Using the historic urban landscape to reimagine Ballarat: the local context

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Urban environments and their complex economic, social, cultural and physical settings have proved to be a challenging context for heritage work and for ideas of sustainability. These environments must be dynamic to prosper and they are intensive locations for flows of people, ideas, capital, physical resources and environmental services (Castells 1989; Evans 2002; Logan 2002; Dovey 2005). Cities and regional settlements are engaged in local, regional and international competitive relationships that favour a myriad of orientations and characteristics, including local definitions of cultural heritage.

Globally, the major debates and advances in developing and applying social and political processes of cultural heritage conservation find their greatest challenges and innovations in cities and towns. More than a quarter of the World Heritage List is composed of areas, precincts or significant parts of cities; and many of the most contested heritage cases concern the limits of acceptable change in the fabric of these places. Advocates of design professions, such as architecture, urban design and planning, often position 'heritage' as an obstacle to the betterment of their cities, blocking the creativity and dynamism that characterise attractive, socially nurturing and economically powerful cities and towns.

As the seminal work of Delores Hayden (1995) argued, urban renewal can cause significant dislocation for local communities as familiar landmarks and landscapes undergo change. Communities can struggle to find the right mix in safeguarding the tangible expressions of their identity and history alongside the need to advance the well-being of residents, citizens and visitors. The Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) approach has been developed as a way of rethinking the relationship between heritage and development and managing change in sustainable ways. Adopted by UNESCO’s General Conference in 2011 following several years of exploration of the ideas in different geo-cultural contexts, the Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape sets out a broad agenda for re-thinking approaches to urban heritage conservation.

Work on the HUL was a response to escalating tensions, particularly in visible and politically charged World Heritage contexts that polarised processes of heritage conservation and development. While the potential heritage significance of larger areas and urban systems was easily recognised, and some landscape concepts had
been borrowed from cultural geography by heritage discourses in the 1980s, heritage conservation tools are not especially effective in addressing processes of change in urban settlements. As Bandarin (2012: 220) argues, a ‘review of the main international conservation tools shows the fragility of a conceptual and policy guidance system that has to deal with an evolving [urban] heritage’. Conventional heritage approaches, essentially ‘Eurocentric’ in their underlying philosophical bases and oriented to the authentic fabric of individual monuments and sites selected for their static historical and aesthetic values, were failing to effectively address the pressures evident in the late twentieth century onwards. Rapid processes of change arising from globalisation, technological advances in materials and infrastructure, population and demographic changes and socio-economic inequalities have produced a vast casebook of urban conservation ‘crises’.

The HUL Recommendation (UNESCO 2011) specifically attempts to address these challenges by providing a platform for managing change in complex local urban environments. Importantly, it is a new approach for UNESCO, building upon past recommendations and conventions, but without intending to be prescriptive. The HUL has been designed to be an enabler of practices that are holistic, strategic and integrated. It consists of a set of high-level principles in the form of a framework and it is reliant on all levels of government, public and private stakeholders, international organisations and NGOs to adapt locally and develop innovative approaches in order to deliver the proposed outcomes. It applies a cultural landscape lens, broadening the definition of urban heritage and the scope of management approaches and processes.

The HUL framework (UNESCO 2011) consists of four tools and a six-point action plan. Recommended tools to be developed include civic engagement tools, knowledge and planning tools, regulatory systems and financial tools using collaborative and participatory approaches that can be responsive to dynamic local settings. The six-point action plan outlines a framework for implementing HUL (see Figure 6.1).

UNESCO’s World Heritage Centre had supported the development of the HUL through its World Heritage Cities programme and it began to disseminate the HUL, supported by academic institutions and others such as ICOMOS, the Organization of World Heritage Cities, League of Historic Cities and the Getty Conservation Institute. An existing UNESCO Category 2 Centre in the field of World Heritage, the World Heritage Institute of Training and Research for Asia and the Pacific (WHITR-AP) began to promote the application of the HUL in an exploratory pilot programme of experience sharing that will be reported to UNESCO’s Executive Board and General Conference. This pilot is exploring various ways of implementing the HUL in a number of cities around the world. Each pilot city exhibits different dominant forms of cultural heritage, has distinct challenges, varying levels of existing conservation approaches and different key stakeholders (WHITR-AP 2014; City of Ballarat 2013a).

Much of the development versus conservation debate facing historic cities is played out at the local government level, with a focus on the management of
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- Undertaking comprehensive surveys and mapping of the city's natural, cultural and community resources.
- Reaching a reasonable degree of consensus, through the use of participatory planning and stakeholder consultations, regarding what cultural heritage values to protect for inspiration and enjoyment of present generations as well as transmission to future ones, and determining the attributes that carry these values.
- Assessing the vulnerability of these attributes to socio-economic pressures and impacts of climate change.
- Integrating urban heritage values and their vulnerability status into a wider framework of city development, which shall provide indications of areas of heritage sensitivity that require careful attention to planning, design and implementation of development projects.
- Prioritising policies and actions for conservation and development.
- Establishing the appropriate partnerships and local management frameworks for each of the identified projects for conservation and development, as well as to develop mechanisms for the coordination of the various activities between different actors, public, private and civic.

Figure 6.1 The Six-Point Action Plan adopted by UNESCO with the 'Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape'.


cultural heritage, particularly through the mechanisms of land-use planning and development approvals. At the same time, new theoretical and methodological questions are being asked in the academic literature on the relationship between theory and practice for cultural landscapes, broadening the concept to include the role of emotion in our understanding of the connections between people and place. Given the perceived disconnection between academics and practitioners in some recent work on heritage (Smith 2006) and illustrated by the Association of Critical Heritage Studies Manifesto (Witcomb and Buckley 2013), a particular challenge is to develop the mechanisms to incorporate these new ways of understanding the relationship between heritage, places and community in the management of urban change. How can the HUL, with its flexible, holistic approach to heritage conservation, be a potential mechanism through which new theoretical insights can be brought into heritage practice? While much of the scholarly and applied literature has focused on the globalisation of cultural heritage practice, particularly the promulgation of Western (or ‘Eurocentric’) ideas and inter- and intra-regional sharing of urban heritage tool kits, we focus in this chapter on the centrality and agency of local government. The local level, especially in the planning, development and community services functions of municipal and city governments, is where these tensions are most acutely experienced and addressed. As a result, local government officials and politicians, as well as community-based activists, are seeking to identify alternative models for considering change.

We explore the experiences of one local council, the City of Ballarat in central Victoria, Australia, in its efforts to consider, embrace and use the HUL and take
part in WHITR-AP's pilot programme (see Figure 6.2). Through this example, we examine the interplay between heritage theory and practice in the implementation of the HUL, charting how the local council has attempted to deal with the 'intricacies' of the city (Amin and Thrift 2002: 1) in its strategic planning using an intuitive form of action research. We contend that the perspective of local government is a specific space for innovation and that local institutions and governance are critical to advancing new concepts and approaches to urban heritage conservation. Without the direct engagement and 'take-up' by local government, it is doubtful that this particular product of international heritage doctrine can meet the kinds of 'paradigm-shifting' aspirations that UNESCO has set for it.

While in its early stages of implementation, the HUL process in Ballarat has created opportunities for the city planners and communities to explore more community-centred and values-based approaches to the management of change. We conclude by offering our observations on the challenges encountered in using the HUL and the questions it poses for future work in this area, including the interface with current heritage legislation and planning frameworks that are inescapable realities for those working within local government.

The HUL approach in an Australian context

Bandarin and van Oers (2012: 23) chart a number of trajectories in understanding the historic urban landscape in an attempt to recover from the 'fracture of modernism'. Key elements include the shift from sites to landscapes, and the idea of the landscape
as a ‘palimpsest’ where the ‘[l]ayering of significance makes it possible to identify the conservation policies and trade-offs between conservation and development facing communities and decision-makers’ (Bandarin and van Oers 2012: 69). Building on the Vienna Memorandum (UNESCO 2005), this approach ‘stresses the link between physical forms and social evolution, defining historic cities as a system integrating natural and man-made [sic] elements, in an historical continuum, representing a layering of expressions throughout history’ (Bandarin and van Oers 2012: 72).

Advocates of the HUL argue for a more flexible and integrated approach to urban conservation that recognises change and provides relevant and effective tools. Nevertheless, this view of the urban landscape as part of a continuum is open to critique as part of a modernist discourse of linear development (DeSilvey 2012). However, the HUL does provide a framework to think about the ways in which a number of key theoretical developments in heritage studies can be brought into contemporary heritage practice.

One advantage of the HUL approach is the shift from a focus on specific sites to seeing how heritage is expressed and represented across larger areas, an approach that has also been developed within cultural geography (Atkinson 2007, 2008). This is particularly important in relation to ‘ordinary’ or everyday landscapes that would not necessarily meet the thresholds of significance in heritage schemes, but are nonetheless important locations through which a sense of place and local identity is made and re-made (Tuan 1977), an approach implicit in the broad definition of cultural heritage contained in the Faro Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (Council of Europe 2005). Within heritage practice, this has also been explored through the development of the European Landscape Convention, whereas Peter Howard argues, it is these ‘ordinary’ landscapes that are most in need of protecting (Howard 2012).

Despite the critique of the cultural determinism in the work of Carl Sauer (Mathewson 2000; Wylie 2007), much of the thinking about cultural heritage landscapes remains focused on the material and the visual, with less attention given to the way that representations of landscapes are an important component in how they are understood. The idea of landscape as a set of representations has in turn been challenged by approaches which stress that the landscape is ‘more than representational’ (Lorimer 2005): ‘an acknowledgment that our understandings of the world are lived, embodied and tangled up with how we do things, our doings and our enactments in the moment’ (Waterton 2011: 66). This approach draws attention to the need to think about multi-sensuous landscapes. This is not either/or, rather an ‘and’, where representational and non-representational approaches are examined. As Wachtow (2011: 87) argues, we need to explore the inter-relationships between the ‘material nature we inhabit and the ideal nature we carry in our heads’. Rather than another ‘type’ or ‘category’ of cultural landscape, the HUL is a way of applying a cultural landscape approach to managing urban environments and their broader settings. Such an approach foregrounds the way in which ‘historical landscape character is a function of perception and understanding’ as well as interaction (Bandarin and van Oers 2012: 66).
The development of the HUL approach has begun to stimulate a refreshed dialogue about urban conservation, oriented around what it might mean to think and treat cities as landscapes. However, global progress in direct implementation of the HUL has been gradual and relatively modest (hence the usefulness of the HUL pilot programme). In Australia, it is our perception that there was not much engagement with the HUL initially. The text of the HUL Recommendation does not have an inspirational tone, and many of its ‘new’ ideas, such as the need to recognise social values and contemporary meanings and to employ community-centred methods of assessment and decision-making, seemed to be ‘business-as-usual’ due to the widespread use and evolution of the Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter (Australia ICOMOS 2013a). Although there are a number of Australian sites and landscapes on the World Heritage List, none of them are focused on urban themes and government agencies and practitioners are just beginning to engage in the development of the HUL.

Despite its status as a continent nation with a relatively modest population size and density, Australia’s population is highly concentrated in urban settlements that include a mix of capital cities in coastal locations and rural/regional cities across a vast span of ecosystems and climatic zones. Established as a nation via a federation of States in 1901, the Australian Constitution allocates most powers relevant to urban planning, land use and development to the States, rather than to the national (or Commonwealth) sphere. Local governments are established through State legislation, although the steady process of decentralisation in decision-making over recent decades has resulted in a substantial suite of responsibilities being carried in practice by Australia’s 562 local government councils (ALGA 2010).

Although there are national and State government laws directed at the identification and protection of Australia’s most significant heritage places, the largest share of heritage places in Australia is identified through local government planning mechanisms that operationalise heritage concerns through the lens of land use and development controls (Productivity Commission 2006). In practice, this means that decisions about change are made on a site-by-site basis and heritage is positioned as a problem to be solved, rather than an economic and social resource and a key component of individual and collective identities. Heritage values often enter approvals processes at relatively late stages, after much human, financial and social capital has already been invested in specific proposals. Heritage ‘battles’ are then posed as anti-change and are either won or lost as local councils attempt to ‘balance’ competing values. It is within this context that the City of Ballarat has used the HUL to reframe debates about conservation, change and the city’s future strategic directions.

Finding the HUL in Ballarat

Located within the country of the Wadawurrung and Dja Dja Wurrung Traditional Owners (Indigenous communities), the City of Ballarat, in Victoria’s Central Highlands region, is the State’s third largest urban area and one of several significant gold-rush era boomtowns. The natural landscape of Ballarat began developing
500 million years ago and it was through a series of massive changes caused by tectonic forces, erosion, volcanic activity, climate change and subsequent water flows that Ballarat's alluvial and deep lead gold deposits were formed.

Beginning over 30,000 years ago, two Aboriginal language groups, the Dja Dja Wurrung to the north and the Wadawurrung to the south, inhabited and developed a deep connection to the land (country), which has great sacred and symbolic significance to both past and current Aboriginal peoples. It was the gold rush in particular that signalled the beginning of Ballarat's current urban form. Beginning in 1851, Ballarat's extensive gold resources resulted in a population explosion and an unprecedented era of rapid growth and development. The importance of Ballarat as a major generator of wealth for the then Colony of Victoria is evidenced today by its grand public spaces, urban form, features and cultural traditions that hark back to this earlier period. Noted for the city's conserved nineteenth-century urban fabric, Ballarat is a major regional tourism destination, selling itself through this heritage of 'elegant architecture, broad tree-lined streetscapes and cultivated gardens' (City of Ballarat 2014c) (see Figure 6.3). With a population of over 98,000 people (State of Victoria 2014) and an area covering some 740 square kilometres, Ballarat's major employment has moved from mining to health care and social assistance, retail and manufacturing. As an industry sector, tourism is considered to be Ballarat's sixth largest employer (City of Ballarat 2014b).

For a regional city that has built its image and economy at least in part on the character and importance of its nineteenth-century post-contact settlement history, there have been many positive outcomes of heritage planning in Ballarat. Heritage protection has been in place and changed incrementally since the 1970s through the mechanisms available in the planning system, resulting in strong planning controls covering large urban areas, many individual buildings and other structures, street trees and archaeological sites that illustrate the tangible expressions of Ballarat's history. Today, there are over 10,000 places in protected historic areas, creating a substantial workload for Council officers and advisors who process

Figure 6.3 Two images of Ballarat's urban landscape: Lydiard Street verandas, part of the nineteenth-century historic fabric of the city (left); Lake Wendouree parklands (right).

Source: City of Ballarat.
applications for permission to enable changes to these places and the government officials who may be required to endorse or reject planning decisions.3

However, like many local government authorities, the City of Ballarat faces ongoing challenges of balancing conservation with change and to build community consensus on what change should occur. "Conventional" heritage planning practices have not been accompanied by an application of the concept of cultural heritage in its broadest sense, including the intangible dimensions. Heritage planning decisions are often made through adversarial processes that require all parties to become familiar with the intricacies of the planning schemes and to adopt defensive positions, enhancing the expectations of conflict for Council and many communities.

With population growth projections of up to 50 per cent over the next 15 to 25 years (City of Ballarat 2014a), Ballarat is amongst Australia's fastest-growing regional cities. As a result, pressures on the existing urban form (including the historic city centre) and significant social and demographic changes are anticipated. The challenges for future urban heritage conservation can only increase in intensity and complexity. The City of Ballarat began investigating ways to manage change in Ballarat more proactively and it has opted to adopt the language, concepts and directions established by the HUL to guide the city's strategic planning processes.

The ability to reflect on the initial stages of implementation of a HUL process in Ballarat provides an opportunity to chart the ways in which heritage has been understood as a framework or process through which the re-imagining of the city's sustainable future can occur. In 2006, the City of Ballarat hosted the tenth Conference of the League of Historical Cities, a time when furthering the Council's role in heritage met with some reluctance to impose further restrictive controls on private property and some frustration with existing heritage controls within both the community and the local government. Ballarat Council officers began a slow process of developing a more collaborative and empathetic approach to implementing the Council's heritage responsibilities, and in 2012, at the League of Historical Cities' thirteenth World Conference in Hue, Vietnam, they recognised that many other historic cities around the world face similar challenges in managing change. In 2012, it was agreed to explore the application of UNESCO's Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape in Ballarat.

Globally, Ballarat became the first known local government authority to begin implementing HUL within its strategic processes in the comprehensive way that was envisaged by UNESCO. In order to mainstream the approach, the HUL process has included the entire area of the municipality and its broader regional setting, not just the historic city centre. Given the lack of an existing implementation strategy provided by UNESCO, and very little literature about practical applications of these directions, the City of Ballarat was invited and agreed to join WHITR-AP's pilot programme to implement UNESCO's HUL (Fayad 2013).

Ballarat's exploratory approach to operationalising the HUL posed a number of early and continuing challenges. The first task was to better understand the consequences of looking at the municipality from a landscape perspective (Mayrinck de
Using the HUL to re-imagine Ballarat

Oliveira Melo 2012), whilst at the same time implementing both new and renewed processes for city planning. Being part of WHITR-AP’s pilot programme meant that Ballarat’s Council officers have had access to international experts, networks and interpretation of the HUL (WHITR-AP 2013; City of Ballarat 2013a). However, specific knowledge about the practical application of HUL in a local government setting, particularly in Australia, was not available and needed to be charted by the City of Ballarat through the implementation process itself. In many ways, it was unclear what practical application and localisation of HUL meant due to its broad statements and aspirational orientation.

The HUL Action Plan became the stimulus for innovation in Ballarat, but it required new techniques and local approaches to be developed. Stage 1 began with an overview study Mapping Ballarat’s Historic Urban Landscape (Context Pty Ltd 2013), which aimed to explore what HUL could mean in practice and in this specific locality. Undertaken collaboratively with Council officers and consultants, the study also relied on the establishment of an advisory group comprising academics from Deakin University’s Cultural Heritage Centre for Asia and the Pacific (CHCAP) and Federation University Australia, Council officers and the consultant team. This collaboration made it possible to move forward with the large task of mapping, documentary research, data collection, and community engagement necessary for the first attempt at a synthesis; and to build a broader consensus while also keeping alive the conceptual and theoretical debates. Pushing the boundaries of usual practices, to unsettle taken-for-granted assumptions, became a prerequisite.

The Stage 1 study developed an indicative landscape characterisation framework (Clark et al. 2004) including urban areas and created a map titled ‘a visual analysis of the municipal area’ (see Figure 6.4). This simple map, in particular, highlighted a number of key visual elements and view lines that are not typically considered in the system of planning scheme overlays, historic precincts and planning zones that create a complex set of bounded parcels out of the urban landscape. While this landscape characterisation is predominantly visual, and is preliminary and imperfect, it has been a useful first step in stimulating discussions and encouraging a broad range of stakeholders to see Ballarat in a new light.

The study also began to explore some new community-based cultural mapping methods. This is a key feature of the HUL approach identified by Bandarin and van Oers (2012: 155) where ‘cognitive mapping by participant groups, anthropology and cultural geography insights, and documentation by locals of oral traditions and customs’ are central to the process. The advisory group worked with some of the members of a community advocacy group, the Ballarat East Network. Walking and driving through Ballarat East together highlighted the importance of the ‘rural feel’ and the importance placed on individual expressions and uses of space. It identified some special views, informal walking routes and quirky features that are often overlooked in local/municipal heritage studies and planning processes. While this was only a first effort to understand Ballarat East in this experiential way, the outcomes for the longer-term Ballarat HUL processes have been significant, underscoring the need to augment the usual studies with other inquiries as
Figure 6.4  Map showing the outcomes of the landscape characterisation analysis conducted by Context Pty Ltd in Stage I of the HUL process.

Source: Context Pty Ltd 2013: 53; City of Ballarat.
there are risks in managing change when the values of some elements have not been recognised by the existing heritage and planning arrangements.

Building on these first steps, work in several new areas commenced (loosely termed together as 'Stage 2'). These were focused on providing new tools that an ongoing commitment to a ‘HUL-approach’ will need and enabling the development of sustainable approaches to often costly and lengthy community engagement programmes, as well as some stocktaking to ensure that previous data collection work by the Council could inform continuing efforts. Briefly, these included:

- A preliminary review of current planning and regulatory policy, including recommendations on how to embed HUL in the Ballarat Planning Scheme (Planisphere, Forest and City of Ballarat 2014);
- Scoping the development of interactive mapping tools, including potential 3D and 4D technologies and other online engagement tools (CeRDI 2014; Omnilink 2014);
- A Cultural Mapping Audit to better recognise and utilise the knowledge and data collected in existing community-initiated programmes that relate to community values (Tsilemanis 2014).

The City of Ballarat began developing the new long-term land-use strategy Today, Tomorrow, Together – The Ballarat Strategy in 2013 (City of Ballarat 2014a). A step in the strategy’s development was Ballarat Imagine, the largest community conversation ever held in Ballarat (City of Ballarat 2013b), which used a values-based approach, inspired by the HUL. With over 6,500 responses, the Ballarat Imagine community engagement programme assisted by enabling a better understanding of what different communities value most in Ballarat, what they imagine for their future and what they do not want to lose. By setting the engagement programme firmly in the context of future change, Ballarat Imagine was able to begin to address the question of the ‘limits of acceptable change’, albeit at a very broad and preliminary level. Three open-ended questions elicited the themes of heritage, history, natural beauty and a great lifestyle as the most strongly valued characteristics; with Ballarat's historic streetscapes, places and features rated the most highly. The timing of Ballarat Imagine allowed its findings to be incorporated into the HUL studies, as well as establishing the vision for the Ballarat Strategy and achieving high-level commitment to the HUL approach. The outcomes have helped to ensure that the needed political support for the HUL process can continue and they have underpinned the agreement to place ‘heritage’ in a central place in the planning for the future, rather than as a separate – albeit important – sector of activity.

**Pausing to reflect**

Points for review and reflection are important built-in parts of the process. The completion of Stage 1 of the HUL programme was marked by an international
symposium on the Historic Urban Landscape in Ballarat in September 2013, and while the tools developed in Stage 2 are continuing to be refined, the public launch of an interactive ‘HUL Ballarat’ website and ‘Visualising Ballarat’ mapping tool designed to facilitate inclusive engagement and participation coincided with a second international symposium in February 2015 (titled ‘Participate, Imagine, Innovate: Revitalising Historic Cities’).

An important and influential outcome has been to shift established mindsets inside the Council offices and in the communities, allowing an emerging understanding of the urban landscape in the context of management and change. Without acceptance of the need to see Ballarat’s urban landscape differently and to change practices accordingly, the HUL programme could not have attained the needed level of formal support from the elected Councillors and Council senior managers. As noted above, one symbolic measure of this was the decision by Ballarat City Council to enter into a strategic cooperation agreement to operationalise HUL as part of the pilot programme with WHITR-AP. Linking Ballarat’s strategic processes to an international programme and finding an approach that had the potential to integrate conservation with socio-economic development goals were elements contributing to the appeal this arrangement had for the Council (Figure 6.5). On the side of WHITR-AP, it was clear that finding a partnership with a municipal authority was highly valued in its efforts to more deeply explore and implement the HUL framework.

At this stage, the implications for the future application for the HUL approach seem very positive, but of course, there are some tensions and vulnerabilities too.

- The process is highly dependent on continuing political support from the Councillors and Council’s senior management and experience shows that this can change quickly. Some of the work that has been undertaken – particularly in relation to the existing planning mechanisms (Planisphere, Forest and City of Ballarat 2014) – has been consciously oriented at ensuring there are some early and useable outcomes for the existing strategic planning and development approvals processes that can allow the thinking about innovation to continue.

- So far, the HUL process has been developed alongside the existing heritage identification and management arrangements. Making changes to well-established processes and frameworks might meet significant resistance, especially given that many are established at the State level (and so not easily amended at the local level).

- One of the most powerful components of the HUL is the idea that the ‘limits of acceptable change’ can be determined, allowing change to occur without losing the most valued and distinctive characteristics. In Ballarat, this has only begun to be understood and operationalised, although creating a more collaborative and inclusive dialogue and breaking down the visual and the fabric orientations of conventional heritage practices have assisted this part of the process.
Collaboration between consultants, planners, academics, community organisations and across Council, along with a willingness to accept the need for change, have been the essential ingredients in the progress made in Ballarat to date. Other important enabling factors have been the ability to stimulate a new dialogue about urban conservation through the platform of UNESCO’s HUL approach, sidestepping the existing urban conservation paradigm – or at least the ways in which it is typically received and applied by local governments. As discussed in the final part of this chapter, we have begun to identify the ways in which heritage practice can be changed through the adoption of the HUL approach (see Figure 6.6).

The process to date has raised an awareness of the potential of adopting the HUL approach, resulting in the HUL being embedded into the high-level Ballarat
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Burra Charter says...</th>
<th>Conventional heritage practice</th>
<th>New 'HUL' practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>... for places of cultural significance</td>
<td>'Heritage' is focused on spatially located 'places'</td>
<td>More than places</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural significance is embodied in the place itself, its fabric, setting, use, associations, meanings, records, related places and related objects [Article 1.2]</td>
<td>Values are tangibly expressed and embedded in place</td>
<td>Values embodied in people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy for managing a place must be based on an understanding of its cultural significance [Article 1.1]</td>
<td>Statements of Significance are adopted and applied through formal processes and are fixed for long periods</td>
<td>Significance as fluid, contestable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place may have tangible and intangible dimensions [Article 1.1] – comprising fabric, associations and meanings</td>
<td>Focus on fabric, especially the exterior fabric and appearance of historic buildings</td>
<td>People carry values which are attributed to tangible and intangible elements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural significance means aesthetic, historic, scientific, social or spiritual value for past, present or future generations [Article 1.2]</td>
<td>Victorian State legislation refers to aesthetic, archaeological, architectural, cultural, historical, scientific or social significance</td>
<td>More than visual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In practice, aesthetic, architectural and historical significance are used more frequently than the others</td>
<td></td>
<td>Depending on values, fabric could be just one way of transmitting meanings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use can be part of significance [Article 7.1]</td>
<td>Adaptive re-use is common</td>
<td>Cultural significance is localised – defined by the distinctiveness of the place and values held by people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compatible use respects the cultural significance of a place [Article 1.1]</td>
<td>Uses are generally not included in statutory requirements</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservation of a place should identify all aspects of cultural and natural significance... [Article 5.1]</td>
<td>Natural values are considered through separate systems of decision making</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous cultural heritage values are considered through separate systems of decision making</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The setting of a place can be significant [Article 8]</td>
<td>Heritage places are strictly bounded</td>
<td>Values guide the approach to the management of change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Precincts/areas are a focus for contestation and patchy outcomes</td>
<td></td>
<td>For example people may value use above fabric in particular instances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oriented at people who provide advice, make decisions or undertake works [Preamble]</td>
<td>Methods are expert-led</td>
<td>Practice needs to reflect cultural perspectives that do not separate nature and culture (including Indigenous cultures)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservation should make use of all the knowledge, skills and disciplines which can contribute to the study and care of the place. [Article 4]</td>
<td>Methods are focused on physical recording and historical documents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Significance is defined very broadly [Australia ICOMOS 2013b]</td>
<td>Aboriginal heritage is often equated with pre-contact archaeological sites</td>
<td>Aboriginal and settler communities associate their heritage with landscapes comprised of diverse elements and periods of history, including contemporary associations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6.6 Emerging HUL practice in Ballarat and its links with Australian practice.
Strategy – a useful determinant of how new development and new growth will occur sustainably in the municipality over the next 30 years. The momentum that continues to build around Ballarat’s HUL pilot programme is enabling opportunities to explore complex issues such as vulnerability, resilience and virtuous economic futures with a growing set of stakeholders, helping to make Ballarat’s approach to the management of change more sophisticated than had previously been the case. The staged exploratory approach to implementing HUL in Ballarat has enabled a feeling of ownership of the change management process and has opened up a dialogue with a different set of people – including the local communities. By embarking on this together, the process has enabled the approach to seem more powerful.

Conclusions: learning from – and for – Ballarat

Seeing urban settlements as landscapes has had more profound impacts on the rethinking of approaches and methods than was anticipated at the start of the project for the City of Ballarat.

The experience of the Ballarat HUL programme has led us to tentatively conclude that incremental change to the existing systems has possibly gone as far as it can, and that working ‘off the grid’ for a while is necessary, even though maintaining sufficient local political support will require some attention to a series of shorter-term outcomes at regular intervals.

The commitment to concepts and methods that are more genuinely community-centred rather than practitioner-driven will take us beyond the current capacity and scope of Australian standards such as the Burra Charter (Australia ICOMOS 2013a), which works best when applied to individual ‘places’ of cultural significance, but struggles with large and diverse areas and is not oriented to non-place components of culture, memory and identity. Embedding values-based thinking and processes has been the particular gift of the Burra Charter to the ongoing dialogue in Australia (and elsewhere) and it has allowed us to begin to appreciate an entirely different dimension of heritage work. However, as Figure 6.6 demonstrates, its ideas are not always fully implemented, especially in local heritage planning contexts. It seems that the idea of values-based heritage work – if expanded in this way – could be the way to go, but the transformations foreshadowed in Figure 6.6 could be very significant for the heritage practices of the future.

Because heritage controls often function to limit or prevent demolition of existing building fabric, ideas of ‘heritage’ have been distorted – and sometimes appropriated to unrelated causes and reactions against change. Perhaps one of the opportunities that the HUL presents communities with is the chance to take back and re-appropriate ideas of ‘heritage’ to those that are more inclusive, diverse and community-centred.

The previous approaches to heritage identification and assessment typically used in Ballarat had focused primarily on individual buildings or groups of buildings in certain streetscapes. This has been essential work, supported by the community, but the HUL approach has begun to shift to a broader understanding of heritage conservation at the local level. Increased attention to the processes of community
engagement has therefore been a central feature of this work, one that demonstrates how such an approach can ‘recover the significance of everyday landscapes’ of the past (Finch 2011: 14), as well as providing a new context for those conventionally designated as ‘significant’.

Surveys such as Ballarat Imagine, walking with the local community and the development of new community engagement tools are only first steps in what could lead to greater changes in approaches. Experiences in Ballarat highlight the importance of having the political support and space to try new things, and for some of them to work (and others not).

The early progress in this work has strengthened the capacity of the Council and its partners to continue. Future work will employ cultural mapping and visual methods to examine in more detail the interaction between people and place, the ‘embodied politics present in the everyday material world’ (Rose and Tolia-Kelly 2012: 1). The implementation of such methods and their incorporation into the HUL approach could have substantial impacts on local heritage practice. For example, we can foresee the need for more malleable statements of significance that are structured around the experiences of place and landscape. The discussions and decision-making processes might allow emerging concepts such as ‘tolerance for change’ and ‘resilience’ to be more commonly used as the authentic fabric might not be the sole or primary carrier of value in all cases (see Araoz 2011).

Despite the pessimism of Smith and Waterton (2012) about the continued resilience of the ‘authorized heritage discourse’, the advisory group was able to support the sustained quality of being unsettled, while also recognising that there are many emotional dimensions to contemplating major changes. We have encountered the difficulty of letting go of the way things are, even when they are not working well enough. The community heritage advocates seem understandably wary about what could be lost if we loosen the strongly regulated and adversarial character of decision-making. Government officials are also cautious about loosening the tightly scripted parameters in which heritage decisions are taken, fearing an escalation of contestation and the loss of the consistency and predictability of outcomes that involve investment and risk. Practitioners might resist sharing more of their control of the processes and risk becoming marginalised or even irrelevant in their own fields of passionate commitment. However, for all these actors there can also be appeal in finding a way to work differently. There is value in finding new forms of language that can allow us to begin anew, freed from the contested, expensive and ineffective characteristics of the status quo.

The emerging HUL approach has also had the beneficial effect of breaking down some of the traditional boundaries between the different areas of council activities. This has enabled the HUL work to move to the centre of the city’s strategic planning, rather than the usual positioning for ‘heritage’ as a separate concern on the edge of these major planning processes.

Given this initial analysis, it should be evident that local government operates as a pivot point between these different actors – and between the duality of ‘bottom-up’ and ‘top-down’ influences. More importantly, local governments are potentially more
nimble, able to innovate without relying on an alignment with other spheres of government. The fact that the City of Ballarat has been able to forge a working relationship with the WHITR-AP and participate directly in the activities of UNESCO without the involvement of the national government demonstrates this ability.

The HUL programme in Ballarat has challenged practitioners and council officers, and engaged researchers from a broad range of disciplines to critically reflect on current urban heritage and planning practices and conceptual assumptions. This has started to suggest methods that can delve more deeply into the way change is considered. By being open to this process, it has also enabled existing practices to be validated or strengthened and new ones to be designed and implemented. Overwhelmingly, however, by stepping back as experts, the experience has been instructive, and it has fuelled the conviction that it is possible to embrace new approaches on how to manage change in historic areas.

Our progress in Ballarat is tentative and exploratory and will need to progress much further before we can claim a paradigm shift and a new way to work. We are also taking many of these lessons into research and practice contexts in other urban settings in Asia to discover other enabling factors and sticking points. However, the most fundamental shift that underpins all this is the one that sees heritage values as embedded in place (as explained in the Burra Charter Article 1.2) to one that acknowledges that it is also embedded in the memories and experiences of people and their communities. These findings have underscored the importance of continually moving between theorisation, experimentation and applied learning – even in such constrained and pragmatic processes as local city planning and development.

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**Notes**

1 First adopted by Australia ICOMOS in 1979 as a local adaptation of the Venice Charter, the Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance (Burra Charter) has been revised a number of times and the current version is dated 2013. The substantial 1999 revisions particularly moved the Charter to balance the focus on fabric with intangible associations and meanings and emphasised the importance of community-based processes.

2 Several of Australia’s World Heritage properties inscribed in the past decade are individual buildings/sites located in urban settings – Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton...

For Aboriginal cultural heritage, conventional practice has focused on the identification of archaeological resources and the regulation of their disturbance. However, recent State legislation creates an important intersect between planning processes and the decision-making roles of the organisations that represent the two Traditional Owner groups. The modes of collaboration are still being found but the recognition of the municipality as a number of landscapes with multiple Indigenous and ‘settler’ values and associations is consistent with the emerging HUL approaches.

The consultant’s Project Manager relocated to City of Ballarat offices for the duration of the study in order to work collaboratively with Council officers. This collaborative process has now been adopted as a core requirement for any consultants working on HUL studies in Ballarat.

This is a subject that has been well covered in management disciplines (see for example Shugan 2004) but less so in the humanities and social sciences.

The ‘Historic Urban Landscape Ballarat’ website was launched on 21 February 2015. It has various materials useful for visualising the city, accessing resources, and ‘talking’ about the HUL – see http://www.hulballarat.org.au/ (accessed 23 February 2015).

Work by Planisphere, Forest and City of Ballarat (2014) has also looked at these transformations of practice.

Linking research with practice is a core focus of the City of Ballarat’s work. For example, PhD work to develop a new phenomenological methodology for practitioners to enable identification of dynamic social and historical values has been financially supported.

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Using the HUL to re-imagine Ballarat


