Social Psychology

Built Heritage as Imagines Agentes

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In this paper we seek to investigate the concept of built heritage as Imagines Agentes whereby built heritage functions as a generating force in the process of appropriation towards belonging. Heritage places as meaningful locations can form a bridge linking the past to the future in a sensitive way. Accessing a local community’s connections to their surrounding environment and recognising and acknowledging the role that built heritage plays here is critical because people’s relationships with places of which built heritage is an integrated part are key to the contemporary policy issues surrounding (social) sustainability. Decision making in projects of restoration and redevelopment of heritage places, particularly in the collective sphere, must consider local populations with their narratives and experiences if the project is to be sustainable and socially better accepted. In the paper, built heritage as Imagines Agentes has been explored through the three-step methodology of Interactive Walking. This novel practice-based method combines methodological approaches in cultural anthropology, such as historical and phenomenological approaches, with the skills of an architect, which comprise observational drawing and modelmaking together with historical heritage studies. We explore the concept of built heritage as Imagines Agentes from two viewpoints, whereby the method and subject start to merge within the object of inquiry: as part of a graphical mnemonic technique for heritage practitioners or planners exploring a heritage site and as part of the environmental appropriation process of local community members.

Introduction

The Cultural Heritage Counts for Europe report (Europa Nostra, 2015) stresses the multiple benefits of heritage and its economic and cultural, environmental and social importance: it demonstrates that to achieve the sustainable development of a heritage site, these four facets are equally important. This means that in addition to their important economic and cultural relevance, historic places have other values at the ecological and/or social level that are translated into different forms of deep actual significance for members of local communities—significance that is not always directly linked to their acknowledged historical characteristics.

The research report of the National Trust (2017) Places that make us, which was updated in 2019 as Why Places matter to people, creates a scientific basis showing that heritage has a clear impact on the well-being of people. The report demonstrates that heritage not only plays a fundamental role in the economic and cultural well-being of contemporary society, but also in people’s sense of belonging, and their feeling ’at home’ (This has to be seen broader than how Tuan [1977] puts it: ’What is home? It is the old homestead, the old neighbourhood, hometown, or motherland’ [1] as we will later demonstrate). The National Trust worked with leading researchers and academics and used innovative FMRI brain scanning technology to examine how places affect people, how they become special and why they attract people; the report shows that places that are meaningful to people generate a significant response in the areas of the brain most commonly associated with emotions. Important in the research is the discovery that people connect with meaningful places in three key ways: connections to the past, connections to the here and now and what thereport calls connections to significant others. Under the section ’Identity and belonging’, it says the following:

There is a real sense of belonging and attachment to places that are meaningful to people. Eight out of ten describe their place as being part of them (86%) and 58% agree that they ’feel like I belong’ when visiting this place. This underpins this physical pull that people feel, as 15% mention a sense of belonging when thinking about how their place makes them feel. (National Trust, 2017, p. 25)

The landscape architect Randolph Hester goes even further based on his experience of fifty years of community design work when he states ’The collective attachment to
place exerts the most positive influence of any single force on the design of community' (2014, p. 191). This means that when several people are attached to the same place, in casu a heritage place, this also stimulates the sense of belonging to a community.

It is clear that if a monument is reduced to its functional- ity, for example, by neglecting its historical characteristics, there is a high risk of cultural destruction. Ignoring the intrinsic qualities of a heritage place can result in the ecological distortion of slowly grown ecosystems. However, social alienation because of the neglect of the different forms of the deep, actual significance of a heritage place, here embedded in place attachment, is much more difficult to de- tect and measure.

Departing from the traditional focus on the built or un- built dichotomy, with the current paper, we aim at delving deeper into the topic of the interrelationship between local inhabitants and built heritage as Imagines Agentes,1 with its activating, generating and inspiring appearance.2 Heritage places serve as a threshold of collective memory of shared ideas that are constantly renewed with an opening in looking to the future. This process is supported and questioned by a myriad of individual memories, experiences and wishes, hence underscoring the idea of openness, diversity, historical heterogeneity and social interactions as sources of place meaning (Iwańczak & Lewicka, 2020, p. 2, referring to Harvey, 1993 and Massey, 1995). However, when thinking about the meaning of a heritage place, we do not exclude the sense of rootedness, or the nature of emotional bonds between people and places (Di Masso et al., 2019). These aspects are often placed in the same row as historical continuity and stability, identity and enclosure while setting aside a more conservative idea about the meaning of place (Norberg-Schulz, 1980; Relph, 1976; Tuan, 1977). With this paper, we want to demonstrate that the interaction with built heritage as Imagines Agentes, more specifically unintentional heritage (Riegler, 1903/1996), such as vernacular and indus- trial heritage, addresses the past, present and future simul- taneously, which means that it emphasises both stability and dynamics, enclosure and openness. This is impor- tant when considering the paradigm shift in the social sciences, where a previous ‘sédentary’ concept of place gave way to an approach that takes into account mobility and the changes inherent in the contemporary world (a ‘mo- bility paradigm’) (Iwańczak & Lewicka, 2020, referring to Cresswell, 2006 and Urry, 2000). The Australian architect Kim Dovey (2009), frames the two views as being opposites: ‘place as being vs. place as becoming’. However, it becomes clearer that it is very difficult, if not impossible, to classify the meaning of the heritage place unequivocally along the conservative (static) and progressive (dynamic) dimensions (Iwańczak & Lewicka, 2020, p. 2). It contains both.

This chapter investigates which role heritage structures play in the process of the visual, mental and physical ap- propriation of a heritage place, whereby place is defined as a meaningful location (Iwańczak & Lewicka, 2020 refer- ring to Agnew, 1987 and Tuan, 1977). It explores the un- derlying meaning of the (spatial) experience with heritage in the process of place attachment, ‘where experiences con- tain both the outward appearance and inward conscious- ness based on memory and image’ (Cresswell, 2007, p. 59).

This was experimented through the practice-based re- search ‘Tracing the deep significance of built heritage through encounters with undisclosed protagonists’ (Gantois, 2019), whereby the possibilities of a new practice-based three-step methodology of Interactive Walking were explored in their capacity to detect and unpack those forms of actual sig- nificance heritage places have for people which are relat- ed to spatial experiences and intensify the understanding of it. This method addresses (architect) heritage practition- ers with the conviction that implementing deeper knowl- edge about the meaning of the heritage place and its role in the attachment of people to the place will result in develop- ment plans and restoration projects that are socially better accepted.

The new survey methodology of routes, observations and narratives is characterised by an active, process-based and context-related approach, whereby knowledge is derived from the practice of everyday life. It shifts a heritage practi- tioner’s attention from an exclusive ‘substantial’ (or ma- terial) focus on the historical building or site to a broader peripheral vision with an anthropological perspective. In- deed, it underscores the field role of the heritage practi- tioner with time and slowness as the method’s essential features. The instruments and strategies employed in the new methodology of Interactive Walking combine method- ological approaches in cultural anthropology such as his- torical and phenomenological approaches with unplanned open interviews of community members as important fea- tures with the skills of an architect, comprising observa- tional drawing and modelmaking, and historical heritage studies.

The working method facilitates the detection and imple- mentation of multiple narratives, both old and new; these narratives are indirectly collected while moving and paus- ing on site through unplanned encounters with randomly run-into subjects, members of the community impacted by a heritage project, here without distinction between natives and newcomers, minorities or gender. Interactive Walking consists of three successive steps. Step 1: Interactive Journeys entails the heritage practition- er’s immersion in the natural setting of the heritage place

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1 Imagines Agentes or active images comes from the Classical art of oratory. Frances Yates (2014, pp. 12–13) refers to imagines agentes as classical memory images. Cicero’s definition has become canonical: the site (locus) is the location—the rooms of a house, for example, or a colonnade—where the orator, in preparing his speech, may line up the images of the things he wants to remember. He is advised to choose active images (imagines agentes) (Hartog, 2011/2015, p. 126).

2 I will do this as an architect reflecting on thirty-five years of practice specialised in the restoration of community heritage situated in peri-urban and post-industrial areas and education and research at the Faculty and Department of Architecture KU Leuven in Belgium since 1991 (http://architectuur.kuleuven.be) and since 2020 also at the Raymond Lemaire International Centre for Conservation (RLICC), Master of Science in Conservation of Monuments and Sites (http://set.kuleuven.be/rlicc).
while walking, observing, sketching and interacting. In Step 2: Spatial Narratives, the practitioner’s individual experiences on location are represented in artistic drawings and tactile models in which heritage places play a central role.

In Step 3: Cartes Parlantes, the individual experiences are confronted and combined with existing expert knowledge.

The three steps of the method were built up through different real-life case studies from the postindustrial Rupel region (academic year 2015–2016 and 2018–2019), the peri-urban Brabantse Kouters region (academic year 2016–2017) and the post-traumatic city of Ypres (academic year 2017–2018 and 2019–2020), all situated in Flanders in Belgium and elaborated on in master studio assignments for students of the International Master in the Architecture programme at KU Leuven, Belgium. The present article will not particularly concentrate on these cases; however, illustrations, which are extracted from the students’ work, will support the different observations. We will not fully elaborate on the method within the scope of the current article, but we will focus on Step 1: Interactive Journeys, whereby the concept of built heritage as Imagines Agentes plays a central role. The other two steps will only briefly be discussed. However, before coming to this we need to situate the problem of the undervaluation of the deep actual significance of heritage places in the process of place attachment for communities today.

The Deep Significances of Built Heritage Undervalued

Until recently, the official valuation of heritage buildings and sites has been nearly exclusively based on their historical characteristics. In the past, there was a concentration on intentional monumental heritage (Riegl, 1903/1996), and then, in the second part of the twentieth century, the focus was also on preserving the vernacular and industrial (unintentional [Riegl, 1903/1996]) heritage for future generations as both the material and immaterial witnesses of all facets of human life and activity. The historian François Hartog (2011/2015, pp. 115–116) calls this changing perspective on historicity in his book Regimes of Historicity, Presentism and Experiences of Time; the author re-attributes a central role to heritage after an era of optimist futurism in which many historical sites were demolished. In the mid-1970s, environmental protection and the preservation of monuments, objects, ways of life, landscapes and animal species became major concerns in the context of increasing globalisation. This was translated in UNESCO’s charters in 1972 with the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage’, which codified the idea of world heritage. The year 1980 was declared Heritage Year, and the idea of memory (invisible and intangible) attached to places came into the foreground. In 1984, the historian Pierre Nora introduced the idea of a ‘site of memory’ [lieu de mémoire] together with heritage (visible and tangible) and its protection and promotion. Inventorising and rethinking it became major issues (Hartog, 2011/2015, pp. 115–116).

This preoccupation with preserving, even reconstructing, a past that might never have existed finally resulted in what Heinich (2010) calls an overfabrication of heritage, to which she refers in the title of her book, La Fabrique du Patrimoine: de la cathédrale à la petite cuillère [translation by the author: The Fabrication of Patrimony: From the Cathedral to the little spoon].

Unfortunately, because of the need for alternative funding and of the challenge of urban pressure and postindustrial processes, in many parts of the world, increasing commercialisation has impacted numerous historical city centres, quarters and peri-urban areas. As a result, the important agency of heritage in the creation of locality and place and the well-being related to the interaction with a heritage place was—and is still—largely undervalued in development plans that almost exclusively judge these buildings and sites by their picturesque character (Waterton et al., 2006, p. 549; Wells, 2010, 2011). The focus is on their instant economic utility because they are often located in very attractive senescent environments and their archetypical form allows for multiple reuse. In many cases, their new function dramatically changes their spatial context and composition, reducing them to empty shells. Hence, heritage is not only disrupted from its historical continuity in time and space, but also from what it essentially is—namely, a long-term developed common with deep significance for local communities.

Ultimately, these heritage sites can no longer be active drivers of positive change as they once were. Instead, they become something that is only subject to change (Fouski et al., 2019, pp. 1–15). There is no space here to go into a detailed analysis of the process, but it raises interesting questions within the discourse about the aforementioned conservative and progressive visions of the meaning of a (heritage) place: what option is active, evolving, generating and which one is passive, fixative and annihilating? The answer is obvious: the neglect of different forms of deep significance of heritage places in restoration and development plans cutting into collectively used places is what triggers feelings of estrangement. Finally, the disturbance of different heritage values embedded in place attachment is pre-


4 In each of the case studies the participating students offered their informed consent. The studio assignments derived from the cases are part of the classroom discussions and all students choose to participate. The students were not remunerated for their participation. They received an evaluation on the results of their architectural projects but not on the survey part, which was based on the developed method and served as the study material for the research in Gantois, G., 2019. Tracing the deep significance of built heritage through the encounter of undisclosed protagonists. Belgium: KU Leuven, unpublished.
ciscely what provokes claims to the right to heritage that arise so often when projects emerge that were not created together with community members who deal with the heritage place on a daily basis.

At the same time, we realise that there is a danger in using community as an easy concept to defend the choices made in restoration or development heritage site projects. ‘In these situations’, Emma Waterton and Laurajane Smith (2010, p. 7) write, ‘jointly-run projects tend to involve things that are done for communities, rather than with them’. The authors state that professionals often speak on behalf of those who are put in the shadows of traditional heritage narratives and restoration projects. For this reason, it is important to (re-)define on a case-by-case basis what the community is in relation to a particular project, here having in mind that ‘community’ is a very fluid concept. ‘Communities’ must be understood according to Waterton and Smith’s (2010) definition in their critical article, ‘The Recognition and Misrecognition of Community Heritage’. They argue that in rethinking the notion of community within the field of heritage, ‘Communities [...] become social creations and experiences that are continuously in motion, rather than fixed entities and descriptions, in flux and constant motion, unstable and uncertain’ (7). This resonates with Cohen’s (1985) opinion that ‘Community exists in the minds of its members, and should not be confused with geographic or sociographic assertions of “fact”. By extension, the distinctiveness of communities and, thus, the reality of their boundaries, similarly lies in the mind, in the meanings, which people attach to them, not in the structural forms’ (98).

However, Waterton and Smith’s (2010, p. 10) definition implies that it is important to understand ‘community’ as a powerful concept within the field of heritage studies because there is indeed a growing need for considering the intense interaction between communities and built heritage in the creation of emotional bonds between people and a particular place or environment of which the heritage structures are an integrated part (see also Seamon, 2013, p. 11 referring to Manzo, 2005; Lewicka, 2011; Patterson & Williams, 2005 and Trentelman, 2009 for a review on place attachment).

A theoretical framework on the present cultural and social value of heritage (without precisely explicting the concept of ‘value of heritage’ itself) and the importance of community involvement when developing heritage sites has already been constructed.

This can be detected in different statements, such as in the publications of Waterton & Watson (2011) and Sarkki et al. (2019), in policy documents and reports such as Cultural Heritage Counts for Europe (Europa Nostra, 2015) and the European Commission (2018a, 2018b) and in many other sources.

The present cultural and social importance of heritage has also been put forward by organisations, such as the Association of Critical Heritage Studies. Since its establishment in 2010, the ACHS has widened the field of investigation related to (oftentimes intangible or movable) heritage by introducing an anthropological perspective. In its preliminary manifesto written in 2012 the founders of the association state explicitly that they aim to ‘invite the active participation of people and communities who to date have been marginalised in the creation and management of “heritage”’. In relation to this, Historic England publishes a yearly report on the value and impact of heritage and the historic environment. In 2014 Heritage Counts looked at the social and economic value of heritage to communities, individuals and the economy (Historic England, 2014), and in 2009, the report Sense of Place, ‘focused on the role of the historic environment in shaping what individuals think and feel about where they live’ (Historic England, 2009). The aforementioned research reports of the National Trust (2017, 2019) demonstrate that there is a strong physical and emotional connection between places and people—and that these places have a positive effect on our well-being.

Heritage-related charters and conventions (Faro Convention, 2005; ICOMOS, 1994, 2013) have long underscored the necessity of reflecting on the social value of heritage places. However, they do not provide clear tools for heritage practitioners for detecting, unveiling and mapping the heritage place’s present societal significance.

On the one hand, since 1990, many scholars from different disciplines have been investigating the meaning of place as an important aspect of social life and its constitutive role in numerous phenomena (Lewicka, 2011; Iwańczak & Lewicka, 2020; Baur et al., 2014 etc.).

On the other hand, there is also a revived interest in heritage in different professions. The social sciences with anthropology and environmental psychology but also Philosophy have clearly been paying attention to the interactions between communities and built heritage and the site’s territory.

Unfortunately, there is still a gap among the different disciplines between theory and (heritage) practice with the methodological considerations related to it (Baur et al., 2014; Gotham, 2003).

In sociology, for example, the following can be noticed:

[... while there have been a lot of actual research and methodological developments on how space is imagined, how people interact in space, what relations space (sic) have to each other and how people move between spaces, there is surprisingly little research on how space is created, experienced and appropriated. (Baur et al., 2014, p. 39)]

And the authors conclude the following: ´Therefore, one focus for future research should be how to methodologically grasp these aspects of spatiality´ (Baur et al., 2014, p. 39).

**Tracing the Deep Significance of Built Heritage as Imagines Agentes**

With the growing demand for more community involvement in the understanding of the lived environment of which built heritage is an integrated part in the creation of a sustainable and resilient society, it is essential to investigate the development of renewed (practice-oriented) methodologies in heritage research and to understand the different forms of deep significance of built heritage related to the experiential dimension of a heritage space’s spatiality and place attachment.

In heritage practice, the focus has long been static, em-
phasising the building's history, its materiality and the technical aspects of conservation and restoration. Heritage practitioners have a range of well-known and effective methods for managing monuments and sites and addressing their financial accountability, but they are not supposed to engage with local communities or effectively investigate the (social) meaning of a historical place. Although participatory practices have been put in place to develop management plans for heritage sites, they still mostly deal with questions about possible reuse programmes. In addition, heritage practitioners are not always involved from the beginning of the planning process; they are involved when decisions about the (re-)use of the heritage place have already been made.

This is a clear deficit because they spend a very long time on location when doing their material survey, which means that when they are open to it, they have many informal encounters and exchanges with local people who provide them with stories, newspaper clippings, old pictures, paintings and references that deepen the knowledge about the place and its different forms of actual significance.

Additionally, the existing participatory practices do not always seem to be effective, regarding where to reach the different communities members involved, especially those who are non-active. It is often difficult, if not impossible, to provide them with their rightful place within the project process—rightful because while they remain on the periphery of the site, as ‘key holders’, they often have different knowledge of the heritage site, which is fundamental for the understanding of both the heritage’s history and the attachment to (or the aversion to) the place.

Therefore, in Step 1: Interactive Journeys of this novel method, a decisive place is attributed to unplanned encounters with the undisclosed but inspiring protagonists to discover what possible meaning the heritage place has for them. The opportunity to meet people is encouraged by rewalking the lines they walked before or that they are still walking (Ingold, 2007, pp. 72–105; Ingold & Vergunst, 2008; Lund, 2008). It places the researchers ‘in the mobile habitats of their informants’ and enables them ‘to observe their informants’ spatial practices in situ’ (Kusenbach, 2003, p. 478).

This is the first essential phase in the investigation of a heritage site because walking is ‘fundamental to the way that we both perceive and intervene in our environments’ (Pink, 2007, p. 244). For heritage professionals seeking to deepen their understanding of the heritage place, the whole context in time and space can be considered more intensely in the survey and planning process by implementing a more active approach with a phenomenological focus.

The use of walking as a fruitful research method is not new. Rebecca Solnit’s (2000) magnificent Wanderlust traces the long history of walking, more particularly its place in literature. There is indeed compelling similarity between the way that a wandering writer uses the reading activity of walking to understand the (urban) landscape and the strategies used in Step 1: Interactive Journeys.

To become thoroughly immersed in the site to investigate, explorations on foot take place over a considerable period of time. As the historian, writer and (feminist) activist Solnit (2005, p. 10) formulates in A Field Guide to Getting Lost, one is ‘illiterate in the landscapes’ language, which is the colloquial expression of the place itself’. Therefore, at the core of the new methodology to explore the relationship of people with ‘their’ heritage and its significance lies not only walking, but more specifically observational walking in the area where the heritage site is situated. Similar to what is referred to as sensory anthropology, in the present methodology, observational walking is considered to be a tool that uses not only the sense of sight, but all of an individual’s sensory and sensual capacities while being reflexive (Pink, 2007).

While walking, the observations and experiences of places and events are retraced and expressed while sketching in small notebooks (Figure 1). No sophisticated instruments such as GPS recording or video recording are needed: only pencil and paper are. These devices are accessible to all. Forms, marks or simulacra of what the heritage practitioner wishes to remember and thoughts that pop up while walking are graphically chronicled, page by page in tiny folded sketchbooklets, which initially serve to memorise the place (as mnemonic devices). The act of observational drawing is introduced here for many reasons. First, drawing is a familiar skill of the heritage practitioner. Additionally, the ability to draw, by hand, as well as to work with models helps to ‘put the designer in a haptic contact with the object, or space’ (Pallasmaa, 2012, p. 14). Observational drawing stimulates sensorial perceptions and sharpens one’s observational skills. It makes one see things differently than one would do when only taking pictures or using cartographical techniques.

The observer starts having revelations, which occur in the act of retracing the existing, observed places while walking. New knowledge about the place that is often only tacitly understood is generated. While drawing, a selection of fields of interest or lenses through which the cultural landscape is viewed can be made. This action does not narrow the investigations; instead, it gives the practitioner a better grasp of the process, helping him/her select the enormous amount of impressions and information and find the interconnections between the different elements.

When wanting to sketch views in which the heritage places play an essential role and taking note of what one wants to remember, one has to take a short break. Pausing on a spontaneously chosen spot on the walking trajectory transforms the space, which was strange and distant at first, for a brief moment, into a place that is appropriated for an instance. Both actions, observational walking and observational drawing while pausing, intensify the sensorial experiences that unveil new ways of experiencing what are at first unfamiliar surroundings.

In a time in which selfies and snapshots are commonplace, it is specifically the act of sketching that attracts people. The additional fact that this happens in a tiny booklet evokes the curiosity of passers-by inviting them to take a closer look. This moment of intimacy increases the local people’s eagerness to tell stories about the drawn heritage structure which has now turned into the topic of conversation. They talk about their experiences that underscore their attachment to the heritage site. The jot booklet—at first a mnemonic device with an imaginary representation of the observer’s own experienced reality—becomes an im-

Collabra: Psychology
important communication tool. It stimulates the exchange of very personal, off-the-record information that passers-by provide about the place and about their value system, concerns, motivations, culture and behaviour. This makes the investigation truly an interactive journey; it also clarifies whether the studied heritage site still generates a cultural and social identity and still holds meaning for members of local communities, locally born or newcomers. It is specifically this idea of setting out to have unplanned encounters that turns Interactive Walking into a fertile research method ripe with social potential.

Therefore, Step 1: Interactive Journeys can be considered a way to combine a scenic walk for investigating the cultural landscape with a serendipitous stroll for the sake of occasionally meeting others and collecting narratives. This procedure maximises the encounter with the voiceless—that is, the ‘people overlooked as authorities capable of adjudicating their own sense of heritage’ (Waterton & Smith, 2010, p. 10). As was already mentioned, these voices are critical for understanding the way in which the studied heritage site is appropriated within daily life.

There is a range of ways in which researchers from many different disciplines engage with participants ‘on the move’ (see, among others Springgay & Truman, 2017; Pierce & Lawhon, 2015; Ingold, 2013; Pink, 2009; Ingold & Vergunst, 2008; Careri, 2002). Studies vary from those where researchers simply wander through landscapes chatting with participants to highly structured tours designed to elicit responses to specific, predetermined places.

Most of these prior research methods combine ‘interviewing and participant observation, with the researcher accompanying informants as they go about their daily routines and asking them questions along the way’ (Jones et al., 2008, p. 3). In those cases, this can be a simple ‘walk’ (Trell & van Hoven, 2010), a ‘pedestrian inquiry’ (Hall, 2009), or a ‘walking interview’ (Evans & Jones, 2011; Jones et al., 2008), a ‘video tour’ (Pink, 2007) or a ‘go-along’ (Carpiano, 2009; Kusenbach, 2003).

Step 1: Interactive Journeys has similarities with these so-called ‘natural go-alongs’ (Kusenbach, 2003), for this particular variation of the walking method raises the most interesting issues about how an existential dimension of (heritage) space, such as its actual meaning, may be detected, unveiled and grasped. However, here, the aim is not so much to walk with others but to meet people and have unplanned open interviews, pausing to draw a chosen view. It is the practitioner who wanders and chooses the stops. It is the people on location who decide whether the chosen and

Figure 1: Step 1: Interactive Journeys_case III: The city of Ypres - The Ghost Client
drawn views are tempting enough to talk about (turning it into the topic of conversation) while they are in that place. At that moment, the interviewees are prompted by meanings and connections to the surrounding environment or heritage structure that are being drawn by the practitioner. The fact that the conversation takes place while taking a break to be able to sketch the selected views counters the critique that both concentrating on the (informal) interview and taking notes are very difficult and unnecessarily interrupt the flow of the conversation (Evans & Jones, 2011).

After having walked and contemplated while representing and mapping the observations, associations and shared experiences in small sketch booklets, unexpected insights and individual views on the heritage site or landscape are visualised in Step 2: Spatial Narratives in this step's artistic maps and narrative models. Different viewpoints are confronted and interconnected, which allows for unveiling multiple layers of the meaning of the heritage site. The cultural landscape is now experienced in motion as a series of multiple oblique views that can only fully be experienced while walking through the heritage site or landscape as a series of compositions dissolving into each other, rather than as a static picture. In these compositions, the lone peaks of the bell towers of historic parish churches and chapels, for example, along with new (monumental) structures, serve as signposts that both newcomers and locals can use to orient themselves and to mentally connect with. These important guiding elements play a fundamental role in the exploration of the cultural landscape, its surprises and unexpected corners and cut-outs that can only be discovered on foot or at a slow pace. In the continuum of the cultural landscape, built heritage, as well as groves of trees, represent discontinuity, which provides scale and recognition to the landscape.

This new step in the methodology merges the large scale of the landscape with the small scale of built (heritage) structures. The model, which is shown in Figure 2, is a clear example of Step 2: Spatial Narratives; it represents the cultural landscape as it is experienced on site, whereby chapels serve as reference points in the landscape. View corridors are determined by these focal points. Those parts of the landscape that cannot be seen in reality are removed from the model. The line of walking is represented, as was experienced, not in a linear way, but curved, with an open view or encapsulated on a hollow path. Representing real-life experiences generates important new insights about the place heritage occupies in the everyday experiences one has when visually, mentally and physically appropriating the environment while walking. The artistic maps and models in Step 2: Spatial Narratives serve as a reflective tool for how things work when investigating a heritage site or landscape; they also shed light on how local people might experience their lived environment in constructing a memory overview and what the position of heritage structures is in this process.

While walking, one occupies the spaces between the different heritage sites in the same way one occupies the heritage sites themselves. Retracing the walking tracks and graphically documenting the heritage structures that were first selected because they appeal to the eye and show events in a chronological way can ensure the practitioner’s ability to remember each heritage site separately and in relation to each other.

As one travels the whole landscape, rather than just separate spaces, the discovery of relationships or possible conflicts is facilitated. On the move, everything stays connected. When walking, one does not focus on the boundary lines of parcels of land on which the heritage structures are situated and that determine ownership, dividing the land into pieces; rather, one focuses on the paths and tracks that interconnect historical properties, sometimes even privately owned land to which the local people retain rights (Solnit, 2000, p. 162). These commons specifically facilitate fortuitous encounters.

In contrast to the traditional way of conducting surveys at a historical site, the first two steps of the methodology are best applied without preliminary investigations of written sources about the heritage place. This is done to begin the process of looking at the location as open-mindedly as possible.

After having explored the heritage site and its larger context and after having represented the experiences and discoveries in artistic representations as Spatial Narratives, the third fundamental step is counter-mapping by creating a series of Cartes Parlantes [Speaking Maps].

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5 The term, Carte Parlante, was coined by the French historian and geographer, François de Dainville, referring to the Middle Ages where, instead of maps, hundreds, or even thousands, of individual plots of land in a set of fields were listed, giving the exact location of each (Oles, 2008, p. 57). According to Oles (2008, p. 58) ‘they were judged according not to adherence to coordinates or scale, but rather according to the faithfulness with which they described relationships between people – usually landowners – and their physical environ-
Commonly accepted maps are now recast as a series of alternative mappings in which the cultural landscape is reimagined. Basically, these counter-maps begin from the expressions in artistic maps and tactile but distorted models. They relate meaningful perceptions collected while walking, thereby unveiling experiences and collected information from the ground, such as social interactions in and around local heritage, the presence of nature, guiding perspectives and heritage structures as signposts, to information and data collected from above through institutional databases, such as existing maps.

These counter-maps focus on relational issues as crucial factors in the production of inherited space. They include different historical layers, scales, topography, geography, ecology, spatial configurations and temporal elements in the (urban) landscape. They alternate between two-dimensional and three-dimensional representations, combining drawings and pictures in bird’s eye and worm’s eye views. Confronting and combining one’s observations of the heritage place, associations and shared experiences with existing expert knowledge, such as archival studies, historical maps and different data on mobility, hydrology or population, depending on the case under study, opening up new planning possibilities for the place. These possibilities are considered in their capacity to link the past, present and future next to the positivist approach on which the study of immovable heritage is traditionally based (facts situated in the past) and in which tradition heritage practitioners are usually trained.

The new knowledge derived from this counter-mapping is then implemented in the subsequent steps of the project development as new narratives that highlight different scenarios and put alternatives forward.

**How Can Sociocultural Values Be Assessed by Heritage Practitioners?**

Not only is a heritage practitioner usually an outsider in the heritage landscapes and buildings that s/he intends to study s/he is usually also not trained to assess sociocultural values at heritage sites.

Heritage practitioners are specialised professionals; they have experience with the discipline of restoration, and they know how to handle historical materials and techniques. They can identify building typologies. They collaborate with art historians, analysts and specialised engineers. For each new restoration project, they build further on the experience they have gained from previous projects. However, they are not trained how to recognise or read the deep significance that heritage has for other people. In the research report from the Getty Conservation Institute: *Assessing the Values of Cultural Heritage*, anthropologist Setha M. Low reviews existing qualitative approaches (cognitive, observational, phenomenological, historical, ethnographic and discourse approaches) in anthropology that are available for assessing sociocultural values at heritage sites and that could ‘help conservation professionals and managers understand the complexity of social relations and cultural dynamics at play in the conservation planning and development of heritage sites (Low, 2002, p. 31). The Interactive Walking method, more specifically Step 1: Interactive Journeys, borrows some of these methods such as phenomenological and historical approaches.

By using an active context-related narrative approach, the curiosity of both the practitioner and passer-by is triggered, and the focus shifts towards thinking through walking and drawing, taking the ‘whole, sensing self as a route into the experiential’ (Pink, 2009, p. 12).

This creates intimate moments of contemplation in which the researcher considers his/her own lived experience as the basis from which to comprehend the lived experiences of others.

However, the way things are faced by any newcomer, including the heritage practitioner, is inevitably affected by what is believed or what is already known from other places. One can never set foot on a heritage place without immediately associating it with former knowledge and experiences (Bachelard, 1958/1969; Rossi, 1966/1982; Solnit, 2000; van Schaik, 2008). When walking the streets and paths in a given historical context, it is as if one knows the place already. New investigation areas are unconsciously overlaid with a person’s memories from other places and personal imaginings; therefore, practitioners seem to tread as walkers do, moving on a truly imaginary terrain when doing their survey instead of investigating a completely new reality.

Many authors from different disciplines have tackled the strength of walking not only as a means to stimulate the construction of an in-depth mental overview of the lived environment, but also as a triggering activity to actively recall memories from other places. Solnit (2000) cites Leslie Stephen, who in his *In Praise of Walking* takes up William Hazlitt's theme of the musings of the mind writing:

> The walks are the unobtrusive connecting thread of other memories, and yet each walk is a little drama itself, with a definite plot with episodes and catastrophes, according to the requirements of Aristotle; and it is naturally interwoven with all the thoughts, the friendships, and the interests that form the staple of ordinary life. (Stephen as cited by Solnit, 2000, p. 120)


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> Each one of us should speak of his roads, his crossroads, his roadside benches; each one should make a surveyor’s map of his lost fields and meadows. Thoreau said he carried the maps of his fields engraved on his soul.

> And Jean Wahl once wrote: the frothing of the hedges I keep deep inside me. (11–12)

Leon van Schaik (2008) also refers to the same phrase of Wahl when he notes the following:
We are also transported directly back to some first experience of such a walk, its sensations and the emotions that caused this to be eidetic moment for us. The soft breeze on our skins after the months of being covered up for warmth, the honeyed scent of the tiny white flowers that cover the new growth of the hedges in profusion, the blurring of that white into a ‘froth’ and the thought of our destination at the end of the lane, be it a pub where we are to meet friends, a study where—minds combed by the line of our walk—we are to continue writing, or some bower framed by the hedge itself which we will sleep beneath that balmy night. (39)

This also means that a heritage practitioner consciously or unconsciously builds a personal memory overview to memorise the heritage places s/he investigates; this is done by relating his/her knowledge and impressions of the sites s/he previously worked on with the new places to be studied.

It is essential to be conscious of this because as van Schaik (2008, p. 106) notes, there is a risk that ‘Spaces move us by association, triggering “stock responses” in us’. In other words, one might be biased by memories from other places when developing plans for heritage sites. Wanting to access the experiences of other people and to engage more of their experiences in the restoration and reuse projects, relies on the heritage practitioner’s awareness of his/her own experiences, as well as his/her ability to articulate this. To transcend one’s own experience is ‘not a trivial activity, but on the contrary extremely difficult’ (Petitmengin, 2006, p. 230) and must be trained.

A first step towards doing this is to explicitly represent these very personal experiences of association and memory by visualising them and directly linking them to the place where these memories or associations appear, as demonstrated with the case of the Brabantse Kouters. The students were asked to walk the cultural landscape of the Brabantse Kouters and to sketch their reference points, the places where they chose to pause and things they wanted to remember. One of the foreign students created a double sketch booklet (Figure 3). The first one was used as a mnemonic device to remember the walking track in the historical landscape of the Brabantse Kouters in which she noted the view corridors which were dominated by bell towers of parish churches and chapels. In the second one, she noted memories of her youth linked to experiences she had in her homeland in her grandfather’s garden, which popped up while walking and pausing in this strange landscape. These memories were triggered, for example, by the simple sight of a plantain once used to heal nettle itch or to feed the chickens. By imprinting the associations with well-known former events on the heritage place, she could memorise the new place more effectively.

In that sense, Step 1: Interactive Journeys entails serendipitous wandering and enhances the practitioner’s ability to physically, mentally and visually engage with the studied cultural landscape of which the built heritage is an integrated part. This emphasises the importance of the heritage practitioner’s own sensory, embodied experience as a basis from which to learn empathetically about the experiences of others (Pink, 2007).

In fact, if consciously used, by using recollection while walking similar places with related experiences, a heritage practitioner might more easily be open to the idea that a (heritage) place has different forms of deep significance for others, known and unknown stakeholders, too.

In this method, the act of walking is at its base an individual spatial experience. However, by re-walking the same roads that other people have been walking before, by visiting, capturing and graphically recording the places that people have been talking about or have been portraying in their actions, the heritage practitioner gains a better understanding of how these places are entangled with the daily routines of people living with these heritage sites.

Through the observation of the local actors’ activities linked to heritage places the attention is directed to the other people involved. The thumbnail sketches are now not only used to memorise a heritage place, or to merely relate to what was known before through association. More specifically, they are an attempt to understand the experiences of others by entering their lived environment. In short, exploring the land while walking is the ideal way for the heritage practitioner to be open to capturing a glimpse of some of the experiences that local actors have with ‘their’ heritage places and to link these observations with one’s own experiences. The more often this process is repeated the deeper the insights we can obtain. The jot booklets are now used to grasp and examine the existing narratives that the drawings underpin. To remember an encounter with a local actor and his/her narratives, a representation of his/her image must be placed on definite loci, just as a writer would (Yates, 2014, p. 27). Therefore, both a representation of the heritage place and images of activities are required, either of a real event or by the traces the activities left. At this point, not only are the heritage structures sketched, but also the representation of an active human figure, enriched with accessories, emerges (Figure 4). These sketches directly link the heritage places with events. When wanting to recall a real physical act or an encounter related to a specific

Figure 3: Step 1: Interactive Journeys_Case II: The Brabantse Kouters - One day walk.

Double sketch booklet: the first one as a mnemonic device, the second one, to note memories of other places. A4 piece of paper, black pen and watercolor. Courtesy of Oksana Savchuk - Student International Master – Faculty of Architecture – KU Leuven – Academic Year 2015-2016.
heritage site, it is possible to rethink a real heritage place as an active place. Rather than only taking an inventory of spaces, experiences are graphically recorded, real or imagined and being related to the spaces. In other words, this approach highlights how 'place grows out of experience, and how, in turn, it symbolizes that experience' (Richardson, 1984, p. 65). This method of combining places and images, which are 'active, sharply denved, unusual, and, which have the power of speedily encountering and penetrating the psyche' (Yates, 2014, p. 17) is an aid to train the acute visual memory most architect heritage practitioners already have.

The historian Frances Yates (2014) notes the following:

It is assistance to the memory if places are stamped upon the mind, which anyone can believe from experiment. For when we return to a place after a considerable absence, we not merely recognise the place itself, but remember things that we did there, and recall the persons whom we met and even the unuttered thoughts, which passed through our minds when we were there before. (25)

The narrative structure of the jot booklets constitutes, page by page, a continuous and chronological chain of representation of the encounters and (heritage) places discovered on the walking track.

Orderly arrangement of the sketches in the jot booklet is essential to hold in one's memory a mass of material representing observations, associations and shared experiences that can be looked up at will without the support of photographs or existing maps. It enables the retracing of the journey by memory at the end of the walk on the reverse side of the unfolded booklet. This strategy of both strolling around to collect narratives and the shape in which these narratives are chronologically sketched in little jot booklets, thereby constructing a memory palace largely borrows from the mnemonic technique described in Yates' The Art of Memory (2014). This technique was originally developed as an intense visualisation technique as a special device for the orator, practised in the ages of oral memory before writing became codified into rules. Inherited from classical Greece, it was widely used until the Renaissance (Yates, 2014, p. 29).

Used in rhetoric, it was a means of impressing places and images on memory in the historical eras before printing without any material support. Yates (2014, p. 29) cites Cicero in De Oratore, (55 B.C., II, lxxxvii, 359), where he describes the art of oral memory as if one inscribes letters in wax, grasping ideas by means of images and their order by
means of places. François Hartog (2011/2015) refers to Yates when he explains the following:

The expression ‘site of memory’ comes from the arts of memory, and before that from the Classical art of oratory, long before Nora’s use of it in his explanation of contemporary memory, Cicero’s definition has become canonical: the site (focus) is the location—the rooms of a house, for example, or a colonnade—where the orator, in preparing his speech, may line up the images of the things he wants to remember. He is advised to choose active images (imagines agentes). (126)

Each time new journeys are depicted and traced, one’s knowledge and understanding of the heritage place is strengthened, and the individually chosen landmarks are linked step by step to images of real-life experiences at specific locations. At first, the build-up of a memory for things or heritage structures has a practical use; it helps to orient oneself. The more lines of walk are drawn in separate booklets, the more details are sketched; the more thoughts and conversations are noted, the better the places and the images (of people and accessories) are imprinted on the memory and the larger the mental overview of the heritage place becomes.

A shift in scale is noticed in the consecutive jot booklets; the focus changes from the built heritage structures to their spatial relation. The initial outlines in the thumbnail sketches of which the booklets are composed represent the heritage structures as isolated objects to create their memory, and they finally function as Imagines Agentes—sequences of active, inspiring and meaningful images—marking the places and experiences at which the memory arrives as it travels along the drawn line of the walk of the day, penned down on the reverse side of the unfolded jot booklet. Considering the combined power of the heritage place as Imagines Agentes with place attachment and phenomenology related to active appearances helps construct our memory (Seaman, 2013).

The walking and sketching strategy enables the integration of visual, phenomenal and spatial data. This is similar to what people do in a natural unconscious way when they memorise their living environment by imprinting the events in their lives on the heritage places. This clearly refers to Tim Ingold’s understanding of mapping as a graphical representation of the daily act of wayfinding (2002). In fact, the procedures employed in Step 1: Interactive Journeys finally merge with the way that local people, too, traverse their familiar environment and unconsciously appropriate it. This is done through a recourse to a mental map established through trial and error, by experience and by reading the signposts—which is what built heritage structures clearly are. They memorise their living environment by imprinting the events of their lives on it.

In that sense heritage places seen as Imagines Agentes not only move through association with their form, but they specifically move with authentic spatial experiences, actions in recent past and present related to the place, such as to look for shelter, to attach to, to remember, to refer to, to meet at, to enjoy, to hate, to reject, to identify with and to live in. More specifically is the significance of the heritage place related to the active verb essence of the experience as in the following: the heritage place shelters, rejects, commemorates, rejoices, guides, refers to, attracts or invites thus attributing human features to the heritage place (Pallasmaa, 2012, pp. 14–15). These experiences play a decisive role in both the developed methodology and the understanding of the actual significance of heritage.

The concept of the verb essence of these (spatial) experiences is recognisable for many people all over the world and recalls memories of events in other (heritage) places. People can feel a bond with the historical and material layering of the place and immaterial attachments to the heritage site develop over time. For example, heritage places turn into beacons within the landscape; they become places to pause and reflect or have meeting points along the paths people take on their everyday journeys around their homes and to and from their jobs. This creates a sense of belonging, turning these heritage sites into places of attachment and recognition appropriated in many different ways. This bond ensures that the heritage place belongs to well-known trusted things, including all living creatures. They attribute the human scale to the cultural landscape.

When walking through the landscape as a newcomer, one can experience that the simple sight of a new place triggers one’s own memories and feelings, as has been mentioned before. The landscape, or fabric, ‘talks’ to us on our journeys. The way we ‘see’ things (with all our senses) is affected by what we already know, believe or remember from other places. Different scholars, including Pallasmaa (2012), van Schaik (2008), Ardler et al. (2001), Solnit (2000) and Rossi (1966/1982), have noted this phenomenon. Here enters the value of the cultural landscape for newcomers, immigrants, refugees, new dwellers, tourists and heritage practitioners. Through this process, one can tie up these new experiences to one’s own life or develop new stories for the heritage site through association, which can stimulate the sense of belonging to the new place, making feeling the newcomer ‘at home’. At this point, the aforementioned definition of Tuan (1977) can be broadened: ‘What is home?’ (1). It is now not longer only ‘the old homestead, the old neighbourhood, hometown, or motherland’ (Tuan, 1977, p. 1) it is also the new place to which we can connect through association to ‘old’ experiences.

Newcomers are important for the heritage and landscapes in our intercultural society; they attribute new layers of meaning to the existing site. This natural interaction generates the growth and evolution of the existing heritage structures and landscapes as Imagines Agentes, which benefit from an incomplete understanding of things, opacity and unpredictability (Taleb, 2012).

When doing fieldwork on a heritage site, one can experience how, for some residents, the landscapes of the past—even if they are now invisible—still occupy the role of signposts over present and real landscapes. Knowledge of the activities and events that took place on the heritage site is being transferred from generation to generation through narratives and material relics. Sometimes only traces of this remain, but even if there are no marks left, people seem to remember. Still, some stories are obscured by the passage of time.

This is wonderfully expressed in the students’ investigations of the postindustrial landscape of the Rupel region,
which is marked by centuries of clay extraction and the brick manufacturing industry. For local people, former clay extraction pits, now reclaimed by nature, still represent places full of activity that provided prosperity in the past; little tunnels, although blocked today because of private appropriation, still connect them mentally with the clay excavation pit on the other side of the street, and the ruined factories still impress. These places have become part of their collective memory. One student, a stranger in the place to investigate, experienced the former ring oven as an inspiring place of silence, thus attributing new meaning to it, whereas for local people, the cold dark brick ovens are still warm and lighted places of hard labour. Figure 5 shows the brick oven in Noeveren today and Figure 6 shows it as Spatial Narratives representing the different interpretations the monumental ring oven has for the local residents and for her, opening ways for new reinterpretations.

Another advantage of being an outsider in the heritage landscape under study lies precisely in the (re-)discovery of the qualities of the usual things that historical studies might neglect and that regular visitors, or even locals, risk overlooking because they are an integral part of their daily routine. Newcomers often unveil the implicit meaning of the place. We do not want to go as far as Kusenbach (2003) in claiming that we ‘access the experiences and interpretations of our informants at the same time’ (463). This assertion has been critiqued by the neurophenomenologist Claire Petitmengin. According to her, it is not realisable to access another person’s consciousness and, thus, experience, while and through ‘walking and talking’ (Petitmengin, 2006, p. 230).

However, we experienced that the proposed strategy awakens the awareness of the elements of the heritage landscapes, long-since forgotten by the residents and their associations with their personal experiences. The tactile drawings and models, representing their lived environment and the heritage places, appealed to them and stimulated them to revisit their own mental overview of the place and share their memories off the record in new narratives. It helped them to formulate what they could not state in words before because it was often difficult, if not impossible for them to express what the meaning of ‘their’ heritage was for them when directly asked about it in questionnaires or participation projects. When the results of the different cases, of the whole process, from the initial observations in Step 1: Interactive Journeys to the project proposals were presented to the local communities and policymakers in several exhibitions and debates, members of the local community felt that these studies considered the deep significance of the heritage sites in their territory (Figure 7). They provided the involved people with a profound documented instrument that not only showed the eventual conflicts of existing planning proposals, but also alternatives and grounded arguments, so that they could communicate and negotiate with decision makers about what was important to them. Moreover, policymakers had a well-grounded basis for outlining detailed policy guidelines for example for management plans or living environment plans.

As demonstrated the link between built heritage and the lived environment of people is inextricable. As a consequence, as independent entities, heritage artefacts only retain their meaning or significance when they are related to their setting, in which the structures, landscapes and all living creatures interact. Therefore, considering the actual meaning of heritage will no longer exclusively depend on the different historical characteristics of an individual
Building, as it is expressed in its materiality. Instead, it will combine the entwined fabric of the complex spaces of individual and collective experiences with existing or newly attributed significance related to heritage places. As Imagines Agentes, their shape, nature and related experiences have to signify something for us, and this meaning is precisely what we want to remember.

Yates (2014) refers to Rhetorica ad Herennium (by an unknown teacher of rhetoric in Rome, circa 86–82 B.C.) when she describes how the anonymous author reflects on why it is that, while walking, some images are so strong and sharp and so suitable for awakening memory, while others are so weak and feeble that they hardly stimulate memory at all (19–25). Heritage, in itself, specifically the archetypical buildings as churches, chapels, rectories, mills and farm buildings, or workmen’s houses, chimneys and brick ovens, represent spaces that are easy to remember based on their details and appealing to the imagination. They are representative, graphic and iconic enough to make them easy to retrace by memory. However, it is only when memory is trained intensively that they will work as Imagines Agentes—which have the power to engrave the place in our memory through reference to former experiences already stored there or by imprinting the new experiences shared with the people we met at the heritage place.

**Conclusion**

We conclude this paper by referring to François Hartog (2011/2015),

Sites of memory are characterized by the fact that in them different paths of memory have crossed; the only sites to be still alive [agentes] are those to which people have returned, which they have recast, reorganized, and reworked. (126)

He states that a site (of memory)—which is what a heritage site clearly is—is never a given: it is constructed and must even be constantly reconstructed (Hartog, 2011/2015, p. 126).

The idea of built heritage as Imagines Agentes is, therefore, also future-oriented. It meanders through different temporalities not only when looking at heritage as such (to be understood as a mixture of past, present and future without a clear delineation), but also in the combination of different practice-based methods and tools from different academic traditions, including heritage studies, cultural anthropology and architecture, when investigating built heritage. Historical approaches address the past through the study of material culture and its evolution. They can provide insights into the past values of the site and how perceptions and significance have changed over time. Heritage practitioners, however, not only have to present the future use, but they also have to consider both the values of past users and current users and those of other stakeholders (such as experts). These are best understood through ethnographic and observational approaches because they seem to be the most appropriate to the heritage practitioner’s task to include ‘the historical, as well as the social and the political, context of the site’ (Low, 2002, p. 32). The utmost important characteristic is that human behaviour or interaction with the heritage location cannot be understood without being on site and studying the context as part of
people's daily lives and activities. In the method of *Interactive Walking*, these approaches merge with the specific skills of an architect—specifically, the ability to draw, by hand, as well as to work with models that both serve, in each stage of the procedure, as primary communication tools in the process of understanding the meaning of heritage places in the life of its occupants.

Reading the cultural landscape through Step 1: *Interactive Journeys* while considering built heritage as *Imagines Agentes*, is an exercise in analysing how heritage structures (and other landscape objects) transform into images, sensations, dreams and emotions to capture the intimacy and complexity of the links that unite people to their everyday environment.

Because walking is ever active and never static, it turns the investigations into an interactive travel story, the narrative into a spatial practice, unveiling heritage as a relationship rather than an isolated object with its literal layers of archaeological remains. It enables transcending the sole focus on the object and exploring the historical, social, cultural and ecological tissues to detect the emotional and experiential realities of place and how these are rooted in the individual and collective memory as they unfold in everyday life. This enables the detection of the formal and informal use of the place, which unveils new insights about the deep significance of built heritage as part of a collectively and actively used mesh.

By framing the investigations in terms of narratives, it is possible to see different, sometimes contradictory, layers of meaning, to bring them into a useful dialogue with each other and to understand more about individual and social change because narratives always carry traces of human lives that we want to understand (Jackson, 2002, pp. 50–53). By focusing on narratives, the immersion into the sites to investigate them and the encounter with the local actors are facilitated. Although the 'respondents', the people on location who are encountered while walking, are not explicitly requested to tell stories, the circumstances in which they feel comfortable talking are created. For example, by using simple tools, such as a tiny jot booklet and a pencil to sketch selected views and take notes, people become curious and are seduced into chatting about the heritage structure or site that has been drawn. The narratives told by individuals (explicit), or constructed by their actions or made visual through the traces they left (implicit) become tools to gain a deeper understanding of their relation to local heritage. These individuals can be well-known stakeholders or undisclosed protagonists, but they all remain anonymous when their narratives are transferred into the projects.

Once the ability is developed to fully experience the heritage site with all one's senses from inside, it becomes possible to engage in the fascinating dialogue with heritage of both the local resident and the newcomer (the heritage practitioner as well as others); hence the focus on heritage as a static artefact, a finished *project or thing*, can be transcended. From that moment on, heritage places can be considered to be *processes of growth*. As Ingold (2013, p. 12) notes, by bringing them back from their passive to their active materiality, 'we (can) rescue them from the cul-de-sac into which they had been cast and restore them to the currents of life'. This more active approach with a more dynam
Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to disclose.

Figures


In each of the case studies the participating students offered their informed consent. The studio assignments derived from the cases are part of the classroom discussions and all students choose to participate. The students were not remunerated for their participation. They received an evaluation on the results of their architectural projects but not on the survey part, which was based on the developed method and served as the study material for the research in Gantois, G., 2019. Tracing the deep significance of built heritage through the encounter of undisclosed protagonists. Belgium: KU Leuven, unpublished.

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