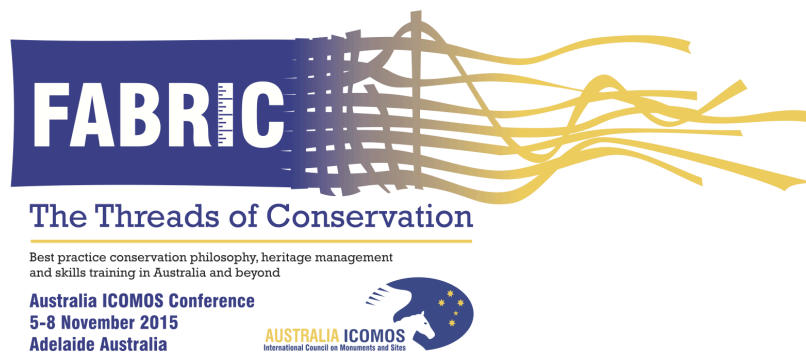


The Impact of Retention of Heritage Places

M. Perovic, V. Coffey, S. Kajewski and A. Madan

Proceedings of:



Introduction

The movement to protect the historical sites that are considered to form part of a country's national heritage has grown enormously since the first World Heritage organisation was established in 1972 (UNESCO, 1972). The significance of historic sites has been recognised globally and discussed by many researchers (Araoz, 2011, Brand, 1995, Foster and Kayan, 2009, Orbagli, 2008, Rypkema, 2003). Many heritage organisations have since been founded with the aim of protecting and managing cultural heritage, and numerous studies have supported the importance of preserving and protecting heritage architecture.

Various studies have been conducted to identify solutions to improve and encourage heritage preservation. Despite the development of principles, policies and guidelines, many problems still exist that affect the retention of heritage places.

This paper attempts to address the omission of factors which may impact on heritage retention. The objective is to determine and analyse the key factors, while also analysing the main challenges to retaining heritage places.

What is the importance of preserving heritage places?

According to the Australian Heritage Strategy Public Consultation Paper (2012a), heritage includes:

‘...stories, traditions, languages, events and experiences inherited from the past: it comprises both natural and cultural places with tangible and intangible values. More than a legacy from our past, heritage is also a living, integral part of life today that is constantly renewed and refreshed. Shaped by nature and history, it gives context to where we are now and where we are headed as a community.’

The story of a city is told almost always by preserving – as much as possible – the heritage buildings that contribute to the telling of that story. Once an old building has gone, the significance of a place is lost in people’s memory (Marquis-Kyle and Walker, 1992, Worthing and Counsell, 1999). It is the duty of the local community and society to protect its heritage and to preserve buildings in their full richness of authenticity (Pearson and Sullivan, 1995, Plevoets and Cleempoel, 2011, Williamson, 2010).

There is a social purpose of retaining heritage places as well as tangible evidence of technical achievement and a chronicle of the development of style (Spennemann, 2006). Nimrud and Ready (2002) revisited the question of the value and importance of heritage buildings to the communities living within the environment in which these artefacts are sited, and noted the works of several authors were clearly supportive of the central theme of the value of conservation and preservation rather than destruction. Tyler et al. (2009), for example, expounded US society’s appreciation for heritage places in the last few decades and expressed the view that historical sites are irreplaceable. Furthermore, according to Tyler et al. (2009:189) ‘there are currently more projects involving the adaptive use of older buildings than there are new construction projects’. This supports the growing perception that the relative cost of preserving a heritage building as a multi-valuable resource is sometimes more economic and sustainable than engaging in new construction. Positive global trends towards greater public awareness of, and support for, heritage-driven developments have been shown in many capital cities including recently in

London. Since 1999, 68% of buildings at risk in London have been saved (English Heritage, 2011).

Heritage places have an irreplaceable value for every community: places tell the stories about who we are and our past that has formed us (Marquis-Kyle and Walker, 1992). Stemming from the awareness of the need to protect cultural heritage worldwide, heritage organisations and institutions have been forming to preserve origins in diverse settings.

Many discussions on the subject of the social and historical value of 'place' have suggested that a sentimental attachment to the past is essential for any community. People seek physical reminders from the past as a social identification of place and their communities. In addition, aesthetic values, quality design, craftsmanship and historic materials all serve to indicate the significance of historic places and the diversity of the cultures in which they were built (Lawrence-Douglas County Metropolitan Planning Office, 2011). Moreover, Johnston (1992) noted that places where people gather and act together as a community become a 'private environment', indicating the depth of association between people and places that goes even deeper when that place has historical value.

How are important 'heritage places' treated?

Economic growth involves changes and inappropriate change contributes to the loss of the values of significant places through inappropriate change. Preservation of the aesthetic quality of heritage buildings and their outstanding universal value is emerging as a task of high importance for governments and the professional disciplines that run heritage projects (i.e. heritage consultants, architects, engineers and project managers) (Mason, 2005, Provins et al., 2008, Roders and Oers, 2011). Moreover, heritage buildings are seen as an important

element of Australia's social capital (Bullen and Love, 2011). Australian leadership in heritage management, particularly in taking action to protect heritage places, is recognised internationally (Australian State of the Environment Committee, 2001). The Australian State of the Environment Committee (2011) highlighted the importance of taking action to protect heritage places from further development pressure in order to retain their values.

In 2011, the Australian Government called for public input to help develop a national heritage strategy for Australia's heritage for the next 10 years (Australian Heritage Strategy, 2011). The Australian State of the Environment report was released in December 2011 for public feedback and was specifically designed to inform and guide a wide range of stakeholders, including members of the public and policy-makers, on heritage issues and the value of heritage protection. The latest call from government for 'a new vision for Australia's heritage' notes that 'the Australian Government is calling on heritage practitioners and experts across Australia to come forward with their ideas and suggestions for the Australian Heritage Strategy' (A new version for Australia's Heritage, 2013).

Heritage places under development pressure

Development and redevelopment are an unavoidable necessity within the world's cities, and on many occasions significant heritage sites have come under severe pressure from a number of directions (Rypkema, 1990). Heritage places attract considerable interest from the media as well as from the political arena.

The World Heritage Committee (Australia) in its *List of World Heritage in Danger* identifies development projects in first place among the three most prevalent threats to heritage

preservation (The World Heritage Convention, 2012b). The problem remains current, and is seriously affecting the Australian heritage preservation and refurbishment sector.

Different types of actions and projects can be undertaken to preserve significant places for future generations. Among the various ways that heritage buildings can be retained, the most currently accepted way to maintain a heritage-listed building is through adaptive reuse. This involves finding a new use for a place in order to 'bring new life' to the building and attract investors. Kumarasuriyar and Nielsen (2012) explain that adaptive reuse 'allows a heritage property to be used for purposes other than originally designed for'. Bullen and Love (2010) point out that adaptive reuse can enable buildings to accommodate the changes that revolve around shifting economic, environmental and social patterns. It is critical to explore such ways in which the 'life' of a heritage place can be ensured. Moreover, before any development takes place, it is essential that planners and developers look at the potential impacts of their projects on historical places (Brooks, 1992).

Retention of heritage places

Based on a review of the literature highlighting the importance of heritage sites and the challenges in retaining their values, a survey questionnaire was conducted to look at both the appreciation of heritage places and the challenges that heritage preservation is facing. The survey was distributed all over Australia to gather data on the perceptions among the general public and among the professionals involved in heritage projects. The participants from the general public included: users or occupiers of bookshops, cafés, museums and heritage buildings, and members of tourism and related organisations. The professionals included experienced experts in heritage projects who represented a range of project stakeholders, namely, project owners and clients, project financiers/sponsors/grant-givers, project

managers, contractors and builders, architects, heritage consultants, engineers, quantity surveyors, superintendents, heritage administrators, tradespeople, conservators and archaeologists. The survey attracted great interest from both the public and the professional groups, resulting in 444 responses. The collected data was analysed using various statistical methods. The results from the descriptive statistical analysis of the frequencies are presented in Table 1 and Table 2.

To enable the comparison between the perceptions of the general public and the professionals on the same questions, the scores of agree (4) and strongly agree (5) were joined based on the mean values for each of the constructs that was examined, namely, key reasons (KR) and main challenges (MC). The perceptions of the general public vs the perceptions of the professionals on the key reasons for heritage retention are shown in Figure 1.

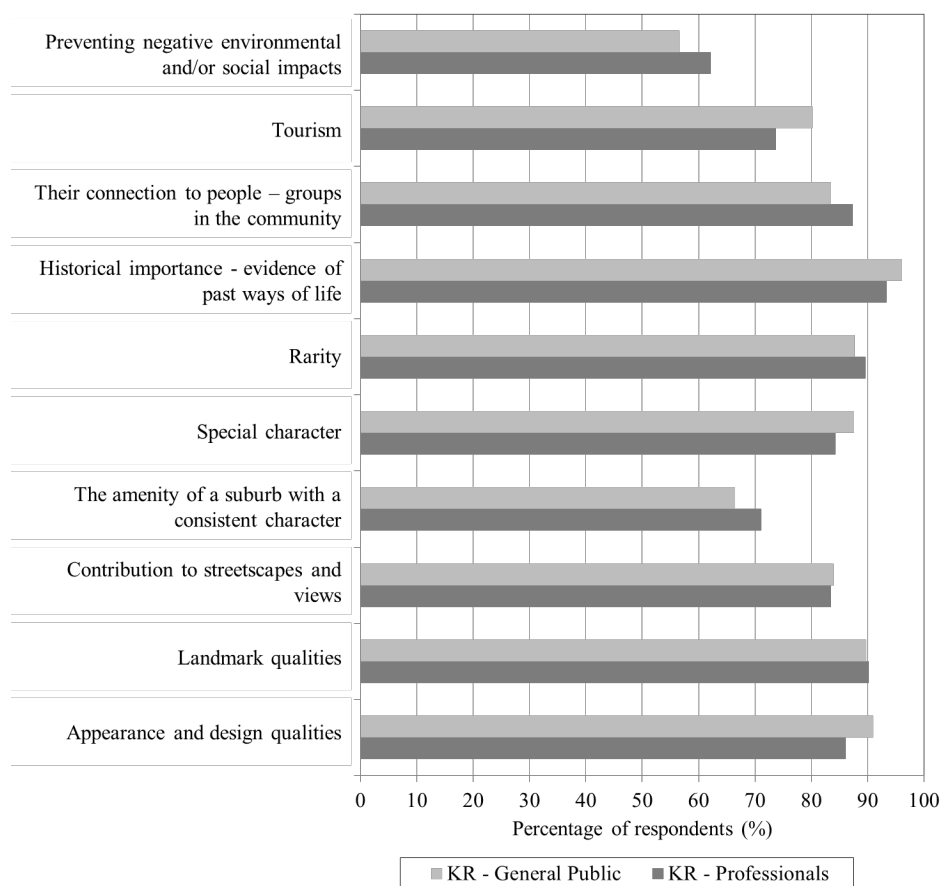


Figure 1: Key reasons for heritage retention

The KR results indicate that historic importance was given as the key reason for the preservation of heritage places by both the general public group and the professionals. Based on its strong ‘highly agree’ rating, historical importance (i.e. evidence of past ways of life) was seen as an imperative factor. The rarity of the historic place, followed by the landmark qualities were the next top key reasons for preserving heritage places. It is clear that both the general public and the heritage professionals believe that strong connections to the place can reveal the past to the present time and tell the unique landmark stories that are worth preserving.

In contrast to the parallel perceptions of the general public and heritage professionals regarding the reasons to preserve heritage places, the two groups have different perceptions of the challenges. Figure 2 presents the results.

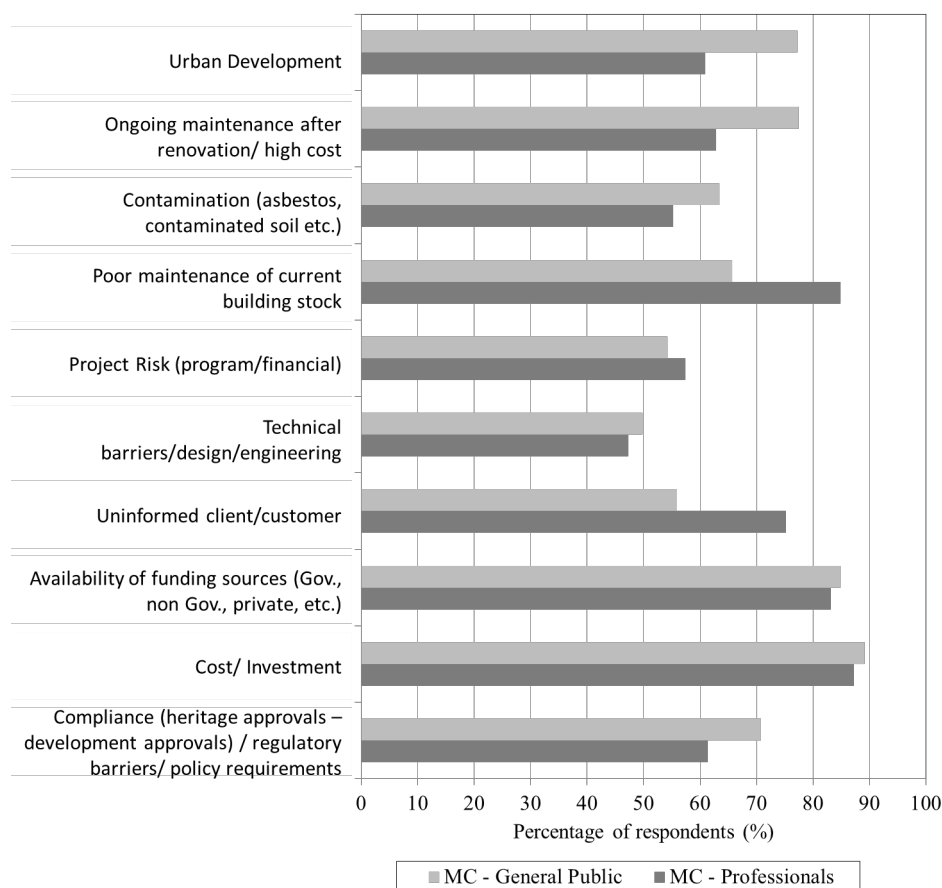


Figure 2: Main challenges

The MC results showed that the two top-ranked challenges to retaining heritage places, for both the general public and the heritage professionals, were related to the financial aspects of heritage projects. The first main challenge was cost/investment, which indicates that any action to retain heritage will be strongly connected with the perception of the project cost. This was followed by the availability of funding sources (public or private sector funds) which greatly influences the decision to retain or not to retain heritage sites. The heritage professionals saw the poor maintenance of the current building stock as the third main challenge for heritage retention, while the general public ranked the ongoing maintenance after renovation (high cost) and urban development as the third main challenges. Financial aspects should not be a barrier to retaining the irreplaceable value of cherished icons from past for the future. A greater commitment of funding should be made by governments to support the regular maintenance that will ensure the longevity of the heritage building stock.

Conclusions

Maintaining historical places is becoming more crucial, and historic preservation has started to play an important role in the overall construction landscape. Due to their unique quality and design, heritage places mark not just the past but the future. The preservation of historic buildings protects important environmental, cultural, social, aesthetic/architectural and spiritual values.

The future use of heritage places must be designed in such a way that it does not deviate far from the original use of the building or site, while at the same time satisfying the current owner's needs. The design must accommodate both purposes. Identifying the significant fabric and the most appropriate design is crucial. There is a need for in-depth understanding of a place, in terms of both its significance and its condition.

Preserving heritage places will secure the history of the country for future generations.

However, we have many challenges to overcome to ensure the future of heritage sites. One of the main challenges for keeping heritage places is the lack of available funding sources (either government or non-government). The community plays an important role; therefore, listening to and acknowledging community organisations can help to conserve a heritage place such as through the provision of donations or the raising of awareness. Heritage places belong to the community and thus the social value assessment or genuine community consultation is highly important. Failure to conduct this assessment properly results in appeals on development proposals or the loss of intangible and tangible values.

The study results showed that the perceptions of the general public match the views of heritage professionals regarding the reasons for heritage retention. This indicates a depth of understanding and commitment among the general public that can be harnessed to support the goals of heritage retention.

The pleasing view of streets and the harmony that heritage places create are irreplaceable. Moreover, every place that represents history is recognised as a landmark and symbolises the country, time, place, people and events. A special character is imprinted in heritage buildings and places. Every site has its own story. By hearing and telling that story, we confirm that ‘heritage is not just the past, but the present interacting with the past in the ongoing growth of cultural tradition’ (Pearson and Sullivan, 1995:195).

References

A new version for Australia's Heritage. 2013, The Hon. Greg Hunt MP, Media release,

Available from:

<https://www.environment.gov.au/minister/hunt/2013/pubs/mr20131104.pdf>

[4 November 2013].

Araoz, G. F. 2011. Preserving heritage places under a new paradigm. *Journal of cultural heritage management and sustainable development*, vol. 1, no.1, pp. 55-60.

Australian State of the Environment Committee. 2001. *Australia state of the environment 2001*. Csiro Publishing.

Brand, S. 1995. *How buildings learn: What happens after they're built*. Penguin Books.

Brooks, G. 1992. The Burra Charter: Australia's Methodology for Conserving Cultural Heritage [Standards]. *Places*, vol. 8, no.1.

Bullen, P. A., & Love, P. E. 2010. The rhetoric of adaptive reuse or reality of demolition: Views from the field. *Cities*, vol. 27, no.4, pp. 215-224.

Bullen, P. A., & Love, P. E. 2011. Adaptive reuse of heritage buildings. *Structural Survey*, vol. 29, no. 5, pp. 411-421.

Australian Heritage Strategy - public consultation. 2012a. Available from:

<http://www.environment.gov.au/resource/australian-heritage-strategy-public-consultation-paper> [29 December 2012].

The World Heritage Convention. 2012b. Available from:

<http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/about/world/convention.html> [27 December 2012].

Forster, A. M., & Kayan, B. 2009. Maintenance for historic buildings: a current perspective. *Structural Survey*, vol. 27, no. 3, pp. 210-229.

Heritage at risk. 2011. English Heritage. Available from:

<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/content/publications/publicationsNew/heritage-at-risk/har-2011-local-summaries/acc-HAR-2011-lon-summary.pdf>.

Johnston, C. 1992. *What is social value?: A discussion paper*. Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra.

Kumarasuriyar, A. C., & Nielsen, D. 2012. Tangible cultural heritage and adaptive reuse: the Old Government House, Brisbane, Australia. In *Heritage 2012: Proceedings of the 3rd International Conference on Heritage and Sustainable Development*, vol. 3, pp. 1857-1865. Green Lines Institute for Sustainable Development.

Lawrence-Douglas County Metropolitan Planning Office. 2011. Historic Preservation Plan Element.

Marquis-Kyle, P., & Walker, M. 1992. *The Illustrated Burra Charter: Making good decisions about the care of important places*. Australia ICOMOS Inc with Australian Heritage Commission, Canberra.

Mason, R. 2005. Economics and historic preservation. *Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution*.

Navrud, S., & Ready, R. C. (Eds.). 2002. *Valuing cultural heritage: applying environmental valuation techniques to historic buildings, monuments and artifacts*. Edward Elgar Publishing.

Orbagli, A. 2008. *Architectural conservation*. Blackwell Publishing.

Pearson, M., & Sullivan, S. 1995. *Looking after heritage places: The basics of heritage planning for managers, landowners and administrators*. Melbourne University Press.

- Plevoets, B., & Van Cleempoel, K. 2001. Assessing authenticity of nineteenth-century shopping passages. *Journal of Cultural Heritage Management and Sustainable Development*, vol. 1, no. 2, pp. 135-156.
- Provins, A., Pearce, D., Ozdemiroglu, E., Mourato, S., & Morse-Jones, S. 2008. Valuation of the historic environment: the scope for using economic valuation evidence in the appraisal of heritage-related projects. *Progress in planning*, vol. 69, no. 4, pp. 131-175.
- Roders, A. P. & Oers, R. V. 2011. World Heritage cities management. *Facilities*, vol. 29, no. 7/8, pp. 276-285.
- Rypkema, D. D. 1990. *Preservation Under (Development) Pressure*. Vital Speeches of the Day. McMurry Inc.
- Rypkema, D. D. 2003. *Planning for the Future, Using the Past: The Role of Historic Preservation in Building Tomorrow's Washington, DC*. Washington: National Trust for Historic Preservation.
- Spennemann, D. H. 2006. Gauging community values in Historic preservation. *CRM: The Journal of Heritage Stewardship*, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 6-20.
- Australian Heritage Strategy – About the Strategy. 2011. Available from:
<http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/strategy/index.html> [29 December 2012].
- Tyler, N., Ligibel, T. J., & Tyler, I. R. 2009. *Historic preservation: an introduction to its history, principles, and practice*. WW Norton & Company.
- UNESCO World Heritage Centre - Convention concerning the protection of the world cultural and natural heritage. 1972. Available from:
<http://whc.unesco.org/en/conventiontext> [25 May 2012].
- Williamson, K. 2010. *Development and design of heritage sensitive sites: strategies for listed buildings and conservation areas*. Routledge.

Worthing, D., & Counsell, J. 1999. Issues arising from computer-based recording of heritage sites. *Structural Survey*, vol. 17, no.4, pp. 200-210.