

B eing Here

Heritage, Belonging and Place Making

A Study of Community and Identity Formation at Avebury (England), Magnetic Island (Australia) and Ayutthaya (Thailand).



Avebury, village and megaliths

Magnetic Island, the beach at Alma Bay

Ayutthaya, school groups at Wat Phra Si Sanphet

**'Being Here': Heritage, Belonging and Place Making.
A Study of Community and Identity Formation at Avebury (England),
Magnetic Island (Australia) and Ayutthaya (Thailand).**

**Thesis submitted by
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in September 2004**

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STATEMENT OF ACCESS

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ABSTRACT

This thesis looks at the way cultural heritage can be more broadly considered to include intangible aspects of our lives. Such intangible heritage encompasses the general values and worldviews of a community and enshrines a community's character and identity. Through meanings, associations, values and ways of life, people individually and collectively create a meaningful relationship with place. Place and community are mutually constituted through social action and practice and the attribution of meaning in a process of 'place making' and of reasserting belonging.

It is recognised that communities are fluid categories that can be 're-sited' in relation to new questions or different places and times. Both individual and community identity are a form of production, and consist as a process that is never complete. That is, identity is not only a matter of 'being' but also a process of 'becoming'. By addressing case studies in three World Heritage listed locations – Magnetic Island (Australia), Avebury (England) and Ayutthaya (Thailand) – the thesis considers the dissonance between heritage as defined and practised through hegemonic instruments and discourses (including international organisations, bureaucratic structures and the Academy), and heritage as conceived by contemporary communities as being the aspects of their lived existence that they desire to retain for future generations.

Through discussion of emplaced communities and a series of case studies, consideration is given to the hegemonic dominance of sanctioned determinations of heritage that attribute significance and in the process can mute local values and narratives. The thesis challenges the ongoing emphasis on tangible aspects of heritage and reviews the natural/cultural heritage dichotomy, demonstrating that attachments to nature are predicated on experiences, practices and engagements with the environment that are grounded in social and cultural processes. I further explore the way in which the voicing of opinions in a struggle over place can be regulated by prevailing scientific discourses and discursive fields, placing a reliance on arguments about conservation that are ancillary to more specific but less articulatable concerns to do with place and identity. Finally, I illustrate the significance of the lived traditions, rituals, ceremonies, skills and practices of the contemporary communities to a holistic understanding of heritage at both the local and broader levels.

I conclude that it is by understanding what it is that communities find important, and how such attachments and values are formed, transmitted and retained to create a 'sense of place', that community participation in heritage can be meaningfully achieved. Community assertions of the aspects of their lives that can be considered important to pass on to their children are not enshrined in the monuments, structures and archaeology that heritage professionals are more likely to identify, but in the sense of belonging that arises through the mutual construction of community and place, reinforced through social practices, memories and local narratives.

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STATEMENT OF SOURCES

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted in any form for another degree or diploma at any university or other institution of tertiary education. Information derived from the published or unpublished work of others has been acknowledged in the text and a list of references is given. I also declare that all research procedures reported in the thesis have received the approval of the relevant ethics committee.

Signature..... Date

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