Local residents exploring heritage in the North Pennines of England: sense of place and social sustainability

Stephanie K. Hawke   *International Centre for Cultural and Heritage Studies, Newcastle University, UK*   Stephanie.hawke@ncl.ac.uk

The aim of this paper is to explore how heritage contributes to 'sense of place' and how engagement with heritage can aid social sustainability. These are relationships tacitly accepted and little discussed in the literature. The paper draws on an analysis of in-depth interview data collected amongst individuals engaging with heritage in the rural northern uplands of the UK. The paper identifies within the environmental psychology literature a framework for investigating sense of place which is then used to analyse the interview data. Cultural heritage is found to contribute to sense of place as a source of pride and by supporting feelings of distinctiveness and senses of continuity across time. Engaging with heritage moreover develops belonging through forms of social capital thereby building stronger communities. The paper concludes that as a process of 'memory talk', as an expression of cultural distinctiveness or in its built or natural physical form, heritage contributes to sense of place by providing a network of references helping individuals place themselves in the past and the present. Using theories of social capital, it is possible to see that engaging with heritage can potentially aid social sustainability.

Introduction and context

In the rural northern uplands of England, some residents are exploring 'sense of place' by engaging with leisure activities that explore local heritage. Community sustainability and sense of place are threatened in the North Pennines region by changing social and economic circumstances (Soane and Nicholson, 2005: 2-3) and this perhaps galvanises those with an interest in heritage to act upon it. Community sustainability is affected for instance, by limited opportunities for local employment (AONB, 2009), which have led to the out-migration of younger people. Simultaneously however, the region's wilderness charm and its designation by the government as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, appeals to those with sufficient wealth to establish residence in the area. These 'in-migrants' either commute to urban centres for work, or are seeking to enjoy the countryside in their retirement years, a trend contributing to an ageing of the population (Ward, 2006: 129). The North Pennines region is therefore experiencing a period of social transition through which residents are navigating their identities. The data presented here, was collected during research conducted in 2008 and 2009 that asked: what constitutes sense of place for people in the North Pennines, why are people engaging with heritage, and what are the benefits of this involvement? This paper specifically focuses on the first and last elements of this question and examines the contribution of heritage to sense of place and the value of engagement with heritage in terms of social sustainability.

The paper first offers a rationale for employing the concept of sense of place and describes how the notion was used to inform methodology, giving a brief overview of the literature. A framework is identified within the environmental psychology literature that allows for the empirical exploration of sense of place. From this framework it is possible to begin to articulate the specific contribution that heritage makes to the phenomenon. Interview data are used to demonstrate that place supports self-esteem,

senses of distinctiveness, and the continuity of autobiography or 'life-story' that are components of self-identity. It is thereby possible to see heritage as more than a physical manifestation, but as a process of meaning making and an expression of cultural identity that contribute to and reinforce senses of belonging amongst communities in the changing social and economic circumstances of the North Pennines.

Exploring sense of place

Approaching an investigation of heritage through the notion of 'sense of place' allows for a view of heritage that integrates landscape and culture, the past and the present, the movable and immovable, tangible and intangible heritage in any analysis (Davis, 1999). However, despite frequent references to sense of place in the heritage studies literature, the contribution of heritage to this experience demands closer examination and more precise articulation. Sense of place can manifest through 'ordinary' features (Atkinson, 2007) such as hay meadows or dry stone walls, but also through the intangible cultural expression of dialect, music or festival (see Smith, 2006: 237-275), the meaning-making process of exploring sense of place as a community by producing exhibitions (2000, Dicks, 2003), and for example through the storytelling and the reminiscences that pepper everyday chatter (Degnen, 2005). By identifying such 'cultural touchstones' (Davis, 1999: 40) solutions to safeguarding the particularity or distinctiveness of the North Pennines can be developed to the benefit of economic and social sustainability. The type of engagement with heritage appropriate for inclusion in the study was informed by this understanding of sense of place, as the next section describes.

Heritage activity

Individuals in the North Pennines are engaging with heritage in order to explore their sense of place and they do so in a number of ways. Those interviewed were involved in heritage activities such as: collecting oral history; researching local history in order to write newsletters, pamphlets and books; creating local history exhibitions and heritage interpretation leaflets; and running volunteer-led museums. Some were interested in tradition: restoring traditional hay meadow flowers; reinvigorating the village show; teaching young people traditional music; or passing on skills such as dry stone walling and bee keeping. Interviews were also conducted with members of heritage trusts, societies and museum friends' associations. Uniting these diverse heritage activities was the common interest in safeguarding a cultural distinctiveness particular to the North Pennines: its sense of place. The next section describes the qualitative methodology used in this research.

Methodology

Twenty seven in-depth interviews were conducted in the North Pennines and these are referred to below as NP1 through to NP27. This approach allowed for a relaxed conversation with a clear purpose (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003:138) and also the flexibility to follow interesting veins of enquiry (Wengraf, 2001:32). Categories for analysis were not established at the planning stage (Punch, 1998:175) but themes and questions were developed in collaboration with the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership which then acted as a 'gatekeeper', suggesting the first three out of the twenty seven individuals to approach. From there a purposive or 'chain sampling' rationale (Schutt, 2009: 174, Silverman, 2005:21) was employed whereby respondents suggested others who were also engaging with heritage through voluntary or leisure-time activity. When data seemed to confirm the analysis, the sample size was felt to be enough (Denscombe, 2007:96). Interviews were transcribed and coded using NVivo 8 software following an approach inspired by the constant comparison method of grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1997). The data analysis was informed by a survey of the sense of place literature, an overview of which the next section presents.

Literature

Sense of place is a shifting notion, consensus upon the definition or measure of which, the literature fails to achieve. It has been seen as 'genius loci': an intangible spirit emerging from the sum of topographical, man made and experiential features (Brandenburg and Carroll, 1995: 384, Stedman, 2003). On the other hand, some approaches give agency to the individual in creating meaning, sense of place created "between people and between people and place" (Pretty et al., 2003: 274). Environmental psychologists have examined sense of place through the lens of identity (Shamai and Ilatov, 2004, Shamai, 1991, Twigger-Ross and Uzzell, 1996, Kaltenborn, 1998, Proshansky et al., 1983) and their empirical research often subcategorises sense of place into three notions: 'place attachment' (Moore and Graefe, 1994, Altman and Low, 1992); 'place dependency' (2001, Jorgensen and Stedman, 2006); or 'place-identity'(Lalli, 1992, Proshansky et al., 1983). The specific requirements of these subcategories remain nebulous (Pretty et al., 2003) and attention has not been given to the manner in which they relate to one another in a hierarchy (Graham et al., 2009, Kyle et al., 2004). However, it is not the purpose of this paper to untangle such conceptual knots. Rather, the ideas put forth by environmental psychology, provide useful approaches to exploring sense of place in the North Pennines and more specifically, the contribution heritage makes to this phenomenon. The next section draws out from the literature a clearer articulation of this contribution.

Heritage and sense of place

Identification with place is part of one's personal identity (Proshansky et al., 1983). In the 1996 discussion of research findings from a study in Rotherhithe, London, (Twigger-Ross and Uzzell, 1996) place-identity was presented as a component of self-identity and it is a view largely accepted in the literature (Hernández et al., 2007: 311). Environmental psychologists, Clare Twigger-Ross and David Uzzell (1996) introduced an identity process theory adapted from the 1986, 1992 and 1993 work of psychologist G M Breakwell. The model sees place contributing to identity in relation to four factors: continuity across time, self-esteem, self-efficacy and distinctiveness. This paper will show that three of these factors: continuity across time, self-esteem and distinctiveness, are underpinned by forms of heritage. Discussion will now examine each of these three in turn, first with a presentation of data demonstrating the contribution of heritage to feelings of self-esteem, then distinctiveness, before moving on to the substantial data and literature supporting notions of continuity across time. The final part of this paper will discuss the contribution that this engagement with heritage and sense of place through voluntary and leisure activity can make to social sustainability.

Heritage supporting self-esteem

Environmental psychologist Kalevi Korpela has indicated that environment can support self-esteem (1989: 251) and rather than just through a positive evaluation of a place, self-esteem can be boosted by reference to a place, for example the sense of pride by association achieved through living in a historic town (Lalli, 1992, Twigger-Ross and Uzzell, 1996: 209). In the North Pennines, respondents explained the pride they experienced when describing their home to others. This resident of historic Blanchland - a village which is a conservation area and built of stone from the remains of a twelfth century abbey - said, "I think you are proud, I mean you do go away and... You like to boast about it" (NP23). Heritage in the form of industrial archaeology gave rise to feelings of pride in the skill of past-artisans: "I think you know the archaeology and the, just the industrial heritage is fantastic and that makes (me) proud. And finding out about the people, the kinds of people and the lifestyles that they had, you know the life they led and how hard it was for them... but they made a living and they survived... I think I'm proud of that as well" (NP04). For these respondents heritage supports their self-esteem and is a component of their sense of place. Twigger-Ross and Uzzell (1996: 207) went on to suggest that place could support the notion of distinctiveness and discussion now turns to the contribution that heritage made in the North Pennines to the sense of cultural difference.

Heritage supporting distinctiveness

As geographer Edward Relph points out, "Place, however else it might be interpreted, is unquestionably about difference..." (2008: vi). Association with the 'unquestionable difference' of place can aid an individual's sense of being distinct from other people in other places. In the North Pennines, respondents used physical heritage in the form of the natural landscape, to illustrate the individuality of their place:

> ... this area has significant landscape and it's quite, it's not unique but it's fairly unique, largely because of... the grouse shooting and the... preservation of the moorland... in a particular state to the grouse, means that you've had very little development during the whole of the last century...

> (NP27)

Respondents referred to the natural heritage when describing the special qualities of place, but distinctiveness was also related to the legacy of humankind's interaction with the landscape, through the cultural heritage of grouse shooting described above for example and in particular the industrial archaeology that allows the landscape to be read as a palimpsest: "...and when I walk about and I see you know a (mine) shaft up the lane or I see deer going across the road past the (mine) shaft ...all these are experiences that I take in" (NP26).

Less tangible forms of heritage were also referenced by respondents as they described the distinctiveness of the North Pennines. Most notable were a number of references to a particular cultural heritage of isolation: "It's relatively isolated and so there's a stronger sense of identity amongst Teesdale people than probably in many parts of the country now" (NP15). Frequent reference was made to such intangible cultural heritage, expressed as a way of life – "there's a lot of that still goes on" (NP24)... "there's a tendency to be inward looking" (NP09) – in the discourse of place distinctiveness. For respondents then, heritage contributed to sense of place by providing distinctiveness in the physical form of natural and industrial heritage and also when expressed as a local cultural 'disposition'. The data show that heritage can contribute to sense of place by supporting self-esteem and notions of distinctiveness in the North Pennines. Following the model presented above (Twigger-Ross and Uzzell, 1996), the third factor of sense of place to which heritage contributes, is a sense of temporal continuity. Discussion now turns in detail to the way in which heritage supports such feelings of continuity across time.

Heritage supporting continuity across time

The place-identity model put forward by Twigger-Ross and Uzzell (1996) sees continuity across time broken down into two further subdivisions. The first subset is the notion of place-referent continuity,

whereby place provides reference points for an individual's past-self, acting as a physical aide-mémoire (Korpela, 1989). The second subset is that of place-congruent continuity, whereby a place presents generic features that can support an individual's self-image. Linking with ideas in sociology about 'elective belonging' (Savage et al., 2005), place-congruent continuity describes an individual's identification with place when it is found to be suitably in keeping with the type of person they perceive themselves to be: place is chosen because it represents an agreeable set of values (Twigger-Ross and Uzzell, 1996). These two experiences of continuity are now examined in more detail. The following discussion presents: the durable relationships of the born and bred as 'insideness'; the way heritage works as a process of placing self in past and present as 'memory talk'; the mnemonic function of landscape as 'aide-mémoire;' and the congruence of place for newer residents as 'elective belonging'.

Insideness

Sense of place has been linked to duration of stay (Hay, 1998). In the North Pennines, some residents have a durable relationship with place. Many are born and bred in the North Pennines, as one respondent explained, "I think there is still a much bigger proportion of people who have spent their lifetimes, and their ancestors lived in the North Pennines, than you get in any other part of the country" (NP07). These respondents talked about familiarity with the landscape, having their personal biography known, and knowing others in a process of social 'insideness' (Relph, 1976: 49) or 'autobiographical insideness' (Rowles, 1983: 302, Dixon and Durrheim, 2000: 457).

Geographer Graham Rowles describes social insideness as stemming from integration within the social fabric of a community over time (1983: 302) and many respondents referred to this feeling of belonging when describing their sense of place: "I feel quite happy going into pubs and I'll go into Langdon Beck anyway, because you always sort of know someone in the end" (NP11). Part of this notion of knowing and being known, is the idea of history; that not only is an individual known, but likewise their parents and wider family: "People know you and your history and the same with other locals, you know them, you know their history and you can go back over a lot of years sometimes…" (NP21). An oral historian and photographer captures this sentiment poignantly:

> …it's like a three D network that you're joined into, these are real people (I'm) not just interested in, "oh I've got another picture of old Alston" you know "oh I've got 500 now." It's not like that. It's about how people look like one another as they come through time and you feel their character and you remember what it was like to be with them. And you know what it's like to be with their children and grandchildren now, so its part of belonging. It's integral, it's one thing, you know it's one complex thing.

> (NP11)

Heritage, through the temporal depth of social relations, contributes to feelings of social insideness and the continuity of identity that is part of the experience of sense of place. Heritage can also serve as a mnemonic tool aiding continuity of identity, a notion which is developed in the following section.

Place as aide-mémoire

It is suggested that place can provide continuity of identity by acting as an aide-mémoire (Korpela, 1989), place-referent continuity provided by the unchanging physical characteristics of a place. This respondent explains how she uses the more constant natural heritage of place as an anchor for her identity in changing social and economic contexts:

> The people change. The landscape doesn't tend to, not as quickly anyway. So I go up there and a lot of the people that I know in the village have died or moved out, there's still a few people that I recognise…but you know when you go on the fells, it's just timeless. And I know going back, way back it wasn't heather moors and all the rest…But you know, as long as I've known it, it's been like that. And it probably will be you know, for as long as I'm here.

> (NP08)

Relph identifies a relationship between change and the way people choose to allocate heritage value: "…the persistence of the character of places is apparently related to a continuity both in our experience of change and in the very nature of change that serves to reinforce a sense of association and attachment to those places" (1976: 31). This argument is developed by the suggestion that place-referent continuity can be maintained even when the physical heritage of a place has changed beyond recognition. Through a process of 'autobiographical insideness,' individuals use the landscape as an aide-mémoire for remembered places, "of which the drab contemporary setting is but a remnant" (Rowles, 1983: 303). Place can therefore be seen, Atkinson eloquently describes, "as a topology of memories: as a sedimented, folded, undulating terrain of associations and memories – and as one continually reconfigured by new eruptions of memory…" (Atkinson, 2007: 523).

Heritage supports sense of place by providing a feeling of continuity across time. This can emerge from the experience of 'social insideness'; knowing others and being known within the local community, or through reference to physical heritage as an 'aide-mémoire'. The following section develops these ideas to examine how individuals place themselves in the landscape of memory through a process of 'memory talk'.

By conceiving the intangibility of heritage as a process, it is possible to further articulate the contribution that heritage makes to sense of place by reinforcing senses of temporal continuity.

Memory talk

In an ethnographic study of residents of Dodworth in South Yorkshire, England, sociologist Catherine Degnen (2005) was able to identify the process of 'memory talk'; references to people and places, past and present that threaded through the everyday interactions she observed. Degnen draws attention to social memory as more than just intentional commemorative practice, but as something 'part and parcel' of everyday interaction, helping individuals place themselves in the 'webs of relations' between people and places in the community (2005: 730). In this instance heritage is a process of people working to locate their identity within their cultural and historic context. Data from the North Pennines provides evidence that participants in heritage activities were engaged with this form of heritage manifested as a process. Respondents involved in presenting sense of place or collective identity to others through local history exhibitions, explained how these exhibitions became a tool for memory talk. This interviewee, describing her experience of organising local history exhibitions, reveals the 'memory talk' she took pleasure in overhearing:

> …it's interesting to listen to people…I try to put names on (photographs) as much as possible, and people say "That's so and so," "No I don't think it is," "Are you sure, I think it's so and so." And it's just a friendly argument, if there's a person (in a photograph) with no name on you know, who is it? And that to me, once (the exhibition is) up…that's the interesting part about it, listening to what people say."

(NP25)

Local exhibitions sparked discussions that helped individuals place themselves within 'webs of relations' thereby producing, consuming and reproducing (du Gay et al., 1997) notions of belonging, identity and sense of place. For some respondents in the North Pennines however, their relationship with place was of shorter duration. The next section examines how heritage contributes to a continuity of identity for these newer residents or 'in-migrants'.

Elective belonging

Purposive sampling resulted in interviews with a number of respondents who were involved in heritage activity in the North Pennines, many of whom were not born and bred in the area. For these in-migrants - new residents for whom the area held particular appeal - heritage supported sense of place by offering 'place-congruent continuity' (Twigger-Ross and Uzzell, 1996: 208). This is a continuity of self-identity or 'life story' (Savage et al., 2005: 54) congruous with the persona an individual wishes to present. It is suggested that people are willing to move to a place that they feel is in keeping with their self perception. In an analysis of data pertaining to the nation's cultural involvement, sociologist Mike Savage (2009) has recently suggested that "People who are privileged on the cultural map can give eloquent stories about their sense of place" and that those privileged tend to be the more geographically mobile middle classes who can choose where to live and belong. The following respondent had moved to Weardale within the last five years and her comments indicate a strong interest in learning about the area, in order to articulate a 'satisfactory account' (Savage et al., 2005: 29) of her sense of place:

> …you've got a real sense of… a real connection with the history of this landscape…if you know about it I suppose…I do know about it and I'm interested in it and I'm interested in researching it so you know, the landscape is very much a man made landscape and…I've got that feeling of…following on in the footsteps of all these other people who lived here, and made this place.

(NP24)

That newer residents are motivated to account for their belonging and articulate a sense of place is further explored in the comments of a local history society archivist:

> …you get occasionally local people interested in their family trees. Surprisingly few, it's always people from outside. It's as if people are…like a kite that isn't tethered to the ground…they want to come and make that connection and think, "Oh phew" you know, "I'm still hanging on to my roots"…

(NP10)

In the same way a respondent who had investigated her family tree as an in-migrant, acknowledged that finding a distant ancestral connection could not replace having immediate family in the locality, "but it still does make (me) feel like I have some kind of investment in the area" (NP04).

For in-migrants, the North Pennines offered them place-congruent continuity, fitting neatly into the self-concept they wished to present. Place supported accounts of 'life story' for example being a 'countryside person': "I'm not a person that loves towns" (NP22), or someone with integrity in their environmental ethics, "(we) leave a lesser carbon footprint than we have in the past" (NP15). Some newer residents were eager to communicate their passionate sense of place: "I feel as though I've got a real interest and emotional investment in the area…I want to develop other people's interest in the place"

(NP24). In this way, in-migrants showed characteristics of 'elective belongers', choosing to belong in place congruous with their self-image (Savage et al., 2005) in a process supported by an exploration of heritage through local history and genealogy. This section has seen that heritage can support sense of place through reinforcing continuity over time. Heritage does this by offering notions of place that are congruous with an individual's self-concept, by supporting place-referent continuity in its tangible manifestation as natural or industrial heritage, and also through the intangible process of memory talk. Heritage has also been seen to contribute to sense of place by supporting the distinctiveness and self-esteem that are also elements of identity. The North Pennines is a region undergoing social and economic transition and the final section of this paper examines the relationship between engagement with heritage in these circumstances and notions of social capital.

Social sustainability

Claims have been made for the value of cultural participation by policy makers and strategic bodies interested in achieving goals such as regeneration, civic engagement, social cohesion, urban renewal and citizenship (Lewicka, 2005, Graham et al., 2009, Message, 2009) and these ideas are largely developed from theories of capital. The forms of capital conceptualised by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1997) are used to explain the non-economic currency guiding the social world in relation to position and mobility.

Social capital is the notion that social networks are valuable in nurturing trust and reciprocity amongst members of associative groups (Coleman, 1990: 302), a benefit claimed of social capital is that as a process, it develops group identity. Political scientist Robert Putnam claimed that social capital could take two forms: bonding and bridging, the former working as a sort of glue to hold members of a particular group (perhaps a family or shared ethnicity) together, the latter working like a lubricant, allowing people to socialise between groups and develop social mobility (2000: 22-23). 'Linking' social capital (Woolcock, 2001) was added to this list, a situation whereby individuals gain access to resources through networks with members of power-holding groups, those individuals or organisations that take or influence decisions.

The multidimensionality of the concept makes social capital difficult to measure. Instead, approximations of social capital are measured, such as membership of associative groups (Putnam, 2000, 1995, 1993). Frameworks have been developed to measure social capital that include: participation, social engagement and commitment; control and self efficacy; perception of community level structures or characteristics; social interaction, social networks and support; and trust, reciprocity and social cohesion (Blaxter et al., 2001). Satisfaction with living in a place has been directly related to social capital (Harper and Kelly, 2003). Whilst the need for wide ranging evidence to support claims about social capital in the North Pennines is acknowledged, the following sections suggest that engagement with heritage can contribute to building and maintaining it.

Maintaining social capital

When explaining how they came to be involved in heritage activity, some respondents referred to a mobilisation of existing social capital, whereby they joined a group as a favour to a friend, "it was just an interest in helping out a group of friends" (NP03) or had heard about membership recruitment through friends, "it was word of mouth" (NP10). Others indicated that heritage activity was a way to maintain social capital and of an annual local history exhibition this respondent commented:

> …it's a time when people get together and now it's got to the stage where you think…"Oh, Mr and Mrs --------- haven't come from Bishop Auckland, I must give them a ring to see if they're alright" because they've come every year for years. And you look for people that you only see say once a year, that come…deliberately at that time of year

(NP25)

The event can be seen to strengthen ties, tightening loose stitches in the fabric of the social network. It was clear that a desire to maintain this sense of close knit community was the motivation for some respondents to get involved: "…you volunteer because you want to belong, but you volunteer because you want to help. I mean because we like the community, we want to see it keep going" (NP22). Here the respondent indicates that engagement with heritage can be motivated by a desire to belong or 'fit in' and involvement as a means to build social capital is an idea developed in the next section.

Building social capital

The interview responses then, support the suggestion that heritage can maintain existing networks. However some respondents were clear that their decision to get involved in heritage related activity was driven by their perception that it could build their network. For long term residents engagement with heritage through associative activity brought them together, but for newer residents, involvement was a way to gain acceptance within the community. Heritage can be seen as a channel through which new residents demonstrated a willingness to participate and engage socially. Where a distinction between 'insider' and 'outsider' (Strathern, 1982: 248) is perceived, in-migrants described how heritage involvement helped them to fit in: "Yeah we've got good relations with the, you know, even the people that's lived here

all their lives. We've fitted in extremely well…and maybe (it's) because we have volunteered" (NP23). The following respondent who was busy conducting oral history interviews and writing local history stories for the parish newsletter explained, "You just do what you want to do you know, contribute what you want to contribute and I think…that's helped enormously in… making us feel part of the community" (NP04). In such cases, involvement was as much a way of signalling a desire to belong as it was the expression of a passion for heritage: "definitely I mean that's definitely one of the reasons to do things really, is to actually meet people" (NP14).

For longer-term residents, heritage related activity brought people together and developed trust, evidencing participation, social engagement, commitment, interaction and support. One respondent explained how developing an exhibition about the history of the local Cooperative Store meant finding former workers and arranging to interview them. For her, one of the pleasures of this process was reuniting people:

> …what the nice thing was, when it opened, the night before it opened, I got them all together, I've got a photograph and all the past workers together and, oh it was lovely because they were all there…it's like a school reunion. It…was really nice.

(NP25)

Another respondent, not born and bred, but a long term resident who was involved in collecting photographic images from the past, appeared to treasure the trusting relationships nurtured through his engagement with heritage saying, "My actual support comes from local people who say '(he)'s alright, he's doing a decent job. I'll lend him my pictures, you can lend him yours'" (NP11).

Engagement with heritage helps to build and maintain social capital for respondents in the North Pennines. Groups recruit through existing networks and some volunteers do so as a reciprocal gesture to friends. Such activity also helps to maintain social capital, strengthening bonds of friendship and community, developing trust and reciprocal relationships. Moreover heritage related activity can work to build social capital, helping newcomers to 'fit in'. It has been argued that the power of strong networks bridges the differences between groups (Putnam, 2000: 22-23) and levers in support (Woolcock, 2001) thereby aiding social sustainability. Perhaps it is possible to suggest that engaging with heritage as an associative activity allows individuals to contribute to strengthening their communities. It follows that access to social networks develops personal agency and an individual's belief that they can meet the demands of any given life-situation. Self-efficacy along with self-esteem, distinctiveness and continuity, is the fourth element of identity to which Twigger-Ross and Uzzell (1996) saw place able to support and this paper has begun to tease out the specific contribution made by heritage to this process.

Conclusion

This paper has shown that for residents in the North Pennines, engagement with heritage developed social capital thereby contributing to social sustainability. Moreover heritage supported sense of place by providing a source of pride and self-esteem, by contributing to the distinctive characteristics of a place, and by supporting continuity of identity through time. Heritage contributed to this continuity of identity by reinforcing 'insideness' (Relph, 1976) acting as an 'aide-mémoire', as a process of 'memory talk' (Degnen, 2005) and as a particular type of cultural heritage congruous with self-concept and therefore chosen by 'elective belongers' (Savage et al., 2005). The paper has traced the manner by which, in the North Pennines, heritage is manifested in ways beyond the physicality of landscape, object or site. Data have shown that heritage can take the form of a process, through the meaning-making activity of 'memory talk'. The paper has also identified the expression of cultural heritage as a 'disposition': isolation in the North Pennines leading to a particular 'way of being' that respondents tried to articulate.

In terms of the practical implications of the research, discussion of this data with members of the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership staff unit, cast a new angle of light upon the findings. These heritage professionals debated the findings of the research and noted the inadequacies of the existing heritage discourse to recognise some of the heritage values held by respondents. Approaches to heritage in the west, born of the positivist science of the Enlightenment (Waterton, 2005), have traditionally worked to validate heritage through the means by which it is protected (listed building, conservation area, museum object, World Heritage Site) (Davis, 2009). The heritage profession, as an outsider elite, remains limited in its capacity to understand and acknowledge notions such as 'insideness' and 'aide-mémoire'. Indeed, the ability of traditional heritage management, Smith's 'authorised heritage discourse' (2006: 4-5) to recognise the ways in which local people find expression for their heritage values is increasingly questioned (Waterton, 2005, Smith, 2006, Gibson and Pendlebury, 2009). The cultural turn experienced by the wider humanities and social sciences presents a challenge to this traditional heritage discourse. The emerging 'alternative heritage discourse' demands protection of heritage that democratically involves ordinary people and acknowledges their many ways of ascribing meaning (Howard, 2002:68). This nascent discourse acknowledges a heritage that is manifested as material object, building or site, but also as expression: a song, dance, regional dialect or culinary technique, and moreover as a process in and of itself: the experience of producing, consuming and reproducing heritage through interaction with it at festivals (see Smith, 2006: 237-275), exhibitions (2000, Dicks, 2003), and for example through storytelling and the reminiscence woven through everyday chatter (Degnen, 2005).

There are however alternative heritage paradigms from which inspiration and solutions may be drawn. This paper concludes by highlighting the potential of ecomuseology (see Davis, 1999) in acknowledging and safeguarding sense of place as it is experienced by local people (2007a, Corsane et al., 2009, 2007b, 2006). With an emphasis on engagement, pluralism, democracy and volunteer contribution, ecomuseology has been found to recognise and nurture the social capital that engagement with heritage can cultivate amongst communities (ibid 2007b). Those interested in integrated approaches to safeguarding sense of place through community engagement with heritage, are therefore urged to acquaint themselves with this literature.

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