

Hidden Cities: Authenticity and City Fabric

Felicity Morel-EdnieBrown¹

¹ Department of the Premier and Cabinet, Western Australia; Honorary Research Fellow, Department of Humanities, University of Western Australia, Australia.

Abstract

Cultural heritage has recently come to be viewed as a panacea for sterility in city development, but preoccupation with creating or discovering a “sense of place,” without investigating the authentic cultural fabric, is one of the pitfalls that urban professionals encounter. Lack of authenticity in reading and understanding the development of cities leads to a “Disneyesque” invention of that which a city should be—a place which “entertains” rather than engages. Community based histories have frequently been the poor cousins of heritage research despite their potential to be a rich source of material for establishing cultural heritage significance. Stories of the past, interwoven with artifacts such as photographs, documents and expressed heritage (stories, dance, tracing of lives) can inform interpretation with a level of authenticity difficult to otherwise replicate. This paper will explore the richness that has been discovered in central Perth through the Northbridge History Project—an initiative whose role is to revitalize the city authentically by drawing on its diverse histories. Containing sites of recognized cultural heritage significance, Northbridge has undergone significant infrastructural and generational change in the last 20 years, bringing with it dislocation of its identity. Fragments of the cultural fabric are being collated into an online electronic archive of primary sources (www.northbridgehistory.wa.gov.au), which is being used to proactively create understanding of the cultural heritage of the area.

Keywords: *cultural heritage, urban, cities, history, community*

1 INTRODUCTION

This paper is the outcome of a presentation given in the “The New ICOMOS Ename Charter (2008) on the Interpretation and Presentation of Cultural Heritage Sites: What Impact Can Digital Technologies Really Have on Public Heritage?” stream of the “Making History Interactive” Conference at Williamsburg, Virginia on Monday 23 March 2009. As such, it follows the structure of the presentation with further expansion of some of the detail, which could not be presented at the conference, with reference to the activities of the Western Australian Department of the Premier and Cabinet’s Northbridge History Project (NHP). It will do so by discussing the rationale and activities of the Northbridge History Project—an initiative whose role is to revitalize the city authentically by drawing on its diverse histories. The paper will also discuss the concepts outlined in the *The Australia Icomos Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Heritage Significance* (The Burra Charter), 10 April 2007; the Council of Europe *Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society*, 27.X.2005 (Faro Convention); the UNESCO *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*, 17 October 2003; and the ICOMOS *Charter for the Interpretation and Presentation of Cultural Heritage Sites*, 10 April 2007 (Ename Charter) in relation to the Project’s structure and activities.

2 RATIONALE

Northbridge is a small lozenge-shaped area, roughly a square mile in size, which forms approximately one

third of Perth’s Central Area.¹ It is home to the Cultural Centre; the Art Gallery, Western Australian Museum, and State Library share a central spine. It has also been home to over 50 nationalities as evidenced by the structures they have created—a mosque, cathedral, temples, and various churches. Today it is Perth’s premier restaurant and entertainment district.

Established in name in 1981 as the result of a public competition, the area is characterized by its proximity to the Central Railway Station in the south, the Perth Cultural Centre in the east and the Mitchell Freeway in the west. Prior to 1981, the area was variously known as North Perth, West Perth, North of Perth, North of the Line and Little Italy. The area was first settled in the early 1830s and its fortunes have ebbed and flowed in tune with the changing economic circumstances of the state. Originally the location of a series of interconnected swamps, rapid development of the area did not take place until the gold rushes of the 1890s. The resultant growth of the city, increased population and expansion of rail transport, saw the area flourish as a trade and light manufacturing hub. Repeated waves of immigration from all parts of the globe ensured that the area reflected diverse ethnic, religious and occupational activity.

¹Gehl Architects, *Perth Public Spaces Public Life* (Perth: City of Perth and Department for Planning and Infrastructure, 2009) 13. The boundaries of the NHP extend further north than the official policy boundaries. This a reflection of the historical development of the area.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the reservation of land for a freeway led to a residential decline. Houses were converted to restaurants, which led to the boast “more restaurants per capita than anywhere else in the southern hemisphere” in the 1980s. In the mid-1980s to the early 1990s, burgeoning al fresco dining and a vibrant, cosmopolitan hospitality and arts scene saw the area become the entertainment precinct of Perth.

As is common with many inner city areas, the history of Northbridge has been characterized by physical change and fluctuating fortunes. A proposed inner ring road (freeway) did not proceed and a cut-and-cover tunnel began construction in the late 1990s, causing dislocation of traffic and a slump in business confidence. Increased competition from suburban shopping centers and entertainment precincts and changes in the composition of the neighborhood community saw people move away. With a rise in anti-social behavior and poor press about gangs, crime, and drugs in the area, there was an increasing feeling that Northbridge was losing its special and distinctive qualities.

In 2002, in response to these concerns, a report by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet called *Northbridge: Shaping the Future* recommended the preparation of an history of the area to “understand and embrace the area’s history to create diversity, interest and business and tourism opportunities.”¹ The Northbridge History Project will be used:

- to identify the different histories of Northbridge;
- as a resource for the authentic interpretation of Northbridge;
- to create community awareness, engagement and ownership of Northbridge through understanding its history;
- to develop an accessible history for the public so that they appreciate the uniqueness of Northbridge; and
- to deliver useable history for educational and tourism purposes.

Initially, the NHP conceived its role to be that of *using* the histories of the area but quickly discerned that because of generational changes, the custodians of the early to mid-nineteenth century history of the area were passing and the histories were on the verge of being lost. Thus, the modus operandi of the NHP quickly moved from that of *using* history to that of *gathering* history before it was to be used by the project. However, discovery of authentic voices from the past is not as simple as it seems. Frequently, the overlay of scholastic or official voices conceals other voices, less vociferous

or less well recorded. Community participation was recognized as essential to the success of the Project.

3 HERITAGE

Community-based histories have frequently been the poor cousins of heritage research despite their potential to be a rich source of material for establishing cultural heritage significance. Stories of the past, interwoven with artifacts such as photographs, documents and expressed heritage (stories, dance, tracing of lives) can inform interpretation with a level of authenticity difficult to otherwise replicate.

While this paper focuses on the Ename Charter, I will first touch on the Burra Charter and why this is important to our understanding of the way in which heritage has been viewed within cities/the city context. This has been partly influenced by the way in which we have identified, articulated and conserved heritage in accordance with the Burra principles.

The overwhelming context of cities is that of the constructed environment. Certainly, the concept of “cities” is becoming more diffuse—think online cities, sim-cities with aggregating interest groups creating their own hierarchies. However, the constructed environment is, fundamentally, a tangible expression of the intangible hierarchies of society. The physical expression can be overt but disguised—think Bentham’s panopticon, tacit; think Foucault’s work on social control that extended or diffused that concept in the 1980s; consider the election processes at work in recent months to elect your new head of State.² Without these underlying concepts the physical rendition becomes meaningless.

In 1999, the Burra Charter highlighted a new awareness of the importance of intangible heritage and its pluralities in its definition of meanings: “*Meanings* denote what a *place* signifies, indicates, evokes or expresses. Meanings generally relate to intangible aspects such as symbolic qualities and memories.”³

The Burra model of interpretation employed was underpinned by the tacit assumption that the interpretation was knowable—that it was able to be determined and articulated—and whilst differing interpretations were legitimate—there was an assumption that the interpretations were intrinsically embedded within the parameters of the physical fabric—that they were supporting of it and supported by

²Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish. The Birth of the Prison. (Surveiller et Punir [1975])*. Translated from the French by Alan Sheridan (New York: Pantheon, 1977).

³Australia ICOMOS, *The Burra Charter. The Australia ICOMOS Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Heritage Significance* (Burra, Australia: ICOMOS, 1999).

¹Jack Busch, *Northbridge: Shaping the Future* (Perth: Department of the Premier and Cabinet, March, 2002) 71–72.

²Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish. The Birth of the Prison. (Surveiller et Punir [1975])*. Translated from the French by Alan Sheridan (New York: Pantheon, 1977).

it—that the referencing was if not circular at least ovate, encompassing some slight stretching here and there to accommodate “isms” as they arose—industrialization, multiculturalism, indigenism, feminism, post-modernism and more recently post-colonialism.

What happens if we untie the heritage from its site specificity and make it a more loose rendition of cultural memory? Do we, having removed its spatial specificity, lose the essential of heritage significance as we currently express it and move solely into the realm of cultural rather than cultural heritage significance? How far can we expand the meaning of site? Can it cover the whole city? Since 1999 there has been considerable movement in the understanding of community-based cultural heritage and intangible heritage and the value that non-place based cultural heritage can have and how this can, in turn, nourish and support our understanding and interpretation of places. In 2003, the UNESCO Convention proposed “the recognition of less tangible aspects of cultural significance including those embodied in the use of heritage places, associations with a place and the meanings that places have for people.”¹

There has evolved an understanding that the very fluidity of understandings that a community embodies can enrich and strengthen traditional scholarship in heritage. The release from specific “place” in the defined sense of the word to a broader “sense of place” or *genius loci*, paradoxically tends to personalize heritage and create a sense of engagement able to construct personally meaningful—and I hesitate to use this word—“heritages”.

As the opening page of the Ename Charter states: “These earlier ICOMOS charters stress the importance of public communication as an essential part of the larger conservation process (variously describing it as ‘dissemination,’ ‘popularization,’ ‘presentation,’ and ‘interpretation’). They implicitly acknowledge that every act of heritage conservation—within all the world’s cultural traditions—is by its nature a communicative act.”² This is fundamentally different from being entertained because the process requires an input (time, thought, interest—if not yet understanding) from the community. As a result there is a type of ownership that occurs wherein the cultural heritage becomes embedded in the psyche as personally meaningful. This engagement, if ongoing, leads to a sense of connection—be it to a place or to a more diffuse area. In turn, this psychological commitment informs other decisions about the places (or areas),

¹UNESCO. *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*. Paris, 17 October 2003.

²The ICOMOS International Scientific Committee on Interpretation and Presentation (ICIP). *The Icomos Charter for the Interpretation and Presentation of Cultural Heritage Sites* (Ename, Belgium: ICOMOS, 10 April 2007), Principle 6.

creating an understanding of its form and, subsequently, its function. This leads, in turn, to good citizenship—a key desire of government but a relationship which must be fostered individually via personal experience.

Cities are, by nature of their constructed environment, ideal places in which to explore the nature of tangible heritage—the very issues that the Burra Charter enumerates/articulates so adeptly. In Western Australia there are three key heritage organizations operating in relation to the constructed environment. They are the Heritage Council of Western Australia, which has responsibility for identifying and protecting places that are deemed to have cultural heritage significance of importance to the State and qualify for entry into the State Register of Heritage Places; The National Trust of Australia (W.A.) which owns and conserves places which have been vested in it and runs interpretive programmes associated with those places; and Heritage Perth Inc (2009), formerly the City of Perth Heritage Appeal, that has been recast to raise funds for heritage promotion rather than conservation and runs a promotional program called “Look Up Perth” which draws attention to facades.³

However, the constructed environment, although it may not be immediately obvious, relies heavily on the context provided by intangible heritage. The significance of a building is not in the bricks and mortar *per se*, even when beautifully executed, but in the context; the values of the society (the intangible values) give it relevance and empower it to be remembered. Otherwise, it is meaningless. Stonehenge becomes just another pile of rocks, citadels become glorified caves, churches huge and empty spaces, devoid of meaning. From the outset, the NHP made it clear that the Project was not concerned about identified heritage places *per se* but about the community culture of the area, which was diffuse in both its physical and psychological boundaries, depending on which community group was being engaged.⁴ We shied from the word “heritage” so that people would not think we were only interested in “important” buildings. Thus the Project moved beyond the interpretation of physical fabric to a broader understanding of the interpretation of the cultural significance, which included the cultural connection not only to specific places but also to an area or set of values. Such an approach in this diverse area also brought with it a wide range of vested interests.

³www.heritage.wa.gov.au; www.ntwa.org.au; www.heritageperth.com.

⁴This has not prevented the NHP from publishing research about buildings associated with particular communities. Kiri Jordan and Jock Collins, “Cosmopolitan Northbridge: A Changing Inner-City Ethnic Landscape,” in *Hidden Histories of Northbridge. Selected Northbridge History Project Studies Day Papers*, ed. John N Yiannakis and Felicity Anne Morel-EdnieBrown, *API Network* (Bentley: Network Books, Curtin University, 2009).

3 STRUCTURE

The Northbridge History Project was established by the former Premier of Western Australia, Dr. Geoff Gallop, in his role as Head of Government, as a reflection of the importance of the area as a significant portion of the Capital. Its brief was to capture the history of Northbridge before it was lost and to use the history to revitalize Northbridge, producing practical outcomes for business, tourism, and urban re-development in the area.

In a community where expectations would run high and diversity of interests needed to be acknowledged, a comprehensive “community consultation process” was proposed with a formal consultation plan to guide it.¹ In December 2004, twenty-six key stakeholders with an interest in Northbridge were approached to form the Premier’s Northbridge History Reference Panel, on the basis that they would champion the process and provide advice and feedback to guide the consultation. These individuals included the Lord Mayor of Perth, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Perth, Chief Rabbi of Western Australia, Commissioner for Police, Mayor of Vincent, Presidents of the Ethnic Community Council, Chinese, Greek, Italian, Vietnamese, African, Gay and Lesbian communities as well as Director-Generals or Ministerial Representatives of government agencies in the area. The Community Consultation plan was launched by the Premier of Western Australia at a morning tea in his suite on 1 June 2005. In the plan, a five year Project was proposed and the process for both initial and ongoing community consultation was outlined in full, including a diagram of the structure (see fig. 1).

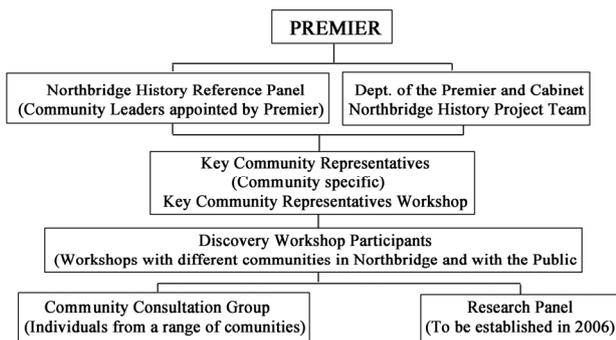


Figure 1. Diagram of the community consultation structure.

As part of the Discovery Workshops, we asked people to indicate if they would like to become part of a Community Consultation Group. The Community Consultation Group was a key element for the Project

¹John N. Yiannakis and Felicity Anne Morel-EdnieBrown, eds., *Hidden Histories of Northbridge. Selected Northbridge History Project Studies Day Papers* (Bentley: Network Books, Curtin University, 2009).

and each was strongly community based and “hands-on” in discovering resources and information as the Northbridge History Project progressed. The Northbridge History Project team worked closely with the members of the Group. People could participate by researching the history of their community in Northbridge or those themes and subjects which the Discovery Workshops uncovered.

The information from the Discovery Workshops was used in several ways, including:

- to inform the Northbridge History Project team of the issues, activities, topics, themes, subjects and resources that participants wanted to see included in the Northbridge History Project;
- to assist the Northbridge History Project team to select the most appropriate ways to promote research and writing about Northbridge;
- to discover available resources for research purposes;
- to find out how the community and public would like the results of the Discovery Workshops to be used;
- to create a Summary Document to guide further research and investigations into the history of Northbridge.

The Consultation Plan was also clear about what the NHP could not do. We encouraged a range of people to tell their stories on the basis that, even where information was not directly used in the project, knowledge of it had the potential to make the researchers aware of sensitivities and community concerns that should be investigated. A direct commitment was also made:

- to be fair, honest and open in our communications with you;
- to treat you and your views with courtesy and respect;
- to not shrink from covering all aspects of the history of the area of which we are aware.²

The consultation phase took a full year, allowing ample time for the community to become involved. Engagement at every level of community participation, both formal and informal and including participation by the general public, was accommodated. Scoping workshops sought advice from communities, businesses, and residents of Northbridge as to their expectations of what a history would contain and how it would be used. Workshops were initiated with each of the Panel members’ constituents which mapped out the boundaries of “Northbridge” as each group saw it.³

These findings were taken to broader audiences for further clarification, as there was potential concern that

²*Project Studies* (p. 243 n1) p. 7.

³Although external boundaries were somewhat diffuse, there was a remarkable constancy about the “inner” core area, although it was somewhat broader than the government’s policy boundary and covered two local government authorities.

individual communities would be overly nostalgic and antiquarian in focus. We sought advice as to their expectations of what an archive would contain, how it would be used, information they thought might be able to be used in history research, how the information could be used by the broader community, and whether they would like to personally participate in gathering information and doing research. As such it fulfilled the objectives of the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, which cited “the need to involve people in the decision-making process, particularly those that have strong associations with a place. These might be as patrons of the corner store, as workers in a factory or as community guardians of places of special value.”¹

By engaging with the community over an extended period, the NHP showed interest in, and understanding of, the complexity of the area, as well as a commitment to treating all participants equitably, and community concerns seriously. The formal consultation document was an important methodology to maintain open communication and facilitate the widest possible participation in the project. It ensured that participants knew how their contributions fitted into the overall project and that the process was transparent, open, and inclusive.

Four months after the launch, the Faro Convention was signed which contained the following clauses in Article 12b: “Access to cultural heritage and democratic participation: [will] take into consideration the value attached by each heritage community to the cultural heritage with which it identifies”; and “recognize the role of voluntary organizations both as partners in activities and as constructive critics of cultural heritage policies.”² As such it was a timely endorsement of the approach taken. The process outlined in figure 1 has been very successful for NHP. Four phases have been implemented since 2005: community consultation (2005/2006); photographs, documents and oral histories (2006/2008); and mapping (2008/2009). A high level of community engagement has ensued and the proposed Community Consultation Groups have instead become Steering Committees chaired by the respective Reference Panel members. These Committees will continue into the next phase of the Project—Interpretation—which is scheduled to begin 2009/2010. It exemplifies Principle 6 of the Ename Charter, which advises us to “encourage inclusiveness in the interpretation of cultural heritage sites, by

facilitating...the involvement of stakeholders and associated communities in the development and implementation of interpretive programmes.”³

5 OUTPUTS

These principles are also being expressed through key outputs the NHP has achieved, including an Electronic Archive (EA), Curriculum, Northbridge History Studies Days, and Mapping.

5.1 ELECTRONIC ARCHIVE

As community consultation progressed, it became obvious that the material would need to be wide ranging and, to make it relevant and easily accessible, in an electronic format. There was a sense that if the material was not online, it wouldn't exist. As a result the website that was initially for information purposes was edited to create an Electronic Archive (EA) so as to both gather and present material for research and commercial purposes (with permission).

Effectively the EA became a primary source archive able to be used for research purposes. This conforms to Principle 2.1 of the same Charter: “Interpretation should show the range of oral and written information, material remains, traditions, and meanings attributed to a site. The sources of this information should be documented, archived, and made accessible to the public.”⁴

It contains oral histories (transcripts and audio files), photographs, documents, research papers, electronic books, PDF's of displays, and curriculum materials. To date there are 1292 images online, 100 oral histories, and 298 documents. This represents about 40 percent of the items provided to the NHP. Much of the material is private material and had never been made publicly available until the EA. There has been a high level of commitment to the EA, brought about in part because the use of electronic images, rather than gathering original from family collections, has meant that people do not feel threatened that objects will be removed from family control. In an area where there has sometimes been a patchy relationship with government agencies, this process has helped to build trust. Images and documents are, instead, scanned at high resolution (1200 or 2400 dpi) “on the spot” at community events or the donors' homes (using portable scanners). As a result, donors have felt very comfortable in providing access to family photographs and documents. There is a sense that these histories are being preserved for the sake of Northbridge.

¹UNESCO, *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* (Paris, 2003).

²Council of Europe, *Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society* (Faro, Portugal, 27.X.2005) Article 12b.

²Council of Europe, *Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society* (Faro, Portugal, 27.X.2005) Article 12b.

³The ICOMOS International Scientific Committee on Interpretation and Presentation (ICIP), *Ename Charter* (Ename, Belgium: ICOMOS, 2007), Principle 6.

⁴*Ename Charter*, Principle 2.1.

The structure of the EA is very simple. All of the material is documented in a Microsoft Excel database and all of the material is presented online via fully searchable PDFs. Users are able to select a community group or search through all the records (pictures, transcripts, and audio files) using a keyword. The use of keywords means that alternate spellings can be included and indexing is not artificially constrained by staff selections. Material can be searched by media or group or across all categories. For example a search on the word “milk” brings up 50 resources, including oral histories, photographs, and documents from which to explore the various memories of cows, kindergarten and war-time propaganda photography. In the future the search function will be GIS enabled.

Northbridge History Project’s searchable Electronic Archive is accessible via the website (www.northbridgehistory.wa.gov.au). In order to emphasize that the EA is an archive of primary sources available for research and non-commercial purposes, agreement to the terms has to be completed (by pressing a button) for every search. A small and slightly tedious process, but one that ensures that—as far as possible—it is clear that the materials are to be used within the terms of the Copyright Act of 1968.¹ Likewise, each page of the downloadable PDF’s carries a similar clause. Although all donors sign a comprehensive authority for the NHP to use their material, as a mark of respect for individual sensitivities and in anticipation that some donors may pass away in the short term, a quite lengthy iterative process is undertaken to ensure that each donor has physically signed off on each item and each page of an item prior to it going online. Such trust has been generated by this model that donors had not to date objected to any use proposed for their sources—including some rather *avant-garde* proposals for the Northbridge Festival in 2007 and 2008.

As Northbridge is in a period of rapid change, the EA is itself becoming a cultural artifact and, in some instances, the only repository of material about certain aspects of the area’s history.

5.2 CURRICULUM

Article 12b of the Faro Convention advises that programs should “take steps to improve access to the heritage, especially among young people and the disadvantaged, in order to raise awareness about its value, the need to maintain and preserve it, and the benefits which may be derived from it.”² The NHP has addressed this through developing curriculum materials

¹*Commonwealth of Australia: Copyright Act, Act No. 63 of 1968 as amended.*

²Council of Europe, *Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society* (Faro, Portugal, 27.X.2005) Article 12b.

for both students and adult education. Through 2006 and 2007 there was nation-wide criticism about the lack of teaching of history in schools. In Western Australia, the history of the state had not been taught in high schools for many years. Aware that those under the age of 35 were a key demographic in the ongoing vitality and rejuvenation of Northbridge, the Northbridge History Project and Department of Education and Training developed “Shaping the Future with History” Curriculum Materials, to teach Western Australian history in the first four years of high school using Northbridge as the exemplar. This material showcased the diversity and richness of the area, while creating a new raft of users for the EA. The curriculum has been rolled out to all public, private, and independent schools across the state. It is simultaneously teaching skills while embedding a different perspective of Northbridge from which to contextualize negative publicity.

The production of a CD which contains the same material also enables adults to self-guide their way through the material, giving them basic historical skills and tools with which to analyze historical sources and read the urban environment. These materials are encouraging research not only into Northbridge but also in local history and the identification of places of cultural heritage significance in communities across the state. As Article 13a of the Faro Convention states, “[understanding] cultural heritage and knowledge [will] facilitate the inclusion of the cultural heritage dimension at all levels of education, not necessarily as a subject of study in its own right, but as a fertile source for studies in other subjects.”

Gaining an understanding about Northbridge’s history in this way will allow people the opportunity to see the area in a completely different manner. Rather than the stigma of an area “in decline”, Northbridge will be seen as an area of complexity, diversity, changing fortunes, and difference, with layers upon layers of history that is entwined with the history of Western Australia.

5.3 STUDIES DAYS

In 2007, the Northbridge History Studies Days were launched, inviting community and academic participation to raise the level of informed debate about the area, and thus, to change perceptions of its value as an area of cultural heritage significance. The aim of the Studies Day is fourfold:

- to contextualize Northbridge in its past and, in doing so, create a better understanding of the area’s uniqueness and how it can be used as a catalyst to revitalize the city;
- to increase the understanding and appreciation of the diverse histories of Northbridge and how they have shaped this area of the city;
- to acknowledge the many histories of the area, including Aboriginal history;
- to raise the level of knowledge about the history of Northbridge and Perth generally.

The Studies Days have consistently sold out, with some 180 attendees enrolling in response to very generous airtime (radio and television) which has been provided by state media covering the history of the area. A mixture of presenters—six academic and six community members—deliver papers; the day is sponsored by the City of Perth, Town of Vincent, TAFE Central and the History Council. The audience ranges from policy and decision makers to historians, other local government officers and people with long connections to the area. In line with Article 12a of the Faro Convention, access to cultural heritage and democratic participation will “encourage everyone to participate in the process of identification, study, interpretation, protection, conservation and presentation of the cultural heritage; and, public reflection and debate on the opportunities and challenges which the cultural heritage represents.”

Leading scholars have presented diverse investigations about Northbridge in terms of its Aboriginal heritage, natural environment, urban form, migrant entrepreneurship, heritage places, labor history, film and art, specific cultural groups, bureaucratic importance, deviance, and recollections of it being a place of difference and adventure. This responds to Article 13c of the Faro Convention, which is to “encourage interdisciplinary research on cultural heritage, heritage communities, the environment and their inter-relationship.”

Panels then address questions from the audience and many interesting issues are raised and new information shared, which, in turn, is prompting more studies. This conforms to Principle 1.2 of the Ename Charter: “Interpretation and presentation should encourage individuals and communities to reflect on their own perceptions of a site and assist them in establishing a meaningful connection to it. The aim should be to stimulate further interest, learning, experience, and exploration.”¹ Primary sources, speakers’ papers, are available online at the EA, and selected papers have been published by Curtin University and Network Books.² This conforms to Principle 2.1 of the Ename Charter: “Interpretation should show the range of oral and written information, material remains, traditions, and meanings attributed to a site. The sources of this information should be documented, archived, and made accessible to the public.”

¹The ICOMOS International Scientific Committee on Interpretation and Presentation (ICIP). *The ICOMOS Charter for the Interpretation and Presentation of Cultural Heritage Sites* (Ename, Belgium: ICOMOS, 10 April 2007), Principle 1.2.

²John N. Yiannakis and Felicity Anne Morel-EdnieBrown, eds., *Hidden Histories of Northbridge. Selected Northbridge History Project Studies Day Papers* (Bentley: Network Books, Curtin University, 2009).

5.4 MAPPING

The third phase of the NHP is mapping. In community meetings, this takes place with an oversized map into which pins are pushed to map cultural geographies and hidden pathways through the city. This is a dual methodology—it both collects and engages. It provides opportunities for contributors to share memories and histories and gives the community a sense of engagement and ownership of the area. The pins give NHP information, which is then mapped and also put online as a document in its own right; the very process of mapping creates a new cultural resource within the community—that of a sense of ownership of their cultural heritage and of pride in the area. The process also refreshes memories, which then contribute more richly to the oral histories and engender further mapping. The maps will contribute to a better understanding of community interaction and overlay this with the daily patterns of human life as they intersect with the hidden patterns of the city. In particular, women’s lives in Northbridge have particular patterns that will be explored in this stage when the maps are presented electronically via GIS.

6 EXTERNAL LINKS

The NHP has also created an environment in which the resources gathered by the Project can be made available to third parties for non-commercial uses to revitalize Northbridge; in particular, the Project has sought to establish links with organizations external to it who can benefit from the EA and NHP’s expertise.

6.1 NORTHBRIDGE FESTIVAL

The NHP provided a major theme for the 2007 and 2008 Northbridge Festivals through images and historical information for use in posters, advertising, signage, the Festival Programme, and the Festival launch. In part, the images were used to rebrand the Festival to make it more attractive to an older demographic; however, in 2007, over 1000 young people, with a demographic of 18–35, participated in a History Hunt where they identified heritage places through binoculars from the top of a Northbridge car park. Complemented by a retro-50s caravan in the main Festival area to collect *vox pops*, the Project had a distinct impact. Bookmarks, posters, and crosswords featuring Northbridge’s history have engaged a younger audience, as has radio coverage on some of the more alternative radio stations. This has increased the both knowledge of the area for the participants and contributed a younger perspective to the EA.

Other community extensions of the project have resulted in the Chinese community committing to building a repository for their cultural artifacts and to better record storage; the Police funding the Police Historical Society to archive their records; an exhibition

of Early Jewish History; an exhibition of Italian photographs in local business windows; a re-enactment of the 1888 journey of the Sisters of Mercy to St Brigid's Convent; an exhibition of Polish photographs and artifacts; and the establishment of both MySpace and Facebook sites by the Gay and Lesbian communities to collate information for the EA.

6.2 INTERPRETATION

Using the resources of the EA for interpretation in Northbridge is the final phase of the NHP. To date the communities have developed walking tours and moves are afoot to commemorate particular sites. Podcasts are being researched and a high level Interpretative Steering Committee with Mayoral representation is being established. Local government authorities have set aside funds and an Interpretive Working Party comprising scholars, designers, artists, business operators and developers is planned. Together with the existing Steering Committees, this will provide a robust group of people with whom to engage to create dynamic and relevant interpretation in Northbridge. In structuring the shape of the Interpretation phase, Principles 6.1 and 6.2 of the Ename Charter are being employed as NHP draws upon the principle that "the multidisciplinary expertise of scholars, community members, conservation experts, governmental authorities, site managers and interpreters, tourism operators, and other professionals should be integrated in the formulation of interpretation and presentation programmes."¹ Care has been taken to ensure that "the traditional rights, responsibilities, and interests of property owners and host and associated communities should be noted and respected in the planning of site interpretation and presentation programmes."²

In summary, the outreach activities of the NHP can be précised by Principle 7.4 of the Ename Charter: "Every interpretation programme should be considered as an educational resource for people of all ages. Its design should take into account its possible uses in school curricula, informal and lifelong learning programmes, communications and information media, special activities, events, and seasonal volunteer involve-ment."

6.3 REPLICABLE

The Project has also been designed to be replicable so as to "facilitate exchanging, developing, codifying and assuring the dissemination of good practices."³ Processes of and standards for documentation, electronic recording, and community consultation have been documented in a package called "Collections without walls: creating a digital archive based on the Northbridge History Project" and templates and toolkits developed pending a roll-out to small regional centers via Museums Australia. Training workshops have been run in the Museums sector and the model is also in the process of being adopted by international groups, who see the EA model as a high quality but cost-effective alternative to a local museum, with sufficient flexibility to be able to be implemented at a small scale and adapted to particular needs. As such, the NHP is adhering to Principle 7 of the Ename Charter: "Develop technical and professional guidelines for heritage interpretation and presentation, including technologies, research, and training. Such guidelines must be appropriate and sustainable in their social contexts."⁴

6.4 MULTI-LATERAL

Article 13b of the Faro Convention, "fostering multilateral and trans-frontier activities, and developing networks for regional co-operation in order to implement these strategies," has also driven the development of broader synergies for the NHP. As part of the mapping phase the NHP is putting in place industry and academic partners to create a spatially enabled research portal in which to integrate the EA with other Government resources and to create a global presence for Perth online. Called *Virtual Perth*, it is the subject of an Australia Research Council Linkage Grant for an integrated GIS of Perth displaying sources and interpretation of historical, current, and "future" Perth. Using GIS, it will use spatial enabled research data to create deep research, and interpreting Perth and Northbridge, it will integrate datasets from State Government and key industry partners. Local partners are NHP, Landgate, Department of Planning & Infrastructure, City of Perth, Town of Vincent, Heritage Perth, Heritage Council, State Records Office and Police, Curtin University, The University of Western Australia, and Murdoch University. Transfrontier partners are Sydney University (www.timemap.net) and University of California Berkeley (www.ecai.org).

¹Ename Charter, Principle 6.1.

²Ename Charter, Principle 6.2.

³Council of Europe, *Faro Convention*, Article 17c.

⁴The ICOMOS International Scientific Committee on Interpretation and Presentation (ICIP), *Ename Charter*, Principle 7.

7 CONCLUSION

Through the process of uncovering Northbridge's history, developing relationships with the Education Department, the Northbridge Festival, academics, political advisors and others with the potential to facilitate the Project's aim to revitalize Northbridge in an authentic manner, the Northbridge History Project is changing perceptions about the area. There is a growing awareness that Northbridge has a cultural character that is distinct and unique. Discovering and making available the histories of this diverse area has created a new sense of identity and community engagement, bringing awareness that the life of the city is played out against the backdrop of the built environment but the soul of the city comes from its context within the cultural fabric. This is underpinning changes in perception of the area by government and policy makers in which the heritage of the area is more than that which is represented in the streetscape. Discussion of physically melding the area seamlessly with the city has changed, and instead there is increasing awareness that

the area's living cultural heritage is valuable and has much to offer as the city seeks to position itself as Australia's Indian Ocean gateway. A fully interactive GIS is in the final stages of being planned, whereby cross-linking of the archive and an interactive presentation will allow a virtual rendition of the history of the area for interpretation, policy making, and research. The force of history is being used to shatter common perceptions of Northbridge as a crime-ridden enter-tainment district with no unique qualities. The sense of discovery and excitement that Northbridge is being associated with now will only increase as the history of the area is brought alive to more and more people.

David Lowenthal writes that a fixed past is "not what we really need, or at any rate not all we need. We require a heritage with which we continually interact, one which fuses past with present."¹ This is precisely what the Northbridge History Project is doing.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The project outlined in this paper would not have been possible without the ongoing support of the Chairs and members of the various Steering Committees of the NHP and Mrs. Tanya Edwards and Dr Elaine Dowd of the NHP. Thanks also go to Professor Lewis Lancaster for helping me to attend the Conference and to the Conference organizers for providing a traveling allowance. Thank you also to Neil Silberman, chair of the session, for making me so welcome.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Australia ICOMOS. *The Burra Charter. The Australia ICOMOS Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Heritage Significance*. Burra, Australia: ICOMOS, 10 April 2007.
- Busch, Jack. *Northbridge: Shaping the Future*. Perth: Department of the Premier and Cabinet, March 2002.
- Commonwealth of Australia: *Copyright Act*. Act No. 63 of 1968 as amended.
- Council of Europe. *Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society*. Faro, Portugal, 27.X.2005.
- Department of the Premier and Cabinet. *Community Consultation Plan*. Perth: Northbridge History Project, 1 June 2005.
- Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish. The Birth of the Prison*. [Surveiller et Punir, Paris, 1975] Translated by Alan Sheridan. New York: Pantheon, 1977.
- Gehl Architects. *Perth Public Spaces Public Life*. Perth: City of Perth and Department for Planning and Infrastructure, 2009.
- Jordan, Kirrily, and Jock Collins. "Cosmopolitan Northbridge: A Changing Inner-City Ethnic Landscape," in *Hidden Histories of Northbridge. Selected Northbridge History Project Studies Day Papers*, edited by John N. Yiannakis and Felicity Anne Morel-EdnieBrown, 249–75. Bentley: Network Books, Curtin University, 2009.
- Lowenthal, David. *The Past Is a Foreign Country*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.
- The ICOMOS International Scientific Committee on Interpretation and Presentation (ICIP). *The Icomos Charter for the Interpretation and Presentation of Cultural Heritage Sites*. Ename, Belgium: ICOMOS, 10 April 2007.
- UNESCO. *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*. Paris, 17 October 2003.
- Yiannakis, John N., and Felicity A. Morel-EdnieBrown, eds. *Hidden Histories of Northbridge. Selected Northbridge History Project Studies Day Papers*. Bentley: Network Books, Curtin University, 2009.

¹David Lowenthal, *The Past Is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) 410.