



I'm going to talk briefly about some issues related to living heritage in the historic urban landscape.

This is based on my Mphil in Conservation of the Built Environment research project, which looked at the market that is held on Cape Town's Grand Parade twice weekly, on Wednesday and Saturday mornings.

In an earlier MPhil assignment I looked at the morphology and social history of Grand Parade. I became aware that the social memory is almost completely excluded from our commemoration, our *recognition* of that public space. This is a site with a long, rich history as a place of significant protest, and as a place of celebration, and as a market place...

In attending BELCom, IACom, IGIC meetings, I could see no clear consensus on the subject of living heritage. What it was. And what to do with it. I decided that exploring this practice would be a good way to develop my personal understanding of living heritage.

(Image: Grand Parade Market, July 2019, Wendy Wilson)



CASE STUDY: GRAND PARADE MARKET

It was late in 2017 when I first mooted the Grand Parade Market as the subject of the case study for my MPhil thesis; it was not well received.

However, just over two years later, the area has become something of a front-and-centre issue in heritage practice.

There's a growing sense of urgency to address the "people" aspect within heritage and conservation.

There's also growing agitation to respond to the needs of redress, as proposed by law and policy.

(Image: Cape Archives AG593, NLSA PHA10600)

RESEARCH QUESTION

Is Cape Town's Grand Parade bi-weekly market living cultural heritage?
If so, how should professional heritage practice acknowledge and respond to this intangible heritage in the built environment?



My central research question was this:

Is Cape Town's Grand Parade bi-weekly market living cultural heritage? If so, how should professional heritage practice acknowledge and respond to this intangible heritage in the built environment?

So what I'm asking is:

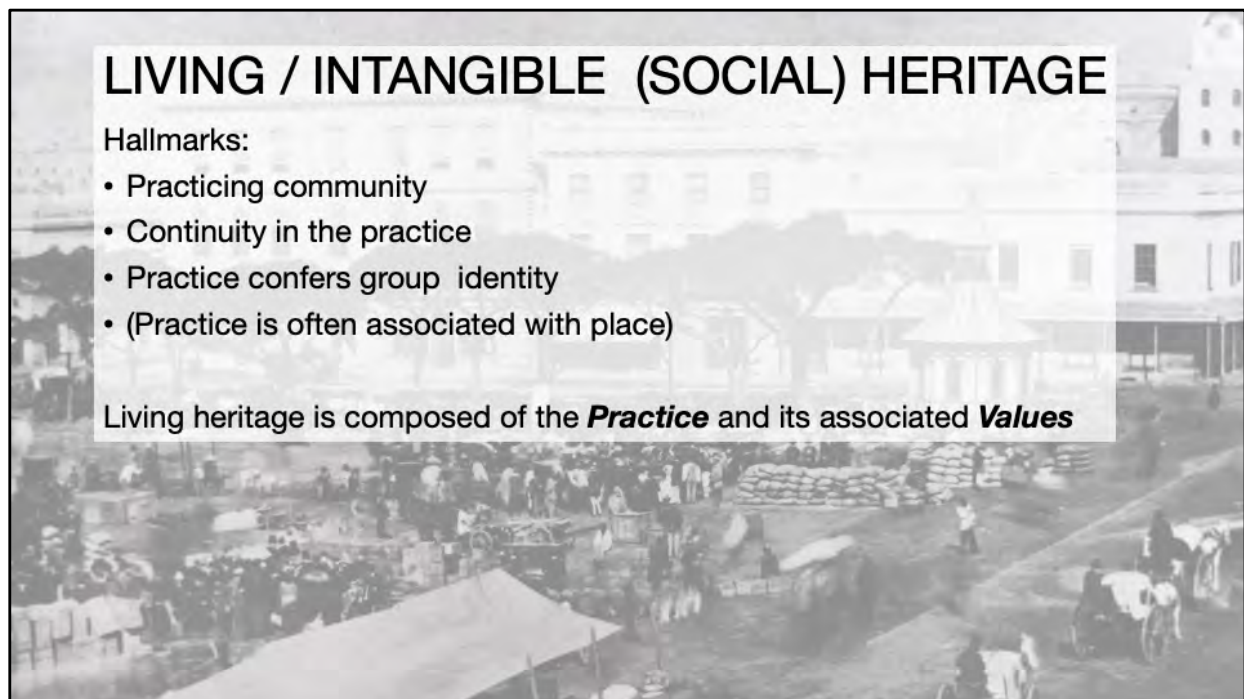
Is the twice-weekly market living heritage?

- How would I know?
- How is it identified?

If it is, does it matter?

- Do we do anything?
- Should we do anything?
- What does policy say?
- What *should* policy say?

(Image: NLSA PHA10616)



Some terminology:

The terms “living heritage” and “intangible heritage” are used interchangeably. South African policy prefers “living heritage” for the dynamism it suggests. We’re also have the term “social heritage”.

Significantly, living heritage is concerned with *people*. The Department of Arts and Culture describes it as: *The foundation of most communities in SA and an essential source of identity and continuity.*¹

This connects three key concepts in living heritage.

- It is a practice associated with community.
- It confers group identity.
- It is characterised by continuity.

Often, in addition, the practice is associated with place or object. At its heart, living heritage is made up of a **practice** and its associated **values**.

Importantly, it may change and mutate while retaining its essence. So, the practice may change (new technologies, for example) while the values ascribed to it remain the same. Or: the practice may be unchanged. But how the practitioners value that may alter.

There’s an understanding of the notion when it comes to ritualistic practice and homogenous groups.

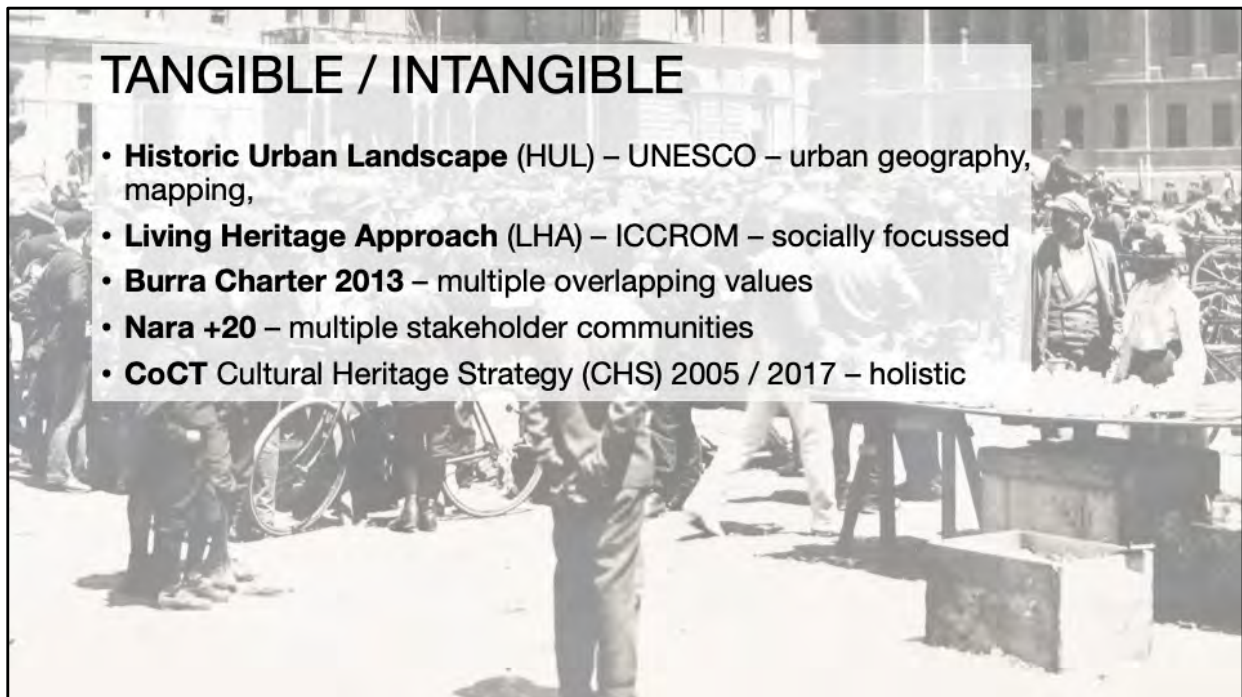
But how do we take this understanding into a diverse or urban context?

In UNESCO's words, living heritage might be: *Contemporary urban practices in which diverse cultural groups take part*

And the practice must be recognised as tradition by those who: *Create, maintain and transmit it.*²

1. Department of Arts and Culture, <http://www.dac.gov.za/content/living-heritage>

2. UNESCO, "What is Intangible Cultural Heritage?" <https://ich.unesco.org/en/what-isintangible-heritage-00003>
(Image: Cape Archve, J7850)



The **tangible / intangible** binary:

The history of legislation, policy and practice has led to tangible and intangible heritage being seen as two separate and distinct entities. However, there's a vast pool of cite-able argument against their separation: International and local and institutional.

This fits with the rise, over the last decade, of more **people-entered** approaches to conservation, particularly in the urban context. These recognise social sustainability, cultural diversity and community values, **alongside** place, structure and urban form.

Key resources include:

- The **Historic Urban Landscape** work of Bandarin and Van Oers for UNESCO. This draws on urban geography.
- The **Living Heritage Approach** coming out of ICCROM. This is socially-focused.
- The **Burra Charter of 2103**. It talks of the tangible and intangible dimensions of place. How that might have a range of values for different individuals and groups.
- **Nara +20**. Which calls for the acknowledgement of multiple stakeholder communities. Particularly those who have traditionally been unheard.

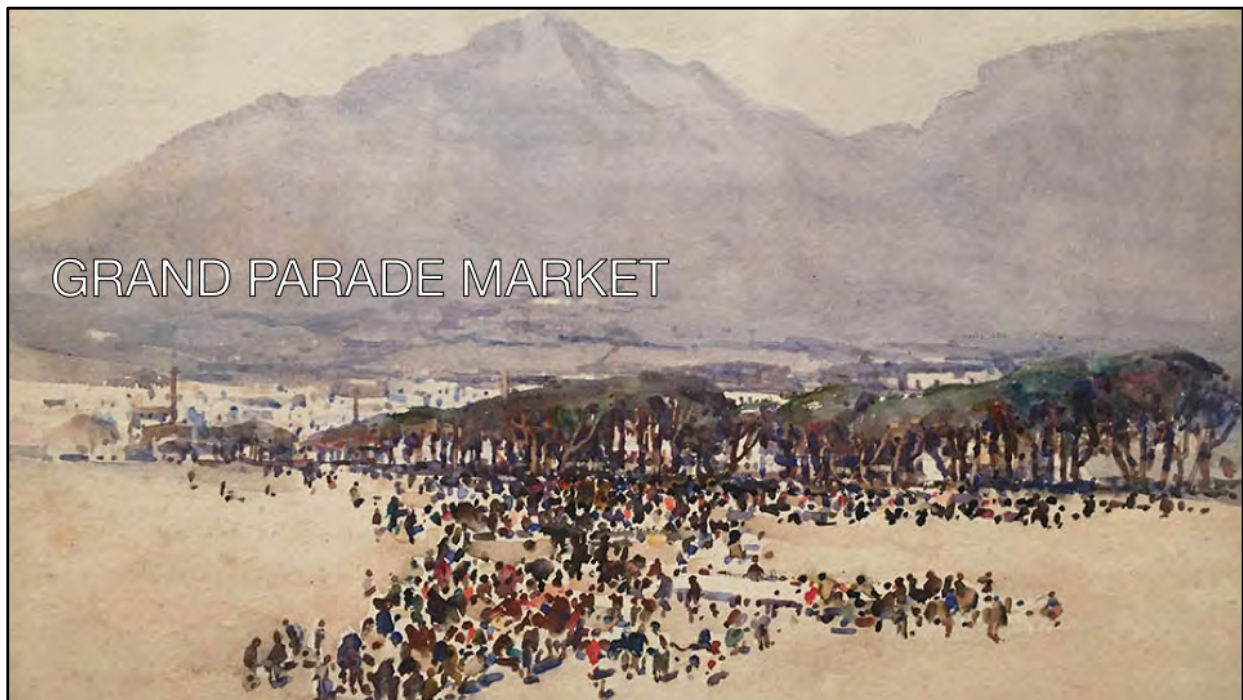
To address, (I quote): *The imbalance of power among stakeholders, often determined by heritage legislation, decision-making mechanisms, and economic interests.*³

Locally, we have:

- The **City of Cape Town Environment Strategy**. This incorporates the Cultural Heritage Strategy of 2005. This is a holistic instrument, flagged by Banderin as one to watch.

Common to these is that they recognise the multiplicity of experience. They all try to manage the inevitable conflict and general messiness that this exposes. And all deal with it in subtly different ways. But they all show that by foregrounding people, the recognition of living heritage becomes an integral part of heritage practice.

3. Japan ICOMOS, "Nara +20: On Heritage Practices, Cultural Values and the Concept of Authenticity," (2014).
(Image: Cape Archives, E7959)



This audience is familiar with the importance of the Grand Parade. Its spatial history. Its social history...

The **market**, however, is perhaps less familiar: a few milestones in the history of the market:

- It's an outdoor market, held every Wednesday and Saturday morning, selling non-food items.
- Arguably, it goes back to 1680, when Governor Van Der Stel allowed free burghers to sell their excess produce on the Parade - at the far side from the Castle.
- The tradition of a market on Saturdays probably stems from farmers coming to town for church on Sunday.
- These sales had grown so huge by the 1750s that an official auctioneer was appointed to manage them. Plausibly, informal trade evolved alongside.

(Image: Gwelo Goodman, SANG)



Travel guides from the mid-19th century describe the market. One writer tells us how: *Hundreds of persons gather round the auctioneers' stands.*

And: *There are no other gatherings of equal liveliness in Cape Town.*⁵

And another that: *The most motley groups imaginable are to be seen.*⁶

And goes on to detail, in the language of the time, just how diverse the market-goers were. Dutch and English merchants, Khoes, the descendants of enslaved persons, and: *The natives of the East, with their various picturesque costumes.*

Records show that the market grew fast between 1890 and 1910. When I piece the history together, a lot of this seems to have been driven by international social upheaval. Particularly, the Jewish influx from Lithuania. So many that a new name, "Paraduikes", was coined.

The Wednesday/Saturday tradition was firmly established by this time. The Mayor's Minutes from 1899 note that: *It had long been custom to hold such sales on these days only.*⁷

5. William Irons, *The settler's guide to the Cape of Good Hope and Colony of Natal* (London : Stanford, 1858).

6. Henry Methuen, *Life in the Wilderness: Or, Wanderings in South Africa* (London: Richard Bentley, New Burlington Street, 1848),

7. Mayor's Minutes" (Cape Town, 1899)
(Image: 1925 African News Agency)



By 1939 there were 76 marked out stalls. This was reduced when the military developed part of the Parade during World War 2. Following the war, not all stalls were re-instated. The number was fixed at 34. It remains so today.

Post-war newsreel film, newspaper features, and photos show a performative space, with a huge variety of goods and people. This is before the Group Areas Act. After 1965, only whites were allowed permits to trade. Although people of colour already with permits could continue. In 1966 Group Areas legislation was applied to District Six. The bomb like impact of its destruction followed in the 1980s. This had a devastating effect on the market. It stripped it of its central geographic place in the city and of a vast majority of its custom.

The collapse of the Cape textile industry in the 1990s also had an impact. Since 1994, there have been numerous changes to the management of the Parade. More recently, there has been an influx of day traders to the periphery. All this affects the market. Sometimes positively, sometimes negatively. However, it retains an unbroken lineage and represents an intangible layer of the history of the Grand Parade as public space.

The point with this skip through the market's history is that detailed historic research—as for any heritage project—is important to reveal *significance*, in terms of NHRA 3.3.

In this case:

- Its importance to the patterns of SA history.
- It reveals information about SA's cultural heritage.

- There is a strong association with place and community.
- It has genuine rarity and age.

The market has a history, but is it living heritage?

(Images: Cape Archives E6174, Cape Times, Saturday July 25, 1931, NLSA)



The literature suggests that to be considered as living heritage it must be claimed as such and identified as significant by the practicing community. The voices of the present.

I interviewed 18 current traders, and one past trader, and was quickly struck by how tightly their stories mapped to the “criteria” of living heritage. Some current traders are third generation at the market, while other extended families have traded uninterrupted for over 70 years. When we discussed whether the market is “heritage” I’d get a one word answer – from everyone: Definitely!

Why?

The reasons I was given include:

- Its age.
- Its association with place.
- Family lineage
- Association with slavery
- And “spirit and feeling” (community).

Notions of **inheritance** and **identity** run throughout the interviews I conducted.

The important thing is that the cultural heritage significance extends beyond the history books and archive records. It is alive in the practice and how that is valued by the practitioners themselves.

(Images: Background, Cape Archives J74. Grand Parade Market traders, June 2019, Wendy Wilson)



Earlier, I identified three characteristics of living heritage:

- It is a practice associated with community.
- It confers group identity.
- It is characterised by continuity

Also, the practice is very often associated with place.

I also noted UNESCO's urging that the practice must be recognised as tradition by those who: *Create, maintain and transmit it.*

In my interviews, the traders repeatedly ascribed these living heritage characteristics to the Grand Parade market. But not necessarily in those words.

My suggestion that the traders represented a "community" was rebuffed, **family** was the preferred word to describe the traders as a group (perhaps because the word "community" can carry connotations of contestation and lack of agency).

Lutfeyyah Salie's father and brother started trading on the Parade in 1960, and she remembers helping out as a little girl. She told me: *We're actually not just workers or stallholders, we're family! We're Jews, we're whites. We're coloureds, we're Africans, whatever they call us. We all together, we work for 60 years as a family.*

The extended **family** identity includes literal families. Of Lutfeyyah's eight family members, six trade on the Parade. Her daughters, one a lawyer, the other a GP, would like to see their mother's legacy continue.

Another family group is the Klein brothers and their cousin Steven Fox. Fox's father arrived after World War 2, having been a trader on London's Petticoat Lane. He coaxed his sister and her husband out to join him. Slowly they built up their businesses. The next generation have three stalls between them, now staffed by the children of their parents' helpers.

During the downturn of the 80s as (largely white and Jewish) stall holders gave up, some would pass their lease "on the sly" to one of their staff or a suppliers. Mr X (anonymity requested), who's been trading over 30 years, got his stall that way.

Magedie Davids points out that (despite Group Areas): *that's how the non-whites started to infiltrate.*

(Image: Lutfeyyah Salie, June 2019, by Wendy Wilson)



When I asked traders how the market had changed, interviewees were of one mind: *Oh, but it hasn't changed at all!* I was told, and: *Nothing has changed.*

Stallholder Mahdi Soeker's words really distil the notion of change in the context of living heritage. He says: *It's the same market, it's just new people.*

Mahdi is a third-generation trader, following in his grandfather's and father's footsteps. He's the youngest of 7, his siblings are in professions, and he says: *It's not an obligation, but someone had to do it!*

The Klein brothers' children aren't interested in taking over. A conversation between them shows how continuity may be viewed differently. For Martin Klein:

It's dying out because there's no one taking our place, you know what I mean, the generations...

Jeff's response: *No, but there's always going to be somebody who might want to come and trade...*

(Image: Mahdi Soeker, June 2019, by Wendy Wilson)



Zuleiga Bardien and Zubeida Isaacs operate a stand that has been running 52 years. They're called *the Mayors of the Parade*. Their father got a lease before the Group Areas cut off date. Zubeida, now 73, comes: *Because it's in my blood. It's in me, man.*

Her words express a "claim" to the space. She says: *It's my Parade*. The sisters were born at 101 Constitution Street, District Six. Through the impact of Group Areas they moved to Salt River and on to Manenberg, and finally settled in Strandfontein. Market attendance has been one constant. Every Wednesday and Saturday they bus through. Their "neighbour" stores their stand and stock in exchange for a piece of their pitch.

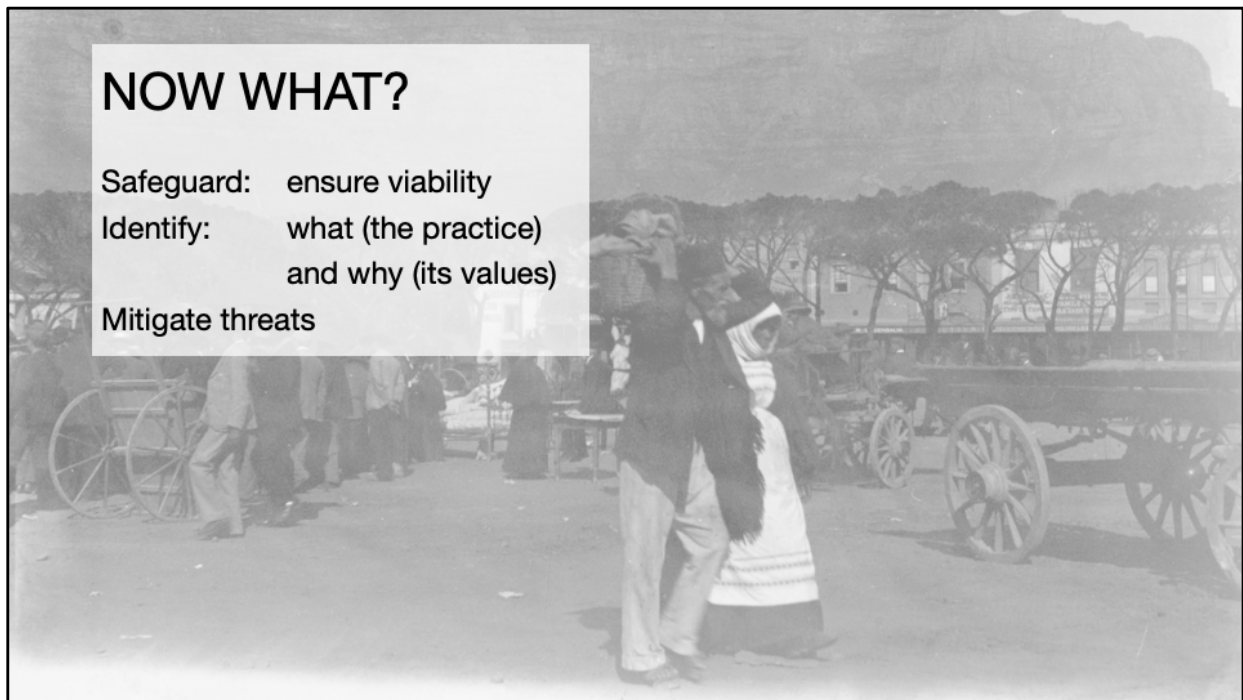
We're so proud to say, the tables that we have, come from the ceilings of District Six, from the house that we moved out of, the ceilings.

Referring to market days, the sisters say: *This is old Parade, like the Parade must be.*

For traders, the Parade *is* the market. Spatially, it's the area bounded by the market experience. Mahdi Soeker expresses the profound connection of the practice and the place when he says: *It's rooted in me, the Parade, and it's going to be rooted in me for the rest of my life.*

Lutfeyyah Salie too, she says: *I'm very passionate about this place because I grew up on this place... I'm getting old on this place.*

(Image: Zuleiga Bardien and Zubeida Isaacs, June 2019, by Wendy Wilson)



Living heritage in the historic urban landscape. So now what?

The living heritage of the Grand Parade bi-weekly market is conjoined with the Grand Parade. It contributes to the heritage significance of Grand Parade (and visa versa). But there are many valid concerns regarding the idea of “**protecting**” such living heritage.

There are concerns regarding:

- State manipulation and control
- “Freezing”, or casting a living practice into a moment of time
- And numerous others.

Indeed, the market traders themselves have concerns. Traders’ Association committee member, Mogamat Davids says: *The only problem with heritage sites is there’s rules and regulations and we’ve already got a set of rules as well as a lease in place. If there’s still a heritage... There’ll be more boundaries, there’ll be much more boundaries.*

The fundamental objective when working with living heritage is to **safeguard** it. Safeguarding means ensuring viability. This doesn’t not mean legislating it. But it might mean legislating **for** it.

Harriet Deacon draws a useful distinction between

- **What.** The cultural practice. Twice-weekly market-trading, in this case

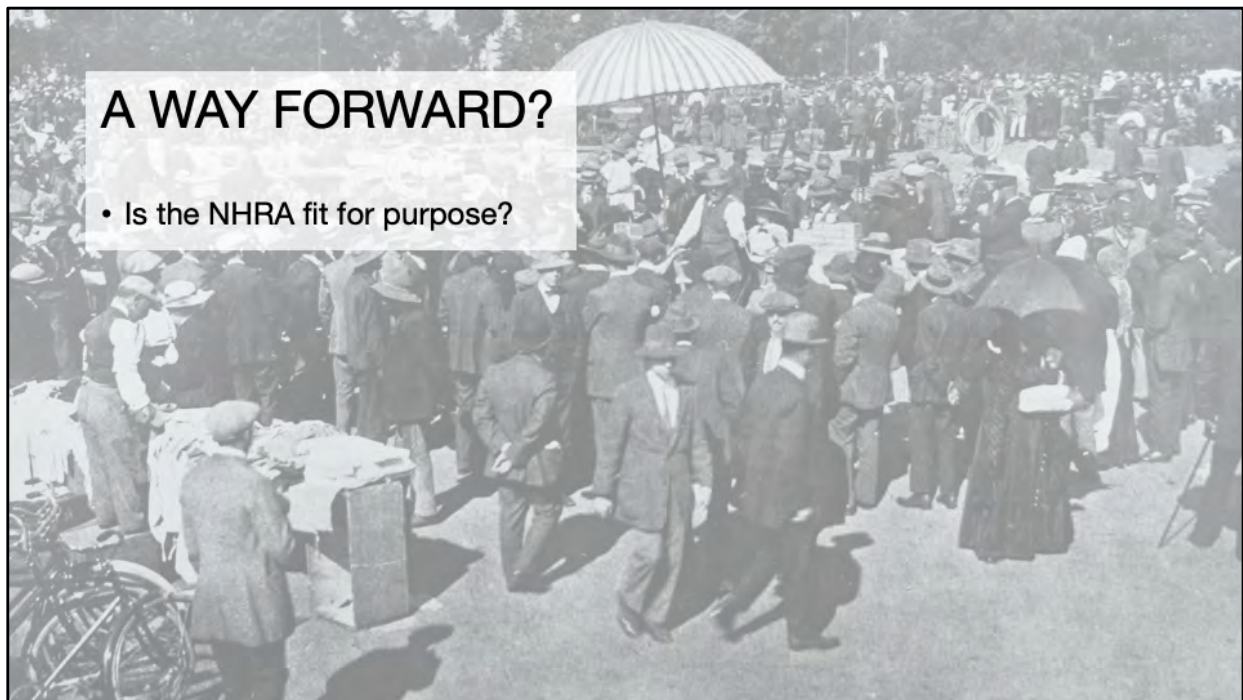
- and **Why**. Its ascribed values. The capacity to confer a sense of personal, generational, collective and social identity, social capital. And so on.

This distinction helps us see that **practice** can be safeguarded by ensuring its environment enables it to thrive. While **values** are acknowledged, celebrated, facilitated, represented or whatever might be appropriate.

Viability is essential for living heritage to survive and thrive. Risks and threats to viability should be eliminated or mitigated. **But** the mitigation of one threat may aggravate another...

Which is where heritage practice plays a role. Charting a route through the mess. And that's where one/some of the alternative/new approaches may play a role, such as the Historic Urban Landscape and the Living Heritage Approach.

(Image, NLSA PHA 10604)



My case study of the Grand Parade market was for a mini-dissertation. It was beyond the scope of the project to make recommendations for future policy. However, these are observations and considerations made and reached through the work.

- Legislation provides poorly for the recognition of living heritage.
- National Policy gives little guidance on strategies for safeguarding it.
- Local policy is still little-known outside of the City offices, and there are few examples of best practice to follow.

I have concluded that:

- The tangible and intangible qualities of place are indivisible. However, the mechanisms of identification and response can be very different. The significance of a built environment asset might be retained through preservation, rehabilitation or adaptation. Meanwhile any associated living heritage significance might need safeguarding, celebration, enablement or memorialisation.
- Living heritage has the capacity to be self-sustaining—economically and socially contributory, even—if it is given a supporting environment.
- Living heritage is resilient and adaptable to change. But not too much too fast, and “nothing about us without us”.

Furthermore, by better defining the terminology—living heritage, intangible heritage, social heritage—heritage practitioners might be better equipped to identify the safeguarding needs of the associated practices.

Does the law need changing to address the needs of living heritage?

A number of people in the field have argued that the NHRA is about “**resources**” and that those are tangible. Andrew Hall (among others at a 2018 seminar at UCT’s African Centre for Cities) has intimated that a redraft is due. However, in 2003 Deacon wrote that “There is no reason why national governments should not safeguard tangible and intangible heritage by means of the same instrument.”⁸

I found a document in the SAHRA records related to a 2001 legal dispute, which reads:

Market trading on the Grand Parade is a well-established activity and is inherently bound up with the history of this important landmark.

Later, it says:

*Furthermore, we wish to advise that the traders of the Grand Parade constitute **a living and cultural resource** which is protected in terms of the provisions of the National Heritage Resources Act.*

And finally:

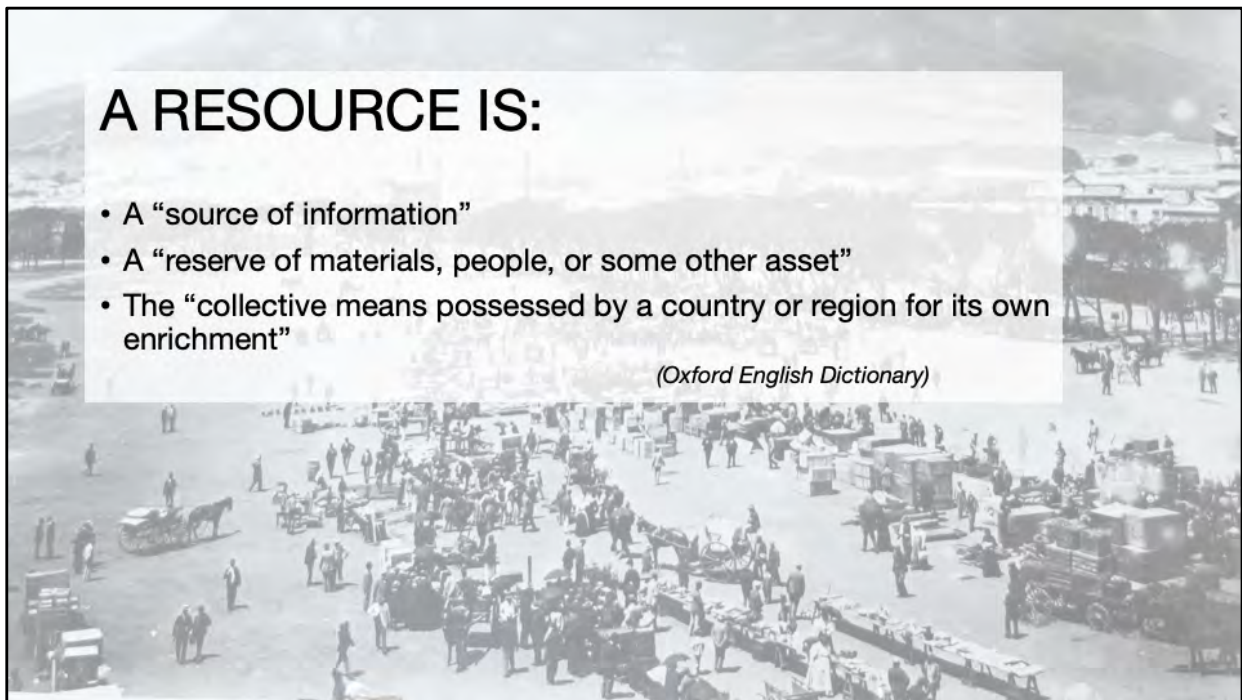
The Act provides, inter alia, that affected communities be consulted and participate in the management of such heritage.

When this document was drafted, the NHRA was a very new instrument. I find it interesting that, at the time, the lawyers and SAHRA official read it as incorporating living heritage. And even more fascinating it was seen as applicable protection for the Grand Parade Market.

Perhaps the issue is not one of policy or legislation, but praxis.

8. Deacon, Harriet, Luvuyo Dondolo, Mbulelo Mrubata and Sandra Prosalendis. The subtle power of intangible heritage : legal and financial instruments for safeguarding intangible heritage. Cape Town, South Africa: Human Sciences Research Council, 2004.

(Image: Cape Archives J3673)



Should we revisit and revise our understanding of the word “resource” in local heritage practice?

It’s a potent word. According to the OED, it represents:

- A “source of information”.
- A “reserve of materials, people, or some other asset”.
- And the “collective means possessed by a country or region for its own enrichment”.

In conclusion:

One key objective of our work is to expose and rebalance, through inclusion, previously neglected areas of heritage. Failing to recognise living heritage is to perpetuate this neglect.

(Image: Cape Archive)



LIVING HERITAGE IN THE HISTORIC URBAN LANDSCAPE

Wendy Wilson, AHP, 29 January 2020