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Local World Heritage: relocating expertise in World Heritage management

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## Chapter 12

### Local World Heritage: Relocating Expertise in World Heritage Management

*Dominic Walker*

#### **Introduction**

The concept of community involvement has become ubiquitous within heritage management discourse and practice over recent years. The increasing concern of heritage professionals to engage with ‘non-expert’ views is the combined result of the far-reaching impacts of various social and political movements, as well as the influence of critical perspectives emerging from disciplines such as archaeology. It has become evident that much archaeological heritage management has not effectively attended to the needs of the public; in particular, local, descendant, Indigenous<sup>1</sup> and other marginalized communities have traditionally been excluded from decision-making processes about their heritage (e.g. McGuire 2008; Smith and Waterton 2009). Alongside these developments, heritage has been identified as having specific roles to play in society, being employed in economic regeneration and tourism strategies as well as being considered a force for generating social wellbeing and cohesive societies.

It is now accepted that tension arises when heritage professionals make decisions about heritage without consulting interested social groups. Not only may they fail to fully engage and represent the social values that give meaning to a place (Johnston 1992; Jones 2004), but also they may fail to thoroughly consider the effect their decisions have on a community. In the case of UNESCO World Heritage Sites, the assessment and conservation of social values is a particularly discernable problem. For instance, some groups may be disinherited through the conservation of ‘outstanding universal values’ at the expense of other, more localized, social

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<sup>1</sup> I use the capitalized form to emphasize the idea of Indigenous nationhood (see Smith and Wobst 2005: 16). I also recognize that some British groups claim indigeneity. However, there are at least two important differences between British indigenous groups and communities in North America and elsewhere. Firstly, in Britain these groups are not legally recognized as indigenous, and secondly, they have not experienced the same degree of political marginalization. As such, in North America, Australia and New Zealand there is a particular need for Indigenous recognition.

values (Graham et al. 2000). As with other kinds of heritage sites, the use of heritage in economic strategies further complicates World Heritage management (Baram and Rowan 2004).

Many of the questions that arise from these observations hinge around the idea of the heritage 'expert' and the notion of 'expertise' more generally. Firstly, it must be questioned what role experts should adopt in the management of World Heritage sites; for whom should they strive to serve, and how should they go about engaging with and addressing the concerns of interested parties? Heritage experts (whether those who formulate policy, support it, or enact it) often work within disciplinary or institutional frames, and possibly serve political entities, their peers, and disciplines like archaeology and art history (see Smith 2004; 2006). Secondly, is the requirement of heritage managers to conserve universal values necessarily commensurate with addressing local needs and values? In principle, World Heritage managers experience the added tension of having to also serve the interests of humanity. Should they for instance strive to more faithfully (and possibly controversially) serve a local community over the incompatible wishes of governments or UNESCO? Finally, a more critical consideration of who harbours knowledge or expertise about heritage is required. Is it necessary for an expert to harbour both expertise and knowledge, or can one be an authorized 'expert' without being deeply 'knowledgeable' (see Collins and Evans 2007)? This raises further issues regarding authority and empowerment, especially if a heritage expert has authority, but is not considered by local people to have legitimate knowledge about their heritage. Further, how can we decide between competing versions of heritage?

This chapter will explore an emerging role for the heritage expert or professional, one that may require a fundamental decentering of authority. The approach and conclusions, however, may be limited to the immediate British context because other nations must negotiate with additional pertinent issues, such as the rights of Indigenous communities. I will proceed by briefly outlining the process by which the range of accepted forms of heritage in the UK has expanded and then problematize the notion of expertise. Subsequently I will explore how the aforementioned issues have emerged in the management of the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape,

a World Heritage Site in South Wales. Finally, I will explore how more mutually beneficial and inclusive collaborative projects might be better achieved.

### **Expanding the Frame of Heritage**

Disciplinary theoretical shifts over the last few decades, especially in archaeology, and the various social and political movements that occurred from the 1960s onwards, have served to allow for the increasing emphasis of social values in the management of heritage in many countries (e.g. Merriman 2004, Okamura and Matsuda 2011). Much of the literature on these developments has emerged from heritage professionals working with Indigenous and other communities in the United States, Canada, and Australia. This literature explores how professionals may engage with, incorporate and emphasise potentially incompatible viewpoints (e.g. Swidler et al. 1997, Habu et al. 2008, McGuire 2008, Wylie 2008). Often the status of the traditional heritage expert is shifted from a position of almost sole authority to a position of collaborator or advocate for others (e.g. Colwell-Chanthaphonh and Ferguson 2008a, Nicholas 2010). In the UK, the social benefits of heritage had been also more explicitly explored in the 1970s, but the election of the New Labour government in 1997 allowed for a renewed emphasis (Pendlebury 2009). Indeed, New Labour's policy priority of reducing social exclusion in the UK became the grounding for much heritage policy (e.g. English Heritage 2000), and complemented UNESCO's call for a more representative World Heritage List. The 1999 UK Tentative World Heritage List emphasized industrial landscapes, whereas previous UK World Heritage Site nominations can be considered as largely monumental and elitist.

Along with the political recognition of the social uses of heritage, governments worldwide have utilized cultural heritage in economic strategies (Hewison 1987, Pendlebury 2009). Particularly through tourism, heritage can provide economic stability for small regions and nations alike, but these uses may contradict social uses. Conflict may be produced when heritage is consumed by both tourists and the local community (Urry 2002), a problem which may be exacerbated by a site's inscription on the World Heritage List. Heritage professionals'

engagement with localized social and cultural values, which may be encouraged in national policy, could be precluded by the official recognition of a site's 'outstanding universal value'. Despite UNESCO's increasing recognition of social values (e.g. UNESCO 2003), the claim of universality may be a force for exclusion when heritage management practice ignores the dynamic nature and needs of local communities. For instance, local populations of the World Heritage Site of the Old Towns of Djenné, Mali, are asked to continue to use mud to build and maintain properties, rather than employ more practical methods (Joy 2007). Western, urban World Heritage Sites are not immune to such processes of exclusion, which is evident at the Greenwich Maritime World Heritage Site, where less affluent residents were priced out of local accommodation owing to a gentrification process (Smith 2002).

In terms of heritage policy, heritage management in the UK and elsewhere has evidently espoused the inclusion of social values but often in practice this seems not to have come to fruition. This largely seems to be the result of heritage being consumed on varying economic, political and social levels. Furthermore, some scholars have asserted the existence of communities of experts, which continue to resist the inclusion of others, such as local communities (e.g. Smith and Waterton 2009). Smith (2004) posits that processual archaeological discourses remain embedded in heritage policy, allowing for the underlying positivistic assumptions to be referenced by heritage managers in their claim for authority over interpretation. This simultaneously authorizes their expert views and enables them to consider subaltern viewpoints as subjective and even irrelevant. This means that when English Heritage, for example, states the ideal of marrying 'expert' and 'community' viewpoints in order to produce fully integrated interpretations of places (English Heritage 2010), the 'community' (i.e. non-expert) viewpoints may simply supplement a mainstream, objective heritage narrative, rather than affording others the authority to vocalize their alternative viewpoints on a separate and at least equal footing (see Smith 2006). However, other scholars, particularly archaeologists working alongside Indigenous and descendent communities, challenge this broadly negative view of current heritage management practice. These archaeologists, many working under the term 'collaborative archaeology', have highlighted

the shift in power that emerges during the course of collaborative management partnerships (e.g. Colwell-Chanthaphonh and Ferguson 2008a).

The conflicting viewpoints on the prevailing situation are succinctly captured by the idea of a 'collaborative continuum' (Colwell-Chanthaphonh and Ferguson 2008b) which is defined thus: at any point in a given management situation, the locus of power, and the resulting benefits of a project (whether economic, social or otherwise), can lie with the traditional experts (often academic, or institutional), with other communities, or anywhere in between. It is clear that myriad communities and individuals harbour different views of the same heritage and how it should be interpreted, valued and used. There may not be simple solutions to dealing with divergent viewpoints because in some situations these views may be grounded in fundamentally different ways of knowing the world (Turnbull 2009, Srinivasan et al. 2010). However, the question of which interpretations of heritage are ultimately authorized as 'expert' is clearly related to issues of authority and social power. Who, then, can be labelled as an 'expert', and what are the criteria for applying this label?

### **The Notion of the Expert**

Expertise can be defined in a number of ways: in terms of an individual's relationship to their subject matter (i.e. holding knowledge of that subject); as an individual's superior competence in a particular task (usually in relation to cognitive performance; Ericsson et al. 2006); or in terms of the interaction between a person, the environment and the audience (i.e. someone *convincing* others that one is an expert about something; Hartelius 2011). In relation to the latter definition, many scholars working in the field of the sociology of expertise have argued that expertise is something that is enacted or performed by individuals rather than something that is held. It might be considered an accomplishment because an individual has demonstrated their expertise in a particular area by using the correct rhetoric, jargon and gestures (Silverstein 2006, Matoesian 2008, Carr 2010, Hartelius 2011). Furthermore, an expert is somebody who has been successfully socialized into a domain of expertise, where he/she can cite others within a discipline or institution

as supporting her/his position and views (Carr 2010). In this view, expertise is not solely about the knowledge held by an individual, but also the process by which people become experts and the community that helps to sustain them as experts.

This being the case, heritage experts may be considered to have achieved expertise through their training and socialization within a community of heritage professionals and other professionals involved in the cultural sector. Further, a particular discourse may be upheld that helps sustain that domain of expertise (e.g. Smith 2004). Jasanoff (2003) asserts that scientists may perform boundary work, labelling what is appropriately objective. They systematically exclude other significant perspectives, and prevent the recognition of problems that are formulated in simple disciplinary terms. In turn, through demarcating a discipline or profession, some are raised to positions of authority whilst others are disempowered (Pruitt 2011: 228–31).

Whereas much research in the sociology of expertise shows that expertise is relational, Collins and Evans (2007) conversely assert that expertise should refer to the possession of substantive knowledge, though they do not deny that becoming an expert also involves a process of socialization within a particular area of expertise. This means that an individual can be an expert regardless of whether they are recognized as such by others. They also identify a tension between expertise and democracy, and question how far expertise can be extended to encompass the public. It might be argued that more technical domains of expertise should rightly be more esoteric, whereas in the 'arts' the scope of expertise can be legitimately extended. Collins and Evans (2007: 113–33) justify this separation by pointing out that in the arts, unanticipated responses are intended, whereas in science, although a scientist's success in delivering information may vary, what is important is the intention of delivering a particular message. Unintended interpretive ambiguity in science, they argue, means that science should only be judged by those who also exist within that disciplinary frame. On the other hand, in artistic domains involvement by non-experts can be highly appropriate and useful. However, they fail to fully consider that power relations may help to define the scope of a discipline and therefore a

domain of expertise is not necessarily self-evidently 'technical' or 'artistic'. This has profound implications for the identification of experts.

Heritage discourse, as traditionally defined, is elitist and based on processual thinking (Smith 2004). In this case, the traditional expert can be legitimately upheld and the public included only in a consultative manner at best, and entirely ignored at worst. However, if the domain of heritage management adopts the lessons of various socio-political movements and theoretical shifts, it becomes more transdisciplinary (and 'artistic' rather than 'scientific'), legitimately offering the label of 'expert' to a wider range of people. Moreover, another question left unexplored is how should expertise be utilized; who should experts serve? This again depends upon issues of ideology and power, which vary between contexts of practice.

The sociology of scientific knowledge indicates that knowledge is produced within social environments (e.g. Latour and Woolgar 1986). Further, exactly what is considered to be expertise is usually a reflection of the social and material positions of those involved in a dispute, and is therefore a product of both politics and culture (Jasanoff 2003). Fricker (2007) introduced the idea of epistemic injustice to describe the situation which occurs when the views of marginalized communities are considered incredible by those with the power to make decisions, even though the lived experience of the marginalized should indicate that they are knowledgeable about particular subjects and can therefore offer significant insights about those subjects. Epistemic injustice may occur because a form of knowing amongst the marginalized is incompatible with the discourse and conceptual resources of the dominant culture (Wylie 2008). Wylie (2003) also argues that the marginalized hold an epistemically privileged viewpoint, bringing important insights to the table. When the marginalized are considered to hold useful, legitimate expertise, it becomes a necessity to involve them in decision-making. In this way, experts become obliged to develop methods that allow them to engage with all interested and relevant parties, and with different types of expert knowledge. In terms of heritage management, where dissonance between different communities (including the academic and professional communities) is common, it is

essential to be cognizant of the processes that may authorize particular ways of viewing heritage, and how others views are marginalized.

### **Blaenavon: A Local World Heritage**

The Blaenavon Industrial Landscape, South Wales, was inscribed as a World Heritage Site in 2000 (Figure 12.1). Its ‘outstanding universal value’ relates to the well-preserved evidence of the social, economic and technological processes of industrialization, especially those in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (UNESCO 2000). For instance, one of the largest ironworks in the world was situated in Blaenavon in the late eighteenth century. Also, in 1878 the Basic Process was developed which allowed for a rapid expansion of the scale of steel production. The 32.9 square kilometre World Heritage landscape in fact comprises numerous sites, although the major visitor attractions are the Big Pit (a coalmine sunk in 1880), and the Ironworks. The town of Blaenavon also lies within the boundaries of the World Heritage Site. The Workmen’s Hall within the town dates to 1894, and is still in regular community use.



**Figure 12.1 – Map of the UK showing the location of Blaenavon.**

The Blaenavon community has suffered from the economic and social effects of de-industrialization since the early twentieth century. Steelmaking ceased in the 1930s, and coalmining declined and eventually ended in 1980. The local government (Torfaen County Borough Council) considered using heritage in economic and tourism strategies from the late 1970s as a solution to various problems such as population decline, high rates of unemployment, and a perceived lack of social wellbeing (Kegie 1970). This was a common approach throughout the Welsh Valleys (Dicks 2000: 27). Big Pit coalmine was especially highlighted owing to its national importance (Welsh Tourist Board 1979). Indeed it opened as a national coalmining museum in 1983, yet tourists did not come to the town itself because of Big Pit's location a mile or two outside the centre. The town's economy was therefore not 'saved', and social and economic decline persisted to the extent that in 1993 Blaenavon was described as a 'problem community beset by devastating unemployment, despair and hardship' (John Brown and Company Consultants 1993).

From 1997, it was recognized that heritage tourism could not be the salvation of the declined coalmining industry yet it could be a 'catalyst for regeneration' (Torfaen County Borough Council 1997). This process demanded a sense of social wellbeing and pride to be developed from within the Blaenavon community, a discourse which clearly reflects the influence of political movements at the time. To help the regeneration process, the local council created the Blaenavon Partnership in 1997. The Partnership is led by heritage professionals employed by the council, but incorporates other stakeholders, including heritage managers from the numerous heritage sites within the inscribed industrial landscape, as well as politicians from various levels of government. Some stakeholders actually have remits pertaining to Wales as a whole – most notably Cadw with their ownership of the Ironworks, and National Museum Wales with their ownership of Big Pit. Working as a partnership, the aim was to exploit the industrial heritage to generate employment, develop a tourist industry, improve the town centre, conserve the built heritage, and bid for World Heritage status. Indeed, since the World Heritage listing in 2000, the

economic benefits have been obvious: new jobs have been created in tourism, the value of property has increased, and there has been a population rise for the first time in 90 years.

Despite this success, the rigid management structure means that decisions remain firmly in the hands of a few professional and political stakeholders. The formal management structure places council employees in charge of the day-to-day running of the site, the main visitor centre, and in the delivery of special projects or initiatives based within the World Heritage Site boundaries. The executive management board is composed of local politicians, council employees, and representatives of the various partners. This board sets the strategic planning and projects for each year. Importantly, there is no formal method by which members of the public can become involved in formulating policies and projects. They are only involved 'by invitation' in special projects or working groups (Blaenavon Partnership 2010: 110). This means that local people cannot be equal collaborators in the democratic decision-making process. Further, it remains problematic that policies and projects are left to individual partners to execute.

The heritage at the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape World Heritage Site evidently serves economic, political and social functions. This includes its role as part of economic and social regeneration programmes run by the local council, the incorporation of national heritage policy guidelines in the management of individual sites and in the Blaenavon Partnership, its usage in national heritage agendas such as the UK Tentative World Heritage List, and its local social value. Its status as a World Heritage Site, and its implication in regeneration programmes, particularly leads to contestation in interpretation and management, and therefore allows it to act as a useful case study to explore the inter-related issues of expertise, knowledge, and the incommensurable uses of heritage.

This chapter illustrates the contested nature of the heritage management at Blaenavon by focusing on only a few issues that have arisen since the Blaenavon Partnership has been in existence: the management of Big Pit: National Coal Museum; a town centre regeneration project; and a recent community-focused scheme. Insights were primarily gained through the in-depth interviewing of 18 people, both heritage professional and local residents with interests in the

heritage of Blaenavon.<sup>2</sup> A semi-structured interview methodology allowed me to discern the points of conflict and tension that had emerged about heritage management practices and interpretations of the heritage since the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape was nominated as a World Heritage Site in the late 1990s. This was achieved through introducing the same themes of discussion and prompts in each interview while encouraging the interviewee to highlight the issues that they felt were important (see Rubin and Rubin 1995, King and Horrocks 2010). The value of the semi-structured interview as a methodology for exploring the complexity of issues related to heritage has been rarely discussed but the main advantage is to allow for issues relevant to the interviewees to emerge spontaneously (see Jones 2004, Sørensen 2009). This is opposed to interviewing in a highly structured manner merely to collect data to fit an existing theory or hypothesis. In this research, the information gained through interviews was contextualised using numerous documentary sources, primarily management plans and local government reports.

#### *Big Pit: National Coal Museum*

The degree of freedom offered to stakeholders to deliver the aims of the Blaenavon Partnership means that National Museum Wales can in effect manage Big Pit regardless of these. Clearly, the site is not managed with the intent of undermining the more localized aims but the national picture of coalmining conveyed to visitors to Big Pit severely challenges the local values espoused at the other sites within the inscribed landscape such as the Ironworks, the World Heritage Centre (visitor centre) and Blaenavon Community Heritage and Cordell Museum. It is by far the most popular tourist attraction within the World Heritage area, and one of the most popular in South Wales, receiving around 180,000 visitors in 2009 (Figure 12.2).

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<sup>2</sup> I use the term 'local' to refer to individuals who reside within the Blaenavon World Heritage Site boundaries. It should be noted that some professionals identified themselves as local according to this definition. Other professionals living outside the area also considered themselves to be local to some extent. However, some interviewees noted that being local is more about empathy with local social values rather than residence in the immediate area (see Jones 2004: 49–51).



**Figure 12. 2 – Big Pit: National Coal Mining Museum, Blaenavon. (Photograph by author)**

When Big Pit opened, many of the tour guides were Blaenavon ex-miners, but in 2010, all but two came from elsewhere. Once these two men retire a largely national claim to mining heritage will have the chance to prevail. This is reinforced by the large over-ground exhibition space which promotes a Welsh experience of coalmining from around 1850–2000. Moreover, the National Museum Wales is tied to the objectives of the Welsh Assembly Government and particularly the ‘One Wales’ agenda (Morgan and Jones 2007). This commits National Museum Wales to helping build a ‘strong confident nation’, as well as promoting life-long learning, sustainable environments, justice in society, widening participation, and cultural diversity (National Museum Wales 2009). Thus, authorized expert knowledge in this context is clearly related to a national interpretation of the heritage. This is in conflict with both the claims of World Heritage as well as local values and demonstrates that despite the policies of the Partnership encouraging a local focus, in practice this may not be realized.

### *Blaenavon Town Centre*

Turning to the town of Blaenavon, physical regeneration of the built fabric was initiated in 1999, when several historical shop fronts on the main thoroughfare (Broad Street) were reconstructed. The aim was to create an attractive place to live and work, ultimately encouraging further financial investment, to encourage Blaenavon residents to improve their own properties, and to help foster a sense of pride in the town. The attempt to transform Blaenavon into a ‘booktown’ – a town full of independent bookshops – in 2003 can be considered a continuation of such projects despite being implemented by an external party. Both the national and local media heralded the booktown project as a turning point for the economy. For instance, *The Times* said the town would be ‘saved by books’ (de Bruxelles 2003). This particular project failed: nine bookshops opened in June 2003 and all but one had closed by June 2004. This project was often mentioned in interviews with both locals and professionals indicating the significance of the failure. The project was financed by an external organization but the Blaenavon Partnership publically supported it. It became clear during the interviews that the failure of the project was also associated, to varying degrees, with the heritage professionals. Today, the problem of encouraging the 180,000 yearly visitors to Big Pit to come to the town and spend in local shops still exists. The promised results of economic regeneration have not fully emerged, and this has led to a lack of trust between many local residents and heritage managers.

Much of this distrust may be down to a simple lack of communication between professionals and locals. Broad Street, the main thoroughfare in Blaenavon, is largely split between locally-orientated businesses and tourist shops, which occupy the renovated historic buildings. From interviewing the owners of some of the ‘local shops’, it was clear that they felt that tourists do not use their shops, but ‘just go to the boutique shops’. On the other hand, many of the owners of the ‘tourist shops’ moved into Blaenavon from other regions of Wales, and felt that they suffer from a degree of hostility from the locally established businesses. The local hostility is apparently based in a feeling that the council helped the new residents set up their

shops. In fact, a strong feeling of ownership is harboured by the local community towards parts of the built heritage. For example, many locals claim a stake in the ownership of the Workmen's Hall (Figure 12.3; actually owned by Torfaen County Borough Council) since their ancestors paid to fund its building and upkeep. The idea of people belonging to a place or being 'insiders', clearly echoes Jones's (2004) observations that local people position others in relation to how they regard the heritage of an area. Indeed, through interviews it became evident that many of the locals considered the professionals to be 'outsiders', even if they came from a few miles away, simply because they had not truly engaged with local feelings, or 'local knowledge'. This seemed to have been extended to the 'boutique' businesses by association. Many did recognize the commitment and good intentions of the heritage professionals but the feeling of a lack of community involvement in projects seems to have reinforced the exclusion of some members of Blaenavon society. In fact, the heritage professionals at Blaenavon said that they have come to recognize this themselves, asserting that more community-led projects are needed.

However, to some extent a sense of pride has been successfully instilled in the town. The overall impression gleaned from local people was that the town had improved in physical appearance, and community pride had been bolstered. Most people were pleased about the World Heritage listing, a label that clearly was not problematic in itself. Indeed, one major community led event, the annual 'World Heritage Day', which is a rebranding of the annual carnivals held since the early 1960s, attracts around 10,000 visitors annually (Figure 12.4). Everyone that spoke about this said it was a source of pride. It is organized and run almost solely by local residents; the council merely facilitates the event. This suggests that in order to achieve social goals like 'empowerment', focusing on the economic is not enough; active community involvement is also required.



**Figure 12.3 – The Blaenavon Workmen’s Hall. (Photograph by Darren Wyn Rees)**



**Figure 12.4 – Blaenavon World Heritage Day 2006. (Photograph by Ric Beachley)**

### *Forgotten Landscapes*

A temporary scheme entitled Forgotten Landscapes may help to address the inter-related problems of under-representation of local heritage and lack of community involvement. Initiated in the summer of 2010, the scheme aims to allow for more extensive engagements and projects with a diversity of community groups and individuals. Many of the projects explicitly recognize that real benefits must be provided for local people, in terms of skills and qualifications, but also social and economic wellbeing. Project ideas were formulated through consultations with the local community. In fact, the area covered by the Forgotten Landscape scheme is twice as large as the inscribed World Heritage Site, which was a response to local people's views that the World Heritage boundaries do not match the local sense of place (Forgotten Landscapes 2009). One programme addresses community engagement, education and training. For example, one project within this programme is a collaboration between professionals and a local youth cycling group. Part of the industrial landscape is several square kilometres of upland which have affected and been affected by industry. Through developing a bike trail, the environmentally damaging practice of bike scrambling in uplands will be tackled, but it will also provide the youths with practical skills, such as landscape maintenance, and vocational qualifications related to managing aspects of the heritage landscape. Another example is a project that offers adult education, providing formal qualifications such as Certificates of Higher Education. However, this project will involve a two-way relationship, as information about the historic landscape will also be sought from locals, which will inform a historic landscape character study of part of the Forgotten Landscapes area. These projects are responding to the need to continue regenerating the local economy, but also working with local people and using the cultural and natural heritage in innovative and sustainable ways. Forgotten Landscape aims to create interactive dialogues with professionals and various social groups, responding to rather than merely recognizing diverse needs. If incorporated into the mainstream management of the Blaenavon Partnership, rather than being a temporary scheme, meaningful and fruitful collaborations can become routine.

## **Relocating Expertise**

It can be argued that the competing definitions of heritage at Blaenavon are related to different realms of expertise, including (and not exhaustively): local experience, a version of heritage management framed by professional discourse, a national version espoused by the Welsh government and its agencies, and UNESCO's interpretation of universally significant heritage. The great challenge for the Blaenavon Partnership is to find a balance between these concerns, whilst considering other related issues such as sustainability, that is, preserving the values of the World Heritage Site while also enabling economic, physical and social changes to occur (Blaenavon Partnership 2010: 69). However, there is presently no permanent formal structure within the Partnership allowing for meaningful collaborations with the local community in formulating the aims and objectives of the Partnership as a whole and in individual projects. This means that the traditional 'experts' remain in a position of authority.

A notion of local ownership, related to feelings of belonging, is evident in discourse about particular aspects of the cultural heritage. Sites such as the Workmen's Hall are imbued with meanings that relate to its historic qualities, but also values based on a sense of place, allowing it to act as a reference point of identity. Conflict can arise through external claims of ownership, and this can clearly be related to the question of where exactly 'expertise' lies. In this case, the label of 'expert' has been attributed to professional decision-makers who, although not ignoring local views and concerns, are not incorporating them in such a way that they are respected as equally expert. Conversely, interviews indicated that many locals felt that the professional 'outsiders' were unauthorized decision-makers. Until the start of the Forgotten Landscapes scheme, no major provision had been afforded for truly collaborative or community-led projects. Involvement was effectively limited to offering support for the various individual projects already planned by the Blaenavon Partnership's working groups.

Expertise may be considered a form of delegated authority. However, by allowing experts to act on their behalf, democratic publics do not necessarily abandon the right to participate in decisions (Jasanoff 2003). Legitimate expertise may only exist when experts clearly allow for

negotiation of their status. This means that experts might only be respected as authoritative when they allow for transparency, as in other forms of democratically delegated power (Jasanoff 2003). It should not be possible to pinpoint a single locus of expertise in the negotiation of complex issues, such as those emerging from the management of World Heritage. Indeed, a transdisciplinary attitude or approach can allow for the negotiation of different types of expertise, including aesthetic, ethical, instrumental and scientific knowledge. Further, the negotiation of these different types of knowledge between representatives can produce a hybrid knowledge product, wherein professionals may act as a kind of mediator, seeking to bring people together and extract the relevant knowledge around an issue (Klein 2004). Latour (2005) has similarly presented the notion of object-centred democracies wherein an object (i.e. an issue) should offer the opportunity to create a forum, wherein people can discuss the values, attitudes, and principles that matter to them. This demands a consideration of both what is the issue at hand, and who is to be concerned with that issue. Latour argues that to date democracy has focused more on procedure (i.e. bringing some of the relevant parties together) rather than considering the contested nature of objects themselves. This may account for subaltern viewpoints being often marginalized or subsumed within an authorized view of heritage; instead of existing as equally expert forms of knowledge, they are considered marginal to a supposed self-evident, 'objective' interpretation.

Successful community involvement or collaboration in archaeological heritage management demands the repositioning of expertise and authority. This allows for subaltern viewpoints, methods and practices that previously had a peripheral existence to be shifted towards the centre of theory and practice (Silliman 2008b). In collaborative archaeology, archaeologists are essentially encouraged to abandon their claim to absolute authority to not only the interpretation of the past, but also to programme aims and outcomes. Instead, programmes should be more mutually beneficial, egalitarian and participatory (Colwell-Chanthaphonh and Ferguson 2008a). Importantly, this does not require the abandoning of archaeological or technically framed expertise, but does require abandoning a commitment to the norms of disciplines and institutions (whether academic or otherwise). Further, successful collaboration demands of professionals an

awareness of power imbalances, in disciplines like archaeology as well as broader socio-political contexts (Wylie 2008). Significantly, there may be no textbook approach to collaboration as each project is grounded in varying socio-political contexts, and makes use of different theories, practices and ethics. This observation is borne out by the increasing number of volumes grappling with the tenets of collaboration (e.g. Swidler et al. 1997, Derry and Malloy 2003, Kerber 2006, Colwell-Chanthaphonh and Ferguson 2008a, Silliman 2008a, Walker 2011).

So where does this leave the role of the traditional heritage 'expert'? To provisionally answer this question, a heritage professional should ideally adopt an 'ethic of collaboration', which entails the development of relationships with other individuals and communities based upon virtues such as civility, trust, patience, honesty, and respect (Colwell-Chanthaphonh and Ferguson 2004, Colwell-Chanthaphonh 2011). McDavid (2004: 37) encourages an engaged reciprocity wherein community help may be requested by the professional, but the community could also request a focus on research questions that serve their interests. Genuine, rather than superficial, long-term relationships often need to be established. These should not just involve niceties in order to secure access to a body of knowledge that can be appropriated (see Boast 2011), but should represent mutually beneficial partnerships. Consequently, this may require specific demands of the heritage manager: at a basic level a patient disposition and the ability to deal with the critiques offered by others (Nicholas et al. 2008); the ability to be self-reflexive about the various (social, political, historical, personal) contexts that influence decisions (Mortensen and Hollowell 2008); and deciding whether it is acceptable on a personal level to adopt the position of advocate for a community (McDavid 2009, McGuire 2008). Hikins and Cherwitz (2011) assert that the best expertise exhibits both focus (e.g. knowledge of the historical value of a heritage site), but also peripheral awareness (e.g. considering competing versions of that same site). Further, they argue that experts should be aware of the 'collateral phenomena' in the surrounding environment, which influences and is influenced by the exercise of expertise. Failing to do so means experts may produce unanticipated adverse effects through exercising simple self-interest or acting merely in the interest of a community of experts.

## **Conclusion**

Heritage management is now conceptualized as a practice which can provide benefits other than conserving heritage for the benefit of future generations. These benefits can contribute to both economic regeneration and social wellbeing, and could afford a level of empowerment to various social groups. The heritage-led regeneration efforts in Blaenavon have certainly improved the built fabric of the town and it has enhanced community pride significantly, as evident in the positive sentiments towards the annual World Heritage Day. Although the heritage professionals at Blaenavon are committed to improving the life of the local community as well as conserving the posited outstanding universal values of the World Heritage Site, tension has arisen through the ways in which the local community has been involved in practice. The Forgotten Landscapes scheme will theoretically allow for a more meaningful engagement with a diverse range of community groups and individuals, who are in some projects afforded the role of 'expert'. Nevertheless, it must be noted that the Forgotten Landscapes scheme is not yet incorporated into the main Blaenavon Partnership, so for the aims of the scheme to be effective in the long-term the restructuring of the management may be necessary to ensure the formalization of collaborative approaches in the overall management of the World Heritage Site.

It is not always clear who should be attributed the label 'expert'. This is dependent on particular contexts and may involve a critical consideration of the processes that have upheld the marginal status of certain groups and their views on heritage. The attribution of the label 'expert' to non-professionals may be controversial for some (e.g. McGhee 2008). However, collaboration is ultimately about decentering authority and accommodating the diversity of values that exist in pluralist democracies. It is also about acknowledging various social injustices (Colwell-Chanthaphonh et al. 2010). This being the case, to produce beneficial outcomes for local communities in World Heritage management, the needs and values of local communities may require more weight and active support than the values defined as 'universal', or indeed other values such as those held by a local or national government. It is not always clear what role the

new brand of ‘heritage professional’ – to avoid the problematic term ‘heritage expert’ – should adopt. Again, this can be said to be context-dependent. Nonetheless, it is evident that heritage professionals should exhibit a ‘transdisciplinary attitude’ (Klein 2004), wherein they are critically aware of multiple, competing versions of heritage, self-aware of their own biases, and can demonstrate the ability to bring together and mediate between interested and relevant parties. Collaborating with a community means that programme aims and definitions can be redefined in ways that are more or less mutually beneficial for the preservation of the built heritage, for the local community and for the tourist industry. Simply put, heritage professionals must accept that they can no longer maintain the sole authority they have enjoyed to date.

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