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## COMMUNITY HERITAGE DISCOURSE (CHD): A MULTIDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVE IN UNDERSTANDING BUILT HERITAGE CONSERVATION

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### ABSTRACT

*Despite the heritage sector's increasing efforts to protect cultural built heritage, the destruction of the historic environment is more significant than ever. For more than a few decades, heritage management systems have faced enormous impediments in their efforts to block the pressures that threaten the sustainability of built heritage conservation. Consequently, increasing numbers of participants are recognising that involving different stakeholders in conservation decision-making can be an opportunity to minimise the barriers to better built heritage conservation. However, in spite of these advances, the heritage sector still has a lot of work to do before its diverse stakeholders join forces for the real reforms that could bring broader insights to the heritage discourse.*

*The objective of this paper is to qualify a new analytical concept entitled community heritage discourse (CHD), as identified in a recent study by Amar (2017). CHD directly reflects on the structures, meanings and processes through which a consensus, expectations and collective action concerning built heritage conservation can be achieved. The focus is therefore on the following theoretical and empirical questions: what is built heritage, which values are significant, who is a stakeholder and how are the three areas related to the conservation process?*

*This paper is based on an empirical analysis of results and insights involving a literature review, focus groups and interviews conducted in Australia and Tanzania. This study reveals that built heritage conservation is not only dependent on a changing landscape and collective memories but, along with it, individual attitudes and value systems. This understanding provides the opportunity to generate a more inclusive framework for the strategic development of heritage conservation plans at the local, national and international levels.*

*The paper gives a new approach to understanding the complex relationship between built heritage and stakeholder perceptions in heritage conservation.*

Keywords: Community heritage discourse (CHD), Conservation process, Cultural built heritage, Decision-making, Heritage discourse, Heritage stakeholders

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

The idea of discourse as part of cultural heritage conservation has emerged from various academic fields, such as history, anthropology, archaeology, architecture and sociology (Graham and Howard, 2008). Coupled together, these disciplines promote a comprehensive understanding through which the meaning of cultural heritage is constructed and reproduced. Four significant shifts in heritage conservation have been implemented since 1800s (Amar, 2017): (i) Morris proposed the restoration of historic buildings, (ii) Ruskin was interested in preservation rather than restoration (iii) Webb introduced the practice of repair/rehabilitation and (iv) Viollet-le-Duc's conservation view was based on re-establishing/reconstructing historic buildings. Since that time, practical and academic debate on cultural heritage continues, with extensive literature

on cultural heritage published within the humanities and social sciences (Samuels and Rico, 2015). As a result of the different aspirations of cultural heritage experts and practitioners, the discipline including the conservation and management of cultural heritage has evolved.

Parkinson *et al.* (2016) describe the on going cultural heritage debates a professional discourse, since the efforts for cultural heritage management are supported by stakeholders working for professional organisations such as ICOMOS, UNESCO and the National Trust as well as different levels of government. Heritage professionals play a central role in creating the conservation legislation, charters and codes of practice which set standards for the assessment of the significant values, authenticity and integrity of cultural built heritage (Henderson and Nakamoto, 2016; Labadi, 2013). One criticism which is often levelled against built heritage conservation, as detailed in Amar *et al.* (2016), is its failure to integrate other forms of values perceived by indigenous groups from different places around the world. However, for Neal (2015), Kapelouzou (2012) and Weiss (2007), this critique emanates from professional discourse itself, arguing that the public (political) and private (investors and developers) stakeholders rely on experts involved in a conservation process to coercively ensure the commodification of cultural built heritage which promote the economic discourse.

Mason (2008:304) states that some of the heritage discourses ‘*represent important impulses within professional circles.*’ Not surprisingly, discourses related to the conservation of cultural built heritage are quite complex, numerous and are distinctly different (Waterton and Smith, 2010).

The unfortunate consequence of these discourses is an unsettling sense that the production and reproduction of meaning of cultural built heritage can only be concerted by the perceptions of heritage experts and practitioners (Samuels and Rico, 2015). Similarly, Baird (2009) observes that enshrining professional stakeholders’ perceptions in heritage legislation and code of practice is dangerous to the efforts for built heritage conservation. Worthing and Bond (2008), for example, state that legislation that allows physical intervention leads to the destruction or degradation of the value, authenticity and integrity of cultural built heritage. However, heritage legislation in many cases sustains the efforts to conserve built heritage, yet Kaufman (2013) and Waterton and Smith (2010) argue that before the laws and regulation are enacted, professional stakeholders need to understand what makes built heritage meaningful to their users: the individuals and groups in the historic environment. The conservation process must keep pace with narratives expressed by the broader community. As Samuels and Rico (2015:18) note, ‘*What is referred to as heritage continues to grow, and expertise lags behind.*’

The goals of heritage discourse are not only to help stakeholders understand the competing conservation theories and the decision-making process, but also how people view themselves (their sense of belonging) and why they present themselves (their sense of place) in relation to the historic built environment. This translates into different ways people create and interpret meaning and their attachment to a place is what experts and practitioners call heritage or significant values (Armitage and Irons, 2013). As such, this paper aims to illustrate what CHD is, specifically in terms of how it can contribute to our understanding of heritage conservation theory, practice and policy. The following section is divided into two parts. First, discourse is described and current debates within built heritage conservation are summarised. Then, the two spheres of discourses and their influence on the perspective of professional stakeholders are discussed. This will

allow for the overlaps in the discursive approaches of the diverse professionals involved in built heritage conservation to be pinpointed.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Whilst the field of humanities and social sciences, including cultural heritage studies, have long investigated many aspects of heritage discourse, a collective definition for the term *discourse* is yet to be determined in the field of conservation of cultural built heritage (Amar, 2017). Dryzek (1997:08) defines as discourse as ‘*a shared way of apprehending the world*’ which ‘*enables those who subscribe to it to interpret bits of information and put them together into coherent stories or accounts.*’ This definition provides the basis for using analysis, judgment and contestation as a model for understanding knowledge construction. Whisnant (2012) argues that discourse is grounded around four insights concerning humanities and social sciences: perception constructs the meaning of social realities; knowledge influences people’s values, attitudes and beliefs towards the construction of social meanings; experience establishes institutions to regulate ways in which meaning about social realities is constructed; and, therefore, discourse forms power dynamics, often creating a different version of reality in a surrounding or a broader societal system. According to Amar (2017), these four insights reflect and subsume the field of cultural heritage and, in fact, are central to theoretical and empirical enquiry that seeks to gain an in-depth understanding of what drives the conservation of cultural built heritage. In the heritage sector, these four insights of discourse are intertwined and closely linked, causing confusion and misconceptions among those involved in the creation and recreation of cultural built heritage (Amar, 2017).

Building on the concept of discourse can provide a profound way of understanding the complexity between perception, knowledge, experiences and power dynamics in the negotiation of meaning or narratives attached to historic environment. A more concrete idea, as described by Smith (2006), is a concept called authorised heritage discourse (AHD) AHD is a branch of critical heritage studies established in the 1980s to facilitate awareness and generate new ideas about heritage management and conservation. Smith (2012) describes AHD as ‘*a framework for archaeological theory and practice and for the way that heritage is interpreted and managed*’. In AHD, the emphasis shifts from a focus on experts to one on place and people. Waterton and Smith (2010) note that AHD emphasises expert endeavours – preserving material, aesthetics and monumental aspects – and excludes community values of attachment, identities or sense of belongingness to a particular object or landscape. As such, it has escalated conservation issues including destruction or demolition by neglect of built heritage (Hallowell, 2014; Graham and Howard, 2008; de la Torre, 2002).

The discussion outlined in this section suggests that discourse and its branches into many other fields in the heritage sector cannot address the issues facing built heritage conservation. Amar (2017) argues that the heritage sector needs to identify the spheres within which the stakeholders’ debates about built heritage conservation take place. In *Understanding Heritage*, Albert *et al.* (2013) find cultural heritage discourse embedded in and emerging out of the public sphere, because it represents an arena where stakeholders can build consensus at times when conflicts between heritage values are becoming increasing evident. However, while the public sphere is employed to lay claim to and convey the heritage sector as an open, democratic institution for its stakeholders (Albert *et al.*, 2013), the involvement of the general community is frequently overlooked in the conservation process (Amar, 2017; Samuels and Rico,

2015; Smith, 2006; de la Torre, 2002). The numerous challenges facing heritage conservation are the direct results of built heritage assets consisting of both public and private values that, perhaps not surprisingly, are associated with non-monetary and monetary benefits respectively (Mason, 2008).

Amar (2017) finds that the majority of built heritage assets are owned by stakeholders in the private sector whose conservation discourses are driven by self-efficacy and monetary needs rather than their significance values. Avrami *et al.* (2000) used interdisciplinary perspectives to explore how the socioeconomic needs of the private sector – that largely construct a private sphere – can benefit and impact built heritage conservation. For example, Rypkema (2008) identified revitalisation, tourism, increased property value and income as the short-term socioeconomic benefits of heritage conservation to the community. In contrast, the attempt to place the private sector in the heart of the public sphere's discussions about built heritage conservation has resulted in an acute crisis in the heritage sector today (Amar, 2017). As such, Rypkema (2008) asserts that economic discourse is far less important than the interests of the public. One should be critical of this assertion, as the private sphere has the power to undermine the public sphere's efforts to achieve sustainability in the conservation of cultural built heritage.

For this reason, heritage conservation is not just a matter for the public sphere but also for the private sphere, as its members are also a part of the community or nation. Behind public commitment, private investments and community initiative for the conservation of cultural built heritage, there are complex underlying cultural assumptions, costs and benefits involved in making different kinds of heritage conservation decisions (Armitage and Irons, 2013). Heritage theory has made an effort to identify new approaches that can readdress the inequalities in conservation decision-making. However, in practice, the gap has widened as heritage policymakers and administrators have struggled to harmonise the involvement of the other stakeholders in its conservation decision-making. For example, amendments to heritage legislation often leave community and private stakeholders with questions that must be put forward and discussed by heritage professionals.

While heritage discourse has mobilised literature focusing on the factors acting as motivators or barriers to collaborations between stakeholders as well as the broad spectrum of the development, management and implementation of conservation joint programs, the discourse for built heritage conservation remains contested and unstable, creating tension in conservation decision-making drawn from a wait-and-see practice (Amar, 2017). This is a result of attention not being paid to how stakeholders themselves – as caretakers of cultural built heritage – handle issues attributed to reconstructing and destabilising the meaning embedded by opposing perceptions or unrealistic objectives for built heritage conservation. In order to comprehend this imbalance of needs, this paper aims to understand the ways in which diverse stakeholders use heritage discourse to implicitly and explicitly prioritise some meanings and neglect others. As such, the paper is guided by the following theoretical and empirical questions: what is built heritage, which values are significant, who is a stakeholder and how are the three areas related to the conservation process? These research questions provide the scaffolding for the analysis and guided the development of the coding protocol, which incorporated variables that captured both framing and standing elements.

The following section summarises the method of gathering and analysing data, followed by a discussion of research findings extracted from a qualitative doctoral research project entitled '*Conservation of cultural built heritage: An investigation of stakeholder perceptions in Australia and Tanzania*,' by Amar (2017). The paper ends with a conclusion section that offers a précis of opportunities for conceptual and empirical research.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

A series of four focus groups and two semi-structured interviews were conducted with representatives from heritage stakeholders from local governments, community activists, corporate owners and professional organisations (including planners, architects, managers, historians, archaeologists and managers). The discussions were recorded and the digital files were transcribed verbatim. The transcriptions were checked for accuracy (Silverman, 2013) through data and investigation triangulation. The data was archived along with observational field notes in the NVivo™ v.10 program for inductive and deductive coding (see Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007) and the following abbreviation represent participant codes from field work: NSW is New South Wales, QLD is Queensland, DSM is Dar es Salaam and ZNZ is Zanzibar. Inductive coding was used to gain holistic insights into the different ways participants construct meaning, including the aspect of values from which attachments to a cultural built heritage are drawn, whilst deductive coding used *a priori* themes identified from the existing theory and emerging patterns as analysis of data progresses. This approach provided points of divergence among discourse that pertains directly to different but interrelated stakeholder perceptions of built heritage conservation that are congruent to framing the relationships to each other. Following this, systemic analysis of the empirical data was conducted to generate the results and findings presented in the subsequent section.

### 4. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The results from data analysis identified seven categories of shared themes linked to different aspects. The conceptual labels used were abstract to denote shared experiences across informants' accounts. These were (1) cultural built heritage and controversy; (2) value creation mechanism; (3) analysis of heritage stakeholder; (4) contested built heritage conservation process talking about stakeholder involvement capacity and their relationships; and, (5) politicisation of built heritage discourses.

#### 4.1 CULTURAL BUILT HERITAGE AND CONTROVERSY

The meaning of cultural built heritage serves as a seed crystal around which perception of heritage value and conservation decision-making are accreted. Much of the difficulty faced in the efforts to protect cultural built heritage stems from the different understandings of the concept held by participants. Broadly speaking, the term *built heritage* was used in three ways, primary due to scope of the experiences and knowledge associated with the words *cultural built heritage*. First, a number of participants argued that 'cultural built heritage' is a tautological statement because, as stated by participant DSM01, '*Cultural stands as an adjective to clarify built heritage.*' The word *cultural* refers to the construction-based history of certain cultures expressed in built form such as buildings, monuments and other structures rather than natural heritage. By this definition, one could argue that built heritage is more related to a historic centre rather than a broader historical urban context such as geographical setting. This conceptualisation was criticised by another participant DSM03, who

argued that built heritage should also include *‘infrastructure such as roads, bridges and spaces in search of broader meaning [of our heritage] in the built environment.’*

Responding to the above discussion, the second viewpoint, as described by a number of participants, is that built heritage should be considered as a subset of *cultural heritage*. The discourse behind this is that cultural heritage typically focuses on a more generalised view by looking at the broader cultural values of a historic fabric and their impacts on society. As noted by one participant NSW05, *‘Most of the legislation talks about cultural heritage, they don’t say that word “built.”’* However, there was a contrasting perception about how the legislative use of cultural heritage has contributed to the current challenges facing stakeholders in the conservation of cultural built heritage. The main challenge is that while in theory ‘cultural heritage’ is considered to represent both the pre- and post-colonial periods, it was noted that in practice the term often referred to cultural archaeology, representing Indigenous heritage that occurred during the pre-colonial period. There was a consensus that this is an issue when it comes to the conservation of heritage assets which are not embodied with indigenous cultural value, particularly those developed during and after the colonial period.

Legislators see these historical places as not worthy of conserving

The third viewpoint sees cultural built heritage is an acceptable term as it encompasses three overlapping schools of thought that were mentioned by a number of participants: cultural representing indigenous heritage, built heritage depicting the postsettlement period and an understanding of cultural landscape which extends to include streetscapes and townscapes. This, however, makes almost everything cultural built heritage; as participant NSW04 argued, *‘If a human being has been involved in it, then it’s got cultural [built] heritage.’* Participant NSW06 provided the following clarification:

*I’m always thinking of manmade structures of some sort, whether they survive or not, but we attach values to those structures. ‘Cause often, the structure on its own may be significant historically but that may not be enough for people to value it as part of their heritage, that there are values associated with the heritage that need to be recognised and have meaning for people, for people to actually want to recognise it as heritage.*

Within that context, the presence and arrangement of historic buildings, sites and monuments in their historical context was agreed as significant in articulating why a place is important. However, again there was a general agreement that it is hard to convince different stakeholders about what is a clear understanding of cultural built heritage as often the legislation does not clearly define this concept.

Above three very different understandings of cultural built heritage are presented, each of which argues a clear concept and within each of which different meanings relating to historic buildings, monuments and sites are created. Clearly, having different understandings creates problems that cannot be ignored because they affect the ways in which stakeholders understand and get involved in the conservation of cultural built heritage. For instance, if legislation focuses on cultural heritage, then stakeholders who have an interest in indigenous heritage or cultural archaeology are likely to ignore built heritage. Understanding the nature of the term *cultural built heritage* and its counterparts is central to the process of the conservation of cultural built heritage. The usage of cultural built heritage is not merely conceptual or semantic but originates from the discourses, in one form or another, attached to the ideological agendas behind the terms *built heritage*, *cultural heritage* or *cultural built heritage*. This is perhaps

unsurprising, considering the terms have evolved from the diverse spheres of policy and professional practice.

#### 4.2 VALUE CREATION MECHANISM

Cultural built heritage is a complex term that needs to be considered in context. It relies on the perception of *value*. As participant DSM03 declared, '*Values are important factors to define cultural built heritage.*' According to the data analysis, value refers to certain attributes, such as the social, cultural, economic, scientific or religious aspects that individuals or groups attach to or within a historic fabric. However, in order to understand values better, participants noted that it is useful to classify values according to threshold criteria; in particular, the significance on the local, national and international levels. This is because, as mentioned in the previous section, a place may mean different things to different people. While participants acknowledge that heritage legislation (e.g. acts, policies and regulations) and international documents are helpful in providing a broad encapsulation of heritage values, they stated that it is very hard to capture the broad palette of cultural built heritage values because '*people imagine and reimagine places all the time and add different values to them*' (Participant QLD07). The majority of participants asserted heritage values are created from the broad perceptions discussed below.

At its essence, social value is about cultural built heritage as a public good. A discourse of public good in relation to cultural built heritage is embedded in the concept of place and identity, which deepens understanding of the narrative development from the experiences and connections people have with place that are unique or special. Such places, as mentioned by participant NSW02, create '*a sense of identity, a sense of place and a link to the past.*' The interdisciplinary groups of participants argued that societies that emphasise these three factors – identity, place and links to the past – positively influence social cohesion and maximise shared values in terms of sustainability outcomes. It was further noted that cultural built heritage is so important that there is no amount of money that can determine its significant values. Put simply by participant ZNZ05, '*The value of built cultural heritage is priceless.*' Adding to this, however, some participants explicitly or implicitly alluded to the view that most stakeholders who focus on individual and not on societal value are not likely to support cultural built heritage as a public good.

This brought the framing of cultural built heritage within a discourse of private good emanating from the rationalisation of economic perception. In the course of the discussion, participants identified that heritage assets needs resources for upkeep as well as management and conservation costs for a long period of time. Participants discussed that cultural built heritage is defined based on its financial input to owners and the surrounding communities. For example, participant QLD06 pointed out that government-owned assets are protected when they '*bring money into the economy in the form of tourism,*' as tourism is considered important for the creation of employment and poverty reduction. For private-owned assets, value is when the historic fabric '*can cope with the property market.*' As participant DSM05 explained, it is tied to operating profits, return on investment and other key economic benefits. It is obvious that cultural built heritage is quite often defined by the socioeconomic value attached to its fabric. Overall participants agreed that heritage owners are '*really interested in the profit margin in the end*' and that is why '*demolition of historic building is done any way.*'



It is unsurprising that the nature and relationship of the socioeconomic values lend themselves to the politics of value creation – a process by which stakeholders ascribe value to historic fabric. The vast majority of participants observed that this mechanism promotes the perceived values of the powerful and silences those of the powerless. For example, participant QLD06 said, *‘There’s a commercial imperative driving politicians that overrides heritage values. I’m not sure that necessarily always reflects what the community wants.’* An important observation from the focus group discussion about value creation was that institutional owners have failed to consider cultural built heritage as part of the corporate social responsibilities that are usually amply covered in an organisation’s core values. As a result of this value creation mechanism, cultural built heritage is currently viewed as a nice-to-have rather than as a core value of the built environment in general. From this perception, the involvement of key stakeholders becomes integral to an understanding of the notion of creating heritage value in terms of attaining non-economic values while maximising economic values in the long run. As participant DSM01 commented, *‘Value is relative in terms of stakeholders.’*

#### 4.3 ANALYSIS OF THE HERITAGE STAKEHOLDER

Data analysis indicated considerable contention over the actual meaning of the term *heritage stakeholder* and this contention remained unresolved. Participant ZNZ03 summarised the problem nicely: *‘What stakes are we holding, who is our leader and who are we representing?’* Participants stated that this lack of understanding hinders the development of capacity for stakeholder involvement in the conservation of cultural built heritage. Although stakeholder groups are known, it was noted that stakeholders’ involvement in conservation decision-making is further complicated by the fact a stakeholder can frequently belong to more than one sector representing varying interests and expectations. Participant DSM06 provided an example of such a situation: *‘NHC Tanzania, a government institution, tends to demolish its historic buildings and build new offices or residences, for the sake of getting money.’* The Tanzanian Act of Parliament No. 45 of 1962 established National Housing Corporation (NHC) to undertake real estate business while the Department of Antiquities is in charge of built heritage conservation. This imbalance of stakeholder perceptions can be avoided by addressing the major shortcomings in the process of participation, engagement and collaboration.

Participants identified knowledge gaps among heritage stakeholders as a big constraint to the assessment of the authenticity and integrity attached to heritage values. Participant QLD02 observed, *‘Heritage conservation and even the history of architecture courses used to be a core part of studying architecture, but they are not any more.’* Participant DSM04 similarly stated, *‘I did my bachelor’s degree in town planning and there was no training on issues related to built heritage conservation at all.’* The disconnect between what practitioners learn and their ability to use what they learn results in an inability to take up most effectively the role of conservation of cultural built heritage. This was found to be accountable for clashing perceptions in the right way to assess cultural built heritage. For example, Participant QLD05 stated, *‘There’s no heritage requirements for the owner or the developer to manage historic buildings to a certain standard.’* Not meeting profit margin expectations often leads to a range of negative outcomes including the obstruction of a conservation process or the destruction of cultural built heritage.

The main reason for conflicts of perceptions and interest in the heritage sector is the asymmetry of stakeholders’ involvement in the assessment for cultural built heritage.

Asymmetry exists in the formal decision-making process where stakeholders with no power or money are excluded from discussions where trade-offs about heritage value can be made. As participant NSW07 noted, *'In our liberal economic state, the focus is totally on the individual/private sector and not on community.'* It was suggested that the heritage sector should embrace a *participatory approach* where the conservation process starts with a joint meeting with communities for the purpose of weaving in the key stakeholders who will possess a combination of power, legitimacy and urgency relations. This will limit the influence that the stakeholders with power, authority and/or control have on the planning, assessment and management of cultural built heritage values. Participant DSM05 suggested the decision-making process should *'involve all stakeholders . . . who qualify and are professional, so the system becomes friendlier than it is now.'* Indeed, the assessment of cultural built heritage depends on the type of stakeholders and their involvement with and influence on conservation decisionmaking.

At the same time, participants noted that special attention must be paid to the stakeholders' cultural differences. These play a huge part in the way stakeholders interpret and connect with the historic environment. For example, it was noted by some participants that when Dr David Livingstone's grandchildren visited Tanzania to trace their grandfather's route, many places were considered significant to them and were recognised by their heritage team. However, Participant DSM01 noted, this interest was specific to their history: *'For them almost every little thing he touched was of value . . . some cultural built heritage the locals may not have any use of.'* While multiculturalism was recognised as critical in the assessment of heritage value, participants stated that it has created confusion and fragmentation in the conservation process. Participant NSW02 recounted how when they were conducting a Hurstville (Sydney) heritage study review,

*'The current community don't understand why certain buildings are important because they are from a different culture, Asian background community.'* This is supported by participant ZNZ03 who said, *'New people who come in don't appreciate the same thing.'* Given the complex nature of stakeholders, a good strategy is to create a sound decision-making framework that focuses on conservation policies and procedures.

#### **4.4 CONTESTED BUILT HERITAGE CONSERVATION PROCESS**

The previous sections established that stakeholders' diverse perceptions greatly affect the preparation of a statement of significant values related to and embodied in historic buildings, monuments and sites. Thus, the involvement of key stakeholder is of increasing importance to the conservation process, particularly in policymaking, which is a major drawback to effective decision-making. As participant DSM04 stated, *'There are several challenges and most of them are related to policies.'* According to participant NSW01, currently policy standards and guidelines are *'ill defined and fundamentally override heritage outcomes.'* For example, participant DSM06 works for a real estate corporation. They explained that they took a conservation order as a *'sabotage to the program of redevelopment and it happened that the corporation fought until the order was revoked.'* However, one useful aspect of the conservation process noted by study participants is its ability to resolve these sorts of heritage issues when stakeholders work together as a group. This can be achieved when the conservation process is revived in the following areas.

- Reducing the ability of stakeholders to obstruct the planning and implementation of conservation decision-making by reinforcing strategies for mapping and

understanding the power, position and perceptions of actors in the heritage industry. As participant QLD05 stated, *'It's about behavioural change or attitudinal change'* where personal position about a built form are constructed and seek to either include or exclude what would be cultural built heritage.

- Integration of stakeholder perceptions should be considered as the starting point of an iterative process which may shape the identification of new strategic planning and improve the legitimacy of its management system leading to an increased likelihood of effective and efficient implementation of the conservation decision-making process. Participant DSM06 noted, *'The problem can be solved by having an integrated plan in which each and every institute concerned has one stand.'*
- Allowing fairness by giving stakeholders who are indirectly affected by the conservation process a chance to be heard in the decision-making process. It was reported that in an ideal world all conservation decision-making would be communal, but this is rarely the case. Participants also stated that in instances when conservation policies and guideline are poorly followed, there should be *'an option of third party appeals to a court – to or against development approvals'* (Participant NSW01). This will create support for sustainable conservation.

Another more challenging aspect of the conservation process is the poor implementation of legislation for the conservation of cultural built heritage. Participant QLD05 stated, *'The legislative frameworks in place are still a work in progress.'* This is because legislation struggles with not only terminologies and different levels of government but also tends to focus on the tangible and *'doesn't deal with the broader aspect of heritage, which still exists and we all appreciate,'* as reported by Participant NSW01. A considerable similarity exists in the perception each group has of the influence of powerful stakeholders over heritage legislation and this contributes to the feeling of alienation among many stakeholders. Participant DSM02 claimed that, *'Even if you have good legislation there will be still people who will . . . bribe and not want to take the responsibility,'* while participant DSM06 further explained, *'You get involved during the implementation phase and not the start and we are not given conservation documents or consent to advise.'* As a result of this misalignment, the protection of cultural built heritage is becoming difficult. One way to solve this issue is to find a common ground in the contemporary conservation process.

#### 4.5 POLITICISATION OF THE BUILT HERITAGE DISCOURSE

Data analysis indicated that the heritage discourses, which transform policy and practice for heritage value assessment as well as the revision of cultural identities, have created conservation barriers. Participant NSW01 stated that heritage conservation is actually very important *'for preserving the truth but at the same time heritage is an elemental part of these kinds of politically driven evolutions of culture.'* This is comprised of authorised heritage discourse (AHD), emergent discourse and international discourse. Within AHD, there has been exploration of expert/professional perspectives into recognising a public sphere in which the conservation process takes place, calling for a greater emphasis on community participation. However, this emphasis is only a theory. As participant DSM05 explained, there is *'no involvement, no coordination at all'* of key stakeholders, especially the community *'who can tell the history of something, if it's worthy of being kept.'* Nonetheless, practitioners should use AHD for the

continuation of cultural built heritage of a particular society and not pushing personal agendas. Participant NSW01 concludes that with AHD, *'You end up with competing consultants on either side of an issue writing contradictory reports.'*

On the other hand, participants made a case for an international discourse. As discussed by participant DSM03, unlike the AHD approach of *'heritage from below,'* this involves a *'top-down approach'* to the conservation of cultural built heritage relevant to community. Its multi-sectoral collaboration was seen useful because it brings together all stakeholders at the local, national and international levels with the knowledge and resources to enable the sustainable implementation of conservation design-making. Participant ZNZ07 stated, *'The involvement of local and international stakeholders is very important for conservation.'* Participant QLD03 concurred, noting, *'You need the impact of that huge international impact on a small society . . . [a] best practice guide.'* Participant NSW04 noted this is important because, *'Otherwise you wouldn't have conservation listing, it's getting harder and harder to put such definitive legislation'* around the protection of most historic places. If combined, the strengths of AHD and international discourse could generate a more positive impact on the heritage sector than either could achieve in isolation. The harmonisation of grassroots level and top leaders (e.g. policy and decision makers) approach is very important to make sure the conservation of the cultural built heritage is going to be sustainable.

Participants also drew attention to a new discourse called emergent heritage. This discourse derives its theoretical basis from decisions about cultural built heritage that may not be considered to be of high significance now but might be considered to be of greater significance in the future. Participant QLD07 reported that practitioners involved in the assessment of historic places' heritage *'can see their value emerging but are often at least a generation ahead of the broader community value.'* In retrospect, the conservation process becomes strategic using a *'sit back and wait'* approach, allotting current stakeholders a responsibility to deliver historic places to the future so they can decide about heritage values. According to participant NSW02, this discourse finds *'the balance between what actually we are protecting, what is important, and how we can bring that importance to benefit the future generations.'* Added to this, *'the pace of change'* (Participant QLD03) was observed to be a considerable setback to the conservation process, since factors like inadequate professional standards, conflicting perceptions and a lack of budgeting and skills can destroy historic places before a generation can appreciate it.

From the above discussion, it can be seen that this sample of stakeholders often regard it as self-evident that heritage discourse should be starting point for solving the complex issues associated with the conservation of cultural built heritage.

Yet, participants hold deep and persistent views that, regardless of the number of meetings, forums and programs, the destruction of historic places will not stop if these discourses fail to create a common framework based on their perceptions of formulating principles that find a balance between the bottom-up and top-down approaches to the conservation of cultural built heritage. Participant NSW03 detailed this as follows: *It's this kind of – it's almost like ships passing in the night. It's . . . Community has an expectation of heritage, which doesn't meet with private owners' expectation of heritage, which in turn doesn't meet with government's concept of how to manage heritage. So you've got three separate systems that simply aren't coming together and yet all three are intrinsic to the management of cultural built heritage. Neither group –*

*none of those three groups are looking towards a consensus. They're all looking past each other and nothing can get done in that kind of atmosphere.*

Sustainability of policy approaches for the conservation of cultural built heritage can be achieved by creating a framework that is accepted and supported by different stakeholders at the local, regional/state/territory, national and international levels.

## 5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Stakeholders have tried to combat the effect of economic growth and development pressure for many years. Buried under a value creation mechanism, studies often lacked a particular focus on the community sector in the way they reimagine the changing landscape and collective memories. With a new discourse on cultural built heritage and their attempt to alter what has not worked previously, different levels of government have been amending legislation and policies relating to conservation principles, the harmonisation of the decision-making process and the alignment and mutual accountability for sustainable heritage management. However, the actual effectiveness of adhering to these changes in both the public and private spheres in terms of achieving the intended objectives for protecting cultural built heritage have not been met adequately. For one, the heritage sector is egocentric – the community, a very important stakeholder, is frequently left out in the decision-making process. This is a considerable issue, as the successful implementation of a conservation plan needs to be supported by the community. As participant QLD05 noted, *'If the community was supportive they'd be supportive. If the community's not supportive, they're not supportive.'*

For others, despite different heritage discourse research recognising that integration of stakeholders in the conservation process for the establishment of a sustainable heritage system, community participation in the public and private conservation discourses is theoretical. It has become apparent that research bodies work under the presumption that heritage discourses are resilient to the construction of cultural values on the changing landscape in relation to making sense of the present. For example, up until now, none of these excellent works (e.g. Parkinson *et al.*, 2016; Smith, 2006) have fully explored a heritage discourse framework that draws out the range of diverse perceptions and interests set out by multi-stakeholders in multicultural societies encompassed by multiple levels of laws, politics. Amar (2017) posits that heritage discourse remains difficult to grasp because it is poorly understood due to the lack of a relevant framework to assist heritage stakeholders in its practical implementation. The contestation over heritage discourses arises because the concept was constructed around the essence of the revision of cultural identity, which postulates a political system that reflects the cultural values and meaning of the present more than the past.

By taking into account the context of the results and findings, these problems can be overcome to a large extent by community heritage discourse (CHD), a concept that presents an analytical framework for the integration of the community in both private and public discourse to facilitate a positive impact for more effective conservation of cultural built heritage (Figure 1). The first step is to gather relevant key stakeholders, especially from the community sector, for the purpose of counteracting the obstructive powers of public and private sectors have on the conservation of cultural built heritage, as currently the involvement of the community sector in the decisionmaking process is particularly fragmented. The framework encourages all three sectors (private, public and community) to engage in an inclusive participatory process to allow critical reflection and the approaching of conservation issues from different angles with the

goal of finding common ground about the cultural built heritage aspect of heritage values. Secondly, since the private and public sectors own almost all heritage asset stock, they should be compelled to incorporate the heritage aspect as part of the corporate social responsibly in the core strategies of their operations.

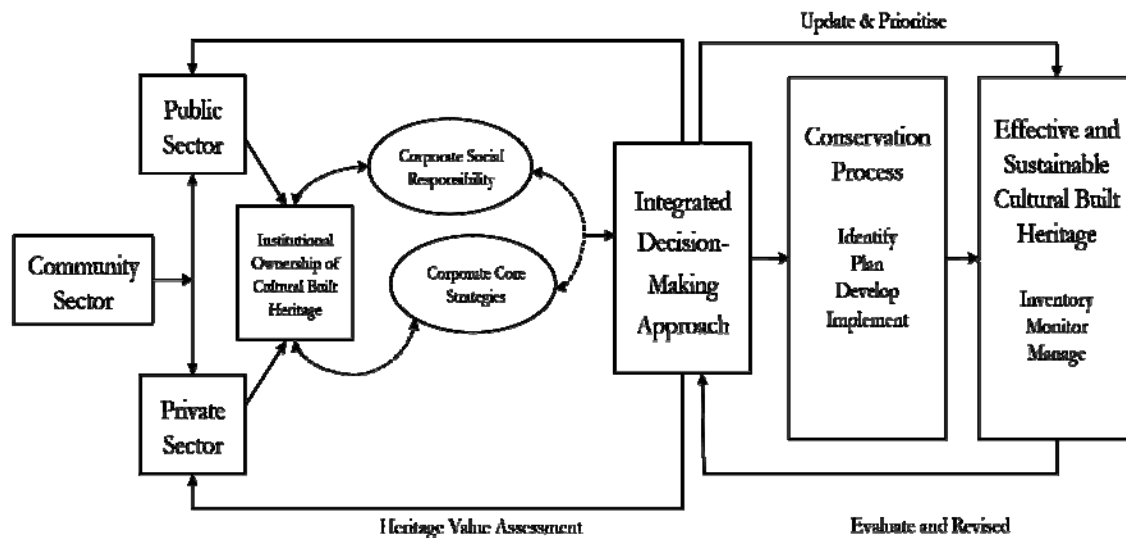


Figure 1: Community Heritage Discourse: An analytical framework for conservation of cultural built heritage  
(Source: Authors, 2018)

This will coincide with the establishment of an integrated decision-making approach, both in terms of acting responsibility toward the assessment of heritage values and implementation of an effective conservation process. Following this, heritage discourses would be used to identify problems and produce a wide range of outcomes. This can be achieved through the process of monitoring, evaluating and updating the decision-making process for the conservation of cultural built heritage.

That means stakeholders can conduct ‘checks and balances’; that is, debate, contest and compare each other’s perceptions about cultural built heritage to see what works, why it works, under which conditions, and for whom. It is only by enhancing the elements illustrated in Figure 1 that the heritage sector has a chance to find a common ground and vest interest on effective and sustainable cultural built heritage for the 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond. As noted above, CHD is an idea gleaned from heritage legislation, heritage discourse, stakeholder perceptions and management system as well as impacts of changing landscape on individuals and collective memories attached to historic buildings, monuments and sites.

In conclusion, this paper has shown how discourses in which contestation and negotiations about the conservation of cultural built heritage are conducted in the public and private spheres through a deliberate exclusion of the general community. Additionally, these two spheres are driven by political and economic whims, leading to problem at the heart of the construction and re-construction of the meaning attached to historic places. Furthermore, the decision-making process is complex due to various heritage legislation and levels of heritage systems that often do not take into account stakeholders' diverse perceptions of cultural heritage. Although heritage discourse acknowledges and theorises ways to overcome the huddles related to the meanings and processes of cultural built heritage, it was noted there is a lack of mutual understanding of theoretical and empirical questions such as: what is built heritage, which values are significant, who is a stakeholder and how are the three areas related to the conservation process? Therefore, an opportunity to generate a more inclusive framework for the

strategic development of heritage conservation plans at the local, national and international levels deserves a lot of attention. This study developed the strategy of *community heritage discourse* (CHD) in an attempt to offer a new path where key stakeholders can base their perceptions of the theory, practice and policy for the more effective management of the conservation of cultural built heritage.

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