Grjewo, are accused. The Nazis had already gathered them all for deportation to concentration camps, when the liberally minded landlord Tony Lettkow, from Königsberg, intervenes and saves them. Can we ever give the word Homeland back its irreproachability? Zygmunt asks in despair, rummaging more than ever in his little museum. By now, he had inherited it all from his Uncle Adam, who finally had lost his mind and disappeared in the vast Borek woods.

Then one fine day everything changed: the conditions for preserving the testimony of the Masurian past, the precious tracks of the Pruzzes, Sudauese, Lithuanians and all others, were upended. The German Brigade Commander of the region, professor Melzer-Tapiau, had hastily come to Lucknow together with officer Bilitza to scrutinize the eloquent relics of the Masurian soil, because he had heard of the collection.<sup>2</sup> And what did they find? *Musical instruments, the humming pot and the devil's fiddle, he allowed himself a grin, and even cracked a thin smile for the "fauna of the homeland", the carved kitchen implements, and my toy collection, ... Melzer-Tapiau nodded as he inspected the weapons collection, took a lance socket and dagger down from the wall ... iron artifacts from a Vandal warrior's grave... In the tool collection, he noted the age of wooden plow and set a spinning wheel in motion; after that he wanted a brandy.* He gulped it down with no apparent enjoyment, avoided looking at Conny and Zygmunt, and remarked: *Not suitable for official support ... not in our sense.*

The museum did not meet his Nazi-ideology criteria. The collections were not worthless, he said, but were *touchingly random, and had a disregard for political*

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1. Lenz, *op. cit.*, 187. Later, Bilitza himself was proved the son of a gypsy and committed suicide of pure shame.

2. Lenz, *op. cit.*, 264.

*implications.*<sup>1</sup> The objects would receive significance only when they are put in the service of an idea, a great ideal – which in this case would be to demonstrate that a Masurian has always seen himself as the guard of the German spirit in the East. The objects should be a vital link between the defense of the homeland and the soil. With that he left. Bilitza announces he will soon be back, in order to remodel the museum in the spirit of the new times.

Now Conny Karrasch warns Zygmunt to open the museum and accommodate the new German Masters' ambitions to turn all museums into aggressive displays, shrines for defense of the homeland and pride of race. But in the end, Zygmunt was not able to carry out the demanded sorting and disposals; he was simply too attached to all the objects, which carried so many memories of past life. He refuses to accept the idea that a Masurian rug, or the stuffed black stork, would suddenly not be allowed to represent his own past, his own homeland, but just some very artificial ideas of race, glory, blood-and-soil. Zygmunt decides rather to close his museum.

## The displacement

It would get worse. International politics and various territorial claims at the end of the war initiated one of the largest evacuation plans the war had seen. The entire East Prussia was to be emptied of Germans – more than one million people. A significant part of the bulk of refugees succumbed on the road, due to snowstorms, famine and the allies' indiscriminate bombing of German ships in the Baltic.<sup>2</sup> Suddenly, in the middle of winter 1945, the order to evacuate reached Lucknow. *I assure you, none of us ever really thought we might be... forced to flee; we simply could not imagine giving up Lucknow. To us the town symbolized permanence and shelter, and we secretly believed that we and the town belonged together for all eternity.*

*I rushed into the museum, determined to drag the crates and hampers I had already packed. ... Don't ask me how I decided to condemn the humming pot and the devil's fiddle to stay but granted the old Masurian spinning wheel a place in the wagon. I gathered up at random whatever caught my eye: documents, coins, costumes. Historic kitchen implements found a cozy nest among the rag rugs, Bronze Age weapons were thrown in with toys and the "flora of homeland". I can't explain why, numb and sweaty as I was, I chose certain objects that had come to us over the border: a hand-carved chair, a Masovian fancy vest, an old saddle and bridle .... I was packing almost in trance, I knew exactly where each one came from and what its story was.<sup>3</sup>*

Everything was stowed in a sleigh and a hay cart, and off they went towards the Baltic coast, to the numerous ships waiting for the German refugees, no matter how dangerous it was. On the road, there was an argument between

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1. *Ibid.*, 265.

2. Neumann, *op. cit.*, 11.

3. Lenz, *op. cit.*, 380.

two homelanderers. *It was inevitable that Intelmann and Przytulla should be at loggerheads. ... When they learned that they were riding on top of the Masurian museum, they found endless pretexts for bickering.*

*Intelmann simply could not see us returning home soon after the end of the war. He cited various movements of people in history that had resulted in totally new constellations. He questioned whether the homeland could be immutable, guaranteed for good ... Przytulla, on the other hand, was convinced that we would soon be returning home. He spoke of the "right of homeland". This right could not be tampered with because it was an expression of innate need. ... He viewed the inventory of our museum as the modest but irrefutable evidence of a long-lasting claim. I let them fight and concentrated on the road.<sup>1</sup>*

Many hardships later – Zygmunt even lost his wife and family, many starved to death on the way, and about half of the inventory of the museum went down with one of the ships that the allied forces bombed – the crowd landed on the Baltic coast near Schleswig<sup>2</sup>, where they start building a new life, a life in exile. Zygmunt finds a house close to the shore where he slowly starts to build his museum once again. He starts a new family, too. The old Lucknowers, who' had settled in the same region, come and contribute to the collections with what they had brought with them from home. The collection was crowned by the most precious of objects: Sonya Turk's hand-written and richly illustrated book on the Masurian art of rug weaving, which Zygmunt had saved from Lucknow. *Great was our pleasure and satisfaction when we finally gave our memories of Lucknow a home. We were delighted to see how much still remained to us. And we made the exciting discovery that our memory could find its way back to the lost town, but that the town itself kept changing as we recalled it to life; ... I realized that every past one reconstructs contains a good measure of invention.<sup>3</sup>*

Finally, the museum is reopened with applause and Gluck's triumphal *Freudenklänge, Festgesänge* (Joy Resounds with festive Sounds). A representative of the government declared in his opening speech that the museum was an expression of justified longing, and that nothing was truly lost so long as it remained the object of peoples' memories and longing. *What did we mean by longing? he asked.... We longed for something unattainable or absent. To long, he said softly, was to turn back the hands of time and bring the object of longing into our present. To cross boundaries in order to take possession.... We are here to celebrate something created out of longing.*

But, then he went on saying something that blew the audience away: *Throughout history, people have been deprived of their native lands. There had been no epoch without its exiles, its refugees, its banished peoples. People had always been forced from home, to wander in foreign lands, and they had survived only if they had ceased to see their past as their only truth...Your beautiful*

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1. *Ibid.*, 392.

2. Near the Danish border.

3. Lenz, *op. cit.*, 421-422.

*homeland is not unknown to me...A lovely town, a lovely quiet region. Already tens of thousands of poles have been born in Masuria, people who now regard this land as their own homeland and indeed must do so; for who would want to tear it away from them again? I know your lovely land; and now it is a neighboring country. ... the true task lies before us: to transform our longing for the homeland into new neighborliness.*<sup>1</sup>

A heavy silence fell. People exchanged looks of astonishment and indignation. And the next speaker, Przytulla, he who had been sitting on the top of the museum collections during the evacuation march, proposed an entirely different story: *"Our museum", he said, represented not an expression of longing but a proof of loyalty to the lost soil of the homeland – the temporarily lost soil, as he put it. ... Any people that believed this land had been uncontestedly theirs from the immemorial was invited to come to the mute witnesses in the museum to learn the truth.*<sup>2</sup>

At this point, I cannot help thinking about another mass evacuation – in fact, any evacuation or escape from war and disasters seems to follow the same pattern. The loss and longing seem to be incurable, the wounds will never heal, no matter how much time has passed since you had to leave. Just think of what happened in the Balkans after the collapse of Yugoslavia. At which point, then, should one give up one's claims for ownership to a place, a landscape, a region?

What I have in mind is the evacuation of around 400 000 Finns from the east of Finland after the war, when the Soviets annexed the region of Karelia. The refugees were moved westwards over the new border and scattered all over the country, where they tried to start new lives. These people – who considered themselves a very special kind of Finns – founded their own associations and museums to keep their forsaken homeland alive in memories, traditions and activities. The loss caused a wound so deep it will never heal. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Karelian descendants saw their chance: a petition with tens of thousands of names was sent to the parliament and government, demanding that they start a campaign to get Karelia back from Russia. President Tarja Halonen was forced to address the question when she went to see Putin (who, no surprise, did not listen to her). But what on earth should we do with Karelia, others asked? There is nothing left of us, nor for us. It was all burnt down when the Finns left. And what should we do with those hundreds of thousands of Russians who now live there and see it as *their* homeland? And who would like to move back there, anyway? The grandchildren of the refugees? Hardly.

The distress among Masurian immigrants caused by the loss was real and deep. The only thing the displaced Lucknowers could do was not to forget, but instead try to cure themselves by rebuilding, reconstituting and recreating all that was lost. Through the new museum they tried to recreate their lost place, its tradi-

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1. *Ibid.*, 424-425.

2. *Ibid.*

tions, its atmosphere, its community. This kind of behavior is well-documented, as Peter Reed notes in his *Returning to Nothing – The Meaning of Lost Places*. A recreation of home(land) and sticking to traditions and familiar customs is what all refugees and immigrants do – at first.<sup>1</sup> Zygmunt also does the best he can, with his daughter Henrike in mind: ... *those years when we were creating the museum, we were both inspired not only by the same ardor but also by the same conviction that Masuria, this dark, taciturn land, would be lost and given up for lost only when no one was left who remembered it.*<sup>2</sup>

But all their efforts were doomed to failure. A few years later, Zygmunt declares himself defeated; he realizes that it is not only his own son Bernard, for whom the museum and its memories means nothing, but for most of the people around them. One day, when the Lucknow Homeland Association in Egenlund was to celebrate one thing or other, Zygmunt stood by the window in his museum and saw the old villagers, crooked by the wind, come up the dusty road. He thought that the voices of the past would gradually be silenced, or at last become inaudible, and that the longing for a return home to one's past becomes a dreamlike endeavour. Memories and relationships grow older, and will eventually disappear.

Finally, it is only Zygmunt and his daughter, Conny Karrash, Simon Gayko (their friend from Lucknow), and a few others, who struggle to keep their memories alive, and who cares for the museum. The moment of Zygmunt's fatal decision draws closer.

*No, it was not an accident. I was the one who laid the fire one night .... I had no choice but to destroy the museum, the only existing museum of Masurian history, over there in Egenlund, Schleswig. ... I set the fire with scraps from the weaving studio. I poured gasoline on them and lit them in the rug room, as well as in the rooms where the old Masurian toys were displayed: rag dolls and wooden instruments, carved and painted birds .... The only person I had confided my plan to was Simon Gayko, a carpenter and cartwright from Lucknow. ... No one was in any danger, even when the fire reached the document room and a sudden gust whirled the papers into the air...floated away like huge snowflakes....*<sup>3</sup>

The last room to surrender to the fire was the one with the jewelery display. Even the catalogues went up in flames. Not even Sonya Turk's distinguished book on the Masurian art of rug making could be saved. This was the only thing Zygmunt really regretted: *My hands trembled, my face burned; all night I had the sensation of having an iron band around my chest. ... The treasured finds have crumbled away, the traces have been obliterated. The past has received back what was its own to keep and what it had lent to us for a while. But already*

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1. Peter Read, *Returning to Nothing. The Meaning of Lost Places* (Printed in Australia: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

2. Lenz, *op. cit.*, 41.

3. *Ibid.*, 4.

*memory has gone to work, searching, gathering evidence in the uncertain stillness of the no-man's-land.*<sup>1</sup>

## Conclusion

*Sorrow, you say? You wonder whether I feel sorrow for all those things lost forever in the fire? I admit, Martin, that I sometimes think I went too far in my purge: but at the time I had no choice. How would I have decided what to save, before everything went up in flames?... No, it was all or nothing....*

*Can you guess the first person I saw when they took off the bandages? My son, Bernard...(and] before he hurried off, he wanted to hear how much remained of the Masurian "relic shack", and when I held out my empty hands, he patted me on the shoulder and comforted me: The present can be glorified just as well as the past, old boy. You might try that for a change...<sup>2</sup>.*

Zygmunt's irrevocable decision to destroy his museum was of course a bit violent. On the other hand, it is easy to understand when considering what they actually had tried to do. They had tried to move a place, with all its connotations, traditions and memories, to somewhere else. But a place, with its museum, cannot be moved. A museum of this type is too intimately connected to its context in time and space, to allow itself to be uprooted and shipped abroad.

This story proves that a Homeland-museum, as a regional museum, is almost organically tied not only to geography and history of a place, but to the people who built it, the people who had contributed to it with their things and memories, the community that surrounds it. I think Angela Jannelli gets it right when she calls these museums "wild", and their makers "the wild museum builders"<sup>3</sup>, an idea that she got from Claude Lévy-Strauss' theory of "wild thinking" and the science of the concrete. Following Lévy-Strauss, Jannelli sees this type of museum as a bricolage and its creator a "bricoleur".<sup>4</sup> In contrast to a "scientific" museum, this is a place of negotiations between experiences directly tied to the objects themselves; it is a "museum of the concrete". It addresses somebody, and somebody's life and memories. Jannelli's thesis is, in fact, a strong apology for the local amateur-museum as a museum genre of its own, and in its own right. Surely, all those hundreds of thousands of people who (in Germany, Finland and Scandinavia at least) are involved in this kind of activity, would agree.

In my view, the importance of this story is that it helps us understand something about the very big idea of museums on the whole; understand *why* we collect, *why* we make and sustain museums, *what* it means to us existentially. A museum like this is an extended home, a microcosm, whereas a bigger, national museum

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1. *Ibid.*, 458.

2. *Ibid.*, 242-243.

3. Angela Jannelli, *Wilde Museen. Zur Museologie des Amateur-museums* (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2012). See pages 21-36, chapter 'Begriffserklärung: Was ist ein wildes Museum?'.  
4. *Ibid.*, 26-30.

would be conceived as a mirror of macrocosm – the “home” of a nation. If the first boom of Homeland-museums, between the two World Wars, was a conservative reaction to industrialization, then today, the rapidly growing popularity of Homeland-museums in Central Europe and Scandinavia would rather be explained not only as a reaction to modernity and globalization, but as a *democratic* movement – a striving for democratization of heritage and history. The Homeland and regional museums would even see themselves as avant-garde, offering opportunities for all kinds of local cultural and political activities, and even as a protest against the demanding rhetoric of “high culture” (Hochkultur).<sup>1</sup>

To all keen museum researchers, museum workers and bureaucrats, who think these local museums should be “professionalized”<sup>2</sup>, the “wild” museum makers would (rightly) say: Leave us alone! This is us, this is ours, and you should keep your rationalizing hands off.

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1. Gottfried Korff, “Der Gesellschaftliche Standort der Heimatmuseum heute”, in Meynert und Rodekamp, 1993.

2. This is actually happening, or has already happened, in Norway and Denmark; the governmental authorities on national heritage, as well as museum professionals, have seen to it that the bigger regional and professional museums have incorporated the small local ones – and thus “killed” them.

# Buildings on the move: relational museology and the mutability of place

*Torgeir Rinke Bangstad*

Museological writing is haunted by a profound ambiguity concerning objects on the move. On the one hand, we revel when museums create new worlds for displaced objects. On the other hand, the object carries the burden of representing something beyond itself in the form of an absent context. The practices of collecting buildings for may-air museums are fraught with this tension of displacement where buildings leave a familiar domain in order to enter a new territory. Organic metaphors of “rooted” and “uprooted” abound in museology and these suggest an intrinsic and profound connection between a place and a building which is lost when the object enters the museum. In this paper, I will introduce ways of theorizing the collecting of buildings which stress the relational dimension of museum objects and the mutability of place. I will bring in examples from my field work study in Olderfjord in Finnmark in 2016 where museum employees from Norsk Folkemuseum documented and disassembled a single-family house destined for the open-air museum in Oslo. I will focus on practices which occur in the force field of museums without necessarily being situated within the physical structure of the museum building or a building exhibition. I have two aims with this paper.

Firstly, I want to argue that a building on the move is a valuable starting point for a discussion of the restlessness of all places which is neglected in museology’s poetics of homelessness which regrets the displacement of an object from its original cultural milieu. By employing relational approaches in museology which treat places as the shifting relations between human and non-human elements, I want to emphasize ‘throwntogetherness’ as a key to understanding the Olderfjord house. Relational perspectives stress the emergent and contingent properties of places as integral to a dynamic vision of place.

Secondly, I will demonstrate how relational museology involves the “outside” researcher by recognizing that the study of museum practices always involves the situated researcher who occupies the same space as the problem she sets out to ponder. The idea of an already constituted and autonomous museum realm is complicated by our embodiment and co-constitutive role in that same space. Relational approaches to museum raise important questions about the agency of elements, bodies, performances, and in that sense, require our attention as much as for what they *do* as for what they *mean*, and hence practice in a broad sense is a key concern in what follows. and It also involves regarding museological writing as a practice which is implicated in performing and creating place.

## Homelessness in the open-air museum

Throughout their more than hundred-year long history, open-air museums have been tied to homelessness in two ways. One particularly important theme in the understanding and reception of the open-air museum is the manner in which it responded to the alleged cultural and existential homelessness of the modern subject. The Scandinavian open-air museum (folk museum) has generally been understood as a response to the ruptures of modernity, offering an ersatz space steeped in history at a time when industrialization and increased mobility challenged a more place-bound lifestyle in rural regions. On the aesthetic level, key thinkers in the early years of the Scandinavian folk museums also formulated a response to the sense in which museum objects were suffering from their own kind of homelessness. It was the attempt to preserve the rootless object cut off from its surroundings or environment which inspired one of the ideologues of Norsk Folkemuseum, the folklorist Moltke Moe, to state that an ideal display would be a complete rendition of an interior space: “We don’t just hear stories about the lives of our ancestors,” Moe stated, “we see it, made palpable, in buildings, tools and domestic utensils, in things large and small”.<sup>1</sup> Moe wanted objects to be immersed in their own environment, in meticulously crafted displays of domesticity, in ways that would absorb the visitors. For him it was essential that objects were not displayed – item after item, as uprooted and isolated objects in a scientific collection where objects were arranged in a cumulative, serial way.<sup>2</sup> Moe proposed that artefacts to be seen in context, where the interiors were the complete images, which allowed the relocated objects and buildings to appear as if in their natural habitat.

As a distinctive museum form, the open-air museum gained momentum towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and was later picked up in countries outside Scandinavia where it originated with Stockholm’s Skansen in 1891 and the Norwegian King Oscar II’s collection of houses at Bygdøy in 1881. The folk museum typically combined ethnographic collections with outdoor exhibitions of vernacular buildings from the same region.<sup>3</sup> Individual buildings with their original interior were invested with the task of representing, in condensed form, the expressive material culture of a particular region. The interiors displayed inside the preserved buildings would also come to reflect the idea of cultures as larger wholes, and the attempt to recreate the cultural context around the object in a more holistic

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1. Moe quoted in Hans Aall, *Norsk Folkemuseum 1894-1919: Trekk Av Dets Historie* (Kristiania: Norsk Folkemuseum, 1920), 4.

2. Mark B. Sandberg, “Effigy and Narrative: Looking into the Nineteenth-Century Folk Museum,” in *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life*, ed. Leo Charney and Vanessa R. Schwartz (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

3. John Aage Gjestrum, “Fra Folkemuseum Til Økomuseum. Økomuseumsbegrepet – en fornyelse av museumsinstitusjonen og et viktig instrument for lokalsamfunnet,” *Nordisk museologi*, no. 1-2 (2001), Hans-Jakob Ågotnes, “Lokalmuseet i det sosiale landskapet: Fortidsformidling i Hordaland gjennom hundre år,” in *Kulturelle landskap: Sted, fortelling og materiell kultur*, ed. Torunn Selberg and Nils Gilje (Bergen: Fagbokforlaget, 2007).

fashion may be regarded as a tradeoff between *ex situ* and *in situ* preservation. In comparison with scientific museums, the *modus operandi* of the open-air museum was an attempt to offset the distance between visitor and displayed object by integrating tools, utensils and furniture in more or less complete environments. Visitors were encouraged to make the experiential and emotional connection with the past on display by literary walking into the spectacle and into the homes of their ancestors. The park-like landscape which still surrounds the relocated buildings in the outdoor exhibitions is central in this endeavour as it allows buildings to appear in place shortly after their relocation, in a way which makes their contexts seem “unbroken”.<sup>1</sup> At Norsk Folkemuseum, this form of functionalist or contextual exhibition, where buildings are organized in larger integrated milieus to reflect their place of origin, is still the norm.

## Mobility and displacement

One way to nuance the idea of open-air museums as mere reserves of traditional culture, is to bear in mind that the development of the open-air museums in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century was contemporaneous with popular forms of display such as cinema, tableaux vivants, wax museums and dioramas. The open-air museum, according to Mark Sandberg, also relied on a form of spectatorship where the interstitial space between the real and imagined and between absence and presence was central to the experience which was not primarily about a naïve and complete immersion made possible by the realism of mimetic displays.<sup>2</sup> What should be stressed in this context is what Mark Sandberg writes about the mobility of the gaze and about objects and buildings on the move. By stressing the productive and even emancipatory value of movement, Sandberg argues that early open-air museums helped to alleviate the experience of modernity’s rootlessness by offering a compensation for vernacular culture under siege and enabling a “representational relationship with vanishing forms of life”.<sup>3</sup> Hence, “displacement” could be treated more forgivingly as “mobility” and the sense of “rootlessness” was also in many regards seen as “liberation”.

It was the mobility made possible by modern means of transport which offered a way to collect buildings from across the nation, and particularly buildings that belonged to agricultural regions which were besieged by new ways of life. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century as railroad networks offered the means necessary to preserve the built environment *ex situ* by moving traditional log buildings to the museum. So what we may at first glance take to be an expression of the unity of particular region and its built environment in the museum tableaux is also implicitly a testament of a vastly improved mobility.

So far, I have argued that open-air museums throughout the years have utilized forms of representation which alleviate some of the tensions of uprooting of

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1. Sandberg, “Effigy and Narrative”, *op. cit.*, 325.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Ibid.*, 353.

objects from their interior space, houses from their familiar domain and to a certain extent even subjects from a sense of existential homeless associated with the modern condition. While displacement and its organic corollary, uprooting, also relate to more assertive notions like movement and mutability as liberating, the profound ambiguity toward objects on the move is still central in much museum theorizing. The opposition between a natural state, being-at-home-in-the-world and the displaced being of objects in the museum realm is a recurring issue in museology which has influenced how museum spaces are normally understood. It is for this reason that a feeling of absence is always on the heels of cultural historic museums in particular, as they deal with something that no longer simply is. Despite their material abundance, museums are often associated with a sense of lack and absence, primarily because museum objects are seen as the surviving traces of a perceived cultural, organic whole. Hence, museum spaces are often treated as spaces of disconnect and absence, of uprooted and decontextualized objects.<sup>1</sup> For the same reason the museum has been referred to as a “storehouse of discontinuity”<sup>2</sup> or the “House of Lack”.<sup>3</sup>

It can be argued that it is this lack which motivates the attempts in open-air museums to fashion experiential or emotional connections across the great divide which separate the past from the present. In a reading of Michel Foucault’s understanding of the museum as heterotopia, Beth Lord claims that a core feature of museums is to render visible the difference between things and concepts and that it is this difference between things is what engenders interpretation: “Interpretation is the relation between things and the words used to describe them, and this relation always involves a gap”.<sup>4</sup> The premise is that the disjunction between objects and concepts which for Foucault occurs in the mid-seventeenth century, when things and concepts started drifting apart and things lost their innate meaning, occasioned a whole range of epistemological questions concerning the human ability to gain reliable knowledge about, and adequately represent the world. It is this premise which has made the modern museum a space of difference and a space of representation. For our purpose in this paper, it means that the open-air museum is treated in museology predominantly as a place for the displaced objects, where forms of display can alleviate the sense in which objects come across as “homeless”.

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1. Lothar Diem, “Heritage Performances in Røros,” in *Place and Displacement: Exhibiting Architecture*, ed. Thordis Arrhenius, et al. (Zürich: Lars Müller Publishers, 2014).

2. Adam Bencard, “Presence in the Museum on Metonymies, Discontinuity and History without Stories,” *Museum and Society* 12, no. 1 (2014): 36.

3. Kerstin Smeds, “The Escape of the Object? – Crossing Territorial Borders between Collective and Individual, National and Universal,” in *International Committee for Museology: Museology and Techniques, ICOFOM Study Series –36*, ed. Hildegard K. Vieregk (Vienna/Austria: ICOFOM, 2007), 172.

4. Beth Lord, «Foucault’s Museum: Difference, Representation, and Genealogy,» *Museum and society* 4, no. 1 (2006): 5.

## Relational theories of museum space

The question now is whether relational perspectives in museology can add anything at all to this idea of open-air museums as representational spaces, as isolated worlds where buildings are deprived of their effective ties to the homeland. In what follows, I want to make the claim that relational museology opens new avenues for research on museum space as something other than representational spaces. It is a way for museology to address key themes in what has been called more-than-representational, or non-representational theories in human geography where notions like affect, materiality and performance are brought to the fore.<sup>1</sup> Relational approaches argue that a museum space can never be exhaustively understood by focusing on signifying processes. Museums are always about more than representation and comprehension, important though these are. So, what is the problem with representations? Nigel Thrift who has spearheaded the non-representational theory in human geography for the past two decades illustrates the problem in the following way:

*Non-representational theory arises from the simple (one might almost say commonplace) observation that we cannot extract a representation of the world from the world because we are slap bang in the middle of it, co-constructing it with numerous human and non-human others for numerous ends (or, more accurately, beginnings).<sup>2</sup>*

This is why Thrift prefers to think of places as “passings” which “haunt” us.<sup>3</sup> So the notion of place as representational is problematic because it sidelines place as a neutral grid on top of which we construct meaning and inscribe values, suggesting that we are “actively constructing webs of significance which are laid out over a physical substrate”.<sup>4</sup> While space in representational theories of museum space is often subordinated to the institutional identity and treated primarily as physical backup for these webs of significance, space is treated as more of a visceral, agentive force in relational theory. This is evident in museum research which attempts to go beyond the notion of museum as ordered spaces for meaning-making. Emphasis is put on the place of the performance which foregrounds affects and material encounters which lie beyond the control of a monolithic institution. Writing about relational approaches in museum studies, Duncan Grewcock, claims that “the performance of the museum does not take place purely in the cognitive or visual and representational realm, but is enacted emotionally, even spiritually, and through a whole range of sensual, mundane bodily experiences, everyday practices and technologies”.<sup>5</sup> A similar

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1. Nigel Thrift, “Steps to an Ecology of Place,” in *Human Geography Today*, ed. Doreen Massey, John Allen, and Philip Sarre (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999). Hayden Lorimer, “Cultural Geography: The Busyness of Being ‘More-Than-Representational’,” *Progress in Human Geography* 29, no. 1 (2005).

2. Thrift, “Ecology of Place”, *op. cit.*, 296-97.

3. *Ibid.*, 310.

4. *Ibid.*, 300.

5. Duncan Grewcock, *Doing Museology Differently* (Taylor & Francis, 2013), 175.

stress on the body can be seen in Emma Waterton and Jason Dittmer's account of affect where it is claimed that the relational turn involves a decentering of discourse and narrative.<sup>1</sup> The body of the researcher in a museum context is an instrument which responds to the material environment and atmospheres and which primes us to act in ways that sometimes escapes or conscious control or speaks to other than our cognitive faculties. The key is that the Australian War Memorial which they analyze is understood as an "assemblage of objects, the bodies of staff and visitors, narratives, materials and more, that together shape the visitor experience".<sup>2</sup> Of course, one might always claim that this in and of itself is not new to museology, but still the emphasis on the body and the somatic apprehension of space was not as clearly articulated in research focusing on signifying processes in museums. In our case, what matters more is that if the body of the visitor/researcher is acknowledged as integral to the museum assemblage from the get-go, it means that the clear divide between some ideal, pre-existing space and the relations taking place within it, can no longer be sustained. Spaces, including the spaces of the museum, are always already in play, changing and emergent. This means that the idea of museum as a space where meaning awaits our uncovering is challenged in a relational approach which pays more attention to unwieldy and never quite finished processes. The problem for theorist and curator Irit Rogoff is the idea that "meaning is immanent, that it is always already there and precedes its uncovering".<sup>3</sup>

If we appreciate space as embodied and emergent, it entails that we as researchers inhabit the spaces we write about and that this embodiment has an impact on the understanding of place and space. This can be seen for instance in a more engaged and personal form of writing, which emphasizes the affective and corporeal encounters with museum objects and spaces.<sup>4</sup> The museologist Adam Bencard has noted a shift in museological discourse towards the experiential and affective dimension of museum space, and for him the museum is a place where the presence of the past elicits strong reverberations within our own bodies.<sup>5</sup> Another related way of engaging museums corporally is through Irit Rogoff's idea of an embodied criticality where the scholar operates from a precarious ground of actual embeddedness, where we "are also living out the very conditions we are trying to analyse and come to terms with".<sup>6</sup> The central point for Rogoff is that researchers need not attempt to stand on the outside of the problem analyzed through some form of disinterested and disembodied

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1. Emma Waterton and Jason Dittmer, "The Museum as Assemblage: Bringing Forth Affect at the Australian War Memorial," *Museum Management and Curatorship* 29, no. 2 (2014).

2. Waterton and Dittmer, "Museum as Assemblage", *op. cit.*, 123.

3. Irit Rogoff, "Smuggling' – an Embodied Criticality," European Institute for Progressive Cultural Policies, <http://eipcp.net/dlfiles/rogoff-smuggling>, 1.

4. Andrea Witcomb, "Remembering the Dead by Affecting the Living: The Case of a Miniature Model of Treblinka," in *Museum Materialities: Objects, Engagements, Interpretations*, ed. Sandra Dudley (London & New York: Routledge, 2010).

5. Bencard, "Presence in the Museum", *op. cit.*

6. Rogoff, 'Smuggling', *op. cit.*, 2.

mode of inquiry. The reciprocity between actors and the space they enact or write about is one aspect worth stressing in the performative and relational approaches to the museum field. It means that one should attempt to connect the position of one's writing to the project of musealization by admitting a place, admittedly marginal, *in* this process. If we are seeking to make sense of the museum space, it could involve, as Irit Rogoff has suggested, trying to dissolve the barrier between action and analysis.<sup>1</sup> This means that museology also engages with the *place* of museology, the situated researcher and her taking place within museum space or in the force field of museum practices. Duncan Grewcock has apprehended the centrality of this move when he speaks of the craft of *doing* museology and *performing* heritage studies.<sup>2</sup> The field of museology is entangled with and performed in place and the practice of museum-going is for Grewcock an attempt to challenge boundaries of thought and action as "visiting entangles thinking through museums with thinking through the body and all the senses"<sup>3</sup>

Grewcock offers a valuable and, I suggest, viable alternative to a disengaged museological perspective. For him it makes a great deal of difference whether we write *with* the field or offer a description *of* it.<sup>4</sup> Taking cue from human geography and aiming to develop a relational museology, Grewcock states that the researcher is part of the field, situated in the messy and unstable space of inbetweenness.<sup>5</sup> How can these insights be employed in the field and in working with houses on the move?

## Homelessness reconsidered

The aforementioned approaches to space invite us to deal with field collecting, buildings being moved, "musealization" of objects without the confidence of stable spatial oppositions at our disposal. The condition of homelessness ascribed so frequently to displaced museum objects usually pays little attention to the sliding scales of the term, which can mean everything from being home free by choice, to being forcibly removed from a state of secure domesticity. The archaeologist, Larry Zimmerman who has done research on the material culture of homelessness in contemporary Indianapolis, has showed how homeless people engage in home-making in places and situations which may not reflect popular ideas about what homes are or what security means. Sandra Dudley, in her work on museum objects and displacement, extends this process of home-making beyond the human subject as she impresses how even museum objects are agentive and at work in the process of emplacement. She strikes an interesting and thought-provoking parallel between homeless subjects in refugee camps

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1. *Ibid.*

2. Duncan Grewcock, "Performing Heritage (Studies) at the Lord Mayor's Show," *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 20, no. 7-8 (2014). Grewcock, *Doing Museology*.

3. Grewcock, "Performing Heritage", *op. cit.*, 187.

4. *Ibid.*

5. *Ibid.*, 188.

and displaced objects in museums which are also trying to assert themselves in a new world. As for the refugees, home is forever *becoming* home:

*[W]hile encamped refugees and accessioned museum objects are alike displaced and inbetween, rather than out of place in the zones they end up in, they are active and agentive in creating both their own emplacement and in making these zones the distinctive places they are.<sup>1</sup>*

So although objects are caught between times and places in a museum, it does not imply that they are *out* of place, out of context, or lost. Displacement for Dudley is not associated with placelessness or non-place, but rather suggests the transition from one stage to another which may have its own value and meaning.

This is an exciting prospect that can be brought to bear, in my case, on the disassembling of the Olderfjord house. It reflects that although displacement, as Dudley argues, may create breaches between places, people, objects and times, it also partakes in forging new relations. I will pay particular attention to the ways in which the house expresses the ‘both here and there’ which Dudley ties to the state of liminality. For me this concerns more specifically how the house merges the present past as material memory with the forward-oriented thrust of objects understood as an anticipation. The most important dimension of relational museology to apply to the case of Olderfjord house is the sense in which place cannot be isolated from the agentive capacity of objects, or from the embodied encounter of the researcher/visitor. A relational approach requires that we do not shut out the minutiae of museum practice, which is often regarded as ineligible for sustained scholarly discussion. Even ‘background noise’ like lighting, movement and sounds may afford affect and produce results which escape or conscious control through the “the ways in which those elements often confound the desire to engineer them, producing wayward encounters and unintended consequences.”<sup>2</sup> I will try to illustrate how such wayward encounters might play out in places, and how the insights from an relational approach might aid museum studies in acknowledging the important role it plays, in this case, at a site in Olderfjord where a yellow house once stood by the side of the road.

There is a very real sense in which this particular house reflects the ways people and objects resettle and make homes under the most trying circumstances. During the winter of 1944 and 1945, fire troops from the occupying German Wehrmacht set fire to several thousand buildings in Troms and Finnmark as the German forces were moving south. The scorched earth retreat was enforced following a “Führerbefehl”, a direct order from Adolf Hitler issued on October 28, 1944, which ordered the destruction of buildings and infrastructure which could potentially aid the advancing Soviet forces who had seized the town of Kirkenes on October 25. Civilians were forced to evacuate further south on large cargo ships. Many

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1. Sandra Dudley, “The Buzz of Displacement: Liminality among Burmese Court Objects in Oxford, London and Yangon,” in *The Inbetweenness of Things : Materializing Mediation and Movement between Worlds*, ed. Paul Basu (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 53.

2. Waterton and Dittmer, “Museum as Assemblage”, *op. cit.*

local inhabitants opposed the evacuation orders and fled. The reconstruction of Finnmark and Nord-Troms was not completed until 1960 when the number of private homes finally matched the pre-war level. The Olderfjord house was built during this period of reconstruction which in many ways materialized the modern ideals of what a modern home should look like. It was essential that reconstruction housing could provide affordable housing, efficient construction techniques and sound living and working environments for housewives, fishers, farmers, city-dwellers and their families. Being forcefully evacuated and being deprived of the security of home, the return to familiar surroundings was truth be told no reconstruction in the strict sense of the old ways of life, but rather an unprecedented situation where dire housing shortage and material scarcity meant that locals had to maneuver in an unfamiliar territory where the idea of home itself had changed.

A vast technological, economic and architectural bureaucracy was mobilized to facilitate the reconstruction, and home-making was in practice negotiating between local interests and centralized housing standards, and between memories of past homes and the requirements of modern lifestyle.



*The reconstruction house in Olderfjord, Finnmark, before it was taken apart. Protective plywood boards are seen in the attic window. May 2016.*

Photo: Torgeir Rinke Bangstad.

In this context too, home is “forever *becoming* home, never quite *being* it”. But how can a museum aesthetics yield to this tremendous fluidity of place, the sense in which a home is emergent? In the case of the Olderfjord there is a beautiful, material contingency, a literal sense in which the unstable grounds under our feet actually contributed to its preservation as a museum object. The preservation, the attempt to freeze a place in a specific time slot, was preconditioned by movement in the ground which became crucial to this particular house from Olderfjord. The house rested on a concrete foundation which was not reinforced with steel bars, and this, in time, meant that the foundation of the house became unstable and started sinking into the ground. Due to material scarcity in the immediate postwar period, the foundation was also interspersed with larger stones (plums) which further reduced the quality of the structure.

When the museum staff first documented the site in 2015, it was clear that the house had severe subsidence damage and that the chimney was gradually sinking through the basement floor. The structural damage would mean that the house became increasingly inhospitable and we know that it was only used as a holiday cottage in recent decades. It had not been refurbished to any significant degree since it was built. If, in contrast, it had served as the family's main household, it would in all likelihood have been added on to, refitted or upgraded, and it would not reflect the early reconstruction years with the same precision. Due to what we could call serendipity, wall panels and interiors were fairly intact, which meant that the house could without major alterations reflect the late 1950's which serves as a time-frame for Norsk Folkemuseum's exhibitions in the relocated house, which opened in May 2019.

The state of the uninhabited building, moreover, meant that it could be acquired for a reasonable price and that no-one would raise any objections to its relocation. The process was broadly conceived as a rescue operation rather than a displacement, which would leave any deep scars in the local, collective memory, even if it did leave a physical void. The way the foundation of the Olderfjord house was slowly sinking into the ground makes us more aware of how the material co-shaped the ensuing events. The clayey building plot which caused the instability of the foundation was decisive in moving this particular house to Norsk Folkemuseum more than sixty years later.<sup>1</sup> For me this serves as an illustration of Massey's throwntogetherness of place, and how the here-and-now is an event which draws on the histories and geographies of "thens" and "theres".<sup>2</sup>

What this made available to us as happy accidents or unsettling contingencies is the result of the coming together of different time trajectories: One slow-moving, barely noticeable, geological time underneath the floorboards; another hectic phase of post-war rebuilding; and a third time, the time of preservation and meticulous attention to authentic details. This constellation is what makes this place move. Of course, this is a wildly eccentric understanding of an ordinary house. But it has heuristic value as a way of tapping into the shifting temporal and material relations which constitute place. In his relational materialist understanding of place, Nigel Thrift argues that place comes with the weight of a number of past associations, but also requires further work to re-activate these associations and even make new ones.<sup>3</sup> As a researcher I am not simply visiting and extracting a static impression of the house, I also become part of these associations of 'thens and nows' which flow through a particular location and destabilize the idea of place as confined to the "here-and-now".

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1. Birte Sandvik, "To hus fra Porsanger til Norsk Folkemuseum," *Museumsbulletinen nr. 1-2 2016* no. nr. 81 (2016).

2. Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: Sage Publications, 2005), 140.

3. Thrift, "Ecology of Place", *op. cit.*, 317.

## Performing place and writing with the field

Although the disassembling of the Olderfjord house had not yet commenced, the house itself seemed to anticipate this next move. When I first arrived at the site in May 2016 I had my mind set on documenting the house down to the smallest detail. I knew that this was a rare opportunity to explore the house before a team from the museum would start clearing out the building and throw away items that were of little or no interest. It would, I reckoned, give me an impression of the frozen condition prevailing in the abandoned building before the next, and more restless phase when the house would be taken down bit by bit, floorboard after floorboard. To my disappointment the windows had been covered with boards the previous winter to protect the structure and the interiors from the rough northern winters. The building was now hand-picked for the museum exhibition in Oslo and consequently the first protective measures were already in place. Plywood covered all of the windows, and the house was no longer left to its own devices or allowed to run to ruin of its own accord. The large green tarpaulin covering the roof of the building prevented more water from leaking in. Only a small stream of daylight entered the boarded up building.



*The kitchen of the Olderfjord house covered by exterior plywood boards. May 2016. Photo: Torgeir Rinke Bangstad.*

As the flash from the camera was reflected in the plywood-covered windows, it denied me the convenience of standing apart from and treating the 'field' of fieldwork as a place which was laid out in advance and ready to be made sense of through some sort of extraction of data from a coherent, spatial whole. Every brief glimpse of the interior space was enabled by the flash and limited by the range and direction of its light ray. This forced me to take random shots of room sections or objects which would possibly make sense later. This was not a place

I entered to extract data from by drawing on a predetermined, methodological mode of entry. The poor lighting and the lack of any distinct contours, however, also entailed a heightened sense of or involved relation with space which required a cautious and alert attitude. Technical appliances like cameras are not only a means for representing space, fixing it in a new form of media which can be brought elsewhere for closer study. Sometimes these also serves as a means of orientation, which relate body and its surroundings, a basic way of working out the field. This illustrates how the field is sometimes enacted rather than decoded; performed in the provisional relations between researchers, fieldwork tools, materials and places which enable some routes of entry and obscure others.

I re-entered the house a few days later when the plywood covers had been removed by an employee from Norsk Folkemuseum. In the ground-floor kitchen I was taken aback by a strange assemblage of things which stochastically joined together different times and places. The impression was not one of time at a standstill which recur in descriptions of abandoned places. It was more like some recent interventions and minor disturbances unsettled the desire for temporal consistency and for experiencing a place suspended in time. At first, the casual arrangement of things in the kitchen seemed unremarkable. Some chairs, a small table, a leather purse on top of a newspaper, a single coffee cup, a kettle on the stove, and a creased plastic wrapping from a package of Oreo biscuits no older than ten years. Underneath a wash bowl I noticed a local newspaper from July 2, 1982 featuring a story about the best goalkeeper in that years' FIFA World Cup in Madrid. A small paragraph at the bottom of the front page told the story of a district road which was being planned at the time, but turned out to be more expensive than the road planners had anticipated. The road was never built. The short life-span of a daily newspaper had been extended to form a visceral memory of interrupted cycles, discarded plans and daily routines coming to a sudden halt. A DIY felt and burlap Christmas calendar on the living room wall were yet another index of the bewildering array of overlapping temporal cycles coming together in this vacant scene of domestic life: the quadrennial world cup, the annual Christmas season, and the fresh daily news on the kitchen counter. Next to the newspaper an empty carton of Marli orange juice had been casually tossed in a wash bowl now partly covered with mold as a sign of the ever present organic cycle where leftovers become nutrients, and abandonment means settlement.

In this array of mundane things, some of the stranded pieces came across as more untimely than others, as being too recent to belong even in this patchwork of different periods and recurring events. The plastic wrapping of the Oreo biscuits which are still found in the shelves of most supermarkets seemed almost like an intrusion, like the vexing reflection of my own fieldwork tools in the window. However, if we think of this place as a form of event, or as what Doreen Massey has called "the event of place", we recognize that the 'here' is the meeting of both social and natural processes which keeps on moving and denying us the convenience of treating place as a coherent entity disturbed by 'external' forces.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Massey, *For Space*, *op. cit.*, 140-41.

If we accept that there are no easily identified external forces which disturb a place, then we are left with the challenge of negotiating a multiplicity which is constituted by the coming together of the “previously unrelated”.<sup>1</sup>

This could have been what was going on in our case. A place is bewilderingly polychronical and by this I do not mean simply that it ‘consists’ of objects from different times. Sometimes a place is caught between times, and in the case of the Olderfjord house I think this collision caused the energy in what might otherwise have been a stale and dusty still life-like situation. It was the coming together of the previously unrelated - the vacant museum space in Oslo and a former weekend cottage - which made the still life quiver as if the place anticipated the next move. What struck me as significant about the place was that it was caught between two temporal modes which caused this peculiar sense of movement-in-place. The boards which had covered the windows made it withdrawn and secluded, but it was also a signal of the impending journey and the connection that was being forged with a site at Norsk Folkemuseum in Oslo.

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1. *Ibid.*, 140.



*The staff of the museum have started to dismantle the building. Photo:  
Torgeir Rinke Bangstad*

Usually when buildings are boarded-up it is in anticipation of an extraordinary event, a hurricane that is building in the Caribbean, a street protest turning violent, a shopkeeper sensing aggression. The boarded windows are in place to protect a property from an external threat and this was true of the preservation which had already left its distinctive mark on the Olderfjord house on my first visit. It is the concurrence of these two modes of relating to time, one anticipatory the other preservative, which is played out in the kitchen, despite it being a perfectly ordinary set up in an abandoned weekend house. In trying to describe how the affect of ordinary life works, Kathleen Stewart emphasizes precisely these moments of intensity which makes places and situations vibrate with suspense. For her affect is about the flow and arrest of apparent stable categories like the home, which resembles the liveness of inanimate objects in still life painting:

*A still life is a static state filled with vibratory motion, or resonance. A quivering in the stability of a category or a trajectory, it gives the ordinary the charge of an unfolding. It is the intensity born of a momentary suspension of narrative or a glitch in the projects we call things like the self, agency, a life. Or a simple stopping.<sup>1</sup>*

The subtle adjustments occasioned by precautionary measures (boarding up and shutting down) and the preservative ethos of the museum, meant that the house was about to lose its bearing. For me, it was the preservative mode of clinging on to something familiar already gone, that caused the place to vibrate. Prior to any physical displacement and long before the actual journey to its new location, it had lost touch with the surrounding site; it was no longer as firmly in place. The boarded windows made the house seem strangely disconnected from the surroundings even if it had not moved an inch. The house, it seemed, could have been anywhere. Instead of regretting the moment when the house would be moved from its original location, it was the sense of anticipation which was the most apparent aspect of the house on that particular day. If memories, as we say, can linger in places, perhaps it is not entirely out of line to claim that a sense of foreboding can reside in the material environment as well.

For Brian Massumi affect is a pre-cognitive “happening out of mind in a body directly absorbing its outside” - a work of intensity which can explain how for instance different temporal organizations like past/present, expectation/suspense can work on each other as resonating levels rather than as binary oppositions.<sup>2</sup> If we take this sense of resonance into account, it implies that places is a function of both memory and anticipation, that places not only contain traces of former users, but that they afford future potential. The absence which is created when the Olderfjord was moved is not void, null or anything like a non-place. It will, following the thoughts architect Peter Eisenman, be an absence which is a trace of previous presence, as memory, or more radically, the trace of a *possible* presence. He compares it to a moving arrow which both contains where it has been and where it is going: “For Eisenman, architectural site is thus realized *in movement*, where it is subject to transitions between what is anticipated and recalled.”<sup>3</sup> This is a notion of place, where place contains both that which is no longer and that which the future holds, and it consciously attempts to expand the temporal present-tense of now into a more complex relation of different temporalities. The awareness of ephemerality or mutability is also a central aspect of performative approaches to place.

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1. Kathleen Stewart, *Ordinary Affects* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007), 19.

2. Brian Massumi, “The Autonomy of Affect,” *Cultural Critique*, no. 31 (1995): 91, 94.

3. Nick Kaye, “Performance Architecture: Absence, Place and Action,” in *Elements of Architecture: Assembling Archaeology, Atmosphere and the Performance of Building Spaces*, ed. Mikke Bille and Tim Flohr Sørensen (London & New York: Routledge, 2016), 308.

## Epilogue: Museums as enclosed spaces and the distanced gaze of the museologist

Museums have often, and for good reasons, been treated as heterotopic spaces. Either through imposing architecture, the carefully structured arrays of objects or by soliciting certain attitudes, museums have been approached as a space clearly set apart from regular life. Museums are heterotopic also in the sense that they allow for objects to escape the ravages of time “on the outside”. Time and space has a special quality in the museum, Carol Duncan noted in her work on rituals in art museums.<sup>1</sup> For her it was the liminality of museum spaces that was key to their operation, and the way these spaces were set apart from and allowed a withdrawal from routines in the day-to-day world. Museum spaces are carefully marked off as deserving careful attention and a certain sense of decorum. There is nevertheless something almost too confined about place in critical museology when architecture and institution seem to convey one and the same thing and when the “visitor is prompted to enact and thereby internalize the values and beliefs written into the architectural script”.<sup>2</sup>

Of course, accounts of museum spaces as heterotopic necessarily draw our attention to what it is about these spaces that make them stand out, be distinctive - in short - be other spaces. As a result, the edges of museum space are sharpened, with little room for mistaking the outside for the inside. In the search for a unique disciplinary identity, museology has also contributed to the dynamic of institutional enclosure/external scrutiny as the epistemological precondition for insight. Museology has nevertheless, since the 1980's, undergone a form of self-critique where the relation to applied, or practical museology has been discussed. This discussion has involved a positioning of the academic discipline on the outside of the institutional architecture of practical museology which is concerned with budgets, registration procedures, conservation methods and display techniques.<sup>3</sup> This has had repercussions also on the way museum space has been approached, as an inside with a set of rules, values and beliefs which have become naturalized and taken for granted for those who occupy these spaces. The detached position of academic museology has claimed a privileged optic with which one can probe into these practices in ways that no practitioner can. This idea of distance from practice as a precondition for insight is not unique to museology. In fact is so fundamental to the idea of science that it seems unlikely to “know from the inside”. The attitude of knowing from the inside is one that anthropologist Tim Ingold builds a strong case for.<sup>4</sup> He regrets that researchers do not fully acknowledge the knowledge coming from direct, practical and sensuous engagements. Instead we assume that data is extracted from the field of

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1. Carol Duncan, “The Art Museum as Ritual,” in *The Art of Art History : A Critical Anthology*, ed. Donald Preziosi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

2. Carol Duncan and Alan Wallach, “The Universal Survey Museum,” *Art History* 3, no. 4 (1980): 449.

3. Peter Vergo, *The New Museology* (London: Reaktion Books, 1989).

4. Tim Ingold, *Making: Anthropology, Archaeology, Art and Architecture* (London & New York: Routledge, 2013).

inquiry and reconstructed on the outside. He moreover opposes the apparent contradiction between participation and observation, expressed in the classic anthropological paradox of participatory observation: “The dilemma is that the conditions that enable scientists to *know*, at least according to official protocols, are such as to make it impossible for them to *be* in the very world of which they seek knowledge”.<sup>1</sup> For Ingold, in contrast, participatory observation constitutes knowing from the inside in a nutshell and as a way of acquiring knowledge through our being in the world.

Museology has become involved in a similar paradox which suggests that being immersed in practice on the inside can hardly be reconciled with the ideal of gaining new knowledge from the outside. For some time now, this fundamental premise seems to have been challenged, and we might notice a subtle shift away from the unshakable belief in detachment from the field of practice as necessary precondition for knowledge. Relational museology, as I have claimed in this chapter, treats museums spaces as more unstable, more porous entities which because of its emergent denies us the comfort of holistic closure.

The realization that the researcher cannot move effortlessly between these ideal categories of inside and outside to extract and reconstruct data in a clean, step-wise manner, lies at the heart of a messier, relational museology. It attempts to deal with those places through the interactions of people and objects, sensations and affects, and crucially, as experiences that are found “amidst the world rather than separate(d) from it.”<sup>2</sup>

## Conclusion

The relocation from a familiar domain to the representational realm of the museum, from home to homelessness has become so tightly connected to museological thinking that it seems difficult to think otherwise. As a result, the spatial properties which set museum space apart as a separate realm isolated from the world at large have reified the idea of museum objects as homeless and lost. In this paper, I have tried to avoid this opposition between distinct spatial and existential categories by developing an account of the mutability of places. I have developed my argument from field work at a site in Finnmark where the different stages of displacement became evident upon my repeated visits.

I have emphasized the interstitial phase when the Olderfjord house had become subject to the preservative pre-excision preparations, as a particularly affective encounter caused by the tension between memory and anticipation. One key insight of relational museology is that space cannot be effortlessly detached from the practice and practical performance of and within space. For this reason, it has been important for me to consider my own experience of the Olderfjord house in terms of museum research where the detached, critical gaze is challenged

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1. *Ibid.*, 5.

2. Grewcock, *Doing Museology*, *op. cit.*, 229.

by a more positioned, embodied and engaged research practice. Relational approaches and more-than-representational theory provide perspectives on space and place where the idea of coldly extracting a distinctive representation of a section of the world is considered futile. In this theoretical framework, which emphasize affective and material agency of places and things, the detached observation is interrupted by our taking place in and co-shaping the field we see and the places we encounter.

I have made an attempt to attune my research object to the appreciation of contingency and throwtogetherness which characterize more-than-representational theories of space. By paying attention to both memory and anticipation in a single structure of here-and-now, I have claimed that the mutability of place is an insight which is often lost in museology's poetics of homelessness. It required some effort from me to get over the initial disappointment as I tried to turn the dimly lit Olderfjord house to my advantage. I recall having wanted to shut out the background noise (of the gravel road that had recently been built, of the scaffolding clinging to the house façade and the green tarpaulin on the roof) so that only a clear view of the house in its untouched, bare state remained. As it turned out, this was impossible and the house had moved past that point already. I was left with the minor interruptions and the disturbances, which eventually enabled an appreciation of a place that was coming together and being taken apart again and changing ceaselessly, as places do.



*The site of the Olderfjord house after the relocation. August, 2018. Photo: Jan Magne Gjerde.*

## **Acknowledgements**

The permanent exhibition on the post-war reconstruction of Finnmark opened at Norsk Folkemuseum in May 2019. I am deeply indebted to the staff at Norsk

Folkemuseum who generously took the time to talk to me and allowed me to be around both 'in situ' in Porsanger and 'ex situ' at Bygdøy as the Olderfjord house rematerialized "away from home". Thank you!

# Museums and the enchantment of places: deconstructing the urban landscape of Rio de Janeiro

*Bruno Brulon Soares*

In the Western tradition, museums have been participating in the process of attributing cultural value to places in the musealisation of cultural landscapes and of their inhabitants since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but more expressively after the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup>. In the past half a century, museums have expanded their multiple forms and have been re-signified throughout the post-colonial world where the dominant *classical* model, forged in European Modernity, has become more and more obsolete.

On September 5, 1971, in the ICOM 9<sup>th</sup> General Conference in Dijon, France, Stanislas Adotevi questioned the role of traditional museums in colonized countries<sup>1</sup>, calling attention to a critical imbalance in the museum field. This museum thinker from Dahomey (now Benin) claimed that the main colonial purpose of these European institutions – that aimed for the cultural domination of places, through the domination of imagination – did not make sense in independent colonized countries. His critique of museums in the post-colonial world is still valuable today, and it could be redirected to the role of musealisation, in the broader sense it has acquired over the years.

As an attitude towards reality that establishes a communication, producing powerful images and valuable social experiences, musealisation is an act of *creation*, in the sense of the magical act that establishes a new order in the social world. It creates the museum performance transmitting cultural enunciations that work only on the basis of previously constituted dispositions<sup>2</sup>, and, therefore, it fabricates places and landscapes (and their margins) instead of merely reproducing them.

Thus, a decolonized perspective over musealisation implies unveiling the re-enactment of colonialism in the social construction of reality by museums. It refers to a reflexive perspective on the hegemonic subject of musealisation. Since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when museums were being used to spread the idea of a shared

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1. Stanislas S Adotevi, *Le musée dans les systèmes éducatifs et culturels contemporains*. In ICOM – Conseil International des Musées / International Council of Museums. *Actes de la neuvième Conférence Générale de l'ICOM / The Papers from the Ninth General Conference of ICOM*. *Le musée au service des hommes aujourd'hui et demain. Le rôle éducatif et culturel des musées* [The museum in the service of man today and tomorrow. The museum's educational and cultural role]. Paris: (ICOM, 1971). 19-30.

2. Pierre Bourdieu, *Pascalian meditations*. (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000).

history and the belief of a cultural hierarchy, these institutions have been exported to colonial contexts acting as privileged stages for the representation of the European sovereign subject<sup>1</sup> – representing first the history of kings, of state leaders, and more recently, the most economic developed segments of society disregarding the full complexity of a territory for the purpose of exporting places as commodities through tourismification.<sup>2</sup> Thanks to colonization, the Eurocentric model of the museum has instated a colonized view over identities, subjectivities and mindsets that has materialised places and the cultural heritage conformed to this particular power structure.

The International Movement for New Museology in the 1980s marked the emphasis on museums' new approaches to the public and to societies. Nevertheless, critical approaches to museology still today emphasize the need to decolonize museum practice.<sup>3</sup> Museums in the 21<sup>st</sup> century continue to reproduce the traditional hierarchy of power that performs the Western conception of opposites, between the object and the public; heritage and society; the product and the producers; science and popular knowledge; nature and culture.... And so on, using musealisation sometimes as a form of domination.

Today, ecomuseums, musées de terroir, Heimatmuseums, natural parks, social museums, museus de favela<sup>4</sup>, etc., have re-designed social space in Europe and in non-European countries, in rural or urban areas. But despite the existence of post-colonial museologies – expressed by the creation of indigenous museums, museums in ghettos and in undervalued communities, etc. – one could ask: if museums originated as European political institutions, can they be used to give voice to minority groups in the former colonies? In other words, can museology be decolonized?

This essay aims to raise questions on the regimes of value created and sustained by the museum agency (also known as “musealisation”) in post-colonial contexts, exploring the example of the city of Rio de Janeiro. My aim is to expose how local governments and tourism in colonized places still reproduce colonial relations which has severe impacts on the life of marginalized populations in urban spaces. As European institutions born in a certain tradition, museums in non-European countries inescapably transpose certain values from one cultural

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1. For a detailed discussion on this idea see Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” 66-111, in *Colonial discourse and Post-colonial theory. A Reader*, ed. by Williams, Patrick & Chrisman, Laura. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

2. Noel B Salazar, “Imaged or imagined? Cultural representations and the ‘tourismification’ of peoples and places”, *Cahiers d'Études Africaines*, XLIX (1-2), (nr.193-194, 2009), 49-71.

3. See, for example, Shelley Ruth Butler, “Reflexive Museology: lost and found”, in Andrea Witcomb, and Kylie Message (eds.), *The International Handbook of Museum Studies: Museum Theory*, (Chichester, West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons 2015), pp. 159-182; and M.-O. Gonseth, J. Hainard, & R. Kaehr (eds.), *Le musée cannibale*, (Neuchâtel: GHK Éditeurs, Musée d'Ethnographie, 2002).

4. Community museums created in the poorer spots of the urban landscape of Rio de Janeiro, where live most marginalized segments of local society, with little access to basic urban services and to cultural goods.

regime to another, producing, as a result, various kinds of cultural inequality. In other words, museums have been used to reproduce Eurocentric frameworks to define cultural objects outside Europe, putting European values above all others. The process becomes more complex and inequalities are stressed when an object forged in a certain cultural regime is musealised in another. This is the case of cultural landscapes, as I intend to demonstrate in the present chapter.

In this analysis, it is not our intention to propose that museums should be removed or rejected in colonized places, because they are powerful tools creating meaning and producing value. We argue, rather, that constant critical thinking about this institution should be pursued in approaching reflexive museology, concerned with the denunciation of Eurocentric methods in museum practice. In a critical approach, a place is the result of several encounters with experiences and subjectivities. *Made* by people as a product of the traces left on experienced space, places turn into objects when we are forced to contemplate them. Becoming an image, in a painting or a museum, the complexity of a place is reconfigured in the creation of landscape, a creation that can only be effective through a *magical act*.<sup>1</sup>

In the example explored in this analysis, the city of Rio de Janeiro was transformed into a “cultural landscape” in 2012, being so declared by UNESCO and a selective group of Brazilian delegates in a magical act that resulted in the incantation of a complex urbanized place. This new label helped to produce an image of the enchanted city that suppressed social inequalities and enacted the supremacy of nature over culture. The formula of “cultural landscape”, in this case, reveals how a supposedly *universal* and *harmonious* regime of values can be imposed on the representation of a place disregarding most of the people who live in it.

Like a painting, a landscape requires distance to be appreciated; working almost as a museum panorama, the landscape is constructed in the eyes of the observer, operating as a form of social incantation. Even though it may bring some elements of the cultural context it represents, it is not indeed contextualized. It may work as the emblem of a culture, but it is mainly characterized as a cultural product. The cultural landscape, in this perspective, is a concept that raises questions about the very process of musealisation and defies its decolonization.

## The history of a “label”: exploring the landscape in Europe

Historically, landscape has been conceived as an exceptional object of figuration in painting, notably in two regions of the world: in Europe, after the Renaissance, and in Asia, particularly in China, from the first years of the Christian

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1. Bourdieu defines the “magical act” as the action with words that produce, under certain conditions, a performative effect on men. See, for example, Pierre Bourdieu, *Ce que parler veut dire*. (L'économie des échanges linguistiques. Paris : Fayard, 2009).

era. Nevertheless, it is with the configuration of national identities in Europe that the concept of landscape gained the properties that it still carries in most of its present representations.

*“Rien de plus international que la formation des identités nationales”*.<sup>1</sup> The words of the cultural historian Anne-Marie Thiesse refer to the evident phenomenon of internationalization of certain “objects”, “concepts” and “institutions” that were created in the process of nationalism in Europe. According to this author, the territories, and their nature, in themselves do not configure the origin of nations. In fact, the representation of “national” nature(s) in painting was used as a tool in the process of nationalism in each country. This was also transmitted to the national heritage and to museums. In the modern operation of creating national identities, according to an identity “checklist”<sup>2</sup>, some fundamental elements play a definitive role in the performance of the nation in order to convince the people of a broad collective attachment to it. Among other elements such as the national language, literature, monuments and ancestors, the *landscape* was emphasized as a part of the nation that congregates nature and culture in a convincing enunciation. According to this model, coined in modern Europe, landscapes are the result of a collective work. They are imagined and equally conducted by poets and novelists, as well as by painters.<sup>3</sup> The national idealizers establish a view full of meaning that carries sentiment, using natural resources in consonance with coherent aesthetics. Nevertheless, frequently, what defines the national landscape is differentiation within the identity group.

In order to express the radical distance between Austria and its Alpine peaks, Hungarian painters and writers exalt the *a priori* ungrateful landscape of the Great Plain (the *Puszta*).<sup>4</sup> Also, the Norwegian national landscape becomes a fiord covered in snow. The sense of belonging invested in the landscape is so strong that in a recent past the Italian Ministry of Cultural Heritage protested against the use of the Tuscany landscape in a Swedish car commercial. As we may see, European national landscapes are defined more for their emblematic purpose than for a functional or social one.

In studies on the distinction between nature and culture, the French anthropologist Philippe Descola<sup>5</sup> has questioned how the conception of “landscape” can be applied in non-European cultures. Following this point of view, from the anthropological perspective, we intend, in the first part of the present chapter, to expose the landscape as a cultural-political category designed to express a particular ideology that is deep-rooted in European tradition. In the name of its decolonization, first, we should ask ourselves: where are the people in any lands-

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1. Anne-Marie Thiesse, *La création des identités nationales*. (Europe XVIIIe-XIXe siècle. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2001), 11.

2. Löfgren, *op. cit.*, 5-25; Thiesse, *op. cit.*, 13-14.

3. Thiesse, *op. cit.*, 191.

4. *Ibid.*

5. Philippe Descola, *Par-delà nature et culture*. (Paris : Gallimard, 2005).

cape? As Raymond Williams put it, “*Les paysans ne sont pas dans le paysage*”.<sup>1</sup> Despite being at the base of the idea of nation, in its idealized representation, the people play a secondary role in the musealised landscape. The persistence of popular culture under the category of *folklore*, for instance, has the effect of subjecting it to a secondary category in relation to hegemonic culture and to the dominant aesthetic. The (rural) people is simply romanticized and, at the political level, not allowed to decide about their own whereabouts.

If we go back to the romantic landscape of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the *beauty of nature*, a concept invented at a certain moment in Western art history is exempt from the representation of people. This imaginative notion tends to depict cultural heritage as natural and beautiful neutralizing the social relations that constitute the general landscape. There is a political reason for that. When the English bourgeoisie invented the “controlled” scenes of the landscape separating their privileged views of the countryside in which the workers were depicted as a small detail in the distance, this glaring representation was the product of a specific perspective from a certain privileged point of view. The 18<sup>th</sup> century landowner in Europe invented natural parks, botanical gardens and zoological gardens according to the same depiction of nature idealized in paintings. This landscape, thus, has a creator and an owner.

From an artistic perspective, a landscape can be seen as a “mental conversion”<sup>2</sup> of the land or the country it represents. It is not the same as the countryside; it is a “scene” created to represent some of its parts. The countryside has many landscapes, but there is always the “frame” that establishes the outer boundaries of a view and defines the landscape.<sup>3</sup> By looking at a landscape, we are automatically shaping and interpreting it, through the eyes of our very own cultural background. It is, therefore, less natural than cultural since we may perceive it as a cultural representation. The examples, through Western history, are numerous.

We may highlight the perception of landscape as a historical construction, which is also material and symbolic, for the purposes of a certain social and economic class and based on certain ideals. In this sense, the spirit of place that has been disseminated with the landscapes is the spirit of the ones who make the “place”, building it as a representation. The “*génie du lieu*”, a socially potent word, frequently appears throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century and is used even in novels such as Jane Austen’s, in which the notion of “making a place” in the sense of constructing it and in the sense of investing it of a certain “character”, is ironically reproduced.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Raymond Williams, « Plaisantes perspectives [Invention du paysage et abolition du paysan], » in *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, 17-18, novembre 1977, 31.

2. Malcolm Andrews, *Landscape and Western Art*. (Oxford / New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 1.

3. *Ibid.*, 5.

4. Williams, *op. cit.*, 33.

One fundamental feature of the landscape is the fact that it is seen from an abstract point of view, the observer's view. Therefore, it is a subjective impression, whose construction is made by a subject that serves as reference for the rationalization of the experiential world. According to Descola, the "subject's objectification" is a "condition for the landscape thinking of the moderns – tributary to the education of taste by the painting of landscape".<sup>1</sup> Hence, the pretension of interpreting the landscape as a neutral, universal concept allows it to be imported as a category of heritage. The landscape, then, will work as a *label* designed to be applied in different parts of the world, even in colonized places, acting as a powerful tool for musealisation.

## Enchanted city: the disputed landscape of Rio de Janeiro

In 2012, the city of Rio de Janeiro, considered to be "shaped by a creative fusion between nature and culture", was inscribed as *landscape* in the UNESCO's World Heritage list. Defined as a "staggeringly beautiful location for one of the world's biggest cities".<sup>2</sup> Rio was the first urban place to receive the title of "cultural landscape". However, for the overall city to be identified as landscape, several of its constitutive social dynamics are systematically suppressed in order to establish the new representation based on certain designated parts of the urban and natural space.

The limits of the landscape defined by UNESCO were clearly the ones of tourist activity in the city, and its proposition came from local authorities as part of the wide process of attributing (commercial) value to the city prior to the Soccer World Cup of 2014 and the Olympics of 2016. It occurred with no participation from the local inhabitants' associations or representatives of local communities; instead it was the result of a proposition that came from politicians, supported by major private institutions.<sup>3</sup> The suggestion to subscribe under the specific category of "cultural landscape" came from ICOMMOS<sup>4</sup>, in 2003. Finally, UNESCO inscribed the Rio Cultural Landscape not in its whole, but in the collection of some of its privileged parts: mainly the districts in the south zone of the city were "elected" to compose the *landscape*, where there are located several beaches and mountains but also where most of inhabitants belong to a distinguished, elevated economic white class. In the criteria that determined the selection of this so-called "cultural landscape", the people living in the poorer districts and in ghettos that

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1. Philippe Descola, *Anthropologie de la nature* (Séminaire). Les formes du paysage. Collège de France, 2012, 649-669. Available at: <[http://www.college-de-france.fr/site/philippe-descola/p1346267512064\\_content.htm](http://www.college-de-france.fr/site/philippe-descola/p1346267512064_content.htm)>. Access in (May, 2016), 658-659.

2. UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Rio de Janeiro: Carioca Landscapes between the Mountain and the Sea*. Available at: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1100>. Accessed May 20, 2017.

3. The biggest communication company in the country, the Globo Organizations, the Brazilian Press Association and the Brazilian Academy of Letters, among others.

4. International Council on Monuments and Sites.

permeate the urban space in a cross-cultural city are completely disregarded. The mere “image” of a staged Rio as source of inspiration for foreigners is, then, consecrated as more relevant than the society that lives in it. According to the UNESCO description, the “key natural elements” that constitute the landscape,

*...] also include the Botanical Gardens, established in 1808, Corcovado Mountain with its celebrated statue of Christ, and the hills around Guanabara Bay, including the extensive designed landscapes along Copacabana Bay which have contributed to the outdoor living culture of this spectacular city. Rio de Janeiro is also recognized for the artistic inspiration it has provided to musicians, landscapers and urbanists.<sup>1</sup>*

Thus, one could ask: what is the place of the local people in the musealised landscape? How do the inhabitants of Rio de Janeiro perceive this “spectacular” landscape sold to be imagined as *universal heritage*? A city is a set of multiple experiences and fragmented identities that are constantly in friction between one social world and another. As have been noted by the urban anthropologist Gilberto Velho, contemporary cities comprehend the “coexistence of different life styles and worldviews”,<sup>2</sup> a feature that is notably more obvious in cities that are marked by social and economic diffusion such as Rio. The different worlds the city encompasses are inscribed in the landscape even in terms of geography or of immaterial boundaries, such as in social ghettos defined by class but also by an inherited notion of race, where social, cultural and ethnic boundaries determine the limits between worlds. These boundaries can be – as they generally are – reified or questioned by the critical agency of local museums. Regarding cultural landscapes and the role of museums in the communities that live in them, the Siena Charter, proposed by ICOM Italy in 2014, and internationally debated in 2016 over the 24<sup>th</sup> General Conference of ICOM, in Milan, states that:

*Museums should promote the creation of ‘landscape communities’ aware of their identity, involved in their preservation, participating in their sustainable development.<sup>3</sup>*

Based on this charter written by European delegates, several questions may be raised regarding the relation between museums and the communities who live in the so-called “landscapes” they help to musealise. In different world contexts, communities have used museums and the notion of landscape as instruments to define a certain identity or to obtain social recognition. The “landscape”, otherwise, may help the state to incorporate certain groups in national policies, and taking part in the national heritage, a process that cannot be achieved without cultural friction and negotiation over representation.

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1. *Ibid.* Italics mine.

2. Gilberto Velho, *Um antropólogo na cidade*. Ensaios de antropologia urbana [An anthropology in the city. Essays on urban anthropology], (Rio de Janeiro: Zahar, 2013), 112.

3. ICOM – International Council of Museums / ICOM Italy. *Siena Charter*, (Siena, July 7, 2014), 4.

Observing the musealisation of landscapes, we may ask, for instance: who has the authority to define what values, monuments or natural forms should be musealised in a certain cultural regime? Those who musealise the landscape do not necessarily have to live in it. To be an observer of the landscape, having the privilege to see it from a distance and being able to capture it at one glance, gives someone the power described in Foucault's analysis of the Bentham Panopticon, according to whom the vigilant observation of someone gives power over someone.<sup>1</sup> The center – where the observer is placed – is the reference because the center *creates* the reference. According to this discussion, the contradiction in the case of the urban landscape of Rio de Janeiro is flagrant. For a landscape that has been solemnly declared as such for its urban and natural features, it depends on the exclusion of some of its less privileged parts to be admired. The “landscape communities” are not contemplated in the landscape unless they suit a foreign representation of the city created for the purposes of tourist commodification.

While in Europe ecomuseums and community museums have, in many cases, fought for the musealisation of their landscape as *their own* “cultural landscape”, local communities in Rio de Janeiro are not concerned with this European category. In fact, the local population have manifested an emphatic opposition to the revalorization of the city for foreign consumption. An urban movement called “Copa pra quem?” (“Cup for whom?”) was initiated in Rio in 2013, claiming social rights and questioning the public investment in that sportive event. The movement, that gained international repercussion producing a negative impact on the image of the city, however, had no impact in the planning for the renewal of this tourist venue.

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1. See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and punish: the birth of the prison*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1995).



*Billboard against the Brazilian World Cup of Soccer of 2014, Paris, France. The text in the centre states “This is World Cup” but it can also mean “This is the division of the world”. Photo: Bruno Brulon.*

Museums know about this resistance against government power. Unlike the European institutions, most community museums in Rio – created in the margins of the UNESCO official “landscape” – work as cultural devices to instate social change, acting in favor of people’s basic needs and survival beyond the romanticized city. This is the case, for instance, of Museu das Remoções (Museum of Removals), that has been created in 2016 as a direct response to the aggressive attempts of removal of local inhabitants from the Western zone of Rio de Janeiro, due to the building of facilities for the Olympic games. The museum brought together the claims of a recognized association of local inhabitants of Vila Autódromo, the small neighborhood created from a fisherman’s community, fighting against the state for survival in that land. Today, this museum aims to denounce removal actions of vulnerable populations by local government that still uses violent methods to materialize the city that is prescribed in the landscape label.

In Rio, for the past two decades, museums in favelas have been created as a result of particular claims for representation by minority groups who fight for the definition of their own identity based on the sense of belonging to a territory and for the valorization of their own heritage, in dispute within these very groups. Nevertheless, as a counterpart to the sold-out city, community museums have been exploited by tourism, making every aspect of the landscape consumed by the foreign visitor. As a cultural enterprise explored by tourism as well as by local government, these community museums are sometimes the result of a political bargain to accommodate marginal populations in the landscape

framework where they can be systematically consumed. Based on these new cultural scenarios, a trend in the museum landscape of Rio de Janeiro emerged in the beginning of the 2000's, when tourism in the favelas led to the creation of several "attractions" for tourists, including a "dangerous" safari in the middle of the slum, or the possibility of visiting and eating with local families in order to experience "life" in a favela. "Tourismification"<sup>1</sup>, as defined by Noel Salazar, is the phenomenon that allows people and places to be consumed or *devoured* by cultural regimes different from their own.

In the "favelas safari" vulnerable communities take part in the spectacle of the city, but inside the logic of social domination and cultural appropriation that constructs the imaginary landscape. Pictures are taken, as in any "exotic" land and the tourists (mostly foreigners) pay an elevated monetary price to the local private companies that sell the experience of dangerous life in the middle of slum. This kind of contemporary relation shows that we are not very far from the human zoos that still haunts the history of museums in the colonized world. "Predatory tourism" is how the local community in Rocinha, the biggest *favela* in Latin America, defines their relationship with strangers. "They come in, take what they want, and they leave nothing behind" – said an inhabitant of Rocinha in 2009.<sup>2</sup> What tourists take with them is the stereotyped image of the unknown *favela* that exists beyond the cultural landscape. Rocinha, as so many other urban communities, is the landscape inside the landscape.

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1. According to Noel B. Salazar, "tourismification" refers to the specific social phenomenon of transformation in social reality caused by tourism. As the author explains: "I prefer tourismification as a term because it is not the mere presence of tourists that is shaping this phenomenon but, rather, the ensemble of actors and processes that constitute tourism as a whole." Salazar, *op. cit.*, 49.

2. Some of the conclusions in this chapter refer to the research implemented in 2009, at Rocinha, Rio de Janeiro, in the research project "Social Memory and community work at Rocinha?", coordinated by professor Lygia Segala, at the Laboratory of Heritage Education – LABOEP, at Federal University Fluminense – UFF.



*A view of Rio de Janeiro from Rocinha: landscape inside the landscape.*

Photo: Bruno Brulon.

The “culture of tourism” involves much more than the simple travel in space. In the first place, it refers to the creation of images and imaginaries that, in general, are much more quickly assimilated than the ones created by museums. It is telling that in social media Rocinha is being associated to several hashtags promoting, in every part of the globe, the indistinct consumption of the city – and yet there are no beaches at Rocinha, and the *favela* was not a venue for the 2016 Olympic games that have significantly altered the city and stressed the incongruities in the landscape.

Thanks to tourism – by reproducing colonial relations from the past –, the value of authenticity in heritage is directly connected to the foreign eye. This newly created object effectively responds to the categories of another culture: the observer is the one who has the power or competence to define cultural heritage and the museum quality in things. As Salazar puts it, tourismification can result in loss of cultural pride and complete reliance on tourism for subsistence, a tendency that is possible to be observed in several places around the globalized world. Tourist development can be and has been responsible for several irreversible changes in societies, because “people in the margins often have little (economic) choice but to accept and adapt to the tourismified identities and cultural views that are created for them”.<sup>1</sup> Tourism, according to Salazar, is more than

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1. Salazar, *op. cit.*, 50.

physical travel, it is “the preparation of people to see other places as objects of tourism, and the preparation of those places to be seen”. As a result of this social process, local and regional museums, as well as ecomuseums, are becoming the centres of attention as performative institutions capable of making the (very conflictive) mediation between observers and the observed realities, sometimes working successfully as denunciatory devices. These instruments for resurgence and affirmation of local identities and competing discourses over heritage are gaining force with tourismification and they have proven to be important for the material and symbolical survival of the groups.

While some community museums or ecomuseums are being used in different ways to raise consciousness inside the favela regarding peoples’ identities and the social problems that surround them, the “landscape” label only helps to increase the predatory tourismification of this specific part of social reality. Tourismification, then, raises some structural questions about the decolonization of landscapes and the disputes over representation in musealisation.

Just like museums, tourism finds itself in a paradoxical relationship to the market, as Réau and Poupeau demonstrate.<sup>1</sup> On the one side, the tourist market helps local inhabitants to make a living and to survive; on the other, tourists and tourism professionals tend to collectively deny its economic and predatory features in the *enchantment* of the social world.<sup>2</sup> This enchantment, other than dislocating places and people, sells the landscape as product of tourism and as an object of incantation that is created with the help of museums. How responsible, then, is musealisation in the present societies? What do we choose to communicate to future generations? Which cultural representations are we leaving as legacy? Who are we placing in the margins of society or of the museum spectrum? And, still, how often are we asking these critical questions concerning our own practice as museum agents?

## **Is there a non-European landscape?**

From the viewpoint of a reflexive museology, analyzing the regimes of value in colonized regions of the world, it is mandatory to critically interrogate the imported category of “cultural landscape” as much as we have been interrogating categories such as “cultural heritage” or “museum”. The question, for several authors who explore the anthropological value of landscape,<sup>3</sup> is whether this notion is useful beyond the cultures in which it was elaborated. What we defend in the present text is that the exercise of questioning the established concepts of Western culture is inescapably in the foundations of a decolonized thinking, that we here try to exercise.

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1. Bertrand Réau and Franck Poupeau, « L'enchantement du monde touristique », in *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* (2007/5 (n° 170)), 4-13.

2. *Ibid.*, 10.

3. Descola, *op. cit.*, 2012.

Foremost, it is necessary to admit that the “landscape” in Europe, as mentioned in the brief historical analysis of its origins above, is what we see as landscape in nature, what we learn to see as such, thanks to the education of sight by European painting.<sup>1</sup> According to Descola, in order to understand the landscape as a useful anthropological category it is necessary to first consider the rather common observation according to which “we do not identify as landscape what we haven’t been directly exposed to before, either literally or metaphorically”,<sup>2</sup> the landscape is made accessible to people by a series of material and cognitive mediations that allow observers to recognize it when experiencing a place. However, the author asks: does the “landscape” exist beyond the contexts of Europe and some parts of Asia where this traditional representation has developed in the first place?

Landscape, in the perspective here sustained, does not exist as a set of objective properties before an observer who contemplates and updates it. It is the result of a structure of interactions that congregates an individual and a place that becomes – to the particular individual and perhaps not to others in the same situation – a landscape. The notion of landscape, thus, implies the existence of perceptive models that work as an integration between properties that emanate from the object and the schemes of representation of the same object which were culturally established,<sup>3</sup> i.e. learned through a specific tradition such as art history as stated before. This particular model that shapes perception – and which has colonized sight in different contexts beyond Europe – operates producing the feeling of a social incantation. The “landscape” experience, dependent on the foreign eye as we have demonstrated above, allows some things and persons in a given social space to be seen and valued while others are kept invisible or must negotiate their representation in the enchanted image.

From the different possible approaches to the conception of landscape, the one museums have traditionally adopted throughout their modern history was that of a territory organized by human action, or, in a more restricted way, as a biophysical substrate over which the history of societies are disposed in social strata<sup>4</sup> and represented in dioramas. In certain museums, a landscape works as a type of prescriptive representation of space that serves to designate an imagined object by omission. This perspective is commonly adopted either by traditional museums or by ecomuseums founded in the strong idea of “communities” that are bound to a limited space in the landscape. It serves as the base for the creation of “territorial stigmatization”, as defines Wacquant<sup>5</sup>, which implicates in territorial isolation and the circumscription of some segments of broad society in urban marginality. The landscape, in this sense, helps in the enhancement of social

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1. *Ibid.*, 649.

2. *Ibid.*, 650.

3. *Ibid.*

4. *Ibid.*, 656.

5. L.J.D. Wacquant, “Territorial stigmatization in the age of advanced marginality”, in *Thesis Eleven* 91, (2007), 66–77.

inequalities by sustaining the patterns of marginality in urban space and even producing the ethnification of the city.<sup>1</sup> When the stigmatized spaces become permanent components of a landscape, depreciatory discourses are amplified in daily life interactions as well as in the higher spheres of social representation, such as in the medias, in museums or even in scientific discourse.

As we here wish to demonstrate, the label of landscape, notably in poorer countries and in post-colonial situations, may serve to enhance social difference creating and maintaining segmented societies that are sustained with the notion of localized cultural diversity. This conception of a landscape does not usually consider social differences and cultural patterns as variable and transitory in time and in space, which is most evidently in contemporary urban territories. Instead, it naturalizes and reinforces the social abyss existent in unequal societies justified by the established stigmas based on poverty, ethnicity or the immigrant status. Territorial differentiation operates, in certain contexts and places, creating the exclusion prescribed in an unconscious colonialism that is in the foundation of neoliberal states and of capitalist consumption in present time.

Is it possible, then, to escape colonialism in the landscape label, when it is applied to the post-colonial world? As suggests Descola, in a more general and direct way, the landscape can be perceived as a space apprehended by a subject.<sup>2</sup> Hence, the variety of landscapes would be related to the diversity of perceptions in every different subject and to the plural relations, biographies, sensibilities and the uses of space that are particular to each interaction. According to this perception, a landscape in a city such as Rio de Janeiro would have to consider the great variety of experiences that produce the disputed space and the negotiation of cultural heritage in its material and immaterial expressions.

In its most significant sense for the transformation of societies, the landscape is a shared representation, created as an iconic sign that refers to something other than itself. In some of its best applications, it may help people to shape their own sense of belonging to a place and their transient identity as a result. Rather than the mere aesthetization of space, the musealised landscape presupposes an intention of representation that is culturally bounded as well as it is politically charged.

## **Deconstructing the landscape: representing people in the enchanted space**

After a portrait is created and it suits its creator's intentions, "How do the people in the landscape live?" is a question not frequently asked. The observer holds almost all the power over the created image, because in the case of landscapes, seeing is creating and what you see is what exists.

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1. L.J.D. Wacquant, . *Urban Outcasts — A Comparative Sociology of Advanced Marginality*. (Cambridge: Polity, 2008).

2. Descola, *op. cit.*, (2012), 663.

In fact, what is in dispute in the identity game is the power to impose a view of the social world “according to the principles of *di-vision*”.<sup>1</sup> Once imposed on the whole group, this principle creates meaning and consensus over the meaning, and mainly over the identity and the unity of the group, which shapes reality in a sensible way. According to Bourdieu, the fights for the ethnical or regional identity, i.e., that refer to the properties (stigmas or emblems) related to the idea of an origin or of a place of origin, and the signs of continuity expressed in culture, such as the landscapes, are a particular case of fight over classification. What is at stake is the dominance over what is seen and what is believed. In the sense of Bourdieu’s regionalist discourse, which is a performative discourse, it envisages imposing as legitimate a new definition of regional (or ethnic) boundaries on a particular group. In other words, it is the value of the person while socially reduced to his social identity that is disputed. Cultural heritage is used as a weapon in the identity wars, lived within the groups while they enact their cultural identities.

It is no coincidence that the organization of the urban landscape of Rio de Janeiro marks the ethnic difference that lurks behind the prominent differences in the physical environment. This is because landscapes tend to mirror the people who recognize themselves in it. The groups, or “communities” living in the margins of urban space are not only territorially stigmatized, but also socially. This “participation” in the landscape is sometimes “(re)affirming the political subjection to the state, that is engaged, in contrast, in regulating certain aspects more intrusive to the market sphere”.<sup>2</sup>

The landscape, created either by colonial expansion or through commercial exploitation, has appropriated several social realities, in an anthropophagic<sup>3</sup> enterprise towards cultures and societies that were being reinvented as *heritage* or as commodity. In both cases, when the landscape is the result of a power struggle, there is a distinguished difference between the role played by the “landscape inhabitants” and the foreign observers and/or settlers. In effect, both sides constitute the landscape, and in a more or less continuous way this collective representation is accomplished under the sign of predatory domination. In light of this debate, it is only fair to ask: can we musealise the world – and if so, on what conditions? If each and every part of the world can be musea-

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1. Pierre Bourdieu, A identidade e a representação. Elementos para uma reflexão crítica sobre a idéia de região. [Identity and representation. Elements for a critical reflection on the idea of region], in Pierre Bourdieu, *O poder simbólico*, (Lisboa: Difel, 1989. 107-132), 113.

2. Frédéric Maguet, « L’image des communautés dans l’espace public », in Chiara Bortolotto, *Le patrimoine culturel immatériel*. Enjeux d’une nouvelle catégorie, (Paris : Éditions de la Maison de sciences de l’homme, 2011, 47-71), 69.

3. The term “anthropophagy” refers to a form of cannibalism in certain indigenous cultures. This concept was used by Brazilian writer Oswald de Andrade to refer to cultural appropriations regarding the Brazilian Modernist movement in his “Anthropophagic Manifest” from 1928. Oswald de Andrade, “O manifesto antropófago”, in Gilberto Mendonça, *Vanguarda europeia e modernismo brasileiro: apresentação e crítica dos principais manifestos vanguardistas*. 3<sup>a</sup> ed. (Petrópolis: Vozes, Brasília: IN, 1976).

lised, because culture is produced and transmitted everywhere, then how can we envisage a democratic musealisation that allows all people to represent and celebrate their own cultural heritage in on their own terms, and according to their own regimes of value?

In order to achieve the democratization of representation, instead of asking what is worthy to be in the museum (or to compose a landscape) or to be designated as heritage, a decolonized museology should ask who has the authority to create value and who hasn't. Those are fundamental questions in a critical, reflexive discipline. This doesn't mean, that museums and heritage production must abandon the concept of landscape altogether. As institutions that also played a leading role in colonization, museums today have the power to create critical and reflexive performances that help the public – and authorities – to understand the past instead of merely repeating it. The same can be done with the idea of “cultural landscapes”.

Museums should recognize the “landscape” as a powerful instrument to discuss inequalities and to re-value people's bonds to space and their sense of *place*, constructed in a given territory. This will allow a critical revision of the naturalized identities and a denunciation of the stigmas sustaining marginalization and, ultimately, to stop social exclusion. A decolonized discourse implies that no museum, no heritage and no landscape is a universal phenomenon. They are political constructions that help to build the social spheres, and they should be built in a way that counts in for everybody, for all social groups in the territory. In Rio de Janeiro, UNESCO's institution of “cultural landscape” has helped to sustain a political and social *status quo*, valuing only some parts of the city. This cultural discourse reaffirms an imported image of the urban space, the urban “landscape”. Once such a label has proved to be discursively effective, it effects the actions of the local government. In fact, the investments in the city of Rio and the urban reformulation after the World Cup and the Olympic games have been directed only to some, already prosperous parts of the community, and thus drastically increased inequalities in the social space. For the past five or six years we have witnessed continuous segregation and further exclusion of populations who live literally in the margins of the so-called “landscape”. Their basic public services are scarce, transportation to the city-centre is ever more inefficient and violence has significantly increased since 2012.<sup>1</sup>

The concept of rationally organized landscape in the European tradition affirms the separation between the observer and a “scene”, or a “presentation” of nature as a spectacle. As is configured, then, a form of musealisation of place that separates man from nature, the consumption from the production, the landowner

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1. According to the Institute of Public Safety (Instituto de Segurança Pública - ISP), in 2017, one year after the Olympic games, the violence in urban areas of Rio de Janeiro involving homicide have increased almost 10%, compared to 2016. See *Carta Capital. Violência urbana no Rio de Janeiro aumenta em 2017*. Available at: <http://envolverde.cartacapital.com.br/violencia-urbana-no-rio-de-janeiro-aumento-em-2017/>. Accessed June 4, 2018.

from the worker, and so on, in such a way that the transmitted message imposes the traditional divorce between a subject, the observer, and the object observed. In the core of modern rationalism, museums have helped us to inherit this separation, one with social consequences.

In order to see musealisation and heritage “industry” from a different angle, a reflexive perspective, the people and the landscape should not be separated but seen as a whole. The separation between the creators of heritage and the ones who live (in) this heritage, and who will transmit it and consume it is an artificial construct that benefits only a few. Landscapes and museums are social constructs and powerful representations made by the elite, and they cast a spell over people; what is seen and what is enacted to be seen in the culturally controlled social order. Such a spell or social magic can be understood differently, as a form of domination by incantation. The first step to break it is recognizing its effects.

# Sustaining a Sense of Place through Community Crafts and Culture<sup>1</sup>

*Jamie Brown and Karen Brown*

## Introduction

Recent years have witnessed a strong academic focus on the idea of a “sense of place” relating to ecomuseums,<sup>2</sup> referring to how local people identify what is distinctive about their territories, and how documenting, safeguarding, and promoting heritage in places under decline can work toward building sustainable futures. Some authors have considered the idea of a “sense of place” more broadly in relation to “social capital,” being “the benefits in terms of wellbeing, good health and civic engagement which are generated through interactions between people, identifying pride in place, shared values and citizenship, and ‘place dependency’.”<sup>3</sup> The European Landscape Convention (2000) describes landscape as a “living context,” referring to a holistic concept of landscape in relation to tangible and intangible heritage, among other considerations.<sup>4</sup> Understood in this framework, community and ecomuseums can be conceived of as active agents in the preservation not only of their collections but also of the cultural and natural heritage that surrounds them. The CCC project therefore aligns with the European Landscape Convention and with the 2016 Italian “Strategic document” of ecomuseums in its premise that

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1. Research for this essay was supported by the Scottish Funding Council Global Challenges Research Fund.

2. Peter Davis, *Ecomuseums: A Sense of Place*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Continuum 2011); Peter Davis, “Ecomuseums and the democratization of cultural tourism,” *Tourism, Culture and Communication* 4 (2004): 45–58; Peter Davis, “Ecomuseums, societies and sustainability: contrasting global experiences,” in *Heritage and Sustainable Development*, Vol. 2, 1285–1295 (Evora, Portugal: Green Lines Institute for Sustainable Development. 2010); S. Cousin, “Un brin de culture, une once d’économie: écomusée & économusée,” *Publics et Musée. L’Écomusées: Rêve ou Réalité* 17–18 (2000): 115–137; M. Maggi and V. Falletti, *Ecomuseums in Europe: What they are and what they can be*. Working Paper no. 137 (Torino: IRES – Istituto Recherche Economico-Sociali del Piemonte, 2000); Amareswar Galla, “Cultural Diversity in Ecomuseum Development in Viet Nam,” *Museum International* 57, no. 3 (2005), 101–109.

3. Rhiannon Mason, Andrew Nemwan and Helen Graham, “Literature review: Historic Environment, Sense of Place and Social Capital,” Report (English Heritage and International Centre for Cultural and Heritage Studies, Newcastle University, 2009). The report also includes an extensive bibliography on this topic, mostly relating to the UK. See also P. Selman, “Social Capital, Sustainability and Environmental Planning,” *Planning Theory and Practice* 2, no. 1 (2001), 13–30.

4. European Landscape Convention, accessed 19 April 2018, <https://rm.coe.int/1680080621>

*Crafts and handmade knowledge, linked to environmental resources and landscape, stand as domestic economic help in a period of economic and personal problems. Ecomuseums can start processes of re-utilization of knowledge, predisposing them to technical innovation, education to new handmade jobs, creative competence, in a pact between generations, directed to small and medium form and job opportunities for young people.*<sup>1</sup>

The CCC project has involved close collaboration between the Museums, Galleries and Collections Institute at the University of St Andrews in Scotland and three small local museums in Costa Rica, as well as the Museo Nacional de Costa Rica, the Red de Museos Comunitarios de Costa Rica, students from the University of Costa Rica, and the International Council of Museums (ICOM) Costa Rica. The museums are the Ecomuseo de la Cerámica Chorotega of San Vicente located in Guanacaste, and Boruca and Rey Curré Yimba Cajc *museos comunitarios* located in the indigenous Brunka region in southern Costa Rica. In San Vicente (Costa Rica's oldest ecomuseum), local people produce pottery according to traditional methods, and in Boruca and Rey Curré Yimba Cajc, the main craft traditions are mask-carving (associated with the "Dance of the Little Devils" festival) produced mostly by men, and traditional dying and weaving of textiles produced mostly by women. The aim of our research has been to consider the innovation potential for the promotion of artisan crafts, while respecting the integrity of community museum principles, including community decision-making, agreement and governance. In our consultations, each community identified artisan crafts as one of their main income generators, and the desire to see young people carry on these traditions toward long-term sustainability. The motivations behind the creation of these museums and the vision of community members for sustainable development underpin all CCC's aspirations and activities.

## **Background to community and ecomuseums of Costa Rica**

The *Ecomuseo de la Cerámica Chorotega* of San Vicente was established in 2007 in an effort to safeguard and promote the Chorotega indigenous craft of pottery-making and the way of life of the local community. Involving Chorotega artisans, the ecomuseum offers practical workshops using traditional materials and techniques for painting and creating motifs relating to Chorotega indigenous beliefs, such as the sacred jaguar, regarded as a symbol of rain and fertility.

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1. "2016 Ecomuseums Agenda 'Strategic document' of ecomuseums," trans. Raul Dal Santo, accessed 12 May 2018, <http://www.ecomusei.eu/ecomusei/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Strategic-document.pdf>. See also *Ecomuseums and cultural landscapes. State of the art and future prospects*, ed. Raffaella Riva (Santarcangelo, Italy: Maggioli Editore, 2017).



*Chorotega Jaguar Ceramic.* Photographs © University of St Andrews.

The Chorotega people were the most powerful American Indian tribe of northwest Costa Rica at the time of the Spanish conquest. Corn farmers, they had most likely migrated from Chiapas many generations before the Spanish conquest, speaking a language called Mangué, which disappeared in the colonial period. Columbian Chorotega-Mangués people still live on the Nicoya peninsula, speaking Spanish rather than Mexican, and cultural traits, such as the reliance on corn, distinguish them from the rest of Costa Rica.<sup>1</sup> In the words of the ecomuseum and local Community Development Association president Maribel Sanchez:

*The mission of the ecomuseum is to rescue the culture of our Chorotega indigenous ancestors. Because it's a living culture that we have and although we do not keep the language, we do have our culture in the aspect concerning ceramics, traditions, let's say, food ... corn, all around this area, the cultural aspect.*<sup>2</sup>

The creation of the ecomuseum at San Vicente was supported by the Fundación Interamericana, the Costa Rica Ministry of Labor, the Ministry of Fine Arts, the National Museum, and regional museums.<sup>3</sup> The Ecomuseum Association is distinct from the Community Development Association, but the land on which the museum is built is owned by the latter, meaning that, officially, the

1. *Encyclopedia Britannica*, accessed 20 April 2018, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Chorotega>.

2. Maribel Sanchez, interview with Karen Brown, June 2016. This research, funded by the Royal Society of Edinburgh, was carried out by Dr Karen Brown as a way of comparing community empowerment and local museum initiatives directed at tourism in Costa Rica and Scotland. See Karen E. Brown, "Paradigm or Predator? Eco and Community Museums in Scotland and Costa Rica", *ICOFOM Study Series*, 45 (2017), 23–36.

3. Maribel Sanchez, interview with Karen Brown, June 2016.

local community take responsibility for it. The museography was implemented in consultation with Ronald Martinez of the Museo Nacional de Costa Rica, who led a series of workshops and guided the community in curating their own history. It was updated in 2017 as part of the EU-LAC-MUSEUMS project workshops called “Our Vision for Change” led by Martinez.<sup>1</sup> The “eco” suffix in the San Vicente museum concept was, according to the president, a means of valuing nature in the community and, especially, a way to avoid burning down the community’s sacred tree. The distinctive tree of Guanacaste is useful for its seed pods, traditionally used as detergent for washing clothes, as illustrated in the museum display.

Between 2016 and 2018, the director consistently reported that the museum was in a period of crisis, with the ecomuseum staying alive mainly owing to the voluntary activities of some elderly people providing ceramics to sell in it. They also depend on external tour companies, employing mostly Nicaraguan tour guides, to bring tourists to the museum. The profits gained from this initiative are frustratingly minimal.<sup>2</sup> The researchers recognized that there is great potential for the museum to develop its surrounding offerings, such as utilizing its outdoor space for workshops demonstrating traditional pottery-making using local materials and the techniques of Chorotega artisans, or cooking in the distinctive village ovens (used for both firing ceramics and home or communal cooking). San Vicente’s identification of its cultural assets, both in the formation and curation of the museum, and in its engagement with the CCC project, has involved processes of musealization (in bringing objects from the territory into the museum), and heritagization (in the mapping of its territorial heritage, tangible and intangible). As described by Lynn Maranda, musealization can be understood as the process whereby the object enters the museum to assume another function as a source of knowledge. Sharon Macdonald has further deployed the term to highlight the musealization of significant objects from everyday life. As Maranda articulates, the moment of “transformation” takes place when a decision is made assigning museal status. A similar logic can be followed in the context of ecomuseums, where sites in cultural landscapes become mapped and assume new kinds of value when considered as a territory museum consisting of cultural and natural assets. This local development process is often bracketed with tourism and codified using words associated with economic growth, including asset management, regional competitiveness, entrepreneurship, and GDP.<sup>3</sup> However, the crucial point of decision-making identified by Maranda assumes added significance in this context as we need to ask who has control over decisions in processes of heritagization, who the actors are, what are their agendas, and what decisions are discussed and agreed. CCC methodology adopts the position that commu-

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1. EU-LAC-MUSEUMS Youth Exchange, accessed 20 April 2018, <https://eulacmuseums.net/index.php/youth-exchange-2>.

2. Maribel Sanchez, interview with Karen Brown, 2016.

3. See Richard Longstreth, ed., *Cultural Landscapes: balancing nature and heritage in preservation practice*. (University of Minnesota Press, 2008); Zoltán Bujdosó, “Basis of Heritagization and Cultural Tourism Development,” *Procedia: Social and Behavioral Sciences* 188 (2015), 307–315.

nity consultation toward local solutions to local problems is key to sustainable development relating to culture.



*Guanacaste tree seed. Stone washing in San Vicente.* Photographs © University of St Andrews and Ecomuseo de la Cerámica Chorotega San Vicente.

To illustrate this point, take the Guanacaste tree and its seeds, discussed above. These seeds can be used for washing clothes without chemical detergents, but once the seed pods are brought inside the museum and displayed, they take on new importance as objects of cultural significance and study, not only for the local people and tourists, but also for researchers in botany, geography and sustainable development. The tree, one of which is located outside the museum, then becomes an interesting natural heritage asset and one which the local community collectively seeks to preserve. When considered as part of an ecomuseum, the tree, which has always been of traditional and household significance among the older generation, then takes on added value and becomes “heritagized,” making it part of a tourist route around the territory and listed as a significant heritage asset, rendering it a powerful instrument capable of resisting unethical development.

When consulted about what matters to the ecomuseum in San Vicente and its sustainability, the president lamented that the ecomuseum was going through hard times. She said that she worried for its future sustainability, adding:

*Just imagine that I should, like my mother, pass away, then what happens is that [the museum] dies. That’s why I want young people, especially young people – that’s what we’re doing with the cooperative. We want young people to get involved and manage the cooperative well, as it is needed.*<sup>1</sup>

In response to such consultations within the community and with Martinez, the CCC project worked with a map of local artisans in San Vicente created by the community. Together, we conceived the novel idea of building on their data to create a new interactive online map of the community, highlighting significant

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1. Maribel Sanchez, interview with Karen Brown, 2016.

places of interest across the ecomuseum site. However, beyond mere promotion, San Vicente faces two distinct challenges that need to be overcome: first, the need to secure the sustainability of its ecomuseum and Chorotega heritage itself; and second, to address the issues facing its young people, such as a lack of opportunity, and peer pressure leading to substance addiction. CCC researchers identified the need to increase wider community participation rather than rely on the already overburdened volunteers, therefore bringing new ideas and thoughts to the table while fostering more community ownership and involvement. A potential outcome of the CCC project is a future partnership between the ecomuseum and the local high school to train and empower young people as tour guides. By documenting San Vicente's landscape and by increasing community capacity through sharing – passing Chorotega knowledge from the elders to the young people – the community can offer young people an opportunity to get involved and gain essential skills relevant to the local economy. In this process, the young people gain a better understanding of ways in which to maintain their heritage, thus reducing the likelihood that they will be uprooted and move out to seek employment, or turn to antisocial behavior.

## **The community museums of Boruca and Rey Curré Yimba Cajc**

Inhabiting very different landscapes and supporting different artisan crafts, the *museos comunitarios* of *Boruca and Rey Curré Yimba Cajc* are located in indigenous territories in the south of Costa Rica, created from processes of evangelization by Franciscan missions and Spanish colonial rule in the seventeenth century.<sup>1</sup> The community groups and museums in Boruca, and in the neighboring Térraba-Broran territory where Rey Curré is located, were developed in the 1980s as a form of resistance against external forces attempting to take away their resources, especially cedar and balsa wood. Boruca and Rey Curré peoples are known collectively as the “Brunca” tribe, as they share the same roots and traditions, especially the Dance of the Little Devils, a festival that takes place over the new year period.

Of particular note in the conception and creation of the community museum in *Boruca* is that the leaders of the Boruca movement were strong women who fought to respect and recover ancestral culture while overcoming discrimination in their communities.<sup>2</sup> Their method was to recognize the value of women outside the domestic sphere by allowing them to promote the female organization of crafts production and administration of an artisan collective. This group of women called Nora Maroto – Marina Lázaro Morales, Feliciano González Lázaro,

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1. See “Memoria de la Red de Museos Comunitarios de Costa Rica: 1980–2014,” in *Memory of the Network of Community Museums of America: experiences of Community Museums and National Networks*, eds Edited by Cuauhtemoc Camarena Ocampo and Teresa Morales Lersch. Creative Commons, 2016. Hereafter “Memoria.”

2. Margarita Lázaro Morales, lecture, University of St Andrews, May 2018.

Acernia Villanueva, Ema Rojas, Margarita Lázaro Morales, Beliza Maroto, and Lucia Morales – worked together to lobby the local development association for a plot of land. Meanwhile, four women – Marina Lázaro Morales, Feliciano González Lázaro, Margarita Lázaro Morales, and Beliza Maroto – set about learning the craft of weaving from two elder women, Petra and Ángela, eventually selling their wares through the National Museum in San Jose and dividing the profits between them. By the 1980s their confidence had grown, and they came up with the idea of marketing traditional Borucan masks for tourist and external markets, a venture that has proven to be very profitable. “Thank God, we’ve been so blessed, so here we are, Margarita and me, still in the fight,” reported doña Feliciano.<sup>1</sup>

To create the museum in Boruca, the organization Mujer y Familia made a financial contribution; Doña Feliciano González became the treasurer, and Mrs. Maria Eugenia Murillo (General Director of Museums of the Ministry) also contributed 300,000 colones (ca. 520 USD). By 1985, following hands-on work by the women and the men they selected to help them, the community museum, Museo Comunitario de Boruca, was built in the traditional rancho style and opened. Strengthened through the Network of Community Museums of America since the 1990s,<sup>2</sup> by 2015 the community museum has, according to Margarita Lázaro Morales, rescued 90% of its culture, including historical pieces, legends, and medicinal plants. One of its greatest achievements was the loan transfer and custody of three pre-Columbian spheres to the Boruca territory, with the largest one of 7.5 meters being installed on loan at the door of the museum. Moreover, the women joined forces with others to create the Association of Artisans La Flor, enabling the local people to make an honest living through craft production and sales. Today, 95% of the Borucan people live off crafts.<sup>3</sup> However, Feliciano reported:

*It’s the same story – non-indigenous people enter the community because they buy the land, and they have been chopping down the trees, the savanna, where all the raw materials grow ... the pine trees, and so on.<sup>4</sup>*

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1. Feliciano González, interview with Karen Brown, Boruca Museo Comunitario, 2016.

2. Museos Comunitarios de América, accessed 12 May 2018, <http://www.museoscomunitarios.org/>.

3. Feliciano González, interview with Karen Brown, Boruca Museo Comunitario, 2016.

4. Feliciano González, interview with Karen Brown, Boruca Museo Comunitario, 2016; public talk by Margarita Lázaro Morales and Adriana Lázaro Morales, University of St Andrews, May 2018.



*(Left) Sphere outside Boruca's community museum. (Right) Masks on sale at the artisan shop. Photographs © University of St Andrews.*

In response to consultations with the community, the CCC project conducted interviews with artisans identified by the Association of Artisans La Flor to contribute to the project's online collaborative map. Each participant was asked to identify the boundaries of Boruca, significant sites deemed relevant for their crafts, and potential areas of interest, such as the sacred waterfall, river and religious sites that play a key role within the local environment. The project also engaged women artisans in a group discussion about their crafts, their history and significance, and women artisans identified traditional materials and techniques for producing their attractive weavings using traditional looms and natural dyes. As in San Vicente, the links between musealization of traditional materials from nature (in this case, pictures of a small sea snail in the community museum alongside a weaving display) and community empowerment became clear in this consultation. Margarita Lázaro Morales described at length how this snail, which lives in a natural reserve nearby, secretes a purple dye at a certain time of year and phase of the moon, a dye that is highly resistant to fading, so creating the most resilient and valued colored dye for weavings. In 2018, for the first time in many years, the community gained access from the government to these snails and made a significant community activity around the historic journey to the beach in the footsteps of their ancestors. It is these types of activities, according to the women's group, that help to strengthen the roots of the community, especially those of the young people who then learn, appreciate and carry forward knowledge of traditional crafts.<sup>1</sup>

During discussions to find out which way would be best to promote their landscapes, individual crafts and workshops, it was agreed by the participants that they would create an online map of Boruca's sights and landmarks without listing each individual's contact details. Instead, it was proposed to name the museum as a central place to buy Boruca's unique masks as it retains some of the profit for the benefit of the community, as well as using it as a starting point for a visit to their region. This simple yet effective decision demonstrates the

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1. Craftswomen of Boruca and Rey Curré, in consultation with Karen Brown, Jamie Allan Brown, and Teresa Morales, 2018.

community's *comunalidad* principle of sharing and working together, rather than each artisan operating individually for their own self-profit. The principle is not restricted to crafts but is applied throughout daily life in decision-making and action, whereby communal tasks, such as repairing the damaged roof of the community *salon*, organizing the annual *Fiesta de los Diablitos*, or picking fruit from a tree is shared evenly for the benefit of the whole community.

The *Community Museum Yimba Cajc* was created in Rey Curré following a series of discussions begun in 2011 and running through to 2012–13. The economy of Rey Curré is based on their crafts which, as in Boruca, respect the traditions of their ancestors and elders. In the words of the local school principal:

*The school is concerned with how the society of our grandparents, of our ancestors, was like. And above all, we want to exalt it, for the Boruca society, in this town of Curré, has been [existing] for many years, right? It's an ancient people. It's located in that place. And that aside, we exalt the Boruca art, crafts, which is what our society is based on (in this case, the Curré society, the Boruca society), what the economy is based on – the production of masks, jícaras [small cups] and weaves.<sup>1</sup>*

This community has already trained young people from the school to conduct articulate and engaging guided tours around the museum and significant sites, an initiative that the CCC project profited from in its collection of data and in conducting interviews. When questioned about threats to heritage preservation in their local territory, the school principal cited the need to maintain their roots by preventing outsiders from building over their cemeteries, by finding ways to control tomb robbers, and by resisting modern carving techniques:

*We maintain the roots of the Boruca people when it comes to arts and crafts, right? Logically, we don't want to bring in machines or other types of tools that would make it easier to craft masks that are traditionally made with gouges, tips of knives and all that. So we've tried to conserve crafts by not introducing machines that would facilitate things a little bit because that would make the true sense of being an artisan disappear.*

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1. School principal, interview with Karen Brown, Rey Curré, Costa Rica, 2016.



(Left) Rey Curré artisan carving a traditional mask seated on a hammock in his workshop. (Right) Interior of Yimba Cajc Museum. Photograph © University of St Andrews.

From the 1990s, in order to strengthen their activities and resolve, Maribel Sanchez of San Vicente and Margarita Lázaro Morales of Boruca engaged with the wider Network of Community Museums of America. Then in 2008 and 2009, the idea of creating a national network of community museums emerged as a reciprocal arrangement between the National Museum and the local community. It is managed through the National Museum of Costa Rica, and is a CCC project partner.<sup>1</sup> In Boruca one of the new projects in 2016 was to set up a basic cafeteria and serve only traditional food.<sup>2</sup> As a result of our consultations it has become clear that, ultimately, the community is working toward a bigger museum and a small library which would host historical material, including screenings of Intangible Cultural Heritage footage. There is also a desire to sustain indigenous gardening for the next generation, thereby further increasing resilience through traditional practices. With increased security in a new museum, the community's aspiration is to negotiate the removal of significant objects, including gold and archaeological pieces, from their current location at the National Museum of Costa Rica in the capital city, San Jose, to their own museum.<sup>3</sup>

To be sustainable, staying connected to other community and ecomuseums in their country and region has been a priority for all three museums under investigation. Through the national and regional networks, they can share their problems and discuss how to overcome them, thereby strengthening their resolve toward community cohesion through heritage identity work.

The Red de Museos Comunitarios meets in Central America every two years, and the community members report essential reinforcement work taking place through this network of shared visions and goals. One of the current priorities of the network is the "Our Vision of Change" program, which seeks to empower young people to engage with, and continue the fight for, the maintenance of

1. "Memoria", *op. cit.*

2. Feliciano González, interview with Karen Brown, Boruca Museo Comunitario, 2016.

3. Adriana Lázaro Morales, public talk and conversation with Karen Brown and Jamie Allan Brown, University of St Andrews, May 2018.

indigenous crafts and identity.<sup>1</sup> However, while community and ecomuseums are located in remote settings with poor infrastructure in place for physical access, they are not immune to the threats associated with globalization, including the interference of media and new technologies, on the lives of young people. Although not everywhere has good internet access, all the community members in possession of a smart phone have mobile data access. In the words of Margarita Lázaro Morales:

*What is worrying now is that we are focusing a lot on material and that also is a challenge for us. That weakness, I could say it like this, seen in youth, in childhood, I feel it as a weakness, that they ignore how important it is to want to keep our roots alive, this is a very big challenge, I feel it is a very difficult task, because along with our culture there is something more powerful, and it's that now we are seeing those mobiles, internet, that are stealing all that is culture... We have to fight a lot not to have a great loss of our memory, in our childhood, in our youth.<sup>2</sup>*

One way to overcome this threat is to make something positive of technology, and also to assist the communities in developing an online presence that they are proud of. In the CCC project, then, technology has been deployed as an enabling tool to empower the local community to promote its indigenous crafts on its own terms.

## Community Craft and Culture methodology

Working in collaboration with ICOM Costa Rica and Museo Nacional de Costa Rica, the CCC project facilitated a community-based approach to find local answers and solutions to the self-identified problems facing each community and its local environment. Benefiting from the existing eco/community museum's role as a focal point for community activities and celebrations, and as a place for dialogue between the community and outsiders, CCC sought to support the musealization and preservation of each community's heritage, traditions, and way of life by empowering the communities to document and map each landscape.

As explained, despite each community being located in remote areas, all are heavily influenced by the ever-increasing accessibility to the internet and media, and in all the interviews conducted it was clear that, while this phenomenon increases access to outside worlds, it poses a particular challenge to the community: how can they help young people to balance access to the wider world and its attendant behavioral patterns with the aspiration to retain tradition and respect for the local environment? Through discussions and participation with both CCC project partners and community leaders, five objectives were agreed, and considered relevant and achievable within the project's timeframe:

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1. Margarita Lázaro Morales and Adriana Lázaro Morales, lecture at University of St Andrews, May 2018.

2. "Memoria", *op. cit.*

- to build on existing partnerships and community groups using an integrated approach, from communities to national and international levels;
- to empower local women to take ownership of selling their crafts;
- to support the communities with the relevant necessary skills to promote their crafts;
- to evaluate and harness the knowledge gained from the project across the wider Community Museums Network of the Americas; and
- to utilize the increased capacity and empowered community in a future wider Latin America project.

Building on mapping work already carried out by the Museo Nacional de Costa Rica in San Vicente, the CCC project facilitated student volunteers from the University of Costa Rica to extend this approach to the *museos comunitarios* of Boruca and Rey Curré Yimba Cajc. Community elders and young people were encouraged to join the students in mapping their respective landscapes, interviewing artisans, and documenting places of interest, for example, ceremonial sites such as Rey Curré's graveyard and pre-Columbian wall, and natural resources such as balsa and cedar wood, utilized for craft-making and daily life. A local development plan to boost community participation and involvement, youth empowerment, and the musealization of the artisan process and artisanal resources is being developed in collaboration with partners to exploit the eco/community museum as a hub for each respective community. Through digitalization of the eco/community museum, community sites are being identified with videos and photographs, and will then be used to develop a website hosting an online map. The goal of this map is to address the connection between each community's heritage and memories and their environment and craft resources. The CCC map thereby supports the local artisans in their goal of preserving and sharing their environment and heritage with the wider world by creating an online cultural landscape. Another outcome desired by the communities was to develop an educational resource pack using the online map as a learning tool for parents, teachers, and youth workers with community-themed activities, thus sharing their unique environment (such as Boruca's waterfall), sacred sites (such as the Guanacaste tree), and their legends with a wider audience.



*Doña Celedina* the indigenous Bruncan language to young people in Rey Curré. Photographs © University of St Andrews.

Working with existing groups and respected women leaders, the CCC project and its collaborative partners empowered young people by teaching them about their indigenous heritages – their language, craftsmanship, building techniques, and the medicinal use of local plants and traditional cookery. Intergenerational activities between each community group, mediated by a positive adult role model, helped younger people participate more positively in their education, thus increasing their confidence and self-esteem, helping them to understand their local environment, and contributing to the overall future sustainability of their heritage. It is hoped that by inspiring each community’s young people to explore their community and environment, they will be encouraged and empowered to become involved in the decision-making process. What is more, their practical experience can contribute toward a more equal and fair community, one that respects the landscape of their ancestors and that will safeguard their distinctive ecology for future generations.

## Conclusion

Cultural landscapes occupy a privileged place in indigenous systems and cosmologies, and while an attempt to fit these assets into the digital museum world presents challenges on many levels, the CCC project design was based on community need. At a time when the role of culture is gaining increased agency in relation to sustainable development, and when ICOM is considering the role of cultural landscapes as protectors of local identity and natural resources, ecomuseums and community museums have much experience to share with the global museum community. Research engaging with these remote communities at grass-roots level has the potential to bring their voice and a more sensitive understanding of their knowledge systems into higher-level discussions, with the potential to impact upon policy relating to museum priorities and ethical sustainable development goals. The question posed by Maranda in relation to museum objects, “why musealize?” is equally important to heritagization processes of ecomuseums

and community museums. For both types of museums the sustainability of local communities, culture, and nature is the goal. Although occupying the borders of traditional museums in the ICOM sense of the word,<sup>1</sup> they have immense potential through collective action to adopt self-determined responsibility for cultural and environmental heritage preservation, as well as to communicate knowledge about it on their own terms. The collective memory of communities such as those engaged in the CCC project is fragile, but assisting communities to build their own path toward sustainable futures is the goal.

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1. ICOM Definition of a Museum, accessed 20 April 2017, <http://icom.museum/the-vision/museum-definition/>.

# One Site, Many Interpretations: Managing Heritage at an Ancient American Site

*Elizabeth Weiser, John Low, Kenneth Madsen*

*"What a useful thing a pocket-map is!" I remarked.*

*"That's another thing we've learned from your Nation," said Mein Herr, "map-making. But we've carried it much further than you. What do you consider the largest map that would be really useful?"*

*"About six inches to the mile."*

*"Only six inches!" exclaimed Mein Herr. "We very soon got to six yards to the mile. Then we tried a hundred yards to the mile. And then came the grandest idea of all! We actually made a map of the country, on the scale of a mile to the mile!"*

*"Have you used it much?" I enquired.*

*"It has never been spread out, yet," said Mein Herr: "the farmers objected: they said it would cover the whole country, and shut out the sunlight! So we now use the country itself, as its own map, and I assure you it does nearly as well."*

In this 1894 fictional story from Lewis Carroll, a game of cultural and technical one-upmanship plays out. In some ways, this has been the story of the Newark Earthworks, a 2000-year old geometric earthen complex in Newark and Heath, Ohio, as possession of the grounds has changed over the years. The site's visual majesty has been reduced to mapped iconographic images, competing claims have been made, and diverse theories put forth as to their importance.

Indeed, the indigenous people who built the Earthworks discovered that the country itself can serve as a map, and they did it on a grand scale. It was not a paper or cloth map that needed to be laid out and smother the landscape, but something that superseded even Mein Herr's imagination—a structure carved into the earth. It seems likely that the mounds represented greater (possibly global or cosmic) processes, and certainly their reflection of lunar cycles hints at such a connection. In any event, they were larger than life from the perspective of an individual person, built into the earth in ways that made it difficult for others to grasp the site's cartographic representations. As settlers arrived

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1. Lewis Carroll, *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded* (New York: MacMillan and Co, 1894), 169.

post-contact, they reduced the Earthworks to miniatures<sup>1</sup> in order to make sense of the construction in their own way and extrapolated new meanings from those representations. This is part of what makes the Newark Earthworks interesting as a focus for our examination from diverse cultural and disciplinary perspectives. The Earthworks is now scheduled to be the United States' next nominee for UNESCO World Heritage status. At this critical juncture in its history, we will in this chapter analyze the heritization of the Newark Earthworks as both material reality and interpreted idea, and examine its role in historical memory and future-looking narrative, from three disciplinary perspectives: that of geography, rhetoric, and American Indian Studies.<sup>2</sup> We argue that as a focus of heritized identity, the symbolic space of the Earthworks represents a community's shift from mystic creation of nebulous origins, to the everyday and ordinary, to a potentially new relationship between displaced and settler societies.

"Ohio was the cultural epicenter of North America two thousand years ago!" announces the interactive website for the Ancient Ohio Trail to the visitors that it hopes will travel through Ohio.<sup>3</sup> There are thousands of earthen mounds and structures spread over the Ohio landscape, built by pre-contact American Indians over at least one thousand years. Most spectacular of these is the Newark Earthworks, "the largest geometric earthwork complex in the world,"<sup>4</sup> built by people today referred to as the Hopewell culture. Today two parts of the Newark Earthworks complex remain significantly intact (see Figure 1). The Great Circle in Heath is the best preserved, "a gigantic circular enclosure, 1200 feet from crest to crest" with walls that extend "up to 14 feet at the monumental gateway."<sup>5</sup> The Octagon Earthworks in Newark, a half-mile wide octagon connected to a half-mile wide Observatory Circle (both exactly 1054 feet in diameter) is a geometric marvel whose walls align with each of the major points in the complex lunar cycle that the moon travels between its extreme rise and set points over an 18.6-year cycle.<sup>6</sup> The entire complex (with avenues, a large square, giant ellipse,

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1. E.g. Caleb Atwater, "Description of the antiquities discovered in the State of Ohio and other Western States," *Archaeologia Americana, Transactions and collections of the American Antiquarian Society* (1820), Plate II, 126-127; E.G. Squire and E.H. Davis, *Ancient monuments of the Mississippi Valley* (New York: Bartlett & Welford 1848), Plate XXV, 66-67.

2. We are all professors of The Ohio State University who work at the university's Newark, Ohio, campus, and we are part of the group of core faculty affiliated with the university's Newark Earthworks Center (NEC), an interdisciplinary academic center whose assistance we thank. As individuals we are specialists in the impact of border security on local communities, especially the Tohono O'odham of Arizona and Sonora (Madsen), in national identity and the rhetoric of museums (Weiser), and in American Indian and Indigenous studies (Low). We also thank Shelby Royal and Lauren Toney for their assistance with the citations in this article.

3. "About the AOT," The Ancient Ohio Trail, last modified 2017, <http://www.ancientohiotrail.org/welcome/about>.

4. "Newark: About the Site," The Ancient Ohio Trail, last modified 2017, <http://www.ancientohiotrail.org/sites/newark:paragraph.1>.

5. "Newark: The Great Circle," The Ancient Ohio Trail, last modified 2017, <http://www.ancientohiotrail.org/sites/newark:paragraph.1>.

6. See Ray Hively and Robert Horn, "Geometry and Astronomy in Ancient Ohio," *Archaeoastronomy*

and other mounds) filled four and a half square miles of the valley that nestles against the Licking River.<sup>1</sup> Archaeological evidence of artifacts from across the continent indicates that it served as a sacred and ceremonial meeting place for Native American visitors who traveled the waterways from over a thousand miles away.<sup>2</sup>

After European settlement in Licking County began in 1798, parts of the Earthworks served quite a different function: as farmland, city blocks, railroad embankments, canal space, or a site for tomb raiders. Preserved sections of the complex have served as a fairground, a military encampment site, an amusement park, and a limited-access country club/golf course, as well as a site for tourists. Today the terms of the Newark Earthworks' service for the future are again being debated. As part of a group of nine archaeological sites in south-central Ohio designated the Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks, it has been officially identified by the US Department of the Interior as the next site to be nominated for World Heritage status.<sup>3</sup> Its small but informative museum was shuttered for years and now open infrequently, and is projected to be replaced with an Earthworks Interpretive Center.<sup>4</sup>

Madsen first frames our discussion of the Earthworks' heritized identity in terms of political control and identification, and he writes of contemporary popular identification with the Earthworks. Weiser then theorizes the discussion of identification and its role in settler dis-identification with ancient and historic Indigenous peoples. Low follows to discuss the potential role of contemporary American Indians in future administration of the site and posit a new relationship between settler and colonized with a focus on self-determination and cultural sovereignty in heritage management.

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4: S1-S20 (1982); Ray Hively and Robert Horn, "A New and Extended Case for Lunar (and Solar) Astronomy at the Newark Earthworks," *Midcontinental Journal of Archaeology*, 38 no. 1 (2013): 83-118.

1. "Newark: The Octagon Earthworks," The Ancient Ohio Trail, last modified 2017, <http://www.ancientohiotrail.org/sites/newark>.

2. See Brad Lepper, "Archaeology: Newark Earthworks—A Place of Pilgrimage," in Ohio History Connection (blog), Aug. 7, 2009, <https://www.ohiohistory.org/learn/collections/archaeology/archaeology-blog/2009/august-2009/the-newark-earthworks-a-place-of-pilgrimage>.

3. National Park Service, "U.S. Nomination to the World Heritage List: Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks," *Federal Register* (May 25, 2018), <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2018/05/25/2018-11363/us-nomination-to-the-world-heritage-list-hopewell-ceremonial-earthworks>: paragraph 6-8.

4. Kent Mallett, "Here's an Idea: Meritor Site Becomes Newark Earthworks Tourist Destination," *Newark Advocate*, May 5, 2018, 1.



*Aerial view of the Octagon/Observatory Circle Earthworks, Newark, OH, also showing the greens of the Moundbuilders golf course. Photo credit: Newark Earthworks Center/Timothy E. Black*

## **Geography and Popular Identification with the Earthworks**

The discipline of human geography explores the interactions of people and their environment and this is, of course, a dynamic rather than a static relationship. The communities of Newark/Heath have long identified with the landscape of the Newark Earthworks. Even as advancing settlers destroyed smaller and less prominent portions of Native American earthworks, the very distinctive Great Circle and Octagon/Observatory Circle were preserved. They were protected not through any recognition of their original purpose but because they were appropriated and re-purposed. The Earthworks provided a recreational focus for curiosity-seekers and town boosters. Certainly these do not meet the standards of conservation that most people would like to see met today, but in their own way many probably felt they were giving honor to the structures.



*A map of the Newark Earthworks and its references. (Smaller mounds past or present are not shown.) Numbers refer to businesses listed in Table 1. Hollow circles reflect past establishments.<sup>1</sup> Produced by Kenneth Madsen.*

As a vernacular identifier, the Newark Earthworks figures prominently among area residents. Jordan defines vernacular regions as reflecting the “spatial perception of average people” and contends that such regions are “composites of the mental maps of the population.”<sup>2</sup> Wilbur Zelinsky drew on regional identifiers as used by businesses in telephone directories to identify dominant regional associations across the U.S. and Canada.<sup>3</sup> We can produce a similar localized version for the Earthworks, to show that these structures have attracted quite a bit of attention in the regional vernacular. Common business, organization, and governmental names that draw on the presence of the Newark Earthworks are summarized Table 1.<sup>4</sup> Such a review suggests the extent to which the largely non-Native American<sup>5</sup> residents of Newark identify with or value the Earthworks.<sup>6</sup>

1. The Octagon and Observatory Circle are located in the city of Newark. The Great Circle is located in the city of Heath.

2. Terry Jordan, “Perceptual Regions in Texas,” *Geographical Review* 68 no. 3 (1978), 293.

3. Wilbur Zelinsky, “North America’s vernacular regions,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 70 no. 1 (1980), 1-16.

4. Based on mentions in the local newspaper, the *Newark Advocate*, as archived at <https://www.newspapers.com/>, and supplemented by personal observations. Items not mapped either did not have a specified location or are located outside the extent of this map.

5. The U.S. Census Bureau reported in 2016 that 0.1% of the population of the City of Newark identified as Native American alone. The portion of the population identifying as White alone was 92.8%.

6. While we acknowledge that there are potential complications surrounding the use of such names as an act of cultural appropriation, this would not have been the case until very recently. Such discussion is also beyond the scope of this paper except to say that the relative paucity of Native Americans in Ohio today means a weak discussion on that topic in the state.



*Mound City Motors advertisement in the Newark Advocate, August 28, 1931, p. 14. (<https://www.newspapers.com/>)*

Table 1. – Select Earthworks-Inspired Names in the Newark Area

<b>Business/Organization (# on map)</b>	<b>Date Opened</b>	<b>Date Closed</b>
Earthworks Dental (1)	2012	2015
Earthwork Recording Studio (2) [see Figure 4]	2007	present
Earthworks Transit	2008	2012
Indian Mound Eye Clinic (3)	1987	present
Indian Mound Mall (4) [see Figure 5]	1986	present
Mound Center [shopping plaza] (5)	1987	present
Mound City Little League (6)	1951	present
Mound City Motors (7a, 7b, 7c) [see Figure 3]	1931	1953
Mound City Tire & Auto Repair (8)	n/a	present

Moundbuilders Country Club (9) (physically occupies Octagon and Observatory Circle)	1911	present
Moundbuilders Dairy Bar (10)	1984	present
Moundbuilders General Dentistry (11)	2010	present
Moundbuilders Inn (12)	1929	1948
Moundbuilders Motor Group (13)	2015	present



*Indian Mound Mall.* Photo: Kenneth Madsen



Photo: Kenneth Madsen.

While the variety and longevity of such names—and frequently associated imagery—over the last century is impressive, our research here does not delve into how this translates in specific ways to feelings about the historical presence of Native Americans in the area or contemporary preservation efforts. Our suspicion, however, is that for many it is simply a banal aspect of life in Newark, Ohio, that benefits from association with a prominent local landmark. Following discussions of banal nationalism in political geography<sup>1</sup>, which posits that political identity is built in part from multiple encounters with the everyday instances of communal representation, we might surmise that efforts at preservation would benefit from the reservoir of positive feelings about the Earthworks generated by multiple daily encounters with references to them.

From the perspective of a geographer, the Newark Earthworks are a testament to the power, persistence/durability, and versatility of place-based identities and how that identity may vary based on one's positionality. They are indeed both an impressive historical monument and a stunning representation of pre-Columbian heritage in North America. Yet as Weiser documents next, such acknowledgement of the Earthworks has not necessarily translated into widespread acknowledgement of the scientific, engineering, and cultural achievements of the builders of those structures, or their descendants.

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1. E.g. Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism*. (Thousand Oaks: Sage 1995); Natalie Koch and Anssi Paasi, "Banal Nationalism 20 years on: Re-thinking, re-formulating and recontextualizing the concept," *Political Geography* 54 (2016), 1-6.

## Local Identification with the Earthworks: What is it? Whose is it?

The field of rhetoric is interested in how the materiality of life is presented in ways that persuade individuals and communities to respond and adopt particular values, beliefs, attitudes, and actions. From a rhetorical perspective, then, the Newark Earthworks gains its significance as cultural heritage less from its material presence and more from the narrative co-constructed by those who curate the site and those who visit it. It demonstrates what Simon Knell argues for in “The Intangibility of Things”: that a material object, while it exists as proof for the narrative being recounted, exists more in the mind of the visitor than in the thing being observed. “This intangible, conceptual, immaterial, evidential object *appeals* to the truth of the material object, but its connection to its material twin is detached and fluid—it lives in another world,” he writes—the world that is created by the narrative it materializes, and that narrative lives in the mind.<sup>1</sup>

While Knell is speaking of the musealization of *objects*, the changing story of the Earthworks demonstrates that the heritized *landscape* itself undergoes a similar move into the intangible when it is endowed with significance by its visitors—when it becomes, in Greg Clark’s terms, a “rhetorical landscape.” A rhetorical landscape asks individual viewers to interpret their experience in a similar way, transforming individual experiences into communal ones and thus building communal identity. This rhetorical landscape, Clark argues, is mapped onto the landscape by its interpretive tools—the narratives that prepare the visitor for their experience. For the Earthworks these tools would include signage at the site, the Ancient Ohio Trails website (2012), the local museum, media pieces, prior classroom and community experiences, as well as communal memory, as Madsen charts above. All of these mean the visitor commonly enters a site knowing something about what they will experience, and when they ask, “What are we looking at?” there is a guide of some kind that interprets it.<sup>2</sup> When communal memory is not in agreement, then rhetorical interpretations are the tools that persuade toward a collective experience.

Such a process of communal (re)interpretation has occurred repeatedly over the past two centuries at the Newark Earthworks, ever since pioneer Isaac Stadden first encountered the Great Circle and, coming home “greatly excited,” brought his wife to “[take] a good look at this great curiosity” back in 1800.<sup>3</sup> Two opposing narratives vie for communal acceptance, with both narratives on display in a 1936 article in the Civilian Conservation Corps’ “Camp Licking” internal newsletter:

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1. Simon Knell, “The Intangibility of Things,” in *Museum Objects: Experiencing the Properties of Things*. ed. Sandra H. Dudley (New York: Routledge, 2012), 328.

2. Gregory Clark, *Rhetorical Landscapes in America: Variations on a Theme from Kenneth Burke*. (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2004), 5.

3. N.N. Hill, Jr., *History of Licking County, O.: Its Past and Present* (Mansfield, OH: A.A. Graham & Co.: 1881), 217.

*We, who have lived and worked around the great Newark Earthworks System, sometimes lose sight of their importance to the ancient people living in this area many centuries ago. We do not realize the vast amount of pride and energy expended in the original construction of these great monuments. To many of us they are mere piles of dirt representing a lot of foolish work.*<sup>1</sup>

Great monuments or mere piles of dirt? Seventy years later, a local university class interviewed town residents about their thoughts on what was then the newly official “Ohio prehistoric monument” and got similar bifurcated responses. While the children said that “the mounds were made by smart people who studied the moon and stars,” older interviewees told the class that they couldn’t understand the interest in a “bunch of uneducated heathen” that lived in ancient times. One man said the golf course should bulldoze the mounds.<sup>2</sup>

These opposing interpretations of the land itself have been a part of the European encounter with the Newark Earthworks from the beginning. Much of the immense complex that had made up the Newark Earthworks succumbed to plow and pavement in the century after settlement, as people were more interested in building a town than preserving the past. The Great Circle, however, was preserved by early settlers to be used as the Licking County Fairgrounds for seventy years (it is now operated as a state park by the state historical society, the Ohio History Connection [OHC]). And the Octagon Earthworks was largely preserved because for 108 years it has been rented by the OHC to the Moundbuilders Country Club as a private golf course—but this is now an increasingly contentious arrangement. As the *New York Times* wrote when the controversy over public access grew especially heated in 2006, “For generations, few thought it strange that golfers at the Moundbuilders Country Club whacked little white balls across ground once hallowed to an ancient community. But now there is an eagerness among many people to see moonrises from the mounds the way the Indians did, a desire that has caused a conflict with the golf club.”<sup>3</sup> Most recently, the OHC has announced that it will take the Country Club to court to force it to accept termination of the lease.<sup>4</sup>

In part, the varying interpretations of the Newark Earthworks are due to its chronological contingencies: As Low points out below, the historical presence of Native peoples in Ohio has been disrupted, disregarded, or outright erased

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1. Dick Fatig, “The Newark Mound System,” in *Camp Licking Mound Builders*, Co. 1544 CCC, Newark, OH (Dec. 21, 1936), 10.

2. Elizabeth Weiser, *English H591.02 Rhetorical Communities class*, (The Ohio State University at Newark, Spring 2006).

3. Christopher Maag, “Ohio Indian Mounds: Hallowed Ground and a Nice Par 3,” *New York Times*, 28 November 2005, <https://www.nytimes.com/2005/11/28/us/ohio-indian-mounds-hallowed-ground-and-a-nice-par-3.html>.

4. Kent Mallett, “Golf at Moundbuilders Could End Pending Ohio History Connection Takeover,” *Newark Advocate*, August 28, 2018, 1.

since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Thus their perspective has largely been left out of the collective memory of the Earthworks as it is held today.

The varying interpretations are also due to the Earthworks' material contingencies. It is to adherents as impressive as the great pyramids of Egypt or Mexico—but it does not look impressive to the visitor who is not primed by rhetorical tools. The complex covers more ground than the eye can take in, its defining walls are relatively low and they are made of earth. As Brad Lepper, the archaeological advisor for the site for the past three decades, notes in the *Times* article, “When you go there and stand by it, all you see is a mound of earth curving off into the distance....Only when you see aerial photos of it do you realize how complicated it is.”<sup>1</sup> More than most, the site requires rhetorical preparation for modern-day visitors to experience its significance. Mathematicians Hively and Horn, for instance, have been instrumental in assessing the geometric precision of measurements across multiple structures, as well as the seventeen lunar alignments spanning nearly two decades of orbit tracked by the Octagon/Observatory Circle.<sup>2</sup>

But recalling Knell, the truth of the Newark Earthworks as cultural heritage, and the opposition between great monuments or piles of dirt, is also due to intangibles. It is part of the larger long-standing narrative over the identity of the moundbuilders. Throughout much of the past two centuries the narrative was that whoever the mysterious moundbuilders were, they could not have been American Indians. In 1881, the *History of Licking County* opined:

*The day is not far distant when the Indian race, as race, will become extinct. Supposing that this extinction had occurred before white occupation of this country, what would the world know of the Indian race? Where are their monuments? Where are their works that would perpetuate their memory? In what particular spot on this great earth have they left single indelible footprint or imperishable mark to tell of their existence? Not so with the Mound Builders. They left works of an imperishable nature, and from these something of their history may be learned, even though personally they do not appear to exist anywhere. They were evidently workers, and much superior to the Indian, viewed from civilized standpoint.*<sup>3</sup>

While archaeologists of the 19<sup>th</sup> century debated the origins of the moundbuilders,<sup>4</sup> local historians were confident in their myth of a vanished people. These racialist

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1. Maag, “Ohio Indian Mounds.” Lepper has written extensively on the Newark Earthworks, with articles in academic journals such as *Archaeology*, *American Antiquity*, and *Ethnohistory*. He is the author of *Ohio Archaeology: An Illustrated Chronicle of Ohio's Ancient American Indian Cultures* (Wilmington, OH: Orange Frazer Press, 2005).

2. See Hively and Horn, “Geometry and Astronomy.”, *op. cit.*

3. Hill, *History of Licking County, O*, 198. Madsen adds from his work in Arizona that a similar disconnection sometimes occurs there as people fail to connect ancient Hohokam culture and artifacts with contemporary O’odham cultures today.

4. See Paul Gardner, “The Great Mound Builders’ Debate and Origins of Our First Field Office, The

narratives of the Vanishing Indian and the Myth of the Mounds—along with the belief that whites were the only ones capable of preserving Indigenous cultural heritage—shaped much of archaeology/museology in the late 19<sup>th</sup> – early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries throughout the Midwest, as archaeologist Sarah Baires notes in a recent essay. The myths rationalized ongoing sociopolitical practices: “The creation of the Myth of the Mounds parallels early American expansionist practices like the state-sanctioned removal of Native peoples from their ancestral lands to make way for the movement of ‘new’ Americans into the Western ‘frontier.’ Part of this forced removal included the erasure of Native American ties to their cultural landscapes.”<sup>1</sup> The myth of mysterious moundbuilders allowed Europeans like the author of the 1881 history of the county to admire the Earthworks while ignoring the contemporaneous oppression of Native peoples.

Both scholarship and media today, of course, routinely describe the builders of the Midwest earthworks as people of the Middle Woodlands Hopewell and Adena cultures and ancestors of historic Native Americans. Thus it is interesting to hear remnants of the myth linger in interpretations of the Newark Earthworks. In 2006, Weiser heard the Newark state senator refer to the “mysterious mounds” as he spoke at the signing ceremony for the bill he himself had sponsored to have them declared Ohio’s prehistoric monument.<sup>2</sup> A 2018 article on the local Johnson-Humrickhouse Museum mentions that the museum displays the Newark Holy Stones—“stones discovered at the Newark Earthworks in 1860 inscribed in Hebrew and subject to various theories on their origins”—without mentioning that they have long been considered a hoax.<sup>3</sup> Tour companies have brought LDS church members to the site in what they call evidence tours pointing to prophecies in the *Book of Mormon* regarding lost tribes of Israel.<sup>4</sup>

But perhaps the most politically charged use of the Myth of the Mounds appears on the website of the Moundbuilders Country Club, whose site extols its golf course on top of the ancient earthworks. Its Club History link consists of only two, now historical, documents, one describing the course and one the club’s origins. The origins document includes the following description of the people responsible for the “unusual site...the only one in the world” on which they golf: “As the mysteries and secrets of [ancient Old World sites] have caused many writers to put forth their solutions, so have our mounds. One writer theorized that the Moundbuilders were one of the Lost Tribes of Israel, another that the mounds were used for athletic events [built to an Old World-measure]. Is this a

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Archaeological Conservancy (blog), April 15, 2015, <https://www.archaeologicalconservancy.org/origins-first-field-office-midwest-regional-office/>.

1. Sarah Baires, “How White Settlers Buried the Truth about the Midwest’s Mysterious Mounds,” in *Zócalo Public Square* (Los Angeles: ASU/NMAH, Feb. 22, 2018).

2. Jay Hottinger, signing ceremony designating the Newark Earthworks Ohio’s official prehistoric monument, June 7, 2006.

3. Leonard Hayhurst, “Museum Reaches Across the Generations,” *Coshocton Tribune*, May 20, 2018.

4. “Book of Mormon Evidence Tour,” Legacy Tours, accessed June 18, 2018, [http://www.legacytour-sandtravel.com/book\\_of\\_mormon\\_evidence\\_tour.htm](http://www.legacytour-sandtravel.com/book_of_mormon_evidence_tour.htm).

coincidence?”<sup>1</sup> Remembering Baires’ point that the myth arose out of the need to erase Native ties to their cultural landscapes, is it indeed a coincidence that Native Americans are erased from the country club’s depiction of the Earthworks they play golf on?

This golf scorecard from 1929 is included in the “Our Course” document, which is one of two historical pdfs that are all the Moundbuilders Country Club provides to describe club history on its website.

The “mere piles of dirt” interpretation of the Earthworks has required for two centuries a counter-narrative that extols their sophisticated construction. This narrative, as we see, has at times collided with the racist myth of the mounds narrative that implies that such sophisticated construction could not have been done by Native Americans—which, in turn, requires regular reinterpretation of the builders as ancestral Indians. And of course, for some people, like the elderly man who wanted to bulldoze the heathens’ mounds, the Native builders narrative reinforces their sense of the Earthworks as piles of dirt. Increasingly, however, the twinned communal narrative of American Indian builders creating great monuments right in central Ohio is gaining ascendance. In rhetorical terms, non-Native people in Ohio are asserting identification with the Indigenous moundbuilders, as Madsen notes above.

Identification is seen by modern rhetoric as the necessary precursor to persuasion. To be persuaded to change our attitudes or actions, we must first be persuaded that we have something in common with the people with whom we are interacting, finding commonality in “speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, idea, *identifying* [our] ways with [theirs],” as Kenneth Burke put it.<sup>2</sup> To build the rhetorical landscape of a heritage site, visitors must be able to find that commonality with long-gone people. Consider the docent-led tours required in sites as disparate as Mesa Verde (US) and Newgrange (Ireland): both are full not only of descriptions of the physical site but stories interpreting how the ancient people who built them lived and viewed their world. These are the rhetorical tools that persuade modern visitors toward a communal experience of the site. The intangibility of Knell’s objects, then, not only means that the objects live through interpretation but that these interpretations exist to persuade visitors to identify with the interpreted past. As Donald Preziosi argues in an article on the function of national museums, artifact proofs are collected to aid in individual identification with the collective: “We imagine ourselves to be what our historical relics . . . can be read as implying we have long been in the process of becoming.”<sup>3</sup>

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1. “The Beginning,” About: Club History, Moundbuilders Country Club, accessed May 22, 2018, <http://www.moundbuilderscc.com/files/The%20Beginning.pdf>.

2. Kenneth Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 55.

3. Donald Preziosi, “Myths of Nationality,” in *National Museums: New Studies from Around the World*, edited by Peter Aronsson, Arne Amundsen, Simon Knell (London: Routledge, 2011), 58.

The tools of rhetorical persuasion encouraging locals to identify with the early moundbuilders is evident as far back as a mid-20<sup>th</sup> century pamphlet from the Newark Chamber of Commerce, which refers to the builders as “the first Ohioans”:

*While many of the mounds in the county have been destroyed by the steady march of progress in the last 130 years, our people have steadfastly refused to allow the two great monuments to an industrious people to be obliterated. For all time to come, they will remain to remind us that a busy community of aborigines once made its home in the beautiful Licking county....The archaeologist is satisfied that the Moundbuilder was of the same racial group as the American Indian....[T]he Newark Earthworks may have been their Mecca or holy ground. Great ceremonies may have been held here, perhaps attended by thousands of persons. Newark probably was the center of a great eastern area of these ancient people.<sup>1</sup>*

In fact, the idea of the Earthworks as Mecca has become something of a trope in the new identification with the Earthworks. For instance, The Ohio State University-sponsored Newark Earthworks Center used Newark Earthworks Day in 2009 to explore the theme of the Earthworks as “a place of pilgrimage...like Mecca or Jerusalem”—a place that people traveled to from across the country.<sup>2</sup> Lepper, the site archaeologist, identified present-day hopes with this interpreted past more explicitly in a contemporaneous article in the local newspaper: “As the Newark Earthworks move toward inscription on the World Heritage List, these monumental sacred spaces will continue to be a place of pilgrimage, but increasingly people will come from the ends of the modern world to see these ancient wonders,” he predicted.<sup>3</sup> Even thirty years ago critics were scoffing at the idea that “the area could become a Mecca for tourists, scientists and educators,” and as an article in the *Advocate* noted,<sup>4</sup> but today local people are more inclined to see the connection because they are more likely to see the Earthworks as economically tied to their own future. A recent *Advocate* article describes the push well with its title “Prepare: Tourists Coming to Newark Earthworks.” Reporter Kent Mallett begins, “An unprecedented wave of tourists will visit Newark and Heath once Newark Earthworks receives its anticipated World Heritage Site designation, according to an Ohio University study. How the communities prepare for all those visitors will determine whether they ride

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1. “The Ancient Mounds in and around the City of Newark Ohio,” Newark, OH: Newark Chamber of Commerce, nd.

2. Brad Lepper, “Archaeology: Newark Earthworks—A Place of Pilgrimage,” Ohio History Connection (blog), August 7, 2009, <https://www.ohiohistory.org/learn/collections/archaeology/archaeology-blog/2009/august-2009/the-newark-earthworks-a-place-of-pilgrimage>.

3. Brad Lepper, “Newark Earthworks Was, Is a Place of Pilgrimage,” in *Newark Advocate*, September 15, 2009, np.

4. Kathy Wesley, “No Bones about It: Local Residents Know Little of Archaeological Treasures,” *Newark Advocate*, Feb. 4, 1990, np.

that wave of economic opportunity to its fullest potential.”<sup>1</sup> While Burt Logan, president of the OHC, frames its current effort to recover the leasehold on the Octagon Earthworks site from the Country Club as a part of the “public responsibility to preserve Ohio’s historical and cultural treasures,”<sup>2</sup> central Ohio media editorials from the *Newark Advocate* and *Columbus Dispatch* framed their support in more fiscal terms: “With the proper support and investment, we believe the local earthworks can become a public gathering spot for masses of people again,” as the *Advocate* put it.<sup>3</sup>

The *Advocate’s* conflating of past and present “masses” further demonstrates that identification with the economic potential of the site has led increasingly to an identification with the industrious people who built the earthworks. This identification with industriousness fits the local heritage narrative, as residents identify their town as a long-time center of industry. The major historical museum of the county, aptly named The Works, was established to “preserve Licking County’s rich industrial heritage.”<sup>4</sup> As the town realizes that its economic future might well be tied to tourist pilgrimages to an ancient complex in its midst, the industriousness of the moundbuilders is stressed. Several years ago, a temporary exhibit at The Works on Newark’s glassmaking industry began with a Smithsonian Institute-sponsored film that for the first time tied together the scientific ingenuity of ancient and modern Newarkians. In 2018, the museum opened a new permanent exhibit called Navigation that brings together both “Newark Industries/Ohio Astronauts” and “Ancient Navigators” who built the lunar alignments into the Newark Earthworks.

This level of identification is a change from earlier depictions—the Ancient Ohio Trail website, for instance, still includes an orientation film clip (also playing at the Great Circle Museum) that begins “Newark, Ohio: a typical town of the American heartland. Seventeen centuries ago, this was a center for a very different culture.”<sup>5</sup> This earlier *disidentification*, in fact, is more in line with the traditional narrative of the American story, which treats post-contact settlement and history as a radical break from pre-contact settlement and history—an interpretation of the national heritage that is not chosen by people of many other lands when they tell their national story.<sup>6</sup>

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1. Kent Mallett, “Prepare: Tourists Coming to Newark Earthworks.” *Newark Advocate*, April 5, 2018, 1.

2. Mallett, “Golf at Moundbuilders Could End,” *op. cit.*, 1.

3. Editorial Board, “Our View: Time is Right to Fully Pursue World Heritage Status.” *Newark Advocate*, Sept. 14, 2018. Local conflicting sentiment is evident in the *Advocate’s* original headline for news of the OHC action, however: “Golf at Moundbuilders Could End Pending [OHC] Takeover.”

4. “About The Works,” *The Works: Ohio Center for History, Art & Technology*, accessed May 24, 2018, <https://attheworks.org/about-the-works/>.

5. “Newark: About the Site,” *The Ancient Ohio Trail*, accessed May 22, 2018, <http://www.ancientohiotrail.org/sites/newark>

6. For a larger discussion of Native/Non-Native historical interrelations, see John Low, *Imprints: The Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians & the City of Chicago* (Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2016); for US museum interpretation of its Native connections, see Elizabeth Weiser, “Who are We? Museums Telling the Nation’s Story,” *International Journal of the Inclusive Museum* 2 no.

As the town stretches to narrate a heritage that identifies its modern-day residents with those of the past, however, the potential for appropriation of that past to the exclusion of contemporary Native Americans, its actual inheritors, remains a problem. “What is missing?” asks a sign at the Great Circle. It turns out to be the little ponds that formed swimming holes at the site for earlier generations of Newarkians of European descent. But what might really be missing from this changing narrative of identification with the cultural heritage of the Newark Earthworks is the voice that has been missing since its discovery in 1800—that of Native Americans, as Low discusses next.

## **Contemporary American Indians and Earthworks Re-memorialization**

American Indian Studies uses interdisciplinary research to examine the socio/political/cultural experience of Native peoples both historical and contemporary. As the Newark Earthworks are at the cusp of possible designation as a UNESCO World Heritage site, then, AIS asks how this impacts Native experience, and an obvious question is who should control the management of the properties of the Octagon Earthworks and the Great Circle. Both are “owned” by the OHC. To date there has been an effort to include Native peoples in the efforts to secure nomination for the sites. However, there are many stakeholders besides the OHC; there are also the economic development and tourism councils, the municipalities of Newark and Heath, Ohio, scholars and friends affiliated with The Ohio State University’s Newark Earthwork Center, local historians and archaeologists, and others. Rather than categorizing Native peoples as a subset of many stakeholders, Native peoples historically associated with what is now the state of Ohio should *lead* the protection and promotion of the sites through their tribal governments and tribal historic preservation offices (THPO). In the past, American Indians themselves were rarely consulted on what memorials they might appreciate or interpret. Civic leaders made those decisions. After all, these monuments were really not for the Natives but for the grandchildren of the immigrant-settlers; offered as a kind of apology in stone. Today, in the US and around the world, that view of the Indigenous relationship to Indigenous monuments is changing.

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2 (2009): 29-38; for a broader discussion of national narratives in museums, see Elizabeth Weiser, *Museum Rhetoric: Civic Identities in National Spaces* (University Park: Penn State Press, 2017).



*A postcard from the 1930s of the Octagon Earthworks as Moundbuilders Country Club.*

Native connections and claims to the Earthworks are subjects of a substantial part of a recent publication, *The Newark Earthworks, Enduring Monuments and Contested Meanings*.<sup>1</sup> In Part V, “The Newark Earthworks in the Context of Indigenous Rights and Identity” essays by Marti L. Chaatsmith, Mary N. MacDonald, Duane Champagne & Carole Goldberg, and Winnifred Falls Steward<sup>2</sup> all make persuasive points. Chaatsmith argues that the Earthworks are the products of the ancestors of contemporary Indian peoples and that current stewardship must include contemporary American Indians. MacDonald asserts that the Earthworks belong to all of us, but in particular to the Indigenous peoples of the world. This is echoed by Sullivan, who, like MacDonald, believes that management should be controlled in the spirit of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. MacDonald adds that the 1972 World Convention on the Protection of the World Cultural and National Heritage should also guide management.<sup>3</sup> While the protections of the United Nations Declaration might serve as a valuable template, Duane Champagne and Carole Goldberg offer in their essay a compelling argument for why the tribes historically associated with

1. Lindsey Jones and Richard D. Shiels, *The Newark Earthworks, Enduring Monuments and Contested Meanings* (U of Virginia Press, Charlottesville, 2016).

2. Marti L. Chaatsmith, “Native (Re)Investments in Ohio, Evictions, Earthworks, Preservation and Tribal Stewardship,” 215-229; Mary N. MacDonald, “Whose Earthworks? Newark and Indigenous Peoples,” 230-241; Duane Champagne & Carole Goldberg, “The Peoples Belong to the Land, Contemporary Stewards for the Newark Earthworks,” 245-261; and Winnifred Falls Steward, “Imagining ‘Law Stuff’ at the Newark Earthworks,” 277-287, all in Jones and Shiels, *op. cit.*

3. MacDonald, *op. cit.*, 235; Steward, *op. cit.*, 283.

what is now Ohio (rather than “all of humanity” or all “Indigenous peoples”) should take the lead in preserving and protecting this sacred space.<sup>1</sup>

What would Native heritage management accomplish? For one thing, it would cause us to rethink the appropriate place for material artifacts associated with the site. Under the management of the OHC, artifacts have been removed to museums from Columbus to Chicago and beyond. It is very common for tribal members to feel a sense of significant loss when materials are taken from an archaeological site, never to be returned. I, Low, witnessed firsthand this “black hole” syndrome of archaeology while engaged in a museum studies internship for the work being done by two major universities at the Homol’ovi archaeological dig in what was then Homolovi Ruins State Park just outside Winslow, Arizona. Entering finds from each day’s dig into the database, I was shocked to see that all of the cultural artifacts were being taken *away*. None stayed with the Hopi. I have a vivid memory of a beautiful piece of pottery being unearthed. The pot was there, everyone was excited, the pot was gingerly removed leaving only a deep impression behind, and the pot was promptly packed up and taken away to one of the universities. The empty impression of the pot was all that remained. The irony is that Homol’ovi State Park had been created in response to pot thieves desecrating the area, stealing the buried material culture. Were we any different? We had degrees and a research agenda, but the bottom line was that the artifacts were still being *taken away*. No Hopi museum existed when I was there in 2006 and no one from the Hopi nation was being trained in curation or field work.<sup>2</sup>

I have another memory of an afternoon that summer when I was out at the dig. A graduate student was standing inside an excavated kiva and lecturing to a group of undergraduates gathered around the rim. As the student spoke about an architectural feature within the kiva and shared her speculation that it had once served as an altar, a Hopi elder made his way to the gathering. (This was unusual in itself because I rarely saw any Hopi at the site during my ten weeks there). The elder listened to the student for a bit and then cleared his throat and spoke. The undergraduates turned to listen as he explained that the feature was not an altar but rather a bench for participants to sit, based upon his knowledge of contemporary kivas. The graduate student, obviously annoyed at an interruption, ignored the information from the elder and spoke louder to reclaim the attention of the students as she explained how the “altar” had been used. The Hopi elder stayed for a minute, looking rather dismayed and perplexed, and then left. Although this was only one moment and opportunity, I was struck by the lack of respect, much less the lost prospect for real collaboration with a tribal member of the first peoples of the region. “Science” trumped Indigenous knowledge; I am afraid the lesson was not lost on the undergraduates.

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1. Champagne & Goldberg, *op. cit.*, 259.

2. With NAGPRA, more Native curators are training around the country. Current information on Homol’ovi State Park and its museum is available at <https://azstateparks.com/homolovi/explore/facility-information>

In files on the early history of the collaboration between the universities involved, the Hopi people, and the State of Arizona was what appeared to be a Park Development Master Plan from the 1980's. In that plan, the Hopi requested:

- The sacredness of the site should be taught to everyone who comes to the site, so they will know how these ruins have to be respected.
- Selected physical improvements and restoration of selected parts of the ruins permissible.
- No large excavations.
- Physical protection of the ruins.
- Park signage to use the Hopi names for sites.
- After the restoration, Hopi medicine people can perform the rituals necessary to spiritually renew the sites.
- Hopi consultation should be involved in all stages of park development.
- Hopi should be involved in planning the exhibits in the visitor center.
- All of the artifacts collected over the years, and the field journals, testing results, and reports resulting from fieldwork should be collected and curated at an onsite research center. All materials from Homol'ovi should be returned to the Park for curation.<sup>1</sup>

This plan has clearly never been fully implemented. Its existence—and the lack of markers of its implementation—emphasize the importance of follow-through and follow-up in any understandings about the management and stewardship of the Newark Earthworks. These cautionary examples of outsider, non-Native stewardship show why tribal-centric care and control is essential. The fact that the Octagon has been for the last century a private golf course and country club even though it is on public land, and the Great Circle was an amusement park (and is now often a dog walk) should establish that the State and the Ohio History Connection have forfeited their right to contend for sole control of these sites in the future.

## New Models for Community Collaboration

Instead, a fresh attitude regarding collaboration is evolving, and the recent movement towards community-based participatory research (CBPR)<sup>2</sup> represents a real opportunity for not just collaboration but *partnership*, wherein the research questions and methodologies emerge from the tribal community and reflect the needs of that community, where community members are trained and given the opportunity for hands-on work, and the material culture ultimately returns to the community of origin. The Community-Engaged Scholarship (CES) advocated

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1. Taken from Low's personal journal kept during the field study.

2. John Creese and Heather Walder, "From Wendake to Chequamegon: Bridging the Wendat Diaspora in Quimby's Early Historic Period," in *Encounters, Exchange, Entanglements: Current Perspectives on Intercultural Interactions throughout the Western Great Lakes*, edited by Heather Walder and Jessica Yann, MCJA Occasional Paper no. 2 (Spring 2018), 34, 48.

by ethnohistorian Steven Warren<sup>1</sup> is another example of the movement towards a decolonizing research methodology and a turn in the right direction.

As we discuss matters of care, custody, and control of the Newark Earthworks, an even greater effort needs to be made towards working with the descendants of the historic tribes of this region. The National Park Service provides a valuable list of those tribal nations on the Native American and Graves Protection Act (NAGPRA) website.<sup>2</sup> The competent and cooperative management of tribal resources and issues has a well-established history in the Midwest/Great Lakes region that can be built upon (pun intended). For instance, the tribal nations of Michigan are united in their efforts to enforce the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) under the Michigan Anishinabe Cultural Protection and Repatriation Alliance (MACPRA). Likewise, in the 1980's, when it was necessary for the tribes of the upper Midwest to organize to regulate their recently affirmed treaty rights, they formed the very successful and enduring Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission (GLIFWC). There are many other examples across the country of American Indian tribal nations uniting in common purpose to advance the needs and goals of the group.

Native peoples have often responded to settler colonialism with varieties of resilience and survivance, or “strategies of survivance” and “acts of survivance.”<sup>3</sup> The catalyst for such movement is the recognition that reengaging with the material culture, sacred places and traditional practices of the past is an effective way to support individual and community identity as Indigenous peoples. The *re-collection* of this traditional knowledge promotes solidarity within the community while protecting the identity boundaries essential to maintaining a distinct sense of what it means to be “Indian.” *Recollection* is not revitalization – it involves no effort to return to an idealized past and has no millenarian/prophetic aspects to it. It is not mere revival – a descriptor that does not capture the memory work and identity issues that come into play with *recollection*. It is not reenactment – those involved are not hobbyists pretending to be something they are not. Rather, *recollections* are about the ways in which we are agents and not victims, actors and not reactors; proactive and not merely responding or accommodating settler immigration and takings of our lands. *Recollections* are a reconnecting with traditional practices, places, and things that confirm, for everyone, who we are as peoples. American Indians have engaged in such *recollections* over the last 500 years.

Whale hunting for the Makah, the canoe revivals of the Tlingit and the Haida, the spearfishing and wild ricing activities of the Ojibwe, the buffalo herd regeneration efforts of the Lakota and other Plains tribes, and the push for land

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1. Stephen Warren, *The Eastern Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma: Resilience through Adversity* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2017).

2. On the National Park Service website at <https://www.nps.gov/nagpra/ONLINEDB/INDEX.HTM> is a link to the NAGPRA Tribal Contacts spreadsheet, accessed June 16, 2018.

3. Low, *Imprints, the Pokagon Band*, *op. cit.*, 12.

recovery and sacred site protection are all occurring throughout Indian Country, and all are examples of *recollection* in American Indian communities that are connecting to the past. They also represent efforts to embrace their place as Indigenous peoples through connections to natural resources and traditions. These activities preserve and promote memories of who we are as Indigenous peoples. They connect us to our ancestors. They are memory devices and memorials to our remembered pasts.<sup>1</sup>

Why do certain places have importance to Native peoples? Their power is not only in the individual memories they convey but in the collective memories with which they are imbued,<sup>2</sup> and which facilitate the individual and collective need to be connected to a shared past.<sup>3</sup> For Native peoples, memory can be *re-collection*. Retrieval of the past is how memory and history are reconfigured. As Carolyn Steedman writes, “In the project of finding an identity through the processes of historical identification, the past is searched for something (someone, some group, some series of events) that confirms the searcher in his or her sense of self, confirms them as they want to be, and feel in some measure that they already are.”<sup>4</sup> For Native peoples with interrupted historical memories, the power of heritage recollection lies in reconnecting the past to the present and to the future in what LeAnne Howe calls a tribalography: “Native stories...seem to pull all the elements together of the storyteller’s tribe, meaning the people, the land, and multiple characters and all their manifestations and revelations, and connect these in past, present, and future milieus (present and future milieus mean non-Indians). Tribalography comes from the Native propensity for bringing things together, for making consensus, and for symbiotically connecting one thing to another.”<sup>5</sup> The authority of memory can be institutionalized into religious traditions, legends, songs, and literature, and the memories are stored in places of worship, museums and archives, where than they can be reified and reinterpreted for new purposes and a multitude of agendas. As we’ve seen earlier in this chapter, memory becomes evidence for those who recollect.<sup>6</sup> Collective

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1. See John Low, “Vessels for Recollection - The Canoe Building Renaissance in the Great Lakes,” in *Material Culture – the Journal of the Pioneer American Society* 1 (2015), 1-31, for a larger discussion on “recollection” as a strategy of survivance.

2. Jackson Lears, “Power, Culture, and Memory,” *The Journal of American History* 75 no. 1 (June 1988): 137-140: “(N)early all the most resilient oppositional cultures have been rooted in collective memory, in precipitates of past historical experience.”

3. See Janet C. Berlo and Ruth B. Phillips, “Our (Museum) World Turned Upside Down: Re-presenting Native American Arts,” *The Art Bulletin* 77, no. 1 (1995), 6-10.

4. Carolyn Steedman, *The Archive and Cultural History* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 77.

5. LeAnne Howe, “The Story of America: A Tribalography,” in *Clearing a Path: Theorizing the Past in Native American Studies*, edited by Nancy Shoemaker (New York: Routledge, 2002), 29-50.

6. Barry Schwartz, “The Social Context of Commemoration: A Study in Collective Memory,” George Lipitz, *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture*, edited by George Lipitz, 374-402 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990); Amy Ku’uleialoha Stillman, “Re-Membering the History of the Hawaiian Hula,” in *Cultural Memory: Reconfiguring History and Identity in the Postcolonial Pacific*, edited by ed. J.M. Mageo, 187-204 (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2001).

memories are transferred from one person to another in order to make “remembering in common possible.”<sup>1</sup> Rituals, myths, symbols, practices *and* places are all a part of memory making and memorializing. The historic contingencies that have resulted in the variety and variability of Native and non-Native interpretations of the Earthworks, therefore, should not be obscured in attempts to identify with their creators. Memory has power because of its multiplicity of interpretations, uses, and transferability.<sup>2</sup> We saw this in the ways that early European settlers to Ohio thought about the Newark Earthworks and that contemporary residents both share and dismiss those varied interpretations. It is now time to re-incorporate Native memory of these places. American Indian tribal nations historically connected to the central Ohio region have the infrastructural capacity, and should have the opportunity, to engage in such recollections of their sacred sites, physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

## Conclusion

In that Empire, the Art of Cartography attained such Perfection that the map of a single Province occupied the entirety of a City, and the map of the Empire, the entirety of a Province. In time, those Unconscionable Maps no longer satisfied, and the Cartographers Guilds struck a Map of the Empire whose size was that of the Empire, and which coincided point for point with it. The following Generations, who were not so fond of the Study of Cartography as their Forebears had been, saw that that vast map was Useless, and not without some Pitilessness was it, that they delivered it up to the Inclemencies of Sun and Winters. In the Deserts of the West, still today, there are Tattered Ruins of that Map, inhabited by Animals and Beggars; in all the Land there is no other Relic of the Disciplines of Geography.<sup>3</sup>

Like the map discussed in Jorge Luis Borges’ fictional story here, the large-scale endeavors of Indigenous people in what is today central Ohio have fallen into disrepair. Drawn onto the landscape and only appreciated from a vantage point that few ever obtain (although today’s aerial imagery provides a proxy for such an experience), these structures had less use in the worldviews of new settlers. Privatized, flattened, and appropriated, those parts that survived were ultimately largely gentrified as historical and recreational sites for settlers of European heritage. Today their functions as gathering places and as maps themselves of the cosmological landscape are increasingly recognized by the descendants

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1. Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

2. James E. Young introduced the idea of “collected” memory to better describe memory’s inherently fragmented, collected, and individual character. James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust, Memorials, and Meaning* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993). As Marita Sturken notes, “Memory is crucial to the understanding of a culture precisely because it indicates collective desires, needs and self-identification.” *Tangled Memories, The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic and the Politics of Remembering* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1997), 8.

3. Jorge Luis Borges, “Of Exactitude in Science,” in *A Universal History of Infamy*, trans. Norman Thomas di Giovanni (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1972).

of those settlers. But their other function – as memory sites for a re-collected, re-identified chronological map linking past, present, and future – has yet to be fully realized.

We might think of landscapes as documents that are written upon, and overwritten, by subsequent inhabitants. The landscape can be a story that both consciously and unconsciously conveys what is important to a people. Monuments form chapters in that story. They have overt, covert, and alternate readings as they espouse, advocate, attest, contest, bear witness, and write/rewrite history.<sup>1</sup> Like books, they are subject to constructions of a multiplicity of meanings, both subjective and temporal. They mirror the narratives of the people who inhabit them—in the case of Native American sites both the hegemon and the counter-narratives of the marginalized Natives who sought to leave signposts for future generations. How they are read always depends upon the era and the audience,<sup>2</sup> but it also depends on who is given the opportunity to tell the story.

Since European settlement, it is Europeans who have told the Earthworks' story, and its heritized identity has been entangled with European perceptions of contemporaneous Native peoples. With approaching World Heritage status comes an opportunity to revise that narrative. The Newark Earthworks can potentially tell not only the past story of Native peoples' monument-construction but the future story of Native Tribes' ability to assert their sovereignty and self in protecting and preserving these places, as they have done throughout the region. Similarly, for many decades the European settlers who built Newark into an industrial center and then suffered its post-industrial decline saw no connection between their efforts and those of the people who lived here before them. Today they are increasingly identifying their community with the industriousness of the ancient people; perhaps they can also identify with the recollection and survivance strategies of the contemporary. The heritization of the Newark Earthworks offers the possibility of working together to act as preservationists for the future. As academics, we often speak about “decolonizing” this or that but it rarely happens. What we are proposing here would be a significant step towards decolonization.

These future potentialities demonstrate a key hallmark of heritized landscapes: The *land* itself, as heritage, a marker of the past, stays substantially unchanged from generation to generation; its intrinsic significance is (relatively) stable. What changes, what is unstable, is its extrinsic significance—its meaning (and potential meaning) as heritage to a changing *people*. As today's people work to understand the significance of the landscape to yesterday's people, what they are really doing is crafting its significance for tomorrow's people. “What will this site mean to us, who will tell its stories?” is another way of asking, “What

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1. Chris Wilson and Paul Groth, eds. *Everyday American, Cultural Landscape Studies after J.B. Jackson* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 86-91, 103.

2. See for instance Ruth B. Phillips, *Trading Identities, The Souvenir in Native North American Art from the Northeast, 1700 – 1900* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1998).

kind of people will we be for this site to mean something to us?" A decolonized Earthworks will mean not only that Native voices are central to the recollecting of its heritized past but that all who identify with the Earthworks will then do so from a necessarily more decolonized stance.



# Head-Smashed-In – some challenges where *site is museum*

*Beverly A. Sandalack*

*Different places on the face of the earth have different vital effluence, different vibration, different chemical exhalation, different polarity with different stars: call it what you like. But the spirit of place is a great reality.*

*D.H. Lawrence “The Spirit of Place”*

## Cultural Landscapes as Museums

Cultural landscapes<sup>2</sup> are shaped by many forces unique to each place and time: natural processes and climate, cultural and processes and historical events, and the legal processes of land subdivision that impose an organizational structure on the landscape.<sup>3</sup> As Sauer put it when coining the term *cultural landscape* “culture is the agent, the natural area the medium, the cultural landscape the result.”<sup>4</sup>

Although Lewis argued that “all human landscape has cultural meaning”<sup>5</sup> cultures do not intentionally set out to create these landscapes to be interesting, attractive or memorable for later inhabitants. It is only when subsequent generations engage with those places that they are given extraordinary value as cultural landscapes. Some lend themselves easily to site interpretation or to preservation of their artifacts in museums. There are additional challenges when the cultures that originally produced them are long gone, or when the landscapes have evolved beyond the notable interpretive period. Canadian cultural landscapes include these examples: L’Anse Aux Meadows National Historic Site in Newfoundland deals with a one thousand year-old Viking encampment, the first known European site in North America; also in Newfoundland, Mistaken Point Ecological Reserve and World Heritage Site deals with fossils from 550

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1. D.H. Lawrence, “The Spirit of Place,” in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of D. H. Lawrence, Studies in Classic American Literature*, eds. Ezra Greenspan, Lindeth Vasey and John Worthen (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 17.

2. See Arnold R. Alanen, Robert Melnick, eds. *Preserving Cultural Landscapes in America* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000) for a thorough discussion of cultural landscapes and their value.

3. Michael Hough, *Out of Place: Restoring Identity to the Regional Landscape* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1990).

4. Carl O. Sauer, “The Morphology of Landscape,” in *Land and Life: A Selection from the writings of Carl Ortwin Sauer*, ed. J. Leighly (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963), 343.

5. Peirce F. Lewis, “Axioms for Reading the Landscape,” in *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes: Geographical Essays*, ed. Donald W. Meinig (Oxford University Press, 1979), 11.

million years ago of the oldest, large complex life forms anywhere on Earth; and Dinosaur Provincial Park in Alberta is a fossil-laden landscape that dates back seventy-five million years.

But more than just dealing with historic material, an approach to cultural landscapes is most valuable when it “recognizes the continuity between the past and with people living and working on the land today”.<sup>1</sup> The challenges are even more complex when the sites deal with a relatively recent past, and when descendants of those who were inhabitants during the notable era are still living and have some knowledge of and interest in the landscape. Writing-on-Stone and Head-Smashed-In World Heritage Sites are two such places in Alberta. Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park features archeological sites and petroglyphs, static features that have been preserved and protected, as well as a nature preserve and a re-creation of a North-West Mounted Police outpost that was operational up to the early 1900s. Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump presents even more complex issues as it deals not just with a place, but with many activities that occurred on that place, several cultures that inhabited the region, as well as conflicts among those cultures.

All this may be too complex, too comprehensive, and too much to expect from any one interpretive site; a complete cultural landscape is probably not even fully knowable. But despite the difficulties, there is great value in making these cultural landscapes available as experiences for 21<sup>st</sup> century people. We live in a time during which landscapes and cultures are transforming, and often vanishing, rapidly, and where authentic places and cultures seem to be more and more rare. It is now also possible to digitally “visit” almost anywhere on the planet, to view it from the air and at street view, and to have a curated and mediated presentation on whatever aspect of the site we may find interesting available to us at any time as long as we have access to the internet. Even the subject of this paper, Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump in Alberta, Canada, can be accessed on the internet and “explored”, including views of the gift shop, and items on the restaurant menu.<sup>2</sup> But, as Gertrude Stein<sup>3</sup> might have observed, is there really a “there” there?

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1. Nora Mitchell and Susan Buggey, “Category V Protected Landscapes in Relation to World Heritage Cultural Landscapes: Taking Advantage of Diverse Approaches,” in *Landscape Conservation: An International Working Session on the Stewardship of Protected Landscapes: Proceedings of a Special Meeting of the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas* (Woodstock, Vermont: Conservation Study Institute, IUCN – The World Conservation Union and QLF/Atlantic Center for the Environment, 15-17 June 1999), 19.

2. Google Earth <https://www.google.com/maps/place/Head-Smashed-In+Buffalo+Jump+World+Heritage+Site/@49.7047163,-113.6568024,902m/data=!3m1!1e3!4m5!3m4!1s0x536e4d8d873b72e9:oxcf88e7148552bb4b!8m2!3d49.705334!4d-113.65342>

3. Gertrude Stein *Everybody's Autobiography* (New York: Random House, 1937), 289, had written about Oakland, California that “there is no *there* there” when she returned from some time away and discovered the place to be completely urbanized, and this quote is frequently used to describe a lost sense of place.

Giving places meaning seems to be a basic human need; Norberg-Schulz<sup>1</sup> demonstrated how humans require a functioning built form as well as symbols or works of art which represent meaningful life situations, with art, culture, and architecture serving to hold and transmit those meanings. It is surely important that we have the opportunity to physically visit places that have meaning. The preservation accorded to important cultural landscapes can often best be done through creation of museums and interpretive programs, but how cultural landscapes are preserved and presented to us is important. What can we learn from the experiences of attempting to display and interpret a complex site?

## Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump

Southwestern Alberta in Canada where the prairies intersect with the foothills is a landscape of agricultural productivity, beauty and drama. Although the region has only been settled by Europeans for a century and a half, it has been the home of aboriginal<sup>2</sup> human populations and many animal and plant communities for many millennia. The region has had numerous places recognized nationally and internationally for their natural and cultural significance and developed as museums and interpretive sites.

Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump is a site of former native Indian food procurement and ritual and is now an important archaeological centre and tourist attraction. It is located on the southeastern edge of the Porcupine Hills, twenty kilometers west of the town of Fort Macleod. The topography of the site is caused by slumping and erosion of the sandstone and shale formations, resulting in escarpments or cliffs, including the main buffalo jump site, which has been a well-known landmark in the area since the first European settlement in 1874. Although the Indians hunted the buffalo using various means, by far the most productive technique was the jump whereby the animals would be stampeded over a cliff. Communal killing techniques were known and used by other prehistoric and historic peoples around the world, but buffalo jumps appear to be unique to North America. Suitable locations for such jumps were relatively scarce; the Head-Smashed-In site was discovered very early as a location and configuration perfectly suited to this method of hunting and to the early inhabitants' way of life.<sup>3 4</sup>

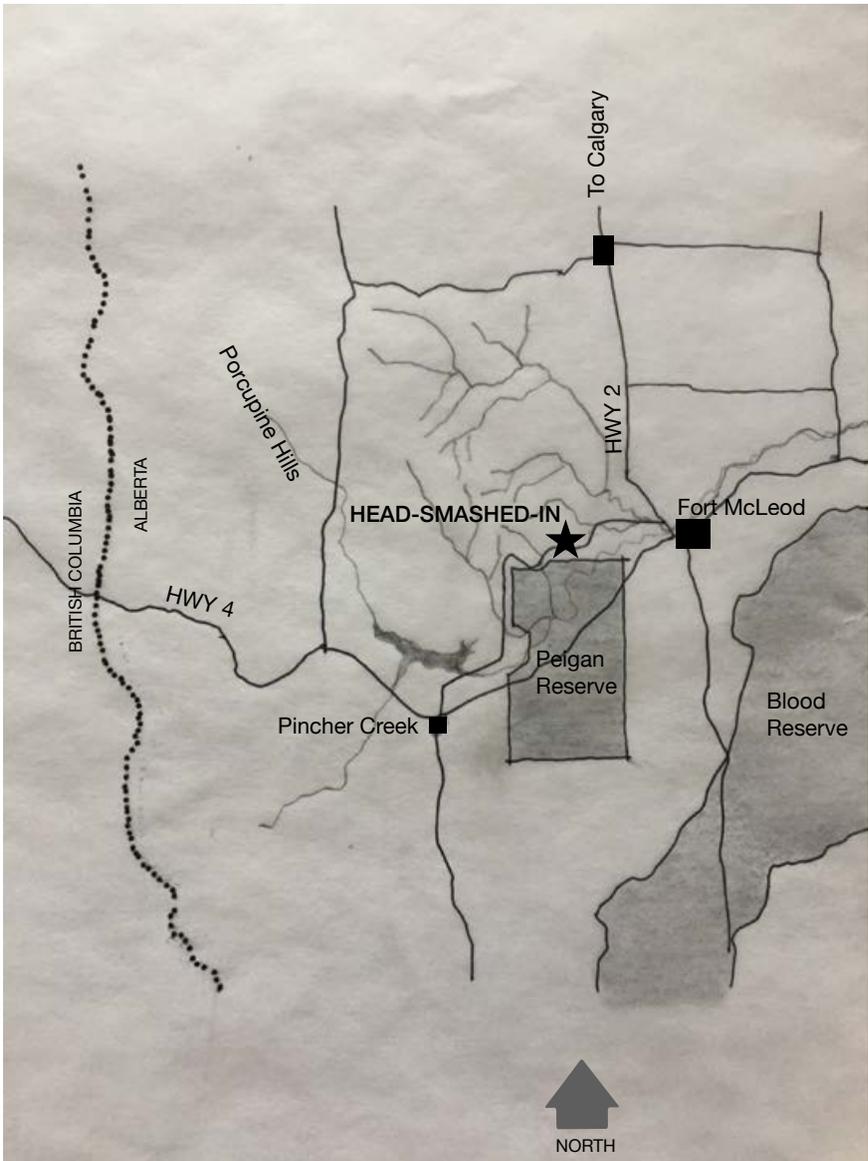
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1. Christian Norberg-Schulz wrote broadly on the topic of sense of place, notably *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture* (New York: Rizzoli, 1979) and *Architecture: Meaning and Place* (New York: Electra/Rizzoli, 1988).

2. The terms aboriginal, indigenous, Indian, native population, tribes Plains people will all be used to refer to the humans living in the area pre-European settlement, and remaining today.

3. Robert McGhee, Robert, "The Buffalo Jumps" in *Canadian Heritage* (May, 1982), 15, and

4. Alberta Culture *Buffalo Hunting on the Alberta Plains* (Edmonton: Government of Alberta, 1984), and Brian O.K. Reeves, "Head-Smashed-In – 5,500 years of bison jumping in the Alberta Plains" in *Plains Anthropologist*, 23, no. 82, part 2 (1978) are the sources of information regarding buffalo jumps in general, and the Head-Smashed-In site specifically.



*Context map.*



*Escarpment, view to the north, showing the steep cliff that the buffalo would be stampeded over, and the interpretive trail below. Photo by the author September 2018.*

The area was used almost continuously as a buffalo jump for approximately 6000 years by the resident tribes, most recently the Peigan (Piikani) and Kainai, two of the three tribes (with the Siksika) of the Blackfoot Nation. Evidence of historic and prehistoric-age use are common in the area and include tipi rings, buried camps, rock alignments, cairns, eagle-trapping pits, vision-quest structures, pictographs and burials. In the immediate area at a convenient distance were the gathering basin, the kill site, and the processing area and campsite, and nearby at the Oldman River were located the winter camping grounds.

The current accepted name for the site, Head-Smashed-In (in Blackfoot *Estipah-Sikikini-Kots*, or “where he got his head smashed in”) was first recorded by the Geological Survey of Canada in the early 1880s. The account describes the demise of a young Indian who wanted to see the jump in operation. He took shelter under a cliff and as the buffalo fell past him he became trapped and was found later with his head crushed under the weight of the animals. Head-Smashed-In is also referred to in one of the Blackfoot myths in which the people of the Porcupine Hills were created and were taught how to hunt the buffalo.<sup>1</sup>

Over the years the jump received considerable attention from arrowhead and artifact collectors as over the 6,000 years of use as buffalo jump, immense quantities of bones and artifacts accumulated to a depth of more than nine meters.

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1. Alberta Culture *Head-Smashed-In Interpretive Program* (Edmonton: Government of Alberta, 1984).

The archaeological importance of the Head-Smashed-In site was recognized after several investigations between 1930 and 1970 pointed out the significance of the area and the need for some form of official protection. In 1968 the Federal Government of Canada declared Head-Smashed-In a National Historic Site, in 1979 the Government of Alberta designated it a Provincial Historic Site, and in 1981 UNESCO admitted Head-Smashed-In to the select list of World Heritage Sites. Under the Alberta Special Places 2000 program 720 hectares of fescue grassland around the centre acquired a historic resource designation. It is not only one of the largest buffalo jumps in North America but also the most well preserved.

Inclusion on the UNESCO World Heritage Site list serves many functions. It brings prestige and attracts tourist traffic to the region and to the communities near the site, while bringing a degree of protection. It also makes additional financial support available from the World Heritage Fund and from local government. The obligations of having a site on the World Heritage List are to give adequate legislative protection to the site, to maintain it properly and to erect a World Heritage Plaque in some appropriate location on the site.<sup>1</sup>

As the site acquired more local, national and international importance, an interpretive building and museum and a series of tourist support facilities including trails, a parking lot and signage were added to its visible features. All UNESCO Heritage Sites have to meet criteria of authenticity. This involves both positive aspects (matters of design, materials, workmanship or setting) and negative aspects (such as the absence of inappropriate intrusions such as poor later workmanship, and additions to the setting which make the experience of appreciating or using the property significantly different from what it was meant to promote).<sup>2</sup> There are inherent issues involved in balancing tourism activity and revenue generation with cultural heritage management; maintaining the sense of place that was part of the original reason for recognizing the site can be a challenge.

With Head-Smashed-In's designation as a World Heritage Site, an extensive process was initiated by a group composed of Provincial Government Culture and Historic Sites personnel, with input from some consultants, including architects, landscape architects and ecologists, to develop plans for an interpretive centre that would accommodate the anticipated increase in tourist traffic and house the permanent archaeological research facilities, and effectively preserve the site. It was not intended that the site become a museum, to display authentic artifacts – the emphasis was to be on *using* the site and building facilities for public education. An interpretive program was developed to include historical information related to the site that explains the mechanics of the buffalo jump, the ethno-history of the human groups involved, and the ecology of the site and their inter-relationships.

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1. UNESCO *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* (United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, 2005, updated 2017).

2. *Ibid.*

It is now thirty years after construction of the site, and perhaps time to evaluate how the project has stood the test of time, and to consider some questions. Is Head-Smashed-In a museum, an interpretive centre, or something else? Is it possible to create a museum of a place, and on a place? How well has the integrity of the site itself been respected over the years? How have the design interventions and maintenance and operations processes either supported or weakened the interpretive intentions? Has the potency of the site been compromised by freezing it in time? Is it possible, through design, to truly respect a landscape, or is the act of intervention also an act of destruction?

The basis for an understanding of a place is to ask questions about the relationship among the parts, and between the parts and the whole. There are three primary relationships: the relationship between form and nature, or *landscape*; the spatial relationships of production, maintenance, transformation and use of the built elements, or *building/program*; and the relationships involved in the processes of formation and the spatial relationship between landscape and built form, or *culture*.<sup>1</sup> These three relationships will be explored as a means of considering the questions.

## Landscape

Because landscapes involve both continuity and change, can, and should, a landscape be a museum? Landscape is always in flux, always changing, and how people live on any given landscape is seldom static. The variability relates to the seasons, to natural processes of succession and adaptation, and to change in human populations and their cultural practices.

The climate of the Head-Smashed-In area is characterised by warm summers and cold winters, prevailing westerly winds, and high Chinook frequencies in the winter. The climate and the grass cover on the prairies once supported huge herds of the Plains buffalo (*Bison bison bison*), a large herbivore that was at one time the most plentiful animal on the plains. A number of other species shared habitat with the buffalo, which in turn supported the integrity of the grassland environment through continual grazing and fertilizing. The buffalo was central to the Indians' existence, providing food, hides for clothing, and bones for many domestic and hunting purposes, and occupied a pivotal position in determining the scheduling of resource gathering of the Plains people, something that occurred throughout the year.

For a seasonal round of food procurement to be successful the Indians had to have a detailed and intimate knowledge of animal behaviour and plant ecology.<sup>2</sup> Buffalo feed on different grasses at different times of the year. The grasses of the mixed grass ecoregion dessicate in late summer/fall, while at the same time the

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1. Beverly A. Sandalack and Andrei Nicolai "Time, Place and Structure," in K.V. Cadieux and L. Taylor (eds.) *The Exurbs: Sprawl and the Ideology of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 2005).

2. Alberta Culture *Buffalo Hunting*, *op. cit.*, 1984.

fescue grass zone remains moist, nutritious and attractive to buffalo. During the summer the buffalo would start to collect in the gathering basin, a thirty-five km<sup>2</sup> area west of the jump, and coincident with the basin of Olson Creek, where they would have been attracted by the rich fescue grasslands, the water supply of the creek, and the winter shelter of the Porcupine Hills. Head-Smashed-In was most heavily utilised during the fall, when the buffalo had the best meat and hides and the greatest amount of fat, and when herd size was optimum.

Advance preparation for the hunt would begin in summer with the tribes congregating for communal celebrations and ceremonies, bringing together a larger group of people to participate in the fall hunts. With the rich and diverse plant life at Head-Smashed-In, other subsistence activities could be undertaken at this time such as berry picking and herb collecting which would augment the diet and provide medicinal and ritual plants. The buffalo had to be driven from the gathering basin to the cliff and kill site, and topography was used to assist directional control over the eight kilometers of drive lanes. As the herd approached the cliff (the main jump off has the longest exposure of maximum vertical drop, averaging ten meters over a lateral distance of thirty meters), its speed would increase as it went down the inclined final approach. The herd would not be able to avoid the cliff, and would fall to the kill site, where the animals would either die immediately or would be dispatched by the waiting tribe.

A temporary campsite was situated on a flat, glacial bench, twenty meters beyond the kill site. After the animals were killed, butchering and processing of the meat and other products would begin. Using dog-pulled travois, the meat and hides would be transported to the more permanent campsites by the Oldman River where further processing would take place. After the fall hunting season, the tribes would winter in the Oldman River Valley, feeding on the meat they had preserved. Besides the economic and subsistence value, the buffalo also had great spiritual significance and played an important role in mythology. There are several remnants of rituals in the area including remains of vision quest structures and rock art images or petroglyphs, making it an extremely rich setting.

During the 1850s and 1860s Europeans were moving into the area and were harvesting the buffalo in great numbers to satisfy an American market for buffalo robes or killing the buffalo seemingly for the sport of killing. This resulted in the virtual extinction of the buffalo herds. The depletion of the buffalo by the white and Indian hunters who were feeding the buffalo robe trade was intensified by the efforts by American authorities to restrict the movement of the herds in order to force starvation of the Indians. By the end of 1879 the buffalo had disappeared from the Plains.<sup>1</sup>

Europeans were also settling the area and were infringing on what were formerly exclusively Indian lands. Conflict between Indians and European settlers and between Indian groups made necessary a new political and judicial system

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1. Gerald Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 184.

and through a series of treaties a system of land assignments was devised that would make possible the continued settling of the west while addressing to some degree the claims by the Indians of land sovereignty. The Indians were forced onto reserves and entered into a state of deprivation as they attempted an agricultural lifestyle that was almost entirely dissimilar to their previous nomadic hunting way of life that had allowed them to move with the seasons. They were now subject to unfamiliar climatic factors and even more unfamiliar market influences.<sup>1</sup>

The setting of the International Boundary between Canada and the United States along the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel divided the Peigan people into two major groups based on kin affiliation which was subsequently broken down by the establishment of the reserves. Now the Peigan are divided between the Piikani Reserve adjacent to the Head-Smashed-In site and the Blackfoot Indian Reservation across the border in Montana, USA. The Kainai occupy the Blood Reserve, south and east of Fort MacLeod.

Following the extinction of the buffalo and the treaties that confined the Indians to reserves, other processes and patterns of human and landscape interaction occurred. The site was privately owned during the 1900s and was used for grazing cattle and consequently subjected to compaction from the animal traffic. The composition of the plant material was altered as it was grazed selectively by the cattle, who unlike the buffalo were not free to roam over the prairie but were confined to ranches by fencing. The site was further altered by quarrying of sandstone for building material, removal of the rock cairns for use as riprap, excavation of cattle watering holes, construction of road beds and fence lines, and excavation of bone beds for artifacts.

The decision to focus primarily on the aboriginal use of the site for a buffalo jump activity means that the fall season, during a relatively short period of history, and the activities associated with it (notably the jump), are pre-eminent. By emphasizing the jump, there is an implied need to freeze the landscape conditions. Will the site maintain the identity that was critical to its designation, and will it maintain an acceptable level of integrity? UNESCO defines integrity as “a measure of the wholeness and intactness of the natural and/or cultural heritage and its attributes.”<sup>2</sup> The integrity of a landscape depends to some degree on how well the landscape retains its historic identity and character. But this is problematic, because when/if the integrity and authenticity are lost, then the purpose of the cultural landscape designation is also lost. *Landscape* is not just a setting for dramatic events – it has long periods of just being, and for much of the time, the prairies and the rest of the western landscape would be likely considered boring for those searching for entertainment or education, or frustrating for those whose role is to develop sites for interpretation.

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1. *Ibid.*

2. UNESCO *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* (United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (2005, updated 2017).

Landscapes as well as cultures constantly undergo constant dynamic changes, not all of which are predictable. This is one of the inherent challenges when site is museum – how to interpret a landscape that has undergone and continues to undergo change?

The site needs to be part of the educational experience included in the interpretive program, and subservient to any building constructed for a museum - the landscape *itself* is the story and the experience that is the point of the recognition of the site. When tourists come to visit, they are likely attracted to the site because of the story and the drama of the jump (something that the site's name capitalizes on). But what of the landscape at other times of the year? What kind of (much less dramatic) images and messages could be communicated? Could they provide the same tourism and educational value that the emotionally impactful buffalo jump and the (often) romantic view of the Indians do?

What will happen as this landscape transforms beyond the point where its expression, historic identity and character that were essential to its designation changes, as it inevitably will, due to climate change, or to the absence of the buffalo or indigenous people or ranchers who were important agents involved in its maintenance? Hall<sup>1</sup> stresses the need for planning and implementation to be part of an ongoing process with World Heritage Sites, and he advocates for more systematic evaluation and monitoring strategies for World Heritage Sites as there are numerous regulatory dimensions, some of them competing, that are involved in management of the resource. Evaluating the effects of designation of a site should be part of this management strategy.

## Building and Program

Is it possible to properly interpret a place through the medium of a building and a manipulated landscape, and through a curated program? The design criteria for the interpretive centre were very specific. It was to be inobtrusive (with no more than fifteen percent of the general mass of the building visible) so as to protect the visual integrity of the site, and was to, where possible, replicate the natural environment. A concept to satisfy these criteria was developed that included an earth-sheltered building cut into the side of the cliff and revegetated with native plant material. All exposed building materials were to be similar in colour, texture, and form to the indigenous rock material and excavated rock was to be used in rehabilitating the site. The centre was to house public exhibition galleries and archaeological research facilities. Access was to be from the bottom of the cliff, a pedestrian walk was to be developed at the top to afford a panoramic view at the cliff edge, the bulk of the building was to be next to the kill site but far enough away that it would not disturb the archaeological material, and the parking area was to be inconspicuous from the approach road. The

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1. Michael Hall "Implementing the World Heritage Convention: what happens after listing?" in Anna Leask and Alan Fyall (eds.) *Managing World Heritage Sites* (Elsevier, 2006), 20-34.

site plan also included fencing to restrict grazing by local cattle and to control movement of vehicles and pedestrians on the site.<sup>1</sup>



*Interpretive building and landscape, view from the east, showing the building set into the cliff and reflecting the horizontal stratification of the sandstone. Photo by the author, September 1987.*

Both the building and the landscape were ultimately awarded national professional awards and viewed as significant achievements. However, although considered successful, the design challenges were numerous, and the ambitious goals of creating an inobtrusive building and landscape were often confounded by government and other regulations and desires. Typical construction and maintenance were obviously not appropriate to a project of this nature, but as the site was developed and as the museum became functional, standardized design solutions started to intrude in the form of safety features and typical details. The building and the landscape design were subtle and understated, and well-integrated with the site, however when Alberta Culture took over the project towards the end of the construction period, many standard elements such as conventional benches and other furniture replaced what had been designed using local materials such as sandstone to be integral features of the site, and visually jarring elements such as a typical parks standard handrail along the cliff were installed due to safety concerns. Alberta Culture insisted on irrigation on the roof, contrary to the advice of the consultants that the grass was to go through natural desiccation cycles and had to blend in with the surroundings; a

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1. Discussion of the program and site design is based on information from planning, design and construction drawings and documents, Cornerstone Planning Group Ltd. *Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump Interpretive Centre Facility Program* (1983), and Carson McCulloch Associates Ltd. *Head-Smashed-In Landscape Architecture Documents* (Calgary, Alberta, 1984-86).

compromise was that the irrigation system was to be used during the establishment phase of the prairie sod and then left in place as a fire protection strategy.

These are not just practical construction details regarding bench selection, use of materials, and safety; they are also related to the cultural orientation to the project, where “the concept of *matapiiksi* is perhaps the most important epistemological difference between Euro-Canadian and Blackfoot understanding of the world and humans’ relation to it. ....While Euro-Canadians conceive of stones to be inanimate, in Blackfoot traditions, stones can have life, personality and power”.<sup>1</sup> The use of standard Alberta Culture benches rather than wooden planks embedded in sandstone boulders is therefore not just a matter of aesthetic preference but has deeper cultural significance and missed interpretive potential. And although safety is a valid concern in any museum, by installing a prominent guardrail along the cliff top beside the path and around the viewing platform, the impact of the cliff edge is largely lost and the continuity of the visual landscape destroyed. This may indicate a lack of understanding of the complexity and safety implications of the project by the client group, who could have better anticipated some of the design challenges and included them more explicitly and comprehensively in the work that the landscape architects were to complete, where they could have been integrated more seamlessly into the site rather than added after the fact.



*Cliff-top viewing area, showing the difference between designed landscape elements and as-built. In the foreground, sandstone boulders that were installed to be bases for the benches are now incongruous remnants between the sign and telescope. In the left background, one of the few sandstone boulders is used as a base for an interpretive sign. RHS shows how most signage is as per standards Alberta Government details, with remnant boulders still on site. Photos by the author, September 2018.*

The interior of the building is organized as a series of five tiers or terraces where the story of the site is told, with each level having a theme: Level 1 Napi’s World (ecology and landscape) (Napi was an important figure in Blackfoot stories); Level 2 Napi’s People (Plains Indians); Level 3 The Buffalo Hunt (spiritual and

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1. Bryony Onciul Museums, *Heritage and Indigenous Voice: Decolonizing Engagement* (New York: Routledge, 2015) 47.

ceremonial significance of the hunt, the use of the cliff as a buffalo jump); Level 4: Cultures in Contact (European trade goods, arrival of the horse and the gun); Level 5: Uncovering the Past (the archaeological program). Visitors enter at the lower level where they are guided to a theatre to watch a re-enactment of the buffalo jump (removed in space and time from an actual jump, but given the impossibility of staging regular actual jumps at the cliff site, a practical alternative), and then work their way up through the building. At the top level there is access to the outside and to the cliff. The overall emphasis of the interpretive program is the buffalo jump, secondarily the people, and then the ecology.

There is some confusion in the sequencing through the building, and the exhibit with the biggest impact – a diorama of the cliff and life-size buffalo – is the first thing that a visitor sees, so the climax is delivered before the story line has been explained. The cliff is fiberglass, although outside there are 300m or so of real sandstone cliff. There are very few windows in the interior of the earth-sheltered building, missing many opportunities to create visual linkages with the site.



*Photo of cliff diorama.* Photo by the author, September 2018.

Despite the efforts to make the building defer to the landscape and be subservient to the site experience, the building, and especially its interior, seems to be the

main feature of Head-Smashed-In. This likely confounds any efforts to nurture a sense of place. As the steering committee of the 2005 Sense of Place project in Alberta realized, the topic 'sense of place' is "too complex, too important, and too interesting to be confined to what could be communicated only through an exhibition."<sup>1</sup> This committee believed, echoing the approaches of others<sup>2</sup> who advocate getting physically into the landscape and learning to read it, that it was important to experience, and have others experience, first-hand, the places that make up the sense of Alberta. It is completely possible that visitors to the Head-Smashed-In site might spend much more time within the building than on the landscape opportunities that the site offers. The video, the diorama (complete with a life-sized buffalo, something not present outside on the actual cliff), the giftshop and the restaurant are tantalizing pieces of entertainment that offer strong inducement to visitors to stay inside, rather than venture outside on the cliff and paths and experience the site itself and whatever weather conditions may be present.

## Culture

Which community does/should the museum reflect? Several different groups used the site over a period of about 6000 years. The most recent aboriginal groups were the Peigan and Kainai Tribes of the Blackfoot Nation, who used the site intensively for a period of at least 100 years. During the 1850s and 60s and after, Europeans moved into the area to hunt the buffalo and then to settle the area, infringing on what were formerly exclusively aboriginal lands. The series of treaties and establishment of the reserves meant that the Indians were geographically confined and land was available for European settlement. Most of the region became privately owned and ranched, before being identified for its importance and designated as a historic site, changing the dynamics of land ownership yet again. There have been many communities involved with the site.

Historic Sites Service of Alberta Culture and Multiculturalism, the client for the project, has a philosophy that cultural heritage belongs to the community.<sup>3</sup> The community in this case was defined as the towns, ranches and native reserves in the immediate vicinity of Head-Smashed-In. The academic community who had several generations of interest in the site was also involved. The process was to include community engagement, which is viewed by current museology "as a

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1. Beverly A. Sandalack, "Introduction" in Sandalack, Beverly A. and Ann Davis (eds.) *Excursions into the Cultural Landscapes of Alberta* (Nickle Arts Museum, 2006), 7. This publication was part of a 2005 series of events called *Sense of Place* designed to commemorate the Province of Alberta's Centennial.

2. Authors who stress the importance of getting into the landscape and learning to read it include May Theilgaard Watts *Reading the Landscape of America* (Rochester: Nature Study Guild, 1957), J.B. Jackson *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), W.G. Hoskins *The Making of the English Landscape* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1955, paperback ed. 1992), Edward Relph *Place and Placelessness* (London: Pion Ltd. 1976).

3. Alberta Culture *Head-Smashed-In Interpretive Program*, op. cit., 1984.

positive, mutually beneficial way to improve and democratize representation”.<sup>1</sup> A Community Advisory Board assisting with the planning of the project consisted of representatives from the immediate native and non-native community, and early on the Advisory Board recommended that the storyline of the exhibit reflect native interpretation through folklore and legend as well as archaeological evidence. The archaeologist, anthropologist, and exhibit designers worked with the Peigan and Kainai Nations to combine the native tradition and archaeological evidence, and this influenced how the building and story line took shape.

Despite the array of forms of engagement that are available, “none of which solve the problems associated with representing complex, multifaceted communities” (engagement) “does not automatically grant integrity or validity”.<sup>2</sup> Onciul believes that “while honourable in its intentions, the increasingly ubiquitous practice of community engagement in museums has often been under-analysed, and its difficulties and complexities understated”.<sup>3</sup>

As of 2018, people of First Nations background held most of the staff positions at Head-Smashed-In<sup>4</sup> where they are involved in interpretation and other activities, while management positions tend to be held by non-Blackfoot and emphasize the archaeological purpose of the site and “the storyline and films continue to be scripted by non-Blackfoot staff with Blackfoot input.”<sup>5</sup> There also seem to be various perceptions and opinions regarding the ongoing purpose and orientation of the site. Head-Smashed-In is “often associated with ongoing conflicts between First Nations and Canadian government” and viewed as a “Western, government institution and not necessarily a place of Blackfoot community voice.”<sup>6</sup> Another report with a somewhat opposite view is that “the Jump has become more the story of the people....a cultural centre for the Blackfoot rather than a celebration of story about the buffalo jump.”<sup>7</sup>

Museums and heritage sites are both mirrors and shapers of culture, nations and peoples. They are key locations where “identity politics and efforts to (re) claim culture and history play out” with “the power to remember and forget.”<sup>8</sup> Does Head-Smashed-In reflect the community(s) that used the site at various times, and who might still be utilizing it? Does it reflect the values and interests of the community that now controls the site? What do the interpretive messages of the museum remember, and what have they forgotten?

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1. Onciul, *op. cit.*, 71.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Ibid.*, 1.

4. Conversation between Conrad Little Leaf, Senior Interpreter at Head-Smashed-In and graduate research assistants 9 June 2017.

5. Onciul, *op. cit.*, 93.

6. *Ibid.*, 93.

7. *Ibid.*, 140.

8. *Ibid.*, 3.

## Museum or Interpretive Centre?

The current (2007) definition of museum by the International Council of Museums (ICOM) is “a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment.”<sup>1</sup> Traditionally, museums have been the best setting for presentation of objects where they “offer a formal reading of the exhibit.”<sup>2</sup> The exhibition can take several forms, where the objects may or may not be organized thematically, and where they do not necessarily need to be situated within their original cultural context.

Izquierdo Tugas *et al.*<sup>3</sup> considered the difference between museums and interpretation in their work on (mainly) Spanish heritage interpretation centres. They note the growing interest in the subject due to many factors including increases in environmental education and improvements in protected nature areas, and subsequent growth in cultural and natural heritage preservation and nature tourism, and more recently in the demand for tourism that combines heritage with education and leisure.

Interpretation, according to the Hicira Handbook “is based on cultural and/or natural evidence, either material or immaterial, found in a given location, and seeks to promote these features in their original context. To this end, the aim is always in situ recovery and the greatest possible contextualisation of heritage resources.”<sup>4</sup> The object itself is not seen as having value when it is isolated from its function and context. The aim of heritage interpretation is conservation, but the intent is also to evoke an emotional experience and raise awareness to “enable visitors to see, explore, situate, observe, analyse, understand, feel and truly experience the site” and in contrast to “the cold rationalistic rigour which characterised traditional museum practices,” “to evoke feelings and sensations: awareness, passion, emotions, and so on.”<sup>5</sup>

Unlike museums, interpretation centres do not focus on the assembly and study of objects, but on enabling visitors, through an educational process, to gain a better appreciation of the site’s natural and cultural values. The Hicira Handbook uses the term *musealisation*, a “museographical approach incorporating an interpretation centre” and cite examples such religious complexes as the Santes Creus Monastery in Tarragona or the Iranzu Monastery in Navarra, or interpretation centres on archaeological sites such as those run by the Government

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1. ICOM Statutes, adopted by the 22<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly in Vienna, Austria, on 24 August, 2007, <https://icom.museum/en/activities/standards-guidelines/museum-definition/>, accessed 10 September 2018.

2. *Ibid.*

3. Pere Izquierdo Tugas, Jordi Juan Tesserras, Juan Carlos Matamal Mellin *Heritage Interpretation Centres: The Hicira Handbook* (Barcelona: Diputació de Barcelona, 2005).

4. *Ibid.*, 15.

5. *Ibid.*, 17.

of Extremadura, or an educational presentation including interactive modules, visitor services, educational itineraries— such as the Iberian settlement of Puig Castellar in Santa Coloma de Gramenet in Barcelona. Issues involved with heritage *in situ* are many, and require different approaches in different situations, but all attempt to present heritage “in its own context and also as part of a process” and are best suited to on-site museums and interpretation.”<sup>1</sup>

The two (museums and interpretive centres) have somewhat different approaches, expressions, and management requirements, as one deals primarily with the artifacts and their display, and the other deals primarily with the site and its interpretation, important distinctions and aspects that can easily be compromised if they are treated similarly, or if the distinction becomes blurred. Head-Smashed-In is an example of this hybrid of museum and interpretive centre. This could be helpful in management, emphasizing both the preservation and display of artifacts *including site features*, not just the archaeological and material cultural objects (a museum), and also the elaboration of the history, evolution, multiple meanings and multiple values ascribed to the site, and opportunities for experiencing it and learning about it (an interpretive centre).

## **Cultral landscapes and sense of place**

At Head-Smashed-In there was a mutually supportive relationship for several centuries involving humans, buffalo, and the landscape that also reflected seasonal variations, the local and regional geography, and the physical needs and spiritual practices of the human inhabitants. These relationships were interrupted and altered and replaced by others that had different correlations between natural process and form, cultural process and form, and legal instruments and land subdivision. While all of these relationships produced their own unique cultural landscapes, the Head-Smashed-In site focuses primarily on the buffalo jump and the aboriginal use of the landscape, and on the archaeological explorations. It secondarily addresses the more recent land uses such as ranching, and the issues of displacement and landscape change.

With the discovery of the archeological value of the site, another type of exploitation took place in the form of the preservation of the site and the construction of the interpretive centre. Tourism provides the justification for the manipulation of the landscape, whereby money is generated through admission fees and the sale of commercial products, and at the present time, it is in the interests of Alberta Culture and the communities near the site to freeze the form of the buffalo jump complex and capitalise on its value as a tourist attraction.

Although the complete known history is presented in the interpretive program, the era given the most attention is the Blackfoot utilisation of the buffalo during the 1800s. Of course, this has educational value, but there is some irony that the Indian culture and relationship with the buffalo that was deliberately des-

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1. *Ibid.*, 31.

troyed about 150 years ago is now glorified in a recreated display of the natural forms and process inside the interpretive building. The emphasis, to intensify the visitor experience, is on the drama and the jump. Is this manipulation of visitors' emotions something that is positive, negative, or just a practical way of ensuring that the site is profitable?

The evolution of the cultural landscape cannot simply be dealt with as a chronology of events; it also reflects the evolution of ideas and ideologies. The values cultures place on the land are reflected in changing patterns of land ownership and land development, and consequently in the spatial, visual and experiential qualities of the built environment. How one understands and interprets those landscape forms and processes depends upon one's ideological position, and consequently influences the histories that are constructed. The approach to a museum and interpretive site is inevitably skewed towards the cultural orientation of those providing the funding, the administration and the design, despite the best intentions. The need to continually engage the various cultures who have a stake in the site, its interpretation and its management is another ongoing challenge. But despite its challenges and contradictions, Head-Smashed-In is a positive example of where people are brought into direct contact with a cultural landscape, and where they have the opportunity to experience parts of it, *in situ*.

Lynch<sup>1</sup> and Hough<sup>2</sup> argued that authentic identity is dependent upon the continuity of both natural and cultural form and process. Davis<sup>3</sup> recently explained again the importance of *place*, drawing on philosopher Zygmunt Bauman's words: It is around *places* that human experience tends to be formed and gleamed, that life-sharing is attempted to be managed, that life meaning is conceived, absorbed and negotiated. And it is *in* places that human urges and desires are gestated and incubated, that they live in the hope of fulfilment, run the risk of frustration - and are indeed, more often than not, frustrated and strangled.

Buildings and landscape spaces can either diminish or increase our sense of being in the world.<sup>4</sup> Their effects on us are very real and need to be carefully considered, and periodic reviews of the experience, the authenticity and the integrity of the site should be conducted, so that it remains true to its purpose. Leask and Fyall<sup>5</sup> remind us that "tourists increasingly want 'real' experiences with other cultures and lifestyles" and a more educational and active experience, where the environment is protected rather than exploited. But many people also tend to take the easy route when it is offered to them and are easily lured by the more

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1. Kevin Lynch *What Time is This Place?* (MA: MIT Press, 1972).

2. Michael Hough, *Out of Place: Restoring Identity to the Regional Landscape* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990).

3. Ann Davis, "Two Humanistic Communication Theories for Museums, Libraries and Archives", *ICOFOM Study Series* [Online], 44 | 2016.

4. Mark Kingwell, drawing on the thoughts of Martin Heidegger in his keynote talk at the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Cities Conference as part of the *Sense of Place* series of events (Calgary, Alberta, 2005).

5. Anna Leask and Alan Fyall (eds.) (2006) *Managing World Heritage Sites* (Elsevier Ltd. 2006), 286.

spectacular entertainment options or by souvenir shops or restaurants rather than doing the harder work required of engagement and education.

The Head-Smashed-In site has gone from being an active, dynamic, dangerous and vital place where life, death and spiritual matters were worked out in partnership with the landscape, to a safe, carefully edited, frozen-in-time museum where it is now difficult to have any experience aside from a carefully curated exposure to an otherwise dramatic landscape. Perhaps that is an inevitable part of creating a museum of a complex place, but much seems to be lost as well, and the site is in danger, should it continue to evolve to satisfy quests for entertainment or prosaic bureaucratic concerns about safety, of becoming a one-dimensional interpretation of a place framed by the dominant culture.

Perhaps the most difficult challenge with sites like Head-Smashed-In is that of restraint and subtlety – to let the site be itself and to evolve according to the natural and cultural processes that will continue to act on it.

# Flâneries in a Northern Urban Landscape. Affective atmospheres, diffuse museum and the creation of heritage in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

*Saphinaz-Amal Naguib and Stein Farstadvoll*

## Introduction

The present paper by Saphinaz Naguib and its integrated photographic essay by Stein Farstadvoll address the cultural dimension of sustainability and questions pertaining to heritage in the twenty-first century, with Vardø, a small fishing town in the north-eastern coast of Norway, as our object of study. The two essays are set in a dialogic relationship with each other, and explore the notions of ecomuseum and “diffuse museum” that are taking root among scholars in museum and heritage studies. We investigate strategies used to prompt, shape and stage affective atmospheres in projects related to the production of heritage. Taking the tropes of *flânerie* and *flâneur/flâneuse* out of vibrant metropolises and over to the quieter rural context of Vardø, we stroll through the streets, observe people and their activities, look at buildings and things, contemplate the surrounding landscape, visit neighbouring sites, and try to get a feel of the place and its history. The photographic essay by Farstadvoll brings forth the *ambiente* and affective atmosphere surrounding our flâneries through the town and the surrounding environment.<sup>1</sup>

I start with a theoretical reflection on the use of *flânerie* and *assemblage* as relevant approaches to the study of museums and heritage in the making. This is followed by a short outline of the history of Vardø and the presentation of the two projects that have triggered the regeneration of the town. I am especially interested in the use of street art to stop a process of ruination due to increased depopulation and abandonment; how art may become a medium to save towns from turning into ghost-towns; how art may bring about renewal and innovation, and become a major cultural and economic resource for these places.

I then explicate the main characteristics of ecomuseum, and offer an inclusive understanding of the concept of the diffuse museum in relation to Vardø. I go

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1. The photographs by Stein Farstadvoll are marked: Farstadvoll. The author has added a few pictures she took while walking about in Vardø; they are marked Naguib. In addition, another contributor to this volume, Torgeir Bangstad, has provided the photograph of the *Movers' trailer*.

on to examine ways of preserving a sense of place by (re)creating the *ambiente* and affective atmospheres in projects concerned with heritage management and examine the impact of renovation projects and art on Vardø. To conclude, I ponder the long-term effect of cultural events in establishing a network of mixed heritage sites, and whether Vardø may in the future become a kind of diffuse museum.



*Eternal Light – Eternal Night; artist: Stephen Powers. Photo: Farstadvoll*

## Flânerie and assemblage

*Flânerie* and assemblage have over the past three decades or so become *nomadic concepts* or, to use the terminology of Mieke Bal, *travelling concepts*, that move between disciplines, fields of research and scholars, and change connotations during their peregrinations.<sup>1</sup> *Flânerie* from the French verb *flâner*, to stroll, to amble, is a social and intellectual practice that evokes an art of walking and observing. It involves movement, perception, the production of knowledge and dissemination.<sup>2</sup> According to Keith Tester, *flânerie* is “the observation of the fleeting and the transitory”.<sup>3</sup> It relates to the critical gaze of the *flâneur*, and is being resorted to as a method for reading texts, studying urban environments, examining material and immaterial traces of the past.<sup>4</sup>

1. Mieke Bal, *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities, A Rough Guide*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002).

2. Ilija Tomanić, Trivundža, “Dragons and Arcades: Towards a Discursive Construction of the *Flâneur*.” *Critical Perspectives on the European Mediasphere*, (Ljubljana, 2011).

3. Keith Tester, (ed.), *The Flâneur*, (London: Routledge, 1994), 7; David Frisby, “The *Flâneur* and Social Theory.” *The Flâneur*, edited by Keith Tester (1994), 81–110.

4. Mike Featherstone, “The *Flâneur*, the City and Virtual Public Life.” *Urban Studies* 35/5–6 (1998), 910.

The figure of the *flâneur*, the one who strolls at leisure through the streets of the modern city watching, listening and reporting on street-life, was first introduced by the French poet, Charles Baudelaire.<sup>1</sup> The *flâneur* of Baudelaire is an artist, a poet, a philosopher who ambles without apparent purpose through the streets of 19<sup>th</sup> century Paris. He is attentive to details; he endeavours to go beyond what he sees on the surface in order to find the hidden meaning of things.<sup>2</sup> During his promenades, the *flâneur* is attuned to the atmosphere and poetics of the urban environment, and makes connections between the different bits and pieces of his observations.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, he knows that change entails continuity and that there is some kind of permanence in impermanence. Modernity, according to Baudelaire, is not determined by chronology; each period has its own modernity and brings about its own novelties and innovations. For him, the notion of modernity expresses “the fugitive, the transient, the contingent, half of it is art and the other half is the everlasting and the unchanged”.<sup>4</sup>

The *flâneur* is a solitary character who walks in the present to find the past. During his stroll, the street refashions him and leads him into a vanished time, into a past that may be perceived as all the more profound because it is collective. It is a past he shares with others, and not merely his private one.<sup>5</sup> As he walks about the city the *flâneur* lets his mind wander to other places. He *assembles* various impressions and images that he records and organizes in such a way that they form the basis for what Benjamin describes as the ‘dialectical image’ where past and present moments meet and flare up into a ‘constellation’.

As we start walking through Vardø, we reflect on the concept of assemblage, and what we here are assembling. The concept of *assemblage* is here used as a method and theoretical approach to express ideas and practices about synchronising heteroclitic objects and putting them together so that they form a whole. Assemblage refers to the multiple, the fragmentary, and to “a continual process

1. The essay describes the painter Constantin Guys; cfr. Charles Baudelaire, „ *Le peintre de la vie moderne* (Paris : Collections Litteratura.com, 1863), 6-10.

Several studies have examined the gender of the *flâneur* and point out that urban women from the bourgeoisie did have their own ways of ‘walking the city’. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century-beginning 20<sup>th</sup> century the *flâneuses* retain the sharp, critical gaze of their male counterparts, but their promenades are not aimless. Rather, they have a purpose and are commonly tied to consumer culture and shopping in the enclosed spaces of large department stores.

2. This perception of the *flâneur* was taken up later by Walter Benjamin, in *Paris, capitale du XXe siècle*. Essais T.4, (Paris : STAReBOOKS éditions, 2013 [1939]), 256 : « *Le flâneur cherche refuge dans la foule.* », 274 : « *Le flâneur fait figure d'éclaircur sur le marché. En cette qualité il est en même temps l'explorateur de la foule.* ».

3. Charles Baudelaire., *Œuvres complètes de Charles Baudelaire. Les Paradis artificiels. Petits poèmes en prose* (Paris : Michel Lévy Frères, 1869). [https://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/Mademoiselle\\_Bistouri](https://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/Mademoiselle_Bistouri) (Accessed on April 21, 2017).

4. Baudelaire, *Le peintre*, 11 : « *La modernité, c'est le fugitif, le transitoire, le contingent, la moitié de l'art, dont l'autre moitié est l'éternel et l'immuable* ».

5. Benjamin, Walter, *The Arcades Project*. Translated by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin, (Cambridge Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002 [1999]), 879 - 880.

of emergence and becoming”.<sup>1</sup> Thus, it highlights the temporary rather than the enduring; the fragments, gaps and fractures rather than the intact and whole.<sup>2</sup>

Drawing on the works of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, in particular *Mille Plateaux*, and Manuel DeLanda’s assemblage theory, I consider assemblage as an ongoing procedure of arranging or, as the French term *agencement* implies, of fitting together a set of heterogeneous elements that may constitute the fundamentals of an emergent diffuse museum.<sup>3</sup> I reflect on how these elements are connected, how their narratives echo one another, and convey a ‘sense of place’. In my use of the term, seen from a cultural historical vantage point and heritage perspective, assemblage entails the recognition that “surfaces are deep ... and multi-layered”.<sup>4</sup> It means the need to recover the memory of things and investigate their changing significance in time and space.

Using *flânerie* and assemblage as methodological and theoretical approaches within the fields of museum and heritage involves taking one’s time, getting a feel of the atmosphere of a place, recognizing the traces of the past in the present, and also being open to wonder. *Flânerie* and assemblage imply that one not only takes into account the social, cultural and historical contexts, but in addition, the *ambiente* and *affective atmosphere* of a place and one’s own sensory experiences. Museums, in particular open-air museums, ecomuseums and diffuse museums have taken upon themselves to elaborate ideal spaces to pursue such activities.

## Vardø, from ruin to regeneration

Vardø is a town of about 2100 inhabitants situated in a tundra like landscape on the island of Vardøya in the very north-eastern corner of the county of Finnmark. The population of Finnmark is ethnically and linguistically diverse. It includes so-called ‘ethnic’ Norwegians, the Sami who constitute the indigenous population of Norway, and the Kven who originally came from Finland and are one of Norway’s five national minorities.<sup>5</sup>

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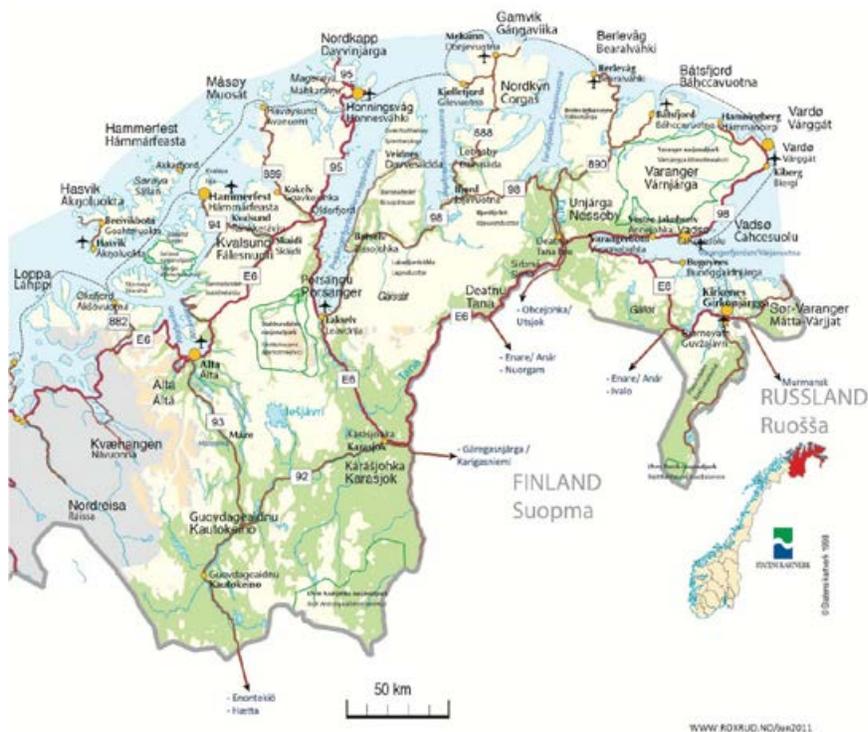
1. Rosanne Kennedy, et al. “All those Little Machines: Assemblage as Transformative Theory.” *Australian Humanities Review* 55 (2013) 46.

2. Ben Anderson and Colin McFarlane, “Assemblage and Geography.” *Area* 43/2 (2011) 124-127.

3. Gilles Deleuze, and Felix Guattari, *Mille plateaux. Capitalisme et schizophrénie*, (Paris : Les Éditions de Minuit, 1980); Manuel DeLanda, *A New Philosophy of Society. Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity*, (London: Continuum, 2006); John Phillips, “Agencement/Assemblage.” *Theory, Culture and Society* 23/2-3 (2006) 108-109.

4. Gonzáles-Ruibal, Alfredo, «In Praise of Depth,» *Archaeological Dialogues* 18/2 (2011) 165.

5. Norway recognizes six minorities. The Sami constitute the indigenous population of the country. The other five are national minorities. Two groups, the Romani or Tatere and the Roms or gypsies, are ‘travelling people’. Two other groups, the Kvener and the Skogfinnere, are people of the borderlands who originally came from Finland. The fifth group, the Jews, is a religious group composed mostly of urban people.



Map of Finnmark<sup>1</sup>

Archaeological finds in the area around Vardø indicate the presence of settlements since the Stone Age. Vardø has a long history as a trading and fishing port that goes back to the 14<sup>th</sup> century. In 1307, the Norwegian king, Håkon V Magnusson ordered the building of a fortress that would mark the north-eastern frontiers of his kingdom, and in 1789 Vardø obtained the status of town. The major sources of income of the town have ever since the Middle Ages been fishing and seafood processing, in particular dry fish and in modern times also herring. Dry fish was exported to other countries in Europe through the intermediary of merchants mainly from the Norwegian Hanseatic city of Bergen who had obtained the monopoly over the trade.<sup>2</sup>

Vardø had also long-standing contacts with the Pomor populations living along the northern coast of Russia. So much so, that in the nineteenth century, Vardø was known as the 'capital of the Pomors'.<sup>3</sup> The French geographer and ethnologist, Charles Rabot noted that on market days in the region one could hear people

1. Source: <http://www.travel-finnmark.no/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Side-1-Forside2.jpg>

2. Randi Rønning Nagu Balsvik, *Vardø – Grensepost og fiskevær. 1850-1950*. 2 vols. (Vardø: Dreyer Bok, 2007), vol. 1, 12-39.

3. Randi Rønning Balsvik, «Pomorbyen, Vardø og Russland.» In *Pomor – Nord-Norge og Nord-Russland gjennom tusen år*, edited by Einar Niemi, (Oslo: Gyldendal Norsk Forlag, 1992) 99-115.

speaking Norwegian, German, Finnish, Karelian, Sami and Russian.<sup>1</sup> During WWII, the German *Wehrmacht* occupied the region and its towns. They built bunkers and shelters, dug trenches and tunnels, and established camps where Russian prisoners of war were interned under very hard conditions.<sup>2</sup>



*Remains of a German bunker in nearby Kiberg. In the gap, one can see Vardø One distinguishes the small white globe shaped radar overlooking the town. Photo: Farstadvoll,*

At the end of the war, the retreating German army operated a scorched earth policy in Finnmark destroying the towns and surrounding nature. The reconstruction of Finnmark and its towns began in the 1950s. Vardø had nevertheless retained a coherent set of its pre-war buildings and these contributed in maintaining the town's character and atmosphere. During the Cold War period, several military surveillance and intelligence outposts were established in many places in the region, among these Vardø where newer radar systems have been installed. These globe shaped radar installations are set up on a plateau overlooking the town. In recent times, the economic uncertainties related to the collapse of the fisheries and lack of job opportunities starting already in the 1970s have led to a serious population decline. Many buildings have been abandoned, left to

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1. Charles Rabot,, « Exploration en Laponie, Norvège, Suède, Finlande », in *Le tour du monde. Nouveau Journal des Voyages*, edited by Edouard Charton, (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1887), 114 : «Vous entendez parler le norvégien, l'allemand, le finnois, le carélien, le lapon, le russe. C'est un mélange de toutes les langues et de tous les costumes. »

2. Bjørnar Olsen and Chris Witmore. "Sværtholt. Recovered Memories from POW Camp in the North." In *Ruin Memories. Materiality, Aesthetics and the Archaeology of the Recent Past*, edited by Bjørnar Olsen and Thora Pétursdóttir (London: Routledge, 2014), 162-190.

crumble and to gradually turn into ruins. This situation was the starting point for all the projects with the aim of reviving Vardø.

### **(Re)creating a sense of place: preservation, *ambiente* and affective atmospheres**

During my *flâneries* downhill from the church of Vardø, I pass the town hall, the Pomor museum with its nests of sea gulls under the roof, and direct myself towards the chapel, the cemetery, and then further down to the *Steilneset*, situated on a promontory along the shore of the sea. *Steilneset Memorial* is a memorial of the witchcraft trials that took place in Finnmark between 1600 and 1692, and one of two large projects as a result of efforts to revitalize the town at the turn of the present century. The monument was designed by the Swiss architect, Peter Zumthor and the French-American sculptor, Louise Bourgeois. Zumthor conceived a construction inspired by the forms and materials of the vernacular architecture and by local knowledge and traditional occupations.



*The Steilneset Memorial, designed by architect Peter Zumthor. Photo: Farstadvoll.*

The long hall is covered by sailcloth and evokes the *hjeller* or wood racks used to hang the cod to dry. The space inside consists of a dimly lit narrow corridor; the names of the ninety-one persons condemned for witchcraft and excerpts from each trial hang on the walls. Beside every plate, a small lamp and a mirror honour the memory of each individual. Louise Bourgeois' installation is constructed inside a cube made of glass and metal. It is an assemblage comprising an empty chair placed in the centre of a circular form. Under the chair, a flame burns constantly. The chair and fire are surrounded by seven big oval mirrors that reflect the flames and also the visitors to the site.



*Steilneset Memorial - Burning chair, symbolizing the witches' burning at the stake. Installation by Louise Bourgeois. Photo: Naguib.*

The memorial was inaugurated by the queen of Norway on the eve of Mid-summer's day, 2011. Interestingly, the speeches held at the inauguration tied the significance of the *Steilneset Memorial* to a much wider transnational and transcultural memory of persecutions, genocides and human rights issues.<sup>1</sup>

The second project to revitalize the town was *Vardø Restored* (2012-2016). The driving forces behind the project were local people wanting to improve the future of their town and by extension the whole island. They believed that the restoration and renovation of some old emblematic buildings of Vardø would gradually bring life back to old businesses, attract new businesses and consequently encourage people to stay. Among these buildings there is the Hornøya lighthouse from the 1890s, the mechanical boat workshop Slippen that was operating since 1911, the Grand Hotel that was inaugurated in 1914, the pub *Nordpol kro* from 1886 where the famous explorer Fridtjof Nansen stopped over before setting out on the second expedition to the North Pole in 1898, the Pomor house from 1865, and also more recent buildings as, for example, the *Trygdekontoret*, which as

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1. John Ødemark, "Cultural Difference and Development in the Mirror of Witchcraft. The Cultural Policy of Display at Steilneset Memorial." *Nordisk Kulturpolitisk Tidsskrift*, 17/2 (2014) 190-192.

its name indicates had housed the office for social welfare, and dates from the reconstruction period of the 1950s.

The main objective of the project has been to devise “a national model for local development based on cultural heritage in commercial ownership”.<sup>1</sup> The restoration of the different buildings has been, and still is, financed by the owners of these properties with the support of the Norwegian Foundation for Cultural Heritage, The Uni Foundation, the Directorate of Cultural Heritage, the municipality of Vardø and the county of Finnmark. A promenade by ways of small side streets leads me to the site of the fortress and its mixture of newer and older buildings. From there I push on towards the site of the Drakkar monument, back again to the centre of town, and get on the main road along the port and one of the restored buildings, the Nordpol pub. Strolling about brings to mind some of the many views on the objectives and worth of restoration and conservation of the built environment. Several of the standpoints on these issues were taken into account during the *Vardø Restored*-project.

Questions related to the preservation and caring of material remains from the past have been the object of many heated debates in different parts of the world. In Europe, the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century saw the emergence of a new interest in the restoration and reconstruction of old buildings, archaeological sites and monuments. In Britain, the conservation movement led by John Ruskin emphasized that historical authenticity meant the recognition that each period leaves its specific mark on the object, making it unique and authentic in relation to time. The Italian architect and writer, Camillo Boito indorsed a more holistic view to architectural remains of the past that takes into account the different lifetimes of a monument and that values traditional crafts and the knowledge of artisans. Truth and authenticity were Boito’s main concerns.<sup>2</sup> He considered the historical monuments similar to ancient damaged, fragmentary documents, which, fits our purposes to understand the restoration development of Vardø.

Alois Riegl elaborated a system of values that is articulated around three parameter<sup>3</sup> *commemorative intent* (Erinnerungswert), *history* (Historischeswert), and *aesthetic values* (Kunsthistorischeswert). The two last values depend on what Riegl called the *Kunstwollen* or art volition. The *Kunstwollen* encompasses the various art forms of a given historical period and culture. Riegl maintained that ideally the aging process of buildings, monuments and artefacts should be respected, and that all efforts of conservation and restoration are interferences

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1. <http://www.architecturenorway.no/stories/other-stories/Vardø-2014/> (Accessed on January 15, 2017)

2. Camillo Boito., *Conserver ou restaurer: Les Dilemmes du patrimoine*, (Besançon: Éditions de l’Imprimeur, 2000 [1893]). Boito’s opinions on the conservation and restoration of historical monuments and architecture are stated in eight points in a document known as the *Prima Carta del Restauro* or the ‘First Charter of Restoration’ that was presented at the third Conference of Architects and Civil Engineers of Rome in 1883.

3. Alois Riegl, *Le culte moderne des monuments. Son essence et sa genèse*, (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1984 [1903]).

with nature. Accordingly, things should be left to perish in beauty. Nevertheless, efforts should be made to postpone the process as much as possible. Hence, Riegl opened the way to preservation rather than restoration.



*Perishing in beauty: Deserted house by the fjord at Vardø. Photo: Farstadvoll*

In practice, the ideas of Boito and Riegl about the restoration and preservation of buildings involves renovation; that is ‘making something new again’, give it new meaning and at the same time uphold its authenticity, commemorative intent, historical and aesthetic values. As the case of Vardø shows, the preservation of the built heritage in towns is very much the art of re-creating a sense of place by reconfiguring, remodeling and rehabilitating sites and buildings in ways that respect their successive lifetimes and in doing so, maintaining their multiple, co-existing temporalities.<sup>1</sup> While some renovation schemes do not interfere with the original form of a building others, such as the old buildings that were selected in the *Vardø Restored* project, operate with extensions, modifications and adaptations to new usages. Other buildings were preserved thanks to street art. Other buildings again were just abandoned to their fate.

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1. Saphinaz-Amal Naguib,, “Tales of Two Cities: Sites of Interculturality and their Narratives.” In *Kulturarens gränser. Komparativa perspektiv*, edited by Peter Aronsson et al., (Göteborg: Arkipelag, 2005), 128 – 144.



*No entrance! Vardø Town Hall; an entrance was closed after renovation works. Photo: Farstadvoll*



*The massive wooden Old Primary School in Vardø designed by the architect Herman Major Backer and finished in 1888.<sup>1</sup> One of the buildings in Vardø that have been protected through resolution by the Norwegian Directorate for Cultural Heritage. Photo: Farstadvoll.*

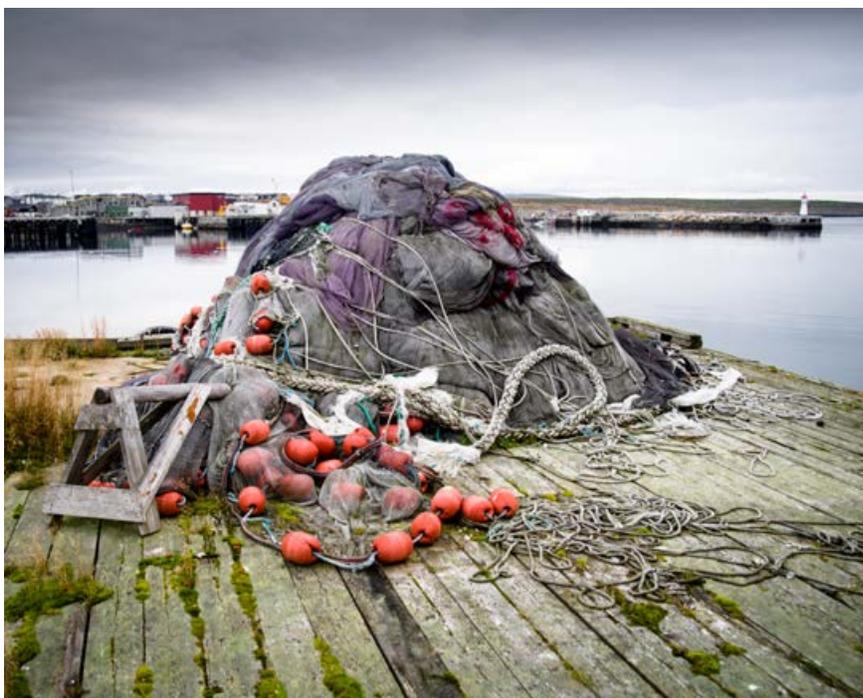


*Art among debris. Artist: Claudio Ethos. Photo: Naguib.*

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1. [http://arkitekturguide.uit.no/categories.php?cat\\_id=344](http://arkitekturguide.uit.no/categories.php?cat_id=344) (Accessed on April 27, 2018)

Works of renovation endeavour to maintain and revitalise what the Italian architect, and historian of urbanism, Gustavo Giovannoni described as *ambiente*.<sup>1</sup> To Giovannoni the *ambiente* refers to both the physical environment and the atmosphere of a place. It expresses an ethereal quality that radiates through the interplay between environment, material culture, knowledge and the senses. It is contingent to location, surrounding landscape, history, culture, perceptions and feelings about a place. The aesthetics of the *ambiente* imply the affective presence of things and the manner in which they influence the production of atmosphere. As such, the *ambiente* has an impact on what Ben Anderson describes as *affecting atmospheres* that are produced by the contacts between different people, between people and things, between people and places. For Anderson, “the word atmosphere is used interchangeably with mood, feeling, ambience, tone and other ways of naming collective affects.”<sup>2</sup> The *ambiente* of a place does not radiate harmonious and beautiful atmospheres at all times. Quite the opposite, as some of the pictures in Stein Farstadvoll’s photographic essay show, powerful emotional and aesthetic experiences permeate the affective atmospheres emanating from ruins, destructions, abandonment and painful memories.



*Fishing life. It is unclear whether this is an installation made of assorted fishing gear by an anonymous artist or simply an assemblage of abandoned fishing gear. Photo: Farstadvoll.*

1. Gustavo Giovannoni, *Vecchie città ed edilizia nuova*, (Torino: CittaStudi, 1995 [1932]).

2. Ben Anderson, “Affective Atmospheres”, *Emotion, Space and Society* 2/2 (2009) 78.

The preservation of built heritage implies taking into account the cultural factor as well as the *ambiente* and *affective atmospheres* of a place. Preservation in matters of tangible heritage is a measure that entails agreement both on the cultural, political and economic plans as to the significance of what ought to be saved and what may be left to ruination and, eventually, cleared away. This poses a number of dilemmas to professionals in the various fields of heritage management and museology, politicians and developers. In a town like Vardø, fighting the looming spectre of ghost town, it requires elaborating alternative plans and contexts to bring about new life to the town. Street art and the Komafest 2012 offered suitable conditions to carry out the venture.

## Out of the coma...

The kick-off event of the above mentioned second project, *Vardø Restored*, was the *Komafest* or Koma festival during the summer of 2012.<sup>1</sup> The website of the event tells us that the Komafest “is an art project on an arctic island in Norway. The project’s main focus is to highlight depopulation problems in the northern regions”.<sup>2</sup> The name Komafest plays on the imagery of Vardø waking up from a long comatic sleep and starting to live anew. The festival was arranged on the initiative of the Norwegian street art artist known as Pøbel (meaning *Mob* in English), in collaboration with the Varanger Museum as the project’s owner.<sup>3</sup> In addition, the Komafest got the financial support of both national and local institutions, such as the county of Finnmark, the municipality of Vardø, Public Art Norway (KORO), North Norwegian Arts Centre, The Freedom of Expression Foundation Norway (Fritt Ord), and several local business people and entrepreneurs.

Eleven internationally renowned street art artists gathered in the town for a three-week period (5<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> July, 2012), and created about fifty art works on the walls of abandoned houses and warehouses. In addition to Pøbel, the other eleven participating artists were Stephen Powers from the United States, Whils from Portugal, Roa from Belgium, Atle Østrem from Norway, Claudio Ethos from Brazil, E. B. Itso and ‘Husk mit navn’ (meaning *Remember my name*) from Denmark, Horfe, Ken Sortais and Remed from France, and Conor Harrington from Ireland. The provisions made to the group of artists participating at the Komafest 2012 were clearly stated; their pieces were to relate to the identity of the place, the history and collective memory of the town and the region. Several artists took their inspiration from the surrounding landscape and urban scenery, and many of the murals and graffiti reflect a strong connection to the place.

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1. There were two events following the Komafest 2012. In 2013, Pøbel opened a gallery of drawings, *The Blood Bank, an art exhibition for featuring the pulse of the city*. In 2016 new restoration and preservation projects were initiated on several old well-known buildings of Vardø.

2. <http://komafest.com/> (Accessed on January 15, 2017)

3. Varanger Museum consists of an association encompassing several municipal museums in the region as well as several historical buildings and sites; <http://www.varangermuseum.no/om-varanger-museum/> .Accessed on August 20, 2017.



*Old freezer warehouse. Artist: Husk mit navn. Photo: Naguib.*

Reading the news coverage of the event, the blogs, listening to recorded interviews and talking with local people, one notices a general agreement that the pieces created on the walls of old houses and warehouses were not vandalism but ‘real’ art. They repeatedly point out that the Komafest 2012 and the artworks on the walls gave a boost to the town. Not only did they put Vardø back on the cultural map of Norway but, in addition, made it part of an international art scene and gave an example in heritage management that could be pursued in other parts of the world.<sup>1</sup>

The Komafest 2012 project was symbolically concluded with an installation by Pøbel, erecting an old moving company’s trailer that had been used as the main means of departure from Vardø, vertically at the entrance of the tunnel connecting the island to mainland.

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1. Pøbel and *Vardø Restored* together with Russian partners were behind the project *New Life* for Teriberka, a small town on the Barents Sea in Murmansk. The project was greatly financed by the Norwegian KORO (Art in the Public Space), cf. articles in local newspaper *Østhavet* (16.07.2015, 3; 02.11.2016, 8; 17.08.2017, 9); <https://barents.no/nb/nyheter/2015/teriberka-inspireres-av-Vardø>. Accessed on 26 August 2017.



*Installation: Movers' trailer. Artist: Pøbel. Photo: Torgeir Bangstad.*

The impact of cultural projects such as *Vardø Restored* may have lasting effects on a place, they may contribute in transforming small dormant towns into a kind of Ecomuseum or rather diffuse museum, as we shall see.



1789 – *De siste ulvene* (meaning: *The last wolves*). Artist Atle Østrem.  
Photo: Farstadvoll



*Fisherman's face.* Artist: Vihls. Photo: Farstadvoll.



*The hunter.* Artist: Connor Harrington. Photo: Farstadvoll.



*Sea Fever. Artist: EB Itso. Photo: Farstadvoll.*



*Fortuna. Artist: Remed. Photo: Farstadvoll.*



*Sea gull father and child. Artist: Pøbel. Photo: Farstadvoll.*

## **Street art and valorisation of place**

The Komafest 2012 showed how art in general, and in the present case study street art, may serve to (re)create a sense of place. In my use of the word, street art is a generic term that encompasses a great variety of genres and styles combining several fields such as calligraphy, poster art, graphic novels, mosaics, paint and installations. Artists use various tools as spray cans, markers, stencils, sticker art, murals, lighting, knitting and ready-made. The pieces created range from the artist's signature or tag, phrases, sentences and poems to sophisticated murals,

and installations made of heteroclite objects.<sup>1</sup> Street art is a multi-sited, interactive and ephemeral form of art. It often carries social and political messages.<sup>2</sup> Several international street art festivals are being organized around the world. They are held in cities like Montreal, New York (NuArt), Copenhagen, Accra, Ibiza, Bodø (UpNorth festival), Bristol (Upfest), Stavanger (NuArt), just to name a few. Usually, street art is a practice of image making in urban public spaces that is increasingly used to valorise certain districts, mostly in urban environments, and by that turning these places into emergent heritage sites and tourist landmarks.<sup>3</sup> Some artists do, however, delve into more rural surroundings for their pieces. The project *Ghetto spedalsk* or 'ghetto leprosy' by the Norwegian artists Dolk and Pøbel is an example of this new current. During the summer of 2008, they painted stencils on the walls of twenty abandoned houses in the Lofoten islands in northern Norway.<sup>4</sup> The Komafest 2012 combined both and brought together the urban and rural environments of Vardø.<sup>5</sup>

As street art is gradually being acknowledged as a form of visual art, questions concerning the market value of the artworks and of copyrights are currently becoming increasingly critical and complex.<sup>6</sup> In Vardø, the fate of the piece called *Skeleton of the whale* by the Belgian artist, Roa is interesting. During the Komafest of 2012, Roa created a mural representing the skeleton of a whale to cover the long wall of a derelict fishing station. In 2015, a local entrepreneur, Jørn Jensen bought up the place. His plan was to transform it into a centre for 'maritime activities'. In the process of restoring the place, he painted over the mural. When asked about it he answered that once the renovation is finished and the business picks up he may contract a street artist to produce a new piece.<sup>7</sup> Many have criticized his decision and see it as an act of irreverence towards works of art and disregard of their importance for the future of the town. However, ephemerality is one of the main features of street art, and the purpose of the Komafest 2012 was to inject new life into old, abandoned buildings.

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1. Rafael Schacter, "Graffiti and Street Art as Ornament." In *Routledge Handbook of Graffiti and Street Art*, ed. Jeffrey Ian Ross (London: Routledge, 2016), 154 – 155, footnotes 2 and 3.

2. For instance, the Arab Spring (2011-2013) witnessed a surge of political street art in the Middle East, cf. Saphinaz Amal Naguib, "Engaged Ephemeral Art: Street Art and the Egyptian Spring." *Transcultural Studies* 2 (2016) 53-88.

3. Graeme Evans, "Graffiti Art and the City. From Piece-Making to Place-Making," in *Routledge Handbook of Graffiti and Street Art*, edited by Jeffrey Ian Ross (London: Routledge, 2016), 168-193.

4. Martin Reed, "Street Art Norway. An Introduction". In *Street Art Norway, vol. 2*, ed. Martin Berdahl Aamundsen (Oslo: Kontur forlag, 2012), 58.

5. Mikaela Bruhn., *Can Street Art Make The Rural Feel More Urban? A Close Look at the Norwegian Municipality Vardø and the Street Art Festival Komafest*, 2015; <https://mikaelabruhn.wordpress.com/2015/01/20/can-street-art-make-the-rural-feel-more-urban/> . Accessed on February 20, 2017.

6. Peter Bengtsen, "Stealing from the Public: The Value of Street Art Taken from the Street." In *Routledge Handbook of Graffiti and Street Art*, edited by Jeffrey Ian Ross, (London: Routledge, 2016), 416-428.

7. Personal communication (interview September 23, 2016).

I will concentrate on four characteristic elements of this type of art that explicate the use of art to recreate a sense of place with its distinctive *ambiente* and affective atmosphere that may, in the end, turn the town into a diffuse museum. The first two main attributes of street art relevant in our case are *intentionality* and *performance*. The artists involved had been expressly invited to contribute to the Komafest 2012. They appropriated the public space to convey their messages, and the streets became their performance and exhibition space. The stage was open and interactive; it allowed them to communicate directly with the inhabitants of the town who had come to watch them work. During that period, the people of Vardø took actively part in the performance by covering one of the walls with their own graffiti. Their participation showed their engagement with a project that may become part of their future collective memory.

The third attribute is the *ornamental* mode of street art. According to Rafael Schacter “[o]rnamant is ... never merely ‘mere’.” As ornament, street art “can be seen to have the ability to construct a new sense of order within the city, to be able to physically score an idea, a concept of civility onto its material surface.”<sup>1</sup> In an article on the graffiti of New York, Jean Baudrillard compared them to wall tattoos that are added to the architecture of an urban space and “remake the walls and parts of the city; they free the walls from the architecture and turn them once again into living social matter.”<sup>2</sup> As ornaments, street art and graffiti remodel the urban environment and highlight a place’s life and social relations with the buildings. In Vardø, they shape the *ambiente* and give the place a particular atmosphere of still being alive, albeit at the same time forsaken. They function also as valuable instruments towards the preservation of deserted buildings and may eventually lead to their renovation.

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1. Schacter, Graffiti and Street Art, *op. cit.*, 153-154.

2. Jean Baudrillard, « Kool Killer. Les graffiti de New York ou l’insurrection par les signes. » *Revista de sociologia* 3 (1974) 27-38; cited in Schacter, Graffiti and Street Art, *op. cit.*, 148 : « *Les graffiti refont des murs et des pans de la ville ... En tatouant les murs ... les délivrent de l’architecture, et les rendent à la matière vive, encore sociale, au corps mouvant de la ville...* ».



*The shadow of sea gulls flying by.* Artist: Stephen Powers. Photo: Naguib.

Walking around and pondering the multiple street art on the various buildings, I muse on the quality and function of the different pieces. *Ephemerality* comes to my mind, and this is, in fact, the fourth main feature of urban art. The reasons of this transience are many. They may be due to damage caused by the weather and erosion, people passing by, or by owners of buildings and local authorities painting over the pieces. Ephemerality does have a certain appeal, and several street artists see the disappearance of their works as a condition of the process to create *for the moment*, for the *experience*, for the *freedom*.<sup>1</sup> Thus, the erasure of their pieces from the walls – as happened in the case of the *Skeleton of the whale* mentioned earlier – or the destruction of their installations in the public space, seems actually to liberate them from the constrictions of conformist moulds. Ephemerality does not necessarily lead to oblivion. Jeff Ferrell points out that nowadays, a number of new channels help prolonging the experience of creation in time and space and, thus, actively counteract the evanescence of street art.<sup>2</sup> For instance, digital photography is increasingly used to document the various pieces. Artists around the world rely on a plethora of Internet platforms and social media to exhibit their works.<sup>3</sup> This is also true for some of the pieces created during the Komafest 2012. Among the pieces that have been whitewashed are the above mentioned *Skeleton of the whale* by Roa, the graffiti *Cod is Great* by the American artist Stephen Powers, the mural showing a bird holding binoculars and watching a man perched on top of the window of the building whistling, and the one of a man trying to catch a running woman in his net by the Danish artist, Husk mit navn.

1. Rafael Schacter, "An Ethnography of Iconoclasm: An Investigation into the Production, Consumption and Destruction of Street-art in London." *Journal of Material Culture* 13 (2008) 46, italics in the text.

2. Jeff Ferrell, "Foreword. Graffiti, Street Art and the Politics of Complexity." In *Routledge Handbook of Graffiti and Street Art*, edited by Jeffrey Ian Ross, (London: Routledge, 2016), xxxiv-xxxv.

3. Naguib, "Engaged Ephemeral Art", *op. cit.*, 62 – 63.

## Museum without walls: ecomuseums and diffuse museums

In light of the points discussed so far in this essay, one may consider Vardø as a kind of ecomuseum. These have been particularly committed to bring about sustainability through various incentives and projects directed towards the selection, preservation, protection and transmission of different kinds of heritage. Peter Davis describes ecomuseums as “museums of time in addition to museums of space”.<sup>1</sup> He defines the ecomuseum as “a community-based museum or heritage project that supports sustainable development.”<sup>2</sup> Not all use the label in their name; every museum has its’ own local interpretation, organization and practice of the concept. Norway adopted and implemented the philosophy of the ecomuseum early on in the 1980s. It represented a further development of the open-air museum and was oriented towards interdisciplinarity, conservation *in situ* and community development. In addition, the ecomuseum gave more attention to the present and future than to a ‘romanticized’ past.<sup>3</sup>

The main common features of ecomuseums are a holistic understanding of heritage that takes in the importance of territory and landscape, the uniqueness and identity of a place, the importance of heritage and memory, the interplay between the natural and the built environment, and active local participation or community governance. These attributes are put in practice thanks to programs directed to improve sustainable traditional, non/intrusive production activities and services, fund-raising and networking, training, education and research. The Declaration of Intent, Long Networks, states that “An ecomuseum is a dynamic way in which communities preserve, interpret, and manage their heritage for a sustainable development. An ecomuseum is based on a community agreement.”<sup>4</sup>

The aim of ecomuseums is to empower and involve local communities. Ensuring integrated governance implies the structural involvement of local stakeholders and individual inhabitants in setting up ventures to preserve, develop and maintain the local cultural and natural heritage. It rests very much on a relationship of trust between the different actors.<sup>5</sup> Further, ecomuseums are not always limited

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1. Peter Davis,, *Ecomuseums: A Sense of Place*, (London: Continuum, 2011), 5.

2. Peter Davis,, “Ecomuseums and Sustainability in Italy, Japan and China: Concept Adaptation through Implementation.” In *Museum Revolutions: How Museums Change and are Changed*, edited by Simon Knell et al., (London: Routledge, 2007), 199. The ecomuseum movement developed within the New Museology school of thought in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and it was one of its proponents, Hugues de Varine who coined the appellation in 1971 (cfr. Desvallées and Mairesse (eds.), 2011, 288-291, 552-556).

3. John Aage Gjestrum and Marc Maure eds., *Økomuseumsboka – identitet, økologi, deltagelse – Ei arbeidsbok om ny museologi*. (Tromsø: Tromsø museum, 2000), 190-191.

4. *Declaration of Intent; Long Networks, Ecomuseums and Europe*. Trento, May 5-8, 2004; <https://www.mondilocali.it/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/Declaration-of-Intent-2004.pdf> . Accessed on March 7, 2017.

5. Nunzia Borrelli and Peter Davis. 2012. “How Culture Shapes Nature: Reflections on Ecomuseum Practices.” *Nature and Culture* 7/1 (2012) 42.

to a single building or a site. They often consist of what Peter Davis describes as a 'fragmented site', a sort of 'continuing landscape' that comprises a network of sites scattered within a region it refers to as its territory. These sites can be places of archaeological and historical significance, habitats of rare fauna and flora or unusual geological formations that can be considered as 'cultural touchstones'.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, the projects in Vardø and surrounding region correspond almost perfectly with the definition and endeavours of ecomuseums.<sup>2</sup>

The same idea underlies the notion of the *dispersed museum* or *diffuse museum* that was introduced by the Italian architect, Fredi Drugman in 1980. The aim of the *museo diffuso* was to rediscover and valorise places of historical significance mostly in urban contexts and put them under one umbrella in a network of varied sites. For instance, in 2003 the city of Turin established a diffuse museum that encompasses all the sites tied to the memory of the Resistance, the war, deportation and freedom rights.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the ambition of ecomuseums and diffuse museums is to preserve the 'spirit of place' or 'sense of place' rather than to collect and accumulate various types of objects.<sup>4</sup> The emphasis is on the distinctiveness of the locality: local history and local memory, local landscape, natural resources, vernacular architecture, ways of life and industries. These were significant factors in the *Vardø Restored* project. For Davis the notions of 'place' and the more subtle 'sense of place' touch deeper cords tied to identity, feelings, knowledge and experience. Place, he says, "is a very individual thing, yet it also has a community expression; it is a chameleon concept, changing colour through individual perception, and changing pattern through time."<sup>5</sup>

The importance of territory and the sense of place accentuate the significance of landscape and the relationship between people and their environment. According to the *European Landscape Convention* that was adopted in Florence in 2000, landscape is a geographical area "as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors."<sup>6</sup> Landscapes may also refer to urban spaces and to the position of a town or city in the topography and natural environment of a region. In the case of Vardø, it connotes to the constant presence of the sea, the absence of trees, the rocky

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1. Peter Davis, "Places, 'Cultural Touchstones' and the Ecomuseum," In *Heritage, Museums and Galleries: An Introductory Reader*, edited by Gerard Corsane, (London: Routledge, 2005), 365-376; *Ecomuseums*, 80.

2. Borrelli and Davis, "How Culture Shapes Nature", 42.

3. Viviana Gravano, "Museo Diffuso: Performing Memory in Public Spaces." In *The Postcolonial Museum: The Arts of Memory and the Pressures of History*, edited by Ian Chambers et al., (London: Routledge, 2016 [2014]), 115. <http://www.forumpa.it/cultura-e-turismo/il-museo-diffuso-di-torino-tra-memoria-e-futuro>; [www.museotorino.it](http://www.museotorino.it). Accessed on March 7, 2017.

4. The two expressions are often used as synonyms. As I understand it the 'spirit of place' conveys the idea of an inherent *genius loci* intrinsic to the location while the 'sense of place' expresses a relational feature between people and place. In the present essay I shall mostly use the expression 'sense of place'.

5. Davis, "Places", *op. cit.*

6. European Landscape Convention, 2000, Chapter 1, article 1, a; <https://rm.coe.int/16802f80c6>. Accessed on March 7, 2017.

terrain, the open horizon and a special kind of light. In his book *Landscape and Memory*, Simon Schama explicates that landscape pertains to cultural memory, and is designed by culture, convention and cognition.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, landscape should be viewed in terms of space and topography, as well as a mental and aesthetic projection which exists only in the measure that it is gazed upon, lived in, represented and remembered. Thus, landscapes may be perceived in terms of *lieux de mémoire* or realms of memory.

As mentioned earlier, memory is one of the main attributes of ecomuseums. Pierre Nora, who coined the expression *lieux de mémoire*, maintains that realms of memory are *topoi*, that is, both places and topics, where memories converge, coincide or clash and delineate relationships between the past, the present and the future.<sup>2</sup> These realms of memory may be tangible and materialized in concrete objects such as archives, landscapes, monuments and museums, or intangible and conveyed through ways of life, beliefs and traditions. For Nora, realms of memory replace the *milieux de mémoire*, or environments of memory that have disappeared. Aleida and Jan Assmann led a new approach to memory studies in the early 1990s by introducing the notion of cultural memory based on different forms of knowledge, both tacit and learned. Cultural memory ties the present to a past that may be thousands of years old, and it is not necessarily enclosed within geographic and national boundaries.<sup>3</sup> Cultural memory may very well be transnational and transcultural.

The notion of transnational and transcultural memory emerged around 2010 within the field of memory studies in the wake of, and as a criticism to Pierre Nora's *Lieux de mémoire* where the focus is exclusively on France. The colonial past and its impact on the countries and cultures it had dominated for so long, and the cultural significance of francophonie are downright ignored. The terms "transnational memory", "transcultural memory" as well as the more recent "travelling memory" refer to the movements and entanglements of collective and cultural memories across and outside the borders of nation-states, ethnic and religious groups.<sup>4</sup> This approach to memory accentuates diversity, heterogeneity, polyphony and the fragmentary. It means a change of emphasis from an unwavering and "pure" national collective and cultural memory towards what Michael Rothberg describes as "*multidirectional memory*"<sup>5</sup> that is more hybrid and includes fragments of memories. The entanglements of memories across

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1. Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory*, (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 1995) 7, 12.

2. Pierre Nora, « Entre mémoire et histoire. La problématique des lieux de mémoire. » In *Les lieux de mémoire*, edited by Pierre Nora and al, Vol. I: La République: XVII-XLII, (Paris: Gallimard, 1984), XVII.

3. Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* (Munich: Beck, 1992); Aleida Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume: Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses* (München: C.H.Beck, 1999).

4. Aleida Assmann, "Transnational Memories." *European Review* 22/4 (2014) 546-556.

5. Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).

borders do not make them universal. For instance, in Vardø and surrounding region the memory of the fishing industry and international trade, the memory of the witch trials, the memory of the Pomors' presence, the memory of the forced 'Norwegianisation' of the Sami and Kven populations, and the memory of the German occupation of the north of Norway during WWII resonate differently to different communities and societies. The regional, the national and the international offer each a different social and cultural framework for sharing stories. But, the significance of the narratives is not the same everywhere.

Also, museums have in the last three decades or so taken up questions related to diversity, trans-culturality and cultural contacts. As mentioned earlier, eco-museums and diffuse museums have usually concentrated on the local and on the homogeneity of their communities. This, however, may be changing. In the case of a town like Vardø, it implies considering the impact of, for instance, interactions between different ethnic communities, various forms of cultural contacts and trade exchanges. It also requires dealing with the predicaments of the physical remains of Germans camps from WW II and the memories contained in abandoned houses and enterprises, and decide whether to save them, or let them slowly fall into ruins, or actively remove them.

## The town as a diffuse museum

The *ambiente* of Vardø emanates a particular atmosphere of life going on interspersed with a sense of abandonment and desolation. We, the flâneurs, stroll along the clean streets of the town, pass by pretty well-kept houses with their tended gardens, hear the voices of children playing in the yards of their school, enter shops and offices, and spend some leisure time at various eateries. Turning a corner while walking, we are taken by surprise by the appearance of remarkable murals or graffiti on the walls of derelict edifices. The point with the Komafest 2012 was to "see the houses again and prompt their salvage and preservation".<sup>1</sup> Without their walls bearing various pieces of urban art, the deserted edifices, and the closed down warehouses tied to the fishing industry, would seem infused with sadness or rather melancholy with its added portion of apathy. They would appear as a kind of "immature ruins" that are simply left to decay. These buildings are old but not yet imbued with the patina and age-value of antiquities. Nevertheless, they stand as vehicles of memory of a not so far away past and have the potential of becoming heritage.

Our flâneries through the streets of Vardø and the assemblage of impressions, pictures and things gathered during our strolls have brought to the forth reflexions about presence and absence, permanence and impermanence, preservation and the valorisation of a place's distinctiveness and *ambiente*, and about drawing upon culture and memory as sustainable resources in heritage management. Today, the main tourist attractions of Vardø include the old fortress, the *Steilneset Memorial*, the *Pomor Museum*, vestiges of German fortifications from WWII

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1. Ole Martin Lislevand, personal communication (25 August 2017).

that connect the place to a broader international history as well as to a cultural memory that goes beyond the national and regional borders. In addition, there is an increased interest in experiencing the northern nature and landscape with the aurora borealis (northern light) and sea bird watching. The street art creations from the *Komafest* of 2012, and the wooden *Drakkar* sculpture shaped as the prow of a Viking ship or drakkar attached to the skeleton of a whale by the Taibola group of artists from Arkhangelsk/Severodvinsk could now be added to the touristic itineraries. The *Drakkar* is evocatively placed on a rocky promontory at the entrance of the fjord.<sup>1</sup>



*The Drakkar, by Taibola group. Photo: Farstadvoll.*

Apart from the Pomor Museum, which is located in a traditional house from the region in the centre of the town, the other sites blend into the landscape in such a way that the borderlines between the town and the different sites seem somehow fluid.

Transnational and transcultural dimensions were articulated during the realization of the Steilneset Memorial, during the *Komafest* of 2012 and the creation of the *Drakkar* sculpture. The awakening of Vardø after its long slumber was done by resorting to culture and different art forms such as architecture, sculpture and street art. The speeches held at the inauguration of the Steilneset Memorial related the memorial to a much broader history and cultural memory of persecutions, genocides and human rights issues. For the *Komafest* 2012, a selected group of international artists contributed actively to the re-awakening of the town. The *Drakkar* was a gift to Vardø from a group of foreign artists. These events have contributed in (re)-creating a sense of place where different sites are

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1. The Taibola is a group of Russian artists from Arkhangelsk/Severodvinsk. In July 2016 they were in Vardø and constructed a sculpture made of wood, which symbolizes modern Vardø. The artwork is situated in Skagen, outside Vardø, and is a gift to Vardø; <https://www.facebook.com/events/285246625163442/> (Accessed on June 20, 2017)

loosely connected to each other in a flexible trajectory of cultural touchstones that includes other sites in the neighbouring region such as, for example, the Stone Age remains at Mortensnes, the old village of Hamningsberg, the caves of partisans and the museum dedicated to their memory at Kiberg.<sup>1</sup>

Culture and art have triggered a change in the *ambiente* and affective atmosphere of the town, and provided the basis for transforming Vardø into an emergent diffuse museum with several cultural touchstones that pertain mostly to local culture and memory. Some sites, as for example, the house of the Pomors that is today the Pomor Museum, the remains of German camps during WWII, the partisans' caves, the Steilneset Memorial, the street art from Komafest 2012 and the Drakkar sculpture have a transnational and transcultural resonance. A notable short-term outcome of *Vardø Restored* and the Komafest 2012 has been the increased number of tourists that have visited the region, also during the winter season. The long-term effects of these projects are still to be seen, but the short term effects have definitely been an increased tourist interest in the place. The street art of the Komafest 2012 could become part of an evanescent collection, continuously in the making. It could form a kind of temporal exhibition that is renewed regularly every few years. Some pieces would have faded away, been painted over or been replaced by new ones on the same spot or elsewhere. One of the aims of the project *Vardø Restored* has, in my view, been to place the town on a wider transnational and transcultural map in addition to the national and regional one. In practice, it entails pursuing international ventures in heritage management, and to try out ways of preserving and enhancing the sense of place and the characteristic *ambiente* of the town and its environment in all future projects without, however, freezing the place in a surrealistic time out of time.

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1. Shaphinaz- Amal Naguib, "Vardø's rich street art scene: Will the city become an ecomuseum?", 2017, <https://cas.oslo.no/read/Vardø-s-rich-street-art-scene-will-the-city-become-an-Ecomuseum-article2468-1167.html>



*Everything is a story.* Artist: E.B. Itso. Photo: Naguib.

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**Museum & Place is a multi-disciplinary anthology of writings on current theory and practice by thinkers from South and North America, Europe and Australia. It marks the emergence of a new discourse surrounding museums and illustrates the urgency of the debates about location. The essays investigate museums in settings beyond traditional places and institutions beyond traditional museums to expand and critique understanding of the vital links between museum and place.**

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