

Conference

Industrial heritage as force in democratic society

Sponsors

Council of Europe
National Heritage Board, Sweden

Location

Örebro, Sweden

Date

May 2001

Talk

**The future of the past in post-industrial society
– keynote summary**

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Roles and locations

I have been asked by the organisers to comment upon the proceedings of our conference, and particularly to consider futures, to consider what comes next. Our topic has been the significance of the industrial past in contemporary democratic society. I will begin with a question and a theme which are intimately connected and which, I propose, are at the heart of that question which has been behind so much of the last few days – what is to be done with the remains of recent, contemporary history?

The question I put to each of us – What is your role? Where do you stand?

Some of us see ourselves as the custodians of ‘heritage’, public servants perhaps, and/or professionals – experts able to decide on these cultural matters proposed important, or as educators of a public or constituency in matters of the value of the past, or as politicians with an agenda or a policy vision.

An anthropologist and cultural critique

Myself? I am not a public servant. As an archaeologist, I work upon what is materially left of the past. (And this definition is central to what I have to say this morning.) As an academic, I take very seriously that turn to reflexivity, that critical awareness of intellectual and cultural location which has come to be such a concern to the academy over the last thirty years. (And my opening question of role is precisely about location.) As an anthropologist, I emphasise that the apparently simple acquisition of a body of knowledge is no longer possible. It never was. It is no longer possible for an anthropologist of whatever kind to take the role of the distanced observer, looking at others and acquiring knowledge of them, for them and delivering it back to them. The anthropologist is located, implicated and accountable (And I hope it is clear that this critique applies to all of us here in our deliberation about collective policies applied to pasts personal as well as shared.)

My role then? That of the cultural critic. In a tradition of archaeological critique, I see my aim – and I would like to put this to you not just as my aim, but something for us all to think about – I see my role as one of unsettling and challenging familiarity, moving us away from easy, accepted, comforting notions of the past and its remains. Fundamental to this critique is juxtaposition – as James Clifford puts it, the role of the cultural critic is to juxtapose, to put unfamiliar things next to each other, and in so doing to provoke reflection.

Agendas old and new

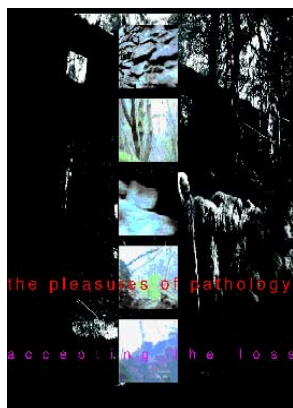
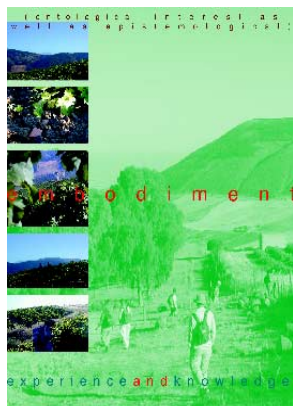
I propose that such a role is worth thinking upon not least because I am concerned about an underlying and unvoiced position, standard or agenda behind much discussion these last few days. I think many of my colleagues here happily uphold this position because it fits with how they see themselves and their role.

I will be blunt and use caricature so that you might position yourselves more easily with respect to the political agenda.

It begins with a defining and archaeological feature of the social fabric – things wear out, are superseded and become candidates for discard and disposal. Our simple question – what is to be done with these old buildings and machines associated with a relatively recent industrial past? Some people, and it is an issue who these people are, propose they know that some, or maybe even all of these remaining buildings and machines should be preserved, conserved, sympathetically converted for an alternative use, whatever. Various reasons may be given why this is considered good. Perhaps it is considered culturally responsible not to lose the past. It is often connected with identity (‘this is **our** past’). Our conference has tabled the issue of a connection between industrial heritage, the conservation/preservation of these buildings and machines, and democratic futures.

I have heard no scrutiny of this basic ‘conservation ethic’ – that old things matter and it is good to hold on to them. It seems that many who see themselves as professionals and politicians are convinced of the validity of the conservation ethic and want to convince everyone else.

In this I hear business as usual for most state conservation, preservation, and heritage programs. A simple novelty promoted here is that the candidates for conservation and preservation are not castles, prehistoric monuments, or works of art whose ‘cultural value’ might be more easily argued. They are often seen as dirty, ugly and rusting relics, and some are not that old.





The second novelty is that these industrial relics are being connected with democratic values, though it has been pointed out several times over the last few days that heritage is usually of interest to cultural elites and remains within their control, whether in cultural discourse or institutions like museums services.

The third new condition is that this modified conservation ethic is being proposed for export from enlightened regions and groups already practising the conservation of industrial heritage. This is a European-sponsored and international conference. Policies, practices, experiences and legislation modelled in (certain parts of) Europe are proposed for export abroad. Many of us may be familiar with this context of **globalism**.

My concern is that we address the assumptions within this agenda. A danger is that we might otherwise lapse into a kind of self-congratulating and introverted closure that would take the question and its answer as given – ‘Of course it is good to conserve the industrial past like any other past. ‘We’ know. Listen to us – it will do you good!’

To try to open up possible futures I want to unpack three of our conference themes – I will now consider democracy, industry and identity.

Democracy

The question again. What are we to do with these (not so) old buildings and machines? Now, I think, I hope, we have accepted that a democratic response does not lie simply in asking people what they want, perhaps by questionnaire, a head count of support for particular options. This however is not the place to argue the inadequacy of such an approach to popular sovereignty. Nevertheless we need a definition of the democratic that is appropriate to our specific and manifold roles. Here I can only sketch some ideas.

In these few days others have argued the case that an appropriate and democratic aim is to avoid fixing things down. I think this is the kind of thinking we should adopt in formulating a conception of the democratic in relation to cultural heritage. In our concern with communities and their relationship to substantial social and cultural change and its material effects and affects, there is a need to be sensitive to plural and different interests, and to respect a right of perhaps very small groups or individuals to their own pasts, respecting their cultural agency in taking up what is left of the past in their own way.

Thus our aim, I suggest, should be to let as many people as possible share cultural creativity. But this will emphasise how democracy is rooted in the provisional. It is awkwardly messy. There are no neat answers. It is partial in every sense of the word, so imminently dislocated. Positions constantly need to be argued for and against. And people will always disagree.

As a corollary to this pluralism and dislocation, the democratic is not simply the popular, or to do with ‘the people’ (the demos). I certainly have heard this simple equation made in our conference as a convenient argument for the preservation/conservation of industrial heritage – it is seen as a celebration of people’s history, the history of the industrial working class. This equation potentially occludes pluralism and diversity.

Conventionally, the project of supporting democracy throws emphasis upon the effective management of plural interests. It also throws into sharp relief the role of professionals, individuals and groups skilled in dealing with the past in the public sphere. I am faced here today by mostly professionals and policy makers. You are not going to like a lot of what people say to you and want to do. Many may well not even care about the material past. It is not going to be comfortable. It is going to be unsettling. And this is the way it **should** be.

The reason why I am emphasising the democratic as incomplete, unsettling, provisional and partial is to highlight the concerns I have mentioned in regard to the role of the professional, the expert and the politician. First I ask that we beware of the easy knowing authority that may accompany these powerful positions. In caricature it may sound like this – ‘we know and they should listen because it will be good for them’. The role of social engineer is not a democratic one in relation to cultural heritage.

Second, I suggest we beware of the easy and comforting narratives that accompany cultural heritage. They are most often centered on the nation state and its related forms. Cultural heritage is so often reduced to support for ideologies of national identity, and those regional identities dependent upon the nation state – whether it’s the orthodox history of the Swedish state, a



region here like Bergslagen, the nation-states of Europe in crisis, or whether it's the European super state. The comforting feelings of unity and a history that makes easy sense do no justice to real contested and pluralist histories of a Europe internally divided, internally colonized and endemically diverse.

Industry

I suggest, in dealing with our question of what to do with old buildings and machines, we try to see around this category, unpack and lay it to one side, while being aware of its significances and connotations.

With respect to the argument for the conservation and preservation of specifically industrial heritage, the term industry is used variously to refer to the relatively recent past, certain features (and 'postindustrial' futures) of modern society, and, as in the field of industrial archaeology, may involve a quite fetishistic attitude to certain kinds of building and machinery (steam engines, blast furnaces, railway stations, pump houses ...).

In these uses of the term I see three fundamental issues.

The first is that of the temporality of cultural heritage, whose preservation/conservation is of concern to us. Our conference is part of a wider expression of the value of the recent past, as well as the more distant and obviously 'historic'. It is captured in the now archetypical question of the value of a factory building whose economic life is over. On one side it may be argued that it should be discarded/demolished because its **usefulness** has ended. On the other we have the argument for its cultural value or significance, for an **extension** of its usefulness.

These arguments may involve questioning whether the factory is 'historic' or not – whether it transcends somehow the mundane quotidian recyclable or disposable. Implicitly or explicitly this is about the demarcation of certain cultural materials and spaces. Is the factory 'historic'? Does history begin only 50 years ago? Or 30, or 20? Can archaeology and history, as disciplinary fields and practices, be applied to **contemporary** society? For me this is to raise the much more interesting question of the character of history as **historicity**, which I define as our sense of who we are, where we are placed, and the scope of our agency in that temporal fluidity of pasts, presents and futures. For that factory, and whatever it may become, may be seen as contributing to such a sensibility. In this issue of industrial heritage I suggest we think of historicity.

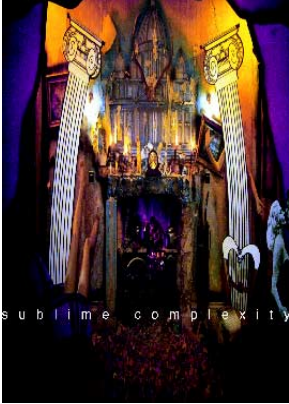
The second fundamental is the question of the value of cultural heritage in relation to the category of industry. Here the term again needs contextualizing. Industry is not best understood as referring simply to certain features of manufacture. It is intimately associated with definitions and experiences of modernity. It is again about historicity, a sense of what it means to live in (post)industrial society. Industry is wrapped up in conceptions of the rural and the urban and how they have interacted and changed – complex cultural fields.

So I suggest it might be better for us to think of our question of what to do with old buildings and things as a particular form of the matter of the **contemporary past**. For to stress historicity over a simpler notion of history avoids the awkward issue of where history begins and ends. It is all around us, only partially is defined by its chronological date, and as a sensibility orients people culturally as well as temporally.

The third fundamental is the matter of fetishism and things. An identification of industry with certain features of manufacture can lead to a fetishism where machines and buildings are turned into things that stand on their own. Industrial archaeology is notoriously fascinated with nineteenth century Victorian heavy industry. It is a limited argument to hold that a particular steam engine or oil refinery should be preserved because it is intrinsically beautiful or inherently represents 'good design'. Much more effective, of course, is reference to context – the people's lives that intersected with things, buildings, material environments.

But let me nevertheless take up the emphasis upon things themselves that we may associate with the term industrial heritage. The fetishism of industry raises for me a fascinating and broad question of our contemporary relationship with goods, the material constitution of the social fabric. The topic of industrial change and decay prompts a sensitivity to social and cultural change and the emergence, in the developed world at least, of postindustrial societies. This very conference is an expression of a reevaluation of the significance of material goods and environments. At its best the cultural heritage movement can involve a reassessment of the alienation of working life in industrial capitalism, the remobilization of artifacts for new and creative ends.





Identity

Let me recapitulate – the remains of the past, let them be called heritage, have been widely promoted as a means of forging a sense of identity. The intimate connection between archaeology and nationalism, for example, has been very well researched and firmly established. But listening as a cultural anthropologist, I have only heard at our conference the beginnings of a critical engagement with this question of identity. We are in the early stages of finding ways of working with this cultural energy.

It is a complex concept, like culture, so essential and yet so difficult to specify. Of course, identity is about who we think we are. But, like culture, identity is better treated less as a specific phenomenon and more as a field of discourse – something that people argue over and around, precisely because they think it is important. It is therefore inappropriate for me to be programmatic about definitions. Let me be more pragmatic and say instead that identity is a position or location invoked in response to questions like – who are you, where do you come from, where do you live, what are your beliefs, what is your community, who do you want to be, how do you see yourself? Answers to such questions depend upon context and may make reference to place, experience, essences, narratives, collectivities, property, and other individuals. Identity is thus, in this position, fluid and constantly changing; and this a priori.

At the heart of identity are two fundamental and closely connected cultural gestures – representation and categorization. The (re)presentation of self and others; and the ordering of individuals into groups. Both involve a range of political and discursive strategies – such as ‘I am this, therefore I do that/own that/have these rights; you are this, therefore you should do that/own that/have those rights’.

Let me also mention here two anthropological truisms and their implications: identities are inherently multi-faceted, and identities are syncretic. Identities are acts of cultural construction, often the result of a cultural **bricolage**, formed piecemeal. They are temporal processes, located and needing constant work and maintenance. Thus the notion of an essential identity is an ideological proposition, not a given.

And as with the democratic, I urge us to beware three typical impulses in dealing with identity.

The first is an existential impasse arising from the manifold complexity of cultural identity – ‘we don’t really know who we are and can hardly hope to in contemporary postmodernity’.

The second is the celebratory gesture and its export or imposition upon others. To feel you belong somewhere and assume that this is what identity is about and that others should share the feeling. Identity here seems currently to be attached to the notion of region and neighborhood as much as nation state – ‘it’s good to be from Degerfors; it would be good if everyone had a similar sense of belonging’.

The third impulse is the imposition of identity upon self and others – ‘this is who you are – believe me, I know’.

All three assume identity as a given. All three, however well meaning, close down the issue of identity and curtail the cultural creativity and openness that I have been emphasising as central to our role in the management of industrial heritage.

Towards new practices – ‘post-conservation’

So, in unpacking these concepts so important in our discussions this week, I am concerned to maintain a critical openness as we consider what might be done with those old buildings and machines that form the core of industrial heritage. Openness too because I have sensed that some colleagues are quite closed to alternatives. They are convinced that they have the right answer, even in this most murky of cultural fields; their task is to promote, to convince, to impose, to control. To repeat their simple scenario – times are changing, people are dislocated, they need a sense of identity and the conservation of the past can help this; and anyway the past needs preserving because so much is being lost in these fast changing times.

I will now move on to some practical suggestions as to how we might respond to the question of what is to be done, while maximising cultural creativity and agency. This will not be a list of recipes however – I am not going to illustrate what I see as current good practice in the management of the contemporary past. I wish instead to see through issues of democratic practice, industry and identity to three more abstract parameters – **people and things**,

temporality and historicity, and **place or location**. I hope that I have already indicated how these are implied in our trio of democracy, industry and identity. I will try to look to the future of archaeological heritages in a speculative, visionary and even utopian way. The practices? – how pasts are selected and arranged; the acts of informing, persuading, educating, entertaining and shocking, writing and speaking of the remains of the past; who is doing it and for whom; and potential opportunities.

I will propose no universals, that what I have to say applies in all circumstances. I refer you instead to my own location as a classical archaeologist and cultural anthropologist living and working, by virtue of my belonging to Stanford University, in the heartland, Silicon valley, of a new 'postindustrial' economy.

Cyborg culture

Prosthetic knowledges in the world: cyborg culture. The cyborg is the intimate articulation of person, personhood, and thing or machine. But the concept is not simply one of science fiction. Much of our knowledge and agency is located in the material world; I think here of the fascinating work of the cognitive scientist Don Norman. We're inseparable from things. Take away things and you have nothing. You don't have, somehow, an underlying set of social relationships and cultural values, set in and interacting with the physical world of science, industry, technology. The thing-world is not simply inert material for human manipulation, natural, providing props and setting for the human drama. No! The two worlds of people and things are inseparable. That is the significance of the term cyborg. The cyborg is thus the machinic nature of ourselves. We are all already cyborgs.

To put it another way, and as Bruno Latour points out – aircraft don't fly, airlines do. Aircraft don't fly themselves. They need pilots and everything else that goes with them. If there were not the pilots and their training, the management systems, the air-traffic control systems, the computer systems, the check-in desks, everything that goes with that, the technology to give you a ticket, travel agents, ground transportation to get to the airport, you wouldn't have flying. Think of flying as a machinic assemblage – intimate articulation of people and things. This is the scope of the concept of cyborg.

And there have been cyborgs for as long as people have been aware and have made use of a material environment.

Proposition – these machinic assemblages are growing in scope and complexity. The distinctions between people and things will lessen even more. This is a context for that impulse to conserve the material past.

Extension

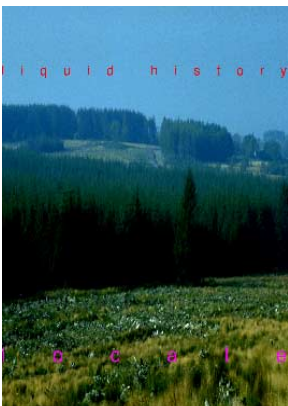
Again with respect to people and things. The sociologist Anthony Giddens calls it time-space compression, those features of contemporary globalization which connect people, goods and places so readily – from transportation to information technology through language and cultural uniformities. And the global market and commodity form.

A fundamental paradox of this economic and cultural extension is between the universal and abstract commodity form, according to which everything is exchangeable with everything else, and the particular located points of production and consumption of each. The paradox is that of a global economy within which there are unparalleled assertions of local identity. It is, in some ways, encapsulated in a universal icon of American culture, Levi 501 jeans, available identical everywhere, yet also somehow signifying the discerning stylistic consciousness of the individual wearer or consumer.

Think of extension as this growing interconnection or combination of people and things, this unification of things through an abstract form, the commodity. Think of it as **reach**. Because reach is always located, from one specific place to another. Proposition – extension as reach is increasing, abstractly and concretely, as real and virtual mobility and the potential of disparate articulations unthinkable only a few decades ago.

Percolating time and liquid history

My colleague at Stanford, the philosopher Michel Serres, puts it like this: time doesn't flow, it percolates. This experience of temporality as a bubbling around oneself is at the heart of landscape studies in archaeology. A typical cultural landscape of various human interventions and relationships, buildings, farming systems, environmental impacts, forms a complex palimpsest.



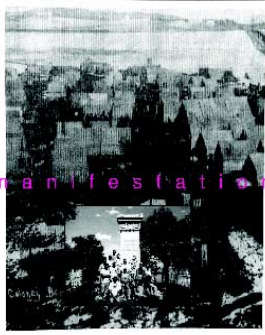
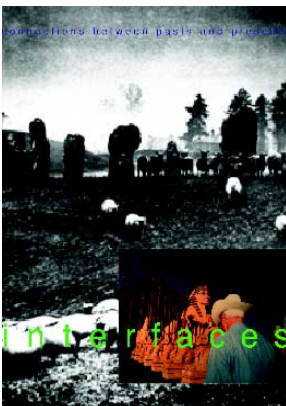
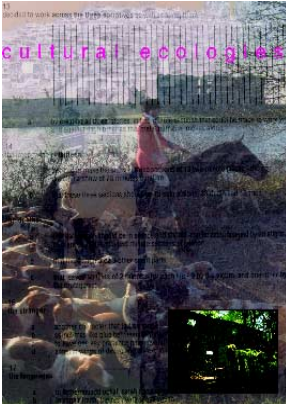


Figure 1. Lateral displacement of the street grid toward the center of the city.



Many archaeologists see it as their task to unravel and forge a linear chronological narrative out of the fragments – this happened here, then that over there. But such landscapes might equally be experienced as multitemporal articulations – the neolithic stone quarry reused as sheep fold, the nearby medieval farm later remodelled as modern holiday home. In these **contemporary pasts** time indeed does not only flow but connects. Serres also uses the metaphor of **chiffonage** – a folding and crumpling like a scarf, a topological folding and crumpling of time as disparate events collide and coexist.

It is a cultural topology of experiences and emotions too, intimately associated with memory. Things come and go. Time bubbles around you. This room in this old hotel where we are today doesn't have one single date. From its first building things have come and gone and left their trace, here and in what people have taken away with them.

It is important to realize that this is not to deny the reality of linear chronology, but only to question its primacy. Nor is this somehow a **confusion** of linear time, as is conceived by those archaeologists unravelling their palimpsests. This hotel room is a collocation of many dates and durations physically present in their traces and effects upon the room. In the same way my 1999 Audi automobile is necessarily and ontologically directly dependent upon well over a century of industrial experiment, research and manufacture across the globe, present in the very design. To doubt the connections is to question the reality of the vehicle – it simply could not exist now without what went on then.

In this liquid history what makes a place specific, local, somewhere or something that we may wish to engage with specifically, is its unique topological folding. That is the percolating time, creating a unique locale in relationship to a wider environment.

Proposition – cyborg articulations and increasing cultural extension will create ever more opportunities and awareness of the creative potential of new routes through these folded topologies.

Interfaces

Our conference is dealing with connections between pasts and presents. I think that seems quite self-evident. These connections between past and present can be conceived as **interfaces**. In that temporal chiffonage I have just outlined, there are interfaces between a house of this date and place and a cairn of another date, and the movement between the two of an archaeologist, of a local, of a visitor, all connecting.

Some of us will be familiar with the design of interfaces between people and computers – the strengths and weaknesses of desktop metaphors, command line or graphical user interfaces, user friendly or not. The field of human computer interaction is very conscious of the design issues here. Good design can make the difference between a machine that works and one that doesn't.

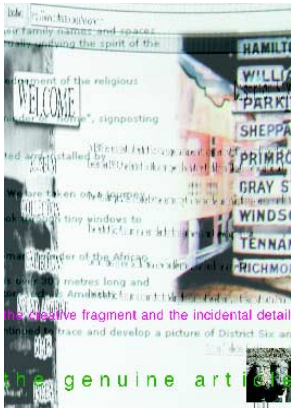
I propose we extend this use of the term interface to material pasts.

How do we interface with industrial heritage? That is what we have been talking about. Or rather **around**, for our discussion has been of very limited interactions – primarily a distanced respect, interest or wonder (the impulse to conserve), and the securing of conditions under which interfaces might be designed (cultural resource management). The term interface prompts us to consider the way the remains of the past are worked upon and put to use as an issue of design. Instead of discovering, conserving and recording the past, our attention is drawn to the ways we interact with it.

Proposition – such an emphasis upon design will foster better interfaces with the remains of the past.

From media ... to modes of engagement

Interfaces are about mediation. Cultural resource managers also interface with publics and clients. So I move on to media. Conventionally, media include the TV and broadcasting industries, publishing, and film, or indeed museums and interpretation centers. While they are conventionally distinguished by the physical medium of printed matter, electronic transmission, moving image photography, whatever, these industries are all **discursive systems** that incorporate networks of access and authority, conventions of content, standards and qualifications, career paths and management systems. (They are cyborg assemblages.) The issue with these conventional media is predominantly one of access and control. But I suggest there is a fundamental change



occurring which represents new possibilities for cultural creativity.

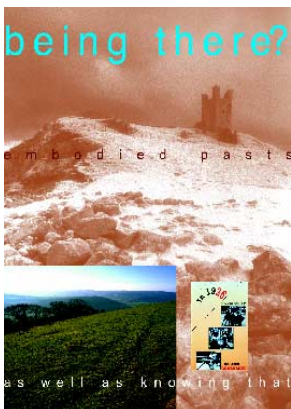
With the emergence of powerful and cheap digital technologies, the difference between a magazine article, a movie, a TV-programme, a photograph, the difference in terms of production (printing presses, studios, broadcasting stations, darkrooms), is far less important than it used to be. Because of the interchangeability of information, digitally, you can take an image, from your camera, put it in your on-screen photo album, you can print it out to a conventional photo album, incorporate it into an office newsletter, you can use it as part of a book conventionally published and distributed internationally, you can use it as a still in your own video program, you can give it to a TV company for broadcast, or send it electronically to a newspaper for mass circulation. Control and access are still paramount as the rolling debates about the internet clearly indicate. However, conventional media are becoming less important than the way people interact or interface with these materials. Media are increasing better conceived as modalities or, as designer Clifford McLucas puts it, **modes of engagement**. This is another way of thinking of user interfaces.

Modes of engagement - held close in the hand, watched and listened to privately; experienced at home with friends and family; delivered with amplification in a large public space; unfolded in one's hand, viewed on the side of a building at a distance; manipulated upon a table-top screen, toured on foot alone or in the company of strangers, spoken quietly

So, what do we do? I suggest that one of our tasks in this interfacing with the past is to explore and enable different modes of engagement in the pursuit of the democratizing of cultural creativity. Experiments are already underway – on-line virtual museums, or the CD-based portable guides in the National Gallery in London which the visitor carries around the paintings, speaking commentary via headphones when desired. Our conference raises the issue of the political purpose of these experiments.

Embodiment – being there

There is something to learn, I think, from all the commercialisation of the past, the growth of the culture industry called heritage. On offer are **experiences**, whether visits to a reconstructed past or animated displays, as well as bodies of knowledge. The epistemological – ‘we know this happened’ – has been supplanted by sensuous experience – ‘this is what it felt like’. ‘Being there’ has become as important as ‘knowing that’.



While the validity of the claims of heritage to offer empathetic experience may be challenged, I would relate this shift to an ontological interest (‘it was like this’) to some recent developments in social theory. Fields like performance studies and the anthropology of the senses, as well as broad interdisciplinary interest in the body, for example, have built upon the theorization of the social as concrete sensuous human practice.

Consider, as an example in historiography, the book ‘In 1926’ by another of my colleagues at Stanford, Sep Gumbrecht. It is a work in the history of the twentieth century which nevertheless does not set out to develop an historical knowledge of its focus – 1926. It reads more as an assemblage of materials, commentaries, ruminations, on topics like gramophones, dancing, elevators, ocean liners, revues, roof gardens, as well as cultural coding like authenticity and artificiality, past and present, sobriety and exuberance. There is no attempt to produce a coherent narrative. Reports from newspapers, movies, novels, sporting events, accounts of Howard Carter’s discoveries in Egypt are not scrutinised as historical sources in an interpretive strategy of reading beneath the surface to ascertain what really was going on. The selection, arrangement and commentary are instead designed to **evoke**. Being there – in 1926.

Manifestation

It is not that the Colorado miners’ strike of 1913–14 has been forgotten. But the historical sources are meagre, and the massacre in the strikers’ camp is about to slip from living memory. Some of my archaeological colleagues, including Randy McGuire from SUNY Binghamton (whose family come from Colorado), have been excavating the site and connecting their finds with original photographs and accounts. They have found the tents and pits where the strikers were living, and this unearthing has been accompanied by displays of the remnants of the strike, culminating in a roadside on-site monument. It’s very simple. It is rooted in conventional excavation and archaeological fieldwork. And there is now a monument where there was no monument, of something that happened, made visible.

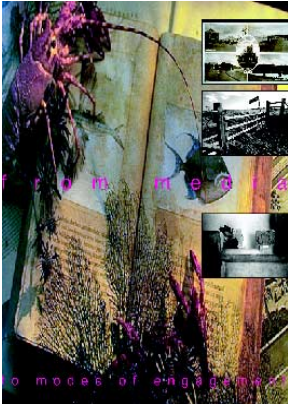
I draw attention to the power of this **manifestation** of the past and propose that a key feature is the prominence of the **interconnection** of past and present – these manifestations are of and for

a particular historical conjuncture. Again this is not a case of simple knowledge that something happened and is witnessed archaeologically, – knowledge for its own sake. Manifestation spurs remembrance now and for the future. I propose this as an appropriate technique for a critical cultural resource management.

Creative fragments

To the official version of the past found in state museums and offered in educational curricula, I would contrast the personal and intimate detail. It might be the personal artifacts unearthed by archaeologists at the site of the Colorado miners' strike. Let me illustrate what I mean with another example – District Six in Capetown, South Africa. A museum opened in 1994 to commemorate the area and honour the people who fought against the forced removal of its inhabitants according to the Group Areas Act passed under South Africa's apartheid.

A floor map depicting the streets and landscape of the old District Six covers the central area of the museum. Ex-residents have inscribed their family names and spaces where they once lived on the map. Artists' prints, paintings and poems depicting their experiences in District Six and of forced removals border the map. On the 'memory cloth' are written comments, messages and personal memories – they cover 300 metres.



I think this as a testament to the historical power of the personal detail.

And they are predominantly, in themselves, fragments. I want to say something about fragmented pasts and about loss. The conservation ethic has us fear both. Ruin and decay – fragmentation as a loss of integrity threatens our hold on the past. Archaeologists bemoan their poor and biased data sets, dreaming of sites preserved Pompeii-like. My Classical archaeology colleagues have, since the nineteenth century, followed a vast project of cataloguing, in their view definitively and for all time, the dataset of antiquity in great encyclopaedias and reference works. Conservationists warn of the massive destruction of the past. A determining aim of cultural resource management is to establish a definitive database of those cultural resources it has as its object – sites and monuments records, inventories of valued remains. It is, of course, appropriate to guard against the unnecessary erosion of our access to history, but it needs to accompany the management of loss. Loss is a simple condition of our being in the world. Heritage managers live in the real world of development and deal with this, but I have a different point about the project of management and control. A definitive cultural database or catalogue is an illusion. The imperfect and provisional dataset is not just the norm, it is the only option. Proposition – we need to work creatively with, and not against, the fragment.

This call is not just a rhetorical one. I see it as a rejection of those visions of information technology as an answer to recording the past, constructing vast databased archives along conventional lines, lodged upon a web server rather than upon filing cards in a museum store. For me the challenge, not actually yet technically possible, is to design dynamic information architectures and interfaces for just these messy and provisional collections of fragments.

Personal archives

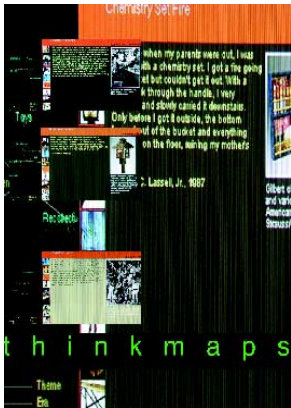
I will not forget easily listening to the people we have met these last few days as they told of their interests in contemporary industrial history in relation to their own memories and experiences. This is surely another prompt for us to enable just this sort of cultural creativity. Its foundations are already well-established, of course, whether we think of family photoalbums (memorybooks as they call them in the United States), or the interest in family genealogy and local history supported by museums, public records and libraries. However, to maintain a distinction, we might call these personal archives **memoryscapes**. The underlying issue is that of information architecture and its interfaces – mundane but vitally important matters of database design and tools for searching and recording. The challenge is to maintain a critical stand, to help people avoid reducing their experience to pre-packaged and trivial mundanity, and instead to realize their historicity.

How might we enable access to information so that people might gather their own resources for building living and dynamic personal archives, connecting themselves to that liquid history I have spoken of? I propose this as another archaeological project for the future.

Thinkmaps

PlumbDesign, a New York based design company, has developed an information interface they call **Thinkmap**. For the Smithsonian Institution in Washington USA, the company created 'Revealing Things', an online exhibition devoted to material culture. A virtual exhibition without





a physical counterpart, it deals with everyday items from the contemporary past – like a hammer and a Japanese lantern. The Thinkmap software allows virtual visitors to explore the connections engendered by the artifacts through a kind of dynamic flow chart. It is an experiment in gathering and navigating. My proposal is that such experiment is only just beginning.

Storytelling – against narrative

We are familiar with the repertoire of narratives which make easy sense of our lives and experiences. Hollywood mass markets them in its adventures, love stories, tales of tragedy and personal struggle. The plots and characters are easily recognized; further gratification might be found in the twists and variations. Archaeology has become indebted to several metanarratives such as cultural evolution, the emergence of social complexity, the origins of agriculture, imperial growth - grand narrative forms under which may be subsumed the vast details of regional histories. Neatly structured, these narratives tidy up history and comfort us that things have always been like this, or that it is beyond any one of us to do anything about the great tide of history. They are part of that strategy of control I discussed above.

In my stand for critical cultural creativity I oppose these narratives with **storytelling**. It is about getting beyond those pre-packaged narratives into intimate details that bring together bigger pictures and the incidental, the personal, the everyday, the different. Storytelling is located. In the best, the storyteller relates sensitively to their audience. They adapt. They get personal. There is achieved a kind of union between self and another (embodied performer and spectator/ listener/witness). It can be a very effective interface.

Performance artist Anna Deavere Smith has used embodied storytelling to great effect in her solo work which deals with recent events, like the Los Angeles riots, in America's political history. With Mike Pearson, artist performer and Professor of Performance in the University of Wales, I have offered further experiment and reflection in our project **Theatre/Archaeology**.

Proposition – let stories (as opposed to narratives) proliferate.

Deep mapping

In sketching potential and trends, I have made reference to many spatial metaphors – cultural location, temporal topologies, memoryscapes, thinkmaps. Here is another. **Deep mapping** – interfaces for geographies of the imagination which bring together everything that might collect around locale. From travel writing through local memory to landscape history. The techniques and apparatus for this map making are readily available: I might mention the great developments in cultural geography and anthropology as well as some aspects of geographic information systems. The critique of cartography (its intimate association with property rights and imperialism) is also well established, enabling a maturity of approach to mapping the local.

Designer Clifford McLucas, based in the United Kingdom, is pioneering new digital graphics for deep mapping in his explorations of the San Andreas Fault in California and the Friesian island of Terschelling in the Netherlands. Great collections of conventional maps, photographs, interviews, sound recordings, documents

Sublime complexity

I end this response to the question of what are we to do with the archaeological past of industrial buildings and artifacts with a simple phrase, one again borrowed from a colleague. In our articulations of people and things, temporality and historicity, and place or location, the challenge is to withstand the simple equations of a controlled and managed history and instead celebrate the **sublime complexity** of cultural agency and creativity.